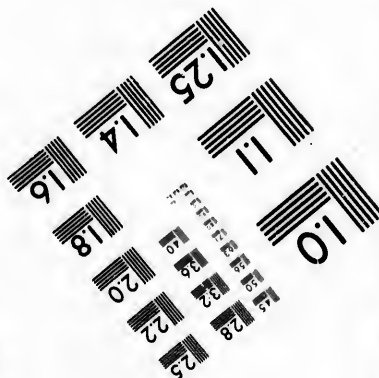
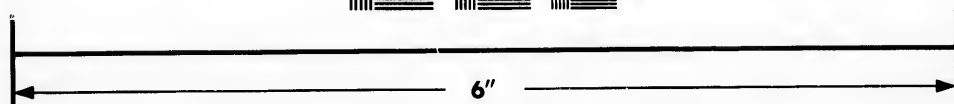
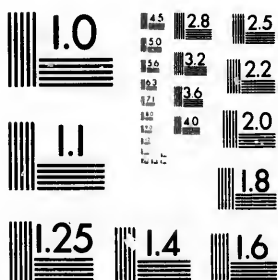


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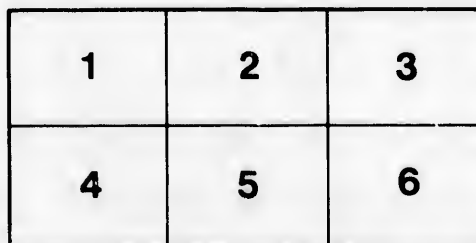
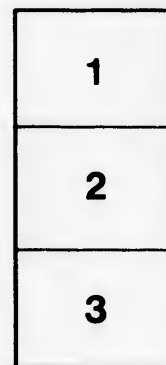
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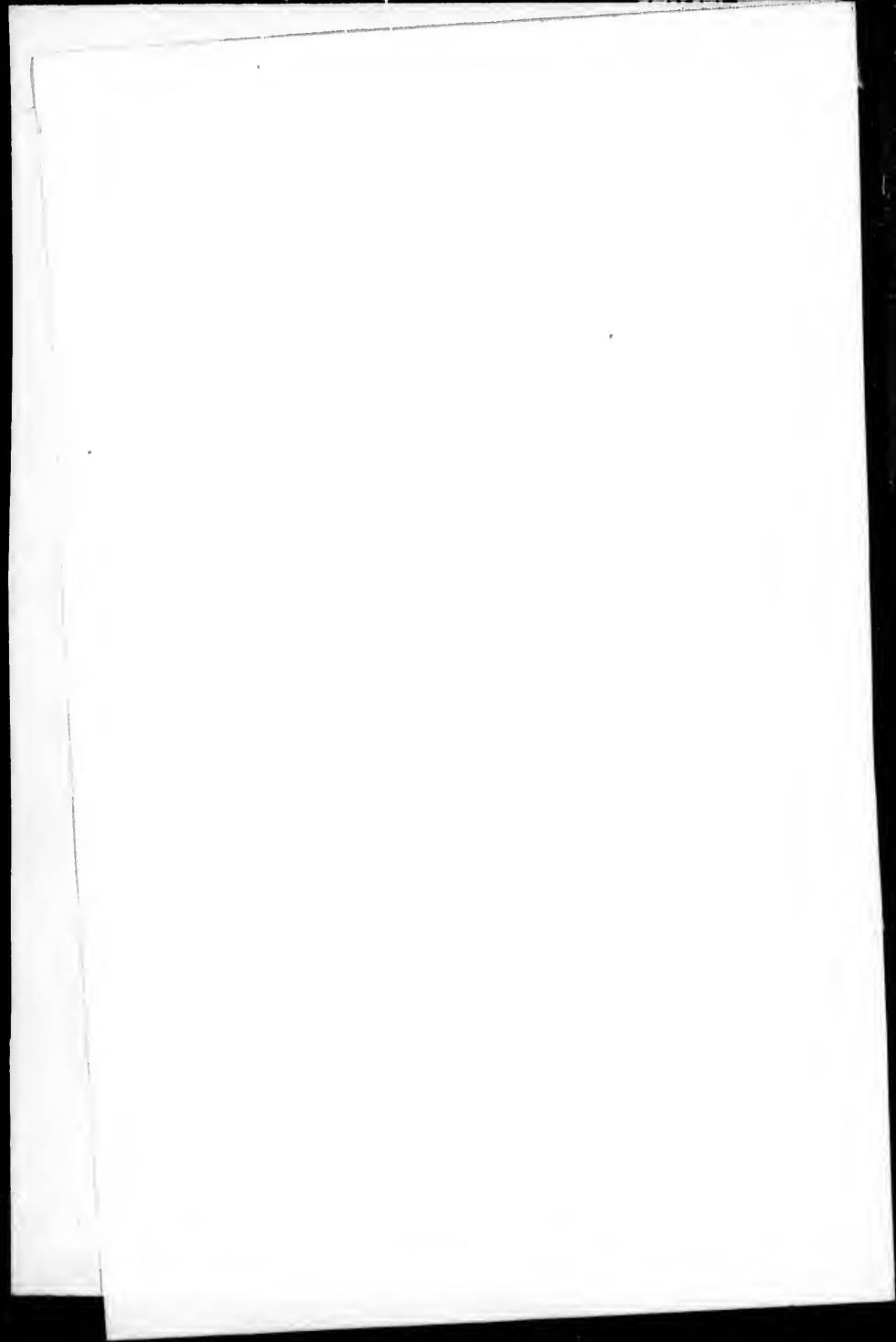
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❧ SERMON. ❧

