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REV. JONATHAN PARSONS M.A.

*West Pastor of the Baptist Church
in Newburyport Mass*

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MEMOIR OF THE REV. JONATHAN PARSONS, M. A.

FIRST PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN NEWBURYPORT, MS.

[By Rev. JONATHAN GREENLEAF, of Brooklyn, N. Y.]

THE family of PARSONS, was an ancient family in England,* and some of the name were among the early emigrants to America. Two brothers of this family, Joseph, and Benjamin, came over to this country about the year 1635, and settled at Springfield, Ms. The elder brother, Joseph Parsons, commonly known as *Cornet* Joseph, was one of the witnesses of the Indian Deed to William Pynchon and others, July 15, 1636, which is the instrument whereby the land in and around Springfield is held. In 1645, he removed to Northampton, returned to Springfield in 1679, and died there March 25, 1684. Benjamin Parsons, the younger brother, is generally known as *Deacon* Benjamin. He probably sustained this office in the first church gathered at Springfield. Certain it is that he lived there, and died there in the year 1690. Among his sons was Ebenezer Parsons, who was born in 1668. He lived in West Springfield, and was chosen a deacon of the first Congregational church in that place in the year 1700, in which office he continued till his death, in 1752.† He married Margaret Marshfield, and had five sons and two daughters. His youngest son was Jonathan, the subject of the following memoir.

JONATHAN PARSONS was born at West Springfield, Ms., November 30, 1705. He was originally designed for a mechanical employment, and commenced learning a trade, but having a great desire for a public education, in which he was much encouraged by the Rev. Jonathan Edwards of Northampton, he began his preparation for college alone, while still at work with his hands, and plied his trade diligently, with his book often lying on the bench beside him. At the age of 20 years he entered Yale College, and was graduated there in the year 1729.

He does not appear to have been devoutly disposed at the time he entered college, and probably had no intention then of entering the

* Thomas Parsons, of Great Milton, received the honor of knighthood from Charles I., about the year 1634, and his descendants remain at Great Milton, and in the city of London, to this day. He married Catharine, the daughter of Alderman Radcliff of London. The coat of arms granted to Thomas Parsons, and still retained in the Parsons family in the United States, is thus described: "He beareth *Gules*, two chevrons *Ermine*, between three Eagles displayed, Or."

† See Dr. Sprague's Hist. Ser. p. 69, note Q.

ministry; and it was not until the middle of his college life, that he began to think seriously of religion. In a manuscript journal of his, and on his birth-day, within a few years of his death, Mr. Parsons makes a review of his life, with special reference to the great change in his religious views. The following extracts from this document will give us authentic information in relation to this matter :

“ Though I had religious parents, who took great pains with me, yet my childhood and youth were vanity. I broke through all the restraints of education and conscience, and gave loose to the way of my carnal heart. When I was studying in order for college, I behaved more soberly in the sight of the world, but really no better, and after I entered college, though I was more studious than some, yet I know of none more wicked, though some were more open in their wickedness. When I had been two years in college, I was taken with a fever, at my father's house, and at this time was under a great sense of my sin and danger. After my recovery, my conscience was tender, and I became so serious and strict that the most of my acquaintance took me for a converted person. I thought it was my duty to make an open profession of religion, and did it accordingly. I thought I was in a fair way for heaven, though I am now convinced that I was a stranger to the new birth.”

Designing now to enter the ministry, Mr. Parsons, before he left college, turned his attention to theological studies, under the direction of the President, Rev. Elisha Williams, and afterward, for a short time, with the Rev. Jonathan Edwards, at Northampton. It seems somewhat surprising that men as discriminating as President Williams and Mr. Edwards, should not have detected the fallacy of Mr. Parsons's experience, and more especially as it was in his case connected with Arminian views of doctrine. But so it was, and he was licensed to preach. In less than a year after he left college, he was invited to the pastoral office, in the Congregational church in Lyme, Ct., and was ordained there in March, 1731. In December of the same year, he was married to Phebe Griswold, the eldest daughter of John Griswold, Esq. of Lyme.*

