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A HISTORICAL SERMON

DELIVERED ON THE OCCASION OF THE

One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary

OF THE

First Congregational Church,

LEBANON, CONN.,

By REV. JOHN C. NICHOLS, Pastor.

ORGANIZED NOV. 27, 1700.

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HISTORICAL SERMON.

The land now embraced in this town, was, as you all know, a part of the territory claimed by the Pequots, a tribe inferior to no other New England tribe in ferocity, enterprise and passion for war; a tribe whose history constitutes the saddest page in the history of Connecticut, and the saddest in the sad history of the Indians. Injustice and neglect have been their portion, from the day that Endicot, in 1636, broke in pieces their canoes and burnt their wigwams.

It is supposed they came from the banks of the Hudson river not long before 1600, as their brethren, long after this, occupied that region undisturbed; and, it is believed, that they left and came to this region because that country was unable to sustain so numerous a population of hunters.

The Mohicans were a clan of the Pequots, of which clan, Uncas was the first Sachem. Uncas was closely related to the royal family by birth and marriage. Prompted by ambition, he seized upon what he deemed a favorable moment to secure the throne, and appeared, with a few followers in arms, against the Pequot Sachem. After varying fortunes, he at length, through the aid of the English, came into possession of all the northern part of New London

County, and the southern portions of Tolland and Windham Counties.

This clan assumed the name [Mohegan or Mohican] by which their brethren were known on the banks of the Hudson. I am sorry to be obliged to add that the Uncas whom we find in history is a very different man from the Uncas whom tradition has taught us to respect. He was in disposition, faithless, selfish and tyrannical, while his ambition is not relieved by one trait of magnanimity.

The Rev. Mr. Fitch speaks of him, when some seventy summers must have passed over his head, as a liar and murderer, a great opposer of godliness among his own people.

The Indian name of this town was Poquechaneed. We can easily suppose that these hills, brooks and plains would attract the attention of the Indians as promising abundant game; and here we know they kindled their fires. Beneath the deep forests that shaded these hills, they pursued, undisturbed, the deer, the bear and the beaver. Along these brooks, and over these plains, they hunted the pigeon, the partridge and the wild turkey.

It consisted originally, as is known to us, of four proprietors, as they were termed, and was obtained from Owaneco, son of the crafty and faithless Uncas.

The first deed was given to Capt. Samuel Mason and Capt. John Stanton of Stonington, and to Capt. Benjamin Brewster and Mr. John Birchard of Norwich, and bears date 1692. It was confirmed by the General Assembly 1705. It was called "the five mile purchase," being 5 miles square, and reached from what was at that time, the northern line of Norwich, to the northern boundary of what is now the North Society.

Samuel Mason, who seems to have taken the lead in the 5 mile

purchase, was son of the Capt. John Mason, who was chosen Deputy Governor of the colony in 1660, and who, on many occasions of those days of trial to the colonies of New England, proved himself a true and useful friend. Trained up in the camp, under Sir John Fairfax, he was qualified to be leader of the little companies sent against the Indians. If we weep over the fate of the Pequots, before we condemn Mason and his little company, we must place ourselves back in those days, and look upon the scene from the scattered huts of our Puritan fathers. Samuel Mason left no son. He was, like his father, a warm friend of the Mohicans.

The second grant from the Mohican chief, was to James Fitch and Capt. John Mason, and was deeded to them in 1702. This, at the time it was deeded, lay north of the limits of Norwich, and south of the 5 mile grant.

This John Mason was a grandson of the Deputy Governor. His father died of a wound received in King Phillip's war; and this James Fitch was the son of the first minister of Norwich, the Rev. James Fitch, who labored as a missionary among the Mohegans and gathered a little congregation, some of whom he believed truly converted. Phillip's war seems to have scattered this little circle of praying Indians. He died in 1702 at the house of his son, who lived in Lebanon, and was buried in the old burying ground. He married a daughter of the Deputy Governor, John Mason. He was a large-hearted and good man, and glad should I be if his descendants will re-build his weather and time-worn monument.

