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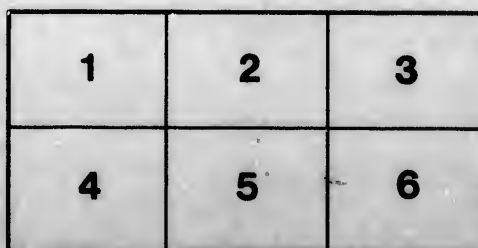
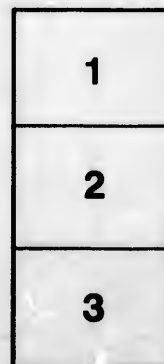
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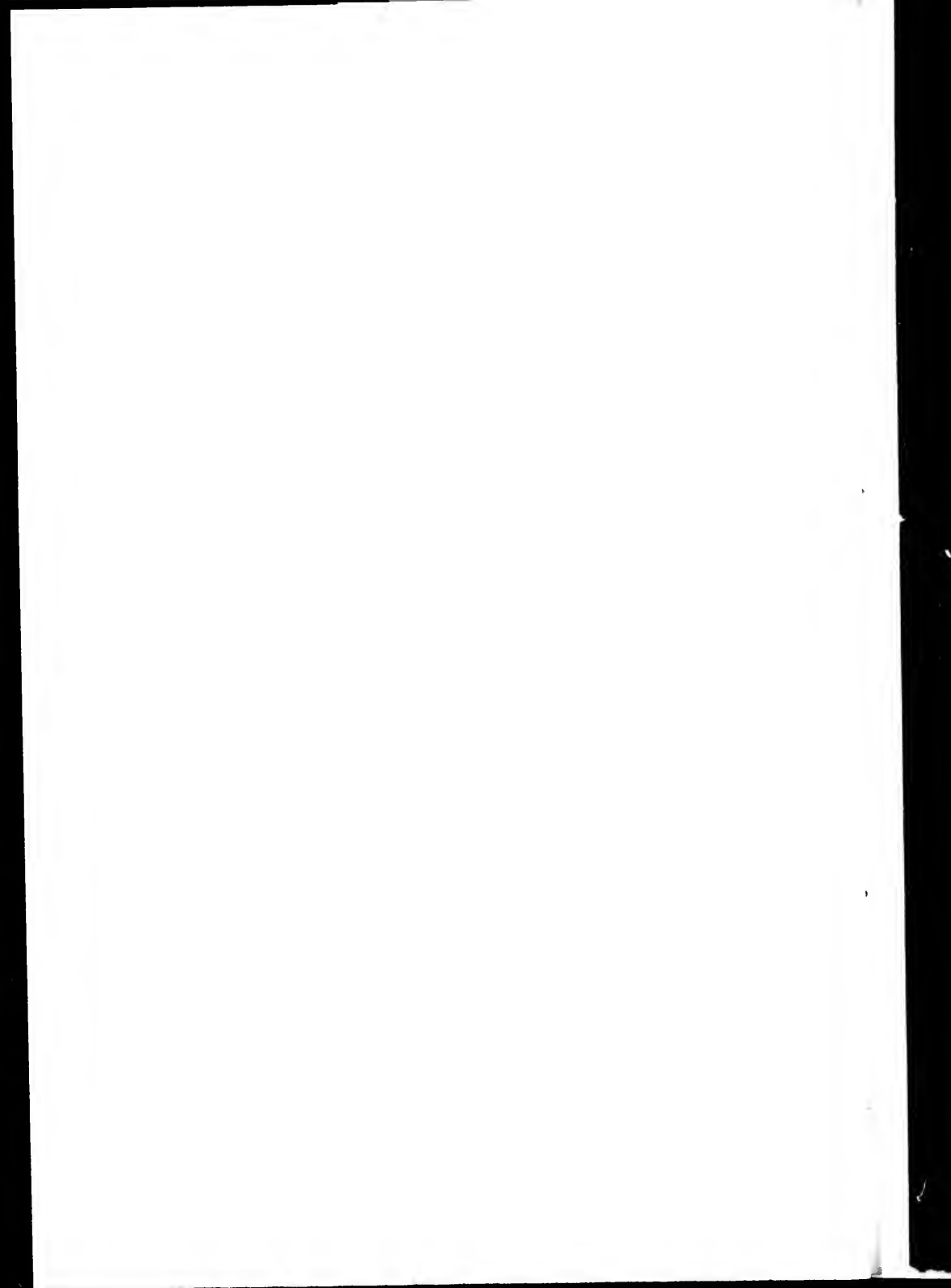
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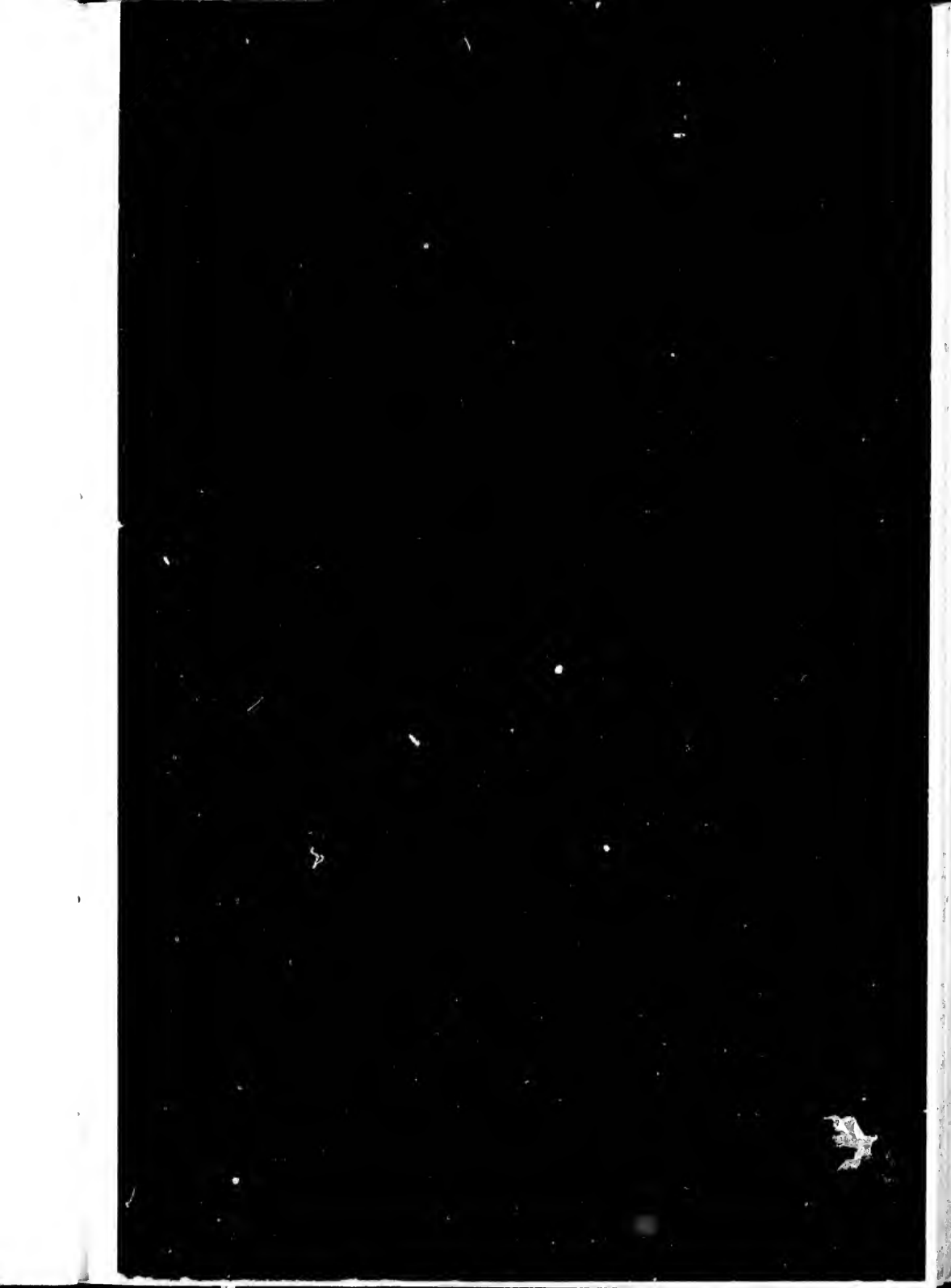
