

HISTORICAL DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE FIRST CHURCH AND SOCIETY OF WINDHAM, CONN.,

DECEMBER 10TH, 1850

BEING THE

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

FORMATION OF THE CHURCH

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Pastor.

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DELIVERED.

HISTORICAL DISCOURSE.



“REMEMBER HIS MARVELLOUS WORKS THAT HE HATH DONE; HIS WONDERS, AND THE JUDGMENTS OF HIS MOUTH.”- Psalm cv. 5; also 1st Chron, xvi12

The words of my text are a portion of a Psalm prepared by David, and delivered into the hands of Asaph and his brethren, to be sung before the Lord, on a memorable day in Israel.

The Psalm is mainly a review of God’s dealings with his ancient people. It recalls his marvelous works from an early period in their history, and frequently exhorts them to bring these displays of power and mercy into grateful remembrance. The purport of the Psalm generally, and the language of the text, particularly, inculcate a duty which commends itself to every enlightened understanding, and to every pious heart.

God is honored by his people in a suitable remembrance of his dealings with them; and the exercise of recalling, and considering the ways in which he has led them as individuals, as families, as churches, as communities, is calculated to promote their spiritual welfare by awakening a sense of dependence on God, confidence in his character and government, and gratitude for his unmerited goodness.

Fifty years ago, this day, the people composing this church and religious society assembled in their place of public worship to call to remembrance the works of the Lord toward *themselves and their fathers*, for the period of ONE HUNDRED YEARS of their history. We have assembled this day, the same church, the same society, but a different people, to call to remembrance the works of the Lord toward *us and our fathers*, for the period of ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS. A century and a half has passed since the organization of this church, in a wilderness portion of the Colony of Connecticut, which has become the parent of other churches, on the north, on the east, and on the west, whose representatives herewith us to-day we welcome, as entitled to participate in commemorating the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the birth-day of their mother.

It is hoped that it may not be without profit to us to look over the history of God’s providence relating to this church and people, from the early beginnings till the present time.

The first English habitation in the territory now known as the town of Windham, was erected in 1689, by Lieut John Cates, a Puritan, supposed to have been a member of Cromwell’s army, who fled from England on the accession of Charles II to the crown of Great Britain.¹ The name by which he is known may not have been his original name. It is possible that it was assumed for security against British spies, who were ready to seize in any place, any and all persons who had rendered themselves obnoxious to the despotism of the Stuarts. He came first to Virginia, but not regarding himself as sufficiently secure, he procured a servant and came to New York, then to Norwich, and then to the retired plantation of Windham. The name of John Cates, whether a true or fictitious name, deserves to be remembered with honor by us and by our posterity, as it has been by our fathers before us. This town, and other towns in our neighborhood that once constituted a part of this, even now enjoy the benefit of an annual appropriation of money for the support of common schools, the product of his liberality. A portion of the small vested fund possessed by this church, was his gift. Also a portion of the communion plate, which

we still make use of in commemorating the Saviour's dying love.

Lieut. Cates was evidently a man of property; and his works testify that he was a man of intelligence, enlarged generosity, and true puritan enterprize. From the time when the first habitation was erected, it would appear that the settlement of the place increased with great rapidity; for in three years, that is, in 1692, (May 12,) the settlers obtained from the Assembly the grant of *Town privileges*. It was in advance of all the other towns of this county in the date of its settlement; and for a considerable period was one of the most prominent towns in the eastern part of the state.

At the first town meeting holden after town privileges had been conferred, (June 11th, 1692,) among other proceedings, this important vote was adopted:—"Voted to apply to Mr. Samuel Whiting for the purpose of carrying on the work of the ministry." Mr. Samuel Whiting was the son of Rev. John Whiting, of Hartford. He is supposed to have come to Windham at the beginning of the year 1693; and tradition declares that *he preached his first sermon on the first day of the year, the first day of the week, from the first chapter of the Bible, and from the first verse*. There is good reason to believe that this tradition is well-founded. Mr. Whiting is represented to have been a man of excellent abilities, rendering him highly useful in the civil transactions of the town; and he is known to have assisted in gathering many of the churches in the county.

"In May, 1693, as an inducement to tarry with them four years, the settlers offered him fifty pounds a year, an allotment through all the division lots, and to build him an house two stories high, and eighteen feet square. In 1697, they gave him a call to ordination. In 1697 the call was repeated, and eighty loads of wood added to his salary. December 4th, 1700, he was ordained; and on the 10th of December, 1700, the church was gathered, and he was gathered with it as pastor. His salary was afterwards raised to 100 pounds and his wood."

Fifteen male persons became members of this church in its organization. Of these, eleven have been recovered from the defaced records left by Mr. Whiting. They are as follows: Rev. Samuel Whiting, Deacon Thomas Bingham, Deacon Joseph Carey, Joshua Ripley, Thomas Huntington, Joseph Huntington, John Backus, Jeremiah Ripley, Jonathan Crane, Joseph Hebard, and Samuel Abbe. These are therefore the names of some of the very early and prominent inhabitants of the town. If a letter may be presumed to have been conveyed from Wenham, Mass. to this place, in the time intervening from October 29th to December 10th, the following persons should also be reckoned among the number gathered with the church at its organization, viz: John Abbe and Robert Hebard, with their wives, Hannah Abbe and Mary Hebard; for there is a letter of antique dimensions preserved on the cover of the church records, dated "Wenham, October 29, 1700," dismissing these persons from the church in the aforesaid place and recommending them as suitable individuals to "join with others in gathering and erecting a church at Windham." This letter concludes with this language. "We commend you all, with your pious and Christian design, to the guidance and conduct of the blessed and effectually quickening spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, praying he would be with you in that weighty worke; helping you to build up, and to be further built up in the kingdom of his grace here, being preserved blameless and brought to his kingdom of glory hereafter: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen.

Yours in the Lord, Joseph Gerrish, Pastor, with the consent of the Brethren of the Church of Christ at Wenham."

Mr. Whiting labored as a minister in this place thirty-two years, and was pastor of the church twenty-five years. He married the sister of Rev. Eliphalet Adams, of New London, by whom he had thirteen children, -- eight sons, and five daughters. He died of the pleurisy, at Enfield, while on a visit to his friends, September 27th, 1725, in the fifty-sixth year of his age. It is said that on his death-bed, he made two *special prayers*, one for his family, and one for the continuance and prosperity of his church.

During the latter part of Mr. Whiting's ministry, it pleased the Lord to pour out his spirit upon the people of this place, and a very interesting and distinguishing revival of religion was enjoyed. Perhaps there is no record of any revival in our country at that early day, which equalled this in extent and power. In the space of six months, eighty individuals were added to the church as the joyful fruits of this spiritual refreshing.

President Clap, in a letter to Rev. Mr. Pierce, of Boston, having remarked on the event, that so large a number were brought into communion with the church in so short a period, says that it was "without

extraordinary apparent occasion, but through the secret operation of the spirit of God upon their heart." He meant, doubtless, that it was in connection with the faithful use of only the *ordinary* means of grace.

