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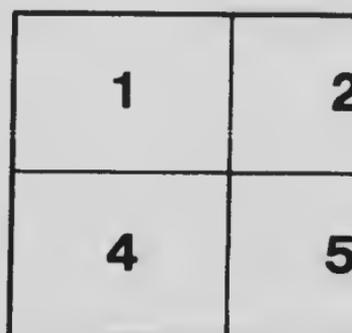
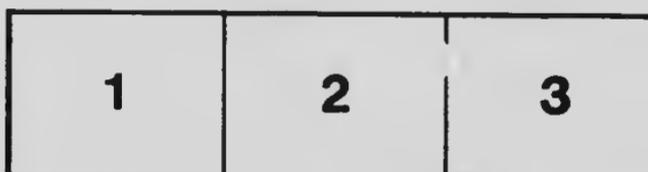
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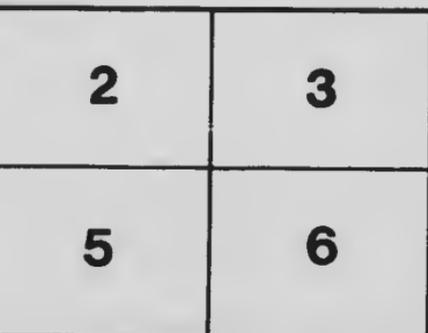
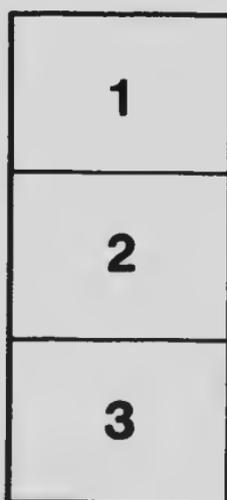
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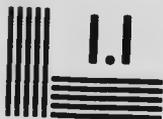
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# Ordination Vows

A sermon preached by the  
Reverend Alexander J. Doull  
M.A. Oxon. Rector of the  
Church of the Advent, West-  
mount, Montreal, in Christ  
Church Cathedral, Montreal,  
the 4th Sunday in Advent  
1907. With preface by  
the Right Reverend James  
Carmichael, D.D., Lord Bishop  
of Montreal.

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Loull, Alexander

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## PREFACE

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I have been asked to write a few words introductory to this Sermon which I do with pleasure.

Modern theological thought claims the freest of hands, to deal with the Holiest of subjects, in the freest manner, but feels not a little aggrieved, if others, who, filled with an overwhelming sense of the object of Ordination Vows, persevere in preaching and defending, what the Church of England expects them to preach and defend, as "Ministers of the Word" and stewards of the Mysteries of God. Such a position is singularly one-sided, and being so, loses all power.

The writer of the following Sermon, writes as a clergyman of the Church of England to those being admitted to that Church's Ministry. He writes as one pledged by solemn vows of stewardship to those about to become stewards, and from that stand-point every position he takes is consistent with the duty, which at my request he had kindly undertaken to perform. I thanked him personally when he preached and I now do so more publicly, but none the less heartily.

JAMES MONTREAL.

Bishop's Court, Montreal,  
March 24th, 1908.

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## Ordination Vows.

**"Thy vows are upon me, O God."**

*Psalm LVI—12.*

We are met together, my brethren, this morning to take our part as members of the one Holy Catholic Church in that solemn service by which, and in which, age after age, the grace of Holy Orders is handed on by the Lord Jesus Christ to those whom He has called to the sacred office of deacon or priest in that Divine Society which He Himself has founded for the express purpose of carrying on His work and perpetuating His Ministry even unto the end of the world.

