

The Church.

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A CHARGE

DELIVERED to the Clergy of the Diocese of Toronto, at the Triennial Visitation, held in the Cathedral Church of St. James, Toronto, on the 3rd June, 1847, by the Honourable and Right Reverend JOHN STRACHAN, D.D., Lord Bishop of Toronto.

MY REVEREND BROTHERS:

Three years have elapsed since I last addressed you from this place. During this period much has occurred in favour of the Church, for which it becomes us to be thankful, and nothing of a calamitous or unexpected nature, that can seriously impede her future progress.

It is indeed delightful to behold the affections of our people embracing with so much pious cordiality and increasing knowledge her distinctive principles, and with what correctness they are beginning to appreciate the beauty and efficacy of her forms of order and worship, with which we feel that there are none to be compared in point of Scriptural authority, ancient usage, and intrinsic excellence, in promoting the growth of living Christianity.

We readily grant that the forms and ceremonies used in the celebration of Divine worship are not properly speaking, religion itself; but they are, nevertheless, essential to its healthy existence and to the continuance of the visible Church, and were they removed, it would gradually disappear from the face of the earth.

But although the claims of the Church in our favour and affection are now more generally acknowledged, and the progress she has made in this Diocese, during the last three years, be very encouraging, we have yet to confess that, owing to circumstances over which we had no control, the number of our Clergy has not increased so rapidly as we had reason to anticipate.

Since we last met we have, from deaths, removals, and various casualties, lost about twelve Missionaries, and this has, in many ways, put us to great inconvenience; leaving parishes long vacant, disappointing reasonable hopes of obtaining a resident Minister, and preventing the appointment of so many Travelling Missionaries, as we had intended and have the means of supporting.

Even the growing prosperity of the Mother Church at home, for which we bless God, daily operates somewhat against our progress, because it creates so great a demand for Clergymen, that few are disposed to take up their lot with us in this distant Colony. Indeed, so long as there is so great an opening in England, it is not very clearly the duty of those brought forward to the Church in that country, to look to distant Colonies to discharge the functions of their Ministry.

In the meantime, our wants and spiritual destitution are increasing as our new settlements extend; and every advance we make in the waste places, only opens new fields of labour, and excites the still more distant settlers to make urgent applications for holy ordinances and a divinely constituted Ministry.

A brief inspection of the map of the Diocese will give us some faint conception of the present extent of this spiritual destitution. We have about three hundred and fifty organized townships, each containing about one hundred square miles, or space sufficient to constitute fifteen or twenty English parishes, and we have only one hundred and eighteen Clergymen, including two now past duty, and three who, having no cure of souls, are employed in the higher departments of education, but are always disposed to give such services as are in their power. We have therefore two hundred and thirty-seven townships, or more than two-thirds of the whole Diocese, with no resident Clergymen. In none of the districts (twenty in number) have we so many as one for every township. In the Wellington District, containing twenty-seven townships, we have only one resident Clergyman, and occasionally the services of a Travelling Missionary. In Victoria District, with twelve townships, and the Ottawa District, with ten townships, we have only two Clergymen in each. In the Huron District, there are only three Clergymen for twenty-one townships. Now, in each of these three hundred and fifty townships, one Clergyman might find ample employment, and in many of them three or four.

This Diocese is now supposed to contain upwards of six hundred thousand inhabitants, of these it is believed that one-third at least, or two hundred thousand, scattered indeed over all the townships, belong to, or are favourable to, the Church; and could we embrace them all in our ministrations, we should in no long time have the great majority of the whole population, for when the Church is beheld in her simplicity, fulness and beauty, she obtains the preference in every well-constituted mind; but owing to the fewness of our Clergy, we are in danger of losing many who might, under other circumstances, have become our sincere friends and supporters.

Our need of a great increase of Clergy is so pressing, that we hail with joy the magnificent scheme now brought to bear, in the establishment of a Theological College at Canterbury, for the express purpose of educating young men for the Colonial Church: yet the Colonies are so many, and their territories so extensive, that this noble Institution can furnish but a very few for each, and by no means supersede local seminaries of the same kind. It will, nevertheless, be in many respects exceedingly useful; it is a new link of grateful attachment to the Church at home, for it shows that she does not forget her distant children, and a sprinkling of young Clergymen coming among us from England, from time to time, will awaken many pleasing associations, and provoke us to new exertions.

