

A D D R E S S

DELIVERED BY THE

PRINCIPAL OF M^CGILL COLLEGE,

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

OPENING OF THAT INSTITUTION,

ON THE

SIXTH SEPTEMBER, 1843.

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**Montreal :**

PRINTED BY LOVELL AND GIBSON, ST. NICHOLAS STREET.



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LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

To the Governors of this College, whose persevering exertions are now so far crowned with success,—to the learned professions, and to the laity generally,—to all of these, individually and collectively, it must be a subject of the most heartfelt congratulation that we are here assembled to witness the opening of the first Institution, in this portion of the British Empire, which is authorized to confer those literary honors and distinctions to which it will, henceforward, be the privilege of our youth to aspire. It is a subject of such deep and engrossing importance as should unite us all in one undivided and unqualified expression of most humble and hearty thanksgiving to Him, who is the bountiful bestower of every good and perfect gift.

In virtue of the office which I have the honor to hold in this University, the duty devolves upon me of setting forth, in this public manner, the general principles upon which it is to be conducted. But I beg to be permitted, previously, to occupy a few minutes of your time in setting before you a concise history of its rise, and of its progress to its present state.

The founder of this University was a highly respectable merchant in this city, whose honorable industry and perseverance in his calling had been crowned with an ample fortune. Desirous

of bestowing upon the country of his adoption,—upon the country in which he had accumulated his wealth, some extensive and lasting public benefit, he consulted his intimate friend and connexion by marriage, the present Lord Bishop of Toronto, in the year 1810, while on a visit to his Lordship at Cornwall, of which the Bishop was then Rector. To his Lordship, then, we are indebted for the suggestion of founding this Institution in fulfilment of the desire of Mr. McGill, to leave behind him a valuable and permanent testimonial of his gratitude for the ample blessings which it had pleased a kind and bountiful Providence to bestow upon him. Mr. McGill, therefore, bequeathed this property, on which we are now standing, then estimated to be worth £5,000, and the sum of £10,000 in money, towards the erection and endowment of an University. It was stipulated in his Will, that if the University should consist of more than one College, one of the Colleges should be called after his own name; and if it should consist of only one College, then that one should have the like denomination. The bequest was made in favour of four Trustees, of whom the Bishop of Toronto was one, to be transferred by them, for the purposes intended, to the Board of the Royal Institution for the advancement of Learning, so soon as it should be constituted in virtue of the Provincial Statute, passed in 1801, authorizing the Governor of Lower Canada to constitute that Board. Mr. McGill died in 1813, but the Board of the Royal Institution for the advancement of Learning was not constituted until the year 1819, when the Trustees duly invested them with the bequest in conformity with the Will of the Testator. It was one condition of the Will that the bequest should remain in the enjoyment of the residuary legatee for a limited period, and that unless the University was erected within ten years from the death of the Testator, the bequest should revert to that residuary legatee. The Board of the Royal Institution therefore lost no time in applying to the residuary legatee to be put into possession of the bequest, in order to the fulfilment of their trust, but they were unhappily met by a refusal to comply with the wishes of the benevolent Testator, (who, it may be here remarked, was the legatee's own most munificent benefactor,) on the ground that the Testator could not legally devise any por-

tion of his property in *Mortmain*. The consequence of this refusal was a long course of litigation, protracted through a period of 16 or 17 years, a circumstance which sufficiently accounts for the delay which has occurred in bringing the wishes of the founder into effect. In the mean time the Board of the Royal Institution procured the erection of the University by a Royal Charter, granted by His late Majesty George the Fourth, in the year 1821,—a course of proceeding which was sustained in our Courts of law as removing the difficulty which might have otherwise arisen with respect to a compliance with the condition that the University should be erected within the time specified by the Testator, until they could obtain possession of the means devised for a more literal fulfilment of his design.