In acknowledgment of the goodness of God, the church set apart a day of thanksgiving, and Mr. Whiting delivered a sermon from 1st Thess. iii. 8. *For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.* The sermon was published at the time, in New London, with an introduction by Rev. Mr. Adams. It confirms the opinion naturally derived from the history of his ministry here, that he was an able, faithful, and zealous preacher of the gospel. The doctrine he deduces, supports, and improves from the text, is thus quaintly expressed: "*All godly persons, and especially they that have taken pains with people for their good, will be much refreshed and comforted, and it will help to balance the trouble they meet with, when they that have been brought over to the acknowledgment of the truth, do stand fast in the Lord.*"

Mr. Adams makes the following observations in the introduction to this sermon:

"It seems to be something necessary that some account should be given of the occasion of the ensuing discourse, and it may, (through the blessing of God,) be useful unto many, when they shall hear of the grace of God unto others, and how he hath been mercifully pleased to visit his people. Windham is a town of about some thirty years standing, where the Rev. Mr. Samuel Whiting hath been improved in the work of the ministry, even from their beginning. God hath been pleased to make him a very rich blessing among them, and doubtless many will have reason to bless God forever, in that their lot hath been cast to dwell under his ministry. Not only hath he seen the town flourishing to that degree in this short space of time, as that two other societies have sprung out therefrom, but he hath had the comfort to observe that many living and serious Christians have been *born, there*, and that his *labor hath not been in vain in the Lord.*

But of late there has, been a greater stirring than ordinary among the dry bones. Many have been awakened to consider and inquire with a great deal earnestness, *what they should do to be saved.* . Persons of all ages and some of whom there was but little expectation, have come together weeping to seek the Lord their God, so that within the compass of about half a year, there have been four score persons joined to their communion, and more are still dropping in, so mightily doth the word of God grow and prevail among them Could their revered pastor have been prevailed upon so far to have gratified the public, we might have been more curiously entertained with the knowledge of many particulars which ought not to be forgotten, while the Holy Spirit, like the wind that bloweth where it listeth, hath been dividing to everyone severally as it will, in this day of their visitation; but at present we must be content with this short and imperfect account.

In the mean time it is surprising to see what an happy alteration there is made when God is pleased to bless the dispensation of the Gospel, and the institutions of his house, and confirm his word in the mouths of his servants

Oh that the same good spirit from on high were poured out upon the rest of the country, for what pity is it that this single *place* only should be *wet with the dew of heaven*, while the rest of the *grounds* round about remains (comparatively) dry.²"

The ministry of Mr. Whiting was a period of peculiar religious prosperity with our fathers. It was a day of the right hand of the Most High. The Lord then heard the prayers of his saints, and he was gracious to the families of his people. This godly minister left in the church on his decease, TWO HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FOUR MEMBERS, all received into communion by himself, excepting the few who composed the church at its formation.

When intelligence reached Windham that Mr. Whiting had been removed from his connection with the church on earth to enter on the reward of his labors above, the people, with one accord, set apart a day of fasting and prayer, to express in a suitable manner, a sense of their bereavement, and to seek the Lord's direction in their destitute estate. The ministers in the neighborhood were invited to spend the day with them. They complied with the invitation; and before returning home, recommended to the people, that they should send to Cambridge College for a candidate. This recommendation was followed; and within three months from the removal of their former pastor, Mr. Thomas Clap was sent to them.

Mr. Clap commenced his labors immediately, and gave general satisfaction. After preaching about seven months as a candidate, he was ordained August 3d, 1726. Rev. Mr. Adams, of New London, brother-in-law of their first minister, delivered he discourse on the occasion.

The provision made for the support of Mr. Clap, was, for that period, very generous. They gave him £300 settlement – a gift outright, to enable him to begin life as a minister with comfort, to provide necessary books, and to enter the connubial state without embarrassment-and £100 annually, with £10 extra for his wood.³

Mr. Clap performed the duties of a minister in this place about fourteen years, and was pastor of the church over thirteen years. He is more generally known to the public than his predecessor and perhaps more generally known than anyone who has come after him, in the ministry here.

He left Windham on a call to the presidency of Yale College and was at the head of that institution till a year before his death⁴ – twenty-seven years.

Mr. Clap was an earnest, laborious, systematic and indefatigable man, during his ministry here, and while he was connected with the college.

In one of the manuscripts that escaped the ravages of the British soldiers at New Haven⁵, containing some minutes of his life, the following interesting entry is found, relating to his ministry in Windham:

It bears date January 1st, 1737.

“I have this last week finished my pastoral visitation of each family in my parish, and catechising the several children in them. And I have also taken down the names and ages of every one, that so I might have more knowledge and clear remembrance of every soul committed to my care and charge, and the circumstances and condition of each particular person. I find the number of them to be 722 – a great number of souls to depend upon the care of one weak and sinful creature, - may God direct and enable me to go through this great work and charge, that I may bear the names and circumstances of every one upon my heart at all times, and especially when I approach unto the Throne of Grace, as Aaron bore the names of the children of Israel on the breastplate upon his heart, when he entered into the Holy place; and may God pour out the plentiful effusions of his Holy Spirit upon all those who are committed to my care and charge, and cause religion to have a real and powerful influence upon all their hearts,-that *our* young persons may be favored and blessed with an early conversion from sin to holiness,-that the rising generation may seek the God of their fathers, be truly pious, and closely adhere to the principles and practices of religion – that the middle aged may not be so engaged in the cares and hurries of this world as to neglect the great concerns of their souls; and that those who are advanced into old age, may be powerfully assisted and directed in their last and finishing work. And may he excite and assist me to lay myself out every way that lies in my power to forward and promote the salvation of their souls.”⁶

The testimony which has come down to the present time, relative to the talents, literary and theological attainments, and the moral worth of the Rev. Mr. Clap, is of a uniform character. He had a respectable knowledge of the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages, but was less distinguished in this department of learning than in some others. “In the higher branches of mathematics, in astronomy, and in the various departments of natural philosophy, he had probably no equal in America, excepting Professor Winthrop, of Cambridge.” “He constructed the first orrery that was made in America.”⁷

The college at New Haven received a new impulse when he entered on the duties of the presidency. “His great mind and extensive literature made it reputable at home and abroad.” “Connecticut Hall,” one of the college edifices, and the only one of so great antiquity that has survived the ravages of time, was built through his enterprise, and under his superintendency. He laid the foundation stone, and in 1752 saw the building completed. At that time it was the best building in the colony. A considerable portion of the money employed in erecting this edifice, was raised by a lottery which the Assembly granted for the accomplishment of the enterprise. The avails of a French prize were also appropriated to this object by the Assembly.⁸

He is represented as having been a solid and impressive preacher, without any superior talent in the

art of speaking; his matter fixing the attention of his auditors, more than his manner. His religious sentiments accorded with the Calvinism of the Westminster divines. He opposed Mr. Whitefield, misapprehending the character and objects of this great and excellent man. In this, however, he was associated with many of the leading ministers of Connecticut.

During his connection with this church he received into communion *two hundred and nineteen individuals*. He administered the ordinance of baptism to *four hundred and seventy-five*, including adults with the children, a very large proportion of them being of the latter class.

It appears on the records of the church that while Mr. Clap was the minister, *twenty-nine persons* "owned the covenant." It may be deemed a favor by some of my hearers, if I should explain what is intended by this language. The owning of the covenant was an act of persons who were not prepared to become professors of religion in full, but were ready to promise in a public manner, by assenting to a written covenant, that they would abstain from prevailing sins, and live according to the commandments of God. The practice had its rise in the proceedings of a synod that met in Boston, in 1662. In Connecticut, it was first brought into use in the case of young persons. After this solemn act they were in a sense members of the church, but did not participate in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.⁹ When they became parents they brought their children forward for baptism, on the ground of this partial connection with the church. After a short period, it was customary for those only who had entered the marriage state, and had children they desired should be admitted to the ordinance of baptism, to own the covenant. The form of the covenant first introduced in this state is preserved in Dr. Trumbull's History. It was adopted at Hartford, February, 1696, and was "owned" almost immediately, by a large number of youth in that city. The covenant was in these words:

"We do solemnly, in the presence of God and this congregation, avouch God in Jesus Christ to be our GOD, one GOD in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost and that we are nature children of wrath, and that our hope of mercy with GOD is only through the righteousness of Jesus Christ apprehended by faith; and we do freely give up ourselves to the Lord, to walk in communion with him, in the ordinances appointed in his holy word, and to yield obedience to all his commandments, and to submit to his government. And whereas, to the great dishonor of God, scandal of religion, and hazard of the damnation of many souls, drunkenness and uncleanness are prevailing amongst us, we do solemnly engage before God, this day, through his grace, faithfully and conscientiously to strive against these evils and the temptations leading thereunto."

