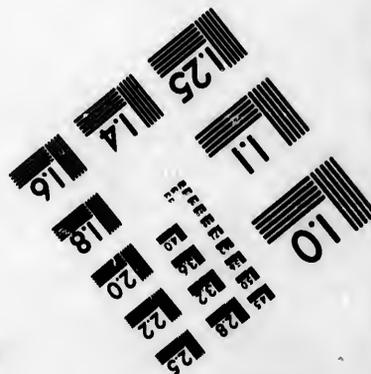
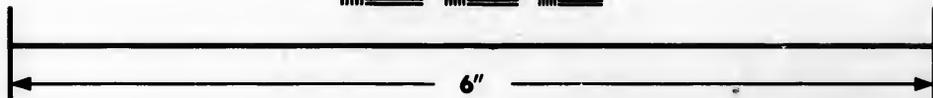
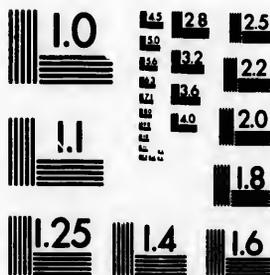


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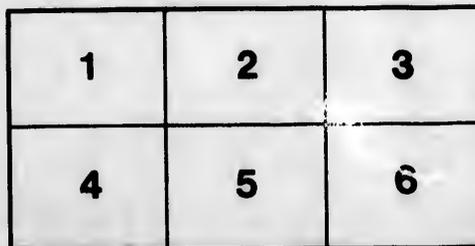
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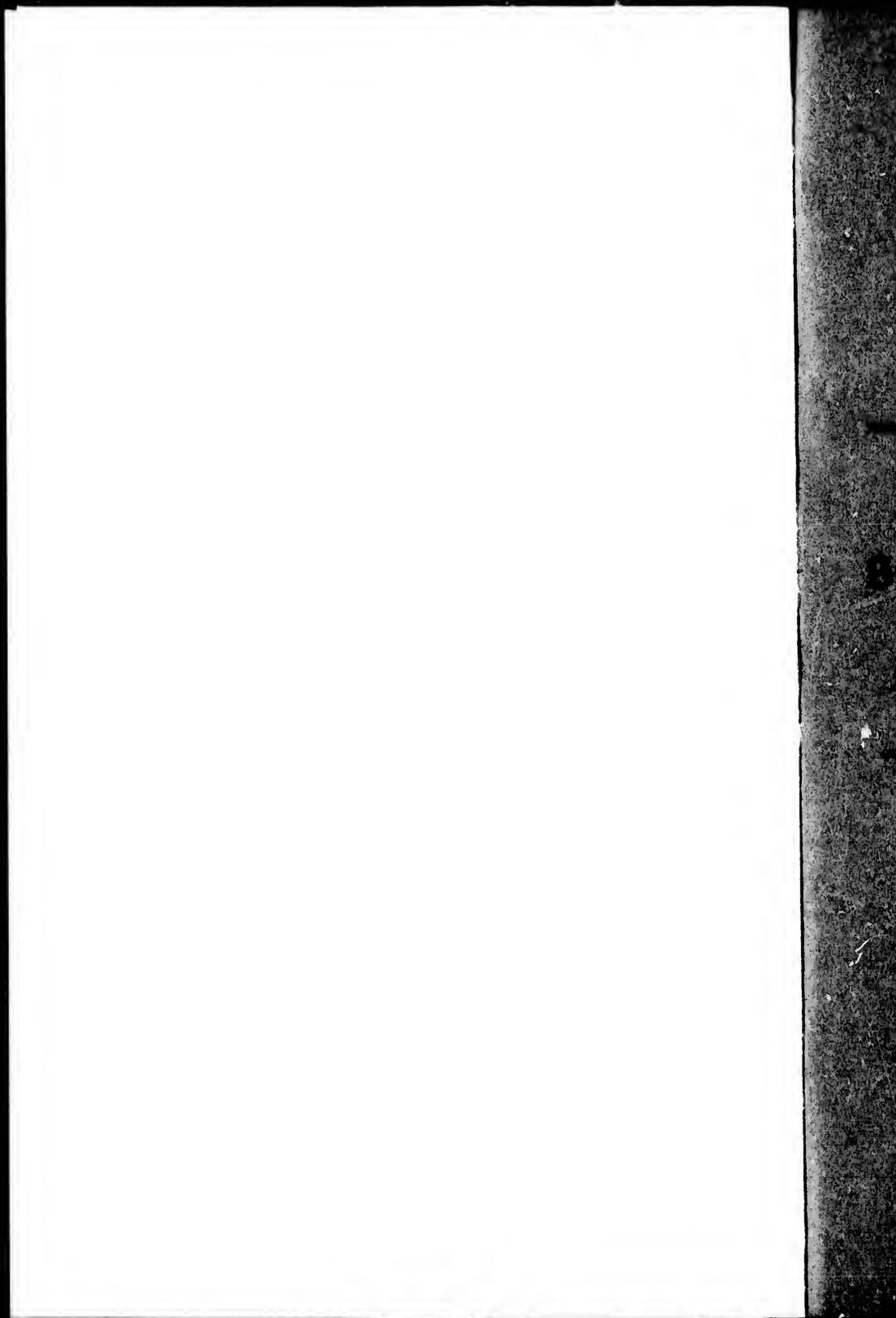
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DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT
St. George's Church, Montreal

