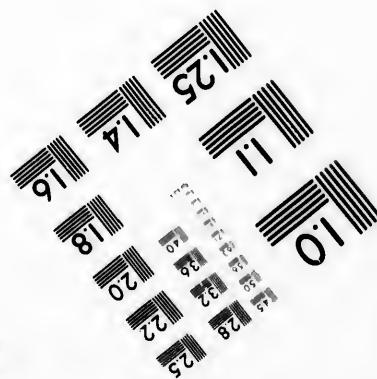
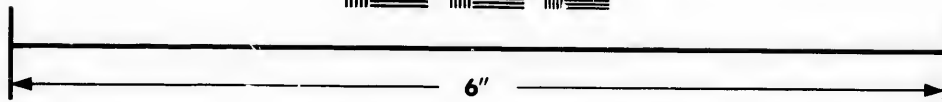
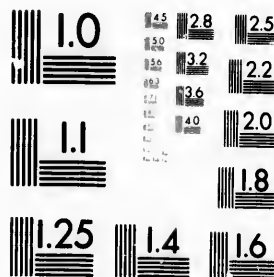


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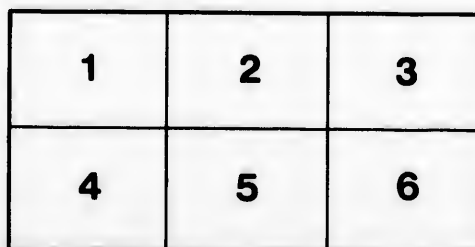
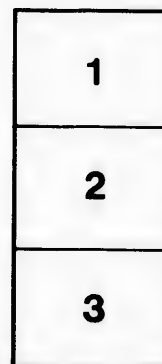
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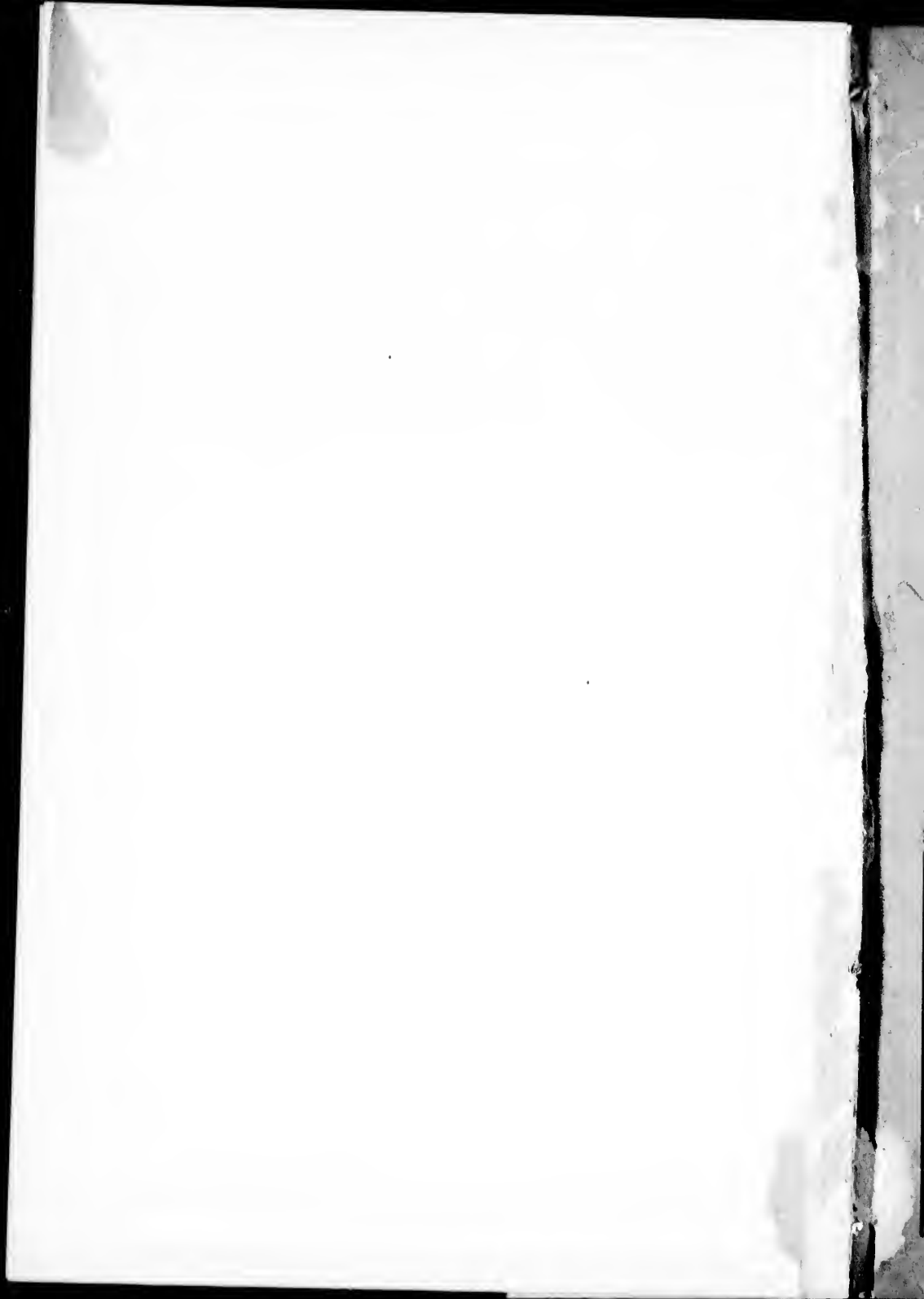
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James Howe Pamphlets

A SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE THE

SYNOD OF FREDERICTON,

IN

CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL,

FREDERICTON,

On the 9th day of October, A. D. 1879.

BY THE

REV. EDWYN S. W. PENTREATH,

(Graduate of the General Theological Seminary, New York),

RECTOR OF MONCTON, N. B.,

AND ASSOC. EDITOR OF "THE CHURCH GUARDIAN" AND "CHURCH WORK."

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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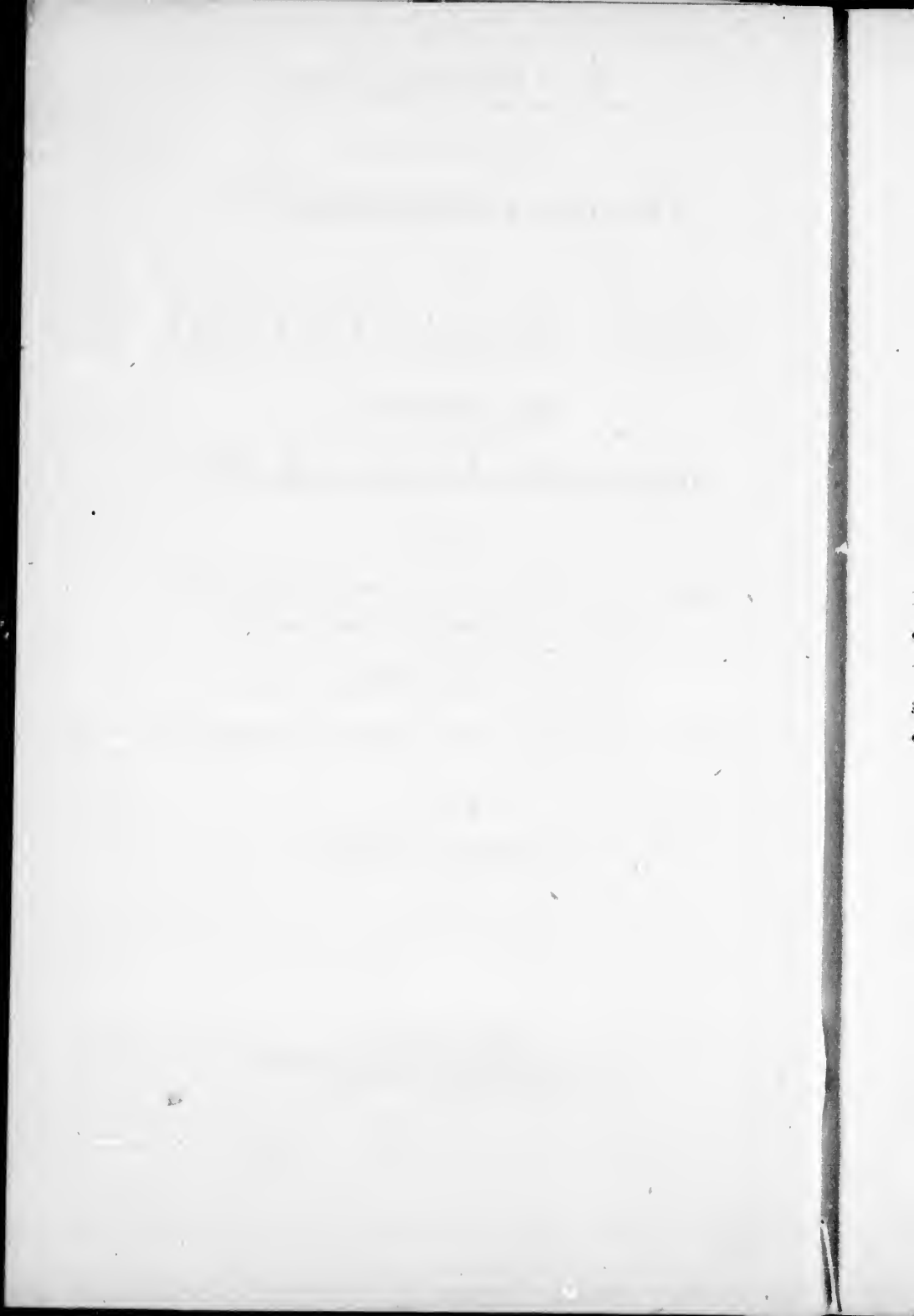
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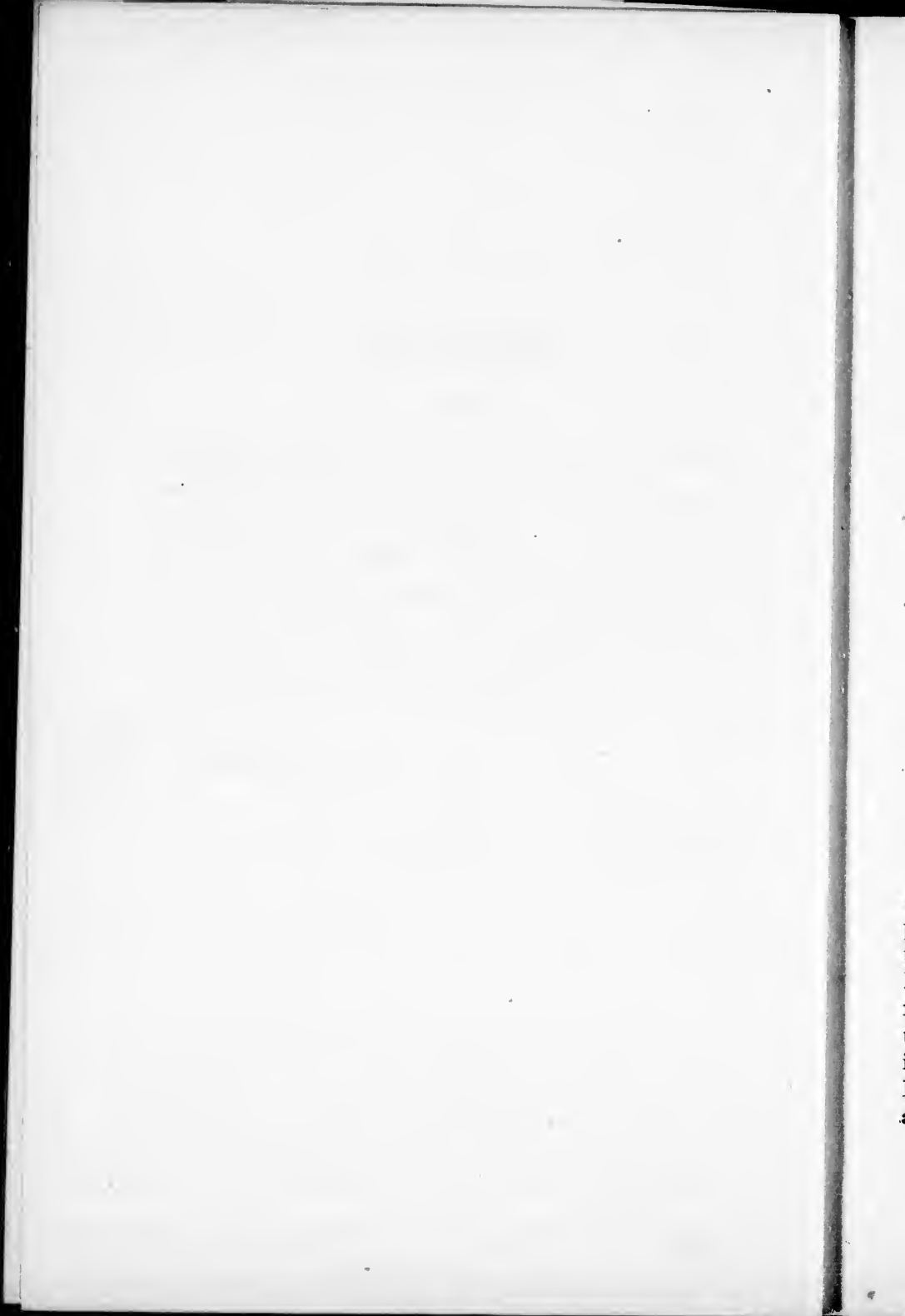
PREFACE.