Our Diocesan Theological College, I am happy to say, is in a very satisfactory and flourishing condition, both as to the number pursuing their studies, and the promise of usefulness and efficiency, which, as the result of the instruction they are receiving, they happily evince; yet the number of students presenting themselves is by no means so great as could be desired.

For this, indeed, in a Colony like this there are many causes. From continual immigration, the state of society is not so settled among us as in older countries. It takes a long time before our people recover from the struggles and privations incident to their new position, and it is not unnatural that there should be among them a desire to guide the minds of their youth to such employments as tend most rapidly and effectually to advance their physical improvement and social comforts. This will account for the fact, that so few from amongst the settled inhabitants of the Province, of that class from which candidates for the Ministry are in other countries usually derived, are found to offer themselves for that sacred office.

Hence it becomes the more necessary to encourage what, in Colonies, may be termed the middle classes of society; that is, the sons of respectable farmers and tradesmen, who, if they should be furnished in other respects with the requisite qualifications, are more likely to be able to contend successfully with the toils and difficulties incident to Missionary life in this Diocese, and to be content with the very frugal provision allowed them.

There is, however, another class of persons whom, in reference to this great object, it is particularly desirable to encourage. It is well known that amongst the emigrants from the Mother Country there are many families who have been induced to leave their native land mainly from the hope of securing to their children, in a new and less populous country, a decent provision and satisfactory settlement in life. Many of these naturally direct their attention to the learned profes-

sions, and some to the sacred Ministry. It is likewise a fact not to be overlooked, that a considerable number of those who are looking for a comfortable maintenance in the Colonies are the sons of Clergymen, settled in various parts of the United Kingdom, whose means have not enabled them to do more perhaps for any of their children, than secure them a good education at a Grammar School. To these different classes we are anxious to give every encouragement in our power to induce them to consign one, at least, of their sons to the Church. But I need not dwell on the excellence and importance of this object, for which I have twice solicited the assistance of the Diocese, in addition to the munificent grant of the Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts, because nothing can be more obvious than our need of additional labourers, while experience has fully proved that, without such assistance as we have been in the habit of extending, we shall find it difficult and perhaps impossible to ensure even a small supply of candidates for the sacred Ministry in the present state of this Colony.

In thus calling your attention to our need of a great increase of our Clergy, we must not be unthankful for the measure of success which God has vouchsafed us since the last visitation, as if we had made no addition to our ranks. At that time our number was one hundred and three; now, as already stated, we have over one hundred and eighteen, and have at this moment the means of employing, from our own resources, twelve or fourteen Travelling Missionaries. Our prospects, however, of a speedy increase, to any great extent, are not as yet sanguine. Next year the very able and learned Professor of Divinity in the University of King's College expects to present four or five candidates for Deacon's orders, and perhaps as many may come from Cobourg. Although it may be said, what are these among so many townships, we ought not to think lightly of the day of small things.

