

*Joseph Lathrop*  
STEDFASTNESS IN RELIGION,

EXPLAINED AND RECOMMENDED

I N A

S E R M O N,

D E L I V E R E D,

In the FIRST PARISH in WEST-SPRINGFIELD,

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By JOSEPH LATHROP, D. D.  
MINISTER OF SAID PARISH.

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On the 25th day of August, in the year 1796. It being the Day which closed the 40th year of his Ministry; and the year, which completed a Century from the Incorporation of said Parish.

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WEST-SPRINGFIELD:  
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M, DCC, XCVII.

gious Society was formed in this place. And *this day* completes the fortieth year, since my relation to you commenced. My Ministry has been twice as long, as that of your first Pastor; and almost five years longer, than that of my immediate predecessor. The *day* reminds us of the relation subsisting between us: The *length of time*, which this relation has continued, reminds us, that its dissolution is at hand.

Your present attendance in the house of God I have requested, that I might address you, on some important matters, under the impression, which the *day* will naturally make on *your* minds, as well as *my own*.

The substance of my exhortation will be that, which the text and the season suggest, "Stand fast in the Lord."

I shall illustrate the words in applying them to you.

I. Stand fast in the *faith* of the Gospel; and repel, with indignation, every attempt to seduce you from it.

If you believe there is a God who governs the world, and men are accountable creatures, then you believe there is such a thing as religion. And if there is any such thing, it must be that which you find in the Gospel. Here every vice is forbidden, and every virtue inculcated. Here the most powerful arguments are proposed, and the most effectual assistances offered, to recommend and encourage a virtuous life. And here the most gracious provision is made to bring the guilty into a state of pardon, and revive their desponding hopes.

Whoever,

Whoever, therefore, makes light of the Gospel, rejects, in substance, all religion : He leaves no ground on which his hope can securely stand, and no information on which his faith can rationally depend. If he discards the idea of religion, he renounces his rationality, and takes rank among the brutes. If he frames to himself a religion, different from that taught by revelation, thus far it must be irrational and absurd ; neither consistent with the character of God, nor adapted to the condition of man.

The honest and upright man, who doubts the divinity of the Gospel, will carefully examine its evidences, and promptly yield to the conviction which they bring. Before he ventures to reject the Saviour proposed, he will take time to answer this question, ' To whom shall I go ?' What better way of pardon shall I find—what better system of virtue shall I contrive, than that which the Gospel reveals ? The serious examination of this question will certainly lead him to a humble acquiescence in the christian scheme.

If the Gospel is divine and important, unbelief must involve us in awful guilt. The Saviour says, ' If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.' ' Take heed, therefore, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God : But exhort one another daily, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.'

This

This is a day, when *deism*, and the errors which lead to it, appear more openly, than they have usually done. The errors most remarkably tending to infidelity are *universalism*, *fatalism*, and *enthusiasm*.

*Universalism*, or the denial of future punishment, relaxes the morality of the Gospel, and gives the reins to every lust. *Fatalism*, or the doctrine that the volitions and actions of men, whether good or bad, are all precisely fixed and determined by an eternal and uncontrollable necessity, takes away all sense of accountability, and opens wide the door to vice and licentiousness. *Enthusiasm*, or a reliance on imaginary revelations, made either to ourselves, or to other people, supersedes and sets aside the revelation which God has given us in the Gospel. Thus they all eventually lead to, and usually terminate in total infidelity.

The open, undisguised appearance of infidelity in the present day is a consequence of those political convulsions and revolutions, which have agitated the world, & especially this part of it. A spirit of liberty awakens enquiry, and emboldens an avowal of sentiments, which once were studiously concealed. When enquiry is roused, it makes many useful discoveries: but it will often run to excess. There is, in some minds, a certain vanity, which affects to discard common opinions, in order to display a superiority of genius. Free enquiry is, on the whole, favourable to truth; but its first efforts often produce temporary errors and confusions.

