

*Rev. Henry W. Wright, D.D.*

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A

**SERMON,**

**DELIVERED AT MEDWAY,**

**NOVEMBER 4, 1813,**

ON THE

**CLOSE OF A CENTURY,**

SINCE THE

INCORPORATION OF THE TOWN.

—  
BY LUTHER WRIGHT, A. M.  
PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN SAID TOWN.  
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DEDHAM:

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REV. LUTHER WRIGHT.

## CENTURY SERMON.

EXODUS xii. 14.

*This day shall be unto you for a memorial.*

IN this chapter we have a particular account of the institution of the Jewish Passover, a solemn festival, in commemoration of God's passing over or sparing the first-born of the Israelites from immediate death, while in a sudden and wondrous manner he destroyed "all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast." The day, in which this event, so distressing to the Egyptians, and so signally propitious to the oppressed Israelites, happened, was a *memorable* day in the Jewish annals. In view of this miraculous preservation and deliverance of God's chosen people, well might he declare, as in the text, *This day shall be unto you for a memorial*, a season for commemorating the gracious interposition of Heaven in your favor.

We are assembled, my hearers, in the sanctuary, for the purpose not of commemorating any *single* or *particular* event of divine Providence, but of reviewing a *series of events*, which have occurred in the course of a century past, in particular reference to this town; and which compose the most prominent traits in its history. As this day completes a *century*, adding eleven days for the alteration of style, since the

legal incorporation of this town, not only common usage, but propriety, and gratitude to our bountiful Benefactor, appear to require, that we should *consider the days of old, the years of ancient times.*

It is not only gratifying to curiosity, but useful and instructive, to examine ancient records, and collect the most remarkable and interesting occurrences which compose the history, not merely of states and kingdoms, but even of towns and parishes. When we thus review, and *consider the days of old, the years of many generations,* even so locally restricted, we shall see the wisdom and goodness, as well as the justice and sovereignty of God, manifested towards the inhabitants of this town from its first settlement to the present period. In proportion as our knowledge of the dispensations of divine Providence towards this people increases, we shall find occasion to love, serve, and obey the God of our fathers. Surely, this day ought to be unto *us* for a memorial of divine goodness and merciful interposition. It becomes us to call into grateful recollection the work of the Lord, and to consider the merciful operations of his hands. God's ancient covenant people were required to *remember the days of old, the years of many generations.* He enjoined it upon them, to set aside certain seasons, for commemorating the wonderful and gracious dispensations of his Providence towards them. Certain it is, that "God established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded their fathers, that they should make them known to their children, that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children, that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God; but keep his commandments."

Happy for us, if a review of some of the most interesting events of divine Providence towards the people of this town should be instrumental in producing these desirable effects.

Before I proceed, suffer me to premise, that the historical sketch, which I am about to attempt, will be very imperfect, through a deficiency of documents and records. But the knowledge of such facts and events as I have been able to obtain, I shall endeavor impartially, fully, and correctly, to relate.

That territory, which *now* includes the town of Medfield, was originally a part of Dedham, and known by the name of Dedham village. At the time this village was taken from Dedham, *that part* of Medway which is *now* the East Parish\* in said town, and which *before* was unincorporated territory, was annexed to *said village*, and incorporated with it by the General Court, May 23, 1651, by the name of Medfield. How many inhabitants or families Medfield contained at the time of its incorporation I have no documents to determine. Although its situation is very pleasant, its soil generally fertile, and its territory well watered by Charles river and several smaller streams, its settlement must have been greatly retarded by the hostile incursions of the Indians. About one half of Medfield was burnt by the Indians, Feb. 21, 1675, and eighteen of its inhabitants cruelly slain. After having perpetrated these infernal deeds, tradition says, they crossed Charles river, and retired to a rising ground, near the place where Mr. Thomas Morse now lives, and there indulged their savage mirth.

Between the 1st of February and the 11th of May 1676, the Indians attempted the invasion of a garrison, long known by the name of the *Stone House*, and sit-

\* See Note (A).

uated near the northeast corner of this town, on land now owned by Mr. Abner Mason. But in this attempt they met with a notorious repulse at *Boggistor*, a small hamlet, or company of farms; and were compelled to abandon the enterprise.

In May 1659, the General Court, in answer to a petition of the inhabitants of Medfield, granted the town, as an addition to their former bounds, and at the west end thereof, a tract of land, extending two miles east and west, and four miles north and south, provided it should not interfere with any former grants; and Capt. Lusher and Lieut. Fisher were appointed to lay out the said grant. This territory has ever since been distinguished by the name of the *New Grant*, and now composes (with little variation) *that part of the West Parish in Medway*, which belongs to this town.