Whilst it is to the Bishop, and the Bishop alone, that the actual power of conferring the grace of Holy Orders pertains, whilst He is the member of the body of Christ through which the body ordains, and whilst without him it would be as incapable of ordaining as the human body would be incapable of seeing without the eye or hearing without the ear, yet those of us who are here assembled with him, whether priests, deacons or lay members, are assembled, not as idle spectators, but as part of Christ's mystical body, the Church, to sanction that which shall be done, and to assist by our prayers and, as in the case of those of us who are priests, by the imposition of our hands in the bestowal of that Divine gift of the Holy Spirit, by whose power alone the minister of Christ can carry the burden and perform the task which is assigned to him. An, my brethren, these young soldiers who to-day kneel before the great Captain of their Salvation to receive their commissions as officers in his army have need of all the strength that God can give to them for the tremendous task they are about to accept.

And we, too, as members of God's Church on earth, have great need of strength and guidance by the Holy Ghost in view of the tremendous importance of the work that is being assigned to them, lest hands should be laid suddenly on any man, lest any man who spiritually or morally is unworthy should enter as a wolf into the fold, seeking not to feed, but to devour and destroy.

#### **The Commission of the Church.**

For what is the Church doing when she confers the grace of Holy Orders upon any man? **She is not sending him into the world to be an expounder of his own theories about religion; She is not sending him as a philosophical speculator regarding the truth of religion; She is not sending him to be a mere ethical teacher of vague, hazy principles of morality culled from sources Christian, anti-Christian or pagan.** Far, far from this, she sends him into the world by the authority of Jesus Christ **to teach the faith, preach the Gospel, administer the Sacraments,** and exercise the discipline, as she from the beginning has received them from her Lord.

The commission is a very definite one given by the Church to a man to represent her and her Lord, and given only after she has taken every care and precaution to ascertain if the candidate understands **what he is undertaking, is willing to accept her conditions, and is qualified intellectually, morally and spiritually to have so great a treasure committed to his trust.**

Before the candidate for Holy Orders presents himself in church he has already been examined carefully by the Bishop, or those to whom the Bishop assigns this work, and, in their name, the Archdeacon publicly assures the Bishop that he has enquired of and examined the candidate, and, as a result, thinks him to be "apt and meet for his learning and Godly conversation to exercise his ministry duly to the honor of God and the edifying of His Church."

### Vows Are Sacred.

Next the congregation is appealed to. Anyone is urged to come forward if he or she knows any impediment which ought to, or, in their judgment, ought to be a hindrance to the ordination. And then, in the presence of God, and in the face of the congregation, certain very solemn questions are put by the Bishop, which, being put and answered by the candidate, become sacred vows binding him for life. Now this exceeding care, this great precaution is taken by the Church because her own honor and the honor of her Divine Lord is being entrusted to the newly ordained, and before she commissions him she must be assured, so far as assurance is possible, that he will do what she expects of him, preach her truth and exemplify it by his life and conversation.

In the present day when very few Churchmen take the trouble to study their prayer books, and when only the offices of Morning and Evening Prayer are familiar to many of them; in the present day, when strange and erroneous views are heard even from the lips of ordained ministers as they stand in the pulpits of the Church, it seems well that on such an occasion as this your attention should be drawn to the solemn vows each and every man takes at his ordination, vows which are the condition of his ordination, and in consequence of which alone is he permitted to officiate at our altars or preach in our pulpits.

### Belief in Church and Scriptures.

Time, of course, does not permit me to examine the ordination vows with you in detail. I commend them to your careful attention for study afterwards. All I have time to do this morning is to consider very briefly the vows taken with respect to Holy Scripture, and the doctrine of the Church.

1st—The Church, as the pillar and ground of the truth, and as the witness to and keeper of Holy Writ, suf-

fers no man to be ordained until he has taken a solemn vow before God and herself that he unfeignedly believes all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and is persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all Doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, and is further determined out of the said Scriptures to instruct the people committed to his charge, and to teach nothing as required of necessity to eternal salvation but that which he shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture.

Belief in the inspiration of the Holy Bible, is, therefore, the very first requirement on the part of the Church, the first condition upon which Holy Orders are conferred.

True, the Church has no theory to impose respecting the doctrine of inspiration, but the fact of inspiration must be acknowledged with regard to each and every book of the Old or New Testament by every candidate seeking admission to the sacred ministry.