ACTS, XVI, 4-5.

"As they went through the Cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the Apostles and Elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the Churches established in the faith and increased in number daily."

This passage may be illustrated by the previous chapter in which is given an account of the first Synod of the Christian Church. Disputes had arisen at Antioch respecting observance of the Mosaic ceremonial law. Christians who had been brought up Jews insisted that the law of Moses was still binding upon all, even upon Christians of Gentile birth who had never belonged to the Jewish church. Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem to represent the matter at a Council of the Apostles and Elders, held about 20 years after the Ascension. The subject was formally discussed, and after much debate St. James, who, appears to have presided, summed up the conclusion and gave the sentence, which was put in writing as the "decrees of the Apostles and Elders." The purport being that the Gentiles who were "turned to God" need not be under the bondage of Jewish ceremonial, a few points excepted; and directions were given to meet some special moral dangers. These decrees, and perhaps others, we read in my text, St. Paul and his companions delivered afterwards to the cities of Asia, "and so were the churches established in the faith and increased in number daily."

The part taken by the laity in these decrees was apparently that of consenting, approving, and furthering what had been done, "then pleased it the Apostles and Elders with the whole church."

"The Apostles and Elders, or Presbyters, as the original word for Elder is, which we have shortened into Priest, represented the permanent ministerial body of the Kingdom or Church of Christ. There was a third Order, that of Deacons, whose office was also spiritual although employed in dispensing the charity of the church. * The ordaining and chief

* Acts, vi, 5-6, Phil, i, 1., I Tim., iii, 8-13.

ruling power was in the Apostles, who, towards the close of their ministry selected Presbyters to whom they committed this chief authority, (not their extraordinary gifts), as we learn from the Epistles of St. Paul to Timothy and Titus. * The word *Bishop*, *episcopos*, meaning an overseer, was during the Apostles' time applied to the Presbyters or Elders, but afterwards it was confined to those who succeeded the Apostles in the government of the Church. Before the close of the first century after their death this Episcopal form of church order was found universally established. Early christian writers state that the Apostles established Episcopacy, and lists are given by them of Bishops succeeding one another from Apostolic times. † With the exception of St. James, the Apostles appear to have gone about at large, but in the first age the system afterwards called Diocesan which limits to a particular district the Bishop's sphere, was fully established and has been the rule ever since, the Kingdoms of this world being as it were thus mapped out to become the Kingdom of Our Lord, and of His Christ. § Particular care was taken in transmitting the ministerial authority, and by the *Apostolical Constitutions* ** which represents the discipline of the church in the second century three Bishops were required for the consecration of one to the Episcopal order. The Orders of the Anglican Church are thus derived. The teachings of the Church of England upon this point, in the Preface to the Ordination Services, is as follows:—

“It is evident unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scriptures and ancient authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been these orders of ministers in Christ's Church: Bishops, Priests and Deacons.”

Under this system in all ages of the Church have Synods been held for the furtherance of the Gospel, the settling of religious questions, and the order and discipline of the Church. The larger Synods have been called *Councils*. These have consisted of the Bishops and Clergy of many Dioceses. The four most celebrated were those of Nice, A.

* 1 Tim., i. 3., 1 Tim., iii, 1-14., v. 17-19-20-23.; 2 Tim., ii, 2., Titus, i, 5, iii, 10.

† Iræneus, A. D., 180. Hegesippus, A. D., 153. Tertullian, A. D., 200. Eusebius, A. D., 315, gives the succession of Bishops in Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, Alexandria, all from Apostles, and intimates the same could be traced in all Churches. Prof. Binet's Christian Church, p 85, 88.

‡ Rev., xi, 15.

** A work written about 250, A. D., within, that is, 150 years after the death of the last Apostle. Beveridge in *Canones Apostolicos*. Works vol. xii, p xxx. Council of Nicea, A. D., 325, required three at least.

