

SEMI-CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

Fourth Baptist Church, Society,

AND

SUNDAY SCHOOL,

OF

PROVIDENCE, R. I.

HISTORICAL DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN THE

Fourth Baptist Meeting House,

PROVIDENCE, R. I.,

JULY 9TH, 1873,

*IT BEING THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH.*

BY

A. H. GRANGER,

PASTOR.

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DISCOURSE.

“Our fathers have told us what work Thou didst in their days, in the times of old.”—Ps. XLIV, 1.

TO the Jew of old the fiftieth was the memorable year. It was the time when the servant was freed from his master, the debtor from his creditor, and when every man was at liberty to return to his own family and possessions. The trumpet which announced that auspicious morn, sent a thrill of joy to the hearts of struggling thousands.

To-day is our jubilee, when we invite all those who have ever been connected with us to come back to the dear old homestead, and meet the gathered household once more. Yet how many have the past fifty years borne where no note of invitation will reach them? We remember them to-day, but they come not at our call. Of the constituent members of the Church, but one is left among us, though probably another is still living, in a distant city. The venerable Dr. Benedict is the sole survivor of those who took part in the dedicatory services of this house, fifty-one years ago; while all those who participated in the public recognition of this Church, have long since gone to their reward. The ranks of the original members of the Society, have also been thinned by death, till few remain. The destroying angel has gathered rich harvests during those years, and the only meeting will be before the great white throne.

It is therefore befitting for us, to-day, to pause and review the past; and, leaping over the intervening fifty years, to go back to 1823, and endeavor to call up the men and the events connected with us, as a Church and a Society.

Fifty years ago, Rhode Island had a population of only about eighty-five thousand, a few thousands more than to-day are gathered within the limits of our city. Under the operation of a gradual emancipation law, slavery still lingered on her soil. People then, as now, talked of going west, but it was not to the vast fields beyond the Mississippi, much less to the shores of the Pacific, but to western New York, and eastern Ohio, where cities as large as our own now stand. Providence then could not boast of a city charter, with her mayor and aldermen, but was still a modest and unpretentious town, with about fourteen thousand inhabitants.

At that time, almost the entire strength of our denomination in this town, was concentrated in the First Baptist Church, under the pastoral care of Rev. Dr. Gano. The Second and Third Churches of comparatively recent date, were, at best, but weak and struggling interests, and then made weaker by their intestine divisions; the one under the pastoral care of the Rev. Peter Ludlow, and the other of Rev. Allen Brown.*

The great revival of 1820 added one hundred and forty-seven to the membership of the First Church, and swelled its numbers to six hundred and forty-eight, the highest that it ever reached.

It was in this year of grace that it was first proposed to organize a religious society, and build a house of worship in this part of the city.

It may, to some, seem remarkable that no movement of this character was made at an earlier day, and that this field was left unoccupied so long; but such judge of Providence as it is now, and not as it was then. In the earlier years of our history the people moved slowly in building meeting-houses. The First Baptist Church had no house of worship for the first sixty years of its existence. The people worshipped in a grove in pleasant weather and in private houses when it was inclement. Their first meeting house was the gift of their pastor, Rev. Pardon Tillinghast, built

* In 1823 the First Church returned to the Warren Association five hundred and sixty-one members; the Third, sixty-three, and the Second sent no letter to the Association, on account of its divided state. Probably there were in the two parties into which the Church was divided and which were then seeking a reunion, one hundred and seventy-five members; making a total of seven hundred and ninety-nine in the town.—See Minutes of Warren Association, 1823.—See Appendix (A).

at his own expense in the year 1700.* Nor had they what would now be called a passable house of worship till seventy-five years later, when their present stately edifice was erected.

Moreover, in the earlier times, the spiritual wants of this part of the city were well met. A century ago the centre of business was not down at Market Square, where it is to-day, but on North Main street, and nearly as high as Smith street, and only a short distance below Constitution hill. Formerly, wharves lined the east side of the Moshassuck river, where now is Canal street, and "loaded vessels from the West Indies with full cargoes went up as far as the foot of Bowen street."† Strange as it may appear, to-day, as we look at that diminutive stream, the Moshassuck, with its dirty, discolored waters, "the tradition is that the first square rigged vessel that ever sailed from the port, sailed from a wharf as high up as the Canal Market.‡ The main ship-yard of the town then, and for years later, was on the *west* side of that same stream, just below Smith street. We find it difficult to credit the statement which has been handed down, that in early colonial days the Moshassuck was a lovely stream, its banks lined with grassy slopes and shady groves, where the young people loved to walk in the twilight hours. But "how has the gold changed, and the fine gold become dim?" The exclusion of the tides, and the obstruction of the river, have wrought an entire change in the stream itself and the adjacent lands. Poetry and sentiment have given place to utility; commerce has yielded to manufactures.

This, therefore, was the old part of the town, and was properly included in the parish of the First Church, whose house of worship was located on the west side of North Main street, opposite Star street. Nor was the location changed until their present house was built, in 1775. A meeting house there, would be tolerably convenient of access, to people residing in this vicinity. Nor is it surprising that they did not immediately take steps for a new organization when the First Church changed its location. They naturally clung to the Church and Society where they had always worshipped.

* Benedict's History, p. 452.

† Staples' Annals of Providence, page 205.

‡ Staples' Annals of Providence, page 205.

In 1820, when the Spirit of Grace moved all hearts, and no part of the town was unaffected, there was no religious organization in this section, and the field was open to any occupant. As there was no house of worship here, the people were accustomed to meet, sometimes in a hall, on the west side of Randall square, on Charles street, and sometimes in another hall, on the east side of North Main street, near Star street. Such was the religious interest in the community at that time, that these halls, though very inconvenient, were often filled to suffocation, and the power of the Spirit was present to convince and to convert. The leaders in this movement were Rev. Henry Tatem of Knightsville, Cranston, and Rev. Ray Potter, Pastor of the Independent Church at Pawtucket. Both were men whom the common people heard gladly, though they afterward passed under a cloud. Mr. Potter, though not of so popular an address, is still remembered as a man of no little power.

The converts were baptized into the fellowship of the First General Baptist Church of Cranston, located at Knightsville, of which Mr. Tatem was pastor—sometimes one and sometimes the other of these men administering the ordinance. I learn from the only constituent member of the Church, dwelling among us, that he was baptized in the Moshassuck stream, near where the Screw Factory now stands, by the Rev. Mr. Tatem, in the Spring of 1820. This was the baptistry in those days, though poorly adapted to such a purpose now. The candidates were accustomed to go to the house of Deacon Pardon Hawkins, who lived in a cottage near the canal on the north side of Randall street, to make the needful preparations. The Deacon was a good man, and his house and his heart were ever open to welcome his brethren.

It was on the evening of the 26th of April, of this same year, 1820, that a number of gentlemen of the northerly part of the town of Providence, met for the purpose of consultation on the practicability of erecting a house of public worship in their vicinity. Benj. Peck, Esq., was chosen chairman, and Samuel Thurber, Esq., Secretary. At that meeting a committee of seven was appointed of which Dexter Thurber Esq., was chairman, "to look out and purchase a suitable lot for a meeting house and to open a subscription for the purpose of raising a sum of money

sufficient to carry the same into effect;" and to report as soon as practicable.

The committee entered immediately upon their duties, and in June submitted the following report:

"Your committee respectfully report that they have had several meetings, and examined several lots, and are of the opinion that the one offered by J. B. Howell, Esq., is the most pleasantly situated, sufficiently large, and cheaper than any other offered, which could be depended upon. They therefore, gave it the preference, and have purchased it. The lot and streets leading to it will cost nearly two hundred and eighty dollars, of which, about two hundred dollars have been subscribed, by citizens of the north part of the town. The balance, your committee flatter themselves, will be obtained without difficulty. They would observe that in their opinion a committee should be immediately appointed to obtain subscriptions for the erection of a house of public worship, and to devise such plans as will be most advisable for carrying the same into effect as soon as practicable."

