



The "Old Stone Church" situated in Free.

TWO CENTURIES
IN THE
HISTORY OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

JAMAICA, L. I.;

THE OLDEST EXISTING CHURCH, OF THE PRESBYTERIAN
NAME, IN AMERICA.

BY JAMES M. MACDONALD, D. D.

“One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth for ever.”—*Sol. Ecc.* 1, 4.

“Nescire, quid anteaquam natus sis, acciderit, id est semper esse puerum.”—*Cic. in orat.* c. 34.

With an Appendix,

CONTAINING DISCOURSES DELIVERED, AND AN ACCOUNT OF THE SERVICES
HELD, IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF
THE FOUNDING OF SAID CHURCH, ON THE 7TH, 8TH
AND 9TH DAYS OF JANUARY, 1862.

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EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM REV. E. N. CRANE.

REV. P. D. OAKLEY: *New Vernon, Dec. 17th, 1861.*

DEAR BRO.,— * * * * *

As you may suppose, the occasion would be one of great and peculiar interest to me. Most of my father's ministerial life was spent at Jamaica, and there he rested from his labours, and lies in the graveyard beside my mother. There I was born and baptized and passed my childhood and early youth. There I, and my three sisters and a brother professed our faith in Christ and united with God's people, and there I made one of my earliest efforts to preach the Gospel. Well do I love Jamaica and the old church, though so little associated with them of late years. My heart will ever pray for the peace and prosperity of Zion there. Ever may her "walls be called Salvation and her gates Praise."

Yours fraternally,

E. N. CRANE.

In the evening the Church was again crowded, when Dr. Krebs delivered the following Exordium and Sermon ;

·EXORDIUM REMOTUM.

It was formerly the custom in the Reformed Dutch Church, at some time in the service previous to the *sermon*, to prepare the way for it by what was called the "Exordium Remotum." I shall take the liberty, on the present occasion, of following the example. Under other circumstances, I would not presume to offer the suggestion which I now design to throw before you. I hope to be justified at this time, speaking in the midst of your rejoicings, and welcomed among you as almost one of yourselves.

Two passages of Scripture I commend to your consideration.

“Moreover, I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more.”—2d SAMUEL vii. 10.

“Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes: For thou shalt break forth on thy right hand, and on thy left.”—ISAIAH liv. 2, 3.

Home, Peace, Increase. These are the elements of blessing indicated by these passages. Precious to us as individuals, as families, as a people, as citizens or as Christians, as a civil community or as a Church. Dear is the hearth-stone and the homestead where God setteth the solitary in families; and goodly and pleasant is it for brethren to dwell together in unity, sitting in peace under their own vine and fig-tree and none to make them afraid. Sweet, too, to go to the house of God in company with them who are likeminded, heirs of like precious faith, the associates of our childhood, the guides, the acquaintance with whom we took sweet counsel together, the familiar friends whose countenances greet us in the walks of life, whose sympathies are cherished amid the associations of worship and communion in the same holy truths and songs of praise and labours and cares, in the same sanctuary and enjoyments of the same ministrations. Dear, too, to patriotism and piety the contemplation of the purposes and promises of security and enlargement in reference to the people to whom we belong, an inheritance both for possession and for communication, a prosperity which grows within our borders and around them, till the wilderness and the solitary place are glad for us

and the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose. Thus does Jehovah promise Israel, and thus, especially, He declares His purposes in regard to the security and enlargement of that holy nation, the generation which He has chosen and ordained to be a royal priesthood to minister the sacrifices of His praise, and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.

Here, too, is an implication of the interest we ought to take in all that relates to this great cause and of our personal obligation to promote it: an obligation which rests not on ministers only, but on all the people of God.

This interesting anniversary may be used, I think, to suggest large illustration of the duty and the privilege to which you are come who have entered on the inheritance transmitted to you by two centuries. Other men have laboured, and you have entered upon their labours. Your heritage is a responsibility. By accepting it and improving it you will shew yourselves worthy children of worthy progenitors. I recognize gladly, and congratulate you while I recognize, the prosperity you enjoy and the service and success of those whom you have sent forth to till other fields, of which we have had example to-day in your sons who have returned to tell you of their ministries elsewhere, and in the reports that have been brought you from others whose blessing also comes back to you. For a recompense in the same, be ye also enlarged.

This commemoration is well. But does it not become you to make the occasion *monumental*? Whether you should engage in the work of Church extension in *one form* rather than in another, you are better able to judge than I am. But I have heard that the place in which you worship is too strait for your increasing numbers. Why should you not signalize your grateful zeal *by erecting on this sacred spot another edifice of more enduring material, more tasteful and convenient, and of ampler accommodation*, while the building in which we are now assembled may be removed and still devoted to kindred uses?

