

A
SERMON

PREACHED

AT FAIRHAVEN, VT.

June 18, 1812.

AT THE

DEDICATION

OF THE

NEW MEETING HOUSE.

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BY NATHAN S. S. BEMAN, A. M.
Pastor of the third Congregational Church in Portland, Me.
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“Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, forever.”—Ps. xciii. 5.

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THE COMMITTEE OF ARRANGEMENT, in behalf of the church and congregation of Fairhaven, present their thanks to the Rev. Nathan S. S Beman for the Sermon preached at the dedication of the New Meetinghouse ; and request a copy for the press.

CHRISTOPHER MINOT,
DAN SMITH,
TILLY GILBERT,
SAMUEL STANNARD,

} *Com. of Arrang.*

GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMITTEE,

I consign to your disposal, my dedicatory Sermon. The discourse is submitted precisely in its original form ; though I have thought proper to add several explanatory and historical notes.

NATHAN S. S. BEMAN.

SERMON.



lxxxiv. Ps. 1. "HOW AMIABLE ARE THY TABERNACLES,
O LORD OF HOSTS."

THE object of this spiritual song is to express the ardent attachment of its author to the worship of God. It was probably written during the civil commotions which were excited by the ambitious and aspiring Absalom.* The situation of the royal prophet was, at this period, truly affecting! He was driven, by an ungrateful son, from that throne on which he had been placed by the special providence of God, and exiled from that city which his own valour had redeemed from the dominions of the heathen. He could say with peculiar emphasis under these complicated afflictions, "all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me;"† yet, his sorrow was not of a worldly or temporal nature. It was not the throne which he had abdicated that attracted his heart; it was not the palace from whose doors he was excluded that fixed his attention; he did not, like a disappointed sinner, heap imprecations and reproaches upon the head of this guilty and rapacious son;—but he sighed for a return to the publick institutions and worship of God. He remembered, that he had left the *tabernacle of the Lord and the ark of the covenant* in Jerusalem;‡ and his devout and

* See Poole, on the text. † Ps. xlii. 7 ‡ 2 Samuel xv. 25, and vi. 17.

ardent affections clung to them with a constant and undiminished attachment. “How amiable are thy tabernacles” O Lord of hosts. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.” These were the sentiments and feelings of David. They inspired his heart, and directed his conduct, through the various vicissitudes of life. By these he was actuated when he sat upon the throne and swayed the sceptre of the kingdom; and these he expresses, in the psalm from which our text is selected, with all the charms of oriental description, when a dejected fugitive from the merciless persecutions of his son. But this affection for the publick institutions of religion, is by no means confined to David;—it characterizes the children of God, and draws the line of discrimination, between them and the children of the world. To state some of the reasons, why the house of God is dear to his people, is the object of our present discourse.

1. The house of God is his *earthly habitation*, and this endears it to the followers of Christ. The essential presence of the Deity pervades every part of the universe;—“if I ascend up into heaven,” says the psalmist, “thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me.”* But there is a *special* sense, in which God dwells in places consecrated to his worship. Of old, he recorded his name in Jerusalem; and as a token of his acceptance of the temple, at its dedication, “the glory of the Lord filled the house,” and the fire of heaven descended and consumed the sacrifice upon the al-

* Ps. cxxxix. 3.—10.

tar.* Now as the christian has chosen God for his omnipotent friend, he cannot but rejoice in his *presence*. In the sanctuary, he is sometimes favoured with an interview with “the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity.”† The exclamation of the patriarch Jacob, has often been applicable to the child of God, in subsequent periods of the world. When filled with that indescribable solemnity, which arises from an impression of the *special presence* of God, he has been ready to say; “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”‡