THIS Sermon was written without the least thought of publication. It is published in deference to the wishes of many of the Clergy and Delegates to the Synod. I respectfully dedicate it to the members of the Synod of Fredericton, present at this special session, in the earnest hope that the action then taken may result in the selection of a Bishop endowed with missionary zeal, and "steadfast in the Apostles' doctrine," who will place himself in the forefront, and lead us "in every good word and work," to the glory of God, and the advancement of His Church.

EDWYN S. W. PENTREATH.

MOXCTON, N. B., October 13th, 1879.



SERMON.

“And they continued steadfast in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”—Acts ii. 42.

WE are assembled here to-night, my friends, as representatives of the Church of England in the Synod of a Diocese planted and nourished by the generous sons and daughters of the Mother Church, to whom we owe our grateful thanks for the long continuance of that assistance which is now being withdrawn in order to plant the standard of the cross among nations not yet weaned from idolatry. Suffer me, then, at the outset to remind you, with a deep sense of our unworthiness, and with no intention of boasting or condemnation of others, not only of your privileges as baptized children of God, living in a land under the influence of the Gospel, surrounded, so to speak, by a Christian atmosphere, and within the reach of the means of grace, but also of your privileges as members of that ancient Church which, from the days of British Christianity, has moulded the thought and life of England’s children, and given them that manly type of religion which combines the widest freedom with the due restraints of authority.

For the first seven centuries she may be called the British Church, without the shadow of Roman influence to darken her polity or her doctrine. From the seventh to the eleventh century she is the Anglo-Saxon Church ; still the old Church—Briton and Saxon Churchmen having gradually united their forces—but with some few corruptions. From the eleventh to the sixteenth century she is the Anglo-Norman Church, yielding more to the overshadowing influence of the Bishop of Rome—the queen city of the world at that time in learning and commerce—but still the Church of the nation, protesting

by her Parliaments and Kings against the encroachments of a foreign jurisdiction, forbidding, though often unavailingly, the admission of foreign ecclesiastics, and prohibiting, as contrary to law and right, appeals to Rome. From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century she is the English Church—not a new Church—in the name of historical accuracy and fair play I protest against that assumption, totally devoid as it is of any foundation—but the old church in a new state, reformed but not created, restored to her ancient British privileges, cleansed from errors which had gradually obscured some of her doctrines, and planting herself upon the bulwark of her independence, that no foreign prince or prelate hath had or shall have jurisdiction within the realm of England.

As members of this ancient body, rich in memorials of piety and learning, we are here to work for her interests and promote her progress in this Diocese. I cannot draw your attention to a more suitable passage, at this time, than that picture of the first converts to Christianity, which is contained in the text. Pricked to the heart by the preaching of St. Peter, they believed. "What shall we do?" they cried. "Repent," says the Apostle, "and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." They already believed; they repented; on the profession of their repentance and faith they were baptized into the body of Christ's Church, and then they began *their life of obedience*. It was before the fiery test of persecution shook their new-born faith, before heresy came in to corrupt it, or false teachers to lead them astray, that we read, "They continued steadfast in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers."

