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FRENCH and ENGLISH
in Canada and across the sea.



A SERMON,

BY

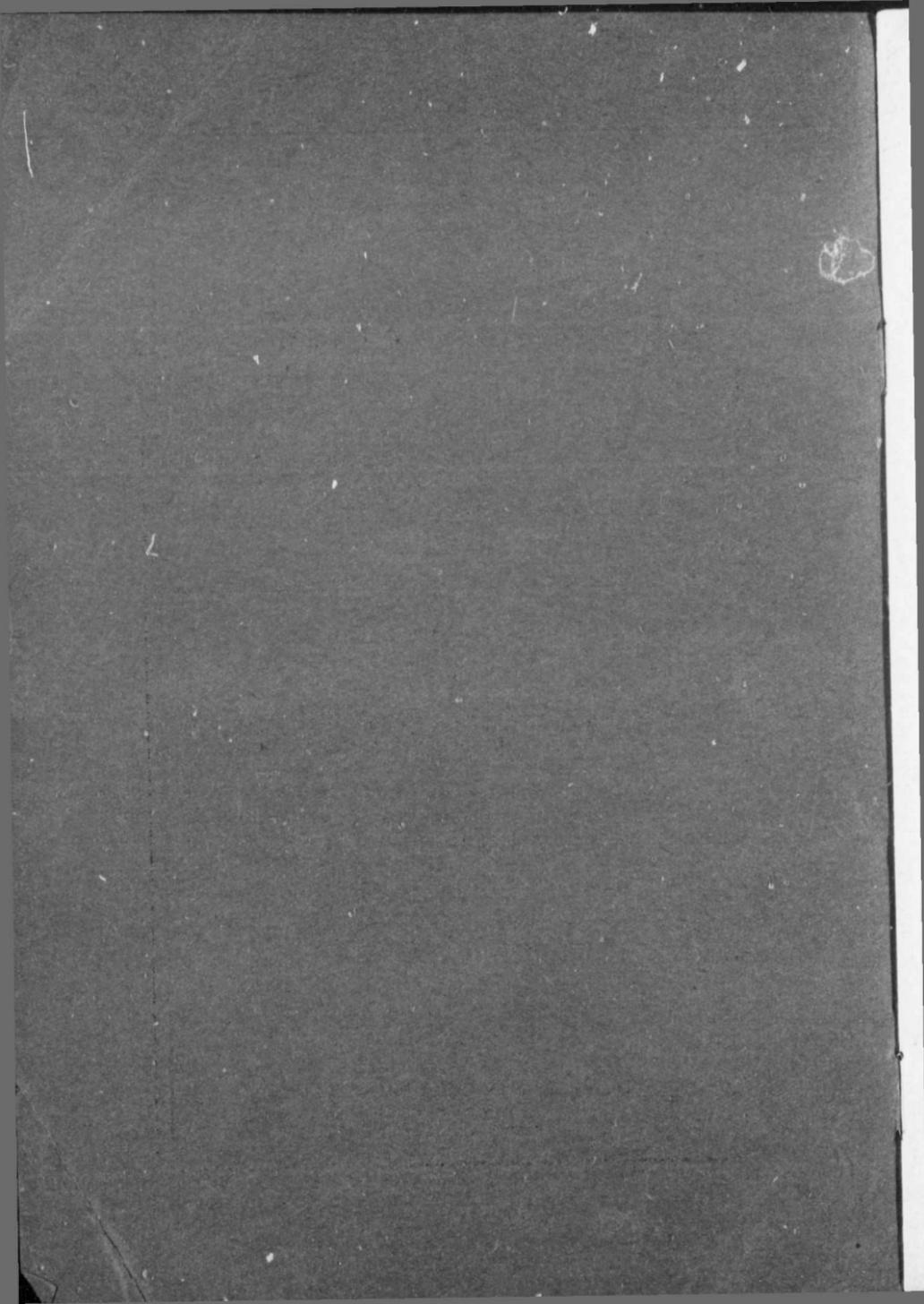
Rev. W. T. Herridge, D. D.



PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

1917

CANADIAN PRINTING
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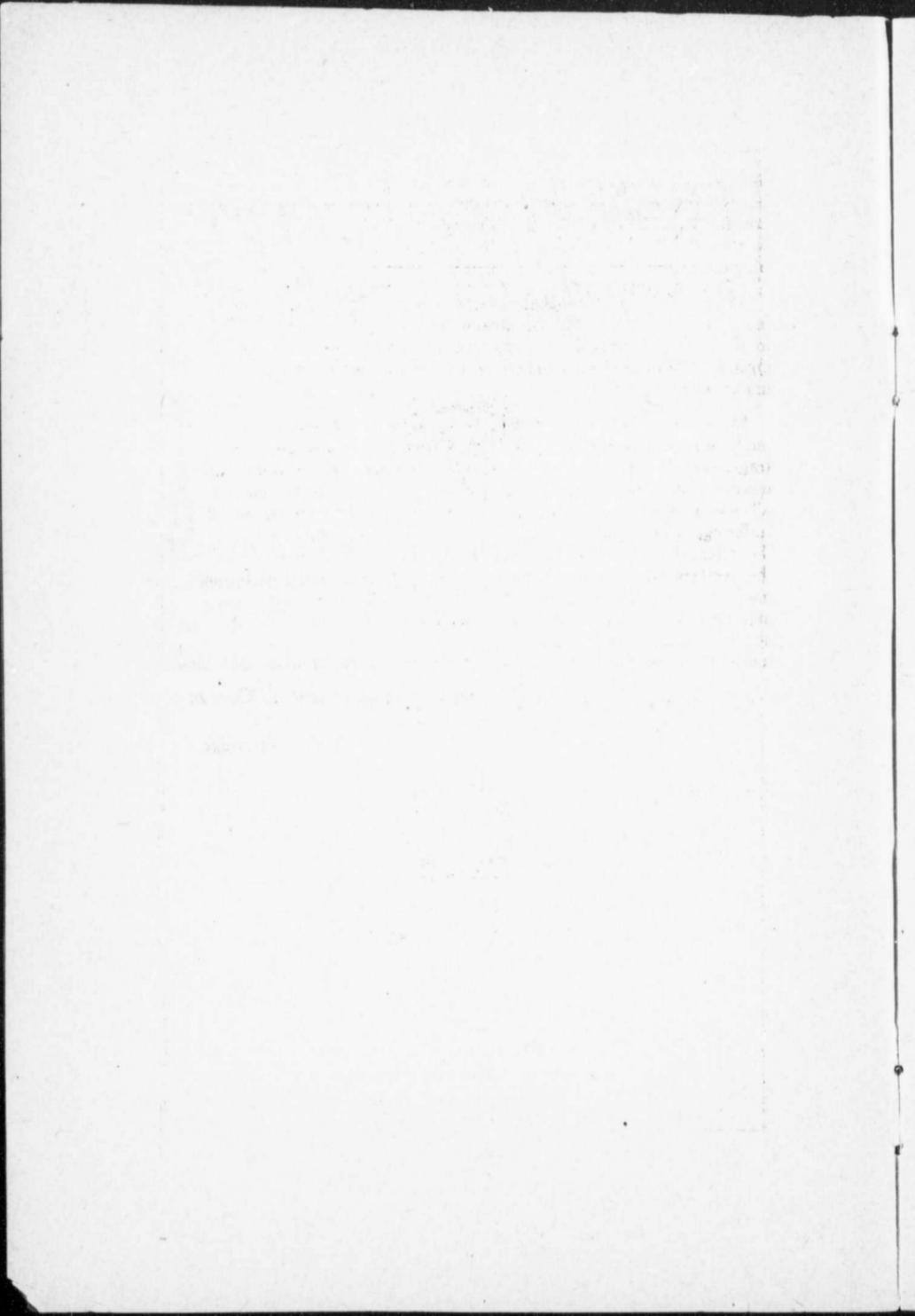


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NOTE.

This sermon was preached in St. Andrew's Church, Ottawa, on May 6th, and in Knox Church, Montreal, on June 10th, after the proposal of Conscriptio had been made.

It is now published in its later form at the request of those who think it may be of some little service, at least, to the cause of unity in Canada.

W. T. Herridge.

St. Andrew's Manse,

Ottawa, June 18th, 1917.

THE [illegible] OF [illegible]

“ The Unity of the Spirit ”

Ept. 4 : 3

One of the most remarkable things about the war is that it has led to a federation of different forces such as the world has never seen before. But what I wish to speak of now is the union of France and Britain in this great strife. If moral considerations were out of place in discussing the subject, the pulpit should leave it alone. It is not the business of a preacher of the Gospel to deal with questions which have no bearing upon individual or national character. But if there are any great questions of this sort,—and I doubt it very much,—this is not one of them. On the contrary, the present union of France and Britain is full of ethical and religious suggestiveness to us all.

