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FOR THE

USE OF THE MEMBERS

OF THE

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

CHARLESTON, S. C.

PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE CHURCH.

BY THE

REV. THOMAS SMYTH,

Pastor.

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1838.

GOD'S PERPETUAL PRESENCE IN,
AND CONSTANT WATCHFULNESS OVER HIS CHURCH.

A SERMON,

PREACHED

AT THE

DEDICATION

OF THE

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

CHARLESTON, S. C.

April 3d, 1811,

BY THE REV. ANDREW FLINN, D. D.

FIRST PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

N. B. This Sermon, which is now very rare indeed, was first published in Charleston, and subsequently in 1829 in the "Presbyterian Preacher," issued at Fayetteville, N. C.

SERMON ON THE
DEDICATION
OF THE
SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

2 CHRONICLES, vi. 20.

That thine eyes may be open upon this house, day and night, upon the place whercof thou hast said, that thou wouldest put thy name there.

MATTERS of everlasting interest, and eternal consequence, my brethren, demand our attention this day. We are assembled, to make a free-will offering to the God of Jacob; to present him with a house, in which to record his name—to manifest his glory, and to make his power known, and the riches of his grace, in preparing sons and daughters for the Jerusalem above. Will God indeed “dwell with men upon the earth,” and is the dedication of a house exclusively to his service, the purpose for which we are now convened in his presence? then the transactions of this day are solemn; their consequences press onward to eternity, and hasten to meet us in the judgment of the great day.

Does not the spirit of prayer already begin to settle on this assembly, and to direct the eyes of the waiting multitude to the mercy-seat of the Most High God? Do I see you, with your faces toward Mount Zion, where the

church of the first-born worships, and with emotions too big for utterance, struggling to direct to the throne of grace, the fervent supplications of your hearts? And is this the language in which you express the feelings of your souls? "O God, whose dwelling is in light unapproachable—whose praises seraphs sing, we beseech thee, let 'thine eyes be open upon this house day and night, upon the place whereof thou hast said, that thou wouldest put thy name there.'" May *he* who sitteth in the heavens hear our united prayer! May his choicest blessings rest upon this house during the time of our pilgrimage, and may our children, and our children's children, to the latest generation, here find the Covenant-God of their fathers!

The text, in connection with the history of which it is a part, presents us with one of the most august and solemn scenes, that perhaps was ever displayed at the dedication of any place of religious worship—A temple, the most magnificent and splendid ever built by man,—a temple whose grandeur was the result of the united wisdom and riches of the king of Israel and the king of Tyre,—a temple on which had been bestowed the labour of an hundred and eighty thousand workmen for more than seven years, was now completed;—Deep were laid its foundations in the base of mount Moriah;—six hundred and eighty feet did its walls ascend;—the cedars of Lebanon, and the gold of Ophir, at once strengthened, and adorned the building. Thither were the thousands of Israel to repair for the purposes of worship, and *there* was the God of Jacob to deliver his responses. *There* were the Urim and Thummim to sparkle on the breast of Aaron—there the Almighty was to keep his court, and thence dispatch his

ambassadors to his world around—thence as from a centre were the lights of the law, and the beams of the gospel to shine upon surrounding nations. Therefore it was, that Jerusalem was emphatically called, the “City of our God; the mountain of his holiness; beautiful for situation; the joy of the whole earth.” He who thundered with terrible majesty from amidst the flames and smoke on the top of Sinai, was now to let the placid serenity of his glory rest between the cherubim, amidst the splendor of this temple, now about to be consecrated to the Lord Jehovah. The period for the solemn transaction arrives—the temple is finished—the dedicated treasures deposited in it—the Ark is brought into the most holy place—the Levites, clothed in white, with their cymbals, their psalteries, and their harps, accompanied by an hundred and twenty priests, have gone on before, making the land ring, and the heavens re-echo with the praises of the Most High God, whose glory has filled the house—the thousands of Israel are assembled—a brazen scaffold is erected in the midst of the open court. In presence of the vast congregation, the royal worshipper comes forward and ascends the place prepared for him. “Upon it he stood,” says the sacred historian, “and kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven.” His eyes are directed to the throne of God—his soul is overwhelmed with a sense of the Divine Majesty—he breaks the solemn silence with a prayer, expressed in language the most appropriate, lofty, and sublime. He makes grateful mention of the goodness of the Lord, to his father David, and his faithfulness to the covenant which he had made with him. As he proceeds,

his soul is overpowered with divine glory, and he bursts forth into such strains as these—"But will God in very deed dwell with men upon the earth? Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee—how much less this house which I have built: Have respect therefore to the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication—that thine eyes may be open upon this house day and night; upon the place whereof thou hast said, thou wouldest put thy name there." Thus prayed Solomon at the dedication of the temple at Jerusalem, and thus prays the christian worshipper on all such occasions. Brethren, we stand in as much need of the gracious presence of God now, as ever the tribes of Israel did. We are equally interested, that his eyes should be open on this house, as they were that he should look propitiously upon the Jewish temple. When rising for the first time in this humble house, reared for the worship of the same God, I know of no language which can better suit the feelings that ought to accompany us into this sacred place, or is better accommodated to the exercises of this day.

