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# SERMON,

PREACHED NOVEMBER 29, 1821,

THE DAY WHICH COMPLETED

ONE HUNDRED YEARS

SINCE THE ORGANIZATION OF THE

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

IN REHOBOTH, MASS.

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BY OTIS THOMPSON, A. M.  
PASTOR OF SAID CHURCH.

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## SERMON.

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### ACTS, IX. 31.

*Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Gallilee, and Samaria, and were edified: and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.*

THE period, to which this passage relates, was that immediately following the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Saul had been a bitter and bloody persecutor of all who called upon the name of Christ. According to his own confession, in his defence before king Agrippa, he was exceedingly mad against the saints in Christ Jesus; and, acting under the highest authority in the Jewish church, shut them up in prison, punished them oft in every synagogue, compelled them to blaspheme, persecuted them even unto strange cities, & when they were put to death, gave his voice against them. Thus he made havock of the churches, robbed them of all peace and rest, and kept them in a state of perpetual tumult and terror. But, when on his way to Damascus, breathing out threatenings and slaughter, and having a commission from the High Priest to bind and bring to Jerusalem all the christians he might find, he was suddenly arrested in his mad career, by a light and voice from heaven, which struck him to the earth, and constrained him to cry out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" In a moment, by the invincible influence of the Holy Spirit, he was changed from a persecutor to a follower of Christ, from a blasphemer to a preacher of the faith which before he destroyed. This wonderful and happy event astonished the saints, appalled the Jewish rulers, quench-

ed the flame of persecution, and gave peace and rest to the harrassed and weary churches of Christ. "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Gallilee, and Samaria, and were edified: and walking in the fear of the Lord, and, in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."

The primitive churches of Christ were constituted and organized as all succeeding christian churches ought to be; and that which was necessary to edify and multiply them, in the time of the apostles, is equally necessary, at the present day. Accordingly, in discoursing from the words before us, on the present occasion, I shall endeavour,

I. To describe a church of Christ.

II. To show what is necessary to the edification of a church of Christ. And,

III. To show what is necessary to the enlargement of such a church.

I am,

I. To describe a church of Christ.

The word *church* is used in different senses. In its original and most general sense, it means any congregation or company of people, selected or called together. In the sacred scriptures, the word *church* sometimes means all the people of God collectively considered, whether on earth or in heaven; all who have been or shall be called, by Divine grace, out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Christ, and finally redeemed from all iniquity. Thus, in the epistle to the Ephesians, Christ is said 'to be the head over all things to the *church*;' and all things are said to have been created by Jesus Christ, 'to the intent that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known, by *the church*, the manifold wisdom of God.'

Sometimes, in sacred scripture, the word *church* means, the collective body of professed saints, or visible believers in Christ, in the world, at any particular time.

Thus in Acts vii. 38, "This is he (Moses) that was in the church in the wilderness."

But, generally, in the New Testament, the term church is applied to a congregation, company, or society of professed believers in Christ, who live together in the same neighbourhood, meet for worship in the same place, and have covenanted to assist and watch over each other, and to maintain together the order, discipline and ordinances of the gospel. Thus we read of 'the church at Rome, the church at Corinth, the church at Colosse, and the church at Babylon; and of the churches of Macedonia, the churches of Galatia, and the churches of Asia.'

Separate churches of the above description, were very numerous in the days of the apostles. In whatever city, or village, or place, they preached with any success, they gathered a distinct church of such as professed, and appeared to possess, true faith in the Lord Jesus. That these churches were congregational, or separate bodies of visible believers, is evident from their local situation in separate towns and districts, from their consisting of no more members than could conveniently meet together in one place, from their having distinct officers, and from their being required, in their collective capacity, to support their pastors and their poor, and to maintain the order and discipline of Christ's house. There is no intimation in the New Testament, that any particular church was, in any respect or degree, subject to any ordinary officers except their own, or to any other church, or number of churches. No bishops or elders, except the inspired apostles, are represented as having jurisdiction in more than *one place*, or over more than *one church*. It appears from the New Testament, that a church of Christ is such a body of visible believers, as live in the same vicinity, assemble in the same place, have their own officers, exercise their own discipline, and are bound by compact to walk together in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord.