And its significance is increased when we remember that no small part of the past annals of Europe is taken up with the record of conflicts between them. It is only a little more than a hundred years since Waterloo. And though, in the Crimean War, they fought on the same side, and against one of their now wavering Allies, their present union is not only the most important, but the deepest in their whole history. While the government of Britain is monarchical and that of France republican, they are both imbued with the democratic spirit, both chivalrously sensitive to human rights, both eager in defence of human liberties. They are fighting now for an idea, so sacred in itself and so divine in its origin that, under its compelling influence, they cannot do otherwise. The old rivalries are buried, and the new rivalry is a rivalry of service and sacrifice in the common cause of freedom.

When we recall the unpreparedness of Britain at the outset of the war, what she has done in it is simply marvellous. Her contemptible army has grown to six million men, some of whom, indeed, have now finished their course upon the field of battle. And those who must needs remain at home are formed into a busy camp that welcomes work and welcomes self-denial, and that, amid all the havoc and pain, refuses to be dismayed. And though Canada has done much to prove her loyal devotion and her sympathy with

the great purpose of this strife, her hardships, her losses, her sorrows fall far short of those of the old mother-land.

And if Britain has been wonderful in her effort and in the results of it, France, in some ways, has been more wonderful still. Perhaps the remembrance of Germany's past attacks upon her, made France more conscious than Britain of the possibility of a renewal of them. She had studied with greater care the development of those ruthless theories of the State and of the German soldier as the Superman, which were bound to make that nation a menace to the peace of the world. But when, at last, the tempest broke, there were some who thought, and Germany among them, that France had grown decadent, and that a brief summer campaign would suffice for the capture of Paris, and the overthrow of the whole land. We know how Teutonic self-complacency was undeceived in that regard. But the whole of the splendid story still remains to be told. In spite of the religious scepticism which had made its inroads upon French thought, and the love of pleasure which seemed to threaten any vigorous manifestation of serious purpose, it soon became plain that there was something more in French character which only needed trial to bring it out. Great as has been the military resourcefulness of France evoked by war, greater still has been her spiritual awakening. It is often a mistake to conclude that the temperament which disposes to a seemingly superficial joy of living has no deeper side to it. Only those who know how to play know how to work with fine effectiveness. Comedy way help to prepare for tragedy. The sense of humour, unless it falls into coarseness, makes bearable distresses that would crush without it. The Teuton, who takes himself most seriously, is being hurled back by the Gaul, whose very laughter is terrible; and the faith in a tribal God, a kind of moloch, whose viceregent is the German Emperor, is being answered by a renewed faith in a God who loves the world.

This is the miracle which is being wrought in France to-day. If she has been chastened for her sins, she is being saved by her penitence. The altars that had been deserted are approached once more. The prayers that had been silenced rise again to heaven. The nation is on its knees, and because of this it is proving so strong to labour, so strong to fight, so strong to endure the worst things than can happen to it.

Nor is this an ecclesiastical revival alone, but something which alas! is not necessarily the same thing, a revival of that true christian spirit which, beneath all differences of outward worship, always makes for unity. Some time ago, a photograph was reproduced in the French journal *L'Illustration*. It represented a ruined Church, broken-arched, roofless, its remaining walls seamed with shell-burst, its floor heaped with débris of masonry and charred

wood. Upon those mounds of rubbish English soldiers were on their knees, and an English Chaplain was celebrating the Communion. By his side knelt the Catholic parish priest, taking part with him. What a suggestive object-lesson ! And where else than under the lurid light of war which destroys petty differences and reveals the common needs of the human soul,—where else, I say, could these two have been brought to worship together ? God help us ! Most of us are Protestants first, or Catholics first, and Christian as far as we have a chance to be under the fetters of denominational bigotry. But the soldiers who are fighting and dying confront the great adventure with a simple faith that makes our sectarian quarrels look ridiculous. There is the charred and bloody plain, the shattered church, the bruised and broken men, but, one altar, one Sacrament, one God.

Surely the spectacle of the unity of France and Britain in the old world must have a marked influence upon us in Canada. For while the Channel divides the two great races there, here they dwell side by side. And though their presence in this land may seem to render our problems more complicated, at the same time it enriches our national life. An attitude of mutual suspicion and hostility would be absurd as well as suicidal, for each has something to learn from the other. The French were here first. They planted the banner of civilization and conquest in Acadia and on the heights of Quebec. Their missionaries braved all kinds of hardship and peril that they might bring christian truth, as they conceived it, to the inhospitable tribes of what was then a savage wilderness. And when, in that final conflict, victory came at last to the flag of Britain, the French in Canada were made like sharers with ourselves in British rights and British liberties.