Be this the prayer then, which shall burst from a thousand hearts, while the fire of God burns in a thousand bosoms, and a thousand tearful eyes are directed to the mercy-seat. "Let thine eyes be open, O Lord, upon this house day and night; upon the place whereof thou hast said, that thou wouldest put thy name there."

I shall now proceed to enquire:

In the *first* place, in what manner must a church of God conduct herself, and under what circumstances must she be found when she has a right to expect that "the eyes

of the Lord will be upon her for good," and his name be recorded in the midst of her ?

Secondly. What advantages has a church of God a right to promise herself from thus having the eyes of the Lord open upon her day and night ?

Behold the questions which naturally suggest themselves from the words before us. Their solution, I shall attempt to give, and then direct your attention to the purposes for which we are convened. May the glory of God fill the house, and his spirit open our understanding to receive the truth!

I. In what manner must a church of God conduct herself, and under what circumstances must she be found when she has a right to expect that the eyes of the Lord will be upon her for good, and his name be recorded in the midst of her ? This is the first enquiry which solicits our regard. To this we answer :

No church, calling herself a church of Christ, has a right to expect that the eyes of the Lord will be upon her for good, unless she be sound in her doctrines—pure in her discipline—fervent in her devotions. Behold the leading features in the character of a church which the Lord will bless—upon which his eyes will be day and night.

She must be sound in her doctrines. The Gospel, like all other systems, has its first principles—its established laws—leading to certain grand results, which must accord with the original designs of its author. A departure from these principles, a perversion of these laws, must therefore defeat the objects which the system has in view, and lead to consequences different from those which entered into its original designs. To effect these designs and attain

these objects, the agency of the spirit of God is absolutely necessary. The eyes of the Lord must be propitiously open day and night upon that church, relative to which, the grand designs of the Gospel shall be accomplished. But no church can reasonably expect this blessing of the Lord, this agency of the Spirit of God, these propitious regards of the Holy One of Israel, when she is departing from the established laws and order of his house. Such expectation would involve the absurdity of supposing, that a being of infinite wisdom, majesty, and grandeur, would not only wink at, but assist in carrying into effect an impious attempt to unsettle the principles of his own government—to find fault with the laws he has established, and in its consequences, to arraign the perfection of every attribute of his nature. Now, the grand design of the Gospel, into which enter the wisdom and power of the Almighty, is to save sinners from the wrath to come, and thereby bring a revenue of glory to God. The principles by which these are to be effected, are unalterably established; they carry with them the evidences of wisdom, goodness and power. To depart from them is impious—to deny their necessity, is an attempt to be wiser than God—an attempt, the folly of which is equalled, only by its wickedness. It is an insult offered to the majesty of heaven, which he will stamp with reprobation, while he will overwhelm with confusion, its guilty author. The church which shall thus depart from the radical principles and doctrines of the Gospel—principles and doctrines, comprehended in the “faith once delivered to the saints”—may expect that the eyes of the Lord will be open upon her—but it will be that *he may mark her for judgment,*

and that his jealousy may smoke against her, till she return to the fold whence she has strayed.

I am not unapprised of the objection which has long been urged by infidelity against the Gospel, on the ground of the diversity of sentiment among its votaries, relative to its doctrines. This objection, though often brought forward with an air of triumph, assumes a principle which is not correct, and is, therefore, not able to sustain the weight which has been laid upon it. It assumes the principle, that every doctrine which is received by one church and rejected by another, is a fundamental doctrine of the Gospel. This is an assumption, however, which we are not prepared to grant, to the extent which the objection would render necessary. We are far from supposing that every shade of difference in opinion which obtains among the churches, implies a departure from the essential doctrines of the Gospel. We believe that thousands and tens of thousands, will sit down together in the kingdom of glory, who cannot *precisely* walk together in the kingdom of grace: they cannot *precisely* think and act together on earth, but they shall sing and triumph together, in heaven. While we grant this, however, we do not, for a moment, surrender the position, that there are doctrines, essential to the salvation of the sinner, and the purity of the Church; doctrines, consequently, which no church can give up, without incurring the displeasure of God, and giving up her claim to Christianity.

It cannot be expected that I should here enter both upon the enumeration and defence of those doctrines which I deem essential to the system of salvation revealed in the Gospel. I deem it my duty, however, upon this solemn

occasion, to state some of those grand, leading doctrines of the Gospel, which we consider at once essential to our future glory in heaven, and to the purity of the Church on earth; doctrines which we believe, not because our fathers have told us of them; not because the martyrs have sealed them with their blood; but because we find them stated in the Word of God, and essential to the objects which the Gospel has in view; doctrines, for the inculcation of which, this house was built, and is this day solemnly set apart.

