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CENTENNIAL DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

First Congregational Society

IN

CHICOPEE, SEPT. 26, 1852.

By E. B. CLARK,

Pastor of the Church, which was Organized September 9, 1752.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE PARISHIONERS.

SPRINGFIELD:
GEORGE W. WILSON'S STEAM POWER PRESSES.
1852.

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DISCOURSE.



ISAIAH LIX: 21.

“As for me, this is my covenant with them saith the Lord: my spirit that is upon them, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever.”

THE great means of perpetuating the institutions of religion are God's Word and Spirit. These he grants to his people in such measures as they are prepared to receive and improve. The pious parent, taking the word of God as his rule of life, regards it as above all price, and he teaches it faithfully to his children, invoking the divine blessing upon his labors. For he knows that without the aid of the Holy Spirit, the good seed of the word will not spring up and grow; he is therefore no less anxious to secure the Spirit's aid, than to sow the seed. And thus through the agency of the Spirit, and faithful parental training, the promises of God are secured and piety is handed down through successive generations.

It is therefore one of the greatest blessings, to have a pious ancestry, the influence of whose prayers, and godly life reach down to the latest generations. Thus it is, that God by his Word and Spirit perpetuates the institutions of religion through the line of his people. And it is a remarkably interesting fact, that most of those, who are sincerely and truly pious, had a devoted ancestry. They have been trained up in a christian family by those who themselves were familiar with the family altar in childhood, and were regularly led to the house of God on the Sabbath. We shall find these remarks confirmed by the investigation which we are about to make into the history of this people.

It is always interesting to gather up the relics of the past, and place ourselves for the time, amid the scenes and circumstances in which our fathers lived and died. We thus place the past and present side by side, and are qualified to judge of the progress of events, to sympathise with our fathers in their privations and labors, and honor them for their deeds of virtue and valor.

It was early in the spring of 1636, that Wm. Pynchon Esq., Henry Smith, John Burr, and others, came from Roxbury to the Connecticut river, and settled with their families in Agawam, which is now Springfield. The original settlement retained the name of Agawam till April 16th, 1640, when the inhabitants in a general meeting, ordained that thereafter it should be called Springfield.

The limits of the town by various purchases of the Indians, were not very definitely fixed, but comprised a territory of nearly twenty-five miles square, embracing West Springfield, Westfield, Southwick, Suffield, Enfield, Longmeadow, Somers, Wilbraham and Ludlow. But the settlement was for many years confined chiefly to the village of Springfield. Those pioneers came not into the wilderness to escape from the restraints nor the burden of supporting religious institutions, for it was only the next year after the arrival of the first families, that a Christian Church was gathered, and Rev. George Moxon settled over it in the ministry.

With the surrounding Indian tribes our fathers lived on terms of the utmost cordiality and friendship. All the lands that came into their possession, were purchased fairly and honorably, and to the entire satisfaction of the natives, who harbored no feelings of hostility to the English.

As an evidence of this is the following interesting circumstance.

In 1637, the next year after the first families arrived and established themselves on the present site of Springfield, occurred the Pequot war, to defray the expenses of which, this colony, together with those at Windsor and Hartford, was very heavily taxed. Consequently the next winter being one of uncommon severity, the three colonies were reduced to a state of alarming distress

“In this emergency three men were sent among the Indians above, in search of bread stuffs; and their mission was entirely successful. On that occasion, our river exhibited a spectacle, never before, certainly never since, seen upon its waters. A fleet of fifty canoes laden with corn, the product of the rich

meadows of Pocomptuck, was at once launched upon the stream and borne onward by the force of the current, and urged forward by the powerful arm of the red man, and carried instant relief to the half starved, suffering strangers.

Such was the friendly state of feeling existing between the English and Indians in those early days. Our fathers came among them not to defraud and expel them as enemies, but to live with them on terms of equality, to teach them habits of industry, to traffic with them, and do them good.

Thus the white man and the red man lived as neighbors and friends for forty years. In 1675 the whole scene was changed, the hour had arrived in which the momentous question was to be settled, whether the whites were to be extirpated from the land of their adoption, or the red men subdued, and scattered and driven from the place of their fathers' sepulchers.

By the agency of Philip of Pokanoket, the youngest son of Massasoit, a union was formed for a "general rising of the natives to sweep the hated intruders from the ancient hunting grounds of the Indian race."

Among others the colony at Springfield was marked for the slaughter, and so artfully the treacherous plot was laid, that destruction must have been the result, but for a timely warning from their friends at Windsor. Aroused by the alarm of impending danger, they fled in consternation to the forts, and were saved with the exception of two men and one woman. The savages pillaged the town, and committed twenty-nine houses and nearly as many barns to the flames, and destroyed all the mills. It was in the month of October, crops had been gathered in, and the winter stores of the colonists were swept away as in a moment.

