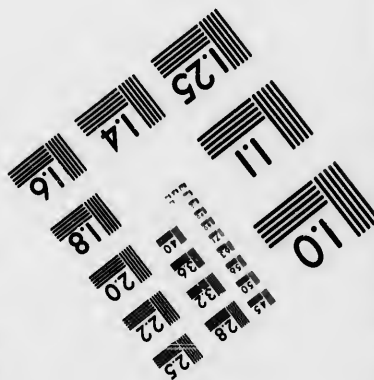
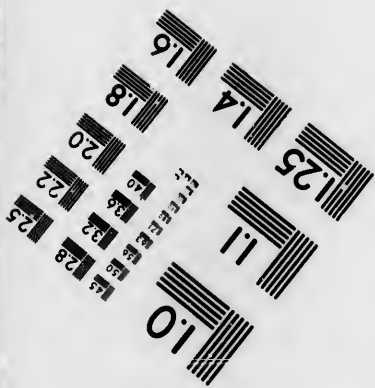
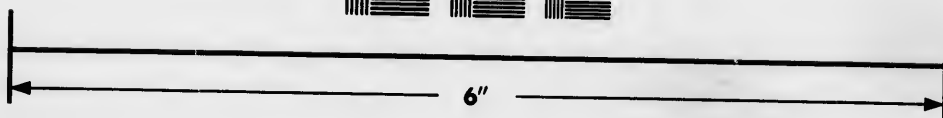
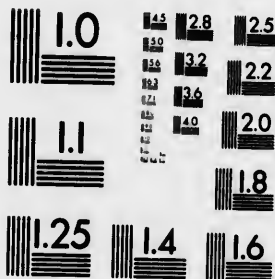


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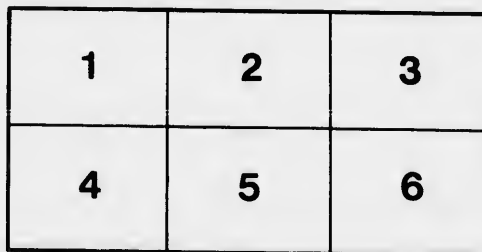
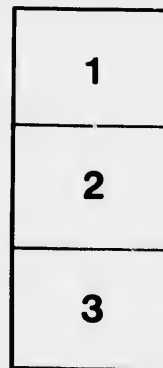
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"A Living Church : What It Needs."

# A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

Synod of the Diocese of Huron

AT ITS ANNUAL SESSION

June 19th, 1877,

BY THE

REV. HENRY C. POTTER, D.D.

Rector of Grace Church, New York.

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## The Church's Needs.

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"And the Apostles and Elders came together to consider of this matter."—ACTS xvi, 6.

Whatever may be our various theories of Holy Orders, we are all agreed, I presume, that the Apostles who are mentioned in these words were thoroughly exceptional men. Whatever measure of inspiration and guidance the Church and her priests and chief pastors have enjoyed in later days, it can hardly be doubted that it has been in every way inferior to theirs. The men who laid the foundations of the Christian Church were men who had been girded for their work by rare and exceptional endowments. Whether we look at their personal characters, or their official careers, we feel instinctively that we are in the presence of extraordinary and transcendently gifted men. Theirs were mighty powers for a mighty work.

And yet it is instructive to find that even these men did not dispense with the help which comes from mutual counsel and conference. Called as they were by exceptional experiences to an exceptional office—guided, as they had a right to believe they would be, by the especial manifestations of the Holy Spirit, they yet turned from the strain of separate and isolated responsibilities to the help and comfort to be found in fraternal intercourse and mutual counsel. Their work was vast and urgent and vital, but they unhesitatingly put it aside, and bid accustomed duties wait while they paused to confer with one another. They recognized the wisdom of mutual deliberation and of combined action;