Such is a church of Christ. I am,

II. To show, what is necessary to the edification of a church of Christ.

To edify is, literally, to build. A church of Christ is frequently, in scripture, compared to a building. As in 1 Corin. iii. 9. "Ye are God's building," and Eph. ii. 19, 22. "Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone ; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord : in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." As a church of Christ is thus, metaphorically, called *a building* ; so, whatever serves to promote its spiritual welfare, is said *to edify it*. The spiritual welfare of a church consists in the knowledge, holiness and enjoyment of its members. Whatever is necessary to promote the progress of the members of a church in the knowledge of divine truth, their growth in grace, and their spiritual comfort, is necessary to its edification. Between these three constituent parts of the welfare of a church of Christ, there is an intimate connexion ; for knowledge is the capacity for holiness, and holiness is the source of comfort. As christians advance in the knowledge of God and divine things, their holy love increases in extent and degree ; which, of course, increases their happiness ; as holy disinterested love gives them the enjoyment of all the good with which they are acquainted. Hence Peter exhorts, "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." And hence Paul said, he ceased not to pray for the Colossian Church, 'that they might be filled with the knowledge of God's will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding ; that they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God ; and might be strengthened by Divine Power, to all patience and long suffering with joyfulness.'

Such being the nature of edification, it is not difficult to see what is necessary to promote it. And,

1. It is necessary to the edification of a church of Christ, that it be duly constituted and organized, agreeably to the laws of Christ and the prescriptions and practice of the apostles. In the primitive churches, there was a *profession of faith, a form of doctrine, a form of sound words*, which they were commanded to hold fast. A church is not properly constituted, without a Confession of Faith, comprising the leading and essential doctrines of the gospel. Until the members of a church have subscribed their names, or signified their assent to such a confession, they are not visible christians. A christian is one, who *cordially* believes the truth as it is in Jesus. A visible christian is one, who *appears* thus to believe the truth. But, how can one *appear* to believe and love the truth, unless he *professes* to believe and love it? Hence the apostle says, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." A Confession of Faith should be *p'ain*, that it may be understood, and not ignorantly subscribed by such as do not believe it; *scriptural*, that it may not promote error instead of truth; and *full*, that no one may honestly subscribe it, who rejects any of the first principles of the oracles of God.

The constitution of a church of Christ comprises a *Covenant*, or mutual and solemn promise to walk together in the faith and order of the gospel. Whether the "form of sound words," mentioned by the apostle, included such a covenant, or not; it is manifest, that a covenant is essential to the very existence of a distinct church, which is not a mere assemblage of disconnected individuals, but a *society* of visible believers, bound to walk together, and unitedly to maintain the faith, worship, and ordinances of Christ.

It is necessary to the organization of a church, that it be furnished with such *officers*, as Christ has appointed.



These are, *a Pastor, and Deacons*. These appear to be the only ordinary officers appointed by Christ. The introduction of the epistle to the Philipians, clearly shows, that Bishops and Deacons were the only officers in that primitive and duly organized church. "Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with *the bishops and deacons*; grace be unto you &c." If there had been any other officers in this church, we cannot suppose the apostle would have neglected them in such an express enumeration.

The *Apostolick* office was manifestly *extraordinary*. The same may be said of the office of *Prophets*, and of such as wrought miracles and spoke with tongues. *Evangelists* are not officers in a particular church, but preachers sent forth to propagate the gospel in the dark places of the earth. The terms *pastor, bishop, teacher, and elder*, appear to be used indiscriminately in the New Testament, as nearly synonymous, and as relating to one and the same office. Some, indeed, have supposed, that in 1 Tim. v. 17, the apostle recognises *ruling elders*, as holding an office distinct from those of pastor and deacons. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." On this passage, it may be observed, that there is no reason to think, that the apostle meant here to make a distinction between different ranks of elders, but between different degrees of service, performed by elders of the same rank. There might be some teaching elders, who, for various reasons, did not constantly preach; and others who occasionally went out to perform the laborious service of evangelists. Besides, it has been justly observed, that the original will well bear to be translated thus: "Let the elders that rule, (i. e. govern their flocks) well, be counted worthy of double honour (i. e. of much respect and a liberal maintenance;) and that chiefly because they labour in the word and doctrine."\*

\* See DR. GUYSE'S *Paraphrase in loc.*

The qualifications, which are required in those, who fill the offices of bishop and deacons, are specified in 1 Tim. iii. 2—12, “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach : Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre ; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous ; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.—Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre ; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.—Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.”