The Mason family of Lebanon, are the descendants of Daniel, the third son of the Deputy Governor, whose son Daniel, jr., born in Roxbury, and baptized by the Indian apostle, Elliot, lived and died in Lebanon. His widow afterwards married a man by the

name of Brainard of Haddam, and became the mother of the devoted David Brainard.

The deed conveying land to Dewey and Clark is dated 1700, and embraced, as I suppose, what is now Columbia, and probably a small adjoining strip of Lebanon. Wm. Clark was from Norwich. I know of but one family of his descendants, and that one resides in Columbia. Josiah Dewey was from Northampton; the late Esquire Dewey was a descendant, and the present occupant of the house and farm is the fifth in descent from him.

The fourth property consisted of a small strip of land called "the Gore" lying between the five mile purchase and the bounds of Windham.

Lebanon, was so called by the General Court in 1697. In 1700, these several purchases were united and the town was incorporated by act of the General Court. In 1705, it sent to the General Court its first representative, viz., William Clark, to the spring session, and Samuel Huntington to the fall session.

Wm. Clark was associated with Josiah Dewey in one of the purchases of land from Owaneco. Samuel Huntington is the first of the name I have met with on record. The land which he first occupied, lay part in the five mile and part in the one mile purchase. As individuals held land by purchase of the Mohican chief, I infer that there were some inhabitants here before the five mile purchase was made, in 1692. In 1695 there were thirty-two heads of families who had taken homelots on the five mile purchase, most, if not all of which lay, as I suppose on this street.

New England had, at this time, passed through its darkest days, its severest struggle with the natives of the country; for King Phillip had lain among the dead twenty-five years. But yet all fear

of these first enemies of the English had not subsided. Tradition states that a log fort stood near where the house of Judge Pettis now stands, into which the people retired at night. I suspect that the danger arose from the war between a rebel clan and the Mohicans, as about this time we learn upon the same authority, that a company [of Indians] finding a Mohegan child in the Brewster family, living where the Misses Brewster now live, dashed its brains out against the garden wall, while they offered no injury to the other inmates of the family.

Another log fort stood where Rev. Mr. Miner now lives, and the well used by the fort is the one still in use.

I find this part of the town called, as early as 1703, sometimes the South Society and sometimes the First Society; and what is now called "the village," is so called as early as 1703. It received this name of village from the fact that its first settlers intended to build there a house of worship for themselves.

The first settlers of the southern part of the five mile grant, early established the public worship of God. For the convenience of attending public worship, and sustaining schools, the land on the street was divided into homelots, as they called them, of forty-two acres each. If a man wanted more land, it was to be back from these. This division brought the houses within a convenient distance of the place of worship. As early as 1697 a lot was reserved for the minister who should settle in Lebanon, which in 1702, was given and granted to the first minister of the town and to his heirs, by Capt. Samuel Mason and Capt. Brewster, two of the original proprietors of the five mile purchase. This lot was the one on which the houses of Mr. Lyman and Deacon Asher L. Smith now stand; for I find an arrangement between the town and the first

minister, Rev. Mr. Parsons, in reference to a road to the mill, opened through his homelot. This mill was built, not by the first minister, as I stated last year, but by his father, Joseph Parsons of Norwich, [Northampton]; and, as an encouragement to build it, the town gave him one hundred and twenty acres of land, provided he maintained it ten years. In 1700, a committee was appointed to take a view of the front part of the ministers' lot and see what was needed to advance the front of the lot, for convenience of the setting up of the ministers' house. This was the first parsonage, and it stood in the lower end of [now] Deacon Smith's garden.

One Richard Lyman had liberty this year to improve the ministers' lot, and to have, for his labor, what he might obtain from it.

Having thus provided a parsonage, and cleared the land around, they began to inquire for a minister.

