



MR. ALLEN'S

DEDICATION

SERMON.



A
DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN CHESTERFIELD,

DECEMBER 8, 1791.

A T T H E
D E D I C A T I O N

O F T H E
N E W M E E T I N G - H O U S E .

By TIMOTHY ALLEN, A. M.
AND PASTOR of the CHURCH THERE.

AND (PUBLISHED) BY DESIRE OF THOSE
WHO HEARD IT.

N O R T H A M P T O N :
PRINTED BY WILLIAM BUTLER.—1792.

P R E F A C E.

THOUGH the Author has been often induced to exhibit his Productions to the publick view, he considered the infirmities of the Seventy-seventh year of his age, a sufficient bar to any attempt of that kind in future ; but after the People of this Town, in a manner very unusual in such case, appeared quite unanimous in taking down the old meeting house, fixing the spot for the new one, and finishing it in an elegant manner : The Undertakers, Committees, and Artificers, desired him to deliver a Discourse at the Dedication of it. And then were urgent for a Copy of the Sermon for Publication. And considering the several singularities of divine Providence in the whole affair, such as the unanimity of the Town, in an affair, usually attended with division : the notable patronage of divine Providence through the perilous operations, in preserving every Person from harm ; and the urgency of the gentlemen abovementioned, he submitted, relying on publick candor, and the allsufficient favour and blessing of God, to serve some divine purpose, by these feeble efforts.—

AMEN.

A Dedication Sermon, &c.

ACTS, VII. 33.

Put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place where thou standest is holy ground.

THE divine nature is the original, and only perfect sample of all holiness. Every thing therefore named holy, under God, gets that stile, from some likeness or relation to God. It may now be asked; but what likeness or relation, can be between a piece of ground, or any other material substance, and a *Spirit; immortal Being; the eternal mind?* I answer, just the same, as gave reason to the well known expressions, in the old state of the church; viz: *Holy Garments, holy oil, holy mountain,* and as in our text, *holy ground.* Now there can be no degree of likeness in nature, between any of these material substances, and the holy God. But a relative connection with him, there certainly was, for he ordered them to be made, appointed their use, and they were according actually used, and in the greatest affair that ever took place in any world, viz: Serving eternal councils in the salvation of men. Consequently, in mere relative holiness, no virtue or property is communicated, to give reason for the predicate, holy, to be fixed to any material substance. There can be no holiness in it. What therefore God has stiled holy, is to be held such for that reason, without

without thinking of any thing in its *nature* answering to that predicate.

There are two means by which this relative holiness takes place. 1st. When God expressly prescribes it, as Exod. xxix. 33. "*A stranger shall not eat things consecrated because they are holy.*" So 37th verse, "*The Altar is most holy, and whatsoever toucheth it shall be holy.*" Also the anointing oil; and all the utensils of the Temple, worship, and sacrifices, were made holy by the same mean.

2nd. Another mean of this relative holiness, was possession, and use by God himself, or his special order, so the censers which the two hundred and fifty men in Korah's rebellion, had used by special order, were put into golden plates to cover the altar, and never more to be used as censers, because they were holy, Num. xvi. 38. So Exod. iii 5. When God possessed and used the burning bush, and Moses was approaching to see the sight, God forbid him, because the place was holy; i. e. was already possessed and used by God himself. So when Jesus Christ appeared to Joshua before Jerico; he had Joshua put off his shoe, for the place was holy, being already possessed and occupied by divine majesty. Josh. v. 15. But that cause being removed, that effect must cease.

It may be asked, how was putting off the shoe an acknowledgement of holy ground? This must be answered both literally and mystically.

1st. Literally. Being barefooted was badge of a servant; a token of being always ready to run and serve. Therefore the evidence of Abigail's consent to be David's wife was, 1. Sam. xxv. 41. That she would be devoted to wash the feet of David's servants: which being bare as servants, were exposed to need washing. And to be without shoes, was a type of readiness to serve God; which was especially necessary, when the divine majesty was visibly present. But when this visible

ible presence was withdrawn, there was no more reason for this practical respect, than in all times and places.