The erroneous views which Mr. Parsons held, joined with the defects in his Christian experience, prepared the way not only for difficulties in the congregation, but for an awful struggle in his own mind. “ Inexperienced, and unsettled in the doctrines which are according to godliness, and lax in his views of ecclesiastical discipline, he lacked, at this time, important qualifications for a teacher and ruler in the house of God, and early led his people to establish a righteousness of their own, rather than to submit to that which is of God by faith; and was by these means unconsciously preparing the way for his removal, when he should be made to understand the way of God more perfectly.” † But let us hear his own account of the severe conflict in his mind at this time. “ Soon after my settlement,” he remarks, “ there was a great and general concern about religion, especially among the young people. I was very zealous in my

* The Griswold family were among the first settlers at Lyme. They occupied the point bounded by Long Island Sound on the south, and Connecticut River on the west, usually known by the name of “ Blackhall.” Matthew Griswold lived there in the year 1683. He married Phebe Hyde, and they had eleven children, of whom John Griswold, Esq. was the fifth. He was born December 22, 1690, and died September 29, 1764. His younger brother, George, was graduated at Yale College in 1717, and entering the ministry, was settled at East Lyme. Mary Griswold, a sister of these, married Edward Dorr, of Lyme, whose daughter, Eve Dorr, was the mother of Rev. Dr. Edward Dorr Griffin, late President of Williams College. John Griswold married Hannah Lee, in 1713, and had eleven children. Matthew, the eldest, born in 1714, was Governor of Connecticut, and his son Roger, was afterwards Governor of the same State.

† Williams's Hist. Sermon at Newburyport, p. 44.

work, and urged them to come to the Lord's table, and in less than ten months, fifty-two persons joined the church.

"After I had been settled nigh two years, I was convinced that I had built my hopes of heaven upon the sandy foundation of my own righteousness. The terrors of the law were very dreadful upon me for several months. Sometimes I thought I must be in hell in a few minutes. I thought every one that saw me must see my wretchedness, and often wondered how they could treat me with common respect, much more with the respect due to a minister; and yet I believe my people were never so respectful to me, as at the time when I had those apprehensions of misery. If I had any quiet, at this time, it was when I was upon my knees, begging for mercy, or reading the Bible. These duties I attended much of my time. But when I read Mr. Stoddard's 'Safety of appearing in the righteousness of Christ,' especially his use of reproof to men trusting in their own righteousness, and not submitting to God, I could plainly read my own character. Still I dare not let go my self-righteous hold, till one morning as I came out of my study to attend family worship, I found myself naked, and saw the justice of God, though he cast me off forever. My struggles were all hushed in a moment, and I think I submitted to sovereign mercy. It was not ten minutes, I believe, before I saw the justice of God fully satisfied in Christ, and how he could save the chief of sinners. I saw the sufficiency of Christ, as the surety of the covenant of grace, to redeem the most helpless, wretched, and hell-deserving. This put an argument in my heart to plead with God in prayer, and afforded some relief for a time. Still I was not satisfied of a change of heart till several months afterwards. Sometime after this I preached to the Indians at Nehantic, on the nature and necessity of regeneration, Mr. C—— and Mr. A—— being present. After service, Mr. A. told me he was afraid I was not converted. My heart said there was reason to fear it. I had been several days in distress about it, and his discourse increased my distress. I went home, eight miles, very pensive. Slept but little that night, and rose early. Mrs. Parsons, taking notice of something extraordinary, asked what was the matter. I told her I could not live so; and after I had attended family worship, I retired into a secret place in the field, resolving never to see any body till I had my state cleared up, whether good or bad. I had not been alone with my Bible, and upon my knees more than two hours, before light broke in with such assuring satisfaction, that I could not doubt of the safety of my state. This was a time (1741) of the outpouring of the Spirit in the land, and eminently so at Lyme, when many, I believe, were savingly converted."

