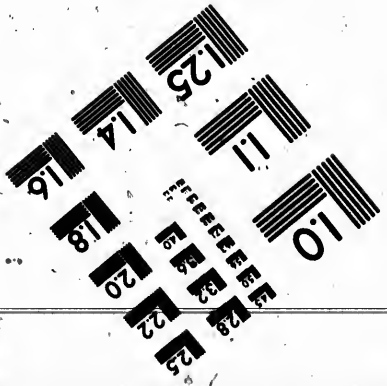
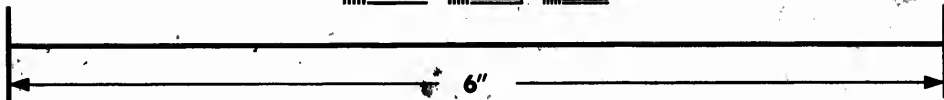
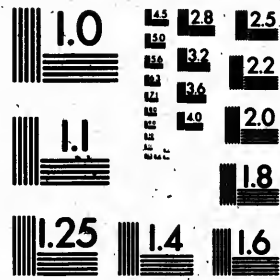


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10

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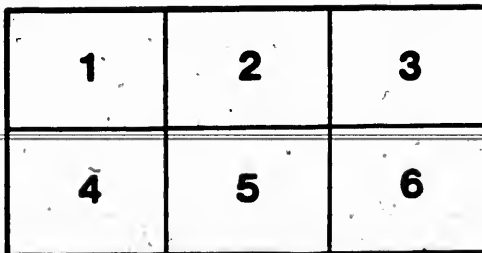
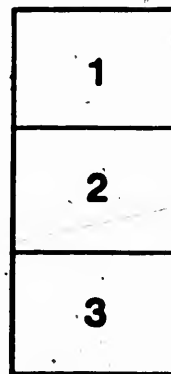
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A

SERMON

PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH
OF QUEBEC,

On Sunday, the 17th of May, 1840,

UPON OCCASION OF THE

ANNUAL COLLECTION FOR THE

NATIONAL SCHOOLS

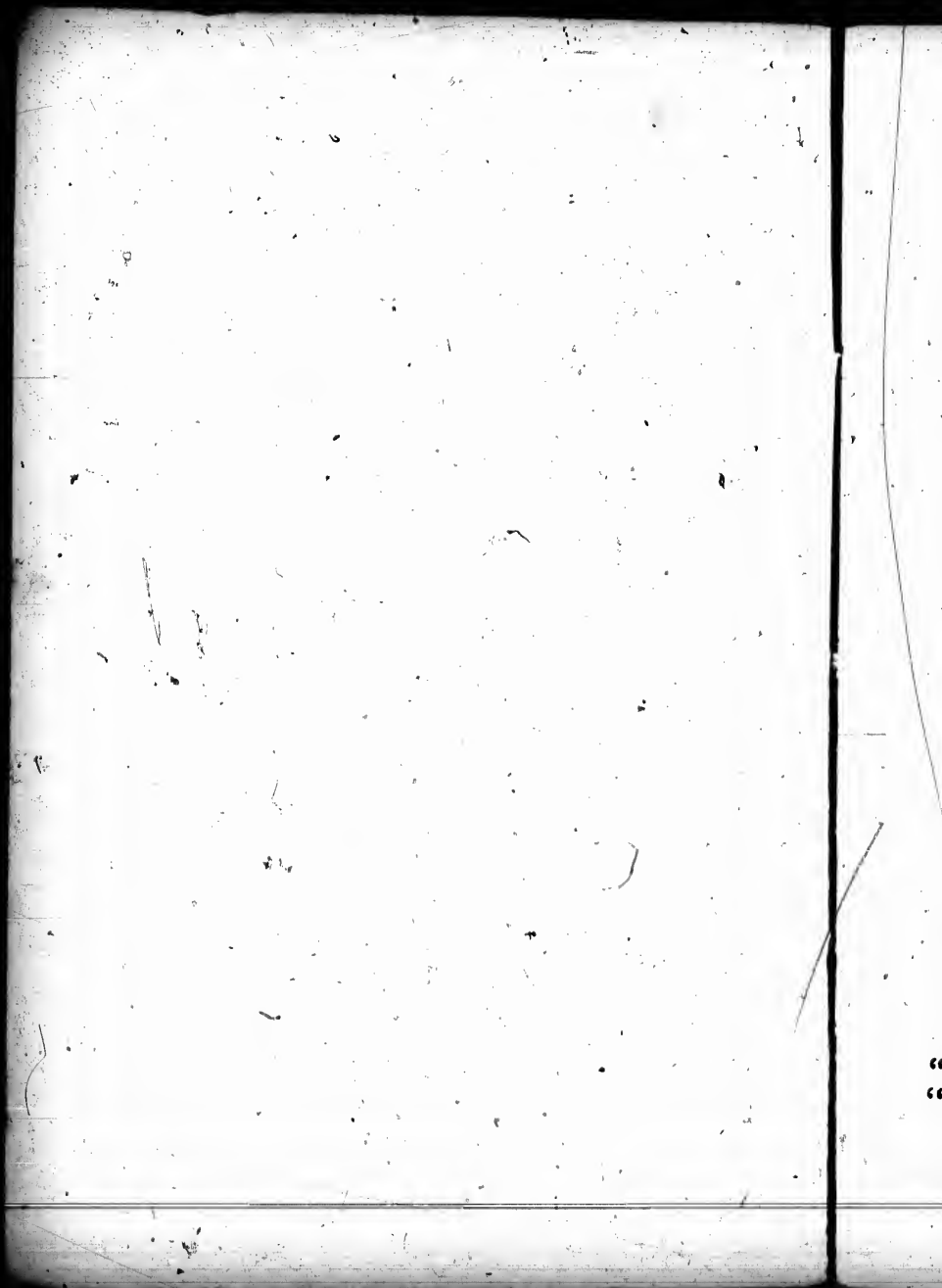
IN THAT CITY.