While, therefore, we hold firmly to the religious principles which are our ancestral heritage, we can afford to have kindly thought for our fellow-citizens who are equally loyal to their own ; and instead of harping upon our points of difference, remember rather the great, underlying principles on which we are agreed. This is a good time to stop putting the chief accent on racial idiosyncrasies. I do not say that we need ignore them, nor be ashamed of them. No one is likely to prove a useful member of any commonwealth who feels no thrill of affection for the land of his forefathers, and takes no pride in its history. But in this new world, if we learn how to do it, we may fuse the two chief-elements of our population into a united whole, and submerge all other descriptive names in the one name of Canadian.

I know it has been said that the French-speaking part of Canada has not done all that it might do in responding to the call of the war. I think this is true. But, for that matter, is it not true in some quarters of English-

speaking Canada also? Our French compatriots have had handicaps in this regard from which we have not suffered. Many of them, especially the *habitants* of Quebec, are simple folk, removed from the roar of the great world, and unless directly instructed, not likely to comprehend the full significance of the struggle in Europe to-day. And they have not been much instructed. Whether, in any cases, they have been told by their religious guides that the war is no business of theirs, and that France is now suffering the Nemesis of apostasy, I do not know. But any political attempts to rouse their enthusiasm and make them understand the naturalness of taking part in this fight for freedom, have not only been spasmodic and unorganized, but marked, at times, by a timidity which was thinking more of the possible effects upon partisan interests than of the effect upon the general good. And, therefore, I find myself unwilling to pass any hasty judgment upon the loyalty of my French fellow-citizens until they have had just as much incentive as ourselves for proving it.

Perhaps it may be said that the proposal of conscription is likely to lead to disunion amongst us. But why should it? Of course, we cannot expect that any sudden arrest of individualism will meet with universal approval; and the right to object must be allowed in a free State. It is regrettable that, in certain quarters, protest has assumed violent forms. But I feel sure that this kind of thing does not fairly reflect the best sentiment of any section of the people of Canada. No one who loves liberty can resent a fresh appeal to fight for liberty when the nature of the appeal and the reason for it are once comprehended by them. And Conscription is nothing but a sharp appeal, imperfect, of course, because an impulse from without is never worth as much as an impulse from within. Yet it is a reminder of neglected duty, a spur to earnest thought, and *réveille* that calls the sleeping camp to arms. In some cases the very shock it gives will soon make the continuance of the shock superfluous, and rouse in those who have hitherto been sluggish an answering fervour which itself drives into the peril and sacrifice of a gigantic struggle by no means yet ended, but upon the final outcome of which depends, not our own future alone, but the future of the world.

Let no one make a bugbear of the word "Conscription," and ignore the fact that every civilized land illustrates, in some form or other, the principle which underlies it. We have many laws upon our statute-book which interfere with freedom of individual action when its exercise is likely to be injurious to the general good. We do not allow the drunkard, the thief, the assassin, the anarchist to go about unrestrained. And if anyone says that this is not at all a parallel case, my answer is that Canada has no worse enemies to-day than those, who, though living otherwise reputable

lives, are blind to the duty they now owe to their country, their Empire, and their God.

In some respects, it is harder to attain unity in a democratic State than in an autocratic one. Let us be thankful that Canada has had her chivalrous thousands who, of their own accord, became conscripts to an ideal. Behind the love of Britons for their flag has been another love, the love of freedom, the love of right, the love of those doctrines of humanity taught by Jesus Christ. Our soldiers are not saints. But they have felt this, at least, that the cry of the downtrodden could not be unheeded by them; that a cruel despotism could not be allowed to pursue unrebuked its devilish purposes; that, if life itself was to remain worth living, the dearest possessions of life must be kept inviolate, though hardship and peril and wounds and death seemed the only road by which to reach that goal.