This form may have been substantially the one employed here, and by the churches generally. In case, however, of some of the churches, it is supposed that they employed in this reception of members to a partial connection, the same covenant that was adopted when members were received into full communion.

This "half-way covenant plan," as it has sometimes been called, had its origin in the close intimacy of civil and ecclesiastical affairs in our early history, and in the low state of religion at the period when it arose. It was strenuously opposed from the beginning by some of the best ministers and Christians, and gradually disappeared as a practice of the churches. There are few now living who have any remembrance of such a custom.

To return to the history of Mr. Clap. As he married in this town, and his wife was the daughter of the clergyman who preceded him, - the worthy Mr. Whiting, - she was no unimportant part of this church, and should not be suffered to escape, as is too common with modest merit, without appropriate notice. She was *fifteen* years of age when Mr. Clap and herself were united in marriage. Our fathers and mothers usually entered upon the estate of matrimony at an earlier age than their sons and daughters are encouraged to hazard it. We are wise in our day: - who will venture to affirm that they were less wise in theirs?

This respectable couple lived together nine years; and at the age of *twenty-four* she was called to a better world, August 19th, 1736, as is attested by the simple stone erected to her memory in our graveyard.

From the description which is given of this woman by Mr. Clap, and which may be found in the

sermon of Rev. Professor Dagget, delivered on the occasion of President Clap's funeral, she must have been indeed a model woman. He says,

"She had a beautiful and pleasant countenance; was a woman of great prudence and discretion, in the conduct of herself and all her affairs; was diligent, and always endeavored to make the best of what she had; the heart of her husband could safely trust in her. She was kind and compassionate to the poor, and all in distress. She was adorned with an excellent spirit of humility and meekness; did not affect to put herself forward in conversation, but chose to speak discreetly rather than much; but was always free, pleasant, and cheerful, in conversation with everyone. She exceeded in a most serene, pleasant temper, and disposition of mind, which rendered her very agreeable to her husband and all her acquaintance; and though he lived with her almost nine years in the connubial state, yet he never once saw her in any unpleasant temper, neither did one unpleasant word pass between them on any occasion whatsoever."

It is every way desirable that these remarkable excellencies of character that adorned Mrs. Mary Clap, should equally adorn all who sustain to his successors the relation she sustained to him. The Christian sisters who are thus related to her elders presiding over churches that have proceeded from this, and who in view of her vocation, will accord her the title of Mother in Israel, may also wisely consider this admirable model. And I would that this ancient, bright example of female loveliness, left for all the members of her sex in this church and parish, as their lawful inheritance, might be duly esteemed and universally imitated.

On Mr. Clap's removal to New Haven, the General Assembly gave the ecclesiastical society here £310, as compensation for the pecuniary loss which they sustained in the dismissal of their minister.¹⁰ It was against their earnest desires that he left them. He indeed tore himself away under strong impressions of duty, and the urgency of prominent clergymen and laymen of Connecticut, who were persuaded that his talents and learning would find a wider field of usefulness in connection with the college.

The church and society rendered destitute by Mr. Clap's removal, soon united in extending an invitation to Mr. Stephen White, to become their pastor and spiritual teacher. He was pleased to accept the invitation, and was ordained on the 24th of December, 1740. Rev. Solomon Williamson, of Lebanon, preached the sermon on the occasion. The other ministers who were on the council, and took part in the services, were Rev. Eleazer Williams, Rev. Joshua Meacham, Rev. Samuel Moseley and Rev. Ebenezer Devotion. Mr. White preformed the duties of the ministry in this place, for the period of *fifty-three years*, - a longer period than had elapsed from the foundation of the church to the time of his settlement. The Society in giving him a call, endeavored to guard against the danger of any such as they had experienced by the interference of the college, in the connection between them and their pastor. The vote presenting him with the call, is in these words: - .. "Whereas the inhabitants of said society having had some considerable experience of Mr. Stephen White's ministerial gifts, to their general satisfaction, do now agree to give him a call to the work of the ministry, and to continue among us in said work *as long as he lives*, or is *able to preach* the Gospel."

The liberal sum of £600 was granted as a settlement, and his annual salary was £200. In the period of his ministry, however, there were great changes in the worth of pounds, shillings, and pence. It was therefore necessary often to estimate the value of the salary promised for his labors, and there is reason to fear that he did not always receive a support which was as ample as he could reasonably expect, or as had been received by those who occupied the place before him. If this were so, the people alike wronged themselves and their minister, and themselves the more severely of the two. Should they not be esteemed the *Solomons* of their day, who fancy that they make money, or in any way profit themselves, by keeping their minister on a short allowance?

Of the character of Mr. White we have sufficient means of forming a just estimate. He was less a public man than his immediate predecessor, and he labored among this people in a less marked and peculiar period than Mr. Whiting, their first minister. Aged citizens still remember him, though he was considerably advanced in years in the season of their youth. Mr. Waterman is a good witness to testify in relation to the character of Mr. White, entering directly, as he did, into the office made vacant by his decease.

He says, "Mr. White possessed good natural abilities, improved by early education. In his station he was a workman that needed not to be ashamed. And the manuscript sermons left behind him are a testimony of real piety and faithfulness. He was constitutionally modest, and unless with his acquaintance, reserved in conversation. In his domestic relations, he was tender and indulgent, and the same affectionate temper he manifested towards his church and people."

Rev. Moses C. Welch, of Mansfield, much younger in years, and in the ministry, than Mr. White, yet well able to form a just opinion of his character, as he enjoyed an intimacy of acquaintance with him, having resided two years in this place, and most of the time in the family of Mr. White, in the discourse delivered at his funeral, says, -

"At what period of his life he chose the good part, and became *savingly* and *experimentally* acquainted with the *truth*. I have not been particularly informed. The most that I know of his character is, from what appeared in his life. Thus much I am in duty bound to say, that in Mr. White were agreeably and happily united, the good scholar, the real Christian, and the able, judicious divine. He was possessed of good natural abilities. These being cultivated by a liberal education, and sanctified by divine grace, furnished him for public usefulness, and to make no inconsiderable figure in the work of the gospel ministry.

He was a gentleman of study, and close application of mind, ever careful to bring beaten oil into the sanctuary of God. In his preaching he treated upon all the important subjects; but the distinguishing doctrines of grace were his principal theme. The infinite and sovereign love of the Father, manifested in plan and works of redemption, -- the infinite fullness and sufficiency of the atonement by the Divine Son, - justification by faith alone. These distinguishing doctrines, and such as are more immediately connected with them, are subjects on which he appeared to dwell with uncommon delight: and these he was able to treat with pertinency and perspicuity. As a scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, he was able to bring out of his treasure things new and old.

The interests of religion in general, and the good of his people in particular, appeared ever to be an object of his great concern. He was faithful to reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine.

In private his conversation savored of the *best things*. He was a faithful friend -an agreeable, entertaining, and instructive companion. Yea, I may sum up his character in short, that he was a kind husband, - a tender parent, - a good neighbor, - a real Christian, - and a faithful minister of Jesus Christ.

I have been ready to think the character of a bishop given by Paul to Titus, was his in an eminent degree. A lover of hospitality - a lover of good men - sober - just - holy - temperate - holding fast the faithful word.

He served God and his generation faithfully, and the last time he spoke from this desk, might have addressed the people of his charge, as 'Paul the aged' once did the elders of the church of Ephesus. 'I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.'"

