

*Kind regards of  
E. K.*

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# DISCOURSE

ON THE

COMPLETION OF THE SECOND CENTURY

OF THE

## FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

*✓*  
OF ELIZABETH, N. J.

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# DISCOURSE,

ADDRESSED TO THE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION

OF ELIZABETH, N. J., OCTOBER 9, 1867,

ON OCCASION OF THE

COMPLETION OF ITS SECOND CENTURY.

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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The occasion that called forth this Discourse requires some explanation. It seems to have originated in the expressed desire of many of the elder members of the First Presbyterian Church in Elizabeth, that, inasmuch as just fifty years had intervened between the great revival of 1817 and that which is just past, a day of jubilee should be kept, especially in honour of the memory of Dr. McDowell, under whose ministry the former revival took place. With this, however, it was determined to connect the memorable epoch which the Church had just reached in having closed its second century. Hence the Discourse is designed not only to be commemorative of the character and labours of Dr. McDowell, but also descriptive of the general experience of the Church during the long period that has elapsed since its organization. As its history had already been written, and it was presumed was in the hands of most of the members, it was not thought best to burden the Discourse with minute historical or statistical details.

On the morning of the day allotted to these exercises, when every thing in nature seemed surpassingly bright and beautiful, a large assembly convened in the First Presbyterian Church, among whom were many clergymen, and several hundreds of persons, of all ages, from the surrounding country. The services were commenced by some remarks from the Rev. Mr. Kempshall, explaining the object of the meeting, after

which the whole morning was spent in alternate devotional exercises and in reminiscences from various individuals, now far advanced in life, of the days that are past ; including also brief notices, by the present Pastor, of those who have preceded him in the ministry. After the delivery of the following Discourse in the afternoon, the familiar exercises of the morning were resumed, and several brief Addresses were made, commemorative especially of the ministry of Dr. McDowell. Incipient measures were also taken for the erection of a monument to Dr. McDowell's memory. Among the clergymen whose voices were heard in the course of the day, were Drs. Skinner, Cox, Hatfield, Rodgers, and G. W. Wood, of New York ; Drs. McLean (President of Princeton College), Rogers and Ogden, of New Jersey ; and the Rev. Messrs. T. M. Cunningham and Edward Allen, of Pennsylvania. Interesting statements were also made by several venerable laymen, whose memories reached far back towards the beginning of the century. The singing, under the direction of Col. J. W. Woodruff, was a very successful reproduction of the olden times. The whole appearance of the congregation in the church, not less than their generous hospitalities outside of it, marked the day as a day of jubilee.

## DISCOURSE.

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THE request that I should take part in these commemorative services, I cannot forbear to say, has at once gratified and embarrassed me. Of course it is grateful to me to know that I share in your kind remembrances so far as even to be thought of in connection with an occasion so closely and sacredly identified with the history of this congregation; but then, on the other hand, I cannot forget that there are fathers and brethren in the midst of you, and all around you, who can speak far more intelligently than I can, especially of its later history, including the recent triumphs of Divine grace in which I understand this jubilee to have originated. But you see I have taken counsel not of my scruples, but of the cherished associations of by-gone days; and thankful, indeed, shall I be, if any thing I can say shall serve to quicken your sense of obligation for the privileges you enjoy in connection with this ancient

and venerable Church, or to give a fresh impulse to your zeal in rendering this Church more and more a light and glory in our Israel.

In meeting what seem to be the demands of this occasion, we put ourselves into the attitude of asking of the days that are past; of yielding ourselves to the teachings of God's providence, as they come to us through his recorded goodness and faithfulness towards you as a Church. And there is much in this exercise of communing with the past, especially with *such* a past as your history presents, that is fitted to act upon your spirits with a reviving and sanctifying power. Be it so that we live in an age of progress—a better time than this surely we could not have for gratefully acknowledging it—but, perhaps, if we inspect narrowly the existing state of things, we shall find that, at some points, we cannot do better, even now, than to take counsel of the wisdom of those who have already passed away. May that gracious providence, which, as a pillar of cloud and of fire, has gone before you, during the long period of two centuries, still be the light and the safety of your path, and may the grateful exercises of this day form part of the instrumentality by

which its continued guidance and guardianship shall be secured to you.