A single glance at the Will of the late Mr. McGill must convince any who are at all conversant with our Provincial history, that he must have had in his view the prospect of a rich endowment of Seminaries of Learning in this Province by the Crown. It is impossible to suppose that a person of the late Mr. McGill's intelligence and connexion with Provincial public affairs should not have been aware of the fact that His late Majesty George the Third had communicated to the Governor of Lower Canada, in the year 1801, his Royal desire that His Excellency and the Executive Council should take up the subject of extensive grants of land for the purposes of education,—and that a report had been subsequently made to the Secretary of State favourable to extensive endowments of Schools and Colleges in this section of Canada—one of the last at Quebec and one at Montreal—and moreover that this report was favourably entertained by His Majesty, and orders sent to this country to carry it into effect. It is impossible to suppose that when Mr. McGill made his Will he was unacquainted with these facts—indeed his Will directly points to them—because he made his bequest in aid of the erection and maintenance of a College at Montreal—evidently pointing to the one which he supposed would be endowed by Government in this city, to the extent of twenty thousand pounds. It is deeply to be lamented that those enlarged and benevolent views of his late most gracious Majesty of pious memory, have never been carried out. This is most deeply to be

deplored—and it is natural enough for us, at this day, to ask why they were not carried into effect—especially when we see that in that portion of this Province which was then called Upper Canada, those views have been fully accomplished. It is at least very easy to discern the cause of this last result—it was the active, unabated zeal and untiring exertions of the Bishop of Toronto. Is it not then reasonable to suppose that a similar zeal and similar exertions on the part of those in this section of the Province, whose duty it was to attend to this most important matter, would have been crowned with the like success? We cannot take upon ourselves to say that such zeal did not exist—that such exertions were not made—but we can and will say that we have no evidence of either. Of one thing, however, we are quite certain, namely, that not one acre of public land, not one farthing of the public money has been bestowed, in the way of endowment, upon this Institution—and the consequence has been that it has the character of a College of private foundation, depending solely upon the resources of that foundation, and upon such aid as may from year to year be granted by the Legislature. It is then precisely in the same position, with respect to the public, as the Roman Catholic Colleges in this section of the Province, and as the Church of Scotland and Methodist Colleges in Canada West. They are of private foundation and so is this;—If, therefore, the Legislature grants assistance to each of those Colleges, whose management is exclusively in the hands each of its own denomination, and are of an exclusively religious character—we may, *a fortiori*, expect to receive aid to the same amount, at least. With these preliminary observations, I proceed to develop the general principles upon which this University is to be conducted.

The Charter which has been read, it is almost superfluous to say, is the authority by which its rulers must be guided—the law and the testimony to which they must appeal—that Charter which was granted by the Sovereign to the petition of those into whose hands the bequest was temporarily intrusted. The first provision in the Charter is for inculcating the principles of true religion. The very first question then, which presented itself to the consideration of the Governors, was that of the religious

character of the Institution. Had the Charter been silent upon this subject, it might in that case, in these days of mawkish liberality, have become a question of policy whether the University might not be more popular, and more likely to receive general as well as legislative support, as a mere seminary of instruction in the arts and sciences, if it were divested of all religious character. I am grieved to say that, in the present temper and feelings of a portion of the inhabitants of Canada, I fear this would be the case. I fear that to secure the cordial good wishes of a considerable body of professing Christians, it would be necessary, anomalous as it may appear, to decree that Christian teaching and Christian worship must be excluded from the walls of this University :—For, to satisfy all parties in this respect, we have to choose one of only two alternatives. We must allow every one of the almost countless sects into which the Christian family is unhappily divided, to have its representative religious teacher and its daily worship within these walls, or we must banish from its precincts even the sound of the name of that God “in whom we live and move and have our being.” I trust there is good sense enough left among us to enable every one to see, at a single glance, that the first of these alternatives cannot be entertained. For not to enlarge upon the distracting effects of such a system upon the minds of the youth who may be congregated here, or upon its inevitable tendency to scepticism and infidelity, a simple calculation will shew its utter impracticability in operation. There are now, within the small compass of this city alone, to say nothing of the whole Province, not less than ten different sects of Christians. If we suppose each of these to have a Professorship of Theology established here, we should then require for this faculty alone, nearly three times the whole number of Professorships which are allowed by the Charter. But if we suppose this difficulty surmounted, each of these ten sects must have its morning and evening service, occupying at least ten hours, or some two hours more in each day, than is usually devoted to instruction altogether, in all the arts and faculties,—or are we to have ten separate chapels within these walls in which the worship of God is to be simultaneously celebrated?

