

**DISCOURSE DELIVERED AT THE
DEDICATION OF THE FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE
CITY OF CINCINNATI, SEPTEMBER
21ST. A. D. 1851**

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Discourse Delivered at the Dedication of the First Presbyterian Church in the City of Cincinnati,
September 21st. A. D. 1851 by Samuel R. Wilson

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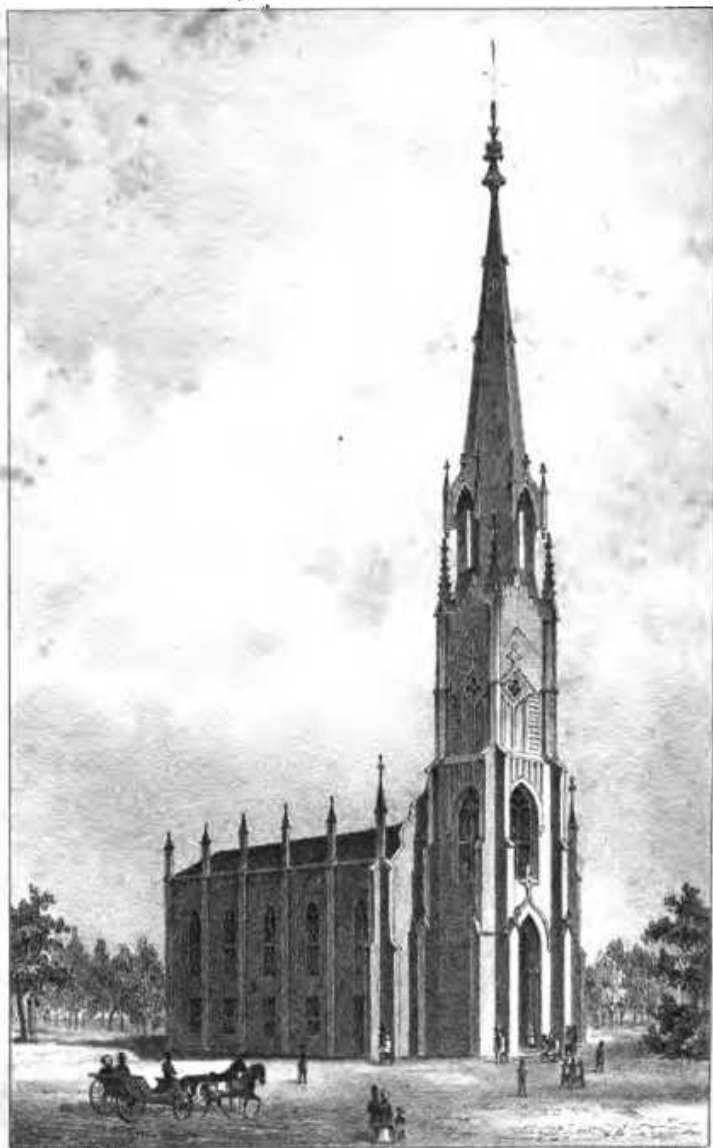
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SAMUEL R. WILSON

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FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
Cincinnati.

• DISCOURSE

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September 21st. A. D. 1851.

BY SAMUEL R. WILSON, PASTOR.

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DISCOURSE.

PSALM LXXXVII. 1-3.—“HIS FOUNDATION IS IN THE HOLY MOUNTAINS. THE LORD LOVETH THE GATES OF ZION MORE THAN ALL THE DWELLINGS OF JACOB. GLORIOUS THINGS ARE SPOKEN OF THEE, O CITY OF GOD. SELAH.”

We are met to-day under circumstances of no ordinary interest. God has accomplished for us the desire of our hearts. We have been permitted to build this house to his name. He has heard our prayers, he has prospered the work of our hands upon us, and now we are all here before him, to present as a thank-offering that which our hands have wrought, and ourselves anew to devote as living sacrifices to his service. It is a season for rejoicing, and methinks each heart, bounding with joy at these tokens of divine favor, is ready to cry out responsive to the holy singer in Israel, “The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.” “We will go into his tabernacles; we will worship at his footstool.” “Praise ye the Lord, Praise ye the name of the Lord; praise ye him, O ye servants of the Lord. Ye that stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God, Praise the Lord; for the Lord is good; sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant.”

