

X

31

AN

HISTORICAL DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN

Christ Church, Stratford, Conn.

ON THE

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT,

MARCH 28th, 1855.

BY THE

REV. JOHN A. PADDOCK, M. A.,

RECTOR.

LONG ISLAND  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY.

“Remember the days of old.”—Deut. xxxii. 7.

NEW YORK:  
G. P. PUTNAM & CO., 10 PARK PLACE.

1855.

✓  
H

# HISTORICAL DISCOURSE

OF THE

CHURCH OF GOD

IN THE

UNITED STATES

AND

THE

WEST INDIES

BY

REV. JOHN A. TOWNSEND, M. A.

NEW YORK

1847

Published by J. B. TOWNSEND, 101 NASSAU ST.

NEW YORK

J. B. TOWNSEND & CO. 101 NASSAU ST.

TO  
HIS BELOVED PARISHIONERS,  
WITH THE PRAYER  
THAT THEY MAY EVER PROVE WORTHY  
OF  
THEIR SPIRITUAL ANCESTRY,  
*This Discourse*  
IS DEDICATED  
BY  
THEIR FRIEND AND PASTOR.





## HISTORICAL DISCOURSE.

---

1 KINGS, viii. 57.

“The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers.”

IN History we see God's dealings with the World, with the Church, and with Individuals. Much of both the Old and New Testament is taken up with historical records, from the study of which the inspired authors designed that we should derive profitable lessons. After a like manner, from the view of God's care over any portion of His Church in any age, we may be instructed, comforted, edified. For the members of a Christian Congregation, the history of their own Parish may be supposed to possess peculiar interest.

This was the first Episcopal Church organized in Connecticut. For a long time it was prominent among the parishes in the State. Hence, many of our brethren in the faith feel with us a deep interest in all that pertains to its past history. To that history, from the beginning to the present time, I would now ask attention.\*

---

\* In preparing this discourse, the author has received great aid, to the time of the Revolution, from the letters sent by the clergy and officers of the Church here, and its friends elsewhere, to the Bishop of London, and the Venerable Society: for the opportunity to peruse these valuable materials of our early history, he acknowledges himself indebted to the courtesy of the Rev. Dr. Hawks, Historiographer of the American Church.

The Parish Records are also pretty full, and have afforded much assistance.

About the year 1690\* there were, in this town, "a considerable number of professors of the faith of the Church of England, desirous to worship God in the way of their forefathers." The number of families thus attached to the Episcopal Church a few years later, is stated to have been fifteen. Some of these had removed from the mother country, and others, through their influence, had conformed to their views. There was, however, no clergyman in the State,† and no one was found to feed these few sheep in the wilderness. In the year 1702, an application was made to the Bishop of London for a missionary, but without success. In September, 1705, the town being destitute of any minister, those attached to the Episcopal Church applied to the Rev. Wm. Vesey, of Trinity Church, New York, requesting him to visit them, "to preach, and administer the ordinance of baptism." Mr. Vesey did not feel able to comply with the request, "by reason of the distance," but desired Rev. Geo. Muirson, of Rye, to respond to the call. Mr. Muirson accordingly came on the 2d of September, 1706,—one year from the time that application was made to Mr. Vesey,—accompanied in his journey by the Hon. Col. Heathcote, who "went fully armed." A place was found for worship, and Mr. Muirson, though threatened "with prison and hard usage," "preached to a very numerous congregation, and baptized about twenty-four persons, mostly grown people." Within the next few months

---

\* The Town was settled in 1639.

† There were at this time in the State about thirty-three towns, and a population of 30,000 ministered to by Congregationalists.



he made two or three visits, and on one occasion was accompanied by the Rev. Evan Evans, of Philadelphia. Towards the close of the next year, the Rev. John Talbot, of Burlington, N. J., preached here to "a numerous auditory." About the first of April, 1707, the Parish was organized by the election of Wardens and Vestry.

These movements were not without strong opposition on the part of the Congregationalists, whose form was then the established religion of the Colony. We now read with astonishment of the prejudice which prevailed, and the hostility manifested. At Mr. Muirson's second visit, "a member of the Council," on the Lord's Day, "stood in the highway himself, and empowered several others, to forbid any person to go to the Assembly of the Church of England, and threatened them with a fine of five pounds." The parishioners subsequently complained that many had been "seized and imprisoned in the county gaol" for not paying the sums demanded for the support of the Congregational minister, and "for refusing to pay money to buy a house and farm for their minister."

But, notwithstanding such opposition, the prospect of success seemed good. Mr. Reade, the Congregational minister, early manifested a friendship for the Church, soon conformed to it, and expressed his desire to receive Holy Orders.\* Others of their ministers privately informed Mr. Muirson, that, if a Bishop was in the country, they would enter our Church. A petition from the parish for a clergyman, addressed to

---

\* The expense and peril of crossing the Atlantic were probably the reasons why he was never ordained.

the Bishop of London on the 1st of April, 1707, bears the signatures of nineteen men, acting "in behalf of the rest."\* From a communication to the Society in England for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, dated January 1, 1708, we learn that the resolution had been taken to build a Church, and the hope was expressed that they would "have it fit to preach in before next winter." Application was made to the Society, by the parish and its friends in other places, that Mr. Muirson should be appointed missionary to them. The request was granted. But before the intelligence reached this country, Mr. Muirson had been called from his labors to his reward, having departed this life at Rye, in October, 1708.†

This was a heavy affliction to the infant parish. Mr. Muirson had first officiated for them according to the rites of their loved Church, first administered the ordinances of religion to them and their children in this strange land. He was characterized, as possessed of "a wonderful deal of prudence and discretion,"‡ "having a very happy way of preaching, and, consid-

\* Their names were:—Richard Blacklatch, Isaac Knell, Daniel Shelton, Wm. Rawlinson, Jonat. Pitman, John Peat, Saml. Gaskill, Samuel Hawley, Will. Smith, John Skitmore, Timothy Titharton, Archibald Dunlop, Thomas Edwards, Isaac Brint, Daniel Bennett, Richard Blacklatch, Jr., Tho. Brooks, Isaac Stiles, Saml. Henery.

† George Muirson was a Scotchman, born about 1675. In 1703, he was sent by the Venerable Society as schoolmaster to Albany. In the Fall of 1704, he went to England, and received Orders from the Bishop of London. Returning to this country in July of the next year, he immediately took charge of the parish at Rye. *Bolton's Church in Westchester*, p. 148, &c.

‡ Letter of Col. Heathcote, Feb. 24, 1707.



ering his years, wonderfully good at argument, and his conversation without blemish," held by the people "in great esteem for his piety and virtue,"\* and peculiarly fitted for the responsible position of a pioneer in the missionary work.†

During the next five years, the Rev. John Talbot, of Burlington, N. J., the Rev. Chris. Bridge, of Rye, N. Y., and the Rev. Mr. Sharpe visited the parish from time to time, and encouraged them in their feeble state. Mr. Sharpe, in January, 1710, was accompanied by Col. Heathcote, and spent "near a month," baptizing many, "amongst whom was an aged man, said to be the first man-child born in the colony of Connecticut."‡

Such attention had the Church excited at this time, that it was thought proper by the Congregationalists, "that one of the best preachers both colonies afforded should be sought out and sent here,"§ and the Rev. Timothy Cutler, "who lived then at Boston or Cambridge," was selected, and entered upon his charge in the year 1709.

Gov. Hunter of N. Y., two years after this, speaks of receiving a visit, when he was in Connecticut, from the Episcopalians of Stratford, who, he says, "appeared very much in earnest, and the best set of men I met with in that country."

\* Rev. E. Evans, June 18, 1708. † Col. Heathcote, April 14, 1707.

‡ Letter from Wardens and Vestry to Venerable Society, 1712.—The names of the Wardens and Vestry first appear this year. Wardens—Timothy Titharton, Wm. Smith. Vestry—William Rawlinson, Wm. Jeanes, John Johnson, Richd. Blacklatch, Daniel Shelton, Archibald Dunlop, Jas. Humphreys, James Clarke, Edward Burrough.

§ Col. Heathcote.

But no pastor was found to watch over and guide the flock. And while they were thus as sheep without a shepherd, the persecution against them did not at all diminish. They sent a petition to the General Assembly, sitting at Hartford in May, 1710, praying for relief, but without any success. A combination having been entered into, not to employ tradesmen or others belonging to the Church, some were obliged to leave the place. But, in an address to the Queen sent in 1712, the Vestry, after speaking of their other trials, show their earnest desire for a clergyman, by adding, "the want of a minister is the greatest of our afflictions."