In July, 1699, they invited Mr. Joseph Parsons, of Northampton, to settle with them. Nov. 27, 1700, a church was organized and Mr. Parsons ordained its pastor. The first year the society gave him forty pounds; the seventh year they gave him ninety pounds, increasing it the intervening years. The following are the names of the nine persons embodied in church order, viz., Josiah Dewey, William Holton, Jedediah Strong, John Hutchinson, Micah Mudge, Thomas Hunt, John Baldwin, William Clark and John Calkins, all of whom occupied, at that time, homelots, or lived on this street, though some of them afterwards removed to a great distance.

It will be pleasant to know more of these men, who, amid all the embarrassments of a new country, and so early in the settlement of the town, assumed the obligations of church membership, and went forward in the settlement of a pastor. They could have been no ordinary men in perseverance, zeal and faith.

Strong, Holton, Dewey, Hutchinson, (and perhaps others) were from Northampton, Mass. Strong was killed in a skirmish with the Indians near Albany about 1722 [Oct. 12, 1709].

Baldwin, Clark and Calkins were from Norwich. Dewey and Clark were proprietors of the northwestern part of the town. Dewey and Baldwin seem to have been chosen deacons. William Clark was associated with Samuel Huntington, in the first representation of the town at the General Court. The first members of the church seem for many years to have been prominent, public spirited men, to whom the town committed much of its business. To the Holton family we are indebted for the "Holton Sweeting" apple.

The Rev. Joseph Parsons was the son of Joseph Parsons and Elizabeth Strong of Northampton. He was born in 1671, and graduated at Harvard University in 1697. He remained the pastor of this church till 1708, when he was dismissed, and he was again settled in Salisbury, Mass., where he died in 1739, aged 68. He had four sons and one daughter, of whom, John, died while a member of Harvard College. Joseph, who was born in Lebanon, was ordained in Bradford, Mass., in 1726. He was the father of the Rev. Joseph Parsons, pastor of the church in West Brookfield in 1759. Samuel and William settled over churches in New Hampshire. Elizabeth, who was born in this town, married a clergyman. To this Joseph Parsons, who married Elizabeth Strong, the Parsons family, now so widely scattered, and so well known, look, as their common ancestor. Mr. Parsons left no record of his ministry, except the names of those who united with the church, and of the children who were baptized. It was left to those who were in full communion in other churches, among the first settlers, to call Mr. Parsons.

Where the people first met for worship, before 1700, it is impossible to learn ; probably at some private house. In the next month after the settlement of a pastor, they fixed upon a spot on which to place a meeting-house, which was a little south of the house in which we are now assembled ; probably in a line with the old brick schoolhouse. Here it was to stand for fifty years. It was to be thirty-six feet in length, twenty-six in width, and sixteen between joints. It had a gallery, and was finished in 1706.

In 1712, it was enlarged twenty-six feet in width, and the next year was plastered and whitewashed, and a new pulpit was put into it. In 1718, a bell was procured.

In 1701, Mr. Parsons, the pastor, proposed to the town, that instead of the meeting house which they had voted to build, they should build a barn, 28 feet in length and 24 in width, upon his homelot ; the society to have the use of it for six years, as a place of worship, when he would give the town the worth of it, and would likewise give ten pounds out of his salary towards building it ; provided that they would build a fashionable meeting house. The town voted to accept the offer, and doubtless worshipped in that till the fashionable house was completed.

In 1714, the meeting house was seated by a committee, who were directed to do it, according to the estates of the people.

The first pew next the pulpit was to be the highest seat, the second pew and fore seat were to be equal, and the third pew and second seat equal. We thus see the reason why the first seat on the right of the pulpit is, still in New England, given to the ministers family.

The settlers on the one mile district, [purchase] wished, for convenience of worship, to be joined to the five mile purchase. They

were united on this condition, that the meeting house should be placed in the center of the two tracts, running north and south; and at this center it was built.

The people living in the northern part of the town also wished to associate with the south society in public worship, and were allowed to on this express condition, that they would make no attempt to remove the already established place of worship.

In 1708, Mr. Parsons was dismissed, and for three years the church remained destitute. The same year they called Mr. Samuel Whittlesey of Saybrook, and in 1709 they also called the Rev. Oxenbridge Thatcher, both of whom declined the call. In 1710, ✓ they invited Mr. Samuel Welles, (a native of Glastenbury, and grandson of Governor Welles,) who was ordained in 1711. They gave one hundred pounds settlement, and ninety pounds as his yearly salary.

