

1876

Centennial of the Congregational Church in Winthrop, Maine, September 4, 1876

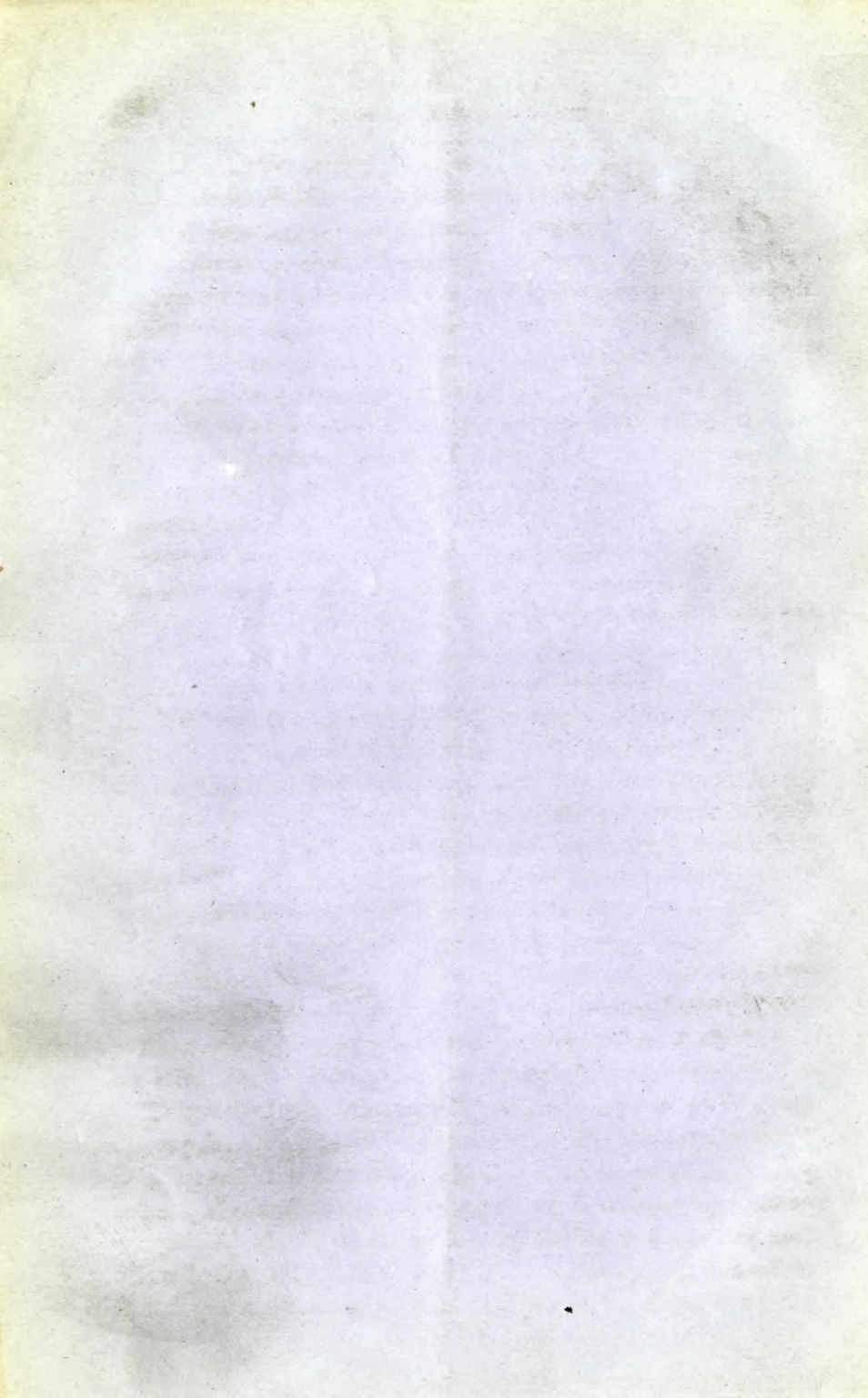
Winthrop Congregational Church

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CENTENNIAL
OF THE
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
IN
WINTHROP, MAINE,
SEPTEMBER 4, 1876.

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CENTENNIAL SERVICES.

The Congregational Church in Winthrop celebrated its centennial anniversary, Monday, Sept. 4, 1876, by services in the church, at 2 o'clock, P. M., and by a festival in the vestry in the evening. The church was elaborately and beautifully decorated with flowers, interwoven with evergreen and clematis, which exhaled a charming aroma. There were two tablets placed upon the walls, one on each side of the desk; one bearing these words, "organized Sept. 4, 1776; number of members, twenty-six; David Jewett, first pastor, 1782. The vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, Ps. 58: 15." The other read thus, "Centennial, 1876; number of members, one hundred and fifty-one; W. F. Bickford, pastor, 1876. Hitherto hath the Lord helped us, 1 Sam. 1: 12."

