

OUR FATHERS GOD, THE HOPE OF POSTERITY:

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Some serious Thoughts //

ON THE

*Foundation, Rise and Growth*

OF THE SETTLEMENTS

IN

NEW ENGLAND

With a view to the *Edification* of the *Present*, and the  
*Instruction* and *Admonition* of *Future Generations*.

A

DISCOURSE

Delivered at DEDHAM, on the Day of  
PUBLICK THANKSGIVING, Nov. 23. 1738.

Upon the *Conclusion* of the first CENTURY, since a  
*Church* of CHRIST was gathered in that Place.

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BY SAMUEL DEXTER, V.D.M.

THE SECOND EDITION.

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Pfalm cvii. 8.—*O that Men would praise the Lord for his Goodness,  
and for his wonderful Works to the Children of Men!*  
Deut. vi. 7.—*And thou shalt teach them diligently to thy Children, &c.*

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B O S T O N :

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MDCCXCVI.



T O

## The Beloved People of my Charge.

Much Respected Friends,

**T**HE ensuing Discourse, as it was prepar'd and delivered at the more immediate instance of some of you,—so now it sees the light by the Press, upon the urgent desire of many more ; and it is hoped may prove of real advantage to you, and to your children, not only for your information in some things worthy to be remembered, but also, and more especially, in quickening a holy emulation and commendable zeal in following the example of our VENERABLE FORE FATHERS in every thing that was virtuous, praiseworthy, and of good report in them.

Though not many) Alterations have been made in preparing for the Press, and a few short additions; which I hope will by no means balk your expectations, but minister to your edification.

BRETHREN, my heart's desire and earnest prayer for you and your's is, that you may be saved.—O that you may be an honour to the Religion which you profess, by walking worthy of the Lord unto all well pleasing, in every station, relation, and condition of life, in the vigorous exercise of all christian graces, and in the due and faithful discharge of all christian duties towards God and men, maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, which (blessed be GOD) we now enjoy, after a long dark night of trouble and confusion.

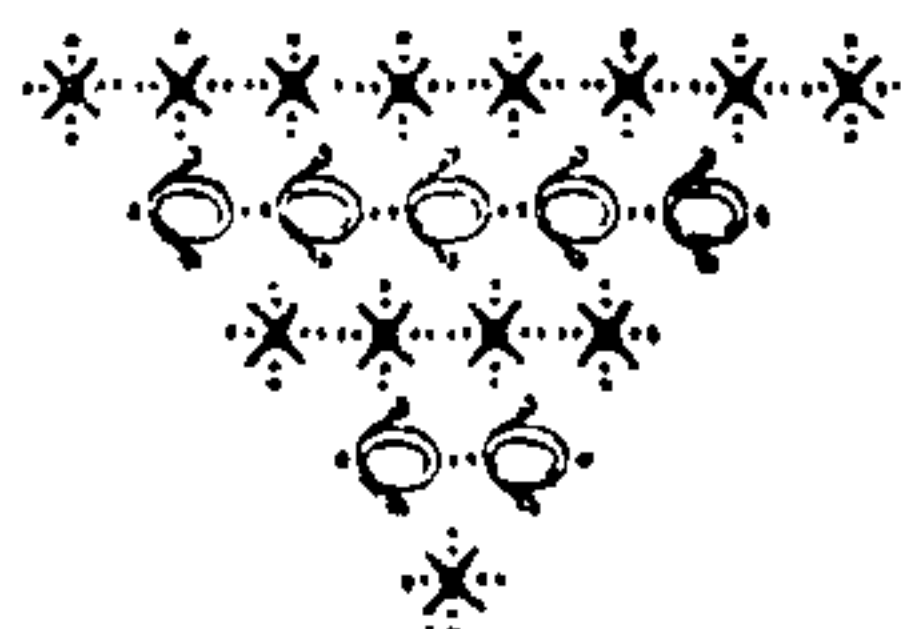
*I entreat you to remember your unworthy Pastor and his Family, in your solemn addresses to GOD, when nearest the Throne. You know what breaches a Sovereign and Holy GOD has made upon us.—Pray for the remnant that are left, that they may live in GOD's sight, and prove an instructed and godly seed.*

*That we may all have the exceeding great joy to see our children walking in the truth;—and in order thereto, that we may have the wisdom and the grace to walk in our houses with a perfect heart, and in a perfect way, and carefully to transmit that holy religion, which was the beauty and glory of our Fore-Fathers, pure and undefiled to our posterity.*

*And that we together, being each others joy and crown, may be received to the rewards of grace in the kingdom of our Father; are (I hope) the sincere and hearty wishes of,*  
 DEARLY BELOVED,

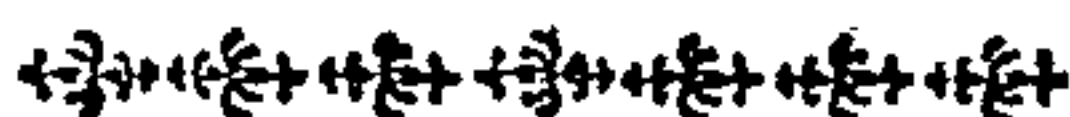
Your affectionate Pastor,  
 and Servant for Jesus Sake,  
 SAMUEL DEXTER.

DEDHAM, December 23d 1738.





## OUR FATHERS GOD, THE HOPE OF POSTERITY.



PSALM LXXVIII. from Ver. 1—8.

1. *Give Ear, O my People, to my Law: Incline your Ears to the Words of my Mouth.*
2. *I will open my Mouth in a Parable: I will utter dark Sayings of old.*
3. *Which we have heard, and known, and our Fathers have told us.*
4. *We will not hide them from their Children, shewing to the Generation to come, the Praises of the Lord: And his Strength, and his wonderful Works that he hath done.*
5. *For he established a Testimony in Jacob, and appointed a Law in Israel: which he commanded our Fathers, that they should make them known to their Children.*
6. *That the Generations to come might know them, even the Children which should be born: Who should arise and declare them to their Children.*
7. *That they might set their Hope in God, and not forget the Works of God, but keep his Commandments.*
8. *And might not be as their Fathers, a stubborn and rebellious Generation: A Generation that set not their Heart aright, and whose Spirit was not stedfast with God.*

My BRETHREN,

**W**E are now, through the sparing, upholding, and supplying mercy of our God, arrived to the expiration of our First Century, since our glorious Head of the Church has had a church in this place.

And



And seeing that our anniversary Thanksgiving happens near upon the conclusion of such a period, I hope that it may prove both acceptable and profitable to essay some religious improvement of both, in a discourse from the words now read.

You may not expect a large and particular account of our *foundation, rise, and growth*; for to do this, would be to give you a history, more proper for your entertainment at other times, than such as are consecrated to God's solemn worship, and for other places than from the pulpit.

Neither will my acquaintance either by private records, or particular traditional accounts, with the special circumstances of the original and progress of this Town and Church, furnish me with matter for such an undertaking.

Nothing further therefore than some brief hints shall be attempted; by all which I desire and hope, that God may have the glory of his wisdom, power, goodness and faithfulness, in what he has done for us; in raising from small beginnings such enlargements as at this day; in appearing for us in our mounts of difficulty; in supplying us so bountifully all along from the rich treasures of his goodness; and in bestowing so many valuable and munificent favours upon us, as we and our fathers have experienced in so long a course.

And more especially for his renewed mercies in the last year; upon which account, to celebrate God's praises, we are in a more particular manner, called together this day.

I would also have this special view in the whole, to inform and instruct our children, the generation of our hopes; and to raise in their minds, suitable dispositions of piety, and resolutions of godliness, to honour the God of their Fathers, and to cleave to him with full purpose

purpose of heart, who did such great things for our fore fathers, and therein also, for us and them ; that with souls full of love and zeal and gratitude, they may say and resolve, He is our God, and we will praise him ; he was our Fathers God, and we will exalt him : This God shall be our God for ever and ever ; we will set our hope in him, and not forget his works, but keep his commandments.

The foundation of our discourse in the several verses, now read, is so large and copious that the time will little more than allow me to divide the text into it's several obvious branches ; to collect the plain and evident doctrines therein contained, and to draw the natural and necessary uses to be made therefrom ; which I shall attempt (by divine help) in as familiar and concise a method, as I can : And therefore in the words we may observe,

- I. A general and pathetical call given to the people of God, to hearken to his law, his will and his word.           And,
- II. The reasons given to urge the people's duty upon them, in attending to the instructions, that were to be given to them in God's name.

We are to observe,

I. A general and pathetical call given to the people of God, to hearken to his law, his will and his word. *Give ear, O my people, to my law, incline your ear. " to the words of my mouth.*

This Psalm of which our text is a part, is historical,\* it is a narrative of the great mercies which God had bestowed upon Israel ; the great sins with which they had provoked him, and the many tokens of divine displeasure which they had been under therefor.

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\* Mr. Henry.

In the foregoing Psalm, the holy prophet had been relating God's wonders of old, for his own encouragement in a difficult time. In this he resumes the subject for the edification of the church, and enlargeth much upon it; shewing not only how good God had been to them, which was an earnest of further finishing mercy; but how basely they had carried themselves to God, which justified him in correcting them, as he did at this time, and forbad all their complaints.

Our text is a Preface to this piece of Church History, commanding the attention of the then present age, and recommending it to the study of the generations to come.

And in the front of this Preface, the holy Psalmist demands attention to what he was about to deliver. The people of God are called upon to hearken to God's law, his will and word: *Give ear, O my people, to my law.* Some make these the Psalmist's words: David as a king, or Asaph in his name, as his secretary of state, or scribe to the sweet finger of Israel, here calls upon the people as his people, committed to his charge, *to give ear to his law*: He calls his instructions his law or edict. Such was their commanding force in themselves; every good truth received in the light and love of it, will have the power of a law upon the conscience.

From this example of the royal Psalmist we may note; that those that are in civil authority, would do well, as far as is consistent with that liberty in which Christ hath made us free, to interpose their power for the edification of the people of God. Or the Psalmist being a Prophet speaks as God's mouth, and so calls them his people, and demands subjection to what was said, as to a law. *Let him that hath an ear, thus hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

Hence we may observe this note of doctrine, viz.

That the Ministers of Christ ought in his name to call upon the people of God, committed to their charge, to hearken to his law, his will and his word.