And because of the splendid valour of our sons, any refusal now to fill up their sadly decimated ranks would be a menace to the living, and an insult to the dead. Easy-going measures are out of place in this crucial hour of the world's history. If the youth of Canada who, up to this time have declined even to consider their public responsibilities, now see them in their true light, that is best. It not, some education and some stimulus are demanded, unless we would dispense with any government at all. We need statemen just now, not mere party politicians. We need those who are prepared to make the same sacrifices themselves which they ask of others. We need a comprehensive grasp of things, an unselfish patriotism, a readiness to submerge all smaller differences that there may be no hindrance to the achievement of one great aim. This is no time to put the accent either upon Grits or Tories. There should be but one party in Canada to-day, the party whose full strength is concentrated upon winning this war. "Selective conscription" is well enough when applied to the actual firing-line of battle. We can't all go there, however much we might wish to do so. But there must be no "selective" methods if Canada is to reach her utmost possibilities. In whatever way it is brought about, this is the time to push forward our effort, to unify our strength, to "carry on" our toil, our wealth, our thought, our prayer, our sacrifice, till, stunned by blow on blow, despotism falls to rise no more.

But it may be urged that there is yet another obstacle to the unifying of Canada, from the fact that the creed of most of our fellow-Canadians of French origin differs, in some particulars, from our own. But is this a real obstacle, or only an imaginary one? Of course, if we consented to be governed by the policy of earlier ages, we should require no pretext for beginning a war of extermination until the triumphant party had established its faith as the only permissible one throughout the land. But no sane

man, I imagine, would dream of advocating that course of procedure. We do well to resist the attempt of any Church to rule the State in Canada, even though that Church should be our own. If we believe that we have a greater measure of religious light and liberty than some around us, no one can blame us if, in a Christian spirit, we seek to diffuse these benefits. Yet neither ultra-Protestantism nor ultra-Catholicism will promote the welfare of Canada half as much as a broad-based faith which includes them both. We all worship the same God. We all employ similar aids to stimulate religious devotion ; and while our Catholic friends put the Church first, and so teach us a wise lesson which we might do well to learn, it is to be hoped that we all alike enthrone the Christian ideal as supreme, and all alike strive, though sometimes, it must be admitted, with lukewarm fervour, to make its loveliness felt in actual life. The picture which I presented in an earlier part of this sermon of the two *padres* of different Churches, and their respective flocks, kneeling together at a common shrine, may seem, just now, impossible amongst us. But history on the battlefield is prophecy also. And though it will not come in your day or mine, as long as the Divine power works among men separating essentials from non-essentials, revealing amid varieties of method the same spirit, disposing human hearts to feel—

“ A value for religion’s self,
A carelessness about the sects of it, ”—

as long, I say, as this leavening influence of God Himself is present in the world, as long as the Risen Christ endures, I shall not despair of the reunion of Christendom.

Meanwhile, we are bound to try to discover the secret of harmony, not in indifference to religious faith of any kind, nor in the attempt to brow-beat others into accord with our own, but by cultivating that essentially Christian temper of mind which unites firmness of conviction with breadth of charity ; which finds greater joy in discovering the elements of truth, even in the most imperfect forms of religious manifestations than in deriding mistake and error ; which re-enforces its own strength by assimilating what is strongest in others ; which carries into life something of the Master’s patience and unselfishness, and so endeavours to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

Nowhere in the world is there a better opportunity than in Canada to work out the practical problems of life in a broad and tolerant way ; to show what those principles of civil and religious freedom, which we have inherited from Britain, are able to accomplish in this big land. To do otherwise would be to prove false to the best traditions of the past, and to obscure the brightest hopes for the days to come. We cannot keep our

national life unless we show that we are indeed a confederated people, bound together by no mere legislative enactments, but by the enthusiastic consent of our own souls. In these epochmaking days, anyone who dares to foment racial or religious strife amongst us is a coward and a traitor, playing into the hands of our common enemies.

In the old city of Quebec, overlooking the noble river, there stands a monument to Wolfe and Montcalm, the vanquisher and the vanquished, in that crucial struggle for supremacy. On its face is written this inscription, "Valour gave a united death, History a united fame, Posterity a united monument."

If we never before felt the full suggestiveness of such a memorial, we ought surely to feel it now. We shall fail to learn the chief lesson of this tragic war if it does not serve to develop amongst us love rather than hate, union rather than severance ; if it does not enable us to discern, beneath all minor divergences, that spiritual bond, strengthened by sacrifice and suffering, which binds us into one. For the noblest instincts of our nature, the voice of earth's best and bravest, the graves of our sons across the sea, the welfare of outraged humanity, the will of God Himself when He made the world,— all these unite in calling us to put away selfish aims, and narrow bigotries, and to join together French and English, Catholic and Protestant, in a common enthusiasm which shall shed imperishable lustre upon the name of Canadian.