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The immigration of foreigners, which is a natural consequence of our national prosperity, and of the present convulsions in Europe, will be attended with real danger to the purity of religion. Many of these foreigners, being men of distinguished education and fortune, as well as of licentious principles and manners, will introduce and disseminate among us the vices and errors of their own country! And libertine sentiments are so congenial to the corruptions of the heart, so flattering to human pride, and so pleasing to the natural love of novelty, that they easily gain credit and prevail.

As this is a day of danger, be watchful, lest you hear the instructions, which cause to err from the words of knowledge. Let your minds be impressed with a sense of the vast importance of religion. Examine and judge for yourselves, what religion is. And let that its real temper be wrought in your hearts.

When a new sentiment is offered to you, enquire, what is its natural influence—whether it encourages virtue, or only emboldens vice—whether it leads to repentance of sin and amendment of life, or only pacifies conscious guilt—whether it would make you better men, or rather set you loose from the obligations of morality? Never embrace an opinion, which would corrupt your manners, or defeat the pure and benevolent influence of the Gospel. Remember that religion is a matter on which depends the happiness of man in his private, and in his social capacity—in the present, and

in the future life ; and let your regards to it be governed, not by the examples and opinions of men, but by the sober dictates of reason, and the plain instructions of revelation.

2. As you would stand fast in the Lord, you must maintain a christian *profession*, and support the honour of it by a *correspondent* life.

It is no uncommon thing, that persons when they are called upon to enter into the church of God, plead in excuse for their neglect, that the members of the church are as loose and ungodly as many others. And they ask, ' Why should we join ourselves to such a society, when its members differ little, or nothing from the men of the world ?'

This is, indeed, an insufficient excuse. The obligations of religion lie on all, to whom the Gospel comes. They arise not from a voluntary profession, but from the command of God. If one sees corruptions in a church, this is not a reason, why he should turn away from it, and leave the corruptions to prevail ; but rather a reason, why he should join himself to it and cooperate with his brethren to rectify what is amiss. It is, however, a known fact, that the loose conversation of professors discredits religion and obstructs the growth of the church. Christians are therefore to be blameless, the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a  
perverse

perverse nation, shining as lights in the world, and holding forth the word of life.

Walk, my brethen, as men bound for another world—as men seeking a better country. If you are absorbed in the cares, addicted to the pleasures, and conformed to the manners of this world, will it be thought, that there is any sincerity in your profession? Will not your example corrupt the manners of many around you? The Apostle speaks—and he speaks with tears—concerning some, who so walk that they are enemies to the cross of Christ.

When I speak to the professors of religion, I mean to comprehend all, who, in any way, declare their belief of the Gospel; yea, all who have been consecrated to God. You ought to regard your baptism as a seal of your covenant obligations, unless you mean to renounce it. And if you renounce this, what do you less than renounce the Saviour?—Baptism is into Christ.

The Gospel has come to you. You either believe, or disbelieve it. If you believe it, then profess it, and live agreeably to it. If you mean to reject it, beware lest that come upon you, which is written in the Prophets; ‘Behold, ye despisers, and wander and perish.’

3. To stand fast in the Lord, is to maintain the power of his religion.

There are some, who have but a superficial religion.

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They are not willing that the form of godliness should be discontinued in the world, nor do they intend to renounce it themselves. But they choose to make their religion an easy-pliant thing, which may comport with their interests and humours, and will not impose too great restraints. Hence they are carried about with divers and strange doctrines. They follow every new sect, hoping to find something which will please their imagination, and pacify their conscience. They are ever learning, but never settled in the belief of the truth.

There are some, who flatter themselves, that it is no great matter, what a man believes, if he only acts agreeably to his belief—that great strictness in morals is not required, or may be dispensed with, where there is a regular attendance on forms, and a warmth of affection in devotional exercises. Thus they put the means in the place of the end.