The lot secured by the committee is the one on which this house stands. At the time of the purchase, the adjacent field was a rough broken pasture, while a clump of trees grew on the spot now occupied by the house. No street had been opened here then, and it was necessary to provide the right of way. Probably the committee thought that a house in this quiet and retired place, away from the dust and noise of North Main street, and yet near enough to be easily accessible, and with no public thoroughfare on either side, would best secure the worshipper from annoyance. In this respect the choice was a wise one. A location on the Main street, however, would have better served to attract public attention.

In accordance with the recommendation of the foregoing report a committee was appointed to solicit donations for the balance due on the lot, and to erect a house; and also to petition the Legislature for a charter of incorporation; and to attend to "all other matters touching the great object in view, of establishing a Church and Society for the worship of Almighty God." This was giving the committee a wide commission, and they probably found it easier in the end to provide for building a house, than to establish a Church and Society.

During the year a charter was procured, and the Fourth Baptist Society was legally organized, under the act of incorporation, on the twenty-eighth day of May, 1821. Dexter Thurber, Esq., was the first President of the Society. Christopher Hill, Esq., Secretary, and Samuel Thurber, Esq., Treasurer. At the same meeting a building committee was chosen to superintend the erection of a house, consisting of Dexter Thurber, Enos Angell, Jabez Gorham, Peter Daniels, and David Cole. The Treasurer was also authorized to procure, by loan, money sufficient to finish the house, except the vestry. The vestry, however, was finished and occupied, eight months before the house was completed.

The house was dedicated to the worship of Almighty God, on the 26th of August, 1822. The Rev. Dr. Gano was the preacher and the Rev. Dr. Benedict offered prayer on the occasion. When the accounts were audited, it was found that the house and grounds had cost not far from six thousand dollars; and that the Society owed the chairman of the building committee the sum of thirteen hundred dollars. The balance, with the exception of a little more than four hundred dollars from abroad, had been contributed by residents in this vicinity.

It may, perhaps, as well be said here that the house was enlarged by the addition of seventeen feet, giving twenty-four more pews, in 1850; and raised, and our present fine vestry rooms constructed, in the year 1861. The expense of the additions and improvements made since its erection, have been about twice the original cost of the house.

Though a house of worship was erected, and the Fourth Baptist Society legally organized, there was as yet no Church established here. The majority of the Corporation were Baptist in sentiment, and designed that this house should be used by no other denomination; but they were themselves connected with no Christian Church, nor did they indicate by what branch of the Baptist family the house should be occupied. The probability is that they were not agreed upon that point; nor do they appear to have been very decided in their doctrinal views.

In the rules which they adopted in reference to the Church which should hereafter occupy this house, they provided for the largest liberty of opinion, in the individual member, even to the subversion of the independent action of a Christian Church. They forgot that it is a fundamental principle with the Baptists that

Christ is the only law-giver in Zion and that a church can never submit to be controlled by any human authority; yea, that no body of men have a right to lay down rules to which she is obliged to conform. Neither Pope nor prelate, synod nor society has any divine authority for imposing laws upon Zion. She is amenable only to her King, and the commands which he has enjoined.

Let not these remarks, however, be construed as reflecting upon the action of the Society. They had built a house without knowing what would be the character of the church which would occupy it in future years. How natural that they should seek to exercise a controlling influence over the contemplated Church, should it prove incapable of properly administering its affairs. Nor did any serious difficulty ever arise between the two organizations. The obnoxious rules gradually fell into desuetude, and the Church and Society, as soon as they were in good working order, moved on harmoniously.

The Society, intent on settling a stated ministry, at the beginning of the year 1822, several months before the house was completed, voted to open a subscription to raise funds to sustain a preacher, and a little later appointed a committee to wait on the Rev. Abner Jones, a minister of the Christian Denomination, the Unitarian wing of the Baptist family, and to invite him to become pastor of the Church and Society. This action would seem to indicate the denominational tendency of the majority of the corporation at that time; they were Baptists but not Trinitarians. We should remember, however, that in Rhode Island fifty years ago, the dividing line between the different classes of Baptists was not as closely drawn as at present. There was less to hinder a man from passing from one to the other. About that time also an anti-Trinitarian wave,—for I can call it nothing else,—swept over the State, shaking the faith of not a few of the leading minds in the denomination on that vital doctrine, the proper divinity of our Lord. What wonder then that the members of this infant Society should be affected by the same influences? Mr. Jones, however, declined the call, and the field was still left vacant.*

* It is but justice to Mr. Jones to add that in his later years, though still ecclesiastically connected with the Christian denomination, he was not Anti-Trinitarian.

In the meantime, while the Fourth Baptist Society were building a house and seeking a pastor, there was another movement going on, controlled by other men, which soon culminated in the formation of a Christian Church. The converts of 1820, though baptized into the fellowship of the "First General Baptist Church of Cranston," really sustained to that body little more than a nominal relation.

They continued to worship, first in a hall, and then in the vestry of this house, visited by the Rev. Messrs. Tatem and Potter, and occasionally supplied by other preachers, for the next two years and a half.

They rarely went to Cranston, unless it was at an occasional season of communion. Here was their spiritual home, while there they were comparative strangers.

Such a state of things might serve a temporary purpose, but could not long continue. In the summer of 1823, we find the members residing here asking the Church in Cranston to dismiss them and incorporate them, as an independent body. The letter of the Church in reply to their request is deserving of an insertion here, as illustrative of the views of church polity, entertained by some of the Baptists of Rhode Island, half a century ago.

"To all whom it may concern, and by these presents be it known, That Pardon Hawkins, Consider Miller, Esek Esten, Nicholas S. Dawley, Willard Smith, Luther Salsbury, William Pierce, Stafford Benchley, Bowers Lewis, Ezekiel Hawkins, Lydia Knowles, Mary Ann Knowles, Frances Knowles, Elizabeth Green, Sarah, Green, Cynthia Amsbury, May Emeline Merrifield, Waite Olney, Mary Smith, Charity Taylor, Abigail Bacon, Celia Ann Smith, Eliza Rider, Lydia Pierce, Mary Dawley, Waite Hawkins, Clarissa Snow, Eliza Hawkins, Elizabeth Curtis, Mary Baker, Marcy Hoard, Marcy Lassell, members of the First General Baptist Church of Jesus Christ in the town of Cranston, and in good standing and living in the town of Providence, in brotherly love and in a Christian like manner, have addressed the aforesaid Church, praying that they may be set apart by themselves and incorporated into a Church, independent of the Cranston Church :

Therefore, after mature deliberation and consideration, we have granted the prayer of our brethren's petition, by these presents, and they are legally set apart and constituted into a Church in

full fellowship with us, with power to transact all business that may come before the Church for the well ordering of the Church as they may see it most fit for the Redeemer's Kingdom. . . .

They are known by us, and may be known by the name of the Fourth Baptist Church of Jesus Christ, in the town of Providence.

Therefore we do ratify and confirm the foregoing, according to the true intent and meaning thereof.

Done by order, and in behalf of, the Church in Cranston, July 5th, 1823.

THOMAS B. COLE, Church Clerk."

Though these brethren and sisters were constituted an independent Church, by the above letter, yet they did not forego the customary council of recognition. Of that council, Rev. Zalmon Tobey was moderator, but when it was convened, or what churches were represented, the record does not state. Probably it was held in the same month of July.

The Church thus constituted and recognized had neither covenant nor articles of faith. Four years later it adopted a covenant, but it never has had any written creed. The doctrinal views of the Church at the time when it was recognized, we are told, "were decidedly anti-Calvinistic," and we find the church on the following year uniting with "several of the free communion Baptist Churches in the vicinity" in the organization of what was called "the Rhode Island Union Conference." There can be no question that the original members of this Church were at heart Arminian, and in favor of what they termed "free communion," though they had no written creed to that effect; and with this the practice of the body agreed during the first ten years of its existence.