God's law is his will, revealed in his word ; to this God's people ought to hearken ; that is, to submit to the power and authority of it, and to yield a cheerful obedience to it. And to this exercise of godliness, the Ministers of Christ ought to quicken and stir up the people of God under their care and watch : To this we are directed by the example in our text ; for what was written afore-time was written for our instruction and admonition : The writings of the old and new Testament were given by inspiration of God, and that for our learning : *For they are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness ; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work.* And agreeably says the Apostle, \* *Take my brethren, the Prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example :* And this we should do, not only in their sufferings, and in their patience, but also in their holy living, their exemplary conversation, and imitable services to the people of God, in the fulfilment of their commission. We should be followers of them, wherein they have been examples of the things which are virtuous and praise worthy and of good report ; of holiness of life, of purity of doctrine, zeal for God, and faithfulness in fulfilling the ministry committed to them, and in discharge of their office as watchmen upon the wall.

And as the Minister's duty is herein declared with respect to those under his watch ; viz. To admonish and quicken them to receive the instructions of wisdom, and to hearken diligently to the words of God's mouth ; so is the people's duty also herein, very plainly and fully intimated to them, namely their subjection and obedience. If we are in Christ's name to call upon God's people to hearken to the words of his mouth, the obligation is as strong on you to attend, *to give earnest heed to these things that are spoken, lest at any time you let them slip ;* and to submit to the force and power of that authority, who enjoins our observation of his will, for  
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\* James v. 10.



he is our God, our maker, our preserver, our lawgiver, and our judge ; he has an undoubted propriety in us, and an indisputable right to dispose of us, and his will ought to be our rule.

Hence then by way of Application.

1. We see the necessary and incumbent duty both of Ministers and People. Ministers are to call upon those under their care and charge, *to give ear to God's law, and to incline their ears to the words of his mouth* ; to know and to do that which is right, and that which the Lord their God requires of them. And the people are not at their liberty *whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear* : There is absolute duty lying upon them to receive instruction, and to hearken to the counsels of God. Hence,

2. Those ministers are chargeable with unfaithfulness who neglect thus to address their people ; and those under their care who refuse to hearken when thus addressed, are guilty of a shameful disregard of God, his will and law. Ministers are to do more than entertain their people with speculations, and preach to them the doctrinal articles of faith ; there is the Rule of Duty, the Precepts of Holiness, which they are to urge and press with all seriousness and cogency, and they cannot be faithful without so doing ; they are to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering, and doctrine. And if their people refuse to hear and obey, the word of God thus delivered to them in his name, and according to his direction, they disregard God himself, his authority, and will ; for they that receive Christ's messengers, receive Him, and they that receive their messages which are agreeable to the analogy of faith, and the doctrines of godliness, receive him ; and they that reject them, reject him ; they despise not men, but God ; and if they reject Christ, and receive not his words, they have one that will judge them, the word that he hath spoken, the same shall judge them in the last day.

Wherefore,

3. Let

3. Let us now, in God's name and fear, apply ourselves to that which the Lord our God requires of us, in our respective characters. And now, may the glorious Head of the Church abundantly furnish me with his word, from time to time, agreeable to your more special circumstances, a word of instruction, reproof, exhortation, and counsel ; and having God's word, may I be enabled to speak his word in the demonstration of the Spirit and with power, agreeable to the lively oracles, with seriousness, gravity, and solemnity ; and with special and pertinent application to the state and condition of your souls, seeking your good, your spiritual profit and advantage, your edification and salvation, and not any vain glory or applause of men ; you also being my helpers, by your fervent addresses to God for me, that I may obtain grace to be faithful, and find mercy of the Lord to be successful. Thus to serve you and your's (by the help of God) is my earnest desire, in what may be attempted in the following articles of discourse, upon this occasion, that God's name may be glorified, and our souls nourished by the sincere milk of the word.

Wherefore to proceed——Let me observe,

II. The reasons given by the holy prophet in our text, to urge the peoples duty upon them, in attending to the instructions and admonitions he was about to deliver to them in God's name.

And these were three, viz.

1. That the things to be discoursed of were weighty.
2. That they were things of an ancient date. And,
3. That they were things in which posterity were concerned. All which render them worthy of regard and attention.

1. The first reason given in our text, by the inspired messenger of God, to urge the peoples duty upon them, in attending to the instructions and admonitions which  
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he was about to give them in God's name, is, that the things to be discoursed of were weighty, and therefore deserve consideration. I will open my mouth in a parable, in that which is sublime and uncommon,\* but very excellent, and well worthy your attention: I will utter dark sayings, which challenge your most serious regards. These are called dark sayings, not because they are hard to be understood, but because they are greatly to be admired, and carefully to be looked into. This is said to be fulfilled in the parables which our Saviour put forth, Mat. xiii. 35. which were (as this) representations of the state of the kingdom of God among men. The passages of this subsequent narrative, which the Psalmist would utter with all freedom and plainness, are styled parables† and dark sayings, not from their unintelligibleness, but by reason of their gravity and weight, and being of great moment for the peoples instruction and advantage; and because the things contained in them, concerning God's transcendent goodness to an unworthy people; and their unparalleled ingratitude for, and abuse of, such eminent favours, and their stupid ignorance and insensibleness, under such excellent and constant teachings of God's word and works, are indeed prodigious and hard to be believed.

Hence we may observe this note of doctrine, viz.

That God's word and providences, the ordinances, commandments, and laws of his kingdom, both of nature and grace, are things of infinite moment and concern to us.

Herein is contained the whole of man, respecting his present useful being, and his future comfort and happiness. God's word contains all things necessary for him to know, believe, and practice, in order to his fruition of the best good, which will never end, after a period is put to his short abode in this world. God's providences are discoveries of his wisdom and power, and of his kindness and favour in upholding all things, and

\* Mr. Henry,

† Mr. Peol.



and in their universal government, wherein he many times shews himself strong, on the behalf of them that fear him ; and sometimes for their instruction and admonition ; and to vindicate the honour of his own holiness and justice, he displays his indignation in the executions of his wrath upon bold and incorrigible sinners.

And in all this, wherein the ordinances, commandments, and laws, of the kingdom of nature and grace are exhibited and displayed to us, there are things of infinite moment and concern to us ; things great and weighty and worthy of our consideration and utmost diligent attention : For what can concern us more, than to know God and ourselves, our duty and our happiness. More particularly,

1. God's word and providences are weighty things, and will appear to be of infinite moment and concern to us, if we consider their glorious Author, the eternal God. He rules in the kingdom of providence and grace : He utters his voice, and lo ! a mighty voice, and a gracious voice, in his providential dispensations, and in his holy word.

The instructions, precepts, promises, and threatnings of the word of God, are all a copy of his adorable perfections, who is infinite in wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.

God's works of creation, providence, and grace, they are holy, though wonderful, and to be sought into, though unsearchable, and his ways righteous, though mysterious, and past finding out.

Wherefore, we should consider with whom it is we have to do, and remember that we cannot by searching find out God, that we cannot find out the Almighty to perfection. Secret things belong to God ; but those that are revealed to us and to our children, that we may do all the words of his law.

2. God's



2. God's word and providences are weighty things, and will appear to be of infinite moment and concern to us, if we consider their important design, to instruct and direct, rule and govern us, according to his holy and sovereign will.

All that the glorious God says and does in his word and in his works, is agreeable to the perfection of his nature : And so far forth as they refer to us, they are for our instruction and direction, rule and government ; that we may know God and our duty, and be kept from the abominable things which his soul hates, and be preserved in his love and favour ; which must needs render these things of infinite moment to us. But, in a word, for I can but just mention what might be enlarged upon.

3. These things are of the last concern to us, and will appear to be so, if we consider their end ; the glory of God, our comfort here, and our eternal happiness hereafter.

This is the grand end which the great God proposes in all the exertments of himself, viz. his own glory. He made all things, he upholds all things, he orders and disposes of all things as he pleases, and all for the advancement of his own honour ; and the revelation which he hath made of himself in his written word, is in the first place for the same glorious purpose, for God can have no higher end than himself, who is the first and the last, the beginning and the end. And subordinately he proposes the good of his creatures, and will make every thing to work together for the good of his chosen. They shall conspire for their advancement in grace, and to prepare them for the life of glory, which he will bestow upon all such, *who by patient continuance in ways of well doing, seek for glory, honour and immortality.* God's word and his providential dispensations have all a tendency to this, with respect to those who make a right improvement of them ; wherefore they must needs be of infinite moment and concern to us, and upon that account demand our most careful and diligent attention :

tion : These things are weighty, and deserve our consideration. God's word is so, his works are so, and diligently to be sought out of all them that take pleasure in them. Hence we infer,

1. How reasonable it is, that we yield obedience to the demands of God, in giving the most earnest heed to the instructions and admonitions, given us from his word and works.

This is consistent with the highest reason, and we can have nothing to object against it. We are dependent creatures, and accountable creatures, and our chiefest interests are much concerned in our yielding such obedience. Wherefore it is highly reasonable that we should so do.

2. Hence how pleasant and delightful should it be to us to give such attention to the instructions and admonitions of God's word and works.

We should do it with all cheerfulness and readiness of mind. Our submission to the glorious God in such an important article, should be the joy and rejoicing of our hearts, for in nothing can we take wiser measures, nor more directly consult our own present comfort and future peace.

3. Hence how profitable such an attention to the word and works of God would be to us.

This is the way to engage the favourable presence of God with us, in which alone our safety, comfort, and success are comprehended ; and this is the way to be received to the rewards of grace, in which is the life of our souls, and the happiness of eternity : See the reasonableness, pleasure, and profit of obedience.

4. Hence also the folly and absurdity of disregarding the calls of God, from his word and works.

Folly is bound up in the hearts of such as do so ; they take the most direct steps to their own ruin. Madnefs is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead, and to the damned.

In a word.

5. How juft is the ruin, and how dreadful will the destruction be of fuch as refuse attention to the calls of God, from his word and works, in which are contained things of fuch weight, and of the laft moment and importance to them.

Such caft the counsel of God behind their backs ; and fuch may juftly expect, that becaufe they regard not the works of the Lord, and the operations of his hands ; He will destroy them, and not build them up ; and that becaufe they refuse to hearken to his calls, that he will laugh at their calamity, when fnares, fire and brimstone fhall be made the portion of their cup ; for on fuch wicked God will rain a moft horrible tempeft. And, concerning fuch his enemies, he will fay, *bring them hither and flay them before me.* And oh ! who can ftand before his indignation, who can abide the fiercenefs of his anger, when his fury fhall be poured out like fire.

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2. Another reason given in our text to urge the peoples duty upon them, in attending to the instructions and admonitions which were to be given to them in God's name, viz. That the things which were to be difcourfed of, were of ancient date.