After this severe mental struggle, and when the clouds of error were thus wonderfully scattered from his own mind, it will not seem strange that Mr. Parsons should have become, as he did, "a burning and a shining light." As was said of another in somewhat similar circumstances, "he burst out suddenly like a heavenly luminary from behind an interposing cloud." Whitefield, and Gilbert Tennent, were at that time traversing the country. They were often at Lyme, and the house of Mr. Parsons was always their home. He drank deeply into the same spirit with them, and became like them, in labors abundant, both in his own parish and in the region round about. Having waded deeply in error himself, he was well qualified to detect and expose the native depravity of the heart, and to show the imminent danger of the sinner while unreconciled to God. In his early ministry he paid much attention to his manner of writing, and was distinguished for a correct, clear, nervous, and somewhat elegant

style; but after the great change in his views, and when the salvation of souls became his great object, and his mind was occupied, and even crowded with severe studies, if his public discourses were less flowery, yet they gained much in pathos and energy. One who enjoyed his preaching at Lyme at this period in his history, thus describes it :

“Oh! with what astonishing terrors have I heard him represent the torments of hell, and the imminent, amazing danger of the impenitent sinner! With what glowing colors, and sweetly surprising language would he paint the glories of heaven, and describe the holy and elevated joys of immortality! In what melting strains would he represent the sufferings of Christ, and his dying love to sinners! So lively were his descriptions of the great Redeemer’s excruciating sufferings, that the solemn scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary would seem to open afresh to the view, and revive anew to the imagination of his auditory, so that Christ might be said to be set forth crucified before their eyes, in his animated descriptions. With what alluring persuasions would he pray and entreat sinners, in Christ’s stead, to be reconciled to God. Such was the apparent fervor of his spirit, and the tender emotions of his compassionate heart, that he would sometimes appear as a flame of fire, and then all dissolved in tears.” *

The following extracts from a letter of his, preserved in Prince’s Christian History, will not only exhibit something of the state of his own mind, but afford some information respecting the great revival of religion in New England at that time. The letter was addressed to the Rev. Dr. Colman, at Boston, and is dated at Lyme, Dec. 16, 1741.

“Rev. and Honoured Sir,

“I must beg your excuse for my long silence, especially now I have had matter enough to write, and that which is greater argument of praise to God, and refreshing to you in your old age, than ever I had in my life. I think duty to God, and service to the souls of men, has so employed all the fragments of my time, that my duty to you was superseded thereby; though my inclination to sound the praises of redeeming love, and be an instrument of renewing your strength, if it might please God, has been stronger than ever.

“In one of my last letters to you, I gave you some hints of an hopeful prospect of the revival of religion among us; and as I can’t doubt but that you rejoiced in hope, so now I trust, a brief and general account of the return of Zion’s captivity will be much more joyous, and fill your mouth with arguments of praise to God, for the triumphs of his mercy.

“Upon Mr. Tennent’s return to Boston, he came through this place, and preached two sermons, which seemed to quicken the convictions of some, and beat down the false hopes of several others: I have reason to bless the Lord that he sent him for our help; indeed, by inquiry since, I find that his labors were blessed more than appeared at the very time. On the memorable *fourteenth* day of May last, there was a sermon preached to a considerable auditory in our meeting-house, when the preacher was much carried out in desire, zeal, and expectation.† In the midst of this sermon, the Spirit of God fell upon the assembly with great power, and rode forth with majesty upon the word of truth. In a minute’s time the

* Rev. Mr. Searl’s Sermon on the death of Mr. Parsons. p. 50.