It may, perhaps, be thought by some, that the declaration of Paul to the inhabitants of Athens, militates against the sentiment which has now been advanced. He informed them, that “God that made the world, and all things therein, saying that he is Lord of heaven and earth, *dwelleth not in temples made with hands.*”§ But, when we consider the occasion on which these words were delivered, and the persons to whom they were addressed, we shall find nothing which contradicts the sentiment, that the sanctuary or house of God, is his earthly habitation. The Athenians were *idolaters*; and they supposed with other nations of the pagan world, that those idols, which were placed in their temples, were the proper objects of worship. The apostle undertakes to prove the inconsistency and folly of this opinion, from the consideration of the greatness and majesty of God. His *infinitude* absolutely forbids, that he should dwell *exclusively*, like these images, “in temples made with hands.” That this is the scope of his reasoning, appears from one

* 2 Chron. vii. 1. † Isa. lvi. 15. ‡ Gen. xxviii. 16 and 17. § Acts xvii, 24.

of the subsequent verses. “Forasmuch then, as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think, that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device.”*

2. The christian is pleased with the employments of the sanctuary. These may be comprehended under the general divisions of instruction, prayer and praise. The christian has a thirst for improvement, and he visits the house of God as a disciple, and not as a critic. He is never satisfied with any degree of religious attainments in this life, but is constantly urged forward in the career of spiritual improvement by an irresistible desire of obtaining additional information respecting himself, his duty, his happiness, his Redeemer and his God. The more enlarged his views of spiritual truth, and the more extensive his religious information, the more elevated is his piety and the more ardent his zeal. The stupid maxim, that “ignorance is the mother of devotion,” is fit only for that apostate church which uttered it. Ignorance is the mother of bigotry—of superstition—of idolatry—of intolerance—of persecution—of cruelty, and of death; but it never *was*, and never *can* be the parent of genuine piety to God, or benevolence to men.

The themes which occupy the minister at the altar, are pleasing to the heart of the christian. It is in the sanctuary that his mind is led abroad to the contemplation of the wonders of the Omnipotent Creator. Revelation is to the *spiritual* eye, what the telescope is to the *natural*; it brings into view, the remote, and otherwise invisible and undiscoverable parts of the universe. From this source we learn the existence of the Angels of

* Acts xvii. 29.

heaven, who stand in countless multitudes before the pavillion of the Deity; and by the same authority we are informed, that other spirits who once soared above the stars of the firmament, are now “reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.”* Here we learn who it was that “laid the foundation of the earth,”† and ‘garnished the heavens by his spirit.’‡ Here we are led back to the contemplation of *man*, as he came from the hands of his Creator. The passions of the heart then submitted to the controul of reason, and reason was obedient to the mandates of God. No storms or tempests then defaced the works of the Almighty; no poisonous vapors floated upon the bosom of the air; no venom lodged in the serpent’s chest; no ‘pestilence walked in darkness or destruction wasted at noon-day.’§ The earth and its rational, and irrational inhabitants presented a lively emblem of heaven. Universal love reigned over every creature, and perfection was inscribed on all the works of God.¶

It is in the same volume, that we are informed of the defection of our primitive parents, and the train of deadly evils which resulted from their violation of a single prohibition of the Deity. The nature and extent of human depravity, must frequently find a place among the subjects which are discussed by the minister of the gospel. While the sinner is boasting of the dignity of his nature, the christian is pleased with that discourse which exposes the *native, universal and entire depravity* of man. This is laying the axe at the root of the tree;—this doctrine alone can slay the pride of the heart which bears the sinner from the compassionate embraces of the Saviour.

* Jude 6. † Ps. cii. 25. ‡ Job xxvi. 13. § Ps. xci. 6. ¶ Gen. i. 31.

With respect to the *native* depravity of the heart, we are informed, that Adam “begat a son in his own likeness.”* This child was not born in the image of God, as our first parents were originally created, but in the likeness of depraved and guilty Adam. “Behold,” says the psalmist, “I was shapen in iniquity ; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”† And the Apostle pronounces all men “by *nature* the children of wrath ;”‡ and this is an incontrovertible evidence, that they are by *nature* the children of *depravity*.

