

FIFTY YEARS OF PASTORAL WORK.

A

SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

REFORMED CHURCH,

NESHANIC, N. J., SEPT. 5, 1871,

ON THE

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS ORDINATION.

BY

REV. GABRIEL LUDLOW, D. D.

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VAULT

P R E F A C E .

Rev. Gabriel Ludlow, D. D., having completed fifty years of pastoral work in the Reformed Church of Neshanic, arrangements were made by the Consistory to celebrate the occasion by suitable commemorative exercises. The morning of September 5th was bright and mild, and the ancient church adorned and beautified, and appropriately decorated for the occasion, was compactly filled at an early hour. A large number of ministers were in attendance of different denominations, and former parishioners of Dr. Ludlow residing at a distance.

The following was the Order of Exercises :—

Invocation by Rev. R. H. Steele, D. D., of New Brunswick.

Reading the Scriptures by Rev. John Gardner, of Harlingen, who presided on the occasion.

Singing—504th Hymn.

Prayer by Rev. Dr. Mesick, of Somerville.

Reading of Resolutions adopted by the Consistory.

Sermon by Dr. Ludlow.

Prayer by Rev. Mr. Doolittle, of Stanton.

Singing—505th Hymn.

Address by Rev. Ravaud K. Rodgers, D. D., of Bound Brook.

Address by Rev. Abraham Messler, D. D., of Somerville.

Benediction by the Pastor.

IV.

The following are the Resolutions adopted by the Consistory :

Resolved, That we feel called upon to express our gratitude to God for permitting us to celebrate an event so interesting and full of tender recollections as the semi-centennial of the settlement of our pastor.

Resolved, That, as having begun life under your ministry, as having sat as catechumens in your catechetical classes, as having stately during all these years attended on your ministry, we gratefully recognize your consistent ministerial character, the wisdom of your counsels in our difficulties, the value of your sympathy and prayers in our afflictions.

Resolved, That though marked with years, as this fiftieth anniversary of your pastorate reminds us that you must be, yet as we discover no decline in your mental powers, our prayer is that you may, in God's providence, be spared yet longer to go in and out amongst us, and instruct us in divine things.

At the close of the exercises a resolution was adopted requesting the Consistory to procure for publication the Memorial Discourse, together with the Addresses, in order to perpetuate the memory of a day so full of deep interest.

S E R M O N .

PSALM 28: 7.

“The Lord is my strength and my shield, my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped, therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth and with my song will I praise Him.”

THIS is the experience of the Psalmist, and one can easily imagine his face radiant with joy when he penned these beautiful sentiments. He acknowledged that all his strength of mind and body was from God, and that he owed all his safety in his many exposures to God. His heart had relied on God and he had been helped in his various enterprises and rendered successful in them; and, therefore, his heart rejoiced and prompted him to praise God with his lips in sacred song accompanied with the melody of his harp. Such has been the experience of all God's people, and will continue to be to the end. Surely no one that leans his whole weight on God will be disappointed. He will find himself to be helped at all times, in all places, in all circumstances. What says our experience? The language may well be applied to this occasion and day. The occasion and day are of deep interest to some; to some more than to others, but to all in some degree. This large concourse of people, this assemblage of

so many esteemed and beloved brethren in the Gospel ministry, the decoration of this house of God, and especially the motto above me, so short but full of meaning—all go to prove that this is a *day* of interest. We desire to improve it as we can in prayer, praise, self-abasement and a review of the past.

The discourse may be protracted beyond what is usual in this pulpit, but it must be borne in mind that there are many topics to be touched upon, and that such an occasion can occur but once in a lifetime. There will perhaps be too much of egotism, but such an occasion from its very nature and circumstances, seems to render this inevitable. My advanced age, too, will perhaps justify me in a strain of remark which would not be becoming in a much younger man. You will accord me a large and generous liberty. Most assuredly I shall not abuse it.

Fifty years ago a young man of twenty-four years of age was set apart to the Gospel ministry and constituted the pastor of this church and congregation by the laying on of the hands of the Classis of Philadelphia—in this house of God, then plain and antiquated in its appearance, since somewhat enlarged, modified and adorned. The act of ordination was performed a few feet in advance of the

place which I now occupy, for the house has been enlarged rear-ward. I love to particularize on such an occasion. I can bring up to view the whole scene. It seems almost a thing of yesterday. Those who officiated then are all gone, and almost all those who were spectators also, at least all those of matured years.* The youth I refer to was by no means robust, but rather in a delicate state of health, sensitive, retiring, nervous in his temperament, of only average talent, moderate attainment, and of little or no experience. He who once answered to this description now stands before you, no longer a youth, but a man of many years; yet, in some respects more healthful and robust than then, with a temperament somewhat changed, perhaps for the better, with faculties somewhat strengthened through cultivation and exercise, with a measure of knowledge rather larger and more diversified through steady, regular application to study and with experience very much enlarged by self-inspection and intercourse with men in different circumstances and

* The Ordination Sermon was preached by Rev. Jacob Broadhead, D. D., from Luke 12: 42, 43, 44. The following ministers were present: Rev. Brogun Hoff, Rev. Peter Studdiford, Rev. Peter Labagh, and Rev. Jacob Larzelere of the Classis of Philadelphia; and Rev. Messrs. Kirkpatrick and Clark of the Presbyterian Church. The following officers constituted the acting Consistory: Elders, Henry H. Schenck, Cornelius Peterson, Denice Van Liew, Thomas G. Hall. Deacons, Peter La Tourette, John Atkinson, William Sunderland, Stephen Gano.

conditions. He holds the same position which he then took after fifty years have rolled away. He is yet a preacher of that Word in which he delights, and the pastor of the same church and congregation to which he has become increasingly attached.

