

**A SERMON PREACHED IN  
COMMEMORATION OF THE FOUNDERS  
OF THE NAHANT CHURCH: AT THE  
DEDICATION OF A TABLET ERECTED TO  
THEIR MEMORY, JULY 22, 1877**

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A sermon preached in commemoration of the founders of the Nahant Church: at the dedication of a tablet erected to their memory, July 22, 1877 by Andrew P. Peabody

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**ANDREW P. PEABODY**

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THE TABLET.

*In Memory of*

WILLIAM H. ELIOT,	THOMAS H. PERKINS,	DAVID SEARS,
WILLIAM PRESBITT,	FREDERICK TUDOR,	PYER C. BROOKS,
JONATHAN PHILLIPS,	WILLIAM APPLETON,	C. COOLIDGE,
NATHANIEL P. RUSSELL,	SAMUEL A. ELIOT,	WILLIAM H. PRESBUTT,
CHARLES BRADDOCK,	SAMUEL HAMMOND,	EDWARD H. ROBBINS,

WHO FOUNDED THIS CHURCH,

WHERE THEY AND THEIR SUCCESSORS, THOUGH OF  
DIFFERENT CREEDS, MIGHT UNITE IN THE WORSHIP OF

GOD.

A. D. 1831.

# A SERMON

PREACHED IN COMMEMORATION OF THE

106231

FOUNDERS OF THE NAHANT CHURCH,

AT THE

DEDICATION OF A TABLET ERECTED TO  
THEIR MEMORY, JULY 22, 1877.

By ANDREW P. PEABODY, D.D.



CAMBRIDGE:

PRESS OF JOHN WILSON AND SON.

1877.

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## S E R M O N .

ZECCHARIAH 1. 5: "Your fathers, where are they?"

IN heaven, we trust; yet none the less here. Here, we have a right to feel, in the most literal sense. We cannot believe that there is any impassable barrier between the two worlds, nor can they be unmindful of earthly homes and kindred, or of places hallowed by sacred memories of worship, self-consecration, and Christian communion; and if there are meeting-places for those who have passed on and those who stay here, must not this distinction belong pre-eminently to the presence-chamber of Him in whom the dead live, and in whom he that believeth shall never die?

It is not, however, of this presence that I would now speak; but of the reappearance of the fathers in the children. The persistence in the same family, even for centuries, of peculiarities of feature, form, gait, and manner, is a matter of familiar observation; and there are here to-day not a few whose faces would be instantly recognized by one who had known their fathers or their grandfathers. Equally enduring is the heritage of mind and character, — nay, more enduring, more surely transmissible; inasmuch as constitutional tendencies are almost inevitably confirmed by precept, example, and influence. You who inherit the names on yonder memorial tablet are living photographs of the founders of this church; and were the likenesses debased,

had the photographs lapsed into caricatures, no tablet or inscription could preserve in honored remembrance those whose children failed to do them honor.

It is often said that hereditary distinctions have no place in a republic. So far from this, they are made only the more prominent and emphatic by the absence of transmitted title or prerogative,—with one important difference, however, that in the Old World the founders of families have often been ennobled for causes which implied no merit, and, in bad reigns, for complicity with royal usurpations, vices, or crimes; while in New England neither mere position, nor mere office, nor vulgar wealth, nor even splendid ability if combined with profligacy, can bequeath a name which posterity will be proud to own. Inherited qualities are the armorial bearings that here take the place of peerage and knighthood.

Hereditary aristocracy is of Divine right and ordinance. The earliest vestige of it is in the law given on Mount Sinai, which—while declaring the third and fourth generations heirs of ancestral guilt—promises a happy succession, without limit of time, for thousands of generations (so the words mean), to those who love God and keep his commandments.

Nowhere has been witnessed such a verification of this promise as in the twin colonies that formed the province, and afterward the State, of Massachusetts. The pioneer settlers in both Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay were the thrice winnowed wheat left on God's threshing-floor,—men who had passed through a series of trials which none could survive but those of well-balanced intellect, indomitable will, sturdy conscience, and impregnable faith. Their faults were those of their age,—some of them in a less exaggerated form than prevailed in the mother-land; their nobler traits bore the express image and superscription of Him for whose sake



they counted all earthly things as nought. In many of the households of magistrates, elders, and ministers, the light has never paled. In every succeeding generation, they have furnished for Church and State men of pre-eminent integrity, purity, and piety. Not a few of these names are still borne with distinguished honor, and have been transmitted to a numerous progeny without a stain; and where the Puritan type of character yet lingers, with its stern uprightness, its religious loyalty, its disinterested patriotism, it is identified in numerous instances with the very names that were its synonymes in the time of Bradford, Endecott, and Winthrop.