The *universality* of human corruption may be found written upon every page of the bible. “There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable ; there is none that doeth good, no not one.”|| This declaration is applicable to all men ;—while in a state of nature there is not an individual exception. It extends from the monarch who sits upon the throne, to the beggar that lies upon the dung-hill.

As it respects the *extent* of human depravity, if we should consult the opinions of men, we might call it *partial* ; but while we adhere to the oracle of truth, we are solemnly bound to pronounce it *total*. It was said of man in a very early period of the world, “that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”§ It is not said, that man was subject to evil thoughts ; or that he entertained a great many wicked imaginations ; but *every* “imagination of the thoughts of his heart was *only evil continually*.” But this was not

* Gen. v. 3. † Ps. li. 5. ‡ Eph. ii. 3. || Rom. iii. 10--12. § Gen. vi. 5.

peculiar to the Antediluvians; for Solomon declares, that “the heart of the sons of men is *full* of evil.”* Surely, if the natural heart be “full of evil” it must be a subtle logic indeed, which can prove that it contains a single particle of goodness. “The heart,” says the prophet, “is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”† This declaration is peculiarly solemn. It is the *deceitfulness* of the heart which forms the veil that hides from the sinner its *desperate* and *inconceivable* wickedness. The phrase, “desperately wicked,” is very expressive; *wicked beyond hope, wicked to despair!* The Apostle informs us, that “the carnal mind is enmity against God;”‡ and this heart of opposition or enmity against him can be bounded by nothing. It is impetuous and resistless as the torrent which bursts from the mountain; “it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”‡ But the *entire* alienation of the natural heart from God, is more solemnly enforced, in those passages of scripture where it is represented under the *image of death*. “You hath he quickened,” says the Apostle, “who were dead in trespasses and sins.”|| Do you ask what is the real extent of depravity over the natural heart? The text now under consideration shall answer the question. The sinner is in a *moral* sense what the dead body is in a *natural*; he is *spiritually dead*—without one holy motion or affection of heart toward God or any of his rational creatures. If these things are not contained in the figure used by the Apostle, it is to us an unmeaning, or an incomprehensible metaphor.

As a guilty and helpless creature, the child of God rejoic-

* Eccl. ix. 3. † Jer. xvii. 9. ‡ Rom. viii. 7. || Eph. ii. 1. and Col. ii. 13.

ces, that Christ “hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”* The Divinity of the Saviour is the rock on which he builds his hopes of eternal blessedness in the heavens. This qualified him to make an atonement for sin ; and without this atonement, the convicted sinner would be overwhelmed with despair in this world, and be consigned “unto blackness, and darkness”† in the next. While the self-righteous suppose themselves in the possession of spiritual health and riches, the christian knows that he is *naked and diseased* ; and he is mercifully clothed in the robes of Christ and effectually healed by his blood. For this interest in Christ he is indebted to the mercy of God. He does not look upon it as that *common* mercy which is conferred indiscriminately upon all men ; but as *peculiar, special, distinguishing, effectual* mercy.

And having experienced the grace of God upon his heart, he is anxious to be instructed in those *duties*, which result from his spiritual relation to Christ. He that is unwilling to have these duties urged upon him in the most solemn and impressive manner, has not the spirit of a christian. “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”‡

The christian rejoices in the *government* of God ; and this ought to be frequently exhibited in the sanctuary. The language of his *heart* and of his *conduct* is ; “The Lord reigneth ; let the earth rejoice.”|| He has no desire of wresting the sceptre from the hand of God, or of limiting his absolute supremacy in the kingdoms of nature, providence or grace. In the system of redemption, he is

* 2 Tim. i. 10. † Heb. xii. 18. ‡ James ii. 26. || Ps. xcvi. 1.

willing that the sinner should be indebted entirely to the mercy of God ; and that the Ruler of the universe should conduct his operations in the *spiritual*, as well as in the *natural* world, according to a systematic and definite plan. He desires that God should have “mercy on whom he will have mercy ;”* and that he should govern “all things after the counsel of his own will.”†

Prayer is another employment of the sanctuary which cheers and animates the heart of the christian. It has been, with propriety, termed *the breath of the new born soul*. The christian cannot live without prayer ; and it constitutes no inconsiderable share of his enjoyment in the house of the Lord, to mingle his supplications with his fellow sinners around that altar where the sacrifices of “a broken spirit”‡ are not despised.

