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of the
A. W. L.*

A SERMON

Delivered on the 29th December, 1814,

AT THE

DEDICATION

OF THE

NEW SCOTCH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

IN CHARLESTON, S. C.

BY AARON W. LELAND, D. D.

Pastor of said Church.

CHARLESTON, S. C.

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1815.

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THE REV. DR. AARON W. LELAND,

Pastor of the Presbyterian Church of the City of Charleston,

Rev. & Dear Sir,

At a Semi-Annual Meeting of the Corporation of our Church, held on Monday the 2d instant, a Resolution was unanimously adopted, that a Committee should be appointed to present to you the thanks of the Corporation, for the eloquent and impressive manner in which you performed divine service on Thursday the 29th ultimo, at the Dedication of the New Church, and for the excellent Sermon which you then delivered, and to request a copy of it for publication. It is gratifying to our personal feelings, that the Corporation have thought proper to appoint us their organ for this purpose; and we beg leave to present to you their unanimous thanks, in the language of their own resolution, and to express our sincere desire that you will comply with their solicitation to publish a Sermon which we are persuaded will be promotive of the interests of Religion, highly honorable to yourself, and beneficial to our Church.

We are,

With great respect and esteem,

Rev & Dear Sir,

Your most Obt. Servt's.

Charleston, 3d January, 1815.

GEO. MACAULAY,
SAMUEL WILSON,
M. KING.

A SERMON.

2 CHRONICLES, vi. 33.

That all people of the earth may know that this House which I have built is called by thy name.

THESE words were dictated by the Spirit of God, on an occasion similar to that which has assembled us in the divine presence. They form a part of that solemn invocation, uttered by Solomon, when his splendid Temple was dedicated to the service of Jehovah. That was one of the most interesting, impressive scenes, ever presented to the view of mortals. A fabric of surpassing beauty, grandeur and magnificence, erected by the immediate direction of God himself, whose materials, structure and decorations, were of divine appointment, was to be consecrated to the Lord. Designed as the repository of the sacred symbols, the sanctuary where the presence and glory of Omnipotence should be signally manifested, the eyes of the nation were fixed upon it as a rising monument of Jehovah's favor. On its completion, the thousands of Israel assembled to witness its consecration. The Jewish monarch, feeling his allegiance to the King of Kings, not ashamed of the institutions of religion, laid aside the emblems of royalty, and devoutly kneeling before the majesty of Heaven, dedicated this national edifice to the worship and glory of God. He implored that *there* might be fixed the throne of heavenly

mercy; that there the sacrifices of devotion might be accepted; there the offerings of penitence and contrition graciously received; and there the treasures of divine compassion displayed. His holy desires were enlarged: his views extended. He looked down thro' future ages: he saw millions, then unborn, repairing to that Temple, raising the tearful eye of supplication to that sacred altar: the pious, offering the incense of devotion—the penitent, melted in contrition; and for all he invoked the rich displays of grace.

Nor did the royal suppliant forget the benighted heathen. He prayed with peculiar fervency, that when the stranger should address his devotions towards that Temple, his prayers might be heard, his petitions granted. In this particular intercession in behalf of the heathen, he was desirous, that to the surrounding nations might be afforded the most convincing evidence, that the God of Israel was indeed the true God; and that the Jewish Temple was the visible dwelling of the Sovereign of the Universe. He was deeply anxious that the Temple of the true God should be easily distinguishable from those of Idolatry. He was fully aware that an evident distinction could not be made in external appearances. The Heathens had their gods, their altars and shrines. In magnitude and splendor some of their Temples were little inferior to that of Jerusalem: their worshippers were as numerous, their sacrifices as frequent, their rites as solemn. The evidences of the distinction must therefore arise from other sources. Knowing the religious customs of the Heathen he concluded, that in cases of distress or trouble, they might in some instances repair to the

Temple at Jerusalem to offer their supplications, like the Athenians, to the unknown God. And he employs, that the Almighty would hear those prayers, grant the deliverance sought, and thus afford them the most convincing proof, that the religion of the Jews was divine; and that their Temple was indeed the habitation of the living God. This was the point of discrimination between the House of God and the Shrines of Idolatry. The actual agency of omnipotence, the real experience of divine influence, the reception of deliverance from an invisible power; these were the tokens, these the demonstrations, that he whose name was recorded in the Jewish Temple was God indeed.

