

**A SERMON, PREACHED NOVEMBER 26,
1829, BEING THE DAY OF
THANKSGIVING: CONTAINING A
HISTORY OF THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH
OF THE SECOND BAPTIST CHURCH IN
NEWPORT, (R. I.)**

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A Sermon, Preached November 26, 1829, Being the Day of Thanksgiving: Containing a History of the origin and growth of the second baptist church in newport, (R. I.) by Various

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VARIOUS

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SERMON,

PREACHED NOVEMBER 26, 1829,

BEING THE

DAY OF THANKSGIVING;

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A HISTORY

OF THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH

OF THE

SECOND BAPTIST CHURCH IN NEWPORT, (R. I.)

With Overtones
BY J. O. CHOULES, A. M.

G.
Providence :

H. H. BROWN, 15 MARKET SQUARE.

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1830.

1883

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At a Church Meeting of the Second Baptist Church in Newport, December, 1829:

Voted, That Deacons WILLIAM W. VERNON, E. TREVETT, and GEORGE C. SHAW, be a Committee, to wait on our Pastor, the Rev. JOHN O. CHOULES, to thank him for the very appropriate sermon preached by him on the last Thanksgiving Day; and request a copy for the press.

ROBERT ROGERS, Church Clerk.

Newport, December 30, 1829.

REV. SIR—We, the undersigned, in accordance with the above Vote, do present you the unfeigned thanks of the Second Baptist Church, in Newport, for the historical sermon, delivered by you, before said Church and Society, on the late day of Thanksgiving; in which the feelings and sentiments, that animated our pious forefathers, to constitute said Church, are clearly depicted, and many important facts stated, which are connected with the rise, progress, and present prosperity of said Church and Congregation; and we do respectfully solicit a copy for the press.

With Christian deference, we are,

Yours, respectfully:
WILLIAM W. VERNON,
E. TREVETT,
GEORGE C. SHAW, } Committee.

Newport (R. I.) January 1, 1830.

DEAR BROTHER—I have received your communication, expressing the wish of the Church that I would publish the Discourse delivered on the day of Thanksgiving. I have no objection to accede to the request, but would state the circumstances which induced me to undertake the composition of the Sermon. Soon after my ordination, I felt a desire to know the early History of our Society. My enquiries were by no means satisfactory. I found the early records sadly defective, and even a long succession of years wanting a chronicle of their events. It occurred to me, that a diligent and speedy application to various authorities at present existing, might contribute to the enlargement of the Church book on important topics, and I applied myself to the task. The Church records of other Religious Societies in the State, the private journals of good men, whose interest in the welfare of the Church induced them to note down her eventful progress, and the information of aged persons in this vicinity, put me in possession of much important matter of fact, which I thought would prove of general interest to our Church and Congregation, if brought into a Discourse.

Many of the young people in the Society know but little of the events which induced their ancestors to leave the endearments of home and native land; and I have therefore endeavoured to shew the connexion existing between the persecutions of bigotry, and the exactions of superstition with the settlement of this Colony and the establishment of our religious Institutions. I would acknowledge my obligations to the labours of Callender, Backus, Benedict and Robinson.

Hoping that this attempt to promote our knowledge of the facts connected with our past history, as a Religious Society, may excite our gratitude to that God who has been our glory and defence, and strengthen our faith in his word and faithfulness,

I am, dear Brother,

Yours with Christian regard,
J. O. CHOULES.

To Dea. W. W. VERNON, }
ELEAZER TREVETT, } Committee.
GEORGE C. SHAW, }

SERMON.



EZRA IV, 15.

"That search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers."

It is interesting to reflect upon the past, when we can derive from the retrospect lessons of instruction and consolation: especially it is pleasing to review the former pathway of a cause which exhibits the most important relationships, and claims an eternal association with "the blessed God." The Christian Church is the cause of God, and in a high and spiritual sense it may be said to be all that we have belonging to God upon the earth.

The world was created by God for the residence of his church, and all the dispensations of his providence, for six thousand years, have taken place in marked subserviency to the economy of grace. Read the page of the world's history, and you will see that every event of matter and of mind has ultimately evinced the steady regard and good will of God to Zion. The people of the Most High have seen his goings forth on their behalf in all ages, and through the tender mercy of our God, we possess an inspired history of the church for several generations, and are thus enabled to reap advantage from the wisdom and experience of those who are now inheriting the promises.

But it is proper to acknowledge that there is much in the history of what is commonly called "the church," which we would gladly forget. Her days of darkness have been many, her enemies migh-

ty, her follies multiplied, her annals written in blood, and we sometimes wish that the falling tears of the historian had rendered her records illegible.

The well known partialities of mankind for antiquity, have caused the dark roll of many generations to be drawn out for the purpose of supporting error as well as truth in the Christian church; and *now* to rely upon the evidence of antiquity to decide the propriety of doctrine or practice in religion, is dangerous, unless indeed, we go back to the antiquity of apostolic days, because the baneful shade of superstition stalked in the track of the earliest heralds of the cross, and her children in some instances became the immediate successors of the Apostles in the church. The middle ages are properly called "dark:" They have thrown a veil upon their transactions, and the only accurate "record" of the church of Christ for about one thousand years, is to be found in the register "*on high*." Yet when clouds and darkness were round the church, "God over all" was at the helm controlling her affairs, directing her destiny; and when the fulness of time had arrived, and the divine purposes were matured, a wonderful combination of events introduced the Reformation. Germany caught the flame; it spread from nation to nation, darkness disappeared before it, and God once more said, "Let there be light."