In all their troubles, they found in that true-hearted layman, Col. Heathcote, a trusty counsellor. In the address just referred to, they speak of him as one "who hath ever been a true friend both to us and the Church, and always encouraged us not to swerve from our holy profession, notwithstanding the difficulties and trials we met with, and the bad success we had in our frequent addresses for a minister."\*

At last their petitions for a clergyman seemed answered. Rev. Francis Philips, having been sent out by the Society in England, arrived in Stratford on the 19th of Dec., 1712, and took charge of the Church. The members felt encouraged. Several persons, "the masters of considerable families," were about leaving the

---

\* Col. Caleb Heathcote came to this country in 1690, and bought large tracts of land in Westchester County, N. Y. He was a member of the first Vestry of Trinity Church, N. Y., and a leading man in the Province, at different times Mayor of New York, Commander of the forces of the Province, Surveyor-General of the Customs for all North America. He died in 1721, and was buried in Trinity Church Yard.



Congregationalists to unite with the parish. But all their bright anticipations were thwarted by Mr. Philips's unfitness for the position,—“Being,” wrote Col. Heathcote, “of a temper very contrary to be pleased with such conversation and way of living as Stratford affords.” He was not satisfied with the people, nor they with him, and he left abruptly on the 19th of Aug., 1713, having been, during his nominal connection with the parish, absent in New York about seven weeks.

The parishioners were now extremely discouraged. During the next year, the Rev. Mr. Bridge, of Rye, wrote to the Society: “The interest of the Church in Stratford seems to be declining; there are there an honest and sober people, truly zealous for the Church; but they live among neighbors who despise and misuse them, \*\*\* and have met with so many discouragements and disappointments that they are almost wearied out; they are frequently calling on me to assist them, and I go as often as my health and the affairs of my own parish will allow me.” The zeal of the people is shown in the fact, that, this same year, they had “the timber felled for a church, and hoped to get it raised in three months’ time.”

Some time after, the Rev. Æneas Mackenzie was conditionally appointed to the parish, but deemed it best to settle on Staten Island.

In Sept., 1718, we find the Vestry again writing to the Society, bemoaning their sad condition. They close their letter with words which may briefly express the condition of the Church at the conclusion of this period in its history; “as to our outward estate, it may very well be said that we are inconsiderable; but as to our number, we have had at least a hundred baptized into

the Church, and have had thirty-six at one time partakers of the Holy Communion of the Lord's Supper, and have several times assembled in our Congregation between two hundred and three hundred persons."

Four more years had they to wait, and a brighter period dawned upon the struggling parish. The minister of God, for whom, we may believe, they had prayed, during the long night of discouragement and persecution, came among them.

On Trinity Sunday, A. D. 1722, Rev. Geo. Pigot, having been sent by the Society in England as Missionary to Providence, but with the request that he should remain at Stratford for a time, gathered the members of the Church for service. The Wardens,\* in a communication to the Society, expressive of their "most grateful acknowledgments" for this their care for them, also "render hearty thanks for those necessary books" which Mr. Pigot brought for the use of the parish. For Bibles, Prayer Books, and other volumes for religious reading, they were long indebted to friends in England.

Mr. Pigot found much prejudice to be encountered, the charges of "popery, apostasy, and atheism," being brought against the Church, but he was encouraged by the inquiries made as to its principles by several leading Congregational ministers. As the result of their examinations, four, including the Rev. Mr. Cutler, who, after ten years' ministry among the Congregationalists in Stratford, had, in 1719, removed to New Haven to assume the Rectorship of Yale College, and the Rev.

---

\* John Johnson and William Jeanes.



Samuel Johnson,\* then a Congregational pastor in West Haven, relinquished their stations, conformed to the Episcopal Church, and went to England for Holy Orders.†

On Mr. Johnson's return, he relieved Mr. Pigot of

\* Samuel Johnson was born at Guilford, Ct., Oct. 14, 1696. At the age of fourteen, he was sent to the College of Connecticut, established at Saybrook, where he graduated in 1714. In 1716, he was appointed tutor in the college, which had been removed to New Haven, and continued in this office four years. He was then set apart to the Congregational ministry, and settled at West Haven, where he remained till he felt constrained to enter the Episcopal Church. The workings of his mind, and his ardent desire to be guided aright in making this change, are seen in the following extracts from his private journal (which, I believe, have never before been published), for permission to use which, I am indebted to Mrs. Susan Johnson.

"June 3, 1722.—I hoped when I was ordained, that I had sufficiently satisfied myself of the validity of Presbyterian ordination under my circumstances. But, alas! I have ever since had growing suspicions that it is not right, and that I am an usurper in the House of God, which sometimes, I must confess, fills my mind with a great deal of perplexity, and I know not what to do; my case is very unhappy. Oh that I could either gain satisfaction, that I may lawfully proceed in the execution of the ministerial function, or that Providence would make my way plain for the obtaining of Episcopal orders. What course I shall take I know not. Do thou, O my God, direct my steps, lead and guide me and my friends in the way everlasting.

"Sept. 17, immediately after the Commencement, 1722.—Being at length brought to such scruples concerning the validity of my ordination, that I could not proceed in administration without intolerable uneasiness of mind, I have now at length (after much study and prayer to God for direction), together with my friends (Mr. T. Cutler, Mr. J. Hart, Mr. S. Whittlesey, Mr. Jas. Eliot, Mr. James Wetmore, Mr. Dan. Brown), after some private conferences with ministers, this Commencement made a public declaration of my scruples and uneasiness, and am advised to sus-

† Three of the number, including Messrs. Cutler and Johnson, were ordained to the Diaconate and Priesthood, in St. Martin's Church, by Dr. Green, Bishop of Norwich, and Vicar of the parish, who officiated for the Bishop of London, then at the point of death.



the care of the church in Stratford, enabling him to proceed at once to Providence, whither he had been from the first desirous of removing. During the eighteen months of his ministry here, he seems to have labored faithfully, officiating occasionally in Fairfield, Newtown, and other places. At his departure he reported seventy-nine communicants, widely scattered, and six adults and fifty-seven infants, as having received baptism.\*

Soon after he left, he received from "Mr. Richard Sackett, settled at Dover, an up town in the province of New York," a grant of 400 acres of land in this

pend administration for the present. It is with great sorrow of heart that I am forced thus by the uneasiness of my conscience to be an occasion of so much uneasiness to my dear friends, my poor people, and indeed to the whole colony. O God, I beseech Thee, grant that I may not, by an adherence to Thy necessary truths and laws (as I profess in my conscience they seem to me), be a stumbling-block or occasion of fall to any soul. Let not our thus appearing for Thy Church be any way accessory, though accidentally, to the hurt of religion in general, or any person in particular. Have mercy, Lord, have mercy on the souls of men, and pity and enlighten those who are grieved at this accident. Lead into the way of truth all those who have erred and are deceived, and if we in this affair are misled, I beseech Thee show us our error before it be too late, that we may repair the damage. Grant us Thy illumination, for Christ's sake. Amen.

"Oct. 6, 1722.—In the fear of God setting myself now upon the serious consideration of the great and urgent affair now under my hand, and a deliberate examination wherein my duty lies, I now set down the motives which lie before me on both sides of the question, Whether I shall now go over to England, and offer myself to the service of the Church?

"That which I propound to govern myself in general in this affair, is

\* From Providence Mr. Pigot removed in 1727 to Marblehead, Mass., and became rector of St. Michael's Church in that place. In 1738 he asked leave of the Society to visit England. His request was granted. On the 16th of June, 1740, he was collated to the rectory of Chaldon in Surrey, where he continued till his death on the 9th of Feb., 1760.—*Uppdike's Narragansett*, p. 204, and *Letter from the Curate of Chaldon* in 1850.

village, "for a perpetual glebe," and "200 acres additional, to finish the Church." Mr. Sackett's title was questioned, though deemed good by Mr. Pigot and others, his land having been purchased of the Indian Sachems before a charter was given to the colony. The Church does not seem ever to have come in possession of this gift, as, a few years after, we find it stated, "there is no house nor glebe."

Mr. Johnson arrived in Stratford about the first of November, 1723. The Venerable Society granted him, as his predecessor, an allowance of £60 per annum.\* In his first letter to the Bishop of London, he

the awful account which I expect to give of all that I do in this world before the dread tribunal of God, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, and every one shall receive according to his work.