There are some, who excuse the corruptions of their heart, and their acquired habits of vice, under the soft and gentle name of natural desires. And they imagine, God will never condemn them for following those propensities, which he has put in them as a part of their constitution. Thus, by making their own lusts and humours, the standard by which to judge of virtue and vice, they form to themselves a licentious religion, which tolerates their iniquities, and calms their

their fears. They explain away the substance, and leave only the shadow; and under this they sit with a false delight.

Beware that you indulge no such delusive sentiments. If religion was designed to prepare you for heavenly happiness, it must form you to a temper capable of that happiness. As that consists in the enjoyment of God, religion must transform you into the image of God.

Observe the stated exercises of secret religion, such as self-examination, meditation and prayer. If these are thrown aside, you cannot experience the real power of godliness. This consists in pious regards to God, and fixed resolutions for his service, which can be maintained only by intercourse with him, and converse with yourselves.

4. A faithful attendance on the *ordinances* of the Gospel is implied in your standing fast in the Lord.

Thus the Apostle teaches us: 'Having liberty,' says he, 'to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith—Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering—Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.'

The ordinances, which God has instituted, are high-

ly important, and cannot be neglected without great dishonour to him, and awful danger to yourselves.

Let me exhort parents to bring their children to baptism. Though of late there has been a great increase of baptisms, still there are among us some households unbaptized.

I speak now only to those, who acknowledge the right of infants to baptism; for this is not a time to bring forward matters of controversy. If you believe that baptism is an institution of God; and that, under the Gospel, as under former dispensations of the covenant of grace, children are to be dedicated to him—if you recollect, that under the patriarchal, as well as Jewish dispensation, the seal of God's covenant was to be applied to them—if you call to mind, that, in the first creation of man, God ordained that children should be a seed to himself, and made this ordinance a part of his covenant with Adam, as the prophet Malachi observes; you will feel yourselves bound to present your children to God, and to procure for them the appointed token of their covenant relation to him.

The prosperity of the church greatly depends on the religious education of children, and the attendant blessing of God. And your consecration of them to him, in his instituted way, will be a mean of awakening your attention to their education, and of obtaining his blessing for them.

It is with pleasure, that I have beheld, in months past, the great increase of communicants at the Lord's table. But still there are many who turn away from it. Of the youths few take a seat there. I hope there are, among you, my children, those who really reverence the ordinance of Christ's supper. The numbers, which I often see sitting around, as serious spectators of the solemnity, afford a pleasing expectation, that more will draw near, and Christ's table will be full. If you are detained from this ordinance by religious fears, your very fears prove your right to it. For a fear of offending God by an unworthy attendance, will not stop here. It will restrain you from offending him by other unworthy conduct. And a fear thus operating indicates a heart prepared to draw near to God.

But if you look on the ordinance with indifference; consider; it is an institution of Christ designed for the commemoration of his death; and therefore indifference to it must involve great ingratitude, impiety and guilt.

We wish to see Christ's church increasing, and the young subscribing with their hands to him. But we wish, that all who name the name of Christ may depart from iniquity, and walk worthy of him, who has called them to his kingdom and glory.

Suffer me also, my brethren, to call your attention to the stated worship of the Lord's day.

That

That social worship is a divine appointment, adapted to the benefit of civil society, as well as to the promotion of vital godliness; you will not deny. And yet it cannot be dissembled, that, in the present day, multitudes treat it with great indifference. Let not this indifference be seen among you. If you, who are professors of religion, and heads of families, neglect, and allow your children to neglect the worship of the sanctuary, it is natural to apprehend, that indifference to this divine appointment will more and more prevail; and, perhaps, when a vacancy shall take place among you—this event is not remote—you will have grown so regardless of God's worship, that his house will be left you desolate. It would be painful to realize, that the next generation will come forward and grow up without baptism—without public instruction—without regard for the sabbath, or for the bible.

