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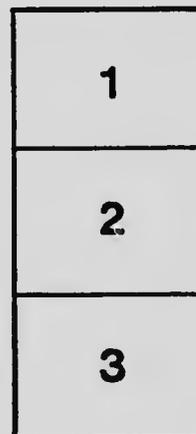
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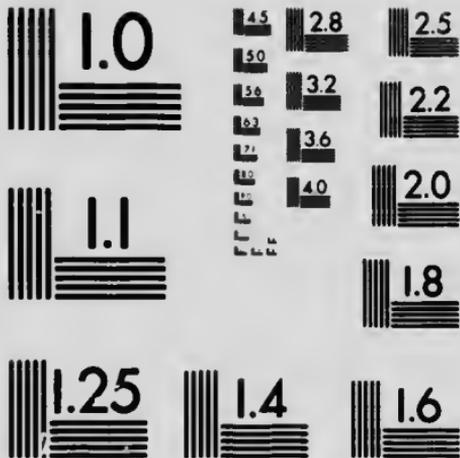
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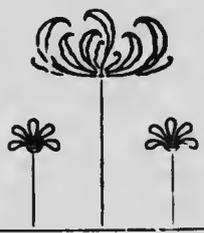


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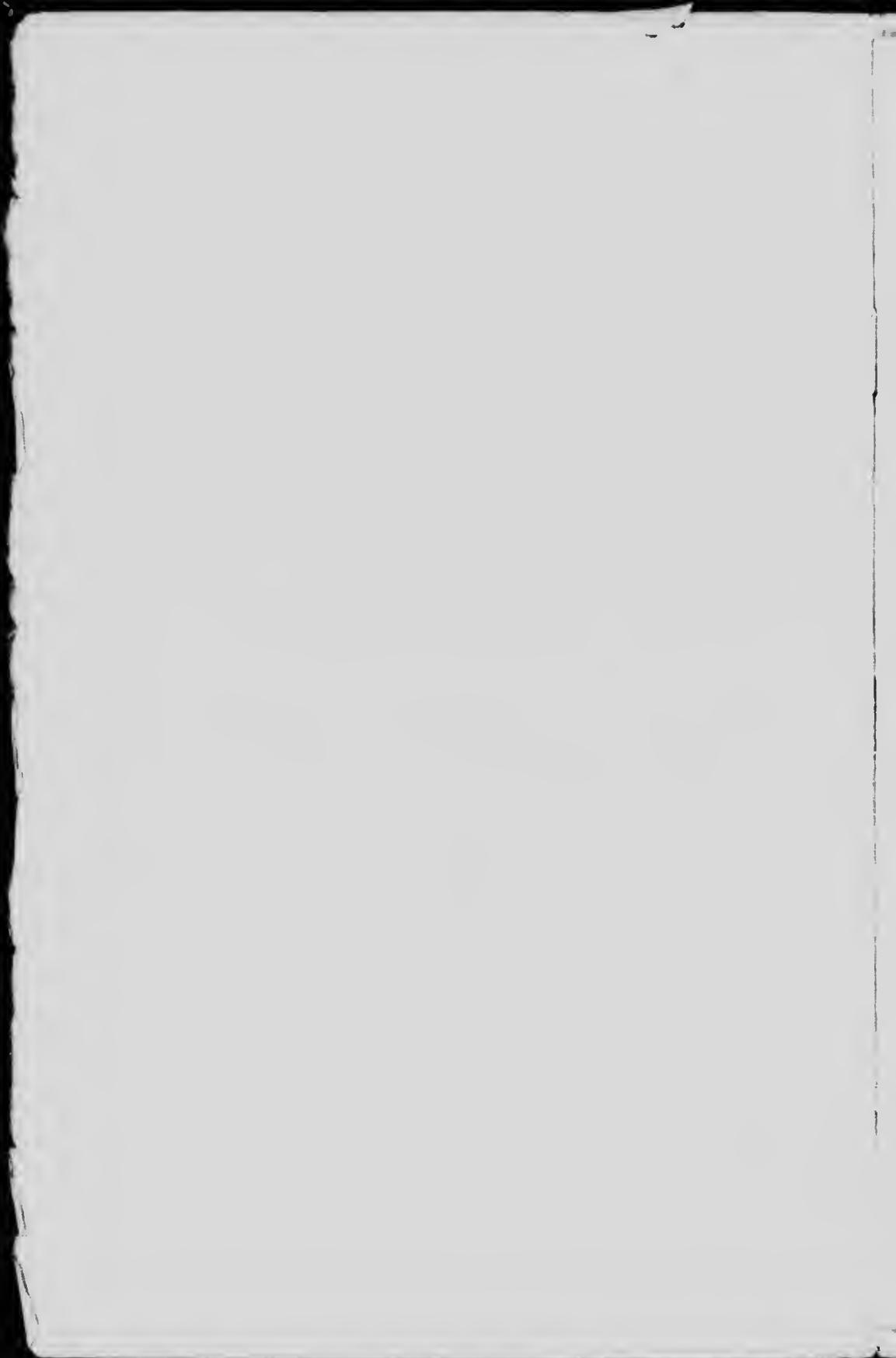
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A MESSAGE FOR
THE NEW YEAR