The same characteristics, my hearers, designate those Fabricks, which, in our days, deserve to be called by the name of Christ. Thus are they distinguished from the Temples of those who know not God aright and obey not the Gospel. The true churches of the Redeemer are not distinguished from others by costly ornaments and mysterious ceremonies, not by crowds of worshippers, nor by severity of penance; but by the manifestations of the divine presence, by the purity and spirituality of the worship, by the experience of divine influence, and by the moral purposes really effected. In visible appearances there is little to distinguish the Sanctuary of truth, from the school of error. The disciples of Confucius are apparently as devout as the worshipers of Emmanuel. The Mosques of Mohamed are thronged with devotees; the sacred rites of the Hindoos are peculiarly solemn; the austerities of the Bramins are incredibly severe. And the system of morals inculcated in many churches, which

have nothing of Christianity but the name is beautiful and excellent. The distinction then must be of a moral nature.

Let us then, on the present solemn occasion, devote our attention,

First—to those qualities which characterise and distinguish the real Temples of Christ; and

Secondly—to the best evidences which can be afforded, that a house of worship is acknowledged and favored by God.

It is indispensably requisite, in order to entitle a House to be called by the name of God, that it be devoted to the publishing, explaining, and defending the truths of revelation. This is the grand design contemplated in the institution. Thither the saints repair to hear, not the opinions of men, but the word of God. To learn, not what theorists have dreamed, but what God has commanded—to know, not what philosophers have invented concerning the divine nature, but what God has revealed of himself—to learn, not what poets have imagined as to man, but what his Creator has declared as to his nature, condition and destiny: and finally they come, not to glean the scattered rays of moral science, which heathen sages have doubtfully obtained, amid the clouds of ignorance and the darkness of error, but to enjoy the full blaze of divine illumination from the effulgent Sun of Righteousness. These are the objects to be accomplished by assembling in the House of God: and these demand that the business there should be to teach and elucidate the oracles of Divine truth.

The wise and good of every age have united in opinion, that nothing was so important and desirable as a revelation from God. The most virtuous, refined and enlightened among the ancients, were deeply sensible of the narrow limits which circumscribed their views—the darkness which involved their enquiries as to the nature and destinies of man, and they earnestly desired instruction from heaven. In the volume of revelation, we enjoy that divine instruction. Christian temples are designed to publish and explain the truths thus revealed. How absurdly impious then is that pride of human reason, which will not stoop to be instructed; but employs those temples, in pursuing the dark inquiries, or teaching the perplexed and doubtful systems of those ancient worthies, who, had they lived under the dispensation of the gospel, would have rejoiced to sit at the feet of Jesus and humbly listen to his word. And how deplorable is that state of moral feeling, which converts the pulpit, designed for the instruction of man in the things of God and eternity, into a mere rostrum, where the public eye is to be gratified by displays of oratory—where the critical ear is to be delighted by a just and harmonious elocution, and where the refined taste is to be pleased by polished style and elegant sentiments! And how pernicious is that prodigality of time, which occupies the hours of public worship, that should be devoted solely to the concerns of the immortal soul, in literature, politicks, or philosophy! The objects to be effected by the duties of the sanctuary are so unutterably momentous, the motives which should impress the mind so solemn, that nothing extrinsic, nothing of

minor consequence, can engross the attention without presumptuous impiety. And surely, to mingle the motives of personal vanity, or the arts of literary ambition with the services of the altar, can be little short of sacrilege.

Upon this subject we are not the advocates of a party, we prescribe no forms, we impose no systems of human invention: we only say, let the House, which is called by God's name, be devoted to the dissemination of those truths which God has revealed. In thus excluding from the sanctuary all vain parade of learning, all the fine flourishes of genius, and the decorations of taste and fancy, we are not the apologists of bigoted ignorance, or illiterate enthusiasm. No, we duly appreciate the vast importance of solid and extensive learning in the ministrations of the altar. Let all the treasures of science be displayed—all the powers of genius marshalled in the cause of truth—all the lights of reason and philosophy reflected upon the sacred mysteries. We wish the doctrines of revelation, corroborated by all external evidence—defended with skill and ability—communicated in a style of purity and elegance—enforced by an able and expressive eloquence. But when learning is introduced for its own sake—when subjects are discussed on account of the embellishments of which they are capable—when talents and knowledge unite their energies, not to beat down the fortress of unbelief, but to overcome an opposing party; not to impress an audience with conviction of the truth, but with admiration of the preacher; then is the holy place prophaned, and the majesty of heaven insulted with mockery and abomination. Thus

we conclude that the great object to which the true House of God is devoted, is to publish, explain and defend the holy volume of inspiration.