What shall we say of the other alternative—that of



banishing all religious instruction, all religious worship, from the walls of the University; that of permitting, it may be, some hundreds of our youth to be congregated here in a state of Heathenism—nay, worse than this, (for the Heathen would not suffer the worship of their Gods to be excluded from such an Institution,) in a state of absolute Atheism, for any thing that they should be permitted to be taught here to the contrary,—*And is it come to this?* Is this the boasted liberality of the 19th century, which leads professing Christians to say that they cannot unite in the support of a seminary of learning, where a child should be trained up in the way in which he *should* go, unless that seminary be based upon a principle which would be spurned by those Heathen whose darkness it is the earnest and laboured desire of the same Christians to dissipate! If example be more powerful in its effects than precept, I should like to know how it would do to tell the Heathen, while we are setting before them the doctrine of salvation through Christ, that it is necessary to exclude the teaching of that doctrine from our chief seminaries of learning, because the mode of doing so might be offensive to some?—Well indeed may we here unite in prayer to God, that having “built his Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, he would grant to us to be so joined together in unity of spirit, by their doctrine, that we may be made an holy temple, acceptable unto Him, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

I appeal to you fathers—I appeal to you pious mothers, whose chief delight it is to teach the infant tongue to lisp the praises of its God, and while they are still fresh as it were from the hand of their Creator, uncontaminated by the corruptions, untouched by the ambitions and unclouded by the cares of the world, to imbue their young minds with the love of their Saviour at the time when they are most susceptible of those impressions which are most pure and most lovely—to lead them to the contemplation of the glories of his resplendent path upon earth, of his sufferings and of his sacrifice, until they love him even as he hath loved us. I appeal to you whether you would be willing, whether you would consider it consistent with your duty

to those same children, to permit them, when they have become more exposed to the temptations of sin, to be inmates of an establishment whence you knew that the teaching of that religion, and the worship of that God, and of that Saviour were banished ;—and where, finding all their time, their talents and their energies devoted to the cultivation of the arts and faculties, they must naturally infer that the one thing needful which their mothers taught them to believe, is only ideal—since the wise and learned men under whose care and instruction they are now placed, and who are goading them on to the acquisition of all the knowledge which they consider to be most useful and valuable, have never spoken of that one thing needful, of that jewel of inestimable price, for the purchase of which their pious mothers had taught them they should sell, if need be, even the whole world if it were theirs.

I shall not urge this argument farther—to say all that might be said on the subject would occupy far more of the time of this meeting than any one individual could be allowed to take up. But enough I trust has been said to show that, even if the Charter of this Institution had been silent on the subject, the Governors could not, consistently with the due discharge of the trust reposed in them, have consented to divest it of all religious character. In a word, that must be a sound principle of human action which bases all human proceedings upon religion.

Much stress, I am aware, is attempted to be laid upon the circumstance, that no mention is made, in the Will of the founder of this Institution, of instruction in the principles of religion, but only of “education and the advancement of learning,” and it is inferred that he did not consequently contemplate any preference in favour of any particular denomination of Christians. But this I must take leave to say is not a legitimate conclusion from the premises; for Mr. McGill either considered religious instruction to be included in “education,” or he did not. If he did not, as it is contended, then we must conclude that, by the mere provisions of his Will in this respect, no religious instruction of any description could be given in this University. But if we bear in mind that when Mr. McGill made his Will, a University without religion was a thing unknown within the British

