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S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE OPENING

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CHRIST'S CHURCH AT SOREL

In the Province of CANADA,

ON SUNDAY THE 25th OF DECEMBER 1785:

B Y

The Reverend JOHN DOTY, a Presbyter of the Church of
England; and Missionary from the incorporated Society for
the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts.

Hitherto hath the Lord helped us. 1 Sam. 7. 12.

*When I came to Troas to preach Christ's Gospel—a door was
opened unto me of the Lord. 2 Cor. 2. 12.*



M O N T R E A L ;

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TO
THE HONORABLE
HENRY HOPE, E.

HIS MAJESTY'S
LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR

IN AND OVER

THE PROVINCE OF CANADA,
BRIGADIER-GENERAL, &c. &c.

THIS SERMON,
PREACHED AT THE OPENING OF
CHRIST'S CHURCH AT SOREL,

IS,

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT,
HUMBLY INSCRIBED,

BY

HIS MOST OBEDIENT SERVANT

THE AUTHOR.

P S A L M XLIII. 3.

“ O send out thy Light and thy Truth ; let them lead me, let them bring me to thy Holy Hill, and to thy Tabernacles.”

THIS prayer of David seems to have been made while he was in exile from the Holy Hill of Sion, the City of his God ; from which the malice of a party, and the cruel hatred and persecution of Saul, or of his own rebellious son Absalom, had forced him. On these trying occasions great and grievous were his feelings. But, what affected him most, and filled his pious soul with unutterable anguish, was, that his flight deprived him the joy and happiness of worshipping JEHOVAH in the Congregation of his Saints. All other evils he could have borne ; but this he could not endure, no, not for a moment : he groaned and fainted under its pressure ; he cried out with impatient desire to be delivered from its burthen.

H E A R his pathetic exclamations. *As the hart panteth after 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.—When I remember these things I pour out my soul in me ; for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept Holy-day. O my God ! my soul is cast down within me : therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.—O send out thy Light and thy Truth ; let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy Holy Hill, and to thy*

*Tabernacles. Then will I go unto the Altar^a of God
my exceeding joy: yea upon the Harp will I praise thee O
God, my God!*

T H I S animated piety of Holy David is not peculiar to him: it is, in a good measure, the piety of all who sincerely love the *Root and the Offspring of David*. To unite in the Public Worship of God, in adoring his Awful Majesty, in singing his Praises, in acknowledging his Goodness, in imploring his Mercies, in hearing his Precious Word, in commemorating his Love, and in renewing their Solemn Vows and Obligations; these Inestimable Privileges constitute their greatest and truest happiness in this world. Whatever their condition or employment in life, their joy and delight is to *come and appear before God* with his people. In their estimation, *One day* spent thus in his sacred Courts *is better than a Thousand* consumed in any other place: and to be debarred that privilege is, to them, an insupportable evil; an evil by which every other calamity is increased and embittered.

F O R these reasons especially, Christians in all ages have formed themselves into societies under the direction of the Ministers of Christ, and in obedience to his Evangelical Institutions; the blessed Apostles and their successors having established the Public Worship of God, wherever the Gospel hath been received. And herein is to be noted how much superior is the privilege of Christians to that of the Jews. The latter, for the performance of their Public Services, were confined to one particular place and Temple, which they were obliged to visit three times in every year however remote from their dwellings;

dwellings; but we, so indulgent and bountiful is God our Saviour! may build him a Temple wherever it shall be most convenient to ourselves: provided with a pure heart and a good conscience, and with faith unfeigned we present ourselves before him, we are assured of acceptance at all times and in every place.

HOW long and lamentably destitute of the Sacred Institutions of Pure and Undeiled Religion you have been in this Village, my Christian Friends, it is needless to observe; and how fervently this Prayer of the Royal Psalmist hath, in substance, been repeated by you. Most of you also were in circumstances very similar to his: exiled from your native homes, and from the Tabernacles of your God, you were here *in a dry and thirsty land where no Water was. Hungry and thirsty for the Bread of Life and for the Waters of Eternal Consolation, your souls fainted within you, and darted many a fervent Ejaculation to the God of all mercy, that he would be graciously pleased to send out his Light and his Truth to lead and bring you once more to his Holy Hill, and to his Tabernacles: that he would perform his promises to make those who sow in tears to reap in joy; and to cause light to spring up for his afflicted Church in darkness. Were not these the pious breathings of some among you?*