Fifty years to God who knows of no beginning, no succession of time, no change, no end, with whom "one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day," with such a Being—let us be filled with reverence and even awe as we think of him—with such a Being, fifty years is but a point; but to us, creatures of yesterday, and whose whole life is but a span, fifty years is a duration of great importance. It is almost the whole of our fleeting, short life—at any rate it includes far the best part of it—the portion characterized by enterprise, activity, enjoyment. I may be said to have given my whole life to the work of the ministry and the pastorate of this church and congregation of Neshanic. The years preceding my twenty-fourth were given to preparation for this work, and all the years since to the work itself. I can yet work, blessed be God! who enableth me; but both the time and ability for work cannot in the nature of things continue much longer. I yet stand in my first position, in a world of disease, accident and death. The shafts have

flown thick around me, many have fallen before them, and I have from time to time been wounded—but not unto death. I have been exposed, especially at one period in my life, by the mode in which I labored, preaching in places badly ventilated, crowded almost to suffocation, passing through the chilly night air, with pours open, to my home, but God sustained and shielded me. How many of my brethren in the ministry have fallen in the prime of life and in the midst of their acceptableness and usefulness through disease or accident. How many have been laid aside from the work they loved by infirmity in one form or another, while I am not only alive but able yet to preach the unsearchable riches of the Grace of Christ. Considering my time of life and what I have passed through, my infirmities are few, and they as yet press lightly upon me; even the almond tree has not yet blossomed abundantly. May I not, without presumption, use the language of Paul the aged: (Acts xxvi: 22 and 23.) “Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to

the Gentiles." I use the language not formally, but sincerely and with some measure of fervency and gratitude. Though my services, trials, labors, sacrifices are not worthy to be compared with his, yet I have obtained help of God, or I long since should have been laid aside as a broken instrument, or utterly crushed. Not only have I been permitted to preach the Gospel until now, but have continued to preach it to the same people for the long term of fifty years, without any perceivable diminution of interest or impression on their part. This has been the case while changes have been going on around me and throughout the whole church, whether for sufficient or insufficient, satisfactory or unsatisfactory causes it is not for me to say. I only speak of the fact and that is admitted by all and lamented by many.

The question might be raised here, why remain so long in one place, and it might be curtly answered—that is a matter which only concerns myself and my people. Had I been dissatisfied I could have certainly changed place, for though I always wish to think and to speak with due modesty concerning myself, yet I think, and it is not saying much when I say it, I might have attained a position other and perhaps more prominent than that which

I have occupied so long—what one can do another can do—and if the people had been dissatisfied they might easily have apprised me of it, and I should not have been slow to take the slightest hint of their wish to make a change. But that slightest hint I have never yet received, and that is one of the pleasantest circumstances in my small history. I have had every evidence that my ministry (such as it has been) has been and still is acceptable to this people. I cannot fail to see this in the attention they give to the word preached, in the affectionate expressions of their countenances and the hearty grasp of their hands when I meet with them. I have this evidence in all ages, and even in Young America, the class that might be expected soonest to tire of my long continued services and my advanced age.

But there are substantial reasons for my lengthened stay here. By constitution I am not restless nor given to change. I have observed likewise, that such as have changed have not, except in a few instances, essentially improved their condition or added to their happiness or comfort, or usefulness even. I have always been a firm believer, and a practical one, in the doctrine of compensation. There are advantages as well as disadvantages in all

places and in every condition of life. We see the disadvantages of the condition or place we are in, but not of the condition we aspire after, till we are placed in it. So, too, we overlook the advantages of our present condition and exaggerate the advantages of the condition we desire. Though not what is called demonstrative, God has made me capable of strong attachments which it was always painful to me even to think of severing. My temperament is sensitive, and therefore I have valued a quiet nook, without the goading and excitement and wear and tear of mind and body inseparable from a prominent place, and here I have had such a quiet nook. Nobody has interfered with me, and I have been permitted to pursue my own course of service in my own way. The utmost harmony has always prevailed between me, and my consistory, church and congregation. Had I been in any other situation I should have been worn out before I was forty or forty-five years, and either in my grave or a wreck in mind and body incapable of doing anything.

And this reminds me of another cause, closely allied. I stand not here to flatter any one. Indeed I have always used plain language in this place, but I can say, with perfect sincerity and truth, that this people have always been kind, nay, indulgent to me.

Some may say, your support has been small—yet it was larger than that of any one around me at my first settlement here, and it has been increased in different modes, and it would have been increased sooner in a strictly pecuniary point of view, and more largely had I asked it; but there was a delicacy, perhaps a foolish one, that withheld me from doing it. Almost all the comforts which were furnished were furnished spontaneously, and when I did ask for anything it was cheerfully accorded. I may say with truth that I have not the slightest regret that I have spent my whole ministry in this church and congregation, neither have I any reason to believe that I should have been either happier, or, what is a much higher consideration, more useful in any other situation. Some speak of larger fields of labor as desirable. I have had a field sufficiently large to tax my full strength, and therefore there was no need for me to seek a larger one. Then, too, if a man be an acceptable preacher I know not that he must and necessarily be transferred to what is called a higher sphere. The people in the interior and open country need his services as much as the people in village, town or city, and are perhaps as able to appreciate his work. I would not, indeed, counsel any young man to pursue the course which I have done. It is often necessary for a man

to change his place, and in some instances the Providence of God points to a change as proper. In such cases let a change be made, but let not him that changeth judge him that changeth not, and let not him that changeth not judge him that changeth. Let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind— I have not changed and, I repeat, I do not regret it. I have, I hope, done a little good here, and would feign have done much more. I have here, too, had much happiness; my heart says, God bless the people of Neshanic and their children, and children's children, for their kindness to me and mine—the dead as well as the living.