D., 325, Constantinople, A. D., 381, Ephesus, A. D., 431, and Chalcedon, A. D., 451. At these the doctrines of our creeds were settled, and the Reformed Church of England recognizes their authority as having been accepted by the undivided Church and as representing the Christianity of those early ages before the truth had been overlaid and added to by the corruptions of later days. Those early ages were not, however, free from violent controversy, but it has been justly remarked that "sad as were such distractions, yet by fighting out those differences, instead of attempting to stifle them by compromise, the church gained a fixed and definite form of sound words, which was of the greatest value, and even necessity, for the preservation of her faith through the following ages of ignorance." *

The *Provincial or General Synods* are composed of representatives from a Confederation of Dioceses within a limited area, such are the two Provinces of Canterbury and York composed of Bishops and Clergy, from whose deliberations came our 39 articles and the revised Prayer Book, the Laity consenting in England through the Parliament.

There is a Provincial Synod of six Dioceses in Canada, also in New Zealand, Australia, and the Cape.

The *Diocesan Synod* is that of a single Diocese consisting of the Bishop, Clergy and Laity.

My brethren we are about to follow the example of the Church from the beginning, and in the same mode, by organizing here a Diocesan Synod. This is a subject so closely connected with the spread of the Gospel and the interests of religion that our thoughts may well be directed to it in the house of God, and I pray that the Holy Spirit may be with us inclining and enabling us to will and to do only what is right.

The subject may be considered as to the *Constitution*, the *Objects* and the *good Results* to be expected from the establishment of a Synod.

1.—*The Constitution*.—Synods of the Church of England in all the Colonial Provinces are composed of three parties; the Bishop, the Clergy, and the Laity by representation.

The two former are the appointed rulers, pastors and teachers of the flock, holding the Divine Commission of the Ministry of Reconciliation, of the Word and Sacraments. †

The Bishop at his consecration to the Episcopal Order has received, in addition to what he has in common with the Presbyters, the power of Ordaining and the charge of spirit-

* Canon Robertson's Church History, vol i, 197.

† Heb., xiii, 17-24.

ual Government and Pastoral care over the whole Diocese, including a Judicial authority. * It is his office to "set in order the things that are wanting." †

The *Diocese* is a portion of the flock of Christ committed to the charge of the Bishop, as Chief Pastor, by those in authority who consecrate him to the office. The *Parish* is also a portion of the flock of Christ committed to the charge of a Presbyter by the Bishop. Clergy and Laity may elect a Presbyter to be their Bishop, but cannot confer the Episcopal office and authority upon him. Parishoners may elect their clergyman, but cannot confer upon him his appointment to the Spiritual charge—Spiritual authority never comes from below, but from above.

In giving this brief sketch of the constitution of the Christian ministry, and particulars of Synods, I am not offering my own opinion, but describing facts of history and existing organizations to afford information. A minister of Christ in speaking of his own office is liable to appear self-exalting, but in a subject like this there is no choice, and he must, humbly I hope, but faithfully, state the rules and principles of the Church.

A first step in organization of a Synod is to settle the *fundamental provisions* as a basis of agreement between the parties. Also a *declaration of principles* is agreed upon and accepted by all and each. The following is an example of such a declaration as adopted in New Zealand:—

"This branch of the Church of England in N. Z., doth hold and maintain the doctrine and sacraments of Christ as the Lord hath commanded in His Holy Word, and as the Church of England hath received and explained the same in the book of Common Prayer, in the form and manner of making, ordaining and consecrating Bishops, Priests and Deacons, and in the 39 articles of religion. And the Synod hereinafter constituted for the government of this branch of the said Church shall also hold and maintain the said doctrine and sacraments of Christ, and shall have no power to make any alteration in the authorized version of the Holy Scripture, or in the above named Formularies of the Church."

I only give this as a specimen. You will observe a leading feature is the close adherence to the principles of the Mother Church, to which each and all are expected to subscribe.

The *binding principle* is a contract made by the three parties, the Laity representing their congregations, to be

* See in Prayer Book the Consecration of Bishops.

† 1 Cor., xi, 34., Titus i, 5.

bound by whatever is agreed upon by all in synod, by the Bishop that is, a majority of the Clergy, and a majority of the Laity. This is called *concurrent assent*, applicable principally to the Legislative action of the Synod, not necessarily carried into details. For instance, if a Board of Trustees were appointed for the management of property, the business would be conducted by the members as in ordinary cases—subject of course always to the Synod.

There is no occasion for any appeal to the Local Legislature for powers. Other religious societies bind themselves by their own regulations without any such powers. Though some of the earlier Synods obtained enabling powers from the State, the later ones have done without, and find the voluntary compact principle sufficient for all purposes.