Occasions like the present have always been reckoned as memorable in the church, exciting the thankfulness of the people of God, and calling forth special expressions of joy. When David and all Israel brought the ark of the covenant up from Kirjath-jearim, they accompanied it with manifestations of heartfelt exultation, “playing before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals and with trumpets.” And again, when that work, so happily begun but so suddenly interrupted by the fatal consequences of

Uzzah's rashness, was perfected, and they carried the ark from the house of Obed-Edom to its resting place in Jerusalem, the happy event was celebrated in fitting manner, and the delighted feelings of Israel found utterance in the words of that magnificent Psalm which David then first delivered into the hands of Asaph and his brethren, to be sung to the sound of cornet and harps, and which opens with a call to thanksgiving—"Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works. Glory ye in his holy name; let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord." When David had collected materials for building, beautifying and enriching the temple, "Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord; and David the King also rejoiced with great joy." When the first Temple was finished, Solomon consecrated it to the service of Jehovah in the presence of an exulting nation, with the most august ceremonies that were ever witnessed in the church on earth. And when, after much toil, and protracted delay, occasioned partly by the apathy of the people and partly by the opposition of enemies, the second temple was at last completed through the zeal of the great Zerubabel, the laying of the cap-stone was hailed with loud acclaim by the rejoicing church, shouting in praise of God's mercy, GRACE! GRACE! UNTO IT!!

The people of God have always taken pleasure in his worship, and in the places where that worship has been publicly celebrated. To satisfy yourselves of this fact, you have but to run your eye over the records of sacred history, for the Bible is full of evidence upon this point. Or if you think this is the testimony of partial witnesses, open the volumes of those secular writers whose credibility is esteemed by many, all the greater in proportion as they evince an antipathy to the faith and worship inculcated in the Bible.

Nay, I need not send you to the history of former days to find evidence that the truly pious love the house of God; the voices of ten thousand witnesses may be heard this day ascending toward the heaven of heavens, from places where prayer is wont to be made in every valley and upon every mountain, in each city and hamlet throughout our land; and these thousands of thousands are singing in sweet accord with the music of heaven, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem! Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together; Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord: Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee."

This delight in the public ordinances of worship is a characteristic of true piety. It is a test, and not the least important test, of the genuineness of our love to God. It is one of those evidences which lie patent to the regenerate and unregenerate alike, by which the validity of a Christian profession may be ascertained. A man may go to church as a matter of form or of fashion, and his presence there will in all probability be signalized by stupidity or coldness, or perchance something worse. It is as like to happen now to the ministers of religion and the solemn services of the sanctuary, as God testifies against the people in the days of Ezekiel, "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo! thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words but they do them not." Eloquence may be as attractive in the pulpit as elsewhere. Learned disquisitions, metaphysical disputes, the speculations of philosophy, and well-composed lectures on history or ethics, may

draw men as readily to the church as to the forum or the academy. And it is not an infrequent occurrence that men have mistaken the pleasure derived from an intellectual entertainment furnished by the preacher, for delight in the sanctuary and its heavenly provisions. But a little reflection upon the workings of their own minds, should serve to discover to such persons the deception they are practising upon themselves. Take away the tongue of the eloquent, and the novelties of the learned, and how vapid the simple truth "as it is in Jesus" becomes to their taste! Let even an Apostle Paul preach Jesus and the resurrection, not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, and how quickly are such attendants upon the house of God disgusted with the weakness of his bodily presence, and the harshness of his contemptible speech!

It is the *renewed* heart alone that loves the assemblies of the saints, because there are gathered the friends and followers of Christ, and there the great God of heaven especially appears in power and in glory. The Christian eye can admire the beauties of art as well as other men; his ear can as readily be charmed with the melody of sweet sounds; his piety renders him none the less capable of deriving pleasure from the efforts of genius or learning. But he is not drawn to the house of God by these attractions. The charms of music, of architecture, of eloquence, and of learning, may all be wanting, and still he will love the place where prayer is wont to be made. It will be the greatest drawback upon his happiness to which he can be subjected, if he be kept from the sanctuary. He languishes for spiritual refreshment, and his fainting soul cries out, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts?" "As the hart panteth for the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"

This attachment of godly men to the public worship of