"Though I have been a grievous sinner, and deserve to be left of God, yet, as those instances wherein I have offended bear no relation to any of these controversies, and therefore cannot be supposed to have any influence by way of temptation to the present undertaking, but, (if any thing,) the contrary; so I do renounce and abhor them, judge and condemn myself for them, and humbly purpose to continue forever in watchfulness against and war with them, and to make business of mortification, by God's grace, imploring His pardon and mercy in Jesus Christ; and therefore I hope in God He does not and will not abandon me to err in any thing of great consequence.

"God's glory, the good of His Church in general, and the safety of precious souls in particular, are the ends I would always, and particularly in the present case, have in my eye.

"Upon the most deliberate consideration, I cannot find that either the frowns or applauses, the pleasures or profits of the world, have any prevailing influence in the affair.

"Now, therefore, to consider particularly what lies *against* in the first place, and here are several particulars:

"1. Some few seeming texts of Scripture, and a possibility of interpreting all on the side of and in favor to presbytery.

\* The allowance was subsequently reduced to £50, and thus continued till the Society's connection with the Parish was dissolved by the events of the revolutionary war.



alludes to the "inveterate enmity" to the Episcopal Church, in the colony, but expresses the belief, that, in Stratford and a few other towns, the eyes of many were "opened to see the great error of such an uncharitable and therefore unchristian spirit" as had been manifested.

On Christmas Day, the church, which had been begun under the preceding rector, was opened for divine service. It stood in the present Church Burying Ground, was "forty-five and a half feet long, thirty and a half wide, and twenty-two between joints," and is spoken of by Mr. Johnson, as a "very pleasant and comfortable building." For aid in its erection, the

"2. Breaking the peace of the country in general and of my own people in particular, which are great things.

"3. Danger of the stumbling of weak brethren, and the damage of precious and immortal souls, and grieving good men.

"Now these considerations are indeed of great weight, and it is not a little thing should be sufficient to balance them.

"On the other hand I consider,

"1. Sundry texts of Scripture there are which seem to me plainly to intimate, that Episcopacy is of Apostolical appointment, which, together with the unanimous witness of the Church immediately after the Apostles' times, and downward in the purest ages of Christianity, seem as much at least (if not more) to oblige my conscience to submit to Episcopacy as a divine appointment, as to observe the first day of the week, and therefore do as much oblige me to declare in favor of Episcopacy in this country, as for the Lord's day, supposing I were in a seventh day country.

"2. If this be therefore a Divine or at least Apostolical institution, (as I am fully persuaded it is,) fear of breaking peace should not shut up my mouth in a matter of so much consequence."

This is farther enforced under seven sub-divisions, and he concludes: "These considerations all laid together, it seems to be my duty to venture myself in the arms of Almighty Providence, and cross the ocean for the sake of that excellent Church the Church of England, and God preserve me, and if I err, God forgive me."



parish were indebted to friends in New York, and elsewhere.\*

The missionary was soon forced to complain, and continually for many years, of the persecution and imprisonment of members of his flock,† for their neglect to pay taxes for Congregationalism. It was claimed by churchmen that the charter forbade the colonists doing any thing contrary to the laws of England, and that it gave no authority to establish here a Form of Religion in opposition to the Church of England, and persecute those disliking that Form. Their claim, however, was not heeded. By one of the laws, any stranger coming into the place could be immediately warned by the Authority to leave; this law was employed to prevent churchmen from settling here. In one of his letters, Mr. Johnson speaks of having come to the prison, and found it full of his parishioners, and an insulting mob about them. The trials to which they were subjected, caused some to move to New

---

\* The next year [1724], we find the wardens and vestry chosen from Stratford, Fairfield, Newtown, and Ripton (now Huntington). Their names were as follows: Wardens—for Stratford, Nehemiah Loring, Thomas Salmon; for Fairfield, Dougal Mackenzie; for Newtown, John Glover; for Ripton, Daniel Shelton, Charles Lane: Vestry—for Stratford, Wm. Jeanes, Jonathan Pitman, John Johnson, Richard Blacklatch, William Smith, Samuel French, Samuel Watkins, Samuel Blagg, James Laborie, Jun.; for Fairfield, James Laborie, Sen., Benjamin Sturgis; for Newtown, Samuel Beers, Robert Sealy; for Ripton, James Wacklee, Richard Blacklatch, Nathaniel Cogswell.

† In answer to the petition of churchmen, an Act passed the General Assembly in 1727, providing that the taxes collected for religion from Episcopalians might be paid to their own ministers. But the Act was rendered almost a nullity by the construction put upon it by the magistrates, that none were to be regarded as Episcopalians who lived at the distance of more than a mile from the Episcopal clergyman.

York. Others were deterred from joining the "sect every where spoken against." But though the growth of the Church was thus retarded, and the missionary at times was quite discouraged, he was able to say in 1725, "a good opinion of her doctrine, government, and liturgy gains greatly in the minds of people, and especially those of the soberer and better sort." And, two years after, about fifty families, one seventh of the population of the town (then ten miles square), were regarded by him as belonging to the parish: besides these, there were, he writes, "a considerable number scattered in the neighboring towns, five, ten, twenty, and thirty miles off." And in 1728, although a number of communicants had left to unite with the Church at Fairfield, where Rev. Henry Caner had been appointed missionary, Mr. Johnson numbered eighty who communed at Stratford from that and neighboring towns,\* and spoke of the church as "considerably fuller than ever before."

As early as 1727, the missionary recommended a Mr. Bennett, who had conformed to the Church, to the Venerable Society, for an appointment as school-master, adding that his parishioners had, amongst themselves, raised for him "nigh £30 per annum, equal to

---

\* We have records of Mr. Johnson's administering baptism, during the first ten years of his ministry, at Fairfield, New London, Branford, Middletown, Milford, Stratfield, Norwalk, West Haven, New Haven, Newtown, Derby, and Chestnut Ridge (now Reading), in Conn., at New Rochelle in N. Y., at Smithtown and Brookhaven, L. I., and Newport, R. I. In many of these places he held service frequently. In Oct. 1730, he expresses his pleasure in having an influence in the College at New Haven, and "that a love to the Church gains ground greatly in it." In 1731, he speaks of having "labored much to promote the Church at Westerly, in Narragansett, as I have occasionally passed that way."



almost £10 sterling ; " and in 1733 he acknowledges the gratitude of his people to the Bishop of London, for "settling a school" in the place.\*

The press was from time to time employed by Mr. Johnson in defence of that which he believed to be truth. This year (1733), in reply to a ballad on the Church of England, by Rev. John Graham, a Presbyterian minister, he published "Plain Reasons for conforming to the Church ;" and subsequently, two other tracts in continuation of the discussion thus begun.

A few years later, the whole colony was thrown into great agitation by the visits of Whitefield. Feuds and divisions arose among the Congregationalists, and many were led to seek for rest in the Episcopal Church. Mr. Johnson, in one of his letters at this period, acknowledging the contributions made to the library by the Venerable Society,† adds, "many of the people are very inquisitive after Christian knowledge." In 1738, it was "voted that there be a weekly contribution to repair the church." But so much did the Congregation increase, that their house of worship would not contain them, and measures were taken in 1743‡ to erect a new edi-

\* In 1729 the Church Wardens were John Benjamin and John Kees ; in 1735, Samuel Fairchild and Wm. Beach.

† In "Abstract," &c. we read, "The Society allow ten pounds' worth of books to each mission for a Library, and five pounds' worth of pious small tracts to every new Missionary, to be distributed among his parishioners, and other parcels of books, as occasion requires."

