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MANUAL,

FOR THE

USE OF THE MEMBERS

OF THE

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

CHARLESTON, S. C.

PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE CHURCH,

BY THE

REV. THOMAS SMYTH,

Pastor.

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TO THE MEMORY
OF
THE ORIGINAL FOUNDERS
Of This Church:
AND TO
ITS PRESENT AND FUTURE MEMBERS,
IS
THIS WORK
RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED.

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P R E F A C E .

THIS Publication, it is hoped, will prove useful to the members of the Second Presbyterian Church and congregation. It will do so, by imparting all that information which is so desirable to those who connect themselves with any society. The origin, history, and progress of the church, is here disclosed; its present condition delineated; its rules and regulations declared; its officers, elders and members published. It will do so, by giving form and character to the church; by attaching to its history and doings, their reasonable importance; and thus making it an object of greater interest and regard.

It will do so, by treasuring up, for future generations, the correct history of the present and the past,—ere time has rolled its oblivious wave over the transactions of by-gone

It will do so, by constituting a bond of union among the members of the church—making them acquainted with each other, and with all that is done in the church; and thus promoting union, harmony, and brotherly love.

In olden times, “they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it.” The great obstacles to a personal acquaintance, and familiar intercourse among Christians, in a city like this, are, their wide dispersion, the continual change in their places of residence, and the consequent difficulty of ascertaining where they reside, from year to year. The following manual will obviate these difficulties. Every member of the church may be furnished with it; and it is hoped, will feel the obligation of cultivating that spirit of mutual intercourse, which has, in former years, been so productive of good to this people. “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.” “Hereby know we, that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” “Thereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one towards another.”

And if the directions given in the introduc-

tory discourses, and in the conclusion of the volume, are in any good degree followed, will they not very powerfully contribute to the advancement of holy living, and thus prepare for holy dying?

Let every member of the church and congregation, put themselves in immediate possession of this little volume. Let them read it at least once a year. Let them endeavour to reduce its rules to practice, and to act upon its suggestions. Let them study the government of the church—become acquainted with its nature and design—co-operate in the prosecution of all its plans—manifest an affectionate interest in all its members, the poor as well as the rich,—and then will she arise and shine, the glory of the Lord being risen upon her; she will lengthen her cords and strengthen her stakes; and the Lord will add to her continually such as shall be saved.

N. B. Blank space is left, for filling up, from time to time, so as to render this manual of continued utility.

THE MORAL INFLUENCE OF A CHURCH

A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED

ON THE

DEDICATION

OF THE

NEW LECTURE-ROOM .

OF THE

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

CHARLESTON, S. C.

March 19th, 1837.

BY THE REV. THOMAS SMYTH,

PASTOR.

munity than that of a more splendid building, devoted to other purposes; and therefore more truly patriotic. Not only are they ornaments, without which any city or village looks bare and deserted ; without which any scene, however otherwise beautiful, wants its sweetest charm ; and without which no poet can throw over his delineations of nature, the perfection of loveliness ; they are fountains also of moral influence. They have a tongue and an utterance given to them, which speak aloud in behalf of the best interests of man, and of society. This will appear, if we consider their moral, their use, and their end.

I. By the moral of churches, we mean the lessons they are adapted to teach. They are symbols. By their natural properties and appearance, they represent moral truths. They are emblematic of things invisible and spiritual. They are not dumb shows, but significant, and pregnant with the most improving reflections. Who can look upon the heavens, and not hear them saying, as they shine, " The hand that made us is divine ?" Who can gaze on nature, without being taught lessons concerning nature's God ? And no more can the eye rest thoughtfully upon a temple of grace without having correspondent emotions enkindled in the heart.

Man is occupied in making provision for the senses, in procuring food for his craving appetites, and in keeping at a distance the gaunt forms of penury, nakedness and famine. He is too apt, therefore, to become sensual ; to think only of what pertains to the senses ; to enjoy only what depends upon the senses ; and to be devoted only to their gratification. These sacred buildings, interspersed *along his path*, teach him that he has a higher nature, of

which the senses are the servants ; a nobler being, to which these are made subservient. His eye is thus inverted from the outward to the inward ; from the physical to that thinking principle through which it lives and has its being. And thus do they serve as mirrors, set up in the midst of a community, in which are reflected back upon each man's heart the lineaments of his spiritual character; where he can read his true dignity, and learn his just importance.