The Church in Cranston with which the members were first connected was an offshoot of the Baptist Church in that town, which was constituted in the year 1816. It was generally supposed to be a Six Principle Baptist Church. But if that body held to the laying on of hands at the time when this church was organized, as it probably did, it could not have been with any great tenacity, else the faith of the mother would have been transmitted to the daughter. But this Church never practiced the

imposition of hands, nor is there anything on its records to indicate that the subject was ever discussed by them.*

The Fourth Baptist Society, several months before the Church was organized, had invited the Rev. Zalmon Tobey to assume the pastoral charge, and he appears to have occupied the pulpit a large portion of the time during the spring and summer of 1823.

In September of that year, he united with the Church, and at their request became pastor, a relation which continued mutually pleasant and profitable until April, 1833.

Mr. Tobey was an earnest working Christian, ever ready to speak a word for the Master. He was not a man of brilliant talents, nor of eloquent speech, but was possessed of that sound practical common sense, which best fits one for the work of life. Though his mind was naturally conservative, rather than impulsive, his life was marked by repeated changes of religious belief. Educated a Congregationalist, of the stern type of Dr. Hopkins, on his conversion, he united with the Baptists. From these he passed to the Freewill Baptists, and then to the Christian Denomination, and finally back again to the Baptists, in whose fellowship and ministry he died, in Sept., 1858. No one ever intimated that Mr. Tobey, in all these changes, was actuated by improper motives, or that he took advantage of his position to divide the Church which he served. He, himself, attributed his changes of opinion to the fact that he entered the ministry immediately after his graduation from Brown University, and without due theological training. His knowledge of Christian doctrine was insufficient to enable him to meet the objections of opponents. The reading of Fletcher's works led him into Arminianism, and of Channing's, into a modified Unitarianism. But when he found that his new views were injurious to his piety, and positively detrimental to his religious enjoyment, he was led to review the whole subject, and the result was, a return to the belief which he early cherished.†

* See appendix B.

† Zalmon Tobey, born in Norfolk, Conn. July 27th, 1791; graduated at Brown University 1817; ordained at Canaan, Conn., in the Spring of 1818. He was pastor at Fruit Hill, North Providence, Portland, Me., Portsmouth, Bristol, Colebrook, Conn., and Pawtuxet, R. I. He died Sept. 17, 1858.

Many still remember the appositeness of his texts when he abjured his faith in the doctrine of the Trinity and when he subsequently recanted his errors. In the former case it was, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God;" in the latter, "my steps had well nigh slipped."

After the resignation of the Rev. Mr. Tobey, one year was spent by the Church and Society in fruitless efforts to secure a pastor. As the Free Will Baptist ministry of that day was uneducated, it was exceedingly difficult to find a man who could meet the demands of the intelligent business men of the Society.

The result was the congregation dwindled away to a mere handful, and the Church became somewhat divided and disheartened. In this state of things the Rev. Peter Simonson, then recently pastor of the Baptist Church at Woonsocket, came among them, and the church instructed its committee to secure his services for one year, dating from the first of April, 1834. He continued as acting pastor until October 1836, when he removed to New Jersey and became agent of the Baptist Convention of that State. But his term of earthly service was nearly completed. A little more than two years after, he was called to his reward, when just entering on the duties of a pastorate.*

Mr. Simonson was a man of strong native powers, able to grasp the great truths of the gospel, and give them to those who attended his ministry. He fed the people with meat, and not with milk. His pastorate was the turning point in the history of this Church. In doctrine he was a Calvinist and a firm believer in restricted communion. He was convinced after a careful examination of the whole ground, that the salvation of this Church, humanly speaking, demanded a change which should bring it into sympathy with the great body of Baptists in the town and State. He canvassed the matter freely with the members of the Church. Some sympathized with him in these views, while others dissented. At a meeting of the Church in June, 1835, the issue was made by a member of the opposing party, who offered the following resolution:

"Resolved that our communion be not restricted; and believing it to be our duty and consistent with the spirit of the gospel, we will invite members of other Christian denominations, Pedobaptists not excepted, to take a seat with us at the Lord's table."

This resolution was long and earnestly discussed; and finally it was agreed to vote on the question by ballot. The record states

* Peter Simonson was born in Monroe Co., N. Y., in 1801; entered Hamilton Literary and Theological Institute, (now Madison University) in 1823; ordained in 1826, and labored first as a missionary in N. J.; pastor at Catskill, N. Y., Woonsocket and Providence, R. I., and Cohansey, N. J., where he died in 1839.

that when the ballots were gathered, "it was found that thirty-one votes had been collected; thirteen in favor of open communion, and eighteen in favor of restricting the communion to all baptized persons."

At the next monthly meeting the church gave letters of dismission to all who wished to withdraw. Sixteen left, the most of whom united with the Freewill Baptist Church, at Olneyville. Three days later seven came from the First Church in this city to fill up the vacant places and to strengthen this weak interest; while others in the vicinity who held letters from other churches came in, and some who had been waiting baptism immediately connected themselves with the body.

At the beginning of the year the Church numbered 86 members. During the ensuing twelve months, 21 were dismissed, 2 excluded, and 2 died; while 6 were added by baptism, and 12 by letter, making the number, at the close of the year, 81. The Church, therefore, in numbers, was not seriously affected by the change.

We could hardly expect, however, that such a revolution could take place without engendering more or less bitter feeling and leaving unpleasant impressions upon the minds of some in the community. It should be remembered that the Society, at its formation, contemplated the widest freedom of opinion in the Church which should be organized here and worship in their house. They wished for no creed save the scriptures of the Old and New Testament; they would have no man pronounced a heretic, unless he denied their divine authenticity. It would not be at all strange, therefore, if some of the members felt that this action of the church was a serious narrowing of their platform. But all these feelings have now happily passed away; and none among us to-day would desire a return to the old status of the Church. It has, however, required years to smooth down these asperities.

It might be supposed that a Church made up of such elements, Baptists and Freewill Baptists, and with no written creed, would lack unity and harmony. But we are able to say to-day, after the lapse of thirty-eight years, that no serious difficulty in regard to doctrine or the ordinances of the Church has ever occurred. What might be termed a moderate Calvinism has been uniformly preached in the pulpit. The invitation to the Lord's Supper has been extended to all members of evangelical churches, in good standing, who have been buried with Christ in baptism. All the

members of the Church have cheerfully acquiesced in the maintenance of these views. Freewill Baptists have often found a home here, and two have acceptably filled the office of deacon. And though the standard of the Church is not professedly as high as some, yet it is believed that the body is practically as sound on the peculiar tenets of our denomination as any in our community. This has been favored by the marked permanency of the pastoral relation, and the steady maintenance of a uniform policy, during the last thirty years. It is easy to conceive that by repeated changes, or by the introduction of one of a hypercritical cast of mind into the pastoral office, the result might have been entirely different.