‡ In October of this year, the University of Oxford conferred on Mr. Johnson the honorary degree of D. D. On his visit to that ancient seat of learning in 1723, when he received the degree of M. A., the diploma given him used this expression ; "Sperantes nempe, illius ministerio, aliam et eandem, olim nascituram, Ecclesiam Anglicanam." To this, allusion seems made in the diploma given at this time, which contained these

fice. Seventy-six names were subscribed to the following pledge: "We, being convinced that it is our duty to contribute what we are able towards building a church for the honor and glory of God in this town, to be set apart for his worship and service according to the most excellent method of the Church of England, do hereby cheerfully and seriously devote to God the following sums, \* \* \* to be employed for the promoting of that pious undertaking." About £1500 were at first subscribed, exclusive of the subscription for a bell. To this sum, Mr. Wm. Beach, having at first made the largest subscription (£250), afterwards added £750. The other subscriptions ranged from £70 to ten shillings, all "in the old tenor."\*

The church was opened on the 8th of July, 1744,† and a sermon was preached by the Rector from Psalm xxvi : 8, on "The Great Duty of Loving and Delighting in the Public Worship of God." The sermon was published, and to it were appended prayers for use in the family and closet. The church then opened is that in which we now worship.‡ In a letter written by the

---

words: "*enthusiasticis dogmatibus strenue et feliciter conflictatus, Regiminis Episcopalis vindex acerrimus, demandatam curam prudenter adeo et benevole, indefesse ita et potenter administravit, ut incredibili ecclesiæ incremento, summe sui expectationem sustinuerit plane et superaverit.*"

\* The Building Committee consisted of Col. Edmond Lewis, Capt. Jas. Lewis, Mr. Ephraim Curtiss, Mr. Daniel Hawley, Mr. Joseph Browne, Mr. John Benjamin, Mr. Ambrous Thompson, Capt. Gershom Edwards, Mr. Joseph Lewis, Mr. Tho. Lattin; to whom were afterwards added Theo. Nichols, Esq., and Mr. Wm. Lamson.

† On the same day is recorded the baptism of Ruth, daughter of Abraham and Eunice Thompson, probably the first baptism in the new edifice.

‡ The dimensions are as follows:—Length, 60 feet; width, 45 feet and six inches; height to the roof, 24 feet; height of spire, 120 feet.



Rector, the new church was spoken of as "finished in a very neat and elegant manner, the architecture being allowed in some things to exceed any thing before done in New England." It was originally designed that on one side of the chancel should be a library room, and on the other side a vestry. The reading desk and pulpit formerly stood far out towards the middle of the church; and the seats were large, square pews, built by those who occupied them. The bell was the gift of the Rector, for which, as it would seem, he subscribed £300. During the same year, he had the pleasure of opening a new church at Ripton (now Huntington), then within the limits of this town and under his care, where were about fifty church families. He gratefully acknowledges "a blessed spirit of peace and charity, and of zeal and unanimity, happily prevailing among his people."

The Venerable Society having made "the providing a parsonage house" by each parish, a condition of the continuance of their aid to old missionary stations, a beginning was here made towards this desirable end in 1748, Mr. Birdsey leaving to the parish twenty acres, about two miles distant from the centre of the town.

On Easter Monday, 1751,\* the parish "voted to direct the Church Wardens to apply to the next Assembly, to be made a society with parochial powers."

---

\* The clock was placed in the tower on the erection of the church, or soon after, for, in Feb. of this year, we find an agreement made with a certain person to keep it in good repair for two years: "to have for his labour £5 for each year, provided the clock goes well; if not, he is to have nothing for his labour."

During the following year, Dr. Johnson was urged by the distinguished Benjamin Franklin, to accept the presidency of the college which he was engaged in founding in Philadelphia. This he declined, but was afterwards induced to take the Presidency of King's (now Columbia) College, then just established in New York, and with it, the position of an assistant minister of Trinity Church in that city. He accordingly resigned this charge, and left Stratford on the 15th of April, 1754, but seems to have performed occasional services here until the arrival of another missionary.

He had ministered in this and neighboring towns for more than thirty years, and been privileged to see a great change in the feeling entertained for the Church of his affections. He had administered the rite of baptism to nine hundred and thirteen children and eighty-one adults, and admitted four hundred and forty-two to the Holy Communion.\* The precise number of communicants at Stratford at this time we are not told, but six years before, there were reported in Stratford and Ripton, "about two hundred," of whom doubtless the greater part were in this parish. The only minister in the State for some years after his arrival, finding but one parish organized, and no church building completed, he was permitted to leave ten or eleven clergymen and twenty-five small churches. When he came, not one hundred adults could be found in the State attached to the

---

\* For the Indians and Negroes, Dr. J. always had "a catechetical lecture" during the summer months, and had among them a few communicants.



Church. On his departure, their number was reckoned by thousands.\*

The principal causes of this increase were stated by Dr. Johnson to be, (1.) immigration from Great Britain and Ireland; (2.) the reading of books setting forth Church principles; (3.) the wild enthusiasm, at first encouraged by the Congregationalists, arising from "Mr. Whitefield's rambling once and again through the country, followed by a great many strolling teachers, who propagated so many wild and horrid notions of God and the Gospel, that a multitude of people were so bewildered, that they could find no rest to the sole of their foot till they retired into the Church, as their only ark of safety."

Dr. Johnson had always been fond of a country life, he was in easy circumstances, had lived happily with his people, and nothing, he declares, "could have reconciled him" to leaving them, "but strong hopes of being more extensively useful to mankind."†

The same year that he left (1754), Rev. Edward Winslow, having arrived from England with an appointment from the Venerable Society, took charge of the parish. God's blessing continued to rest upon it. In 1756, a committee‡ were appointed "to treat for the purchase of a glebe," and "for the sale of the Church lands;" and, the next year, Theophilus Nichols and Joseph Wooster, Esqrs., were empowered to give

\* Twelve years before this date, Dr. J. estimated the number, as "considerably more than two thousand, and at least five or six thousand, young and old," and "daily very much increasing."

† Autobiography.

‡ Viz., Edmond Lewis, Theophilus Nichols, Gershom Edwards, Elnathan Peet, and David Brooks.

a deed for certain lands sold. It seems probable that a residence for the clergyman was procured at this time, on the site now occupied, but we have no farther allusion to the matter until July, 1763, when Mr. Winslow mentions, "we are provided with a decent house, with two acres of land adjoining, and about as much at a little distance." At a parish meeting in the year 1757,\* it was "voted that the Church should be pewed throughout with long pews," and twelve new pews were accordingly built. In 1760, a third Church was erected within the limits of the town, at North Stratford (now Tashua), and the care of that, as well as the congregation at Ripton, devolved upon the Rev. Christopher Newton. In a letter written in 1762, Mr. Winslow speaks of his congregation, as composed principally of persons of middle age, "the younger wanting more room to spread and improve their husbandry." He bears testimony to his parishioners, as "in general careful to support the reputation of their profession, and to reap the benefit of the means and advantages they enjoy to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour," "attached to the communion of the Church from solid principles, and from a proper sense of the happy tendency of the means therein afforded for all needful improvement in Christian knowledge and practice, careful to preserve harmony among themselves, and peace and charity with their brethren of the other persuasion." But, the next year, he was forced to write, "never did a malignant spirit of

---

\* This year, John Benjamin, Jr. was appointed organist. According to tradition, the organ was sent from England, but the precise time is not known.



opposition to the Church rage with greater vehemence than of late."

On account of advantages for his large family, Mr. Winslow deemed it best soon after to accept the mission at Braintree, Mass., and relinquished the charge of this parish on Easter Sunday, April 22, 1764. He had the satisfaction of feeling, that he left "with the general affection of the people," and that he gave up the Church "with some substantial additions to its strength." During the ten years of his connection with it, he administered the rite of baptism to one hundred and ninety-nine, of whom the greater part were in Stratford, but some in Norwalk, Woodbury, Wallingford, Milford, and Saybrook, in this State, and Rye, N. Y. During the same period, one hundred and three names were added to the list of communicants. A year or two before leaving, he reported the number of heads of families belonging to the Church, in that Society of the town with which he was connected, as about eighty, which he estimates to be "perhaps half the number of Congregationalists." He gives the number of communicants at the same time, as "more than one hundred and fifty," and adds that he had "usually between ninety and one hundred at the stated monthly celebration of the Holy Sacrament." It was said of Mr. Winslow by Dr. Johnson,\* "he excels all the clergy of the colony as a preacher, and is behind none of them in discretion and good conduct;" and in a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. J. recommended him as a most suitable person for Commissary.†

---

\* In 1760.

† Mr. Winslow came to New York during the Revolution, and had charge of St. George's Chapel. He died in that city from an attack of paralysis.