Thus amid the ashes of their dwellings and the destruction of their gathered harvests, the colonists looked with fearful apprehension upon the approaching winter. But a merciful God who stays his rough wind in the day of the east wind, so ordered that the winter was uncommonly mild, and the stores that escaped the flames supplied the need of the colonists.

In the midst of these dark and terrific scenes, was the family of Deac. Samuel Chapin,* who died Nov. 11th, 1675, in a single month after the burning of Springfield. Deacon Chapin came from England or Wales, and arrived at Springfield with his family

* Deacon Chapin was the ancestor of nearly all the Chapins in this country.

(of four sons and two daughters) at an early period, and became a leading man in the town. Another daughter was born in Springfield in 1644, so that his arrival must have been at a previous date. In the year 1661, 23 years after the settlement of Springfield, two of the sons of Dea. Samuel Chapin, Japhet and Henry, married. Henry married Bethia daughter of Benjamin Cooley of Longmeadow, and Japhet was married the preceding July to Abilene daughter of Samuel Cooley of Milford. After remaining a few years in the village of Springfield, the two brothers removed to this northern section of the town. I have not been able to ascertain the precise year of their settlement, nor whether they both came in the same year.

In 1666 two years after the marriage of these two sons, Deac. Samuel purchased of Mr. John Pynchon a large tract of land, embracing most of the river flats lying between the Chicopee River, and Willimansett brook or Wallamansick as it was then spelt.

In the month of April 1673, Samuel, the father, deeded to his son Japhet, a large portion of the tract which he had purchased of Major Pynchon. And the probability is that about this time, the two brothers removed to this section of the town, as pioneers in the wilderness.

About 180 years ago our now beautiful and highly cultivated plain, was a howling wilderness. Here was the undisturbed lair of the wild beast, and the savage warrior found a safe retreat from his pursuers in the tangled thicket. Hither the two brothers Japhet and Henry came and planted themselves down in the midst of the forest. Except a house on the south side of Chicopee River, their nearest neighbors lived in the village of Springfield.

Japhet built his house at the north end of what is now Chicopee Street, a little north, and west of the house now owned by Mr. Ogden, on the next lower offset, where he had a charming view of the river, and the hills on the opposite shore. Henry located somewhere toward the lower end of the street. They together at that time owned most of the land lying between Chicopee River and Willimansett brook, and extending some distance eastward on to the plain.

These men had been faithfully trained up from their childhood in the ways of virtue and religion by their pious father, and evinced in their lives that these parental labors were not in vain. For though the house of God was nearly six miles distant, through

a pathless wilderness, and across the unbridged river, the return of each sabbath-day found these men punctually in their places in the house of God. Japhet particularly was distinguished for his devoted piety. And he had need of piety to sustain him amid the heavy trials that awaited him; for a daughter was to be carried captive by the merciless savages. The days of peace and friendship with the Indians, which had continued for forty years, were passed away, so that the red man was now a constant source of fear and alarm to our fathers. Their fire-arms for defense were their constant companions in the field and by the way, and they went even to the house of God on the sabbath "as when one goeth down to the battle."

Hannah the second daughter of Japhet married John Sheldon of Deerfield, Dec. 3d, 1703, and removed to that frontier town, and lived in the house of his father, Capt. John Sheldon. On the night of the 29th of the next February, in a little less than three months after the marriage, occurred one of those terrific scenes, which no tongue can adequately describe. That evening the happy villagers of that town retired to rest with the usual prospect of a quiet night, but they were aroused from their midnight slumbers, by the war cry of the savages, to behold their buildings in flames and themselves in captivity. Being unable to force the door of Capt. Sheldon's house, the Indians made a hole with their hatchets, and thrusting in a musket, fired and killed the Captain's wife. The son and wife leaped from the chamber window to make their escape, by which effort she sprained her ancle and was taken captive while he escaped.

The prisoners numbering 112, amongst whom were Hannah wife of John Sheldon, and Rev. John Williams pastor of the church, and his family, were taken to Canada, and after about two years were redeemed.

Religion was a needful antidote to the anguish of a father's heart, as he thought of his daughter in captivity.

About this time Japhet received a sympathising letter from his brother in Mendon, comforting him under his afflictions, which letter I here present entire—*verbatim et literatim*.

mendon, April 8th, 1704.