BY
REV. ALFRED GANDIER, B.D.
St. James' Square, Toronto





**A Sermon for the
New Year**

Preached in St. James' Square Church, Toronto
Sunday Morning, December 31st, 1905
by the Pastor

REV. ALFRED GANDIER, B.D.



Published for the Congregation by the
Board of Managers.



Three Mottoes for the New Year

Being a Sermon preached in St. James' Square Presbyterian Church by the Pastor, Rev. Alfred Gandier, B.D.

"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."—*Rom. 12. 11.*

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness."—*Matt. 6. 33.*

"And above all these things put on Charity, which is the bond of perfectness."—*Col. 3. 14.*

For this last evening of the old year I have chosen three texts, and from each of these I would derive a motto for the New Year. From the *first* I derive this motto, "Take life seriously"; from the *second*, "First things first"; from the *third*, "In all things Charity."

I.

Look at our first text: "Not slothful in business." The Greek word does not mean business in the ordinary sense, but rather haste, eagerness, earnestness, diligence. The thought com-

reference to all the words by which it is translated is that of intensity, the moral earnestness that makes one willing to take pains. The phrase might be translated: "Be not slow in taking pains—let not your work be lacking in intensity." In other words, it is our motto—"Take life seriously."

The same thought is expressed under a different figure in the next clause of the verse—"fervent in spirit." In plain English that means, "boiling in spirit." We use the same figure in our language, when we assert of some dastardly deed that it is enough to make a man's blood "boil." The spiritual temperature of the Christian is to be high. There is to be a fine moral heat about him. He should see the moral issue in all conduct, and give himself with warmth and enthusiasm to the work of life.

The third clause of the verse reads somewhat differently in the oldest manuscripts, and of this reading a correct translation would be: "Serving according to the opportunity of the moment." The Christian is not to wait for some great opportunity, not to be listless and indifferent until a chance comes to distinguish himself, not to say, "If I had the wealth of A, or the education of B, or the ability of C, or the social position of D, I might accomplish something worth while." The Christian is to do with his might what his hand findeth to do at the moment. It is his to do the next thing, attend to the nearest duty, be it great or small, put conscience

and heart into whatever work has been allotted him in the providential order. Then will all life be worth while, and all work lifted to the level of our holiest moments.

Nothing is more needed to-day than that all classes of men and women should take their own life and their own work seriously.

Do not misunderstand me. The Apostle is not exhorting Christians to make their work a burden, to worry and fret over it. We have too much worry already. What we need is to believe in our work, however humble, do it with our might, fill our little place, and leave results with God. Unless we believe in the worth of our own life and the value of our own work, we cannot possibly do our best or be our best. It cannot be too often repeated that what counts is not the kind of work we do, but the way in which we do it. The humblest work, well done, is not only a gain to the community, but a permanent contribution to the moral character of the worker; whereas, what may be considered the highest kind of work, poorly done, is immoral and degrading.

No doubt those whose lot it is to perform habitually the common-place, every-day tasks of life, are specially tempted to undervalue their work, and sink into mere drudges or time-servers.

It is comparatively easy for some men to take life seriously. How can any man stand in a pulpit, week by week, and be privileged to address his fellow-men on the great themes of life and

death and eternity, sin and salvation, and not feel that if responsibility rests on any man, it is upon him, that he of all men must take his mission in life seriously? We might expect the same sense of responsibility in the physician or the surgeon, or the workman upon whose faithfulness the life and safety of his fellow-men immediately depend. But it is not quite so easy for carpenters, bricklayers, masons, plumbers, laborers, factory hands, housewives, domestic servants, to recognize their responsibility, and look upon their work as a sacred task for God and humanity. They are apt to think of their daily toil merely as a means of making a living—a necessary evil to be gone through with as easily and quickly as possible. In many departments of work, thoroughness and efficiency seem to be things of the past. How few girls take pride in being good cooks or good housekeepers! How few workmen are sufficiently in earnest about their work to master it and do it well! Careless, slovenly work seems to be characteristic of this new country. Artizans coming from the Old Land are surprised at the number of men here who pass as mechanics and ask the wages of mechanics, but who have never mastered their trade.