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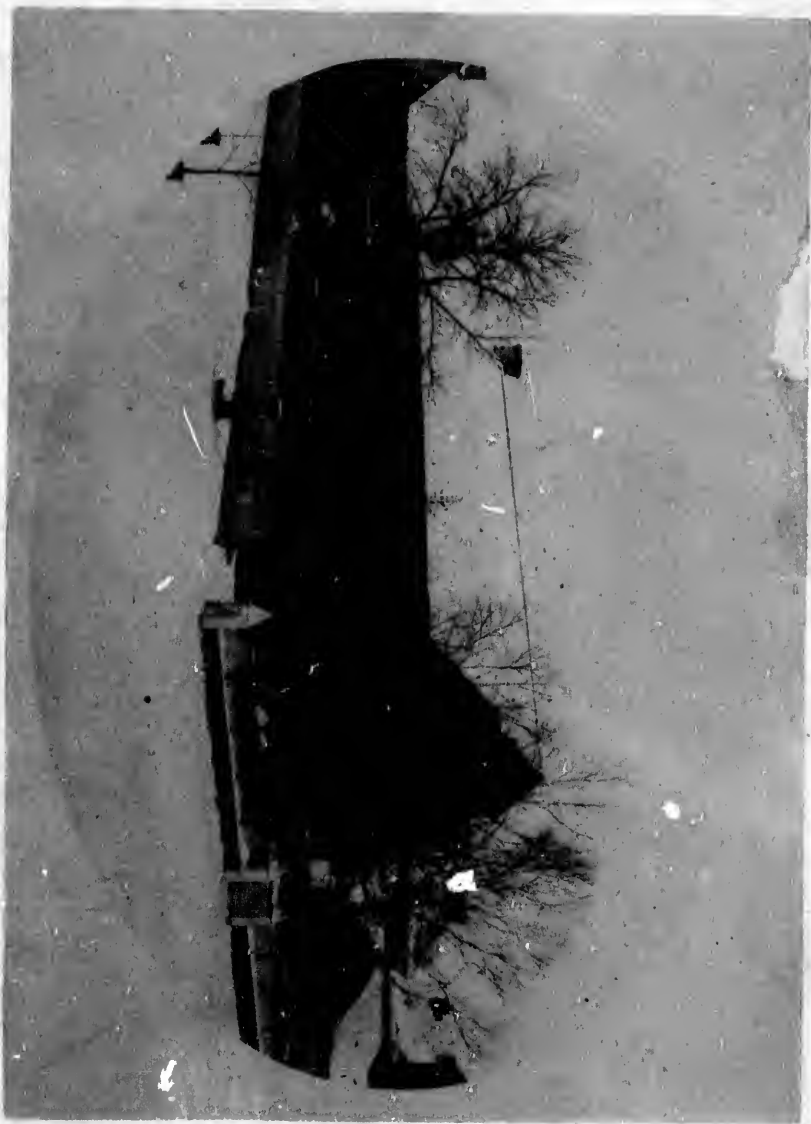
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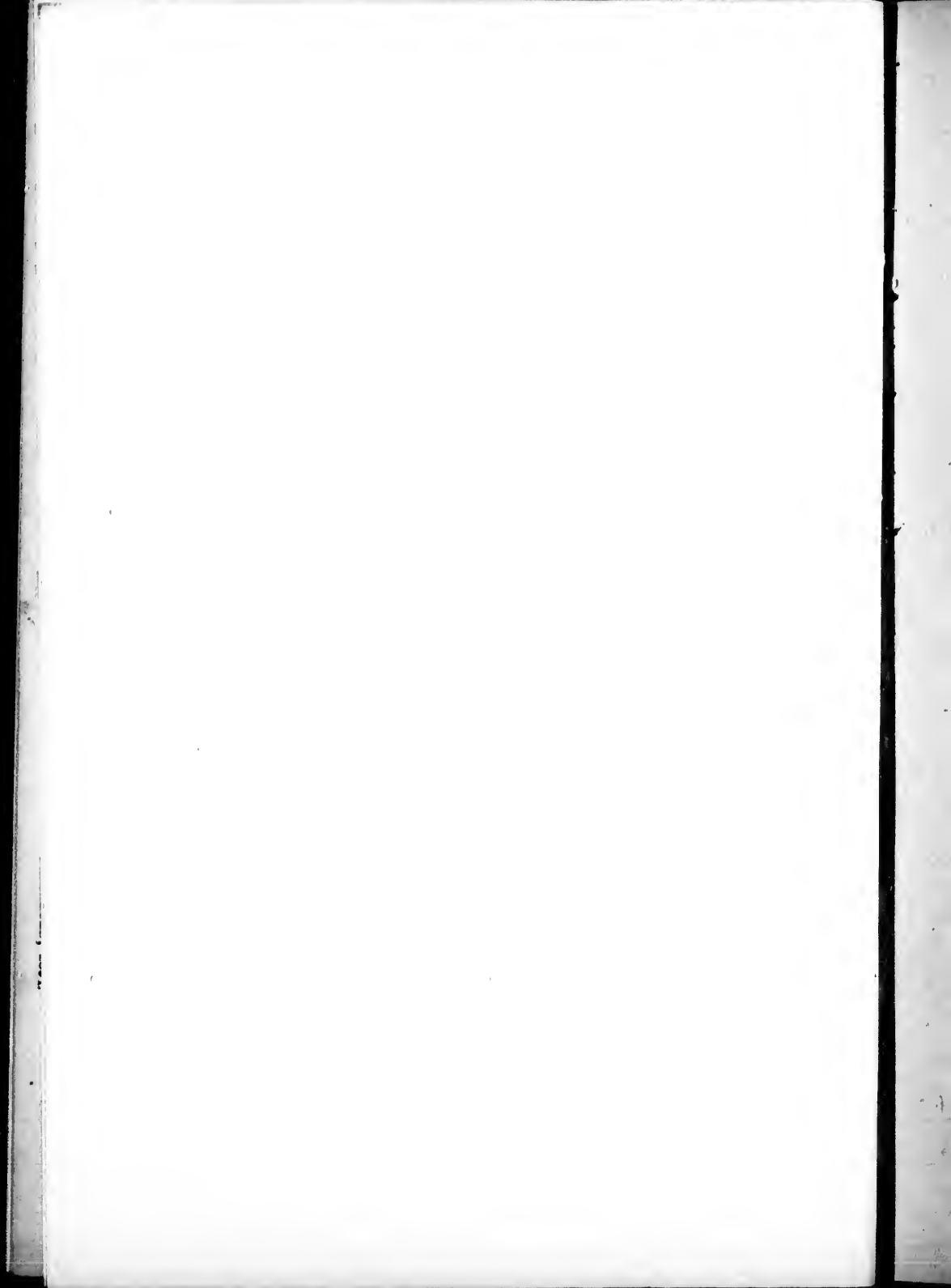




ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, OTTAWA.

EXPOSED, 1828.

ENLARGED, 1854.



SERMON

DELIVERED BY THE

REV. DANIEL M. GORDON, B.D.,

IN

St. Andrew's Church, Ottawa,

ON THE 21st JANUARY, 1872.



OTTAWA:

PRINTED BY I. B. TAYLOR, 29, 31, & 33, RIDEAU-STREET.

1872
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THE present St. Andrew's Church, which is the oldest Protestant place of worship in the City of Ottawa, was erected, chiefly through the kindness of the late Hon. Thomas Mackay, in 1828. The first minister of the charge was the Rev. John Cruikshank, now Minister of Turriff, Scotland, who was inducted by the late Rev. Dr. Machar, of Kingston, on the first Sabbath of March, 1830. Mr. Cruikshank resigned in 1843, and was succeeded in the pastorate of St. Andrew's Church by the Rev. Alexander McKidd, who remained two years. On the 14th January, 1847, the Rev. William Durie was inducted, but his incumbency was of short duration, as he died, deeply regretted, on the 12th September, 1847. He was succeeded by the Rev. Alexander Spence, D.D., who was inducted to the pastorate on the 27th July, 1848. During the incumbency of Dr. Spence the Church was enlarged, in 1854, to meet the growing requirements of the congregation. Dr. Spence resigned the charge on the 24th October, 1867, and on the 17th December, of that year, the present pastor of the congregation was inducted.

It has been resolved to erect, on the site occupied by the present church, a new one that will more fully meet the wants of the worshippers. Sabbath, the 21st January, 1872, was the last day on which Divine Service could be held in the old church. The accompanying sermon, having been delivered on that occasion, is published in compliance with the request of the Kirk Session.

THE MANSE, OTTAWA,

January, 1872.

SERMON.

"And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said unto all the people, 'Behold this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which He spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.'"—JOSHUA xxiv., 26, 27.

This day marks an epoch in our history as a congregation, for this is the last day on which Divine service will be held in this old, familiar building, in which we are assembled. Erected by men who have passed away, chiefly by him who may be justly called the founder of our city, a firm and honored friend of the Church of Scotland, one who still lives in the hearts and memories of many around me, this edifice has for forty-four years been sacred to the worship of God. Erected at a time when but a few scattered houses could be seen on the site where now stands the capital of Canada, it has witnessed the coming and going of many, and there are now but a few surviving of those that were present when the sounds of praise and prayer were first heard within these

walls. Originally much smaller in dimensions, the church has been increased to meet the growing requirements of the congregation, till, at last, it has been wisely determined that it should give place to another more suited to the wants of the worshippers. It is by imitating the example, rather than by preserving the works of the departed, that we do them greatest honor; and we shall best show our esteem for the good men who have left us this building, if, prompted by generosity like theirs, we leave to those that come after us one better suited to the service of God. It is fitting, moreover, that the house of God should be not merely a place capable of accommodating a certain number, but that it should be, to some extent at least, an expression of the gratitude which the worshippers bear to God. If He has blessed them with wealth, and if their private dwellings bear evidence of it, surely it is but seemly that the Church in which they worship should show some token of God's goodness to them, and of their gratitude to Him. To us, as a congregation, God has given increase of numbers and of wealth; it is, therefore, most needful and most fitting, and has been liberally and wisely resolved, that we erect a Church edifice which shall more fully meet our wants. But, ere we part with this one which so long has been employed for the noblest purpose to which a building can be devoted, let me turn your thoughts to a subject which may be in har-

mony with the memories and associations that this day is likely to recall to many of you.

The scene presented by the words before us is one from the early history of Israel. Joshua had led them to the land of promise: he had renewed the covenant with the people, that they should serve the Lord their God, and he set up a stone, saying, "Behold this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which He spake unto us; it shall be a witness unto you lest ye deny your God." That stone set up by Joshua is spoken of as hearing the words of the Lord, and as able to bear witness regarding Israel's obligations to God. The passage presents to us this thought, which I desire to illustrate, viz.:—that material things, objects with which we are familiar in the world around us, have a certain power to bear witness regarding us. Many thoughts and facts might be suggested in proof of this. I ask your attention to two of these which may, I think, be not unsuitable to the peculiar service of this day. I notice then,

I.—That material objects may have power to bear witness regarding us, by being connected with particular events in the history of others, or in our own past experience. God has so framed us that one thing helps to bring other things more clearly to our thoughts when these two are in any way related, and, through the power

of memory and association, material scenes may unfold to us their story, may bear witness to us as clearly as if we read their evidence upon the printed page. We feel this, for instance, amid scenes made famous by bravery or virtue. As we tread the fields where brilliant victories have been won, or stand by the graves of the martyrs, the ground seems sacred, because it bears witness to the worth of the mighty dead. Calling to memory the deeds which have made them famous, these scenes have power to quicken our feelings, while they silently speak to us of those that are no more. In this way a peculiar interest gathers around the home where a great and good man lived, and the spot where some noble or heroic deed has been performed seems afterwards like sacred ground. The memory of holy deeds hallows the place where such deeds were done, and the spot thus hallowed becomes a witness to after generations. It is thus that to the Christian no land seems so full of deep interest, none fitted to arouse such devout and tender feelings, as the land made sacred by the Saviour's earthly presence,

" Those holy fields,
Over whose acres walked those blessed feet,
Which, eighteen hundred years ago, were nailed
For our advantage to the bitter cross."

It seems as if Bethlehem and Bethany, Galilee, Olivet and Calvary, would awaken the Christian's profoundest feelings, by the appeal they would make to his memory.