Several very appropriate pieces of music were spiritedly rendered by the choir, prayer was offered by Rev. Henry F. Harding, of Hallowell, a discourse was read by Rev. Thomas Newman Lord, a former member of the church, after which the Lord's Supper was celebrated, Rev. Thomas Adams and Rev. H. F. Harding, administering.

The services at the vestry consisted of a bountiful supper, at which all were seated, and where social intercourse flowed in joyful and unrestrained measure. The hour was a glad one to all. After this, remarks were made by Messrs. Harding, Hill, Nixon, Adams, B. Thurston, Lord, and the pastor, interspersed with singing several appropriate hymns.

The following letters and poem were then read, by Dea. Woodward:

SEARSPORT, Aug. 29, 1876.

STEPHEN SEWALL, Esq.,

Dear Sir:—I thank you for the invitation extended to me and Mrs. Thurston to be present at your centennial celebration next week. It would be extremely gratifying to my feelings if I could be with you on that joyful occasion. But circumstances do not favor the gratification of my feelings.

If I could be with you, and opportunity were granted me, I should like to submit some remarks on the value of a devoted, sound, christian ministry. The church in Winthrop has been a stable church, not easily carried away by the winds of false doctrine. This is to be attributed to a sound ministry. Of their first pastor, the Rev. David Jewett, I have little knowledge. His death followed his settlement in fourteen months. The second pastor I knew considerably in my youth. He was a good man, and his ministry, though brief, was blessed of God. The third pastor I knew well. That he was a good man, and full of faith and the Holy Ghost, it is believed few who knew him will deny. For more than forty years he went in and out before this people, breaking unto them the bread of life. He was a man of fervid piety, and great industry. He brought from the treasury of God's word things new and old, instructing his people largely in the fundamental truths of the gospel. He did not live late enough in the nineteenth century to learn that doctrines were not proper things for the pulpit. He regarded them as the bone and muscle of the gospel, as the grand and vital force of the redemptive system. Hence he preached clearly the great truths of our holy religion, line upon line, and precept upon precept; the sin and ruin of man; redemption by the blood of atonement; the necessity of the new birth in order to life eternal; this great change something more than the simple intention to follow Christ; but a great radical change in the moral character; this change wrought by the Holy Spirit; the final judgment, and the eternal retribution of saints and sinners according to their characters and works. Such were the great elements of his preaching. He labored to persuade men by the grace of the gospel, and the terrors of the Lord. Both the intellectual and moral character of the church was influenced and molded by such a ministry. For intelligence in regard to the great truths of the gospel, and the settled belief of them, this church has long had an honored record. Nor have the fruits of piety been wanting. Many souls have been won to Christ and trained for heaven.

Of the later pastors of this church I have had but little knowledge. Their ministry has been brief. I know of no reason to suppose that they have not been sound, good, and useful men. The church has been en-

larged under their labors. Its history has been a favored and honored history. Let God be praised, and the church become more and more a light and blessing in the world.

If I may be allowed a word of counsel, I would say, beware of the minister who speaks lightly of the great and vital truths of the gospel, who regards them as unprofitable themes for the pulpit, and who ignores them in his preaching. The practice of omitting to preach the doctrines of the cross in the latter part of the last century, and the beginning of the present, prepared the way for the introduction of another gospel into many of the pulpits of the Bay State. Ever therefore demand of all who may minister to you in holy things, that they faithfully preach the great truths of the gospel, preach them clearly and fully, but not as dry abstract facts, having no relation to man's duty and destiny, but as the great sanction of the precepts, as that which alone gives life and force to them. Precept without sanction is a rope of sand, powerless and useless.

I have reason for a grateful remembrance of the church in Winthrop. They lent me a helping hand in my early efforts to prepare for the ministry. Fifty-six or seven years ago, I well knew the leading members. Some of them I regarded as dear friends. But nearly all of them have since passed to their eternal award, so that I am a stranger to most of the present members. Still I send them christian salutations, and offer for them my earnest prayer that the blessing of God may rest upon them all, and that through the rich grace of God we may meet in the better land.

Cordially your friend and brother,

S. THEURSTON.

WELD, Aug. 24, 1876.

TO DEA. HENRY WOODWARD,

Dear Brother:—I thank you and my other friends for the kind remembrance which prompted your cordial invitation, and I may well count it an honor and privilege to be had in esteem by the church, to which for a time I imperfectly ministered.

Though I do not expect to be present in person, these enclosed lines may serve as my representative; and accompanying them are my cordial appreciation of the good will of my old friends, and best wishes for the church and people.

Very truly yours,

DANIEL D. TAPPAN.