Of the venerable Dr. McDowell, of whom I understand that I am expected especially to speak, I had no personal knowledge until after I had become a member of the Theological Seminary at Princeton, in the fall of 1816. Soon after the great revival commenced here—I think not far from the beginning of the next year—I accepted an invitation from Dr. McDowell to spend a few days with him as a witness, and up to the measure of my ability as a helper, of the good work that was then in progress. Then it was that I had the privilege of observing, for the first time, the depth and power of his religious feelings, of listening to his fervent prayers and pungent yet affectionate appeals, and of breathing an atmosphere which his own excellent judgment and strong faith and glowing zeal had helped, in no small degree, to create. What I saw of him, during that visit, left me in no doubt that he was as well fitted to give direction to a scene of extraordinary religious interest as any person I had ever met. After the fruits of the revival had sufficiently matured to be gathered into the

Church, and the Communion Sabbath on which this solemn act was to be performed was in immediate prospect, I was favoured with an invitation to pass that Sabbath in Dr. McDowell's family. I found, on my arrival here, that Dr. ROMEYN, of New York, had come to share the services with the Pastor of the Church. I heard him deliver the preparatory sermon and the sermon after the Communion ; but the great occasion was on Sabbath morning, when the ordinance was administered, and upwards of eighty, if my memory serves me, openly declared themselves, for the first time, on the Lord's side. The scene was one of absorbing interest ; and I can truly say that half a century has done but little to diminish the vividness of the impression it made upon me. Dr. McDowell preached on that strikingly appropriate passage,—“ *Who are these that fly as a cloud and as doves to their windows?*”—and the sermon, though far enough from being what is called, in modern phrase, *splendid*, was eminently evangelical in its tone, and was delivered with an impressive fervour that no art could ever counterfeit. After the sermon came the admission to the Church—that multitude of persons, of all

ages, came into the aisles, as their names were called, and, after they had given their assent to an epitome of the Confession of Faith, and many of them had received Baptism, they were welcomed to the Communion of the Church; and then followed the administration of the ordinance with a degree of tenderness and simplicity, and yet moral sublimity, that seemed, more than any thing I had ever witnessed, to bring Heaven and Earth together. There are probably a few present, whose recollections of that scene are as vivid as my own; and I am sure they will agree with me that there were evidences of God's gracious presence here on that occasion, which might well constitute an epoch in the history of any Church.

It was my privilege to have occasional intercourse with Dr. McDowell from the time I now refer to till near the close of his life; but nothing that I ever saw in him or heard of him, at a later period, essentially modified my early impressions. What gave character to his ministry, above every thing else, was, that his whole heart was in it—the object which it contemplated,—the salvation especially of those committed to his immediate charge, was the great

object for which he lived. He was watchful for opportunities of doing good, and was ever on the alert to turn them to the best account; while yet he was at the greatest possible remove from all startling innovations upon the order of the Church; from every thing that seemed to court success at the expense of reverence and Christian decorum. He knew how to make himself at home in all your dwellings, and a sharer in all your joys and sorrows, without infringing on any of the proprieties of life. He moved about among you as an angel of light and love, scattering blessings over every path he traversed. But his large Christian heart went abroad far beyond the sphere of his immediate labours; and you could scarcely hold the briefest conversation with him but it would reveal to you some benevolent purpose that was designed to take effect, perhaps in some other congregation, perhaps in another State, perhaps at the ends of the earth. The whole Presbyterian Church honoured him as one of her wisest, most energetic and influential ministers. In his latter years he had his full share of vicissitude and trial, but he glorified God out of the depths, holding fast his integrity, his faith, his

perseverance; and, before death came, every cloud that had overshadowed him seemed to have disappeared. Though only about half of his entire ministry was passed among you, I do not wonder that his name is pronounced here with veneration, and his memory gratefully embalmed.

But you will not have reached the full estimate of your obligations, if you limit your views to what has been accomplished here by *one* of God's faithful servants; for you have had a long succession of ministers among you, nearly all of whom have left behind them an honoured name, while several of them are justly recognized as among the greater lights of our American Church.

Of those who preceded Dr. McDowell I will mention only three. The first is the great and good DICKINSON, who united with the office of Pastor that of a Teacher of youth, and ultimately of President of the infant College. No minister of the Presbyterian Church had a more controlling influence in all its councils than he; and scarcely any writer on theological subjects in this land was so widely or favourably known. Not only tradition, but his printed

sermons that have come down to us, furnish the evidence that those who sat under his ministry enjoyed the highest Christian privileges. Then there was the noble, patriotic and devout CALDWELL, who lived and moved and had his being in generous impulses and efforts, and whose very blood formed part of the price of our country's independence. Within my recollection there were those still living among you who could testify, from personal remembrance, not only of his love of country, but of his devotion to the Church, and who could tell how manifestly his heart warmed with the love of Christ, while he was pleading with sinners to be reconciled to God. The close of his ministry they remembered as an event that not only draped this town in mourning, but sent a pang to the inmost heart of the whole American Church,—that portion of it only excepted that was in sympathy with a traitorous spirit. At a still later period there was the gifted and eloquent KOLLOCK, who, though having charge of the very congregation in the midst of which he had received his early training, soon came to be admired, here as well as elsewhere, as one of the brightest stars of the American pulpit. It was

only for a brief period that he held the pastoral office here, but it was long enough for him to become enshrined in the grateful remembrances of those to whom he ministered and to secure a traditional fame with their posterity. These are but representatives of the succession of wise and faithful men, whom the Head of the Church placed here in the earlier periods of your history, and whose cumulative influence prepared this soil for the culture of that venerable man whom most of the elder portion of the congregation now remember as their first Pastor.