He would connect them with the life of Him who once dwelt among them, and thus the silent scenes would speak to him with a real though soundless voice; to his eye they would seem covered with a real though unseen evidence, and would thus bear witness to him.

And this witness-bearing power of any spot on earth becomes still greater if it be connected, not with the history and deeds of others, but with some passage in our own experience. If at any time we have been delivered from some great and sudden danger, or have been partakers of some rapturous joy, then the scene of such deliverance or such joy is felt by us ever after to recall that past experience, and so bear witness to us. It is this that gives to the home of our childhood its peculiar power to stir our hearts, and to set rapidly in motion feelings that are elsewhere unmoved. The man who has been long a stranger to his native land may think that the incidents of his childhood have vanished for ever from his memory, and that, by reason of the world's rough toil, he never can recall the feelings of his early years. But let him return to the old home in which he was nurtured, and then every room and window, every field and tree, startles him with the multitude of its memories; page after page of his old life book is unfolded, and he cannot choose but read it, even though it be blotted with tears; again he hears the voices of his loved and lost,

which the world's cares long had silenced; again there beam on him the old familiar faces, as friends, long dead, seem around him as of yore. And the scenes recall not only the incidents, but also the feelings of his youth; he has thrown off the cares and the sorrows of his manhood; his sun has moved suddenly back upon the dial, and his heart as suddenly has regained the freshness of life's morning tide. Amid the flashings of his memory and his quickened throbs of feeling, the old scenes, with life-like clearness, stand up as witnesses before him. In this way, too, some trifling gift bestowed by a valued friend may be dear beyond price, because of its worth as a remembrancer, and a witness of friendship; in this way a book, a letter, a lock of hair, a tiny trinket, may suffice to open the flood-gates of memory, and to summon up our buried thoughts and feelings. In this way the stone set up by Joshua would be a perpetual remembrancer and witness to Israel, ever afterwards reminding them of God's mercy in leading them safely through the Jordan, and of their vow of faithfulness to God.

So, too, when we have been long accustomed to meet for worship in one familiar building, we look at it not merely in its material aspect, and measure it not merely by its money value; memory adorns it with new beauty, and gives it new worth, for we feel that it has become a witness to us from its connection with those that are

gone, as well as with scenes in our own past history. Within these walls the words of saving truth have been uttered from other lips, and heard by other listeners; vows have been pledged, children baptized, souls born again, and seasons of Holy Communion enjoyed by those long since admitted to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Of those who have left this congregation to join the "congregation of the dead," of those who once worshipped here, but who now join, we trust, in the service of the upper sanctuary, the number would be greater than that of any assembly which this church could contain. Most of us have touched, by kindred or affection, some members of that vanished company. Surely, as we think of past scenes and incidents that have happened here, and of the honored dead that once called this place of worship theirs, we may feel that these mute walls are rich with untold records, and that though we see no hand, as in Belshazzar's vision, writing the register, yet memory covers them in such a way as to make them witnesses unto us. And the experiences that we have ourselves enjoyed here may increase their witness-bearing power. We may recall seasons of strong and deep emotion, when we paid our vows unto the Most High, times when the way of life seemed clearer, and the living Christ seemed nearer, and our spirits rose Heavenward with stronger wing than we ever before had known;

times when the soul enjoyed profoundest peace, beholding its acceptance in the Beloved, or when it felt new throbbings of life and strength as it leaned on Christ's all-suffering grace. If this, or anything like this, has been our experience within these walls, then they are to us what the stone raised by Joshua was to Israel; hearing what the Lord has said to us, and what we have replied to Him' they are witnesses unto us, lest we should deny our God

And not only do material objects in this way bear witness to us; they may also bear witness *against* us. There seem to be silent records of our sins kept in the places where these sins were committed. Let the sinner revisit the scene of his past misdeeds, and he will sometimes feel as if even the material objects around him spoke to him in a voice of perpetual reproach. Even when we visit the scenes where *others* have deeply sinned, we feel as if a peculiar horror was brooding over the spot; but much keener becomes the feeling if we ourselves have been the guilty actors in the deed of sin or shame. Nature may preserve a strange silence at the sins of man; the murderer, retiring from the scene of his guilt and reeking with the blood of his victim, finds the external world unchanged, as if unconscious of his crime. Yet all the while a secret record has been kept of each evil act, and, by the power which places have to recall the deeds committed in them, and thus to revive the register in the sinner's memory,

the scenes of his guilt are felt by himself to be witnesses against him. And thus there may be places in this world on which some of us would never wish to look again' because we could not revisit them without feeling as if the very walls of the room, or other objects round us were looking on us with a stern reproachful eye, as they summoned before us our guilty acts, of which they once were witness. In this way the church where people meet for worship may witness against their cold hypocrisy, their hollow, heartless form of service, wherein God was not present to their hearts, and the message of a dying Saviour's love fell on sealed ears and hardened hearts. In this way these walls may bear witness against many of us, as we remember how often we have here by our hypocrisy sinned grievously against God, and how often the vows which have here been made have been broken by us elsewhere.