Mr. Welles remained the pastor of this church until 1722, when, at his own request, he was dismissed. The reasons assigned by him, to the church and society, for this request, were his own ill health, and the absence of his family in Boston, the native place of his wife.

Of Mr. Welles, we can know but little; his ministry was a brief one, and the record left by him is almost nothing. Among the church notes recorded, is this, that John Bull be on probation for the office of deacon.

By Mr. Welles, the half-way covenant was, in 1715, introduced into this church—a practice which seems almost as strange to us, as it was disastrous to the churches of New England.

Mr. Welles built and occupied the house now occupied by Mr. David Woodworth, the frame of which must have been standing

about one hundred and thirty years. An anecdote handed down by tradition would lead us to fear, that with him, as with certain whom the apostle James mentions, gold rings and good apparel had far too much influence. The father of Gov. Trumbull sometimes visited Boston, as a drover. On one occasion, Mr. Welles seemed shy of his former parishioner, as if ashamed of his homespun dress and plain appearance. When Mr. Welles next visited Lebanon he called on Mr. Trumbull, who declined shaking hands with him, remarking "if you don't know me in Boston, I don't know you in Lebanon."

By the [same] council which dismissed Mr. Welles, Mr. Solomon Williams, a native of Hatfield, Mass, was ordained. The society voted to give him, as a salary, one hundred and twenty pounds yearly for ten years, in public bills of credit, or in provisions; and at the end of ten years, to give him one hundred pounds in bills of credit, or in provisions, according to the value of bills of credit at the time of his settlement.

It was soon seen that their present house of worship was too small to accomodate the growing population, and the very next year after the settlement of Mr. Williams, they began to agitate the question of a new meeting house. The building of a house of worship is even now felt to be a great undertaking; what then must it have been one hundred and twenty-five years ago, by a society recently formed composed of members brought together from various places, and surrounded by all the embarassments of a new settlement.

In prosecuting the work, our fathers met with many obstructions. "The Crank," as it was then called, now Columbia, had become a society by itself in 1716, and had its own minister, so that no aid could be expected from them. The families living in the western and southwestern part of the town expected sometime before long

to become a distinct parish. It was natural that they should oppose the building of a new meeting house; or at least decline being taxed for a house so remote from them, and the accommodations of which they hoped not long to need. They therefore took this occasion to request to be set off by themselves.

In the first society there was a difference of opinion in regard to this division. Some felt that the request was a proper one, and should be at once granted; others felt, that as these families had aided in the settlement of Mr. Williams, they should, for a while longer, at least, aid supporting him. To go now, they feared would be ruinous, interrupting the efforts to build a new house, and leaving themselves too feeble to sustain the institutions of religion.

The question was at length referred to the General Court, and though the committee appointed by the Court to examine the circumstances of the society decided against a division, they were set off, as a new society in 1727, two years after the vote to build a new house in this society, and to have a minister of their own.

From the first settlement of the town, it seems to have been supposed that another parish would be formed north of this, and a place of worship built in "the village." It was because of this expectation that the families there living named that street "the village." It was to be supposed that they would object to being taxed for a house so remote from them, and which they hoped soon to have no occasion to use. To quiet their feelings and preserve peace, the first society, in the spirit of justice, voted at a society meeting, that as soon as the list of the society should amount to a certain sum, a society should be set off in the north part of the town, provided the General Court allowed thereof, and that whatever the families living there should give towards the new meeting

house, then building, should be paid back again. A committee was appointed to lay this vote before the General Court, at its next session, and request them to enact in such form as to oblige the money to be paid back to them. The General Court directed the list, on which this new meeting house was made, to be kept among the records of the society, to enable the society to carry out their vote.

In 1731 the southern line of the North Society was run, and the South Society again promised to pay back whatever the families living north of this line should pay toward the new house; provided they were made a society by the General Court within eighteen years.