Deare Brother :

I cannot with my pen express the concernedness of spirit that is in me for you and my deare cusen

that is led captive by the barbarous heathen. god is by such dispensations trying the faith and patience of his children, it is therefore my dayly request that god will support her in body and sperit and her bodely captivity may prove to her speretual enlargment, and that god wil please to give you comfort in hope, knowing that god is able to find out a way for escape, tho no way appears to us. as abraham being called to offer up his Son Isaac, who did it willingly knowing that god was able to rais him from the dead. these afflictions arise not out of the dust, but there is a cause, we are redy to complaine of the french and Indian enemis, but they are not the cause, but as it was sometime said to Jerusalem, yower wais and yower doings bath proeced these things to thyself. So may new england say that our sins have brought the Sword of the wildenness upon us. I do therefore believe there must be a general Reformation before the rod of god will be taken off from us. Brother I long to see you, and did intend to have given you a visit this next month but multitud of busnis publik and pirtiqueler throngs me so that I have no prospect of coming this spring, though I cannot come to see you yeat I shall be glad to heare from you by all oppertunities thorow the little time that is remaining to us heare, and that our prayers may dayly meet at the thron of grace and that we may so demeane ourselves heare that at last we may have a joyeful meeting in the kingdom of glorey, so with kind love and Respects to yowerself and my sister, wish my love to all my cusens I Rest yower loving brother,

Josiah Chapin.

After the death of Japhet Chapin in 1712 the children received a lengthy letter from Rev John Williams of Deerfield, instructing them concerning the improvement which they should make of his death and speaking of him as having been a man of great piety. This letter the record states was in the hands of Deacon Edward Chapin before he died.

Japhet left six sons, Samuel, Thomas, John, Ebenezer, David, and Jonathan, all of whom were settled along on the street near to each other. Henry Chapin left but two sons, Henry and Benjamin.

I have not been able to ascertain the locality of the house of the father, nor that of either of the sons. I think that Henry built south of the Chicopee, and Benjamin on the north side.

Although a few others came in and settled here from time to time, still for many years the Chapin families occupied nearly the whole territory. In 1753 there were 27 persons taxed as belonging to this parish and 20 out of the whole 27 are Chapins.

The 8 sons of Japhet and Henry Chapin had each large families, amounting in all to 87 children. Samuel had 10, Thomas 11, John 8, Ebenezer 13, 11 sons—David 12, 10 sons—Jonathan 11, Henry 10 and Benjamin 12, making to Henry Chapin 22 grand-children and to Japhet 65, from their sons alone.

Here these men lived, and trained up their numerous families, toiling for their daily bread through the week, and taking those who could go to the distant sanctuary on the sabbath. All but one of these 8 sons of Japhet and Henry lived to be more than three score years and ten, the youngest was 64 and the oldest 95 when he died. These all became old men and saw their numerous children settled around them, and their children's children rising up on every side, when all the religious privileges they enjoyed aside from those of the family altar, were obtained by going to the distant center of the town on the sabbath.

Of course with the greatest exertions on their part, with no means of conveyance but horses on which they rode, but a small portion of this community could visit the public sanctuary on the sabbath. Many of the women, the little children and the feeble must necessarily spend the long hours of their sabbath days at home. And thus, with no sabbath schools and books of religious instruction but the Bible, unless it might be the New England Primer, and by the reverence for the holy day which prevailed in those early times, and the strictness with which they were accustomed to observe it, the sabbath day must have been long and tedious to the young families of our fathers. And yet, notwithstanding all the disadvantages under which they lived, from the character of the men that were thus trained, we have no question that on every pleasant sabbath morning a large company from the settlement north of the Chicopee were present in the old meeting house in Springfield.

“For (I quote from an old record bearing date 1743,) it is considered disorderly for persons to be away from home, and absent from the stated worship of the families and religious meetings unless it be in very extraordinary cases.”

I seem to see them now, the fathers mothers and children, some on foot and some mounted on their well trained horses, wending

their way soberly and seriously through the tall forests that overshadow their lone pathway, till they reach the house of God.— There they bow in reverence, and offer their prayers and praises, listen to instruction from the oracles of God, and return at evening to ponder the truths they have heard, and reduce them to practice in the daily avocations of life.

But these godly men were not content to remain with the rising generation around them so far away from the privileges of the sanctuary; hence in the spring of 1750, they applied to the General Court, and received on the 10th of June, 1751, an act of incorporation as the 5th parish of Springfield. The first parish meeting was called on the 13th day of July following. Another meeting was held in August, at which time the first steps were taken toward building a meeting house, and another in October following with reference to obtaining a Pastor. And not trusting to their own wisdom they reverently applied to the Association for advice respecting a candidate for settlement.

This advice was obtained, and accordingly the services of Mr. John McKinstry were engaged for a quarter of a year. Having preached for them the stipulated time, at another parish meeting on the 7th January, 1752, Mr. McKinstry received a unanimous call to settle with them in the gospel Ministry, but the negotiations respecting the salary continued till the 7th of the next June, when all those matters were arranged, and the time of the Ordination was voted to be on the 9th day of the next September. The question arises, whether the Church was organized on the day of Ordination, or at a previous day. It would seem that the Church must have been formed at a previous day, and from an old diary kept as I suppose by Deac. Edward Chapin, this opinion might be confirmed, which is the following, "March 15, 1752. This day the Rev. Mr. Breck administered the Lord's supper to us in the 5th parish."