dominions;—the experiment of such a scheme was reserved for a much later period—an experiment which has proved a signal failure—the fair conclusion then is that the founder of this University did consider religion to be included in “education.” But if we admit for a moment, the supposition that he did not so consider it, how would the question be affected by such a hypothesis? It must be admitted, on all hands, that the intentions of the testator could not have been carried into effect in the establishment of an University, without a Charter making provision for the manner and form, and for the regulations under which it must be conducted. If, then, it had been clearly set forth by the founder, that no religion was to be taught in the contemplated University, it would follow that no part of his bequest could be legally appropriated under a Charter which prescribed “instruction in the principles of true religion.” This University must therefore fall to the ground, and the money of the testator applied by his trustees under that Charter must be refunded. This would be a consummation which I apprehend none of those who pretend so to interpret the Will of the late Mr. McGill, would desire to see. But how stand the *facts* in this case? The testator bequeathed land and money to a corporate body, called “The Royal Institution for the advancement of Learning,” in trust, to be applied by that body towards the erecting and maintaining an University “in such manner and *form*, and under such regulations as the said Royal Institution for the advancement of Learning shall in this behalf prescribe.” Here, then, is the most ample declaration of the testator with respect to the *manner and form and the regulations* under which it was his desire that the contemplated University should be conducted. He leaves this absolutely to the Royal Institution to settle, and to no one else. And what was the action of the Royal Institution “in this behalf?” They applied for, obtained and accepted a Royal Charter, which makes provision for “the manner and form,” and for “the regulations” under which the University is to be conducted. Under this Charter, then, it is incontestible, and under no other authority can the bequest of the late Mr. McGill be legally applied towards the maintenance of an University. The Governors of the University, to whom

is intrusted, by this Charter, among other objects, the framing of the "regulations" under which it is to be conducted, know no other authority than that Charter. And when they looked into that Charter, and saw that the very first object to which it points is "the education of youth in the principles of true religion," they felt that under no circumstances could they be justified in making no provision for such instruction; and when they farther found it enjoined upon them to make provision, among other objects, for "the performance of Divine Service therein," they could not feel a moment's hesitation in giving to the University a religious character;—and they have no difficulty in avowing that they had sincere pleasure in finding that they could, with perfect unanimity, discharge their duty in a manner so much in accordance with their own desires.

This important point being settled, the next thing to be considered was, of course, the nature of that religious character and the form of Divine Service to be established. They could not entertain the idea, for reasons already stated, of more than one system of religious instruction, or of more than one form of Divine Worship; and to guide them in their selection they had again recourse to the authority under which they were acting, to the law and the testimony to which they were bound to appeal. In the Charter, they are free to admit they found no positive instruction, in direct terms, on the subject. But they could draw no other legitimate inference from the declaration of the Royal pleasure that this University was designed "for the instruction of youth in the principles of true religion," than this, that the Sovereign could have meant by "true religion" none other than the particular form with which he was himself in communion, and which he was bound, by the most solemn obligation to maintain.—And with regard to the views of the founder of the Institution on the same subject, although there does not appear to be any thing in his Will, which positively settles the point beyond all question; yet it is well known, that he lived and died in the same faith as that which was professed by his Sovereign,—that he proposed to name a Clergyman of the Church of England, in his Will, as the first President of the College; but the offer was declined on the ground that it would involve the

necessity of his removal from Upper Canada to this city, which he would not consent to do ; and that he selected as Trustees of his bequest, until the Board of the Royal Institution should be constituted, persons who were all members of the Church of England, save one who was one of his oldest and most intimate friends. It appeared then that, in the absence of any positive instruction on the subject, the United Church of England and Ireland had a very strong claim to the distinction of being selected as the peculiar form of doctrine and worship to be established in this University. It is equally clear that there is not the slightest foundation, either in the Charter or in the Will or in the circumstances of the founder, for such a claim on the part of any other denomination ; and the Governors therefore felt that they could not err in giving the preference to that which had a *strong claim*, over those who had *no claim at all* ;—a strong claim which receives much additional force from the fact that the members of the Church of England both in this city and in the whole of this section of the Province, are not only more numerous than any one other denomination of Protestants, but, according to the last census, more numerous than the whole united body of all others within the same bounds who are distinguished by the same general designation. A Divinity professorship, therefore, of the Church of England has been established by the statutes, and provision has been made for the performance of Divine Service in the University, according to the form and discipline of the same Church, leaving it optional with those of other denominations to absent themselves from the services. In this particular, the Governors can conscientiously aver that they have faithfully and fearlessly discharged the most important of the duties entrusted to them,—faithfully in accordance with the authority under which they were acting, and fearlessly as to any possible consequences. For however deeply they should deplore any such dissatisfaction as may lead those who conscientiously differ to withdraw their countenance and support from the University, they would have much more deeply felt the well merited obloquy of shrinking, under the fear of man, from the performance of a sacred duty to God. But they hope for better things from their fellow subjects of all other denominations. They trust that they will, on mature