Do not be startled at this *broad hint*. Do not too readily conclude against it by alleging that this house will answer all your need for a good while to come. You may think so: others will not accept your decision. Your pleasant village is growing. It is attracting residents from the neighbouring metropolis. It is destined to be girdled with tasteful villas and to be enlarged with new accessions. Already you are compelled to deny or to restrict the accommodation of those who desire to worship with you. You cannot long afford to act upon a narrow and short-sighted policy. The overflowing population will seek accommodation elsewhere—and it may be, for such things have been—you may find organizations and churches growing up altogether separated from you, with fruitful rivalries and jealousies, which might be prevented forever by a timely provision for the increasing numbers who are now desirous only to be joined with you even as they are in the Spirit, *joying and beholding your order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ*. Now, there-

fore, thank God and take courage. *The joy of the Lord is your strength.*

SUBSTANCE OF SERMON.

“The joy of the Lord is your strength.”—NEHEMIAH viii. 10.

To be sorrowful under calamity is neither unnatural nor unsuitable,—especially to be sorry for our sins. Yet, is it consistent with cheerfulness in view of the grace that saves. Grief may be indulged immoderately and untimely. Upon the return of the Jews from captivity and the restoration of their worship, they were glad; but as they listened to the law they felt their sins, their hearts sunk, and they wept aloud. They were dissuaded from this excess, and were reminded of all the mercy which had forgiven their sins and restored them to the privileges they had inherited from their fathers, and they were exhorted to give themselves up to holy festivity and to display kindness to the destitute as a token of their prosperity and gratitude: and it was added, “Neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

The joy of the Lord. God is often said to rejoice over His people. His delight is in them. They are to Him a holy satisfaction; as are faithful children to their parents. And if this were what is meant by the “joy of the Lord” in the text it would be equally true as a declaration of the cause of our strength and the element of our joy, our safety and defence.

But it is rather used subjectively, to express that joy which we have from the Lord and in Him. Since it is God’s joy in His people in saving and blessing them

which furnishes joy to their own souls. And this affection of theirs is the "joy of the Lord," because (1) It comes from God. He imparts it—He produces it. It is His gift through Jesus Christ, and it is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is divine in its nature, like that which God himself feels in objects that are good. It arises from a sense of the mercies of God—all His favour in redemption, in the blessings of His covenant, His kindly providence, all the portion He has prepared for his people. (2) We have this joy *in* God. "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom now we have received the atonement [or the reconciliation]." By virtue of our reconciliation to God, Jehovah becomes our portion, our dependence, hope and trust and love. Once it was not so. The Christian did not then know God, nor Jesus Christ. He was opposed to God; he was jealous and afraid of God; he saw no form nor comeliness in Christ; He trusted in himself, and looked for his portion in his fleshly idols.

A change has come. He has become acquainted with God, and is at peace. He has fellowship with the Father and with His Son. Jesus is precious. The love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. He delights himself in the Lord, in His supremacy and holiness, in His law and grace, in His holy providence and exceeding great and precious promises. He walks with God. He looks to Him to supply all his need from the riches of His glory in Jesus Christ, and his hope of heaven is that there he shall be for ever with the Lord.—As *Asaph*, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon the earth that I desire be-

side thee;" or as *David*, "Thou art fairer than the children of men;" or as the *Church*, "Thou art the chiefest among ten thousands and altogether lovely."

This joy is our strength. It fortifies the believer in his attachment to the great truths of the gospel. Men without an experimental knowledge of the doctrines of grace, disparage and deny them. But let one feel those truths in their effects upon the heart; let him realize his guilt and his depravity, and cry out in anguish, "What must I do to be saved?" let him realize the grace and power of Christ to save him; let him taste the joy and peace of believing and the attraction of the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost; let him bask in the light of the knowledge of the glory of God by Jesus Christ, and adore with grateful wonder the sovereign mercy which begot him anew by His resurrection to the lively hope of the immortal inheritance;—let him *feel* all this, and you have before you a man to whom *all* the truths of the gospel are precious and nourishing as the very life of the soul. You cannot make him relinquish them. He knows whom He has believed; and the joy of his salvation anchors his soul fast to all the counsel of God.

It is an element of our growth in grace. "Unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings: and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall." Diseased by sin and enfeebled, we begin the Christian life in weakness: we are as those who are recovering from sickness, while the genial influence of the sun and the sweet breath of heaven animate the convalescent and impart life and

bounding joy and invigorate all the powers. A merry heart doeth good like a medicine. Let the Christian be joyful in the Lord. All his faculties shall work in harmony ; his soul shall grow in knowledge, love, and purity and power. Even as when the circulation flows buoyantly through the veins, the blood briskly fulfils its course, health mantles the cheeks, the spirits bound, the limbs play, the active powers develope in healthful and vigorous growth ; even as the skipping heifer fattened at the stall furnishes an image of happy life rejoicing in the freedom as well as the fatness of the open pastures.

