

THE MONTHLY RECORD OF

THE TEMPLE OF GOD.

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SERMON.
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Preached at the opening of New St. Andrew's Church, Toronto, by the Rev. D. M. Gordon, B. D., of Ottawa.

I. COR. iii 16-17.—“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”

These words may well put us to shame, for who among us regards himself as the “habitation of God through the spirit,” or where are the fruits of our holy living that bear witness to the power of that indwelling presence? We may try in the Psalmist's confidence to say: “Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place.”

Can we reverse the words and say “Lord we have been Thy dwelling place?” And yet, though our faith be feeble and our lives be unworthy of our high calling in Christ, these words to Christians: “Ye are the temple of God, the spirit of God dwelleth in you, and he temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”

In trying to unroll the meaning of these words I ask you to consider (1) the view here given of the Christian Church, “Ye are the temple of God”; (2) the glory of the Church as here expressed, “the spirit of God dwelleth in you” (3) the purpose of the Church—to be holy unto the Lord—“for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” (1) The view here given of the Christian Church, “Ye are the temple of God.” Paul was a “Hebrew of the Hebrews,” and naturally no object on earth could seem to him so suitable a figure of the Church of Christ as the temple at Jerusalem. It was the centre around which both the national and religious life of the Jews revolved; it was the pledge of God's presence and protection, the shrine and palladium of the nation. When he was far from the courts of Zion the pious Jew turned reverently towards the temple at the hour of prayer. When he gazed on the city of his solemnities and saw the temple in the midst of it, it might well seem as if the everlasting hills in their silent majesty had been set round it for its special protection. And when he entered its courts

that were thronged with awe-struck worshippers, when he presented his own offering at the altar, when he heard the rich music ringing through its vaulted arches, when he saw the High Priest who was set apart to make peace between man's guilt and God's holiness, when he felt himself partaker of the atonement procured by the High Priest as he passed into the holy of holies we little wonder that the temple became to the pious Jew the one place of all others where man's service and sacrifice were met by God's presence and protection, and that to the Christian who had been a Jew no comparison could seem so appropriate for describing the character and glory of the Church as to call it “the temple of God.” And the likeness of the visible Jewish temple to the Christian Church was not accidental, not a mere happy illustration on the part of the Apostle; it was from the first a foreshadowing type of the Church. Like all the Mosaic ritual with its altar and offerings and bleeding sacrifices, the temple was ever pointing forward a figure of better things to come, while it constantly ministered to the religious life of the nation, it served also as type of that which would be more appropriate than itself to be the dwelling place of the Most High; it foreshadowed first the visible then the mystical body of Christ. As it has been sometimes expressed, God has manifested Himself, in the world's religious history, as dwelling in three temples, first, in the visible temple at Jerusalem, then in the temple of Christ's body, “God manifest in the flesh,” and lastly in the temple of the Christian Church. Christ himself connects these three, when He speaks of His body as a temple, and speaks through His Apostle, of his Church as a body; and Christians are living stones in the temple, because they are living members of His body. The first gave place to the second, and the second to the last, as the bud gives place to the blossom, and the blossom to the fruit; the temple which for centuries had been the pledge of God's presence with His people gave place to the fleshly temple of Him in whom “dwell the fulness of the Godhead bodily,” and this second temple was removed in order that there should be manifested among men that more glorious temple, the redeemed Church, that