They were the monuments of antiquity, dark fayings of old, *which we have heard and known, and which our fathers have told us.* They are things of undoubted certainty, we have heard them and known them ; and there is no room left to question the truth of them.

The gospel of Luke is called a *declaration of the things which are moft surely believed among us*, Luke i. 1. fo were the things which the Pfalmift was about to relate.

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The honour we owe to our Parents and Ancestors, obligeth us to attend to that which our fathers have told us, and as far as it appears to be true and good, to receive it with so much the more reverence and regard. There is both profit and pleasure in being informed of things of ancient date, that are of undoubted verity, and of moment and importance.

Hence we may observe this note of doctrine, viz.

That it is a very agreeable and useful entertainment to refresh our minds with the remembrance of what God has done for us in our day, and with his dealings towards our Ancestors, which were performed in the days of old ; in the times of ancient generations.

It is exceeding pleasant to ingenious and inquisitive minds to reflect upon the observables of divine providence, within the compass of their own knowledge ; and also to be entertained with those of ancient date, which were remarked in the days of their Forefathers.

I shall not say any thing to demonstrate the pleasure that there is herein, the bare repeating the fact carries its own evidence along with it to all such whose minds are of this stamp ; and herculean labour would be but labour lost, to endeavour to form a relishing idea thereof in the minds of such as are of another mould.

Wherefore I pass to say, that it may be a very useful and profitable entertainment to refresh our minds with what God has done for us in our day, and with his dealings towards our ancestors, which were performed in the days of old ; and to show that in several ways, and for several ends and purposes it may be so.

Particularly,

1. To fix in our minds a just remembrance of the great and good things, God hath done for us, and for our progenitors.

Thus



Thus says the inspired penman in our text, verse 4. *Shewing to the generation to come, the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and the wonderful works that he hath done.* We should not presently forget the merciful appearances of God for us, or ours, it is an argument of ingratitude if we do ; neither should we soon let slip the awful tokens of God's displeasure in any instance, by means of which our flesh has been made to tremble ; but we should lay up the remarkable occurrences of divine providence for future improvement ; and frequently to renew the idea of them in our minds, cannot but have a tendency to fix them in the thoughts of the imagination of our hearts. Again,

2. To stir up in us a holy fear of God and a dread of his wrath.

Among the purposes of heaven in the discoveries of the divine displeasure, in the executions of vengeance, this is one, *that others may hear and fear*, may thereby be admonished and take warning. We ought to fear that holy and dreadful name, the LORD our God. We should have such an awe of the Majesty of Heaven, and such a dread of his wrath, as to make us very cautious of doing any thing to provoke him to come forth against us in anger. Now a serious reflection upon what God has done, either in our own day, or in ancients times, to punish his people for their rebellions against him, may have, and surely it ought to have this influence and effect upon us, through a holy fear of God, to avoid those ways and practices which were so provoking to the God of Heaven, that for the honour of his great name, he hath visited his people with sore judgments and calamities. This is particularly intimated to us in our text. verse 8.—*and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God.* Further,

3. This may be of use and service to excite our love, and increase our gratitude to the ever blessed God.

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The many kind things that Heaven has done for us and for our fathers, should influence us to love our most gracious and bountiful benefactor, and should enlarge our hearts in gratitude to him. Every day is a witness for God that he is good, and does good ; and calls for our constant and persevering returns of love and gratitude. But there are some remarkable interpositions of favour and goodness which demand our most special and peculiar notice ; eminent and signal appearances of divine favour call for more peculiar and enlarged returns : And many such there have been, if we did but duly attend to them, in our own day, and in the days of our fathers, which are very loud calls to us, to love the Lord our preserver and benefactor, and to render to him our grateful acknowledgments, according to the benefits done unto us. And a due reflection upon these things may have a special tendency to stir us up to our duty herein, and thereby greatly turn to our advantage. Ver. 4. *We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, &c.* Again,

4. To encourage us to put our trust in God, and to make him our hope and confidence at all times.

He that has delivered can deliver, and if our ways please him he will yet deliver. He has been, and is, the *Hope of his Israel, and their Saviour in times of trouble* ; great and marvellous have been his works of salvation ; and the Lord Jehovah is still an inexhaustible fountain of goodness, and in him there is everlasting strength. And this is one end of such a reflection, particularly pointed at in our text, ver. 7. *That we might set our hope in God.* If we make God's commandments our rule, we may make his covenant our stay, for he is never unmindful thereof. Further,

5. Such a reflection may be of great use and service, to awaken in us a suitable care, to conform our tempers and manners to the holy will and law of God, that we may engage his gracious presence with us, and obtain his blessing upon us.

This

This has been God's manner, he will be with his people in a way of mercy and blessing, while they adhere to him in a way of duty and obedience. This we are assured of, from the declarations of God's word, and from the history and method of his providential dispensations; thus we read, 2 Chron. xv. 1, 2. *And the spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded, and he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin, the Lord is with you while you be with him, and if you seek him, he will be found of you.* Wherefore if we regard the favour of heaven, and in that our own interest, such a serious reflection will have a tendency to engage our regards to the will and law of God, agreeable to which are those passages in our text, ver. 5, 6 and 7. *For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children. That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born: Who should arise and declare them to their children. That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God; but keep his commandments.*

In a word.

6. A suitable review of the great and good things which the ever blessed God hath done in our day, and in the days of our fathers, may be of use and benefit to our posterity, that they may be informed of the works of God, and called upon, not to forget the hope of their fathers, nor be unmindful of his law; which for encouragement duly to observe, he has so signally appeared in ways of mercy; and for the breach of which, he hath come forth in anger, and marched through the midst of his people in indignation.

But this advantage of a due notice of the remarkables of Providence is to be the subject of a distinct head, and therefore may be more particularly considered by and by.



I shall therefore only add here, upon the whole of what has been offered under this note of doctrine, That for such sacred purposes as the instruction and admonition of the present and succeeding generations, in the fear and love of God, and obedience to his law, we have many instances in our bibles, of rehearsing the wonderful works of God, both present and former.

If I should pretend to give you the narratives at large, they would stretch my discourse beyond due bounds: I shall therefore, only direct you to the passages, and desire that you would read and peruse them at your leisure.

To this purpose is *Moses's* divine song, *Exod.* xv. when Israel triumphed over their enemies, who were drowned in the Red Sea. And a great part of the book of *Deuteronomy* is taken up with such accounts, and with solemn calls and exhortations therefrom to obedience, particularly the 3d, 4th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 29th chapters; and to the same end is the song of *Moses* in the 32d chapter, which setteth forth God's mercy and vengeance, and concludes with this exhortation, *Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe and do, all the words of this law: For it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life, and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.* With the same pious design, *Joshua*, the captain and leader of Israel, exhorted the people of God before his death, and gave them a narrative of God's dealings with them. See *Josh.* 23d and 24th chapter. This also is the run and this the intention of the testimony of *Samuel*, the Lord's prophet, against Israel, after they had asked a king. See *1 Sam.* 12th chap. And many other instances of the like nature we have in the book of Psalms: Thus the Psalm of which our text is a part, and to which piece of church history it is a solemn preface: And so *Psal.* cv. in which we are directed to praise God for his special favours to his church, an enumeration of which is therein given; and to the same purpose is Psalm cxxxvi.

In



In the New Testament also, such useful narratives are not wanting; you remember Stephen the proto-martyr's defence, when accused of blasphemy, Acts vii. And the Apostle Paul in the xith chap. to the Hebrews, relates the wonders of faith which the ancient fathers and people of God were instances of, and as a consequence therefrom, begins his xiith chapter with this exhortation, *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.*

Thus I have endeavoured doctrinally to show you the profit and advantage of a serious reflection on the great and good things which the glorious God hath done, in the course of his providence, whether formerly or more lately.

And now by way of Application.

1. We hence see both the necessity and expediency of a serious reflection and meditation upon God's providential dispensations, whether of later or ancients date.

If there be so much profit and advantage in it, surely then it is both necessary and expedient. It is necessary, for it is our duty with regard to God, that we may give him the glory that is due to his name. And with regard to ourselves, that we may behave and conduct ourselves in a becoming manner, agreeable to our character as the people of God, who own their dependance upon him and acknowledge his propriety in them, and their obligations to him, who have their hope in him, and their expectations from him. And it is expedient, for the pleasure and the advantage of it renders it highly so. If we consult our own interest, we shall thus regard the works of the Lord and consider the operations of his hands.

2. According to our doctrine, and agreeable to the examples of such a practice, which have been produced; and with a sincere view to the same good purposes, let

let us look back and consider the works of the Lord, and the wonders which he hath done in our day and in the days of our fathers. But it must be in a few general brief hints, for a large volume would not more than suffice to contain the particulars.

And here allow me,

1. To give you some short account of our *Foundation, Rise and Growth*, with some remarkables of Providence, worthy to be taken notice of, in such a relation.

And then,

2. Briefly to hint what influence these things should have upon us.

In the first place,

1. I am to give you some short account of our *Foundation, Rise and Growth*, with some remarkables of Providence, worthy to be taken notice of in such a relation.

\* “From the days of *Moses*, who wrote the first history of the beginning of the world and of Israel, the wise and pious among men have scarce known a more sacred pleasure, nor found a more profitable entertainment, than in tracing the footsteps, and windings of divine Providence, in the planting of Colonies and Churches, here and there through the earth.

“Nor let it seem vain in me to say (says the same great man) that in the settlement of the New-England Churches and Provinces, there have been some circumstances so like unto those of Israel of old (after their entrance into Canaan) that I am perswaded no people of God under Heaven, can sing of his mercies and judgments, in the inspired phrase, with more direct and pertinent self application than we can do.

† “It was not long after the beginning of the former century, that a considerable number of the subjects of  
D the

\* The Rev. Dr. *Colman*, in his Preface to Mr. *Penhallow's* History of the Indian War.

† The Rev. and excellent Mr. *Pemberton*, in a brief account of the State of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay in New-England, Civil and Ecclesiastical.

the Crown of England, by the allowance, and under the countenance and protection of the supreme authority, did transplant themselves, families and estates into the remote regions of *America*.

Our New England Chronology says, ‡ “ That it was on the 9th of November, in the year 1620, that they made the land, after long beating the sea ; and on the 31st of December the same year, they kept their first sabbath on the main land, at the place now well known by the name of Plymouth ; from which time therefore the Rev. Mr. Prince fixes the æra of their settlement.

“ These first Planters were known to be persons, not only of approved piety to God, but of exemplary loyalty to the Throne and Government they belonged to ; and brought these principles of affection and duty to their Prince into these his distant dominions ; and their care was to transmit the same loyal principles and spirit to their posterity.

