



S E R M O N,

PREACHED JAN. 10, 1810,

AT THE

DEDICATION

OF THE

CHURCH IN PARK STREET,

BOSTON.

—::\*::—  
BY EDWARD D. GRIFFIN, D. D.

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BOSTON:

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AT A MEETING OF THE BRETHREN OF THE PARK STREET  
CHURCH, THURSDAY EVENING, JAN. 11, 1810,

VOTED, That the thanks of this church be presented to  
the Rev. Dr. GRIFFIN for his excellent sermon, delivered  
at the dedication of our new church, on Wednesday, 10th  
inst; and the clerk be directed to request a copy thereof  
for the press.

*A true copy of record.*

ATTEST, WM. THURSTON, Clerk.

# SERMON.



2 CHRON. 6. 18.

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 I HAVE BUILT!

SUCH a view of the immensity and omnipresence of God was presented to the view of Solomon, as he lifted his eyes to heaven, to offer that memorable prayer at the dedication of the temple. Elevated on a brazen scaffold, in the centre of an open court, with the heavens for his canopy, and surrounded by the many thousands who had assembled to attend the feast of tabernacles, he kneeled;—while breathless silence held the immense concourse, and every eye was fixed on their king, the royal suppliant kneeled; and spreading

forth his hands towards heaven, offered this prayer to the Being for whose honour he had reared, and to whose service he was dedicating, that magnificent edifice. While his eye surveyed the heavens, which God had *spread out as a tent to dwell in* ;— while his sublimated mind rose to the contemplation of that infinite Being who suspended from His throne, as a mote, the heavens and the earth ;— while, from that amazing height, he looked down upon the speck which he had called a temple,—he cried aloud, *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 I have built !*

As I rise, for the first time, to minister in this humbler temple, and look round upon walls and arches, reared for a habitation of the God of Jacob, an unusual awe seizes my mind, and constrains me to ask, Does He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, *dwell in any place ? Will He condescend to dwell with men on the earth ? Can we presume to hope that He will dwell in the house which we have built ?*

These three questions will form the heads of my discourse, and lead to the main object of our present meeting.

I. Does He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, dwell *in any place* ?

The *essence* of God bears no relation to place ; and in respect to His *knowledge* and *agency*, He is omnipresent. Not a dust that is driven by the whirlwind, not the finest filament of an insect's wing, not an atom floating in the remotest bounds of space, but is constantly inspected by His eye, and upheld and moved by His hand.

But for the more perfect manifestation of Himself to creatures, He has consecrated certain places with special marks of His presence. *There* is presented the ear which hears their cries, the mouth which answers, and the hand which relieves : and *there*, without wandering through all space, they may find their God. The most distinguished of these places is the heaven of heavens ; which, though it cannot confine His glorious Majesty, is often called His *dwelling-place*. In language intended for mortal ears, He is represented as seated there on a visible throne, Himself the object of distinct vision, and holding familiar intercourse with His saints.

What exhibition of the invisible God was made in heaven before the ascension of Christ, we are not informed : but now, in the person of Him in

whom *dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*, the inhabitants of that world behold *God manifest in the flesh*. Formerly there was a *visible* God in the tabernacle and temple ; now there is in heaven. *Then* He dwelt in a luminous cloud ; *now*, in the humanity of Christ. This is the true *Shekinah*,—the glory of a temple not made with hands. There, on a glorious throne, sits the same body, with the same countenance, that was seen in the streets of Jerusalem ; arrayed in the splendour which mortal eyes beheld on the mount of transfiguration, and in Patmos.\* That body belongs to one in whom the human nature is raised to a *personal union* with the divine.† This Person is the *Word* by which God expresses the secrets of His mind, the organ by which He governs the universe, the channel through which all His communications to creatures are made, and the grand medium through which He is seen. In this Person the *invisible* God is brought

\* Matt. 17. 2. Rev. 1. 13—15.