I have spoken of some of those who preceded Dr. McDowell here in the pastoral office ; but there is one who came after him, now among the glorified, whom I could not omit to notice without doing violence to some of the tenderest associations of the hour ; though I am quite aware that, in rendering the appropriate tribute to his memory, I must repeat substantially the office which your kindness assigned to me just after he had gone to his last resting place. Dr. MURRAY, it may safely be said, brought to his highly important position here all those qualities which were best fitted at once to grace and honour it, and render it in the highest degree

effective. With a mind quick in its discernment, clear in its apprehension, sure in its movements and comprehensive in its range, he united a heart to which noble and kindly impulses were as natural as his breath, and from which there was diffused a genial, social warmth, that rendered his presence every-where the harbinger of joy. His Christian character was a beautiful compound of conscientiousness, faith and humility, of active benevolence and earnest devotion. His preaching was characterized by strong and well-matured evangelical thought, so clearly presented that a child could understand it, and by a manner of delivery of which simplicity, solemnity and deep fervour were the prominent characteristics. You know better than I do how diligently and faithfully he fulfilled his duties as a Pastor ; how he could forget every thing else in his efforts to promote your spiritual well-being ; how his words of counsel and sympathy came to your hearts as a healing balm in the hour of sorrow ; how earnest he was to recover the wandering, and how ready and grateful to welcome them when recovered ; in short, how, as if by an intuitive perception, he discovered your needs, while, by an instinctive

benevolence, he was on the alert to meet them. You know how silently, and yet how steadily and powerfully, the cause to which he was devoted moved on under his faithful guidance; how, during a single year, he admitted upwards of seventy to the Communion of the Church; and what a bright record he has left for the encouragement of all who come after him. You know, too, how much he was honoured by the Presbyterian Church, in being called to some of her places of greatest responsibility and trust, and how satisfactorily he met the high demands which were thus made upon him, as far as he felt at liberty to yield to them. And I may add, you know how his fame as a writer spread on both sides of the Atlantic, and especially how he immortalized himself in the controversy for which his early training was the providential preparation. Even on the list of your distinguished and revered Pastors, I may safely say that his name stands as a burning and shining light.

It would be an offence against delicacy if I were to extend my remarks to the relation existing between you and your present Pastor, farther than to say that you have good reason to

acknowledge God's gracious hand in giving such effect to his labours as has been witnessed in the recent revival among you. Such a state of things, occurring in his early ministry here, must surely be a source of rich encouragement both to him and to you; and is it too much to hope that it may be the harbinger of other and still richer displays of God's power and grace, that shall add still larger numbers to your Communion, and brighten still more his immortal crown.

What I have said may perhaps suffice to show the character of the *Ministry* with which this Church has generally been favoured from its first organization to the present time. I do not pretend to say that all in this long succession of Pastors have been equally faithful or equally honoured; but I may safely say that it is a rare case indeed that any congregation has so much in its ministry to be thankful for during so long a period. Let me now proceed to speak briefly of the *Church* itself; and I will endeavour, as far as I can, to show what have been its most prominent characteristics.

Let me premise a word, however, to put you on your guard against any misconstruction of

what I am about to say of the character of this Church, in respect either to the past or the present. I do not forget, and I trust you will not forget, that I am speaking of Christians, only as they have been, or now are, in the course of their training for Heaven; and all the excellence that I shall attribute to them must consist with a large measure of acknowledged imperfection. Those who have passed away *have* felt, and those who remain *still* feel their need of God's gracious Spirit to perfect the work of their spiritual renovation; and yet I cannot doubt that, as a Church, continued through two centuries, this has been one of the most favoured in our denomination.