ON CHRISTMAS DAY, 1861.

BY THE REV. GABRIEL LAUREL, D.D.

Author of "The Church of St. George's, Montreal," &c.

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN

St. George's Chapel, Montreal,

ON CHRISTMAS DAY, 1861,

(The 6th and 7th Companies of the Prince of Wales Regiment
being present,)

BY THE REV. CANON LEACH, D.C.L.,

Incumbent of St. George's Chapel.

MONTREAL:

PRINTED BY JOHN C. BECKET, 38 GREAT SAINT JAMES STREET.

1862.

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This discourse, written with no thought of its being published, is published at the request of the 6th, and 7th, Companies of Prince of Wales Regiment of Volunteer Militia Rifles of Canada Active Force.

REVISED EDITION
ADAPTED TO

36052

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN

St. George's Chapel, Montreal,

On CHRISTMAS DAY, 1861.

Matthew 10. 34.—Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword.

The proper matter and occasion of this day's solemnity is the birth of our Lord. His nativity is the beneficent event, that comprises in itself, the conditions that render all other festivals joyful, being an expression of God's love, that so much exceeds all that was ever called by that precious name, that, as St. Paul says, "the love of God in Christ Jesus is a thing that passeth knowledge."

Very often on former occasions, has it pleased Almighty God, to grant us the opportunity in this place to commemorate, in the happiest circumstances, this great event in the history of man; and notwithstanding the sorrowful nature of the intelligence* that has just reached our shores and flashed through the land; notwithstanding too, the doubtful and portentous aspect of human affairs, in the eventful complexity of which, we must be necessarily involved, there is still cause—the same everlasting cause, to rejoice in the Lord's nativity, and to celebrate with the best and purest devotion of heart, that instance of God's early and everlasting mercy.

It was known of old that some interference of God was needed, for the well-being and salvation of the human race.

* The death of his Royal Highness, the Prince Consort.

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It was known, from ancient days, that there was no hope of these, if the whole matter depended upon what man himself could do. All the tribes of men, what were they, but exiles from Paradise, and heirs of nothing but strife and sin, want, toils and miseries. Fallen from the better state, they became the prone slaves of superstitious terrors, the victims of one another's craft and wickedness, godless and shrunken creatures, but for God's interference and successive merciful manifestations of Himself. By the manifestation of himself in Christ, his purpose was, to restore and exalt our nature. He thereby allied us to himself, so that you and I, and all with whom the faith of Christ is a vital and sanctifying power, may be, in a certain emphatic and transcendent sense, the sons and daughters of the everliving God ; and for this cause assuredly, we may still raise the voice of thanksgiving, which has, for so many ages, swelled the song of praise on this day, in Christ's Church—"Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and goodwill to man."

But how does this correspond with the words of our blessed Lord himself, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth ; I came, not to send peace, but a sword." How does the song of the heavenly host upon the plains of Bethlehem, agree with this assertion ? Let us first advert to the fact, that the gospel of Christ has brought peace to the world, and secondly, let us endeavour to show, that the words of our Lord in the text, are consistent with it.