2.—*Objects*.—A first object of a Synod is to apply the canons and laws of the Provincial Synod, in our case the Church of England, to the local circumstances. It is also to make such laws and regulations for the good government and efficiency of the Church as are required from time to time. Its functions are purely legislative, not judicial. It is not called upon to give judgement upon doctrines. These are already decided in the Standards of the Church of England, which are accepted in the fundamental declaration. Amongst matters to be regulated would be of course the rules of order and mode of proceeding in the Synod, election and qualification of lay representatives, financial questions and management of property, appointment of ministers and the tenure of their cures, laws of discipline, native missions, measures for the spread of the gospel and decrease of vice, higher education, preparation for the ministry, the election of future Bishops, committees would be appointed to report upon various subjects, and probably there would be elected a standing committee. Want of legislation in these matters is urgent, some are of deep importance, and you, my brethren, supposing as a congregation you join the Synod, in selecting your representatives next Easter will need to feel your responsibility and to act with thought and prayer to God to be guided aright, so that all may be done for His Glory and the increase of His Kingdom.

3.—*Good Results* may be anticipated with reason though we must expect some difficulties.

Mutual satisfaction and confidence may be expected from the fact of all having their appointed sphere. *All will be in their place*. The Bishop, while he take no important steps without the counsel and consent of Clergy and Laity, and shares with them, indeed hands over to them a considerable part of the administration of affairs, need not be dislocated from

any function which has always belonged to the Episcopal office. The Clergy who are deeply interested in measures respecting appointment to cures, mode of tenure in the same, election of their Bishop, and laws of discipline will be subject to no regulations without their consent. The Laity who are most concerned of all in the efficient performance of ministerial duties, who supply the means of support to their Clergy, who are the most fitting administrators of trusts, whether of real or personal property, will have nothing concluded without their approval.

The *corporate life* of the Diocese as a branch of the Church Catholic will be exhibited and set in action with ability to take part and to utter a distinct voice in any wider movement affecting religion in the world.

By union and concert there will be *more strength to do good*. The Clergy will not be so liable to be disheartened from a sense of isolation, and the Laity, represented and consulted by right, will be naturally more ready to aid in every good work.

By common action a *wider interest* must be felt by all and less danger will there be of individual eccentricity and of congregational independence, by all taking part and interest in the general welfare of the Church, realizing the principle that "if one member suffer all the members suffer with it," and "bearing one another's burdens," and "so fulfilling the law of Christ." *

And we may expect, (such is the testimony of all who have had part in Synods), that those who hold different views, within the latitude allowed in the Church of England, will be brought *nearer together* in both feeling and opinion. Each one, in open discussion may bring to the other some truth which he has overlooked, and each may convince the other of some extreme which the due proportion of doctrine requires to be modified.

In any case even difference of view need be no impediment to hearty co-operation. Considerable differences in ritual appear to have been no just ground of disunion, or even disapproval, in the times of the Apostles. We do not read that the Christian converts under St. James, who were "all zealous of the law," † were any less acceptable disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, than those from the Gentiles, to whom St. Paul ministered at Antioch, who shrank from Jewish Ritual. Thus while the Scriptures we have been considering teach us not to be disheartened at the religious

* 1 Cor., xii, 26., Gal., vi, 2.

† Acts, xxi, 20.

controversies of our day, for some controversy there has always been; we learn also charity and forbearance towards one another.

If, in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, we can carry with us into our Synod the spirit of brotherly kindness in "honour or preferring one another," discussing difficult and exciting questions with manly and Christian forbearance, we may indeed hope our deliberations will be productive of good to the Church of God and of profit to ourselves.

All who shall have taken part may return each year refreshed and edified, full of purpose to do more and to sacrifice more for the highest objects which can engage the energies of man. When the results shall go forth, "the decrees for to keep,"—the doctrines and principles and order of our dear Church of England, which we shall have confirmed and applied to our special circumstances, "the churches" will "be established in the faith," *—the faith unmixed with novelties of mediæval days or with smooth things to suit 'the spirit of the age,'—the solid Verities of God, revealed to us in Christ and His Apostles, recorded in the Scriptures, summarized in the Creeds, transmitted to us in the Church. May this movement also be productive of an increase of labourers in the Lord's Harvest, an increase in the number of the Churches, an increase and deepening of the true life of holiness amongst us, an increase in the number of souls brought to Christ in penitence and trust, and an increase to that great multitude whom no man can number of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, whose perfect bliss is described in the figurative language of the final Scripture, they stand "before the throne and the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands," and sing with everlasting praise, "Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb." †

* Jude, 3.

† Rev., v li, 9-10.

