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Conant, Thomas, b. 1785.

The autobiography of Rev.

Thomas Conant

From
Ella Brooks,

to
Malcolm Young





Thomas Conant

THE

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF

REV. THOMAS CONANT.

B O S T O N :
A N D R E W F . G R A V E S ,

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P R E F A C E .

It is in accordance with the earnest desire of many Christian friends, and some of my ministering brethren, who think it would be promotive of the cause of truth as well as for the encouragement of the disciples of Christ generally, that I am induced to furnish a brief sketch of my life, and especially those incidents connected with my past labors in the ministry.

It is an opinion I have long entertained, that as a general rule nothing should be published concerning any one's life while he is living. And were it not that the origin, early experience and struggles of several of our churches, and the progress of religion in many places, were intimately identified with my own history, I should absolutely refuse to give publicity to the incidents which are recorded in this volume. My personal knowledge, however, of many interesting facts connected with the cause of religion in those places which were the scene of my early labors, is probably as great, if not greater than any one now living.

There is also another consideration which has some weight in my mind, and that is, the number of those with whom I was formerly associated in the churches in promoting the cause of God, is fast diminishing, and therefore, to such as remain, the review of by-gone

scenes, may furnish them with some pleasing and perhaps profitable reminiscences. And still further, it may not be ill-timed perhaps, that my younger brethren both in the ministry and in the churches, should be reminded of the labors and sacrifices of those who have borne the heat and burden of the day.

The reader will perceive that some allusions are made in the following pages to other religious denominations, as the Unitarians, Congregationalists, &c.; it is, however, with no unkind or invidious spirit that I speak of them, but simply because circumstances and the convictions of duty, brought me into connection with them.

As my term of active ministerial labor is nearly completed, having extended over a period of nearly fifty-five years, and also being admonished by my age, approaching four-score years, it is quite probable it cannot be long before I shall be called hence to be here no more. A casual survey only of the ground over which I have passed, causes me to feel the truth of Inspiration — “unprofitable servant,” but my hope of present and final acceptance with God, rests upon the Person and Work of the Redeemer.

Scituate, January, 1861.

T. C.

MIDDLEBORO', Oct. 31, 1860.

At a meeting of the Pastors of the churches of the Old Colony Association:

Voted unanimously, that we approve of the publication of the Autobiography of Father Conant without delay.

KILBURN HOLT, *Clerk.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

Birth—Ancestry—An Early Incident of Childhood—First Religious Impressions—Strict observance of Religious Duties—Self Righteousness—Vain Hope of Heaven—School at Rochester—Religious Duties given up—Results.....	9
---	---

CHAPTER II.

Fitted for College—Dissuaded from going by my Father.—Learning a Carpenter's Trade—Attending Meetings in Boston—The Effect of Drs. Baldwin and Stillman's Preaching—Unitarian Preaching—Opposition to Baptist Preaching—Fondness for pleasure.....	13
--	----

CHAPTER III.

Religious Impressions Suddenly Revived—Distress of Mind—The first place for Prayer—Ignorance of Experimental Religion—Example of Church Members—Consciousness of Sin—How Aggravated—Sense of the Justice of God.....	19
--	----

CHAPTER IV.

Hope Cherished—Joy—Doubts and Fears—Doubts of Believers Contrasted with Unbelievers—Trials of Believers Overruled—Encouragement from Col. Gardner's Experience.....	25
---	----

CHAPTER V.

- Duty of making a Profession of Religion—A New Trial—
Examination of the Subject of Baptism—Baptism—
Father Backus' Blessing—Interest in Prayer and Con-
ference Meetings—Important means of Grace..... 31

CHAPTER VI.

- Teaching School — A Disadvantage Improved—Inquir-
ers — State of my own Mind—Conversation upon the
New Birth—School Meeting—Singular Views of Reli-
gion—A Minister Opposes Experimental Religion—
Change in his Mind—Results—Conversation with Mr.
Nye and Mrs. Leonard..... 36

CHAPTER VII.

- Impressions about Preaching—Inquiries respecting a
Passage of Scripture—My Father unwilling for me to
Preach—A Teaching Providence — House and Land
disposed of—Duty made Plain..... 44

CHAPTER VIII.

- Studying for the Ministry—State of Religion in P—
Prayer and Conference Meetings—Revival—Opposi-
tion—Trials About Going to College—Baptism in P—
Correspondence with Luther Rice upon the subject of
Baptism..... 51

CHAPTER IX.

- My Brother's Ordination—Discussion upon Infant
Church Membership—Dr. Emmons—A Call at his
House in Franklin—Conversation upon Baptists and
Baptism—His Sentiments at Fault with his Practice—
His Conventional Sermon—Decided for the Ministry.. 58

CHAPTER X.

- License to Preach—Warren Association—Dr. Sharp—Dr.
Baldwin—First Preaching—Tour Labors in Barnstable
— Teaching School — Revival — Brewster — Orleans—
Chatham—Baptism of Congregational Church Mem-
bers by Baptist Ministers..... 65

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

vii

CHAPTER XI.

Free passage to Maine—Nantucket—Landed on Cape Page—Chappaquiddic—Edgartown—Meetings—Opposition—A Young Man Powerfully Convicted—Sunrise Meeting at Dr. Whelden's—An Incident at this Meeting—Meetings in Tisbury—Mr. Prince Rogers..... 71

CHAPTER XII:

Return to Edgartown—Baptism—Last Meeting—Opposition—Effect of the Truth—Falmouth—Marshpee—Rev. James Davis—Mr. Lincoln—Members of Military Company ask for Prayers—Conversions—The Physician—Departure for Bridgewater..... 81

CHAPTER XIII.

Teaching School and Preaching—Plymouth—Marshfield—Bellingham—Mr. Aaron Perkins—His Experience, &c—State of Religion in Bellingham—Return to Marshfield—Review of the Year..... 87

CHAPTER XIV.

Teaching in Scituate—Preaching in Marshfield and Pembroke—An Incident at a Funeral—Conversation with Mr. A.—Church formed in Pembroke—My Ordination—New Bedford—School Incident in Duxbury—War of 1812—Westboro—Church Constituted—Fourth of July Sermon..... 101

CHAPTER XV.

Labors resumed in Marshfield—Missionary Labors in Boston—Great Revival in Marshfield—Thrilling Incidents—Sabbath School—Preaching in Hingham and South Abington—Opposition—Progress of Baptist Principles..... 111

CHAPTER XVI.

Invitation to Visit New Bedford—Letter of Dea. Barstow—Items of Labor with Incidents—City Missionary in Boston—Report, &c..... 126

CHAPTER XVII.

Pastorate in Plymouth—Missionary in Plymouth County —Pastorate in Brewster—Death of my Son—Revival of Religion and Incidents Connected with the Work—Pro- tracted Meetings—Reflections.....	134
--	-----

CHAPTER XVIII.

Observations upon the State of Religion in the Congrega- tional Churches at the time and before I commenced my Ministry—Causes which operated against the Piety of the Churches.....	145
---	-----

CHAPTER XIX.

Rev. James Davis' Christian Experience—Ordination as a Congregationalist—Change of Views upon Baptism —Re-ordination as a Baptist—His Varied Labors and Success—Description of his General Character—His Last Sickness—Happy State of his Mind—Peaceful and Triumphant Death.....	154
--	-----

CHAPTER XX.

Conclusion.....	174
-----------------	-----

AUTOBIOGRAPHY.



CHAPTER I.

Birth — Ancestry — An early incident of childhood — First religious impressions — Strict observance of religious duties — Self-righteousness — Vain hope of Heaven — School at Rochester — Duties of religion give up — Results.

I was born in Bridgewater, Mass., October 5th, 1785. I was the seventh generation of Rogers Conant, who came to America from England in 1623, and who had in charge from a company of merchants in London, a colonization establishment at Cape Ann, Mass., on Naumkeag river, the place now called Beverly ; but they remained for awhile before going to Beverly, on what was called Conant's Island, afterwards called Governor's Island, for Rogers Conant was considered governor of that com-

pany. He was one of twelve brothers, six of whom being Protestants, fled into England from France, at the revocation of the edict of Nantz, leaving behind them six other brothers, who were Papists.

There was nothing remarkable respecting my childhood days, with the exception, perhaps, of an uncommon fondness for sheep and lambs. When I was between four and five years of age, my father, Ezra Conant, took me with him to one of his pastures about a mile from his house; when he saw I was so taken up with the sheep and lambs, he thought he would step behind a tree, to see what I would do. I soon found I was alone, and night coming on, what to do I did not know, for I could not find my way home. The sheep and lambs soon began to lie down; I finally went and laid myself down among them, entirely contented to take up my abode with them for the night, if my father had not come to me, and taken the sheep home.

The first serious impressions that I can recol-

lect, which were made on my mind, were, when I was about ten years of age. A cousin of mine about my age died, which led me to inquire of my grand-mother, "what I must do to be saved." She said, "I must leave off sinning, read my Bible, and pray." For two years, I suppose I did read my Bible and pray, but as for leaving off sinning, I had no proper sense of sin whatever. Indeed, I lived such a self-righteous life, that I do not remember, that I had a doubt during the time, if I had died, but that I should have gone safely to heaven.

Soon after I was twelve years old, I went to Rochester, to attend an academy in that place, taught by the Rev. Calvin Shaddock. I boarded in his family with a number of young people; but after being there several weeks, I was confident they neither read the Bible, nor made it their practice to pray; and as it was a task for me, I concluded to give it up also, except when it thundered and lightned, or when some sudden death occurred, believing, I should fare as well as those did, with whom I associated.

It was most obvious, therefore, that my first religious impressions were only awakenings, or alarms of conscience, and resulted merely in a temporary alteration of the outward life, while the heart remained unchanged and impenitent. It was like "the morning cloud and early dew." When certain duties are performed for the sake of obtaining salvation, or seeking to ingratiate one's self into the favor of God, convictions or impressions that reach no farther, unaccompanied with a sense of sin, or unworthiness, or ill desert, are to be considered as purely legal in their character; and the sorrow or fear arising from such convictions, is that which worketh death, instead of life. With no love for religious duties, because no godly sorrow for sin, nor faith in the Saviour, the time soon came when those duties were a burden and their riddance a great relief. Such, doubtless, are the commencement and termination of the serious impressions of multitudes.

CHAPTER II.

Fitted for college—Dissuaded by my father from entering college — Learning a carpenter's trade — Attending meetings in Boston — The effect of Drs. Baldwin and Stillman's preaching — Unitarian preaching — Opposition to Baptist preaching — Fondness for pleasure .

Soon after I returned home from Rochester, the Bridgewater Academy being now opened for the first time, I attended there until I was sixteen years old ; and during that time, I was nearly fitted for college. But my mind was unsettled as to my future course. My father made me several offers in a pecuniary way as inducements for me to work on the farm, and live near him. My only brother, G. C., who had graduated at Brown University, was very anxious I should go to college. I was inclined, however, most of the time to learn a house-carpenter's trade, and my father chose that I should, rather than for me to pursue my stud-

ies any farther ; for then he thought, I might be near him in years to come. He finally obtained a place for me in Roxbury to work at that trade, with the consideration that when I should be eighteen, I was to have my time to myself. I commenced school keeping when I was eighteen, during the winter months, and continued it for many years after.

When absent from my father's house at other times, I worked at my trade in Roxbury and Boston. When in Boston, I generally attended the meeting of the Universalists, whose distinguished preacher at that time was Murray. Occasionally I went to hear Drs. Baldwin and Stillman ; but I soon found that their style of preaching, or the truths they exhibited, disturbed my mind so much, that I chose rather to hear smooth things. I found I had neither disposition nor heart to listen for any considerable length of time to the searching truths presented by these ministers of Jesus Christ. And, therefore, in order to avoid unwelcome impressions, and preserve my mind undisturbed on the subject of religion, I kept away.

About the time I was twenty-one, I began building a house for myself, near my father's ; and while I lived in his family, I attended the Unitarian meeting, Dr. Sanger's, and was very far from having any religious impressions. Indeed, there was nothing in that sort of preaching, that tended in the least degree to alarm my slumbering conscience, or to convict me of sin by a plain and scriptural presentation of the law of God, either in its holiness, claims or penalty, and consequently, no exhibitions of an atoning Saviour to save the lost and guilty sons and daughters of Adam. Whatever of truth there might have been presented, it was rendered pointless and powerless with its admixture with fundamental error and misapplication, to convict the sinner of sin, and urge his flight to the crucified One for salvation and eternal life. Universalism and Unitarianism, or, Arminianism, I found were one and homogeneous in the siren song respecting the eternal interests of the immortal soul, "peace, peace be still!" I felt then as many do now, who

cherish the views of those just mentioned, that there was no necessity of being concerned either for the present or future safety of the soul; and, therefore, it was a real intrusion, and a direct annoyance to be told, that “unless I had religion I should be lost—unless I believed I should be damned.”

There was one incident which occurred about this time, which I most distinctly recollect; it was this: I heard Dr. Stillman preach, and I thought for several days afterwards, that I would try and be a Christian. He showed me that I was not one, but that I *ought* to be, and the threatened danger to which I was exposed in the eternal loss of my soul, if I were not a Christian; and, therefore, I had an idea of some sort of effort, though at once indefinite and purposeless, that I would *try* and be a Christian. But these impressions, however, soon passed away, and I became more opposed than ever to any radical change in my moral condition, or to any means or measure that might be employed to disturb my carnal security; so

much so indeed, that soon after I came home to my father's house, I learned that a Baptist minister was to preach one afternoon at a private house about a mile from my father's, I asked a young man to help me put him out of the house, as he had no business to come into Dr. Sanger's society and hold meetings. Thus the opposition of my heart began to show itself, and especially against those whose manner of preaching, destroyed my self-complacency and disturbed my sinful ease and love of the world.

I was uncommonly fond of balls and parties. While I was more and more sensible of a decided distaste for religious things, I was more eager to indulge in vain and trifling scenes of amusement, if possible, in this way, to expel all serious thoughts and reflections from my mind. Only the evening before, my mind was so powerfully wrought upon, so much so, that I never got rid of it, until I found hope in the mercy of God. I was one of the two that had made arrangements for a ball on Thursday of the

week following. I was engaged to procure music for the same. Little did I think that the next evening, I should be so concerned for my soul; even when I sat down to take my tea, I expected to go to a party as soon as I arose from the table. "God's ways are not as our ways, neither are his thoughts as our thoughts."

CHAPTER III.

Religious Impressions suddenly revived — Distress of mind — The first place for prayer — Ignorance of experimental religion — Example of church members — Consciousness of Sin — How aggravated — Sense of the Justice of God.

While I was at the table eating alone, and no other person in the house except my mother, I was for the first time in my life thoroughly convinced, that there was no solid enjoyment in parties of pleasure, or in vain and sinful amusements of any sort whatever ; but I now had the conviction, that there was something in religion of which I was ignorant, and which alone could furnish true peace of mind. The more I thought upon the subject, the more distressed I became, until the perspiration dropped from my face. Such was my distress, that I arose from the table before finishing my usual meal, and sought retirement. I thought I would get down upon my knees and beg for

mercy as soon as I should get out of the sight of my friends. I finally went to the farthest apple tree in my father's orchard, and for the first time in my life, I fell on my knees to sincerely and earnestly beg for mercy, feeling that I was a great sinner before God. I had in times previous in the course of my life used the *form* of prayer, and thought, perhaps, there was a degree of earnestness and devotion in the duty, but now, my heart was burdened with a sense of sin, such as I never knew before. Saul, the persecutor and Pharisee, doubtless often prayed in his way as the forms of his religion urged him to do, but it was not until after his awakening by the voice of the Son of God, being overwhelmed with the consciousness of his sin and guilt, that it was said, "behold he prayeth."

I believe I knew as little about the *theory* of experimental religion as any one who ever lived in a Christian land, having hitherto very generally attended meeting with the Universalists and Congregationalists, who were Armin-

ians and Unitarians at this time, where the distinctive marks of religious experience were never insisted upon, and in reality were never taught.

Besides, the last ball I attended in the Academy Hall, in Bridgewater, was with several members of the Unitarian Church, and Dr. Sanger's oldest son, a licensed preacher, danced as much as any one. My mother was a member of that same church, but I never recollected of hearing it once intimated, that there was any sin in attending balls, or in drinking the social glass, if we did not drink too much, or keep too late hours. But notwithstanding this, I distinctly remember soon after I arose from my knees, and was returning to the house, of calling to mind many things which I had before considered innocent enjoyments, then for the first time appeared odious and sinful in the sight of God.