I also find amongst the old papers a Church list, bearing date of *June 1752*, containing 43 names, and the tax assessed upon each one for defraying the expenses of the communion. From all this we should naturally infer that the church was organized before this time. And yet in all the parish votes, and in the communication which the parish received from the Association approving their doings in giving Mr. McKinstry a call, there is no mention of a Church, and no intimation that such a distinct organization existed. Neither is there an intimation of any *action* of the Church as a

distinct body, till the day the pastor was settled. I therefore conclude that the Church was organized on the same day of the ordination, which was the 9th of Sept., 1752: and as nearly as I can ascertain consisted of 43 members. Some of these were living on the west side of the Connecticut, as the parish then embraced all the northern part of the town of W. Springfield. All but eleven of the 43, are Chapins. The Pastor's salary was to be gradually increased for four years, from £49 6s. 8d. to £62 13s. 4d. and thus it was to remain. One half of the salary was to be paid in lawful money, and the other half in grain at the market price. In addition to this, he was to have, as the parish first voted, 20 cords of good merchantable wood. Then it was voted, that they add one cord a year till it reached 30 cords, and that was to be ever after the fixed amount of wood. Subsequently it was voted, that the worthy Mr. McKinstry shall be always provided with a sufficiency of firewood.

According to a parish vote of June 24th, the 27th of August was observed as a day of fasting and prayer, to implore the divine blessing and assistance in reference to the occasion of settling their minister. The clergymen convened on the occasion, were Rev. Messrs. Stephen Williams of Longmeadow, Samuel Hopkins of W. Springfield, Peter Reynolds of Enfield, Ct., Robert Breck of Springfield, Noah Merrick of Wilbraham, and John McKinstry of Ellington, Ct., the father of the candidate.

All but one of the six sons of Japhet Chapin and both the sons of Henry, were living at this time, and their names with one exception (Benzer,) I find on the church record.

At the time of the ordination, the meeting house was in an unfinished state. It was raised "on the 5th of June, 1752, through the indulgence of heaven with great joy and safety." And in Dec. following at a parish meeting it was

"Voted, to cover the outside of the meeting house with quarter boards, to glaze all the windows, to do the plastering overhead, and to finish the lower part of the house." Such being the state of the house, they were of course unable to meet in it for the present.

On the next November, 1753, all things were ready, the new meeting house was completed, and agreeable to the customs of those early days, a committee was chosen in parish meeting to perform the delicate and responsible duty of seating the meeting house, with liberty duly granted by vote, to seat men and women together. The rule of seating was the last tax list. The usual custom at a later day was to go by the age and list. This custom of seating a house

of worship by a committee, has passed away, never to return, I can find no intimation that there was any thing like a public dedication of the house; but as these old men, bending with age, the sons of Japhet and Henry assembled at the roll of the drum, and entered these courts of the Lord to unite in the solemnities of public worship, and felt that at last they had secured a tabernacle for the Lord in their midst, where he might record his name, and a minister to break unto them and to their posterity the bread of life, their pious hearts were jubilant with praise to God, for his loving kindness to them and to their children; and thus these humble courts were solemnly and sincerely dedicated to the Lord.

Benjamin son of Henry, and David son of Japhet, each 70 years of age, were elected deacons of the church. After 3 years Dea. Benjamin went to his rest at the age of 73, but Dea. David lived and served his generation for 20 years longer, and after an illness of a single week, slept with the fathers at the age of 90 years, in 1772. He was evidently a man greatly beloved and venerated, and was eminently devoted and useful to the last, a pillar indeed in the Church of God. It was said of him by a poet of that day, "speaking freely of the patriarch David,"

" He was an Israelite indeed,
 In whom there was no guile;
 His reason and his mental powers
 Did service to him give,
 And to his friends and kindred near,
 Almost while he did live.
 Sometime before he left this world,
 It was his good desire,
 That he no longer should abide,
 Than service would require;
 And as this was his holy wish,
 He had his sweet request;
 And by an illness very short,
 Went peacefully to rest."

Dea. Sam'l. Cooper was probably elected to the office to fill the place of Dea. Benjamin Chapin, but all that we know of him is that he lived on the west side of the Connecticut River. Though Dea. David Chapin had finished his course and gone to his rest, and the church mourned for him as for a father, yet he had left amongst them a deep and visible impress of his sincere and devoted piety. His son Edward was 28 years of age when the fath-

er died; *he* was elected Dea., took his father's mantle and bore it 28 years and died in 1800, at the age of 76. It was during his life that the parish was divided, and the portion on the west side of the river became a separate parish in 1786.

Three years after the division of the parish, by which it was much weakened, and the pastor becoming old and infirm, a mutual council was called, and a new arrangement was made between him and his people.