We may, moreover, well believe that these registers kept by material objects never can be destroyed; the objects may change their form, but they do not pass utterly away. You may sometimes have cast into the fire paper which you had covered with writing, yet, even after the fire had passed over it, you might still be able to read each word distinctly. So, it may be, even after all coming changes shall have passed over this earth, we may still behold the scenes of our former guilt in such a way as to

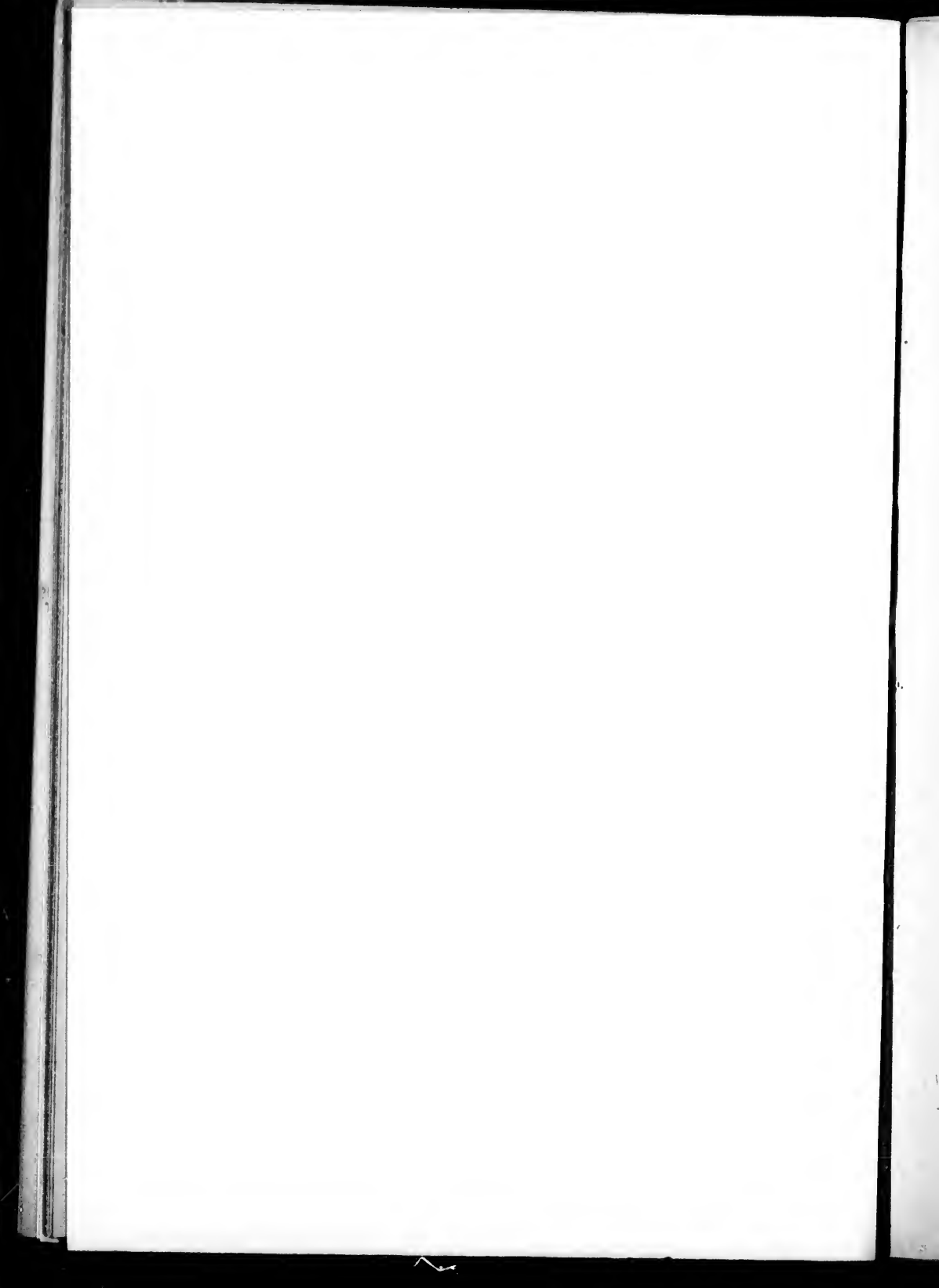
recognize them as witnesses, whose accuracy we cannot deny. The criminal might think that he had just burned the only existing record of his crime; and yet, ere it passed into dust, he might be compelled to read it, and to find it condemn him as it lay in ashes before his eyes. So, for aught we know, it may be that, through whatever changes the material world may pass, those objects with which we have once been familiar may never lose that power which memory gives them to bear witness regarding us, just because they have been so closely connected with past incidents in our history.

II. Again, another way in which material objects may bear witness regarding us is, by fulfilling the purpose for which they were created, while we do not. The good is always bearing witness against the bad, simply by being good; any man who does his duty is felt to be a reproving witness by the indolent; his example is a constant reproach them. In the same way material objects, which are good in this respect that they perform their duty,—they fulfil the purpose for which they were created—bear witness against men who fail to fulfil the end of their existence. In this way the patience of some lower animals has often been felt to give a silent reproof to the passions of those that abuse them. Thus, too, the stone set up by Joshua silently, steadily, faithfully fulfilled one great end of its creation by being a perpetual witness to

