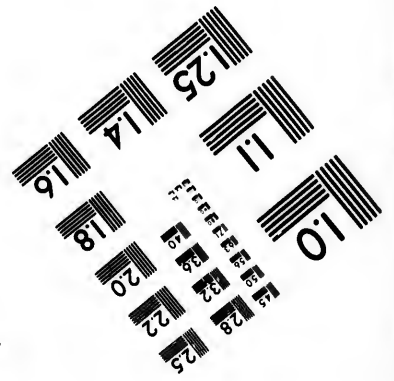
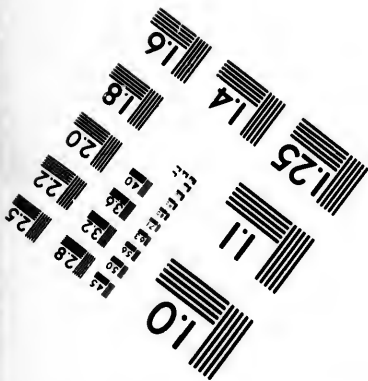
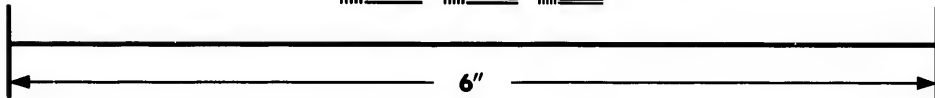
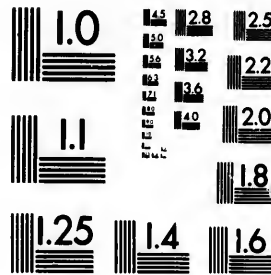


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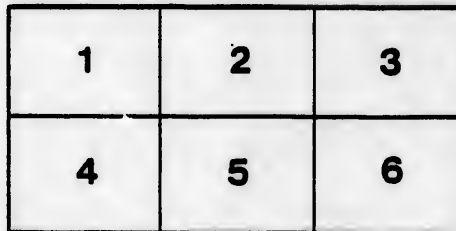
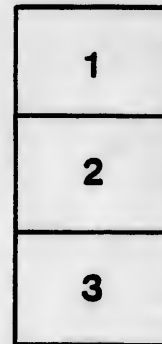
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# EDIFICATION.

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A Sermon,

*PREACHED IN THE CHURCH OF S. ALBAN  
THE MARTYR, OTTAWA,*

ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 2, 1876.

BY THE

REV. CANON BEDFORD JONES, L. L. D.  
RECTOR OF THE CHURCH.

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PRINTED BY REQUEST.

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Ottawa :

THE CITIZEN PRINTING AND PUBLISHING COMPANY, SPARKS STREET.

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## EDIFICATION.

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“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.” (Rom. xiv. 19).

“Let all things be done unto edifying.” (1 Cor. xiv. 26).

IN selecting a subject and choosing a text for a New Year's sermon a great deal has to be considered. There are occasions when hearts seem especially open to impressions. Indeed, it would be strange, were it otherwise, when everything seen and heard in Church presents the most affecting of all themes to eye and heart, the mercy and love of God to sinners—that mercy and love shown most wondrously in *God Himself coming to earth* to be a Brother, a Babe, One of ourselves, and so to draw us to and unite us to Himself by the tie of a Common Humanity. This must touch all our hearts. Add to this that we are spared to see another epoch of time, brought safely through the changes and chances, the sorrows and joys, of a whole year. Then a new and a very impressive motive of gratitude still further opens our hearts to receive the message that He may put it into His minister's mind to deliver. And as we meet together on the first Lord's Day of the new year, a faithful priest will endeavour to plant in the prepared soil of his people's souls, such seed as will be likely to take root and bear fruit most to their own advantage, and to the glory of God.

Now, my dear brethren, for some time past I have had little doubt as to the *Subject* I should like to present to you as most profitable to-day. But when I came to the Text, I hesitated between that verse of S. Paul in his letter to the Romans, and that in his first letter to the Corinthians. One was longer than the other. That other was more epigrammatic, more likely to be remembered as our watchword or motto for 1876. Yet the longer verse conveyed a good deal more of what I wished

to say. It speaks, not only of things, but persons. It is an admonition not confined to the Ministers and Services of the Sanctuary, it applies the precept to every member of the Congregation at home as well as in church. So I resolved at last to end my difficulty by taking *both* the verses as my new year's Text, while my Subject may be briefly comprehended in a single word, 'EDIFICATION.'