With the assumption of the being and perfections of God, together with the truth and divinity of the Scriptures, we believe the testimony of the Holy Ghost relative to the entire depravity of the human heart, and its departure in temper and spirit from the laws of holiness; that man is a sinner before God exceedingly; helpless and polluted; utterly and absolutely unable to justify himself, in whole or in part, by works of righteousness which he can do. This we believe, both because we find it clearly and unequivocally stated as a doctrine of the Gospel, and because our own experience, and that of the saints in every age, have proved it to be true.

Another doctrine of the Gospel, which we believe essential to the salvation of the sinner and the purity of the Church, is the necessity of divine influence—the active agency of the Spirit of God in regenerating the soul, thus dead in trespasses and sins—implanting in it holy principles—enabling it to put forth the acts of a living, purifying faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and opening the springs of evangelical sorrow for sin. This we regard as a fundamental doctrine of the Gospel, the rejection or corruption of

which by any church, is an evidence that the eyes of the Lord are not upon her for good. We follow no "cunningly devised fables" when we receive and adopt this as an essential article of our faith. We receive it on the testimony of Jesus, who has unequivocally declared, that without its practical influence on the heart, no man shall enter into life.

On the doctrine of faith in the Son of God, we have already touched. Its necessity is stated among the first principles of the Gospel. I again bring it into view for the purpose of directing your attention for a moment to another, which we receive as an essential doctrine of the Gospel, and which exhibits the *object* of the Christian's faith. The Lord Jesus Christ, both in his human nature and divine, is the object to which I allude. At a time like the present in the Christian Church, when many are departing from the "faith once delivered to the saints;" when the hedges from around many parts of the Lord's vineyard are taken down, and the vine which his own right hand has planted, is exposed to the ravages of the beasts of the desert; when the enemies of our Father's inheritance are rushing in like a flood, and the impious hand of licentious criticism is attempting to strip the Redeemer of his glory, I deem it my duty on this solemn occasion, both for myself and for the congregation which has reared this house for the worship of the living God, to bear public testimony in favour of the divinity of Jesus. We receive this as an essential article of our faith, necessary to our salvation and the purity of our Church, not merely because it has been handed down to us, sealed with the blood of the saints; not merely because the nations of the redeemed have cherished

it as the foundation of their hope, rejoiced in it on earth, and triumphed in it on the mount of glory, but because we find it stated in no equivocal terms in the word of God. When we hear the Holy Ghost declare of him, that "He is the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace,"—that "he is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person—that he thought it no robbery to be equal with God—that all men are bound to honour the Son even as they honour the Father"—that the high command of God binds the angels of heaven to worship the Saviour—When we find every attribute of Deity ascribed to him; eternity, omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence,—we have no difficulty on such testimony in receiving as true, the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. It is *this* that gives us security, when we surrender our souls into his hands, that "he is able to keep what we have committed to him against that day"—*this* is the crown which shall flourish on his head, when his enemies shall sink beneath the rod of his wrath. When these shall tremble before the terror of his frowns, we hope to sing the Godhead of the Son when we shall meet him in the clouds of heaven.

We receive, as an essential article of our faith, the sublime and incomprehensible doctrine of the adorable Trinity. It shall never excite in us a blush, that we receive, without being able to develope this great mystery. We are contented to believe that there may be modes of existence which we cannot comprehend. For us, it is sufficient that God has *revealed* this doctrine—that the essential attribute of deity are ascribed alike to the Father, the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, and that "these three are One."

These are the grand fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, into which all others may be resolved, which we believe to be essential to Christianity. In whatever church these are believed, and their practical influence felt, there is evidence that "the eyes of the Lord are upon her for good." I say, "their *practical influence felt*," for I wish it to be deeply impressed upon every heart, that the mere belief of the doctrines of the Gospel is far from being sufficient for the purposes of salvation. A church or an individual, may be strictly orthodox in principle, and yet be far from the righteousness of God. But when these doctrines are brought home to the heart by the agency of the Spirit, then it is, that they are made mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; then it is, that the work of God is revived, his temple filled with glory, sinners brought to the knowledge of the truth, saints built up in their holy faith, and the fetters broken from around the captive. "May the eyes of the Lord be thus upon this house, day and night, that we may see his glory, as our Fathers have seen it in the sanctuary,"