By that arrangement Mr. McKinstry was to retain his pastoral relation to the Church and Society, but he was to preach, administer the ordinances, solemnize marriages, attend funerals and visit the sick, as he might be invited, and was to receive a salary of £18 and 15 cords of wood during his life; provided however, another minister was settled over the parish this sum was to be reduced to £12 a year. For some cause the salary was not promptly paid, and the pastor had claims on the parish for old arrearages, that ran back for years before the division took place; and those of the new parish on the west side of the river, felt that by the division, they were released from all obligations to their former Pastor, and refused, or were reluctant to pay their proportion of these arrearages. Hence followed a long and bitter controversy, producing alienation, and greatly weakening the parish in numbers and ability. After he relinquished preaching, Mr. McKinstry lived for 24 years and died Nov. 9, 1813, aged 90 years. So long as he was able, he met with the people on the Sabbath, gave out the hymns and led in the devotional services, while a sermon was read by some other person. Dr. Lathrop of West Springfield preached his funeral sermon from Gen. 25, 8. "Then Abraham gave up the ghost and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years."

Of him the Dr. thus speaks:

"Mr. McKinstry was a man of good natural talents, a respectable scholar and sound divine. His preaching, though it suffered some disadvantage from the feebleness of his delivery, yet was edifying to his stated hearers. He was a man of exemplary piety, of a candid spirit, of a modest, humble disposition, of great resignation under trials, of steady, unwavering patience under long continued infirmities, and of christian fortitude and hope in view of approaching dissolution."

Thirteen years previous to the death of his Pastor, Dea. Edward Chapin fell asleep. From what I can gather of his charac-

ter as a parent, a citizen and a christian, I have no hesitation in pronouncing him a burning and a shining light. For many years he was the clerk of the parish, was chairman of committees for the transaction of their most difficult and delicate business, from time to time, and was the principal man in the church; the comforter of the afflicted, a guide to the enquiring, and an example to all in christian zeal, faith, and purity of life.

A letter has fallen into my hands which Dea. Edward wrote to his son Edward when in the army, bearing date 28th Aug. 1777, which is a most interesting and valuable relic of the man. In grammatical construction, purity of diction, in penmanship and the sentiments of elevated, pure, simple piety, and parental tenderness with which it abounds, it shows that he was not only a christian, a father who was deeply solicitous for the spiritual good of his children, and a true patriot, but a very intelligent man for that day.

The house in which he lived and where he brought up his family, is still standing on the east side of the way, and the first south of the meeting-house. His son, the late Dr. Calvin Chapin, graduated at Yale College in 1788, was for a time tutor in College, studied theology, and settled in the parish of Rocky Hill, Wethersfield, Ct., where he labored the remainder of his life, a very distinguished and valuable minister of the gospel. For many years he was a member of the college corporation, and the Recording Secretary of the American Board.

The Rev. Aaron L. Chapin, now President of Beloit College, Wis., is the grandson of Aaron, who was the eldest son of Deac. Edward, and who lived in Hartford. None of the descendants of Deac. Edward's family are remaining here. When he died, it was indeed a dark and gloomy day for this church, for its main earthly pillar was then removed, and utter extinction seemed inevitable. For eleven years they had already been without an officiating pastor, death was making inroads upon the members of the church, the additions were very few, and ruin seemed to be at the door.

In 1804 the number of male members of the church was only 7, there were a few more females, but altogether they were indeed a little band, without a preacher or deacon, without indeed a leading member to take charge of their meetings, for Mr. McKinsty had now become very old, and very infirm. But in the Lord there was still a friend, one who remembered his Zion, even

in her weakness, and who in mercy directed hither the feet of one who was willing to take and to bear responsibility for his Lord and Master. A valuable accession to this little band of believers was made in the www.libofDrAmes.com Skeelee, who being a professional man and a devoted christian, removed from Somers to this place in 1804. Mr. Caleb Pendleton moved into the place and united with the church about the same time; he was a good reader and aided them much. But still this was one of the waste places of Zion.

The number was so small that were willing to be taxed for the support of the gospel, that after doing all they could, together with the little help they received from the Missionary Society, they could hire preaching but a small portion of the year, and on Dr. Skeelee and Mr. Pendleton devolved the responsibility of conducting religious worship the rest of the time.

Mr. Skeelee was chosen to the office of Deac. about 8 years after his removal to this place, so that for 12 years the church was destitute of even so much as an officer.

What a picture of desolation, poverty and gloom is presented in this part of our history. It is a cold and winter day—there is no bell to summon the community to the house of worship, and no signal to mark the hour of meeting. The wind howls around the old and shattered temple, playing wantonly with its loose and worn out covering, and forcing its way through crack and crevice and broken pane, as if in mockery at such attempts to resist its power. And there, without a fire, a dozen persons assemble, not to be charmed with the performances of a gifted and eloquent preacher, but to attend a deacons' meeting. A portion of scripture is read, a hymn given out, but there is no leader and they cannot sing; a prayer is offered and a sermon read. The few hearers are scattered over the house shivering with the cold, and listening as devoutly as circumstances will permit. Another prayer is offered, and the morning service is closed.