Rev. Mr. Simonson was succeeded by Rev. Thomas B. Ripley, as acting pastor, who served the Church and Society in this capacity from March 1837, to September 1840. These were years of quiet growth. Mr. Ripley is the only ex-pastor living; and for a number of years past has resided in Portland, Me., serving the cause of Christ and humanity as a city missionary.*

In February, 1841, the Church and Society extended a cordial invitation to Mr. Francis Smith, of South Reading, (now Wakefield, Mass.,) and a recent graduate of Newton Theological Institute, to become pastor. He accepted the call, and was ordained during the following month. His ministry extended over a period of nearly thirteen years, as he resigned the pastoral office in November, 1853. He was highly esteemed, especially as a Christian man and as a sympathizing pastor; and though twenty years have elapsed since he closed his ministry here, not a few speak of him in terms of warmest commendation. It was not so much his talents as a preacher that impressed them, as his qualities of mind and heart which endeared him as a friend and counselor. Whatever were the trials or afflictions which his people experienced, they were sure of the cordial sympathy of their pastor. During his pastorate, the affairs of the Church and Society moved on harmoniously and a fair measure of prosperity was enjoyed. The

* Thomas B. Ripley was born in Boston November 20th, 1795; graduated at Brown University, 1814; studied theology with Rev. Dr. William Staughton, of Philadelphia, and was ordained at Portland, Maine, July 1816; was pastor at Bangor Me.; Woburn, Mass. and Fourth Church, Providence; spent ten years teaching and preaching in Tennessee and Mississippi; returned from the south-west in 1852, and has since been engaged as city missionary in Portland, Maine.

membership of the Church was increased, the house was enlarged, former prejudices melted away, and a deeper hold was secured upon the respect of the community. His death, a year and a half ago, was sincerely lamented by all."*

The present pastor dates his connection with the church and Society from May, 1854. Of these nineteen years, it hardly becomes me to speak to-day. Suffice it to say, they have been years of growth in numbers, and in the elements of moral and spiritual power. With the exception of the large ingathering of 1858, they have been more remarkable for steady and uniform increase, than for seasons of special revival.

Thus it will be seen that five men only have filled the pastoral office since this Church was first organized. Their joint term of service stretches over the half of a century. Let us look now at some of the lessons which the period under review affords.

We hear, to-day, not a few declaiming against the degeneracy of the times. It is often said that those sterling virtues on which the welfare and prosperity of a people largely depend, are dying out among us. While there are confessedly great evils existing in society to-day, it will be found, on a careful review of the half century before us, that in some directions at least, there have been marked improvements.

The customs of society, in reference to the use of intoxicating drinks, furnish us an illustration of this. Fifty years ago, with rare exceptions, they were used by all classes in this community. The mechanic and the ordinary day-laborer must have his grog, or he would not work. The employer who refused to furnish liquor to his men, was denounced as mean and stingy. The chairman of the building committee, of this house, though decidedly opposed to the drinking habits of the day, was obliged to conform to the universal custom, and furnish the required stimulant to carpenters and masons and painters. It is doubtful if fifty-one years ago, this house could have been built without liquor.

How different to-day! The world moves, and in this respect, in the right direction.

* Francis Smith, born in South Reading, (now Wakefield,) July, 1812; graduated at Brown University, 1837, at Newton Theological Institute, 1840; ordained pastor of this church, March, 1841; resigned November, 1853. He subsequently preached, as stated supply, at Allendale, Fruit Hill, Valley Falls and Wanskuck, in this state, and for two years, at Rutland, Vt. He died in this city, January, 1872.

In the earlier years of this Church it was not an uncommon thing for a person to be excluded from its fellowship for intemperance. But a case of this kind has not occurred for the last twenty-five years. As early as 1835, the Church voted, "the sale of ardent spirits by a member of this Church is a proper subject of church discipline," and that, "this Church will not fellowship any of its members who use ardent spirits as a drink." A few members dissented, but to the principles of temperance here enunciated, it has steadily adhered to this day, with the result already stated.

In another direction we can see also an improved moral tone during the half century.

I have already referred to the debt upon the house of \$1,300, due to the chairman of the building committee, at the time when it was dedicated. This debt was unprovided for; nor was the interest paid the next five years. Mr. Thurber, to whom it was due, appears to have cashed all bills against the Society, for that period, and to have credited all receipts. He thereby took upon himself its liabilities, though the property of the Society was, of course, holden. The next question was how to liquidate this indebtedness. The Society adopted a course little in accordance with our conceptions of a high Christian morality, though fully endorsed by good men of that day. They applied to the legislature for a lottery grant, and received a charter, which authorized them to raise three thousand dollars. They sold their charter to Mr. J. B. Wood, of Providence, and paid off their indebtedness.

Perhaps this incident explains the well-known fact that Mr. Thurber, to whose efforts and benefactions this Society is so much indebted, was in the later years of his life so decidedly opposed to incurring a debt, in building or improving a house of worship. He remembered his own early experience.

From morals, let us turn to religion, and see what the review of the half century of this Church teaches.

It was organized with thirty-two members. There have been added to it three hundred and forty-six by baptism, and two hundred and twenty by letter and experience; making a total of five hundred and ninety-seven, who have been connected with the church. Its present membership is two hundred and thirty-one. This evinces a healthy, though not rapid growth; the average increase being a little more than eleven a year.

It should be borne in mind that, when this Church was organized, this section of the city was, so far as our denomination was concerned, a part of the parish of the First Church; and the anomalous position which this body occupied at the outset would not tend to give it any special favor with regular Baptists. The consequence was, it did not embody the Baptist sentiment of the community at that day, nor does it even now; though the percentage, which goes elsewhere, is smaller than at any former time.

When the Church changed its polity and came into line with the great Baptist family, it was strengthened by an accession from the First Church; but the number received was no greater than the Church, a few years later, gave to the Jefferson street Church, at the time of its formation.

It has not, therefore, been built up by materials drawn from abroad. It is a genuine product of the soil. Here the constituent members were mainly converted; and here a decided majority of those who have since been connected with it were also led to Christ.

This Church has enjoyed two seasons of special religious interest, the one in 1842, when ninety were added, and the other in 1858, when sixty were received into membership. There have been other seasons of spiritual refreshing, but none of equal extent.

It has been often objected to special seasons of revival, that the converts are not steadfast; and that a large percentage of those who are then brought into the Church, subsequently fall away. Probably the statistics of this Church, for the past fifty years, would show the same; and if we were called upon to pronounce judgment, guided by these alone, it would not be of a very favorable character. But there is one circumstance which should materially modify our conclusions. A very large proportion of those who were then gathered into the Saviour's fold came from beyond the limits of our stated congregation and Sabbath school. They were persons who had received little or no religious culture, and who rarely visited the house of God. It was often remarked, in 1858, that we knew not where the converts came from, as they were persons who were not accustomed to worship with us, but were drawn to the place of prayer by the Spirit of God. I have been repeatedly told that the same was true, even to a greater extent, in the revival of 1842. Shall we

now demand that such persons, who, up to the time of their conversion, have lived in almost entire ignorance of the requirements of a Christian life, be as correct and as consistent in all their deportment as those who from childhood have been trained in the precepts of the gospel? I freely admit that the addition of fifty or an hundred such members to a Church imposes upon it no little care and anxiety. But if seventy-five per cent. of them make, ultimately, useful Christians, is not the labor well expended? Does not fidelity to Christ demand that such be not left to perish?

The stated worshipers in the sanctuary, and the members of our Sabbath school, may be brought into the fold under the ordinary operations of the Holy Spirit; but the conversion and baptism of ten or twenty of these make no impression on the outside world. It is only when the Spirit of Grace descends with Pentecostal power that the multitude are moved, and the church of Christ makes inroads upon the world. This has been our experience, and it accords with that of other branches of Zion. The revival of 1858 wrought a great change in our Sabbath congregation; a change whose beneficial influence we feel to-day, though our hopes in regard to many who then entered the Church have been sadly disappointed.

It is pleasant, brethren and friends, to review the dealings of God with us as a Church and people, for the last fifty years. Notwithstanding this is not one of the largest Churches of the thousands of our Israel, who can estimate the influence for good which has gone out from this place? The men who organized this religious Society, and built this house of worship, a half a century ago mostly sleep with their fathers; but their works we trust will long remain. For more than fifty years, that gospel which speaks of peace and reconciliation to the sinful, of hope to the dying, and of comfort to the mourning, has been here proclaimed. In that period how many have been quickened to a new spiritual life! How many stimulated to higher attainments in virtue and piety! How many strengthened to fight manfully the battle of life and bear its trials and burdens! How many made better men and women, and better members of society, as well as prepared for their immortal destiny! We can hardly estimate, to-day, the beneficial influence which has gone forth from this sanctuary, and the stated ministrations of the gospel here.