Now, as I have just said, this Edification of Christian people is the business, not only of the priests of God's Church, it is the business of the Christian people themselves, it is a solemn duty they owe to one another. S. Paul says, that in sundry matters about which a variety of opinion was likely to arise among brethren, the grand rule to be followed was "Let all things be done unto *edifying*." Peace and harmony were to be followed and cherished with a view to the mutual *edification* of one another. It is worthy of notice that the Apostle does not condemn the difference of opinion on matters in which no principle was involved. He knew that while men were men, it was not God's design, that every man was to see everything exactly as every other man saw it. There would always be brethren to whom, some things would appear of more consequence than these things did to others; some would place value on matters which to others seemed the merest trifles. Some would have scruples about things (about *touching, tasting and handling*), that to stronger minds were no stumbling block whatever. These matters for the most part were comparatively trifling matters of individual or personal taste and feeling, and as long as they did not disturb the *peace* of the community, as long as they did not *disedify* the brethren and engender strife, there should be liberty and no pronouncing of censorious judgment. No man, said the Apostle, had a right, no man had any business to judge his brother about these matters of individual observance, such as the keeping of a particular day, the eating of flesh, or being a simple vegetarian. These things you observe refer to conduct in *private life*, to what Christians should or might do at home. There was to be a generous liberty of thought and action in all things that did not affect principle. But still what all should



keep in view was the *Edification of the Brotherhood*. Even in private life, Christians should control their conduct so as to preserve peace and love towards one another. For, says S. Paul, "none of us liveth unto himself and no man dieth to himself;" "we are all members one of another," and "if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it." When (as in the Epistle to the Corinthians) the Apostle comes to speak of Christian behaviour *in public*, (I mean in the meeting together for public worship) this same rule is still laid down. The individual taste or indeed, the individual benefit must be subordinate to the edification of the whole Congregation. Nothing should be done to disturb the general harmony, order and peace. All things must be done unto *edifying*.

Now having laid down plainly this great principle, let us for a moment consider the full import of this word *edifying* or *edification*. It is a very favorite word with the Apostle Paul, it signifies literally *building up*, and the Apostle applies this word to the Church and its members. The Church is God's Temple in which Christians are living stones continually being built up, polished, cut into one shape or another, and finally set in their proper places, some more ornamental, some more plain, some more prominent, some more hidden from view, but all the while the process of building going on day by day and year and year, until at last some day—when we know not—this beautiful Temple of God shall be finished to the very topmost stone, and the Lord Jesus will come again, and dwell in it for ever and ever. Now, my dear brethren, we are by God's providence placed here as a *party of builders* employed at a special work of our own. Our congregation is as it were a separate working party under the direction of one *master builder*, as S. Paul calls the clergyman. We are beginning a new year of work; we are engaged for a new term, and our building concerns each and every one of the congregation. God sets us all to work at His *great building* for another year, and all the time He tells us He is Himself working in us and working with us. And as our work for God and with God goes on, as go on it must, it is well to remember one or two things. That (as with

all noble structures) the raising of the Christian Temple is a *matter of time, of patience and of order*. It is not to be done in a hurry. The Lord Jesus Himself laid the foundation long ago in His Apostles and Prophets, and on it we have every one of us to go on, generation after generation and year after year, building and beautifying each of the three great stories of *Faith, Hope and Love*. We have to go on working at each of these parts of our Lord's Temple, working patiently and with pains, carefully measuring each stone and beam and fitting each exactly into its place according to the architect's design. In fact, the more time, pains and patience are given to everything even the smallest details, the more perfect will the building be in the end. But, my brethren, there is one thing which is indispensable to any building, whether it be a cottage or a palace, be it of stone or brick or wood, and it is to this I wish especially to call your attention to-day. There is one thing which if neglected will hinder the progress of any work, no matter with what skill or designed, or no matter how excellent, or how numerous be the workmen employed, and its neglect will certainly hinder the progress of God's work also. This one thing, my brethren, is the **GOOD WILL OF THE WORKMEN TOWARDS EACH OTHER**. If the workmen fall out and quarrel; if they interfere with one another's special work, if in their several trades and occupations, there be not harmony of procedure and mutual concessions, then everything must go wrong, there can be no progress. Here, suppose, is a huge stone brought from the quarry, and two excellent stone-cutters are set to work; one is to chip away at one side, and the other man at the other side. Fancy the result of these two good fellows stopping to quarrel about the length of their leather aprons, or refusing to go on with their work until they procured chisels that weighed precisely the same number of grains, Or suppose the mason and the mortar man fell out, because the latter carried his hod on the right shoulder, instead of the left, or because his assistant with the mortar thought the mason was putting too big a stone here and too little a stone there, and refused to bring another hod until *his* ideas were consulted. Fancy what