Israel, while Israel, by disobedience of God's laws and distrust of God's love, failed to fulfil the purpose for which God gave them being and led them safely to the land of Canaan ; very strongly and sternly, therefore, would that memorial, by the contrast of its own faithfulness and their disobedience, bear witness against them. We may not, indeed, be aware of the various purposes to which any material object may, by Divine appointment, be applied ; we cannot foresee the many uses which under His ordinance it may serve. Many things may be entirely unnoticed for ages while awaiting some special use for which God has designed them. Thus the wood from which was formed the ark of Noah, the materials employed in the erection of the Temple, the stones on which were written the tables of the law, might be for centuries unnoticed until at last they were used for the purpose for which God had designed them. Yet, at the same time, these material objects would be serving God's end and be glorifying Him in waiting for the fulfilment of His purpose, as well as in performing it, just as truly as in the moral world the law holds good that "they also serve who only stand and wait." But whatever special work may be fulfilled by any material object, the general purpose of its existence, the design of its creation, is that it should serve and glorify God ; and this purpose is attained by the material world. The heavens and the earth were

made to shew forth the glory of God's wisdom, power, and goodness, and there is not a wind that blows, nor flower that blooms, nor star that shines which does not render its constant, though unconscious, tribute of glory to God. "The round ocean, the living air and the blue sky," the wonders of forest, flood, and field, the storms and the sunshine,—all parts of the material creation—yield their ceaseless praise to Him who made them, and thus fulfil the purpose of their existence. The same thing holds true, to a certain extent, of human handiwork. The productions of science and art, the steamship and the railway, painting and statuary, with the countless requisites of daily life often, perhaps most frequently, fulfil the end for which they were designed. Although man's workmanship is marred by many failures, yet often the labour of his brain and hands does fulfil the purpose for which it was intended. Material things thus readily respond to the design of the skilful worker, and, if we look on them as God has moulded them, that response is perfect.

But when we turn from the material creatures to think of the mind and heart of man, we fail to find *him* serving and glorifying his Creator with faithfulness like theirs. He is able to yield to God a higher homage than the material heavens and the earth, able to give a nobler adoration, because he can worship and obey God, not with blind submission, but with free intelligence, and



with filial devotion. This glory, which nature could not render to God, it was the purpose of man's creation to yield. For this end God gave him power that could wield dominion over the earth, a mind whose thoughts can wander through eternity, a heart whose affections nothing earthly can satisfy, a spirit which can find rest only in God Himself. He endowed him with the power of an endless life, to fit him for communion with his Maker. And the object of all these gifts, the purpose of man's creation, the end for which he was called into existence is that he should "love the Lord his God with all his heart, and soul, and strength, and mind." But how have we fulfilled this purpose of our creation? We need not look for an answer to the open and avowed vice of society, to those who break the laws of God and man, who defile the land with their iniquity, who fill the prisons, and swell the records of human crime; they shamefully abuse God's goodness, and fall far short of the purpose of man's creation. But, without dwelling on *their* case, we may come among the beauties and attractions of our social life; we may uncover its gaieties, and probe its pursuits and its pleasures, and it is there, among the generous, the wealthy, the admired of society, that we find the most saddening proofs of the way in which we fall short of the glory of God. That the murderer, the adulterer, the thief, should cast off all homage to God