Man is circumscribed in his view, by earth and earthly scenes. These form his horizon. He sees not beyond. He rises not above. All his movements are on this level. All his plans revolve around this centre. These, however, point him to the skies. They are golden ladders, by which in spirit he can ascend. Heaven is a glorious temple ; and these are miniature representations of the heavenly temple. In them heaven descends to earth, and lifts the soul from earth to heaven. They lend us wings. They enable us to fly. They guide us in our flight, and give us visions of a higher, purer, and better world. While fog and vapour may hang upon the city, alas, too significant of that darkness which envelopes the minds of its inhabitants, these assure us that in that upper sanctuary, all is brightness and unclouded sunshine.

Man is swallowed up in the present. It is to him all-engrossing. For it alone he is solicitous. A veil hangs between it and the future. The incessant claims of ever-present interest leave him no wish to penetrate the gloom. These direct him to the future. They are links of eternity, by which he is bound to it, and made to feel an interest in it. Religion was the inventor, and has ever been the patron of architecture, and her first efforts were de-

voted to the religious interests of man. In his solemn moments, when he realizes eternity, man erects these monuments, that in the busy turmoil of life he may be brought to recollection.

Man is so much left to his own sway, and to his own self-government, untrammelled and unguided, as to need much a friendly monitor. For who can bear rule, and keep under his own spirit; who can walk in a path of unfettered freedom, and subjugate as he ought his own passions? Do we not see man becoming more obstinate, than the mule; more unreasonable, than irrational animals; and more violent, than the mountain torrent. We like therefore, to see these temples of piety rising among the scenes of business, and lifting their heads among the masts of commerce. They are constant monitors. They speak powerfully to man's heart. And yet they are silent, and never offend by their officious intermeddling. They thus serve to keep the proper balance in man's spirit, that in his attention to this world he may not forget another, and that in the exercise of authority he may remember his own responsibility to a higher tribunal.

Man too, in his contact with the selfishness, craftiness, and disappointments of the world, is constantly harassed and perplexed. And do these not help to soothe his irritated feelings, to calm the troubled spirit, to bring him to recollection, and to restore him to himself? In the midst of warring elements, and the principles of discord, these arise like temples of peace, where the waves of passion are stayed; they are the beacon torch in the storms of ocean, throwing light upon the path of danger.

In the successful pursuit of worldly occupation, and the

advantages and outward privileges connected with the possession of this world's goods, man is insensibly led to cherish a spirit of pride, and of fancied superiority. He is ready to think, that there are, not only the accidental distinctions among men, arising from the contingent events of life, but essential varieties and grades. Here, however, the spirit of pride is crushed; the high imaginations are brought down, and the more becoming spirit of humility and kindness fostered. Here the essential equality of all men in the judgment of heaven, their common participation in a common nature, their equal destinies, and the impartiality of God, who regardeth not the persons of men, are most forcibly inculcated.

While each individual in a community is pursuing his own interest, with all the ardour of his soul, the spirit of society is insensibly lost, in a selfish individuality. The community is resolved into its fragments, and the public good lost in private welfare. Here is a bond of union. Here selfishness is frowned down. Here man is made to feel his relation to his fellow man; to consider all his brethren; to feel that their happiness is his; and to live not for himself, but for the whole.

And finally, from all these causes, men are too strongly inclined to forget God; to neglect his reasonable claims; and to imagine that he sits far removed on the throne of the universe, an indifferent or unconscious spectator of their conduct. But by the presence of these buildings, set apart to God, this spirit of scepticism is, as it were, visibly confuted. By the appeal they make, even to the senses, is man reminded that there is a God who judgeth in the

earth; that though in heaven, he is also on earth; and that his eyes behold the evil and the good.

If such then, are the lessons which they teach, such the moral they impress upon the heart, what is the value and importance of churches to society? If they thus dignify human nature, if they thus adorn society, if they are thus a constant and living monument to men, preaching, even when they are closed, how great is the privilege of assisting in their erection and preservation. To make them in these respects as impressive as they might be, with what taste should they be formed, and with what care should they be perpetuated. The silent, unspeaking influence, to which I have adverted, has, I have no doubt gradually subdued the irreligious aversion of many, and led them into those paths where they have afterwards found peace and joy.