Since our last meeting in June, 1844, I have visited every Mission in the Diocese. Not having included Woodstock, Bleinheim, Wilmot, Stratford, and Zorra, in my former visitation, I held Confirmations in them respectively soon after we separated, and found them, and more particularly the first, namely, Woodstock, of great promise. In the summer of 1845 I visited the Districts West of Toronto, as far as the Mahnetonang Island, Lake Huron, and returned by the way of Owen's Sound. In the summer of 1846 I travelled through the Districts of Niagara, Simcoe, and the Home, and all those East of Toronto. The time occupied, and the continuous and great intensity of the heat in 1846, were rather beyond my strength, and warned me of the necessity of dividing the Diocese into three parts, instead of two, an arrangement which becomes the more requisite, from the extraordinary increase of Missions and Stations, at which my visits are desired. During my first visitations, in 1840 and 1841, I confirmed at seventy-four stations, scattered over an immense surface; in 1842 and 1843 they had increased to one hundred and two; and in 1845 and 1846, to one hundred and ninety-seven. Hence, you perceive that my stations, during those years, had increased ninety-five. Here it may be proper however to remark, that some of these last were rather stations of exploration, such as my journey to Owen's Sound, and other back settlements, that I might make myself better acquainted with the country and inhabitants, and show our Travelling Missionaries that I called upon them to undertake no labours which I am not willing to share. Some of the stations, as the country becomes better cleared and opened, and the roads more tolerable, may be joined for Confirmations, so as to economize labour; but this can only be done to a very limited extent, although it may be sufficient to prevent so great an increase under this head during the next three years. The number confirmed, in the course of my recent visitation, was 4358, which only exceeded the former by 679. This may be considered a less increase than might have been expected from the rapid growth of our population from immigration and natural causes. It is, however, necessary to remember, that the number of grown-up and elderly persons, who came forward during my first Confirmation journeys, has greatly diminished, and that the candidates now more generally consist of young persons. In respect to immigrants, many are confirmed before they leave home; and where it is otherwise, the mass of them proceed to the newest settlements, and do not for some time come within my range of travelling, extensive as it is, nor can they be reached with advantage, till some kind of roads or paths are made, even by our Clergy, active and laborious as they are.

It is very pleasing to remark, that a very great change has been for some years gradually manifesting itself in regard to the holy ordinance of Confirmation. Our people now almost universally believe and recognise it to be an Apostolic institution, and, to all who receive it, a most beautiful and impressive consummation of their baptism.

The frequent administration of this interesting ceremony has been especially blessed throughout the Diocese, and has had the most salutary effects upon the minds of many, whose views of the true foundation and principles of our Church were very confined and unfruitful. Following up the holy conceptions and aspirations which the frequent witnessing of Confirmation is calculated to produce, they have formed more correct opinions of the sacred functions of the Church of God, in her divine appointment to regenerate man and to mould him for heaven.

As an Apostolic ordinance, the Scriptural warrant for Confirmation is more generally admitted and appreciated. Our congregations feel it to be a most solemn and profitable renewal of their baptismal vows, and the taking possession of all the gifts and inheritance of the first Sacrament, with a full understanding of their infinite importance. They are farther taught to feel that it is the proper introduction to the holy Communion, and bestows upon them a blessed fellowship with the Church in all ages. Nor is it a small advantage to the pious mind, to have thus enjoyed an opportunity, at which the faith and obedience to Christ, promised for him by the lips of others in early infancy, shall be pronounced by his own; and that before he is admitted to the full privileges of the Church, he should have given this testimony publicly before God and the congregation. Hence Confirmation, being much better understood, has taken a far deeper hold on the hearts and minds of our people than it used to do. It is more felt in its spiritual application, and more affectionately valued by spiritual minds.

The return of seasons of Confirmation is looked for with much anxiety and satisfaction, and may be considered the great harvest of the Church. At no time do our services appear with greater loveliness and interest, except perhaps at the infant baptism of innocence and beauty, than when a band of young Christians come forward to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and their readiness to fight under his banner, against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto their life's end.

"I was delighted," said one of the most promising of my younger Clergy, "to hear many of my congregation observing that they were much affected at beholding the ordinance of Confirmation administered for the first time, displaying as it does the Episcopal authority, which is one of the marks of the Catholic Church. In one case, where I had been unable to persuade two young persons in a family to become candidates for Confirmation, they expressed great sorrow, after having witnessed the ceremony, that they had not yielded to my advice, and professed their determination to be confirmed, God willing, at the next opportunity."

The progress of the Church Diocesan Society in promoting the extension and endowment of the Church in this Colony, was brought so fully under your notice yesterday at the annual meeting, that it is not necessary that I should dwell at any length on the subject. Our people are everywhere more sensible of the duty of giving of their substance towards the permanent support of religion. The offertory is becoming

more general and effective, and wherever it has been introduced with a christian spirit, it has been attended with a visible blessing. How such a legitimate mode of contributing to the support and extension of the Church in this Diocese, in which we resemble in so many things the Church of the first age, came to be questioned by any one, can only be accounted for from inattention to the true nature and character of the Christian religion. What, it has been said, shall we, after a pathetic sermon destroy its effect by the jingling of money. Such a profane sarcasm could never have proceeded from a well constituted mind, because the charity called forth is one of the best means of shewing that the preacher has made the proper impression upon his hearers. He has opened their hearts to the temporal and spiritual wants of their fellow creatures, and made them eager to give God his portion. "Now abideth faith, hope and charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity;" for when faith is swallowed up in conviction, and hope in eternal blessedness, charity, or love, the bright image of God, burns in the bosoms of the redeemed for ever.