But we observe farther, that it is more especially requisite in a Christian Temple, that it be employed in preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The Gospel is the religion of the cross, its truths are the doctrines of the cross, its hopes are the purchase of the cross, and its Temples should ever be devoted to the preaching of the cross.

But we have reason to weep over that sad perversity, which has converted the sacred edifices from their original design, to purposes of human policy, and guilty ambition. Ever since the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom were taken under the fatal patronage of civil government, the institutions of Christianity have been too often used for purposes, not only foreign, but hostile to their true design. In surveying the past and present state of the Christian world, the heart of piety is pained at the record of costly fabricks, called by the name of Christ, reared by princely pride, and designed for national aggrandizement: and of others still more magnificent, erected by the wages of sin, and devoted to the cause of antichrist. And though less atrocious it is not less pernicious to occupy the churches of Christ in teaching lessons of mere morality, and building up a system of self-righteousness upon a sandy foundation. What can be more absurd than to employ Temples called by the name of Christ, in teaching doctrines which he pronounced false; in pointing out a path to heaven which he declared was the road to perdition, and in recommend-

ing a course of religious observances, and external decencies, which he declared more odious, in the sight of God, than open immorality, and would lead to more aggravated condemnation? And how impious to use them in attempting to confute doctrines which Jesus taught, or to prove things unnecessary which he pronounced essential, or in denying that depravity of nature, and that exposedness to wrath, from which he shed his blood to purchase man's deliverance! And how shall we speak of that atrocious sacrilege, the crimson guilt of which stains this Christian land, which employs churches dedicated to the Redeemer, in striving to rend from him the crown of divinity and degrade him to the level of created beings! Surely this conversion of the Temples of Emmanuel into fortresses whence his enemies may assail his throne, is an exploit of wickedness without a parallel.

Thus the very nature of the case evidently requires, that the house of Christian worship should be employed to teach and enforce the peculiar truths of Christianity. In order for this it is manifest that those doctrines, which are vitally important to the gospel, be published with zeal and faithfulness, and maintained with strenuous and persevering efforts. The doctrine of human depravity is to be taught, because men must be convinced of their guilt and danger before they will feel their need of a Saviour, or be persuaded to flee for refuge to the ark of safety. The divinity of Christ is to be maintained as the corner-stone of the gospel, for without it the fabric of Christian doctrines cannot be supported. Deny it and you destroy the infinite atonement, that golden chain which unites the glory of God

with the redemption of man; deny it, and you leave sin triumphant, you extinguish the hope of salvation. If Christ be not God our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain, you are yet in your sins. The necessity of regeneration, by the special influences of the Holy Spirit, consisting in an entire moral transformation, and in the implanting a new principle of holiness, is ever to be inculcated; for except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. And finally, it is never to be disguised or palliated, that those who die impenitent and unholy cannot enter into life, but the wrath of God abideth on them; and they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. These are truths inseparably connected with preaching Jesus Christ and him crucified; therefore, for their inculcation and defence is the Christian Temple especially designed.

But it is indispensable in a true church, not only that the truths of the gospel be maintained, but also that the messages which God addresses to men, through the medium of his word, be delivered with plainness and fidelity. In every thing connected with religion, luke-warmness is criminal, indifference is treachery. Nothing is unimportant which relates to the soul; the destinies of eternity will stamp with everlasting importance the minutest of its interests. All the duties of the house of God should be performed, as under the piercing inspection of Omniscience, with an eye fixed upon the last tribunal, and in full prospect of dissolving nature. Under such impressions the truth will be spoken without respect to persons; the veil will be with-

drawn which conceals their danger from the impenitent, and the tremendous alternative, repentance or perdition, will be placed before the trembling sinner.