After I entered my father's house, I took a light in order to retire to my chamber, but my mother perceiving that I appeared different

from what she had ever seen me before, asked me "what was the matter?" I told her I was such a sinner I could not tell. She said she "wished some one of the neighbors to be called in, for she did not like to be alone with me." At first, I was unwilling to have any one sent for, but finally I consented to have a young man and woman, who were hopefully pious to come in. But when they came, the sight of them seemed to increase my distress; for I thought they were very happy, while I was very miserable. I attempted to leave the room, but the young man followed me, and conversed with me; I finally came back, and he prayed with me. My distress, however, was so great, that I recollected but little he said. He told me among other things, that "I must repent and believe." I told him I did believe and tremble, and so did the devils in hell, and that was a most suitable place for me.

After my young friend had left me, I walked the room, being in agony of mind bordering on despair. I feared I had committed the unpar-

donable sin, because I had made light of those who had been concerned about their souls, and after they had expressed hope in the Saviour. I also had cast ridicule upon others at the time of their baptism, especially the first time I ever saw an individual immersed, when Dr. Baldwin baptized twenty-five, and Dr. Stillman baptized thirteen in the Mill Pond one Sabbath afternoon; considering all the light remarks I had made of professors of religion, and the contempt of baptism which I had shown in connection with the opposition I had exhibited towards the things of religion generally, caused me to weep aloud, for my sins appeared so numerous and aggravated, and my fears so strongly excited, that I felt I was sinking into hell. But in a little time, I realized it was perfectly just and right with God, that I should be cast off forever; as soon, therefore, as I felt to resign myself entirely into the hands of God for him to dispose of me as he saw fit, I obtained some relief in my mind. I had neither excuse for the multitude of my sins, nor per-

sonal merit or goodness, nor any claim upon the divine mercy for hope or salvation, but infinitely unworthy and ill-deserving. My only plea, therefore, before the mercy-seat, was the prayer of the penitent, self-condemned publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." He who sees the inmost soul, and marks its struggles and conflicts with sin which it cannot of itself remove, and its earnest, dying longings for spiritual life and liberty, will draw near to hear the sighings of the prisoner, and proclaim deliverance to the captive.

CHAPTER IV.

Hope cherished — Joy — Doubts and Fears — Doubt of Believers contrasted with those who are Impenitent — Trials of Believers overruled — Encouragement from Col. Gardner's Experience.

I did not enjoy a satisfactory evidence of my acceptance with God until the next day, when I was in a neighbor's house, where I met the same young man who conversed with me the night before ; it was while he was praying with me again, that I received a peace of mind which the world can neither give nor take away. I was delightfully conscious of a different love toward him, and everybody else, than ever I was sensible of before. As I went home, it appeared to me that I was in a new world, everything around, above and beneath me, wore a new and uncommon aspect ; and I could seem to behold God in every thing in a different manner than ever before. " Old things had

passed away," behold, "all things had become new." These words were in my heart, and upon my tongue, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and good will toward men." I remained very happy in my mind for several days. The duties of religion, the company and conversation with the people of God, meditation upon the love and sacrifice of the Saviour, deliverance from sin, the inward testimony of the imparted spirit of holiness, the heavenly peace that reigned in my soul,—these things, were sources of unspeakable delight, and beyond all the power of language to express.

After this season of joy, praise and thanksgiving to God, I had many distressing doubts and painful apprehensions for a considerable time, lest the change which had taken place in my mind, was not the genuine work of the Spirit of God, and therefore neither gracious nor saving. I was greatly troubled and perplexed on this point, whether the change which had taken place in my mind was a genuine, gracious one or not, on account of its peculiar sud-

denness, and so much shorter than some whom I had heard tell their Christian experience. Indeed, there are many different phases in the experience of the people of God, and yet the product of the same Spirit. Some have continued for months and even for years in a distressed state of mind before they found a satisfactory hope in the Saviour; others cannot determine precisely the *time* when their souls were brought to know and love the Lord, perhaps in the earlier days of their youth. And then again, others have a brief experience, and soon are brought to trust in God and rejoice in his salvation. Whatever, therefore, may be the peculiar leadings of the Spirit in regard to individual experiences, few are the instances where no doubts or misgivings arise in regard to their acceptance of God and personal interest in the divine favor. It is true, there is no merit in doubts of this sort, as all Christians well know, nor would any exist, were the whole moral nature entirely conformed to the mind and will of God. Perhaps, however, there are

some who profess religion, who have no doubts, but who ought to have them ; others, who have them, ought not to. It should be observed, however, that doubts with reference to the *truth* of religion which many entertain, and which I have heard expressed, are quite opposite in their nature and influence, from the doubts of believers with regard to their *personal* interest in the pardoning mercy of God. The former, are the fruits of impenitence, and even skepticism ; while the latter, are peculiar to believers in their conflicts with sin and Satan.

Whatever doubts and fears the Christian may have, one thing is most obvious in his experience ; he will be led to more earnest prayer to God, for heavenly wisdom and divine light to shine into his mind ; he will seek a nearer access to the throne of grace ; he will search and examine his heart more diligently by the word of God and from the experience of good men ; and thus, what at first seemed to him really impediments in his Christian course, arising from his doubts, fears, darkness and conflicts

with sin, are, by the blessing and purpose of an overruling Saviour, made eminently conducive to an increase of his faith, his furtherance in the divine life, and greater discipline and preparation for the service of God. "All things work together for good to them who love God, and to them who are the called according to his purpose."

At this time, I remember reading the life of Col. Gardner. It afforded great relief and encouragement to my mind. It shed new light upon a subject which had caused me many doubts and much distress. From his experience, I became satisfied that it was not absolutely the space of time, in which persons were under conviction for their sins, but whether they ever were truly convicted and thoroughly convinced of their deplorable condition, so as to be prepared to look to Christ for salvation, as all lost and perishing sinners must do, or perish. The work of the Spirit in convincing "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment," may, in individual cases, be exceedingly short, as those

on the day of Pentecost, or the jailor, and multitudes since ; in other instances, longer time may elapse before the soul is brought to bow submissively to the authority of the Redeemer ; or obtain satisfactory evidence of its gracious state, and yet, the results prove that it is the work of the same Spirit. The Lord “ leads the blind by a way they know not.” It is the fruits of the Spirit, the true and proper developments of a spiritual life, which affords the most satisfactory evidence of a gracious experience.

CHAPTER V.

The duty of making a public profession of religion — A new trial — Examination of the subject of baptism — Baptism — Father Backus' blessing — Interest in prayer and conference meetings — Important means of grace.

Several weeks after I indulged a hope in the mercy of God, my mind was considerably exercised about making a public profession of religion. As to the duty of taking such a step, it was clear to my mind. The directions given in the New Testament are unequivocal on this point. And, therefore, inasmuch as I felt that God for Christ's sake had forgiven my sins, and removed the mountain load of guilt from my heart and conscience, and given me his Spirit to witness with mine that I was a disciple of the Lord Jesus, though one most unworthy, I felt that I ought publicly to profess my attachment and love to the Redeemer's cause, and show to the world, that I was willing to

forsake its vain and sinful pleasures, and unite myself with the people of God.

A new trial now awaited me. As all my relatives belonged to the Congregational (Arminian) denomination, they wished me to join with them; but in regard to the *mode* and *subject* of baptism, there was a severe conflict in my mind. When my friends saw this, they procured the best works they could find upon the subject of baptism or sprinkling, and put them into my hands. I read them carefully, and compared them with the directions laid down in the New Testament, as to the ordinance of baptism itself, and those who were the proper subjects of it.

I took the Concordance, and looked out every word that said anything upon baptism, and compared every word in the English Testament with the Greek Testament, and by a careful examination, I could not find that baptizo or any of its roots, or branches, was ever translated to *sprinkle*, but sprinkling came from rantizo, which is a very different word

from baptizo, and with a different meaning altogether.

After searching the Scriptures, and praying over the subject for several weeks, I was satisfied that none but *believers* were suitable subjects, and only *immersion* was the right mode of baptism. As soon, therefore, as my mind was made up on this subject, my duty was clear in the matter, and I offered myself without further delay to the first Baptist church in Middleboro', about the first of October, 1806, and was baptized by Rev. Isaac Sawyer, near the residence of Father Backus. My baptism occurred about six weeks before the death of this eminent man of God. I recollect most distinctly, as I went to his house after baptism, this venerable servant of Jesus Christ being mostly, if not wholly confined to his room and to his bed, put his hand on my head, and implored the Divine blessing to rest upon me, and gave me some good advice.

I felt it my duty to speak and pray in conference and prayer meetings, and also to con-

verse with the unconverted upon the subject of religion. If God had pardoned my sins, and shed abroad his grace in my heart, it was that I might do good to others. If my eyes were opened to discover the excellency and glory of Christ in the plan of salvation, and to behold the danger of impenitent men in neglecting their highest good, and thus losing heaven forever, it was plainly my duty to speak a word for God and his cause. And, therefore, in the prayer and conference meeting, I took special interest and delight. It is in these humbler and more familiar appointments of the church, that both the graces and gifts of its members may be greatly improved. "They who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength," and thus be prepared for other and more responsible duties. How much unimproved talent there is in the church, which lies buried in a napkin, out of sight, and therefore useless! With an experience running through more than fifty years, it is my solemn conviction that the church of God has grievously suffered, and

still does, in consequence of its members withholding their influence, prayers, and personal co-operation from the prayer and conference meeting. Rich, spiritual blessings descend upon the "hills of Zion," when all the tithes are brought "into the store-house" of the Lord. It is the conference and prayer meeting, as one of the most important means of grace, which brings the Saviour into the midst of his disciples, and secures to many a believing soul, his gracious benediction — "Peace be unto you." The conference and prayer meeting, when sustained by the disciples of Christ, is like the sentinel's light upon the ramparts of Zion, showing to the enemies of truth, the vigilance and energy of a spiritual church.

CHAPTER VI.

Teaching school—A disadvantage improved—Inquirers—
State of my own mind—Effect of a conversation upon the
new birth—School meeting—Singular view of religion—
A minister opposes experimental religion—Change in his
mind—Results—Conversation with Mr. Nye and with
Mrs. Leonard.

In the winter of 1806-7, I taught school in the town of Sandwich, Mass. It was the custom then, in district schools particularly, for the teacher to “board round.” The inconvenience which resulted from this practice in many instances, would at once be obvious to every reflecting mind, yet I resolved, I would if possible, turn this disadvantage to some good account. Wherever I went, I made it a point to converse with all the members of the several families with whom I boarded, upon the subject of religion. Not many weeks passed away, before the Spirit of God concurred with my

humble efforts in this direction ; several persons were awakened to a sense of their need of Christ, and found hope in his mercy.

I shall be pardoned by my readers if I allow myself to allude to several items of some interest which occurred about this time, and which I noted down for my own special benefit.

“Feb. 27, 1807. While I was boarding at Mr. H.’s, two individuals came to see me in the evening, with inquiring minds, to converse upon the subject of religion. The Spirit of the Lord was evidently teaching them their sinfulness, the depravity of their natures, and their perishing need of salvation. They afterwards found hope in the grace of God, and united with the Congregational church in that place. I have had such deep impressions of Divine things upon my mind for two or three nights past, that I could not rest in my bed, but arose in the night watches to plead with God for a revival of religion — that his work might appear in our midst.”

“March 2d. I think I never had such a night of anxiety as last night. My soul was burdened — I could not sleep on account of the awful situation of sinners laying with such weight on my mind ; and besides, I was greatly distressed because of the pride of my own heart.”

“I was told by a man to-day, that when I was at his house last Friday evening, I talked considerably upon the new birth, and that after I went away, he had such a discovery of sin and such a horror of conscience as he never had before ; but before morning he was very happy, having acknowledged his transgressions, repented of them, and submitted to Christ. He now felt to rejoice in the God of his salvation. This has caused considerable opposition.”

“March 9th. There was a school meeting this evening, to see about turning me away. Some thought it best for me to keep my time out, but others were of a different opinion. One man said this religious stir was only one

of the *devil's frolics*, and that it would not last more than three weeks."

"March 12th. Boarding at Mr. Joseph Hall's. He says "he likes a *steady* religion best." He thinks the people had better let excitement alone ; if the work is of God it will stand, if not, it will come to naught. Mr. H. said, he believed, "that if we had more good works than bad ones, we should go to heaven ; but if we had more bad deeds than good ones, we should lose our souls — just as the scale should turn." He said he "thought if we worked we should be prospered, and not as a minister said to his wife, "only have faith, and we can live."

Mr. Hall was one who engaged me to teach their school the second winter. When he spoke to me about it, he said, "he engaged me to *teach* their school, and not to *preach* to the scholars." Now this was more than a year before I ever had any thought of preaching. It is true, after I obtained hope in Christ, I felt it my duty to exhort and entreat sinners to be

reconciled to God. The school agent and a few others, obtaining hope in the gospel, prevented the opposition party from turning me away, till I had kept the time for which I had engaged the school.

The first winter I taught school in Sandwich, the Rev. Jonathan Burr, was probably an unconverted minister, and opposed to experimental religion. The third and last winter I taught there, he became a new man, and preached very differently from what he had hitherto done; so much so, that another minister was procured to fill his place. One Sabbath when Mr. B. got to the pulpit stairs, in order to go into his desk, three as influential men as there were in town, stood on the pulpit stairs, to prevent Mr. B. from going into his pulpit. Two of those men, came to an untimely end in a very short time after this. Mr. Burr, and his friends, repaired to Fessenden's Hall, and he preached there until they built a new meeting house for him.

“ March 19th. Went to Mr. Moses Nye, to

board. He has of late found comfort in his mind. He told me, that "last winter when I boarded in his family, I said that no one did any thing religiously good, until his heart was changed." He said, "he thought I judged very hard, but I believe now it is even so."

"March 20th. Went to meeting—heard Rev. Mr. Burr preach. Went to Dr. Leonard's, at noon. His wife told me, that 'if this disturbance,' meaning the religious interest then in progress, 'would stop where it is, she believed it might do good in stirring the people up. What blind and deluded creatures, wishing a revival to stop where it is!'"

"I find that the scriptural doctrine of *regeneration*, or the *new birth*, meets with but little favor from the people generally. Indeed, knowing that the human heart is by nature alienated from God, "at enmity with Him, not subject to his law, nor can be," and in order for a preparation for the pure and holy society of heaven, it must be thoroughly renewed and sanctified by the Spirit of God, with such a

view of the human heart, and the necessity of its regeneration, it is not surprising, when the axe of divine truth is laid at the root of all in which vain and sinful man boasts, that there should be manifested some opposition; or, that individuals should express some singular views respecting the change which the Spirit of God produces in regenerate souls. Were there no opposition excited in the preaching of the Gospel, no exhibition of truth adapted to conflict with the selfishness, perversity, and impenitence of the human heart, we should be led to suppose that such preaching was not according to the word of God, "but another Gospel." "The offence of the cross," however, has not ceased, nor will it, as long as a single soul remains unsubdued by the grace of God."

When the Spirit, therefore, is poured out and the inquiry is heard on every hand, "What shall we do to be saved," it is the discriminating and searching truths of God's word, showing sinners that they are lost—undone—guilty—destitute of holiness—no merit or righteous-

ness of their own—condemned by the law and deserving hell ; and that Christ alone can save them, and willing to save unto the uttermost ; —it is truths of this character which not only awaken the carnal mind to see its true condition, but they lead, every year, hundreds and thousands of repenting sinners to seek salvation in a crucified Redeemer.

CHAPTER VII.

Impressions about Preaching — Inquiries respecting a passage in Scripture — My father unwilling for me to preach — A teaching Providence — House and lands disposed of for the Gospel's sake — Way of duty made plain.

Up to this time, I had been repeatedly asked, "if I did not feel it my duty to preach;" I uniformly replied to such inquiries that I did not. The first distinct impression I had about preaching, was while I was teaching school in Barnstable, in that part of the town, called Great Marshes, in February, 1808.

The Congregational minister of that parish having died, and as it was customary for the neighboring ministers to give the widow one Sabbath's service each, I had an opportunity of hearing all the ministers in that Association preach. There was but one of those ministers that I heard preach or pray, who gave me any evidence that he had experienced a change of

heart. I do not think that I judged uncharitably, when I say of all the rest, they appeared to be profoundly ignorant of the grace of God in the matter of Christian experience, or of the nature of evangelical faith—the faith that saves — that unites the soul to Christ — that works by love, or of the great doctrine of an atoning Saviour. I even asked one of them a year after, whom I heard preach at this time, at the house of Mr. Barnabas Bates, Bro. Silas Hall being present, what he thought this passage of Scripture meant, 1 Peter iii. 15. “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you, a reason of the *hope* that is in you, with meekness and fear.” He said, that “Christians at that time were greatly persecuted, and they were to give the reason why they were so willing to suffer such persecutions.” I observed that it said “a reason of the *hope*” they had *within* them, and, whether it had not reference to the *state* of their minds—the reason of their hoping they were Christians? He said “he thought it did.” I then asked him to give the

reason of his hope. He said, "he had no idea of telling his experience to every little upstart."