When this town was a part of Medfield, I am informed, that the house for public worship stood *where, or near where*, the house, erected for the same purpose in that town, now stands. There was no prospect of an agreement, by which the meeting-house might be removed to accommodate the inhabitants situated west of Charles river. Besides, the local situation of the town was such as to render it inconvenient for the remote inhabitants of the town to assemble at one place for public worship. Under these circumstances, and taking into view the increasing population of the west part of the town, the inhabitants of that part of Medfield, which is now Medway, petitioned to be set off as a separate town; and, on the 24th of October 1713 (O. S.) the General Court granted their request. It was not in consequence of any dislike to their minister, or the church and society to which they belonged, or any difference in religious sentiments, that they



sought a separation ; but that they and their posterity might more conveniently enjoy gospel privileges.

The inhabitants of Medway, although small in number, compared with their present state, and their means for defraying expenses comparatively scanty, soon evinced their sense of the importance of the regular and stated administration of the word and ordinances of God by erecting, in the year 1714, the next after their existence as a town, a decent and commodious house for public worship.

Mr. David Deming preached in this town, as a candidate for the christian ministry, in October 1714 ; and received a call to settle in this place, as a public teacher of religion, January 31, 1715, about fifteen months after its legal incorporation, and gave his answer in the affirmative on the 12th of September following. He was ordained to the work of the gospel ministry in this town on the third Wednesday of November 1715. Unhappily Mr. Deming left no church records, of which I could ever obtain any account. In consequence of this failure I am unable to ascertain, *when* a church was first gathered in this town, of whom, and of what number it was composed. For the same reason I am unable to afford you any historical account of ecclesiastical transactions during his ministry. The Rev. Mr. Deming was dismissed, at his own request, by the church and town assembled together, September 24, 1722, in the seventh year of his ministry. His ministry was short ; and, according to tradition, unhappy for himself, and for the church and people in this town.

But that holy and merciful Being, who regards his church and people as the apple of his eye, did not long permit this town to be destitute of the stated means of public, religious instruction. On the

23d of March 1724, the town concurred with the church in calling Mr. Nathan Bucknam to settle with them in the gospel ministry. Mr. Bucknam gave an affirmative answer to this invitation, on the 24th of October following. As he was a *minor* when he received this call, it is said he delayed his answer several months, that he might arrive to the age of twenty-one years, previous to his deciding upon a subject of such magnitude and importance. He was solemnly set apart to the work of the christian ministry in this town, December 23, 1724. This was an auspicious and happy day to the inhabitants of this town. Although Mr. Bucknam was young, and of a slender constitution, he was mature in christian knowledge and experience, and strong in the faith and hope of the gospel. At the time of his settlement he was deservedly considered as an able, pious, and promising young man. Much was hoped, under God, through the instrumentality of his public and private labors. Nor were these hopes and expectations disappointed. As to his religious sentiments, they were Calvinistic. He firmly believed in those doctrines, which are usually called the doctrines of grace, or the doctrines of the reformation. These he faithfully and unequivocally preached; and these were the ground of his consolation and hope in death. He was diligent and faithful in the discharge of all ministerial duties. His people loved and revered him. Few, if any, ministers have been more generally and deservedly respected by their people than Mr. Bucknam. He was small in stature, but of grave and dignified deportment. Although he was a man of quick feelings, and his passions easily excited, they were happily controlled through the influence of that holy religion, which he so faithfully and so earnestly preached. If under

the impulse of sudden and excited feelings he sometimes spake unadvisedly with his lips, his passions were soon calmed, and gave way to the dictates of sober reason and religion.

But notwithstanding his uniform fidelity and engagedness, as a minister of Christ, we have account of only *one season of special attention* to the great things of religion and the soul, under his ministry. In the year 1741, when there was such a general revival of religion in New-England, this town shared in the good work. According to the records of the church in that memorable year 37 persons were added to the church of Christ in this town, 14 of whom were admitted at the same time, July 20th, and this whole number in the course of *seven months*. In the next year, 1742, ten persons were admitted to the communion of the church. This was undoubtedly a season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and *many of his people were made willing in the day of his power*. Would to God, that such seasons of religious attention would often return, and replenish the churches of Christ in this town!

Previous to this revival of religion, it was a season of *general declension and lukewarmness*. The pastor and church being *deeply affected*, as I trust, by this melancholy consideration, in a public and solemn manner, renewed covenant with God and each other, October 8, 1736. This solemn transaction, which is sanctioned by the example of *God's ancient covenant people*, and by the practice of our forefathers upon special occasions, was, we have reason to believe, an offering acceptable to the Great Head of the church, and was followed by tokens of his special favor. When Zion travaileth, she will bring forth spiritual children.