By these expressions we mean not to applaud the boisterous rant of the enthusiast, or the frightful vociferations of the fanatic—but rather the earnestness, the impressiveness, the pathos of the great Apostle, who watched for souls as one who must give an account—who knowing the terrors of the Lord, would persuade men to be reconciled to God. This is real, but nevertheless it is according to knowledge. While we carefully guard against extravagance, let us with equal care avoid apathy—While we shrink back from the torrid zone of enthusiasm, let us beware lest we withdraw among the ices of indifference.

zeal

It is a favorite sentiment of modern times, that in the ministrations of the sanctuary, it is only necessary to dwell upon the hopes and promises of the Gospel: to allure by unfolding the charms of holiness, the felicities of virtue, and the bright rewards of piety. But experience has fatally proved, that men cannot be flattered into penitence. The allurements of hope and the entreaties of mercy will never persuade the votary of sin to renounce its gratifications. Go to the man in whose veins there lurks unseen a deadly malady, who yet fancies himself in health; go and see if you can charm away the disorder by recounting the sovereign virtues of a remedy without its application; see too if you can persuade the patient to submit to medical prescriptions, without first disclosing to him his alarming symptoms and the danger which awaits him? So it is necessary to convince men of the atrocity and fatal consequences

of moral guilt, before they are prepared to receive the blessings of the gospel. In a state of pure innocence and holiness, moral beings might perhaps be preserved from pollution and guilt by the voice of love, by the charms of goodness. But the power of depravity is too strong, the evil tendencies of fallen nature too violent, to be thus restrained and overcome. The still and peaceful lake may be encircled by banks of flowers; but it requires a barrier of rocks to restrain the wild waves of the stormy ocean. Thousands have successfully resisted all the winning calls of the gospel, have heard of the love of Jesus with perfect apathy, and pursued a career of sin, amid all the displays of love and goodness, which could melt or move; who afterwards, when they have been made to feel the burden of sin, when their fearful danger and the wrath of Jehovah have been disclosed, have fallen at the feet of sovereign mercy, melted into contrition before the cross, and become the holy disciples of Emmanuel. God has not revealed truths which are improper or unnecessary to be declared; he has not represented his wrath against the ungodly, or the dangers which await them, as more tremendous than the reality. He has threatened nothing which he will not execute; therefore in the holy place where men assemble to hear what God the Lord will speak, the threatenings should go hand in hand with the promises, and the terrors of the law excite a salutary gloom, to be dispelled by the bright hopes of the gospel. Such, we humbly conceive, are some of the important purposes, to which that Temple is devoted, which is truly called by the name of God.

We may now, in the second place, briefly consider some of the evidences, that God does acknowledge and distinguish by his special presence a house which is called by his name. The evidence, which Solomon desired should be afforded to the heathen, that his temple was the habitation of the living God, was, that the prayers offered therein should be heard, and the deliverance sought should be granted. In like manner the best evidence which can be afforded, that a Christian Temple possesses the requisite qualifications, is found in the manifestations of the presence of God, and the actual experience of divine influence, upon the minds of the worshippers.

The doctrine of divine influence, though it meets the scoffs of infidelity and the contempt of worldly wisdom, is still most precious to the believer. He needs no arguments to prove that the Spirit of God does specially operate upon the mind, for his own experience affords resistless demonstration. By this influence, we do not refer to the dreams, or visions, or audible voices, or bodily affections, of deluded fanatics; but to that power, which impresses religious truth upon the mind, which enlightens the darkened understanding, bows the stubborn will, opens the heart to receive conviction and instruction, and renders the means of grace effectual to conversion and salvation.

We mean that power, which accompanied the eye of the Saviour, when he turned and looked upon Peter, and the guilty Apostle was instantly cut to the heart and going out wept bitterly—which softened one thief on the cross into penitence, while the other remained obstinate and impious—which caused three thousand

of Peter's hearers to be pricked in their hearts, while the rest of the multitude exclaimed in mockery, these men are full of new wine; and which renders the same preaching the power of God through faith unto salvation to some, while to others it is a stumbling block and foolishness.