I told him it said, we must "be ready to give to *every* man that asketh you the *reason*," &c. Mr. Bates asked me, "why I asked Mr. Waterman, to tell his experience?" I told him I had heard several of his hearers say, they did not think he had ever experienced a change of heart; and I stated, I thought so too by what he had said at this time. Mr. W. took up his horse-whip, and lifted it above me and said, "if it were not for the name of it, he would lay it over my head." Mr. W. professed to experience a change of heart several years after.

It was while hearing this same man preach one year before, that I perceived the first impression on my mind, that I ought to devote myself to the work of the ministry. As soon, therefore, as I returned to Bridgewater, I informed my father concerning the state of my mind, and stated to him, I thought it was my duty to give up the idea of living near him, having the care of him and his property, as he

had requested me to, and to make immediate preparation for engaging in the work of the ministry.

My father said he was unwilling I should take this course, and as he had done a great deal for me to induce me to live near him and have the care of him, I, therefore, ought to remain with him. I told him, I knew it, but my mind was so impressed with the subject of the ministry, and the situation of sinners, without hope, and "without God in the world," that I could not rest. But my father said so much, and expressed so great unwillingness for me to leave him, that for the time being, I concluded to give up the idea of the ministry. A providence, however, occurred shortly after, which deepened and renewed my former impressions, and prepared the way, in which, I trust, it was the will of God for me to go.

I was at work at my trade on a house about two miles from home, when the staging gave away with only myself upon it. I fell eighteen feet, and struck upon some stone steps. I put

out several bones in my ankle and foot, and split one bone very badly. The same staging held me and three others only about fifteen minutes before I fell, but almost as soon as they were off, it gave way. As they were carrying me home, it was very strongly impressed on my mind, that it was the providence of God to open the way, that I might yet preach the gospel. And probably it was. As I was a cripple a considerable part of a year, it gave me an opportunity to study which I endeavored to do. My mind became more and more dead to the world during those days of affliction than ever before. My father manifested considerable concern, because I took so little notice or interest in worldly matters.

My brother G., who was at that time Pastor of the Congregational church in P., came home on a visit. My father informed him that I appeared very gloomy — that I manifested but little interest in the affairs of this world — that he had given me a part of his homestead to encourage me to take an interest in his business

and welfare, but it was all to no purpose. My brother conversed with me, and wished to know what made me so melancholy. I told him it was the impression I had about preaching. He went to my father, and endeavored to prevail with him to give me up, and let me prepare for the ministry, for he did not think I should ever be worth much for anything else. My father after considering the subject, and giving expression to his feelings in tears for several days, finally consented to my arrangement, in which the will of God seemed most obvious, on condition that my sister and her husband, would buy my place and live near him ; for he could not think of a stranger coming to live so near him. I accordingly made arrangements with my brother-in-law, having exchanged places with him upon his own terms.

I then felt that houses, lands or particular friends and relatives were trifles, in comparison with winning souls to Christ. It seemed to me, I was willing to make any earthly sacrifice

for the honor and service of my Lord and Master. The earnest desire of laboring to promote the kingdom of the Redeemer, and save souls from death, was supreme and above all others; and that I was ready to cut the last tie that bound me to secular interests and pecuniary concerns, if I could but be instrumental in doing good to the souls of my fellow men. I felt, that, with all the indications of providence in the past, united with those of the present, a way indeed was being opened, in which I might walk, and thus devote myself to the work of the gospel ministry. I exchanged places with my brother-in-law on Friday, and advertised his place for sale the next day, to be sold on the Monday following, to the highest bidder.

CHAPTER VIII.

Commenced studying for the Ministry — State of Religion in P. — Prayer and Conference Meeting established — Revival Opposition — Trials about going to College — Baptism in P. — Correspondence with Luther Rice on the subject of Baptism.

The same week on Thursday, October, 1809, in which I disposed of all my worldly entanglements on the Monday previous, I set out for P. to study with my brother. There was at this time, particularly among the Baptists, no school of the prophets, to which a young man desirous of preparing himself for the gospel ministry, might go. Opportunities, therefore, for study, or, indeed, encouragements offered, were very limited, compared with those at the present day. And thus many among the Baptists, whom God called by his Spirit to preach the gospel, entered immediately upon the work without the advantages of either a collegiate or

theological education. It may be, however, under the circumstances of the case — the call for laborers — the prevalence of error — the character of the work to be done, that God blessed the instrumentality of his own selection in building up his cause to an extent, perhaps, at that time, equal to any subsequent period since.

Soon after my arrival in P., I found there were but few in the place who believed in experimental religion. One of my brother's deacons was a Universalist in sentiment; a part of his church were Arminians, and a few only believed in what are called Calvinistic sentiments. The whole town, however, went to his meeting. I proposed to my brother and several members of his church, if they did not think it would be well to have a prayer and conference meeting. They said they attempted it once or twice a few years before, but there was so much opposition from the Universalists and others, that they gave it up. And they furthermore said, they did not think there was

sufficient strength to carry on such a meeting. But I persevered, until I got a man who belonged to the society, but not the church, to consent for me to appoint a prayer meeting at his house, which I did, and also at other houses, without any particular opposition, for six months. The meeting, however, during this time, did not meet with general favor from the members of the church; and besides, my brother knowing the diversity of views that then prevailed in regard to the meetings, did not give that hearty support to them which he otherwise would doubtless have done. It was not long before indications of the Spirit's presence were manifested in the community, and particularly in our meeting; and, then, those who had spiritual life began to fall in with the work.

This revival spread into Holden and Spencer. About two hundred, it was supposed, obtained hopes in the mercy of God during the year, in all these towns, and quite a number became Baptists. Nor was this work of the Spirit in

his convincing and converting power, without some instances of marked opposition.

The following note I put down at this time :

1. "For several weeks past, I have had great trials in my mind about going to college. The importance of thorough intellectual training cannot be questioned. Sanctified attainments are an acceptable offering to the Lord." The responsible and divinely appointed work of the christian ministry clearly demands that human acquisitions should be associated with those which the grace of God alone can furnish. It may be said of every minister of Christ, not that he needs *less* of human learning, but he needs *more* of the teaching Spirit, and the mind of his great Master.

2. "These words have come to my mind with such power, that I have felt "woe is me," if I do not go directly and preach the gospel. "I say unto you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest." The question presented to my mind was this, and it was one of no or-

dinary magnitude: shall I spend the four years or more to come in securing an education, or do what I can with the preparation I now have, and the blessing of the Lord, in laboring to win souls to Christ? My convictions of duty, the worth of the soul, the uncertainty of life, and an irrepressible desire to promote the kingdom of the Redeemer, induced me to incline to the latter course."

As there were some in P., where the good work of God first commenced, who had embraced the views of Baptists, we sent to Templeton, a distance of fifteen miles, for Elder Elijah Andrews, to come to the place and baptize. This was the first instance of baptism by immersion known in that town. He also baptized a number in the neighboring town of Holden about that time.

It was while residing in P., that I became acquainted with Mr. Luther Rice. He taught school in the place, while he was a member of William's College. I regarded him then, as a young man of sincere piety and devotion to

God. He was greatly interested in all that pertained to the cause of religion. He was a Congregationalist in profession, and was studying with a view to the Christian ministry. With respectable talents and earnest piety, he bid fair to become a useful laborer, as he did, in the vineyard of his Lord and Master.

After Mr. Rice became a Baptist, he spoke of a correspondence which he had with a friend many years before upon the subject of baptism, and which he regarded as the principal means of calling his attention to the subject, and which, at that early period, though he was afterwards ordained as a Congregationalist, fastened conviction on his mind, as to the correctness of Baptist views, until he changed his opinions, and openly avowed himself a Baptist. On the return of Mr. Rice from P. to William's College, and at the request of my brother, who desired that I might be convinced of my error in being a Baptist, he wrote me a letter upon the subject of baptism. I replied to it. Another was sent, and then another, until

four communications from each of us had passed and repassed upon the subject. It was to this epistolary correspondence he referred, which was the primary means in the providence of God of leading him to become a Baptist. Instead of convincing me, as my brother hoped he would, and turning me from supposed error, he himself was convinced of the unsoundness and unscripturalness of his own views upon infant sprinkling, until his convictions ripened into an honest confession and profession of the truth of baptism by immersion, and that believers were the only proper and scriptural subjects of that ordinance.

CHAPTER IX.

My brother's Ordination — Discussion upon Infant Church Membership — Dr. Emmons — A call at his house in Franklin — Conversation upon Baptism and the Baptists — His published sentiments at fault with his practice — Extracts from his Conventional Sermon — Decided to go into the Ministry.

Here I would take the liberty of introducing a somewhat singular, and at the same time an interesting fact. It explains in part certainly the grand difficulty which is interwoven into the policy of Congregational churches; and by which they are environed, and nothing will relieve them, in my humble opinion, but an entire abandonment of the unscriptural and traditional doctrine of infant sprinkling. It will be seen in the sequel, how the minds of Congregational Ministers were affected at that day as well as at the present time, by the false position into which they are thrown, in consequence of clinging to that un-

sightly excrescence which mars the beauty and simplicity of a Gospel church.

The first visit I ever made to P., was to attend the ordination of my brother in that town. When the council had convened, he asked his brethren if there would be any objection to his brother, meaning myself, being present with them during his examination. They said there would not. Among other questions which were asked my brother, one was this, "When you baptize infants, shall you consider them in the church or not?" He replied, "in the church in part, but not in full." "What!" said one of the council, "partly in the church and partly out?" He said "yes," and there it was left, until the council arose and went into another room. On their return I took the liberty to make a remark something like this: "It appears to me that you have left one wheel in the mire this evening." Dr. Emmons immediately asked "what was that." I told him in respect to infants being partly *in* the church and partly *out*—a kind of purgatory. This remark led

us to talk upon the subject of baptism until near midnight, and then again in the morning. Dr. E. asked me to call on him in Franklin, on my return home, and spend the night with him. I did so. As soon as I entered the house, he said he was glad to see me, and now said he, "I am going to give you a whipping."

We conversed a long time that night, and the next morning upon the subject of baptism, and the Baptist denomination. Among other things he said: "he was willing for an Arminian, or a Unitarian to preach in his meeting house," for, said he, "I can go the next Sabbath and pull it all down;" but in his conversation he said, "he was not willing for a *Baptist* to preach in his house upon baptism." Well, said I, you think you cannot go the next Sabbath and pull it all down, I suppose?

I informed him also, that in a sermon he preached a few years ago, before the Convention of Congregational ministers, you advanced there these ideas: that he who did the will of God would *know* whether the doctrine was of

God or man. But as you have said in our conversation, you did not think that the apostles practiced baptism only one way, and that you have said, you did not know whether it was by *sprinkling* or *immersion*, therefore, I should not think you had *done* the will of God concerning the mode of baptism. He put his hand to his head, scratched it, and said, "Ah! I believe I shall never convince you of your error."

The sermon of Dr. Emmons, to which I referred, was preached May 31st, 1804, three years before I had this conversation with him. It may be found in a collection of his Sermons, page 181, vol. 1. He says, "the notion that men ought not to blame one another for thinking differently upon religious subjects, is built on the principle that men can really know that their sentiments are certainly right. But this is a false principle — because there is a plain and infallible rule of faith which gives those who conform to it certain evidence of their believing the truth. And a certainty of being in sentiment is very different from the strongest

confidence of being so. Those who embrace error may be extremely confident that they have the truth, and they may mistake confidence for a certainty. But should they actually embrace the truth, they will then know that their present opinion is right, and that their former was wrong."

Dr. Emmons told me at this time also, that he did not think that any one *certainly* knew in respect to the mode and subjects of baptism, which way was right, whether sprinkling or immersion. He says in the same Sermon quoted above, "A man must not only know the truth, but *know* that he knows it."

Thus it seemed to me, that his published sentiments were at fault with his practice. And the same remark will apply with equal force to scores of other Pedo-baptists, or Congregational writers upon the subject of baptism. While they admit the fact of immersion as being the primitive mode of baptism, and admit too, that infant sprinkling is nowhere to be found in the Bible as an express

divine command, yet this practice conflicts with their theory, and presents to the world, one of the most singular religious inconsistencies which ever occurred in the history of the church.

I continued to study with my brother until the last of July, 1809, and held meetings the last of my time there, either in P. or in Holden, almost every evening, and at the usual hour on the Sabbath. Meetings were held in Holden, at brothers Thos. Marshall's, J. Walker's, and P. Allen's.

About this time, I was very much impressed again, that it was not my duty to go to College, but to engage at once in the work of preaching the gospel. I felt that necessity was laid upon me more than ever before, and that "woe was me," if I did not go directly into my Master's vineyard, and labor for the advancement of his cause. In fact, I had taken texts of Scripture and spoken from them at private houses on the Sabbath for several months before this time. The first instance I recollect of attempting to

preach, and for this purpose selected a text, was on the sixth of November, 1808, at the house of brother J. Walker's, in Holden. On leaving P., I went directly home to my father's house in Bridgewater. My mind was deliberately and fully decided to waive all the anticipated advantages which would result from a collegiate course of study, and immediately engage in the work of the ministry.

CHAPTER X.

License to preach—Warren Association—Dr. Sharp—Dr. Baldwin—First preaching tour—Labors in Barnstable—Teaching School—Revival—Brewster—Orleans—Chatham—Baptism of Congregationalists by Baptist Ministers.

The Sabbath after my arrival home, I went to the first church in Middleboro', to which I belonged and spoke before the brethren and sisters, and received from them a license to improve my gift in preaching wherever God in His Providence might open the way.

The first Baptist Association I ever attended, was the Warren Association, which met at Haverhill, on the first Wednesday in September, 1809. All the Baptist churches in Rhode Island, and most of those in Massachusetts, except a few in the westerly part of the State which belonged to the Sturbridge Association were represented on this occasion. Dr. D. Sharp,

who was from New Jersey, met with us for the first time. He offered one of the prayers during the session of the Association. But as he wore a ruffle in his bosom, and besides had his hair well powdered, those of us who were not accustomed to see such things in a *Baptist* minister were somewhat disgusted. First impressions however, are liable to mislead. Dr. S. lived long enough in our midst as an exemplary Christian, and a devoted and able minister of Christ, to remove all our prejudices against him. It is quite probable his habits changed in a measure, and ours likewise, for we are changeable creatures. Even Dr. Baldwin, in the first part of his ministry in Boston, on a certain occasion, devoted nearly half an hour in preaching against ministers wearing a surplice, or black gown, with very great sleeves and ministerial band; he then called them the badges of the great whore of Babylon. But some years after when he was chosen chaplain of the House of Representatives, he could not go into the State House to make a prayer, without wearing his gown and band.

In a few weeks after the meeting of the Warren Association, I set out on my first preaching tour. I went to Barnstable where I had my first impressions about preaching. I found it, however, exceedingly difficult to get any one in Great Marshes, to open his door for Baptist preaching.

The minister, Rev. Enoch Pratt, who was there at that time, was an unconverted man, which fact, he publicly acknowledged several years afterwards in the Baptist meeting house in Brewster, while I was pastor of the church in that place in 1835. He rose of his own accord, and stated before the whole assembly, that he preached four years before he ever experienced a change of heart.

As it was difficult to procure a private house in which to preach, no door being open for my reception, instead of being defeated in the object of my visit, I determined to go into every house, and call upon every family, from Howland's Tavern, as it was then called, to Barnstable Court House, which was four or five

miles, and converse with every one as well as I knew how, upon the subject of religion. In prosecuting this course, I was turned out of doors three times in one day. One person who requested me to leave her house which I did, but kept talking to them all the time, followed me down to the front door yard, and as I shut the gate to leave them, she bid me God speed! A few years after, as I passed through the place, I was told that lawyer Nye's wife had her attention arrested by the truth, from what I said to her on that day, when I called at so many houses.

From Barnstable, I passed on to Bass River, in Yarmouth. As I went to the warfare at my own charges, I engaged a school in that place, and preached both in the school-house where I taught, and in a school-house in the adjoining district, and also in some private houses. A revival of religion commenced, and twenty-five obtained hope during that winter and spring, and connected themselves with the Baptist churches in Hyannis and Harwich. I went

from this place to Brewster, and preached there several times in private houses, and also in a school-house. I passed on to Orleans, and preached there several times as opportunity offered, in private dwellings.