A few years after the religious attention above mentioned, the harmony and peace of the town were, for a season, interrupted by those discussions and events, which finally issued in a separation of the town into two distinct parishes. The *first* meeting-house, erected in the town, stood where the house in which we are now assembled stands, which is remote from the centre of the town. Besides, the town has a natural division from north to south, called *Black Swamp*. As there was no road passing from the west to the east part of the town near the centre of this swamp, the west, and particularly the northwest part of the town, were subjected to great inconvenience in attending public worship, where the meeting-house was situated. Hence several persons in the northwest part of the town petitioned the General Court to be set off from Medway, and to be annexed to Holliston, there to attend and support public worship. In this attempt, however, they failed. At length that part of Medway called the *New Grant* (a few families excepted) together with a number of persons belonging to the westerly precinct in Wrentham (now Franklin) in conjunction with a considerable number of inhabitants belonging to Bellingham and Holliston, petitioned the Legislature to be set off from their respective towns and precincts, and to be made a separate precinct. Although they met with considerable opposition in the prosecution of this object, the prayer of their petition (with some small variation) was finally granted; and on the 29th of December 1748, they obtained an act of incorporation, by the name of the *West Precinct in Medway*.

The first meeting-house in this town was burnt in the winter of 1748, by some person unknown. The frame of the house, in which we are now convened,

was erected in the year 1749 ; and the building finished the next year. The frame of the first meeting-house in the West Parish in this town was raised the same year, in which the frame of this house was erected, and was soon after finished. These meeting-houses, erected about the same time, of the same dimensions, 42 feet long and 34 feet wide, with a height well proportioned, were finished very much in the same style. They were originally very decent and commodious buildings ; and, at the time they were erected, were considered the most elegant houses of public worship in this vicinity. Both their external and internal resemblance to each other has ever been considered as very striking. Another resemblance in these two houses we anticipate with pleasure. The pleasing prospect is, that they will soon be succeeded by others, more convenient, more decent, and more correspondent to the pecuniary resources of the respective parishes.

The second church of Christ in this town was gathered October 4, 1750, by the Rev. Nathan Bucknam. Mr. David Thurston received an invitation, March 5, 1752, from the West Parish in this town, to settle with them in the christian ministry, gave his answer of acceptance April 29 following, and was ordained to the important work June 23, 1752. The Rev. Mr. Bucknam preached his ordination sermon. In consequence of ill health, and of difficulties arising in the church and parish, the Rev. Mr. Thurston was dismissed at his own request, February 22, 1769, in the seventeenth year of his ministry. In the spring of the year 1772 he removed with his family to Oxford, in the county of Worcester, where he purchased and cultivated a farm.

On the 28th of December 1772, the West Parish in this town concurred with the church in giving a call

to Mr. David Sanford to settle with them in the gospel ministry. This invitation he answered in the affirmative February 13, 1773, and was solemnly consecrated to the important work on the 14th of April following. The Rev. Stephen West, of Stockbridge, preached upon the interesting occasion.

Soon after the settlement of Mr. Sanford unhappy difficulties arose, not only among the church and people of which he was pastor, but between the two churches in this town. Five members of the second church in this town, who were opposed to the Rev. Mr. Sanford, on account of his religious sentiments, and who absented themselves from the communion of the church, were soon after excommunicated. These excommunicated persons, upon *their request, and agreeably to the advice of an ecclesiastical council*, called by them, were received, October 2, 1778, by the first church in this town to their fellowship and communion. In consequence of this procedure of the first church, the second church soon after withdrew communion from them. Several unsuccessful attempts were afterwards made to restore fellowship and communion between the two churches. But this unhappy difficulty, so discordant to the christian character and profession, and so injurious to the cause of Christ, continued for about thirty-two years. The difficulty was finally settled through the instrumentality of the Rev. Drs. Prentiss and Emmons, whose judgment and advice were requested by the two churches. Thus, to the joy and satisfaction of all Christians among us, mutual fellowship and communion were restored to these churches. This interesting event took place in the spring of the year 1810, a few weeks before the decease of the Rev. Mr. Sanford; and, I trust, much to his satisfaction.

In stating some of the principal transactions of this painful controversy, I have cautiously endeavored to express no opinion of my own respecting its merits. I may, however, venture to observe, that, in the course of this controversy of thirty-two years, *mutual blame* was undoubtedly contracted. Consequently there ought to be *mutual* humiliation with the churches before God, and *mutual* and prayerful endeavors to avoid every occasion of offence in future. Long may these churches of Christ know by happy experience, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to live together in harmony, fellowship, and peace. May seasons of refreshing from the divine presence visit them; and may they be purified, enlarged, and built up in the faith and hope of the gospel.

On the 3d of October 1807, Mr. Sanford received a paralytic stroke, which threatened immediate dissolution, and instantly terminated his public labors. He revived, however, in some degree, but lingered in a distressed state till April 7, 1810, when, I trust, he fell asleep in Jesus. "Blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord; for they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." He died in the seventy-third year of his age, and in the thirty-seventh of his ministry.

