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Historical Discourse

DELIVERED BY

REV. E. S. HOLLOWAY,

PASTOR OF

GREENEVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH,

Conn.

AT THE

Dedication of their Chapel,

Wednesday, Dec. 30th, 1885.

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“THEN SAMUEL TOOK A STONE AND SET IT BETWEEN MIZPEH AND SHEN AND CALLED THE NAME OF IT EBENEZER, SAYING, HITHERTO HATH THE LORD HELPED US.” I Samuel VII, 12th.

When the seas have been lashed into a fury, when the storms have beat thereon and the clouds of darkness for many days have encircled the ship, at the first appearance of fair weather the tempest tossed mariner scans the heavens in search of the North Star; and guided by its brilliant light he changes the course of his vessel and safely arrives in the desired haven.

So is it ever with man, when the storms of life come o'er him and earth's dark clouds gather around him whatsoever he may think of Christ or the leading power of the Holy Spirit in those hours of woe invariably he looks for guidance either to the infinite Father above or to his ideal of a man here below and directed by his influence passes through the mists on into the sunshine.

It had been a bitter experience for Israel since the ark of the Lord had been taken away and sad were the hearts as they lifted their voice and cried: “The glory is departed from Israel;” but too well did they know that their own

sins had brought this calamity upon them and in their distress they turned to him whom they knew trod in paths of righteousness and said to Samuel, "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us" and thus brought humble and lowly before God their petitions were acceptable to him, and the ark, representing to them the presence of Jehovah, was returned and their enemies put to flight.

Hardly had the din and uproar caused by the fleeing Philistines subsided when Samuel knowing whence came their help was returning thanks to God for the victory, although elated and joyful because of the great triumph, he who could ask God for help does not forget to return Him the glory. And there before the doubting hearts of Israel he erects their Ebenezer, where it may ever be seen by their children's children speaking in silence more eloquent than language, of another victory granted to this much blessed people.

We meet to-day as a church to look over the history of forty years. Years of darkness and light; of clouds and sunshine; of hopes and fears. We have scanned the heavens and found at last the bright star of hope and are walking in its brilliancy. We have cried to the great Jehovah to deliver us and he has heard our cry; we know from whence cometh our help, and to-day after a year of great prosperity, temporal as well as spiritual, we come to dedicate this chapel to the service of the living God and we can truly call the name of it Ebenezer, for "hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

From its earliest days the history of this church has been a history of struggles, now burdened with a debt and now suffering from grievous wolves with the doors ready to

close upon its feeble members, it seems like Israel returning from captivity as we come by the grace of God in answer to the prayers of many which have come up before Him for forty years who loved Zion and whose hearts bled for her when in so deep sorrow; and if those who have loved her in adversity and have gone home in the triumphs of faith can look down upon us to-day they will sing still more sweetly "Worthy the Lamb."

Sometime in December 1844, A. A. Robinson, then a Licentiate from the church in Lebanon, came among the people of the Baptist faith in this community, many of whom were members of the Central Baptist church, Norwich, who after prayerful consideration in April 1845, presented to their church the following:

TO THE CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH NORWICH.

Dear Brethren:—Believing that the time has fully come in the providence of God when there should be constituted a new Baptist church in this place of "like faith and order" as yourselves and being desirous of entering into the contemplated organization, we the undersigned members of your body do respectfully ask to be dismissed with a view of forming said union.

In making this request permit us to say that we think we are not led to the move by any spirit of faction or disquietude, for we love the church with which our lot has hitherto been cast and sacred to our memories will be many a scene through which we have passed in connection with those with whom we have so long endeavored to worship the "God of our fathers."

But we remember that a part of our solemn covenant vows are that we are to do what we can for the upbuilding of

the Redeemer's Kingdom on earth, and after careful and we trust prayerful consideration of the whole subject we are led to the conclusion that the greatest good will be done to the greatest number by forming the colony of Baptists in this village into a regular Baptist church that there may be sustained more efficiently the worship and ordinances of God's house.

In reply to this the following communication was received.

The following individuals residing in Greeneville having presented a petition to the Central Baptist church in this city of which they are members in good and regular standing, asking to be dismissed from said church for the purpose of forming themselves into a church of the same faith and order in said village;

The church unanimously voted to grant the above request, fellowshiping them in the same and thus hoping that the Redeemer's Kingdom may be extended and when officially notified of such formation we shall consider them regularly dismissed from us.

By order and in behalf of the church,

EDWARD RAY, *Church Clerk.*

(The sixty-four names we omit.)

And so with the unqualified approval of the mother church and the grateful smile of God on the 14th of May 1845 with REV. D. B. CHENEY as pastor this church was constituted with ninety-eight members.