and in this, one of the earliest of the Infant Church's councils, they have set an example for all churches and for all times. We do well, therefore, that we are here to-day to follow it, and that from the grave and urgent work of the Church, in so many and such various fields, this thoughtful body of clergy and laity—the representatives of the Church in this young but powerful Diocese—has come together to deliberate and confer anew. Through the kindly courtesy of your Bishop it is the province of a "stranger from across the border" to stand in this place and to give you this greeting. If he does so with something of diffidence, and something more of self-distrust, he does so, nevertheless, with this inspiring consciousness that, after all, his work and yours are one; that his most sacred traditions and most venerable sanctions are drawn, as are yours, from the same revered mother—that mother whom John Winthrop, Governor of Massachusetts, writing in the sixteenth century, called, "Our dear mother the Church of England, to whom we owe a long course of loving watchfulness and care." It is true that the Church in Canada and the Church in the United States exist to-day amid very different civil conditions and under widely dissimilar political systems. But theirs, thank God, is a dearer bond than any begotten of the State, and a closer sympathy than any that kindles at the sight of a flag. It is the sympathy begotten of a common faith, a common language and liturgy, and a common ministry and sacraments. As an American Churchman stands in some ancient English minster, awed by its majestic proportions and its chastened and venerable beauty, he finds himself reminded of the legend of that young artist of Padua, who, standing before a master-piece of Raphael's, cried out in irrepressible pride, "and I too am a painter." For then it is the impulse of such a one, though he may stand upon English soil for the first time—yet remembering who are his ancestors, and from whence have come his literature and his religion—to cry out with equal warmth and pride, "I too am an Englishman." Even so when we, who live to the south and east of the lakes and of the St. Lawrence, find our

way north and west, as we gather in some such holy and beautiful edifice as this, with brethren of the same scriptural faith and apostolic order, we too are tempted to exclaim, "Ours also is an Anglican mother and an English Prayer-Book; ours the blessed heritage through those pure and reformed standards of the one Lord, one Faith and one Baptism." And though, if you who are Canadian Churchmen should choose, with the men of Israel of old, to protest, "We have ten parts in the king, and we have also more right in David than ye," we could not venture to gainsay you; yet still I think you will not refuse to own the closeness of the tie that binds the two Churches together, nor upbraid me for here recalling it.

I confess that I do so with a motive. This oneness of sonship and lineage, of faith and order, is but a simile of that other identity of our circumstances and work. Your Church in Canada and ours in the United States are, each of them, conditioned by various accidental differences of circumstances and surroundings, which give them certain features of obvious unlikeness. But when you have made allowance for these, there remain other and substantial resemblances in those circumstances which are far more important and influential. Yours, for instance, like ours, is a new country and a comparatively virgin soil. The Christian civilization which you are contributing to rear in this Diocese is, like ours, embarrassed by no traditional influences of the people and the soil. On the other hand, yours, like ours, is a population gathered by immigration from many lands and widely different races. The German, the Irishman and the Negro jostle one another in your streets as they do in ours; and with you, as with us, there is the same eager race for wealth; the same too-common impatience with modest means and uneventful experiences. The same bracing breezes (dry, searching and exciting) that have made, as scientists tell us, of the phlegmatic Old Englander, the restless, nervous, interrogative New Englander, blow across your hills and valleys that blow across ours—indeed, in their eastward progress from the great lakes



and the Rocky Mountains they reach you first. In a word, the conditions under which Churchmen in Canada and in the United States are called upon to do their Master's work, and build up the Church's walls, are much the same. And, therefore, if I speak on this occasion of some of the Church's needs, as we have learned them in New York, I think you will own that they are no less her needs as you have learned them in this newer London.