I have witnessed many changes during my pastorate of fifty years—some here, some elsewhere. There have been changes, and great ones, over the face of the whole earth since 1821. They cannot be said, indeed, to be directly connected with my pastorate, and yet there is something of a connection, inasmuch as they have been contemporaneous. It may be said, with truth, that the term of time between 1821 and 1871 has been one of the most stirring and the most prolific of great events in the world's history. The Pope of Rome has been divested of his temporal power entirely, and even his spiritual power has been very much diminished

notwithstanding the arrogant and despotic tone of his encyclicals and his claims of infallibility. Who cares for his anathemas now? Italy, long torn by intestine discord and strife, and oppressed by foreign powers, has been united into one great kingdom under the sway of the heroic, large-hearted, liberal Victor Emanuel, with imperial Rome, once "the mistress of the world," for her capitol. She, too, a matter of far greater importance, has been thrown open to the influence of the pure religion of Christ. The same may be said of bigoted and priest-ridden Spain and Mexico. France, after having passed through three revolutions, and having been desolated in every part of her territory and especially in her splendid and idolized capitol, and humbled to the dust, is endeavoring to establish that for which she is wholly unprepared—an abiding Republic. Prussia has risen from a small beginning to the first rank among the European nations, and her King has revived in his person the position of Emperor of the Germanic Confederation, broken into pieces in 1806 by the first Napoleon. The despotic and aristocratic spirit has given way, not only in Great Britain, but even in Austria and Russia, and even in the great Ottoman Empire, to liberal views and a more liberal administration of national affairs. If you compare

the administration of Gladstone with that of Castle-reagh—the condition of the British Parliament as now constituted and the state of the masses of her people now, and in 1821 you will perceive an immense difference.

During this period our Republic has rapidly attained a height of prosperity that has excited the envy of the European nations, and has been plunged into such a condition as is unique in the annals of all time. Through the goodness of God, too, she has emerged from this trying condition, and bids fair to advance with more than her former prosperity. What discoveries in the arts and sciences. What wonders do we witness in the quick transmission of information by the electro-magnetic telegraph to the extremities of the earth, even through the depths of the ocean itself. How common the use of steam for oceanic navigation and warlike purposes. What a net-work of railroads is spread over our own land and others. Even the Atlantic and Pacific are united by this novel mode of communication, and the shriek of the locomotive is heard in our distant western prairies and in the deep gorges of the Rocky Mountains. To come nearer home, who in 1821 thought of a railway through the fertile and beautiful valley of the South Branch of the Raritan. Yet, there it is, a

precious reality. What changes and improvements we have seen all around in our own immediate vicinity; antiquated structures have been made to give way to new ones, or have been modernized in their appearance. This venerable house of God has been enlarged, raised and improved so as to have become altogether a different affair from what it was when I first officiated in it. Even the vehicles in which you rode to the house of God are changed; your furniture, your whole style of living, manners and customs, all are changed, so that when I look back to the year 1821 I seem to be in a new world. In the meantime there have been such improvements in agriculture that I do not speak extravagantly when I affirm that more is produced by one acre of our soil now than formerly by three.

Through these fifty years what changes I have witnessed in the people. Taking the term generation in a larger sense, I have seen one whole generation and two-thirds of another pass away. Those who were sixty then have long since passed away, and even those of fifty, and I may add those of forty and thirty. Few of them remain at any rate. The images of the departed seem to appear as they sat before me in their different places in this house. But the view is an exceedingly mournful one. Not

one, I believe, who then was a member of our communion is among the living now. Those who were then youths of twelve or fourteen now belong to the older class of my people. A very large proportion of those before and around me were then infants in their mother's arms, or have been born since my settlement here and have grown up, while others are growing up under my pastoral care. Some of my church officers belong to this class. Instead of the fathers and mothers, have arisen the sons and daughters to fill their places. I am ministering to the great-grandchildren of those that formerly called me. That is a common circumstance. But I can go a step farther, and say that I am in many cases ministering to the children of their great-grandchildren. And to me it is a delightful fact, if it be one, that the attachment of the fathers and mothers has been transmitted to their descendants to the youngest of them all—not diminished.

What changes I have witnessed in the denomination to which I belong. I am the only surviving member of the Classis of Philadelphia as it existed when I united with it. I am the oldest minister of the Reformed Church save six or seven. I am the oldest pastor in that church, I believe, with no exception—I mean the oldest in one church. How

many burning and shining lights have been extinguished in our own and other denominations since my settlement here. Changes of another kind have taken place. I have seen the Presbyterian Church rent into two parts and re-united with thanksgivings to God on each part for the re-union. Our Reformed Church has been much enlarged and extended, especially westward—Illinois, Michigan, Iowa, Minnesota and other neighboring States. We then had one hundred and fifty churches, now four hundred and sixty-four. The number of classis then fifteen, now thirty-three. We then counted two Particular Synods, now four. The churches of North Branch, Second and Third Raritan, East Millstone, Griggstown, Blawenburg, Rocky Hill, Middlebush, Second of New Brunswick, Bound Brook, Clover Hill, and South Branch, have all come into being since 1821, and all are spirited, prosperous and useful. Every church around me has changed its pastor, some several times. With all these I have enjoyed the most friendly relations.