† Mr. Parsons does not name the preacher on this occasion. It was undoubtedly himself, and the time was probably very soon after the severe struggle in his own mind, when his soul was so wonderfully set at liberty.

people were seemingly as much affected, as if a thousand arrows had been shot in among them. The heart of almost every sinner was pricked, and the children of God greatly affected with compassion toward them. The arrows of conviction were so sharp, and stuck so fast in the hearts of many, that they were forced to cry out aloud with the anguish in their souls. About fifty or sixty persons, chiefly grown to the age of men and women, were crying out, and praying with loud voices under a sense of their sins, and the wrath of God, under which they felt themselves bound down. And since that day convictions have been strong, a work of humiliation clear, and many conversions, according to the best judgment I am able to make. The parish is small, consisting of about 120 families, yet many days the past summer, I have had 20, 30, 40, 50, and sometimes 60 persons under deep concern with me in one day, inquiring the way to Zion. * * * I hope since the 14th of May last, more than 140 souls have been savingly converted in this place. The same happy work has been carried on in the neighboring parishes of the town, especially one under the care of the Rev. Mr. Griswold, in a most wonderful manner. * * *

"I have many times seen the comforts of God's children as extraordinary as the sufferings of convicted sinners. Sometimes 20 or 30 at an evening lecture have been so filled with the love of Christ Jesus, and the sense of God's love to them, as to be quite overcome; and seldom has been a meeting without an instance or more of that nature. On last sacrament day, whilst I was breaking the bread, near an hundred persons were melted down in such sort, as my eyes never saw before: Many whole pews were almost overwhelmed; some from a sense of the majesty, some from a sense of the wisdom and glorious excellency of the great God, shining through the man Christ Jesus, and others from a sense of the dying love of the Redeemer. Never did I see so much love, so much pleasure and delight, and such an apparent spirit of forgiveness where there had been any unhappy broils. They could scarcely wait till the sacrament was over, without flying into one another's arms. I have no more doubt but that the great Master of the feast was present in the influences of his grace and Spirit, and manifested himself in his love and beauty, than if I had seen him with my bodily eyes. * * *

"Many of the towns round about have been sharers in these blessings, as doubtless you have been informed. The Rev. Mr. Adams, of New London, has found some considerable concern among his people about their salvation; but there is at present a dividing principle which seems to get in, and I fear proves a check to the good work. * * *

"I can't break off without telling you that the Indians of this town, who are about 130 souls in number, are many, if not most of them, much affected about themselves, and very desirous of instruction in the knowledge of Christ. I have preached to them once a fortnight for some time, and God has evidently manifested his power to them, and his grace for them, even in the times of my preaching and exhortations, as well as at other times, and by other helps. The concern for their souls increases in me, and in them, and, I trust, about fifteen souls, according to the best judgment I can make, have been converted within about five months. Thus the Lord brings in the dear Indians for his inheritance, and makes light from the dead break forth in a glorious manner.

"I am, Rev. and honored Sir,

"Your dutiful son and obliged humble servant,

"JONATHAN PARSONS."

After considering the very striking change which had taken place in Mr. Parsons's mind, and the great zeal he exhibited for the salvation of those around him, and the undoubted alteration both in his doctrines and mode of preaching, for he had actually burnt up the sermons he had written during the first five years of his ministry, as unworthy of preservation; it will not by any means be thought surprising that difficulties should have arisen between him and the people of his charge. He was probably settled an Arminian, and for several years had taught his people rather to rest on their own righteousness for salvation, than to depend alone on that of Christ; and when he frankly renounced his errors, and with much boldness and energy "preached the faith that once he destroyed," although many were hopefully converted among the people, yet all were not; and under these circumstances, the bitter enmity of the human heart to the truth would be very likely to break forth. It proved so in this case, and in his journal Mr. Parsons makes the following remark:—Speaking of the revival of religion at Lyme, he says—"There was great opposition to the work, and several turned to be my enemies because I told them the truth, and raised many false reports of my doctrine." The contention became at length so sharp, that at his own request he was dismissed from his pastoral charge, by the advice of a council, in October, 1745.

A little previous to the time of Mr. Parsons's dismissal from Lyme, some movements were made in that part of Newbury, Ms., now the town of Newburyport, for gathering a new congregation; and by the advice of Mr. Whitefield, Mr. Parsons was invited to visit that place, and he accordingly left Lyme on the 28th of October, 1745, and arrived at Newbury in the beginning of the following month. "I found," says he in his journal, "a number of serious Christians in the congregation which I came to visit, who appeared to be understanding, solid, and in some measure established in the main points of Christian doctrine. But many others appeared of an Antinomian turn, full of vain confidence, self-conceit, false affections, &c., and some that were the greatest Christians in their own esteem, appeared to be worldly, and covetous. Nevertheless, as I thought the doctrines of Christ were run down in this part of the land, and though I was but a poor instrument to defend them, I did, by great importunity, consent to abide with them, and took the charge of the congregation in March following." (March, 1746.)