Praise is an important and delightful portion of public worship ; and in the performance of this duty the child of God often catches something of the ardor and animation of the celestial world. It is true, his harp is sometimes hung “upon the willows”§—but at others, “the songs of Zion”¶ dwell upon his lips, and he enjoys on earth some prelibations of the beatitude of heaven.

The christian is not soon weary of the employments of the temple. He does not say with the parsimonious worldling, “when will the new-moon be gone, that we may sell corn ? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat ?”* He does not wish with the inconsiderate youth to exchange the sanctuary for the place of amusement ; nor, with unrenewed persons of every descrip-

* Rom. ix. 18. † Eph. i. 11. ‡ Ps. li. 17. § Ps. cxxxvii. 2. ¶ Ps. cxxxvii. 3. * Amos viii. 5.

tion, to retire from the employments of the sabbath, that he may drown reflection in the noisy scenes of the week. He says with David, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand ; I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."*

3. The child of God is pleased with the sanctuary because he there meets with the friends of Christ. The religion of Christ is a *social* religion ; and some of its sweetest consolations are dependent on this character for their origin. Christians take "sweet counsel together," and walk "unto the house of God in company."† "I was glad," says David, "when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together ;—whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord."‡ The faith of the christian is strengthened, and his devotion elevated by the presence and society of those who are actuated by the same spirit, and who are assembled for the worship of the same God and Father of the church. While they worship God, they commune with each other ; and while they direct their eyes to their common Father, their hearts are imperceptibly drawn together by the interesting and tender ties of fraternal affection. The friends of Christ look with complacency on the characters of each other, and this brotherly attachment produces a desire to associate for the public worship of God ;—and the gratification of this disposition strengthens the principle of attachment itself. In the sanctuary those affections are

* Ps. lxxxiv. 10. † Ps. lv. 14. ‡ Ps. cxxii. 1—4.

called into exercise, and *strengthened*, which will eternally reign in the bosom of the saint in heaven. And it is worthy of notice that the kingdom of glory is often represented by metaphorical expressions drawn from the public institutions and house of God. It is called a *temple*.—“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God.”* It is “a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”† There the tear of affliction will forever cease to flow, and the voice of *prayer* itself will give place to the beatific songs of angels and saints.

4. The sanctuary is a place where the mercy of God is displayed, and this raises it in the estimation of the christian. The grand object of the gospel is to express this resplendent attribute of the Deity. The religion of the bible is emphatically a *system of mercy*. While *justice*, in all its awful and tremendous severity, fell on apostate angels, *mercy* provided a Saviour for the ruined family of man. It was *mercy* that influenced the Son of God to leave the abodes of light, and visit the benighted regions of the earth. The same mercy inspired him with invincible perseverance, and armed him with *inextinguishable fortitude* to meet the dangers and encounter the sufferings which opposed the execution of the mission with which he was entrusted by the Father. It was mercy that led him to interpose between God and man, and receive in his own body the sword of divine justice which was pointed at the naked and defenceless bosom of the sinner. The *sick* who were *healed*—the *blind* who were restored to *sight*—and the *dead* who were raised to *life*,

* Rev. iii. 12. † 2 Cor. v. 1.