Dr. Emmons, in his sermon, preached at the funeral of the Rev. Mr. Sanford, observes, "The Author of nature endued Mr. Sanford with a rich variety of rare and superior talents. He possessed a quick apprehension, a clear and sound judgment, a lively imagination, and an uncommon knowledge of human nature. These intellectual powers, sanctified by divine grace, fitted him to shine with peculiar lustre in every branch of his ministerial office. Though for several years after his ordination, he had but little

success, and only now and then a single individual was hopefully converted, yet in the years 1784 and 1785, there was a great and general effusion of the divine Spirit upon his people, and a very large number, considering the extent of his parish, gave satisfactory evidence of a saving change, and made a public profession of religion.”

It is now about three years and seven months since the decease of this faithful minister of Christ. Since that period the church and people in the West Parish have been destitute of a settled minister. Most of the time, however, they have been supplied by candidates for the ministry of great respectability. May the great Repairer of breaches send them a faithful minister, who shall unite their hearts and affections, and who shall be a blessing to them and to their children.

Under the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Thurston 79 persons were admitted into the church, 18 of whom were males, and 61 females. During the Rev. Mr. Sanford’s ministry 118 persons were received to the communion of the church, of whom 47 were males, and 71 females. Eighty of this number were added during the *special revival* of religion, which commenced in November 1784. Since the decease of Mr. Sanford 9 have been admitted to the church. The whole number received into the second church in this town since the settlement of Mr. Thurston, their first minister, is 206.

There were 257 baptisms under the ministry of Mr. Thurston, 28 between Mr. Thurston’s dismissal and Mr. Sanford’s ordination, 286 under the ministry of Mr. Sanford, and 28 since Mr. Sanford’s death. Whole number of baptisms since Mr. Thurston’s settlement, 599. Twenty-three persons have owned the covenant with a view to receive baptism for themselves



or children, or been admitted to what is sometimes called the half-way covenant; but none since the settlement of Mr. Sanford.

Nine brethren have been chosen in the church to the office of *deacon*, viz. Nathaniel Cutler, Joseph Holbrook, Jonathan Metcalf, Samuel Fisher, Moses Hill, James Morse, Jonathan Metcalf, Joseph Weare, and Nathaniel Cutler, two of whom now officiate in that honorable station.

On the 11th of June last, the West Parish in this town erected the frame of a new meeting-house, 53 feet square, and 29 feet in height, together with a projection of 15 feet by 30, which supports an elegant cupola. The outside of this house is finished in a style of neatness and elegance, which reflects much credit upon the skill of its master-builder. The inside of the building is in a state of forwardness, and will probably, in the course of a few months, be completely finished. It redounds much to the honor of the parish, that they have engaged in the building of a house, so commodious and elegant. We sincerely regret, that there should be any division, respecting the place, upon which the house is located. We sincerely hope and pray, that a spirit of mutual candor and conciliation will prevail, that division and contention may subside, and that this people may continue to worship together in unity and peace.

But to return to the history of the East Parish in this town,—the Rev. Mr. Bucknam continued faithfully to labor among his people in word and doctrine, until his public labors were suspended by old age and bodily infirmities. He was unable to preach for ten years previous to his decease. He died February 6, 1795, in the ninety-second year of his age, and in the seventy-first of his ministry. Although he survived his public

labors, he did not survive the affections and respect of his people. Indeed, his praise was in all the churches. Many now present were witnesses of his fidelity and enlightened zeal, of his laborious and persevering exertions to promote the spiritual interest of the people of his charge. His memory will be cherished with respect by this people.

On the 25th of June 1788, Mr. Benjamin Green was ordained colleague pastor of the first church in this town, and was dismissed February 28, 1793, having been in the ministry about four years and eight months. Mr. Bucknam lived about two years after the dismissal of Mr. Green.

The circumstances, under which Mr. Green was dismissed, occasioned an unhappy division among the people in this parish. More than twenty candidates were employed, and two unsuccessful attempts were made, before the settlement of your present minister in this parish. On the 25th of June 1797, which was nine years to a day from the ordination of Mr. Green, the *speaker*, for the first time, addressed you from this sacred desk on an exchange with Mr. Wm. Bigelow, a candidate, who was at that time supplying this pulpit. The latter part of July following, he was applied to, and supplied the desk twelve Sabbaths in succession. Afterwards, on application, he went to Brentwood, (N. H.) where he preached for several months. While preaching in that place he received a call from this church, bearing date January 4, 1798, and from the parish, dated the 24th of the same month, to settle in the gospel ministry in this place. As soon as his health and engagements would admit, he returned to this place, and after serious and prayerful deliberation answered the call in the affirmative, on the 29th of April following. On the 13th of June 1798, he