At that day, much more than at the present, parish lines were very strictly observed, and it was thought quite disorderly to form a new church within the territorial limits of one of the same denomination, and hence when certain members of Rev. Mr. Lowell's church in Newburyport, and Rev. Mr. Tucker's church in Newbury, became dissatisfied with their ecclesiastical relations, and proposed to form a new church, on higher Calvinistic ground than those churches then stood, they deemed it expedient to take the Presbyterian form, the churches from which they separated being Congregational. Nineteen persons subscribed the covenant engagements, and constituted the church, when Mr. Parsons became their pastor.*

* The following is a copy of the engagement entered into by the original members of this church. It is copied from the Appendix to Rev. Mr. Williams's Historical Sermon.

"We the subscribing brethren who were members of the First Church in Newbury, and have thought it our duty to withdraw therefrom, do also look upon it our duty to enter into a church state; specially as we apprehend this may be for the glory of God, and the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom, as well as for our own edification and comfort.

The connection thus formed, continued happily for thirty years, and until death dissolved the tie. The church, originally most emphatically "a little one," was enlarged during the ministry of Mr. Parsons to the number of several hundreds, at least two hundred of whom were supposed to be converted by his instrumentality; and the congregation was gradually enlarged till it became one of the most numerous on the continent.

In this vast congregation Mr. Parsons labored abundantly, casting abroad the good seed of the word with an unsparing hand. His ministry at Newburyport was not marked by revolutions, nor by any great events. It was peaceful and useful, and the years glided away, until he became "old and gray headed," and the time of his departure arrived.

It was but a few years before his death that Mr. Whitefield made his last visit to New England, and here, as at Lyme in former years, Mr. Parsons's house was his home. He had been to the eastward as far as York, in the State of Maine, and having preached at Exeter on Saturday, returned to the house of Mr. Parsons, being expected to preach for him on the approaching Sabbath. But God had other purposes to accomplish, and about six o'clock on Sabbath morning, with Mr. Parsons and his family standing around him, he fell asleep in the Lord. An immense congregation assembled on the Sabbath, when Mr. Parsons preached from Phil. i. 21, "To die is gain."

Mr. Parsons did not survive Mr. Whitefield many years. His constitution soon gave way, and after a long and somewhat distressing sickness, he died in much peace on the 19th of July, 1776, aged 71. On the death of Mr. Whitefield a tomb was built for him underneath the pulpit, agreeably to a wish he had often expressed to be buried there. Mr. Parsons's remains were laid in the same vault. There they continue to repose together, until the trumpet of the great Archangel shall raise them up to glory everlasting.

Mr. Parsons was of middle stature, light complexion, with blue eyes, and a somewhat prominent chin. Though not what would be called a handsome man, yet he had a commanding countenance, with very strongly marked character written upon it. His manners were easy and polished. His natural temper was hasty, and rather unlovely, and though education and divine grace had done much to soften and subdue it, yet it cost him a struggle to keep it under, to the end of his life. He was a man of much general learning. When he left college he was considered as an accurate scholar, well versed in the Latin and Greek languages, and had made very considerable proficiency in the study of Hebrew. He was a ready and correct writer, and was considered a very useful member of ecclesiastical bodies on this account. A variety of matter which many excellent men would be unable to put into regular order without much time, under his commanding pen would almost immediately assume a proper form, every topic well arranged, and gracefully expressed. He was a well read

"We do therefore, as we trust, in the fear of God, mutually covenant and agree to walk together as a church of Christ according to the rules and order of the Gospel.

"In testimony whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and seals, this 3d day of January, A. D. 1746."