In speaking of what this Church has been, I may say, in the first place, that it has generally been a *united* and *peaceful* Body. I say *generally*—for it were not to be expected that any Christian community, in this imperfect state, could pass the long period of two centuries without any contrariety of purpose or any interruption of harmony. In looking over your history, as given by your lamented Pastor, Dr. Murray, I find that, though, at several different periods, there were distracting and agitating influences

at work here, yet the most serious occasion of disquietude was during the ministry of the Rev. DAVID AUSTIN, and in consequence of his standing forth an earnest advocate for the doctrine of the immediate personal reign of Jesus Christ on the earth. The controversy that now took place was rather between the well meaning but deluded Pastor and the mass of his congregation, though there were a considerable number who, for a time, sympathized deeply in his fanatical impulses. But, with all the exceptions from a state of harmonious feeling and action that I can gather from your history, I may safely say that a spirit of mutual good-will has here generally prevailed, and that the members of this Church have, in more than an ordinary degree, been fellow-helpers to one another's edification, and fellow-workers to the kingdom of God. I have never heard, since my first knowledge of this congregation, of any serious collision having occurred in it; and your presence here to-day, under these deeply interesting circumstances, is evidence enough that you are still bound together in the bonds of a goodly fraternal fellowship.

I remark, again, that this has always been a thoroughly *evangelical* Church, while yet it has had no sympathy with a *bigoted* or *intolerant* spirit. Whether this Church was formed originally upon a Congregational or Presbyterian basis, is a question which cannot now, I understand, be satisfactorily answered, though it is said to have been composed of about an equal number of New England Congregationalists and of Scotch Presbyterians.\* But whatever may have been its early denominational relations, there is no doubt as to the fact that it has always been outspoken and earnest in its defence of evangelical truth. It has never proved itself a trumpet giving an uncertain sound; has never attempted, or been suspected of attempting, a compromise with any of the dubious forms of Christian doctrine. Jesus Christ and Him crucified, the World's Light and Hope and Refuge and Glory, has been the great truth around which all other truths have been made to revolve. At the same time, if my impression is correct, it has not been the usage here to make a man an offender for a word. You have recognized the fact that differences on

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\* See Letter at the close.

minor points may exist among those who hold the Head ; and those differences you have tolerated in the spirit of an enlarged charity ; and you have asked for no other pass to the Communion table than a credible profession of faith in the great truths of Christianity and a life conformed to such profession. Instead of separating Orthodoxy and Charity, you have looked upon them as twin-sisters, each rejoicing in the other's light, and both the more sound and healthful for the union.

I may say, again, that this Church has an honourable record for its general tone of *spirituality* and *consistency*. As early as the days of Dickinson there were copious showers of Divine influence shed forth upon this congregation, the result of which was the gathering of large numbers into the visible Church. And besides the signal revivals which have been enjoyed here in later periods, of which I have already spoken, there has been many a gracious visitation of less power and notoriety, which nevertheless has resulted in the increased spirituality of God's people, and the hopeful conversion of a goodly number of souls. If I mistake not, there has been much wisdom manifested here

in maintaining the purity of revivals; in guarding against self-deception, especially from the influence of undue animal excitement; in taking care that earnestness should be qualified by reverence, and vigorous effort by a regard to Christian order. It were to be expected that a Church, so much in contact, as this has been, with God's gracious Spirit, should evince habitually more than a common relish for spiritual exercises, and should make this manifest by the outward demonstrations of an exemplary life. Such an expectation I believe to be fully met by your record through all the past generations. And it is to be earnestly hoped that that spirit of intense worldliness that prevails so extensively in many of our Churches, and that seeks to cast down the last barrier between the Church and the world, may never breathe its pestilential influence over this hallowed spot. May Christianity ever be enthroned here in her life and power.

So also this Church has been, and still is, distinguished for its *efficiency*. At no period of its history, as far as I can learn, have its members trained themselves to sit with folded arms and expect the work of the Lord to go on without

them—on the contrary, they have generally realized that their spiritual birth was with reference to their spiritual activity, and their conduct has been, in a good degree, in accordance with this conviction. Several Churches, especially those of Rahway, Westfield, Connecticut Farms and Springfield, may be said to have been formed from this—at least, most of those of whom they were composed had their original membership here ; and no doubt the formation of these distinct Churches, however harmoniously it may have been brought about, must have required wise and vigorous coöperation. And, at a much later period, you have furnished the original materials for another Church here in the midst of you ; and more than that, you have furnished the church its Pastor in one of your own beloved and honoured members, who, after a protracted and eminently useful ministry, has lately been called up to receive the crown.\* And this leads me to say that our Theological Seminary at Princeton has always found favour in your eyes ; and, while you have contributed liberally to its support, two of your

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\* Rev. Dr. MAGIE.

ministers\* have been among its most efficient Directors and Trustees, while at least one of your members† has also been a Trustee, and a goodly number of your young men have been trained in it for the sacred office. To other great objects of Christian benevolence you have also shown yourselves ready to contribute; and your contributions, if they have not been like the swelling flood, have at least resembled the full and quiet stream. I doubt not that good seed has been scattered from this Church all over the land; and that there are many now before the throne, who look down upon you and gratefully refer their exaltation to your benevolent Christian doings.