reflection, feel neither jealousy nor alarm in the provision which has been made in favour of the Church of England in an University whose founder was of its own communion, in an University whose portals are flung widely open to all of them, and the freest and most unfettered access afforded them to all the offices and all the advantages and honors in every art and faculty, save that one which is allotted to the members of one Church alone—the Faculty of Divinity. And they, moreover, confidently indulge the hope, a hope founded on the soundest principles of justice, that “the powers that be” can have no hesitation in granting aid to an Institution which admits all, without distinction of creed, to a free participation, without test or subscription, in all the advantages to be derived from the knowledge of the arts, and of the faculties of Law and Medicine, merely because the faculty of Divinity is open to the Church of England alone, and her forms of worship and discipline therein established, while the same powers have dispensed and are still dispensing aid with a liberal hand to other Seminaries of learning, in which the distinctive denominational character is far more strongly marked, and exclusively maintained. But should it please those powers to act otherwise, and to deal less justly with the Church of England than with other denominations of their fellow subjects, we shall not regret the course we have taken, but rest in the full assurance of that support which a kind Providence will not fail to bestow. The path of rectitude and duty is the path of safety.

A Professorship has been established in the faculty of Medicine with a competent number of Lectureships in its various branches. And the Governors entertain a strong hope of being enabled shortly to establish a Professorship in the faculty of Law. In the Arts, Professorships of Classical Literature and of the Mathematics and Natural Philosophy have been established, and to all of these appointments have been made, with the exception of the Mathematics and Natural Philosophy, for which no application had been received which could be favourably entertained by the Governors. They have therefore entrusted the selection of a Professor in this branch of the Arts, to two competent persons in the University of Cambridge, in England.

The University therefore opens with Professorships of Divinity, Medicine, Classical Literature, and Mathematics and Natural Philosophy, with five Lectureships in the various branches of the Faculty of Medicine; and we hope soon to add Lectureships in Rhetoric and Logic, and in History and Geography. While the Governors deeply regret that the very limited means at their disposal has prevented them from doing more, they are not without the prospect of increased revenues and a consequent enlarged sphere of action at no very distant period. And it gives them sincere pleasure to announce that, in the impartial discharge of their duty, their selections have happened to fall upon persons of four different denominations of Christians—a circumstance which affords a sufficient guarantee that no impediment exists to the attainment of the offices of this University on the ground of differences in religious belief. The Governors also feel much satisfaction in being enabled to say that a proposal, on the part of the subscribers to the High School in this city, for a junction with this University, has been accepted on terms satisfactory to all parties—so that that Institution may now be considered as a preparatory school to this University, while it preserves its distinctive character of independence under a joint Board of Directors appointed by the subscribers to the school, and by the Governors of the College.—This happy arrangement, while it has the much desired effect of uniting parties in the interests of education, secures to the University a constant, and it is hoped an unfailing supply of well prepared students.

It is under these circumstances that we launch our infant Institution upon the world; and though it may be now but as that “little cloud like a man’s hand,” which appeared upon the horizon at the bidding of the prophet, let us pray and let us trust that the blessing of a kind and protecting Providence will cause it to spread and gather strength, like that little cloud, until its benefits descend upon our land in copious and refreshing showers of wisdom and knowledge.