And so putting off the shoe in the visible presence of God, was in practical reverence of his holy majesty. A sign of submission to him ; and of readiness to do all his pleasure. It was also a token of humiliation and mourning for sin. For this reason David went up mount Olivet bare-footed, in flying from his son Absalom. 2. Sam. xv. 30. And to shew that the temper of mind pictured hereby, becomes us, in the divine presence, as well as in all humbling circumstances, this speaking signal was enjoined.

2. That we may understand the mystick design of this type, we must know

1. That the feet are a type of affections: For as the body moves by the feet, so does the mind by the affections. This therefore gives light in Eccles. v. 1. "*Keep thy foot when thou gonest to the house of God.*" For if not you offer there, the sacrifice of Fools ; i. e. a sacrifice, which has not your affection, love and delight in it, because these were placed on other objects, when you came there.

2. As our feet are placed on that which supports our bodies, so our hearts rest and stand, on that which is the object of the affections. And as the shoe is between the foot and its foundation, so it obstructs and hinders the foot from coming to that foundation. Just so every wrong object of affection interposes and hinders the mind from coming to God, trusting in Christ, and his word, as it ought ; and as it must, in order to stand firm by faith. Therefore all such wrong objects of affection, or mental attachment, whether among outward things, or inward dispositions, as intercept and hinder the concurrence and compliance of the heart with holy matters, are called shoes, and are
B forbidden

forbidden. God commands us to put them off. And unless we do so, the heart can never approach to God, or comfortably enjoy him. So that instead of this command's being a senseless and unmeaning thing, 'tis the summary of all practical holy religion; and quite essential to the life of holiness, and all true christian experience.

But it may be said, as ancient types looked to Christ and his kingdom which is come and established, and so typical holiness antiquated; why do we retain the stile of *holy* hill, in several instances. As in case of the Sabbath, Bible, Ordinances, &c. The first of these only, shall be attended to.

The holiness, or morality of the Sabbath, and our bonds to its religious observance may be supported in the following manner, viz.

1. If the only being of perfect reason, and righteousness, had perfect reason for following his own judgment in every point; and has made us know that he did so, in instituting the Sabbath; then there was perfect reason for the institution; & then we are under just such bonds to observe it. Nothing but Atheism can evade this argument. For we are told Exod. xx. 9. "Six days shalt thou labour," &c. Giving us divine liberty for our own employments, on all these days, that he might with more perfect reason, reserve the following monument for himself, viz. "*But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.*" He did not say it *shall* be the Sabbath hereafter; but *it is now*, already the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. But if this declaration was quite right, then the Sabbath had its foundation in the nature and reason of things; for by this declaration it had perfect existence, before God spoke a word about it. And so it follows. 11th vr. "wherefore" or for which reason, "God blessed," the *sabbatism*, for so it is in the original, i. e. confirmed it, and connected blessings with it, for all its faithful observers.

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Those blessings were not connected with the seventh day, (tho' God rested or sabbatized on that day) but with the sabbatism itself. For God never designed that day of the week should always be the time for sabbatizing; For he knew that Jesus Christ would come, and would be Lord of the sabbatism, and would dispose of it as he pleased, and he did so.

2. As the only perfect being is our safe pattern, and perfect example, so we are bound to obey that divine commandment, Eph. v. 1. "*Be followers of God, as dear children.*" The inspired word is *Mimetai*, which signifies to imitate, or mimic; but we cant do so in this case, without keeping holy the Sabbath day, for he did so. He rested on the Sabbath, blessed and hallowed it. And 'tis impossible to support the character, or enjoy the peace, of dear children of God, without imitating him, in this important case.

3. I would now give you a third reason for sanctifying the Sabbath, which avails much more for the christian Sabbath, than for that of the Jews. But a few sentiments are necessary to introduce it. As

1. *Sabbath* was always designed to memorialize and commemorate, the greatest work which God had been know to accomplish, as Exod. xx. 10.