with a united voice proclaim the mercy of God. The tears of the garden, the *groans* of Calvary, and the mountains of Judea which heard the midnight prayer of the Saviour, can bear testimony to the mercy of God. And the same mercy still characterizes the dispensation of the gospel. The promise of Christ, to the heralds of the cross, is, "Io, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."* And how often has the truth of this declaration been sealed in the sanctuary? When divine truth has been poured upon crowds of attentive hearers, the spirit of the living God has descended like "a rushing mighty wind."† Many have received impressions which have fastened to the conscience, and which could never be erased by all the insane pleasures and intoxicating dissipations of the world. Others, at such seasons, have been born into the kingdom of God, and have begun the songs of the upper temple; "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."‡ A work of grace generally commences with an *unusual and increasing* attention to the public worship of God. The sanctuary is crowded—attention is marked on every countenance, and solemnity pervades every heart. A universal stillness reigns through the house of God—a stillness similar to that which precedes a tremendous storm, or a desolating earthquake! Every individual hears for himself. One sermon, he now supposes, may decide his destiny of life or death. The Almighty approaches—clouds, not of divine *indignation*, but of *mercy* gather at his feet—the rains of righteousness descend, and converts are multiplied as the drops of the morning dew. Thus the promise of God is accomplished, and his mercy displayed. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty,

* Mat. xxviii. 20. † Acts ii. 2. ‡ Rev. v. 12.

and floods upon the dry ground.”* Is there “joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth?”† What then must be the joy of the christian, when showers of mercy descend upon the congregation, and multitudes are prepared to “shine as the brightness of the firmament,” and “as the stars forever and ever!”‡

5. The intelligent christian cannot but esteem the house of God on account of its influence in promoting the *temporal* prosperity of men. Civil society cannot exist without some kind of religion, and no symptom is so well calculated to secure its perpetuity and happiness as the religion of Christ. *Infidelity* in its legitimate tendency is destructive to every thing dear and valuable to man. In its operation upon individuals, it darkens the prospect of happiness—poisons the heart—extinguishes hope—and ruins the soul! And its progress in society is attended with effects no less *deleterious* and *fatal*. Give it full operation, and it will sweep away the strong and essential pillars of national existence. The above declarations rest upon the united authority of reason, revelation and experience.

It is the language of reason. Some impressions of moral obligation, and of responsibility to a Superior Power, are necessary in order to secure fidelity in the common transactions of life. Obligations between man and man are predicated on accountability to God; and where the *latter* is destroyed there is no security for the discharge of the *former*. If you can once obliterate from the mind of man all ideas of dependence upon God, and of a future retribution, you will prepare him for a finished and consum-

* Isa. xlv. 3. † Luke xv. 10. ‡ Dan. xii. 3.

mate villain. You have put a weapon into his hands which he will lodge in the vitals of society. You have let loose a ferocious tiger which no persuasions can tame—which no legal fetters can bind—which no power but Omnipotence can control! When you have taught him to dispise the authority of God, he will violate without compunction the statutes of men.

In coincidence with these decisions of reason, are the declarations of Scripture. “Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people.”* “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”†

This testimony of reason and revelation, against infidelity and in favor of the religion of Christ, is confirmed by the *experience of ages*. Nations have prospered in direct proportion as they have been devoted to the honor of God; and they have invariably declined when his name and institutions have been treated with profanity or contempt. When did the house of Israel inherit the smiles and benedictions of their God? It was when he was honored in the *temple*, in the *palace*, and in the *habitations of the people*. But when they forsook the God of their fathers, profaned his sanctuary and neglected his worship, he visited “their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.”‡ *The French Revolution* furnishes a lesson on this subject which ought to be pondered with attention by the other nations of the earth. We say nothing of the *political* character or situation of that country; we refer to that people, and summon up their calamities and their sins to prove that the christian reli-

* Prov. xiv. 34. † 1 Tim. iv. 8. ‡ Ps. lxxxix. 32.

