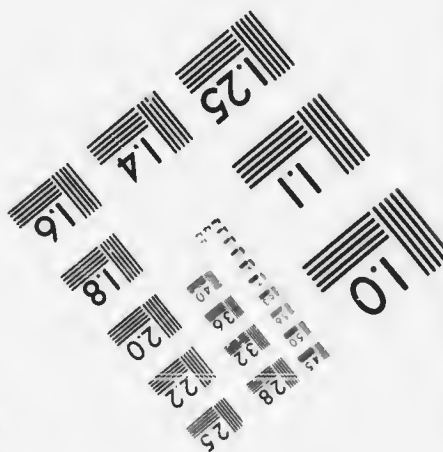
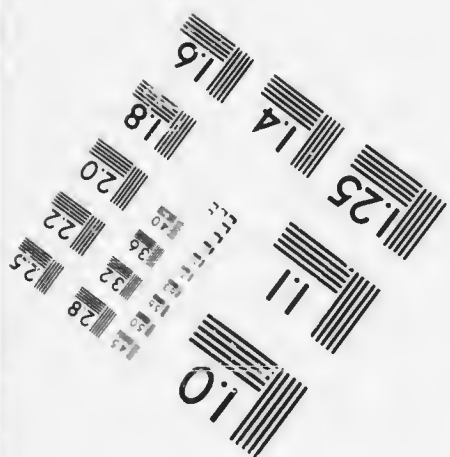
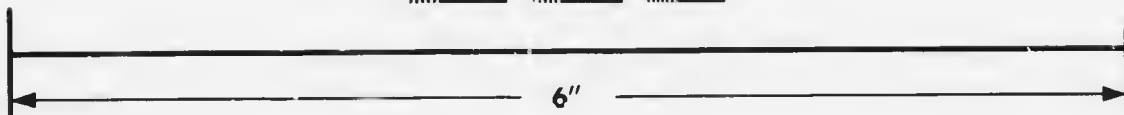
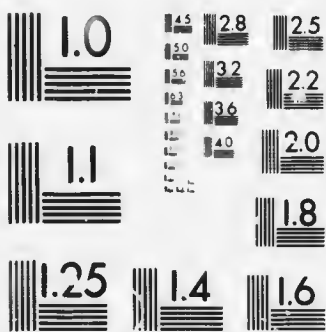


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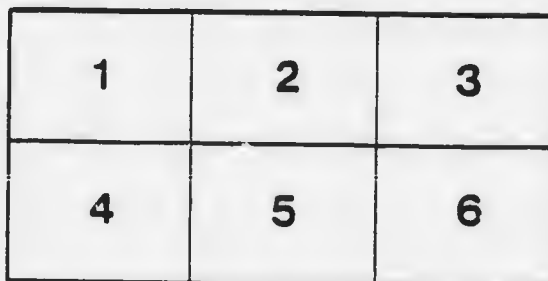
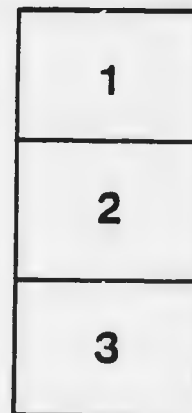
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DUTY OF CHURCHMEN :

A SERMON

PREACHED AT THE

Free-seat Chapel of St. John the Evangelist,

MONTREAL,

ON THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, 1868.

BY THE

REV. R. W. NORMAN, M.A.,

OF EXETER COLLEGE, OXFORD.