There were interesting seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord enjoyed during Mr. White's ministry. Particularly one such season in the year 1741, in which year there as an addition to the church of fifty-seven members. This, it may be recollected, was in the season of the "Great Awakening" as it is sometimes called, when there was a very peculiar attention to religion in the churches of New England generally, and in some other parts of the country. In 1742, there were thirty persons added to the church.

But it is to be owned with sorrow, that taking into one view all the time embraced in the ministry of Mr. White, the history of the church, and the moral condition of this place, is calculated to awaken emotions most melancholy, and most painful to the heart of the true friends of Zion. "How is the gold become dim! the most fine gold changed!"

When Mr. White's predecessor took leave of Windham, he left in the church two hundred and eighty-seven communicants. When he himself was removed by death, there were left in the same but an hundred and one.

My friends, be ye careful lest ye judge unjustly, lest ye impute unfaithfulness, or deficiency in zeal, or knowledge, or discretion, without cause. Results which are obvious to human sight, do not in all cases prove the character of God's servants. There is no evidence that this minister was any way chargeable before God, because his success was so unlike that which had attended the ministry of the men who labored in this field before him. The fault is to be sought elsewhere. The representation of his piety, and zeal, and benevolent interest in this people, which we have considered, forbid us to charge blame upon him. There are many causes of this deplorable state of things, which deserve consideration.

The season of Mr. White's labors here included the period when there was greater general depression in the concerns of religion than at any other period, perhaps, since the settlement of the country. The last half of the last century was the period when we imported much infidelity from Europe; when our learned men, and professional men, were skeptics and infidels, to an extent that they have never been before, nor since. We felt the effects of preparing for war, and engaging in war, and the calamitous *results* of war, on the feelings and habits of the people. Very few if any of our churches but find occasion to mourn over this portion of their history, as one of moral darkness. And in Windham, for some reasons, this depression in religious concerns was experienced in an unusual degree, and the prevailing infidelity prevailed here in an extraordinary measure. Many from this place were in the army, some of them officers in the army, and many returned when the war was over, to reside, bringing the opinions and the habits formed in the camp; and these were abundantly propagated. This people suffers even now, from the vicious opinions and practices that were introduced in the latter quarter of the last century. Here has been witnessed melancholy proof that the sins of the fathers may be visited upon the children, to the third and fourth generation.

Hear Mr. White speak for himself, on this subject. In the sermon he preached at the Fiftieth Anniversary of his settlement, (1790) he mournfully says,

"When I came to this town, there were some of the first settlers living. They are now dead, and almost all the next generation. In those days there were scarce any that were not professors of religion, and but few infants not baptized. **NO FAMILIES THAT WERE PRAYERLESS.** Profane swearing was but little known; and open violations of the Sabbath not practised as is common now. And there were no Deists among us. The people as a body were fearers of the Lord, and observers of the Sabbath, and its duties. But the present day is peculiar for men's throwing off the fear of the Lord. Declensions in religion have been increasing for about thirty years past, such as profaneness, disregard of the Sabbath, neglect of family religion, unrighteousness, and intemperance, the imbibing of modern errors, and heresies, and the crying prevalence of infidelity against the clearest light."

We are ready to exclaim, - Can it be possible! Is not this series of statements representing such a contrast between the moral condition of this community in 1740 and 1790 to be received with great allowances? Mr. White's successor thinks it to be a just description, and from the manner in which he speaks in his Century Sermon, narrating his own observations, we find indirect, but substantial evidence of the general accuracy of Mr. White's assertions.

Not a few members of the same society that so studiously made arrangements at the time of Mr. White's settlement to prevent the possibility of his leaving till the *end of life*, or till he should *cease to be able to preach* the gospel, strenuously endeavored to remove him by withholding his support, in the latter part of his ministry. He had friends, however, who stood by him to the last. The respectable authority which has been frequently referred to before, in relation to his general and ministerial character, declares that "He lived and died respected and esteemed by those people whose approbation was worth possessing; while he had the hard reflections of those whose censure on such subjects was praise."

Mr. White received into communion with the church three hundred and eighteen persons; and ten hundred and forty-four persons received the ordinance of baptism by his hands. Like his predecessor, he married in this place. His wife, a worthy woman, universally esteemed, was the daughter of Capt. Thomas Dyer, and sister of Col. Eliphalet Dyer. He had by her *thirteen children*. He serenely went to

his rest, January 9, 1793.¹¹

Rev. Elijah Waterman was the next pastor of this church and people. A call was extended to him, bearing date June 23d, 1794, and offering him an annual salary of £145. He was ordained the first day of October following. The ordination sermon was delivered by Rev. James Dana, D. D., of New Haven. Many persons in this place well remember when Mr. Waterman was ordained, but there are no persons living in the church, who were members at that time. Mrs. Lydia Snow, and Deacon Samuel Perkins are believed to be the persons latest deceased whose membership in the church extends to so early a date. There are three female members living who were received into communion by Mr. Waterman; -Miss Lydia Wills, Mrs. Rachel Cross, and Mrs. Marial Huntington. Mr. Waterman officiated as pastor here till the 12th of February, 1805, a period a little short of eleven years. The judgment I form of his character is derived from the representations of those who enjoyed his personal acquaintance, and sat under his ministry; and from the productions of his pen which he has left behind him.

He was a man of more than ordinary mental acumen, and probably was in little danger of suffering any imposition by sophistical reasoning, from whatsoever quarter, or in whatsoever manner it might come. He evidently formed his opinions for himself, and he certainly did not fear to maintain them.

He was a sound preacher. He preached *sound* doctrine, and he defended it by *sound* arguments. He was a man of a good share of learning. Particularly was he a historian and a treasurer of facts. This church is greatly indebted to him for the indefatigable exertions he put forth to collect and save the interesting fact respecting its early history. Were it not for the labors which he commenced in the way of preparation for the anniversary of the church, observed fifty years ago, and which he continued as long as he could find encouragement by success, (the results of which are embodied, some in his anniversary discourse. some in a preface to Mr. Whiting's thanksgiving sermon, and some in the records of the church,) to make out a tolerable history of our early days, would now be an utter impossibility.

The records that could be found in the hand-writing of Mr. Whiting, Mr. Clap. and Mr. White, which were much worn and defaced, he carefully transcribed into a volume. And this leads me to observe of him, that he was a man of peculiar patience and diligence, and of unusual benevolence; for all these qualities must have combined in the individual, who, aside from his ordinary pursuits, allowing very little leisure, was willing to spend weeks and months solely for the benefit of others. His manner in the pulpit was to a considerable degree of the popular cast. He was bold, active, and energetic. He never sacrificed the grand impression aimed at by any attempts at the display of oratory. Probably in leading traits of character he more nearly resembled President Clap than any other of the ministers who have been settled in this place. There was an interesting revival in connection with his labors in the year 1796, as the fruits of which twenty-five persons were received into the church. There was also an unusual attention to religion among his people in 1798. In the early part of the year following, twenty-two persons united with the church.

Before he left Windham he found himself in the midst of enemies. His *doctrine* gave offence to some. And the offence the doctrine in itself occasioned, was aggravated by the fearlessness and the ability with which he maintained it. Then again his *practical discourses* were received with as much dislike by a certain part of his congregation, as his doctrinal. He preached on the duties of individuals in all the relations of life; on the duties of magistrates, as well as those in a more humble condition. In other words, he did what an independent and conscientious minister might reasonably be expected to do in the way of preaching, that is, to reprove men for the very sins of which they are guilty, and admonish and exhort them to forsake them. To all this, he also added an offence of *conduct*, which with some persons created greater dissatisfaction than any which arose from his pulpit performances. He made complaint to the *magistrate* against a company of individuals, for the violation of the law then existing in Connecticut, prohibiting "all servile labor and vain recreation" on fast-days and thanksgivings. Those who for their pleasure went rabbit-hunting on fast-day, with all safety but for Mr. Waterman, were not satisfied with the further pleasure of paying the fines by law prescribed, through his instrumentality. Quite a portion of the society conspired to remove him after the manner which had been attempted in relation to his predecessor. They "lodged certificates." As his support became precarious, it was thought advisable by himself and his numerous and ardent friends here, that he should leave for some other field of labor. The church, and many of the best of the people were exceedingly reluctant to part with Mr. Waterman.