What changes in my family and circle of relationship have I witnessed. I may say with one of old: "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me and mine acquaintance into darkness." But God was always present with me, my light and my stay.

The remains of several of my deceased ones are sleeping in the place of graves not far off, and those of another in a cemetery on the bank of the Lower Mississippi. What changes have taken place in myself. Then twenty-four, now seventy-four. I cannot say, with God's servant of old: "mine eye is not dim nor my natural force abated," but I can say that God has dealt very graciously with me in these and other respects.

I come now to speak of my labors in this portion of the Master's vineyard. And here, while it becomes me not to speak of their quality, yet, I may speak of their amount. I cannot, however, but premise that the ground was well prepared for me by my predecessors. The Church of Neshanic, it would seem, was organized in 1753, and, from the beginning, was ministered to by able men of God. She enjoyed the services of such men as Frelinghuysen, Hardenburg, Van Harlingen, Polhemus, Labagh and Smith. At first the churches of Neshanic and Harlingen were collegiate. The pastor who resided at Neshanic preaching two Sabbaths at Neshanic and one at Harlingen, and the pastor who resided at Harlingen, two Sabbaths at Harlingen and one at Neshanic. I was acquainted with five of them only by tradition and reputation. They seem to have

been estimable men, and faithful, instructive, earnest and evangelical preachers. With Dr. Labagh I was personally acquainted, nay, intimate for several years, till his death, and I both esteemed and revered him. He was of much more than average talent, a very edifying preacher and very much at home and useful in our different Church courts. With the Rev. Wm. R. Smith I had not the pleasure or profit of an acquaintance, he having deceased the year previous to my settlement here, died at the age of sixty-eight after having been a pastor of this church during the period of twenty-five years. He was stricken with disease while in the act of dispensing the truth to his people, not unto death, but so as to unfit him entirely for the work of the ministry through the rest of his life. But during several years of my ministry I often heard his name mentioned by the older and more pious class of my people with great affection and deep interest. After his death the Churches of Harlingen and Neshanic were separated. Dr. Labagh receiving and accepting a call from the Church of Harlingen, leaving the Church of Neshanic to choose a pastor for itself. After a little time spent in hearing different candidates, I was, as I have been informed, unanimously chosen as their pastor and inducted into my office on this fifth day of September,

fifty years ago. The Elipsis above me, how striking! How much would be required to fill it! And how mournful some of the reminiscences it suggests to my mind!

The fact of my having been preceded by such men as I have mentioned was both an aid and a stimulus, and my unanimous election a great encouragement. The people had been accustomed to hear the most uncompromising, plain, pointed statements of doctrine and duty, and I had only to pursue the path marked out and followed out by my predecessors without let or hindrance. The matter of discipline had been attended to also, as I could plainly see by consulting the records, and though it is vain in this earthly state of things to expect a perfect Church, yet the effort had been made to preserve her in a reasonable and attainable condition of purity and order. I had then precedents and valuable ones before me, and a public sentiment that would bear me out in this and other trying departments of my pastorate work. Taking all the facts into consideration I had many advantages, which such as cultivate entirely new ground do not possess. Instead of undervaluing or disparaging the labors of those that had gone before me I was grateful for them, and endeavored to carry forward the work which they

prized, and to improve upon it if I could. I found, however, that to improve upon their work was not easy, for though they had their infirmities, defects, and even, if you please, their faults, yet they were not triflers, but earnest laborers in the Gospel vineyard. I have lived long enough to know that it is one of the easiest things in the world to find fault with others, our co-laborers, or those that have gone before us, but a very difficult thing to excel them. We may, perhaps, in some points, while we fall behind them in others. I then in my youth and inexperience endeavored to do something. I must have preached, including afternoon and funeral discourses, more than 5,000 sermons at least, during the past fifty years. I have seldom been out of my accustomed place through ill health or for the purpose of recreation. I have taken much pains in the indoctrination of the precious youth that have grown up around me, so far as parents afforded me opportunity, in the Biblical and catechetical classes, and have experienced great pleasure in doing this. I see my catechumens all around me, some of them even among my church officers. I have seen the good effects of this system in the character of the religious experience of those that have been added from time to time—frequently in considerable num-

bers—to the communion of this church, an experience intelligent and deep as well as feeling.

As to the skill with which I have wielded the sword of the Spirit—that is a topic on which it becomes me not to speak—of the fact that I have used the sword—*i. e.*, the word of God, the Gospel—I can speak with confidence. If I know what the Gospel of Jesus Christ is I am sure I have preached it. I have set it before the people in all its prominent and distinctive features. I have not only *not* been ashamed of that Gospel, but I have gloried in it and in Him who is the sum and substance of it—even Jesus Christ and him crucified. I have endeavored to show the connection of all the other doctrines with this glorious central one. I have endeavored to show the preceptive part of God's word, as connected with Jesus Christ and him crucified; as showing them their need of his atonement for sin; teaching them also that it is their rule of life, and that all their ability to live according to it is from Jesus Christ, and that their acceptance in their endeavors to live according to it, is through Jesus Christ. They have been taught that the promises are all performed in and through Jesus Christ, that the Providence of God is exercised by Jesus Christ, and that all the predictions have reference to Christ either directly

or remotely. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of Prophecy." They have been taught that even the historical and biographical parts are full of Christ.