The year before Mr. Winslow left, Dr. Johnson had resigned the Presidency of the College in New York, and returned to his old home in Stratford. He asked of the Society to be reappointed to this mission, expressing his desire, "so long as he should be able, to be yet further useful." The parish considered themselves happy in again obtaining his services. At the age of nearly three score and ten, he applied himself diligently to his duties, and found himself, he writes, "as able to discharge them, through God's assistance, as he had been twenty or thirty years before." \*

In a communication to the Society in September of this year (1764), he reports "about one hundred families, and one hundred and forty actual communicants," and accounts for the numbers not being larger, while additions are being continually made, from the diminution by death, and by frequent migrations "from the sea coast to the inland parts, where land is much cheaper;" "had all that conformed to the Church, with their descendants, continued here hitherto," he adds, "instead of one hundred, I believe at this time there would have been three hundred families."

The next year we have a proposal illustrating the benevolent and self-sacrificing disposition of the venerable missionary. He proposes to the parish not to take any of the "money rates" to himself, but, "after crossing out the names of such as are subjects of charity," to have the sums collected from others, and placed at interest for the purpose of establishing a fund towards the support of his successor.

---

\* Autobiography.



In October, 1766, a convention of twelve clergymen from Connecticut and New York, of which Dr. Johnson was president, was held here. Their deliberations had special reference to the sad condition of the Church deprived of Bishops, and to the disastrous consequences, which, it was feared, must ensue. The dilatoriness on the part of the English Government in this matter,\* the fewness of the clergy for the work, and

---

\* This deprivation of the Church of her chief ministers was not without continued protest on the part of those most interested in her prosperity. Many were the appeals sent from this country to the authorities in England. Bishops there urged upon the Government the importance of granting the requisite permission for consecration. The Venerable Society exerted themselves for the accomplishment of the same end. Sums were bequeathed by the pious for the endowment of bishoprics. More than once, the way seemed prepared for speedy action. But a change in the Ministry, the death of the Sovereign, the idea that a bishop must have temporal power, indifference on the part of very many in England, remonstrances from Congregationalists and Presbyterians in this country, and, in later times, the suspicions of some Churchmen that the episcopal office would be employed to aid English oppression—these causes, operating at different periods, caused the continued neglect. It was a grievous neglect for the Church. It was well said by the Venerable Society, in one of their applications to the Crown, that the office was “very useful and necessary, for establishing the Gospel, for the due exercise of ecclesiastical discipline, for ordaining men well qualified and willing to take upon them episcopal ordination, for confirming persons baptized, and promoting of piety, duty, peace, and unity, as well among the clergy as laity.” From want of Episcopal supervision, disorders arose in many places. Very many were hindered from entering the ministry. The expense of the voyage was not less than £100. At the time of the convention in Stratford (1766), about one-fifth of those who had gone for Orders had died on the journey. The parish of Hebron, in this State, sent over, at their own expense, one candidate after another, but not until a lapse of nearly twenty years, and three had died away from home, did they succeed in obtaining a clergyman.

The missionaries at Stratford, from the days of Muirson, were faithful in their appeals for the remedying of this evil. The long delay, however, it is pleasing to think, resulted, in the providence of God, in our obtaining



the fact that the Venerable Society declined making any more missions in New England, caused Dr. Johnson much sorrow and anxiety, so that in June of the next year he writes, "every thing now looks so dark and discouraging here to the Church, that, after forty-five years' labor to promote it, in which, thank God, I have seen it much to flourish, I fear what little time may yet remain, I must live to see it decline and decay."

The venerable missionary was now at times confined to the house by lameness, and therefore obtained the assistance of Mr. John Tyler, then a candidate for orders,\* who read service and a sermon, when necessary; and in Jan., 1768, the parish called Rev. Ebenezer Kneeland to be an assistant to their rector.

Two years later, we find the aged and faithful servant of Christ engaged in an additional effort for the promotion of God's glory, expressing his design to make Stratford "a resort for young students in divinity, to prepare them for Holy Orders." "Before they go," he continues, "if not graduated otherwise, I would procure them the degree of M. A., at the College of New York. I have several times directed one or more, and have now four here."† This Theological School he expresses his intention of continuing during his life, with the assistance of Mr. Kneeland, who, he adds, "is very well qualified to continue it when I am gone." In

---

bishops entirely independent of any connection with the State, which might not have been the case before the Revolution. It is pleasing also to note, that no more can the charge of neglect in this matter be laid upon England, her colonial bishoprics now numbering twenty-nine, of which all but two have been established and endowed within the last fifty years.

\* Afterwards, for fifty-four years, Rector of Christ Church, Norwich.

† Viz., Messrs. Marshall, Tingley, Perry, and Jones.



this connection, he gratefully acknowledges the receipt of Mr. Somaster's library, a collection of volumes, which, having been given to the Society for use at some missionary station, had been sent here.

It was not permitted to Dr. Johnson to continue for a long period this labor of love, for which he was so admirably fitted. On the 6th of January, the Festival of the Epiphany, 1772, "he conversed," we are told, "with his family, on the subject of his death, with the greatest cheerfulness and serenity." Among other things, he said, that "although he seemed to be but little indisposed, yet he found his strength failing him, that he must soon leave them, but he was going home." He expressed his wish that his death might resemble that of his loved and esteemed friend Bishop Berkeley. His desire was granted. Very soon after this conversation, like the good Bishop, "he instantaneously expired in his chair, without the least struggle or groan."\* Two days after, his funeral was attended, all the clergy from the neighboring towns being present. A sermon was preached by the Rev. Jeremiah Leaming of Norwalk, and his remains were placed in the church-yard,† where they await the re-

---

\* Chandler's Life, p. 125.

† The monument erected to his memory bears this inscription, prepared by Rev. Myles Cooper, D. D., his successor in the presidency of the college in New York:

M. S.

SAMUELIS JOHNSON, D. D.,

COLLEGII REGALIS, NOVI EBORACI,

PRÆSIDIS PRIMI,

ET HUIUS ECCLESIAE NUPER RECTORIS,

NATUS DIE 14TO OCTOB. 1696,

OBIT 6TO JAN. 1772.

If decent dignity, and modest mien,

The cheerful heart, and countenance serene;

surrection of the just. Rev. John Beach of Newtown, one of his most valued friends, had been requested to preach on this occasion, but, being unable on account of sickness, the sermon\* prepared by him was shortly after delivered here, and published at the request of those who heard it.

Few words need be added to what has been said of Dr. Johnson, who has been justly denominated "the Father of Episcopacy in Connecticut."† "He was remarkable for a very uniform and placid temper, and great benignity of disposition, which was displayed in habitual beneficence and hospitality."‡ He was a diligent student through life, a good classical scholar, passionately fond of the Hebrew language, and possessing a mind richly stored with general knowledge. He was an ardent seeker for truth, ever willing to re-examine any position which he had taken. His sermons were

---

If pure religion, and unsullied truth,  
 His age's solace, and his search in youth;  
 If piety, in all the paths he trod,  
 Still rising vig'rous to his Lord and God;  
 If charity, through all the race he ran,  
 Still wishing well, and doing good to man;  
 If learning, free from pedantry and pride,—  
 If faith and virtue, walking side by side;  
 If well to mark his being's aim and end,—  
 To shine, through life, a husband, father, friend;  
 If these ambition in thy soul can raise,  
 Excite thy reverence, or demand thy praise;  
 Reader, ere yet thou quit this earthly scene,  
 Revere his name, and be what he has been.

MYLES COOPER.

\* Text, 2 Cor., iv. 18.

† His life has been published, prepared by Dr. Chandler, principally from an autobiography.

‡ Hon. G. C. Verplanck, in Hist. of Trinity Church, N. Y., p. 116.



composed with care, and the duties of the pastor to his flock were faithfully discharged. His pen was often employed to defend the Church, to which he was ardently attached, in works which were published. Mr. Beach, in his funeral sermon, did not hesitate to speak of him, as "the most excellent scholar, and the most accomplished divine, that this colony ever had to glory in." Many of the early clergy of Connecticut, educated in prejudice against the Episcopal Church, attached themselves to it through his influence. "For near fifty years," says his biographer, "there was not, I believe, a single candidate for Holy Orders in the colony who did not apply to him for his advice and direction. To those of them who needed pecuniary assistance for the voyage to England, he gave generously and cheerfully."\* The clergy in 1742 unanimously requested of the Bishop of London that he might be appointed the Bishop's Commissary† in this colony. The Venerable Society made mention of his death as "a public loss to the Society and to the American Church." During his ministry in this place, we have the record of 1,172 baptisms, and 473 persons admitted to the holy communion; the parish, whom he had so long and so faithfully served, might well regard their loss as "irreparable." This diocese will never let his memory die, and in this Church, his name should ever be held in grateful and honorable remembrance.