In the P. M. they assemble again, just enough to make desolation desolate, go through with the services and retire. And these meetings thus conducted, were continued, not for two or three Sabbaths only, but a quarter part of the time for 35 years. For the last 10 years of his life, the burden was on Deac. Edward Chapin. And for nearly a quarter of a century did Dr. Skeelee and his associates assemble in their dilapidated temple every Sabbath, and there they conducted the public worship of their cov-

enant keeping God, according to the best of their ability. Indeed at that time it was necessary for that little band to walk by faith, for there were no appearances, not so much as a cloud the bigness of a man's hand, that could afford them hope of better times to come. Yet in those days of weakness, and fear, and much trembling, these servants of the Lord faltered not, but to the best of their ability discharged the obligations that were laid so heavily upon them; and preacher or no preacher, the sanctuary was thrown open, and a worshipping assembly was gathered there every Sabbath; the waiting eyes of these few sheep were turned beseechingly unto the great shepherd, and though they waited long, they waited not in vain. While these men were waiting, God was for years by his providence and grace, disciplining and preparing for them an under shepherd, who at the appointed time should come to them in the fullness of christian love, consecrated to his Master's service.

Mr. Alexander Phœnix was the son of a wealthy merchant in N. Y., graduated at Washington College, and devoted his attention to the legal profession. After a time, he laid aside his law books and engaged in the mercantile business, but in this he was unsuccessful, and domestic afflictions pressed heavily upon him, till feeling that his way was hedged up on every side, he was led at last like Saul of Tarsus, to enquire what the Lord would have him do?

Though late in life his mind was directed to the study of theology, that he might prepare himself to build up some one of the waste places in Zion. He became a preacher, and when in the earliest of his labors, his feet were directed to Chicopee, he was at once convinced that he had found the waste place in which he was to labor. And when Deac. Skeele and others received an intimation that Mr. Phœnix might be induced to settle with them, their joy was such as words could not express; they were so few and feeble and had been so long destitute of a pastor, that to have an evangelical, devoted minister settled over them, was more than they had even dared to expect, it was rather an object of hope. But it was even so. On the 28th of April, 1824, Mr. Alexander Phœnix was ordained and installed as pastor of this Church, which on that memorable day, received indeed an ascension gift. This was the dawn of brighter days. The people flocked to the house of God, and listened with joy to the message of grace as the new pastor opened and pressed home the

truth. For thirty-five years the church had been without an officiating Pastor. In a year and a half from this time, the new meeting house was dedicated to the God of Israel, and the old one in which the fathers 74 years before had bowed and worshipped the covenant keeping God, was removed and devoted to a secular purpose.

Five years passed away and then in 1831, that year of the right hand of God, that year of revivals beyond all others in modern days, when in all parts of New England such multitudes were brought into the kingdom of Christ, this church was not "left as a peace not rained upon." For here too the showers of grace descended, the church was revived and greatly strengthened in numbers and graces. A large proportion of the adults came out on the Lord's side, and a great moral change was visible in the whole aspect of society. There were about 40 additions made as the fruits of that revival, and during the whole of Mr. Phœnix's ministry of eleven years there were about 76 members added to the church.

A great debt of gratitude is due to Mr. Phœnix from this people, for his faithful and self-denying labors here, for he received but a nominal salary, being a man of wealth he lived mostly from his own private means, while the church and parish gained strength and character every year. When he came, though the church was receiving aid from the Missionary Society, with all they could do they could support preaching but a quarter or half the time. But with their new Pastor was added strength, the meeting house was built, and the debt was paid, foreign aid to support the gospel was no longer needed, and the various causes of benevolence have received annually the contributions of this church and people. Thus was their ability increased by their effort to support the gospel ministry. Mr. Phœnix left when he felt that duty called him away, but still in the evening of his days he looks back upon those 11 years of his pastorate here as the happiest and most useful portion of his life. He had been the means of raising this church to a self-sustaining state, and had thus prepared the way for another pastor, and resigned the charge.

Blessings on his memory! The reward of a useful man will be his. Soon after Mr. Phœnix left, the Rev. E. B. Wright was installed as pastor of the church; but owing to his feeble health and often repeated request, the parish yielded to his wish, and he

was dismissed in the spring of 1839, after a pastorate of 6 1-4 years. There were 11 additions to the church during his ministry. In Oct. of the same year the present incumbent was inducted into the office of pastor over this flock, whose humble labors God has seen fit, in a measure, to bless.

The Lord has allowed us to enjoy frequent seasons of refreshing from his convicting and converting Spirit, so that during these thirteen years, 85 members have been added to the church, 56 of whom were received on profession, and the rest (29) by letter.

There are at present 85 members of the church, nearly half of whom are Chapins. Both Japhet and Henry are represented in their descendants, not only in the church, but in its officers. Dea. Orange Chapin, descending from Japhet through Thomas, and Dea. Giles S. Chapin from Henry, through Dea. Benjamin. And with the exception of about 35 years, between the death of Dea. Edward, when for some 12 years there was no Dea., and the appointment of Dea. Giles S. Chapin, one at least, and some times both of those church officers have borne the name of the honored and worthy fathers of this place, from the time of the organization of the church to the present day.