The Church then, must be sound in her doctrines. She must also be pure in her discipline. This is not the place, nor does it comport with the object I have in view, to enter upon the vindication of any particular form of church government. I am very far from supposing, that all who differ in their forms of government from the church to which I belong, are therefore to be stricken from the rolls of the redeemed. Nor do I for a moment suppose, that other forms of government in the affairs of the house of God, may not admit of as much purity of discipline as those we have believed it our duty to adopt. Were I to

admit all that the most extensive liberality could require, viz., that God has left it discretionary with his Church, to be regulated by circumstances in the adoption of her forms of government, it would not affect the proposition now before us, which is, that under whatever forms of government the affairs of a church may be placed, she is bound to preserve her ordinances pure, her doctrines correct, and her members, as far as possible, unspotted by the world. The truth of this proposition, will not, I presume, be questioned—the very nature of the case, and the positive instructions of the word of God, prove it to be true. Necessary to the existence and good order of any society, are certain laws and regulations, which are binding upon the members. The interests and purity of such a society, will always be in proportion to the strictness, with which its laws are executed. If the government be feeble and inefficient, the pernicious effects will soon be felt through every department of the community. These general principles extend their influence into the Church of God, and become proportionably stronger, as the necessity of purity, of order and virtue, is there greater, than in societies of a different nature. The Church is a society formed for the purposes of holiness; her object is, to train up members for the Church Triumphant. Her head is holy; her laws are holy; and she is altogether conversant with holy things. In order, therefore, that her grand designs may be answered, and her objects attained, it is indispensably necessary that her discipline be strictly guarded. When this becomes lax, corruptions, both in principle and practice, will insinuate themselves into the Church, and strip her of her glory. The necessity of a discipline, vigilant and

active, extending both to the principles and conduct of church members, is clearly stated in the word of God, and enforced by the example of the Apostles. With what tenderness, but yet with what firmness, does our Lord direct his Church to deal with an obstinate, and offending brother. His fault is to be stated to him in private, by an individual fellow-member. If he refuse to hear the friendly admonition, one or two other members are to be taken, that they may bear witness, relative to his deportment. If he still refuse to hear, he is to be brought before the Church in a more public manner. If he yet prove impenitent, he is to be cut off. With what severity does the Apostle reprove the Corinthian Church for the laxness of her discipline! A most flagrant offence against the laws of morality and religion, had been committed by one of the members of that church. She still retained him within her pales, and received him to her communion. For this, the Apostle with a zeal that became a minister of Jesus, reproveth her in the most pointed manner. "Ye are puffed up," says he, "and have not rather mourned, that he who hath done this deed, might be taken away from among you." He then commands them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by his own authority as an Apostle, to execute the laws and discipline of the church, and expel from her communion so disorderly a member. "Purge out, therefore, the old leaven;" purify your church, by exercising a proper and vigilant discipline. "Reprove, rebuke, exhort," and finally cast off the scandalous and incorrigible, "that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened." "For even Christ our Passover, is sacrificed for us." In what solemn and affecting strains is

couched the message which Jesus sent to the minister of the Church in Pergamus. In that Church he found many things to commend : he praises her for her zeal and boldness in his cause ; but he passes a severe censure on her, for the laxness of her discipline, in point of doctrine : he tells her that he has a few things against her, because she retained in her communion some who held doctrines which were not according to the truth of the Gospel. If a Church of Christ, therefore, expect that she shall stand approved by her Lord, and that his "eyes will be upon her for good," she must be strict, vigilant, and pure in her discipline. Her standard of doctrine, let her fix according to the word of God, and the terms of her communion let her settle ; and having so done, let her see to it, that with strict impartiality she preserve these sacred.

Does the Church expect that the eyes of the Lord will be upon her for good, and does she desire an evidence of this ? then she must be fervent in her devotions. Let the fire of heaven be always burning upon her altar. Let the celestial flame never become languid. Let her incense rise with much perfume, that it may come up to the throne of God with acceptance. Let this solemn truth be written upon her walls, that whenever she lifts her eyes she may read it, that the God with whom she has to do is "a Spirit," and that therefore he requires the worship of the heart. No costly offerings ; no splendid edifices ; no decorated courts can compensate for the absence of the heart. Refuse *this*, O my people, take no pains to light up the fire of devotion when you assemble in this place to worship, and from this sacred temple God will turn away in his wrath ; upon this house his eyes will be propitiously open neither

day nor night, and in this place will he refuse to record his name. Hear the charges which he exhibits against his ancient Church, and the thunders which break forth against her, because of the truth of those charges. He charges his people with "worshipping him with their lips, and drawing near him with their mouth, while their hearts were far from him;" with appearing before him, in the house of prayer with their bodies, while the flames of devotion were extinguished in their souls; therefore, he arraigns them in his temple, and demands of them a reason for their inconsistent conduct: "To what purpose," says he, "is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts. Your new moons, and your appointed feasts my soul hateth. When you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; and when you make many prayers, I will not hear." Terrific denunciations! May we never know them, but by the hearing of the ear! Alas! should we, by the frozen formality of our devotions, bring these judgments upon us, we have built this house in vain! We have reared these costly walls, but the finger of the angel shall write "*Tekel*" upon them, reminding us that we are "weighed in the balances and found wanting."