By the "unanimous and earnest" desire of the parishioners, Mr. Kneeland, who had assisted Dr. Johnson

---

\* Chandler's Life, &c., p. 129.

† The Commissary had power delegated from the Bishop to discipline, and judge in Ecclesiastical matters.

for the last four years of his ministry, was appointed by the Society the missionary to the parish. Its limits were now very much reduced from their original extent, being "bounded," wrote the wardens, "west by Rev. Mr. Lamson's cure, which extends within three miles of the church, on the north by Rev. Mr. Newton's, which extends within five miles of the church, on the east by Stratford River, but one mile from the church, and on the south by the sea, which is two miles from the church, but habitable only one mile." The wardens, in the same communication, speak of the number attached to the church as being greater than at any former period, but their ability to support a clergyman less than fifteen years previous, from the "decay of trade and failure of several of their principal members."\*

In April, 1775, we find that a committee was appointed to devise means for the payment of that due on the glebe, and to superintend the repairs on the church.

We come now to the troublous days of the Revolution. Many of the clergy felt obligated by their vows to continue their allegiance to Great Britain, and strong feeling against the Church was thereby created. The vine which had taken deep root, and sent forth vigorous branches, was broken and trodden down. There is no record of the baptismal, or other offices being performed here from the beginning of the Revolution till after the close of the war.† But there

---

\* On Easter Monday, April 20, 1772, it was "voted that the pew next to the pulpit be given to Capt. Philip Nichols, he building the Christening Pew."

† The last record is the Baptism of Asa, son of Thomas and Ann Cur-



seems reason for supposing that the Churchmen of this town were generally patriots.\* Mr. Kneeland is believed to have continued in charge of the parish until his death, which occurred on the 17th of April, 1777. But it is probable that services were interrupted during the last year of his life; for in October, 1776, Mr. Inglis, of Trinity Church, N. Y., wrote that all the Churches in Connecticut were closed, except that at Newtown, where Mr. Beach still ministered. Mr. Kneeland is said to have been "a man of meek and quiet spirit, a good scholar, and a very acceptable preacher."†

The parish seems to have been destitute of clerical services for some time after his death. In April, 1778, the use of the glebe was granted to his widow until the appointment of another incumbent to the parish. In September of the same year, an agreement was made with Mr. Henry Van Dyke, who was ordained some years after, that he should perform divine service.

---

tiss, on the 3d of February, 1776. He, having faithfully served God in his generation, and having been a Warden of Christ Church for nearly thirty years, was buried by the present Rector on the 13th of Feb., 1850.

\* Such was the spirit displayed, that, as early as 1774, not a man in the town was "ready to dissent from the revolutionary measures recommended by the Continental Congress, and the movements, in various places, expressive of sympathy for those who suffered from such oppressive acts as the Boston Port Bill." Among the churchmen active in the cause of their country may be named Nehemiah Beardsley, a Colonel of Troops raised in Conn. Many are known to have received pensions for their services in the war.

† Mr. Kneeland was of Congregational parents. He graduated at Yale in 1761, and went to England for Orders in 1765. Before coming to Stratford, he served as Chaplain in the British army. He married Charity, eldest daughter of Dr. Johnson. He left no children. His remains were interred in the Churchyard at Stratford. For that said of his character in the Sermon, and some of the statistics in this note, I am indebted to Rev. Dr. Chapin, who refers to the Fowler MSS. as his authority.

for the last four years of his ministry, was appointed by the Society the missionary to the parish. Its limits were now very much reduced from their original extent, being "bounded," wrote the wardens, "west by Rev. Mr. Lamson's cure, which extends within three miles of the church, on the north by Rev. Mr. Newton's, which extends within five miles of the church, on the east by Stratford River, but one mile from the church, and on the south by the sea, which is two miles from the church, but habitable only one mile." The wardens, in the same communication, speak of the number attached to the church as being greater than at any former period, but their ability to support a clergyman less than fifteen years previous, from the "decay of trade and failure of several of their principal members."\*

In April, 1775, we find that a committee was appointed to devise means for the payment of that due on the glebe, and to superintend the repairs on the church.

We come now to the troublous days of the Revolution. Many of the clergy felt obligated by their vows to continue their allegiance to Great Britain, and strong feeling against the Church was thereby created. The vine which had taken deep root, and sent forth vigorous branches, was broken and trodden down. There is no record of the baptismal, or other offices being performed here from the beginning of the Revolution till after the close of the war.† But there

---

\* On Easter Monday, April 20, 1772, it was "voted that the pew next to the pulpit be given to Capt. Philip Nichols, he building the Christening Pew."

† The last record is the Baptism of Asa, son of Thomas and Ann Cur-



seems reason for supposing that the Churchmen of this town were generally patriots.\* Mr. Kneeland is believed to have continued in charge of the parish until his death, which occurred on the 17th of April, 1777. But it is probable that services were interrupted during the last year of his life; for in October, 1776, Mr. Inglis, of Trinity Church, N. Y., wrote that all the Churches in Connecticut were closed, except that at Newtown, where Mr. Beach still ministered. Mr. Kneeland is said to have been "a man of meek and quiet spirit, a good scholar, and a very acceptable preacher."†

The parish seems to have been destitute of clerical services for some time after his death. In April, 1778, the use of the glebe was granted to his widow until the appointment of another incumbent to the parish. In September of the same year, an agreement was made with Mr. Henry Van Dyke, who was ordained some years after, that he should perform divine service.

---

tiss, on the 3d of February, 1776. He, having faithfully served God in his generation, and having been a Warden of Christ Church for nearly thirty years, was buried by the present Rector on the 13th of Feb., 1850.

\* Such was the spirit displayed, that, as early as 1774, not a man in the town was "ready to dissent from the revolutionary measures recommended by the Continental Congress, and the movements, in various places, expressive of sympathy for those who suffered from such oppressive acts as the Boston Port Bill." Among the churchmen active in the cause of their country may be named Nehemiah Beardsley, a Colonel of Troops raised in Conn. Many are known to have received pensions for their services in the war.

† Mr. Kneeland was of Congregational parents. He graduated at Yale in 1761, and went to England for Orders in 1765. Before coming to Stratford, he served as Chaplain in the British army. He married Charity, eldest daughter of Dr. Johnson. He left no children. His remains were interred in the Churchyard at Stratford. For that said of his character in the Sermon, and some of the statistics in this note, I am indebted to Rev. Dr. Chapin, who refers to the Fowler MSS. as his authority.

On the 27th of March, 1780, the wardens were authorized to engage the Rev. John R. Marshall of Woodbury, to officiate here every third Sunday, until the parish was otherwise provided for, and, the next year, authority was also given them to obtain his services for such time as could be agreed upon. At the succeeding annual meeting (on Easter Monday, April 1, 1782), the wardens were instructed "to agree with a clergyman for the present year," but we have no record as to the result of their action.

In 1783, the Independence of the United States was acknowledged by Great Britain, and with this ended the aid extended to the parish by the Society in England, it being deemed incompatible with their charter to carry on missionary operations beyond the dominions of the British crown.\* To that Society, we, my brethren, in common with many parishes, owe a deep debt of gratitude; for to it, under God, is this Church indebted for its "first foundation, and a long continuance of nursing care and protection."

The Parish was now thrown entirely upon its own resources, and, notwithstanding the trials of the previous ten years, and the injury which it must have received, it soon gave proofs of life and vigor. On the 18th of April, 1784, Rev. Jeremiah Leaming, D.D.,

---

\* The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts was organized in 1701. That year its income amounted to about \$7,700. In 1782, the last year that aid was extended to the Church in the United States, its receipts were about \$25,000. It is still vigorously prosecuting its good work, its income last year being nearly \$712,000. From its "first beginning in New England, it has extended its operations into all parts of the world, from the Ganges to Lake Huron, and from New Zealand to Labrador."



was called to the Rectorship, and immediately entered on his duties. On the 4th of July of the next year, a committee was appointed to confer with Mr. Solomon Curtis, and, if practicable, purchase of him the lot adjoining the glebe, using for payment certain money in the hands of the Church officers.\* And in July, 1786, a subscription was opened for repairing the Church, the work being done during the next year.