was ordained to the momentous work of the christian ministry. The Rev. Moses Adams, of Acton, his former instructor, his worthy friend and patron, preached an appropriate discourse on the occasion from Isaiah 1. 7. "For the Lord God will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." The impressions, excited on his mind upon the solemn occasion, he hopes, will never be forgotten. Your present minister, my dear people, has been laboring among you with much imperfection and deficiency, but, he hopes, with sincerity and some degree of fidelity, for upwards of fifteen years. He has had his joys and his sorrows, his comforts and his trials among you. Since his residence in this place, twice has he been brought apparently to the confines of the grave by long, painful, and distressing illness.\* But his life has been protracted, when hope itself was ready to expire. By the blessing of God upon the *skilful, generous, and well-directed* exertions of his physicians and attendants, he has been restored to comfortable health, and he hopes to some degree of usefulness. His feeble and imperfect labors have been attended with discouragement and sorrow. He feels conscious of being the unworthy instrument of little good, comparatively, to this people. But he hopes his labors, by the grace of God, have not been wholly in vain. He has had more than usual encouragement for the year past. God has been pleased, he believes, to visit this place with the special effusions of his Holy Spirit. He desires to rely, for the success of his labors, on the almighty arm of that holy and merciful Being, *whose people shall be made willing in the day of his power.*

\* See Note (B).

Under the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Bucknam about 207 persons were admitted to the communion of the church; under the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Green, 41; between the dismissal of Mr. Green and my settlement, 5; and since my ordination, 36, 9 of whom are males and 27 females. The whole number admitted to this church since the settlement of Mr. Bucknam to the present time, a period of about eighty-nine years, is about 259.

There were about 830 baptisms under the ministry of Mr. Bucknam; about 37 under the ministry of Mr. Green; 19 between Mr. Green's dismissal and my settlement; and since my ordination, 103; whole number since Mr. Bucknam's ordination, about 989. Under the ministry of Mr. Bucknam 117 persons were admitted to the bonds of the covenant, with a view to receive baptism for themselves or for their children; under the ministry of Mr. Green, 2; and since my settlement, 9; but none since May 18, 1800. Whole number admitted to the bonds of the covenant since the settlement of Mr. Bucknam to the present time, 128.

According to the records of the church 14 persons have been chosen to the office of *deacon*, three of whom are now living.\*

A few weeks ago, the inhabitants of the East Parish in this town voted to build a new meeting-house, fixed upon the site, and purchased the land, with greater unanimity than what is common upon such interesting and trying occasions. Those persons, who differed in opinion from the majority in some of these important decisions, appear to exercise a spirit of candor and accommodation to the views of their brethren, which reflects honor upon their judgment and feelings.

\* See Note (C).

Under these propitious circumstances, may we not indulge the pleasing hope, that, within a short period, we shall be favored with a convenient and suitable house for public worship, together with continued harmony and peace? Should this union, in building a house for the public worship of God, continue, it will be honorary to the parish, and worthy of the imitation of posterity.

The town of Medway has been remarkably favored with health, with the exception of a few years, since its incorporation. The number of *deaths*, which stand upon record in the town-clerk's office, is 765. It is not pretended, however, that this is the true account of the number of deaths in this town for the century past. The number is undoubtedly considerably larger. It is deeply to be regretted, that many have neglected to make due returns of deaths, which have taken place in their families. The first death in this town after its incorporation, was that of Sarah, the wife of Josiah Rockwood. She died September 5, 1714.

In the winter of 1754, a very mortal and distressing sickness prevailed in this town, which swept away a large number of heads of families and others, in the space of a few weeks. From the 9th of January to the 9th of February of that memorable year, nineteen persons died. The disease was called the *great sickness in Holliston*, from its more extensive and desolating ravages in that town, which lies contiguous to Medway.—In 1775, the *dysentary*, then called the *camp trouble*, greatly prevailed in this, as well as in other towns. In one house six persons died in the month of September, who were of three generations. Many who survived the disease were brought to the confines of the grave.

The number of *deaths* in the East Parish of this town since my settlement, embracing a period of about fifteen years and five months, is 113, which is an average of less than 8 in a year. Of the 113, thirty-one arrived at the age of 70 years and upwards. Of the 31 persons, who lived to this age, 14 lived to the age of 80 years and upwards. Of these 14, who attained to the age of 80 years, 6 lived to the age of 90 years and upwards. The eldest of this number, Mr. Henry Daniels, died November 23, 1806, in the 99th year of his age. From these and other facts, which might be adduced, it is obvious to infer, that this town has shared largely in the blessings of health and longevity.—There are now living in this town 106 persons 60 years of age and upwards. Of this number, 58 are 70 years of age and upwards; of this number, 14 are 80 years old and upwards; and of these 14, one female, the widow Mercy Daniels, is past 90 years of age.

There are two grave-yards in this town. The one in the East Parish was probably selected, and used as a depository for the dead, before the incorporation of the town, but at what date I have no document to determine. It is said, a Mr. Fairbanks was the first person, whose remains were interred therein.