Here is the New Testament model for Christian people, and it is well worthy of our serious consideration. Steadfastness is not a virtue we can claim as common in these days, least of all steadfastness in *apostolic doctrine*. Corruptions have overlaid it on the one hand, and distortions or subtractions have impaired its proportions on the other. The Apostles proclaimed the great doctrines of Atonement, Sacrifice, Faith,

Regeneration, Justification, Sanctification. They preached the facts of Christ's life, the incarnation, the sufferings, the death, the resurrection and the ascension. They proclaimed the coming of the Holy Ghost, the setting up of the Church of God and eternal judgment. Into the sacred name of the Trinity they baptized, and on the baptized they laid their hands. These and other foundation truths they taught with no uncertain sound, and in their doctrine the first converts remained steadfast. There is great need that we should imitate their example, for "the seeds of falsehood and wrong are being sown by busy brains over the whole country from end to end." We have reached a point when every truth of God is assailed, every hope of man is called in question, and when, as has been said, "the heresies that Athanasius confronted at Alexandria, and Chrysostom assailed in Constantinople, have appeared with terrible distinctness in the public mind of to-day." We are called upon to speak for the great primary principles of Christianity, and it behooves every child of the Church, which bases her doctrine on Holy Scripture, to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," "to hold fast the profession of faith, nothing wavering," and to take a stand on those great principles which, drawn from the Word of God, are summed up in the Apostles' Creed, and are affirmed by the undisputed Councils. To do this, you must be students of the Bible, making use of all the light that history and research have thrown upon it. "Be not tossed about by every wind of doctrine." Be steadfast in the faith.

They were also steadfast in the Apostles' "fellowship." Divisions and schisms had not yet done their baleful work. It is true that soon after this false teachers crept in. The ideas of voluptuous cities, the philosophical tendencies, the luxurious civilization of the centres of population of those days, had their effect in corrupting the doctrines of the gospel. The tendency in the human mind to self-will, and "indulged individualism," asserted itself, and hence the heresies of the early days. But here is the model, steadfast in the Apostles' "fellowship." They were not turned aside from their belief by

every plausible speaker who had a theory, and expatiated with glib tongue upon it. They were not drawn away after men who are always dissatisfied unless they can lead, be it ever so small or ridiculous a following. I conceive that the Church of England has a witness to bear in the world in maintaining that the divisions of Christianity, whether to human sight they seem preventible or not, are contrary to the will and Word of God. It is not bigotry to stand in the old paths, and, holding fast to the Apostles' fellowship, neither allured by the additions of Rome nor betrayed into the defects of Geneva, she bears without condemnation of others her testimony to the original unity of the Church. "There is one Body and one Spirit." She deplores the divisions of Christianity, and, as far as she can, she invites Christians to unite evangelic truth with apostolic order, that they may continue in the doctrine and fellowship of the Apostles.

Another note of these primitive Christians was "breaking of bread." In the original it is "THE breaking of bread." I take this to be the partaking of the Holy Communion. It was the common expression in those early days for this Sacrament. And however we may regard this sacred feast, it is an unquestionable fact that the Church of England has ever taken heed to the command of her Lord. Frequently, and with all outward demonstrations of reverence, she calls on her faithful children to "draw near with faith and take the Holy Sacrament to their comfort." Though too many turn their backs upon it, and we have to lament that so many refuse to nourish their spiritual life with these "Holy Mysteries," yet the Church remains "steadfast in breaking of bread." In solemn service she is ever engaged in "showing forth the Lord's death till he come." I need do no more, in speaking on this point, than call your attention to the way in which we have ever clung to this third note of the Church in the days of these post-Christians.

And they continued "steadfast" "in prayers." Again we find the definite article "THE prayers." It is a remarkable fact that neither Jew nor Gentile ever had an extempore prayer in public worship. Such a thing was utterly unheard of. The