In this respect the Church Society has done much; and when the parochial system is judiciously carried out, by the Clergy joining and helping one another, the most happy results are sure to follow.

We are, as the first Christians, struggling to maintain and extend the truth, and for this purpose we are, as they were, planting a Church in every neighbourhood. Now this can only be done by contributing of our means, and that not grudgingly, but liberally; and there should be no delay, for if we do not lay a permanent foundation for the Church and her ministrations through the Diocese during the present age, thorns and briars will grow up, and a generation will succeed us who know not God. Great then, my brethren, is our responsibility, and fearful the guilt of those who neglect and discourage this labour of love.

It is scarcely necessary to answer the unsound objections of those who reject the offertory. Is it because their people are unfavourable? or because it will produce but little? We reply, it is a part of the public worship of God, sanctioned and practised by the Apostles, and enjoined by the Church; and we may with the same propriety oppose any other portion of Divine worship as this, and so banish religion altogether from the land. Have these objectors been at pains to explain this duty to their people—have they called attention to the Scripture sentences of the offertory in the Prayer Book—have they taught that charity is the brightest of the Christian graces, and that its diligent practice is made the ground by our Lord himself of a favourable judgment at the last day? Let us all feel that any serious neglect on this point, and especially in a new country like this, must be very fatal in its consequences, and that the responsibility rests chiefly upon us. Let it be seen that in this we are not seeking our own advancement and interest, but the glory of God.

Charity, be it remembered, though the brightest among the constellation of Christian graces, requires like every other virtue to be cherished and encouraged, and then it expands more and more in force and energy, and though still a duty it becomes a delight. Its meaning is not to be confined to almsgiving; for it is meant to promote and support every institution which may contribute to the health of the body and the soul. It should also in its beneficial effects be illustrated by examples, that its beauty and excellence may be the more deeply impressed upon the hearts of our people. The members of our Church should be taught never to come to Divine worship empty handed; and again and again should they be reminded of this important duty, which so strongly connects our devotion to God with kindness to man, and it should not be forgotten that a small exertion on the part of our people at the present time, would be more effectual than ten times the same exertion a few years hence. Suppose that in this Diocese sixty thousand families belong to the Church. Were each of these families to dedicate to the service of God a few acres of wild land, some giving more, some less, as God has enabled them, but, on the whole, averaging eight or ten acres each, it would form an endowment sufficient to establish, in time, three or four parishes in every township. Now, this is an effort which every one will readily acknowledge to be of no great magnitude, for an acre of land is of little value at present, and yet how mighty the results it would produce, and of what infinite importance to the country. It would enable the Church, with the other growing means at her disposal, to carry her holy ministrations to her children in every part of the Diocese in all future time, however numerous they might become. Some such effort as this, you will be pleased to learn, is in contemplation, and the detailed information necessary to put it forward, with hope of success, is now collecting; and even if partially successful, it will prove a good beginning, and, when fairly put in motion, it can be gradually carried forward as opportunity serves. For it is not a work to be completed in a day, or in many years. It is our duty to do all we can, and to leave the final issue to a higher power.