gion is the best security for civil institutions, and that a nation of infidels cannot exist. What we advance stands recorded as in letters of blood, upon the pages of authentic history. As a nation they rejected the religion of Christ, and committed themselves to "the winds and waves" of infidelity and error*. In the career of their wickedness, the temple and altars of God were diminished; the immortality of the soul was denied; death was pronounced an eternal sleep†; the character of Christ and his followers was vilified and traduced‡; the religion of heaven was treated as a fable; the bible and other religious publications were openly committed to the flames; the public worship of the everlasting Deity was prohibited by a law of the land, and a host of imaginary goddesses received that adoration which is due alone to the SUPREME MONARCH of the universe§. But what was the effect of these things upon the happiness of society? Did this infatuated people reap the golden harvests of felicity which had been promised them by the lying tongue of infidel philosophy? No; the dreams of Voltaire and his infamous associates vanished in a moment; and the

* It may perhaps be urged by some who have not critically investigated the principles which gave birth to the French Revolution, that this nation rejected only a *corruption* of christianity. It is true that *papacy* was the established religion of the kingdom; but whoever will read the writings of the philosophers, and the records of the national Convention, must be convinced, that a cold and impious attack was made not upon this or that particular sect in religion, but upon the grand and fundamental principles of REVELATION. No man, we presume, will say, that the doctrine of the *immortality of the soul*, and the *existence of a God* are "Popish corruptions;" but these were publicly denied.

† See Faber on the Prophecies.

‡ The watchword of Voltaire in opposing Christ and his religion was, "*Crush the wretch*;"—and the Apostles he calls "twelve scoundrels." See Voltaire's letters as cited by the Abbe Barruel.

§ The following is an extract from the report of Anacharsis Cloots, member of the committee of public instruction, printed by order of the national convention. It furnishes an awful picture of man when under the complete influence of infidelity.

sad scenes of reality which followed, demonstrated, that they were not the friends of humanity, but the ministers of evil and the scourges of the world. *Infidelity* and *death* marched hand in hand. While this atheistical nation proclaimed war against the heavens and defied the thunders of the Almighty, the vengeance of the insulted Majesty of the universe awoke, and smote them “with the besom of destruction*.” These infuriated infidels were let loose upon each other, and the whole kingdom was soon converted into a broad field of desolation and of blood !

Our subject furnishes several important and useful REFLECTIONS.

1. That man is not a *christian* who does not love the house of God. The principles, on which the friends of Christ are attached to the public institutions of religion, have already been stated. But do all men possess these dispositions and affections of heart ? Certainly not. Many contribute nothing that the Temple of the Lord may

“ Man, when free, wants no other divinity than himself. This God will not cost us a single farthing, not a single tear, nor a drop of blood. From the summit of our mountain he hath propagated his laws, traced in evident characters on the tables of nature. From the east to the west they will be understood without the aid of interpreters, comments, or miracles. Every other ritual will be torn in pieces at the appearance of that of reason. *Reason* dethrones both the kings of the earth, and the kings of heaven. No monarchy above, if we wish to preserve our republic below. Volumes have been written to determine whether or no a republic of *atheists* could exist. I maintain that every other republic is a chimera. If you once admit the existence of a heavenly Sovereign, you introduce the wooden horse within your walls ! What you adore by day will be your destruction at night.”——“ The intolerance of truth will one day proscribe the very name of *Temple*, ‘*fanum*’ the etymology of fanaticism”——“ We shall instantly see the monarchy of heaven condemned in its turn by the revolutionary tribunal of victorious reason ; for truth exalted on the throne of Nature is sovereignly intolerant.” See *Residence in France*. For proof of other particulars which we have mentioned respecting the French Revolution, we refer the reader to *the above works*. The *Abbe Barruel*, and *Faber and Smith on the prophecies*. The last mentioned publication, *Smith on the prophecies*, ought to be read by every *christian* and every *politician* in our country.