I only add that this Church is venerable for its *antiquity* and its *associations*. Though the exact date of its origin cannot now be clearly fixed, we are sure that it is *about* the year 1667; and that places it far up on the list of the oldest churches in our land. And through what an eventful portion of the history, not of our own country only, but of the world, has it already come! Here have been heard the voices of

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\* Dr. McDowell and Dr. Murray. † Mr. Reuben Van Pelt.

BURR and BRAINERD and the TENNENTS, and that modern apostle, WHITEFIELD, and many other of the commanding spirits of our American Pulpit, who were most active in framing our ecclesiastical polity. Here raged the storm of the Revolution, and I suppose that several names of that period, of high civil and military renown, appear on your records. Long after this Church originated, the Church at large was in a deep slumber in respect to her obligations to evangelize the world; and here has been witnessed, not only the dawn of the brighter day, but the mounting up of the sun into mid-heaven,—the gradual unfolding of a plan that contemplates nothing less than the regeneration of the whole world. During this period, also, how many nations have been arrayed against each other in deadly conflict! How many kings and princes have risen and flourished, only to make for themselves an ignoble record! How many noble institutions have been projected and established, and have even grown old in the fulfilment of their appointed mission! In a word, what wonderful developments of God's providence have been made in every department of human activity, on every field open to our observation!

Surely you cannot but venerate this Church, of which you are the privileged members, not only in view of its early origin and diversified gracious experiences, but in view of that succession of great events,—forming no unimportant part of the world's history,—of which it has been the favoured witness.

Having said all that I deem necessary to illustrate the character of the Ministry that has been exercised here, and the character of the Church that has been thus signally favoured, let me now, in a few words, endeavour to trace the influence which the Ministry and the Church have exerted upon each other.

As to the influence which the Ministry has exerted upon the Church, I am sure that I do not exceed the limits of sober verity, when I say that it has made the Church essentially what it is. The pastoral office is of itself an agency of great power, and the manner in which it is exercised must determine whether it is for good or evil. Let it be perverted,—no matter in what way, and it will be far from assuming a mere negative character—even though it be associated with the attractions of a cultivated intellect and a generous spirit and a fine social

bearing, yet, if it lack the essential quality of fidelity to its great object, it will act as a terrible engine of evil; and the more effectively for the aid which it will derive from these personal advantages. For the authority of the ministry, as a Divine institution, is generally acknowledged; and if false doctrines or loose practical maxims come forth under the sanction of the ministerial office, what else can we expect but that perverse minds will accept the erroneous teaching more readily on account of the sacred channel through which it comes to them? But, on the other hand, let a minister possess the true spirit of his office as well as the requisite intellectual qualifications for it; let him address himself to his work as an ambassador of God and show himself prompt to the performance of every duty, even though it be at the expense of the greatest personal sacrifices; let him take counsel of the Providence of God as to what he ought to do, and seek grace from on high to enable him to do it; and you may rest assured that that minister is exerting an influence that no human mind can estimate—an influence essentially cumulative in its character and incomparably glorious in its results. The

Ministry which this Church has generally enjoyed has been of this latter kind,—wise, earnest, faithful; and it has been the chief instrument by which the stability and efficiency of the Church have been secured, and the triumphs of Divine grace in connection with it achieved. By this means, too, a benign influence has been brought to bear upon the morals of the surrounding population, and when there has been an attempt to inaugurate evil practices, the Pulpit has not been slow to sound the note of warning. As an example of what I mean, I may mention the fact that, sometime in the early part of the ministry of Dr. McDowell, an attempt was made to introduce, in the neighbourhood of this then quiet village, the rude practice of horse-racing. Dr. McDowell, knowing and deprecating from the heart, as he did, the gross immoralities with which these scenes are usually connected, asked the coöperation of the civil authorities to prevent the threatened evil; but without success. Nothing daunted or discouraged, however, by this unpropitious result, he resolved to undertake, in better strength than his own, the work of resistance; and, accordingly, he delivered a discourse on the

subject, so full of scathing, solemn rebuke, that those who had come hither to trifle, and had seated themselves before him in a defiant attitude, revealed, by their manifest restlessness, the consciousness of guilt. But, notwithstanding his earnest remonstrance, the race was begun; and scarcely was it begun before Death marked one of the persons thus employed as his victim. Still, however, the scene went on; and with it was associated the grossest wickedness in different forms. But the courage of the leaders soon began to falter, and they abandoned their enterprise and left the place to return to it no more. This was certainly among the striking events of Dr. McDowell's ministry; but it was a faithful illustration of the spirit that controlled him and of the influence which he exerted. And I may add, the same spirit of conscientious fidelity, in its varied exercises, had existed here before, and has existed since, in connection with the pastoral office; and to this fact, I cannot doubt, are to be referred, in no small degree, those qualities which have secured to you so honoured a name and place among the Churches.