A church, that has such a confession of faith and covenant, and such officers as have been mentioned, may be considered as duly constituted and organized. Such a constitution and organization are necessary to the edification of every church of Christ. Without a sound and full confession and covenant, they will be exposed to heresies and divisions, which will retard their progress in knowledge ; and will be utterly unable to maintain discipline, which will equally retard their growth in grace. The officers of Christ’s appointment, the apostle expressly says, Eph. iv. 12, were given “for the edifying of the body of Christ.” The need of such officers to the edification of a church of Christ, will sufficiently appear, in the course of the succeeding observation.

2. It is necessary to the edification of a church of Christ, that both its officers and members be diligent and faithful in the discharge of their respective duties. The organization, which Christ has prescribed for his churches, is happily adapted to promote their edification ; but it will fail of producing this desirable effect, if the appropriate duties of the officers and members, be either neglected, or confounded, or carelessly and remissly performed.

The *Pastor* is called *a steward, a teacher, and an overseer*. It is his appropriate duty to feed the flock of Christ with knowledge and understanding ; to give himself to reading, meditation and prayer ; to teach and preach the doctrines and duties of the gospel in publick and private ; to administer divine ordinances, and lead in the exercises of social worship ; and to preside in the meetings of the church, and superintend and watch over its order, discipline and walk.

It is the appropriate duty of the *Deacons*, to *serve tables* ; to take care of the property of the church ; to attend to the temporal support of its pastor and its poor ; in a word, to manage all its prudential, pecuniary and secular concerns. This clearly appears, from the original institution of their office as recorded in the first part of the sixth chapter of the Acts. That Philip afterwards preached the gospel, proves that one, who has been a deacon, may afterwards become a preacher ; but it does not prove that preaching the gospel is any part of the office of a deacon.

It is the appropriate duty of the *brethren*, to attend on the instructions, worship and ordinances of the sanctuary ; to admonish and deal with each other, according to the rule laid down by Christ, in the eighteenth chapter of the gospel by Matthew ; to contribute of their substance, as there may be need and ability, to defray the expenses of the church ; and to maintain the worship and instructions of the family and the devotions of the closet.

Now, if any of these duties are *neglected*, the edification of the body is hindered. If the *Pastor* neglects his duty, the church is not instructed, and cannot grow in knowledge. If the *Deacons* neglect their duty, the pastor is interrupted ; the poor are without the comforts of life, or the means of frequenting the sanctuary ; the prudential concerns of the church are deranged ; and the house, worship, table and family of Christ, lack the appearance of decency & order. If the *Brethren*, generally, neglect their



duty, their edification is hindered. If they forsake the assembling of themselves together, in vain does the pastor speak to empty seats ; if they withhold more than is meet, it will not be in the power of the Deacons to provide for their instruction, convenience and comfort ; if they neglect the scriptures and prayer in the family and closet, they will be babes in knowledge and fruitless branches in practice ; and, if they neglect discipline and suffer sin upon each other, the leprosy of error and immorality will spread over the body.

If the appropriate duties of officers and members are *confounded*, it cannot fail to injure the edification of a church. Should the Pastor undertake the duties of the Deacons and Brethren, or they undertake the duties of the Pastor, it would be as injurious to the edification of the body of Christ, as it would to the health and comfort of the natural body, should the head and hands be made to perform the office of the feet, and the feet the office of the head and hands.

It must be obvious, that in proportion to the *carelessness and remissness* with which the officers and members of a church perform the duties of their holy calling, their edification must ever be retarded. But, when each officer and each member stands in his proper place, and discharges his duty with punctuality, diligence and fidelity, the spiritual building cannot fail to become grounded and settled in the faith, adorned with the beauties of holiness, and filled with the light and comfort of the Holy Spirit.

3. It is necessary to the edification of a church of Christ, that it be in the full possession and free exercise of all those *rights*, which the great Head of the church has given it.