“ To encourage and strengthen them to submit to the many toils, hazards and vast expence in subduing and planting a wilderness, they were favoured with the Royal Grant of a Charter, by which they were vested with several Powers, Liberties, and Privileges, for their good order and government.

“ Under the protection of the Royal Charter in which they entirely confided, for the security of the liberties therein granted, they were animated cheerfully to undergo unknown perils and hardships, which were unavoidable in their first plantations, by which a valuable accession has been made to the British dominions, and the commerce of Great Britain enlarged without any charge to the Crown.

In the latter end of the reign of King Charles the second, this Charter was vacated by a judgment of the High Court of Chancery, which judgment was  
rescinded,

‡ The Rev. Mr. *Prince*.

respited, till the reign of King James the second, when this corporation was disfranchised and actually divested of all the powers, liberties and privileges that had been granted to them.

“ After the happy Revolution, those glorious Princes King William and Queen Mary, of immortal memory, were pleased in their princely wisdom and grace, by their royal Charter to unite and erect into one province, the Colonies of the Massachusetts Bay, New Plymouth, &c. by the name of the Province of the *Massachusetts Bay* in *New England*, which was to be governed by a Governor, Council and Assembly.

“ By this Royal Charter many valuable Privileges and Immunities are vested in the Body of the People inhabiting the said Province, their properties secured, and all the Immunities and Liberties of natural subjects born in the realm of England, are granted and affirmed to them.

“ The inhabitants of this Province have always had a just value for their civil Liberties, but the free and secure enjoyment of their religious privileges, has ever been most dear to them, and esteemed a plentiful reward of all the dangers and difficulties they have been struggling with, from their first plantation to this day.

“ The first Planters of these his Majesty's territories, were as to their persuasion in religion, such as in the English nation were called *Puritans*, who desired and sought what was in their apprehension, a further reformation in point of discipline and worship.

“ That they and their posterity after them might enjoy the liberty of their consciences in these points, and worship God according to their best light, with less hazard to themselves, and less offence to others, they sought a place of rest in these remote regions.

“ By



“ By the care and zeal of these first Planters, the kingdom of *Christ* was first planted in these his Majesty's distant dominions, Churches erected in their several Towns and Plantations, in which the Gospel is dispensed, and the Ordinances of God's House administered, without any terms of Communion, but what according to their best light, were plainly prescribed in the word of God.

“ The Doctrines of Faith professed in these Churches are entirely Protestant, most agreeable to the doctrinal Articles and Homilies of the Church of England, and to the Confessions of the Reformed Churches abroad.

“ The Churches in point of Discipline and Mode of Worship are mainly Congregational and Presbyterian, of one profession and principle, with the united Brethren, the Protestant Dissenters in South Britain.

“ Through the blessing of Heaven these Churches under their present securities have greatly flourished and increased.”

Our merciful and glorious God did in a wonderful manner cast out the Heathen before our Fathers, and planted them : *He prepared also a room before them, and caused them to take deep root, and to fill the land, so that the vine hath sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches upon the river.* We have heard with our ears, O God, our Fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old, how thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them ; how thou didst afflict the people and cast them out ; for they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them ; but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them.\*

Very

\* Very remarkable was the hand of Heaven in a mortal contagion that swept away multitudes of the Aborigines, just before the arrival of the first English settlers. And as evident an interposition of Providence was the extraordinary restraints laid upon those that survived, that were disposed to do hurt to God's little flock in the wilderness : And also the amicable temper which some of them discovered, in their inclinations to shew kindness to, and do service for the infant Plantations.

Very various have been the divine dispensations towards our Fathers, and towards us, as their and our ways have pleased the Lord ; sometimes the bright shines of prosperity in our civil and religious interests have surrounded us ; and sometimes our prospects have been dark and gloomy : And many have been the almost insuperable difficulties that we have passed through from the tongues and the pens of false brethren, and from the arrows, guns, and hatchets, of a barbarous enemy.

Very threatening the time when our Charter was taken from us and the Government dissolved, \* and very distressing the administration of government from that time to the happy Revolution.† Very dark the time when the land and churches were filled with perplexity and concern from what happened by the righteous permission of Heaven, from the Spirits of darkness,‡ and very grievous the things that have fallen out from the divisions and animosities which have embarrassed our affairs, both civil and religious, at one time and another. And in a word, very surprizing and shocking the prospects, when a righteous and holy God hath many a time threatned us with impoverishing and desolating judgments for our sins ; and sometimes caused us to taste the bitter fruits of our impieties and irregularities. Nevertheless, through the patience of Heaven, we are continued a people, and are still in the enjoyment of very valuable privileges, and from small beginnings are become great. §

But

\* The first Charter taken away 1685. The old Government dissolved in May 1686. Sir *Edmund Andros* arrived Governour December 1686. The Rev. Dr. *Increase Maiber* went Agent to England in the spring 1688.

† In *England*, Nov. 1688. In *New-England*, April 1689. The present Charter granted 1691. Sir *William Phipps* arrived Governour 1692.

‡ In the year 1692.

§ See this set in a very good light, in a sermon preached upon the like occasion, by the Rev. Mr. *Foxcroft* of *Boston*, from *Matt. xiii. 31. 32.* Aug. 23. 1730.

But I leave these things of a general purport, and pass to consider some things more immediately referring to ourselves.

According to the account which I have received, the town of *Dedham* was the 16th or 18th settlement from the first beginning of the country.

It was petitioned for as a township in 1636, and desired that it might be called *Contentment*; which name I doubt not was asked for some special reason, and likely enough to denote the temper and disposition of the then inhabitants. However, when the grant was made, it was called by its present name.

Our Church Records say, "The township of *Dedham*, consisting of about thirty families, residing there 1637, being come together by divine Providence from several parts of England; few of them known to one another before."

And being thus incorporated into a civil Society, and invested with the same privileges that others enjoyed, they soon bethought themselves about a Church State, for it was that, that their hearts were principally upon.

Agreeably it is added in our ancient Records.

"It was thought meet and agreed upon, that all the inhabitants that affected Church Communion, or pleased to come, should meet every 5th day of the week at several houses, in order lovingly to discourse and consult together of such questions as might further tend to establish a peaceable and comfortable civil society; and prepare for spiritual communion in a Church State. Partly that we might be further acquainted with the tempers, spirits and gifts of one another; and partly that we might gain further light in the ways of Christ's kingdom, and the government of his Church," &c.

And in the pursuit of this method, they prepared for, and at length came into a Church State, in a very serious and solemn manner.



A particular account of the measures taken and of the manner of their combination is preserved to us by the care and pains of that reverend and venerable gentleman Mr. *John Allin*, your first pastor : And whoever reads it must allow, that there is in it a full discovery of a sincere regard to the glory of God, and to their own spiritual education in the ways of God (according to a judgment of charity) a strict regard to holiness of life, and a great care to maintain the *unity of the Spirit* in the bond of peace. That there was much of the presence of God with them, and that having their hearts enlarged with the consolations of God, they ran in the ways of his commandments with cheerfulness and constancy, and held fast their integrity.

This Church being the fourteenth that was embodied in the country,\* was gathered on the 8th day of November 1638, by making a solemn profession of their faith, and entering into covenant with the Lord, and one with another, consisting of 8 persons † to whom several others were added before the church was compleated with officers ‡ which was on April 24. 1639,§ when the Rev. Mr. *John Allin* was ordained to the pastoral office, who through help received from God, continued in his work, 'till the year 1671, when on the 26th of August he

\* *Johnson's History.*

† Viz. *John Allin, Ralph Wheelock, Edward Aikin, John Ineson, John Hunting, John Frayry, Eleazer Lusher, and Robert Hinsdall,*

‡ Viz. *Henry Phillips, John Dwight, Robert Kempe, and Daniel Fisher,* with several women.

§ See ancient Church records. The Deacons office excepted, which was not filled for many years ; for I find such a memorandum as this, in our Church records, viz. the choice and ordination of Deacons being long left unperfected : sometimes by reason of different apprehensions in the Church, and sometimes by reason of brother *Chickering's* delays of acceptance in regard of his relation and affections to Mr. *Phillips* in England ; it pleased God that after long experience the Church had of brother *Henry Chickering* and *Nathan Aldis* in the work of Deacons, the Church with a general vote (some few only suspending) called them to that office, and agreed they should be ordained thereunto the next Sabbath, being elected on the 23d of the 4th month 1650. So that this Church was without Deacones 11 years.



he fell asleep in the Lord, “ having continued (says our church history) the reverend and dearly beloved pastor to the church of Christ in *Dedham*, after ordination, thirty two years, and died in the 75th year of his age.

After whose death, this church was destitute of a pastor two years and about 4 months, when this breach was greatly made up in the happy settlement of the Rev. Mr. *William Adams* ; who was ordained to the pastoral office December 3d, 1673, and carried on the work of the Lord among his people here, through the assistances of the glorious head of the church, for 12 years and 8 months, and ceased from his labours, exchanging (we trust) earth for Heaven, on August the 17th, in the year of our Lord 1685.

After whose decease, this church was destitute and in a broken state for 8 years, when to their great joy, the repairer of breaches supplied the vacancy with a pastor (we trust) after his own heart, in the Rev. Mr. *Joseph Belcher*, who was ordained to the pastoral office in this place, on Nov. 29th, in the year 1693, and was made a great blessing to this people, in whose light they rejoiced till April 27th 1723, when he was not suffered to continue any longer by reason of death. He lived much desired and died greatly lamented, in the 53d year of his age, and in the 30th of his pastorate.

After which this church was destitute one year, which brings down the time to the present settlement.

I shall add, that besides those in the ministry this Church and Town have been favoured with very valuable and worthy men, some in the Magistracy, and others in a more private sphere. A *Lusber*,\* a *Fisher*, † a *Dwight*,

\* Of whom it is thus recorded in our Church Book, “Major *Eleazer Lusber*, a man found in the faith, of great holiness and heavenly mindedness, who was of the first foundation of this Church, and had been of great use (as in the Commonwealth so) in the Church, especially after the death of the Rev. Pastor thereof, Mr. *John Allis*, departed this life November 13, 1672.

† Mr. *Daniel Fisher*, a Gentleman learned in the Law, and a Magistrate for the Colony.

*Dwight*,\* have been among our men of renown ; and many other truly serious, godly and useful men, who being dead, have their names and memories, yet alive among us, for their worthy deeds done to and for this people, and for their heavenly conversation, who herein have left us an example worthy of imitation.

And blessed be God, that we have some, we hope, yet surviving, that are not destitute of the principles and zeal of their fore-fathers.