† By this is meant, (1) that the union is so intimate, that, with the same lips, and in the same sentence, He can apply to both natures the same *personal pronoun* ; (John 10 18 ; ) — (2) that the sufferings of the human nature are as meritorious as though they had been the sufferings of the divine ; the blood that was shed being considered the blood of God ; (Acts 20. 28 ; ) — (3) that the same *person* that *suffered*, has the *reward* of governing the universe, and bringing His people to glory ; all of which cannot be predicated of either nature exclusively. (Matt. 28. 18. Acts 5. 31.)

forth from His eternal concealment, and presented to the familiar view of creatures. In Him the glories of the *omnipresent* God are collected to a point, and exhibited from a single throne to every eye in heaven. But,

II. Will God in very deed dwell *with men on the earth*? Yes; that glorious Majesty who *humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven*, has condescended to dwell with sinful men on the earth. Has He not dwelt with men? What beneficent Power, then, has enlightened our darkness, has sanctified our natures, has answered our prayers, has spoken peace to our hearts, has converted our children, has spread among the vallies the beauties of the Spring, and loaded the mountains with the fruits of Autumn? Is He not here? Here are His smiles, His looks of love, His tokens of favour. God is goodness personified, and in action. Wherever He has walked in the earth, a thousand blessings have been scattered from His hands, and an Eden has bloomed beneath His feet. Every place which He has touched, has become like the house of Obededom.

In a highly interesting sense, He dwells in the *whole* of this redeemed world; still more specially in the Church; but peculiarly in the hearts of His people. He dwells in the Church as He abode in

mount Zion generally ; but the bosom of His saints He makes His *holy of holies*.

This infinite favour comes to men through the intervention of the Son of God, the anointed Mediator, the Christ : not the second person in the Trinity *as such*, and by no means the man of Nazareth *as such* ; but an agent, who, appointed by the Father and subject to His will, holds the middle place of Mediator between God and man, and unites both natures in this one office. As it was owing to His mediation that any friendly intercourse between heaven and earth was established, to Him alone was committed the management of this intercourse, and the entire government of the world. With the Holy Spirit subject to His will, He has, from the beginning, carried on all communications between God and man, and made all the exhibitions of God which have been seen on earth.

He never conducted the affairs of fallen man as the second person in the Trinity, but only as the Christ. The God of the patriarchs and of Israel, was no other than the mediatorial King, acting as the representative, and with the authority, of the whole Godhead. It was the Christ who appeared in Eden, and pronounced sentence on our first parents. It was He who, under the name of Jehovah,

frequently appeared to the patriarchs ; who talked with Moses out of the burning bush ; who dwelt in the pillar of cloud and of fire ; and who gave the law at Sinai. It was He, as the apostle affirms, whom Israel tempted in the wilderness.\* It was He who dwelt in the Shekinah. It was He, as the evangelist declares, whom Isaiah beheld in his vision, when he saw a temple opened in heaven, and heard the seraphim, in adoration of the Trinity, crying, *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts!* †

After acting as the God of the old testament, this eternal *Logos*, who *was in the beginning with God*, and who *was God*, *was made flesh and dwelt among us.* ‡ He lived, He toiled, He wept, with miserable men. When He had paid our ransom, He *ascended on high, and received gifts for men, that the Lord God might dwell among them.* The gifts which from the beginning of the world He had held and distributed, because He had given security for the payment of their price, having now actually paid that price, He, as our representative and guardian, more formally received. The greatest of these was the Holy Spirit, whom, as His agent and representative, He sent forth to dwell more sensibly with his people. And now the joyful proclamation was made in heaven, which extended

\* 1 Cor 10. 9.

† Compare Isai. 6. with John 12. 37—41. ‡ John 1. 1, 14.

its sounds to earth, and diffused hope and transport through these abodes of wretchedness : *Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.* But,

III. Can we presume to hope that He will dwell in the house which we have built ?

Even this we may hope. Our gracious Father has always been pleased to honour the sanctuary with His special presence. By some it has been thought that the Shekinah dwelt in a tabernacle among men immediately after the fall, and during the whole patriarchal age ; and that this was the tabernacle which was in the Church at Sinai, before *that* which was made after the pattern shown in the mount.\* But it is certain that when the great tabernacle was erected, the God of Israel took up His abode in what was called *the holy of holies*. That this apartment was really His dwelling place, is evident from the following, among many other facts. Here His glory was actually displayed on the mercy seat, between the cherubims. This was the oracle before which the priests stood to inquire of the Lord by Urim and Thummim, and from which He gave responses. To enter the court towards which the face of the Shekinah was directed, was, in the language of inspired men, to appear be-

\* Exod. 33. 7.