It is the right of every separate church, to form & adopt its own Confession and Covenant. As no one can believe or promise for another, so it is manifestly absurd for any individual or body of men to assume the power of imposing, upon others, either a creed or covenant. It belongs

to the Author and Finisher of our faith to prescribe to his churches, what they shall believe and what they shall do. He has not delegated this authority, to any man, or to any order, or assembly of men. Each church is amenable to Christ only, for the doctrines which they profess to believe, and the duties which they promise to perform. For others to presume to impose a Confession upon them, is usurpation, which must ever be injurious to the edification of any church. The Creed, thus unlawfully imposed, is likely to be any thing, rather than the truth, and must tend to exclude from communion the most intelligent and conscientious christians, to deter the members of the church from a free enquiry on religious subjects, and to seal the lips of their Pastor, and thus deprive them of that instruction, which is indispensably necessary to their edification.

It is the right of every separate church, to elect and install its own officers. The Apostles did not claim the power of placing officers over the churches, without their choice and consent. The Pastor and Deacons of the primitive churches, were elected by the suffrages of the Brotherhood. While the right of ordination to the work of the ministry was limited to the Apostles and Elders, the churches installed whom they pleased as their Pastors and Teachers. And the free exercise of this right, is necessary to the edification of every church of Christ. They must be satisfied with the abilities, acquirements and character of their Pastor, in order to receive benefit from his ministrations. Though he may be competent; yet, if he be unacceptable, he will neither be heard, nor respected. But, a church, deprived of the right of choosing and installing its officers, is more likely to be burdened with such as are weak, erroneous and viscious, than to be blessed with such as are able, sound in the faith, and of good report.

Once more,

It is the right of every separate church to exercise dis-

cipline and manage all its concerns, independently of the interference or control of any other body. The command to receive the hopefully pious, to deal with offenders, and to withdraw from the disorderly and incorrigible, is given to *the church*, and not to any diocesan bishop, synod, consistory, assembly, or consociation. Nothing like an ecclesiastical tribunal, aside from the church, is suggested, in all the New Testament. There is but one instance mentioned, of the session of an Ecclesiastical Council; and that council consisted of a single church, over which the apostles themselves presided, and whose result was not imperative, but merely advisory. The whole business of maintaining worship, discipline and order, is enjoined upon the church in its separate capacity. This is the right of every church of Christ. And without the free exercise of this right, no church have it in their power to preserve themselves from corruption in principle and practice, or to furnish themselves with the means of knowledge and grace. In important and difficult cases, it is doubtless lawful and expedient for any church to ask advice of sister churches; but no church is bound to follow such advice, any further than it appears to them agreeable to the will of Christ.

I only add,

5. That freedom from violent persecution, is necessary to the edification of a church of Christ. During the persecution which arose about Stephen, and in which Saul was so active, the churches were broken up, their members scattered abroad, and their social worship and christian communion interrupted. It was not till the conversion of Saul and the consequent cessation of persecution, that the churches *had rest and were edified*. Though all they that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution from the world, in a greater or less degree; yet, violent persecution from the powers of the earth, must ever deprive the churches of the exercise of their rights, take from them the means of instruction, and in all re-

spects hinder their edification. Thus it was with the christian churches during the ten persecutions under the Roman Emperours. And thus it has been ever since. Individuals in the furnace of persecution, may be refined ; but churches, as bodies, generally lose their purity both of doctrine and practice ; and, not unfrequently are reduced to dross, or totally consumed.

It remains to show,

III. What is necessary to the enlargement of a church of Christ.

Between the edification and enlargement of a church of Christ, there is an intimate moral connexion. When the churches are *edified*, they walk *in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost* ; and then they seldom fail to be *multiplied*.

Here, then, let me observe,

1. That purity of doctrine and practice, is necessary to the enlargement of a church of Christ. It is only when a church preserve the faith of the gospel and obey the laws of Christ, that they are prepared to receive an accession of new members. Numbers, indeed, may be added to a church, however corrupt ; but it is not to be expected that they will be such as shall be saved. An impure church is an unsuitable place for young converts, who need to be fed with the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby, to be nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, and to be provoked unto good works. A church who have greatly departed from the faith, and sunk into sinful conformity to the world, have no reason to expect an effusion of the Spirit and an increase of their numbers. Christ is offended with his churches, when they reject his doctrine, neglect his commands, and dishonour his name ; and, instead of enlarging them by his Spirit, it is to be apprehended, He will diminish them by his judgments. What He said to the seven churches of Asia, may be considered as addressed to all churches in similar circumstances ; and his treatment



of them, may be considered as an example of his treatment of all others, who imitate their conduct. If a church leave their first love, their candlestick will be removed out of his place : If they connive at heresy, they must expect that Christ will fight against them with the sword of his mouth : If they sink into a lukewarm state, they must expect to be utterly rejected.