I need not acquaint you that within the limits that were first *Dedham*, whose number of inhabitants in the year 1637 were 30 families, there are now 6 townships,\* and some considerable part of a 7th, † there are 9 parishes, and as many gathered Churches, ‡ with Pastors,

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\* *Timothy Dwight*, Esq; a Gentleman truly serious and godly, one of an excellent spirit, peaceable, generous, charitable, and a promoter of the true interests both of the Church and Town ; died January 31, 1717-18; *Ætat.* 83, and buried on the same day with his sixth consort.

• *Viz. Medfield* made a Township, January 1650-1, whereof the Rev. Mr. *Joseph Baxter* is the present Pastor.

*Wrentham*, set off from *Dedham* March 27, 1661. Confirmed by the General Court, October 1673. The Rev. Messieurs *Henry Messenger*, and *Elias Haven*, Pastors of the two distinct parishes in the town.

*Needham*, set off from *Dedham*, May 28th, 1711. Confirmed by the General Court November 1711, The Rev. Mr. *Jonathan Townsend* the Pastor.

*Bellingham*, set off from *Dedham* May 11th, 1719:

*Walpole*, set off from *Dedham* May 15th, 1724, and confirmed at the fall sessions. The Rev. Mr. *Phillips Payson* their Pastor.

† *Viz. Natick*, where there is a Church of our Lord Jesus, consisting partly of English and partly of Indians. The Rev. Mr. *Oliver Peabody* their Pastor.

‡ *Viz:* 1 in *Medfield*, 2 in *Wrentham*, 1 in *Needham*, 1 in *Bellingham*, 1 in *Walpole*, and 3 in *Dedham*, viz. the old Parish, the south Parish, set off from the Town Sept. 2, 1728, confirmed by the General Court Nov. 1730. The Church gathered there June 23d, 1736, and the Rev. Mr. *Thomas Balch* ordained their Pastor, June 30th, 1736. The other Parish is distinguished by the name of the *Clapboard Trees* ; where a Church was gathered, and the Rev.

one only excepted; § with a considerable number to make a 10th, when they shall judge their circumstances agreeable. ||

There are ten trained Companies, with a troop of Horse, and a very considerable part of another. Within our present limits are three Parishes, three Churches, and three trained Companies.

I do not mention these things for ostentation, but that we may see and consider how great hath been our increase from small beginnings; and be induced to give God the glory of his power and goodness.

As to the Births and Deaths, the admissions into Church fellowship, and the removals from it, Marriages, &c. I cannot pretend to compute and affirm the number. Yet we may in our own minds be led (it's possible) to some juster and more enlarged conceptions thereof, than at first we are ready to imagine, from the following account, which begins with my settlement, on the 6th of May 1724, since which time, according to the best calculation that I can make, which is something above 14 years; there has died and been buried in this place and neighbourhood, who congregate with us, 369: Infants baptized 447: Adults baptized 35: Admitted into Church fellowship 171: Dismissed to us 9: Dismissed from us 33: Laid hold of the Covenant 44: Besides the Baptisms, Admissions, &c. that have been in the other Churches. And the number of Marriages have been 104; besides those that have been joined in holy wedlock, belonging to this Town, by other Officers. And if these things have been within a little more than the space of fourteen years, what has been done in the course of an hundred?

As

Rev. Mr. *Josiah Dwight*. (formerly of *Woodstock*) installed their Pastor June 4th, 1735. And they were made a distinct Parish by the General Court January 10th, 1736.

N. B. Where I say confirmed by the General Court in November, it is to be understood, sometime in the Fall Sessions.

§ Viz. *Bellingham*, who are now destitute of a settled Minister, viz. January 25, 1738-9.

|| Viz. at a part of the Town known by the name of *Springfield*.



As the people of God in this Place have been sharers in the common smiles of Heaven with other places, so they have been in publick frowns and calamities, such as sicknesses and wars, scarcities, and the like. But I do not find any distinguishing calamity brought upon them since their first settlement.

Of late years, God's people in this land, and we in this place, have been under a variety of providential dispensations, and have reason to sing both of mercy and of judgment.

Many have been the frowns of Heaven, and great the divine threatnings in the wars with the Indian savages; by earthquakes, storms and sicknesses, such as the small pox, and the throat distemper, by which such vast numbers of our children and youth in one place and in another, have been removed to the silent house appointed for all living. Death having obtained commission to come up into our windows, and to enter into our dwellings, to cut off the children from without, and the young men and women from the streets, many hundreds, if not thousands, have fallen an easy prey. Also in the threatnings of scarcity, and in the deaths of great and good men, both in the Magistracy and in the Ministry.

And great has been the kindness and favour of the blessed God to us; as in the continuance of our precious privileges both civil and sacred; so in our special salvations, protection and provisions: In our successes against the Indian enemy in the last war, though with the loss of much treasure, and many a valuable life: In the peace that we have of late years enjoyed: In the salvations that we have hitherto been favoured withal from threatened ruin and destruction. And in the fruits of the earth, which beyond expectation, we have been blessed with, for the supply of the necessities of life, and sometimes in great plenty.

And in a particular manner, great and kind have been the bounties of Heaven with which the year past hath been brightened and blessed in the plentiful harvests both  
former



former and latter. In the general health of the land, though some places have been sorely and distressingly visited with the throat distemper; \* with whom we would sympathize, and for whom we would constantly pour out a prayer to the God of our lives and hopes, remembering those that are in bonds, as bound with them; and they that suffer affliction, as being ourselves also in the body; and not knowing how soon it may be our melancholly lot; who have at this day special reason to take notice of the goodness of God to us, in the health that we have been favoured withal in the year past, in which we have had fewer deaths in proportion than in any one year since my settlement. We should also take a thankful notice that we yet enjoy peace, notwithstanding the threatening prospects of war betwixt *England* and *Spain*; which if there should be, we must expect not only to hear of the confused noise of war, and garments rolled in blood, but also to taste, and it may be drink deep, of that bitter cup.

Thus I have given you some short account of our Foundation, Rise and Growth, with some remarkables of divine Providence, worthy to be taken notice of, in such a relation.

I come now in the second place as was proposed.

2. Briefly to hint what influence these things should have upon us

And in the first place,

1. Our increases and enlargements, with the continuance of our invaluable privileges, should excite us to give God the glory of his infinite wisdom, almighty power, and inexhaustible goodness.

An infinite fulness hereof there is in the ever blessed God; and very wonderful and even astonishing have been the displays thereof, in the foundation, rise and growth of these colonies and churches, and of this place in particular, which a little above an hundred years ago, was a howling wilderness, the regions of death, and the habitations

\* *Malden, Andover, &c.*

habitations of ignorance, idolatry, barbarism, and inhumanity ; but now a land of light, and a valley of vision, wherein the true God is feared and worshiped, with as much light, affection, zeal, and purity, as upon any spot of earth through the known world. *O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.*

2. The spirit, life, zeal and power of godliness, which was the glory of our forefathers, ministers occasion of humiliation to us, their degenerate offspring.

Where is that holiness and love, that purity and faith, which the first planters of these New English settlements were eminent for? Our fathers where are they? And the prophets do they live forever? Verily, we are risen up in the room of our fathers, a generation which do not know, love, fear and obey the blessed God, with that fervency and life, and strictness as they did. We are fallen from their first love, and we do not do the first works. May not the lamentation over, and the expostulation with God's people of old, which we have recorded, *Jer. ii. 2.* and on, be justly improved with respect to us, in the present day of our declensions—*Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness to the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase: All that devour him shall offend, evil shall come upon them, saith the Lord.—Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? Neither said they where is the Lord, that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt? And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof, and the*  
goodness

*goodness thereof. But when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination; (for are there not among us, even among us, wicked ways and practices to be found?) the Priests said not, where is the Lord? and they that handle the law, knew me not; the Pastors also transgressed against me; and the Prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit; wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the Lord, and with your children's children will I plead. O! that we were more sincerely sensible of our declensions, and humble for our apostacies, and penitent for our backslidings; that we might reform every thing that is amiss, and return to him from whom we have revolted, that iniquity may not prove our ruin. And from the examples of our pious Fathers, may we be quickened to a laudable ambition and emulation, that the things which are virtuous and praise-worthy, and of good report, may be our adorning, as they were their's.\**

Suffer me (my brethren) to put you in mind of the regard which they shewed to necessary and useful learning; from a value to which, in the days of their weakness, burthens and impoverishments, they laid the foundation of that *Seminary*,† which has been such a great blessing to the land and the churches. And let this shame us out of our regardlessness to that which is better than money and farms.

Is not the disesteem of learning too evident in a prevailing temper (was it not for the law of the Province) to be wholly without a Grammar School? Don't we see too much of this, in the negligence of parents and masters in sending their children, and those under their care and charge to school, when we have one.

My Brethren, what will the next, or succeeding generations be, in our country Towns, unless a love to, a value for, and esteem of learning, revive? Must we not send

\* Here are two or three paragraphs added, which were not delivered when the Sermon was preached.

† September 1636, the General Court voted 400 l. towards building the College at Cambridge.



send abroad for men to do our publick business for us ? I think it is beyond all dispute, a rare thing to find among us, men of a common character, that can use their pens as many, many of our Fathers could.

I intreat you to bear with my plainness and freedom of speech ; and suffer me to add ; O let us endeavour to recover that spirit of family government and authority which our Fathers had ; They ruled their houses well, and had their households in good subjection ; children and servants knew their places, and kept their distances : But how is it now ? Verily in family government is the foundation laid for good order, peace, and a regular conduct, in Church and State. O let us command our children and households, that they fear God and honour the King ; that they reverence their superiours, and behave with all suitable decorum towards every one. And I hope, without offence, I may subjoin, for I have no particular references, how much it is to be wished, that our School-Masters would shew all good fidelity in that trustment, and let their little nurseries be the schools neither of Tyrannus nor of Gallio, but that they use their best endeavours to instill good knowledge, virtue and religion into the minds and hearts of children, that they may give a good account of their stewardship.

And O let us every one in our respective spheres and characters, endeavour to shine in the gifts and graces with which our forefathers were endowed and brightned.

And as I have taken up the Mantles, so, O that thro' grace, I might inherit a double portion of that excellent spirit, which rested upon my ascended Fathers, who ministred at the Lord's altar in this place. I do not pretend to have attained, but I desire to follow on ; Lord quicken my pace, and encrease the fruits of thy spirit in my weak and feeble essays, for the glory of thy name, and the good of precious souls ; and O that we might be so happy as to be the crowns of each other's joy in the day of Christ's appearing.