They were; and have been remarkably accomplished. That Society whose great employment for near *Ninety Years* hath been with an Apostolic zeal to propagate the true faith; and who by Divine Assistance, have caused the Light and Truth of the **Glorious Gospel of Christ** to shine in this Western
World

World so brightly as to pierce through every dark and angry cloud; that venerable Society, incorporated by Royal Charter for the propagation of the Gospel in these and other His Majesty's Foreign Dominions, have sent out the *Light and Truth* of God's blessed Word to you. **THEY** are the great Instruments employed by Almighty God to gather you his poor sheep, *scattered in the dark and cloudy day*, into one fold, under the conduct of a Shepherd who sincerely wishes he were better qualified for the important charge; and whose daily prayer is, that he may not minister to any of you in vain. You are no longer without an Instructor and a guide, but hear continually a voice crying; "*This is the way, walk ye in it.*"—O that you may all have a hearing ear; and know how to value this blessing; and, by a suitable improvement of it, give the best evidence of your gratitude both to God, and to your Pious Benefactors:

But though this more important necessity was supplied and for Eighteen Months past we have assembled for the Public Worship of God, we have done it under great inconvenience: like our Blessed Lord and Master who had not where to lay his head, we had no decent place, no sacred Tabernacle for his service. For my own part, if I had not seen the hand of God among us, disposing so many to attention and devotion, I must confess, the unsuitableness of our late place of meeting, its dark confined and comfortless condition, would have almost discouraged me.

DEEPLY impressed with a sense of this great deficiency, was it not the further Prayer of every
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pious heart that as our Merciful God had favored us with his *Light* and *Truth*, the Ministry of his Everlasting Gospel, he would also *lead and bring* us to his *Holy Hill*; that he would graciously pitch his *Tabernacle* and dwell among us as he hath in all places where it hath pleased his Infinite Goodness to gather to himself a Church for the Praise and Glory of his own most Holy Name? Not a day have we assembled in our former gloomy retirement without fighting for this additional benefit; without expressing our longing desire and prayer, that this urgent necessity might be supplied.

HERE also we have a singular answer to our Prayers. This house, whose builder* little thought how much he contributed to the unsearchable designs of Providence in building it; whose former inhabitants departed some months past, as if impelled by an Invisible Hand to give place to that Adorable Majesty to whom it is now dedicated; and which is so commodiously arranged for the Sacred purpose of Public Worship, is provided for us: provided, *primarily* by the *Father of Lights* from whom proceedeth every good and perfect gift; but *immediately* by the generous contribution of some, whose names—May they be written in the Book of Life with all the peculiar rewards annexed to such virtuous and pious actions!

In

* James Grant, Merchant-Taylor, who if he had designed it for a Church could hardly have planned it more conveniently. It is 32 feet front, by 28 feet deep; built about 6 years ago, of the best squared Timber; is put together after the best manner; will admit of a Gallery on three sides, and a small Steeple; both which it is to have; and is now, below, very neatly pewed off so as to accommodate above 120 persons.

IN this modest building unpolluted by the Meretricious Ornaments of Superstition, and, like the Pure Gospel to which it is subservient, plain, simple, suited to our wants, we have now assembled to offer up our united prayers and praises ; and, in so doing, to Consecrate it to such religious use. For, as the Bread and Wine which we are about to receive in Commemoration of our Savior's Love, though they be not *Transubstantiated* or changed by the prayer of consecration, but remain after it no other than simple Bread and Wine, are nevertheless thereby set apart from Vulgar Use, and sacred to the *Eucharistic Service* ; so this house, though it derive no inherent holiness or efficacy from our present devotions, yet is it hereby solemnly set apart and dedicated to the honor and service of God, and of the Lamb, henceforth no more to be considered in a vulgar view but as CHRIST'S CHURCH the *Tabernacle* in which he has promised to meet and bless us.

AND O ! how inestimable a favor is this ! Will the Lord indeed meet with and bless us in this place ? will he condescend to be present at our imperfect devotions ? How boundless is his Love ! How exuberant is his Goodness ! Surely we must acknowledge, with all the emotions of gratitude, that *the Lord is gracious*, and that *his Goodness endureth continually* : we must feel it to be not less our happiness and delight than our privilege and duty to come and present ourselves before him.

