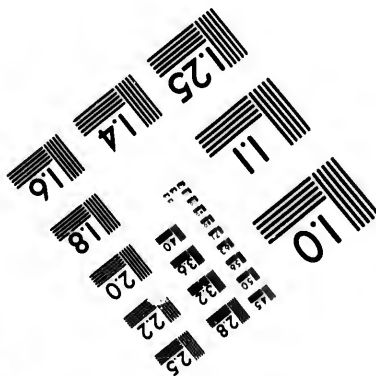
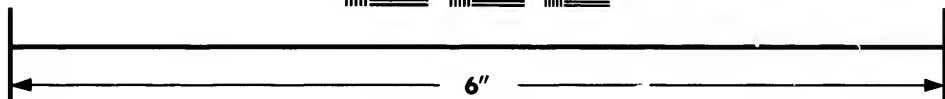
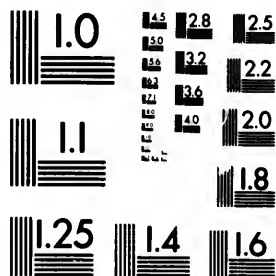


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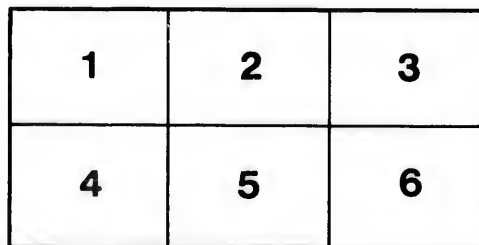
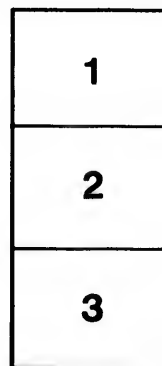
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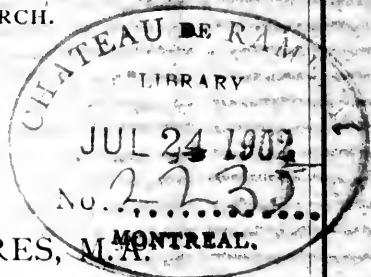
CHURCH PARTIES
AND
CHRISTIAN UNITY:

A SERMON,

PREACHED ON WHITSUNDAY, MAY 20TH, 1888,
AT ST. JOHN'S CHURCH.

BY

REV. JOHN DE SOYRES, M.A.
RECTOR.



Printed at the request of some of the Parishioners.

SAINT JOHN, N. B.
J. & A. McMILLAN, 98 PRINCE WILLIAM STREET.
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IN NECESSARIIS UNITAS,
IN NON NECESSARIIS LIBERTAS,
IN OMNIBUS CARITAS.

"But Wisdom is justified of all her children."

LUKE, vii, 35.

IT was indeed a hard and puzzling ordeal for the Jews to have to judge, at the same time, two characters so diverse, and, to their minds, so contradictory, as those of John the Baptist and JESUS CHRIST. Let us place ourselves in their position. When they had, to some extent, overcome their repugnance to John's unconventional life and words, had reconciled themselves to his inconvenient directness in commanding unpleasant sacrifices, their troubles were not over.

Instead of establishing them as his disciples—their work to pace with him a theological academy, the privileged sharers of an esoteric faith, he tells them that they are but at the threshold; that he himself cannot guide them further; that a higher and greater teacher must now be theirs.

And the new Instructor seemed to reverse all that had been learned. Where John had abstained, he enjoys. Where the old teacher had left liberty, he imposes new and stringent mandates. Where John had answered questions of casuistry with specific instruction, JESUS leaves them to their own conscience: he declines to be a judge or a divider, he refuses to be named one of the prophets, he retires when they would fain make him king.

What wonder that some, against John the Baptist's desire, made themselves his sect rather than his disciples: just as, later, Paul and Apollos and Peter were to be distressed by partisans who regarded them not as teachers, but as the figure-heads of their factions.