Jew was accustomed to his liturgical service of psalms, lessons from the law and the prophets, and fixed prayers. The Gentile had a stated service in his idol temple. Our blessed Lord had taught his people a form of prayer at their especial request, and in the "breaking of bread," the Divine office, we can trace to apostolic days a fixed form. We have no reason to suppose that these converts went contrary to all practice and precedent. And I draw from this a lesson of steadfastness to the liturgy which we have, the accumulation of centuries, "the prayers of the holiest in the past, the praises of the saintliest in all the ages." The prayer book has won the admiration and respect of Christians of every name who have examined its pages, and who have seen how rich it is in the very words of Scripture—how it expresses the common needs of humanity. Men like Robert Hall the Baptist, Adam Clarke the Methodist, and Albert Barnes the Presbyterian, have acknowledged the evangelical purity of its sentiments and the power of its petitions. Its prayers have been uttered by the very brightest intellects as well as by the humblest of the world. They have been the glad expression of thanksgiving from those whom God has blessed, and the cry of lips white with pain. These praises and petitions have echoed among the lofty roofs of cathedrals, in the log churches of the wilderness, the palace of the noble and the hut of the peasant. They have been heard in the dungeon of the prisoner and in the castle of his captor. The psalms have been sung by lonely camp-fires under the blazing sun of the tropics, and in the regions of the north amid the silence of eternal snows. The wigwam of the Indian has resounded to the morning and evening prayers, and the forests have sighed a requiem as the solemn words of the burial service have re-echoed among the pines. This liturgy of ours is the concentrated worship of the Christian ages. "Te Deums" have celebrated the greatest triumphs of the centuries, and the "De Profundis" has wailed out its sorrow over trouble and defeat. We, the sons and daughters of the Church of England, desire to maintain the Book of Common Prayer, antiquated as it is in some expressions, ambiguous it may be on one or two points, owing

to the changes in the meaning of words as our language develops, because its words are words of power. They are saturated with Scripture, every expression has a history, every service is enshrined in the memory. The words seem to be alive. As one has said, "They have been whispered when God has taken home the soul of an infant, they have echoed in the laborer's cottage, they are not one man's words, one heart's utterances, they are the world's words, they are humanity's cries to heaven for ages." So, brethren, may we continue steadfast in the Church's prayers. In private, or on some public occasions, by the bedside of the sick, or for special reasons, it may be necessary that the lips should frame the sentiments of the heart, but never in stated public worship while we have a liturgy that has grown into our very life, which the more we use and understand the more we shall appreciate, for we shall see that, unless we are undevout, formal and spiritually dead, it is this very repetition which is the secret of its power, for it is a growth into the individual life.

In spite of the imperfections that cling to everything in which the human blends with the divine, though the tares and wheat are growing side by side within her fold, still, I believe, that the Church of England, the mother of the Anglo-Saxon race, continues "steadfast in the Apostles' doctrine," sealed with the crimson tide which flowed from those who died to defend "the faith once delivered to the saints;" still from the days when the Pentecostal tidings were wafted to the shores of the Druid's Isle has her three-fold ministry conformed to the New Testament pattern of Apostles, Bishop—Elders and Deacons; still the heralds of the cross go out into all lands to carry the knowledge of the Saviour; still, as century after century rolls away, her white-robed ministers invite the faithful to the "breaking of bread," and from the lips of countless thousands rise the responses to the common prayers, that heritage of liturgical worship which we have received, and which we desire to transmit to posterity. With Bishop Wulsham How, we say, "We do not esteem the Church of England faultless, but we marvel at the fewness of her faults." And here, remote from

the city of the first converts, in a land undistinguished as yet, in earthly history, this fair cathedral has risen, stone upon stone, rich in blessed memories of self-sacrifice and tempered zeal, and named with the name of that Christ whom the Apostles preached, to be a *centre of diocesan fellowship*, and to perpetuate those four notes of the Church of the New Testament—apostolic doctrine, apostolic fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers. Now what is this but to proclaim our crucified, risen, and ascended Lord? For is He not the substance of the Apostles' preaching? Is He not the head of the Apostles' fellowship? Is He not known to his people in the breaking of bread? And do not our prayers ascend through His all-prevailing name to a Father reconciled to us by the blood of the cross?

But, my brethren, there is something more needed than a pure faith and apostolic lineage to win a world for Christ. We need *Apostolic Labours*. This is an age which looks more at the *practice* than the *profession*, more at living examples of Christian life than the statements of the theologian. It is an age of great intelligence and keen criticism, existing side by side with ignorance and inveterate prejudice.