### **Must Believe All the Bible.**

If a man were to say: "I believe parts of the Bible to be inspired, but I have grave doubts respecting this book or that," "I am convinced that 64 out of the 66 books of it are inspired, but I am not so sure about the remaining two books," then he might be right or wrong in the opinion of the higher critics; but one thing is clear, if he were an honest man, and if the Bishop to whom he applied for ordination were also an honest man, he could never become a clergyman of the Church of England. For the question and answer are very clear and distinct, admitting of no evasion or equivocation: "Do you unfeignedly believe all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament?" "I do believe them."

How some men can, after making this solemn declaration, teach and preach theories respecting the Bible

utterly at variance with this sacred vow passes the wit of man to determine; how, for instance, a well-known ecclesiastic of the Church at home can reject portions of the Gospels, of St. Matthew and St. Luke, wherein the Holy Ghost has preserved for us two accounts of the Virgin birth of our adorable Lord God, and yet remain an Anglican priest, baffles the comprehension of the ordinary man who has any idea of common honesty.

### Priests Should Be Honest.

No one asks the priest who has lost his faith, or a part of it, to teach what he does not believe, but we do ask him, to be honest and not teach doctrines from the Church's pulpits which are contrary to her teaching, contrary to the solemn vow which he took at his ordination, and which formed an absolutely indispensable condition of his being ordained and allowed to preach at all.

Secondly—This brings us to a consideration of the further pledge and promise required of every candidate for Holy Orders, viz., that he accepts and will preach the doctrine of Christ as the Church has received the same.

The Catholic Church of Christ is not a society seeking after truth; it is a society that has found truth, a society whose head is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Truth Incarnate.

The truth has been committed to her from the beginning; it can neither be added to nor taken away from, it is the faith once delivered unto the Saints, for which she must contend, the Gospel which never changes and which, like Christ who gave it, is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. "But though we," writes the great Apostle of the Gentiles, "though we, or an angel from Heaven, should preach unto you any Gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preacheth unto you any Gospel other than that which ye received let him be anathema."

### Must Preach Old Gospel.

And as a true and living part of the Church Catholic, the Church of England sends her ministers to teach and preach **not their own theories, not their own Gospel, not the new theology, but the old, old faith and the old, old Gospel as she has received the same.**

The candidate for deacon's orders is asked not only whether he trusts that he is moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon him this office and ministrations to serve God for the promotion of His glory and the edifying of His people, but also whether he thinks that he is truly called according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ and the due order of this realm to the ministry of the Church.

And when he presents himself to receive the Priesthood, the questions are far more explicit and the vow taken is most solemn and binding.

"Do you think in your heart that you be truly called, according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the order of this Church of England to the order and ministry of Priesthood?" "I think it."

"Will you then give your faithful diligence always so to minister the **Doctrine and Sacraments and the Discipline of Christ** as the Lord hath commanded and as this Church and Realm hath received the same according to the Commandments of God; so that you may teach the people committed to your care and charge with all diligence to keep and observe the same."

"I will so do, by the help of the Lord."

### First Act of Worship.

And the very first words which he recites after his ordination, the very first act of worship in which he takes part, is the saying or singing of the Nicene Creed, wherein the Church's Gospel is most fully set forth and declared.

For any man, after giving such a solemn pledge to God and His Church, after having accepted the Creeds, and promised to teach the faith as the Church has received it, for any man to deny or throw doubt upon any statement of the Creeds, such as the Virgin birth or the Godhead of Jesus Christ, and His bodily resurrection the third day from the dead, is to break his ordination vow and to use his ministry for a purpose exactly the opposite of that for which it was conferred.

Let the faithful and the world be well assured that, when the teaching given from the Church's pulpit contradicts or conflicts with that given from the altar, the lectern or the prayer desk, something is wrong. The man who stands in it has need to read again his solemn ordination vows, and either to carry them out or retire from a position which, as an honest man, he can no longer occupy.