I. And first among them (as one who speaks to brethren, many of whom have been clothed with the same priestly office) I would venture to name the need of an educated and thoughtful ministry. It is the glory of our mother, the Church of England, that, while she does not despise the simplest and homeliest phraseology, she yet bids her ministers arm themselves for their high tasks with those weapons of an ample learning and a genuine scholarship, in which she has always been so rich. And it is to-day her pre-eminent distinction that the products of the literary labors of her sons do more if not to shape, then to stimulate the religious thinking of our time, than all other influences put together. An eminent divine of one of the most influential religious bodies in the United States said to me not long ago, "When I am asked 'to what living literature I am most indebted,' I do not hesitate to say 'the literature of the Church of England'; there is nothing like it in Germany or anywhere else." And there is nothing like it. Whether we take the Bampton Lectures of Liddon or the Sermons of Mozley, and other volumes which I might name, holding the same rank, what nobler evidence could the Church of England give us that she is, as of old, the friend of learning and of learned men—the mother of teachers, and the source and fountain of profound attainments and a devout scholarship? But from what has all this come? It has come from those wise provisions in her system which afford to her clergy both the leisure and the opportunities for study and for reflection; and it is one of her chief dangers in this hurried and utilitarian age that, from a

false spirit of economy, or from a mistaken estimate of the real value of such a ministry, she will so abridge their opportunities and so increase the demands upon them, as to make such distinction in learning and thoughtfulness no longer possible to her clergy. Says Dr. Farrar, Canon of Westminster, and lately head-master of Marlboro, in a recent King's College lecture on Jeremy Taylor: "To the acquisition of such a learning as was Jeremy Taylor's, this age—hard, exacting, jealous, without concentration, without self-recollection, without leisure; utilitarian, mistaking a superficial activity and a worrying multiplicity of details for true, deep progress, quite content with vapid shibboleths, archaic ritualism, or emotional emptiness, jealous of a labor which, because it is retired, is mistaken for idleness, and robbing everyone it can of all means for the exhaustive pursuit of learning—is wholly unfavorable. Two hundred years have passed since the publication of the 'Liberty of Prophesying'—and we are still quarreling about copes and chasubles, and making it a matter of importance whether the sacramental bread should be cut round or square. When men are absorbed in such controversies, and, above all, in the grinding littleness of endless and elaborate agencies, often wholly disproportionate in number and in the toil they involve, to any possible good which they can achieve, there is little possibility of a learned clergy—there is indeed a fatal certainty that such will not be produced." Yet, in spite of such an indictment, there are still in the Church of England some quiet nooks, some calm retreats, where one may read and digest and think. But how is it among ourselves, whether in towns or out of them? How manifold and how engrossing are the cares which are bound upon the clergy, over and above their distinctly ministerial duties? How often is the whole financial system of a parish made to rest upon the clergy?—Who beg or borrow the money that builds our churches? Who superintend their construction and erection, and care for the "fabric" after it has been reared? Who train our choirs and organize and largely vitalize our schemes of parish work? Who drudge, often with hand as well as brain, in the discharge of a

thousand petty details, to which the ministry was not called, and on which, verily, it has no warrant for wasting itself? God forbid that I should seem to discourage any pastor from cordial co-operation in every laudable undertaking, but I appeal to the experience of the clergy whether there has not often come to them the sense that they were frittering away their lives upon countless secular minutiae, which are almost as remote from the tasks to which by their ordination vows they were set, as would be dancing or fox-hunting. There is many a clergyman in our day who finds it impossible to spend five hours in the week in his study. He is set to be a teacher and guide to others, and yet in an age which, more than any other that has gone before it, challenges the clergy to the production of their best weapons and their utmost strength — such a one finds himself going into the pulpit on a Sunday morning with a string of common-places at once vapid and impotent. I know it will be said that the Church and the pulpit in our day want some other things more than they want learning and thought; and I freely grant it. The Church and the pulpit want most of all in her ministry sanctified character—souls on fire with the love of Christ, and longing to reach and rescue those for whom Christ died. But while the Church most truly wants awakened and deepened feeling, she wants something more besides. To give feeling its due influence it must rest upon profound conviction, and in order that conviction may be profound it must rest in turn upon reasonable and intelligent foundations. There is a certain chastened and affirmative earnestness in the pulpit which is perhaps more impressive than all other things combined; for it gives you the impression that he who speaks is saturated with a sense of the certainty and authority of that which he preaches. But one can never be so penetrated with the profound sense of a truth until he has searched it to the roots and viewed it in every light. Earnestness of feeling is, verily, not without its value; but when it has awakened a corresponding earnestness of feeling it must be prepared to answer the questions which that awakened earnestness will inevitably provoke. We may wish that we