That for which many had been earnestly laboring for a long period, the consecration of a bishop who might perform episcopal duties in the State, had been at last effected, the Rev. Samuel Seabury, D. D., being consecrated to that office by Dr. Kilgour and other bishops of the Scottish Church, at Aberdeen, on the 14th of November, 1784; and in the year 1786, a collection was here made towards his support. An aged communicant† of the parish who received the statement from members of the family of a former generation, informs me that Bishop Seabury's first confirmation, and hence the first administration of the rite in America, was in this church in which we are now worshipping.

Dr. Leaming continued in charge of the parish until Easter, 1790, when, suffering from the infirmities of old age, he resigned the situation. During the six years of his rectorship, the rite of baptism was administered to one hundred and fifty-four, and thirty-five

\* On the 26th of Feb., 1785, it was "voted that the church do now qualify as a parish, according to the Laws of this State."

† Mrs. Susan Johnson. The first two persons confirmed are said to have been Mrs. Anna Johnson wife of Wm. Sam. Johnson, LL. D., and the Hon. S. W. Johnson. I have not been able to learn that Bishop Seabury left any register that could be referred to as authority on this interesting point.

names were added to the list of communicants. He was highly esteemed and loved in this parish, and the estimation in which he was held by his brethren of the clergy is evident from the fact that he was their first choice in 1783 as Bishop of the Diocese; but, declining on account of his infirmities, Dr. Seabury was elected.\*

On Dr. Leaming's resignation, the Rev. James Sayre was called to the rectorship, and a committee was appointed to ascertain whether the church at Milford would "join this church under the same minister." Mr. Sayre had been settled at Trinity Church, Newport, R. I., but was obliged to leave that place after an open rupture with a majority of the congregation.† He was eccentric in his character, and thought by some to be at times deranged. After a ministry of about two and a half years in this parish, he united himself with the Congregationalists, or (as some say) Methodists, on the ground of dissatisfaction with the Prayer Book, as it had been established in the General Convention in 1789, and approved at a convocation of the clergy

---

\* Jeremiah Leaming was born at Middletown, Conn., in 1717. He graduated at Yale College in 1745, embraced Episcopacy immediately after, and was ordained in 1748. He officiated at Newport, R. I., eight years, when he accepted a call to the Church at Norwalk, Ct., where he continued twenty-one years. During the Revolution he suffered severely from both the British and American parties. The Church at Norwalk, with many other buildings, was burned in 1779 by the British troops under Gen. Tryon, and Dr. Leaming lost his furniture, books, all his papers, and even his wearing apparel. From Norwalk he went to New York. "He was afterwards put in jail as a tory, and denied even the comforts of a bed. This brought on a hip complaint, which made him a cripple for life." After the close of the War, he was called to the church at Stratford. He died at New Haven in Sept., 1804. He published a Defence of the Episcopal Church, a Sermon on the Evidences of Christianity, and Dissertations on various subjects. *Updike's Narragansett*, p. 267.

† Updike's *Narragansett*, p. 405.



in this diocese in Sept., 1790, by the vote of every member except himself. During his ministry, sixty-nine were baptized, and ten admitted to the Holy Communion.

On the first of April, 1793, the Rev. Ashbel Baldwin, then of Litchfield, was called to the rectorship, to officiate here for two thirds of the time. Mr. Baldwin accepted the call, devoting to the Church at Tashua the remaining Sundays.

In 1795, the Convention of the Diocese met here, attended by Bishop Seabury, nineteen clergymen, and twenty-three lay delegates.\*

† Under Mr. Baldwin's ministry the congregation gradually increased, and in 1804, it was resolved "to finish the unfinished pews in the church."

In 1808 the Convention of the diocese appointed a committee to "inquire whether the library given by Mr. Somaster to the clergy of Connecticut, may, consistently with the terms of the donation, be deposited in the library of the Episcopal Academy at Cheshire." The committee reported at the next convention that the library was "entirely at the direction of the clergy," and it was then ordered that the books should be collected and placed in the institution at Cheshire. A few volumes, probably overlooked at the time, are still found here.‡

\* It was the last convention over which Bishop Seabury presided, he being called to his reward on the 25th of Feb., in the following year.

† In 1794, a committee was appointed to settle with "the persons employed in covering the church;" in 1799, a subscription was ordered to be circulated for means to "cover the north roof."

‡ By the kindness of Mrs. Susan Johnson, several hundred volumes of

At the same convention (A. D. 1809), Mr. Baldwin reported the number of families belonging to the parish as eighty, and sixty enrolled as communicants. This is the first record that we have, after the Revolution, of the number connected with the parish, and shows that it had by no means attained to the strength which it enjoyed before that period.

Four years after, the Convention again assembled here. Bishop Jarvis had been called away by death during the previous month. Twenty-nine clergymen, and an equal number of lay delegates, attended the Convention. On the assessments for a Bishop's Fund made this year, this Parish paid \$288 of the \$300 for which it was assessed.\*

For some years efforts were used to obtain Mr. Baldwin's release from the Parish at Tashua, and his undivided attention to the Church in this place, but without success until 1815.† During the following year there was a large increase in the number of families and communicants, many from the Congregational Society then connecting themselves with the Parish. Mr. Baldwin reported to the Convention in 1816 an addition of forty communicants. Two years after, the seats in the body of the church were narrowed, and some new ones made on the room thereby gained.‡

the Library of the Rev. Dr. Johnson have been for some years placed in the Rectory for the use of the clergyman.

\* Only one-fifth of the Parishes paid their full assessment.

† Mr. Baldwin, at different periods in his ministry, held occasional services in Milford.

‡ The glass chandelier hanging in the church was presented by Capt. S. C. Nicoll in 1818.



In 1821, the Parish at Tashua presented a request that Mr. Baldwin might again officiate there for a third of the time. It was acceded to by this Parish for that year, but, at the ensuing Easter, they refused longer to assent to it.

In 1822, the Diocesan Convention again met here. Bishop Brownell presided, and twenty-seven clergymen and thirty-eight lay delegates were present.

On the 19th of April, 1824, Mr. Baldwin presented his resignation of the Parish, which was accepted during the next month. He had been Rector for a period of thirty-one years. During this time he admitted one hundred and thirty to the Holy Communion.\*

Mr. Baldwin ever took an active part in the general affairs of the Church. For a period of twenty-six years he was Secretary of the Diocesan Convention, and being again elected in 1822, he declined the office. For fourteen years he was a member of the Standing Committee of the Diocese. In 1801 he was appointed "Secretary and Chaplain" to the General Convention, and at five Conventions he was elected Secretary, until he refused longer to serve.

One of his cotemporaries† has truly, I believe, characterized him as "a gentleman of strong mental powers, of a lively and cheerful disposition, animated and eloquent in the pulpit, with a sonorous and distinct elocution, benevolent and humane, blending in his character many excellencies in unison with lively and sarcastic sallies of gay good humor and wit." Of him, and another‡ who long ministered in the neighboring Par-

\* No record of his baptisms is found.

† Rev. Isaac Jones, late of Litchfield.

‡ The Rev. Philo Shelton.

ishes of Bridgeport and Fairfield, our Senior Bishop spoke in his address to the Convention in 1824, in words, to the justice of which we can all, I am sure, heartily respond: "These clergymen were admitted to their ministry at the first Episcopal Ordination ever held in America. They have labored faithfully in the Church in this Diocese during its darkest periods of depression, and through the progressive stages of its advancement they have taken an important part in its councils. They have borne 'the heat and burden of the day,' and are entitled to the gratitude of all those who enjoy the fruits of their counsels and labors."\*

The Rev. Edward Rutledge, of the Diocese of South Carolina, succeeded Mr. Baldwin in the rectorship. He also held services, from time to time, in Milford. The Church was prosperous under Mr. Rutledge's ministry.† He was a practical and earnest writer, a graceful speaker, and a devoted parish priest. He continued in charge, universally esteemed and beloved, until the spring of 1829, when he accepted a situation as professor in the University of Pennsylvania, at Philadelphia.‡

---

\* Mr. Baldwin was born in Litchfield, on the 7th of March, 1757. He graduated at Yale College in 1776. During the Revolution he was active in the cause of his country, holding an appointment as quartermaster. He was ordained by Bishop Seabury to the diaconate at Middletown, August 3, 1785, and to the priesthood, in Trinity Church, New Haven, on the 18th of September. On the 9th of that month, he became rector of St. Michael's Church, Litchfield, where he continued till his removal to Stratford. After his resignation of this parish, he officiated in Tashua, Meriden, and Southington, Wallingford, Oxford, and North Haven, and was a resident in New Haven, Stratford, Bridgeport, and, lastly, in Rochester, where he died on Sunday, Feb. 8th, 1846, having attained to nearly 89 years of age.