With some slight alterations the little band adopted the articles of Faith adopted by the New Hampshire State

Convention. They denounced Human Slavery and Intemperance, the former serpent which they have seen crushed by the seed of the woman; against the latter we are ever arrayed.

The following covenant they also adopted:

Having been as we trust brought by Divine grace to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ and to give ourselves wholly to Him we do now solemnly and joyfully covenant with each other to walk together in His glory and we do therefore engage in His strength:

That we will exercise a mutual watch care over each other as members, one of another, that we may promote the growth of the whole body in Christian knowledge, holiness and comfort, to the end that we may stand perfect in all the will of God:

That to secure this object we will uphold the public worship of God, the ordinances of His house, and hold constant communion with each other therein; that we will cheerfully contribute to our property for the support of the poor, and the maintenance of a faithfully evangelical ministry among us:

That according to our ability and opportunities we will as the faithful servants of the Lord do good to all men; especially in helping to extend the gospel in its purity and power over the whole human family:

That we will not omit closet and family religion nor neglect the great duty of training our children and those under our care with a view to the service of Christ and enjoyment of heaven:

That we will walk circumspectly in the world, and thereby seek to win souls to our Master, remembering that God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power, of love and of a sound mind, that we may be the light of the world and the salt of the earth:

That as occasion may require we will exhort and admonish one another according to the direction of Christ in Matt. XVIII and in a spirit of meekness, considering ourselves lest we also be tempted and that as we have been buried with Christ by Baptism and raised again, so there is on us a special obligation henceforth to walk in newness of life.

And may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ the Great Shepherd of the Sheep through the blood of the everlasting covenant make us perfect in every good work to do His will, working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.—Amen and Amen.

And now fully equipped for the work with an under shepherd who *loved* to preach the “Glorious Gospel of the Son of God,” and with a flock ready to work with him, there were added to the church during his short pastorate a greater number than at any time in its history, but notwithstanding the great success that attended his efforts in March, 1847, BRO. CHENEY sought other fields of labor and in the April following REV. LAWSON MUZZY became the pastor. No marked religious interest was prevalent and the temporal interests of the church was in so discouraging a condition that in September, 1851, at the close of his pastorate it was feared that the church would be closed, but in October, REV. WM. DENNISON was sent to the little

struggling band by the State Convention, and with an unswerving faith in God went among the Baptists of our State and was successful to such an extent that the hopes of the church were revived and in April, 1852, BUTLER MORLEY began laboring among them, but not till the following December had they a regular pastor when NILES WHITING came to "feed the flock of God," and with their church nearly freed from debt by the indefatigable efforts of BRO. DENNISON, their hearts looked for great spiritual blessings; but in the midst of their hopes their sky was overshadowed by a dark cloud which turned some hearts almost to despair. On the church records may be found a statement which explains thus the cause of their sorrow:

"Feb. 27, 1854. At one o'clock this morning our house of worship was entirely destroyed by fire." And there in the cold hours of a winter's night those children of God who had labored and prayed for Zion, saw the red flames leaping upon the walls of the object of their love and in a few short hours reduced to ashes, and before the charred remnants of your church had ceased smoking, then sat down amidst the scene of desolation one Mother in Israel weeping as she would over a fallen son, cries of anguish were heard, sobs and tears because their church was no more. They needed not to sing for their lives sang

"For her my tears shall fall
For her my prayers ascend."

Well might any ordinary man have shrunk from the great task which met him, but NILES WHITING never, and going forth, not in his own strength, he gained the great object which he had in view and almost like the fabled Phenix

our own little church sprung from the ashes of the one for which they mourned.

But amidst their rejoicings their hearts were again made sad by the dispensation of our all wise Providence and before the house was ready for dedication, he, whom these people loved and to whom great credit is due for the building in which we worship, passed Oct. 3, 1854, from the church militant to the church triumphant, and this church stands to-day as a monument to the perseverance and christian courage of NILES WHITING.

In December, REV. D. D. LYON came to the sorrowing band and during his ministry, a blessed season was enjoyed in the salvation of many precious souls and it was the privilege of this earnest servant of God to bury in baptism those who believed in His name.

In April, REV. O. W. GATES came to the pastorate and carried on the work which had been prosecuted by so many faithful men of God and nobly did he labor in the same cause and his efforts were greatly blessed in the conversion to God of more than a score of souls.

He evidently believed in a living church inasmuch as twenty-four were excluded during his pastorate.

In October 1860, REV. JAS. M. PHILLIPS came to the field made vacant by the removal of BRO. GATES to another pastorate.

During BRO. PHILLIPS' pastorate, our county was passing through the stormy scenes of the civil war and the little flock were called to mourn for some of her loved

children who were sacrificed on our country's altar but they recently bowed their heads in obedience to the divine decree and would freely give still other sons to blot out that curse which at their organization they had pronounced their opposition.