And



And (my dear Charge) I beseech you to imitate the zeal, the love, the faith, the purity, the holiness, the charity and liberality of your pious ancestors ; and let this day, or this season of this year, witness for you, that you are followers, as well as descendants from them, who through faith and patience are inheriting the promises, in your liberal communications to those that stand in need ; such you have with you, and you will always have with you ; do not forget them. The blessed God hath given bountifully into your hands this year, and they that reap bountifully should sow bountifully, and that is the way for another good crop, and a further plentiful harvest. Of this, some of you are not unmindful : God's poor, and his unworthy servant speaking, must commend your acts of kindness. The Lord reward your bounty in the gifts of his providence, and in the fruits of his grace, to you and to your children forever.

3. From what we have heard, let us be excited to rejoice in the goodness of God, and to make the joy of the Lord our strength ; and let us raise these notes of triumph, Psalm 105, beginning, *O give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people ; sing unto him, sing Psalms unto him, talk of all his wondrous works ; glory ye in his holy name ; let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.* See also Psalm 106, beginning, *Praise ye the Lord, O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever.* Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord ? Who can shew forth all his praise ? Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doth righteousness at all times. Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people ; O visit me with thy salvation, that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance. And in the 107th Psalm, beginning, *O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever ; let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered them out of*

*of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. They wandered in the wilderness, in a solitary way, they found no city to dwell in, hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them; then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses, and he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men.*

4. What we have heard should encourage us to trust in God, to hope in his mercy, and to pray for his special presence, and peculiar blessings, particularly the outpourings of his spirit.

The ever blessed God hath done great and good things for us, and he is the only adequate object of our trust and hope; and he that has done can still do: To him therefore let us, with humility, and in faith, with fervency, commit our cause, who is God performing all things for us; and in a particular manner, let us cry mightily, that the spirit may be poured down from on high upon us, that the hearts of the fathers may be turned to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that we may become a holy people; that God would pardon our iniquities, heal our backslidings, receive us graciously and love us freely, and make us a peculiar people to himself, zealous of good works.

5. From what we have heard, let us be quickened to bless and magnify the glorious God for the former and later manifestations of his goodness and grace, bounty and kindness.

We should abundantly utter the memory of God's great goodness, and sing of his loving kindness. We should mention the loving kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us; and his great goodness toward the house of his New English Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving kindnesses.

But in a word,

6. The great goodness of God towards our Fathers and towards us should animate us to use our utmost endeavours, that our children may be suitably affected with these things. But this brings me

3. To consider the third and last reason given in our text, to urge the people's duty upon them in attending to the instructions, and admonitions that were to be given to them in God's name, viz. That they were things in which posterity was concerned.

Verse 4th and on of our text, *We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come, the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done ; for he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our Fathers, that they should make them known to their children, that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children, that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments, and not be as their Fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that set not their hearts aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God.*

The things which the Prophet was about to discourse of, as they were things weighty, and the monuments of antiquity, so they were to be transmitted to posterity ; and it lies as a charge upon us, carefully to hand them down. Because our Fathers told them us, we will not hide them from their children : Our children are called their's, for they were in care for their seed's seed, and looked upon them as their's. And in teaching our children the knowledge of God, we repay to our parents some of that debt we owe to them for teaching us. Nay if we have no children of our own, we must declare the things of God to their children, the children of others ; our care must be for posterity in general, and not only for our own posterity. And for the generation  
to



to come hereafter, the children that shall be born, as well as the generation that is next rising up, and the children that are born. That which we are to transmit to our children, is not only the knowledge of languages, arts, and sciences, their liberty and property ; but especially the praises of the Lord, and his strength appearing in the wonderful works that he has done. Our great care must be to lodge our religion, that great depositum, pure and entire in the hands of those that succeed us.

Hence we may observe this note of Doctrine, viz.

That we ought to do all that is in our power, to have the souls of our children impressed with suitable apprehensions of God, his will and law, and their duty ; to effect which, the rehearsal of, and acquainting them with, God's memorable providential dispensations, whether of ancient or later date, may have an agreeable tendency.

Here let it be said,

1. We should use our utmost endeavour, that our children may be suitably affected with the law of God, his will, and their duty.

*He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our Fathers, that they should make them known to their children, v. 5.* The law of God was given to his people, with a particular charge, that it should be taught diligently to their children.

He established a testimony or covenant, and erected a law in Jacob and Israel ; gave them precepts and promises, which he commanded them to make known to their children. See Deut. vi. 7. *And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.* See also verse 20, and on. *And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What means the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord our God hath commanded you ; then shalt thou say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt, and the Lord brought*



*brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and the Lord shewed signs and wonders, great and sore upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes ; and he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he swore unto our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day ; and it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these Commandments, before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us.*

The Church of God, as the historian saith of the Roman Commonwealth, was not to be *Res unius ætatis*, a business of one age, but was to be kept up, from one generation to another. And therefore, as God provided for a succession of ministers in the tribe of Levi, and the house of Aaron, so he appointed that parents should train up their children in the knowledge of his law ; and when they are grown up, they must arise and declare them to their children ; that as one generation of God's servants and worshippers passeth away, another generation may come, and the church, as the earth, may abide forever. And thus God's name among men may be as the days of Heaven. And then,

2. The rehearsal of God's memorable providential dispensations to our children, and suitably acquainting them therewithal, may have a happy tendency thus to impress the law of God upon them. His providences both of mercy and judgment.

It is requisite that God's works should be made known to posterity, together with his laws ; the fulfilling of his promises made to the obedient, and his threatenings denounced against the disobedient : Let these be told to our children, and to our children's children.

And hence they may take encouragement, to conform themselves to the will of God, that not forgetting the works of God, wrought in former days, or later times, they may set their hope in God, and keep his commandments, may make his command their rule, and his co-

venant.

venant their stay. And those only may with confidence *hope for God's salvation*, that make conscience of *doing his commandments*. The works of God, duly considered, will very much strengthen our resolution, both to set our hope in him, and to keep his commandments.

And then, hence may children take warning, not to conform to those examples of their fathers which have not been good, and for which God hath visited them with his sore rebukes, that they might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation.

When the character of Fathers is, that they are stubborn and rebellious, that they walk contrary unto God, who though they profess relation to him, yet do not set their hearts aright; are not cordial in their engagements to God, nor inward with him in their worship of him, and therefore their spirits are not steadfast with him, but upon every occasion fly from him: Children should take warning not to follow their examples.

And verily those that are descended from wicked and ungodly ancestors, if they will but consider the word and works of God, will see reason enough not to tread in their steps: It will be no excuse for a vain conversation, that it was received by tradition from our Fathers, for what we know of them that was ill, and the punishments that they received therefor, should be an admonition to us, that we dread that which was so pernicious to them.

In fine. Such an acquaintance with the dealings of Heaven, may have a tendency to fill our children with an holy awe and reverence of the divine Majesty; with a cheerful hope and confidence in him; with earnest desires and a steady care to please him, by obeying his will; with awful fears of offending him, by any instances of disobedience; and in a word, this may instruct and quicken them to fear, love, serve and worship that God who was their Fathers God, and is their God, and who they desire may be the God of their's after them.

Hence

Hence by way of Application.

1. We learn the duty of parents to instruct their children in the knowledge of God's word and works ; of his law and providence.

We should teach them diligently to our children : We should talk of them when we sit in the house, when we walk by the way, when we lye down, and when we rise up. We should acquaint our children with what God hath done for his people, for his churches, for our families, for ourselves, and for them. What sense they should have of divine mercies, and how they should resent the tokens of divine displeasure. What improvement they should make of such things to stir them up to holiness of life, and to direct their hearts into the love of God, and a patient waiting for the mercy of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Hence we learn the duty of children to hearken to and receive instructions ; to regard God's works and obey his will. And to lay up such things as a sacred depositum to be transmitted down to their posterity ; and to have their own hearts suitably impressed, and their lives influenced to an agreeable conversation by the examples of God's mercies and judgments. His smiles upon religion and virtue, and his frowns upon impiety and dishonesty. In a word,

3. Let what has been offered upon this subject, have this influence and effect upon us ; to quicken us to regard the works of the Lord, and to consider the operation of his hands in the methods of his providence towards us, and towards our venerable and renowned Forefathers.\*  
—That

\* For I am humbly of opinion, that the principles from which sprang their remove into these uncultivated regions ; the views and aims, they had therein, the perils and fatigues they underwent and endured, and the magnanimity, patience, and self-denial with which they bore the same : And his sake, the honour and glory, for whom they suffered all, justly entitle them to the regards of heroes, martyrs, confessors, &c. in our esteem, and in the annals of time.



—That our hope may be set in God, and that we may not forget his works, but keep his commandments: Let the thought of their being weighty things, ancient things, and things in which posterity is concerned, prove a motive to us hereunto.

But it is time to draw to a close. Wherefore upon the whole, and to conclude: So copious is our present theme, and so many incidental articles which require our notice, and so narrow the limits of time, to mention them all; that renders it exceeding difficult to keep proper measures, and to preserve a natural, a clear and unconfused method. And how defective soever the present Discourse hath been in these respects; yet let us endeavour to answer the grand design and intention of it, which is the noble and excellent end of preaching, viz. to profit.

Wherefore I shall conclude with a few briefs hints of exhortation.

1. Upon such a reflection as we have now made, let us be filled with humble and holy admiration.

Lord! What is man that thou art thus mindful of him, and the children of men that thou shouldest thus visit them? Who are we, and what are our houses, that thou hast brought us hitherto? Again,

2. Let us utter the memory of God's great goodness, and of his wonderful works, with sincere views that his name may be thereby glorified.

Let us with our whole souls, bless God for preserving our Fathers from the perils of the sea, in crossing the great ocean to settle themselves in this land. And for protecting them from the dangers that they were in from the savage inhabitants upon their arrival: For his casting out the heathen from before them, and giving them this good land for an inheritance: For smiling upon them, and prospering them in their settlements;



ments : For his propitious aids, direction and influence in their civil and religious interests : For continuing to us our precious privileges to this day : And that now through the indulgence of Heaven, we enjoy a wise and gracious Prince upon the throne, for whom we pray that his life may be long and his reign prosperous : And in the increase of the royal family in the birth of his highness Prince George,\* and that we have the hopeful prospects of a succession in the protestant line in the illustrious house of Hanover, to the end of time. And that we in this land are favoured with good Rulers, and from among ourselves, such as are accepted of the multitude of their brethern, seeking the wealth of their people, and speaking peace to all their seed ; for whom we give thanks, and pray that under their wise and just administration, we may lead lives in all godliness and honesty. In a word,

We should bless God for the bounties and benignities of the year past in particular, and be above every thing solicitous what we shall render for the benefits done unto us. *Bless the Lord, O our souls, and all that is within us, bless his holy name.*

3. Let us fear and reverence that great and dreadful Name, The LORD our GOD.

His works of wonder, of power, of wisdom, of goodness and faithfulness, should have such an influence upon us. Again,

4. Let us not dare to go on in a course of rebellion against God.

It will be the vilest ingratitude, if we do ; and we may justly expect, if we do, that the profusion of goodness which we have experienced, will be concluded ; and the treasures of wrath will be opened, to vindicate the honour of incensed justice, and of abused love and patience.