HYMN FOR THE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH IN WINTHROP, ME., SEPT. 4, 1876.

BY D. D. TAPPAN.

God of the centuries, thee we adore;
Author of favors past, and still in store:
We laud thee for past goodness, first of all,—
And for the future, humbly on thee call.

These hundred years have witnessed, each for thee,
Honored thy truth, and love, and clemency;—
Our fathers' God is ours, to whom anew,
We pledge our fealty, as we now review

The things that were, and muse on things to come,
More wondrous, as our busy minds may roam
O'er fields of promise, not as yet fulfilled,
But, each a rock on which bright hopes we build.

What perils gathered round our nation's birth,
One hundred years ago. Through the wide earth
The story of her wrongs, and God's rich blessing,
Has spread; in other lands their wrongs redressing.

In that dark hour *this* light was lifted, here,
The wilds around, and each lone place to cheer;
'Mid storm and calm still keeping its high station,
Till this birthday,—coeval with the nation.

We think with gladness of our peerless sires,
In church, and state, and hope those glowing fires
Kindling immortal deeds for earth and heaven,
To us and our successors may be given.

And, when another hundred years have flown,
And, through the world Jehovah's name is known,
May it be seen, that, faithful to her trust,
This Winthrop Church stands reckoned with the just.

CENTENNIAL ADDRESS.

T E X T .

PSALM cxi, 2. The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.

A COMMON characteristic of ancient saints is the pleasure they experienced in contemplating the works of God. Moses commanded his people to "remember the days of old, and consider the years of many generations." David said "I remember thy judgments of old, O Lord, and have comforted myself, thou hast made thy wonderful works to be remembered."

God himself is infinitely great, and therefore "doeth great things, and unsearchable—marvelous things without number." His people have pleasure in his works, because they display the greatness of his being and perfections. They study his works with intense interest, because they fill their minds with adoring views of his character, and raise their hearts to him in love and praise. They have been accustomed to look beyond second causes, and ascribe all events to the sovereign ruler of the universe. They have delighted to trace the glorious display he has made of himself in nature, providence, and grace. And this characteristic has distinguished them from those who "regard not the works of the Lord, nor consider the operation of his hands." The wise men of the world glory in human wisdom, the mighty glory in their might, and speak of the great things God has done for them as if they did them themselves; but those imbued with wisdom from above, "glory in this, that they understand and know the Lord who exercises loving

kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth," and rejoice that he reigns.

These two classes are visible in the history of all christian nations. They have confronted each other in those important events which have transpired among us during the first century of our Republic. Among our civil rulers we have had God-fearing men, disposed to give prominence to the nation's dependence upon him, and obligation to obey his law; and we have had those who would make the people Godless. It is cause for thanksgiving that the friends of the Sabbath have been successful in their efforts to save it from being publicly desecrated during the national exhibition of our centennial progress.

This hundredth year of our national existence is full of interest to every enlightened lover of his country. It wakens the spirit of patriotism into new life, and fills the land with expressions of wonder in view of the rapid increase of our population, and the great improvement we have made in agriculture, manufactures, commerce, and education. Our civil, literary, and benevolent institutions give us a name, and make us a praise among the older nations of the world. The almost universal acknowledgment is that we have done well for ourselves,—accomplished great things,—laid the national foundation on a safe and secure basis, and raised a civil superstructure beautiful in the eyes of all beholders. But few realize the nation's indebtedness to God,—the saving influence of religion and the christian church.

The sphere of patriotism is often confined to the human side of things. It recounts chiefly the deeds of men, and celebrates the praise of statesmen, warriors, and scholars. It fails to consider the work of faith, the power of prayer, the saving influence of the righteous, the interposition of Jehovah in national deliverances. It rejoices in its boastings, and glories in men.

Religion takes men beyond the sphere of common patriotism, and leads them to consider how great things God has done for the nation. The pious mind, accustomed to view his hand in human affairs, sees in our national growth and greatness a power, wisdom, and goodness more than human—no less than divine. It looks

beyond human legislators, able statesmen, brave warriors, profound scholars, persuasive orators. It thinks not so much of what the nation has done for itself, as of what God has done for it. Its language is, "the Lord hath done great things for us. If it had not been the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us, then had they swallowed us up quickly, when their wrath was kindled against us."

The devout mind is jealous lest this centennial anniversary be kept without a proper recognition of the fact that the nation owes its past prosperity to God,—that it is dependent on him for future well-being,—that religion is essential to its perpetuity and perfection,—that without religious principle and people, it cannot be saved from a doom so terrible as that which has come upon wicked kingdoms of other times.