the result would be if every one of the men employed were the judge of every others work; no one subject to any authority; no one doing anything, but just when and what he pleased; and no respect paid to the foreman, the clerk of works or to the plans and specifications of the architect. It is because *harmony* and *order* and *discipline among the workmen* are so essential to the progress of the building, that S. Paul and his fellow Apostles, all through their Epistles written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost insist strongly on love and harmony among the brethren, on obedience to authority, on all things being done to edifying. In other words, the *Building* itself must be the chief concern of everybody. The *Building* must in its advancement, its adornment, occupy the main place in the mind of each workman, the *Building* I repeat, not the individual tastes of each man, the *Building itself* in its growth, its strength, its beauty, its completeness; this should be the great object to be ever before the mind, in comparison with which every thing else is subordinate, and of little consequence. And this *great object* we Church of England people are by our Church directed to keep particularly before our minds; this grand principle of subordinating individual tastes, opinions and prejudices to what will *edify* the great body is laid down clearly in our Prayer Books. Our learned Reformers, in 1549, unbiased then by any foreign influence, distinctly state in the Preface about Ceremonies kept in our prayer book in all the various revisions, that they reserved those which (though devised by man) tended to maintain a decent order in the Church, for which they were first devised, as well as that they pertained to *edification*, whereunto (and these are the very significant words to which I ask your attention), "*edification, whereunto all things done in the Church* (as the Apostle teacheth) *ought to be referred.*" Both Bible and Prayer Book, then, my brethren, unite in enjoining this most salutary rule on us as a congregation of Christians, and I think every one should ask himself the question about every action in public and private—*will this edify my brother Christian as well as myself?* I say in private as well as public life, for S. Paul lays down the rule for one

as well as the other, and I am persuaded it is a good rule for us all, as ever working and building in our houses and our families, as well as when we meet together in the House of Prayer as a congregation.

And now to be practical, let us ask :—

I. How may we edify one another *individually*? How are we to build ourselves up in Faith and Hope and Love, and while we build ourselves up, help our families, our children, our servants, to go on building also? This is not my main point, but it cannot be overlooked when one is speaking of "*edification*," of which a most important part is the work of building up *oneself as an individual*. I have no hesitation whatever in summing up under four heads, the unquestionable means of building up one's own soul in the grace of God, in the love of Christ, and in the hope of glory.

1. *Prayer, regular private prayer*, morning and night; and family prayer, as a substitute for the Public Prayer, when and only when the latter cannot be attended. And I am quite sure that no brother will be *disedified* by this means of individual edification.

2. The daily reading of some portion of *God's word*, I do not mean a mere perfunctory reading through of a chapter, as if there was some charm in just going over so many verses; but the *perusal*, the thoughtful perusal of some portion—even a verse or two—with a prayer for the enlightening grace of the Holy Ghost. I am sure, my brethren, that is a most important means of edification for oneself.

3. Attendance at *the Church's services* on Sundays and week days. The experience of all God's most faithful servants in all past ages testifies to the blessing to be found in the Sanctuary, in the meeting even of two or three together in the Name of the Lord. It is my solemn duty to tell you this; and to state my own earnest conviction that you neglect and lose a most precious means of edification, a means of building up your souls in God's faith and fear, and to be blessed specially by God, when you absent yourselves from the House of Prayer all the week or on the Lord's Day. Oh how many of you are there who by a *very little*

exertion, a very trifling self-denial might be here every morning! My brethren, there is a *laziness* that is a very near relation to infidelity, let me rather say a *stepping stone* to infidelity; Oh beware how you indulge it. At all events the Sunday services and the week day services of the Church are certainly means, by which you may edify yourselves without disedifying any one else.

4. Lastly, there is the *the frequent communicating* in the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of the Lord. *Preparing* week by week for this, and *partaking* week by week of this, and *remembering and reflecting* week by week over so solemn an action, must surely influence the whole conduct of the Christian, must influence the words, the deeds, the thoughts of each communicant. And this was just what the Lord intended it should do; exercise a controlling, guarding, guiding, grace-giving, influence over the whole life, the conversation, the habits of His disciples. Surely, we should not be afraid of such a Divine influence being exercised! Is it not just what we all need? Well, then, my brethren, this is how you may certainly build yourselves up in Faith, Hope, and Love, week by week and day by day throughout this year,—by *Prayer, Bible, Church, Sacrament*.—With these you will in your private capacities as fathers, mothers, sons or daughters, masters or servants, neighbours or friends, edify yourselves and one another, and with these you will most surely disedify no one. None of these, will be, or ought to be, a stumbling-block to your brethren.