Nor, if we look at the ways of Providence, can we consider this issue doubtful. The Bishop of London proposed to build within the metropolis fifty Churches, and it has been proceeded with in a true Christian spirit, and will soon be accomplished. To build the like number of Churches required, a century ago, the whole influence of Government. The Bishop of London's proposal was a great definite object, and the building of the first Church silenced all doubts as to its practicability, and now that it is nearly completed, there will arise an assurance that the three or four hundred Churches still required in that immense city, will in due time be erected. So far the holy work has been blessed, and it would indeed be strange were it now to cease; but it cannot be. The holy impulse has been given,—a glorious emulation excited,—the benefits are already visible and striking, and the task, gigantic as it may appear, will be accomplished. Why then should we despond and tremble for the success of our plan? In all collective undertakings, the first step, or more properly speaking, the first act of faith, is the germ of all that succeeds it, because the pledge of actual consummation. Therefore, the first testimony, in holy confidence, to our scheme of extending the Church through the Diocese becomes to us an assurance of final triumph. Let no one start in despair at its magnitude, or think lightly of the day of small things.—Think of the late Mr. Wilberforce, standing alone in the British Legislature, in his first attempt to abolish the slave trade, when assailed with the scorn and fierce opposition of almost all around him, and his glorious triumph. Now, our object is as much a Christian duty as the abolition of the slave trade; and the time, it is hoped, is not distant in the history of this Diocese, when all our people shall recognize, as a first principle and their first duty, to provide for the salvation of the souls and bodies of men, and that we have no right to build ourselves "wide houses and large chambers, and ciel them with cedar, and paint them with vermilion," (Jer. xxiii. 14), until we have built up houses of God for every portion of the Christian population of the land. Nor are we without the encouragement of example in this great undertaking.—On my return from visiting the missions west of Toronto, in September, 1845, I found a letter from the Lord Bishop of Ripon, the perusal of which dissipated in a moment the continued fatigue which I had been enduring for several months. His Lordship stated, that "he had the pleasure to inform me that some munificent individual, entirely unknown to him, had deposited in his hands the sum of five thousand pounds sterling, which the donor wished to be appropriated to the building of a Church in the Diocese of Toronto, to be called the Church of the Holy Trinity; the patronage to be left entirely to the Bishop of the Diocese, as well as the situation."—Sacramental plate, surplices, and all things needful, were at the same time promised, and have since been furnished.—

The only condition imposed is, "that a yearly Report of the progress and circumstances of the Church is either to be printed in the Annual Report of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, entitled, 'Holy Trinity Church Report,' or to be sent to the Rev. H. Swale, M.A., Little Yorkshire, who will shew it to the benefactor. I have the most remote conjecture," adds the Bishop, "who the donor is." On consulting with several of my clergy and other friends of the Church, all of whom were filled with joy and admiration at this noble Christian manifestation of charity, they concurred with one voice that the free Church should be built at Toronto, by far the most populous city in the Diocese, and in a locality most likely to embrace the largest portion of the poor. This Diocese may be justly considered the great reservoir of emigration from the United Kingdom, and therefore its increase of population is extremely rapid, and of this increase Toronto naturally partakes more than any other town. Of the emigrants, many are of the poorer classes, so that a more valuable boon could not be conferred upon them, than that of building and endowing a free Church for their religious instruction. The great importance of the object which the pious and generous donor has in view is very much enhanced, from the fact that our Churches are commonly built by subscription, for which sittings and pews are in general stipulated, and although liberal provision is in most cases made for the more destitute class, often to the extent of one turn of the whole Church, yet thus generous as it appears to be, is not always sufficient, hence we have no little difficulty in providing convenient room in our churches for the accommodation of our poorer neighbours. Moreover, it is refreshing to know that we have a sacred edifice, one of the largest and most beautiful in the Diocese, built expressly for the benefit and use of the poor, into which they can enter with sweet independence of mind and grateful feelings of heart to the pious donor that it is their own. It is further proposed to attach to the Church a Free School, for the advantage of the children of the congregation and all others who may desire to avail themselves of the benefits it will offer.—The basis of instruction to be the Church Catechism, without neglecting those secular branches of education which are taught at schools from which religion is unwisely and wickedly excluded. Measures were immediately taken to find a site for the Church, eligible for the purpose intended, and to proceed without delay to its erection. In the selection of a proper site we met with some difficulty; several were offered, but they were not in the desired locality, and the price demanded by the proprietors of such as might have been deemed eligible, was so great as would have trenchanted on the wished for endowment.—From anxiety on this subject, however, we were soon relieved by the Honourable John Macaulay, retired Lieutenant Colonel of the Royal Engineers, who bestowed upon us, gratis, the very spot which we had all believed to be the most appropriate, at an expense to himself of more than five hundred pounds. While we offer our warmest thanks for this generous and seasonable gift, we beg to acknowledge our obligations to several other gentlemen, who generously offered us sites, but which were declined, because not convenient for the object in view. But we have not done with our generous benefactor. The whole proceedings are clothed with something so delightfully holy, that to dwell upon them is to elevate and purify our own hearts and affections, and thus to produce similar fruit. In due time the sacramental plate for the Church, and also for private communion with the sick, with table-cloths, napkins, and surplices, &c., all of which are very much admired for their tasteful elegance, reached us in safety. But what created still greater admiration, and still deeper feelings of gratitude, were the magnificent gifts, and their beautiful appropriation, for rejoicing on the day of the consecration of the Church, with which these things were accompanied.—First,—The donor desires that fifty pounds sterling be presented at the Offertory on the day of the consecration of the Church of the Holy Trinity, should the Holy Communion be then administered; if not, on the first occasion on which there is a Communion. Second,—That the same sum be offered to supply gifts and rejoicings for the poor on the day of consecration. Third,—That the sum of fifty pounds sterling be offered and appropriated for an Altar Cloth for the Church of the Holy Trinity. Fourth,—That the like sum of fifty pounds sterling be offered for the beautifying of the Font; or should that be completed, for any internal decoration for the more devotional observance of Divine Service. Such a complete act of charity, and so thoughtful and delicate in all its arrangements, and descending with holy foresight to the most minute things which might in any way tend to the devotional objects of the gift, is scarcely to be found in the history of the Christian Church. Wealth is indeed a blessing, when it is thus devoted to so noble a purpose as the extension of Christ's kingdom.