*fore the Lord.* From this abode of the divine presence issued the fire which was kept burning on the brazen altar ; and the flame which consumed the sons of Aaron, when they presumed to offer common fire : an awful warning to those who minister at the altar with fervour not enkindled in heaven. Once in a year, on the great day of atonement, the typical high priest, with the blood of expiation in his hand, and with the names of the twelve tribes upon his heart, entered, as the shadow of a crucified and ascending Saviour, this miniature of heaven, to intercede for his people. Thus dwelt the God of Israel at Shiloh, at Kirjathjearim, in the tent which David pitched in Zion, and in the temple which Solomon built. The second temple did not contain the Shekinah : it was the abode, however, of the invisible God. *I heard Him, said the prophet, speaking unto me out of the house ; and He said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever.*

*The Lord loved the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.* He did not reject the incense of private and social worship which daily arose from the dwellings of Jacob ; but He delighted rather to dwell, and to manifest Himself, in Zion, *whither the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel.*

And still, *where two or three are gathered together in His name, there is He in the midst of them.* In these chambers of Zion, the christian Church have often sat at His feet to hear His words, and supped with Him at His table. Here, like the beloved disciple, they have frequently leaned upon His bosom. Here they have often seen the veil drawn aside, and beheld a countenance clothed with eternal smiles. Often have they seen His *power and glory in the sanctuary*; His *power* displayed in the conversion of sinners, and the *glory* of all His perfections meeting their eye, in one blaze, from *the face of Jesus Christ*.\*

While I reflect on this, my soul exclaims, *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! Happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom!* I am not surprised to hear *the sweet psalmist of Israel* say, *I have loved the habitation of thy house, the place where thine honour dwelleth.* My heart answers to his, as he takes his harp and sings: *Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the North. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand;*

\* 2 Cor. 4. 6.

*I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. I reverence the transports with which this holy man accompanies the ark into Zion ; and I listen with delight to his song by the way : Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions ; how he swore unto the Lord, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob : Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed ; I will not give sleep to my eyes, nor slumber to my eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.*

Similar to this has been the zeal which good men have shown, from the earliest ages, to prepare a place for the publick worship of God. At first they had nothing, probably, but an altar under a grove, in the open air. A stone consecrated to God, sometimes became a Bethel. In later ages, after Israel were planted in Canaan, they had, besides their tabernacle and temple, their proseuchæ or prayer-houses, both before and after the Babylonish captivity, in all their dispersions as well as in their own land. These were open courts in the fields, surrounded commonly with trees, and often situated near the sides of seas or rivers. In these oratories they prayed, not with a single voice, but, as they did in the temple, each one by himself. After their return from Babylon, they had also

their synagogues, not only in Palestine, but wherever a sufficient number of Jews resided to constitute an assembly. In them some one led in publick prayer, and expounded and enforced the scriptures. These synagogues occasionally furnished churches for the apostles. The primitive christians had no houses set apart for publick worship. They met in synagogues, or school-rooms, or private apartments, or in the open air. In process of time, however, the humble school-room of Tyrannus was exalted into a splendid cathedral. Since then, houses for publick worship, with greater or less magnificence, have been erected in all christian countries. Our pious ancestors introduced them into this land, and raised them upon the ruins of heathen altars. Happy was the day when the Church of Christ first landed on these Western shores ! Happy have been the succeeding years, which have seen churches formed, and temples arise, through this land of light and liberty ! Happy was the hour when the foundation of this house was laid : but more auspicious still is the morning on which we meet to dedicate it to God.

The history of this undertaking is short. A few individuals, finding another house for divine worship to be necessary, united to erect this. On the 27th day of February last, a part of their number, by the aid of an ecclesiastical council,

were formed into a christian church. On the first day of May, was laid, with an appropriate inscription,\* the corner stone of this edifice, which is now opened for publick use.