I have in my dispensation of the truth used great and even studied plainness of speech. My object has been fourfold—to instruct—to interest,—to impress and improve, or to use a stronger word, to convert. I was satisfied that I could gain neither of these objects nor any other worth being gained, without being understood. I have almost idolized what the great masters of Rhetoric call precision of style, the language that expresses the thought clearly and fully—neither more nor less. The trumpet has never sent forth an uncertain sound, though it may oftentimes have sent forth the sounds that may have grated very considerably upon your ears, your consciences, your feelings, yet I know that in all cases these sounds have been sounds of affectionate counsel, warning and exhortation.

But however it may have been on ordinary occasions, yet in the times of your affliction, in the apartment of sickness where I was not slow to come, because there I knew I was needed and welcome, there and in your bereavement, standing beside the remains of some beloved one in the house of sorrow or at the

edge of the grave, there at least "I was gentle among you as a nurse cherisheth her children." There I have mingled my tears with yours and have endeavored to fill you with consolation and hope. There too I have spoken of Christ and have testified that an interest in Him is the best cordial in affliction, the best, yea the only preparation for death. There I have reminded you of the glorious Resurrection of the dead and urged you to make it your own through faith in Him who is the Resurrection and the Life.

To act under the influence of motives perfectly pure is not for man in his present condition; self will intrude in one form or another unbidden and unwelcome, yet, there may be a sincere and an earnest and an honest aim so to act, and even an approximation to such a state of things. I have endeavored to preach always as under the eye of the great "Searcher of Hearts," anxious mainly to gain His approval. But O! my defects in every department of my work. The retrospect is far indeed from being satisfactory, except as I have "the testimony of a good conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, I have had my conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you ward." I think I have

been upright in my dispensation of truth—"I have believed and therefore have I spoken,"—I have preached and applied the truth, the whole truth—the most humbling and condemnatory portions, to myself as well as to my people. In compliance with custom, though I do not consider it a matter of much importance, I would mention that I have solemnized five hundred marriages and have baptized nine hundred and ten dear little infants.

And now I come to speak of results, and I feel humbled that considering the length of time during which I have laboured here, and the abundance and variety of my labours, and the advantages I have had, especially those advantages resulting from the antecedent labours of my estimable and valued predecessors, there should be such meagre results—apparently at least.—I might throw myself over upon the doctrines of the weakness and insufficiency of man and the sovereignty of God, and quoting the great Apostle to the Gentiles, affirm that "neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God who giveth the increase," and again: "It is not of him that willeth neither of him that runneth but of God that sheweth mercy." Yet no man in my view is allowed to make these unquestionable truths an excuse for indolence or negligence in the

Gospel field. I trust I have not, I do not,—and yet I am far from thinking that my diligence and care are by any means up to the Scriptural standard or the example of him who indited the language I have quoted, or of his associates, or of many of their successors and predecessors in the work of the Gospel ministry. Yet as there are grades in sincere diligence and earnestness, so too there are grades in success according to the good pleasure of Him that giveth the increase.

I would not overlook the great truth that such is the immense value of one soul, and if saved, such the immense value of that salvation, when you take account of the evil from which it delivers and the bliss and improvement to which it is an introduction—evil endless on the one hand, and bliss and improvement as endless on the other hand, that he must set a foolish value on his defective services, who would not count them amply rewarded, even if life long, were they the means of bringing one soul to Christ—of delivering one, only one soul from Hell and elevating one soul, only one soul to Glory. But the increase which an indulgent and munificent God giveth, is much more than one soul to the shortest and least successful honest ministry on earth.

During my ministry here more than 400 have been added to the Communion of this Church by profession. I speak not of course of those that have been added by certificate or letter, for although we value them, some of them, very highly, yet they were not gathered into the Church through our instrumentality, but have only transferred their relation from one part of the Church to another. But we can think of some with great pleasure who though added to the Communion of some other Church nearer, or more remote, within the bounds of which they had taken up their residence, have had not only their first impressions, but their new life here: though for some cause or other they were withheld while here from making a public profession of religion. We know of such, and there are more that we do not know of, and we claim them as a portion of the fruit of our labours in the Gospel. There are those too who are really prepared, as we believe, to come out on the Lord's side, a goodly number, who need an impulse from above to carry them over some obstacles that lie in their way, small in reality but large in their own estimation. At the return of each Communion season we have looked for such, and have longed to give them the hearty affectionate grasp of Christian Fellowship, but have yet looked in vain.

They will come however, my heart whispers to me they will come perhaps at the next Communion.

I trust that there is a healthy public sentiment here of a religious tendency. I mean that although all are not under the full influence of Religion, yet all with some exceptions respect Religion and its ordinances. They have been taught and convinced that it is a reasonable service which they are exhorted and urged to render. They have been taught and are convinced that the most mysterious of the doctrines of the religion of Christ are not contrary to reason,—above it indeed, but not contrary to it—I mean the Trinity—the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ—the responsibility of man &c. They have been taught and are convinced that the Scriptures are the word of God and an infallible rule of faith and practice. They do not doubt so much as they think they do, at any rate they do not doubt so much as they would have others believe they do. We have endeavored to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God, and trust we have in some good measure succeeded.