CHARLES PIERCE.
MOSES BRADSTREET.
EDWARD PRESBURY.
JOHN BROWN.
RICHARD HALL.
BENJAMIN KNIGHT.
WILLIAM BROWN.
BENJAMIN PIERCE.
DANIEL NOTES.
MAGER GOODWIN.

THOMAS PIKE.
DANIEL WELLS.
JOSEPH HIDDEN.
NATHANIEL ATKINSON, JR.
JONATHAN PLUMMER.
DANIEL GOODWIN.
SILVANUS PLUMMER.
SAMUEL HALL.
CUTTING PETTINGELL.

historian; and had also made good proficiency in the study of medicine, to the practice of which he devoted considerable time, during the first years of his ministry. But when his mind became more deeply imbued with the subject of vital religion, and the great worth of immortal souls came pressing upon him with unutterable weight, he laid aside lighter studies, seeming not to heed his reputation as a nice, tasteful scholar, or an elegant and finished orator; but, like the Apostle, resolving to know nothing among the people, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. His style was now plain, and his eloquence was often overwhelming; not the eloquence of measured gesture, and theatrical start, but the native eloquence of a man of strong mind, discussing momentous subjects, and solicitous only to be clearly understood.

Although it was his decided opinion that creeds and confessions of faith were of great use as public exhibitions of the sentiments of the churches, and he did himself adhere strictly to the "Westminster Confession," and enjoined it upon others, yet he ever set up the Bible as the infallible standard of divine truth, the only unerring rule of faith and practice. The great and leading subjects of his public discourses will be best understood by quoting the words of one who sat under his ministry for several years, after the great change in his religious views. "In the course of his preaching," says this writer, "he insisted much, and with remarkable clearness, upon the grand, leading, and most important doctrines of divine revelation. In particular, upon the humbling doctrine of the deplorable depravity of mankind since the fall; that by nature they are dead in trespasses and sins. He was particular as to the economy of redemption; the important doctrine of the sacred trinity; the offices which each divine person sustains and executes in the affair of our redemption. Who was more full in the doctrines of grace; or that could set them in a more convincing, amiable, and striking light than he? or who better taught the nature and necessity of the new birth? or of progressive sanctification? Who placed in a clearer light the efficacious agency of the Holy Spirit in the application of the benefits of redemption; or in the rise and progress of a saving work of God in the souls of the elect, and their justification through the imputed righteousness of Christ, received by faith alone?" * "In sermonizing," says this same writer, "his method was correct, natural, easy, and clear, and his manner of delivery animating. He had a ready and fruitful invention, a rich and lively imagination, and a clear and commanding voice. His extemporaneous performances were somewhat remarkable. He excelled most of his brethren in the gift of prayer, and at times he seemed to come near to God's throne of grace, and pour out his soul before him in the most ardent desires, and devout addresses; and it has been reported that in the course of his providence, God has granted him some signal answers."

"He was a faithful and vigilant pastor; applying himself with great care to the wants of his people, both in public and in private. The success attending his ministry was great. During his residence at Lyme, he entertained charitable hopes that near two hundred persons were savingly converted; and in Newburyport also, he had the satisfaction of seeing large accessions made to the church through his instrumentality."

Though he was far from being a perfect man, and had even many defects, yet he had also many excellencies. He was one of those men to whom the world is greatly indebted, and whose memory an enlightened Christian community will not cease to venerate and cherish.

* Mr. Searl's Funeral Sermon on the death of Mr. Parsons, p. 47.

Mr. Parsons, as before stated, married Phebe Griswold, of Lyme, December 14, 1731. By this marriage he had thirteen children, six of whom died in infancy. Those who lived to marry were

1. *Marshfield*, born at Lyme, February 7, 1733. He married Lois Wait, by whom he had a son, John, whose descendants are numerous, living mostly in the State of Ohio, and the western part of the State of New York. One of them is the wife of Rev. D. B. Bradley, M. D., missionary at Bangkok, in Siam. He died at Lyme, January 13, 1813, aged 80 years.