That the proprietors were correct in supposing another house to be necessary, will appear from the following statement. For a hundred and twenty years after the first christian assembly was gathered in this town, a new congregational or presbyterian church was established, upon an average, once in twelve years. But since that period, that is, for near seventy years, none has been added to the number, notwithstanding the increasing ratio of the progress of population : but, on the contrary, two which existed at the commencement of the American revolution, have disappeared. In 1775, and for thirty years preceding, there were, in the town, eleven houses for publick worship, owned by the congregational and presbyterian churches ; in 1808, there were but nine. It was, therefore, necessary, unless people were to be excluded from the publick worship of God, that another house should be provided for their accommodation.

Having, with this impression, proceeded to open a new church, we owe it to the publick frankly to disclose the views which have governed us, and distinctly to announce what they are to expect from

a place of worship, which invites their attention and patronage. And this disclosure is made with the more cheerfulness, as no object is set up at which a good man ought to blush.

This church has not been built, I trust, from party zeal, or ill will to our brethren ; but from a reasonable desire to enjoy the right, denied to none in this land of liberty, of worshipping God according to the dictates of our own conscience. It is our happiness to have sought this privilege, not where the rights of conscience are unknown, but in this ancient and respectable town which has often been called the cradle of American liberty. We can have no reason to fear that the descendants of those, who by their intrepid defence of the rights of man recently gave a new era to the world, will envy us this privilege of freemen. They would indignantly resent any attempt that should be made to destroy or embitter this most precious portion of our liberties. But no such attempt will be made. This is the renowned seat of catholicism. Here men regard, with a liberal smile, those whose religious opinions differ from their own. Surely then we should escape rebuke, were we even attempting to give currency to new doctrines. But this is not our object. We have no greater desire than to see those truths prevail which all our congregational churches have acknowledged ; and that religion, which

has made the name of Boston musick to many thousands of ears which are now listening to the songs of seraphs.

The worship of God, as conducted in this house, will not, I hope, wear the appearance of controversy ; much less, of bitterness against others ; but of meekness, rather, and gentleness, as the spirit of the gospel dictates. This pulpit was not erected to hurl anathemas against men who to their own master must stand or fall. But here, with an eye uplifted to heaven, and filled with tears, we are to make supplication for ourselves, our families, our brethren, and for a world lying in wickedness. Here, I hope, the truths of the gospel will be preached in all their simplicity, in all their mildness, and in all their force ; without uncharitable allusions to any who may defend different views of the scriptures. The business to be transacted here, lies not between us and our brethren of different names or opinions ; but between God and our own souls. Pursuing such a course, if we are not so happy as to command the esteem of the candid and peaceable, we will endeavour, at least, to deserve it.

In the cause of truth no unhallowed violence, no efforts contrary to the humility and meekness of christian love, are either necessary or admissible. In the support of this cause man is not to prevail,

but God. Man is a poor, feeble instrument ; and has nothing to do, but, like Gideon, to *blow his trumpet*, and *hold his lamp*, and *stand still in his place* : the victory and the glory are the Lord's. The man who is deeply impressed with these truths, will *not strive*, but will *be gentle unto all men*. It is more in character for those who ascribe all the power to man, or who support a cause which God does not favour,—it is more in character for them to bring their passions to the combat, to throw their unsanctified feelings into action, and assail the persons or characters of their opponents. But the cause of truth and of God disclaims all such aid.

This house, though not raised for controversial discussions, has been built by those who esteem it far from indifferent what doctrines a man believes ; and who doubt not that his religion will take its shape from the articles of his faith. Their object has been to subserve that experimental religion which is intimately connected with *the doctrines of grace*. These doctrines have, in every age, been manifestly owned by the divine Spirit, by being used as the great instruments of revivals of religion. And I hesitate not to add, that their eulogy has been strongly and steadily pronounced by the general voice of the christian world. In the early ages of christianity, they bore the name of the or-

thodox and catholick faith ; and were maintained by the whole body of the Church, in opposition to the sects which had withdrawn from its communion. They were the doctrines of the glorious Reformation. Since that memorable era, they have been, with some exceptions, the common faith of the protestant world. We find them in the Westminster confession of faith, and in that excellent catechism, which, from our childhood, we have been taught to reverence. For the love which our fathers bore to this system of faith and piety, they left forever their native shores, to seek an asylum for their families and their religion in these Western wilds. They bore these doctrines in their hearts, when they rode the Atlantick wave ; and in their concern for forms, felt chiefly a desire to press the naked point of these truths upon the hearts of men. The churches which they established, received no other faith. And to this day, there are few churches in New-England, or the United States, which are not ready to hazard their lives in defence of *the faith once delivered unto the saints*.