This is the influence which, when experienced in a place of worship, affords a striking proof that God has there recorded his name. This influence is displayed, when the ministrations of the word are attended by the demonstration of the spirit and with power. When a holy awe and sacred reverence are diffused among the worshippers—when the fervors of devotion are enkindled and communicated from heart to heart—when the destinies of eternity seem presented to view—then it is indeed the house of God and the gate of heaven. Under such manifestations of God's special presence, the services of the sanctuary become an antepast of heaven. There, while the mysteries of redemption are unfolded, the soul of the Believer glows with all the ardor of hope. There, while the Love of Jesus is displayed, the contrite heart is filled with the sorrows of guilt, mingled with the joy of deliverance. There, while the triumphs of Redemption are celebrated, the saints, relieved from the burden of sin, attune the choral song of praise to him that loved them and gave himself for them. There, the tempted and the afflicted bending before the mercy-seat, seek and find support and consolation. And there, those who have walked in darkness implore the cheering rays of Zion's Sun, & lo, the light of God's countenance is lifted upon them, and they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Thus a striking proof, that a place of worship is worthily called by the name of God, arises from the actual experience of those spiritual blessings, those special impressions of divine truth, those real effects of the gospel, which God alone can bestow.

There are certain definite and important objects, for which both saints and sinners should assemble in the house of God. Thither the real Christian delights to go, to meet his covenant God—to hold sweet communion with his Saviour—to spread his wants and woes before a throne of mercy—to obtain strength for his combat with sin—to enkindle the flame of love in his heart at the sacred altar—to obtain the rich instructions and encouragements which the word of God imparts, and to anticipate on earth the joys of heaven. When in a place of worship these objects are effected; when the Christian feels a sacred nearness to God, obtains lively impressions of spiritual things, finds his devotions enkindled, his hopes brightened, his consolations increased, his views of truth expanded, he has reason to exclaim with holy Jacob, surely the Lord is in this place.

On the other hand, the motives which should lead the unconverted to the house of worship, are, a desire of religious instruction—a deep sense of their being destitute of an interest in Christ, destitute of real holiness—a hope that their minds may be impressed with eternal realities, and an anxious solicitude that they may be enlightened to see their danger and their remedy while the day of grace continues. They ought to attend upon the means of grace, desiring an awakened attention, a softened heart, a tender conscience,

a deep and solemn conviction of sin, a transformation of nature, and an experience of evangelical repentance and justification. When these wants are supplied—these purposes effected; when the preached word is made quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword; when deep anxiety is awakened in the minds of sinners; when the secure are roused from their slumbers, and discover the infinite sinfulness of their nature, the holiness and justice of God and the wrath to which they are exposed: when many, thus convinced, thus illuminated, thus melted, are brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus; we need not doubt that the church where such effects are produced, is acknowledged by the Saviour, is honored by *his* presence who inhabiteth the praises of his Israel.

Such we anxiously wish, we devoutly pray, may be this House which we this day dedicate to the worship and glory of God. Here may the truths of revelation be declared, maintained, and vindicated, till these walls moulder into ruins. Here may the blessed gospel of Christ, and salvation by his atoning blood, be preached in purity and love to thousands yet unborn. Here may the messages of God be delivered with affectionate zeal and unyielding fidelity; the promises exhibited in all their heavenly beauty, and the threatnings in all their terror. Here may all those doctrines which are essential to salvation be earnestly inculcated and ably defended. The depravity of human nature—the way of salvation through the atonement purchased by the death of Christ—the divinity of the Mediator—the personality and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit—the necessity of spiritual regeneration, saving

faith and vital holiness, to prepare the soul for heaven; these are the pillars which support the gospel system, each indispensable to its perfection; and may these be the glory of this Church, when our children's children shall here worship the God of their fathers.

Here may the eternal God record his name—here establish his mercy-seat; grant his gracious presence, and bestow the rich blessings of his grace. In this sacred place shall the saints present their precious offerings before the Lord—enjoy the communications of divine grace, and grow in the knowledge of their Saviour, and ripen for heavenly bliss. Here may mourners in Zion obtain beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and a garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Here may the tears of grief be wiped away, and the pangs of affliction soothed by heavenly consolation. Here shall the ransomed of the Lord meet around the sacramental table and hold communion with Him who is the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely; here enjoy pre-libations of heaven, learn the songs of paradise, and from hence wing their flight to mansions not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Here also we devoutly hope the triumphs of redemption will be displayed in the conversion of multitudes from darkness to light—from the power of Satan to God. Here may the King of Zion plant his standard; the banners of the cross wave triumphant, and many votaries of the world, many captives of sin, bow to the sceptre of Emmanuel, follow him as the captain of their salvation, and come off conquerors & more than conquerors, through him who loved them and gave himself for them. And when time shall be no more,

may thousands from the bosom of a blissful eternity, look back with rapture to this sanctuary, as the place where first commenced that stream of holy exercises and spiritual life, which increased to a river of joy, and flowing onward issued in a boundless ocean of perfection and blessedness.