It was only a few persons, in the humbler walks of life, who here, fifty years ago, were organized into a Christian Church. There was not one man of wealth, or learning, or high social position among them. The world heeded them not, when, in the name of their God, they set up their banner. Humanly speaking, that little Church was no more than a grain of mustard seed in the world's great field. We do not say that it has grown to be a great tree, but we do say that many have sat under its shadow with delight and that it has its representatives in half of the States of our Union. Humble as it was in the beginning, limited as were its means of usefulness, it has been a moral and spiritual force in this community. From it has gone forth an educating influence which has helped to mould the character of this people.

To-day, as we complete the half a century, we can thank God for the past, and devoutly pray that a wider influence and a more rapid growth may be granted to this branch of Zion in the future. As this old section of our city has, for the last few years, been awaking to a new life, God grant that this Church, also, may have a brighter career before her. We know not who will gather, in 1923, to commemorate her centennial; for long ere that day shall dawn, we, who bear the burdens of the hour, shall sleep with the fathers; but whoever they may be, may they look upon an active and vigorous Church, untainted by error, unstained by immorality, and instinct with a divine life.



APPENDIX A.

The question whether the Baptists of Providence have maintained their own relative position as a denomination during the last fifty years, has been discussed quite earnestly of late. The following statistics, gathered from authentic sources, will enable each one to form an intelligent opinion upon this point.

In 1823, the population of the town of Providence was, in round numbers, fourteen thousand, with eight hundred members connected with the three Baptist churches. This would give one member to every seventeen and one-half of the population.

It is supposed that there is in this city to-day, a population of seventy-eight thousand; the census of 1870 returning sixty-eight thousand, nine hundred and four.

The City Registrar, Dr. Edwin M. Snow, in the sixteenth annual report of births, deaths and marriages in Providence, calculates that, of the population of 1870, thirty-eight thousand-seven hundred and fifty-eight were of American parentage, and thirty thousand, one hundred and forty-six were of foreign parentage. Taking this as a basis, the population of our city, born of American parentage, is not far from forty-four thousand. This is the number, therefore, which we should compare with the fourteen thousand of fifty years ago, when our population was almost exclusively American. The foreign element, wedded to Catholicism when it landed on our shores, and their children trained in the same, should properly be left out of the account.

The last associational returns give two thousand nine hundred and twenty-six members, connected with the churches of the city. This would give one member to every fifteen of our native born population; a slight relative gain during the fifty years.

When we consider how much our population has been increased during that period by immigrants from the neighboring states of Massachusetts and Connecticut, whose religious education and prejudices were adverse to our denomination, this is a fair record.

The opinion which prevails so extensively that the Baptist cause in this city has for some years been retrograding, has probably arisen mainly from the changed relation of the First Church to the denomination. Fifty years ago, nearly six-eighths of the Baptists of the city were embraced in its membership; to day only a little more than one-eighth. During that period business has encroached on population in the central portions of the city, converting dwellings into stores and offices, and compelling many of the worshippers at the First church to seek a home more remote from their sanctuary. At the same time the organization of churches in the different parts of the city has naturally gathered in the people who would otherwise have gone to the centre. It is doubtful whether, under these changed circumstances, the former prestige of the First Church could have been maintained; or, if it could, whether the interests of Christianity, on the whole, would thereby have been promoted.

APPENDIX B.

As there has been much uncertainty in the minds of many, in regard to the ecclesiastical relations of Rev. Henry Tatem and the views of Christian doctrine and the practices of the Church in Cranston into whose fellowship the constituent members of this Church were baptized, the following extracts from a communication from Rev. J. Brayton, furnished at my request, will be read with interest.

"Henry Tatem was received into the Johnston Six Principle Baptist Church February 4th, 1816, on recommendation from the Salem Church, Mass., on profession of his faith in the Six Principles of Christian doctrine, and on submission to the laying on of hands as practiced by the Six Principle Baptists.

The Second Church in Cranston or Knightsville, was organized June 5th, 1816, (the First having dissolved some twenty years before,) consisting of about eighteen members of the Six Principle Baptist faith, under the pastoral care of the Rev. Mr. Tatem. The members of this Church, by mutual consent (including Henry Tatem) were set off from the said Six Principle Baptist Church in Johnston, located about one mile west of Olneyville.

Rev. Mr. Tatem resolutely advocated the doctrines of the Six Principle Baptist faith in the church at Knightsville for about three years from the time of its organization in 1816. During this time the Church increased to seventy-one members, and was in a prosperous condition when he withdrew from the Six Principle Baptist Church and went into open communion, and most of his members followed him. These he organized into an open communion Church, which was the Church into which your members were baptized. Henry Tatem and Ray Potter took the name of the 'General Baptist Church.' Hence this Church at Cranston was the 'First General Baptist Church of Cranston,' whence your Church derived its existence.

I do not know when Ray Potter became associated with Henry Tatem. I am not aware that he was ever a member of a Six Principle Baptist Church. Potter was born near the location of the Cranston Church."*

* I may add that both of these men lived in that vicinity for years. Tatem died in the western part of Massachusetts, about 1832; Potter died in Pawtucket in 1865.

SKETCH OF THE HISTORY

OF THE

FOURTH BAPTIST SUNDAY SCHOOL,

READ AT THE CELEBRATION OF THE SEMI-CENTENNIAL
ANNIVERSARY OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE
CHURCH, JULY 9TH, 1873,

BY

STEPHEN R. WEEDEN.



HISTORICAL SKETCH.



NO description, however minute, accurate and faithful in its details, no history, complete, comprehensive and careful though it may be, can ever be written, which will give a correct view of what may be called the *inner life* of a Sunday School.

We may learn when the institution was established, and by whom; the names of its officers and teachers and scholars; the form of its organization; the methods of imparting instruction; *everything*, in short, which goes to make up the frame-work; and yet be wholly unable to judge of its real value, as a source of religious influence in the neighborhood where it is situated.

An active and energetic superintendent,—young and enthusiastic teachers,—intelligent and sympathetic scholars,—given these elements, with piety in *very* small proportion,—and you may have all the outward appearances of a most excellent Sunday-school, in which a lively interest always prevails,—to which children and youth are strongly attracted, and all the members deeply attached; while, as a means of leading souls to the Saviour, of awakening a sense of obligation to love and obey, and confide in Him, it is altogether a failure.

In presenting a sketch of the history of our School, for fifty years, little will be said of the working of its machinery. The character of those who have kept that machinery in motion, forms the surest guarantee that much of the seed sown was good seed; and that although but little fruit may have appeared to human eyes, the labor bestowed has not been in vain, if it has secured the approbation of Him who judgeth men by the motives which influence them, rather than by the results of their efforts.

Extensive inquiry has failed to establish the date of the commencement of the School, although there are many living whose knowledge of contemporaneous events is accurate. It *may* have been held during the summer of 1822. It is certain that it was in 1823. The first record that can be found is an article which appeared in the Rhode Island Religious Intelligencer, of December 12, 1823, which reads as follows:

“Mr. Editor.—If you will give the following a place in the Intelligencer, you will gratify some of your readers:

SUNDAY SCHOOL,

Kept at the vestry of the Fourth Baptist Meeting House,

MR. MOSES CURTIS, <i>Principal</i> ,	} <i>Instructors.</i>
MR. STEPHEN G. LUTHER,	
MR. WILLIAM PIERCE,	
MR. ORIGEN BACHELER,	
MISS CYNTHIA BROWN,	} <i>Instructresses.</i>
MISS SALLY HATHAWAY,	
MISS SARAH WALKER,	
MISS LUCRETIA CORNELL,	
MISS MARY H. MANN,	

"The number of scholars who attended the School was ninety. Total amount of verses committed to memory, and recited in school, 23,391. Sixty-seven scholars recited the above, the others being two young to commit to memory.