But no place on earth has been more distinguished for a bold and manly vindication of these sacred truths, than this ancient refuge of the Pilgrims. We daily walk over the ashes of some of the most valiant champions of the christian faith ; and constantly breathe the air that was perfumed by the in-

cense of their prayers. What christian has lived in any period of the last century and a half, and has not heard of the impenetrable phalanx formed by the ministers of Boston, to defend the doctrines of the Reformation? These were the truths taught by your Wilsons, your Cottons, your Mathers, your Thachers, your Willards, your Colmans, your Pembertons, your Sewalls, your Princes, your Webbs, your Coopers, your Foxcrofts, your Checkleys, your Moorheads, your Eliots; and as many more, whose names will always adorn the annals of the Church.

If the tendency of any religion was ever thoroughly tested, it was the religion of the fathers of New-England. No such colonies ever formed the beginning of any other nation: no other nation ever inherited equal blessings from their ancestors. By what then were those colonies distinguished? By the purity of their faith, and the fervour of their piety. These evidently had a leading influence in forming the state of society, and the venerable institutions, which they bequeathed to posterity. The happiness of New-England is a monument, raised upon an eminence, to teach the world the tendency of the faith and piety of the Puritans. I venerate those holy men. I reverence their fortitude, their patience, their wisdom; but most of all, their love of truth. I feel ambitious to say,

Among those ancestors were my own ; and in this ground sleeps the dust of my fathers. But I am more ambitious to say, Their views of evangelical truth are mine. It is with mingled emotions of pleasure and hope, that I see an edifice raised to support the doctrines of our forefathers ; and to promote those views of *practical* religion which restrained them from frivolity, and prompted them to a course of strict and manly piety.

What then were those doctrines and views ? I will tell you ;—that if ever the time should come, when men shall support themselves by a professed veneration for the religion of our ancestors, while seeking to banish that religion from the world, you may know what our fathers believed.

From authentick histories of past times, from the confessions of faith which our fathers adopted, and from the books which they wrote, it is known that they were decided *Calvinists*.

They believed that “ there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ;” that “ these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.”

They believed that God left nothing to the capricious operations of chance ; that He eternally determined *what He would do, or suffer to be done* ; and that His government, thus shaped and

settled by His infinite and unchanging wisdom, extends to all events, as well in the moral as natural world.

They believed that the scriptures of the old and new testament, given at first by the inspiration of God, have been preserved, by His providence, sufficiently pure and entire; and that the translation which we have in our hands, is, in every important point, correct.

They believed that *by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation*;\* that the posterity of Adam are *shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin*,† are *by nature the children of wrath*,‡ *dead in trespasses and sins*,§ and possess that *carnal mind which is enmity against God*.||

They believed that the second person in the adorable Trinity, took upon Himself, as Mediator, *the seed of Abraham*; and that this Mediator suffered death, as a vicarious sacrifice, to atone for the sins of the world.

They believed that no man *can see the kingdom of God, except he be born again*;¶ that this change, which in scripture is called a *new creation*,\*\* a *new birth*,†† a *resurrection from the dead*,‡‡ is produced by the supernatural influence of the divine

\* Rom. 5. 18. † Ps. 51. 5. ‡ Eph. 2. 3. § Eph. 2. 1.

|| Rom. 8. 7. ¶ John 3. 3. \*\* 2 Cor. 5. 17.

†† John 1. 13. ‡‡ John 5. 25.

Spirit ; that there is a specifick difference between common and special grace ; that the repentance and faith necessary to salvation, are altogether distinct from any thing which exists in the heart before this change.

They believed that *by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified ;\** that *by grace we are saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God.†*

They believed that God hath *chosen His saints in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy, and without blame before Him in love ; having predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will ; ‡* that *as many as were ordained to eternal life, will believe, § being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will ; ||* that the names of those who, in the eternal covenant of redemption, were given to Christ, were *written in the book of life from the foundation of the world ; ¶* that, in the same transaction, the Mediator received *power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father*

\* Rom. 3. 20. † Eph. 2. 8. ‡ Eph. 1. 4, 5. § Acts 13. 48.

|| Eph. 1. 11.