Consider the matter as it immediately respects yourselves. Is an aversion to God's worship consistent with the temper which belongs to heaven? Would not an attendance upon it assist you in your personal religion, and in the education of your children? Would not your good example be highly beneficial to those who are coming after you? Say one to another, 'Come and let us go up to the house of the Lord.' Let your feet stand within its walls. Let it appear as a city that is compact together, whither the tribes go up to give thanks to the name of the Lord.

There

There is another thing which I beg leave just to mention. It is what must soon call your attention, unless— which heaven prevent—you cease to be a religious society. I shall not dwell on the subject; but I often think of it with concern. It is providing a decent and convenient house for divine worship. Whenever there shall be a vacancy here, to supply it will be exceedingly difficult—perhaps impracticable, in the present state of your house of worship. The building of a meeting-house, and the settling of a minister at the same time, may be attended with such embarrassments, as will much endanger your peace and tranquility: Your own prudence will lead you to deliberate, whether the concurrence of two so important transactions, ought not, if possible, to be prevented.

5. Your standing fast in the Lord will much depend on the maintenance of *family religion*. If this is generally neglected, all religion will soon disappear. Joshua thought so, when he said to the people of Israel, 'If it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, choose ye, this day, whom ye will serve. But, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.'

Attend, then, to the religious education of your children, and afford them your assistance in the things which concern their present usefulness and future happiness. Train them up to industry in some honest calling. Restrain their irregular propensities. Encourage every virtuous disposition. Furnish them with the necessary

cessary

ecessary means of mental improvement. Walk before them in a perfect way. Suffer them not to become the companions of fools; but teach them to associate with the wise. Maintain social worship in your houses, and require their orderly attendance. This will facilitate your domestic government, and obtain the divine blessing on your households.

6. The Apostle having expressed his desire, that the Thessalonian believers should stand fast in the Lord, adds this request, 'The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, to the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness.'

That you may stand fast in Christ, you must cultivate a spirit of candour and charity, in opposition to bigotry—a spirit of peace and humility in opposition to spiritual pride, from whence comes contention.

Regard religion as important; but be most zealous for the substance of it; not for mere circumstances and appendages. Be steady in your christian profession; but never condemn those who differ from you, unless the difference affects the foundation of christianity.

Candour and condescension are essential to a Gospel temper and conduct, and necessary to the peace and edification of Christian churches.

Hitherto, my brethren, you have maintained a commendable union. I do not find, that any controversy  
has

has ever existed in this church, which has required the interposition of an ecclesiastical council. 'Let brotherly love continue.' Dangers have attended you; but, by the good hand of providence, you have been safely conducted through them. Dangers again may arise; but be at peace among yourselves, and the God of peace will be with you. 'Mark them; who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which ye have received, and avoid them; for they who are such serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and with good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.'

There is an hypocrisy, which, to serve a party design, affects a zeal for the purity of the church. This, as long as it can work secretly, under the disguise of piety, will produce great mischief. Excepting this, there is nothing more dangerous to the peace of the church, than religious bigotry; by which I mean, laying such unreasonable weight on certain opinions and forms, as to exclude from our charity and fellowship all who dissent from us.

Those sects, which set up separate communions, to the exclusion of other Christians, and are industrious to make proselytes from other churches, that they may increase a party of their own, are building on a foundation very different from that which Christ has marked out. Never patronize and encourage any sect founded on so narrow a basis—any sect which rears up itself by materials

materials surreptitiously collected from other buildings.

To undermine, one christian society in order to build up another, is the essence of bigotry, as distinguished from charity. On this principle few christian churches can exist; for you will find, in the same vicinity, few Christians who do not, in some things, differ from one another. And if every disagreement must cause a separation, scarcely two can walk together. And we find in fact, that societies, erected on this narrow basis, soon totter and fall into ruins.

In this imperfect state there must be charity and condescension, else there can be no union and stability in christian churches.

I remind you of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the present truths. I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance, knowing, that shortly I must put off this tabernacle. And I desire, that, after my decease, ye may be able to have these things always in remembrance.