And if the influence of the Ministry has been

thus potent in forming the character of the Church, what influence has the Church in turn exerted upon the Ministry? It would be strange indeed if some or other of its members had not, at some time, embarrassed their minister's efforts, thwarted his good purposes and caused his heart to bleed; but, as I am dealing in generals, I think I may safely say that the Ministry here—so far as we can judge through all the generations—has been met by the Church in the spirit not only of cordial good-will but of efficient coöperation. And thus your ministers have been strengthened and cheered in their arduous labours. They have been sustained by your sympathies and prayers; and in the fact that they have seen you fellow-helpers in their work, they have recognized a fresh assurance that their labours would not be in vain. Even Heaven itself has been more dear to them, in the prospect, because they have expected to meet there those who have ministered to their strength and comfort here upon earth. Thus it is that the Ministry and the Church here have helped each other in their labours, and have been sharers in one another's joy.

And now have we not reached a point at which the one great duty that urges itself upon you is thanksgiving and praise? This I understand to be the special duty which your observance of this day contemplates; and are there not voices from Earth and Heaven, from amongst the living and the dead, calling you to it? Is there any feature or any portion of your history, that does not, in some way, connect itself with the Divine goodness, so as to form a legitimate subject for grateful remembrances? Whether you look at it in general or in detail, whether in connection with the primary agency of God or the secondary agency of man, do you not recognize an irresistible appeal to your hearts to "praise Him from whom all blessings flow?" Regarding this then as the special duty of the hour, I call upon you to throw your whole hearts into the performance of it. Praise God that the material out of which this Church was originally formed was admirably fitted to accomplish its purpose; that, though different countries and different ecclesiastical organizations were represented here, yet, under the influence of that wisdom and charity that come down from above, all was merged into one harmonious

Body, and, ultimately, if not at once, into an efficient Church of our own communion. Praise Him that you have the record of such an able and faithful ministry; that voices have been heard here that have penetrated, through the press, to the ends of the earth; and that some still live vividly in your remembrance who were among the acknowledged lights of our American Church. Praise Him for the gracious care which He has exercised here in seasons of peril; for all the comfort and strength that He granted to his people in the dark days of the Revolution, especially when they saw their house of worship ruthlessly set on fire, and their beloved Pastor stricken down by the hand of an assassin; and, I may add, for the measure of wisdom that has been manifested here, and the measure of quietude that has been enjoyed here, amidst the general agitations which, at different periods, have swept over the Presbyterian Church. Praise Him that so little of internal dissention and so much of peace and good will have ever prevailed here, and that each successive generation has been able to testify how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. Praise Him for all

that you have been enabled to accomplish in originating or strengthening other Churches, in raising up and sending forth gifted, well-furnished and earnest young men to the work of the ministry, as well as for being permitted to associate yourselves with the enterprises designed for the relief of human suffering, for the general improvement and elevation of society, or for the purification and extension of the Church. Praise Him for the large measures of spiritual influence with which this Church has been favoured at different periods and under different ministrations. Praise Him for that Communion season in 1817, and for other Communion seasons since, especially the one just past, when this aisle before me has been filled with those who had come to enter publicly into covenant with God. Praise Him that so many of your children and youth are growing up under the benign influence of Sabbath School instruction, and that so many are already walking in wisdom's ways, and forming characters that will render them a blessing to their generation. And, finally, praise Him for having led you so graciously over so long a way; for having given you constantly fresh pledges of his

favour, and having placed you in circumstances and surrounded you with influences that give promise of increasing efficiency and devotion, until the whole Church, having performed her mission on earth, shall be ready for the final translation to Heaven.

But I must touch another chord, else I shall not be true either to the past or to the future—I must remind you that you hold a position which, while it calls you to devout thanksgiving, imposes upon you vast responsibility. You are put in charge with the results of the diversified influence that has been operating on this ground during two centuries; for influence, though the individuals by whom it is originally exerted pass away, lives in the principles, the characters, the habits, of succeeding generations. It is considerably more than a century since the venerable DICKINSON closed his earthly labours and went to his reward; and it is long since there has been an individual living who had any other than a traditional knowledge of his person or character; and yet DICKINSON'S utterances here have not spent their force to this hour—they live, no doubt, though we cannot trace them, in the characters of the occupants

