

**MEMORIAL ADDRESS DELIVERED
BEFORE THE SECOND
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AND
SOCIETY CINCINNATI, APRIL 28,
1872**

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Memorial Address Delivered Before the Second Presbyterian Church and Society Cincinnati,
April 28, 1872 by Nathaniel Wright

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NATHANIEL WRIGHT

**MEMORIAL ADDRESS DELIVERED
BEFORE THE SECOND
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CINCINNATI, APRIL 28, 1872**

The Church edifice of "THE SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AND SOCIETY OF CINCINNATI," on Fourth Street, having been sold, the purchaser to take possession on the first of May, the last Religious Services of the Society in the Church were held on Sunday evening, April 28, 1872. The services commenced with the usual exercises of the day, singing, and prayer by the Pastor, followed by a Memorial Address, by NATHANIEL WRIGHT, Senior Elder of the Church.

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ADDRESS.

It is useful in human life occasionally to pause and review the past. Experience is a wise teacher. Not only the difficulties and successes, the mistakes and the achievements of *ourselves*, but also of those who have gone before us, are lessons to be studied for our own good. Now and then some crisis in affairs, some transition from old scenes to new, seem to call upon us especially for such review. The benefits of it are not merely the instruction it may impart. But more than this, it serves to keep alive in our hearts our sympathy with our Fathers—with those who have gone before us—to bind together the past and the present generations in bonds of perpetual love.

We are about to leave this house in which we have worshiped so long, and to occupy another. To many of us the associations of the place are touching and strong—to all of us they are interesting. Here, for forty-two years, from week to week, we have listened to the truths of God, seeking to train us for duty and for heaven; here, from time to time, we have met our Redeemer at his board, to quicken our remembrance of him and our love; here, some of us have first felt

the love of Jesus and professed his name before men ; here, our children have been baptized and grown up with us in the worship of the Most High ; here, in the Sunday-schools so many have been trained in the paths of piety ; here, we have so often met the kind, familiar faces of each other, and felt the powerful sympathy of social devotion. But all material things of earth must pass away. Their uses are temporary, and we must learn to part with them cheerfully. "Set not your affections on them," says the apostle.

But the *associations* of the place and its history are not to be parted with. They are to be cherished as a part of the life of the church, to be carried with it to its new abode and be remembered perpetually. It has, therefore, been thought proper, that, before leaving the house, we should spend an hour together in reviewing its past ; that when we bid farewell to the building, we may take with us all the influences for good associated with it. The speaker has been selected for this service by reason of his long connection with the society, and he begs your indulgence and your patience ; for I do not feel like attempting a formal, dignified address—rhetorical display "plays round the head, but comes not to the heart." I would speak to you, my brethren and friends, in the free, familiar way of a brother in a family circle. I would aid you in keeping in memory the incidents, the persons, the labors, the feelings of the church and the dealings of God with us ; in a word, all those associations which constitute the personal

identity of a church, which make it seem the same after all its members have changed.

There is an incident in the history of the Hebrews which illustrates this idea, and shows the power of these memories of the past. The Israelites had been released from centuries of bondage in Egypt, had spent forty years of wandering life in the wilderness, had reached the banks of the Jordan, across which lay their permanent home—the home in which they and their children, from generation to generation, were to be trained in the service of God.

At this juncture, Moses, the man of God, that great and good man, the noblest character in all human history—who can think of him without excitement—

“ This was the truest warrior
That ever buckled sword ;
This the most gifted poet
That ever breathed a word ;
And never earth’s philosopher
Traced, with his golden pen,
On the deathless page, truths half so sage
As he wrote down for men.”

Moses, I say, makes to the nation his parting address. *He* was not allowed to pass over the Jordan. God had appointed his unknown grave in a vale among the mountains of Moab. This address is the book of Deuteronomy, strictly a memorial address, recalling to mind the events of their past history and the dealings of God with them—so touching in sympathy for the people he had led so long and loved so well, though

they had grieved him so sorely. These memories of the past, so woven into the hearts of that people, have preserved their national identity for more than three thousand years.

To refer to such wonderful history in illustration of the humble affairs of one little church, may seem ostentatious. But is it really so? Is not the mission of the Christian church a higher and a nobler service than even that of the Jews? *Their* mission was to keep alive upon earth the knowledge of the true God; but it was confined to their own nation. *Ours* is, to spread the light of the glorious gospel of the Son of God over all the world. *Their* history, with its awful demonstrations of Almighty power, its earthquakes, and thunders, and pestilence, was terrible to the human senses. *Ours* is the quiet and gentle influence of kindness and love—the silent dew, the mild sunshine, so blessing all the earth—a power surpassing all other among men, for it comes down from heaven and God is Love. “Not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord.” Surely such service is worthy all our efforts. It is in this service, like the Jews of old, that we cherish these memories of the past among ourselves.

I propose to speak first of the secular affairs of the society; then of the church proper and its doings, its members and their social influences.

The first records of the society are January 29, 1816, though its organization was not authoritatively settled till 1817. It originated virtually in a small colony from the first Presbyterian Church of the city. If there

was anything of the workings of imperfect human nature on either side in that origin, it was no marvel upon earth. They were pious and devoted people. If we can esteem and love only those who are perfect, where in this world shall we find anybody to love? Nay, where shall we find anybody to love us?

They began few in number and a feeble society. They worshiped for some two years in such rooms as they could find about the city, in private houses, in school-rooms and the like. In an application to the Presbytery for a minister to supply them, they offer the sum of \$550 per annum. In 1817 or 1818 they erected a small frame building on the east side of Walnut street, a little north of Fifth, where they continued to worship for about twelve years. The erection of this humble building cost them not a little of trouble and anxiety. One of those mothers in Israel used to relate that at one time they were stopped in the work for want of lumber; they had not been able to lay it in beforehand, and there was none in the city, and none expected.

They had a prayer-meeting at her house, and, among other things, prayed earnestly that God would help them along with the work. Next morning some of the members happening to be at the river, saw a raft of lumber afloat which the men aboard could not land for want of help. So they hurried out, helped them ashore, and in return got a supply of lumber very cheap, and thanked God for it. The architect of the court-house had a lot of window-sash, which, through some mistake,