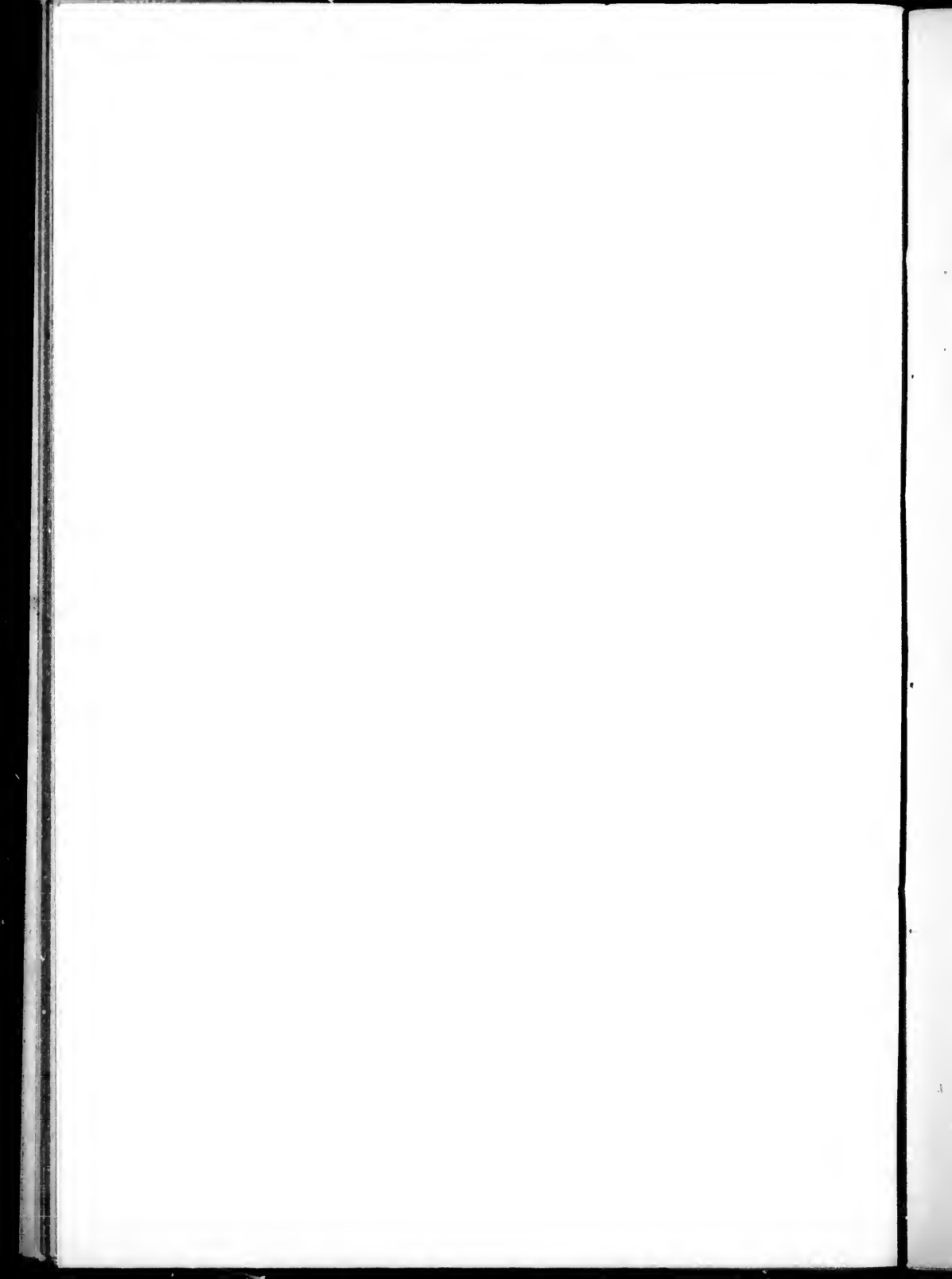
and fall short of the purpose for which he was created, is sad, but scarcely surprising; but that so many generous, amiable, loving and attractive souls should often live without any love of God, or any true desire to serve Him, *this* is passing strange, as well as sad. It matters little that we be amiable and accomplished, loving and beloved, the true test of our existence is,—Are we living for God? Do we desire His favor more than all earthly happiness, and the advancement of His kingdom and glory more than all earthly aims? Can we declare that no created object lies nearer to our heart than God, or that we would be ready to sacrifice money, honor, ease, home—all at the call of duty to God? Are we, in short, fulfilling the purpose of our existence by loving the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, and mind? Alas! when we think of the time and the treasures we waste upon self, of the way in which pleasure is deified, and earthly gain made the great end of existence, we are constrained to cry “God be merciful.” Many hearts that are soft and gentle, and that glow with tender feelings, have love for all but God; many minds that are busy with brilliant fancies, and filled with grand designs, have never a thought for God; many spirits that possess unconquerable energy, and that are capable of heroic self-devotion, never wrought one persevering word or endured one moment’s self-denial for the sake

of God. The *best* affections of man are often estranged from his Maker; and there are many, with whose lives society finds no fault, whose enjoyment would not be one whit the less if there existed no God at all. What matters it though a man may win the world's attention and esteem, if he gives no thought nor love nor service to his Maker? What matters it though the child win the praise of his playmates, if his heart never throbs with love for his father? Will the father be content with the praise which others give his child, while that child's heart is cold and dead to him? And can we conceive that God, to love Whom we were created, can be content with any kind of life we lead, so long as we live without love to Him? He looks to the heavens for glory, and they give it, for "the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth His handiwork." He looks to the earth for glory, and He receives it, for "the earth is full of His glory;" but He turns to man and finds that he, who should render most, gives least. What wonder is it then that He calls heaven and earth as witnesses against man, calls His faithful creatures to bear evidence against those that disobey Him? As saith the Psalmist, "He shall call to the heaven from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people" or as He declares by the word of Isaiah, "Hear, oh heavens, and give ear, oh earth; I have nourished and brought up

children, and they have rebelled against Me." What wonder is it that His faithful prophets, in the agony of despair at the sins of the people, turned to that material creation that was true to God's purpose and cried, "Oh earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord!"

And so, to bring the case home to ourselves, can we not feel that, as the memorial erected by Joshua was a witness against Israel by fulfilling the purpose of its existence, which Israel did not, and as, for a similar reason, the heavens and the earth, which give glory to God, are witnesses against the sinful children of men, so this Church edifice long has been, and this day is, a witness against us as a congregation? It has fulfilled the purpose for which it was designed. If the expression may be applied to material things, it has done its duty. Have we? Do we not feel that the Judge of all the earth must condemn us for the way in which, as a people, we have failed to glorify Him; for the way in which we have squandered so much upon self, and have given so little to the cause of God? Our faith in Christ has been feeble, our love to the brethren has been weak, our hope of glory has been exceeding dim. Is it too much to say that God has often derived from these mute materials of wood and stone a glory which was denied Him by many worshippers within these walls?

Brethren, if these things have been so in the past, let



us seek, by faith in Jesus Christ, the Source of light and life, to live more truly to the glory of God in the time to come. Be it ours to strive steadily, through the aid of the Holy Spirit, to fulfil the purpose and to finish the work for which God has created us. Then shall the homes in which we dwell, and the churches in which we worship, and the heavens bending silently over us, and the earth that lies silently around us, bear witness that we have not denied the Lord our God.