AND, if there be any present who, need Additional Arguments, they should remember, that our wants too, which are many and urgent call loudly for
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for Assistance. Not only the protection and blessings of providence; but the pardon of our daily infirmities, the perpetual aid of God's Holy Spirit, the illuminating virtue of his sacred word, the increase of our Faith Hope and Charity, our growth in Grace, our continued advancement in the Christian Life, are all important subjects of prayer and supplication; and therefore very strong inducements to frequent this sacred place. For since the great duty of prayer is performed to more advantage in Public than in Private; since the coals of the Altar, if scattered, will deaden, but if united will kindle into a glowing flame, it must be highly proper and interesting that we assemble for that Holy purpose.

AND if to this we add the *Divine Command*, that we should so assemble, and the *Divine Promise*, that where but two or three are assembled in Christ's name he will be in the *midst of them*, it must shew both the expediency and necessity of such a practice if we desire to partake the Divine favor.

THAT in some cases, a Christian may be excusable in absenting himself from Public Worship, is admitted: but such cases are few, and always grievous. The faithful soul can never be easy under such circumstances. In short, as a regular and devout attendance on the Public Worship of God is one sure characteristic of a true Christian; so an opposite conduct is a strong presumption of a disaffected heart. There cannot be a more certain evidence of irreligion and impiety than the wilful neglect and contempt of this important duty.

Let us therefore *not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of too many is*; but, imitating the
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the pious zeal of David, thirst and pant to come and appear before the *Living God* in his *Tabernacle*. Let us joyfully embrace every opportunity of uniting in these sacred offices of Religion, that we may be knit together in mutual Love, increasing in all the Social and Christian virtues; and that *those of the contrary part*, beholding our piety and good works, may reproach us no more. Let the purity and rectitude of our whole conduct be a witness of the Superior Excellency of our Faith; in all things endeavouring to approve ourselves *The True Worshipers*, who *Worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth*. In a word, let us be really and truly what this house is figuratively, the *Church of Christ*; *Living stones built up into a Spiritual house*; built upon the foundation of the *Apostles and Prophets*, *Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone*; in whom all the building fitly framed together may grow into an *Holy Temple in the Lord*; an *Habitation of God through the Spirit*.

BY such an exemplary conduct we shall do more essential service to the cause of truth than by any other means; shining as lights in the world and illuminating all around us with the true knowledge of the Gospel of Christ; and so perhaps turning many *from Darkness to Light*, and *from the power of Satan unto God*.

AND who knows but this may be one of the great ends of Providence in sending us into this Country. It was certainly the case in former times. When Israel went in to Egypt, it was, partly, to reprove an ignorant and idolatrous people: when the Jews were carried captives into Babylon it gave
Daniel.

Daniel and his Companions an occasion of reclaiming a wicked Nebuchadnezzar: When the Church of Jerufalem were *scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen*, they travelled far and near preaching the Lord Jesus: and in later times, whenever the Church of Christ hath been persecuted and dispersed, one certain consequence hath been the enlargement of his Kingdom. Happy beyond expression shall we be, if we *let our light so shine before men, that they, beholding our good works, may glorify our Heavenly Father: for they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.*

AND now, let me add, this day is joyful to us on three several accounts. First, as it is the Anniversary of our blessed Lord's Nativity: Secondly, as it is the day on which, having finished the great Work of Redemption, he arose triumphantly from the dead: and Thirdly as it commences our more decent and orderly Worship; and opens the *First Protestant Church in the province of Canada*. This happy concurrence of circumstances is, I trust, an indication of our future prosperity.

MAY the Gracious Disposer of all ^{events} wants make it so indeed. May his Divine Blessing, without which their Labor is but lost that build, rest upon and defend this little Sion incessantly. May all who Worship here be refreshed with the dew of his Holy Spirit; and be made joyful in his House of Prayer. May the Word of Truth here delivered, sink deeply into the hearts and bring forth fruit abundantly in the lives of all who hear it. May
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this, which is now *The House of God*, be; to all who enter into it, *The Gate of Heaven*; leading and bringing them to his *Holy Hill*, and to his *Heavenly Tabernacles*; where *there is fulness of joy, and pleasures for ever more!* AMEN.

F I N I S.