Having a part in its battles we have also a part to-day in its glorious, honorable peace and God given prosperity.

In April 1866, Rev. WM. ASHLEY became pastor but returned to his former charge after a year's labor. No especial spiritual manifestation is recorded as having taken place during the labors of these two brethren and in August 1866 REV. LYMAN B. TEFFT became pastor, and the power of God was manifested in the conversion of many, the result of the faithful labors of former pastors and the untiring zeal of Brother Tefft. He, however, was soon led by sickness to leave the church to which he had endeared himself.

In June 1869, REV. ALFRED FREE assumed the pastorate, again the church rejoiced in prosperity and the conversion of souls.

These conversions were especially encouraging inasmuch as they were among the young men and women upon whom the burdens of the church must fall.

In April 1872, REV. J. N. SYKES came to the pastorate and remained for a period of three years.

In September 1875, REV. W. E. BATES greatly cheered the hearts of the people by his presentation of the truth as it is in Jesus, but he too was soon led to labor in other fields.

In April 1878, REV. M. M. MILLS assumed the pastorate and remained for one year.

REV. M. PROCTOR FAVOR also remained one year when in December 1880, REV. A. J. WILCOX become pastor, the church was greatly encouraged and upbuilt by his able and scholarly presentation of the word.

During the pastorate of BRO. WILCOX, the church did more for missions, foreign and domestic than at any time during its history.

REV. W. D. HEDDEN, D. D. supplied the church for six months, and in April 1883, REV. JAS. B. CONNELL became pastoral supply and during the year of his labors more than a score were added to the church but in April 1884 at their earnest request BRO. CONNELL began laboring with the church in Moodus of which he has since been the beloved pastor.

In May 1884, the present pastor began his labors and is greatly encouraged by the earnest support of a united church.

For many years the church has felt the need of an additional room in connection with their house of worship and efforts have been made in this direction but hitherto the way has not been opened.

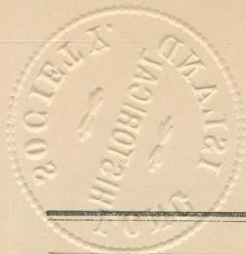
In the Spring of 1885, steps again were taken in this direction, after prayerful consideration it was decided to make a desperate effort to accomplish it; the people of the church were poorly able to embark in any such enterprise; but were willing to do what they could. God raised up friends for us about the state and elsewhere and nearly the

whole amount expended has been provided for and now fully equipped for the work we go forth in His strength to victory.

And we would not forget in this day of great blessings those who have labored and prayed for Zion in the years that are past and while we rejoice in present blessings and bright prospects for the future, we give all glory to Him who hath blessed us bountifully, and raise this our Ebenezer for "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

Owing to imperfections in the record it has been almost impossible that no mistakes occur in this statistical table.





CHURCH ORGANIZED, May 14, 1845.

PASTORS.	Duration of Pastorate.	Additions by				Removals by			
		Baptism.	Letter.	Experience.	Restoration.	Letter.	Exclusion.	Erasure.	Death.
D. B. Cheney,	May 14, 1845 to March, 1847.	33	22	7		10	6		1
Lawson Muzzy,	April 1, 1847 to Sep. 1, 1851.	8	30	2		36	12		3
State Missionary, Wm. Dennison, Supply,	Oct. 1851 to April, 1852.								
Butler Morley, Supply,	April 1852, to Sept. 1852.								
Niles Whiting,	Dec. 1852, to Oct. 1854.	3	9		1	13	6	4	5
D. D. Lyon,	Dec. 1854, to April 1857.	14	23			13	2		2
O. W. Gates,	April 1857, to July 1860.	25	11	1	1	14	24	2	3
James M. Phillips,	October 1860, to Jan. 1865.	1	2	1		10	1		6
William Ashley,	April 1865, to April 1866.		3			5	4	1	1
Lyman B Tefft,	August 1866, to May 1869	16	10		2	5	2		5
Alfred Free,	June 1869, to Oct. 1871.	12	6	2		2	2		
J. N. Sykes,	April 1872, to April 1875.		2		2				2
W. E. Bates,	Sept. 1875, to April 1878.		2			5		2	4
M. M. Mills,	April 1878, to April 1879.		2		2	9			1
M. Procter Favor,	May 1879, to May 1880.	1	3		2	2			
A. J. Wilcox,	Dec. 1, 1880, to June 1882.	1	2			1			3
W. D. Hedden, D D.,	July 1882, to January 1883.								
James B. Connell, Supply,	April 1883, to April 1884.	12	8	2					
E. S. Holloway,	May 1884,	24	7	2	1	8	1	2	3