11. Where God's *making the world*, is the reason for sabbatizing.

2. Jesus Christ was the creator of the world. Jon. i. 1. In the beginning was the word, and the word was God, all things were created by him. And Heb. i. 2. "*He made the worlds;*" Yea "*all things visible and invisible.*" Col. i. 16.

3. As creation was then the greatest work, God had been known to do, so the first, or Jewish Sabbath was in memory of that, as the greatest work of God.

4. But redemption, wrought by the same divine

vine agent, was infinitely greater work than creation, creation was the stage on which redemption was to be wrought; it was made for that very purpose. No opposition was made to creation; but redemption was opposed by earth and hell, and yet was accomplished. No death was necessary in creation; but the most terrible death that ever was, was necessary to accomplish redemption. Creation was made for bodies, and natural life; but redemption for souls, and eternal life. So it appears that redemption was an infinitely greater, & more important work than creation. Therefore,

5. The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine agent of both, knowing when redemption was finished in his resurrection, the reason of the first Sabbath ceased; because now an infinitely greater divine work was to be memorialized by sabbatizing, continued his redeeming work, through the seventh day, Sabbath, and rested from his work, and so sabbatized on the first day of the week, Mat. xxviii 1. 6. 1. Cor. xv. 4. Heb. iv. 9. 10.

And so the doctrine is established, that there is infinitely greater reason for the christian Sabbath, than ever was for that of the Jews. And this is so far from fixing changeableness on the institutor; that it gives evidence of his unchangeableness. He always designed the Sabbath to be a memorial of the greatest work of God; and now as a greater work of God has taken place, than that of creation, he fixed the memorial of it accordingly. For,

1. He ceased, or rested from his work, i. e. sabbatized on the first day of the week, himself: thereby setting the same example for his followers, as he did in the beginning on the seventh day.

2. He practically taught his disciples to tread in his steps. Jon. xx. 19. For when the disciples were assembled, on the first day of the week; he joined them, and instead of reprov-
ing them,
encouraged

encouraged them, in the highest manner, by pronouncing a Sabbath's blessing on them, in these most encouraging and comfortable words; "*Peace be unto you.*" Implying all blessings, and especially spiritual ones, (for peace is such) are for you, on this day, as Sabbath; and in this practice of sanctifying it. And because it was a point of great importance, Luke also attests it. Luke xxiv. 33. 36. And again the next Sabbath, or first day of the week, Jesus to confirm them in this practice, met with them again and blessed them. See Jon. xx. 26, And the inspired apostle confirms it, by directing the Corinthian Church to be prepared for publick contributions on the first day of the week, as the stated time of their publick assemblies. 1. Cor. xvi. 2. And to encourage them in it, tells them, he had ordered the Churches of Galatia to do the same on that day. And for this reason the first day of the week was stiled emphatically the day when disciples come together to break bread. Act. xx. 7. And there is not one word in the Bible about christians observing any but the first day of the week, as Sabbath, ever since. And doubtless this was meant when Christ is called *Lord* of the Sabbath day. Mark, ii. 28. And so it appears that the Sabbath is connected with the first day of the week, by special institution, consisting in the express word, & actual example of Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

Therefore though the sabbatism was moveable from one day to another, it is in itself unchangeable, and of course, the stile *holy*, belongs to it just as it did originally. Exod. xvi. 23. Neh. ix. 14.

As to other subjects of the predicate *holy*, such Bible, Ordinances, and worship, since I am bereaved of the use of my hand in writing, and considering the great mercy of God to us in general, in giving us light and understanding enough to acknowledge their *holiness*, I shall only add ; that

no portion of meer matter can have holiness in its nature. The *Bible, Elements*, in the Lord's Supper, &c. are holy by special divine order, and by their divine import. God had also once a house of worship, stiled *holy*, & Jesus Christ gives us the reason, because it was a type and picture of his body, Jon. ii. 19. 21. It was also a type and picture of his Church, the collective body of his *holinesses*. For of them he says, II. Cor. vi. 16. "*Ye are the temple of the living God.*" And I. Tim. iii. 15. he says, "*The church of God, is the house of the living God.*"

That house therefore was holy by special divine order, and by its typical import. But there has been no house in the world, entitled to the stile of *holy*, since Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven. And of course, 'tis owing to ignorance, bigotry, & superstition, that a house for christian worship, is ever stiled *holy, house of God, holy place*; and such like. A house for christian worship, and all religious worship in any place, is to be attended in a very holy manner. The object, and the business, are *holy*. The heart of the subject ought to be holy; answerable to the employment.