These votes seem to have satisfied the families of that part of the town, as well they might, and the new meeting house was soon completed. I will add here, that in 1741, the South Society voted to allow the people living in the North Society their ministerial rates, the four or five months of cold weather and bad travelling, to support preaching among themselves. The next year also, they allowed the village people thirty pounds to procure lay preaching among themselves during the winter. How often this was done I do not know; in looking through the old records my eye fell upon these two votes.

I cannot help remarking, how different, doubtless, would have been all that part of the town, had the wise and good purpose of its first settlers been fulfilled, and a meeting house had been placed in the village, so that the families who lived there could have enjoyed, from the beginning of the town, the pastoral care and society of an educated and pious minister.

Nor can I refrain from remarking that the quarrel which arose near the close of the century, about the location of the meeting-

house, would have been prevented, with all its afflictive consequences to individual families, and to the town, had the men who took the lead in it informed themselves of the facts which I have just stated. It was in this quarrel, as in many others; they were too much excited to stop to inquire into the facts, or to admit that they could be wrong.

In 1733, a committee was appointed to seat the people in the new meeting house according to their age and estate. At the same society meeting it was voted that they would separate and set apart the new meeting house, wholly, only and entirely for the divine services and the public worship of God, from time to time forever, and for no other use. This new meeting house, opened for worship in 1733, stood where the brick one now stands. It was sixty feet in length, forty-six feet in width, and twenty-six feet between joints.

Large as it was, it was filled every Sabbath. To obtain a good seat in the gallery it is said to have been necessary to be early in the house.

It had a steeple, and was furnished with a bell weighing five hundred and thirty-five pounds. In September, 1761, a larger bell weighing nine hundred and fifty-nine pounds was procured. It remained the place of worship seventy-one years.

In 1736, the society appointed a committee to fix the places in the highway where particular persons might build them horse sheds or stables and small Sabbath-day houses. It would be well if more of this shed building spirit, for the comfort of our horses, had survived to our day. There would then have been fewer appeals to the compassion of the merciful man, from animals, exposed during the Sabbath to the wind and storm.

Dr. Williams, the pastor of this church from 1722 to 1776, was a

man much esteemed in his day as a writer, a theologian and a christian. He published some occasional sermons, and two or more pamphlets in support and explanation of the half-way covenant, in reply to President Edwards. He was a graduate of Harvard, and received his doctorate from that institution.

Among his parishioners were men of great worth and high political standing, whose patriotism he encouraged, and in whose political sympathies he warmly shared.

The last thing recorded in the society's books of this venerable and good man is a request that five pounds out of his last year's salary be given toward the public expense in defence of our rights and properties, though, he adds, "there is no tax now collecting on account of expense."

How far Dr. Williams sympathized with the Armenians of his day, I am not able to decide. That he did so, to some extent, I infer from his views of the ordinances regarding baptism and the Lord's supper, as means of regeneration, to be used by the impenitent. He administered baptism to adults, without requiring faith in them, and received all to the communion who offered themselves, without a relation of their experience, provided,—to use the language of the recorded vote—"they be of sound knowledge in religion, and a conversation free from scandal." Views so unscriptural would now be tolerated in no evangelical church of our order. A church filled up in this way would have little sympathy with spiritual religion. In such a church, discipline would be impossible. With this practice before us we need not wonder at some of the scenes through which this church has passed. The creed of the church shows that the doctrine of the new birth has always been received by it as an important truth. But the practice of which I have just

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spoken, as opening the way for disorder in the church, and the existence of other sects, is based on the supposition that this new birth is not an ascertainable change, but a gradual and imperceptible one.

The ministry of Dr. Williams was exercised during a period in which much good and much evil appeared. Whitefield made his appearance, and was used by God in waking up the churches to new life and greater spirituality. Nothing left to the guidance of men, however wise and good, is free from error.

In this great and extensive revival, evils found their way. Davenport started upon his career of ruin kindling fires, which, if now extinct, have left the ground barren over which they passed.