In the first place, our Saviour sent peace on earth, when he gave the clear and infallible knowledge of the fact of God's boundless love to the fallen children of men ; and this fact was made clear and incontestible by the mission of his only begotten Son for their salvation. It became thenceforth known that God looked not on the children of men with raging and satanic fury, as their ignorance of His character had induced the people to believe, but, on the contrary that He

sought their salvation with inexpressible tenderness and affection. 2dly. Our Saviour gave peace on earth, when he gave himself a sacrifice or expiation for our sins against God. 3rdly. Christ sent or gave peace on earth, since he proclaimed and authoritatively taught those moral and spiritual principles, the possession of which is necessary to salvation, and without which, there can be neither peace nor salvation in time nor eternity, and when, in addition, he provided by the agency of the Divine Spirit, for the efficacious reception of those principles.

Since the days of Christ until now, the work of our blessed Lord has exerted, through all ages and in all civilized states, an influence which it is utterly impossible to estimate. It has infused into the souls of millions, in every age, the peace of God, which passeth knowledge. It has, in instances innumerable, suppressed or alleviated the violence of war. It has, invariably, discountenanced the usurpation of ambition and deeds of rapacity and wrong. The world owes to it, all the long and precious intervals of peace, which it has enjoyed.

It is true indeed, what the song of the angels proclaimed, viz., "peace on earth, and good will to men." But it is true in the second place when considered in another point of view, that Christ came, not to send peace, but a sword. A wicked man cannot be made good, without a great conflict. Many bodily diseases of the most dangerous character cannot be cured without inflicting great pain—without operations attended with the most acute sufferings for the time. Do you suppose that a world lying in wickedness, could be brought to goodness and reduced to peace with God, could be cured of its mortal and universal diseases, without pain or conflict, without struggle and resistance? From the moment that the redemptive work of our Lord began, rage

against it and opposition to it, commenced. The Kings of the earth combined and plotted against the Lord and his anointed—kings and peoples too, and spiritual wickedness in high places, all the unholy legions, whose interests were affected, whose pride was wounded, whose soul of evil was pained, resisted Christ's work, and in all countries where the glad tidings of salvation came, with what rage and violence did they often demand that it should be arrested; and as it ever has been, so it is now, and will be, till Christ shall come again. In the conflict of light and darkness, in the struggle that never ceases between sin and righteousness—between truth and error—between spiritual life and spiritual death—between the salvation and the damnation of the living world of men, there will be suffering on the one hand and violence on the other, the living sacrifice and the persecuting evil. Between man's creation and his end, it is a very long and an eventful fight, and hence, though the gospel of Christ is eminently the gospel of peace, peace in its design, peace in its tendency, peace in view of its actual effects as seen in long intervals of the world's past history, and peace in the end, and that an unbroken and everlasting peace, yet, till that time shall arrive, till the salvation of Christ shall have its perfect course and the regenerated world breathe nothing but holy love to man, and loving obedience to God, there will be conflict and the sword, and now and then, the wild roar of war.

Our blessed Lord, in the words of the text, very clearly indicated this as one of the conditions, upon which the final grace and salvation of the world were to be brought to pass, and in view of the menacing aspect of public affairs, it is our duty, alas! a very painful duty, to look to the dark side as well as to the bright, of the great conflict begun at the nativity of Jesus, and to remember what he has said of the sword, as well as what the heavenly angels sung to the Shepherds.

Intelligence has been brought us in no ambiguous language, that we are in imminent danger of one of the greatest possible evils, that can befall a country ; already the apprehension of war, and the premonitory din of arms, ominous of the mortal strife, are in the midst of us. That God, in his infinite mercy, may turn away and dissolve this impending cloud of calamity, is the burden of every good man's prayer. Without attempting to balance the probabilities, whether or not, this evil may descend upon us, the voice that gives us warning is one that demands, in all cases, the most profound attention, and, notwithstanding the symptoms of peace that appear on the present countenance of affairs, it may be as well for us to remember, that it is a voice which has seldom or never been known to give a false alarm. It is yet too early to indulge the flattering hope, that the danger is even already on the eve of departing, and while it is our duty to study the things which "make for peace"—to abstain from all irritating language—to keep clear of all acts of aggression and injustice—and in particular with respect to the citizens of the United States, who may happen to come among us, or reside amongst us with honourable purposes, to treat them, if possible, with more than ordinary respect and hospitality, and take care that they be shielded in person and property by the laws of our country ; I say, while it is our duty in such things as these to be very studious of peace, we may recollect at the same time, that it is an additional security when we are prepared for the resistance of violence. One is never so ready to strike an adversary when he stands armed from head to foot, prepared to defend himself. Had Abel taken the precaution to fix a few inches of iron to his shepherd's crook, perhaps his brother Cain would have been less ready to become his murderer.