The time here allotted us is short. Soon our days on earth will be numbered: Let us fill them up with usefulness, that we may finish them with joy.

When I look back, I am surprized to see how soon forty years have passed away. The time which remains to me, and to some of you, will scarcely be perceived. Let us, who are walking together in the  
downward

downward path of life, contemplate our end, and apply our hearts to wisdom.

There are many present in this assembly, who have no recollection of the commencement of my ministry. Their existence began at a later date. But you, my friends, will soon find yourselves in the list of the aged. You already begin to take a share in the business of society. You, perhaps, will have a part to act in the settlement of another minister. May your hearts be filled with those pious sentiments, and social affections, which will qualify you for the part assigned you in this world, and for the happiness proposed to you in the next.

May this christian society, which has stood for a hundred years, still stand fast in the Lord. The pious zeal of your fathers laid a foundation for the privileges, which you here enjoy: See that you, with equal zeal, transmit them to succeeding generations. May they, who shall live an hundred years hence, recognize your works of piety, as you do theirs, who lived an hundred years ago.

To awaken in us the zeal recommended, and to enforce the advice offered to us, we will take a view of the origin and progress of this society, and of the dealings of providence toward it.

The town of *Springfield*, (of which this town remained a part until 1774) was settled from *Roxbury*.

in the year 1636, just 16 years after the arrival of our fathers at Plymouth. In the preceeding year, plantations were begun in Windsor, Hartford and Wethersfield, by adventurers from Dorchester, Newtown, (now called Cambridge) and Watertown. Gov. Winthrop, in his Journal, says, "In October 1635, about 60 men women and children, went by land towards Connecticut, with their cows, heifers and swine, and after a tedious and difficult journey, arrived safe there.—But the people from Dorchester who removed their cattle before winter, lost the greatest part of them. Some, however, which came late, and could not be put over the river, lived well thro' the winter without any hay. The people were put to great straits for want of provisions. They ate malt, grains, and acorns; and they lost near £2000 worth of cattle."

At this time cattle of all kinds were extremely dear. "A good cow was valued at £25 or £30; a pair of oxen at £40; sheep at 50/ a head."

The reason alledged for these emigrations was, that "all the towns within the Bay began to be much straitened by their nearness to one another, and by the great increase of their cattle."

But though the want of room might be the first motive, a spirit of enterprize strongly co-operated with it: For the emigrations were so large, that the old towns were thereby exceedingly weakened and diminished.

Governor

Governor Winthrop says, "In 1636, Mr. Hooker, pastor of the church of Newtown and the best of his congregation went to Connecticut and drove thither 160 heads of cattle." And from Dorchester Mr. Wainham the pastor removed with almost his whole church, so that soon after we find the people in that town deliberating on the formation of a *new* church, "a great part of the old one being gone to Connecticut."

The first planters in Springfield were no more than eight *men*. The number of women and children I have not been able to learn. Their first intention was to have settled on the west side of the river, as did the adventurers in the towns below. Accordingly they began to build in the great meadow, at a place from that circumstance denominated, and still called *House Meadow*; but on the friendly advice of the natives, that the place was subject to inundations, they changed their purpose, and removed to the other side.

Though they were few in number, yet, animated with a spirit of piety, they early provided for the settlement of the Gospel-Ministry. And within one year after the plantation began, Mr. Moxon, their first minister, was with them.

The people on Connecticut river generally lived in peace with their Indian neighbours. The town of Wethersfield, however, in the second year after the settlement began, met with a severe blow. "Sequin, a

head

head man of the river Indians, gave lands on the river to the English, that he might sit down by them and be protected. But when he came to Wethersfield and set up his wigwam, the people drove him away by force. Resenting the wrong, but wanting strength to revenge it, he secretly drew in the Pequots, who came up the river, and killed six men at their work, and three women, and captivated two girls, and destroyed a horse and twenty cows." As this mischief was in consequence of a provocation offered on the part of the English, they, by advice from the governor and magistrates in Boston, instead of prosecuting a war, made a new agreement with the Indians of the river.