The greatest of all the works of God is that of human redemption,—the work of saving his people,—of providence and grace in executing his purposes, and fulfilling his promises concerning the church which Christ loved, and for which he gave himself that it might be redeemed by his blood and stand a monument to his eternal praise. It is the ground and pillar of the truth,—God's appointed instrumentality for saving men. On it depend the nation's weal,—the world's salvation. The dealings of God with his people are those in which they most delight, and which they seek out with most profit to themselves. It was in view of the divine interpositions in behalf of the church that David said "whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord."

This delight in the works of God which characterized the ancient saints, and prompted to frequent and devout meditation, was of great personal benefit. It imparted many useful lessons, strengthened faith, encouraged hope, dissipated fear, scattered doubts, incited zeal, increased peace, and stirred to action. Christians at the present day should do likewise. "They should abundantly utter the memory of God's great goodness, and talk of his wondrous works. They should speak of the glory of his kingdom,

and talk of his power; to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.”

You, brethren and sisters, members of this church, actuated by the spirit of ancient saints, and sharing the pleasure they experienced in studying the displays God made of himself in behalf of his people, have judged it proper to celebrate, by appropriate services, this centennial anniversary of its existence. It is meet that the day which marks an epoch so full of events which magnify the grace of God; which have been so powerful for good on the inhabitants of this town; which have been fraught with so much sanctifying influence on earth; and which have caused so much joy in heaven, should be consecrated to a recital of some prominent facts, to precious reminiscences of departed friends, to songs of praise, and earnest supplication.

It seems to me, brethren and sisters, that you have been guided by heavenly wisdom, and by the spirit of grace, in setting apart this day to these hallowed services. They must, I think, prove a means of grace to your hearts, and strengthen you to build anew on the ancient foundation. Loved ones, long ago entered upon their heavenly rest, come up before you with overpowering emotions. Some of them were bound to your hearts by ties of nature, —all by ties of christian affection. With many of them you went to the house of God in company, joined in social prayer, bowed around the same family altar, and engaged in various labors for the Master. They are not lost to you. They have only crossed to the other side of the river of death, and soon you will pass over to join their blessed society and share their perfect bliss.

With great pleasure do I perform the part assigned me in the services of this occasion; but deeply regret that I must do it so imperfectly. Personal recollections of individuals and events here, during the last fifty-six years, come up before me to-day, and cause me to live over again the happiest portion of my life. This town was the home of my boyhood, and as I grew up to manhood, I thought it the only earthly paradise. I came here a

fatherless boy, at the age of twelve, in December, 1819. How different this *village* then and now. At that time, no stage-coach had passed through it. It had no meeting-house, and only two male members of the church lived within its bounds. Through the deep snow of winter, the mud of spring and autumn, and under the burning sun of summer, old men and youth plodded their way to the unattractive house of worship on yonder hill, in which was no fire except what was carried in the foot-stove by mothers and maidens, and there we listened to the gospel message proclaimed by one so venerable, that I thought him an old man when in the prime of life. He now rises before me, as he stood in that pulpit of queer form, and elevated so far toward the skies that no boy of common courage ever thought of reaching it. I see the square pews with partitions so high as to hide their occupants with the exception of their heads. I hear the rattling of the upturned seats as they used to be thrown down at the Amen of prayer. I can see the chorister with tuning-fork at his ear. I hear the fa, sol, -la, which preceded the service of song,—the hoarse tones of the bass viol,—the shrill sound of the violin, and the many voices of men and women who sang “with the spirit and with the understanding also.” Then almost everybody went to meeting, and were satisfied with a house not painted or carpeted, and with seats not cushioned. They wanted two gospel sermons every Sabbath, each twice or thrice as long as is endurable at the present day.

But times change ; the people get new notions ; “one generation passes away, and another generation cometh” unlike the one which preceded it. We should not cling to the customs of the fathers simply on account of their antiquity, nor should we abandon them only because they are old. While we may not say that the former times were better than the present in all respects, we may safely subscribe to the utterance of an ancient man, “Days should speak, and a multitude of years should teach wisdom.” It is not wise to imitate some of old, who, when God said to them, “Stand ye in the old ways, and see and ask for the old paths, and walk therein,” stubbornly replied, we will not walk therein.

The occasion calls our thoughts far back into the past, and prior to the existence of any now present. How little did the original members of this church, and their immediate successors, think of the interest their doings would create in the minds of those who would be on the stage of action at the end of a century. Had they thought of *this*, early materials for a history would be more abundant, though sufficient is at hand to fill a volume of considerable size; consequently, in a single discourse, many things of interest must necessarily be passed over, and those mentioned receive only a brief notice. The first thing to notice concerning the church whose hundredth anniversary we now celebrate, is

ITS ORGANIZATION.