On the supposition that the calamity of war should light upon us, there is one circumstance that should be kept pro-

minently in view, and that is—we shall be defending our own homes and our most sacred rights—we shall have a just cause—a cause for which we cannot be ashamed to supplicate the strength that we need, from the God that is Almighty. To repel invasion, to sustain the system of laws and the free institutions, which it has pleased God to grant us here, is a just cause. It is, altogether unlike a war of aggression upon the soil of another, and totally different in its character, from any war of invasion, dictated by rapacity, or revenge, or ambition. In defending ourselves we are robbing or cheating no one—in defending ourselves we are hurting none, but them that are seeking to destroy us; and if we have a political constitution with which we are contented, if we have been shielded by its laws in life and property, and in all that we hold dear in the solemnities of our religious faiths and forms of social life—if we have prospered under its protection, and are proud to work out our destiny as a people, bound by the strongest affection of love and gratitude to that mother country, whose courageous sons in days gone past procured for us by heroic deeds and indomitable energy and perseverance, the inheritance which we possess in this Canadian land—if these are blessings worthy of being protected, let us protect them, with united and determined resolution. If we stand not on our defense for them we do not deserve to possess them. This is a case that will endure no wavering or stupid hesitation, unless we wish to be recreants to all that is estimable and truly good among men.

It has sometimes been objected against the lawfulness of military service, that Christ has declared “that they who take the sword, shall perish by the sword.” But these words have no reference to military service; they refer to private retaliation of injuries. No legislative system allows the individual to take the law into his own hands—such a per-

mission would be a suicidal error. If a man kills another who has injured him, the civil magistrate will punish him, and justly. That is the signification of the passage. Saint Paul says, "if it be possible, as far as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." Yes, *if it is possible*, but how is it possible to *live* peaceably, if they advance in armed force, for the purpose of destroying you? Again, it is objected, that a time shall come, when men "shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and that nation shall not rise against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." That happy time is, alas! still to come, and to all appearances, it is yet far distant. When the soldiers came to John, saying, "and what shall we do?" did he tell them that military service was unlawful? did he not tell them "to be content with their wages?" Did our Blessed Lord not commend the faith of the Centurion? The Centurion was a soldier and received from Christ no command to strip off his regimentals, throw down his armour, and abandon the service. Many are the names of the holiest men mentioned in the Scriptures—the names of those who bore arms in war. Abraham was captain of a battalion formed out of his own family or tribe, and, returning from battle, was *blessed* by Melchisedec, priest of the most High God. I need not speak of Moses and Samuel and Joshua and David. The truth is, that war is not only lawful, but often a matter of necessity, and, in many cases, the highest duty which can be required at our hands. If a prosperous and religious people are to maintain their advantages and preserve their existence as a socially organised body, they must be able to protect themselves from the injurious violence of others. There is no intelligible principle of duty that requires them to suffer themselves to be plundered and preyed upon, to be dismembered or destroyed. If it is allowable for a good man, when attacked by a murderer, to defend himself

to the best of his ability, if every civilized race of human beings is justly called upon to defend itself against the rude attacks of savages that may inhabit its frontier settlements, so is every civilized people that possess a political constitution of their own, bound in duty to repel the aggressions of others, who, in the frenzy of human passions may assail them unjustly and act violently against their safety.

I honour the profession of arms, and the men that bear them. I honour them because I believe, that, in the last resort, they are the guardians of the laws under whose regulative and fostering influence all the dearest and holiest interests of a people, exist and grow. No laws, then no justice, no truth no order, no religion—nothing but anarchy and degradation and the wild outbreak of all the vilest passions that teem from the depraved hearts of men—a state in which a good man would rather die, than live. I honour them, because, in the last resort, they are the bulwark of the very existence of a nation when the storm of war breaks upon it. They stand the brunt of the battle. They constitute the great wall of fire, that protects every department of the social state ; it is they that sustain the shock, and offer themselves a kind of sacrifice for the safety of others. There was a time in Israel, when neither shield nor spear was to be found among forty thousand of the children of Israel. Then was the time of anarchy ; they chose new gods and the Lord sold them into the hands of of their enemies, till there arose a mighty princess, styled a mother and judge in Israel. “The inhabitants of the villages ceased ; they ceased, until that I Deborah arose, until that I arose, a mother in Israel.” She honoured the volunteer. “My heart is towards them” she said, “my heart is with the leaders in Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people.” And I will make bold to say, that had the mother of our Israel, I mean her most graci-