New London and Windham Counties were the scenes of most disorder. Here the separatists gathered most societies. The position which we occupy, enables us to take a more correct view of the origin of these new societies, all of which have, under the name of "new lights" or "separatists," passed away, than could be taken by cotemporaries.

It was the half-way covenant—the practice of receiving unconverted men into the church, and the error which makes regeneration, an unascertainable change. It opened the door for all the sad and long living evils which attended the great and glorious revival of that generation.

I have no evidence that Dr. Williams ever saw this, but he used his influence to bring back the wanderers, and arrest the evils of their course. Davenport acknowledged him as one of the instruments used by God in reclaiming him from his errors.

In 1747, this church did, by vote, withdraw from the several bodies of separatists, as disorderly walkers, as a testimony, to use

the language of the records, "which we look upon ourselves called to give to the honor of Christ."

Whitefield, I believe, did not visit Lebanon ; but the pastor of this church was a sincere friend of the revival which followed his labors. He sent in his attestation to the reality and glory of this work of God, to the friends of the revival, who met in council at Boston in 1743. After listening to a discourse before the General Court of Connecticut, in which the preacher gave utterance to his hostility to the revival, and invoked the artillery of heaven against its promoters, Dr. Williams said, to express his disapproval of it, that he never before saw the artillery of heaven turned against itself.

In 1742, the General Court forbade, under heavy penalties and forfeitures, any minister from preaching in any parish but his own, without an express invitation from the pastor of the parish. This church, the very next month after the passage of this act, voted unanimously as follows : "It is our express and hearty desire, that the pastor will, at any and all times, as he shall have opportunity, and as he shall judge most fit, and likely to promote the interests of religion, desire the assistance of any regular orthodox minister of the gospel, or regular licensed candidate, either belonging to this colony, or any foreign parts, to preach in this parish, or perform any service of the ministry."

"Of foreign parts," refers to Whitefield, and in the absence of the pastor, the deacons were requested to do the same. In this vote we see, I think, disapprobation of the Act of the General Court, as infringing on religious liberty, and a warm sympathy with the work of God, then in progress in the land.

It is difficult for us to see how this sympathy with the revival men

of that day is to be reconciled with the half-way covenant so earnestly defended by Dr. Williams, and so long practiced by this church, or with the practice of bringing unconverted men into the church, that the seals of the covenant might be the means of their conversion. But, with the evidence before us, we cannot doubt that Dr. Williams and this church looked with a truly friendly eye upon the revival; and if they opposed the separatist as they did, and as they should have done, it was because of the pernicious errors which these blundering and ignorant, yet conscientious men, mingled with the truth which they advocated.

In 1772, Dr. Williams preached his half-century sermon, and in the winter of 1776 closed his earthly labors, and entered, we doubt not, upon his reward. We have among us, here and there one, yet lingering on their way, who can recall his personal appearance, and we find his name cherished with warm love in the hearts of many a child and grandchild of those who knew and loved him, as a pastor.

The church and society remained destitute of a pastor for six years. Among the candidates who preached here, and who received a call to settle, were Mr. Solomon Williams, a nephew of the deceased, Mr. Nathan Fenn, and Mr. Walter Lyon. To Mr. Williams and Mr. Fenn, they gave each a second invitation.

Related, as Mr. Williams was, to their revered pastor, it was natural that many on this account should warmly advocate his settlement. But others had their objections, so that he at length withdrew the affirmative answer, which he at first gave to the call to settle.

Mr. Fenn, if I was to judge from the votes of the society, and from the recollections of some among us, awakened a deeper and more extensive interest than Mr. Williams. He was a different

preacher, more earnest in manner and less ornate in style than Mr. Williams. On a division of the house, one hundred and twenty-nine voted for his settlement, nineteen against it, yet he declined the several calls. Some objected on the ground that they did not wish to be scared into heaven, and these objectors were found in the families of influence about the church.

Mr. Fenn, I infer, had no sympathy with the half-way covenant. He felt, too, that those should not be admitted into the church who did not give evidence of personal piety. This would lead the special friends of Dr. Williams to feel coolly toward him, while he doubtless saw, in a church so gathered, the materials of future disorder and the necessity of discipline that might rend the church in pieces.