* Isaiah xiv. 23.

be built;—not a single fraction of that property which the beneficence of heaven has bestowed upon them, can be spared for the promotion of the glory of God and the maintenance of the gospel. *Others* are seldom or never seen in the sanctuary; the most trifling or impious excuse is sufficient to satisfy their conscience in the violation of the sabbath and the neglect of the public worship of God. And are not *some* who are regular and decent in their attendance in the house of instruction, influenced by motives very different from those which actuate the christian? To many, the reflection rarely, if ever, occurs, that they are surrounded by the walls of the earthly habitation of the everlasting God! The exercises of the sabbath are burdensome services; and they have no lasting impression on the heart. Such persons derive no consolation from the presence and society of the friends of Christ. While seated with them in the sanctuary, they do not feel that their hearts are bound to them by the indestructible ties of christian affection; and their minds cannot be borne forward by the joyful anticipations of a glorious and eternal residence with them in the kingdom of heaven. Multitudes have no desire to witness a work of grace, a revival of religion, a display of mercy. If God, in compassion, commences such a work, it is opposed as a deadly evil which would poison all the sources of their happiness. While the *angels of heaven* fly with alacrity to bear divine consolation to the bosom of the repenting sinner, *men* may be found who would gladly deter others from an experimental acquaintance with the Savior. All these characters are strangers to the spirit of the gospel. They are destitute of those principles of attachment which bind the christian to the institutions of religion; and which lead him to exclaim, “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts.”

2. Our subject furnishes one important evidence of the truth of the christian religion. We have already seen, that this system of religion is necessary in order to the existence, perpetuity and happiness of civil society. This is acknowledged even by infidels themselves. Its salutary effects in softening the heart, in warming the passions, and in directing the conduct of men, few have had the hardihood to deny. Now, if the *fruit* be good, the *tree* must be good also. It is a gross and palpable absurdity to suppose, that the prosperity of the world can be better promoted by *falsehood* than by *truth*. But this is the dilemma in which the rejecter of revelation must be inevitably involved. He says that inspiration is a fable ; that the bible is radically false ; and yet, confesses, that it is better calculated, than the principles of infidelity, to promote the happiness of the world. Surely such a person must have a degraded notion of the Deity ! According to his principles and confessions, God has formed the system of the universe, in such a manner, that its happiness can be advanced by nothing so effectually as by the most infamous and detestable falsehood ! If such a person would maintain even the appearance of rationality, he must become a *christian*, or an *atheist*. It is a maxim of universal application, that principles should be tried by their effects. The tendency of the christian religion is to augment the happiness of man ; we, therefore, have no hesitation in pronouncing it the child of heaven. To acknowledge, that it produces benevolent effects, and at the same time to deny its authenticity, is as *absurd* as it would be to suppose, that “an angel of light” was the offspring of the regions of perdition.

3. He that is not a supporter of the public institutions of religion, cannot be a friend to his country. God has

Identified the interests of civil society with the advancement of his kingdom ; and it is not in the power of men or angels to sunder them. We do not say, that religion and government ought to be united ; we advance no such sentiment as this. We do not wish for a national establishment of religion. But we say with confidence, upon incontrovertible authority, that the happiness, harmony and respectability of a nation must depend on the prosperity of Zion. As public institutions, and houses of worship are necessary for the promulgation of the gospel ; and as this gospel is the vital principle of national existence ;—that person, who is not a friend to these establishments, is an enemy to the welfare of his country. Let his notions of civil government be what they may, he is unworthy of the name of a *patriot*. He is not only contending against the kingdom of Christ, but he has taken up arms against the dearest interests of his fellow men. Depend upon it, that infidel philosophy will never be satisfied with any thing short of a complete subversion of every political and benevolent institution ! The religion of Christ must be honored and supported, or your government will fall and crush the nation in its ruins !

4. We learn from our subject the propriety of consecrating houses to the worship of God. The feelings of christians and the good of society call with an imperious and united voice for the support and diffusion of the christian religion. For the accomplishment of this object, places of instruction must be opened, where the minister of the gospel may roll the thunders of the Law, and point the trembling victim to “the Lamb of God, which take th away the sin of the world*.” And the place where the solemn and momentous business of the soul and eternity is transacted, ought to be considered as sacred to God.