A council was convened, which, after some deliberation, adjourned for a season, hoping from

representations made to them, that a support might yet be provided. The plan was proposed of selling the pews in the meeting-house, to be held as real property, for raising a fund the interest of which should pay the salary. This did not succeed; and when the council re-assembled, according to adjournment, the pastoral relation between him and this people was dissolved.

Among the votes passed in the church during these troublesome times, the following is recorded, testifying the estimation in which he was held by the members. "Voted, that there has from the first connection of this church with its pastor, been an unusual degree of unanimity and brotherly love, and that this still remains to be the case."

In his farewell sermon he propounds to the people nine questions. The *third* and *fourth* of them are as follows:

"Has not your pastor labored so to divide the word of truth as to comfort the broken-hearted – to awaken the careless sinner – and to call up the attention of the infidel and scoffer, by motives and strongest that religion could furnish?"

"Has your pastor been a mere time-server in his preaching, accommodating [himself] to the opinions of leading and influential persons? Has he said more, or has he said less to gain the favor of any one? Has he prophesied smooth things, and cried like the false prophet, peace to the wicked?"

If it should be thought that there is a considerable share of *human nature* in these inquiries, it is hoped that it will be charitably remembered that he was a *man*, as well as a minister. Soon after leaving this place he was settled over a parish in Bridgeport. He, also, like his two immediate predecessors, married among his own people. His wife was Miss Lucy Abbe, daughter of Shubael Abbe, Esq., who was worthy the general estimation she enjoyed.¹²

After Mr. Waterman's dismissal, for about a year and a half, various persons were employed to supply the pulpit. August 12, 1806, a call was extended to Mr. Daniel C. Banks. The society inserted in the call this condition:

Viz. "That a majority of said society shall have the power, upon giving one year's notice to said Mr. Banks, to discharge him from the ministry in said society; and that said salary shall cease within one year after such notice shall be given; and that the said Mr. Banks shall have power to leave said society within one year after he shall have given notice of his intent to do the same."

Mr. Banks declined the call.

After an interval again of something more than a year, a similar call was extended to Mr. Charles Atwater. The call was declined by him. At length the church and society were successful in an unanimous application to Mr. William Andrews, to become their minister; and he was ordained on the 8th of August, 1808. Dr. Welch, of Mansfield, preached the ordination sermon, in which he suggested that trials might await the inexperienced minister. Says he,¹³

"The work of the ministry is weighty, solemn, and laborious. You are entering on the work in a tempestuous day - a day in which you will be exposed to peculiar trials. Religion is opposed by many, and the ministers of the sanctuary are despised, villified, and reproached. This will expose you to pressing difficulties, and you will probably meet with great discouragements."

Dr. Welch, in this discourse, also thus addresses the people:

"You, my brethren and friends of this church and society, are about to receive a rich blessing - a fresh token of the favor of our Lord. This church has gone through a variety of changes, and the transactions for which we are met in the house of God, will naturally excite in some of your breasts, the most tender feelings. This was the first organized church in the county; and here the ordinances of the gospel were early established. One hundred and eight years will be completed, next December, since the first pastor of this church was ordained. The three first ministers, all of whom were lights in the church, and great blessings to the world, served here between ninety and an hundred years. The labors of the third were continued more than half a century. His ministry and death are affectionately remembered

by the speaker, and many of the society. Soon after his decease, the Lord sent you another, who was cordially received, and settled with great unanimity and flattering prospects. But a clear sky is, many times, suddenly beclouded."

I find my task more and more delicate, in undertaking to write a true history of our affairs, as I approach nearer to the present period, and must therefore relate things in which many persons now living, were more or less concerned. But yet, may I not ask myself, who wishes that any thing should be told, but what accords with the truth? History is no longer history, but fiction, when it conveys unjust or erroneous impressions. The law of the impartial historian must be mine.

All persons who were accustomed to attend on the ministrations of Mr. Andrews, concede that he was a man of learning and power. He ever gave the impression to those with whom he was no particular favorite, that he was an earnest and thorough man in the discharge of his official duties. He was a person of peculiar seriousness. He deeply felt his responsibility, and designed to commend himself to God, and the consciences of all his people. He might have been less social in his nature, and less familiar in the ordinary intercourse of life, than Mr. Waterman, but in the pulpit he was not a whit inferior to his predecessor. The ministers of his acquaintance all unite in according him a high degree of merit. Chief Justice Reeve, as good a judge of a minister as of law, is said to have spoken often of the interest with which he heard Mr. Andrews.

After laboring for a few years in this place, Mr. Andrews was discouraged, and desired to remove to some other field. He was troubled and distressed at the stupidity in religious things, and the iniquity so prevalent among the people. The Sabbath-breaking pained his soul. He preached against it - preached on the duty of magistrates in relation to it. It could not appear to him a work of necessity to make hay on the Sabbath, because it happened to be good hay-weather. He therefore requested the people to release him. It was, however, found to be a more difficult work for him to obtain a dismissal than it had been for his predecessor. They had paid him promptly - they had fulfilled all their engagements. They never engaged to attend meeting with punctuality - to keep the Sabbath with strictness - to reform from their evil practices in general. And indeed, with regard to these things, some of them appear to have assumed that he had no claim upon them. In a pamphlet published soon after a separation was effected between Mr. Andrews and his people, prepared by a prominent citizen, and member of the society, the writer remarks, "The people did not apprehend they should incur any censure or reproach, if they continued the same steady course in the performance of the duties of religion, which they had long pursued; and very honestly thought that they had no occasion for any new light." In the summer of 1812, Mr. Andrews preached a sermon from the text. "*I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed on you labor in vain.*" (Gal.iv.11.) It was at a time when some of the people had been laboring considerably on the Sabbath, getting in their crops of grass and grain. And there is indubitable evidence that the sermon, whatever other qualifications might belong to it possessed, in rare measure, those that rendered it *impressive*. "Among other things" says the writer before quoted, "he took a view of the conduct of different classes of people in the society during his ministry; the young and the old, the members of the church, and the civil authority, and declared that all had grown worse." This sermon was concluded by a notice that at the end of the year he should ask to have his pastoral relation dissolved.

It is not entirely certain that all the persons who opposed Mr. Andrews in his request for a dismissal, pursued this course out of any peculiar attachment to him, or peculiar desire to enjoy his ministry in preference to that of any other man; or that all who were unwilling to part with him in the circumstances then existing, were influenced solely by the benevolent intention of promoting the highest moral and religious welfare of the people here. But there is, to say the least, a good deal of sagacity in the argument which is urged by the writer of the pamphlet referred to, against the reasons Mr. Andrews had given for leaving. Says he, "It never was heard, or suggested in the Christian world, that ministers are to leave their people because they are wicked. This is indeed the strongest reason why they should continue their labors among them; here they are most necessary, and will most probably be useful; for they who are whole need not a physician, but they who are sick."

After a council had been summoned to the place a second time, his dismissal was accomplished. This occurred on the 20th of April, 1813. Twenty-one persons were received into communion with the church during the period of his ministration. He was subsequently settled in Danbury, and more recently in Cornwall. From the latter place he was called to his heavenly reward, leaving a widow, who is believed

to be now living, and several children, among whom are four sons in the ministry.