Let the terrible denunciations of God, directed to the Church at Laodicea, be written upon our altars, with the point of a diamond, that we may profit by the solemn admonition, and avoid *her* doom. "I know thy works," says the "Amen, the faithful, and true witness, I know thy works; that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert either cold or hot; so then because thou art luke-warm

and neither cold nor hot, I will throw thee out of my mouth."

Spirit of the living God, dwell with celestial fires within these sacred walls, and preserve us and our children to the latest line, from these fearful judgments! Sacred to the inculcation of doctrines thus pure, to the exercise of discipline thus strict, and to dévotions thus fervent, be this holy edifice to the latest generation! Then shall "the eyes of the Lord be open upon this house day and night, for good;" and when its foundations shall tremble in the general convulsions of nature, it will be found that the name of Jehovah was recorded here.

Do you ask, O congregation of the Lord, what advantages shall result from the eyes of your God being thus open upon you day and night? This is the

II Question, suggested by the text, which we promised to answer. Blessed is that house in which God has recorded his name. Blessed is that church upon which his eyes are open, day and night continually. Although the fires of persecution may rage against her, she shall issue from the midst of them, having lost nothing but her dross. Like the bush of Moses, in which the flame burned, she shall not be consumed. The rage of men and devils shall not be able to hurt her. Enemies may encamp, and foes invade, but the Breaker of Israel goes up before her; the Lord of hosts at her head, therefore she shall not be afraid. The captain of her salvation, on whose vesture and on whose thigh is the name "King of kings, and Lord of lords," shall wave the banners of eternal triumph over the camps of those who would spoil her. She may have many sore conflicts, and be brought very low; she may even

be made to cry out, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me;" her songs may be turned into mourning, and her tuneless harp be hung upon the willow. In the camp of her enemies the shouts of triumph may be heard;—it shall be but for a moment: the *Hope* of Israel, and the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, shall soon return and cover her with his buckler; the night of her darkness shall be chased away, by the returning beams of his glory. Our Jesus holds up to the view of his Church, no Mahometan paradise; no visionary notions of superior bliss, or exemption from trouble in this world. He has never told her that she shall pass to glory on a bed of down; nor that the path that conducts her to his Father's kingdom shall be covered with roses. No: very different are the terms upon which he has taken her into covenant-relation with him. Through many tribulations must she pass; many a conflict must she experience; many a tear must flow, and many a weary, trembling step must she take, before she finish her pilgrimage upon earth. But she has the promise of her Lord, that, during this pilgrimage, he will be, with her, to support and to bless her; to encrease, to strengthen, and finally to conduct her to glory and triumph in heaven. On earth he will bless her with a faithful ministry; with peace among her members; with the agency of his Spirit to make the word and ordinances effectual for her salvation; and finally with protection and defence, until her warfare be accomplished.

Behold the advantages which a Church of God has a right to promise herself, from having "the eyes of the Lord open upon her for good."

He will bless her with a *faithful Ministry*. The pro-

mise of God to his Church is, "I will give you pastors according to my own heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." Ah, it is a solemn, it is a weighty business to guide the flock, to feed the Church of Christ, which he has purchased with his own blood. There is awful responsibility attached to the station occupied by him who "stands between the dead and the living." How important is it to the interest of a Church, that her pastors feel the spirit of their station; that they be "men fearing God, and hating covetousness;" "taking good heed to themselves and to their doctrine, that they may save themselves and them that hear them." If God intended to curse a people, and blast their spiritual interests from the blossom to the root, I know of no way in which it could be more certainly effected, than by giving them up to an unfaithful ministry—a ministry from which the Spirit of God must forever stand at a distance. To fill the office of a faithful minister, and "rightly to divide the word of life;" to "declare the whole counsel of God;" to feed the flock; and, unabashed by the countenance of man, to warn the sinner of his danger; to stem the torrent of iniquity and popular prejudice, requires much firmness, much prudence, much courage, and much grace. Such men are blessings to the world; such pastors are blessings to the Church. Their names shall be had in everlasting remembrance, when the memory of the temporizer shall rot. The worth of such men in the Church of God is seldom known, until their light has been put out in the sanctuary. After they are dead, the church begins at once to feel their worth and her loss. But whether the church be sensible of it or not, these are the men under whose ministry she

shall eventually flourish as the palm tree. These are the ministers of whom Jesus hath said, "I will be with you always, even to the end of the world." Receive them, brethren; they bring blessings in their train; they will be evidences, that "the eyes of God are upon you for good." These are the earthen vessels, in which, for your edification and the furtherance of your salvation, he has deposited the treasures of his gospel and his grace. Thus their gifts and graces your Saviour kindly bestows upon them, that he may make them instrumental in blessing you. "When he ascended up on high," says the Apostle, "he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." He gave some Apostles, some Evangelists, some Prophets, some Pastors, and some Teachers," for the perfecting of the saints; for the work of the ministry; for the edifying of the body of Christ.