We see before us some "bound in trespasses and sins," who live without God or hope, some who are brought up under false systems and travesties of religion, who need the light of God's eternal truth in their darkened souls, professing Christians, whose faith needs to be increased and their love deepened. More than this, there are large numbers of honest seekers after truth, who stand "bewildered among many counsellors," and, listening to the discordant voices of a divided Christianity, fail to hear in them the tender tones of that blessed Saviour who prayed "That they all might be one," in order, as He says, "That the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." The devout Christian sees with wounded heart that because the "household of faith" is divided against itself, an excuse is afforded for unbelief. And there are some endowed with commanding intellect, who place their trust in the quicksands of an ever-shifting science, and when they come to the region of

the supernatural, utter a cry from the depths, "Behold we know not anything," or else look upon the existence of God, and future life as only a solemn hope, unable to believe in any evidence with which Christians can furnish them. To all these, the intellectual, the worldly-wise, the honest doubter, the poor, ignorant and degraded, as well as to every class of modern society, and every phase of modern thought, the Church of the Eternal God, of which we are an apostolic branch, has a mission. The Divine Society, banded together, ruled by law, and officered, with Christ at its head, and the Holy Ghost, the life of the body, pulsating through its members, was set here on earth to bring back heaven's order and law, to naturalize the children of men into the citizenship of heaven and make them God's subjects. Composed of imperfect, failing, sinful men, often feeble, attacked from without and within, yet through all she holds up before the world CHRIST, the Saviour of the world, Christ the hope of the sinner, Christ the way, the truth and the life. In the power of that name her ministers are to go out into the highways and hedges and compel the invited guests to come in; in the power of that name her individual members are to preach Christ by example and life, so that there may be a powerful witness in the world of the truth of the Gospel. We not only owe a duty to those within the fold, in building them up step by step in Christian character by the use of all those blessed means of grace which she so richly distributes, by teaching that Christianity consists in the formation of this character, wrought out by repentance, faith and obedience in adversity and prosperity, by all the changes and chances of life, but we have also a mission to those of our own land whose feet are never found within the house of God, and God will bless that Church which tries faithfully to carry the gospel to those who from ignorance or pride refuse to hear it. In the words of Bishop M'Laren, of Illinois: "This must be the genius of the Church, to go down, down to the lowly and despised, down to those who will not come to us, down with the Font and the Altar and the Bible and the Prayer Book to the poor and neglected classes, and, thank God, we are beginning to feel more

deeply that our mission is not to spread banquets for the clusters of privileged saints that are gathered in great temples, but to go out in love, and invite the masses to come and partake of the bread which nourisheth to everlasting life. It is a question whether by remaining too long in Jerusalem, by wearing the fetters of a narrow Jewish exclusiveness, we have not courted spiritual lethargy and Laodicean lukewarmness."

The parables of the lost coin and the lost sheep were intended to show us not only the joy over the recovery of lost souls, but that *diligent search* is to be made for them. Pieces of money those human souls are, who are lost amid the dirt and rubbish of the world. They are pieces of God's money, stamped from their very birth with the image of the Great King. Perhaps they have been long cast away; they are so incrustated with sin that it is impossible almost to believe that they are pieces of heavenly money at all. They are rough, careless, coarse, sensual, profane. Is this the image of God we say? Is this a piece of the true gold stamped in the mint of heaven? Aye, underneath this crust is the image of the King. The man is endowed with an immortal soul. Within that man is a human heart, if you can but reach it, and a conscience, if you can but touch it. And while there are these, and such as these, within the circle of our work, while there are the scoffer and the sceptic, the careless and irreverent, the cold and the lukewarm, the ungodly and the profane, those who do not do better sometimes because they have never been taught, because they really do not know, for no one has taught them in what a perilous state they are, it is our duty to sweep the house diligently until we find them. We, the ministers of God, stand as Ezekiel stood, charged with a commission from God, and accountable to God for that commission. Do we not know, my brethren of the clergy, the ignorance of the primary elements of Christian truth that is so lamentably prevalent? Have we never stood beside the couch of some who have been passing out of this world with the crust of ignorance heavy upon them? The result of long neglect had been such that their understanding was darkened, and we could only pray that God would be

merciful, for the time to teach and guide them to the knowledge of God and His Holy Word had passed forever in this life. We know by sad experience how heavy is the burden to be borne in bringing to the knowledge of men the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and breaking of bread, and prayers. "Who is sufficient for these things?" Yet we must toil on, bearing the burden and heat of the day. The cool of the evening will come at last, for

"Be the day weary or be the day long,
At length it ringeth to even song."

The hours of work are fast passing away, and soon the vesper bell will toll. Soon we shall be summoned to cease from our labors and to give an account of the day. Meanwhile let us gird ourselves more directly for the exigency, systematize more our subjects of pulpit teaching, look vigilantly to the Sunday Schools and the children, and make use of every approved agency for arousing the careless, and deepening the spiritual life.