As soon as the disturbance in the elements, occasioned by the unsettling of Mr. Andrews, had subsided, the society repeated a call they had formerly given to Rev. Daniel C. Banks.

In the vote inviting him to come among them, they inserted this extraordinary condition: *That if either party, minister of people wishes to dissolve the relation, the case shall be referred to three judges of the Superior Court, or to other referees, such as shall be mutually agreed upon.* Mr. Banks again, for some cause unknown, decline the call.

Mr. Cornelius B. Everest was the next minister invited to take the spiritual oversight of this church and people. He was pleased to comply with the invitation; and after preaching for a little season, his ordination took place on the 22nd of November, 1815.

His services had, even before this event, been blessed by the effusions of the Holy Spirit. Many now living in the church have occasion to remember his early labors with deep interest and devout gratitude to God. Within the first two years of his ministry thirty-two individuals made profession of religion. Mr. Everest was a wise and good preacher. He was accustomed to take just views of scripture truth, and rightly to divide the truth to the various classes of his hearers. He knew how to instruct and comfort the saints; and how to impress the consciences of sinners. He was particularly attentive to the duty of *discipline*, as relates to the church; and during his stay with this people many were removed from the church on account of disorderly conduct, for which they manifested no repentance. He was a man of affability, kindness and discretion. He made few, if any, enemies among the people. All felt kindly towards him. All would say, probably, that they wished him well. The wishes of too many, however, were not emphatic enough to induce them to do what justice required for his support. And he left for the ostensible reason, while there was no difficulty in his congregation, and it embraced a much larger amount of wealth than it now does, that he could not depend on a competent support. It is not designed to cast reflections indiscriminately. There is no doubt that there have been here, in all times, those who have been just and generous, in the intentions and act, as regards their minister. But at the period now referred to, it is too evident that there were many who were so indifferent to the welfare of the society, and the interests of morals and religion in the place, or so avaricious, that they would furnish but a small proportion of their share towards a respectable maintenance for the minister.

Mr. Everest was dismissed by council, November 14th, 1827, having been pastor here about twelve years; and having received into the church sixty-seven individual. He has since been settled over the First Church in Norwich; and over the church in Bloomfield. He is now preaching, as stated supply, to a congregation in Rainbow.

While Mr. Everest was here, a sort of hurricane occurred in the moral atmosphere, totally strange in this general quiet community. There seemed to be, by one consent, a congregating into this neighborhood of large numbers of a new class of preachers, who considered themselves ordained of Heaven to introduce into these parts at least, a new dispensation. They preached in private houses, and on the public square, and in the sanctuary when they could obtain an entrance. They preached doubtless some truth; both they preached much error. They assailed most of the leading doctrines of the gospel system. Mr. Everest combated the doctrinal errors of these preachers with good success. He delivered and printed a sermon, which was a very effective one, from the text, "I am set for the defence of the gospel." (Phil. i. 17.) The errors of the nature he combated were pretty much overthrown. There was another error of this class of preachers that he did not successfully meet. They preached that ministers ought to *preach for nothing* – that those who have pay are *hirelings* – and that it is better to go and hear ignorant persons preach in fields and barns, who have no recompense, than to hear the learned black-coats, who receive a support for devoting their time and talents to the useful calling of the ministry. This error Mr. Everest did not meet. And the seed sown then has ripened into a harvest of briars and thorns. Children and youth received a prejudice, against a respectable and intelligent ministry, and an orderly sanctuary; which is now one of the prominent reasons why many families in the limits of this parish, are scarcely at all represented in any house of worship on the Lord's Day.

It was, I think, during the ministry of Mr. Everest, that the society concluded that they would no longer "*seat* the meeting-house." It had been the custom to appoint a committee, once in two or three years, to designate the seats where families and individuals should sit. The aged were accommodated near the pulpit for better hearing the minister, and others were provided for, as to eligibility of seats,

somewhat according to the amount of their tax, and general standing in the community. The young folks occupied the gallery; the male sex on one side, and the females on the other side of the singers – the young folks all, but more especially the males, being under the particular watch and care of the tithing-men. It was very difficult to please all in this way of seating. A story is told, illustrating this, of one Mr. Jonathan Hebard. He was placed in a wall-pew, just by the north door; and he made complaint, that they not only put him into the coldest spot in the house, but that they put in *snow* with him; a respectable citizen by the name of Snow having been assigned as his pew-mate.¹⁴

After an interval of about two years, in which the pulpit was supplied by different persons. Mr. Richard F. Cleveland, a native of Norwich, received and accepted an invitation to settle among this people. He was ordained, October 15, 1829. His ordination sermon was delivered by Rev. Dr. Sprague of Albany. He assumed the pastoral relation on the condition that he might be discharged, if it should be his pleasure, at the end of three years. When the three years were expired, he preferred to, though the society and church were exceedingly desirous to have him remain, and employed very earnest efforts to induce him to change his mind. His relation to this people was dissolved by council, *according to contract*, October 1, 1832.

Mr. Cleveland was a good man, an ardent and laborious man, a holy man. He loved the cause of Christ, and he loved this people, and labored earnestly for their spiritual welfare. He was a man well calculated to attach a church strongly to himself; and he did not fail to accomplish this desirable object in this place. Thirty-one persons were added to the church during his ministry.

He went hence to Portsmouth, VA. After continuing about a year in Portsmouth, he went to Cladwell, NJ and from Caldwell he went to Fayetteville, NY. He was but recently dismissed from the latter place, to engage in an agency for the American Home Missionary Society, in Central New York.

April 6, 1833, Rev. Erasmus D. Moore received a call for settlement from this society and church. For some reason he made choice of another field of labor. From this time, different individuals occupied the pulpit for longer or shorter periods, till the fall of 1837, no person receiving a call to enter on the pastoral relation.

The present pastor was ordained October 11, 1837. The sermon was preached by his honored father, Rev. Bennet Tyler, D.D., of East Windsor Hill. The charge was delivered by Rev. Dr. Nott of Franklin, the venerable Patriarch of the clergy of New England. At that time it appeared to the present pastor exceedingly improbably that he should continue so long in this connexion. Providence directed his steps here. Providence has hitherto sustained him here. And the future is also left to the decisions of Providence. Of his character, and his ministry general, he leaves it for him to speak, who shall occupy this post fifty years hence, when this church shall celebrate the two hundredth Anniversary of its organization.

He would say that he sees very much reason for humiliation and penitence in the review of his ministry thus far, while he sees much occasion for gratitude to God. We have not been destitute of visits from the Holy Spirit during this period, refreshing the hearts of God's people, and bringing sinners to Christ. It was in a season of depression in the church, as regards the state of religion; and when its numbers were much reduced, from a variety of causes, particularly from emigration, that the present pastor entered on this field. There were at that time seventy-four members of the church living. Since then, seventy-nine have been added. Yet, owing to the work of death, and the continued loss by emigration, which exceeds the loss by death, the net increase is but thirty-six, making our number of living members this day one hundred and ten. It gives us great pleasure to know, that many who are ornaments to religion in other places, entered into covenant with the Lord and his people among us.

This church has ever been greatly blessed in devout and useful *female* members. Miss Anna Follet is frequently spoken of by persons now living here, and occasionally by aged persons in the adjoining churches, as having been peculiarly eminent for piety and gifts qualifying her for usefulness. She taught many children the elements of common learning, and many adults the great things that concern the welfare of the soul. The small house near the former church, in which for twenty years or more she lived with her sister, was a place where Christians often gathered to pray, and anxious sinners often resorted to inquire what they should do to be saved. She was born 1759, and died 1833. The Misses white, (who have been spoken of in a preceding note,) daughters of Rev. Mr. White, were devout women, and ever deeply interested in the cause of Christ. Their house was for many years much occupied as a place for

social religious meetings.