This took place September 4th, 1776. At this time the mind of the American people was agitated by the stirring events of the Revolution. They had struggled through a long war, and the problem of their national Independence had become a fixed fact. But the nation was an infant, in its swaddling clothes, and needed sustenance to keep it alive which the people found difficult to provide. The town was incorporated only five years before the church was formed, and the first white settler came upon its territory only ten years previous. But there were those who thought of the spiritual, as well as of the temporal Zion, and said of her, "If we forget thee, O Jerusalem, let our right hands forget their cunning; if we do not remember thee, let our tongues cleave to the roof of our mouths."

This church came into being forty-four years before the State, and when the now fruitful fields were covered with their native forests. It is supposed to be the first church of any denomination gathered in the region now included in the counties of Kennebec, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Somerset, Franklin, and Oxford. Few churches in our commonwealth are as old as this. Not more than forty of the present one hundred and eighty-seven of our own denomination.

Its original members consisted of sixteen males and eleven females. They subscribed to the following covenant. "We do

declare our consent to the doctrines of religion as held forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, or Shorter Catechism, apprehending, in our judgment and consciences, that they are agreeable to the Holy Scriptures." Unlike many other of the earlier Congregational churches of the State, it built on the apostolic foundation, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone. Many of the subsequent members of the church came from places near where our pilgrim fathers landed, and where their sentiments prevailed. These men were sound in the faith, evangelical in spirit, and bold in defense of truth. This accounts for the steadfastness of this church in the essential doctrines of the gospel, while others were rent and ruined by yielding to heresy.

For some time after its organization the church was destitute of a pastor, and had but little preaching. From two ministers invited to settle over it, negative answers were received. One of these judged himself too young and inexperienced. The judgment of young ministers and old churches has much changed since that day on the questions, how young ought a man to settle as a minister, and how old ought he to be before the people unsettle him?

THE PASTORS OF THE CHURCH.

January 2d, 1782, was a happy day to this little flock. Rev. DAVID JEWETT then took the oversight thereof; as we trust, according to apostolic direction; not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. In the short space of fourteen months God took this servant from his labors on earth, to his rest and reward in heaven. Thus this little flock was again without a shepherd. Mr. JEWETT's grave is in the same cemetery with Mr. Thurston's, but no stone marks the spot. ↑

From 1781 to 1800 there is a blank in the history of the church which can never be filled, as the record is lost. But these saints during these nineteen years of privation, have "a witness in heaven and a record on high," to the praise of God's grace, and we may be permitted to read it there.

August 27th, 1800, Mr. JONATHAN BELDEN was ordained, and

There is a stone at his grave now 1881.

became pastor of the church. At this time it was very small, as is supposed, not having over twenty members, though twice that number had belonged to it. The pastorate of Rev. Mr. BELDEN closed September 10th, 1805. He died in Hallowell, January 3d, 1844, aged sixty-nine. Some few of us remember him well. He was a Godly man, of a meek spirit, and a faithful servant of Christ; but as people became fastidious hearers of the gospel, some, who acknowledged his preaching to be "powerful and weighty, said his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible."

To Rev. DAVID THURSTON this church and town owe a debt of gratitude never yet fully estimated, and which they can never pay. To him, in a great measure, this town owes its excellent reputation, and this church its extensive usefulness. So long as that marble tablet shall remain in its place in the rear of this desk, or its letters be legible,—so long as this house, through which his voice so often echoed in seraphic strains, beseeching men to be reconciled to God, shall stand; yea, so long as the winds shall sweep over these hills, and through these valleys, the name of DAVID THURSTON will be revered, and his character and life be handed down to posterity. Thousands and millions in heaven will look up to him as a benefactor. That he was a perfect man we do not pretend, that he sometimes erred in judgment we readily admit, but that he had fewer defects of character and more estimable qualities than most men, we assert without fear of being contradicted. His life as a minister has been so fully portrayed by a brother, and printed for your perusal, that I need not detain you to recite his many virtues and labors of love. His settlement here took place February 18th, 1807—twelve years after the settlement of Dr. Gillett in Hallowell, and four years previous to that of Dr. Tappan in Augusta. During his pastorate three hundred and twenty-seven were added to the church. No one of its members at the time of his settlement is now living. After a pastorate of forty-four years, he was dismissed by an ecclesiastical council October 15th, 1851. He died at the post of duty, in Litchfield,

May 7th, 1865, after a useful and happy ministry there of six years, aged eighty-six.

The high esteem in which this good man was held, is seen in the following resolutions, offered at the State Conference by Dr. Pond, and unanimously adopted :

WHEREAS, The Rev. DAVID THURSTON, late of Litchfield, has been connected with this Conference of Churches from its first organization, an officer in it, and a uniform attendant upon its annual meetings, has also been an overseer of Bowdoin College, a trustee of the Maine Missionary Society, and for half a century a trustee of the Bangor Theological Seminary; and

WHEREAS, He was at his death president of the Maine Branch of the American Education Society, and of the American Missionary Association, and has ever been distinguished for his attachment to every good enterprise, and especially for his efforts in the anti-slavery cause, now happily triumphant, even when such efforts were a stigma and a reproach; therefore

Resolved, That in the death of Mr. Thurston, not this Conference only, but the friends of education, of liberty and philanthropy, of Christian missions, of the church of God, of truth and righteousness in the earth, have together sustained a heavy loss.