II. But it remains that I should say a word about how you should edify or build up one another *as a congregation*. Here I am reminded of that famous saying attributed to St. Augustine, and for a thousand years a *watchword* to the *Church*:—

“ *In necessariis—unitas ;  
In dubiis—libertas ;  
In omnibus—charitas.*”  
“ In essential things—unity ;  
In doubtful things—liberty ;  
In all things—charity.”

Ah, my dear Brethren, this is a golden rule, a splendid summary of our Apostles' teaching. It will do us all good to keep it in mind. We all need it continually to direct us in our religious differences and arguments, and with us here, as a congregation, I think it is a rule not difficult to be followed; for, are we not most of us educated, liberal-minded Christian men and women, by whom a truth clearly stated is readily appreciated? For it is a pleasant thing to know that there is in this congregation a very happy *unity about essential things*. I am sure if we were all to be on our death beds to-night there would be no difference between us as to our Faith, our Hope, our Love;—our Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, our Hope as resting solely on His Sacrifice on Calvary, His glorious Resurrection and Ascension, His Intercession and Mediation, His union with us and our union with Him, and as looking forward to being with the Lord and seeing Him as He is where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest—the Hope of Immortality! And then would not our hearts be full of Love to one another as well as to our Lord? And then, would we not be at peace with all the world and forgive every enemy, forgive as we ourselves hope to be forgiven for His Sake! These, dear Brethren, are the *essential things*, and on these have we not unity? For ten years past I have been kneeling by many many death beds. From the first to the last the same prayers, the same doctrine, the same words of comfort, warning and exhortation have been uttered, and not in one solitary instance have I had an argument about the essentials of the Faith. I am, therefore, persuaded we are *united in Essentials*. Thank God for this unity.

“*In doubtful things liberty.*”

There are a great many things about which neither the Bible nor the Church have laid down definite rules, and about which men, who hold quite as strongly as other men the essentials of the Faith, hold and are allowed to hold different views which they look at from different standpoints, just as they have been differently trained and educated, or according to the constitutional bias of their temperament or disposition. St. Paul speaks

of these *doubtful* things, and concedes liberty of thought and action. We ought to do the same.

Now to take a practical example of what I mean, I may mention the *use of the Cross* in or out of a church, or the *making the sign of the Cross on the person*. I confess I take a very broad view myself of this cross wearing or cross making. As a matter of plain, historical fact, we all know that in the very earliest ages of Christianity, the disciples of our Lord used crosses—pray remember not crucifixes—and in coming in and going out of their houses, while sitting down to their meals or getting up, while meeting each other in the streets, when lying down to rest or rising up, made the sign of the cross. (I am giving you as nearly as I can remember the very words of Tertullian in the second century.)\* It was to these poor disciples of Jesus, escaped from the general degradation and filthiness of the surrounding heathenism, their constant *reminder* of Whose servants they were, of Him in whom they believed, and of what He had left behind to them to carry after Him—a *Cross*. And a very terrible cross it often proved, a cross of suffering and shame, a cross of daily persecution and of martyrdom. Now, I do not suppose that they—any more than you or I—had the faintest idea that there was any inherent virtue in wearing a cross, or making the Sacred Sign. It was no Means of grace. But beyond a doubt thousands and thousands of the most faithful followers of our Lord, from that time to the present, have found it edifying to themselves. Some of you may have read how the pious Presbyterian mother of the famous Hugh Miller, in the North of Scotland, taught her little son with his prayers to make the sign of the cross. Now, my Brethren, here is a *doubtful matter*, and I for one am quite willing to let Christian people exercise their liberty about it, and as a rule I find that this is the view taken by most sensible Christian men among us. I know that many of us have been accustomed to associate what we

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\* Ad omnem progressum atque promotum, ad omnem aditum et exitum, ad calciatum, ad lavaera, ad mensas, ad lumina, ad cubilia, ad sedilia, quacumque nos conversatio exerect, frontem crucis signaculo terimus.—*Tertullian. de Corona*, § 3.