With such a ministry will the Lord bless that church, "upon which his eyes are open day and night," and in which he has "recorded his name." He will also give her peace in all her borders; and her sons and her daughters shall be united together as one family. The religion of the Gospel is a *peaceful* religion, and its peaceful and happy effects are felt in that church upon which the eyes of the Lord are open for good. Before its blissful influence, envy, malice and revenge; wrath, hatred and strife, retreat back to the dungeons of darkness. If, in the wilderness below, there can be found any thing which resembles the paradise above, it is a Christian Church cemented together by the principles of christian love. "Behold," exclaimed a heathen, when looking upon such a Church, "Behold how these Christians love one another."* "Behold,"

* Pliny's Epistles to Trajan.

says the spirit of God, "how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." And why should they not? Children of the same family; heirs of the same inheritance; travellers to the same distant country; hastening to the same eternal home, and preparing to sing the same song, the burden of which is, "to Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." These considerations might surely induce the members of the Church of Christ to live in amity with one another. "Great peace have they who love thy law," is the promise, and with such peace, both within and without, will the Lord bless that church "upon which his eyes are open day and night for good."

He will also bless her with the visitations of his Holy Spirit. This is the divine agent, without whose influence no church can ever prosper. It is *He* who opens the fountains on high and "pours water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." We may stand in the midst of the "valley of dry bones," and prophecy for ever, but unless the Spirit of eternal truth awaken the north and the south winds to blow upon them, they will continue to be dry bones still. There will be neither noise nor shaking among them; but let him proclaim aloud, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!" and immediately there is a movement among them; they prepare to stand on "their feet an exceeding great army."

Why is it, my brethren, that so many of the branches of Zion languish, and why have the word and ordinances of God so little effect upon our worshipping assemblies? Why so few flowing to the standard of the cross, and crowding the gates of salvation? It is because of the

absence of *God the Spirit*. Only let *Him* return, and Zion begins to rejoice, and to blossom as the rose. Her converts are numerous as the drops of dew. Sinners are smitten with a sense of guilt, and with bleeding hearts and streaming eyes ask the way to the Saviour, earnestly enquiring "the road to Zion, with their faces thitherward."

The saints go on their way rejoicing, and with songs of redemption flowing from their lips, they proclaim, as they march along, that times of refreshing, from the presence of the Lord hath visited them; the groans of the mourner are turned into songs of praise, when he finds that his feet are taken from the fearful pit, and placed upon the Rock of Ages.

Then the "light of Zion breaks forth as the morning, and her health springs forth speedily." The house of God is a Bethel, and his courts are filled with his glory; the flocks of the chief shepherd are conducted to the green pastures, and made to lie down beside the still waters.

With such glorious seasons does the Lord oftentimes bless his Church when "his eyes are upon her for good." Thus did he bless his infant Church on the day of Pentecost; thus in every age has he continued to make his word and ordinances effectual to the salvation of sinners and the refreshing of saints, and thus will he continue to make his Church flourish, until he shall call her to the Church Triumphant.

These are some of the blessings which a Church of God has a right to promise herself from the eyes of the Lord being upon her for good.

We notice, in the last place, the protection and defence of the Most High, which shall be as a munition of rocks

to his Church. He places her in possession of these great and distinguishing privileges, and guards her in safety while she enjoys them. He protects her against the machinations of her foes, whether they be of a temporal or spiritual nature. "When the enemy rushes in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard." He preserves her from error, and from the influence of false teachers, who would sap the foundation of her faith. "The Lord (says the Holy Prophet) will create upon every dwelling of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and a smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon *all* the glory shall be a defence. This shall be written for the generations to come, and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord."

These, O brethren, are the blessings which shall make *this* branch of Zion flourish like the palm tree, so long as the eyes of the Lord shall be open upon this house, and his name stand recorded in this place. But if we should become luke-warm in our worship, licentious in principle, or immoral in practice; if, forgetful of our high privileges, we should hereafter practically ask, "Who is the Lord that we should obey him?" shall we turn from our God and "heap to ourselves teachers having itching ears," we have reason to fear that he will turn away from us; remove our candlestick out of its place; smite our house in his wrath, and take away our mercies till we shall learn by their loss, to appreciate their worth; and with unavailing lamentations be left to deplore our situations when these slighted mercies are gone, and the things that belong to our peace may for that reason be eventually hid from our eyes.