"Master Stephen T. Olney deserves particular commendation, as he recited, of scriptures, catechisms and hymns, 2,445 verses. Miss Amey Mann recited scriptures, 828; catechisms 554; hymns 401, total 1,784.

"In Mr. Bachelor's class, the scholars were taught to read their Bibles in course, at home, commencing with Genesis. In this exercise Master Albert Smith excelled. He read to the Second Book of Samuel.

"Although no particular religious excitement appeared among the children, yet serious impressions were made on the minds of some,—impressions which it is believed will prove lasting. May every reader feel an interest in this subject, and, with the poet,

"Call down God's benison on the Sunday School."

[The *Intelligencer* was a small religious paper, published weekly, by James D. Knowles,—then a printer, but afterwards a distinguished preacher.]

Mr. Moses Curtis was principal of the public school in Benefit street. Soon after the period above named he became a preacher of the gospel, and when last heard from was engaged in that work at Belchertown, Mass. Mr. Origen Bachelor was usher or assistant teacher, in the same school, and was a truly pious man. Mr. Luther and Mr. Pierce were, also, good men. The three last named have long since passed to their reward. Miss Brown and Miss Hathaway are still living.

It was not the practice, in those days, to use question books, or lesson papers; and the teachers seldom conversed with their scholars about their lessons. For every ten verses of scripture, or hymns, or answers to questions in Baldwin's Catechism, correctly repeated, the scholar received a ticket marked "Improvement." For ten such tickets another one was given, marked

"Reward." Three of these entitled the holder to a book,—not a very large one, but as books were more rare, in those days, than at present, the hope of obtaining them furnished sufficient stimulus to induce the children to commit to memory a number of verses which would appall many of our present scholars.

This system prevailed until the publication of the Union Question Books, by the American Sunday School Union. These were very generally adopted, throughout the country,—but at what precise period, by this School, it is not possible to state correctly. They were the means of bringing about a revolution in the method of teaching,—one good result of which was the formation of a library, and another, the establishment of teachers' meetings; for when it was found that something was to be *said* about the lessons, conscientious Christians felt that they ought to *know* something about them, and, as a means of obtaining that knowledge, they met together for consultation and inquiry. These meetings were established in our School at an early day, were well-attended, and for many years were maintained with much regularity. To this fact may well be attributed much of the efficiency of the School, not only at the time, but in subsequent years, when the scholars who had been instructed by such teachers came to take the places of those who had taught them.

Mr. Curtis was succeeded by Mr. Edward Seagrave, who is still living, in Pawtucket. He had taken the place of usher in the First District School, previously filled by Mr. Bachelor.

The next Superintendent was Mr. Gilbert Richmond,—afterwards, for many years, the active and efficient agent of the Rhode Island Sunday School Union, in which capacity he conferred inestimable benefit upon our State, by his zealous labors in establishing Sunday Schools in the country towns and manufacturing villages. To the influence of these schools, more than to any other cause, perhaps, may be attributed the impulse which the subject of education received, in the rural districts, some forty years since. Previous to that period, many of the farmers of Rhode-Island had been strongly opposed to public schools, but the instruction imparted in the Sunday Schools excited a taste for knowledge which created a demand for good common schools in every portion of the State. It is matter of interest that Mr. Richmond's estimate of the value of Sunday Schools,—from which so important results have followed,—was formed by his connection with this School.

After Mr. Richmond, the Pastor of the Church, Rev. Zalmon Tobey, became Superintendent of the School, in which work he was frequently assisted by Mr. Williams Thayer, a wealthy gentleman, who resided in the south part of the town, but being greatly interested in the welfare of this Church, of which he was a member, he labored zealously in its behalf, adding much to the interest of the social meetings, and to the efficiency of the Sunday

School. Mr. Tobey continued to act as Pastor of the Church until April, 1833, and probably retained the nominal superintendence until that time.

No record of the proceedings of the School have been found covering the period between the summer of 1823 and the spring of 1834. From a journal commencing May 12th, 1834, it appears that the whole number present that day was 93. Mr. Reuben Mowrey was the Superintendent, and it is supposed that he was chosen to succeed Mr. Tobey, the previous year. He was then a student in Brown University, and has been, for many years, a most devoted and faithful Christian minister,—now settled in Merton, Wisconsin. Under the date of May 19th, appears the following entry:—"Two hopeful conversions since last report, both in Miss Peck's class." June 1st,—"Two scholars baptized to-day, Rachel Thurber and Ann Jillson." August 17th, "Miss Abby Peters took charge of the Infant School." This is the first mention of an Infant Department that appears. It was very small, and not divided into classes, but managed by one teacher. It was held in the gallery and dismissed during the winter months.

Mr. Mowrey resigned the office of Superintendent, September 22, 1834, and was succeeded by Mr. Joshua M. Macomber, whose term of office cannot be ascertained; but it is known that he was followed by Mr. Charles E. Toothaker, who continued till the spring of 1837, when he resigned, and the School was without a regularly-appointed Superintendent for several months.

During Mr. Toothaker's administration the Infant Department was organized in the form which it has ever since retained. This Department has long been regarded as a very important branch of the School; and the faithfulness with which the officers and teachers have performed their work, has had much to do with the prosperity and success of the whole body. It affords occupation for the young ladies, as soon as they are prepared to teach, and its influence in developing their talents and Christian graces, forms no small part of its value. Children of four or five years of age are sometimes placed under the care of a teacher, with whom they continue until they have passed through the course of instruction prescribed for that Department, when both teacher and class are removed to the Juvenile Department, where the relation is still continued.

The Infant School was held, for more than twelve years, in the gallery, subjecting its members to much inconvenience and discomfort. In 1848, the friends of the School showed their appreciation of the value of that Department, by subscribing about \$800, for the erection of a separate building for its occupancy. Several years afterwards, when the vestry was enlarged, it was removed to the room adjoining that occupied by the Juvenile Department, leaving nothing to be desired in the matter of accommodation.

The hold which this branch of the School had upon the feelings of those who have labored in it, may be learned from the time that many of them have continued in their work, the first Superintendent, Miss Ruth S. Mason, having discharged the duties of the office more than twelve years, and Mrs. George B. Peck more than twenty years. Mrs. Lucius A. Willard, and Mrs. Joshua Tripp have also filled that station, which is now occupied by Miss Susan Manton.

For many years the Sunday School was managed under the auspices of a Society, called the Fourth Baptist Sunday School Society, of which the conditions of membership were a contribution to its funds. This body met annually, at which time a report was presented, by the Superintendent of the School, by which the public interest was, to some extent, maintained. The Church at length assumed the care of the School, and the Society died, the interest which many of its members had felt in the School dying with it, as the only opportunity of hearing about its proceedings was taken away.

The introduction of the "Sunday School Concert," sometime after, brought the School into more frequent communication with the public than ever before, and more than compensated for the loss of the Society. This feature of the Sunday School system has greatly increased the popularity of the institution, and affords a much needed stimulus to the members of the School, as well as a means of maintaining the interest of the public in its welfare.

The period commencing with the administration of Mr. Mowrey, and ending with that of Mr. Toothaker, is still regarded by some who recollect it as the "Golden Age" of our School. Under the excellent management which it received, new life was infused into every department. Several large Bible Classes were formed under the care of young gentlemen from the University, whose subsequent career was foreshadowed by the faithfulness with which they devoted themselves to their work in this School. Brethren Dwight Ives, Silas B. Randall, Edward A. Stephens, John L. Lincoln, W. Cooledge Richards and Ira Leland are affectionately remembered by many who sat under their instructions, who, years afterwards, were our most valuable and reliable teachers. Indeed, it is not too much to say, that the School feels to this day, the effects of the impulse which was given by the brethren above-named, whose example of devotedness, and wise instructions, were an inspiration to those who came after them.