Resolved, That Mr. Thurston has left to his brethren of this Conference, and to survivors generally, the richest legacy which a dying man can leave,—an *example*, bright and unsullied,—running through a long and laborious life of cheerful hope and trust in God, of steadfast devotedness to his Master's work, and of untiring diligence in the discharge of professional and Christian duty,—an example to be studied and imitated by us all, and from which, if we do not profit, the fault will be our own.

The day Mr. Thurston was dismissed, Mr. RUFUS SAWYER was ordained and took the oversight of the church. He might then have been compared to a youthful landsman taking the place of a skillful mariner on board a ship in a violent storm at sea. He assumed his responsibility as a minister in troublous times, when the state of things demanded experience, as well as the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove. The wonder is that he managed so well. He improved as a preacher, and was a highly esteemed minister in other places. After a pastorate here of eight years, he was dismissed January 21st, 1859; and died in the west, Nov. 29th, 1872.

Mr. SAMUEL BOWKER, a student in Bangor Seminary, supplied the church after Mr. Sawyer left, and was constituted its pastor

October 16th, 1860. Dismissed October 13th, 1863. Died February 15th, 1868. The troubled waters had not become still when Mr. BOWKER entered upon his work, nor were they rocked to rest during his ministry. But through all these days of trial, God did not forsake his people. There was evidence of the Spirit's presence,—souls were converted, and several added to the church.

THOMAS K. NOBLE was ordained October 13th, 1863,—dismissed March 15th, 1869, on account of ill health.

Rev. EDWARD P. BAKER was not formally installed, but was acting pastor from November 1st, 1865, to July 1st, 1872. He was highly esteemed for his work's sake, and is still held in grateful remembrance. During his ministry sixty-seven were admitted to the church.

RICHARD W. JENKINS was ordained September 15th, 1874. Dismissed April 17th, 1876. During this short pastorate Mr. JENKINS gained many friends.

The ninth pastor, Rev. W. F. BICKFORD, has just entered upon his work under auspicious circumstances. That he may prove himself a good minister, and here spend a long and useful life, should be the prayer of a united, working church.

DEACONS OF THE CHURCH.

Did time permit, I would dwell upon their varied and valuable traits of character. I knew them all with the exception of the first. "They used their office well, and purchased to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." May the useful life of the present senior Deacon be lengthened many years, and at his departure, his mantle fall upon his junior associate, and this church be as favored in its officers for a century to come, as in the century past.

MINISTERS SUPPLIED BY THIS CHURCH.

Robert Page, Samuel Johnson, George W. Campbell, Daniel Campbell, William May, William S. Sewall, Thomas N. Lord, Caleb S. Williams, Luther S. Gibson, Samuel N. Tufts, Perez Southworth, Benjamin Southworth, Francis Southworth, Alanson Southworth. Some of these men passed away after a long and useful ministry. Those who remain have well-nigh finished their course, but the home of their first espousals is still dear unto them. For further particulars of these men, see Rev. Mr. Thurston's history of Winthrop. Two other young men of promise in the church, George Thomas and William Morton, commenced a course of study for the ministry. The former was unable to proceed on account of mental depression, and the other was removed by death.

Ministers' wives supplied by this church are eight. Without intending any disparagement of the rest, I feel thankful that the best one of the eight fell to myself. Every minister who finds a *real* wife finds a good thing and obtains favor of the Lord.

MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH.

The whole number on its roll is five hundred and eighty-one; two hundred and thirty-three have died, eight been ex-communicated, one hundred and eighty-five been dismissed to other churches; present number, one hundred and fifty-five. Among the departed ones many might be mentioned distinguished for their faith in God, their devotion to his cause, their love of truth, their holy lives, and even course of piety. They deserve to be held in everlasting remembrance. Through faith and patience they inherit the promises; and if, to-day, they could leave their blissful home, and mingle in our present service, and impart some lessons they have learned with spirits of just men made perfect,—with angels to whom they are made like, and with Christ whom they see without a veil between; may we not suppose they would be willing to make the short exchange.

MEETING-HOUSES OF THE CHURCH.

Less than two years before the organization of the church, the

town voted to build a house for the worship of God, thirty-six feet long, and thirty feet wide. It was erected on the farm owned by Deacon Haven Metcalf, and never finished inside or out. In 1786, the town, including what is now Readfield, voted to build two meeting-houses, called the North and South. The South house is the one in which this church worshiped until 1825, and was given to the Congregational Society by the town, on condition that the Society should keep it in repair, and permit the town to use it for the transaction of its business.