To accomplish these purposes has this Church been erected; to these objects is it religiously consecrated; and that it may be signally instrumental in promoting the salvation of men and the glory of Messiah's kingdom, it is devoutly commended to the protecting smiles of Him who directeth all things, according to the council of his own will.

On this occasion it may not be improper to give a brief historical sketch of this Congregation, which has now completed this second Building for religious worship. About the close of the seventeenth century, soon after the first settlement of this City, a religious society was formed, chiefly by persons from Scotland and New-England, who erected a place of religious worship, then called the Presbyterian Meeting. For more than thirty years they continued united, obtaining their Ministers from the Presbyterian establishments in Europe. At length there appeared a disunion of sentiment, upon the subject of ecclesiastical government; the Europeans being zealously attached to the forms and discipline of the Church of Scotland, while the majority preferred the Congregational or Independent system. This difference of opinion terminated in an amicable separation. This took place in 1732; when the Presbyterians, consisting of about twelve families, formed another society, purchased the ground

adjoining this Church, on which they erected a small convenient place of worship, which remains to this day, a monument of their piety and zeal, forming a part of that venerable building, in which we lately worshipped the God of our fathers. They guarded against the evils they had experienced; for in the Titles to the Land it is expressly stipulated, that it is for the use of a Presbyterian Church, according to the forms and discipline of the Church of Scotland, having Ministers ordained in the Presbyterian form, believing in the Westminster confession of faith, and to be converted to no other purpose forever. The names of these patriarchs of our congregation were James Abercrombie, John Allen, Daniel Crawford, John Bee, John Fraser, George Ducaff, and James Paine. Their first Minister was the Rev. Hugh Stewart from Scotland. His place was supplied by the Rev. Messrs. Grant, Kennedy, Lorimore, and Morrison, who successively filled the pastoral office until the year 1763. At that time the congregation had so increased, that a considerable addition was made to the Church, to render it more capacious. The Trustees then were Geo. Marshall, William Woodrup, George Inglis, Dr. John Murray, William Simpson, George Murray, Alexander Rantowle, and James Grindlay. The Church chose for their Pastor the Rev. Dr. Hewat of Edinburgh, who continued in the ministry with them, until the year 1775, when, on account of the revolutionary war, he returned to Europe, and afterwards settled in the Gospel Ministry in London. At the time the Church was dispersed by the war, the Trustees and leading members were Messrs, Robert Philp,

Robert Brisbane, William Glen, Robert Wilson, William Ancrum, Robert Roward, Andrew Marr, Alexander Chisolm, William Wilson, and James Johnston; when 1455 pounds, currency, was the sum annually subscribed for the support of the Minister. After the departure of Dr. Hewat, for several years, the congregation was dispersed and disorganized. The ways of Zion mourned, her courts were desolate. The sanctuary of God was converted to the unholy services of war.

In 1784 the Church was reorganized, at which time Dr. Robert Wilson, Messrs. David Lamb, James Gregorie, John Mitchel, and James O'Hear were the Elders. The Rev. James Graham officiated as Minister until 1788, when the Rev. Mr. James Wilson, a clergyman of the Church of Scotland, then residing in New-York, was called to the Pastoral office, which he held for four years, when ill health compelled him to resign. The corporation then addressed a Letter to the Rev. Drs. Robertson & Blair of Edinburgh, requesting them to choose and send them a clergyman; when the Church had the distinguished felicity to obtain the Rev. Dr. Buist, their late beloved and deeply lamented Pastor, whose eminent talents, impressive eloquence, dignity of character and useful labors, have made impressions upon the minds of this congregation, too deep and tender ever to be effaced. He arrived in Charleston in June, 1793, and was installed in November following. During his ministry the congregation flourished in so great a degree, that two additions were made to the Church, for the accommodation of the worship-

pers. Near the close of his life it was determined to erect a new Church, and considerable progress made in providing funds, when the Church was suddenly called to mourning and lamentation by the sudden removal of their beloved Pastor. After this most afflicting event, the design of building a new Church was suspended. The important vacancy was filled by the Rev. Dr. Buchan from Edinburgh, who was succeeded in 1812 by the present Pastor. Early in the last year the Corporation engaged with united zeal in the erection of this Edifice, which design they have prosecuted, with unwearied diligence, and persevering efforts, to its completion. By the ability and faithfulness of the Master Builders and the several artificers, it has been finished in a most satisfactory manner; and thro' the kind care of Providence no fatal accident has occurred during its erection.