were back in those simpler days when learning was the property of a class, and when the people took the teaching that was given them with simple and unquestioning faith. But wishing will never bring those days back again; and meanwhile our business is rather to readjust ourselves to the new conditions amid which the Church finds herself. If it is said that she must meet the too-common tendency to a relaxed faith merely by a louder reassertion of her ancient symbols, I answer that this is to repeat the error of Rome in the decrees of the Vatican Council, without the splendid discipline and consistent traditions of the Church of Rome to warrant it. Ours is a Church which stands as a witness to the freedom of the right of enquiry, and we shall never successfully stifle that enquiry by despising or ignoring it. On the contrary, the Church must meet living questions with an intelligent and generous candor, and must answer the assaults of unbelief with a might and learning at least equal to theirs by whom such assaults are made. It may be that we suppose the critical and scientific skepticism of our time to be unknown to the great mass of those to whom in this land the Church is called to minister; but if we do, it is because we do not take the trouble to read the books and look into the magazines, which are bought and read nowadays by everybody. Do we forget that one man of genius in our day has written a novel to prove the moral identity of our own race with that of the races below it? Do we forget that one of the cleverest serial stories of our day is aimed obviously against a theology which, though I do not hold it, has had more than one eminent and learned disciple in our Mother Church, and yours as well as ours? Do we realize that girls and boys read and ponder such teachings just at an age when their minds are most susceptible and most alert? And meantime, what are too many of us doing, but heating the old broth over again, or firing blank cartridges at the ghosts of errors which are alike dead and forgotten! Surely it must be owned that something else is called for in our day, and that somehow the Church must meet so obvious and pressing a want. How shall it be done? How shall we

secure a learned and thoughtful clergy? In Canada and in the United States alike, the Church has no venerable endowments, no ancient seats of learning, no income-yielding scholarships or amply-paid Cathedral stalls for her clergy—nothing, usually, but the parish glebe and the modest parsonage, and an endless round of hard work, poorly and often irregularly paid. It is true, it will be said, that upon the clergy are imposed innumerable burdens which do not really belong to them. It is true that they are distracted by engagements and fretted by details which make it simply impossible for them to obey the injunction of their Bishop at their ordination, to “draw all their cares and studies ‘one way’.” But how, it will be asked, do you propose to better this state of things, not later and elsewhere, but here and now? I answer that we are to do so, if at all, by borrowing the wisdom of those who are about us. This wisdom, as it has illustrated itself in the history of almost every communion in this land, but especially of that one which, of all others on our side of the line, is the most numerous and well organized, consists in developing and utilizing the effective co-operation of the laity. And this brings me to the second of those needs of the Church in our day of which I would speak this morning.

II. It has been said somewhere that we, in our communion, profess to believe in three orders of the ministry, and falsify it by being content with two. And, unfortunately, the charge is true. We have bishops and priests in our day, but we have no deacons; or if we do have them, they are not in any sense the representatives of a distinct office, performing a distinct function, and ordained for a particular work, but simply presbyters in a chrysalis state, with an impatience to be advanced to that good degree of the priesthood which is not always quite consistent with their having earned it. Said a learned and venerable pastor in my hearing not long ago, “We have no longer any deacons in the American Church. They have so large a sense of their own dignity, and so scanty a respect for authority, that I have reached the conclusion that they