The building of this house was accomplished in the summer of 1825. I need not recite the particulars of the terrible catastrophe at the raising of its frame the year previous. I was an eye-witness of that scene, and shall never forget it.

Some also remember the hair-breadth escape from a greater destruction of life and limb at the old house the Sabbath following, when a very large congregation assembled at the funeral of one of the victims of the above mentioned calamity. The public mind was feverish. Fears were entertained that the huge timbers of the old temple were not of sufficient strength to bear the strain the large congregation assembled would make upon them. In the midst of the services some one thought a crackling sound was heard, gave a shriek, and then came a general rush for the door and windows,—men, women, and children were thrown together promiscuously, and some were on the point of leaping from the gallery to the ground. I can see the disconcerted pastor standing at his post, and hear him trying to soothe the fears of the excited multitude. By dint of effort, order was restored, and the assembly went home thankful that God had been better than their fears, or rather convinced that they had feared where no fear was needed.

REVIVALS OF RELIGION.

These have been as frequent as with most churches, and fraught with the most glorious results. During Mr. Belden's ministry there were forty added to the church. There were tokens for good in 1810, and in 1820 there was much religious interest, and in that and the year following, there were thirty-five added. The

years of greatest prosperity were 1824 and 1825. A religious interest was felt through the entire town,—a deep solemnity pervaded the minds of old and young, and it was realized that God was present in very deed. During these years fifty-one united with the church. This revival greatly increased religious influence in the village, put a new aspect upon the prayer-meeting and the Sabbath School. About this time the church was greatly strengthened, and the pastor assisted by the coming of several persons to the town who united with the church by letter, among whom were Samuel Cordis, Thomas J. Lee, James Clark, and your present senior deacon, Stephen Sewall.

In 1842, God again poured out his spirit and revived his work, and thirty-five were added to this fold. Since that time there have been seasons of deep religious interest, in which the people of God have been refreshed, and the kingdom of Christ built up. To these seasons of the outpouring of the Spirit we, in a great measure, are indebted for the privilege of this centennial celebration. Without them this church would long ago have become extinct. Its further increase and growth in grace depend upon the special presence of the Holy Ghost. Its united, importunate, persevering prayer should be, "Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts; look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself. Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."

TRIALS OF THE CHURCH.

I have already alluded to troublous times in the history of our beloved Zion. No strange thing happened to it in this regard. Our Saviour recognized a needs be that offenses come. The fund given by the Plymouth Company for the support of preaching caused bad feeling and litigation. It is grievous to sensitive minds to be unjustly censured and condemned when acting in a collective body. And this church and its pastor in the early part of the century, experienced much of such censure and condemnation. The part of the ministerial fund this society held after one-half of it

had been given to Readfield, when set off from Winthrop, was claimed by another denomination. A civil suit ensued, much ill-feeling was engendered during the contest, and more when it was decided that the fund could not be taken from this society. Subsequently the parish very generously voted to give it to the town for a school fund, and this act was sanctioned by the legislature.

When we consider the political, moral, and religious questions which agitated the State and the nation during the middle of the present century, and the superior character of the minister and of many of the members of the church at this time, it is no wonder that this agitation disturbed their quiet and created discussion. They were men of progress, and walked in the light as fast as it was revealed to their minds.

First came a discussion on the use of ardent spirits as a beverage. Mr. Thurston left off the practice of drinking his social glass at weddings, and as he made ministerial calls. He labored with the church as a body to get a pledge not to touch the accursed thing. One member, and he a physician, gave it as his opinion that it would be a dangerous experiment for farmers to attempt to do their haying without rum. There was a terrible wincing in the congregation, and some professors of religion were not a little stirred when, at one time, the pastor announced his text, Wo to the drunkards of Ephraim. The sermon proved that he had sent a well aimed arrow to the drunkards of Winthrop. Some said the prophet is a fool,—the spiritual man is mad. He had touched appetite; condemned long established customs, proposed a complete revolution. He stoutly contended he was both sane and wise; and after a hot contest, the enemy laid down their arms, made an unconditional surrender, and espoused the cause of their leader.

Then came the agitation of the slavery question. The pastor at this time was far in advance of his ministerial brethren on this subject. His opinions and practice brought him into conflict with some of his best parishioners and warmest friends. Those who took sides with him were men of positive opinions. As they viewed the subject it seemed very strange that their brethren

should differ from them in theory, or hesitate to adopt their measures. They said to them, you are too slow, and sometimes intimated that they were unsound. Conservative men sought to hold back the hasty ones, and advised to "do nothing rashly." The duty of action against slavery in various ways was agitated in the church, and some few urged a sweeping denunciation of some of our religious societies. At one time the pastor thought duty called him to lecture through the State on slavery, which he did in 1837 and 1838, and his pulpit was supplied by Rev. D. D. Tappan, who has sent us an original hymn for this occasion.