The people in Springfield suffered no molestation from their Indians, until the year 1675, which was a time of great calamity.

The famous warrior king Philip, who had ever been an enemy to the English, being driven from his headquarters at Bristol; then called *mount Hope*, came with his Indians to the westward; and, having destroyed Brookfield, advanced to the river, and excited among the Indians here a general disaffection to the English. The people in this and the northern towns on the river, began to apprehend danger, and to put themselves in a state of defence. The people in Springfield, however, relying on the professions of the Indians, felt too secure. Hostilities committed in the towns above, in August and September, increased their concern; but

still they did not realize their danger, until, by a message from Windsor, they were informed, that 300 of Philip's men had joined with the Springfield Indians, and were then in the Indian fort on Long Hill, and that their intention was to destroy the town. This plot was disclosed by one of the Windsor Indians. On this alarming intelligence, the people fled to their fortified houses, and thus saved themselves from a general massacre.

In the morning of the 5th of October, O. S. two men, with an intention to examine the truth of the information from Windsor, set out for the Indian fort; but were fired upon by the way; one was killed, the other mortally wounded. The conflagration of the town immediately ensued, in which were consumed about 30 houses, and 20 barns. Only two or three houses escaped: These were fortified. Assistance was sent from other towns, but arrived too late. Besides the two men above mentioned, there were several wounded, and one mortally. One woman was slain.\*

One of the men killed in the morning in the way toward the fort, was Mr. Thomas Miller, from whom descended the family of that name in this parish.

At this time there were some houses in Longmeadow, and a number on this side of the river, none of which were destroyed. The enemies first object was the destruction

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\* See Mr. Breck's Century Sermon.

struction of the principal settlement. Before they could extend their operations, succours arrived.

But in the spring following, some mischief was done on this side of the river. In Chicopee-street, so called, about a mile north of the meeting-house, the Indians killed a young man named Pelatiah Morgan; and at the same time, captivated a lad, who was in company with him. The lad afterward returned.

In the same year, by the best information I can obtain, Mr. Abel Leonard, who lived near the south bank of Agawam, was shot in his canoe, as he was passing that river. One of his descendants, of the fifth generation, now dwells on the same lot.

There is an imperfect tradition of others, captivated, and slain, of whom I can collect no satisfactory account.

Within the memory of our aged people, some of the houses here were fortified and garrisoned; and within about 50 years past, watches were occasionally appointed to patrol our streets, for fear of the enemy.

Happy are we, who sleep in our houses, and go forth to our labours in safety, & have none to make us afraid.

At what time the settlements on the west side of the river began, I cannot learn with exactness; but it was probably as early as the year 1660. In the space of 39 years, the houses in that part of the town, which is now the first parish in Springfield, had increased from perhaps about 8 to but little more than 30: and yet in

1664, which was 11 years before, there were, in the whole town, 73 *male inhabitants*. There must therefore have been a considerable number at that time in other parts of the town.

In 1662, there was granted to John Riley, a *house lot*, on the west side of the river, conditioned, that he soon erected a house upon it. And two years after, there was granted to Thomas Cooper, on the south side of Agawam, a *house lot*, located with relation to a cellar, which he had already dug.

Within a few years after this, I find grants of *house lots* in divers places; some as far west as Paucatuck-brook.