2. It is necessary to the enlargement of a church of Christ, that those means should be used, which God has appointed, for the conviction, conversion and salvation of sinners. These are, principally, *three ; the example of christians, the instruction of children, and the preaching of the gospel.*

*First.* The holy example of christians, is one of the means necessary to the enlargement of a church of Christ. When the members of a church keep their covenant with God and each other ; when they do whatever Christ has commanded them ; when they contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, speaking the truth in love ; when they are sober, temperate, just, kind, forgiving, watchful, prayerful and heavenly-minded ; and when they liberally communicate, and like their Lord and Master, go about doing good ; then they exhibit striking evidence of the reality and power of religion. The world take knowledge of them, that they have been with Jesus. Sinners are constrained to see, that there is an essential difference between them, and saints. They become alarmed for themselves, are led to inquire what they shall do to be saved ; and often, through the concurring influence of the Holy Spirit, are persuaded, by this means, to take up the cross, and follow Christ. Hence, our Lord said, " Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." The holy conversation of christians, always has a powerful tendency to carry conviction to the minds of sinners ; and, without this, other means seldom prove effectual. When the members of a church live like the world, sinners

around will think themselves, and often justly, to be as good and safe as they. It is not unfrequently owing to the degeneracy of the church, that sinners bless themselves in their hearts, and cry peace to their souls, when God says there is no peace.

*Secondly.* The instruction of children is another of the means, necessary to the enlargement of a church of Christ. Ever since the visible church of Christ was first erected in the family of Abraham, the father of the faithful, it has been enjoined upon heads of families to command their children and households, and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. To the diligent and faithful performance of this duty, great and precious promises are made. By means of the endeavours of parents and householders to train up those under their care, in the way they should go, God has been pleased, in all ages, to replenish his churches. Those, who have been added to the Lord and to his people, have generally been such, as were dedicated to God, and taught the holy scriptures, from their childhood. "Of such, said our Lord, is the kingdom of heaven." The children of the church are the hopes of the church. If these are neglected, there is little reason to expect, that the church will be enlarged. But,

*Thirdly.* The principal means, necessary to the enlargement of a church of Christ, is the preaching of the gospel. 'It pleases God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.' This is the grand instrument which God has appointed, to enlighten the ignorant, awaken the stupid, humble the proud, reform the vicious, and turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Unless the gospel be plainly and faithfully preached, other means will seldom be used; the light of christian example will cease to shine, and the instruction and discipline of the family will be neglected. Unless the gospel be clearly and fully preached, men will remain ignorant of the sacred scriptures, ignorant of God, and ignorant of themselves, and will live and die in their sins.

It is only where the gospel is preached by ‘good men, who are full of the Holy Ghost and of faith,’ that it can reasonably be expected, ‘much people will be added unto the Lord.’

But, for success to a preached gospel, as well as to all other means, men are dependant. “Paul may plant, and Apollos water; but God giveth the increase.” It must, therefore, be observed,

3. That united and fervent prayer for the special influences of the Holy Spirit, is ever necessary to the enlargement of a church of Christ. It is the Holy Spirit, who convinces men of sin, raises them to spiritual life, and creates them in Christ Jesus unto good works. It is He, who gives the means of salvation all their effect. And He comes to revive his work, in answer to the prayers of believers. God gives the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him: and He will be enquired of by the house of Israel, to give a new heart and a new spirit to the impenitent and unbelieving. It is believed to be a fact, substantiated by the history of the church, that every considerable revival of religion and enlargement of Zion, has been preceded by special, ardent prayer, on the part of God’s people. There is ever the highest encouragement to pray for the effusion of the Holy Spirit and the enlargement of the church; for ‘the Lord’s arm is not shortened that it cannot save, his ear is not heavy that it cannot hear; and the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man, availeth much.’