Let this salutary caution be written in our hearts. "The Lord is with you while ye be with him, and if ye seek him he will be found of you, but if ye forsake him he will forsake you." In every period of the Church, God has made good these promises to her. He was with her in the wilderness when she was fitly represented by the burning bush. When Jacob was small, and his spiritual sons but few in number, yet when "they spake one to another, the Lord hearkened and heard them." Nor has he in later times left himself without a witness. In the primitive ages of Christianity he displayed his mighty power, and went up before his servants with signs and mighty wonders; and when Imperial Rome drenched the earth with the blood of the saints, the great Jehovah was with them, realizing his promise, that "as was their day, so should their strength be." "Through the long and dark period of Anti-Christian tyranny, while fiery trials beset her on every side," his right hand conducted her to the glorious morning of the Reformation, and from that period to the present, he has displayed his glory in the fulfilment of his promises to his people.

But we hasten to a conclusion. I have directed your attention to the principal features in the character of a church, which has a right to expect the presence of the Lord to be favourably with her. These features consist in soundness of doctrine; purity of discipline, and fervency of devotion. To the advantages which a church has a right to promise herself from the presence of the Lord being so with her, I have also directed your attention, and have stated them to consist in a faithful ministry; peace among her members; the visitations of his Holy Spirit;

and final protection and defence. Happy Church! Glorious blessings.

A particular and formal application of the subject must yield to the immediate business which now presses upon us. Present solemnities, future prospects, eternal consequences, rise and pass in awful review before me. When I look upon them, my eyes moisten, my soul trembles, my heart is affected. Men of prayer, to your posts! Heirs of immortality, put off the shoe, for the place is holy. Bow yourselves before the glory which fills this House of God. Majesty of Heaven, descend—descend with the power of thy Spirit, and rest upon this assembly! Present solemnities, how awful they are! Another dwelling erected for the Most High God! *This Day* sets it apart for his service. Sacred edifice! Residence of our God—future birth-place of souls—object of our prayers, our exertions, and our hopes—have we at length seen thee receive the worshipper into thy bosom? Long may the pure doctrines of the Gospel be here taught! Long may the streams of salvation here flow! May not unhallowed tongue ever here be lifted to pervert the Word of Life! Confounded be the wretch who, under the garb of a Gospel Minister, shall ever enter here, for the purpose of beguiling unstable souls with false doctrine—doctrine different from that which we have this day proved to be the doctrine taught by the Holy Spirit. Witness, my brethren, who have built this house of prayer. Witness, ye fellowship of the body of Christ, who from other Churches are present with us to day. Witness, ye Angels who hover over this assembly. Witness, thou Son of the Most High God, who bought us by

thy agonies in the Garden and on the Cross; witness for us that we *this day* cleave to the doctrines of Grace; to the doctrines of the Reformation; to doctrines, in the strength of which, the Martyrs triumphed in flames, and passed in chariots of fire to Glory; to doctrines, the belief of which, fully accords with the confident expectation that this place shall be the scene of revivals of religion, produced by the extraordinary effusions of the Spirit of God. And for the preaching of these doctrines; "for the purposes of prayer and praise; for the administration of the sacraments of the New Testament;" for the purpose of feeding the Church of God with the pure milk of the word; in pursuance of the object for which we are now assembled, we proceed to dedicate this house to the great Head of the Church.

God of Jacob attend! Church of the first born witness!
WE SOLEMNLY DEVOTE THIS SACRED EDIFICE TO GOD THE FATHER, SELF-EXISTENT AND OMNIPRESENT; TO GOD THE SON, THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS FATHER'S GLORY; TO GOD THE HOLY GHOST, ONE WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON; "TO THE SERVICE AND THE GLORY OF THE ADORABLE AND INCOMPREHENSIBLE TRINITY," WE MOST DEVOUTLY DEDICATE THIS HOLY BUILDING, WITH ALL THAT APPERTAINS TO IT. And now, O Lord God of Israel, "the great and terrible God," let thine eyes be open day and night upon this House. In it record thy name, and here delight to meet thy people to bless them. When pursued by their enemies they shall fly to this house for refuge. When thy chastisements are upon them for their sins, and they shall come to confess their iniquities, and tell their sorrows before thee in this house, "then hear

thou in heaven thy dwelling place," and answer the prayer of thy people.

"Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into thy resting-place, thou, and the ark of thy strength." Let thy priests, O Lord God, who shall minister in this house, be always "clothed with salvation;" and let thy saints here rejoice in thy goodness. How awful is this place! This is now the house of God; this is the gate of heaven! How deep the present solemnities which rest upon it! But O, when I look into future times and dwell upon future prospects, I am filled with awe. With eternal things we shall be *here* conversant for a little while. *Here* God shall sit upon the Mercy-Seat, at the foot of which we shall present our prayers and our tears. Hither shall some of us bring our burdens and lay them down at the feet of Jesus. Hence shall issue the overtures of mercy to the guilty of the present generation, and balm be here administered to the broken heart. Here the trembling sinner shall enquire for the Saviour and find his gloom penetrated with the beams of hope. Here the believer shall sit down at the Supper of God, and have his soul wrapt hence away to the temple of which the Lamb is the light. Here at times our eyes shall behold the Redeemer, when he shall appear in the galleries and shed his glories through the house; and *here* (fearful prospect) the Gospel shall be to some of us and of our children, "the savour of death unto death."