In this connection it should be stated that there has been scarcely a year, since 1832, during which the School has failed to receive valuable aid from students of Brown University. Time would fail to name them all; but there are many here who love to recall the good old days and the faithful labors of Sumner and Flanders, of Samson and Dodge, of Edwards and Hartshorn, of Cate and Dennison, and Day and Haskell, of Norcross, and

Page, and Andem and Eaton,—men who have made their mark, wherever they have been,—and concerning many of whom it may well be said that “their praise is in all the churches,”—while, in later years, they have been succeeded by others, equally worthy to be remembered, and held in high esteem. All these, year by year, have given us the benefit of their best thoughts, and self-denying efforts,—for which they have seldom received even the cheap reward of a “vote of thanks.” But the “honor that cometh from God only,” is all they ever sought, and of that they will never be defrauded.

It would seem ungrateful to omit all notice of those true-hearted men and women, dwellers in our own neighborhood, who have labored diligently, some of them for many years, to bring the rising generation to a knowledge of the Saviour. Nearly all of these have been engaged in wearisome labors, during the week, and when the Sabbath came, most gladly would they have hailed it as a day of sacred rest. But as often as it has returned they have joyfully repaired to this house, glad to devote the best of their powers to the service of their Lord.

It is no light tax upon the strength of a conscientious Christian to teach a class in the Sunday School. Both faith and patience must often bear a fearful strain, such as can be borne only by those who endure “as seeing Him who is invisible.” But such there have always been, amongst us; and great reason have we to render thanks to our Heavenly Father, for the kindness He has shewn us, all these fifty years, in calling so many faithful followers of His Son to devote themselves to this service, and rewarding them so richly with the joy and peace which they have found in their work, and with the happiness which they have experienced in seeing so many of those whom they have instructed turning to the Lord.

The Superintendents of the School, since September 1837, have been Stephen R. Weeden, George B. Peck, Samuel Haskell, Lucius A. Willard, Alvah W. Godding, John M. Manning, Oliver P. Fuller, Jared W. Scovell, Addison W. Parker, Jun., Thomas G. Field, Daniel W. Hoyt, John D. Smith and Nathan Leavenworth.

The first complete list of all the members of the Juvenile Department that has been found, is a roll book, commenced September 17, 1837. The teachers, at that time, were Brethren Martin T. Sumner, Arnold Whipple, Levi Barney, Elisha W. Baker, George B. Peck, Ethan Whipple, Enos H. Briggs, Alexander Burgess, Ezra Colvin, Cyril Babcock, Philip W. Martin; and Sisters Mary Rounds, Rachel Thurber, Elizabeth Russell, Harriet Peck, Sally Hathaway, Nancy Weeden, Eliza Sheldon, Sophia Daniels, Amey Manton, Susan Lasell, Sarah W. Covell, Ann Wood, Mary Ann Covell, and Sarah Wight. The Bible Classes were taught by Brethren George P. Daniels, and Benjamin A.

Edwards, and Sisters Mary M. Ormsbee and Ann F. Weeden. Seven of the gentlemen named have departed this life, while all but three of the ladies are still living.

The Infant Department was under the care of Miss Ruth S. Mason. The names of the teachers cannot be given, but the number present September 17, was 12; scholars 45. The average attendance for three months ending September 30, 1838, was 11 teachers and 64 scholars; of the whole School for the same period, 197. In 1839, the average attendance was 206; in 1840, 242, and in 1841, 255. At that time there was only this School in the territory now occupied by six schools; but the great increase in its numbers was largely owing to a systematic visitation of all the families north of Olney and Orms Streets, which was pursued by the teachers for several years. The good effects of this practice were not confined to the increase of the School. Both teachers and parents became more interested in its welfare, and in each other, by the intercourse thus brought about, and the acquaintance with each other was beneficial to all.

The practice of making contributions for missions had its origin in the following manner,—as appears from a journal kept by the Superintendent in 1840:—“January 12. We gave each of the scholars in the Infant Department, a little book, last Sabbath, as has been done, occasionally, before. One of the little girls received one which told about the condition of the heathen,—mentioning particularly the practice which prevails in India of mothers throwing their children into the Ganges. The little girl was deeply affected by the narrative, and felt an earnest desire to do something for these poor people,—so going to her mother, she begged her to give her *six cents*, that she might send it to the missionary, to buy a book for some heathen mother. The request was granted, and to-day the money was brought to the teacher, to be sent to the heathen.” This incident induced the Superintendent to call the attention of the School to the subject of missions, the result of which was that a monthly contribution for that object was established, which has been continued until the present time.

The following extracts from the journal from which the above was taken, show that the laborers of those days did not remit their efforts because the fruits of their labor failed to appear. August 26, 1838. “A new class was formed to-day, and Mr. Horace Lee was appointed teacher. This is the first instance, during the past six years, of a male teacher being procured from among those who had been regular scholars; and this is only *one* of a class which has, within a year, numbered *nine*,—all the others having left us, except one, who acts as librarian. This is lamentable, but it is not so lamentable as the fact that not a single instance of conversion, nor more than one of decided seriousness, among

the boys, or young men belonging to the Bible Classes, has been known to me, during the period above mentioned."

Nearly three years later, June 20, 1841, the record states that "Gorham Thurber and Sylvanus Burgess,—members of Mr. Hartwell's class,—have this day taken charge of classes of boys, being the first instance in which young men who have been converted while connected with the School, have become teachers." This was *eighteen years* after the establishment of the School. During the same time thirty young ladies had united with the church.

An examination of the records of the church for the last fifty years, reveals a fact which is somewhat suggestive, showing as it does, the *progressive* influence of the School. During the first fifteen years of the existence of the Church, the number of persons admitted by baptism was 90,—of whom 20 were members of the School. Within the second fifteen years, 111 were baptized, 53 of whom were connected with the School. During the last twenty years there have been 146 baptized of whom 105 belonged to the School. Thus from less than one-quarter, during the first period,—and not quite one-half in the second,—the proportion had become more than three quarters during the last.

If it be considered that many members of the School are not converted until after they have left us, but in time become Christians, and unite with other churches, while many of those persons who here offer themselves for baptism have been converted before coming amongst us, it will appear that a very large proportion of all the conversions which take place here are from the Sabbath School.

It is not necessary to insist that the School is the only, or even the most effective instrumentality in leading to the Saviour those who publicly profess their faith in Him; but such facts as have been stated would certainly indicate that a very important place should be assigned to the work of instructing these young persons in the doctrines which are to be received, and the duties which are to be performed, by the members of a Church of Christ.

The letter from this school to the Rhode Island Baptist Sunday School Convention, in 1855, (with an alteration of dates) forms a fitting close to this sketch of its history:

"It is now more than fifty years since this school was established, and during that period it has been constantly regarded with affectionate interest by the greater part of the community in the midst of which it is located. Its calls for pecuniary aid have been responded to most liberally and cheerfully, in many instances by persons who felt no interest in religion, and in some cases by those who had no faith in the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. This feeling has been partly the cause, and partly the effect, of its continued prosperity and usefulness. Those

who have labored in the School have often felt discouraged and depressed in spirit, when they have seen so little good resulting from their efforts; but however much they may have had reason to reproach themselves, for want of faithfulness, or for lack of faith, they have had no reason to complain of Him who "giveth the increase," for, during the whole term of our existence as a School, the tokens of His favor have been frequent and abundant. For more than forty years, it has required the services of nearly forty men and women to perform its labors. These He has furnished, from week to week. Hundreds of dollars have been needed to supply its wants. They have never been lacking. Above all, His Spirit has often visited us, converting many of those for whom we labored. *How* many, we cannot say; but if we could only see the whole number of those who have gone from our circle to the mansions of bliss, it would, without doubt, tend to encourage our hearts, and to quicken our efforts, *greatly*."