\* His Highness Prince George, born May 24, 1738.

patience. But let us remember from whence we have fallen, and repent and do the first works, that God may go on to own us for his people\*

“ Let us be solicitous to do all we can to secure the continuance of the gracious presence of God among us. To this end, let us be concerned to get every provoking evil reformed : Let us be inquisitive into the causes of the present decay of piety, and unsuccessfulness of the gospel ; labour to repair all our defects, rectify all our mismanagements, and retrieve our characters. Let us unite all our endeavours, cares and prayers, for the recovery of languishing religion, for the building up Christ’s kingdom, and carrying on the work of the Lord, that we may see the return of good days. That is the call of Christ to his people here, Rev. iii 2, 3. *Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die, for I have not found thy works perfect before God, remember therefore how thou hast received, and heard, and hold fast, and repent.* And as in verse 11, *Behold I come quickly, hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.* He that hath an ear, let him hear, what the spirit saith unto the Churches:

“ Let us often recollect the errand of our forefathers into this land, and pursue that great interest, which brought them hither, when it was a land not sown, an inhospitable wilderness, where (as they were wont to say) they esteemed brown bread and the gospel good fare. Let us be mindful of the holy covenant, wherein they have bound us to be the Lord’s ; and teach it our children, who shall tell it to the generation to come, that they also may set their hope in the Lord. And that our little ones may know the covenant care and faithfulness of the God of Israel, under whose wings their forefathers came hither to dwell in safety. Let us attend to the words of David’s dying charge to the rulers and people of Israel, 1 Chron. xxviii, 8. *Now*

G

*therefore*

\* The two following paragraphs are added since the Sermon was preached, from the Rev. Mr. Foxcroft’s Century Sermon, p. 44, 45:

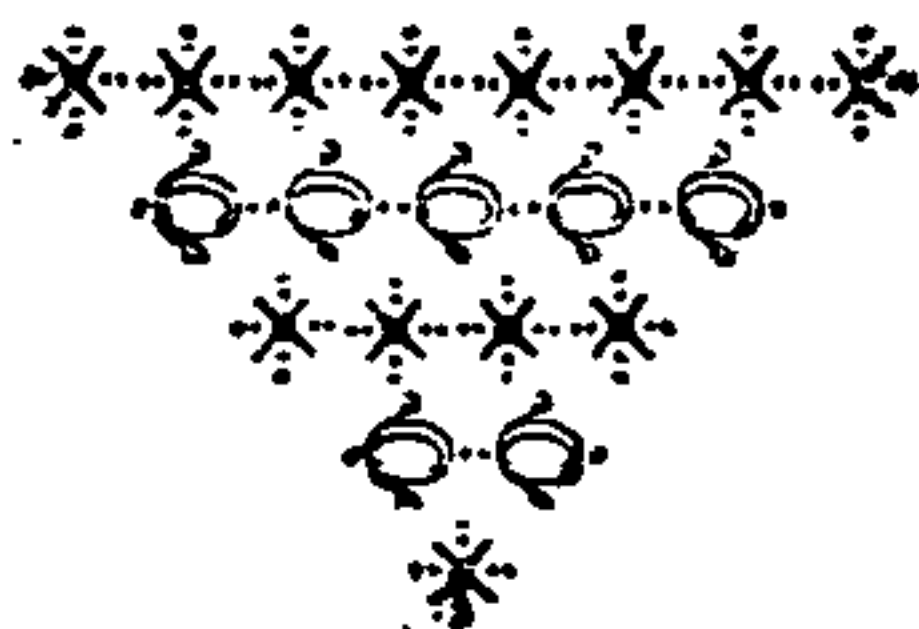
*therefore in the sight of all Israel the congregation of the Lord, and in the audience of our God, keep and seek for all the commandments of the Lord your God; that ye may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance for your children after you for ever."*

Further,

5. Let us charge our children and households to keep the right ways of the Lord, to do judgment and justice, and let us set them an example of it in our own holy, humble, thankful and obedient lives; that in so doing we may inherit the blessings, and avoid the threatnings recorded, *Isaiah i. 19, 20. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land. But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword (of divine justice) For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

In a word. Let this day and the sacrifices of it, come up for a memorial before God, of our holy joy in him, of our hearty love, and humble gratitude, and of our steady and fixed resolutions, by the help of his grace, to walk worthy of the Lord unto all well pleasing. And when we have eaten and are full, let us bless God for the good land which he hath given to us; and be careful that whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, that we may do all to the glory of God.

To God, only wise, bountiful, and gracious, be all honour and glory, for ever and ever, AMEN.





## A N A P P E N D I X.

**I**T is thought proper, not so much for the gratification of the curious, as for the quickning of the serious, and admonition of the unthoughtful, that the Covenant of Association, which the first settlers of this town entered into in their infant state; and upon the signing of which they admitted others to incorporate with them, should be published, by way of Appendix.

And also the solemn Covenant of God, which our Fathers entered into when they gave themselves up to the glorious Jesus, to be his people in Church Communion. Here follows,

I. The SOCIETY COVENANT in these terms, viz.

1. We whose names are hereunto subscribed, do in the fear and reverence of our Almighty God, mutually and severally promise amongst ourselves and each to other, to profess and practice one faith, according to that most perfect rule, the foundation whereof is everlasting love.

2. That we shall by all means labour to keep off from us, all such as are contrary minded; and receive only such unto us, as be such, as may be probably of one heart with us; as that we either know, or may well and truly be informed to walk in a peaceable conversation with all meekness of spirit, for the edification of each other in the knowledge and faith of the Lord Jesus; and the mutual encouragement unto all temporal comforts in all things; seeking the good of each other, out of all which may be derived true peace.

3. That if at any time difference shall arise between parties of our said town, that then such party and parties, shall presently refer all such difference unto some one, two, or three others of our said society, to be fully accorded and determined, without any further delay, if it possibly may be.

4. That every man that now, or any time hereafter, shall have lots in our said town, shall pay his share in all such rates of money and charges as shall be imposed upon him rateably in proportion with other men, as also become freely subject unto all such orders and constitutions, as shall be necessarily had or made, now or at any time hereafter from this day forward, as well for loving and comfortable society in our said town, as also for the prosperous and thriving condition of our said fellowship, especially respecting the fear of God, in which we desire to begin and continue, whatsoever we shall by his loving favour take in hand.

5. And for the better manifestation of our true resolution herein, every man so received, to subscribe hereunto his name, thereby obliging both himself, and his successors after him forever as we have done.

This Covenant is subscribed by 126.

This Association Compact, plainly shows, that the *truth* and *ways of God*, *mutual assistance* and *brotherly love* were things much regarded by the first settlers of this town; and sure I am, that they are worthy of the notice of their posterity. Now



Now follows

II. The CHURCH COVENANT, in these terms, viz.

"We whose names are subscribed, having found by woful experience, the unsteadfastness of our hearts with God, and proneness to go astray from his ways (for which we desire to abase and humble ourselves in his presence) and desiring to be joined forever to the Lord, and to cleave together in spiritual love and communion, according to his holy institutions, that we might enjoy in his name such holy helps as the Lord Jesus in wisdom and compassion hath ordained in his Gospel for his people, thereby to let out himself unto them, and to build them up in faith and holiness, till he have prepared them for everlasting communion with himself.

We do therefore, in the name and presence of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, and before his people here assembled, solemnly enter into covenant with the Lord our God, professing and acknowledging the Lord Jesus, our blessed Redeemer, to be the only priest, prophet, and king of his church, and (through the help of his grace) his only merit we rest upon for our pardon and peace with the Father, his only teaching and righteous government, with all the blessed ordinances of his kingdom; we do embrace and submit unto in all things, as the only rule of our lives; renouncing all our own righteousness, with all the doctrines, devices, and commandments of men, not agreeing with his holy word; especially all the superstitious and tyrannous commands of Antichrist, and his adherents, wherein we have in any kind been entangled; professing and promising (through the help of his rich and free grace) henceforth not to live unto ourselves, but unto the Lord Jesus, who hath bought us with his blood, avoiding carefully all such things as be offensive to his majesty, and dishonourable to our profession of his name, with all such dangerous temptations as our sinful hearts are wont to be drawn aside withal, in special, the inordinate cares of, and entanglements in, the affairs of this life: Promising and professing also, through the help of the Lord, to live together in this our holy fellowship, according to the rule of love, in all holy watchfulness over each other, and faithful mutual helpfulness in the ways of God, for the spiritual and temporal comfort and good of one another in the Lord; and all to the setting forth of the praise of his rich grace in Christ, who hath called us, in his abundant mercy, to this holy fellowship with his Majesty, and one with another."

Nov. 8. 1638.

N. B. In the time of the Rev. Mr. Adams, upon the 23d day of May 1683, the church solemnly renewed their covenant, and in the doing of it, they made some very necessary and weighty additions to the former.

The Renewal of Covenant is thus prefaced.

"We who through the exceeding riches of the grace and patience of God, do yet continue members of this church, being now assembled in the holy presence, and in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, after humble confession of our manifold breaches of covenant before  
the

the Lord our God, and earnest supplication for pardoning mercy, through the blood of Christ, and due acknowledgement of our great unworthiness to be owned as the Lord's covenant people, also acknowledging our inability to keep covenant with God, or to perform any spiritual duty, unless the Lord Jesus do enable us thereunto, by his Spirit dwelling in us. And being awfully sensible that it is a dreadful thing for sinful dust and ashes personally to transact with the infinitely glorious Majesty of heaven and earth : We do in humble confidence of his gracious assistance and acceptance thro' Christ, each one of us, for ourselves and jointly as a church of the living God, explicitly renew our covenant with God, and one with another, in manner and form following."

Then follows the Form of Covenānt beforewritten ; to which is added the following paragraphs, viz.