All who have been settled ministers in this place have come here in their youth. No one of them had been ordained before coming here.

The following persons have filled the office of Deacon in this church. The figures denote the date of their election to the office.

1700, Joseph Carey	1765, Jonathan Martin
1700, Thomas Bingham	1765, Elijah Bingham
1700, Nathaniel Wales	1777, Samuel Gray
1729, Abel Bingham	1787, Eleazer Fitch
1729, Joseph Huntington	1787, Hezekiah Bissel
1729, Ralph Wheelock ¹⁵	1790, Thomas Tileston
1729, Eleazer Carey	1796, Samuel Perkins
1741, Nathaniel Wales	1802, Eliphalet Murdock
1748, Ebenezer Wales	1815, Charles Lee
1754, Joseph Huntington	1824, Thomas Welch
1754, Nathaniel Skiff	1840, Abner Follet

All have deceased excepting the three last named, and of these the first has removed from this place, and is now connected with the Second Church in Norwich.

The following churches were organized as colonies from this. The church at Mansfield Centre, or South Mansfield, then called *Naubesetuck*.

The date of its organization is October 18, 1710. Rev. Eleazer Williams, son of Rev. John Williams of Deerfield, Mass., of eventful history, was its first pastor. Before this time, Mr. Whiting was required to preach occasionally at Naubesetuck.

The church in Hampton was organized from this, June 5, 1723; and Rev. William Billings was ordained pastor. The place was then called Kennedy or Windham Village.

The church in Scotland society was organized from this, October 22, 1735. The first pastor was Rev. Ebenezer Devotion. A society had been formed there in 1732.

There was also a church organized in what was then the north part of the society, but is now included in the society and town of Chaplin, in 1780. Rev. John Storrs was the pastor. After continuing about sixteen years, it was thought, on the whole, the dictate of wisdom to give up the support of religious worship in that locality; and thirteen members were received back to this church. Other members probably united themselves with churches in other places.

The church in Willimantic, now a very important part of the town of Windham, the early members of which were in considerable numbers from this church, was organized at the house of Mr. A.C. Tingley, January 22, 1828.

In 1750, there was an attempt made to form a "*Separate Church*" in this society, by persons who had been members of this church, and a minister was proposed for ordination. Those who started the enterprise called themselves "*Brethren and Sisters.*" On account of disagreement among themselves, the enterprise was abandoned.

The Episcopal church was established in this village in the year 1832.¹⁶

The Baptist church was instituted in the 1846.

The first house of worship built in Windham was erected in 1697.

The second, a larger one than the first in 1716.

These houses, it is supposed, were on the "parade" or public square about in the range between the present house of worship and the bank.

The third house of worship was commenced in 1751, and completed in 1755. It was occupied till the 20th of March, 1848, when it was pulled down to employ the timbers, to some extent, in constructing the

one in which we are now assembled. The sermon preached by the pastor on the occasion of bidding farewell to that venerable sanctuary, the day preceding, from the 84th Psalm, 1st verse, "*How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!*" is deposited under the corner stone of this edifice.¹⁷

This beautiful and pleasantly located, and commodious house of worship, erected with great unanimity, and paid for with most commendable enterprise and generosity, was completed in March, 1849; and on the 29th of the same month, was dedicated to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The sermon on that occasion was preached by the pastor from the 122nd Psalm, 1st verse, "*I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.*"

In view of this summary of our history as a church and people, I would offer a few remarks. And

1. We see abundant cause of gratitude for the present degree of prosperity which we are permitted to enjoy, notwithstanding our exceeding unworthiness before God.
2. We see abundant cause of gratitude for the rich legacy we have received from our early fathers, the early settlers and residents of this place; in their love to Zion; and enterprise in things that concern the welfare of Zion; in their holy examples and their fervent prayers.
3. We see the folly of attempting to overturn a church founded by holy men, who trust in God and see his glory. Not one church probably, founded by the early Puritan settlers of New England, whom God sent here to recover the land from the desolation of a savage wilderness, to form its civil institutions, and to plant its churches in his name and for his glory, has been overthrown by the enemies of religion. This work of our fathers was of God, and God's hand has been engaged in the protection of their work. *It is from other causes than the opposition of the enemies of true religion that churches suffer any permanent injury.* Those who array themselves against the church may injure themselves; they may destroy their own peace, and their own character, and make a sacrifice of their immortal souls; but the church to which their hostility is directed will live and flourish.
4. We see the destructive influence of those persons, who oppose the labors of a conscientious and pious ministry.

Parents who follow this pernicious course often do unspeakable harm to their children. They fortify them against the very instrumentalities which are calculated to promote their highest welfare. Will they go to the sanctuary to hear the minister preach whom their parents virtually instruct them to despise? Or if they go, will they give heed to what he says? They become profane: the minister can do nothing to recover them from this vice. They become intemperate; the minister's exhortations and reproofs avail nothing. For him and his opinions they have no respect. It is the minister's business to draw them from their follies, into the path of wisdom, to persuade them to honor their parents, to fear God, to keep his commandments, and lay up treasures in heaven. And all this the parents counteract by their unwise conduct.

The vice that has prevailed in this place, in some former periods, to so great an extent, and the results of which we even now feel, is in no small degree to be attributed to the conduct I am alluding to, in parents and persons in elevated and influential circumstances. If there had not been, in certain periods, such opposition to the ministry here, the morals of the place would have been then, and would be now, much better. The property of the place would have been, and would be now, much more valuable. The soil of these farms would be more productive. Many of the farms in this society have been repeatedly drunk up by their intemperate proprietors – some of them more than once in the memory of aged citizens now living. Did this sort of morals proceed from the preaching of the ministers? It is known by every one that it was the result of disregarding the ministers.¹⁸ They reasoned of righteousness and temperance to a people who never heard them, or treated their doctrine with contempt. And here let me venture to assert that an upright minister, who, in the fear of God, and without respect to the fear or favor of men, takes upon him the ungracious task of admonishing the people of their vices and urging them to forsake them for the ways of industry, sobriety, and every virtue; who endeavors to persuade the people to flee from the wrath to come, and prepare for the glory and bliss of heaven, is the greatest friend they have. Those that arrive at heaven through the faithful instrumentality, will acknowledge it with joy: and those who perish in spite of their instrumentality, will also acknowledge it, though with unavailing sorrow.

5. The history of our church, to which our thoughts have been turned this day, instructs us to humble ourselves before God for our present and past unfaithfulness and unbelief; and to seek the Lord with an earnest faith, for his continued blessing. The God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, the God of the Pilgrim Fathers, the God of the fathers of this church and people, will remember us with blessings if we wait upon him.

And when another anniversary of our church origin is observed, fifty years to come, though most of us, if not all, will be sleeping with the congregation of the dead, the day may be observed by a more holy, more grateful, and more prosperous people.

“Now unto him that is able to keep you falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now, and ever, Amen.”

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Note – The first child born in Windham was Ebenezer Jenning: born 1691.

Arthur Bebins died, 1788, aged 108.

Samuel Lincoln died, 1794, aged 101.

Nathaniel Lincoln, died, 1834, aged 105. This man was accustomed to come four miles to meeting, *on foot*, after he was an hundred years old.

Mrs. Sarah Kingsley died, 1842, aged 99 years, 8 months.

Mrs. Susanna Kingsley died, 1846, aged 100 years, 9 months.

The house, in which the church is said to have been organized, was about a mile north of the public square. It has been taken away, but is still remembered by many of the citizens, as the “Dingley house.”

The following is the inscription on the monument of Lieut. Cates. “In memory of Mr. John Cates. He was a gentleman born in England, and the first settler in the Town of Windham. By his last Will and Testament, he gave a generous Legacy to ye first church of Christ in Windham, in plated, and a generous Legacy in land for ye support of ye poor, and another Legacy for ye support of ye school in said Town forever. He died in Windham July ye 16<sup>th</sup>, A.D. 1697.