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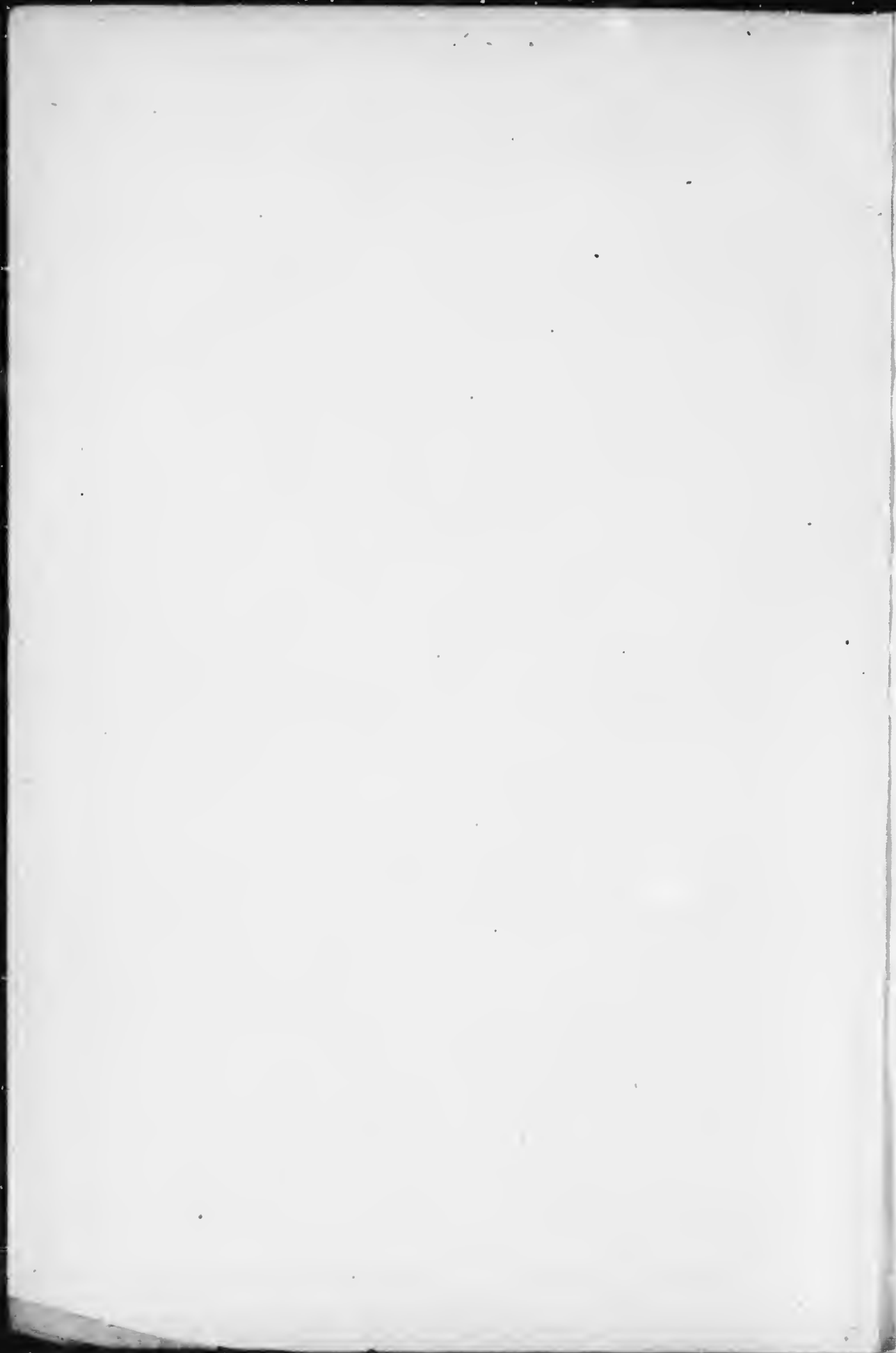
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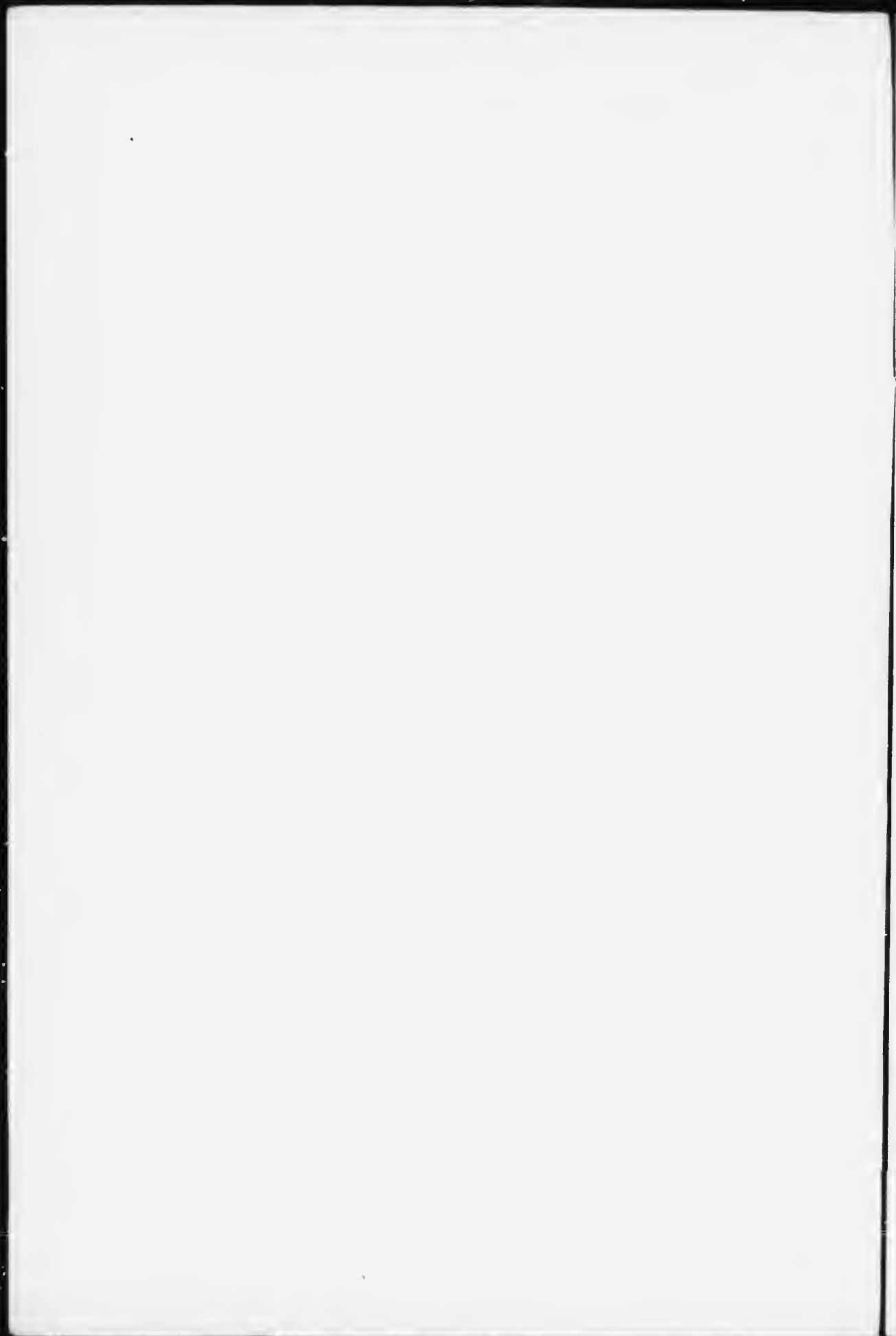
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## SERMON.