must all be archdeacons." And the worst of such a sarcasm is that with us it is so often and so largely true. The pressure of new fields, the frequent disposition of parishes to prefer young men, whose energy is not always, however, a sufficient compensation for the blunders of their inexperience—the spirit of our age, impatient of subordination, and too eager to rule to be willing to learn how by consenting to serve—all these have conspired to make the Diaconate, at least in our branch of the Church, only a hurried novitiate, hurriedly entered and quickly terminated. As we turn back the pages of ecclesiastical history, we read that at the time of the Council of Chalcedon there were some forty deacons in Edessa alone, and that Constantinople had over one hundred. We read of them as a permanent and distinct office, sometimes combining the exercise of their ministry with some secular calling in which they were engaged; and because of their closer contact with the people, acting as guides to the presbyters in the ministration of relief to the sick and destitute, and in the exercise of discipline toward the profane and irreligious. And as we read of such things in other days, it is impossible not to wish that we might reproduce them in our own. How invaluable, especially in fields in which the ministrations of the presbyters are more or less itinerant, to have a resident deacon who could maintain the services, visit the sick, look up the wandering, and like the first seven, have charge of those collections made for the charitable ministrations to widows and others. Indeed the difficulty is, not to see how such an officer in the Church might be usefully employed, nor how a perpetual Diaconate might increase the efficiency of her ministry—but rather to avoid such exaggerated demands upon the office as shall lead to its practical extinction. Of course, if we will persist in laying upon the Diaconate all the burdens of the Priesthood, there can be no reason why it should not take the rank and responsibilities of the Priesthood. The problem is how to develop a class of devout and earnest men who shall be clothed with restricted powers and authority, and set to do a restricted work; and how, when necessary, to unite such an

office with a secular calling. If it is said that such a thing can not be done, it is enough to answer that in the Methodist communion it already has been done. One of the founders of that communion in this country was Elisha Hedding, for many years its Senior Superintendent or Bishop. It was my fortune, a few years ago, to stumble, in a strange house, upon his biography; and if one would know what Methodism in this country owes to what are called "local preachers," he will do well to read that volume. It shows what vast results may be accomplished by persons clothed with restricted powers—if only they are wisely chosen and prudently employed; and it points to an agency which, in our pioneer work in this Continent, is almost indispensable.

But if we can not have it — and experience would seem to imply that we cannot — then we must have that thing which is nearest to it; I mean a more cordial and a more general spirit of lay co-operation. At present it would seem that the laity has but one function to perform, and that is the function of contributing of its means. Our Sunday-schools, our parochial societies elicit, it is true, a certain measure of lay co-operation, but usually only from the very young. For some unknown reason, it seems to be accepted that just when a layman has reached that ripeness in years and experience which fits him to instruct and counsel others, he ordinarily ceases to do so. "Pure religion and undefiled," declares the Apostle, "*is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction,*" as well as to keep one's self "unspotted from the world." Is this only a duty of the clergy? Is all other activity, save activity in one's week-day business, excluded from the New Testament conception of Christian living? Has not every man received some gift? and are not men bidden to "minister the same one to another?" If there is one thing more striking than another, in looking at the condition of the Church to-day, it is the disproportion between the gifts and opportunities of the laity and their exercise. In other days, when the priestly class was the only

learned one, it was fit and natural that to them should be confined the missionary work of the Church; but in our time, when learning and books are the equal inheritance of the laity as well, there is a definite responsibility that goes along with them. Who can speak to one immersed in business with such directness and efficacy as some companion who, from practical experience, has touched the core of the same temptations? Not long ago, you will remember, there was a proposition looking to the admission, under certain restrictions, of laymen in the Church of England, to its pulpits. I confess, for one, I can not but feel that the dangers of such a plan, if dangers there are, would be far more than counter-balanced by its advantages. But if this should be otherwise, there is no layman among us who may not wisely remember that it does not need a pulpit in which to serve Christ and His Church. The Church calls for many varieties of service from her loyal laity, some of which are directly in the line of their secular training. To relieve the clergy of anxiety for the financial administration of their parishes; to give personal help to the due order and decent maintenance of the Church's services; to visit the destitute, and gather in the stragglers and instruct the ignorant—all these are tasks which are within the reach of the most modest and retiring. And suffer me to say that it will not be until we have elicited such a spirit of co-operation that the vast arrears of the Church's work can at all be overtaken. That conception of the Church which regards the clergy as called to do her work, and the laity as called to sit and watch them do it, is not more false than it is impotent. Above all this passive theory of the Christian life, which makes the individual disciple a sponge to absorb sermons and services and pastoral visits, an ecclesiastical leech, crying "give, give" and yielding nothing back—this is a theory which means, to the soul that acquiesces in it, only spiritual dyspepsia or paralysis. It is an open question whether there is not too much preaching and ministering in view of the meagre outcome of answering endeavor and activity. To be continually listening to arguments and exhortations which lead to no fruitage of Christian activity