In November, 1781, the society invited Mr. Zebulon Ely to settle here in the ministry, and November, 1782, Mr. Ely was ordained over this church. Mr. Ely was a native of Lyme in this State. He continued the pastor of this church till his death in 1824. He was a man of sound mind, and of evangelical views. Of the ordinances of religion he had different views from Dr. Williams, and we no longer hear of the half-way covenant. Whether it was laid aside by the vote of the church after using it ninety years, or whether by common consent it fell into disuse, I am unable to say. A portion of the church was always opposed to it. Mr. Ely evidently regarded personal piety, repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus as essential qualifications for church membership.

Individuals, however, during the early part of his ministry, were admitted into the church, who did not at the time profess repentance and faith, but simply a desire to flee from the wrath to come; and he received them with the full understanding, that they would not

come to the communion at present, but when they felt qualified, to come. In this thing the church probably controlled him.

Mr. Ely remained pastor of this church forty-two years. He died November 18, 1824. The last discourse which he delivered from this desk, was from the words, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me," and fit words were these with which to close a ministry in which Christ had been held forth as the true teacher, as the Great Saviour, and as God, manifest in the flesh. I know not what more appropriate words he could have found for the text of that last sermon.

Mr. Ely, to quote from his funeral sermon, was a man of learning, a good, classical scholar, and what was more estimable, he appeared to be a man of ardent piety. He had a sound mind, and was active and influential in the counsels of the church.

I find no record of any extensive revivals of religion during the long period, a century and a quarter, over which we have travelled, but yet such seasons of mercy were enjoyed by this church as is evident from the fact that during some years many more united with the church than during other years. In 1741, ninety six persons were received into full communion. In a sermon preached in 1741, Dr. Williams speaks of the great and glorious work which God was carrying on in this land. He speaks of meetings of great interest and of many conversions. Miss Mitty Dewey used to speak of a revival in the early part of Mr. Ely's ministry in which he was very active in attending religious meetings, sometimes preaching in the open air, when the house could not contain all who were interested to hear.

Near the close of the life of Mr. Ely, there was a season of much



religious interest, during which many were converted, as they hoped, and about seventy united with the church, some of whom have in cheerful hope fallen asleep, and others are still members of this church.

At the time of his settlement, this was one of the largest and most united societies in the State. I have heard Dr. McEwen say that it was the second only to the first church in Hartford. But during Mr. Ely's ministry occurred the unhappy quarrel in regard to the meeting-house, to which I have already alluded—a quarrel which left mildew and death on the spiritual interests of many a household—which separated many a family from the house of God, and which put beyond all hope the execution of the plan of the first settlers of the town of having a meeting-house in the village. Few things affect the best interests of society so disastrously, as such a quarrel.

The old meeting-house, as it is called, was removed in 1804, and the present brick one built on the spot on which it stood, and was dedicated in 1807.

After the death of Mr. Ely in 1824, the church remained without a pastor about one year. On September 29, 1825, Mr. Edward Bull was ordained, and was dismissed in 1837.

For three years the church was again without a pastor. February 5, 1840, your present pastor was here installed.

For a century and a half, the gospel has here been preached, and the ordinances administered. During this long period this church has been without a pastor only eleven years, and for more than a century there was but one ordination. There have been six ordinations in all.

The confession of faith adopted in 1700, is the one now in use,

with a few verbal alterations. To this, its several pastors, and its many, many members have assented, as containing the essential doctrines of the gospel. The covenant now in use, is longer than the first one used; when or by whom it was altered I cannot learn.

In 1766, Samuel Kirkland was ordained here as a missionary to the Indians. He was the father of Dr. Kirkland, late president of Harvard college. This missionary was instrumental of the conversion of Shenandoah, the famous Oneida chief, whose last words were "bury me by the side of my minister and friend, that I may go up with him at the great resurrection."

From this church went forth, Alice, the wife of David Bacon, missionary to the Indians; sent out by the missionary society of this town in 1800.