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ACTS xviii end of 17th v.—“ And Gallio cared for none of these things.”

THE Gallio here mentioned was the Proconsul of the Roman Province of Achaia. His original name was Marcus Annæus Novatus, and he assumed the name of Gallio from a Roman who adopted him. He was elder brother of the well-known Stoic philosopher Seneca, and, to judge from the mention made of him by his brother and by others, he was a popular man, widely known, and whose society was almost universally courted. He was quite a specimen of the Romans of his day, refined, polished, self-indulgent, indifferent to almost all interests, except his own; with no sympathy for or with those over whom he was ruler, and without a thought of learning something of the religious views and practices of the inhabitants of Greece, whether Christians or otherwise. He had no real belief at all in a God. He was

ready to truckle to the most troublesome of his subjects, provided he saved himself trouble, and kept them at peace. He was only careful to obey to the letter the laws and imperial edicts of Rome. As long as these were carried out, he paid little regard to the eternal principles of humanity and justice. Corinth was the capital of Achaia, and one day there was a great uproar there. St. Paul had come thither from Attica, and at the commercial city of Corinth he made more converts than at the intellectual city of Athens. In consequence of an edict of banishment sent by the Emperor Claudius, there had been a general dispersion of Jews from Rome. Some of these Jews came to Corinth, and St. Paul found an ample field for his preaching. He testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah, and showed them that, by their opposition to Christianity, they were setting at nought the teaching of their own prophets. This exasperated them, so that he solemnly and publicly announced his intention of devoting himself to the Gentiles. But, as he lived in the house of Justus, close to the synagogue, he attracted some Jews, and among them Crispus, the chief person of the synagogue, baptized by St. Paul himself, who became a Christian, as did his family. Many of the Greek population were also con-

verted to Christianity. God Himself encouraged St. Paul to persevere. God promised him His Divine protection, and assured him that He had "much people in the city." At last the Jews, in a body, rose and seized St. Paul. They dragged him before Gallio, the Proconsul. Their accusation implied two charges. 1st. That by teaching that Jesus was Christ and God, St. Paul was violating the law of Moses, and introducing false worship. 2nd. That in and by doing this he was breaking the Roman law. The Roman law forbade the introduction of new objects of worship, without a special decree of the Senate. No doubt the Jews were much enraged with the Apostle for opening the door of the Church to the Gentiles. They put their charge very cunningly. They hoped that the Proconsul would take the matter up, and by summary death or imprisonment get rid of this, to them, hateful preacher of new doctrines. They were disappointed. The Proconsul was not disposed to go beyond his strict authority. The Roman power had as yet issued no proclamation against Christians. Persecutions were yet to come. The Romans, if they thought at all of the Christians, confused them with Jews. Gallio had no wish to mix himself up with these, as he thought, wordy squabbles between two di-