And others solved the difficulty yet more expeditiously by rejecting both teachers, rejecting at once that burthensome baptism which involved repentance, and the discipleship which claimed the Cross. No far-fetched excuses were needed; a very moderate measure of ingenuity sufficed. The one teacher could be rejected because he separated himself from mankind; the other because he shared its joys and sorrows. "*For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and ye say, he hath a devil. The son of man is come eating and drinking, and ye say, Behold, a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, the friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of all her children.*"

She is justified *from* them, from their own personal insufficiency and weakness which sink into oblivion, while that which is her gift remains eternal. For the children of wisdom are many, and are but sharers in her heritage. Sometimes they misuse the gift; sometimes they do not even comprehend its value till late, nor their own responsibilities. Nevertheless, sooner or later the jewel shines out, in spite of the rude setting. And wisdom is justified *in* and *by* her children, for, though they meet with disdain at first, then opposition, then, perhaps, a seductive and deceptive rush of favour,

followed by neglect; yet at last, long perhaps after their death, they are recognized in their true character, scions of the royalty of truth.

That difficulty of choice between different ideals and different systems has lasted through all the ages of the Christian Church. Parties have changed their names and their watch-words, but in essence they are continued in unbroken descent. It is easy to denounce parties, and most easy to denounce those which are not our own; but it is better to understand their reason of existence, and the forces which maintain them. "*There must be heresies* (or factions) *among you*," said St. Paul, "*that they which are approved may be made manifest*;" and much more must there be one-sided conceptions of Truth, earnest, sincere efforts to maintain and propagate that which we know to be Truth, and believe to be the whole Truth.

From the time of the Reformation there have been certain great divisions of Protestant Christianity, regrettable as having caused so much of controversy and bitter misunderstanding, but each from its own side having striven for some important truth, neglected, or opposed, or misconceived by the contemporary Church. First of these, in order alike of chronology and importance, is that section (at first indeed representing the whole spirit of the Reformation itself) whose glorious function it was to state once more to a deceived and ignorant world the true source of salvation in JESUS CHRIST. To write the history of that movement is to narrate the history

of the Church of England in its most splendid epoch. It is to tell once more the well-known story of Latimer bidding Ridley play the man; of Cranmer expiating a moment's weakness by a martyr's heroism; Jewell, in his great *Apology*, demonstrating the agreement of the Reformers with the Scriptures and the Primitive Church; Baxter and Howe, in a later age, proclaiming the same message; in the last century, Wesley and Whitfield, outside at last (but never in hostility to the Church), Romaine and Toplady, Venn and Newton and Cecil within, raising a needed protest against the utter spiritual deadness of the age, when the pulpit seemed to have no function but to discuss abstract questions of religious evidence, and to inculcate outward morality without experiencing or communicating one spark of that love to GOD and the neighbour which alone can generate it.

Who but will thank GOD for the work of these men, a glorious page in the history of Christianity? But, while the excellence of that work needs no proof, we are not blind to the dangers, the exaggerations, and the deficiencies which sometimes followed in its train. For that is the inherent weakness of human nature and human intelligence, that rarely can we grasp more than one truth, and sometimes only but a part of it.

Just as, only in the rarest instances of genius—to a Homer, a Dante, or a Shakespeare, the whole world of human nature has been revealed: so in theology, only to

a few chosen minds has GOD given that wide and sober grasp, that calm and still zealous energy, which preserves the balance of seemingly antagonistic truths, the need for freedom and the need for government; faith as the source, holiness as the result of life in CHRIST; above all, and in all, the teaching and the practice of charity, "*the very bond of peace and of all virtues.*"

Now, the dangers and shortcomings which followed in the train of this movement were not wanting. The intense emphasis laid upon the need of a professed and personal faith, led sometimes to a carelessness about outward organization, to a neglect sometimes of practical religion, and often, alas! to the admission of hypocritical followers, who professed with their lips what was utterly absent from their hearts. Mere voluntary assemblages of Christians, gathered round some eloquent personage, though often, for a time, the centres of real spiritual life and help to others, are transitory, depending on the life, and sometimes on the character and teaching of one man. And so another party had arisen in the Church, not disregarding the great fundamental teachings, but believing that the faith of CHRIST needs an outward organization, in order that the great deposit of revealed truth may be preserved inviolate, that all things may be done decently and in order, that the existence of the Church should not depend on the life and strength of individual ministers, but should have the aid, under GOD's spirit, of those organic helps so clearly recognized in St. Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus.