In 1683 there appears to have been a number of inhabitants here; for, in this year, on the 18th of March, a boat containing sundry persons, who, on the Lord's day, were returning from public worship, was overfet in the great river, and three persons were drowned; viz. Reice, and John Bedurtha, and Lydia the wife of Joseph Bedurtha. Another woman, by the name of Rogers, supposed at first to have been dead, was restored.\*

In the year 1696, which was 60 years after the settlement of the town began, the inhabitants on the west side of the river, making about 30 families, were incorpora-

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\* The first names of Planters, on this side of the river, which I have been able to find, are Riley and Cooper. Soon after these are Foster, Jones, Petty, Scot, Barber, Rogers, Milier, Parsons, Morgan, Fowler, Leonard, Bedurtha, Fly, Bagg, Day, Merrick. These names, most or all, were here before the parish was incorporated. Some of them are now extinct—some are numerous and respectable.

ted into a distinct parish. In June 1698 a church was gathered, and the rev'd John Woodbridge was ordained its pastor. He died in June 1618. He was well remembered by many people, who were living when I came to this place. From them and others I have learned, that he sustained an amiable character, as a gentleman, a christian and a minister.\*

What was the growth of the parish, and the number of baptisms, admissions and deaths, during his ministry, I cannot find; for his records, if he kept any, were lost soon after his death.

The first deacons in this church, Messrs. John Butler, and Ebenezer Parsons, were chosen in 1700. The former died in 1712, aged 70; the latter in 1752, aged 84 years. Eight others have sustained and exercised the deacon's office in this church; of whom four have deceased. Their ages were 92, 80, 75, and 88 years. Four are still living, of whom one is now 87, and one 85 years old. §

In June, 1702, this meeting-house was erected. It arose in the very beginning of the present century. May the next century, which is just at hand, as early see a

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\* He left four sons, who were men of worthy characters. Two of them were ministers. One settled in Southbury; the other in a parish of Newhaven.

¶ Messrs. Joseph Ely, John Ely, Samuel Day and Joseph Merrick.

§ Messrs. Nathaniel Archibson, and Jonathan White. The deacons of the south church are all still living. The two first, Messrs. John Leonard and Reuben Leonard, were chosen in 1762, and are now, the former in his 87th, the latter in his 81st year.

a new house rising among you. 'Build unto God a sanctuary, that he may dwell among you.' And 'be ye all builded together for an habitation to God through the Spirit.'

In June, 1720, the rev'd Samuel Hopkins was ordained the second pastor of this church. He died in October, 1755, in the 62d year of his age, and 30th of his Ministry. His character is well known, and his memory still dear to the aged. He was highly esteemed by all his acquaintance. \*

Within this parish, which then included the whole tract, now called West-Springfield, there were baptized, during his ministry, 660 persons, and 210 admitted to the Lord's table. Of deaths I cannot find, that he kept any record. At the time of his death, there were about 200 families within the limits of the original parish. To this number it had increased in 60 years. The annual increase was 3 families nearly.

In reviewing our narrative, one thought will naturally strike your minds; and let it be deeply impressed; that your fathers, from the first settlement of these towns, and even of the country, were stedfast in the religion of Christ—that in their deepest poverty they were zealous to maintain the instituted worship of God  
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\* His consort, Mrs. Esther Hopkins, daughter of Rev. Timothy Edwards, of Windor died June 1766, aged 72 years.—He left two sons, both now living, one of whom is minister of Hadley; & one daughter whom married to the Hon. J. Worthington, Esq. LL. D. & died Nov. 1766, aged 36 years

—and that the care and blessing of providence did remarkably attend them. 'Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved, so stand fast in the Lord.'

After the decease of Mr. Hopkins, the parish was vacant about 10 months. In March, 1756, I began to preach with you; In July following was invited, and on the 25th of August was separated to the work of the ministry in this place.

All the ministers, who took a part in the solemnity of my ordination, are among the dead: and only two\* survive of those who constituted the ordaining council, which was uncommonly numerous.

In 1757, the southern part of the original parish was erected into a distinct parish, containing about 75 families. In September, 1762, a church was formed, consisting of Christians of different denominations, who, with great appearance of candour, waved their distinguishing sentiments, and covenanted to attend on the same ministry, and commune at the same table. On the week following, the rev'd. Sylvanus Griswold was ordained their pastor.