The burying-yard in the West Parish was located for that purpose, in the spring of the year 1750; and, I am informed, the body of Eunice, a daughter of Mr. James Partridge, was the first deposited in that place. By the best calculation, that can be made, it is supposed that the bodies of about 430 persons have been buried in this grave-yard.

These repositories of the dead contain the dust of your ancestors, your brothers and sisters, your beloved

offspring, and many of your neighbors and dearest friends. Over their graves many a sigh has been uttered, and many a tear shed. They will never return to us ; but we, my friends, in gradual succession, must go to them !

The number of *births* in this town, since its incorporation, cannot be ascertained, through a neglect of due returns to the town-clerk's office. The number on *record*, during this century, is as follows :—In the first twenty-five years, 393 ; in the second twenty-five years, 595 ; in the third twenty-five years, 700 ; and in the fourth twenty-five years, 756 ; whole number, 2444.

The record of *marriages* is probably correct, and stands thus :—Married by the Rev. David Deming, 16 couples ; by the Rev. Nathan Bucknam, 233 ; by the Rev. David Thurston, 98 ; by the Rev. Benjamin Green, 15 ; by the Rev. David Sanford, 195 ; by the Speaker, 95 ; and by civil magistrates, 86 ; whole number of couples, 738.

There are, and have been, for many years, five school-districts in this town, three in the East and two in the West Parish. In these districts there are five convenient school-houses, built in the modern style by the respective districts. In these houses five schools are kept as much as seven months, upon an average, by suitable instructors, at the expense of the town, each district receiving and expending the money for which they are respectively assessed for that purpose. So equal is the distribution of property in the town, that the difference in the money paid, and expended in each district, is comparatively small. The local situation of the town is such as to accommodate all its children and youth in these five districts, four families excepted at the northwest part of the town, who are annexed to a district in Holliston. But few

families in town are more than 1½ mile distant from a school-house. The children and youth enjoy great privileges for education, which in general are well improved.

Although from local situation and other causes, unhappy difficulties and disagreements between the inhabitants of the two parts of the town have existed, and formerly greatly interrupted the quietude of the town, happily these contentions have subsided; and the present generation appear to be agreed in promoting each other's good, and the best interests of the town in general.

By agreement two-thirds of the town-meetings are holden in the East Parish; that is, the town hold all their meetings in the course of two years in the East Parish, and all their meetings in the course of one year, next following, in the West Parish.

Nine persons from this town have received a liberal education; and three are now students in Brown University at Providence.\*

The town of Medway took an early and active part in favor of the American revolution, which commenced in 1775. With one heart and one mind, with a very few exceptions, they were ready to resist the unjust and oppressive measures and pretensions of the British ministry. They willingly furnished their proportion of soldiers through the revolutionary struggle. They were ready to jeopardize their lives and their fortunes in the sacred cause of liberty. Many promising young men from this town willingly left their wives and children, their parents and friends, to encounter the hardships of the camp, and the dangers of the field of battle; nine or ten of whom never returned, but died in the service of their country.

\* See Note (D).



There are some traits in the character of the ancient inhabitants of this town, and which in some good degree remain in their descendants, that are peculiarly laudable, and worthy of imitation.

The people of this town have generally been frugal and industrious, sober and temperate. They have been careful in making contracts, and generally punctual in fulfilling them. This town has been as free from those nuisances, called *tavern-haunters* and *grog-shop visitors*, as perhaps any town in the Commonwealth. And it is to the honor of our tavern-keepers and store-keepers, that, generally, they have refused to harbor idle, dissipated, and intemperate persons.

Most of the inhabitants are cultivators of the soil; and by industry and economy, under the smiles of Providence, become what is usually denominated *good-livers*.

There are two large cotton factories and a woollen factory in the southwest part of the town, which constantly employ upwards of seventy children and youth. The building of two or three more factories in this town is contemplated.

Although the number of people, who may be denominated rich among us, is not large, the people in general abound in all the necessaries and comforts of life. Through the smiles of Providence, the number of poor people in this town is comparatively small. In few, if in any towns, is there a more equal distribution of wealth, than in this.

The number of poor persons, who have been supported at the expense of the town, has always been small. The number of paupers, now supported by the town, is four, which is said to be more than the average number for thirty years past. Near the close

of the revolutionary war, and for ten or more years following, when the pressure of taxes was severely felt by the people, the town was wholly exempt from expense on account of the poor. It is to the honor of the town, that such paupers, as have been cast upon it, have been very comfortably supported. Persons of small estates, under the pressure of sickness or other misfortunes, have been generally assisted by the town, by the partial, or entire abatement of their taxes, as circumstances required.