call "*superstition*" with the cross and the sign of the cross. Well, suppose it is superstition, it is a very harmless superstition, and remember that this was just what some of the Christians of S. Paul's time said about other Christians, and yet the Apostle, on behalf of the weak brethren, pleaded for toleration and concession in a matter that did not compromise principle or endanger the faith. It was a weakness on the right side, on the side of faith, not of unbelief. I am not sure that he would have as earnestly pleaded on behalf of weakness of a different kind that is far more common among us in these days. Permit me to contrast them. Here in the same church are two worshippers. One of them comes in just as he would to a concert room or club room, he stands up while other people stand up, and because they stand up, he never kneels down for prayer, but sits and lounges all through the solemn addresses of the congregation to Almighty God; during the singing of canticles and hymns he never tries to sing a line, but looks about him and criticises everything and everybody. He is a man, suppose, who, in a drawing room or at a supper table, has voice enough, but—to *sing in church!* that is not to be thought of, no more than responding above his breath, or in a scarce audible murmur, if he troubles himself about it at all; and altogether his behaviour and attitude betoken from first to last the utmost indifference and coldness, not to say irreverence, in the House of Prayer and in the presence of the Lord God of Hosts. Here is a weak brother, whom we all readily tolerate. Would S. Paul have tolerated him? Suppose another man who, as he enters the Church, bows his head and offers a prayer, for he feels that he is coming into the Presence-chamber of his God; that he is about to engage in a most solemn business, requiring every faculty of mind and body; that his very heart and thoughts are all quite open to the Eye of the Holy Being, he is about to address, and then all through the Service strives to remember with every sentence uttered *where he is and what he is doing*; speaks out *audibly* with loud voice (as he is told to do by his Church) the Responses; sings out heartily the Hymns and Psalms; kneels down in all humility; reads



the Chapters attentively along with the clergyman; and strives to hear with meekness the engrafted word, this, because he believes that here all the time God's Spirit, the Holy Ghost, is building up his soul in grace and love and faith and hope, and that *God expects him to cooperate with that good Spirit.* Now suppose that this worshipper as he enters and as he leaves the House of Prayer makes the sign of the cross to remind himself of the redeeming love of his Saviour, the grace and mediation of the Lord Who died for him;—I ask you, of which of the two men, shall we as honest Christians think most favourably? If we concede to the one the liberty of sloth, indifference and irreverence, how much more shall we not concede to the other *liberty* in an act that edifies him and surely need not disedify or disturb anybody else? Nay, has not he a very fair right to turn round to the clergyman and say: "Sir, before you rebuke me for superstition, rebuke this other, and alas! many others, for irreverence, for indifference and sloth, that look very like infidelity"? These are, you may think, the extremes, but we know they exist, and are allowed to exist in the Church, and as I have said, I would have you take with me and with S. Augustine and S. Paul the Apostle of Christ, a broad and a charitable view of these doubtful things. Yes: "in doubtful things liberty, and in *all things Charity.*" Oh, my Brethren, my object to-day is to unite you all in charity to each other, so that you may when you meet together here during the year, try to edify one another following after the things that make for peace: and believe that nothing will do this more than the spirit of *Christian charity*, "the very bond of peace and of all virtues." I had another text that I was nearly taking to-day, it was, "*Love as Brethren,*" and it means almost the same thing as "Let all things be done unto edifying." For if we love each other without dissimulation, and love as brothers and sisters of one family should, then, indeed, we shall try to edify one another, and be ever ready to give up our own fancies or prejudices in many unessential things for the sake of the general *edification.* We shall mutually bear and forbear, following the example of Our Lord

Jesus, who pleased not Himself in things that never could be wrong, and this for the sake of His weak sinful brethren of earth.

EDIFICATION. EDIFYING. BUILDING. The words remind me that there is a *material* as well as a spiritual work that calls for the united efforts of this congregation. It is to us one of the *essential* things that requires *unity*. That is an *edifying* in a very literal sense which I cannot forget, and you will, I hope, excuse my putting you in mind of it to-day. I do earnestly hope that something may soon be done towards *this* building which God has entrusted to us. I wished to say something on this important matter, but I have exceeded my limits and already too long taxed your indulgence. I have now only to pray that you will think over the Apostle's words, and in your public and your private life this year, that you may "*follow after the things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another,*" that we shall all work together as Christian men and women should work, trying always to find out not how and where we differ, but how and where we agree, and then I believe our work, which will be a labor of love in every sense of the word, love for our common Lord and love for one another, will prosper and progress, for we shall have the Blessing of God over us, and the Grace of Christ with us, and the Holy Spirit in us.