Now, the worst of all this is not the injury and loss to society, the lack of men and women who can be depended upon to do well what they undertake to do. That is bad enough, but there is something worse. Every slovenly act leaves its stain upon the soul. Every time a man scamps

his work, he scamps his own character. Every time a man does less than his best, he weakens his own moral nature. Whatever be our sphere in life, we can be our best only by doing our best. So much of man's work and so much of woman's work seems trivial; but no useful work need be trivial. If we put our best into it, we will get the best out of it.

Then I appeal to you business men—you young fellows who are just entering upon your business career, and you men who are leaders of commerce, who have influence and control in the world of finance—take your business seriously. Think not of it merely as a means of making money, but as a means of serving Christ and lifting the moral tone of business relationships between man and man.

This is the age of commerce. The age of war has not yet passed, but it is passing, and the commercial age has come.

The men who dominate the world to-day, who have control over the lives of their fellow-beings, whether for good or evil, are not the great warriors, but the leaders of commerce, the great financiers. Some of us may resent this, but we have to take things as we find them. It is not an ideal state of society, but it is at least better than a society based on militarism.

Commerce is not an end in itself; the age of commerce is not the consummation of human history; it is not the last and best age; but it is the age in which we live; and the great need of

the civilized world to-day is the Christianizing of our commercial and financial methods.

We need men for the Gospel ministry, but even more we need men who will make an honest effort to carry the principles of Jesus Christ into the every-day business of life and into the high places of finance.

Leaving the Golden Rule out of the question altogether, do not the revelations made in the public press, with such startling frequency of late, indicate a very low standard of business honesty, almost no sense of honor between man and man in business relationships? Have we not had instances of employers and employees in certain lines of business combining to rob the public? Do we not all know of large business houses in this city where employees have combined to rob their employers—not an occasional instance of theft due to want or special temptation, but a number of persons uniting in a concerted system of robbery carried on week after week? And who shall say these men have not learned their lesson from the great combines which have effected a concerted and highly-organized system of robbing the public? Then, in addition to the rascally schemes of professional promoters of joint stock companies who go up and down every side-line of the country preying upon the savings of the people, in addition to rascally manipulation of the stock market, have there not been many instances in recent months of men at the head of great financial institutions

betraying their trust—men who were paid large salaries because of the responsibility resting upon them and the trust confided in them? Not satisfied with their large income, they have used and jeopardized, and, in some cases, lost the savings of the people in unlawful attempts to increase their own wealth.

Does it not seem as if all sense of duty to one's fellow-men is dying out of business? Does it not seem as if many most respectable men, occupying high positions in business and society, make no conscience of any thing so long as they keep within the letter of the law? And how many in high places and in low seem to regard the most flagrant dishonesty as business ability, if only the individual is clever enough to escape conviction!

Oh, Christian business men, young and old, you have a mission in life, a nobler mission by far than that of making money! It is yours by example, by influence and by protest, to do all that in you lies to raise the tone of business morality and quicken the sense of honor between man and man in business relationships. Why should it be a thing incredible among Christian men that the Golden Rule should become the motto of business life? Why should we not in all relationships of life treat others as we ourselves would like to be treated?

One word more under this head of taking life seriously. At the beginning of another year let me urge you to take life seriously as citizens.

In this land the people appoint their legislators and administrative rulers, and largely determine what laws shall be enacted and enforced. This lays a responsibility on the Christian citizens of to-day such as did not rest upon the early Christians, who lived under the Roman Empire and had no say in the choice of their rulers or in the making of the laws.

I need not say to an intelligent congregation how largely the safety and well-being of our homes, the reforming of social abuses, the purity, sobriety, beauty and prosperity of our city and our land depend upon the character of the men we elect to public positions, and the kind of laws we encourage them to enact.

Our municipal elections are to-morrow; and the will of the people is to be taken as to the reduction of liquor licenses. I would say: Begin the year by taking seriously your responsibility as citizens. Let every one who has a vote cast it, and in marking your ballot for Mayor, for Controllers, for Aldermen, for Board of Education, use all the intelligence and moral discrimination God has given you. If we cannot always have in public life the men we would like, let us see to it that the best available men are elected; and whether we prevail or not, let us make sure that our votes are cast to lessen the facilities for evil, and blot out as many as possible of the man-traps which disgrace our cities.

II.