Several years after this, five of the members of the Congregational church in Orleans were chosen to draw up new articles of faith and practice for that church. Two or three of the committee were seamen, and during the interim were absent at sea, but when the entire committee came together to compare their views and sentiments, a majority of the committee presented essentially Calvinistic Baptist articles of faith and practice. In forming their opinion, it was understood, they were to consult no book but the Bible.

About this time, some of the members of the Congregational church in Chatham, were tried upon the subject of believer's baptism. Bro. David Curtis, a Baptist minister, baptized at one time, eighteen of the members of the church, who continued their membership in

the same church some time after. One of the deacons, who carried round the bread and wine at that time, told me afterwards, he did not partake of the sacrament himself, and informed his pastor of the fact, that he could not partake of it, because he did not think he had been baptized. The Congregational minister of Orleans sent to Bro. Simeon Crowell, of Bass River, to come and baptize ten of the members of his church, which he did. After a while most of those who had been baptized, came out and assisted in forming Baptist churches in both of the fore-mentioned towns, viz., Chatham and Orleans. And besides, when I first visited these places, I found but one Baptist professor in each of them, nor was there any minister in either town, of any denomination, that believed in experimental religion.

CHAPTER XI.

Free passage offered to Maine — Nantucket — Landed on Cape Poge instead of Holmes' Hole — Meetings on Chappaquidic — Invited to Edgartown — Meetings — Opposition — A young man powerfully convicted — Sunrise meeting at Dr. Wheldon's — An incident at the Prayer Meeting — Meetings in Tisbury — Mr. Prince Rogers.

After laboring in those towns mentioned in the preceding chapter, Capt. Farras, of Bass River, gave me an invitation to go down to the State (Territory) of Maine with him, in his vessel; he said he would carry me free from all expense. I concluded to comply with his invitation, and accordingly took our departure for the East. After we had set sail, and got some little distance on our way, the wind changed, and as it was ahead, we put into Nantucket. While we lay there wind-bound, I inquired of the captain, how long he supposed we should have to remain there? He said he could not tell. As it was a matter of so much uncertain-

ty, I told him I should give up my purpose of going with him to the East; and as there was a sail-boat about to start for Holmes' Hole, and as I had had an invitation a few weeks before, to visit the place, I concluded I would go there instead of going with him.

It was some time in the month of August, near the middle of it, I should judge, 1810, when I left Nantucket, with the intention of going to Holmes' Hole, but for some reason or other, I do not know precisely, unless it was because I conversed with the men in the boat, upon the subject of religion, though they had agreed to carry me to Holmes' Hole, they put me ashore on the first land we came to, which was Cape Poge, on the Island of Chappaquidic, making me think, by their representations, that it was a part of the place where they agreed to carry me.

I went into the first house I came to, and inquired for the names of those men who had invited me to visit Holmes' Hole. They said, "They did not know such men." I inquired,

if where I saw vessels was not Holmes' Hole? They said it was not, but Edgartown. Finding I had been imposed upon by the men who put me on shore in that place, I concluded I would improve the providence so far as I was able, and converse with the people upon the subject of religion. I did so as I went up the Island, toward Edgartown harbor.

I commenced holding meetings at the house of Mr. Benjamin Pease, on Chappaquiddic. I preached there all day, and in the evening, on the first Sabbath, which was the day after I landed on the island. I held prayer meetings at the rising of the sun on each morning, and preached every evening during the first part of the week, at some private house. I had been there but a few days, before one obtained a hope, which seemed to excite some opposition, as there was no other preaching at Edgartown, or on Chappaquiddic, at that time, but Unitarianism, or, as it was more properly termed. Arminianism.

I was invited by Mr. Thomas M. Coffin, who

is now living, and a worthy member of the Methodist church in E., to come across the harbor to Edgartown, and preach in his house or hall in the upper part of the building. When I visited the island, and called at E., in 1853, I saw Mr. C., and conversed with him and others of the aged members of the community, upon the scenes of the past. It brought vividly to my mind by-gone and deeply interesting events which transpired in this place — events pertaining not simply to the ordinary affairs of life, or the changes which death, or removals, or the progress of years may have produced, but those in which the *religious* welfare of our fellow-men were concerned, when the Spirit was poured out, and sinners were translated from the darkness of sin into the marvellous light of the gospel. Events of this character are deeply interesting to contemplate in after years, when old age furrows the countenance and whitens the locks, we can look back to the period when the dawn of spiritual life first enlightened the darkened under-

standings of men, and inspired their souls with the hope of pardon through Jesus Christ. And again, to know, also, that years after such precious visitations of the Spirit, there are those who are pressing on to the heavenly Canaan, and bringing forth the fruits of righteousness in old age — this is matter of devout thanksgiving and praise to God. Reflections like the foregoing, naturally occupied my mind during my last visit to E., when I remembered the great and good work of God, and the conversion of souls which I had witnessed in the place, nearly fifty years ago.

The very first meeting I held in Edgartown, I was seized by the mob, while I was preaching, and dragged out of the hall backward, down stairs, and out of doors. I continued talking, however, all the time; and while I was speaking at the door, to the multitude around the building and in the street, a young man was so powerfully wrought upon, that he fell to the floor in the hall, and cried for mercy. He said, “he wished me to pray for him.” I

told the mob at the door, of the fact, and wished they would excuse me from talking to them any longer, for there was a man at the head of the stairs in great distress of mind, who desired me to pray for him. I did so; and no one offered the least harm, or molestation. At the close of the meeting, I inquired if there was any one who desired me to appoint a prayer-meeting at his house the next morning at sunrise? A man by the name of Dr. Whelden, who was the principal physician in the town, asked me to appoint it at his house.

This man, soon after this, and not far from the time of Mr. Davis' visit to Edgartown, with myself, which was the following year, 1811, obtained a hope in the mercy of God. He was a person of more than ordinary physical strength, combined with great force and energy of character. His distress of mind arising from conviction of sin, was intense. His experience was a most striking proof of the peculiar work of the Spirit, in convincing "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." For days

and weeks, his mind was in such a state of anguish that he was scarcely able to attend to his professional duties, and besides, many nights he walked his room, bewailing his condition as a guilty and condemned sinner. But deliverance at last came to his soul, as it does to every penitent, seeking his God and Saviour. The hope which sprang up in his mind, and the love of God shed abroad in his heart, were, to him, as the transition from midnight to meridian day — from sickness to health — from death to life ; — “ old things passed away, and all things became new.” He at once interested himself in the cause of experimental religion, and openly espoused the interests, labors and sacrifices of the people of God. In those days, when the friends of evangelical piety were but few, his house was thrown open, his table was spread, and his pecuniary resources were cheerfully given, as so many expressions of his attachment and love of the truth as it is in Jesus. It cost him something to be a follower of Christ, but the sacrifices were freely and joy-

fully made. He became a member of the Baptist church. He lived to a good old age. His departure from this world to the world of spirits, was as quiet and calm as the summer evening. It was like the sinking of the orb of day beneath the western horizon — serene and cloudless. He died in 1841.

An incident is related of him that while Mr. Davis was preaching one evening in his house, a large number gathered outside to interrupt the services, or to offer some violence to the minister, Dr. Whelden, then in the vigor and energy of manhood, stood before the opposing party and declared that before any should lay their hands upon the minister, he would lose every drop of blood in his heart. No further attempt was made to break up the meeting that night. At this time, during the labors of Mr. Davis and myself, there was an extensive work of grace in all this part of the Island, many were converted, and some are still living who know of the things whereof I write. The meetings and the work were greatly opposed,

but still the Spirit wrought wonders in the conversion of the stout hearted, and those who were very far from religious things.

Another incident is related which occurred about this time; while the house was surrounded by many who came to oppose the meeting, and exhibited threatening purposes, a certain woman came into the street in front of the house, and cried with a loud voice, "*Fire! FIRE! FIRE!*" Many rushed from the steps, entry, and from the inside of the house, and exclaimed with surprise and alarm, "*where? WHERE?*" She replied, "in hell, and you will soon be into it." It had a wonderful effect in quieting the perverse spirit of the opposing multitude.

There are now three Evangelical churches in this town,—the Congregational, Methodist, and Baptist; all of which are able to support the preaching of the gospel. The change there in these respects, is very great, compared with the state of things when I first visited the place.

After a visit to Holmes' Hole, where I held meetings, I went to West Tisbury, and there also I held a number of meetings and preached one afternoon in the Congregational meeting-house. Rev. Mr. Hatch was the settled minister of the place. The last meeting I held in that part of the town, was, as I have since learned, at the house of Mr. Prince Rogers.

This man heard of my preaching at Gay Head in the fall of 1853, and came eleven miles to my meeting. He appeared highly gratified to see me, and seemed to think it strange, that I could not remember him and my preaching at his house over forty years ago! He said, one man by the name of Whitcomb, remained after meeting till a late hour, so great was his distress of mind, and that he was brought to rejoice in the mercy of God before he left the house. Mr. R. also informed me, that since that time, a Baptist church had been gathered in that place (West Tisbury), and that this same Whitcomb had been a deacon of it, during the period of thirty years. Mr. W. died a few years since.

CHAPTER XII.

Return to Edgartown—Baptism—Last Meeting—Opposition—Singular effect of the Truth—Appointments at Falmouth and Marshpee—Rev. James Davis—Graceless Members of Mr. Lincoln's Church—A Military Company ask Prayers—Conversions—The Physician's Opposition overruled—Departure for Bridgewater.

From Tisbury I returned to Edgartown again, and preached a number of times at Dr. Whelden's house, and also in the Court House. Several obtained hope, but as I was not an ordained minister, we sent for Rev. Abisha Sampson, who was then preaching at Holmes' Hole, to come to E. and administer the ordinance of baptism.

While he was baptizing, there were several engaged at the same time in dipping dogs. Such was the derision cast upon one of the most plain and significant institutions of the New Testament—an institution upon which it seems to me no well informed person, or a careful

reader of the Gospels and the Epistles of the Apostles, would be willing to stake his reputation, that it was not primarily administered by immersion.

The last night I preached in E. there was another mob that came to the house in order to break up the meeting. The mob arrived just as I was about to name my text. I addressed myself particularly to them. I told them I had a very interesting text, and I wished them to hear me. The text was this : Luke xxiii. 34. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Those who came to the meeting for purposes of mischief, never advanced another step towards me after I named my text. I think there were more tears shed at that time than at any meeting where I ever attempted to preach. It was evident that the Spirit of the Lord accompanied the word spoken, and many were convicted in their own consciences; and some, I trust, who came to the meeting to create disturbance, with light, trifling, and perverse minds, returned to pray, and confess their sins to God.

After meeting, I went about six miles to spend the night, that I might be in readiness to take the ferry boat on the following morning to Falmouth, where I had engaged to preach that night. I had also a still further appointment to preach to the Indians of the Marshpee tribe. These engagements I was enabled to fulfil.

Rev. Mr. Lincoln, who was pastor of the Congregational church in Falmouth at this time, was an unconverted man, which he afterwards acknowledged. Rev. James Davis preached a number of times in this town afterwards, and finally in Mr. Lincoln's meeting house. He held a protracted meeting for several days. During the progress of the meetings, they sent for Rev. Mr. Bates, a Baptist minister, who was preaching at Hyannis; he came and assisted Mr. Davis in the meetings. It was during the labors of Mr. D. in Falmouth, that some of the members of Mr. L's. church said to Mr. Lincoln, "Why did you not tell us when you took us into your church, that we must be born again?"

There was another interesting fact connected with these meetings. There was a military training or muster in the place, and one of the companies, if not more, was so much concerned for their souls, that the members of it proposed to march into the meeting house, and ask Christians to pray for them, which they actually did do.

Mr. Lincoln professed to experience a change of heart soon after this, and also many others. Some became Baptists, and joined the Baptist church in Hyannis, others became Methodists, but the largest number connected themselves with the Congregational church in the place.

Another incident occurred at these meetings of which I was informed, and in which we can see strikingly illustrated the saying that, "man purposes, but God disposes," it was this:—The principal physician in the town, coming home from visiting some of his patients, found that his wife and daughter had gone to an evening meeting; and being very much opposed to the meetings, he declared he would go and take

them home. He entered the meeting house, and had got only a short distance up the broad aisle, when to his surprise, his wife and daughter, with others, had just stepped out of the pews into the broad aisle, where inquirers were requested to come, who desired to be conversed with and prayed for. It had such an effect upon the doctor's mind, that instead of taking his wife and daughter home with him, as he at first intended, he fell upon his knees, and desired the people of God to pray for him. Thus frequently, is "the loftiness of man humbled, and the Lord alone exalted."

An allusion has been made to Rev. James Davis, with whom I attended many meetings, and whose labors God most signally blessed, both upon the Cape and Vineyard. I propose to give a more particular account of this departed servant of God in a future chapter. His name has been associated with many precious revivals of religion, and the conversion of many souls to Christ.

Had it not been for a number of appoint-

ments to preach in different places on my way home to Bridgewater, I should most probably have gone back to Edgartown immediately, for the friends in that place, sent a man a day or two after I left, requesting me to return; informing me also, that several of the company who assembled around the house the last evening I preached there with threatening purposes, had their attention very much called up to the subject of religion on that occasion.

Thus I trust the good seed of the kingdom was sown, and under the guidance and blessing of the Spirit of all grace, it produced promising results. The means employed were both simple and direct; and wherever in the providence of God I was permitted to preach the gospel in this my first itinerant tour, the blessing of the Head of the church appeared in a greater or less degree to follow it. "To Him therefore, be all the praise, dominion, and glory, forever. Amen."

CHAPTER XIII.

Teaching school and preaching—Plymouth—Marshfield—Bellingham—Mr. Aaron Perkins—His experience, and subsequent events in his history—State of religion in Bellingham—Return to Marshfield—Review of the year.

As I received nothing for my labors, only what any one saw fit to give me, I found it necessary for my support, to teach school winters. At this time there were no Mission Societies, either foreign or domestic; no Home organization of any sort, to assist feeble interests or churches, or to sustain laborers in the field. There were instances, however, in which individuals manifested the most cordial sympathy in my efforts and labors, and were disposed to aid in regard to my pecuniary interests.

I commenced teaching school this year in the town of Duxbury, in Dec., 1810. During the continuance of my school, I supplied the feeble interest in Plymouth. The church had been

organized, but at that time they had no settled pastor. I walked from Duxbury to Plymouth, every Saturday afternoon, and usually preached in some private house on Saturday evening, and on the Sabbath in a cellar kitchen, or basement room in the house of Mr. Bartlett, on Summer street. The latter part of the time I preached in a hall on Middle street, known by the name of Burbank's Hall. Sabbath afternoon, after the usual service, I walked back as far as Rocky Nook, and generally preached in some private house in the evening. Owing to the feebleness of the Baptist cause in P., my compensation for the time which I supplied them, was quite inconsiderable.

Before I closed my school in Duxbury, a committee from the Baptist church in Marshfield, came for me to supply them, which I engaged to do at the expiration of my school term. The first Sabbath I preached in Marshfield, I told the brethren during the intermission at noon, that I did not feel it my duty to appoint any more meetings in that place. Many things

were forbidding, and, doubtless, I judged from the sight of my eyes instead of walking by faith. "God seeth not as man seeth." The meeting house was in an unfinished state, especially inside, and the people sat round upon rough boards. I had come to the conclusion in my mind, and supposed that in the afternoon, I was preaching my last time in that place, for the present to say the least, but after meeting I found one person in great distress of mind; the wife of Dea. Aaron Sherman; this circumstance gave a new direction, both to my own feelings and to outward events, so that before I left the house, I appointed a meeting for the next Sabbath, and also made arrangements to preach in several places through the week. Instead, therefore, of preaching here only *one* Sabbath as I at first felt and supposed, I continued my labors through the next six months following; and during that time several obtained hope in the mercy of God.

BELLINGHAM.

About this time, I was earnestly requested to go to Bellingham; and in view of the fact that the work of God appeared to subside in a measure in Marshfield, I concluded it was the opening of providence for me to labor in another part of my Master's vineyard. I therefore went to B. I had preached there only a few times, when several letters were sent to me from the friends in Marshfield, and one from Rev. John Butler, of Hanover, urging me to come back to M. again; the reason assigned was that two young men had their attention called up to the subject of religion by the last sermon I preached there, and that one of them had already obtained a hope in the gospel. This was young Aaron Perkins, now Dr. Perkins of Texas.