The results however are mainly in the future. My successor will witness them if I do not, though I have good hope that I shall through God's indul-

gence to me—yet if I should not, I desire meekly to wait the will of God. I have sown good seed, even the seed of the Kingdom, and I know it will not be left to perish. The Master has said “one soweth and another reapeth—I sent ye to reap that whereon ye had bestowed no labor—other men labored and ye have entered into their labors.” That is an encouraging message which the Lord of old sent by his servant: (Isaiah LV. 10-11.) “For as the rain cometh down and the snow from Heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”

And now, what as to the future! I leave that to the pleasure of God. My mind has been much, perhaps too much exercised about it of late. But I am perfectly willing that God should order the whole matter. There are some things on which my heart is set—one is that I may have opportunity to preach the word to some extent here while I am able; the other is, that under all circumstances I shall remain connected with the Church to which I have given the prime, nay the whole of my life. I will labor on as

I can and as I have done hitherto, endeavoring however to improve, as I shall be enabled, upon the past. Help is desirable however at my time of life; and I shall yield cheerfully to any arrangement which a people always indulgent may be disposed to make, that will be likely to relieve me and to promote the prosperity of this Church and congregation.

There is another matter on which my heart is set—I shall be thankful to see this Church in a more flourishing state before I finish my ministry here. Will not the officers, the members of the communion, parents, Sabbath school teachers and superintendent, yea all who love the prosperity of Zion, unite their efforts and prayers together to this end. Efforts such as they never yet have made, prayer such as they never yet have offered. And now I repeat—my heart says from its inmost depths—may God bless the people of Neshanic for their kindness to me and mine—the precious dead as well as the living. May God bless them, their children and their children's children—AMEN.

ADDRESS

BY REV. RAVAUD K. RODGERS, D. D.,

PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BOUND BROOK.

Beloved in the Lord!

We are gathered together in this Sanctuary of the Lord's House to-day by his good hand upon us, under circumstances which are peculiar, but full of delightful interest. We come to celebrate an occasion, such, so far as we know, as has never before occurred in Somerset County, and such as may never occur again—the celebration of a FIFTY Years pastorate. We come hither to offer our hearty congratulations to the Pastor, who may well, and no doubt does use as his own, the language of the Apostle, "Having therefore obtained help from God, I continue unto this day"—and here turning to Dr. Ludlow, and taking him by the hand, Dr. Rodgers continued, and you, Dear Brother we do affectionately congratulate in that in the kind dealings of the Great Head of the Church, you have been spared to minister to this people for half a century—that you have been permitted to give them the flower of your youth—the vigor of your manhood, and now the

experience, and, if we may judge from the able and instructive discourse which you have addressed to them this day, we may add the strength of venerated age.

In the name of the Ministry of Somerset County, irrespective of denominational interests, we thank God on your behalf that you have been allowed thus long to minister in the very Sanctuary, in which by the laying on of the hands of the Classis, you were set apart to the work of the ministry—that here from generation to generation, God has so greatly smiled upon you in your work—that here you have been made the instrument in his hands of edifying the body of Christ—of pointing enquiring sinners to the cross of Calvary and leading them by the still waters of a Saviour's grace—our prayer is, that it may be your sweet privilege to do the work of the Lord for many years to come, so that when the Head of the Church shall have served Himself of you here, and releases you from toil on earth, and calls you to rest on high, you may be greeted by Him, as the one who has sustained and cheered you on, with “Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into “the joy of thy Lord”—and that in that great day, very many of those to whom you have here broken the bread of life, may rise up and call you blessed.—

Then turning to the people, Dr. Rodgers added— and we congratulate you the good people of Neshanic, that in the good Providence of God, you have been favored, as were your fathers before you with such a ministry. Few Congregations have been blessed as you have been. During my ministry in my present charge, for it has extended over a period of more than forty-one years, there have been changes in every Church in Somerset County, of every denomination, except this Reformed Church of Neshanic, and the Presbyterian Church of Lamington—of which latter Church, Dr. Blauvelt has been the beloved pastor for forty-five years—and here I may say, without any boasting, that Somerset County is the Banner County for long pastorates—I know of no other in this State, nor yet in any State of our American Union. The following statistics will show how true the remark is when made with respect to this County—

The Rev. Dr. Ludlow was ordained and installed pastor of the Neshanic Church, September 5th, 1821.

The Rev. Dr. Blauvelt was ordained and installed pastor of the Lamington Church, August 9th, 1826.

The Rev. Dr. Rodgers was installed pastor of the Bound Brook Church, May 5th, 1830.

The Rev. Dr. Messler was installed pastor of the First Church, Somerville, October 29th, 1832.

The Rev. Dr. Sears was installed pastor of the Six Mile Run Church, September 5th, 1833.

The Rev. Mr. English was installed pastor of the Liberty Corner Church, October 23d, 1838.

The Rev. Mr. Gardiner was installed pastor of the Harlingen Church, November 14th, 1844.

The Rev. Dr. Rankin was installed pastor of the Church at Baskingridge, September 4th, 1851.

So that there are now in the County of Somerset eight settled pastors in active service whose pastorates amount in the aggregate to two hundred and ninety-three years. In addition to these, we may mention the following whose pleasant relations to the Churches they serve, give good ground for hope that they too may long continue to labor in the Lord—

Rev. Dr. Mesick has been settled in the Second Church of Somerville for sixteen years.

The Rev. Mr. P. M. Doolittle in the Church at North Branch, fifteen years.

The Rev. Mr. Le Fevre in the Church at Raritan, fourteen years.

The Rev. Mr. Searle in the Church at Griggstown, twelve years, and

The Rev. Mr. Corwin in the Church at Millstone, eight years—These five an aggregate of sixty-five years.