Having dwelt at considerable length upon our first motto, let me now proceed to deal more briefly with the others. Our second motto is:

"First things first."—"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God." We have just been contending that *all* life is sacred, that the Kingdom of God should include all relationships, personal, social, business, and national, that for the Christian nothing is secular. But while that is true, certain things are primary. Some things must come first, because upon them all else depends. We must have the foundation before we can rear the superstructure; we must have the spring before we can have the stream; there must be life before we can have its activities. So, too, we must get a man's spirit if we want his body; we must awaken the individual conscience, bring the individual souls of men and women into subjection to the mind and will of Christ, before His Spirit will pervade social, business and national life. The Kingdom of God is first within men. There will be no new heavens and new earth, no reconstructed society, until the individual men and women have become new creatures in Christ Jesus. The community and the world will never be right until the men and women of the world know and love Jesus Christ.

The task of primary importance, therefore, is

to bring, first, my own soul, and then the souls of others, into a right, personal relationship with Jesus Christ and keep them there.

To this end the study and teaching of the Bible as the one authoritative witness to Christ, public and private worship, the preaching of the gospel, missionary effort, must have the first claim upon our time, our thought, our prayers and our purses.

To this end we must jealously guard the Sabbath as a great religious and national institution. It is our one great opportunity of preaching Christ to the people, reasoning with them of righteousness, temperance and judgment, bringing them face to face with God and eternity, and awakening them to a consciousness of the higher kinships and possibilities of our nature. The Sabbath is one of the "first things." It is essential if there is to be any higher life for the individual and the nation.

To this end we must never allow business or social engagements to impinge upon our distinctively religious duties and exercises. Whatever else is neglected, we must not neglect those primary things by which the soul of man lives—the inspiration which comes from the study of Holy Scripture, private prayer, united prayer, evangelistic effort, the telling out of the Infinite Love

"Wheresoe'er God's breath has given
Life to beings meant for heaven."

The Christian people of this city are seeking to put first things first by devoting the first month of the year to a series of special evangelistic services in Massey Hall, under the leadership of Dr. Torrey and Mr. Alexander. For this movement I ask your sympathy and co-operation. But may I not ask more? May I not ask you during the month of January to let social and even business engagements take a secondary place, and give your time and thought and personal effort, as never before, to the bringing of others into personal relationship with Christ. It will be a grand thing to have hundreds converted in Massey Hall, but what we desire is that the flame of revival should break out in every congregation. The full fruition of the movement will not be realized unless the spirit of prayer and expectancy, of consecration and soul-seeking, of conviction and confession be awakened wherever any company of people meet in the name of the Lord Jesus. Such a revival would regenerate our city and send a thrill of new moral and spiritual life throughout the land; and it will come when we put "first things first."

III.

One motto still remains to us—" *In all things Charity.*" Paul says: "Above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

Charity is love in the broadest, most catholic sense. The Apostle calls it the perfect bond, that which unites men, binds them together in Christian fellowship and Christian service. It is just the opposite of suspicion, prejudice, jealousy, censoriousness. The classic description of this virtue is found in the thirteenth chapter of Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians:

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

The lack of charity between the professed followers of Jesus Christ, the refusal of Christians to understand each other, the readiness to think evil and impute evil, the eagerness with which suspicions have been nourished and the tenacity with which prejudices have been clung to, have been the scandal of the Christian church in all ages, and have retarded the coming of Christ's Kingdom more than all opposing forces.

Without that charity which rejoiceth with the truth wherever found, that charity which thinketh no evil, is not easily provoked, is tolerant and loving, there can be no united effort in any worthy cause.

Without a broad Christian charity there cannot be that spirit of unity and love which will make the evangelistic campaign that begins today in this city a success. It is almost certain that things will be said by the visiting brethren which some of us will not like, and that some of the methods adopted will not appeal to us. But are we on that account to criticize and condemn the whole movement, and stand aloof in Pharisaic self-satisfaction? Surely we have charity enough to recognize that we are not the only people in the world, that other people have ideas as well as ourselves, that methods which do not appeal to us may appeal very powerfully to others, that possibly our visiting brethren, after years of experience and much success, know more about leading men to Christ than we do. Let us withhold criticism and be willing to learn and to help, until we are as largely used of God in winning souls for Christ as these men have been. Then we will not want to criticize. There are diversities of gifts and diversities of operations. For example, many of the Salvation Army methods do not appeal to me. I would not think of worshipping regularly in Salvation Army meetings. It would not be for edification. Yet I profoundly admire and reverence the Salvation

Army because of the self-denial they have exercised and the work they have done. I recognize that they are doing certain parts of the Lord's work better than I could, and reaching people whom I could not reach; that the Lord hath need of them even more than He hath need of me; and I bless God that He hath raised them up to serve where the Church was weakest. "The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you."