"And whereas there are many evils that are grown too common in this land ; so far as we or any of us have been guilty of any of them, we desire from our hearts to bewail it before the Lord, and humbly to entreat for pardoning mercy, for the sake of the blood of the everlasting covenant. And as an expedient unto reformation, of whatever evils have provoked the eyes of God's glory among us, we do subjoin unto our Church Covenant, a further engagement, whereby we do in the presence of God promise"—

"That we will (by the help of Christ) endeavour every one of us to reform his own heart and life, by seeking to mortify all our sins, and endeavouring to walk closely with God, to uphold the power of godliness, to keep holy the Lord's day, and reverently and carefully to attend upon the dispensation of the word and ordinances of Christ, and all parts of his worship (whether publick or private) according as in the worl of God it is required of us to do."

"We promise also (by the help of Christ) to walk before God in our houses with an upright heart, taking care that God be constantly called upon by prayer, and that the scriptures be frequently read in them, and that we will endeavour to perform all duties required of us towards our children, for their spiritual good, both by our example, instruction, and government, and prayers for them.

"We do further engage (the Lord helping of us) to endeavour that we may be pure from the sins of the times, such as neglect or profanation of the worship and institutions of Christ, Sabbath-breaking, vain and sinful company-keeping, mispending of time, excessive drinking, wanton and loose behaviour, failing in truth, uncharitable and unrighteous censuring, sinful tale-bearing, corrupt communication, pride, covetousness, and the like ; and in our places to endeavour the suppression of them. And that we will make conscience to walk so, as that we may not give occasion to others to sin, or to speak evil of our holy profession.

"Now that we may observe and keep this sacred covenant, and all the branches of it inviolable for ever, we desire to deny ourselves, and to depend wholly upon the eternal Spirit of Grace,  
and"



and upon the free mercy of God, and the merit of Jesus Christ, and when we shall fail, there to wait upon the Lord Jesus for pardon and for acceptance, and for healing, for his name sake."

It is added,

"This Form of Covenant being made openly in the congregation after sermon and prayers in the forenoon, the brethren of the church testified their consent thereto by lifting up the hands, and the sisters by arising up from their seats."

And now (my dearly beloved brethren) *Let us remember the vows of God that are upon us*: Let us often read over, and seriously reflect upon our covenant engagements: Let us humbly lament before God all that breach of covenant, which we are chargeable withal, and cry mightily for pardoning mercy through the blood of the everlasting covenant. And that the holy God would not avenge upon us the quarrel of his broken covenant. And, O that for the time to come we might have a more constant and steady regard to our covenant engagements, and walk worthy of the Lord unto all well pleasing. Unto which let this covenant (now in our hands, and O that it was written on our hearts) be a *constant and continual Monitor*,

Let not the Lord our God abhor us to destroy us, but remember the covenant of our ancestors.—Having entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of our fathers, with all our heart, and with all our soul; let us in the most solemn manner renew the bonds with which we have bound our souls, and like the men of Judah, rejoice at the oath: Having sworn with all our heart, let us seek God with our whole desire.

And let us be careful to bring our children under the wing of the covenant, and the bonds of the covenant, that we may plead covenant mercy for them, and have a covenant hope for our offspring.

And for our encouragement, let us remember, that *all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant, and his testimonies.*—*The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto childrens children: to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.*

*Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord; he is their help and their shield. The Lord hath been mindful of us, he will bless us, he will bless the house of Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron, he will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great.—The Lord shall increase you more and more, you and your children,——You are the blessed of the Lord that made heaven and earth; the Heaven, even the Heavens are the Lord's, but the earth hath he given to the children of men.*

*We will bless the Lord, from this time forth and for ever more.*

A M E N.

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S U P P L E M E N T



*Dedham, May 2, 1796.*

**T**O the foregoing *CENTURY SERMON*, the following *SUPPLEMENT* is added, at the desire of a number of persons. It contains an account of the settlement of the Rev. Mr. Dexter, in the ministry, and of some transactions and events, especially of such as took place, between his preaching said Sermon, and the ordination of the present Pastor.

THE late Rev. Samuel Dexter was ordained on the 6th May, 1724.

THE Pastors of the churches, in the ordaining council were the Rev. Messrs. Peter Thacher of Milton.

John Danforth of Dorchester.

Nehemiah Walter of Roxbury.

Ebenezer Thayer of Roxbury.

Joseph Baxter of Medfield.

John Cotton of Newton.

Joseph Emerson of Malden.

Jonathan Townsend of Needham.

THE ordination sermon was preached by the Rev. Mr. Baxter, of Medfield. Mr. Dexter was much respected, not only by the people of his charge, but by his fathers and brethren in the ministry, and by the neighbouring societies, to whom his occasional services were very acceptable.

A FEW of his people, indeed, in the former part of his ministry, appeared somewhat restless and uneasy, and complained of grievances. But it doth not appear to have been very clearly ascertained, what those grievances were. His mind was pacifick and benevolent, but easily, and very painfully, affected with oppositions and troubles. His troubles of this kind nearly terminated, when a church was gathered in that part of the town called *Clapboard-Trees*, as that society contained nearly all the male-contents. Peace and harmony generally prevailed, in the first church and society afterwards.

AFTER preaching the century sermon, Mr. Dexter continued in the pastoral office, performing the duties of it, much to the satisfaction of his people, by whom he was greatly beloved and esteemed, till the 29th of January, 1755, when, after a short sickness, he was removed by death, in the 55th year of his age, and the 31st of his ministry. The society expressed their regard to his memory, and to the family he left, by voluntarily defraying the expences of a decent and honourable funeral. His consort survived him, and is still living in the 94th year of her age, injoying a good measure of bodily health, and the clear and calm exercise of her mental powers. He left six children, four of whom are still living.

THERE were four Deacons in the church of which Mr. Dexter was pastor, when he preached the century sermon, viz. John Metcalf, and Joseph Wight, who were chosen to that office, October 30, 1727; and Ephraim Willson, and Richard Everett, chosen to office, November

November 7th 1735. Deacon Everett died, January 27th 1746; and Deacon Metcalf, October 6th 1749. The two other deacons continued to officiate till after Mr. Dexter's death. Nathaniel Kingsbury was chosen to the office of deacon, August 29th 1746, soon after the death of deacon Everett.

DURING the abovementioned period 112 persons were received into the church, who had not been members of any church before. Twelve persons were admitted upon a dismission and recommendation from other churches. Twenty-one persons were dismissed to other churches, besides a considerable number who transferred their relation to the two newly incorporated churches in the 2d and 3d precincts in Dedham. *Owning the covenant*, or recognizing the baptismal covenant, as it hath been called, was practised in a few, and but few, instances. Three hundred and ninety-three children were baptized, and five adult persons.

THE number of deaths, in said society, during the above term, as nearly as can be collected, from remaining records, was about 192; and the number of births about 435. The account of births and deaths labours under a degree of uncertainty, and is not mentioned as accurate.

ABOUT the years 1741 and 1742, a remarkable attention to religious concerns was excited, among the people of this society, as there was in many other parts of the land. Greater additions were made to the church than usual, 16 persons were admitted into it December 13th 1741, and 23 on the 17th day of the next month. The 4th day of March 1742, was set apart, by said church and society, as a day of solemn fasting and prayer, to seek the more plentiful effusions of the Holy Spirit, particularly on the rising generation. And, on that day, the church solemnly renewed their covenant, with God, and one with another, in a serious form of expressions, which is entered at large in the church's book of records.

IT had been the custom, probably from the first incorporation of the church, for all persons when admitted into it, to exhibit what was called, a relation of christian experiences. On the 7th day of March, 1742, the church voted not to insist on this as a term of communion, but to leave it to the choice of persons to do it or not.

AFTER the death of Mr. Dexter, the bereaved flock employed several young gentlemen, as candidates. In the month of June following, the present pastor was invited to preach with them. In September following, he received an invitation to settle with them, in the work of the ministry. In the beginning of January following he declared his acceptance of their call; and on the 5th day of the next month, viz. February 1756, he was ordained to the pastoral office. The period between the death of his predecessor and his ordination was just one year, and one week.

NINE churches were invited, by their pastors and delegates, to assist in the solemnity of said ordination. They all attended, viz. The first church in Cambridge, the church in Needham, the first in Medway,



Medway, the first in Stoughton, the second in Roxbury, the church in Sherburn, the second and third in Dedham, and the church in Framingham. All the pastors of these churches, who attended on the occasion just mentioned, have, some time ago, finished their labours and their lives, and are gone, we hope, to receive a gracious reward. Our Fathers where are they? And the Prophets, do they live for ever? They are not suffered to continue by reason of death. We should be thankful that the great Lord of the harvest lives, tenderly to care for the welfare of his churches, by raising up and sending a succession of labourers into them.

As Mr. Dexter, in his Century Sermon, mentioned the churches and societies which originated from that, of which he was pastor, it may not be amiss, to relate a few events respecting them, which took place subsequent to the publication of that sermon, and previous to the death of the author.

THE Rev. Joseph Baxter was then minister in Medfield. He died May 2d, 1745, in the 70th year of his age, and 49th of his ministry. The Rev. Jonathan Townsend was ordained his successor, October 23d, 1745. The Rev. Henry Messinger pastor of the first church in Wrentham, departed this life March 30th, 1750, in the 55th year of his age and 32d of his ministry. The Rev. Joseph Bean succeeded him in office, and was ordained, in December 1750. The Rev. Elias Haven, pastor of the second church in Wrentham, died August 10th 1754, in the 41st year of his age, and 16th of his ministry. The Rev. Jonathan Townsend of Needham, survived Mr. Dexter; as did also the Rev. Messrs Phillips Payson, of Walpole, and Thomas Balch, minister of the second society in Dedham. The Rev. Josiah Dwight, pastor of the third society in Dedham, was dismissed from office about the year 1741. And the Rev. Andrew Tyler was ordained his successor, in December 1743, who continued in office, till after the death of Mr. Dexter.

A FOURTH precinct was incorporated, in the westerly part of the town of Dedham, November 18th 1748; and commonly known by the name of *Springfield*.

THE Rev. Jonathan Mills, minister in Bellingham, was dismissed from office, A.D. 1737. There hath been no congregational minister since, in that town. The church of that denomination is extinct. There hath, for many years past been a baptist church there. The Rev. Elnathan Wight was it's first pastor. After his death the Rev. Noah Alden was set apart to the work of the ministry as his successor, who is still living, and in office, in that place.

N. B. Few transactions and events, in this *Supplement*, are brought lower than the time of the ordination of the present minister of the first church and society in Dedham. In his sermon, preached February 7th 1796, transactions and events, of a similar nature, are recorded, and brought down to the time, in which said sermon was preached.