A little before the death of Mr. Hopkins, a number of inhabitants in the north part of the original parish, uniting with a number on the east side of the great river,

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\* Rev. Mess. Mackinstry, and Hopkins of Exeter.

ter, were incorporated into one parish; and, in 1752, called and settled the rev'd. John Mackinty.

That part which lies on the west side of the river, by a late act of division, is become a distinct society, and is the third parish in this town. It has a meeting-house; but is destitute of a minister. We hope it will not long remain so.

When the second, or south parish was incorporated, there remained in this about 95 families, and 550 souls. Ten years ago the number of families was 154, and of souls 897. Within the same limits; the families are now 171, and the souls about 990. Nine families have lately been annexed to this from the south parish. The present number of families is 180, and of souls about 1030. The average increase of the parish for 40 years has been 2 families a year. The progress in the last 10 years has been nearly the same, as in preceding years. In this period the emigrations have much exceeded the immigrations.

In the first 20 years of my ministry, the number of deaths was 208; the mean number of souls, I suppose, was about 670; the proportion, something less than 1 to 3. In the space of 30 years; the number of deaths was 346; the mean number of souls about 724; the proportion a little short of 1 to 2. In the whole peri-

ad of 40 years, the number of deaths is 473; the mean number of souls 772; the proportion nearly 8 to 13, or something less than 2 to 3. In a period of 66 years, the number of deaths will probably be equal to the number of souls living in the middle of that period; i. e. about 920.\*

Of the 473 persons, who have died in 40 years, 140 had arrived to the 50th; 111 to the 60th; 86 to the 70th; 43 to the 80th; 5 to the 90th; and 4 to the 95th year of their age. 'If a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many.'

The baptisms of children, whose parents were members of this church, have, in the time of my ministry, been 837. Of these 48 have been baptized since the beginning of July 1795, which is little more than a year.

Admissions to the Lord's table, including transfers of relation to this from other churches, there have been 290. Besides these, about 30 have joined themselves to the church, expressing a doubt of their meetness for the Lord's table. This church regards all professors, as complete members, and under her watch; but she exercises indulgence to tender consciences. Of the 290 communicants,

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\* In the space of 40 years, 29 persons have been taken from among us by casualty. In the last war, 6 belonging to the parish died in the army, 11 by sickness, and 5 by the word of the enemy.

communicants, 113 have been admitted in the last 10 years; and 35 in little more than a year. The increase of the church has been much greater in the last 10 years of my ministry, than in any preceding period of the same length. The increase, since the June of the last year, has been distinguished. The Lord make you to increase more and more in numbers and in good works.

May the remaining part of my ministry be rendered more useful, than the past; and through your prayers may I obtain grace to fulfil the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of Christ, and thus finish my course with joy;

Our relation has hitherto subsisted in comfortable peace and friendship. May it so continue to the end.

I remember, with gratitude, many kindnesses which I have received; and you have my ardent wishes and daily prayers for your tranquility and happiness.

Among the testimonies of your regard and benevolence, there is a recent one for which you will accept my particular thanks. The benefaction to which I allude was so liberal and seasonable, and so happily adapted to my exigences, that it could not but be gratefully felt. It was made with a cheerfulness and ardour, which add much to its intrinsic worth; and with so great unanimity, that I confess myself indebted to you all.

May your benevolence awaken in me a greater

gence in your service. May your union among yourselves be preserved. May peace and wisdom guide all your steps. May you never want a minister who will heartily feel, ardently pray, and cheerfully labour for you in the Lord. May the word and spirit of God never be removed from you, nor from your seed nor from your seed's seed, ever down to the latest succession of our mortal race.

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them who are sanctified. And I intreat you for the Lord Jesus sake, and for the love of the spirit, that you strive together in your prayers and labours for the common interest of Christ's church, and for the particular interest of this society. May my remaining services be accepted of the saints, and useful to you all. May I come to you with joy, and with you be refreshed.

• May the God of peace be with you all.

A M E N.