of these pews, and in the high position which it is your privilege as a congregation to hold. And thus it is with the other great and good men who have exercised their ministry here—and I may add, thus it is with many whose names appear only on their family records or tomb-stones, but who nevertheless served their generation faithfully within the narrow sphere which Providence assigned to them. The good influence which they exerted is still an element of purity in your moral atmosphere,—a trust providentially committed to you to be managed with cautious fidelity for the benefit of those who are hereafter to live. Let me say then, the graves of your fathers speak and charge you to husband faithfully the influence of their mouldering occupants, that there may be a glorious testimony from earth awaiting them on the great resurrection day. And then there comes a voice from beyond the veil that hides from us the future,—a voice from generations that will not see the light till your eyes and mine are closed upon it,—imploring you to be faithful to their interests, and leave to them only a legacy of blessing. I exhort you to testify your gratitude for the past by making

the best provision for the future. Transmit to the next generation all the good that has come down to you, improved and intensified by having passed through your hands. Especially cherish with sacred care the fruits of the revival with which you have lately been favoured; let its subjects be guarded against the temptations to worldliness which will doubtless beset them, and trained to habits of earnest devotion and untiring diligence and cheerful self-denial; and, while this will constitute the appropriate preparation for other similar displays of God's power and grace, it will ere long render your own memories fragrant with the blessings of generations to come.

One of the most interesting features of this occasion is that, while it throws us back amidst the scenes of other days, it brings together those in whose memories those scenes are most gratefully and reverently cherished. Here are fathers and mothers in Israel who received their early training under that venerable man whose ministry commenced on this ground more than sixty years ago, and whose tender and solemn utterances come to them to-day, as if from the grave in which he sleeps, or the Heaven

in which he rejoices and reigns. Thanks to that gracious Providence that has preserved them through so many years, in the midst of Christian influences, and permits them to rejoice together to-day, in looking back upon the way by which they have been led, and in looking forward to the glory in which their path will soon terminate. While the almond tree flourishes, may their onward course be growing brighter. May they bring forth much fruit in old age. May their children and children's children walk in the footsteps of their faith, and thus become the medium through which their works of faith and labours of love shall descend to future generations. Before they go hence may they witness a repetition of those wonderful works of Divine power and love, which, in both their earlier and later years, have filled them with joy and praise. At last may they all be gathered into the assembly of the glorified.

Perhaps there is no class to which the occasion addresses itself with more solemnity and impressiveness than Ministers of the Gospel—the great lessons which it teaches us are that we are set to perform a momentous work, and have

but a brief period in which to accomplish it. How like shadows shooting over the rock have been the lives of those who have successively exercised the pastorate here! McDOWELL, MURRAY, MAGIE,—how lately were they here in the midst of you, proclaiming God's word, administering His ordinances and labouring to bring sinners within the attracting power of the Cross; but now their work is done, their record is finished, and we cannot doubt that they have been exalted to a ministration in the eternal temple. And I cannot but advert to the fact that another of the greater lights of our denomination has just been extinguished in a neighbouring city—the bold, earnest, gifted and eminently useful Dr. KREBS, with whom your late Pastor was in most intimate relations, and through whose lips the messages of mercy have sometimes come to you, has, after a protracted season of bodily and mental decay, just entered into his rest. Shall not we, to whom the sacred office has been committed, hear and heed the monitory voice of our departed brethren, charging us to exercise our ministry in view of the brevity of its continuance and the endless duration of its results? Shall we not

labour, as these, our departed fathers and brethren, have done, to impress ourselves, by a benign and renovating influence, upon the characters and the destinies of all committed to our care? Shall we not endeavour to discharge our duties with such an humble, earnest, dependent spirit, that monuments of our fidelity shall rise on every side of us, and the beneficent results of our labours shall be the testimony on earth and in Heaven that we have not lived in vain?

And while there is much in the solemnities of this hour to give a fresh impulse to the Ministry, is there not also a sound going forth through the whole Presbyterian Church, calling for a higher degree of devotion and self-denial and Christian activity, in sustaining and advancing the great interests of Christ's Kingdom. The history of this Church, its healthful preservation and gradual increase through so long a period, its vigorous off-shoots in so many other flourishing Churches, its general tone of spirituality and activity and liberality, all conspire to render it an example to the denomination of which it forms a part. Let other Churches then endeavour not only to imi-

tate it, but even to surpass it, in works of faith and labours of love. Let them contemplate both the Providence and the Grace of God, as they have been displayed here, and gather from each fresh encouragement, not only to build themselves up in faith and holiness, but to exert themselves to the utmost for the salvation of all who are within their reach.