SUPERINTENDENTS.

[The dates are substantially correct.]

Moses Curtis.....	1823.
Edward Seagrave.....	1824.
Gilbert Richmond.....	1825.
Rev. Zalmon Tobey.....	1826—1833.
Reuben Mowrey.....	1833—1834.
John M. Macomber.....	1834—1835.
Charles E. Toothaker.....	1835—1837.
Stephen R. Weeden.....	1837—1844.
Samuel Haskell.....	1845.
George B. Peck.....	1845—1846.
Stephen R. Weeden.....	1847—1850.
Alvah W. Godding.....	1850—1851.
Lucias A. Willard.....	1851—1853.
Stephen R. Weeden.....	1854—1856.
John M. Manning.....	1856—1857.
Oliver P. Fuller.....	1857—1858.
Addison Parker, Jr.....	1858—1862.
Stephen R. Weeden.....	1862—1869.
Thomas G. Field.....	1869—1870.
Daniel W. Hoyt.....	1870—1871.
John D. Smith.....	1871—1872.
Nathan Leavenworth.....	1873—1874.

Henry Day, Jared W. Scovell, Elijah Bent, and Allen J. Brown, have officiated temporarily, at different periods.

SEMI-CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY.

At the Annual Meeting of the Fourth Baptist Society, in 1872, Messrs. Edmund Thurber, Alexander Burgess, and Stephen R. Weeden, were appointed a Committee to consider the expediency of celebrating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the dedication of the House, on the 26th of August, and to make necessary arrangements, if it was thought proper to do so. As the fiftieth anniversary of the organization of the Church, and also of the Sunday School would occur in 1873, it was concluded to postpone action until that time.

On the 30th of May, 1873, a Committee was appointed by the Church, to make arrangements for a joint celebration, to take place on the 9th of July following. This Committee, together with that of the Society, was organized as follows:

REV. A. H. GRANGER, D. D., PASTOR, Chairman.

Rev. William Phillips, Edmund Thurber and Stephen R. Weeden, Committee on Invitations.

William D. Avery, Alexander Burgess and Alvin F. Stevens, on refreshments.

William J. Waterman, John P. Barney, Sylvanus Burgess, Charles F. Wilcox, John B. Peck, on the decoration of the house.

Allen J. Brown, Edwin Burgess and Charles E. Smith, on Finance.

William R. Blake and Elijah Bent, on Music.

The general direction of the services of the occasion, was left to the Pastor. They were as follows:—

1.—Voluntary.

2.—Anthem.

3.—Reading of the Scriptures and Prayer.

4.—Hymn, sung at the dedication of the House, August 26, 1822.

“In sweet exalted strains,
The King of glory praise.”

5.—Historical Address, by the Pastor.

6.—Hymn.

“Oh, where are kings and empires now,
Of old that went and came?”

7.—Historical sketch of Sunday School, by S. R. Weeden.

8.—Prayer and Benediction.

P. M.

1.—Collation. Followed by addresses.

6.—Hymn. Air, *America*.

Written for the occasion by Rev. Frederic Denison, of New Haven, Ct.

Inspire our souls, O Lord,
To chant in full accord
Our jubilee,
Thy chosen, ransomed band,
While guided by thy hand
Up to the heavenly land,
Will sing of Thee.

On high, the sainted dead,
Who, with triumphant tread,
Passed through death's flood.
We, waiting, hold the field,
Bold, 'neath our Captain's shield,
The sword of truth to wield,
For man and God.

Recalling fifty years
Their toils and joys and tears
The heart to thrill;
With hope irradiate brow,
And joyous lips, we bow,
Repeating fresh our vow
To do thy will.

Assured in Christ, our Rock,
Withstanding every shock
Of storm and ill;
Obeying what he saith,
With firm, unbating breath,
We boast "One Lord, one faith,
One baptism" still.

O Zion, shout for joy!
All earth may not destroy
Thy sacred gates.
Thy foes without are barred,
Thy head with glory starred,
And bright cherub guard
Around thee waits.

3.—Prayer.

4.—Doxology.

The following account of the proceedings, written by Rev. John C. Stockbridge, D. D., appeared in the Watchman and Reflector of July 17th.

“RHODE ISLAND.—The Fourth Baptist Church in Providence, celebrated, with beautiful and most appropriate services, its Semi-Centennial Anniversary, on Wednesday, the 9th instant. This Church, the most northerly of the many Baptist Churches in Providence, has, since 1853, been under the pastoral care of Rev. A. H. Granger, D. D., whose ministry, reaching on through so many years, has been signally blessed by the Great Head of the Church. The place of worship was adorned in an attractive manner with flags and shields, on which were inscribed the names of the different Pastors, and with a profusion of flowers. The shields were four in number. The first one on the left wall, was inscribed with the name of the first Pastor, Rev. Zalmon Tobey, with the date of his pastorate, from 1823 to 1833. The second bore the name of the second Pastor, Rev. Peter Simonson, from 1834 to 1836. The third had on it the name of the next Pastor, from 1837 to 1840, Rev. Thomas B. Ripley. The fourth had the name of the Rev. Francis Smith, from 1841 to 1853. Black lines surrounded three of these shields over which was a crown, the token that these pastors had entered upon their reward, and were now wearing a crown of glory. The shield in which was the name of the surviving ex-pastor, Rev. Thomas B. Ripley, was enclosed in red lines, and over it a cross, the sign that as a soldier of the cross he was still fighting the battles of his Lord. On the wall in the rear of the pulpit

was another large shield, over which was the name of the present Pastor, Dr. Granger, above which was a festoon of evergreen, and over this the three most expressive emblems, the cross, the dove, and the anchor. The devotional exercises of the occasion were by Rev. Drs. Caswell and Babcock, and a historical discourse was delivered by the Pastor, Rev. Dr. Granger. This discourse was most properly occupied with a sketch of the circumstances which led to the formation of the Church, the peculiar religious belief and position of the Church, which at the first were somewhat different from those of the regular Baptist churches, a sketch of the different pastors who had filled the pastoral office, accompanied with a discriminating presentation of their peculiarities, and the special work which each had accomplished. The Church was represented as being now in a healthy condition, and as entering upon the second half century of its history with bright prospects for its future. At the conclusion of the historical discourse, an admirable paper was read by S. R. Weeden, Esq. giving a sketch of the history of the Sabbath School, which dates its organization not far from that of the Church itself. Some of the leading men in our denomination, such as Rev. Drs. Sumner, Dodge, Samson, and many others, were connected with the School while pursuing their studies in Brown University. The exercises were closed with an appropriate prayer, by Rev. J. T. Smith, of Warwick. At one o'clock the commodious vestry was nearly filled with guests, gathered there to partake of the bountiful collation which had been prepared for them. Among the guests, in addition to those already referred to as having taken part in the morning service, we noticed the venerable Dr. Benedict, "Father Allen," as we love to call him, of East Providence, Rev. William Phillips, several of the Providence Pastors, Rev. A. F. Spalding, of Norwich, Ct., and others. The after dinner speeches were made by Rev. Mr. Simonson, of Hartford, a son of the second Pastor of the Church, Rev. Dr. Caswell, Rev. Dr. Babcock, Rev. O. P. Fuller, a former Superintendent of the School, Rev. Mr. Pidge, a child of the Sabbath School and of the Church, Pastor of the First Baptist Church, Lawrence, Mass., and Dr. Benedict. Excellent singing was furnished by the choir, in the intervals between the speeches. Among the pieces sung was a hymn, written for the occasion, by Rev. F. Denison, of New Haven, Conn. All the exercises were of a pleasant character, and the social features of the Anniversary, united with the more serious services of the forenoon, made the day one which will long be remembered by all who were permitted to participate in these sacred and joyful festivities."