#### IMPROVEMENT.

1. We may learn from what has been said, that the word *church* is sometimes used in an improper sense. This term is sometimes used to designate the professed christians of a particular country, or of a particular denomination. Thus, we hear mention made of the church of England, the church of Scotland, the Roman church, the Greek church, the Episcopal church, and the Presbyterian church. But this appears to be an improper and unscriptural use of the term church. This term, as ap-

plied in Scripture to professed christians, means, either the whole number of visible believers in the world, collectively considered ; or some one particular and sepe-  
rate society of such believers, united by mutual covenant, and assembling in one place for divine worship and attendance on divine ordinances. No countenance is given in sacred Scriptures, to national, diocesan, or consociated churches. These are of human invention, and tend to create schisms in the body of Christ.

2. We may learn from what has been said, how any body of professing christians may *become*, and how they may *cease to be* a church of Christ. When any convenient number of professed christians unitedly give their assent to a scriptural Confession of Faith, and enter into Covenant to walk together in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord ; then they are a church of Christ, to all intents and purposes. And whenever such a body of professed christians renounce their Confession of Faith, or generally and openly violate their solemn Covenant ; then they cease to be a church of Christ. A church is altogether *a voluntary society*, and can neither be made, nor unmade by any power out of itself.

3. We may infer, from what has been advanced, that the churches of Christ, should guard their rights, with a watchful and jealous eye. The possession and free exercise of these rights, is indispensably necessary to their edification. If they suffer themselves to be despoiled of these, they may be deprived of the means of light and grace, and be laden with impositions and oppressions, which their fathers were not able, and which they will not be able to bear. Ambition is natural to men. Even the disciples of Christ, and in his immediate presence too, were not ashamed to ask, 'Who of them should be greatest?' Let the churches of Christ then, be vigilant. Let them 'stand fast in the liberty, with which Christ has made them free ; and not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage.'



4. It is matter of thanksgiving to God, this day, that He hath, thus far, furnished this church of Christ with the means of edification, and hath made such additions to it, from time to time, as to preserve it to this *first centurial anniversary of its formation*.

This church was gathered on the 29th day of November, A. D. 1721. It then consisted of *ten* members, all males ; *six* of whom were from the church in what is now Seekonk ; *three* then first made a profession of religion ; and *one*, viz. the Rev. DAVID TURNER, was from the church in Scituate, and, it is supposed, was, on the same day, ordained as their Pastor. During his ministry, which continued about *thirty six* years, the number of persons added to this church, by profession and recommendation from other churches, was *one hundred & seventy one*.

The Rev. Mr. TURNER died, August 9th, A. D. 1757, in the *sixty third* year of his age. He was succeeded in the pastoral office, by the Rev. ROBERT ROGERSON, a native of Great-Britain, who was ordained on the second day of July, A. D. 1759. During his ministry, which continued about *forty years*, it appears, so far as the records give information, that *thirty six* persons were added to this church.

The Rev. Mr. ROGERSON died, March 20th 1799, in the *seventy eighth* year of his age. Between this period and the ordination of the present Pastor, *nine* persons were added to the church.

The present Pastor, after supplying this pulpit one year as a candidate, was ordained on the 24th day of September, A. D. 1800. Since which time, *seventy seven* persons have been added to the church. The whole number of persons added to this church, including those first embodied, is *three hundred and three*. The present number of members, is *fifty six*, of whom *eighteen* are *males*, and *thirty eight* are *females*.

In the year of our Lord 1800, there commenced in this place, a season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, which continued through the following year ; in

which time, about *forty* persons were added to the church, and several others were hopefully made the subjects of the renewing influence of the Holy Spirit. This, considering the size of the Society, which did not, at that time, exceed *fifty families*, was a great revival, and ought to be remembered with devout thanksgiving to the God of all grace.

Though the original Confession and Covenant of this church, were viewed to be scriptural ; yet, as they were prolix, and the manner in which they were expressed in some instances obsolete and obscure ; it was thought proper to revise them. This was accordingly done, in the year 1810. The first day of November, in that year, was set apart by the church, as a day of special fasting and prayer ; on which occasion, they publicly and solemnly renewed Covenant, and gave their assent to the Confession of Faith and Covenant now in use.