That this party has also a noble record of good work, it is impossible to deny. It was from their ranks, at the beginning of the last century, that Robert Nelson and his friends established the first great Missionary Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts, as also the sister association for promoting Christian knowledge. It was by their efforts that irreverence in divine worship was gradually removed, and that, now, every section of Christendom recognizes that to worship GOD in a neglected building and with slovenly performance of the Church's ordinances, is not a proof of a spiritual worship, but rather of its complete absence.

But here again, the shadow is found with the light. Ignorant followers, zealous without discretion, unable to exercise the true balance, made all Truth and all Holiness to consist in obedience to authority, and performance of rubrical ordinance. The outward sign alone was magnified: the element of personal faith in the inward and spiritual grace was ignored. And so, from one side as from the other, came bitter words of recrimination: "You are not preaching the pure Gospel!" said one party. "You are making the Word of GOD of none effect through your traditions." "And you," exclaimed the opposite side, "you are faithless to your vows of ordination. You are despising those ordinances and sacraments which CHRIST commanded."

And thus, in bitter strife, the crowning virtue of charity was lost. And worse than this. Exaggeration and one-sidedness have this terrible after-effect, that they

generate an equal exaggeration on the other side. Because one side seems to neglect, on the other, the excess will be increased, and the gulf widened between those who claim the same eternal Father, the same redeeming Saviour, and the same sanctifying Spirit. And so there was need for another teaching, though not another party, to uphold the principle of charity,—that new commandment, “that we love one another.” No doubt the abhorrence of controversy, of mere verbal orthodoxy, or of mere machine-like correctness of ritual, has caused on this side also errors as regrettable as in the others. The knowledge that empty phrases had been substituted for God’s truth has led some of them to neglect the due exposition of fundamental doctrines; and the consciousness that Church order has sometimes been made the cloak for sacerdotal tyranny, has led at times to neglect of organization divinely approved. But still there was need for the counterbalancing force, and among these last, as among the others, the children of wisdom have been found.

In our own century, among the worthy representatives of the first movement I have described, who has not heard of the character and work of CHARLES SIMEON at Cambridge. Coming there when all religious life seemed dead, when theological learning was at its lowest ebb, he strove against an opposition which would have daunted the stoutest heart. Actual violence, bitter attacks, then contempt, nicknames—the easy substitute for arguments—fell to his lot, but he pressed on, gathering around him

from students and townspeople a small but gradually increasing body of hearers for the Gospel of CHRIST. At last he lived to see the battle won; and when, fifty years ago, he passed away to his rest, there are those still living who remember the universal grief, how those who once had been opponents joined in the great procession to the historic chapel of King's College, and all recognized that here Wisdom was justified by her offspring.

Nor shall we forget another figure from that sister-university which has been said to have been more fruitful in movements than in men, but still boasts a great calendar of sons who have done service to Church and State. JOHN KEBLE, at Oxford, led that movement which at first intended to restore reverent service, and to inculcate neglected truths, passed in later hands far beyond the intentions of its creators. But the union of an apostolical simplicity with perfect scholarship and culture, made him a figure so personally attractive that all bitterness ceased around him,—the weapon of the controversialist fell as that gentle face appeared. And when the professorship at Oxford was exchanged for the quiet vicarage of Hursley, and he who had expounded the principles of the Church put forth those Hymns of the Christian Year, which are now the heritage of all Christians, sung by Dissenter as by Churchman,—then men who differed most widely from his opinions on some vexed questions felt that here also was a child of wisdom, and they learned of him later because they had loved him first.

And if, lastly, I may speak to you of one with whom, in former years, I came in personal contact, I would claim, as for Simeon and Keble, so also for FREDERICK DENISON MAURICE, the same sonship in the heritage of wisdom. Sixteen years have passed since he was laid to rest, and already he is only a name to many people. But some here doubtless have heard or read of his early struggles, the alternations of fame and obloquy, the fierce attacks, the sufferings neither feigned nor protruded; at last rest, rather by sufferance than recognition. And to the younger generation of those who came under his influence at Cambridge, who remember what they learnt from look and voice as well as from definite teachings, what lessons of truth and reality shown forth like the Good Priest of Chaucer:

“And CHRISTÈS way, and His Apostles twelve
He taught; but first he followed it himself;”

that influence was unspeakable.