visions of the same turbulent and quarrelsome race. But yet he desired to offend neither party. He did not therefore require a defence from St. Paul, but he refused to listen to the charge. He said "if it were a matter of wrong, *i. e.* great moral wrong, or wicked lewdness," rather perjury, "reason would that I should bear with you," *i. e.* reasonably listen to your charge; "but if it be a question of *words* and *names* and of your law, look ye to it, for I will be no judge of such matters. And he drove them from the judgment-seat." Gallio had a contempt for the whole matter. He entitled the preaching of St. Paul that Jesus was Christ, a question of *words* and *names*. He styled the precious truth that the Church was to be universal, a question simply of the Jewish law. He got rid of the matter in the easiest way to himself. By refusing to punish St. Paul, he expected to gain popularity with the Apostle's party. By leaving in the Jews' hands the decision of legal matters, he flattered their national vanity with the show of a power that had long passed away. Anyhow, Gallio saved himself trouble, did not compromise himself, and kept within the limits of his power. This verdict, however, did not appease the tumult. We read: "Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before

the judgment-seat." This incident is not very easy to explain. Most likely Sosthenes was friendly to St. Paul. There was a Sosthenes, afterwards, a Christian. Perhaps, the mob, disappointed of the bloodshed which they had hoped to witness, turned in brutal rage upon a prominent Jew and made him their sport. Whatever was the cause of this outrage on justice and law, it produced no effect on Gallio. It did not induce him to alter his previously formed determination. Neither did it, as it ought to have done, bring severe retribution on those who, in the presence of the minister of law and order, set both at defiance by unprovoked cruelty. "Gallio cared for none of these things." He, perhaps, satisfied what little conscience he had by the reflection that he himself had done no wrong. He gratified his selfishness by abstaining from trouble. He forgot that by abstaining to prevent cruelty, he practically sanctioned it and made himself responsible for it. He did not know that to the end of time his name would be remembered as that of one who is indifferent to right and wrong, and who cares not which prevails; who values only his own enjoyment and the popular esteem of others. When Gallio sent St. Paul away, he did not know that he was putting from himself the cup of salvation.

and that he never would have another like opportunity. A few years after this, Gallio was summoned to Rome. He then shewed how little principle he had. He was there and then ready to sacrifice right to imperial favour. He there became the favorite of the abominable Nero, and pandered to the atrocious crimes of that wicked man. He met with a natural punishment, for, according to most accounts, he was put to death by Nero's orders. If so, St. Paul the Apostle, and Gallio the Proconsul, both fell by the same bloody hand, but they did not meet in Rome, and Gallio died two years before St. Paul visited the imperial city for the second time. It would seem, I think, that such a character as that of Gallio belongs particularly to a high state of outward refinement, and an artificial condition of society. Such was the character of Roman society at that time. Such a period as that to which this age belongs, abounds in Gallios. Their samples are numerous and perhaps even increasing. The Romans professed toleration, and toleration is a right, a generous, and even a Christian principle. Would there were more of it in the world. But it is an abuse, or more strictly, a perversion of toleration; it is a mere pretext for concealing indifference, when all views, principles, and religions are elevated or

depressed, as people would have it, to the same level. It is to copy Gallio, to assert that everybody may think and do what is right simply in his own eyes. Satan, in sheep's clothing, is directing such a movement. He is making confusion; he is melting down all principles into one common mass. To acquiesce in a low standard of faith and religion, is to copy Gallio, and those who do so would sink far lower even than the low basis they have taken for themselves. There are some people who tell us that the Church of the future is to have no particularly distinctive doctrines, but is to be based only upon good-will to men. Doubtless, good-will to men is a principle we all should aim at. Would there were more of it also in the world. But there can be no real union that is purchased at the sacrifice of truth. However kindly disposed we should be to all, whether they differ from us or no, we cannot compromise truths for any end whatsoever. God who knows better than we do our separation from other Christians, and the causes of such divisions, will heal them in His own time. Our duty is to do what in our hearts and conscience we know to be right, to pray and leave the rest to God. The cynic of the present day who, with a calm affectation of superior intelligence, calls those who value strict truth, narrow-minded