Young Perkins was a machinist, and withal skilful in his trade. His business engagements frequently led him to Marshfield to repair and set up machinery. His native place was Bridgewater. He was specially fond of parties of

pleasure, balls and dances. In his visits to M., he had instructed the young people in several new figures in dancing, with the expectation that at some future time he would have a further opportunity of practicing them with the young people of the place. The revival, however, occurring, made its inroads into the ranks of the youth, and turned their attention from vain, worldly, and sinful amusements, to serious thoughts about their souls, God, and eternity. Some of those with whom young Perkins was acquainted, and with whom he had joined in the merry dance, had become the hopeful subjects of a gracious change. He was then in Bridgewater when the intelligence of the revival reached him. His schemes of pleasure in his anticipated visit to M. were all frustrated. On his arrival at M. he immediately commenced with an effort to divert the minds of the people from the subject of religion, but in every instance he failed to stop the progress of the work, and for a time absented himself from all religious meetings. It was the last sermon

which I preached in M. before going to Bellingham which became the means of his awakening and conversion. Since I was about to leave the place, and the last service was an evening service, he concluded he would attend. My text on that occasion was, 1 Cor. vi. 20, "Ye are bought with a price." It was a word fitly spoken, because it was accompanied by the Spirit of God, and resulted in his consecration to the cause of Christ and to the Christian ministry. He was a chosen vessel of divine grace.

Bro. A. Perkins sent me a letter in 1853, stating that he wished to spend a few days with me in Marshfield. He furthermore desired me to make several appointments of religious meetings in that town, which I did. The first meeting we held was in the evening at the house of Bro. Isaac Thomas, where Bro. Perkins first obtained a hope. He spoke from these words, "Let us go up to Bethel." He said every Christian had some particular place which he called his Bethel. He said this was his. Here he found the Saviour, here he com-

menced the life of faith, here he entered upon the high way of holiness, here he surrendered his soul into the hands of Christ and chose another Master, even Jesus ; here he received the Spirit by which he had been cheered and encouraged in his labors since, and by which he had been enabled to do any good in the cause of God. This was peculiarly his Bethel. We spent the Sabbath near the place where he was first struck under conviction. As we were going to meeting, he inquired of me, "if I had kept an account of the number I had baptized." I told him I had not. I then asked him, "if he had an account of the number he had baptized." He said he had. I inquired as to the number, and he replied, "about thirteen hundred."

In a few months after his conversion, he was licensed to preach the gospel, and entered immediately upon the work of the ministry.

The communications which I received from Marshfield, before noticed, urging me to leave Bellingham, and return to M. again, created a

severe trial in my mind as to my duty in the case. I had an engagement of six or eight Sabbaths longer in B. ; and besides there were several whose attention were already called up to the interests of their souls, and before I left found hope in the mercy of God. And still farther there had been and still was a great destitution in the things of religion in B. These considerations induced me to remain in B. for the present, at least, until the expiration of my engagement to supply for them. At this time, which was in the Fall of 1811, neither the Lord's Supper, nor baptism had been administered in that place during the period of twelve years by any denomination. There had been both a Baptist and Congregational church in that town, but both of them had run down. When I first visited them, there was neither a Baptist nor Congregational church, and but very few professors. Both societies, however, had united and built a meeting house. There were two or three Baptist male professors, but they were unwilling to go into the

new meeting house, because they had a *bass-viol* there. Some even wondered how I could preach where there was a *bass-viol*. I remarked to them, if there were forty *bass-voils*, and forty devils, and there was an opportunity of doing good and benefiting immortal souls by preaching in a meeting house, I was willing to go.

A few days before I left the place, I publicly requested on the Sabbath at the close of the service, that those who had recently obtained hope, and all others who desired to unite and constitute a Baptist church, should there be one formed in the place, were requested to meet the next day in that house and make what arrangements we could for that purpose. Several met, and we had quite an interesting meeting, for there had been no meeting together of Christians separate from the world for a number of years.

On my way from Marshfield to Bellingham, I had previously called on Elder Rathburn, at West Bridgewater. As I was now about to

leave that place, I called on him and informed him of the state of things in B. He soon after this moved his family to Bellingham, labored and lived there, until he died.

The principal reason which induced me to return to Marshfield where I could receive but a small pecuniary compensation in comparison with what I might have expected in B., was, I considered the field of usefulness to be much greater in this region. Evangelical religion was well nigh extinct. Spiritual death reigned almost unbroken throughout all the professed churches of Christ. It was only at distant and remote points that the true light shone at all. Arminianism and Unitarianism had nearly supplanted and crowded out the faith of the gospel. Neither ministers or churches of any denomination in Marshfield, Duxbury, Pembroke, Hanson, Scituate, Cohasset, and Hingham, except the small Baptist church in Marshfield, and a few Methodists held prayer meetings, or believed in revivals of religion.

This was the state of religion all through the

above section of Plymouth County, when I commenced my labors in Marshfield, and after my return from Bellingham. Among the causes which resulted in such a harvest of formalism and impiety in the churches, such an apostacy and departure from the Puritan faith, I will speak more particularly hereafter.

During the year 1811, I preached two hundred and eleven times, besides attending a number of prayer and conference meetings. A note refers to this time. "July 27th, 1811, there were two brought to the knowledge of the truth, and into the liberty of the gospel last night, which make twenty during my labors thus far in Marshfield. I find there is considerable excitement among the ungodly, and many of them even threaten to shoot me and my horse, and tar and feather me." Such is the depravity of the human heart, and its opposition to the truth. It always has been so, and probably always will. Moral goodness in such an exhibition of hostility against the gospel and the doctrine of regeneration! Impossible. In-

dividuals may be considered respectable in many things, but they show the enmity of their hearts, when they oppose the gospel or its influence among their fellow-men. And besides this, I have learned it is no cause of discouragement for a minister of the gospel, when opposition is raised against the truth; it is rather proof that the word of the Lord is running and being glorified. One of the grand offices of the Spirit is to convince the world of sin, and thus many, when taught by it, develop, most strikingly, the enmity of their hearts. This is the "plague of the heart."

Several passages of the word of God upon which I discoursed during the year 1811, in several places, and from which I heard, were specially blessed to individuals, and the means, in the hands of God, of their conversion. If anything is worthy of record, and which will be highly prized by the friends of the Redeemer, it is the word of God, which, when accompanied by the Divine influence, awakens, convicts and converts the soul. It is

begotten again to that new and spiritual life in Christ Jesus, only by the truth, or the word of God. The Apostle speaks in the following manner : “ Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth.” And again, “ Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.” A few of the passages of Scripture are the following : Acts xxiv. 25 ; “ And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled ; and answered, go thy way for this time ; when I have a more convenient season I will call for thee.” Amos iv. 12 ; “ Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.” Isaiah lv. 6 ; “ Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.” 1 Cor. vi. 20 ; “ For ye are bought with a price.” Eph. v. 16 ; “ Redeeming the time, because the days are few.” Rev. vi. 17 ; “ For the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand ? ” 2 Kings vi. 17 ; “ And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee open his eyes that he may

see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw, and behold the mountain was full of horses, and chariots of fire round about Elisha." Isa. lvii. 14; "And shall say, cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way; take up the stumbling-blocks out of the way of my people." Luke xxi. 8; "And he said, take heed that ye be not deceived." Prov. x. 24; "The fear of the wicked it shall come upon him; but the desire of the righteous shall be granted."

CHAPTER XIV.

Teaching in Scituate—Preaching in the neighboring towns—Marshfield and Pembroke—An Incident at a Funeral—Conversation with Mr. A. at his house—Church organized in Pembroke—My Ordination—New Bedford—School Incident in Duxbury—The War of 1812—Removal to Westboro'—Baptist Church constituted—4th of July Sermon.

In the winter of 1811-12, I taught school in the South district, in what is now called South Scituate. I preached every Sabbath in Marshfield, and two evenings in the week, when the travelling would permit. I also went once a week six miles, most of the time on foot, to Mr. Mica Foster's, in Pembroke, who afterwards became deacon of the Baptist church in Hanson.

While teaching this school in South Scituate, a man died in that district, who belonged to the Congregational church in P. His friends went for his minister to attend the funeral. He said, he wished for them to “se-

cure the services of some other minister, as he was not very well." Accordingly, they requested me to officiate on the occasion. When I arrived at the house, I found the minister present who was first sent for. After sitting awhile, as it was not time to commence the exercises, I took the opportunity to mention to him, that there was an interesting revival of religion in Mr. Niles' society, in Abington. I finally asked him, if he did not hope that there might be such a work among his people? He replied, "he did not wish to converse on disputed points at a funeral." I told him, I did not consider it a disputable point at all, for I supposed that all Christians were agreed in respect to the importance of heart religion. "*Heart* religion or *head* religion," said he; "ah! I do not wish to converse upon this subject now, but should be pleased to have me call upon him and have further conversation upon the subject."

A few months after this, I preached one evening about a mile from his house, and in the

morning I called upon Rev. Mr. A. He asked me to take a seat, which I did. In a few moments he told me, "I ought to be horse-whipped." I asked him for what? He said "for abusing him at the funeral of Mr. Leavitt." I inquired of him in what respect I had abused him? He said, in asking him, "if I did not hope there might be such a work among my people as there was in Abington, when you knew I was opposed to it." I told him I did not, although I knew that most of his sentiments were. He furthermore said, "I ought to be horse-whipped for coming into town, holding evening meetings among his people, and causing so much disturbance." He said, he "looked upon me as bad as though I had come and stolen away his wife, and that he had no opinion of such ministers as I was; and besides, I was too lazy to work."

As it was near twelve o'clock, and I had advanced toward the door to take my leave of him, he said, "he would ask me to remain, and take dinner with him, if he thought I should

behave myself as I ought." I told him I was afraid I should not, and so I bade him good-by. Thus ended my interview with Rev. Mr. A., and I was more convinced than ever that he was evidently opposed to the work of God in the pouring out of his Spirit; and still further, giving me painful proof that that great work, without which neither ministers nor the members of their churches can be saved, had no apparent sympathy in his heart.

PEMBROKE.

A Baptist church was organized in the town of Pembroke, at Mr. Luther Howland's house, on the 12th of May, 1812; and at the same time and place where the church was constituted, I was ordained to the work of the ministry, as an evangelist.

The ordination services were as follows: - - Bro. Samuel Glover preached the sermon from 1 Cor. xv. 11; Bro. Joel Briggs, delivered the charge; Bro. John Butler offered the ordaining prayer; Bro. Lewis Leonard gave the

hand of fellowship; Bro. Joseph Torrey made the concluding prayer.

All these brethren have finished their earthly labors. They witnessed a good profession, and died in the faith of the gospel. Indeed, only here and there remain one and another, scattered far and wide along the broken line of life, who were cotemporaries with me in the earlier part of my ministry, and fellow helpers unto the kingdom of God.

I was united in marriage on the 26th of March, preceding my ordination, to Miss Annie Leonard, of Bridgewater, and sister of the late Lewis Leonard, D. D., of Cazenovia, N. Y.

MARSHFIELD.

The Sabbath following my ordination, I went to Marshfield, and baptized four persons. I had engaged to preach in M. three-fourths of the time; the other fourth I preached at Mr. Howland's house, and in a store near by, for several months. Still retaining my connection with the church in M., I went one-fourth of the

time, after this, for a season, to New Bedford, before there was any Baptist church or society in the place. I preached one-fourth of the time in a hall occupied the other part of the time by the Congregationalists; and since they controlled it, they were unwilling that the subject of baptism should be presented, which I usually did before the administration of the rite, and on this account we left it, and repaired to a private house. This was in the summer of 1812. A Baptist church was constituted here during the following year, 1813.

I had made some arrangement, and concluded it was about settled, that I should teach a winter school in 1812-13, in the lower part of Duxbury, but when the district came together, a variety of opinions were expressed in regard to my keeping the school, chiefly on the ground of my religious principles. Some said, "they would rather have the small-pox come into the place than to have Conant come among them;" others said, "they had rather have their children go to school to learn to *swear*, than come to school to me to learn to *pray*."

My connection with the Baptist church in Marshfield, extended over a period of more than sixteen years, three-fourths of the time, with the exception of two years, or nearly so, during the war with Great Britain, from Nov., 1814, to April, 1816. With the other fourth of the time, as previously intimated, I supplied other places as the providence of God seemed to indicate. In consequence of the war, and the landing of British troops in Marshfield, and their burning several vessels in Scituate harbor, which was only a few miles from the house where I lived, and besides, from constant alarms of the approach of the enemy, the inhabitants moving away from the shore, I concluded it was best for me to remove from M., likewise.

WESTBORO'.

There were a few Baptist professors in Westboro', where I had preached occasionally, as I passed through the town in going and returning from my brother's in P.; they learned that

I was about leaving M., and sent one of their number to see me and engage my services half of the time in Westboro', and the other half in Shrewsbury, which I agreed to do. I continued there one year and a half, until peace was restored, and then I returned again to Marshfield. While I was in Westboro', I baptized thirteen, who united with the Baptist church in that place; one of them was a young man about entering college, who is now the Hon. Isaac Davis, of Worcester.

The Baptist church was constituted soon after I commenced preaching half of the time stately in the place. While I was there, opposition to the Baptists was very strong. A young man was fined because he refused to train in a military company. Lawyer Harrington, in arguing the case against him in Westboro', said, "he was a lawless, good-for-nothing fellow; you do just as you are a mind to, just like a *Baptist* minister." They supposed I had done wrong in breaking over parish lines.

Peace being restored with Great Britain, the two political parties in town, thought it advisable to meet together on the 4th of July — have an oration on the occasion, and all dine together. It was proposed at first to invite the Congregational minister to deliver the oration ; but they said, he had taken such strong grounds in politics, the opposing party would not have him. They finally concluded to invite the Baptist minister, and therefore the committee came to see me about it. I however, utterly refused, as I never had delivered an oration, so called. Besides, at such times, they were in the habit of drinking toasts, firing cannon, shouting, &c., all of which, was not in accordance with my taste or my views. The committee entreated me earnestly for some time ; finally, I told them I would *preach* on the occasion, and dine with them if they would have no drinking toasts, firing cannon, &c. My proposal was accepted. I therefore preached to them on the occasion, from this text, Joshua xxiii. 10, 11 ; “ For the Lord

your God, he it is that fighteth for you. Take good heed, therefore, unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God." I noticed first, that God had evidently fought our battles for us, as he did for Israel of old. 1. *In the French and Indian war ; 2. In the Revolutionary war ; 3. And now in our present war with England.*

II. The obligations we were under to love the Lord our God. Soon after this, several joined the Baptist society, and among the number was Col. Fisher, who was Representative of the town, and by whose influence they were led to commence building a Baptist meeting-house.

CHAPTER XV.

Labors resumed in Marshfield, on the return of Peace — Missionary labors in Boston — Great revival in Marshfield — Thrilling incidents attending the work — Sabbath school organized — Preaching in Hingham and South Abington — Opposition — Progress of the Baptist sentiments in North Marshfield.

RETURN TO MARSHFIELD.

After the return of Peace, I resumed my labors again with the Baptist church in Marshfield, in 1816, and continued to supply them as heretofore, three-fourths of the time, and the remaining part I went either to Scituate, or Plymouth, or Duxbury, or Hingham, or South Abington. In the year 1817, I went one quarter of my Sabbaths and preached in the dwelling house of Deacon Abial Cudworth, in Scituate, where I now live. In 1819, I engaged a few months as missionary in the city of Boston. Instead of taking one-fourth of my time each month, I concluded it would be best to spend

the three winter months in Boston, as city missionary. I accordingly entered upon my duties. I had, however, been engaged in this work only a few weeks, before several letters came to me at one time from different persons and from different parts of the town in Marshfield — each writer ignorant of the fact that the other had written, requesting me to return to Marshfield, immediately, because a very powerful revival of religion had commenced, and at a time too, when there was not a minister of any denomination in town; those who belonged to the town were away at that time. And besides, there were but few professors, comparatively, in the whole town, who believed in experimental religion. The Baptist church was small. There were a few Methodist members that occasionally had preaching in their dwelling-houses, and a few members in the Arminian church, that believed in a change of heart. This was the state of things when the revival broke out. As the interest increased, those who had known anything about the new birth,

appeared to gather where the attention was, and to take part in the meetings.

The evening I arrived home from Boston to Marshfield, as I felt that duty required me to give up my present labors in B., it was judged there were four hundred people in and around my house. Every part of the house was filled to its utmost extent. I preached to the crowd, who were eager to hear the word of God, from Rev. v. 11, 12, 13; “And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.”