I now proceed to make some remarks on the premises. And

1. We have seen that there can be no holiness in mere matter. Objection, Our bodies are mere matter; and yet the apostle implies, that *our bodies must be made holy*. I. Thess. v. 23.

Answer. Our bodies are holy, when they are devoted to divine service, and in practice are conformed to the laws of holiness in the Bible, and to a principle of holiness in the heart. But this implies no holy property in the matter of our bodies. If mere matter can't love God, which is the principle of holiness; 'tis impossible it should have holiness in its nature.

We have seen also that the Sabbath is fixed to the

the first day of the week, by Jesus Christ the Lord : and we all know, that a primary object in building, and furnishing this house, is to serve the appointed uses of that holy Sabbath. And that for those purposes specially, it is solemnly dedicated this day. If we believe these things, and have any religious, or only rational notions of them ; we shall never enter this house, for any of those most sacred purposes, with malignity indulged in our hearts ; or with the air, or spirit of levity. This is not a vulgar house ; nor made & furnished for vulgar uses. The design of it is to be a convenient place for the service of God. Let every person who enters it professedly for that purpose, remember God is present in the congregation of his people ; and that his eye is on their heart ; and he will make them eat the fruit of their own ways ; and fill them with their own devices. He will be sanctified in them that come near him. Lev. x. 3.

2. Then our first business in all approaches to God, is to put off every mystick shoe. 'Tis most dangerous to rush into the worship and service of God, with heart and affections muffled, distempered, and embarrassed, with mystick shoes. Remember this is the first thing he sees about us when we approach his presence ; for he looks at the heart. Jer. xx. 12. And is much displeased with the heart that inwardly departs from the living God. 'Tis mockery to draw near to God, with a false treacherous heart. We should always remember when we enter this house, for the service of God, it must be with hearts and affections quite barefooted. Otherwise we are in danger of his wrath every moment. The sight of this place of worship, should bring the thoughts to view.

3. Divers circumstances require such solemn regard, in all our improvements of this house. As

1. There

1. There have been special Tokens of divine patronage towards this town, respecting their place of public worship, for several years past. Men are apt to be jealous for supposed rights, and contentious, if they are invaded. Yet a majority of this town, who were not accommodated in the place of worship, it being a mile from a proper centre; endured that excess of travel for ten years, in peaceable compliance with the minority. And if but one hundred persons did so; then in going and returning, they endured two hundred miles travail every Sabbath day. And as there are fifty two Sabbaths in a year this excess of travail on Sabbaths only, is ten thousand and four hundred miles. And if other occasions of meeting there, were as many more as the Sabbaths, the travail would be more than twenty thousand miles, which is nearly equal to the diameter of the terraqueous Globe. Yet all this was endured with more submission than is common in like cases. Which is to the honor of those who endured it. And since we are bound in all things to acknowledge divine Providence, Prov. iii. 6. And since if persons enduring all this, had been as querulous as common in such cases, the town had been convulsed; and our happy enjoyment of this house had never existed. These considerations bind us always to enter this house with grateful veneration for its bounteous author.

2. The goodness of God was so conspicuous, in preserving every one of the multitude employed in taking down the old House, and erecting it here from any disaster, that it demands a dutiful acknowledgment from every person acquainted with these facts, whenever they enter this house, especially to worship the preserver of men.

3. As convenient accommodation for the worship of God, is the honor and happiness of any people; so the unusual elegance of this house, for the

the purpose of its present dedication, calls aloud on its proprietors, to honor its great object, whenever they approach his presence, to worship in it.