BY THE REV. GEO. MACKIE, A. B.
CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD BISHOP OF MONTREAL, AND
CURATE OF QUEBEC.

QUEBEC:

PRINTED BY THOS. CARY & CO.

1840.



ERRATA.

- Page 3, line 3.—For *this* read *the*.
Page 3, line 6.—For *such a one* read *such an one*.
Page 5, line 20.—For *men* read *man*.
Page 6, line 15 and 16.—For *from* read *of*.
Page 7, line 8.—For *ever* read *never*.
Page 8, line 4.—For *deserved* read *deserves*.
last line but one.—For *prejudice* read *prejudices*.
last line.—For *prepossession* read *prepossessions*.
Page 9, line 19.—For *seem* read *serve*.
line 24.—For *form* read *force*.
Page 13, line 8.—After *and* insert *that*.
Page 14, line 8.—For *school* read *schools*.
Page 15, line 14.—For *them* read *those*.
line 17.—For *policy* read *police*.

they are that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when
“I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it
“forth wild grapes?”

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SERMON.

4th Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Hosea, part of the
6th verse :—

“ My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”

HE doubtless has yet to learn the nature and extent of Christian obligation, who cares not that the heathen live without God in this world ; but he who can look on unmoved, while Satan is wresting from the Lord's portion of His own inheritance—what words shall describe the conduct of such a one!—If it argue a gross dereliction of duty not to have reclaimed the moral desert, and to have made it the garden of the Lord, how awful must be that neglect which can suffer the once fruitful field to revert into a wilderness!—There is a more than wonted emphasis in the complaint of the text, it is the language of one who sees the vineyard which his own right hand had planted, all wasted and desolate, its hedges thrown down and its fences destroyed :—of one, constrained as it were to exclaim : “ What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it ? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes ?”

And is it even so?—The Lord's own people destroyed for lack of knowledge!—My Brethren, let us see to it, that this solemn expostulation addressed to Israel of old, be not addressed with equal justice to ourselves, or if conscience have already proved us guilty in the matter, let us take timely heed, lest haply we be found even to fight against God.

I shall therefore beg you to consider the importance of Divine knowledge, and our consequent obligation to promote it, and will then briefly advert to the special claim upon your regard, of those who are of the household of faith—and may the Good Lord commend the word spoken with power to your hearts, and stir up your wills to devise liberal things!