Some of the founders of this church were lineal descendants of these fathers of New England; and every one of them, I believe, was of kindred parentage and ancestry.

William Havard Eliot, foremost on the list, prepared the plans for the church, obtained the subscriptions, and officiated as secretary at the first meeting of the proprietors; but died before the building was completed. He was conspicuous equally for private virtues, for public spirit, and for refined and elevated tastes. No man had a dearer place in the esteem of those who knew him, or had more entirely the respect and confidence of the community. In the service of religion, he is to be commemorated as a leader in the reform of church music, which, under his guidance, rose from a tumultuous concourse of unskilled voices into a sacred art. His memory is still fondly cherished; and there were those who felt, when he passed away, that he had hardly left his equal.

His brother, Samuel Atkins Eliot, was for many years second to no fellow-citizen in enterprise and public service, as chief magistrate of his native city, as her representative in Congress, as a liberal benefactor and a judicious manager of various philanthropic institutions, and as Treasurer

of the University, — a man of signal integrity, purity, and loftiness of character, of firm religious faith, and of a life which, in its varied fortunes, illustrated alike the strength and the tenderness, the strenuous activity and the trustful resignation, that mark the faithful follower of the All-Perfect.

William Prescott was long regarded as at the head of the legal profession in this State, and twice declined a seat on the Supreme Bench. At the same time, he was a man of large and varied culture; and his fame as a lawyer hardly transcended his reputation as a scholar. To these endowments were added the still more excellent gifts of those traits which, in their due proportion and harmonious blending, make up that highest style of man, — the Christian gentleman.

Of his son, William Hickling Prescott, — who has given his name to the world in works which cannot be superseded, and therefore cannot die, — there remain in the inner circle precious memories of genial friendships, warm affections, kindly services, and a pure, graceful, beautiful life, on which never rested a shadow save the momentary shadow of death.

Jonathan Phillips was one of the many in his generation who regarded wealth as but a stewardship from God, — a relief-fund for need and suffering, a movement-fund for every enterprise that has human good in view. He was known, also, as familiar with the best thought, and associated with the profoundest thinkers, of his time, and as equally a diligent student of the records of the Christian revelation, and a loving disciple of Him who went about doing good.

Nathaniel Pope Russell, the father of your present treasurer, preceded him in that office, and held for many years of gratuitous and faithful service a like trust for the Massachusetts General Hospital, — a post of singularly responsible

and arduous duty, — for the West Church in Boston, and for the Bunker-Hill Monument Association from its formation till his death. The accumulation of these offices bears witness to the abounding and implicit confidence reposed in his fidelity and discretion, and, at the same time; to his unselfishness and public spirit in so large a sacrifice of time and ease to the higher interests of the community.

Of Charles Bradbury I know little, except that he was a man of unblemished reputation, and held in high esteem by his associates.

Thomas Handasyd Perkins is remembered as the merchant-prince of his time, for many years surpassing any other man in New England, if not in the United States, in the extent of his operations, — a man of masterly ability in his profession, of a mind enriched alike by reading and by travel, of keen insight into character, and of almost prophetic foresight as to events in the mercantile and political world. With unswerving rectitude and a high sense of honor, he united a generosity commensurate with his ability; and our noble Institution for the Blind, bearing his name, owes its existence to his liberal endowment. He has left his record, not only in this and other forms of public charity, but equally in the successful career of not a few whom he educated as merchants, or aided in their entrance on a business life, or tided over hazardous straits in those seasons of trial which checker the history of the financial world.

Frederick Tudor, one of the earliest residents, was one of the chief benefactors of Nahant; and much of the verdure that crowns the once barren peninsula is the surviving memorial of his laborious enterprise. A man of liberal culture, of large mental scope, of strenuous purpose, and indefatigable perseverance, he made it his life-work to actualize what was deemed impracticable, and to realize what seemed impossible.