3. The third remark on the premises is, that we should pay such regard to the word of God & his worship, as never to admit any thing unscriptural, or antichristian. The Bible stiled a house for worship and sacrifice, among the Jews, *The house of God, Sanctuary.* &c. Reasons for which have been given. But it allows no house for christian worship to be so stiled. And since the antitype of all those types is come, to uphold the types, is practically to say, that Jesus Christ is not come, and that he who bore that stile was an impostor. And so to deny christianity, speak falsehood, and support the Jews. 'Tis unscriptural. The Papists have holy Ground, Houses, and Places: but God bids us "*come out from among them, and not touch the unclean thing.*" 2. Cor. vi. 17. and doubtless all who mean to purify themselves as he is pure, will purify from these corruptions; because they are antichristian.

4. We have seen the absurdity of types, after their design is answered. The name of Christ was *to be above every name.* Phil. ii. 9. *His name alone to be exalted in all the earth.* Psal. lxxvii. 10. We have seen also, there is more reason; infinitely more reason for the christian Sabbath, than ever was for that of the Jews. And we have had reason for a most sacred improvement of that day; & some of them are encreased by the privilege of this house. To which others shall now be added.

1. This house is not made for vanity; but for the service of God. And is this a trifling matter? Is there a person among us, who don't know this demands attention, solemn attention! What shall be thought then of the person, old or young, who shall attend worship in this house in a light, airy manner; comes gazing, smiling, gabbling, in-

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to a place dedicated to the service of God? such indecency is infinitely more aggravated, than to rush into the presence of worldly majesty with a whistle, which would ensure the censure of gross ill-breeding, idiotism or insanity.

2. The dedication of this house to holy uses, binds us to use it in a holy manner. No guile, envy, hypocrisy, or other evil habits, should be admitted here. These are shoes forbidden to be worn. Indeed, 'tis impossible for a soul to draw near to God, with these embarrassments. When we enter this house therefore, remember the command, "*put off thy shoes, and be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace.*"

3. We should take argument, compulsive argument, from divine Bounty, in the comfort, convenience, and privilege of this house, for holy services and enjoyments, to become a people to the honor of a bountiful benefactor; and make it appear that this grace is not ill bestowed.

I shall conclude with some gratitudinary notes.

1. We are in debt to divine Majesty, for this elegant accommodation for his worship. God said of the first house for holy services, "*the silver is mine, the gold also is mine.*" Hag. ii. 8. He has indulged us the materials of this house; shall we pervert them? Shall we suffer the profanation of such favour? Far be it! But let us at every sight of this bounty; "*give unto the Lord, the glory due to his great name.*" And dedicate, heartily dedicate, this monument of his goodness to his service. And allow it to stand a witness of our duty; and solemn test of our allegiance.

2. The People at large are to be acknowledged, for their concurrence in the important work; as also for their steady approbation, and promotion of it from the first. May divine blessings here remunerate to them, all their care, and all their cost.

3. The undertakers, inspectors, and all subservient

servient co-adjutors, are to be thankfully acknowledged; the undertakers especially; that when divine providence had opened a prospect of something of the kind; they indulged so liberal a projection, as this which has taken place. And both they, and the Inspectors, are intitled to publick thanks, for that good judgment, patriotism, firmness, and perseverance, with which the whole has been prosecuted, to the present perfection.

4. But our gratitude, is eminently due, under God, the patron of all ingenious artificers; to that curious artist, who with his associates, undertook that arduous work, and whose diligence, constant attention, and high mechanism, have accomplished this brilliant accommodation for divine service. We ought to desire that their souls might be beautified with the Grace of God, and that they might be edified to his Palace above the skies.

And now after honouring the presence of numerous friends on this agreeable occasion; we again call on our souls, and all that is within us to bless and praise the name of the Lord, for all his benefits; and for this display of his favour, to his unworthy people. And dedicate this house, as a memorial, and monument thereof; and as a test of our allegiance to his holy Majesty.—AMEN.