And, finally, you cannot fail to recognize in the exercises of this day, or rather in the position and history of this Christian society, a fresh pledge of the final triumph of our ever blessed Christianity. Who is it that has borne this particular Church along through the already protracted period of its existence; preserving it amidst dangers, honouring it with an able and faithful ministry, giving it large influence for good both at home and abroad, and imparting his gracious Spirit in such measure that it has seemed as if the very earth was opening to bring forth salvation? It is He who has pledged himself to the universal triumph of the Gospel,—to the completion of that spiritual edifice which is now in the process of being built. Wherefore, I pray you, let the view which you have now taken of your own present

favoured condition, in connection with God's providential and gracious dealings that have brought you to it, serve to strengthen your faith in the revealed assurance that Christianity shall ere long become universal. Yes, that same Gospel that has wrought such wonders among *you*, has in it the power to regenerate the world, and that power is now in the process of being rapidly developed. And I know not how you can more effectually testify your gratitude to God for that marvellous loving-kindness which you recognize in this service, than by consecrating the energies which his grace hath bestowed upon you to the great work of human salvation;—to the ushering in of that day, when every part of this poor fallen world shall become vocal with the praise and radiant with the glory of our Immanuel.

The Rev. Dr. HATFIELD, of New York, who has probably made more extensive researches into the early history of the First Church in Elizabeth, than any other person, has favoured me with the following letter since the preceding Discourse was delivered, that leaves no doubt that the Church was originally Congregational.

NEW YORK, *October 18th*, 1867.

REV. WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.,

*Dear Brother* : — At your request, I send you a few statements respecting the early history of the First Presbyterian Church of Elizabeth, N. J., having a particular bearing on the question of its denominational character.

The Church must have been organized very shortly after the settlement of the town in 1664–65. The men who founded both the town and Church were, with very few exceptions, New England men.

The most of them came from the Puritan Colonies on the East end of Long Island ; not a few of them emigrated from New Haven and the towns in the vicinity. Gov. CARTERET brought with him a company of thirty persons, nearly all of whom were merely servants. Not more than four or five of these persons became permanent residents. Some three or four families were

from New Amsterdam, and of Dutch descent. Scarcely any of these became permanent residents. The all-controlling influence was Puritan,—precisely the same as in Massachusetts and Connecticut, and afterwards in the adjacent town of Newark.

The Church was an Independent Church, both in faith and order. The Scotch emigration came not earlier than 1682, under the Quaker administration. The most of these found homes at Rahway and the Scotch Plains. Very few became residents of the town proper. Many of the Scotch, also, were Quakers. The Church remained throughout the century under the same controlling influences as at first. It had its Pastor and Deacons, but no Elders. Its affairs were regulated at “town meeting.” Subscriptions to the Pastor’s support were made at “town meeting,” annually.

Their first minister was the Rev. JEREMIAH PECK, a native of London, England, and one of the early settlers of New Haven, Connecticut. Educated at Harvard College, he became the minister of Saybrook as early as 1662, and a resident of Elizabeth-town from 1668 to 1678, when he removed to Greenwich, Connecticut, and remained there until 1690, at which time he settled in the ministry at Waterbury, Connecticut, where his death occurred June 7, 1699, in his 78th year.

The second minister of the town was the Rev. SETH FLETCHER, previously settled at Saco and Biddeford, Maine, and at Southampton, Long Island, whence he came to Elizabeth-town in 1680, where he died in August, 1682.

The third minister was the Rev. JOHN HARRIMAN, a native of New Haven, Connecticut, and a graduate of Harvard College. He began his ministry at Elizabeth-

town, September 30th, 1687, and died in the pastoral charge of the same Church, August 19th, 1705.

The fourth minister was the Rev. SAMUEL MELYEN, a native, probably, of New York, and a graduate of Harvard. He was settled at Elizabeth-town May 20th, (?) 1704, as a Colleague Pastor. He retired from the pulpit to private life in 1707, and died at Elizabeth-town in the summer of 1711.

The fifth minister was the Rev. JONATHAN DICKINSON, also from New England, of whom I need not speak more particularly. He was ordained Pastor of the Elizabeth-town Church September 29, 1709, by the Consociation of Fairfield County, Connecticut.

During all this period the Church had retained its form as an Independent Church. JONATHAN OGDEN and GEORGE ROSS were the Deacons in Mr. HARRIMAN'S time. Mr. DICKINSON united with the Presbytery of Philadelphia in April, 1717. The Church was represented, for the first time, in the Synod of Philadelphia, in 1721, by ROBERT OGDEN, a son of Deacon JONATHAN OGDEN.

It is fully ascertained, therefore, that, for the first half century of its existence, the Church was an Independent Church, and that it became Presbyterian not earlier than 1717. For a fuller and particular account of this interesting period in the history of this venerable Church, I must refer you to my History of Elizabeth-town, now almost ready for the press, in which are given the authorities on which this brief statement is made.

Yours very truly,

EDWIN H. HATFIELD.