### What the Priesthood Is.

My dear brothers, you who are here assembled, like the Apostles of old on the day of Pentecost, waiting for the gift of the Holy Ghost and power from on high, yours is, indeed, a high, holy, noble calling. To-day you enter into the ranks of those who are the officers of Christ's army; to-day you hear His voice saying: "As the Father hath sent me even so send I you; receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Priest in the Church of God."

"For the office and work of a Priest in the Church of God." Never forget it; that is the purpose for which you are ordained, that is the purpose for which you receive the Holy Ghost, and, so long as you faithfully try to execute that office and work in humble dependence upon His indwelling presence and power, so long will that Divine presence never fail you.

The vows of God are upon you, or will be upon you before you leave this church, vows which pledge and bind

you most solemnly to definite whole-hearted acceptance of the Bible and the Church and of the whole truth which each teaches and bears witness to. You are being sent to teach those great truths which never change, never can change, because the needs of humanity are the same from one generation to another.

### The Ministerial Message.

Men may say what they will, sin, however, is a terrible reality and calls in every age for the same Divine remedy. Your message, the message the Church bids you deliver, is the only message that can bring comfort and help to the sinner, and joy and hope to the believer. Your message is to tell the world of a personal God, a God who is one God in Three Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Your message is to tell the world that God made it and all that therein is, and that, when mankind sinned, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Your message is to recount to the world the story of Jesus' birth and life and death. That He, the eternal Son of the eternal Father, was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; that He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. That He descended into Hades. Your message is to proclaim that this same Jesus, perfect God and perfect Man, rose again from the dead on the third day, and ascended into Heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence He shall come to judge both the quick and the dead. Your message is to tell men of the descent of God the Holy Ghost, of the existence of the one Holy Catholic Apostolic Church through which and in which the Holy Ghost works, making men, through the sacraments and all the

means of grace, partakers of that forgiveness of sins won for us by the atonement which Christ made upon the Cross; partakers, too, of all other benefits of that His most blessed passion. Your message to men finally is to assure men that **there is a life beyond, that the Church on earth and the Church in Paradise are one,—**separated now by a veil to be drawn aside at death,—a life which shall find its consummation and bliss at the last day, when the Lord shall come and **when our bodies and souls shall be reunited in the Kingdom that shall have no end.**

That, dear brothers, in brief outline, is your message; that is what you have vowed you will teach and preach. Can you imagine one more glorious; can men want anything more; can they do with anything less?

#### **Modern Substitutes Not Satisfying.**

Ah! the modern substitutes pale beneath its dazzling brightness, and who would exchange the one for the other?

As one who knows whereof he speaks said to me only the other day: "The new theology is poor stuff to do a day's work on."

**Man's spiritual nature calls for food; it is not satisfied with negations and theories and endless speculations, and the Church sends you to feed men with the word of God, with positive truth, with holy life-giving sacraments.**

A glorious message, a blessed work is yours, but, oh! the task is indeed beyond human strength. You would not dare to take these solemn vows to accept this holy office unless you knew that ordination was a great reality and that God's Holy Spirit would indeed be given to you, but, knowing this, you come full of that same confidence which fills us as we send you hence in our Master's name.