Since the organization of the church 100 years ago, great are the changes that have taken place. Then the country was new and the conveniences and comforts of the people few and meager. The houses were unpainted, the yards unfenced, and their furniture and tools of rude construction. They were destitute of carriages of all kinds, but the ox cart, and money was exceedingly scarce.* What a contrast do we now behold in the air of neatness and comfort which every where appears around us, and within the humblest dwellings in our midst.

Then there was no sabbath school to draw the minds of children and youth to the oracles of God, and no religious books adapted to the capacities of children. But ~~five~~ ^{ten} persons could even write their names, and for mental improvement the advan-

* As an evidence of the scarcity of money, I find an old church record containing the names of the church members in 1752, in 1753, in 1754, in 1756, and 1757, and a regular tax of sixpence was annually assessed upon each member to defray the communion expenses, and even this was too heavy for some to pay as it appears from the fact that the names of nine persons are placed by themselves as being behind in their taxes for the year 1756. From 1757 onward for more than half a century, I can find no church record and no evidence that one was kept.

tages were small indeed, for their public schools lacked almost every thing but perseverance that was necessary to make them attractive and useful. Then a bible was so costly, that Japhet Chapin made provision in his will that a portion of his property should be appropriated to get each of his grand children a bible. Now, the common day laborer may carry home four beautifully bound, clearly printed, elegant bibles in pay for a single day's work. The whole missionary enterprise has risen up since that time. We have frequently given more in a single year to the cause of benevolence than the whole of Mr. McKinstry's salary, although the parish is now reduced in its area to less than half its former size. I have no time to speak of the changes that have taken place *around* us, though the Chicopee and the Connecticut have been pressed into the service of man, and the tramp of the iron horse is hourly heard, dashing across our plain with his mighty train and the lightning tell us the news of the day.

But one lesson I would have deeply impressed upon our minds, and that is, *gratitude*, not only to those good men who planted these institutions, but to those who, at a later day in trial, and in deep poverty, clung for years to the sanctuary and the institutions of religion with a death grasp, and thus handed down to us the precious blessings of a living church. To them no sacrifice seemed too great to secure and transmit to their children the blessings of the sanctuary. A view of their toils, sacrifices, and self-denials, should cause our hearts to cluster around the stated means of grace, the institutions of religion with warmer affection, and lead us to strive the more to make them minister to our good. A great debt of gratitude is due to their memory for the precious influence which comes down to us from them—and let their descendants ever cherish toward them the deepest emotions of veneration and affection.

From this history we learn how intimately connected is the support of religious institutions with the temporal as well as spiritual good of the people. No community can afford to live without the sabbath and sanctuary privileges. We see as in letters of light that godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of this life that now is, and of that which is to come. May God deeply impress this lesson upon our minds, and in emulating the virtues of our fathers, may we be able by grace to transfer to future generations these same gospel institutions in their purity and moral power.

As we have thus glanced over the history of the church, many places appear where the members might erect their Ebenezer and say with emphasis, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us;" while under all the circumstances, the present existence of this church is a monument of the faithfulness of God to his covenant with his humble and confiding children, and an illustration of the truth of the text, "My word shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed saith the Lord, from hence forth and forever."

APPENDIX.

The following letter is an exact copy of the original, capital letters, punctuation, spelling and all, with the exception of a few paragraphs omitted. This and that of Josiah Chapin together with many other valuable and interesting papers was found by the author of this discourse in an old chest in a neighbor's garret.

Springfield Thursday 28 Aug. 1777.

Dear Son

After long waiting for intelligence from you to know where to direct a Letter & still receiving none as yet, what has become of the Post we expected we know not, or what part you are ordered to or where stationed, I no longer refrain from writing hoping a few lines may find way to you by some means or other. Part of the Militia being called for; Capt Ephraim Chapin is preparing to march soon to the Northward, I expect to send this by him or Seba Bemont who goes his waiter, hoping proper care will be taken to know where your Regnt is & send this to you, for I conclude there is communication open from North to South as yet, but how soon it may be otherwise we know not, for it seems that the Continental officers are expert in Runing to the amazement & confusion of those that trusted in them. You can hardly conceive what a shock it gave us at home when we heard that Ticondaroga with the stores & everything was left to the Enemy without so much as trying to defend it. Such vast expense of labor & cost to build and store it, & all thrown away in an hour! *Confusion on somebody!**—but this is according to the language & ideas of this vain World. Let us now raise our thoughts to a Divine Superintending Providence, that governs all the affairs of Men, & we shall remember that vast armies have been destroyed & immense treasures lost from time to time in ages past, when a covenant professing people forsook the Law & broke the just command of a Holy God, — how like to this is our case. It seems that as we have persisted in walking contrary to God, that God is determined to walk contrary to us (as he declared to the Jews of old by the mouth of his prophets) untill we think on our way, & return unto him by penitent confession of & heartily forsaking our sins. This is no discouraging consideration neither, for it will remain an everlasting truth (which the prophet of old was directed to proclaim) Say unto the righteous it shall be well with him. Of what importance must it then be to every individual person to secure an interest in the Divine favor in such a day of dark and gloomy aspects as the present