Permit me then, beloved brethren, on this day, so much desired, so auspicious to our congregation, to offer you my sincere congratulations. You have much cause of thankfulness and rejoicing. A review of the origin and progress of your society, must afford you pleasure. But more especially the distinguished prosperity and complete success, which have crowned your efforts in erecting this holy Temple, for yourselves, your children, and your children's children, afford abundant cause of gratitude and joy. To you, venerable fathers and mothers of this congregation, whose whitened locks are a crown of glory, it must afford peculiar satisfaction, that amid all the infirmities of age, you have lived to worship God in these walls; and tho' like the Fathers of Israel, you may weep at the remem-

brance of that ancient sanctuary, where some of you have worshipped for seventy years, and others for three score years, which is hallowed by the most sacred associations, and endeared by every tender recollection; yet let those tears be mingled with joy at the establishment of this second Temple. You may say with good old Simeon, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen thy salvation.

The Elders of this Church must experience a high gratification in the external welfare and temporal prosperity of this congregation, of whose spiritual concerns you have the more immediate direction. To you every thing which relates to this Church, must be deeply interesting. Several of you have held your present offices more than half a century—you assisted in the collection of the Church after the storms of the revolution; and you have remained constant to its interests through affecting vicissitudes of prosperity and affliction, since that time; and your liberality and activity have been eminently distinguished in this important undertaking. From these considerations, you must find, in the solemnities of this day, the most unmingled pleasure.

But while this occasion calls for our gratitude, and excites the most agreeable reflections, it also awakens our tenderest sympathies and opens the avenues of sorrow. We mourn the departure of one* of our brethren, distinguished by his attachment to this congregation, and by his liberality towards the expense of this building, and who as a member of the Building Com-

* Mr. M'Millan Campbell.

mittee was actively engaged in its erection. But he was not spared to see its completion; he has left us to mourn his loss, to remember his worth, and to copy his laudable example. We have likewise to lament the loss of a most valuable youthful member* of the congregation, who has been called away by death since the commencement of this undertaking; and also more recently of another member† of the Church, suddenly removed to eternity. A reflection upon these losses, while it increases our thankfulness that we are spared, will chasten our exultations and cast a salutary shade upon our too sanguine earthly expectations; so that we may rejoice as though we rejoiced not.

Finally, beloved friends of this congregation, this day, while it furnishes cause of joy and thankfulness, presents you with prospects and considerations of a most solemn and affecting nature. God has graciously enabled you to complete this sacred edifice. It will most assuredly prove an everlasting blessing or an everlasting curse to each one of you, as you shall improve or neglect its privileges. Here you will pass the short remainder of your probation, receive the offers of mercy, and enjoy the calls and warnings, the invitations and promises, which are still reserved for you. Here the Holy Spirit will graciously strive with you; and you will either cherish his influences to your salvation, or resist them, till grieved by your perversity, he will give you up to a fatal delusion. Here you will join in the songs of Zion; and either praise the Lord in sincerity, or impiously mock him with solemn sounds

* Mr. James Wilson. † Mr. William Millar.

upon a thoughtless tongue. Here many of you will surround the sacramental table, and partake of the memorials of a Saviour's dying love; either to your spiritual nourishment and consolation, or by communicating unworthily, you will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. And here the tremendous question is to be unalterably decided, whether you are to become holy, love God, and enjoy his presence forever; or to remain the enemies of holiness, the enemies of God, and the objects of his everlasting displeasure. If the means of grace, which you will here enjoy, do not prove a savor of life unto life, they will of death unto death: if they do not melt you into love and obedience, they will petrify you in impenitency. Your moral feelings are here to be formed for immortality; and you will here be ripened for glory or fitted for destruction. The space of probation, allotted to each of us, will soon close: our means of grace be numbered and finished; and we be summoned before the judgment seat, to render an account for all our gospel privileges: And may God, by the influences of his Holy Spirit, give such efficacy to the religious instructions and services of this earthly sanctuary, that we may be prepared for the purer enjoyments, and more exalted worship, of the celestial temples. *Amen.*