and bigoted, is a Gallio after his own fashion. He cares for none of these things. He would unite all men to one another, not by the union of a common faith, but by that which is a rope of sand, I mean a sinking of all definite doctrine till what is left is colourless and vague. There are few expressions more abused in the present day than that of people agreeing to differ. We may do so on questions of politics, or other matters of mere passing moment. But on questions of the great verities of the Christian faith, we must hold our own, whatever happens or may happen. Our Lord foretold that one result of Christianity would be division, *not* union, not that the religion of the God of love is turbulent and quarrelsome in itself, but because of the infirmities of men. I do believe that there is more of real union among Christians of all denominations, and among members of our own Church, than most of us imagine; but he who would make out our differences as trivial and superficial, is a Gallio. The union he would bring about is false and hollow. In fact, brethren, strange as it may seem, opposition is often better than apathy. I would rather see people narrow, if they are earnest and honest, than indifferent to the issues of the strife which is raging around. For earnestness may be directed aright, and the



narrow man, if he is honest, may be led to see the greater truth and greater consistency of principles and practices which now he may condemn. Yet while we find fault with a Gallio, let us not side with the mob who attacked and beat the innocent Sosthenes. The condemnation of indifference does not necessitate intolerance and malignity. In quietness and confidence shall be our strength. A spirit of persecution is abroad, and though people dare not now-a-days slay with the sword, they wound no less unjustly, not much less keenly, with the pen and with the tongue. But the truth will prevail in the end, and even the more, because it is now in some quarters attacked and repudiated. It may not prevail in our time, but what matters that, if only in the end it triumphs over error and ignorance. My brethren, you all know, those at least who are regular members of this Church, that your self-devoted incumbent, now absent from this country, has, amidst evil report and calumny, striven to set before you the teaching of our branch of the Church Catholic. What he has borne for the sake of the truth and of Christ's Church, I verily believe no one but God knows. But his work and his endurance have not been in vain. There are some members of this congregation who have learned from him the

beauty of holiness. There are some who worship in this Church who have felt that here God is near, who have realized that unspeakable reverence and wrapt humble devotion which denotes the acknowledgment of a Present Deity. There are some who have said with Peter,\* "Lord, it is good for us to be here," and who have had the Psalmist's words echoing in their hearts: "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord."† There are some to whom this little humble Church has been nobler and dearer than the spacious Churches elsewhere. It has been to them as Jacob's ladder, that joined heaven and earth, in itself humble and poor, yet a place on which angels have ascended and descended, taking up the prayers of the faithful and bringing down blessings from on high. There are some who, in the early morning, at the Blessed Sacramental Feast, have felt their hearts burn within them. They knew that their Lord was by, and that He made Himself known to them in "breaking of bread." There are some who have felt their love of the Faith and the doctrines of the Church so strong that they would rather die than part with any one of them, and that now they have tasted of this blessedness, they know they are living, in some

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\* St. Luke 9 c. 33 v.

† Ps. 122. 1 v.

degree, a hidden life with Christ. I know there are some. May the good work speed, and the Lord prosper it. Brethren, our duty is to labour on quietly, trustfully, and prayerfully. The greatest results are produced often by small causes. The tiny zoophytes construct the island coral reefs of the Pacific, and this small Church has been already, in this country, the beginning of that great movement spreading over England's colonies which has influenced indirectly those opposed to it, and even those outside the Church, and which is destined to produce, I believe, an untold effect upon Christianity and Christendom at large. It is a reviving of the spirit, the activity and the faith of that which I believe in my heart to be the purest branch of the Church in the world, but which has so long been sleeping a sleep as of death. That faith, those principles, will continue to be taught here. We hope even to win over some who differ from us. But we shall be charitable and tolerant. We shall maintain the truth, regardless of scoffs and slanders, believing that if we are only humble and in earnest, our endeavours will be blessed. Only let us be true to ourselves, let us abstain, if possible, from controversy, but yet be ready to give a reason of the belief we have. Lastly, let us remember that

the race is not to the swift always, nor the battle to the strong, that numbers are no criterion, and that popularity is no test of truth. The voice of the people is only the voice of God when it upholds those everlasting principles which come from God Himself. The popular cry once condemned Christ and crucified him, and the popular voice is only too ready now at any time to surrender His truths. The reward will be to him who is meek and lowly, knowing his own infirmities, but strong in the Lord and enduring unto the end.