this is not merely negatively but positively evil. Out of it there comes, sooner or later, a dismal sense of unreality, which hardens the hearer and paralyzes or disheartens the preacher. And, therefore, the co-operation of the laity in every form of the Church's life becomes essential alike to their own spiritual life and the lasting efficiency of the clergy. Even apostolic hearts would have fainted and faltered if, in the first ages of the Church's work, it had not been for the Aquilas and Priscillas, whose loving labors so cheered them.

III. I know what will be said by a great many honest and earnest men and women, in all our congregations, when we come to them with this plea for an increased activity on the part of the laity in the Church's work. It will be said that such activity implies a religious enthusiasm which is not theirs, and which they cannot but feel that it would be hollow and unreal to affect. Undoubtedly, of many persons this is true, and if it is, then does it not bring us to that which is after all the Church's most urgent want—*the deepening of her spiritual life?* Ours is an age of great mental activity, and especially of organized activity. The Church never had so many agencies—so much machinery for the doing of her work—until it has come to be a question whether running the machinery has not exhausted that vitality of which it was meant to be the expression. I have heard a parish clergyman much commended for holding seven services, including three celebrations of the Holy Communion, in a single day. I wish I could see their virtue. It is impossible, where there are so many mechanical duties to be performed, but that the spirit in which they are performed should not be mechanical also; and it has certainly sometimes happened that our often-church-going has not deepened seriousness or earnestness of character. And so, behind all our other needs as Churchmen and Christian disciples, there stands—I am sure there is not one of us but is conscious of it—the need of deepening the spiritual life; to come closer into the presence of that Lord whom we profess to serve, until, like her who grasped the hem of His garment with

her timid but trustful touch, virtue from Him shall quicken and awaken us. You remember that legend of Leonardo di Vinci, which is told in connection with his painting of the Last Supper. As I recall it now, it runs that when the wall of the convent in Milan, on which he had painted it, was first exposed to view, the monks gathered round the picture, eager to criticize its details and to admire and applaud its most insignificant accessories. There were loud voices and fierce disputes, until it was with one consent agreed that, if there was one thing better than another about the picture, it was the drawing and coloring of the table-cloth. The impatient painter listened with flushed cheek and flashing eye until the last of the order had spoken, and then seizing his brush, with one dash of color blotted every admired detail of the table-cloth out. He had brought them to look upon the face and figure of Christ, and they could be so absorbed upon so paltry a thing as the painting of a bit of cloth! Even so, I think, in these days of restlessness without devotion, of bustle without faith, we are absorbed in a thousand small details, well enough in themselves it may be, but oh! how far removed from the central fact of that religion of which we claim to be disciples. And all the while the Master is looking calmly down upon us, waiting until we shall consent to withdraw our eyes from these and lift them to Himself. For then how surely shall it come to pass that, drawing our inspiration straight from Him, our work, our duty, our shortcomings, will all alike stand forth in a new and clearer light. If we are the pastors of His flock, we shall, as we lift our eyes to Him, find ourselves moved to feed them more diligently, and lead them more prudently than we have ever done before; and, whether clergy or laity, looking to Him we shall catch the spirit of Him who said, "I must work the works of Him who sent me while it is called to-day; the night cometh when no man can work!" Show us, therefore, O thou mighty One, first of all Thyself, and so arouse us to the work which Thou hast given us to do!