Of us also was Rebecca Williams, afterwards wife of Mr. Hebard, missionary to Syria; and Charles Wetmore, now missionary and physician at the Sandwich Islands.

I have thus given a brief sketch of the history of this church and society. Compared with the history of states and kingdoms it is of little interest; yet, how important is the bearing of the events we have reviewed, upon our character and destiny. All that is favorable, in the circumstances of our birth, to an education and moral improvement, we owe to the efforts and sacrifices of the venerable men who have subdued the forests, and who converted these wet and cold marshes into fruitful fields.

They were men of energy, and perseverance, and firmness. What, but perseverance in duty, could have removed the original forests from these plains and hills, and covered them with plenty? What, but firmness, could have retained them here amid the dangers and exposures and labors of a new settlement.

They were men impressed with the value of education. The school-house went up alongside with the house of public worship.

In 1700, they appropriated two hundred acres of land for the purpose of maintaining a school. At the same time the Rev. Mr. Parsons gave five acres, Deacon Dewey ten, Samuel Calkins five, Daniel Mason ten, and John Calkins ten, all for the use of schools. This is the first notice of a school; and it is a notice most honorable to the venerable men mentioned in it, and in no succeeding year are the schools forgotten. The records of the town furnish abundant evidence of their continued interest in the subject of education.

In 1740, a grammar school was established by a vote of the town, a school which in time rose to a high reputation in the state and land, and which drew to this place the children of many of the first families in the country. When there were but thirteen states in the Union there were pupils here from nine of them.

To what else, but this early interest of our fathers in schools, can we trace the fact that Lebanon has sent more sons to college than any other country town in the state; so that Lebanon has had a representative in college nearly all this period. To what other influence than that started, when Parsons and Dewey and others gave their acres for the support of the school, is it, that so many of the sons of Lebanon have entered the different useful professions and occupied commanding positions in society?

Without much effort we can count three hundred and forty-five ministers of the gospel, of our order, whose parents lived in this town; among whom I mention Jonathan Trumbull, Eliphalet Metcalf, Samuel Huntington, Eliphalet Huntington, Lynd Huntington, Eliphalet Williams, Eliphalet Lyman, Joseph Lyman, William Ly-

man, Asa Lyman, Lathrop Rockwell, Timothy Stone and others. Four have become members in other denominations.

Two natives of this town have been United States Senators; twelve, members of Congress; five, Governors; one, Commissary General; one, aid to General Washington; one, aid to General Gates; three, distinguished painters; five, Judges of the Supreme Court; one, signer of the Declaration of Independence; one, Speaker of the House of Representatives; one, deputy Postmaster General; one colored man, who was awhile, member of Dartmouth College, was a preacher in Boston, and became Prime Minister of St. Domingo. Twenty-eight entered the medical profession, and twenty-three, at least, entered that of the law.

Again, they were men who valued and loved the institutions of the gospel. What, but a true and warm attachment to the institutions of religion, could have led them amid the labors of a new settlement, and when remote from any place at which they could exchange the products of the farm for money, to settle a minister, build a parsonage and a house of public worship? What, but love of religion, could have made them so ready to endure privations and hardships for the sake of truth and righteousness? What, but religion, could inspire such care for each other, and for posterity? They were the very men to whom it is given to lay the foundations and raise the superstructure of society. Had they been irresolute, or profane, or sabbath breakers, or despisers of religion, the honor would never have been given to them of laying the foundations of the prosperity, the happiness, the education, and the piety, which have ever existed in this town.

Such men, men of fixed purpose, of industry, of public spirit, and of strong attachments to the institutions of education and re-

ligion, are the men needed to settle the great west and southwest of our country. Such men secure prosperity, while mildew and death rest upon all the efforts of the infidel and the contemnners of religion, to build up society.

Such men are also needed to hand down what we have received to those who are to succeed us ; and as the successors of such men, a great responsibility rests upon us. We are the connecting link between the past and the future, and we owe it to our fathers, to our country, and to God, to transmit to coming generations the means of education, the blessings of liberty, and the truths of religion which we have received.



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