The people of this town *ever have been, and still are*, very tenacious of their civil rights and constitutional privileges. They have ever claimed the right of discussing political subjects, and of speaking and acting their sentiments, in a constitutional manner. *This privilege*, it is to be hoped, they never *will relinquish*. Under every administration of our national and state governments, they have claimed and exercised the right of examining, and judging for themselves, concerning the conduct and measures of public men. And whatever measures of government, at any period, the people have supposed to be injurious to the public weal, they have, in a constitutional manner, opposed.

Although the inhabitants of this town have not been wholly exempt from the unhappy effects of party spirit, and difference of opinion on political subjects; yet it is but just to observe, that this difference of opinion among the people of this town has not been attended with so much bitterness, animosity, and malevolence, as has been the unhappy case in many places. Men of different politics have, at every period, been chosen to fill the most important offices in the town, when the respective parties were very unequal in number. The best interests of the town have

not been sacrificed upon the altar of party rancor and resentment. Generally speaking, the people are willing that their neighbors, that persons in *every station or profession*, should exercise the same constitutional rights, which they claim for themselves. That party feelings and error might wholly subside, and give way to a just and enlightened zeal for the honor and prosperity of our country, is most devoutly to be desired.

Thus, my hearers, by considerable labor and attention on my own part, and by the kind assistance of a number of respectable characters among us,\* I have collected this historical sketch of this town. I am sensible that it is imperfect, for reasons which have already been mentioned; but, I trust, not essentially incorrect.

Upon a review of the historical facts and events, which have been related, some interesting reflections naturally occur.

1. The providential care and goodness of God towards the people of this town has been peculiarly manifest, and demands our grateful acknowledgments. He has given to this people a fruitful soil, a healthy and pleasant situation. Their numerous wants have been supplied. The necessaries, comforts, and many of the delights, of life have been afforded them. In seasons of danger and distress, their watchful Guardian has appeared for their relief, comfort, and support. He has been to them *a very present help in the day of trouble*.

But, my fellow-towsmen, the goodness and mercy of our God has not been confined to the supply of our temporal wants. He has not been unmindful of your

\* See Note (E).

spiritual and eternal interest. You have been favored with a preached gospel from the beginning. Although some of your ministers have continued but a short period among you, and their ministry was unhappy and unsuccessful, you have not been destitute of faithful ministers. Nor have their labors been in vain among you. God has poured out his Spirit upon this people, visited them with special seasons of refreshing from his presence, crowned his written and preached word with success, and watered and enlarged these churches. In these wondrous displays of divine grace the peculiar hand of God is to be acknowledged. In view of the many temporal and spiritual blessings conferred upon us, we have abundant reason to exclaim with the grateful Psalmist, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

2. It becomes the people of this town to humble themselves under the frowns of divine Providence, which they and their fathers have experienced. You have received *evil*, as well as *good*, from the hand of God. You have not been exempt from the evils and calamities of the present life. Sickness and death, sorrow and distress, scarcity and temporary want, have at seasons prevailed in this, in common with other, places. You have not always been united, prosperous, and happy, under all your ministers. Three ministers have been dismissed from their respective charges in this town. Divisions and unhappy controversies have arisen in the respective churches and religious societies, at different periods of their history. Viewing these as the fruits and effects of sin, of a misimprovement of privileges, and abuse of the

divine goodness, and as sent in righteous chastisement from a holy, just and merciful God, how ought we to humble ourselves before him, and acknowledge, that we have not been punished as our iniquities deserve. Would we desire to escape many evils incident to the present life, or be favored with divine consolation and support under such as may be sent upon us, let us realize our dependance upon the God of our fathers, and by a sincere confession and unreserved renunciation of our sins conciliate the divine favor. In this way only may we hope for pardon and acceptance through the merits of Jesus Christ.

3. Upon this occasion it is obvious to reflect upon the many changes and the great events, which have taken place in the world, in the course of the century, which this day closes upon us. How many desolating wars have been waged; how many revolutions effected; what torrents of blood have been shed; how many monarchs dethroned; and how many have acceded to thrones and sceptres! How many illustrious and eminent characters have appeared on the stage! Among them we mention WASHINGTON, whose noble and mighty achievements, whose greatness, patriotism, and goodness have procured him a pre-eminent rank on the catalogue of fame! Many, wonderful, and important have been the discoveries in the arts and sciences in this period. Without reverting to other countries, what great changes have taken place in this, in its settlement, population, manners, customs, and improvements; in our civil, literary, and religious institutions.—This century has witnessed many and extensive revivals of religion, the formation of many humane, benevolent, missionary, and Bible societies; the extensive spread of the gospel, not only in Ameri-

ca, but in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the most distant isles of the remotest seas. Guided by the light of divine truth, have we not reason to apprehend, that the unparalleled devastation and war, which are now desolating the nations of the earth, will soon, under a divine influence, serve to humble and reform mankind, and prepare them for the reception of pure, vital Christianity. Considering the astonishing changes which have taken place in the civil, moral, and religious world, in the course of twenty years past; considering, on the one hand, the great, powerful, and extensive means which are now in operation, and the unexampled preparations which are now making for the destruction of mankind; and on the other, the *great and increasing exertions* which are making in *this*, and in *other countries* to send the gospel of Christ to the heathen world, and to revive pure religion among ourselves; and considering the many, great, and animating revivals of religion by which the churches of Christ have been enlarged; I say, taking into view these wonderful changes, appearances, and events, have we not reason to apprehend, that *the Great Day of the Lord is at hand; and that soon the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