And where can such a statement as this be made with reference to any other County.

These are the Lord's doings, and they are marvelous in our eyes. Let us magnify His name together for what He has done for this and other Churches in our time-honored County of Somerset! And in close, we add more especially on behalf of this people,

Here let the Son of David reign,
Let God's anointed shine!
Here let Him hold a lasting throne,
And as his Kingdom grows
Fresh honors shall adorn His Crown
And shame confound His foes!

ADDRESS

BY REV. ABRAHAM MESSLER, D. D.,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST REFORMED CHURCH, SOMERVILLE.

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This is really a most deeply interesting occasion. It has both the impressiveness of novelty and solemnity; and they are combined in a sentiment of wonder and thankfulness. Wonder at the wisdom and grace of God which has made it possible that such an anniversary as this should be celebrated, and thankfulness that he has given his servant here strength to do so much work for him and for this people, to whom he has ministered through so many long years. I do not think that such a circumstance has ever before occurred in our County long as the pastorates in our Churches have frequently been—for instance, the elder Frelinghuysen, Vredenburg, Studdiford, Zabriske and Van Liew. I have found two instances in our State and in our own Church—Benjamin Dubois of Middletown and Freehold was pastor of those Churches sixty-three years, and preached actually to them fifty-three years. The last ten years of his life he had as colleague Rev. Dr. Van Vranken. A second, Jacob Kirkpatrick of Rin-

goes, who served that congregation fifty-nine years. I do not think that such instances occur often anywhere: or that there have been many at any time, or among any denomination of Christians. They are exceptional instances, even among the long pastorates, of which a former time could boast more than the present. We give our friend here the praise of having attained an honor which is possible only to a very few! We thank God that he has given him grace to do what a precious few only are permitted to do. All honor to him! He has wrought during all the burden and heat of the day—and now when the evening hour is so near he ought to have rest. He is “emeritus” from long service and abundant labors both.

Fifty years of faithful uninterrupted and successful labors as a preacher and a pastor! fifty years in the same pastoral charge and in the same pulpit! These very walls must have an odor of sanctity, if not really and locally—certainly in the associations and veneration which memory acknowledges and cherishes and before which she bows almost in adoring veneration! We can hardly grasp the idea of what has been the whole amount of instruction, prayer, praise, worship and thanksgiving which has constituted the work of these years and of which

they have been the occasion. We can scarcely think how rich the services of these years have been in the instruction, comfort, incitement, guidance and invigoration experienced in the souls of those who have waited on God in attendance on these services. Figures cannot tell the good that has been done; for much of it remains to be made known in heaven. They cannot tell even the conversions which the preaching of the Gospel has been the occasion of: for they have not all been manifest by a public profession here— perhaps not even by a public profession any where. They may have gone to heaven before they had an opportunity to own Christ, or they may have gone other where and owned their Redeemer there. Our preaching is really like sowing seed some of which always falls by the way side. The traveller, the stranger, the sojourner come and hear and carry away the good seed in their hearts; and the preacher never knows what good he has really done. These fifty years beside the fruit which has been gathered in here, have many revelations to make of other fruit which has been gathered elsewhere, and other still to come on in its season hereafter.

Fifty years of pastoral labor among the same people! When I announced the fact recently to a young

clergyman his exclamation was, that is tremendous. The fact itself is greatly to the praise of both pastor and people. It is only in a very few places and on the part of very few pastors, that it is possible. Selfishness, or pride, or ambition, or insubordination generally make pastorates only of a few years duration. Some ministers are ambitious of having many calls. Certainly it is a worldly ambition; and not by any means, really to their praise. It is thought an evidence of extensive popularity. It is really only the result of a restless spirit. It always impairs usefulness; and it finally destroys it! Men who have had the most calls and settlements, often end in having none! Whereas to be content to labor on in the field where Providence has called one as long as there is work to be done, is one of the purest manifestations of the spirit of the heavenly Master which can be given! as old Matthew Henry says, "God looks upon those as fittest to be honored by him and employed for him, who are humble and low in their own eyes"—and hence it comes to be a maxim of experience in the Christian ministry, that it is the unambitious man who is really the most useful man and honored in doing most good in the Church. These are the kind of pastorates we need to keep the Church from pharisaism: and then pharisees in

it from making sadducees: how fast they are being made! Those young men who are looking for a wider field might often better look whether they have been able to fill the one where their work has been assigned them. A very contracted field is generally wide enough to occupy all the gifts and powers ordinarily given to ministers: and wide fields are apt to entail more labor than can be done.

We have said that such a pastorate as we are reviewing to-day, is an honor both to the pastor and people! Churches are as apt to weary of their ministers as the ministers are to weary of them: and the same influences are in operation in the one that produce their unfortunate results in the other—a restless spirit—a rage for novelty—a desire to be amused and excited by the preaching, rather than edification and growth in grace! It is therefore only a Church in which there is a predominance of solid, judicious piety, where such a long pastorate is possible. Good men must control the Church and give power to right views and principles: good men must stand by the pastor and hold him up and encourage him: good men must pray and bring down upon him and upon his labors the blessing of heaven, or he could not continue to edify and satisfy his hearers. It is the hearer quite as much as the preacher who

is concerned in the result! We may grant that there are dull and uninteresting preachers: but must also consider how many captious, conceited and unreasonable hearers there are! We all of us have some men to whom we are to preach, whom the Angel Gabriel could not satisfy! Their self conceit and their unstable, unsettled mind would lead them, under any ministry to want something else—what it is they may not know themselves; but it is something different—different always, no matter what it is they have! It is therefore to the praise of any people that they have found satisfaction and edification, even in such a pastorate as this has been, so long. We speak of their course in high commendation. There are but a few places and Churches where such a thing is possible; and they have proved themselves to be among the very best—yes, the very best!