If there were *many* ways of access to the Father of lights, and the revelation of Jesus Christ were only proposed as the shorter, better way, it would hardly be a matter of trifling importance to the pilgrim upon earth, to know what route he might pursue with greatest ease or safety to himself.—But the question assumes a far higher import, when we reflect that it is not one of *comparative advantage*.—There is a way of salvation, and *but one* such way.—“I am the way” says our Lord “no man cometh unto the Father but by me” hence eternal life is suspended on the knowledge of the true God and of Jesus Christ whom he has sent, and the question between knowledge and ignorance, becomes nothing less than a question of life or death. It would be foreign to my subject to discuss the possible salvability of those who have never received the message from

Heaven.—There are who believe that the Lord for Christ's sake, may be merciful to such as have lacked the opportunity of arriving at the knowledge of the truth. —But this supposition is founded on no sure warrant of scripture, and would involve a departure from the ordinary mode of God's dealings, for heathenism (be it observed in passing) is only the sin of the fathers visited upon the children, the natural and necessary consequence of former neglect. It is the wiser part to confine our view to the things which are revealed,—to meditate upon that simple declaration: "By grace are ye saved through faith"—to reflect that faith in an unknown Saviour were a contradiction in terms ("for how can men believe on him of whom they have not heard?") and hence to infer our duty: to bring men to submit to the righteousness of faith, by making them acquainted with the object of faith, even Jesus Christ and him crucified. But shall we said that the knowledge which is unto Salvation, is a something very different in its kind from that which men can impart, that it is an understanding which the learner cannot get with all his "getting"—a teaching from above—even an unction from the Holy One, pervading all the faculties of the mind, and shedding a mysterious though hallowing influence over all the feelings of the heart?—Shall it be urged that the devils have an accurate knowledge—none more so—of the purport and intent of Christ's coming into the world—and yet that their knowledge but gendereth to the bondage of fear—they believe and tremble! My Brethren, I do not pretend that the knowledge of what

the truth of God is, and the possession of the truth itself are one and identical.—I can readily imagine the case of the professed disciple, conversant with all mysteries and all knowledge, and who in spite of all his attainments, shall be compared to nothing more appropriately than “a sounding brass” or “a tinkling cymbal.” This, only would I affirm, that knowledge is so essential that without it, I cannot conceive but that the sinner must perish in his sins.—That the fitting seed have been sown, will not necessarily ensure an abundant harvest—season—soil—climate—temperature, these and other secondary causes must concur, under the providence of God, to this happy consummation.—But it were madness to expect the fruits of increase, if the fitting seed have not been sown—“Men do not gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles.” In this sense knowledge is essential; and of this we may be well assured that the Son of God would not have come into the world, to the very intent that he might “bear witness to the truth,” if the knowledge of the truth had not been of paramount importance to the best interests of his creatures—Indeed without this guide what has man whereby to discern between good and evil? What has he which shall be as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast? Is he not at the mercy of ten thousand conflicting doubts and fears, and carried about by every idle “wind of doctrine”? Can he elsewhere acquire any fixed or settled principle of action? If he ask of philosophy to instruct him, he is led through a maze of subtle theories and doubtful disputations and perplexed with enquiries about man’s chief

7
est good," nor can he find in any of its boasted systems, that scheme of motives which is calculated to produce a sanctifying influence upon the heart and affections.— While in the Gospel his every doubt is at once removed— there he sees how that love to God in Christ is the mainspring to set every wheel in motion. Whatever shall accord with this principle, he finds it to be good, and whatever shall deviate from it, be it ever so little,—he perceives it to be evil.

But you will say—"May not a man know these things and yet be perishing for lack of knowledge?—and does not the question still recur—How does he know them— Does he so believe the truth, as to receive it in the love of it?"

The connection between knowledge and practice is not such that they can never exist apart.—There can never— indeed be a becoming practice which is not founded on the knowledge of the truth, but the converse will not hold. There may be a knowledge which is simply *notional* as distinguished from that which is *practical* and *experimental*, and thus it shall happen that in these days of profession, the complaint of the Lord may be often addressed with a fearful significance: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."—For if we look about us, and around us, we cannot but perceive that the majority of nominal aye, and of carefully instructed christians, have not been begotten again through the word of truth—that they do not form any right estimate of themselves—of the God with whom they have to do—nor of Jesus the Saviour of sinners.—They know nothing by experience

of their own spiritual ignorance, they have not learned to become fools that they may be wise—they know nothing of the exceeding sinfulness of sin as that accursed thing which deserved God's wrath and condemnation—they know nothing of the innate depravity and the extreme deceitfulness of a heart of which the every thought is evil and only evil continually.

—They may plead guilty to this or that failing—may lament this or that casual infirmity—but they are how far from—believing themselves with Job to be “vile!” or from joining in that sober verdict of self condemnation

—“In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.”