And, my brethren of the laity, assembled here from the various parts of the Diocese, and sons and daughters of the Church, if it is our duty to begin it is your duty to aid. Apostles, elders and brethren composed the Church of Christ. If one member goes wrong, all the members suffer; if one is blessed, all are the better for it. We have not the endowments of the Mother Church, whereby we could bring to bear on Christian work the machinery of multiplied agencies; we have not a network of Parishes covering the land with temples gray with antiquity, schools, hospitals, orphanages, and all the blessed institutions which Christianity introduced into the world. We cannot compete with her in the vast number of the clergy, her noble institutions of learning, her missionary colleges, her great Societies, and her munificent givers. We are in a land that is very dear to us, but mighty only in the possibilities of the future, engaged in laying foundations for generations to come after, weak in numbers and poor in goods, struggling to plant a primitive Christianity free from State control, bearing in our hands an open Bible and that watchword of the ages,

the Apostles' Creed. We have no human theories to insist on. We recognize all the baptized in the name of the Trinity, we ask no more for admission to the fold than this same summary of Christian doctrine. We belong to a Church which breathes Christ in every line of her Prayer Book. We can, therefore, ask you, loyally to help us lay the foundations of religion, to carry the gospel to this people, in the scriptural, sober and earnest ways which were our fathers' inheritance, and are our own. For this reason we ask you to help our Church Society, the means, under God, by which the comforts of religion are carried to many a scattered flock; we ask you to help the Divinity School, from which the sons of our land may go out well equipped and furnished to meet the problems of the day, and lead souls to Christ. Help us in our Diocesan and parochial undertakings! May you stand shoulder to shoulder with us in the crusade against sin, and in loyalty to Christ and His Church, being "living epistles, read and known of all men," "ready to give to every one a reason for the hope that is in you," as faithful sons and daughters of the Church of England, which *has preserved*, aye and WILL PRESERVE, apostolic doctrine and fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers.

Let me ask, in conclusion, what can we do that is too much for Christ and the Church? I say, Christ *and His Church*, the Head and the Body, the Bridegroom and the Bride, the Vine and the Branches, the corner stone and the living stones of the temple. The one must be above the other. Christ is above the Church, but they are not separated. I dare not put asunder what God hath joined together. When Saul, the persecutor of *the Church*, was dazzled by that lightning stroke which taught him the error of his way, the voice of One whom he had never seen in life fell upon his ear, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou ME?" "Who art Thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus *whom thou persecutest*." Observe from this how Christ identifies himself with the Church. He suffers when she is persecuted, He shares her fortunes, and is persecuted when she is assailed. Let us work for that branch of it in which God has placed us! In this portion of the vineyard there are special needs, special

dangers and special opportunities. Will you not, my friends, consecrate some of your time and talents to work for Him? You will find this work at your hand, in your homes, in your parishes. The path of duty will open out before you, if you will only ask on bended knees, "Lord, *what wilt Thou have me to do?*"

In a few moments you will pass out of these doors, away from the hallowed influences of this service, and the memory of it alone will be in your minds. But you cannot pass out of the sight of One of majestic presence, you cannot get out of reach of the calm, tender eyes of One who was a man of sorrows for your sake. He stands no more by the Galilean lake to teach the thronging crowds, but His gentle voice is ever calling, "Follow Me." "Come unto Me . . . and I will give you rest." As you pass to your several homes, remember your vows! Let Repentance be your daily state of mind, Faith your constant companion and Obedience your aim. Let Jesus Christ and Him crucified be the sole ground of your hope. Then when the hours of life's day are over, and the time comes for you to be gathered to your fathers, when your hands now so strong to labor are weak as an infant's clasp, and your eyes are closing upon earth with its toils and troubles, you may pass to the "rest that remaineth for the people of God," "looking unto Jesus," steadfast in the Apostles' doctrine, in the communion of the Catholic or universal Church, comforted by the "breaking of bread," and soothed by the prayers of your Mother Church, who will never leave you until the earth covers up all that remains of the casket from which the jewel for a time has departed.

" Oh by Thy love and anguish, Lord,
Oh by Thy life laid down,
Grant that we fall not from Thy grace,
Nor cast away our crown."

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