The interest was very great. One young man swooned away, and appeared to lay nearly lifeless all that evening. And at other meetings, some men would come into the room, and while I was preaching would fall directly upon their knees, and remain in that position until I had finished my discourse. Some when alone, would be peculiarly exercised in their minds. One man when in a boat alone, lost the use of his limbs, and swooned away, and went whithersoever the winds and tide carried him, till he was picked up in a creek near where Daniel Webster formerly lived. A pious physician examined the man, and considered the state he was in at the time he swooned away, as a kind of trance.

Some were powerfully wrought upon in the midst of their vain amusements. Even the first that were converted and who lived near the Baptist church, had carried their clothes with them on Sabbath evening, to their boarding house, connected with the factory in which they worked, at the lower part of the town, intend-

ing to go to a ball on Thursday evening following. But while they were at work in the factory, some one in their hearing said, "it was believed that Eleanor Sprague was under concern of mind," which was the means in the hands of God, of awakening these vain and thoughtless youth to the great interests of their souls. Nearly three miles from the factory, a prayer meeting was held on Tuesday evening of each week, by several females; they heard of this meeting, and at the close of the day's labor, they went to it, and desired an interest in the prayers of Christians. In a few days they obtained hope in the mercy of God. The good work spread so fast, that at the expiration of three weeks, it was judged by those who had observed its progress, that more than seventy persons had become hopefully converted to God. Another instance was equally striking as the preceding one: A young man, Reuben Williamson, was arrested and powerfully wrought upon by the Spirit of God, as he was alone, on his way with his jug to get in-

toxicating liquor, in order to celebrate his birth-day, being twenty-one years old that evening. He returned home without going any farther, or obtaining his liquor, and in a few days after, he was rejoicing in the God of his salvation. As the results of this work, fifty-two joined the Baptist church in Marshfield; some united with the Baptist church in Pembroke; others connected themselves with the Congregational church in M., and a few became Methodists. A more particular account of this revival, which was published at that time, may be found in the Boston Recorder, for 1819.

It was during this year, that a Sabbath school was commenced in Marshfield, which was, I think, the first one established in Plymouth county. We had no question books, as none were in existence except the Primer, and, therefore, the scholars committed to memory portions of the Scriptures and Watts' Hymns. One of the scholars committed to memory the four Evangelists during the season. What

she did through the spirit of ambition, in order to outdo others, she found after her conversion, of special advantage to her. She is now the wife of one of the deacons of the church.

HINGHAM.

I preached in the house of Miss Polly Barnes, in Hingham, in the year 1821. I was then hooted at by men who called themselves gentlemen, as I rode through the streets. Here, also, as in other places, the sect everywhere spoken against, had its share of obloquy cast upon it. It is a truth, however, which has required ages to learn, and indeed, not fully learned yet, that persecution will never put down a good cause, nor injure a bad one. In April, 1824, I commenced my labors again in Hingham. At this time I preached once in eight weeks in a loft, over where there was a slaughter-house. Dea. Asa Wilbur, of Boston, generously contributed to the support of the gospel, during this period of my labors. After a few months, we obtained a more convenient

place in a hall in the central part of the town. A few months only had transpired, when the congregation increased so much that it was expedient to have the services of some one on the ground all the time. Accordingly, they procured the services of Bro. Samuel Glover.

Two Orthodox Congregational ministers, by the names of Gray and Pierce had labored in the place several months each, but I believe, I was the first Baptist minister who commenced preaching at the usual hours of public worship, on the Sabbath, in Hingham.

In 1825, the friends in Hingham requested me to go to Lynn, and converse with the Missionary Board that was to meet at that place, and lay the situation of the Baptist cause in H. before the Board, and also to visit Haverhill and Boston in their behalf. Dr. Baldwin took a lively interest in their welfare. He had been down to Hingham, and preached several times on week days, and had baptized two persons ; he considered the young interest in H. a very important field of labor, and one

that should be sustained. He requested me to preach his Friday evening lecture in his meeting-house, on my return home, which I did. He, however, went from the meeting of the Board to Waterville, to attend the Commencement, and died there a few days after. Thus we meet and part with the good of earth, but there will be a gathering of the saints hereafter, where separations can never come !

SOUTH ABINGTON.

In the year 1822, Deacon Rainsford having removed from Boston to South Abington, learned that I had preached a number of times in private houses in A., and that some had obtained hope in the pardoning mercy of God, but never had united with any church, because they were Baptists in sentiment ; and besides, there was no church of that order in town. Deacon R., in company with Mr. R. Cook, who had recently obtained hope, came to my house in Marshfield, and desired me to go to Abington, and baptize him and several others

I had frequently been asked, and often sent to from A. to come to that place and set up a Baptist meeting. But I thought as there was Orthodox preaching in the place, Rev. Mr. Thomas, I might do more good for the present in preaching in those places where there was no other preaching but Unitarianism. But now, when there were those who could not conscientiously be anything else but Baptists, I felt it my duty to comply with the request of the brethren who came to visit me. Before they left, I authorised them to appoint a meeting, which was held at the dwelling house of lawyer Benj. Hobarts. At this meeting, another was appointed on the coming Sabbath at the house of Dea. Rainsford, at the usual hour of public worship. At this time, I baptized Jonathan R. Gurney, and Robert Cook, both of whom became deacons; one of their wives was also baptized at this time, the other soon after. All became members of the Baptist Church which was constituted shortly after. These were the first individuals who were ever

immersed, so far as I can learn, in the town of Abington. This circumstance, as it would be natural to suppose, created its measure of opposition in this place, as the observance of the rite of baptism for the first time certainly, and even afterwards, has frequently excited low ridicule and ungracious reflections in other places. I never expected the ungodly world to be pleased with the humbling requirements of the gospel, but when the second command of the ascended Redeemer — the ordinance of the church is administered, and it awakens *religious* hostility on the part of the professed ministers and disciples of Christ — this, it seems to me, almost, if not quite, puts credulity to shame.

My son, then a lad of nine years of age, could not go half a mile to a store on an errand, without being harassed by the enemies of the Baptists, to such a degree, that one man by the name of Elihu Hobart, as respectable as any in the place, considered it so unsafe for my son to go home alone, that he came with him to protect him. When I went out of town

to spend a night, they would come round my house and howl, to frighten my wife and children. One night, every long hair was sheared off my horse's mane and tail; the beast was cut so as to bleed.

One of the ministers to whom I applied for a school, refused to examine me, solely on the ground of my principles as a Baptist; but I went to the other minister in town and he examined and gave me a certificate. And at the time when I taught in A., the effort to break up the school, had its origin in the same spirit of dislike to the peculiar views of the Baptists. It is hoped, however, that time has softened the asperity of those who could not once endure the term immersion, if maturer reflections and larger acquaintance with historical and Scriptural facts, have not led them to tacitly tolerate what cannot be successfully refuted.

During the two years I preached in Abington, half of the time, there was a church gathered of twenty-five members, a small meeting house was built and paid for, and a society

formed of more than forty heads of families. One of those who sheared my horse, finally became a member of the Baptist church, and acknowledged that he did the deed. Such are the changes which religion makes; it turns our foes, and the foes of the cause of God, into its friends. The prevalence of Baptist principles in A. has been most obvious from that day of trial and of small things, to its present attitude and strength. The church is one of the ablest and most influential in the Old Colony Association, and, indeed, in this section of the State. Repeated revival seasons have shed their fertility and fragrance upon this Zion of the Lord.

When I first preached in Marshfield, 1811, there was but one head of a family in all the north part of the town, who attended a Baptist meeting on the Sabbath. Almost the whole of that half of the town, did not believe in a change of heart, though they were not called Unitarians but Arminians. They almost universally took that side of the question, however,

when the subject was introduced. A few of the first years, it was difficult to get doors opened for an evening meeting. After a while, individuals became more disposed, and opened their doors for the preaching of the gospel, and converts were added to the Lord. Among those in the north part of the town, who became the hopeful subjects of renewing grace were the following: The present wife of the late Col. Colámore, of West Scituate, and her sisters, one of whom was the first wife of Rev. Joseph Torrey, and the other, the wife of Dea. William Eames; the wife of a Unitarian deacon, and her daughter, who married Dea. Calvin Stockbridge, of North Yarmouth, Me., were brought to the love and acknowledgment of the truth as it is in Jesus; Dr. Charles Macomber and his wife were baptized, and united with the Baptist church, after they had been members of the Congregational church fifteen years. Dr. Macomber graduated at Cambridge college, and was one of the Councillors of the Medical Society in Boston, when he died.

In order to accommodate those in the north part of the town who had become Baptists, it was thought advisable to build another meeting-house, instead of removing the South meeting-house from its present locality. For several years after the north meeting-house was built, there was but one church, though two societies. Before I left Marshfield, in 1828, I preached alternately in each meeting-house; afterwards a church was formed at the north. In this vicinity, also, during a period of fifteen years, I saw the gradual and permanent progress of Baptist principles,—at first opposed, but afterwards listened to, and then embraced.

CHAPTER XVI.

Invitation to visit New Bedford — Letter of Mr. Barstow —
Items of labor, with incidents — City Missionary in Boston.

About twelve years from the time when I first went to New Bedford as a supply, I received an urgent invitation to visit the place, and take the pastoral charge of the church. I received several letters upon the subject. One of them is as follows:—

“New Bedford, March 29, 1824.

RESPECTED BROTHER:—

Since I last saw you, Bro. Chase has informed us he shall preach his last sermon on next Lord's Day, which was something I expected; the reason he gives, he thinks his usefulness is done here, and so we think. He is a very feeble man — does not preach but two sermons in a week, and sometimes not so many. Had I known what I now do four

weeks ago, I should have been extremely glad to have written you. Our church talk about another minister, and the voice is Bro. ———. I now write this in haste, fearing you may be engaged; but, should you not be, on the receipt of this, we wish for you not to be until we can receive a line from you, which we hope you will send by the return of the mail; and should you not be when you receive this, and we get an answer that you are not, Bro. Coggswell and myself contemplate going to see you. We hope you are not. Should it please the Lord that there should be an opening for you, here, we hope the results will be a blessing to you and the church of Christ in this place. Please to write an answer of your situation immediately, if you think it expedient. My respects to your wife together with Mrs. Barstow's. Ever praying the Lord would be with you wherever you may be placed.

From your unworthy brother,

THOMAS BARSTOW."

When I received the foregoing communication, I thought considerably about complying with their request. But being sensible of my limited education, I thought I was better adapted to the country than for such a place as New Bedford. But notwithstanding, Deacon Barstow and Bro. John Cogswell came to Marshfield, and said they were not going away unless I would engage to go to New Bedford, and that I had preached long enough in the pine woods ; neither their arguments nor the circumstances of the invitation, however, caused me to believe that it was my duty to leave my present field of labor.

During the first twenty years of my ministry I think I preached *four* times on the Sabbath, as often as I missed preaching *three* times, so that the average would be about three times on the Sabbath, besides several times during the week, whenever the weather and travelling would permit. I also kept school three months or more every winter, during the first sixteen

years of my ministry, and seven winters before I began to preach. I kept a large school in the day time, in Marshfield, crossed the river either in a boat, or upon the ice, (for there was no bridge where Little's bridge is now,) went five miles to Scituate, preached, and returned most of the time, the same evening. I taught school one Saturday forenoon, went eleven miles in the afternoon, on a wintry day, to the lower part of Duxbury, preached in the evening, returned Sabbath morning, preached three times during the day, administered the ordinance of baptism at noon, when we had to cut the ice six inches in thickness for the purpose.

I baptized forty individuals in Duxbury, who united with the Baptist churches in Marshfield, Kingston, and Hanson. I baptized ten at one time, in the lower part of Duxbury. Among others whom I baptized, was the widow of Col. Partridge and her sister. They had been members of the Unitarian Congregational church twenty-two years; before either of them ever experienced a change of heart. I also

baptized others after they had been members of the same church in D. several years.

As I was going one time to preach and baptize in Duxbury, a young woman, who lived at the house of the Unitarian minister, desired to witness the ordinance of baptism. The minister told the girl, "he wished she would request Mr. C. to call on him as he returned home." She replied, "you do not like Mr. C." "Yes, I do," said he; "but I do not like his stealing my sheep." "Do you mean," she inquired, "in a *temporal* or *spiritual* sense?" He replied, "in a *spiritual* sense." He invited me to call several times, which I did. I met him one day in the road, and he inquired, "what news?" I told him of some who were concerned for their souls in Marshfield, and how they talked, &c. He said, "those were merely hysterical feelings, and that he had those feelings sometimes himself." He saw how astonished I appeared at his reply. After a short pause, he said, "I suppose you think I do not know anything about religion, because I

call those *hysterical* feelings?" I replied, "that it appeared so to me." He added, "I am glad you are not to be my final judge." Thus ended our conversation for the present. God's word and the judgment will settle the truth of religion.

In the fall of 1828, I entered upon the duties of a City Missionary, in Boston, for the second time, and continued in this service until the close of 1829. The Report of my labors was published in the Boston Recorder of that year. A few incidents selected from my Report will illustrate some scenes familiar to a city missionary.

In visiting among Roman Catholics, I found most of them very ignorant indeed. One of them told me he believed that one prayer made to the Virgin Mary, availed as much as two made to Jesus Christ.

I established a school in order to teach the Catholic young men to read and write. About twenty attended. They made some proficien-

cy, and would have done well but the priest preached against it, and finally destroyed the school. One evening, a considerable number of new faces made their appearance and took their places among the scholars, pretending they had come to read and write. After my school had commenced about half an hour, all at once every light was put out, and stones were thrown in every direction, and especially at me. One hit me in my side, but as I was pretty well clothed, it being cold weather, it did not hurt me a great deal. I rushed down stairs as soon as possible, in order to avoid both the stones, and to secure the services of a police. It being dark, and the officer not at hand, the disturbers of my school easily made their escape. I suppose one reason, and perhaps the principal one which awakened the indignation of the priest against my school was, I had given a copy of the *New Testament* to every scholar who was able to read.

Several instances of hopeful conversion, among those whom I visited, came under my

observation. One who died in Hanover street, a man about thirty years of age, was in very great distress of mind for a number of weeks. About ten days before he died, he told me he had given himself up to God, and now he felt willing to go when it was God's will. Two days before his death, he appeared very happy in his mind, and sang most of the hymn—

“Don't you see my Jesus coming?” &c.

Another was a young man about twenty-two years of age, who died in Warren street. When I first visited him, he said he had no evidence that he was prepared to die. He appeared to have an inquiring mind, and three weeks before he died, he obtained a hope in the pardoning mercy of God. He had his senses as long as he lived. His last hours were spent principally in prayer, and I trust, as the returning prodigal was welcomed to his father's house, this young man, penitent and believing, was pardoned and saved.

CHAPTER XVII.

Pastorate in Plymouth — Missionary in Plymouth county —
Brewster --- Death of my son — Revival of religion and in-
cidents connected with the work.

PLYMOUTH.

In December, 1829, I received an invitation to assume the pastoral charge of the Baptist church in Plymouth. Having accepted it, I immediately entered upon its duties. I had been acquainted somewhat with the history of the church since its organization, and had supplied them from time to time, at different and distant intervals, therefore it was not wholly to me a new field of labor. I found the church in P. in a very low and discouraged state. They were in debt in several particulars, and thus their energies were in a measure crippled. During nearly five years I preached there, the church greatly increased in wealth and influence, and nearly doubled in numbers. This

season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, was one of the most extensive ever enjoyed in P. It was shared in by all the evangelical churches in the place. It was a time of the Spirit's power, and many were the subjects of its new creating influence. The enemy was coming in like a flood, but the Spirit of the Lord lifted up an effectual standard against him. Forty-one were added to the Baptist church in one year; twenty-five of these were heads of families. In a few years, as the result of this work, the church increased from sixty-three to one hundred and twenty members. Thus was this branch of our Zion greatly encouraged, and new life was infused into all their interests, both temporal and spiritual. All their debts were paid off, and they could say they owed "no man anything." A licentiate from this church was ordained at Edgartown, in June, 1841, and preached nearly seven years in the Baptist meeting-house not more than thirty rods from the hall where I was hauled out of while preaching the first Baptist sermon ever preached in the place.

The church in P. has been from time to time favored with the dews of heavenly grace, and converts have been added to its members. In the place first selected by the Pilgrims as their new home on these Western shores, may the gospel in its tolerant spirit, and in the simplicity of its ordinances, ever find increasing friends and cordial supporters !

After having closed my labors in P., I was employed as a missionary in the Old Colony Association, about six months, during which time, in addition to supplying destitute places on the Sabbath, and holding other religious meetings on week days and evenings, I assisted, Rev. H. C. Coombs in collecting nearly all the subscriptions for building a Baptist meeting-house in the town of Norton.