—And what do they know of God, as the holy and the just God, who cannot but hate sin, and cannot but punish it? and what do they know of that his faithfulness and truth which can never repent nor retract the word that is gone out of his mouth?—And what are their views of Christ—as a Saviour appointed for them, or failing this, the Judge who shall surely condemn them? What personal interest do they claim in his merits, what adequate conception have they realized of his love which passeth knowledge?—All these things are to them confessedly “dark sayings” and “hard sentences.” And can such a knowledge as theirs really stand them in any stead?—Now the truth is simple of itself—and offers no serious difficulty to him who has the key of an humble contrite spirit, “The wayfaring man though a fool shall not err therein.”—If it is not understood—it is only because of the prejudice and prepossession which oppose themselves to its re-

ception, or because of the wiles of that enemy who is ever on the alert to catch away the seed which is sown in the heart. But then these opposing influences are such, that by reason of them, few men are "able to come to the knowledge of the truth"—we may not deny this—yet shall we therefore be forward to infer that it is but lost labour to spread abroad the message of salvation, seeing that we cannot also communicate the favourable disposition to receive it, nor impart that spiritual discernment without which it must remain a "sealed book"?—What! shall we not labour at all, because we may labour in vain? and withhold the only and appointed means because they may be and are abused! God forbid!—Shall the sower fail to sow his seed because he may be disappointed of his hopes? shall he not rather be the more diligent rightly to improve the fitting times and seasons in dependence upon him who can give the increase? "Means are ours: events are in the hands of the Lord." Let us as knowing how many things may seem to frustrate our hopes, only on that account the more anxiously avail ourselves of whatever may seem auspicious to the promotion of our work. Let us especially choose out the soil of the youthful heart, or ever its native propensities have acquired the form of habits, and while early prepossessions may yet be enlisted in the service of Christ—Many obstructions shall thus, though the grace of God, be made to yield to the application of a timely culture, and the desert be taught to bloom and flourish as the rose.

It is with the view of moulding the yet tender disposition into habits of obedience to the will of God, that

the Church has provided (she could do no more,) her admirable framework of instruction, and if from the prevailing laxity of the times this provision may seem to be little better than a decent form—shall we condemn her, or not rather take shame to ourselves that, priests and people, we love to have it so? But, not to indulge the language of complaint which is always an easy task,—let me point you to the special interest with which she has surrounded the little ones of her fold, that I may challenge at your hands, as christians and churchmen, some special token of interest in their welfare.—Acting then throughout her whole system of discipline, on the faith of the covenanted promise, and in dependance upon the blessing from above, she proposes one and the same nurture to all her members without exception. Admitting no distinction of sex or station or condition of life, she recognises man in no other character than that of a sinner—helpless and undone unless God in his mercy interpose, and it is her one single desire that he be translated from the bondage of nature into the freedom of grace—be made acceptable to God and approved of men—a partaker of the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. Proclaiming aloud that “all men are conceived and born in sin and that our Saviour Christ saith none can enter into the kingdom of God except he be regenerate and born anew of water and of the Holy Ghost,” she calls upon believing parents to present their children to Christ that they may be washed in the “laver of regeneration and may receive of Him that thing which by nature they cannot have.” The infant

admitted within her fold, she claims for him an interest in the prayers of all God's worshipping people—the sympathy of the whole communion of saints, that through the power of Divine Grace, he may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning," while she charges it upon his sponsors—whom from an excess as it might seem of precaution, she had associated with the parents in this labour of love, to see that the infant be taught so soon as he shall be able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession he has made by them, and that he may know these things the better, that he be called upon to "hear sermons,"—to attend upon the ordinances of the Lord's house and the appointed means of grace, and that he be instructed in all other things which a christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health—in a word, that he be virtuously brought up to lead a godly and a christian life.

But while she addresses this language to all her members irrespectively, and exacts in every case, this solemn pledge, she is not unmindful of the fact that some of the Lord's people may by reason of their poverty, be unable to impart to their children the needful rudiments of education. To meet this exigency, she makes good their lack of means out of the abundance of their richer brethren, and provides schools wherein their children may be taught, without money and without price, all that it really concerns them to know.—Hence the origin of National Schools—the glory of our Church and Country—in which is maintained and kept alive that sacred

principle that all education which is not based upon scriptural truth is useless and worse than useless to its possessor.