A ministry of fifty years; what an amount of labor it involves! I take it that our friend, your pastor, must have averaged as many as three public services weekly—two on the Sabbath and an extra service of some kind—catechising, lecturing or a funeral—during the week. Now if we reckon up the amount of these labors in numbers, it will be seven thousand eight hundred sermons, or what is equivalent to a

sermon; costing as much to prepare it--sometimes more than a regular sermon, and entailing almost in all cases quite as much exhaustion in the delivery! I confess I wonder when I think of it, that our friend has been able to perform it. Other men run about from place to place repeating a few carefully prepared sermons, and acquire fame--are lauded as active and influential men in the Church; but here he has stood in the same pulpit fifty years, preaching new matter every Sabbath day, and he is not exhausted, nor are all his treasures yet expended! A little circle of knowledge is sufficient for a peripatetic ministry—a year here, three years yonder, and five in another place; but a mind that is capable of bringing out treasures new and old in such exhaustless profusion for such a long period of years, must be a royal mind! It is like a mint the ore of which is rich beyond exhaustion! I confess I sat and wondered to-day, as he went on pouring out upon us his abounding wealth! What a noble sermon it was: and this man has been preaching here to the same people, in this strain for fifty years! He has certainly proved himself a workman that need not be ashamed.

There are said to be some ministers who are able to shake a sermon out of their coat sleeves. I have heard some sermons shook out in that way, and con-

fess I did not estimate them as worth the shaking. No! there is no such facility in preaching! It is a laborious and thoughtful business, and especially when one is called upon to bring of his treasury things new and old for half a century, and to stand up in the presence of an intelligent Christian audience, and from Sabbath to Sabbath edify it with matter commending itself to the understanding as much as it does to the heart. No one but a thoughtful scholar can do it. No one that is not deeply read in the Scriptures and in Christian theology can hope to accomplish it.

It was a custom in Ancient Greece to train their athletes in muscular exercises! Running, contending in the circus, hurling the javeline, shooting with the bow, leaping a barrier, developed strength, and perfected skill, and prepared the warrior for the battle field! The victor was encouraged and rewarded by a civic crown, and the athlete strove to gain it, not so much from any intrinsic value which it might possess in itself, as from the honor which it conferred! It was considered a noble ambition to win such a crown!

The Christian pastor is not an athlete contending for an empty prize or a vain distinction. He has a nobler aim! His ambition is to secure the honor of

God and the benefit of his fellow men! He does not fight as one that beateth the air. He does not run as one that strives for an ambitious distinction! He has laid upon him the duty of winning souls for his Redeemer's Crown—gems of priceless value and of enduring worth. There is a world around him perishing in sin and misery, and he is to rescue them from impending perdition. He is God's messenger to bring them glad tidings—God's ambassador to effect their peace with heaven and bring them back to their allegiance to their rightful Sovereign! He is to be faithful, paternal, winning in his efforts—beseeching them with all long suffering and gentleness! Their salvation is laid upon him, and he is to answer for it when he comes to give his own account. We have been told to-day how earnestly our friend and fellow laborer in this vineyard has sought to win souls for his Master, and what his success has been. He has brought in the sheaves of a noble harvest; but I am free to say the whole has not been told. I believe it could not be told. It will only be known when the secrets of God are revealed to the universe. Seed has been sown which is to spring up in future years. Influences have been set in motion which hereafter will be perfected. Convictions have been wrought which time alone will mature.

When this man is resting sweetly in his grave, there will be conversions the glory of which will be added to his crown as gems of enduring worth! Even his prayers are waiting to be answered in future years. His griefs are to be changed to joys—his agonies are hereafter to become his most enduring gladness; and where he has travelled in pain most hopelessly, he will yet feel to rejoice most enduringly! Oh, yes, there must be a rich reward waiting him in the other world and the other life. How joyful to think of it! What a joy it will be when it comes to be given! To stand among the elder sons in glory and wear a shining garment!

A little while more: a little more toil, and care, and self denial; and then, like Paul, he will be able to say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord righteous Judge shall give me in that day."

Yes henceforth! In a little while the crown will come.

He is standing at the threshold, weary, faint and sore;
 Waiting for the dawning, for the opening of the door;
 Waiting 'till the Master shall bid him rise and come,
 To the glory of his presence, to the gladness of his home.

A weary path he hath travelled, mid darkness, storm and strife;
 Bearing many a burden, struggling for his life;
 But now the morn is breaking, his toil will soon be o'er,
 He is standing at the threshold, his hand is on the door.

Methinks I hear the voices of the blessed as they stand,
Singing in the sunshine, in the far off sinless land ;
Oh would that I were with them, amid their shining throng
Mingling in their worship, joining in their song !

The friends that started with him have entered long ago ;
One by one they left him struggling with the foe ;
Their pilgrimage was shorter, their triumph sooner won,
How joyfully they'll meet him when all his toil is done.

With them the blessed angels that know no grief and sin,
I see them by the portals prepared to let him in.
O Lord, I wait thy pleasure ; Thy time and way are best ;
But I'm wasted, worn and weary ; O Father bid me rest.