After the return of the pastor, discussion and irritation continued till a few felt so aggrieved that they asked a dismissal and recommendation to the church in Litchfield. The state of things produced by the difference of opinion on the subject of slavery, and the duty of christians in reference to it, led Mr. Thurston to ask a dismissal, and made the ministry of several of his successors very trying. It has been a source of grief to many hearts. It is not for us to censure anybody. "To err is human." I doubt if there were any here during these perilous times so pure in motive, so correct in judgment, so wise in measures, as to have a right to cast the first stone at those who were judged most in error. God be praised, that in his own time, and in his own way, he accomplished what many righteous men and women long desired to behold, but died without the sight. "He chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty,—and took the wise in their own craftiness, and carried the counsel of the froward headlong."

LESSONS FROM THE PAST.

1st. "Have fervent charity among yourselves." This grace is highly extolled in the New Testament, and is essential to christian fellowship. Without it the church cannot keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Unless its members add to godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity, there will be scism, confusion, and every evil work. They do not long walk uncharitably before they begin to walk disorderly. A review of

your past history reveals some unpleasant things which would have been avoided, if there had been more of the spirit of forbearance exercised, and more prudence manifested in judging each other. God permits his people to learn by experience, and if you, brethren and sisters, were called to go through some of your past trials again, you would greatly diminish their irritating effects, by a more prudent treatment of each other. There would be less provoking, but to love and good works; and less striving, but for the faith once delivered to the saints. Many of the reformers of the past needed a reformed spirit to make them successful in their efforts to reform others.

2d. "Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." We may say to God, as David said, "Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered; they trusted in thee and were not confounded." The history of this church for a century affords pleasing evidence of God's faithfulness to his people; his readiness to hear the cry of the humble, and fulfill the desire of them that fear him. There have been many dark days to this people; years which tried their faith and patience; seasons when unbelief has asked, "Will the Lord cast off forever? and will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone forever? Doth his promise fail forevermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" But some remarkable interposition of a distrusted God, has led them to say to their misgiving hearts, "this is our infirmity. We will remember the years of the Most High. We thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks forever: we will show forth thy praise to all generations." The voice of our departed ones, who through faith and patience inherit the promises, says, have faith in God. Wait and work, and your eyes shall see his salvation. "He is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love; therefore be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, inasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

3d. "Thank God, and take courage." The review of the past dealings of God with this church we have taken, though very brief and imperfect, presents many things for which we should be very thankful and hopeful. It was organized upon the true foundation, and its first creed was strictly biblical and evangelical. Amid all the theological conflicts which agitated the century of its existence, and all the shipwrecks of the faith experienced by other churches, *this* remained firm in its hold on essential truth, and proved the gospel the wisdom and power of God unto the salvation of all believers. It has never had a wicked or unworthy minister, and but comparatively few reproachful members. It has had a growth as steady and rapid as most sister churches. It has had many members of strong minds and devoted hearts, who served God and their generation faithfully. They were holy men and women,—the salt of the earth, and deserve to be held in grateful remembrance. Though dead, they speak, and bid us magnify the grace divine so conspicuously manifested in their conversion, spiritual growth, and extensive usefulness. It was sufficient for them, amidst life's trials and death's agonies. Fathers and mothers in Israel, where are they? "They have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb,—are before the throne of God," and worship in the heavenly temple. Let us courageously and joyfully follow them so far as they followed Christ, and his strength will be made perfect in our weakness; and when life's pilgrimage is ended, we shall join our departed loved ones in their heavenly home.

4th. "Yield yourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead." It is well to consecrate this day to reminiscences of the past; to a review of the mistakes on our part, and the mercies on God's part; to confession, supplication, and thanksgiving. But better will it be, if you, the present members of the church present yourselves living sacrifices to God; make such a consecration of yourselves as shall lead you to act henceforth under the impression that you are not your own, and bound to glorify him in your bodies and spirits which are his. Such a dedication to God would put a new aspect on your spiritual state, and who can say but it

might make the ministry of your new pastor the richest in spiritual blessings of all the rest, and decide the continuance and prosperity of this church for a century to come.

With the emblems of Christ's broken body and shed blood before you,—with such an interesting and instructive history behind you, and enjoying such a day as we shall never forget, the transactions of which will go down to future generations, will not each brother and sister of the church say, Lord, I am thine; thine to love thee more and serve thee better than I ever yet have done; thine to be while life and breath and being last or immortality endures.

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant; make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