It is believed that this church has been, from the beginning, built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. It has ever enjoyed all the rights and privileges of a church of Christ, and was never in bondage to any man or body of men. It has ever been favoured with the appointed means of instruction, having been served, with little intermission, by *Three Pastors*, for the space of *One hundred years !*

This church has ever been supplied with two or more *Deacons* ; the whole number of whom ; since its organization, according the Records, is *Fifteen*.\*

* DEACONS.	Chosen.	DEACONS.	Chosen.
Thomas Ormsbe, }		Joshua Smith, . .	
Elisha May, }	. 1721.	Daniel Bliss, . . .	
John Wilmarth, . .	1731.	John Brown, . . .	1791.
Abiah Carpenter, . .	1738.	Calvin Jacobs, . .	1801.
Joshua Smith, . . .	1744.	Asahel Bliss, . . .	1803.
Thomas Carpenter, .	1744.	Chase Moulton, . .	1811.
Stephen Moulton, . .	1750.	Ezra Perry, . . .	1814.
Ephraim Bliss, . . .	1762.		

It would be ungrateful, not to take notice, on this occasion, of the goodness of God, in putting it into the heart of a distinguished member of this church, Mr. EPHRAIM HUNT, to bequeath the whole of his large estate to the society connected with the church, for the support of their Pastor. This bequest was received about forty years ago. Such liberal benefactors should be held in lasting remembrance.

In view of this brief narrative, may we not say, my Brethren, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us?" This church has indeed ever been small; though not smaller than churches in general, considering the size of the congregation connected with it. But, we will remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, how He said, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." If this church be founded, as we trust it is, upon that elect, tried, precious Corner Stone, which God hath laid in Zion, it will stand; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

5. If the things, which have been mentioned, be necessary to the enlargement of a church of Christ; the members of this church may hence learn their present duty. It is most desirable and important, that this church of Christ should be enlarged. It is, at present, small. Many of its members are far advanced in life. They cannot much longer continue with us, by reason of death. If they are indeed, as we would hope, the real friends and followers of Christ; they must expect, according to the course of nature, soon to be removed from the church militant, to the church triumphant. Unless additions be speedily made to this church, it must, in a little time, become extinct. How deplorable would be such a catastrophe! There would, then, be none in this place, to preserve the faith once delivered to the saints. The rising generation would grow up in ignorance and sin. The holy Sabbath would no longer be regarded as a day of sacred rest. The worship of God would cease. The love of Christ in giv-

ing his soul a ransom for many, would be forgotten. Error and vice, like a leprosy, would overspread the face of society ; and generation after generation, untaught, unwarned and unconcerned, would hurry down the broad way to everlasting destruction. It is inexpressibly desirable and important, that this church should be perpetuated and enlarged. What is necessary to its enlargement, has been pointed out. It is the incumbent duty of the few surviving friends of Christ in this place, to do, without delay and without reserve, what in them lies, ‘ to strengthen the things that remain, and are ready to die.’ Let them ‘ awake to righteousness and sin not.’ Let them ‘ cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.’ As judgment, so reformation must begin at the house of God. Let the members of this church, by a holy conversation, recommend truth and godliness to all around them. Let such, as are heads of families, walk within their houses with a perfect heart, daily kindle the fire of devotion upon the domestick altar, diligently train up their children in the way they should go, and resolve, each one, with pious Joshua, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Let the gospel be plainly and fully preached ; and let all lawful means be used, to fill the house of God with attentive hearers of the word. And as it is God, who must give the increase, let frequent and fervent prayers be offered, for the special influences of the Holy Spirit. “Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”

*Finally.* This subject and this occasion should deeply impress upon the minds of all, who are without the pale of the visible church, the duty and importance of giving Christ their hearts, and uniting with his people, in promoting his kingdom and glory. During the long lapse of a hundred years, since this church was gathered, what numbers in this place, have lived and died in visible commun-

ion with the unbelieving world, and in an ungrateful neglect of the dying command of the Lord Jesus? Who, of all this multitude, will now justify himself for his disobedience? Who, of all this multitude, does not now lament, that he did not join himself unto the Lord, and unto his people? If they were ashamed of Christ, He is ashamed of them. He esteems those only as his friends, who do whatsoever He commands them. There can be no neutrals with respect to the cause of Christ. He has said, "He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." How dangerous, then, is the condition of all those, who are visibly on the side of the enemies of Christ? Soon they must appear before Him, to give account for their treatment of Him and his friends, and for the manner in which they have received his doctrines and commands.

Men and Brethren, the time is short. Before another Anniversary of this kind, every individual here present, will be numbered with the dead. Whatever, then, your hands find to do, for Christ and his church, for your families and friends, or for your own souls, do it immediately, and with your might. The great Head of the church hath said, "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

AMEN.















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