BREWSTER.

Receiving an urgent request from the Baptist church in Brewster to become their pastor, I left my missionary labors, and removed my family to that place in June, 1835. This also

was a section of the State which I had heretofore visited, and in which I had preached the gospel; and besides, during my ministry thus far, I had been quite familiar with the general interests of the Baptist cause on the Cape. In entering upon this field of labor, and assuming the pastorate of the church, I was forcibly reminded of the events of bygone years, when in my first itinerant tour in this vicinity, there were but few Baptist professors, and only two Baptist churches on the Cape, below Plymouth, viz: Harwich and Hyannis. I had been in Brewster about nine months, when a new sorrow visited our family, such as we never experienced before, though one we had anticipated for some time; this was the death of our only son, Thomas Baldwin C. He died at the age of twenty-three. His disease was consumption. The hopes of parents and friends were strongly centred upon him. He had nearly completed his professional studies as a physician. If one of the most interesting periods of human life, or the prospect of future

usefulness, or the solicitude of those by whom he was loved, or amiability of disposition, and filial obedience, or persevering effort to arrest the progress of the disease — if these considerations had availed ; if it had been left with short-sighted mortals to determine the will of heaven, then, indeed, the life that passed from our midst, our company, and from our hearts, would have been prolonged. The event of his death was a very great affliction to me and my family. Yet amid the sorrow there was joy ; in the darkness of the dispensation, there was light ; in the severed cords that once bound us to an only son, new ties connected our hearts with the unseen and eternal. He died in the triumphs of faith. If heaven at last shall make amends for all, then, the grace of the Redeemer, which prepares departing friends for his ineffable presence and glory in the skies, will amply sustain the sorrowing and the bereaved, in the trials and conflicts of life.

“ Dear Father, if thy lifted rod,
· Resolves to scourge us here below ;
Still let us lean upon our God,
Thine arm shall bear us safely through.”

He who works all things after the counsel of his own will, and for the good of those who love him, made this seemingly adverse event the means of lasting benefit to many. It was overruled for good to me, to my family, and to the people of my charge. A very interesting and extensive revival of religion soon commenced. I baptized thirty-six within four months from the time of my son's death, who were received into the Baptist church. Five of them were sea captains, and one a first mate. The interest extended into the Congregational church, after several of their congregation who had attended the Baptist meeting, were converted. They finally fell in with the work, and both the Congregationalists and Baptists held Sabbath evening meetings, alternately, in each other's houses. But these professed union meetings did not continue but a few weeks, as most of the Congregational church were Unitarians, as it proved by their securing the services of a Unitarian minister for their next pastor.

Some of the circumstances connected with this work of God in B., were quite striking, and full of interest, and therefore, I will state a few facts in regard to it.

One Captain Boggs, was among the first in Brewster, whose attention was called up to the great concerns of his soul, by being with my son in his last sickness, and seeing him so happy in his mind. He told this in his experience at a prayer meeting at my house about a fortnight after my son's death. He said, "if religion made one so happy on a death-bed, then he thought it was worth seeking for," and he said, "he did seek for it, until he found it." The Captain furthermore said, "he did not attend scarcely to any thing else during the fortnight but to the concerns of his soul." Another young man was struck under conviction at the funeral of my son. We had a series of meetings soon after. The next Sabbath the first one indulged a hope. As soon as I had dismissed the meeting, the young man arose of his own accord, and before the

whole congregation, told what God had done for his soul. This circumstance seemed to deepen the conviction of those who had been under concern of mind much longer time than this young man had been. They asked Christians to pray for them. Not more than two or three of the whole congregation went out of the meeting-house till the close of the afternoon exercises; and I never went out of the pulpit during the intermission. That day, and especially the intermission, was one of the most solemn and interesting I ever experienced. The dying scenes of my only son, and the pungent convictions of several sea captains in the congregation, besides many others, were so before my mind, that I was scarcely capable of going through with the usual exercise of the afternoon. I think I never saw so many stout-hearted men and masters of vessels, bowing and weeping under the power of God. But notwithstanding my body was pressed down as under a mighty load, yet such scenes are well adapted to help ministers to preach and Christians to pray.

So general were the effects produced that day, that during the following week, the stores and work shops, became places of prayer and religious conversation. Mr. Bailey, a Methodist minister, who was at one of our meetings a few weeks after this, stated publicly, that he had travelled and preached in thirteen of the States, and had been in a large number of revivals, but he never knew so many men over thirty years of age converted in any one revival as in this, considering the size of the town.

As to the propriety of holding protracted meetings, I am of the opinion that generally speaking they are of great advantage, especially if the church is in a prepared state to enter into the work of the Lord. Since they have fallen into disuse somewhat within the few past years, there has obviously been less of divine influences in the churches, and the number of conversions has greatly diminished. Without the Spirit's influence, nothing will be accomplished. Indeed the wheels of salvation will roll backward instead of forward. But

laboring in dependence upon the Spirit's influence, waiting upon God in earnest, believing prayer, and we have no reason to doubt but that *protracted* efforts, now as in times past, will be crowned with the blessing of the Head of the church.

I have attended during my ministry, nineteen *protracted* meetings, and many were hopefully converted during those meetings. Some of them have been held only a few days, at other times, weeks. One of these *protracted* meetings continued fourteen days in Harwich, and Br. Barnaby baptized sixty-three within two months afterwards. It seems to me therefore, in reviewing the past, there should be a more general return to this sort of labor. Besides, Baptist churches are liable to lose in a great measure their spirituality and become conformed to the fashions, policies and spirit of the world. If the churches and ministers seek to please the world instead of converting it, then will the world make aggressions upon the churches, and the line of distinction between

the professed friends of God and those who are not, will become obliterated. Costly churches—paid choirs to sing the praises of God—laxity of discipline in separating the precious from the vile, thus laying aside the laws of Christ in his own house, for fear of giving offence—these, among other things, contribute to diminish the spiritual power of the churches both with God and man.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Observations upon the state of Religion in the Congregational Arminian churches at the time and before I commenced my ministry — Causes which operated against the piety of the churches.

I have been asked what were my views as to the *causes* which probably resulted in the decline of piety in the Congregational churches about the beginning of the present century. I would therefore speak of the following causes which contributed to such a result: 1. *Lowering down the fundamental doctrines of the gospel*—such as the *depravity* of the human heart—the *necessity* of its radical renewal—the *divinity* and *atonement* of Christ—the *person* and *work* of the Holy Spirit—the *sovereignty* of God in election—the *final* perseverance of all true believers, &c. Now these doctrines were not generally preached in many of those churches called Congregational, though in ef-

fect Arminian, at the time I commenced my ministry. There were, however, other churches under the general term Congregational, in which the above doctrines were fully and plainly preached. Amid the general apostacy, they held fast to the faith of the Pilgrim fathers. At the commencement of the present century there was scarcely one of the Congregational order so called in Boston, but that was more or less affected with Arminian sentiments. With but few exceptions, both ministers and churches were willing that the distinctive and discriminating doctrines of the gospel should quietly pass into disuse and consequent disbelief. These doctrines are not now preached in Arminian or Unitarian churches. They would not be endured a single moment. Piety, which is the fruit of conversion by the Holy Spirit, cannot live and flourish where the doctrines of the gospel are not preached and enforced upon the hearts and consciences of the people. Nor do we look for conversions only where such truths are proclaimed; the Spirit is neither

poured out, nor are revivals of religion enjoyed. Instead, therefore, of the freshness, beauty and luxuriance of a well watered garden, such churches are obviously the grave-yard of piety. My observation for years, and from what I knew of the state of religion in the churches before referred to, leads me to this conclusion.

It should be remarked, however, that in the secessions from those churches which have taken place in many towns in this State and elsewhere, and which resulted in the formation of Congregational Orthodox churches, we have a still further proof, that those who were spiritual and had experienced a change of heart, could not live among the dead. Remove the fact of man's utter sinfulness in the sight of God, that he is lost and perishing, or that the Holy Spirit is not necessary to renew and sanctify the heart, or that Christ is not an almighty Saviour, or that salvation is not wholly by grace, and we take away all power and efficiency from the gospel—we disrobe it of its

divinity—it becomes a dead letter—it is another gospel, though not another; and as a necessary consequence, the spirit and life of true godliness wane away, and its fruit almost wholly, if not entirely disappears. Prayer and conference meetings which furnish no diminutive part of the aliment of regenerate souls, or instances of inquiries after the truth, are numbered among the things that were, and are comparatively obsolete terms. It requires, therefore, no special investigation to convince one of the fact that this is the present state of many of those churches which formerly, in years past, maintained the doctrines of the gospel as zealously as they now repudiate them.

2. *The introduction of unconverted members into the churches contributed in no small degree to the degeneracy in religion.* Unconverted members were introduced into the churches in several ways. 1. *By infant membership.* If infant baptism is a divine ordinance, and those unconscious babes become by this rite the subjects of the covenanted blessings of God with

his people, why not consider them as visible members of the church? The inference is a very natural and reasonable one, and the conclusion is quite satisfactory, it seems to me, to every reflecting mind. Well, this principle has been acted upon, and infant church membership has been maintained by some churches and ministers. And it is not too much to say that those who practice the rite of infant baptism and associate it with the distinguished spiritual blessings, find that the subject of *infant church membership* is still an open one, and exceedingly difficult to be disposed of. They are at sea upon it—with no fixed latitude or longitude to determine its precise position. It, however has been found that neither *infant baptism*, nor *infant church membership* is adapted to furnish the church with converted members. This evil was seen by Edwards, who maintained that none should be considered members of the church, though they had been baptized in infancy, unless they gave evidence of experimental piety. He endeavored in his

day to stay the progress of a corrupt and corrupting practice ; and he well knew that unless this check were put upon it, the time would come when the churches would be filled with *unconverted* members. 2. *When infant or adult baptism, or any other, is regarded as a means of grace to the impenitent, instead of an ordinance of the church, then, the door into the church is thrown wide open, for all who would rather choose this condition of salvation, than to give their hearts to Christ, and accept of his mercy as it is offered in the gospel. Sinners will do anything rather than do what God requires. But neither baptism nor church membership is a condition of salvation. It is to repent of sin and believe the gospel. It is said that Stoddard, the predecessor of Edwards, advocated the theory of adult baptism, as a means of grace, because he supposed it was instrumental of the awakening and conversion of his own soul. It might have been true in his case, but the application of the principle to others, would be subversive of the order of the*

gospel, and the result would most unavoidably follow — the introduction of *unconverted* members into the churches.

It should be observed in this connection, that adult membership in Arminian or Unitarian churches, is based upon no acknowledged fact of experience of a change of heart — of trust in Christ — of forgiveness of sins, but simply a desire on the part of individuals to connect themselves with the church. And, indeed, in the estimation of one of the most prominent ministers in the Unitarian ranks, he desires that the Lord's Supper shall be open to all who wish to partake of it; and he ignores the invidious distinction which is made in a congregation on the Sabbath, when a part of it take their places at the table of the Lord, while the others, as good and worthy as those who remain, leave the house, merely because they are not members of the church. The simple fact, he believes, because one man is voted into a church, and another is not, since he has not been proposed a member, should constitute no

real objection, why everybody who wishes, may not come to the Sacrament. Taking his view of the case, his conclusions are both reasonable and just. He does not believe there is any difference, nor should there be, between a member of the church and one who is not. And why should he? The church and the outside world are one. Why, therefore, the necessity of any such organization as a church? None at all.

And again, the natural tendency of *infant* baptism, all must see, is to annihilate the plain and obvious command of the gospel — *believe* and be baptized. We can, however, have no reasonable apprehensions that this obvious perversion of the truth in this particular, can very extensively prevail. There is a real and not a fanciful difficulty in the thing itself. It is felt by those who have more to do with it than Baptists themselves. The time was when the observance of this rite was supposed to be fraught with some special spiritual advantage, but such impressions are rapidly passing away,

like “dissolving views.” It is now with some Pedobaptist churches, a dead and lifeless thing, as it really is. It may be pleaded for now and then, and be galvanized into a little temporary observance, but the institution can never stand in the world, and exert the influence which it has hitherto done. It is falling by its own weight, or rather because there is nothing of it. “It must be put into the Scriptures,” says one, “before it can be found there.” Many members of Pedobaptist churches are well aware that the continuance of *infant* baptism really forestalls the teachings of the word of God, where, in the matter of *personal* obedience, each individual is required to give his own expression or profession of his attachment to the cause of Christ. I am therefore, led to think from all I have seen and read upon the subject, that infant baptism has been one of the avenues through which errors have crept into the churches, and has contributed in no small degree to the degeneracy in religion in times past, the fruits of which are seen at the present day.

CHAPTER XIX.

Mr. Davis' Christian experience—Ordination as a Congregationalist—Change of views on Baptism—Re-ordination—His varied labors and success—Description of his general character—His last sickness—State of his mind—Peaceful and triumphant death

I propose in this chapter to give some account of Rev. James Davis, whose labors in the work of the ministry were eminently useful. He appeared to be a prepared instrument in the hand of God, of promoting the cause of evangelical piety. The numerous instances of revivals which attended his efforts, in connection with a holy and devoted life, proved that he was specially fitted to win souls to Christ. There was peculiar unction from on high, in all his services, calculated to impress every mind, that he had power with God, and that his chief aim and purpose were, to save souls from death. There was something in him which would remind the thoughtful observer, of the

one anciently, who “came in the power and spirit of Elijah.” He was plain, earnest and faithful in his exhibitions of the truths of Scripture. He laid “judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet.”

Having attended many meetings with this man of God, when the Spirit was poured out, and souls converted, besides being somewhat familiar with his manner of life as a Christian and minister, I thought it would not be time misspent, perhaps, if after nearly two-score years since his decease, that some account of his Christian experience, labors in the ministry and the circumstances of his last sickness and death, should be read by the present generation. I am indebted to the American Baptist Magazine, of the November number, 1821, for many of the following facts:—

Mr. Davis says of himself, “I was born in Hopkinton, N. H.; Nov. 6, 1772. When about eight years old my mind was seriously impressed. I recollect that at certain times I was much affected with preaching. I was afraid to

sleep at night. I knew that I was a sinner, and that I was liable to die in sleep, and lose my soul. I then concluded that when advanced in life I would read and pray and become religious. After this I became thoughtless and unconcerned, and continued to live as though I was accountable to no one, until about nineteen years of age. The winter before I obtained a hope, I was more than ever captivated with scenes of carnal diversion. In Dunbarton, the adjacent town, the work of the Lord began powerfully to prevail. A number of young people whom I knew, were solemnly impressed and returned from the meetings in great distress of mind. I began to think that it would be best for me to attend to the concerns of my soul, and change my mode of life. I soon began to be anxious about myself, and saw that I was in an evil case. My pride of heart was very great. I would get out of sight of those who were conversing upon religious things, and yet desired to hear what was said. I did not wish that the minister should

say anything in particular to me upon the subject of religion, lest I should be thought serious, and be made a subject of ridicule. I joined a company of rude young people for fear they would say I had become religious. But I could not live in that company no more than I could in the fire. I had an awful sense of my guilt, danger and exposure to hell and ruin. I felt that I deserved to be damned, and that it would be perfectly just in God to cast me down to dwell where darkness and horror reign. Life appeared short; it seemed as though there was but a step between me and everlasting woe. The world had lost all its charms—a gloom was spread over every outward thing. The idea was impressed upon my mind that I must pray or go to hell; and even when I prayed, I felt more criminal, and that I was mocking God. And still it was thundered in my ears, pray or be damned forever. Night after night I never had my clothes off, or went to bed. My appetite was gone—I had no relish for food. One Sabbath day after

the services, before the meeting-house, I cried and wept aloud. The minister came and conversed with me. Kneeling upon the ground, he prayed with and for me. He then observed that I must retire home—that I was in the hands of God—that I must repent or perish—believe or be damned. The idea was strongly impressed upon my mind that I should be miserable forever—that I should soon be in hell. I was emaciated to a skeleton. I pondered in my mind whether there was not a *possibility* that God might save me in some way, and have mercy upon me.

“ One day I retired to my room to read ; in a moment, as quick as thought, my burden and distress were removed ; the book appeared to be full of God — full of glory — and this glory seemed to be shining all around me, in the heavens and in the earth. I was full of the spirit of praise. I had lost sight of myself. It was not a question in my mind whether I should be saved or lost. After my mind was relieved, my bodily health seemed to be re-

cruited at once, and my strength to be restored. I felt greatly concerned for sinners; for six months I enjoyed a heaven upon earth. I joined the church with forty-one besides myself. My mind became greatly exercised about preaching the gospel. I was encouraged to go forward and obtain an education, which I did."

