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## THE DUTY AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF MINISTERS AS BUILDERS IN CHRIST'S HOUSE.

A SERMON

*Preached by the Rev. Murdoch Stewart, St George's Chapel, Cape Breton, at the opening of the Free Synod of Nova Scotia, on the 21th June, 1852; and given for insertion in the Missionary Record at the request of said Synod.*

PSALM CXXVII. 1st: "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it."

In this Psalm a few examples are set before us of a doctrine which holds true in all cases, viz., the utter inefficiency of all human plans, means, and endeavours, without the Divine blessing;—the entire dependence of success, in any pursuit, on God. The builder may exert himself to the utmost in building;—the watchman may carefully and anxiously watch;—one may plant, and another may water, but if God withhold the blessing, all their labour is in vain. This is undeniably true of every thing in which man can engage, and *should* be remembered and acknowledged by all; but especially is the continual remembrance, and humble acknowledgment of its truth, of supreme importance with regard to *our* peculiar work. For while, in worldly pursuits, men may succeed, though utterly forgetful of God, and of their dependence on Him,—while the builder of an earthly fabric may succeed to his utmost wish,—while the husbandman may reap the most abundant crops from the soil he cultivates,—while the worshipper of Mammon may heap up wealth, till even himself shall acknowledge it is enough,—while, in such things as these, men may

succeed until the time come when their souls shall be required of them, though they live, and plan, and work, in complete forgetfulness of their dependence on God,—we have no reason whatever to expect that those engaged in the work of the christian ministry will ever be successful instruments in building up Christ's house, His church—the temple of the Lord, unless they ever bear in mind and humbly acknowledge their entire dependence on the Lord himself, for the blessing which will make the means of grace effectual means of salvation, and unless they look to Him for that sufficiency which they have not in themselves.

On such an occasion as this, Fathers and Brethren, when we, who, from our office, may be called builders in Christ's house or church, are met to deliberate on matters which concern that building, it will not be inappropriate to turn our attention briefly, at the commencement, to the truth set forth in the text; "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it."

Let us consider

I. The nature of our work, as compared to that of builders, and the object to be aimed at by us—from which the dependence of success upon God will be manifest.

II. Some hints as to our duty as builders in the Lord's House.

III. Our encouragement.

I. The nature of our work, as compared to that of builders, and the object to be aimed at by us.

In various passages of Scripture we find the Church compared to a house, or temple, such as that of Solomon, and the work of the christian ministry compared to that of builders. Now, of what does