¶ Rev. 17. 8.

had given Him ;\* that all whom the Father hath given Him, shall come to Him ; that of all these He will lose nothing, but will raise it up again at the last day ;† that the Father which gave them Him is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of the Father's hand ;‡ and that of course they will be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.¶

They believed that the wicked will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.§

They believed that the Church and the world are two separate kingdoms ; and that none but true believers have a right to the sacraments of the new tēstament, either for themselves or their children.¶

They believed in revivals of religion, produced by extraordinary effusions of the divine Spirit.

They warned their contemporaries and posterity against those who are *lovers of pleasures more than*

\* John 17. 2.

† John 6. 37, 39.

‡ John 10. 29.

¶ 1 Pet. 1. 5.

§ 2 Thes. 1. 9.

¶ Though some diversity of opinion, in respect to the qualifications requisite for offering a child in baptism, was, in later times, introduced ; yet the first fathers of New-England uniformly supported the opinion above stated.

*lovers of God ; having a form of godliness, but denying the power :\** and, by their own dignified and holy example, they strongly discountenanced a plunge into that whirl of dissipation *which drowns men in destruction and perdition.*

Such were the views of the fathers of New-England : and I repeat the declaration, that to support the same views of the truths and duties of our holy religion, this church was erected. Those, therefore, who *stand in the ways, and ask for the good old paths, and walk therein,* will say, *Peace be to this house :* those only who have abandoned the religion of their fathers, will regard it with a cold or a jealous eye.

It is proper for me further to state, that if our earnest desires are accomplished, we shall see, in this house, the power and glory of the Lord, as our blessed ancestors beheld Him in the sanctuary. It shall not be concealed, it shall never call forth a blush, that this edifice was reared with many prayers and hopes that it might prove subservient to revivals of religion. And if this should be the will of God, and another Pentecost should come, let none say, *These men are full of new wine.* Should three thousand be pricked in the heart at

\* 2 Tim. 3. 4, 5.

once, the Holy Ghost will decide whether this would furnish a fit subject for ridicule, or an occasion for joy and praise. Why should that be denounced as enthusiasm, in our days, which, in the days of the apostles, was the power of God? Is it possible that the heirs of our fathers' virtues, should spurn a blessing for which those fathers prayed with their dying breath? Should the libertine, smitten here with the power of truth, become chaste, the prayerless devout, and the infidel a christian, who ought to be offended? Should the whole assembly become solemn and earnest in their inquiries after truth, who could convict them of making an improper use of the house of God? People rush, with all their hearts, to scenes of pleasure, and haunts of business; and why should they not, with all their hearts, come before the Lord? While they are allowed to be eager in all other pursuits, surely it cannot be demonstrated that they are bound to go to the temple of the living God *to sleep*, or *to laugh*, or to gaze vacantly about, and return without a thought of what they have heard. I hope in God that this house will never be profaned by indecorous levity; nor stand for a handful of easy men to amuse themselves in for an hour, one half of the day; but that it will be crowded with solemn and affected worship-

pers ;—with people who are conscious that they have souls, and must give an account to God.

And now, in pursuance of the design of our meeting, we proceed to dedicate this house to Him for whom it was erected. May God attend ! Let all the angels witness !—We religiously devote this edifice to the Father, infinite and self-existent ; to the Son, the brightness of His Father's glory ; to the Holy Ghost, almighty and eternal. To the honour and service of the ever blessed Trinity we solemnly dedicate these walls, these arches, these columns, this pulpit, that towering spire, and all that contains, with all that is contained within these sacred limits. For the preaching of the word, for the publick service of prayer and praise, for the administration of the sacraments of the new testament, and for the residence of the eternal God, we consecrate the house. And now, O Lord, if dust and ashes may speak to thee, graciously attend to our supplications ! When thy people, overwhelmed with trouble, shall spread their distresses before thee in this house ; *when the heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, or they are put to the worse before the enemy, or their spiritual foes carry them away captives ;* and they shall return, and confess their sins, and pray before thee, in this place ; then do thou hear, and answer ! When, under temptation or darkness,

they shall come hither to inquire of thee as by Urim and Thummim, do thou give responses, and *guide them with thy counsel!* And now, what wait we for? *Arise, O Lord, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength!*—Behold Him here! His glory fills the house! Bow yourselves before a present God!