2. *Jonathan*, born at Lyme, April 25, 1735. He resided at Newburyport, was much distinguished as a Christian shipmaster, and died at sea, December 29, 1784. He married Hannah Gyles, of Salisbury, Ms., and had four sons, but they all died unmarried, and the name of Parsons is extinct in that branch. He had also six daughters, viz: Elizabeth, who married 1st, Samuel Chandler, and 2d, John Mycall; Hannah, who married Abraham Jackson; Lois, who married Jacob Stone; Mary L., who married Nathaniel Brown; Phebe, who married Samuel Mulliken; and Lucia, who died unmarried.

3. *Samuel-Holden*, born at Lyme, May 14, 1737. He was graduated at Harvard College in 1756, studied law, and settled in Middletown, Ct.; was a Major-General in the Revolutionary army, and was an Aid to General Washington, by whom he was afterwards appointed Governor of the North-western Territory. He was drowned in the Big Beaver Creek, Ohio, November 12, 1789. He married Mehetabel Mather, of Lyme, and had seven children, three sons and four daughters, viz: William-Walter, who left no son; Enoch, now living in Hartford, Ct.; and Samuel-H. His daughters were, Lucia, who married Hon. Stephen Titus Hosmer, of Middletown; Mehetabel, who married Dr. W. B. Hall, of Middletown; Phebe, who married Samuel Tiffin; and Margaret, who married 1st, Stephen Hubbard, of Middletown, and 2d, Alfred Lathrop, Esq. of Carthage, N. Y.

4. *Thomas*, born at Lyme, April 28, 1739. He was a shipmaster, and resided at Newburyport; and was missing at sea, supposed to be murdered, in February, 1772. He married Mary Gibson, and had one son, Jonathan-Gibson, who married, but left no son, and the name of Parsons is extinct in this branch. Capt. Parsons married for a second wife Sarah Sawyer, of Newbury, and had three daughters, viz: Sarah, who married Gorham Parsons, of another branch of the family, but left no children; Anna, who married Fitz William Sargent, of Gloucester, Ms.; and Mary, who married Ignatius Sargent.

5. *Phebe*, born at Newburyport, March 6, 1748. She married Capt. Ebenezer Lane, of Boston, and died there, leaving no children, in 1781, aged 33.

6. *Lucia*, born at Newburyport, December 23, 1752. She married Capt. Joseph Tappan, of the same place, and died there in May, 1815, aged 63, leaving three children—Phebe, wife of — Dow, of Norwich, Ct.; Sarah; and Thomas-Parsons.

7. *Lydia*, born at Newburyport, April 3, 1755. She married Capt. Moses Greenleaf, and died at Williamsburgh, Me., March 21, 1834, aged 79. She had five children—Moses, Clarina-Parsons, Ebenezer, Simon, and Jonathan.

Mrs. Parsons died December 26, 1770; and in the following year Mr. Parsons married Mrs. Lydia Clarkson, the widow of Andrew Clarkson, Esq. of Portsmouth, N. H. She survived him.

The printed works of Mr. Parsons are the following :

1. Letters in the Christian History. 1741.
2. Sermon at the Boston Lecture. 1742.
3. Lectures on Justification. 1748.
4. Good News from a far Country. Seven discourses. 1756.
5. Rejoinder to R. Abercrombie's remarks on a fair narrative of the proceedings of the Pres. of Boston against himself. 1758.
6. Sermon on connection between true godliness, &c. 1759.
7. Manna gathered in morning. 1761.
8. Infant Baptism from Heaven. Two sermons. 1770.
9. Sermon on the death of Mr. Whitefield. 1770.
10. Controversial Letters to Smith on Baptism.
11. Freedom from Civil and Ecclesiastical tyranny. 1774.
12. Sixty Sermons. 2 vols. 8vo. (Posthumous.) 1780.

NOTE.

The following sketch of the several branches of the families of Joseph and Benjamin Parsons, may not be unacceptable to some readers.