This ends all the account Mr. Davis has left of his early life.

Mr. Davis was graduated at Dartmouth College, in 1798. By whom, and where he was first approbated to preach, we know not. In 1804, he was ordained to the work of an evangelist, by the Congregational ministers forming the Association of the Western District of Vermont. Mr. Davis remained in connection with the Congregationalists, till the year 1816, when he felt it his duty to be immersed, on a profession of his faith. Having submitted to the ordinance of baptism, agreeably to the usage of apostolic times, at his request, he was re-ordained to the work of an evan-

gelist, on the 14th of Nov., 1816, at Lyme, in Connecticut. The notice of the fact we find as follows: Ordained on the 14th of Nov., 1816, Rev. James Davis, a noted Pedobaptist itinerant preacher, to the work of an evangelist. Mr. D. had been previously baptized, by Rev. Mr. Wilcox, on the 12th of Oct., of the same year. He was appointed a missionary to travel principally in the State of Connecticut.

From this period, he labored in various places with unwearied zeal. Besides preaching, he used all his influence in procuring funds for Missionary and Educational purposes. It is much to the credit of Mr. D., that, notwithstanding his pecuniary means were very limited, yet he assisted several pious young men in obtaining literary advantages, and devoted much of his time and property in promoting the cause of Foreign Missions. A few months before his death, he wrote as follows, to one of the editors of the Magazine:

“More than fifteen years ago, I paid over \$100, for the use of a young man of the Bap-

tist denomination, who was looking forward to the ministry, to assist in the improvement of his mind. I have paid into the hands of the treasurer of the Connecticut Auxiliary Society, to aid the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, \$300. I have collected for the Seminary, under the care of the Board, about \$500 : and to Deacon James Loring, for the assistance of young men called to the ministry, \$56.53. I really believe I have been instrumental in the hands of God, of bringing into different churches of the Baptist denomination, eight hundred members. But Paul called himself a ‘fool in boasting.’ ‘God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ ”

Mr. D. was peculiarly abstemious in his manner of living, frequently depriving himself of his regular meals and sleep. He spent much time in fasting and prayer. He seemed unusually devoted to God. His health appeared to be gradually declining for several months before his death. He continued, however, to ride from place to place, until within a few

days of his death. On being asked by a pious friend, how those doctrines of the gospel which he used to preach, now appeared to him? he replied, "God's truths, I have lived by them, and can die by them. They will stand when heaven and earth shall pass away. O, what should I now do, if it were not for the Lord Jesus Christ?" He then with much emotion, with his hands lifted up, and his eyes flowing with tears, exclaimed, "*Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.*"

At parting, he said to the family he was visiting, in a most affecting manner, "See that none of you appear at the judgment, on the left hand."

About three weeks before his death, Mr. D. arrived at Mrs. Howe's, in Abington, but in an extremely weak, emaciated condition. He was received and treated by this dear family with Christian affection and kindness. Mrs. H. appeared so far from considering it a burden to take care of this devoted servant of the Lord, that she said, "she would not on any ac-

count have been deprived of the privilege of having him die at her house." The efficacy of Divine grace was most clearly displayed in the death of this good man. During his short confinement he appeared to possess an entire resignation to the will of God, and to enjoy an unshaken confidence in the merits of the Saviour.

Being desirous of once more commemorating the dying love of Christ, at his particular request, the Rev. Mr. Torrey, of Hanson, with a number of the brethren, met on Lord's day evening, 13th of May, at Mrs. Howe's, for this purpose. Of this interesting communion, Mr. Torrey gives the following account: "It was a precious season. The remembrance of it can never be effaced from my mind. To behold a saint, a minister of the gospel, face the *King of terrors* with composure — to see such an one, after having borne the heat and burden of the day, longing to depart and be with Christ, is no uninteresting sight. Such a scene did the last sickness of the Rev. James Davis present. He seemed to have a deep sense of the deprav-

ity of the heart, and hoped for salvation only through the mercy of God in Christ.

Soon after I entered the room, he said, "Brother Torrey, you will never lament on your death-bed, that you have been too faithful in warning sinners of their danger. You will never lament that you have been engaged in prayer for their salvation." After speaking of the consolation he had derived from that gospel he had labored to preach to perishing sinners, he said, "I never in all my life had such a sense of the wretched condition of sinners as I now have. I never was so sensible of the awful error of the Unitarians!"

"The communion season was a time of refreshing to him, and I trust to each of the brethren present. After he had received the bread, he appeared much engaged in prayer and meditation, for a short time, and then repeated the 95th hymn, 2d book, of Dr. Watts, in a very impressive manner.

"Infinite grief! amazing woe!
Behold my bleeding Lord!
Hell and the Jews conspired his death,
And used the Roman sword."

The fourth and fifth verses especially, he repeated with peculiar emphasis.

“ ’ Twere you my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were;
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief a spear.

“ ’ T were you that pull’d the vengeance down,
Upon his guiltless head;
Break, break, my heart, O, burst mine eyes,
And let my sorrows bleed.”

At his request, we sung, at the close, the 13th hymn, 3d book, commencing with the words,

“ How sweet and awful is the place,
With Christ within the doors;
While everlasting love displays,
The choicest of her stores.”

It was indeed, a heavenly place in Christ Jesus.

On the 28th of May, 1821, he calmly resigned his spirit into the bosom of his God and Saviour. On Thursday, the 31st, his remains were entombed in the family vault, near the

house where he died. Solemn prayer was offered up at the house, before the corpse was removed, and after the interment, the procession moved to the Congregational meeting-house, where a solemn and appropriate discourse was delivered by Dr. Baldwin, in compliance with the request of his deceased friend."

The memory of the just is blessed.

The following communication I sent to Dr. Sawin, giving some description of the general character of Mr. Davis.

"Pembroke, Aug. 23, 1821.

"DEAR BROTHER IN THE LORD :

"At your request, I state the following concerning the life of Elder James Davis :

"The first time that I ever heard of the man, was by my brother G., who was at that time preaching as a candidate, in the Congregational society, in Carver. As near as I can recollect, he observed, that, 'he was a very religious, singular man, and that he preached in a singu-

lar manner.' The first of his preaching in the place, he told his hearers, 'the Lord was coming into the place, he believed, by his Spirit, and that they might oppose it if they dared, but the Lord would work.' He wished for a prayer meeting to be appointed in the morning, and as one was about to address the throne of grace, he requested him 'to pray particularly for the young people, that they might be converted.' A revival soon commenced in the place; a considerable number shared in it.

"One time, as he was on his way to Assonet, he stepped into a house, and gazed about for some time, which excited the attention of those present. At last he remarked thus, to the family. 'You have a very nice house, it is almost too good to pray in, is it not? There never was any prayer in it, was there?' and then bid them good-by. The family began to think what the stranger meant; they recollected also, that there never had been a prayer in their house. This circumstance appeared to be the means of their awakening; they sent for

him to come and attend a meeting at their house, and it soon became a house of prayer.

“The second time I saw Mr. D. was in the town of Sandwich, where I was then teaching a school. His first sermon there was from these words, ‘Prepare to meet thy God.’ A number received impressions at this meeting that abide to this day; a great revival soon commenced, which spread into Barnstable and Falmouth. The years following, 1810, 1811, I attended a great number of meetings with him, on the Cape, and on Martha’s Vineyard. There were greater revivals of religion in those places, at this time, than had ever been known in them before. Mr. Davis was a great instrument, in the hands of God, in effecting this work. When he went into a place, he would preach if asked, and before he pronounced the benediction, he would ask, ‘if any one wished for him to appoint a prayer-meeting at his house the next morning at the rising of the sun?’ if any opened their doors, he would give out the appointment. These morning prayer-

meetings were often very solemn and interesting; sometimes they would continue the greater part of the forenoon. By the time these morning prayer-meetings came to a close, some one would wish him to appoint a meeting at his house, to preach in the evening. After this manner, meetings have continued for weeks together, where there has been any special attention to religion in the place.

“I do not know that I ever saw a more devoted man. I have lodged with him a number of times, when he has spent most of the night in prayer; for hours I have known him to stand with his face toward the wall of the room, in the posture of secret prayer.

“A lawyer once slept with him, who said in the morning, ‘he was unwilling to lay with such a man, for he believed he had been praying for him all night.’ The lawyer, however, soon after obtained a hope in the pardoning mercy of God. Mr. Davis staid several nights at a physician’s house in Barnstable. The physician told me that ‘he believed Mr. D.

spent whole nights is prayer, for when they went up to make his bed, they perceived that no person had slept in it.'

“I visited him in his last sickness. I was preaching at the time in Marshfield; he sent for me a few days before he died, at Widow Howe's, in Abington. When myself and wife went to his bed-side, he took us by the hand, and said, ‘he was glad to see us;’ he made a little pause, and took hold of my hand again, and said, ‘dear brother — I have got almost home, but I am not sorry that I have preached the gospel, that I have warned the righteous and wicked, that I have encountered difficulties for the cause of Christ, nor for the sacrifices which I have made for God.’ I asked him, have you no fears of death? He replied, ‘I cannot say that I have any at all.’ I asked him what was the principal source of his comfort? He said, ‘that the Lord reigned, and would do all his pleasure.’ And of the number that I have witnessed upon dying beds, which has been many, during more than fifty

years in which I have been in the ministry, I never saw a more heavenly countenance than his, and one that gave me more evidence that he was going immediately into heaven, and especially while my wife was singing the hymn he requested her to sing at this time, which was as follows :

- “ Arise and shine, O Zion fair,
Behold thy light is come!
The glorious, conquering King is near,
To take his exiles home.
- “ The trumpet ’s thundering through the sky,
To set poor prisoners free;
The day of wonders now is nigh,
The year of jubilee.
- “ Ye heralds blow your trumpets loud,
Through all the earth and sky,
Go, spread the news from pole to pole,
Behold, the judgment’s nigh!
- “ Blow out the sun, turn up the earth,
Consume the rolling flood;
While every star must disappear,
The moon turn into blood.

- “ Arise, ye nations underground,
 Before your Judge appear;
All tongues, all languages must come,
 Their final doom to hear.
- “ The watchmen all have left their walls,
 And with their flocks above,
On Canaan’s happy shore they stand,
 And shout Redeeming love.
- “ Come, all ye brethren, in the Lord,
 Whose hearts are joined in one,
Hold up your heads with courage bold,
 Your race is almost run.
- “ Above the clouds behold him stand!
 And smiling, bids you come;
While angels beckon you away,
 To their eternal home.
- “ To see a pilgrim as he dies,
 With glory in his view;
To heaven he lifts his longing eyes,
 And bids the world adieu.
- “ While friends stand weeping all around,
 And loth to let him go,
He shouts with his expiring breath,
 And leaves them all below.

“ O Christians, are you ready, now,
To cross the narrow flood?
On Canaan’s happy shore behold,
And see a smiling God.

“ The dazzling charms of that bright world,
Attract my soul above;
My tongue shall shout redeeming love,
When perfected in love.

“ Go on, my brethren in the Lord,
I’m bound to meet you there:
Though you’ve to tread the enchanted ground,
Hold out and do not fear.

“ Fight on, fight on, ye conquering souls,
The land keep still in view;
And when you reach fair Canaan’s shore,
I hope to meet with you.”

“ Thus passed from the labors of earth and the conflicts with sin, the devoted Christian, and the faithful minister of Jesus Christ. He laid aside the habiliments of a soldier to receive from his Lord and Redeemer, ‘ the crown of glory which fadeth not away.’

Yours, &c.,

THOMAS CONANT.”

CHAPTER XX.

CONCLUSION.

The following closing pages embrace a condensed view of my labors for the last twenty years. The reader will find here nothing marked or varying from the ordinary experience of ministers in general, and on this account, I am aware it may not prove very interesting. However, it will serve to show a continuous narrative of changes in my ministerial history down to the present time.

I left Brewster in Feb., 1839, and supplied the Baptist church in Chatham fifteen months. I then removed to Hanover, at the earnest request of my brethren in the ministry, in connection with the invitation of the church. The church in H. at this time, was in a very low, discouraged and distracted state, in consequence of the prevalence of various forms of

isms; and some of the members were carried away with false and pernicious doctrines which were then advocated. I labored with that people for the space of three years, and, with the blessing of the Head of the church, their condition was considerably improved for the better.

In 1843, I accepted an invitation to take the pastoral charge of the Baptist church in Scituate, where I continued my labors during the period of ten years. Previous to my going to S. a very extensive revival of religion had been enjoyed there, in connection with the labors of Bro. F. Damon, now of Bow, N. H., who then was a licentiate, and teaching school in the place, whom I assisted in his meetings, and baptized fifty-seven of the first converts. Bro. D. was soon after ordained, and baptized others, who desired to follow in the steps of their Lord and Master.

At the close of my term of service in S., in 1853, I had a pressing invitation to return again to Brewster, my former field of labor, but

on several accounts, viz: the health of my family, and besides it being permanently located in S., and also my own advanced age, I declined. Since then, I have occasionally supplied vacant pulpits and destitute places, as my services were wanted, and where I thought I could do good. Thus a few months in Kingston, at Gay Head, Hanson and N. Marshfield; a few Sabbaths in S. Abington, and nearly two years in Hanover. I am sensible of the approach of infirmities which accompany old age, yet, thus far, when I have been able and had the opportunity, I have been ready and willing to engage in my Master's work, and I desire to occupy till He comes.

At present, my field of labor is somewhat a new and novel one, yet heretofore quite needy, and into which I cheerfully entered without any stipulated pecuniary consideration whatever, but with the hope of doing good while I may, and as long as life continues. I endeavor to preach every Sabbath afternoon, when pleasant, in a hall, near Beach Woods, in the

town of Scituate, and those that attend meeting on the Sabbath, live from three to six miles from any meeting-house ; and it is a class of population that has not hitherto attended religious meetings anywhere. The number present is usually about sixty or seventy persons. Immediately after service, I have a Sabbath school, averaging about thirty scholars — ages from seven to twenty-two years. I instruct a Bible class of about ten, whose ages are from fifteen to twenty-two years. It is quite a notable fact, with but two exceptions, not one of all that attend either the Sabbath school or Bible class, was ever known to have any connection with any other school or Bible class. Very good attention is given to the word spoken and to the other exercises, which leads me to hope that the seed sown in weakness, with the blessing of the great Husbandman, will result in the conversion of souls. The distance, however, is so great for me to travel, which I usually do, that when winter comes on, I shall be obliged to suspend my labors for the present.

A little incident recently occurred which may be worthy of a passing remark: The Congregationalists had a Sabbath School Convention in Scituate, in September last, 1860; there were eight schools present. They gave me and my *mission* school, as they called it, an invitation to attend. At the close of the exercises, Mr. Williams, their agent, requested all that would wish to attend Sabbath school during life, to manifest it by rising. My school rose first. Mr. W. then spoke in terms of commendation and approval of the school. Besides, the school under the direction of its efficient superintendent, Mr. Charles Bailey, sung as well as any school in the Convention.

My friends will pardon a still further allusion to myself, and with this I shall close; and yet I would express my heartfelt gratitude for this last instance of unsought and unexpected appreciation of my humble services in the cause of Christ. I copy the following extract from the *Watchman & Reflector*. "The recent meeting of the Old Colony Baptist Pastoral

Union, was one of more than ordinary interest. In addition to the regular exercises, a pleasant retrospect of by-gone scenes was presented by some of our older ministers, and especially by our venerable father in Israel, Rev. Thomas Conant. The Lord employed him in founding the Baptist churches in Bellingham, Westboro', New Bedford, Abington and Hanover; and in enlarging the churches in Plymouth, Marshfield and Brewster. He was also among the first who preached evangelical doctrine in Edgartown, Hingham, Cohasset, Duxbury, and North Marshfield. At the conclusion of the pastoral sermon, by Rev. A. M. Averill, Rev. B. A. Edwards, in behalf of friends present and absent, presented Father Conant with a package of money, (\$100,) which had been put into his hands for that purpose, accompanied with such remarks as the occasion seemed to demand. Our aged friend expressed his hearty thanks for this and other tokens of regard, some of which had been left at his house. He also made some touching allusions to other days,

when instead of money, he received scoldings and threatenings, and, in one instance, stones, as the reward of his labors. Once he had a whip held over his head, and once was pulled out of a hall by his coat, for preaching the truth in love. Still he loved the cause of Christ, and all Christ's people, and left his benediction upon his younger brethren in the ministry, and on all his friends."



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