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ous Majesty the Queen—had her tongue now liberty of expressing the thought of her mind—even now, in the sorrow perhaps, of a half broken heart, I know not what might be the exact words, but I am certain that their meaning would be that of Deborah's "My heart is towards you that offer yourselves willingly amongst the people."

Opportunities are precious, because they may never return, and I should gladly have seized the present opportunity, to say something at large as to the duties of the soldier. But the time forbids more than the statement of a few general propositions.

Among the first duties of those who bear arms, is an inviolable loyalty. They are to serve the cause, which they profess to serve. To their good faith and allegiance are entrusted interests of the greatest magnitude, and it is always best to be honest and true. No man can be happy, no man can be brave, that does not hold within his breast, the treasure of a clear and quiet conscience.—Loyalty and truth are precious in the eyes of God.

Again—the willing and ready obedience which the soldier is required to render to the command of those under whose authority he is placed, is obviously a duty of the greatest importance. This lies at the root of all efficiency and success. Without this, nothing can be done in combination, and with consistency. If this obedience is rendered with a view to the preservation of public order, or for national defense, it is well pleasing to God. The soldier's work is thus sanctified, and his reward is certain.

Again—there is the duty of a bold and vigorous discharge of his office, when it is required of him. If he has to encounter a danger, let him make up his mind to meet it with force and determination, with confidence and cheerfulness. We have seen that he may justly invoke the assistance

and blessing of God, and the good soldier that falls in the battle field, is like the priest struck dead when ministering at the altar—both are in the place of duty, and the place of duty is always in the ways of God. Other lands have their defence in the number and courage of their armies, and shall this young Country of ours have no walls of fire round about it? Is there nothing precious or dear to be here defended? I need not ask you—I know your reply.

It is another property of a soldier, to be able to commit his cause cheerfully to God, that fearing God, he may have no other fear. His spiritual life may grow in conjunction with his duties—not that he needs to be a monk, but still, in the exercise of his religious duties, he may have cause to expect that he is approved of, by the All Seeing Eye of his Heavenly Father. Be loyal, be obedient, be courageous and God fearing. Suppress all feelings of private animosity, and abstain from all private quarrels. Be temperate too—“He that striveth for the mastery must be temperate in all things.” And thus, if called upon in the course of Providence to struggle and contend and encounter dangers in your country’s cause, may you have faith to believe, that the grace and strength of God will not be withdrawn from you, but supplied abundantly in the day of trial, if such a trial should come, enabling you to endure hardship as good Soldiers of Christ.

Let us hope, nevertheless, that the gracious goodness of God may put to sleep all the elements of strife, and silence the sullen murmurs of the dread calamity of war. Grant us, O Heavenly Father, grant us peace—that peace which the blessed Angels sang rejoicing, when the new born Saviour first visited the children of men. It has happened to us this Christmas Day, that our cup of joy is mingled, not only with bitterness arising from the prospect of a great calamity, but with the sorrowful intelligence of the death of the Prince

Consort—one, whose conduct and wisdom and many noble virtues had won the nation's love and admiration—an event which the citizens of the Mother Country are even now mourning with unfeigned sadness—sadness still more profound on account of the sorrow of our beloved Queen, whom may God support and make strong to bear the affliction, which in his inscrutable wisdom, he has sent. We know, that out of all the evils that are born in time, God will educe some good that will remain eternally. Let this be our hope and consolation in all conjunctures, and though some dark shadows of doubtful import are apparent in our usually peaceful and lustrous skies, and are well calculated to make the brow grave, and fill our hearts with anxiety, let these only move you to stand firm to your duties in the day of trial and to seek more earnestly that blessing of God, which maketh rich and addeth no sorrow thereto—then shall this Christmas be a joyful one to you after all, and the voice of your Heavenly Father whisper to your hearts his love and mercy, that endure forever.—Amen.