II. Such is the effect which the existence of churches in a community may be reasonably expected to have, at least in some degree, upon all its members. This, however, is but the reflection of that radiance which they cast upon those who truly improve and enjoy them. We are therefore led to consider their use. They are not made to point a moral or suggest a lesson, however important this may be. They are dedicated to man's higher nature, to that by which he is related to God, to the spiritual world and to eternity. They are dedicated to the worship of the Supreme Being, a capacity for which, is man's chief distinction and glory, allying him to higher orders of intelligences, and qualifying him for the occupations of heaven. They call man off from the service of the body, of the world, of time, of all idols, and all false sources of expected happiness—to

worship Him who is the true and very God. They turn him away from inanimate creation to the living source of all creation. They direct him from the unsatisfying nature of all things earthly to the all-sufficient fountain of all goodness. Here we worship God, do him homage, and give him the reverence due unto his name. But here we worship him in that peculiar and most attractive character of FATHER, cherishing towards us the disposition, shewing towards us the kindness, the pity, the sympathy, and the forbearance, and exercising over us the authority of a Father. As our Father, he imparted to man his own likeness, designed him for his glory and enjoyment, and destined him to immortality. As our Father, he still looks down with pity upon his rebellious and ungrateful children; and has so loved them, as to provide redemption for them, restoration to him, and reunion with him. We here then, worship him not only as God the Father, but as God the Son, Immanuel God with us, God manifest in the flesh, Christ risen in glory, Jesus the ever living friend of the lost and the wretched. This house is dedicated, not only to the worship of God as Father, but God as Son, and God as Holy Ghost; and yet God as ONE GOD, besides whom, in this mystery of his being, in this glory of his nature, in this revelation of his infinite and inconceivable mercy, there is, there can be, none else. By worshipping this God here, in spirit and in truth, by hearing his commands, obeying his precepts, confiding in his promises, accepting his overtures, and doing his will, we are justified, sanctified, glorified, and completely redeemed from the curse of sin, and the ruins of the fall; made again partakers of the divine nature, and heirs of glory, heaven, and immortality.

III. But to this, necessarily brief, allusion to the use to which churches are devoted, let us add as brief a consideration of their end; and our view of their nature, value and importance will be completed.

Every church may be regarded as a true oracle,—a place where answers are given to the inquiries of his people, by that God who is here worshipped. Here God communicates his revelations and messages. Here he makes known his decisions, and announces his will. It is the house of prayer. It is the christian's oratory. It is God's presence chamber; the out-court of his temple, where he meets his people, and hears their prayer and their supplication which they make before him. He hallows the house thus built for him, "puts his name there for ever, where his eyes shall be open, and his ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place." "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!" They are pledges of Heaven's mindfulness and mercy. They are pyramids in the desert. Here God reveals himself as a sun and a shield, giving grace and glory, and withholding no good thing from them that walk uprightly. Here God waters those who have been planted in the house of the Lord, and makes them flourish in the courts of our God. Here God is found of those who seek him; he gives to those who ask of him; he opens his love to those who knock at this gate of promise. Here God hears the sighing of the needy, and the groans of the penitent, and gives his Holy Spirit to them that ask it. We dedicate this house to prayer. Come up here to meet your God. And if "thou shalt seek the Lord thy God thou shalt find him; if thou seek him with all thy heart and soul. Now set your

heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God. Trust in him at all times, ye people ; pour out your heart before him. The Lord is nigh them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."

Every church is also an asylum. It is a place of security and retreat, where, as criminals and debtors we may find shelter from justice. "A glorious high throne is the place of our sanctuary," not a throne of justice and judgment, but a throne of grace. Here God is enthroned in mercy. Here he displays his bow of love in the clouds of his anger. In the midst of his wrath against sin, and his indignation against transgressors, he remembers mercy. Here the weary may find rest, and the persecuted succour, the weak be strengthened and the downcast revived. Here there is a refuge from every storm and a shelter from every blast, and grace to help in every time of need. Here God binds up the broken hearted, gives "liberty to the captive, beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Here he appears as "the Father of lights from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift;" as the good physician who has balm for every wound, and healing for every sickness; the tender shepherd who calls after every wandering sheep, and brings it back in gentleness to the fold of mercy. This house is dedicated as a christian oracle, and as a christian asylum. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord." Yea, even the fearful sparrow and the timid swallow, fancy they have found a secure habitation, where they may lay their young when they have built a nest on thine altars, O Lord of Hosts. Let us then, come boldly unto this throne of

grace, that we may find grace and mercy. For through Christ Jesus, we have access by one spirit unto the Father, and where two or three are gathered together, there is He in the midst of them.