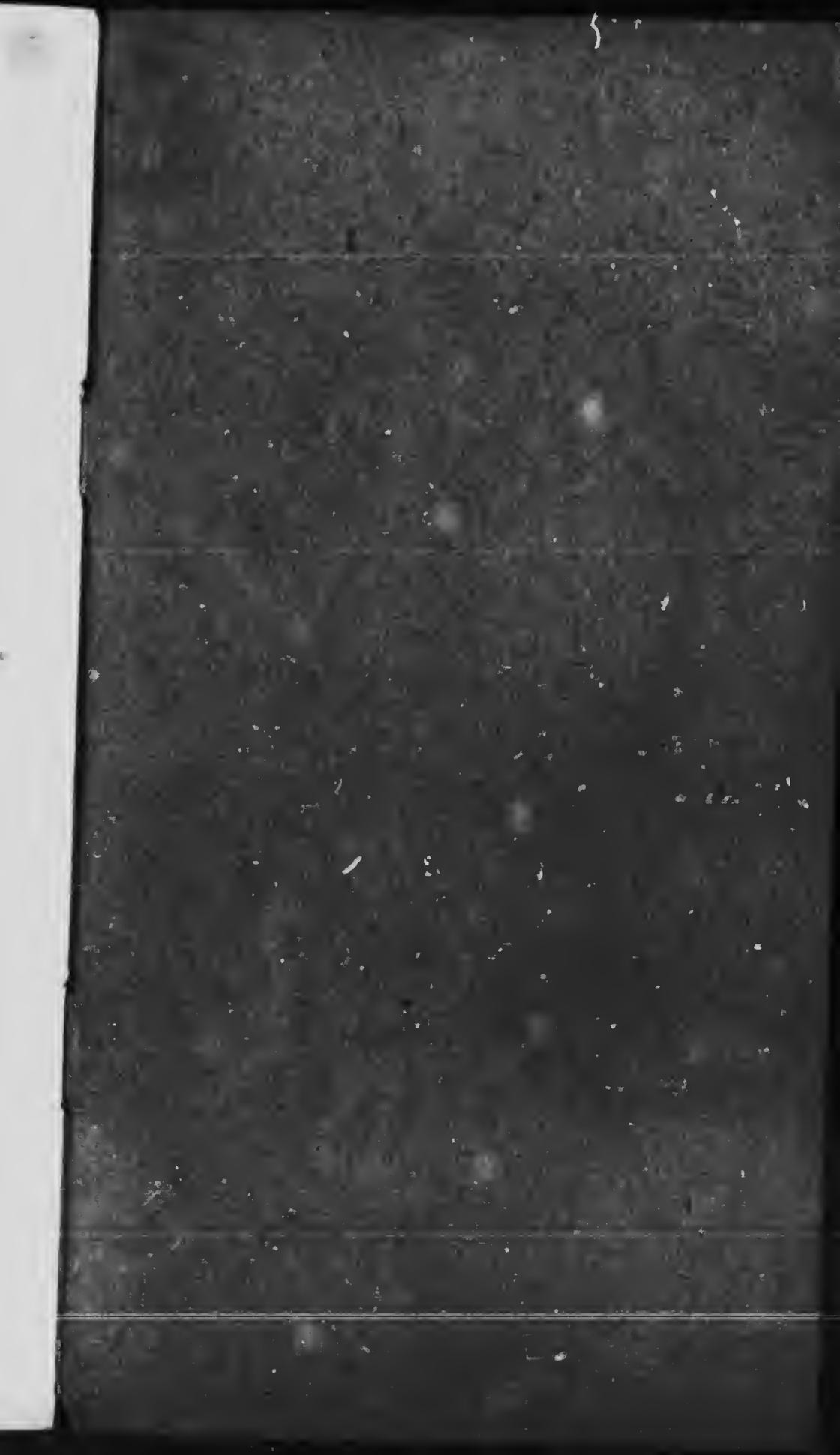
God is true. The Holy Ghost is given through the laying on of the Bishop's hands, and, if you stir up the gift, you will never lack power or strength.

The Holy Ghost is with you, nay more, Christ Himself is with you, and will be, according to His promise, always, even unto the end of the world.

**Be faithful to Him hold His honor very dear; be true to your solemn promises and vows; keep the Church's faith; preach her truth; obey her laws and customs and commands; carry out her system, not your own; so will you be blessed yourselves—a blessing to others.**

Feel your weakness, but feel also Christ's strength, and, when the battle with sin and doubt and unbelief seems almost to overwhelm you, know that your necessity is Christ's opportunity, that in your weakness is His strength perfected, know and feel and say with St. Paul: "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me."





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