*How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!* I am filled with awe as the sacredness of the place, and the everlasting consequences of preparing and devoting it to God, rise before me! Here God will sit; and hither His people will come to receive instruction from His lips, and blessings from His hands. Here the despairing sinner will find a beam of hope. Balm will here be offered to heal the broken heart. *The Lord will count, when He writeth up the people, that this and that man was born here.* But, O my soul! what thinkest thou of the negotiations for peace between heaven and earth, which are here to be carried on? If all nations turn their eyes to the place where a treaty between the powers of Europe, is discussed; with what interest do our departed fathers contemplate such a place as this! Spirits of Whitefield, Tennent, Davies, and Edwards! how, as ye pass over, do ye regard an assembly of immortal creatures, listening

to the messages of God, while ye see the recording angel registering their names, and imprinting on the tablets of eternity their treatment of the propositions of heaven? As ye range the fields of light, and behold some of your former hearers wrapt in folds of eternal darkness, tell us, heavenly spirits, what think ye of the house of God?

In this house the gospel will be to some *the savour of life unto life*; and to others, *the savour of death unto death*. Should this church stand a century and a half, and its seats be generally filled, how many thousands will hear the gospel within these walls! Millions of times will all those thousands look back from eternity to this house, with inconceivable pleasure or pain. By all those thousands, the effect of its erection and dedication will be felt, millions of ages after this world is no more. These measures, then, I consider as the antecedents of happiness and misery, greater than the mind of man can now conceive. The time will come when not a tongue in the universe will make these measures the subject of a jest.

I am prompted, not less by justice than by feeling, to commend, in terms the most respectful, the exertions which have been made by the proprietors of this house. That so small a number of men

should complete so spacious and beautiful an edifice, in the course of eight months, is a wonder which has no parallel in the history of American churches. May this structure long stand a monument of their liberality and zeal for the worship of God and may they, and their children, and their children's children, find, within these walls, the means and earnest of eternal life !

We have abundant reason to acknowledge the goodness of God in bringing this important enterprise to so happy an issue, without the sacrifice of any lives, or material injury to any person. I tender you my hearty congratulations on the occasion ; and invite you, my dear brethren, to join in thanksgiving and praise to Him who has graciously prospered our humble endeavours. On every wall and door let your faith read this inscription, *Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.*

Finally, my brethren, though this is a noble beginning, I must not neglect to remind you that the principal thing remains yet to be done. The grand consummation is faithfully to employ the house in the worship of Him for whom it was built. Otherwise you lose all your labour, and pronounce this dedication a solemn farce. It would be lamen-

table if any of you, after all these exertions, should be excluded from *the congregation of the righteous*. Save me from the anguish of such anticipations! Come, then, as often as these opening doors shall invite you, and, in the spirit of humble worshippers, present yourselves, with your families, before the Lord. Let no idle fancy, no unhallowed feeling, ever pass these consecrated thresholds. In a house devoted to God, you have no right to think your own thoughts, or find your own pleasures. Charge your affections not to linger upon the sounds which shall here be uttered, or upon the objects which shall here meet the eye. Extend your views above the house. God is not confined to temples made with hands. The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him. Bursting every barrier, and breaking every enchantment, let your thoughts rise, in the grandeur of true devotion, to Him who fills all space. And when the dust of this crumbled edifice shall be scattered upon the winds of heaven;—when the stones of the last earthly sanctuary shall tremble in the convulsions of expiring nature;—when the agonies of disappointment and despair shall seize on those who reproached your religion;—then, in the full assembly of your fathers, and with all the triumphs of victory, you shall ride the clouds with your victorious Prince. And when all the myriads of the redeem-

ed, following the triumphant chariot of their returning King, shall shout at heaven's gate, *Lift up your heads, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in!* you shall be welcomed to those abodes of salvation where there is *no temple*, but *the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb.* Amen.