Every church should also be regarded as a birth place of souls. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth. Her walls are salvation, and her gates praise. Here God waits to be gracious, for he loveth Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. He bows the heavens and comes down, he inclines his ear, and outstretches his saving arm. Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, that he may dwell in thy courts. He will be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple. For it hath pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. And of this and that man, it will, we trust, be said in heaven, he was born here.

This house, then, we dedicate to the salvation of souls, those temples of the Holy Ghost, which are of more value in the estimation of God, than all the splendour of palaces; whose redemption could not be purchased by all the riches of the world, and which shall be gathered from the ruins of the universe, into the everlasting kingdom of God. Here wisdom crieth aloud and spareth not. "How long, O how long ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity; and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?"

Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you." Here God says with continued importunity to the sinner, "Seek ye my face, turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die." Here Christ stands, as he did on the great day of the feast, and with a loud voice cries "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." And O how sweet will it be, in yonder world of glory, to look back on the scenes of our earthly probation, and remember, O Zion, how our hearts were glad when they said unto us let us go up to the house of the Lord.

And lastly, every church may be regarded as a nursery for heaven, where the plants "flourish and bring forth fruit," until transplanted to the paradise above they drink in the waters of life, and bear the golden fruits of glory. Here we meet as travellers by the way, as "we go from strength to strength, until every one in Zion appeareth before God." Here as we pass through the dreary valley we find a well of salvation and spiritual refreshment and drink in fresh vigour. Here,

in our warfare against flesh and blood, against principalities and powers, we clothe ourselves in the whole armour of God that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Here in this toilsome, weary race, we shake off the dust of sloth, gird up the loins of our mind and again press forward "toward the mark for the prize of our high calling." Here the strong bear the infirmities of the weak, and the brother of high degree ministereth to him that is low, the prosperous weep with them that weep, while the afflicted rejoice with them that rejoice; and all with one heart and one soul, strive together in "unity of the spirit and the bonds of peace," until that blessed hour arrives when faith shall become vision, hope fruition, and charity shall become all and in all. Here, in our wandering through this wilderness of earth, we encamp until all arrive at last, where there shall be one God and Father of all, one Lord, and one glory.

Such is the moral, such the use, and such the end of a Church of Christ. And it is in the contemplation of these, a proper estimate can be made of their real worth. This present building, which we now dedicate as a church for social religious exercises, is more likely to promote these ends, than the one we have left. It is in a more central and public location; it is more visible; and it is in itself more beautiful and appropriate. It is the fruit of much labour; the result of many anxieties, long garnered in many hearts. Towards it there have been many bright anticipations; while around it is gathered the grateful incense of many prayers. We enter it for the first time, full of hope, that it may be to us as a day spring from on *high*; that it may be for a bulwark to our beloved Zion;

that it may be fruitful as the womb of the morning ; and that our youth may here be led to salvation, numerous as the drops of dew. Let me trust, that you will give to these bright prospects of joyous expectancy and hope, the delightful charm of fond recollections. Let this room be regarded as the old made new ; as still our Lecture-room, though changed in locality and form. Make this the repository of the past, and treasure up in this building, the happy associations connected with the former. Transfer from the one to the other, those nameless indescribable emotions, which many of you cherish with the remembrance of other days. Our Lecture-room we can never forget: never, no never ! For there we, or our children, or friends, were first made to know the power, the peace, and the purity of the Gospel. There, we have enjoyed hours of heaven, visions of bliss, and ecstasies of feeling, whose memory is still a pleasant dream. The friends and companions of other years accompanied us there ; and voices now silent in the grave were heard there. But we have only changed the outward accommodation, and we consecrate this building to the spirit of the past. This is the future home of all fond and endearing thoughts ; around which we will concentrate our tenderest regards. And our most earnest prayer is, that the glory of this latter house may be as the former ; that God may baptize it with the same Pentecostal blessing ; and that it may arise and shine, the glory of the Lord being risen upon it.

I congratulate you, in the name of my country, this city, humanity and religion, all whose interests you have subserved, on that liberality, and zeal, which has completed this building; and upon the taste and beauty with which,

in its simple neatness, it is erected; and I pray that all its purposes may be accomplished in your souls through eternal ages.

To thee, O Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in humble and adoring reverence, we thy servants would now dedicate this building. For thy glory it is, and was erected, and to thy name shall be all the praise, of all the good accomplished by it, for ever. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this king of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? the Lord of Hosts, he is the King of glory." AMEN AND AMEN.