But while we are most grateful to the donor who has thus provided for the spiritual instruction of our poor, it may not be out of place to mention some exertions among our own people, which have a kindred spirit, and may, by the blessing of God, provoke others to the like good works. The congregation of the township of Dunwich is composed of a few families, which are entirely rural in their manners and habits, and manifest the strongest attachment to the Church; of their zeal in her favour they have given many proofs. Though few in number, they have erected a neat Church on a plot of ten acres of land, without any assistance from other quarters. One individual, a farmer, gave eighty pounds towards its erection, another sixty pounds; while the land, and also a set of excellent books for the desk, were the donation of an aged lady of the congregation, now departed, who has left for the benefit of the Church a small legacy yet to come. They have lately built a commodious Parsonage House, and have added to their Church a handsome steeple, furnished with a large bell; and all this has been done quietly and without any bustle or apparent effort, as if they were matters of course. Is it not from this example evident that there needs only the same spirit to do the same in every populous neighbourhood throughout the Diocese?

The Church in the township of Westminster we owe to the vigorous and unwearying labours of Miss Watson, a lady who came to Canada principally with the view of establishing her nephews on land. On arriving in this township, where a purchase had been made on her behalf, she found it unprovided with religious ordinances. Her first step was to appropriate ten acres of her farm for the site of a Church, Churchyard, and Parsonage; she then appealed to her friends in England for assistance in aid of her own and her neighbours efforts, and she has now the satisfaction of beholding her exertions crowned with success in a very commodious Church with a respectable congregation. A few such persons in each District, and their waste places would soon rejoice and blossom. In the township of Malahide we have a signal proof of what may be done by a single person, whose heart is in the work. Mr. Johnson has a large family, and is not a wealthy farmer, nevertheless he resolved upon building a Church on his own farm. The Church is almost completed, as he is determined to finish it without any assistance. This he says he had on his mind when he first came into the woods and settled on his land, and was an invigorating source of encouragement which never left him; and to this he attributes his continual health and gradual progress towards independence. It was, he remarked, a great undertaking for a poor man, but he and his family have done most of the work with their own hands; and he thinks he is in better circumstances than he would have been had he made no such attempt. This shews how much good a man may do, even in situations by no means promising, when sincerely disposed and heartily labouring for the honour and service of God. A very few such men could establish and endow a parish and not feel it a burthen, but a blessing, as Mr. Johnson now does.

[TO BE CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT.]