It is the singular felicity of this country, that she has no doubtful annals, either civil or religious. She is the hope of the world, the expectation of the race of man; God's hiding place for his redeemed ones; he hath elevated her in the sight of all the nations, and inscribed her glorious destiny in characters legible as if written with the lightning's beam on the dark thunder cloud. The kindreds, tribes, and tongues of other lands behold it, and they say, "Arise, let us go hence!"

Light is never so sweet as when it rises up in

darkness. At a period when the miseries of Europe seemed to call for the especial interference of Heaven, in order to justify the belief of a superintending Providence, Jehovah burst forth from his secret chambers, evinced the reality of his government, became a very present helper in the time of trouble, and shewed, that "it is the glory of God to conceal a thing."

"Light came from heaven—the Magnet was reveal'd,
A surer star to guide the seaman's eye,
Than the pale glory of the Northern sky."

Then the grasping genius of Columbus planned a mighty project, as he gazed upon the star of day dipping in the far-off western wave,

"Where the tide of light,
Day after day roll'd down the gulf of night,
There seem'd one waste of waters—long in vain
His spirit brooded o'er the Atlantic main,
When, sudden as creation burst from nought,
Sprang a new world through his stupendous thought.

Thoughtful he wander'd on the beach alone,
Mild o'er the deep the vesper planet shone.

Through the slow silent hours he watched the host
Of midnight suns, in western darkness lost,
Till Night himself on shadowy pinions borne,
Fled o'er the mighty waters, and the Morn
Danc'd on the mountains—"Lights of heaven," he cried,
"Lead on—I go to win a glorious bride!"

The winds were prosperous, and the billows bore
The brave adventurer to the promis'd shore;
Far in the west, array'd in purple light,
Dawn'd the New World on his enraptur'd sight!
Not Adam, loosened from th' encumb'ring earth,
Waked by the breath of God to instant birth,
With sweeter, wilder wonder gaz'd around,
When life within, and light without he found,

When all creation rushing o'er his soul,
 He seem'd to live and breathe throughout the whole.
 So felt Columbus—when divinely fair
 At the last look of resolute despair,
 The Hesperian Isles, from distance dimly blue,
 With gradual beauty, open'd on his view.
 In that proud moment his transported mind
 The morning and the evening worlds combin'd,
 And made the sea, that sunder'd them before,
 A bond of peace, uniting shore to shore !”

Thus a new era dawned upon the world. Men of science and learning exulted at the thought of the researches to be made, and the achievements to be effected on a yet untrodden theatre ; misery and despair rejoiced in the prospect of a secure asylum ; and tyrants, conscious that their sceptres had lost their former potency and value, gazed most probably with chagrin, upon a spot of earth, that they foresaw would be too remote for their permanent control. The despotism of Elizabeth, the misrule of James, and his unfortunate successor, and the prelatical oppressions of Whitgift, Bancroft, and Laud, had produced much misery to a large body of the English nation.

“It is a shrewd presumption against prelacy, that the most arbitrary princes have discovered the greatest fondness for it, as if it served their designs better than any other system, called religion.” The attachment has been mutual, and full-blooded prelacy has flourished only under despotism. History shows that it has uniformly attempted dominion over the private judgments and consciences of men. Thus we see the bench advancing, with its one hundred and forty-one canons, demanding subscription, and arresting the march of truth, on her way to gospel liberty. The rights of conscience being thus infringed, the preposterous attempt was made, to establish religion on the foundation of human authority. We are ready to ask the question, “When prelates fixed a religion for latest pos-

terity, why did they not complete the farce, and assess a rate of taxes to the end of time?" Men could no longer remain in the pale of a church, whose head was a King or Queen, either Lutheran, Presbyterian, Prelatical, or Popish, which had existed under all, and served the purposes of each of these.

Objections were made to the officers of the church, as characters unknown in apostolic times; such as Arch-Bishops, Bishops, Deans, Rectors, Vicars, Curates, Chancellors, Arch-Deacons, Proctors, Registers, Surrogates, to describe whose power and employment, Robinson remarks, would puzzle the twelve inspired Apostles. Your forefathers were determined to come out from a church, whose greatest grief appeared to be her amputation from Rome; and whose most anxious desire seemed to be an approximation to that idolatrous and apostate communion. The rites and ceremonies and innovations of the church, all conspired to render non-conformity justifiable.*

To escape the cruel persecution of the Star-Chamber, and court of High Commission, and the anathema^{ising} spirit of the arch-bigot Laud, who poured out his fury on all but papists; your pilgrim fathers left their homes, took their bibles, crossed the ocean, seated themselves on the New-England shores, and commenced the cultivation of the social and Christian charities.†

* The questioning of infants—consecration of places—bowing to the East, and at the name of Christ—using the sign of the cross—demanding sponsors and sprinkling infants—absolution of the sick, &c. &c. &c.

† That the policy of Church and State was intended to harass and distress the consciences of men, is very evident from an examination of various measures of the times. The following anecdote is in point: When the Lord Chamberlain, Manchester, told the King, while the act of uniformity was under debate, that he was afraid the terms were so hard, that many of the late ministers could not comply with them; Bishop Sheldon being present, replied, "*I am afraid they will.*" See Dr. Bates' funeral sermon for Baxter.—Two thousand ministers parted with their living, and kept their consciences! So it appears that the ministers were more honest, than his Lordship supposed.