Maurice was brought to the Church of England not by education or hereditary connection, but by mature conviction that her ordered liberty affords the best framework for spiritual progress, and that she reconciles Protestant freedom with fidelity to the universal Church. Once in her ranks, and after dedicating himself to her work as a minister, he consecrated his life as solemnly as ever a monk of the Middle Ages cut himself off from the world's temptations. He was one of the first to feel, and to excite in others, that intense sympathy for the poor which must be a faith, though sometimes it is only

a fashion. He it was, with colleagues one in spirit, who proclaimed that the Gospel blessing on the poor was no mere phrase. He taught prudence and self-help to the working-man; explained the principles of co-operation; pressed on them the need for higher education; offered himself as their teacher. His voice was drowned in the uproar of the year 1848; it was overwhelmed by the party-cries of those who resisted all change and all improvement, or who disdained his proposals as insufficient. But the voice was not silenced, nor were its words forgotten. Who does not remember the Laureate's invitation, and the lines

. . . "Till you should turn to dearer matters,
Dear to the man who is dear to GOD;
How best to help the slender store,
How mend the dwellings of the poor;
How gain in life, as life advances,
Valour and charity, more and more."

At last came the end of combats, and Cambridge, the place of his first choice, received him as a teacher and as a parish priest. Never will those who then, for the first time, heard him, forget that voice which made the reading of the Scriptures a commentary, and the oft-heard Liturgy a new devotional discipline. Never will they forget, who had the privilege of meeting in his house, the magical influence of a nearer personal access; those classes, almost like a family circle, in which the narrow light of Locke's Essay was made the text of conversation that opened to our eyes the first glimpses of that true philosophy —

"Which is not crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute."

And when, but a year later, he was taken from us, in the midst of work for the world, in the beginning of recognition by the world, it was as when the tidings came that Elijah had departed, the silencing of a great voice, — but no, that voice was not silenced, "*he being dead, yet speaketh.*"

And for each and all of these men, the Church of England has room in her wide fold. She is not a sect, born out of some minute difference, and ending with some transient popularity, but a Church, built upon the broad and firm rock of CHRIST's teachings, ordinances, and promises. Those great and wise statesmen who stood around the throne of Edward and Elizabeth, and framed the substance of our formularies, endeavoured not to contract, but to enlarge. They wished to retain, if it were possible, the whole nation; they strove to include not only those who were capable of grasping the full teachings of the Reformation, but those thousands in the North and West who had not yet severed the ties of affection to the old forms, and who now found so many of the old prayers and praises, as well as the old creeds, faithfully translated in the new Liturgy.

For the Church to which we belong is Catholic and Protestant, and, above all things, National. She claims no infallibility for herself. She denies no hope for others. Her motto is found in those noble words, the authorship of which is unknown, but which surely the spirit of God

inspired, words which should be your motto, brethren, as they shall be mine, in preaching and in practice, so long as I shall be called to minister among you: IN THINGS NECESSARY, UNITY; IN THINGS NOT NECESSARY, LIBERTY; IN ALL THINGS, CHARITY.

One last word: if we realise that the Spirit is given, not to this or to that section of the Church, but to *every man to profit withal*; if we remember that to the back-sliding Galatians, and to the restless and divided Corinthians, the same apostolical salutation came as to the beloved of Ephesus and Philippi; if we remember the divine blessing on the peacemakers; if we feel that to preach even truth wrathfully and bitterly poisons the very truth itself; that our satisfaction may be the Pharisee's pride, and the object of our dislike may enjoy the Samaritan's blessing; then surely the seeming difficulty of Diversity in Unity, and Unity amid Diversity, will cease to perplex us. We shall welcome, we shall honour each child of Wisdom, accepting the measure of his gift; we shall "*walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*"

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