Cornet Joseph Parsons married Mary Bliss, and had ten children, viz : Joseph, John, Samuel, Ebenezer, Jonathan, David, Mary, Hannah, Abigail, and Hester. Of these children, Joseph, John, and Jonathan, settled in and about Northampton; Samuel, settled in Durham, Ct. The other sons died young. Mary married J. Williston; Hannah married P. Glover; Abigail married J. Colton; and Hester married Joseph Smith. The children of Cornet Joseph Parsons were born between the years 1647 and 1672. He died March 25, 1684. His wife outlived him many years, and died in 1712, at the age of 92.

Joseph Parsons, the eldest of this family, married Elizabeth Strong, the daughter of Elder John Strong, the ancestor of the late Governor Strong, of Massachusetts. They had ten children, viz : Rev. Joseph, first of Lebanon, Ct., and then of Salisbury, Ms.; Capt John, of Northampton; Ebenezer, of Northampton; Elizabeth, who married Ebenezer Strong; Rev. David, of Leicester, Ms., the father of Rev. David D. D. of Amherst, Ms.; Josiah, of Northampton; Daniel, of Springfield; Moses, of Durham, Ct.; Abigail, who married E. Clark; and Noah, of Northampton. These were all born between 1671 and 1692.

Rev. Joseph Parsons, the eldest of the above named children, married Elizabeth Thompson, in 1701, and had five children, viz : Rev. Joseph, of Bradford, Ms.; Rev. Samuel, of Rye, N. H.; Rev. William, of Southampton, N. H.; Elizabeth, who married Rev. J. Fogg, of Kensington, N. H.; and John, who died while a member of Harvard College. These were all born between 1702 and 1725.

Rev. Joseph Parsons, the eldest of the above named children, married Frances Usher, the daughter of Governor John Usher, and had ten children, viz : Frances, who died unmarried, aged 78; Elizabeth, who died young; Rev. Joseph, of Brookfield, Ms.; Thomas, of Parsonsfield, Me., of which town he was the proprietor; Samuel, of Cornville, Me.; Dr. John, of South Berwick, Me.; William, who died young; William, of Alfred, Me.; Sarah, who died unmarried; and Edward, educated a lawyer, died in the Revolutionary army, an Adjutant in Col. Poor's regiment. These children were all born between the years 1730 and 1747. Of these, Rev. Joseph Parsons left one child only, a daughter, now Mrs. Pitkin, widow of the late Samuel Pitkin, Esq., of East Hartford, Ct. Thomas had twenty children, of whom Col. Joseph Parsons, of Parsonsfield, Me., is one, and the late John Usher Parsons, of Kennebunk, Me., was another. Samuel, another son, left four children. Dr. John, of South Berwick, left three daughters; and William, of Alfred, Me., had nine children, to the youngest of whom, Usher Parsons, the writer of this is indebted for most of the names and dates of this branch of the family.

Deacon Benjamin Parsons, the younger brother of Cornet Joseph Parsons, died at Springfield in 1690, leaving five sons and three daughters, viz : Benjamin, Samuel, Joseph, Ebenezer, and Hezekiah; and Abigail, who married 1st, John Man, and 2d, John Richards; Sarah, who married James Dorchester; and Mary, who married Thomas Richards. Some of the sons lived at Enfield, Ct. Joseph lived in West Springfield, and died there in 1734, leaving one son, Joseph, and one daughter.—Ebenezer Parsons, the fourth son of Dea. Benjamin, was born at West Springfield in 1668, and died there in 1752. He married Margaret Marshfield, and had five sons and two daughters, viz : Caleb, Ebenezer, David, Benjamin, Jonathan, Margaret, and Sarah. These children were born between the years 1695 and 1709. Of this family, Caleb resided at West Springfield, and died without issue. Ebenezer lived also at West Springfield, and died there in 1742, ten years before his father, leaving six daughters, but no son. David died young. Benjamin settled at Kingston, Ms., and left four sons and four daughters. Jonathan settled first at Lyme, and afterwards at Newburyport. Margaret married Rev. Daniel Elmer, of Newark, N. J. Sarah married Caleb Hitchcock, of Brookfield.