Then, we need more charity in the pushing of social reforms. We cannot expect all men to think alike. There will be differences in opinion and habit even among those who have the good of the community at heart; and too often it happens that while Satan is not divided against himself and the forces of evil stand united, reformers are suspicious of each other, divided and disorganized. If only good men could come nearer to each other, find what ground they hold in common, and stand there with united front, those who prey upon the susceptibilities of youth and the weaknesses of human nature would not be allowed a free hand in the community and a controlling voice in local politics.

The great majority of those whom I address to-day, like myself, are total abstainers and prohibitionists. We would like to sweep the liquor traffic out of the land, bag and baggage. But since that is not possible at the present time, surely we ought to be broad enough to unite

with those who may be neither total abstainers nor prohibitionists, but who are willing to help us minimize an evil we cannot abolish. If we cannot have "no license," let us unite for fewer licenses. It is a narrow, mistaken policy to throw away the possible best because we cannot now have the absolute best.

With all the evils of the age in which we live, there is a broadening spirit of Christian charity. Good people are coming to understand each other better; the forces which make for righteousness are drawing together, and nowhere is it more evident than in the movements toward Church Union.

Bitter jealousies and grave abuses in Church and State rent the Presbyterian Church of Scotland into fragments. These divisions were perpetuated in Canada. But in 1875 the Presbyterians of Canada rose up and said: "Why should we perpetuate the jealousies and divisions of the Old Land? We are making a new start in a new land. Let us be united."

And so we thank God that for thirty years we have had the one great Presbyterian Church in Canada, strong, aggressive, missionary. The broad scope and magnificent success of our Mission work is the result of union.

Nine years later the Methodists of Canada said: "Why should we perpetuate those divisions which broke out among the followers of Wesley in England and the United States? Let us follow the example of our Presbyterian

brethren, and be one." And so the great Methodist Church in Canada came into being.

To-day the Methodist, Congregational and Presbyterian Churches are beginning to question whether they should hold aloof from each other any longer, and whether organized union on a much larger scale is not now possible. We had one of the finest manifestations of Christian charity the world has yet witnessed when, a few weeks ago, in this city, representatives of these three great churches came together in no spirit of contention, but in the spirit of conciliation, to emphasize points of agreement and find a basis of union. I do not know of any event in the history of Protestantism more notable or more far-reaching in its consequences, than that representatives officially appointed by Methodist, Congregational and Presbyterian Churches should agree upon a statement of doctrine and of Church polity and administration. The doctrinal statement issued by the joint committee not only contains what is essential to the Christian faith, but all that has been considered distinctive of Presbyterian teaching. No one need ask a clearer statement of the Sovereignty of God or of the doctrines of grace. Yet the representatives of all three churches were willing to accept it as a statement of their faith. What is more, I believe there is not a minister in the English Church, outside the Sacramentarian party, who would not accept this statement of the Christian faith; nor is there a minister in the Baptist

Church who would not accept it, with the one exception of Infant Baptism.

Organic union may not come for years, but these different branches of the Christian Church are practically one in faith, in charity, in missionary spirit. They are not enemies, they are not rivals in any unworthy sense, they are co-workers. So Christian is the spirit existing between these different churches that in a city like Toronto the evils of division are but little felt.

But in the small towns and villages, and in the sparsely settled districts of this vast country, the evils of division are manifest and the waste of men and money very great. In how many small communities of two or three hundred souls, Methodist, Baptist, Church of England, Presbyterian are each seeking to care for a little handful of people, when one good church would provide ample accommodation for all. This waste can be prevented only by some kind of union, and I for one feel that we dare not go on indefinitely wasting men and money at home, when the Heathen world calls so loudly for men to come over and help.

For the next hundred years all sorts and conditions of men and women will pour into this broad land. For the next hundred years our Home Mission work will be ever vaster and more complex. We have in this land an aggressive Romish hierarchy who will leave no stone unturned to dominate the life of this Dominion. The task before us is great and difficult beyond

all precedent. The Evangelical Churches must draw closer and stand together as never before, if they are to meet the need of this new time. We may be called upon to sacrifice something of what has been distinctive in our separate churches, and it will be a real sacrifice to many. But what of that if the cause of Christ and the future of our country demand it?

Surely the thought of a great united Church, bound together in faith and love, facing the stupendous but all-glorious task of world evangelization, must appeal to the imagination of all. With that thought no Christian will need other incentive to take life seriously, put first things first, and manifest a broad spirit of Christian charity.