It is strictly upon this principle that the National Schools in this city are conducted, their object being so to inculcate the power of Godliness, that it may be the leavening motive to action in all the every day affairs and transactions of life; may serve to regulate and to controul all such as are lawful in themselves, and may deter from the prosecution of those upon which the blessing of God cannot be sought and expected. These Schools have been in successful operation, now for somewhat more than twenty years, during which time about nine thousand persons of both sexes have received a suitable education within their walls—and I think that I shall hardly be accused of exaggeration, if I say that it is not easy to estimate too highly the influence for good which they must needs have exerted upon the social condition and prospects of our community. I might found indeed a strong negative claim upon your liberality, if I simply represented them as tending to the prevention of evil.—Had they not been in existence, what, in all human probability, would have been the discipline in which many of our poorer brethren would have been trained, as the substitute for that which they have there received? Why! the discipline of vagabondism! the education of the streets! a nurture such as could hardly have failed to make them tenfold more the children of hell than they were by nature!—Is it then *nothing*, if through the instrumentality of these schools some have been

snatched from the bars of a prison-house, perhaps from the gallows—and fitted to become useful members of society! Supposing this to have been the case in any one instance, who shall say that our labours have not been abundantly repaid!—But I should be ashamed to take this low ground—because from my heart I do devoutly believe that these institutions have an intrinsic claim of no common order, and they are deserving of every encouragement as the most important of all our parochial institutions, for without them, our Sunday Schools and other means of usefulness would be, in so far as the poorer classes are concerned, of comparatively little value—Moreover the education which they offer is really unexceptionable in its kind, and conveyed in an intelligent manner.—Some of yourselves can testify to the progress of the children in the various branches of secular instruction—and having examined many of them from time to time in the Sunday School, myself, I have been uniformly pleased with their answers, and would venture to assert that in the extent and correctness of their Scriptural information, they are not excelled by any children of their own age and standing in this city. Perhaps I ought to mention that the Bible is the text book in use, and that the Catechism is taught to the children of the Church of England only, on one day of the week—in consequence of which arrangement, the children of various denominations not excluding Roman Catholics, are found willing to embrace the opportunities of instruction afforded. For these so excellent institutions, I am therefore much

bold to claim from all of you who have hearts to feel, the tribute of your prayers, your services and your alms—of your prayers, that “pure religion and undefiled” may ever flourish within their walls, and that the blessing of the Father of the fatherless and the Friend of the poor may descend and rest upon them: Of your services, because these are of the highest moment to the promotion of their best interests: In the establishment of the school at a time when the poor of our communion were comparatively few, it was wisely judged expedient to anticipate a prospective necessity by the ready supply of gratuitous instruction, and by means of the proffered bounty, in some sort to create the demand—yet something more has ever been needed—strange as it may seem—it is necessary to persuade, nay almost to constrain many of the poor to avail themselves of the supply thus brought within their reach. In such a climate as this, the want of sufficient clothing is often pleaded in excuse, and it must be confessed often with good cause—while the services of the older children are not seldom required at home, in the procuring of fuel, or the performance of other domestic offices. It might therefore tend very materially to increase our numbers, if some of you who have leisure and competence would prevail upon, and enable those of the poor who may be within the sphere of your influence, by casual relief when needed, and by other tokens of a kindly interest in their well-being, to procure for their little ones, even at the expence of some discomfort to themselves, that instruction which under the blessing of God might make them both wise unto

Salvation, and bring down a blessing upon the houses in which they dwell. Our list of attendants is somewhat on the increase, and comprises one hundred and thirteen boys and one hundred and nine girls, but many more might not unreasonably be expected if the parents were placed in those circumstances, or roused to that sense of duty, which would prompt them to regard in its proper light the boon presented to them. We should also be grateful (for we have nothing to conceal and every thing to gain from publicity,) if you would occasionally visit the Schools.—In saying this I feel that I am condemning myself for my own too often neglect—but I say it in all sincerity, as anticipating from such visits encouragement to the teachers no less than to them who are taught.

Finally, let me request your alms—I hardly know why I should use this term, for even as a matter of policy, your contributions will be more than repaid to you in the improved tone of society of which Schools like these, are the never failing instruments—and yet I am loth to retract it, for I could wish you to give, as hoping for nothing in return—to give—in very love, and of pure affection for Him who for your sakes became poor—Esteem it your privilege to spend and to be spent in his service—and rejoice that you are permitted to minister unto him in the person of his little ones. O ye especially, who have experienced the riches of his love towards you, and know somewhat of the exceeding length and breadth and depth of his loving-kindness and tender mercies, seek, seek earnestly to make others partakers of the benefit. Think it not a

light thing that any weak brother should perish for whom Christ died, nor suffer the people of the Lord to be destroyed for lack of knowledge.

Yet, oh remember, that one is nigh at hand who seeth the heart—and so offer yourselves and your substance, as in his immediate presence! Freely ye have received: freely give!