RELIGIOUS EXERCISES IN OBSERVANCE OF THE DAY,  
DEC. 10<sup>TH</sup>, 1850

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The churches that had been formed as colonies from this, were invited, with their pastors, to spend the day with us.

Convened in the house of God, at 11, A.M.

After singing, by the choir, the 148th Psalm, H.M., tune, *Lenox*, the pastor read an extract from the records of the church, relating to the observance of the Hundredth Anniversary, 50 years ago.

Then followed the Invocation and Reading the Scriptures, by Rev. Allen Clar, formerly a member of this church. Singing; the 148th Psalm, 1st part, L.M.; tune, *Extollation*.

Introductory prayer; by Rev. Thomas Tallman, pastor of the church in Scotland.

Singing; the 44th Psalm, 3d part, C.M.; tune *Archdale*.

Historical Discourse; by the pastor.

Prayer; by Rev. Elijah B. Huntington, of Quinebaug, related to this church by marriage.

Singing; the 575th Hymn, L.M.; tune *Mendon*.

The Lord's Supper was then administered. Rev. Samuel G. Willard, pastor of the church in Willimantic, Rev. Richard Woodruff, stated supply of the church in Hampton, and Rev. Anson S. Atwood, pastor of the church in Mansfield Centre, officiated at the table, each of them making an address.

The 137th Psalm, 4th part, S. M., and the 117th Psalm, 1st part, L.M. were sung at the table.

The Benediction was pronounced by Rev. George J Harrison, of Franklin.

On motion of Deacon Thomas Welch, it was then "Voted: that we adjourn to meet in this place, *on the TWO HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY of the church, Dec. 10th, 1900.*

FOOTNOTES

¹ The land which embraces the town was given in 1675 to a certain number of gentlemen named as legates in his last will, by Joshua, Sachem of Mohegan. It was partially surveyed in 1676, and the main street was laid out. Purchases were made for settlement in the two following years.

² There was no unusual attention to religion in any of the congregations in the neighborhood, at this time.

³ Mr. Clap was born at Scituate, Mass., June 26, 1703. His parents were Stephen and Temperance Clap. He entertained a hope of his conversion at the age of seventeen, while a member of Cambridge College. He completed his collegiate course in 1722. In 1725, December 31, he came to Windham, in order to settlement. He was ordained August 3, 1726. *Windham Church Records. – Minutes of his life in manuscript. – Dr. Daggett's Sermon at Presiden Clap's funeral. – Dr. Allen's Am. Biog. And His Dictionary. – Rev. Elijah Waterman's Cent. Sermon, etc.*

⁴ He died January 7, 1767.

⁵ His valuable manuscripts were plundered in the expedition against New Haven, under General Tryon. Among them were materials for a history of Connecticut.

⁶ The census of the parish alluded to in this extract from Mr. Clap's manuscript is preserved in his own hand-writing, and is now in the possession of the write of this discourse, - one leaf only missing. There were 120 families, 722 individuals.

His own family is recorded thus, -
"Thomas Clap, June 26, 1703.
a Mary Clap, April 25, 1729.
Temperance Clap, April 29, 1732.
Pompey, Negro, about 1713.
Phillis, Negro, about 1717.
Tamar, Negro, December 18, 1736."

The Dyer family is recorded thus, -
"Capt. Thomas Dyar, May 15, 1694.
Lydia Dyar, January 15, 1695.
Mary Dyar, January 31, 1719.
b Eliphalet Dyar, September 14, 1721.
Lydia Dyar, July 12, 1724.
Eunice Dyar, June 5, 1727.
Ebenezer Fitch, July 12, 1724.
Cuffee, Negro, about 1711.
Hagar, Negro, 1716.

⁷ Am. Biog. and His. Dictionary

a His wife had died a few months before.

b Colonel of regiment raised in 1758, for the expedition against Crown Point, Agent for Colony to Great Britain, - Delegate to the Congress of 1765, and to that of 1774, - Appointed Judge in 1776, and Chief Justice in 1789.

⁸ Dr. Trumbull', History, Vol. II. B. 12.

⁹ They also did not vote in the church. Vide Sermon of Rev. Cyprian Strong on this subject, printed at Hartford, by Hudson & Goodwin, 1780.

¹⁰ Dr. Trumbull says, Vol. II. P. 303, "The Committee of the First Society of Windham, made application to the Trustees to give them a recompense for the removal of their pastor. Upon this they mutually agreed they agreed to refer it to the judgement of the gentlemen of the General Assembly, what compensation they should have. Those gentlemen considering that Rev. Clap had been in the ministry at Windham fourteen years, which in their estimate was about half the term of a minister's life in general, judge that the society ought to have half the price of his settlement. This was about fifty-three pounds sterling. Upon the memorial of the Trustees, granted that sum to the people of Windham as compensation." Dr. Trumbull has fallen into a mistake in relation to the sum granted by the Assembly.

The following vote is found on the Records of the First Ecclesiastical Society in this

place, (Meeting August 20, 1740.) Also voted and ordered by this Society, that Mr. John Abbe, Nathan Skiff, and Joseph Bingham, the present Society's Committee, or anyone of them, in the name and behalf of said Society, receive the three hundred and ten pounds money granted to this Society in May last, by the General Assembly, on the account of Rev. Thomas Clap's removal from us to the Rectorate of Yale College."

¹¹ He was born at Middletown; in 1718. When he was two years old, his parents removed to New Haven. He graduated at Yale College, in 1736. His wife deceased May 27, 1802, aged eighty-three. The last two of the family that died in Windham, were maiden daughters. Sarah White died December 28, 1836, aged seventy-eight; Susanna died April 5, 1837, aged ninety-five. Two colored servants belonging to the family, survived Susanna White; one, *Cate*, is since dead, and one, *Creusa*, still lives, inhabiting the family mansion, and having a life-interest in her former master's property.

¹² Mr. Waterman was graduated at Yale College, 1791; ordained at Windham 1794; installed at Bridgeport 1806; and died October 11, 1825, aged 56. He was the father of Rev. Thomas Waterman, of Providence. He published a *Life of Calvin*, - *Catechism of Geneva*, - *A Century Sermon*, - *A Sermon at the Execution of Caleb Adams*, - and a *Sermon founded on 2d Kings v. 18 - The Noble Convert*, preached at the request, and published by the consent of Hon. Pierpont Edwards.

¹³ This sermon was printed by Mr. John Byrne, of this place. The sermons preached by Dr. Dana, at Mr. Waterman's ordination, and by Dr. Welch, at Mr. White's funeral, were also printed by Mr. Byrne.

¹⁴ The seating of the meeting-house, it is since found, was relinquished at an earlier day.

¹⁵ Father of Rev. Eleazer Wheelock, D.D., founder and first president of Dartmouth College, who was born in Windham, April 1711.

¹⁶ An Episcopal society was started in 1804. After maintaining worship about a year, they voted to join the First Society in the support of the Gospel Ministry. The present Episcopal house of worship was erected in 1833. The Baptist house of worship, in 1846.

¹⁷ It may be found in due time, with other documents, in a leaden box below the south pillar of the portico. The Building Committee of the house recently taken down were Jonathan Huntington, Nathaniel Wales, and Thomas Welch. The Building Committee for the house recently erected – Justin Swift, Abner Follet, Chester A. Woodworth, and Christopher Yerguson.

¹⁸ Perhaps there is danger that a false impression may be made, by what is said respecting the morals of the people. I would therefore say that *in these days* there is probably no *very great difference* in this matter, between this town and others of the same size in the state. There has certainly been a very decided change for the better within forty or fifty years.