4. Let us, my brethren and friends of this town, review for a moment the many, great, and interesting changes, which have occurred among us in the course of the past century. The inhabitants of this town have been completely changed. The congregation of the dead has been swelled. Our fathers and the prophets, where are they! Where now are the first inhabitants of this town? Where their first ministers? Where the first members of these churches? Of the *six* min-

isters who have been settled in this town *four* are numbered with the dead ; and he, who now addresses you, has peculiar reasons to expect ere long to follow his predecessors to the house appointed for all living. But while he continues, he will not cease to feel a lively interest in the temporal and spiritual prosperity of this town, in which, if it be the will of God, he would willingly spend the short remainder of his days.—When we look back upon the past, we perceive that the fashion of this world passeth away, while Jehovah remaineth the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Finally, my hearers, in view of the changes and events which have occurred in this town during the past century, let us, in imagination, look forward a century to come. That period will soon pass away, and where will it find us? Not among the living; but the dead—not in *this world* of sin, sorrow, and change; but in that glorious and happy world, where sorrow and change can never enter; or, in the awful regions of endless misery and despair. In a little time, my respected hearers, we shall take no interest in the changes and events of this world. Soon shall we be fixed beyond the reach of change, and others will succeed us.

What devolves upon us is, rightly to improve the passing moment, to live near to God in the exercise of repentance, faith, and holy love—to be thankful for his mercies, resigned to his will, and obedient to his commands. Let it be our great and constant concern, that our example and improvements be worthy of the applause and imitation of the generations that are yet to come. Guided by the light of divine revelation, let us pass the time of our pilgrimage in the fear, and

service of that holy and merciful Being, who has upheld us to the present time. Then may we fear no evil. Then, when years and centuries shall be no more ; when time shall be swallowed up in eternity, we shall be admitted to behold the divine presence, to celebrate his praise, and enjoy his love for ever and ever. AMEN.



## NOTES.

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### (A)

AT the time this discourse was delivered, the author considered the *East Parish* in Medway, agreeably to tradition and general belief, as originally a part of *Dedham*. But the confident opposite opinion of Abner Morse, Esq. has led him to a more critical and thorough examination of the subject, which has issued in the conviction, that *no part of Medway* was ever a part of *that town*.—[See page 5.]

### (B)

In August 1800, the author was attacked by a severe and distressing illness, which suspended his public labors about four months. In the course of that period he was the subject of two painful, but successful, surgical operations, performed by Dr. N. Miller. To the united and judicious prescriptions of Doctors Miller and Richardson, under the direction and blessing of God, at this season of danger and distress, he ascribes the restoration of his health, and the further continuance of his life.

In September 1807, the writer was again attacked by a violent fever, which soon exhausted his strength, and brought him to the brink of the grave. But the efficacious smiles of a merciful Providence upon the seasonable and skilful means and assiduous attendance of the same physicians restored his health, and prolonged his days. This sickness caused an intermission of his public services for nearly five months. During this time, he was called to suffer another painful operation.—[See page 17.]

### (C)

Deacons Asa Daniels, Simon Hill, and Asa Daniels, jun.; the two former, through the infirmities of age and bodily indisposition, are unable to perform their official services.—[See page 18.]

## (D)

	<i>Graduated.</i>	<i>College.</i>	<i>Profession.</i>
Daniel Adams,	1774,	Harvard,	Divinity.
John Bullard,	1776,	Harvard,	Divinity.
David Daniels,	1776,	Harvard,	Mercantile.
Eli Bullard,	1787,	Yale,	Law,
John Morse,	1791,	Providence,	Divinity.
Ferdinand Ellis,	1802,	Providence,	Divinity.
Timothy Hammond,	1808,	Harvard,	Law.
Elijah Morse,	1809,	Providence,	Law.
Nathaniel Lovell,	1810,	Harvard,	Physic.
Jasper Adams,	} Students.		
Charles Turner,			
Abner Morse,			

[See page 22.]

## (E)

The author here gratefully acknowledges his obligations to Joseph Lovell, Esq. town-clerk, Deacon Jonathan Metcalf, clerk of the Second Church in this town, and Abner Morse, Esq. for their kind and useful assistance in the examination of records, and in affording him many documents and facts necessary to the composition of this discourse.—[See page 25.]