Thus shall matters move on in this house of God, with respect to us of the present generation, until the time of our probation shall be finished; but soon, very soon shall this be completed, and our seats in this house be left vacant forever. Soon shall my voice cease to sound within

these walls. The cold sod shall soon press upon this bosom, and my labours give place to the silence of the tomb. I shall soon sleep with my fathers; but the prospects of this house shall not be affected by it. From this place where I now stand, I look down the stream of time, and I see the successive generations which shall rise up after us, floating to this house, enquiring for *Him* of whom their fathers had told them that he was their God. Hither do I see the despairing sinner of after ages, direct his trembling steps. To the mercy seat which is here erected, he lifts his streaming eyes, and breathes his broken prayer for mercy; and behold within these walls shall be heard the first accents of his song of redemption. Hither do I see the believer of future times come to "pay his vows to the Lord in the presence of his people."

These are affecting prospects which rise before me, when looking forward to generations which shall assemble here when we shall be numbered with the dead. But methinks a still more affecting object presents itself before me. Here do I see the sinner yet unborn, with a heart alienated from God, and harder than the nether-millstone, with a soul cased in adamant, *slumbering away* the moments allotted to the house of God. May the "stone cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber answer it," and rouse him from his sleep of death! Here also do I see the future herald of the cross, with strong crying and tears, urge the flight of the sinner from the wrath to come. We shall be dead, but Jesus shall be here with our children; here shall he speak to them in their sorrows, ease their aching hearts; when we shall be shut up our fathers in the tomb. Future prospects, how an

how affecting! Eternal consequences, how pleasing! now terrible! How many thousands shall hear the word of life in this house! From the bosom of eternity every one of these thousands, millions of ages hence, shall look back to this holy place, with higher notes of praise, or louder groans of anguish. The believer, of whom it shall be written that he was born here, standing high in salvation before the throne, shall look back to this house, the place of his birth, and the song, "To Him that loved me, and washed me from my sins in his own blood," shall swell into louder and *louder* strains continually. From out of the pit do I see the flames streaming with more dazzling glare; and thence issuing, do I hear more fearful shrieks and lamentations, at the recollection of opportunities neglected and mercies slighted within these walls. My soul trembles. Let the veil be drawn.

A word to my own people and I have done:

My brethren of this congregation, this is a solemn day to you. Receive my most hearty congratulations, and my fervent prayers for your present and future peace. You have built a house for the God of your fathers, which the proceedings of this day attest. The history of your enterprise is short and simple. It originated in no spirit of division or party rancor. With your brethren of the First Presbyterian Church in this city, you are at perfect peace. Their liberal and friendly exertions, to assist you in carrying into effect your laudable undertaking, furnish ample evidence that they are at peace with you. Long may the principles of christian fellowship and holy love cement your interests! The growing population of our city called for another place of public worship. You heard the call;

it united you as one man. Your brethren of other churches generously strengthened your hands for the good work, and here is the house which you have built and offered to the Lord. You have done well. May the God of your fathers bless you! He has hitherto prospered you almost without a parallel. This spacious edifice has been erected without the loss of either life or limb among the workmen. This is cause of gratitude. True, amidst the praises and congratulations of this day, the tear gathers in your eye, when you look upon the vacant seats of *Milligan* and *Boyd*. Shades of our departed friends, we well remember your anxieties and exertions relative to this house, while you were in the body. To this day you often looked forward, while you dwelt in your houses of clay. Will you pass this way at times, and visit our worshipping assemblies here! But I forbear.

Brethren, you have done much; but much more remains yet to be done. You have built a house for the Most High God. It remains that you fill it with devout and pious worshippers. Let not your seats, left empty in this place of prayer, testify against you in the day of eternity, that you here neglected the offers of mercy, and turned away from the ordinances of God, which were designed to secure your salvation. Let not the fires which burn upon the Pagan Altar, reproach your want of zeal in the service of the God of *truth*. With souls hungry and thirsting for the Word of Life, come, with your wives and children, to this house which you have built for me, and *here* enquire for Jesus. He will meet you in this place, and bless you. And when he shall come in the clouds of heaven, with his own glory and the

father, accompanied by the splendid retinue of the skies, may we all be received into his presence with, "well done good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord." Having finished our probation *here*, may we all be translated to the "Temple not made with hands," where *we* who sow, and *you* who reap, shall rejoice together!

And now to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, be glory in the highest; and let the Church Militant join the Church Triumphant, in the loud—*Amen*.