*On the 5th of July preceding the date of this letter Ticonderoga was surrendered by the Americans under General St. Clair, to the British commander, General Burgoyne.

day is. Is it not enough to astonish & even confound any thinking person to see such numbers in military Array for the Defence of our Religion & Liberties, & at the same time by their Impious Language & practices provoking & even Daring Heaven's whole Artillery to Discharge upon this Guilty Land in heaviest volleys. Certainly it may be said to the Wicked It shall go ill with him. But notwithstanding all the gloomy aspects we are under there is ground of hope; for the foundation remaineth sure, he that repenteth & forsaketh his sin shall find mercy. It would seem as if a merciful God was not only waiting for our return to him, but most earnestly inviting us thereto; by sundry kind interpositions of his Providence in the great plenty of the fruits of the Earth for our sustenance, the successful Battle at Fort Stanwix & also at Bennington.

* * * * *

Perhaps you may have heard before this that cousin Lieut. Israel Chapin very narrowly escaped Death & Captivity in the Battle near Ti— when Sergt Nathan Chapin & Gideon Chapin were Captivated; with sundry others belonging to Springfield. But Sergt Nathan behaved himself so steadily and honest amongst them that he embraced a very fair opportunity to bring off nine with him, they did not like to wait (it seems) for an exchange of prisoners they being ordered to go in a boat to Crown Point to mow their grass for them, & having only one inhabitant in the boat with them; they entertained him so generously with a bottle of Rum (which they were allowed to carry for their own refreshment while mowing) that he fell into a very sound sleep, upon which they rowed the boat to a port of their own choosing & left their pilot to finish his nap in the boat, & advanced with a quick step homeward. The Sergt arrived home this day fortnight in health, tho' much fatigued which gave us all great joy, he behaved valiantly in the fight, Discreetly when in captivity and Courageously in the arduous undertaking of making his escape. * * * * * As his escape was in answer to fervent prayers I hope it is acknowledged with gratitude to the great Arbitor of all Events.

My Dear Dear Child I want to tell you something of the trying disappointments which have happened to me relating to your situation & to begin with my meeting you at Worcester in so weak a state if I could have gained the consent of the two gentlemen with whom I was going to court I should have turned about & helped you home, but that was not to be had — then I wrote a letter & sent giving advice for the recovery of your health, but that you did not receive. I made haste homeward with full expectation of finding you there, but to my great grief found you gone 3 days before my arrival; & what wounded me very sensibly was that you was so unfit on account of your weak state, & yet could not have time to stay a few days to recruit your health at home. I thought of following after to bring you back, but when I considered how far you might have got I despaired of overtaking you, & then my only relief in that anxiety for your welfare was to recommend you to God & his grace. * * * * *

And blessed be God for the consolation afforded upon the rect of your little Letter of the 24 June, which was much more welcome to us than a thirty Dollar Bill could have been. There you express yourself in the most comforting language when you profess to put your trust in the Lord, & we hope you may not be deceived in so important a matter -- & indeed it is the crown of our wishes for you & our daily prayers that you may be enabled by divine grace so

to trust in the Lord as to dwell secure from fear of evil. Those & only those are safe who do truly trust in the Lord, be sure, take heed you dont deceive yourself in so important a matter I am very sensible of the need you stand in of Divine special Grace to enable you to resist the snares & temptations you are surrounded with, & would therefore charge you again with the most affectionate tenderness to stand fast in the Faith of Divine Revelation for the truths therein recorded are firmer than mountains of brass, & will remain forever. My son if sinners entice thee consent thou not. * * You may be sure that you are daily and repeatedly remembered at the Throne of Grace, dont be wanting on your part in working out your salvation. It gives me joy to think & hope that you have engaged in the arduous, necessary joyful work -- if you have indeed fixed your trust in the Lord, you are safe, & we are happy -- Farewell.

This with the love of your Mama Brothers & Sister comes from your affectionate Father

EDWARD CHAPIN.

The following is a list of the deacons in this Church.

Benjamin Chapin,	elected in	1752	died	1756	aged	74
David Chapin,	"	1752	"	1772	"	90
Samuel Cooper,						
Edward Chapin,	"	1773	"	1800	"	76
Amos Skeele,	"	1813	resigned	1825		
Simeon Stedman,	"	1825	"	1837		
Joseph Pease,	"	1825	died	1839		
Giles S. Chapin,	"	1837				
Orange Chapin,	"	1840				

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