While "HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD*" is inscribed upon its walls, they ought never to resound with the view of ambitious strife or political contention. The transaction of worldly business in the sanctuary cannot fail of producing unhappy effects. A degree of its sacredness is destroyed whenever it is used for secular purposes. The human mind is so much under the influence of association of ideas, that, even amidst the solemnities of the sabbath, it will spontaneously recur to those worldly and trifling scenes, which have been exhibited in the house of God during the week. If this place is, indeed, "*Holiness unto the Lord*†," as your *inscription* declares, then let this character never be degraded by a conversion of this sanctuary into a theatre of mere *temporal* transactions.

Lastly, The completion and dedication of this house must furnish matter of joy to the promoters of order and the friends of Zion. Permit me on this solemn and joyful occasion to congratulate the members of this church and society on the interesting and auspicious prospects which are this day presented before you. Surely, you are under unspeakable obligations of gratitude to God, that he has remembered you in his providential dealings toward the children of men. In the course of a few years, a surprising alteration has taken place in *the moral and religious* condition, privileges and prospects of this town. We can most of us remember the time when it was "like the heath in the desert" which seeth not "when good cometh‡." A few years since you was destitute of a minister of the gospel and an organized society;—now "the messenger of grace" directs you to the blood of Christ; and God has here planted a church, and

* Zech. xiv. 20.

† These words are written over the pulpit.

‡ Jeremiah xvii. 6.

we trust, that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*.” Heretofore, you have had no house of public worship, except one that stood as a monument of *disgrace* rather than of *honor* to the town ; but we this day witness with undescribable satisfaction, the glorious effects which may result from the energy and public spirit of a few individuals. In justice to our own feelings we are bound to say, that this house, considering the divided state of the town and the pecuniary circumstances of its friends, furnishes a striking and uncommon testimony to the liberality and taste of its builders.

Being now completed, let us surrender it into the hands of the great Builder and Proprietor of the universe. “But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth ? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee ; how much less this house which” thy people “have builded †.” “Arise, O Lord, into thy rest ; thou and the ark of thy strength ‡.” “Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in §.” Here, eternal God, let thy presence dwell ; let thy name be written upon the walls of this earthly temple ; let thine angels hover round these altars, and bear to the inhabitants of heaven, from this sanctuary, the joyful intelligence of the conversion and salvation of sinners ! Here let thy grace refresh and animate the hearts of thy people, that they may exclaim, “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts.”

This house is now the property of God ; and henceforth, my friends, it is your solemn business to derive spiritual improvement from the messages of mercy which are here delivered. Perhaps, some who have contribu-

* Mat. xvi. 18. † 2. Chron. vi. 18. ‡ Psalm cxxxii. 8. § Psalm xxiv. 7.

led to the erection of this building are strangers to the love of Christ. It would be awful indeed, if these walls which are the work of your own hands, should rise up in judgment and testify against you. God is now building a TEMPLE more important and magnificent than any constructed by the ingenuity and art of man. Christians are the “lively stones*” which compose this spiritual edifice; and it is of indescribable importance, that you individually constitute a part of this “habitation of God through the Spirit †.”

Let christians renew their covenant transaction, at the opening and dedication of this house. The success of the gospel depends very much upon your exemplary lives and ardent prayers. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companion’s sakes, I will now say, peace be within thee ‡.” I was going to conclude—but the presence of this numerous assembly has borne forward my thoughts to that day, when the nations of the earth shall be congregated for judgment. The destinies of the universe will then be pronounced; and every individual in this house will enter upon the joys of Paradise, or begin the unavailing groans of endless perdition. Fly, I beseech you, fly to the arms of the merciful and omnipotent Redeemer! Escape, O sinner, escape from “the city of destruction,” before the storms of divine and Almighty wrath shall fall upon you, and sink you to the dark regions of despair and death.

* 1. Peter ii. 5. † Eph. ii. 22. ‡ Psalm cxxii. 6–8.