This joy is our support under trials. A wounded spirit who can bear? It is weak and wasted, and incapable of exertion and of hope. But if the heart be joyous—if it knows the joy of the Lord, it regards affliction as light, and patience performs its perfect work. Joseph in the prison, Daniel in the den of lions, the Hebrew children in the burning fiery furnace, Paul and Silas bleeding in their midnight dungeon, David in the valley of the shadow of death,—all have supports and comforts, and they learn even to glory in their tribulation, which was producing the peaceable fruits of righteousness and begetting hope that should never be ashamed nor confounded. “Thy statutes are my song in the house of my pilgrimage.”

This joy is our guard and defence against temptation. The heart that is destitute of it is exposed and open to the fascinations of sin, and in its vacant or troubled hours has no resort but worldly and sinful recreation. But the Christian has meat to eat the worldling knows not of. Thus preëccupied and forti-

fied he opposes his godly joy to the incantations of the charmer that would allure him to transgression. The joy of the Lord has an expulsive power, and it meets the full tide of temptation and rolls it back :

“ God is my all-sufficient good,
 My portion and my choice ;
 In him my vast desires are filled
 And all my powers rejoice.

“ In vain the world accosts mine ear
 And tempts mine heart anew,
 I cannot buy your bliss so dear,
 Nor part with heaven for you.”

“ There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.”
 “ We will remember thy love more than wine.”

This joy is our wealth, enabling us to make sacrifices of worldly ease and possessions, at the call of duty. Men who brood over their sorrows become terribly selfish. They have little thought for the woes of others. Morose and churlish they do not, cannot, understand, how it can be more blessed to give than to receive. But a joyous, is apt to be a lavish spirit. It takes a pleasure in doing good. It will divide its crust with the famishing, and rise at midnight to comfort the weary. It has always enough for contentment, yea, enough and to spare. It may be poor, but it makes many rich—with a cup of cold water, a kind look, a tear, a prayer—all it has to give. It loves to do good just

in proportion as it is like God. The ever-blessed God is the most bountiful giver in the Universe.

This joy is our energy and efficiency in duty, and a source of our help and success in enterprize. Grief and fear depress a man, and hide from his view all encouragements. There is always a lion in the way. Moses cannot rouse his countrymen in Egypt; they hearkened not to him for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage. The disciples cannot watch with their Lord, but sink into sleep for overmuch sorrow. David says, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, *then* will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." And he resolves, "I will run the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart." Joy disposes a man to action like the bubbling and bounding life of a healthful, happy child. It sees encouragements and finds resources. It is ready for service. It can testify of God's faithfulness and love. It has good success: as when God honoured the praises of his people, and gave Jehoshaphat the victory over the Ammonites—for when he encouraged Judah to believe in the Lord their God, and the singers went out before the army, not playing *dead marches*, but singing, "Praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth forever," so that when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against their enemies and they were smitten.

Finally, this joy is the strength of God's people in their dying hour. It removes the bondage and the fear of death. See,—the timid woman, who has apprehended the parting with beloved friends, and shrunk from the thought of judgment, finds supports and

comforts in the presence of that Friend who sticketh closer than any brother and in the assured hope of entering upon the joy of the Lord forever. The little child, that trembled with vague fear of the cold church-yard and the dread mysteries of the world beyond the grave, is more than consoled with the sweet promises of the Good Shepherd who folds the lambs in his bosom, and expects with sweet hope the call of that dear voice which said, "Suffer the little children and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

"Jesus, the vision of thy face
 Hath overpowering charms;
 Scarce shall I feel death's cold embrace,
 If Christ be in my arms.

"Then while ye hear my heart-strings break
 How sweet my minutes roll;
 A mortal paleness on my cheek,
 But glory in my soul."

Would you then be strong in the faith, useful, beneficent, pure, comforted in life and death, rejoice in the Lord always. So, too, shall you honour your religion and commend it. Of all persons in the world, a Christian is the most obliged and has the best right to be happy. Sulky and sullen tempers only disgust and repel. Cheerfulness is a hymn of praise; and whoso offereth praise glorifieth God. But guard against losing this joy. Sin makes broken bones, and hides God's countenance. Grieve not the Holy Spirit. But follow on to know the Lord, then shall thy goings be as the morning. The path of the just is as the shining light

that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Let the superiority of the Christian's portion be appreciated and sought after. The true Christian is not that moping, melancholy, feeble creature the thoughtless worldling deems him. He has joy, he has strength, both in acting and suffering, while you despond and lie inactive: and he is honouring his Maker and enjoying Him, while you are vainly dreaming of selfish, earthly, sinful pleasure. What is the mirth of fools? "I said of laughter it is mad. There is no peace to the wicked." But how shall we get this true joy? "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom now we have the atonement." Let the Christian always resort to Him. In Him the most sorrowful abject may find comfort. Let the sinner turn from the paths of sin. "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. Why spend ye your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He will *give*—salvation is free in Christ; He will give *rest*—O, the precious repose for the sin-burdened and sin-weary—rest! rest! rest in the bosom of God! joy! joy forever!

Come then—let not conscience make you linger—nor of fitness fondly dream—think not of buying the *gift* of God—of offering a price for the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Come *thus* to the mercy-seat:

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidst me come to thee,
O Lamb of God I come."