† The record of baptisms and additions to the communion has not been preserved.

‡ Edward Rutledge was born near Charleston, S. C., Nov. 16, 1798. He was graduated at Yale College in 1817. In 1819 he was ordained



We have now, beloved, reached that period when the history of the parish is known to most of you more accurately than it can be known by me. I shall, therefore, confine myself to a brief summary of such facts as it may be desirable to record, premising that, in the frequent changes in the rectorship to which the parish has been subjected during the last twenty-five years, the statistics presented often give but a very imperfect idea of the true work accomplished by the minister.\*

For a short time after Mr. Rutledge's resignation, the Rev. Ashbel Steele officiated in the church, but was never elected rector.

The Rev. George C. Shephard, having been duly called, entered upon his duties on the 1st of Nov., 1829. During the next year a new rectory was built upon the site of the former one, at an expense of about \$2,200. Of this sum, \$650 was obtained by the sale of land† belonging to the Church, and the remainder was raised by subscription. In 1834, about \$900 was ex-

deacon by Bishop Brownell, and, having married Augusta, daughter of Nathaniel Shaler, Esq., of Middletown, Conn., he removed to South Carolina, and labored in St. Thomas and St. Denis parishes, in that diocese. In 1821, he organized the Church at Springfield, Mass. In Nov., 1822, he resumed the charge of St. Thomas and St. Denis, and was ordained priest by Bishop Bowen, on the 17th of Dec., at Shrewsbury Chapel, St. John's Parish, S. C. From this place he removed to Stratford. In 1831, a bronchial affection obliged him to relinquish his duties at the university, and he proceeded to Charleston, hoping that the genial air of the South would renovate his health. All efforts to avert the disease were in vain. He died at Charleston, March 13th, 1832.

\* The number of clergymen connected with the parish during the last twenty-five years has been about the same as during the previous hundred.

† A part of this lay about the rectory, and the remainder at a short distance.

pended in repairing and painting the church.\* Mr. Shephard's connection with the parish terminated at Easter, 1839. During the nine and a half years of his rectorship, one hundred and four children and eleven adults received holy baptism, and seventy were confirmed by the Bishop. In addition to that expended on the church and parsonage, there were contributed for missionary and charitable purposes, exclusive of the alms at communion, about \$2,875.

The Rev. Edwin W. Wiltbank was elected to the rectorship on the 2d of June, in the year of Mr. Shephard's resignation, and continued in charge until the fifth Sunday in Lent, 1842. Twenty children and three adults were baptized by him, and nineteen were presented for confirmation. The offerings, exclusive of the communion alms, amounted to about \$420.

On the first of June, 1842, the parish called the Rev. Alfred A. Miller to the vacant rectorship. Mr. Miller's connection with the parish was short, he feeling obliged, from the illness of a member of his family, to remove to a warmer clime. During the year and a half of his rectorship, the organ was so much improved as to render it almost a new instrument, the old pulpit and reading desk were removed, and those now used placed in their present position. Five were baptized, and sixteen received the rite of laying on of hands from the Bishop of the diocese. Mr. Miller resigned on the 28th of Nov., 1843.

He was succeeded by the Rev. John Morgan, who commenced his duties in January of the following

---

\* In 1835, the font now used in the church was presented by Miss Frances Johnson.



year. Mr. Morgan presented his resignation on the 3d of December, 1845, but continued to officiate until the next spring. During his ministry, baptism was administered to thirty-three children and two adults, and confirmation to ten persons.\*

At Easter, 1846, Rev. Joseph Scott entered upon the rectorship. On the 27th of August, 1849, he accepted a call to the Church at Naugatuc, and resigned his position here. Twenty-six children and one adult received from him the rite of baptism, and four were presented for confirmation. The church offerings, exclusive of the communion alms, amounted to \$605.

On the 28th of Oct., 1849, your present Rector commenced his labors in this church as a Parish minister. On Tuesday, the 30th of April, in the following year, I was here admitted to the order of priests by Bishop Brownell. In the spring of 1851, the large square pews on each side of the church were changed to afford increased accommodations. During my rectorship, forty-six children and fourteen adults have received baptism, and fifty-six have been confirmed by the Bishop. The number of communicants is, at present, one hundred and fifty-five. The offerings of the Church, including the communion alms, have amounted to about \$2,300. In addition to this, \$500 have been left for purposes connected with the Church of Christ, by two communicants who have been taken from us.

My brethren, at the expiration of nearly one hundred and fifty years since the first service was held

---

\* No record has been preserved of the church offerings during Mr. Miller's and Mr. Morgan's connection with the parish.

here by the pious Muirson, we are privileged to join in those prayers and praises that our fathers then united in. But all else is changed, happily changed. In almost every town where the early missionaries went sowing the good seed, flourishing Churches are now found.

Like most of the Parishes in our old villages, this is continually sending forth its sons to do a work for Christ in other places; but some of these return, after years of absence, to live again in the scenes of their youth, and strengthen the old Church. Though the limits of the Parish have been reduced, even within a few years, it is now, by the blessing of God, stronger than at any previous period in its history, united and prosperous, and more pews are needed to accommodate those who desire to worship with us.

The review which we have this day taken, suggests to us, beloved, that we have reason to be thankful for the days in which God has cast our lot. Prejudice is to a great extent dissipated. Open persecution has ceased. We have the privilege of worshipping God freely, according to the dictates of our conscience. We can hold and inculcate those primitive and apostolic truths for which our fathers suffered, while cultivating and maintaining "quietness, peace and love among all Christian people."

We should be ever ready, dear brethren, to impart to others the like aid and sympathy with that which was so long extended to us. This is the appointed plan in the Providence of God for advancing His kingdom among men. The spirit of love influencing the followers of Christ, causes them to rejoice in aiding and comforting the weak, seeking, with the help of God, to build up all in the most holy faith.



Lastly, let us, putting our trust in the Lord, be "strong and of good courage." His loving care and defence in the past are a pledge for the future, if we are but faithful in our allegiance to Him. If at any time there come dark and gloomy days for the Church, let us look up to our God for guidance and help. Remembering where our true strength lies, let our prayer be fervent and constant,—**"THE LORD OUR GOD BE WITH US, AS HE WAS WITH OUR FATHERS."**

---

O ALMIGHTY GOD, who hast built thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-Stone; Grant that, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, all Christians may be so joined together in unity of spirit, and in the bond of peace, that they may be an holy temple acceptable unto thee. And especially to this Congregation give the abundance of thy grace; that with one heart they may desire the prosperity of thy holy Apostolic Church, and with one mouth may profess the faith once delivered to the Saints. Defend them from the sins of heresy and schism: let not the foot of pride come nigh to hurt them, nor the hand of the ungodly to cast them down. And grant that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by thy governance, that thy Church may joyfully serve thee in all godly quietness; that so they may walk in the ways of truth and peace, and at last be numbered with thy Saints in glory everlasting; through thy merits, O blessed Jesus, thou gracious Bishop and Shepherd of our souls, who art with the Father and the Holy Ghost one God, world without end. Amen.





LONG ISLAND  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY.

LIST OF CLERGYMEN  
WHO HAVE HAD CHARGE OF  
Christ Church.

---

NAMES.	TIME.
GEORGE MUIRSON, - - - - -	1707—1708
FRANCIS PHILIPS, - - - - -	1712—1713
GEORGE PIGOT, - - - - -	1722—1723
SAMUEL JOHNSON, D. D., - - - - -	1723—1754
EDWARD WINSLOW, - - - - -	1754—1764
SAMUEL JOHNSON, D. D., - - - - -	1764—1772
EBENEZER KNEELAND, - - - - -	1772—1777
JOHN R. MARSHALL, - - - - -	1780—1782
JEREMIAH LEAMING, D. D., - - - - -	1784—1790
JAMES SAYRE, - - - - -	1790—1792
ASHBEL BALDWIN, - - - - -	1793—1824
EDWARD RUTLEDGE, - - - - -	1824—1829
GEORGE C. SHEPHARD, - - - - -	1829—1839
EDWIN W. WILTBANK, - - - - -	1839—1842
ALFRED A. MILLER, - - - - -	1842—1843
JOHN MORGAN, - - - - -	1844—1846
JOSEPH SCOTT, - - - - -	1846—1849
JOHN A. PADDOCK, - - - - -	1849—1855