

The Church of England in Colonial New Brunswick: 1847-1866

The Early Medley Episcopate

Overview

The goal of this study is to focus on the Church of England in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. The method employed will rely heavily on the episcopal Charges of Bishop John Medley, first Bishop of the see of Fredericton. Medley's Charges are an underutilized source in the history of the period. Although published at the time, one indication of their under appreciated and underused status is gleaned from the fact that no one repository of the province's historical resources possesses a complete set of Medley's Charges.¹ Technically, the Charges were directed to the clergy only, these documents nonetheless contain much information of general historical interest. In this study we shall use them as a lens through which to examine the status, challenges, and progress of the mid-Victorian era Church of England in New Brunswick.

As well as showing the mind and personality of Bishop Medley, the Charges also reveal much about his audience, the clergy of the province and their collective hopes and anxieties concerning the laity to whom they sought to faithfully minister. Careful reading of the Charges also unveil the place of the Church in New Brunswick in relation to the great theological issues of the day including critical events in England as well as the New Brunswick Church's relations with other parts of the emerging Anglican Communion. Telling observations concerning colonial poverty, behavior at worship, giving, churchmanship and attitudes towards the Faith are all to be found in these unique documents. It is hoped that our journey together through these sources will be both enjoyable and perhaps even stimulate further individual investigation of these unique and valuable documents – Bishop John Medley's episcopal Charges.

¹. See Preface to B.L. Craig's, *Apostle to the Wilderness: Bishop John Medley and the Evolution of the Anglican Church*, (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, N.J., USA, 2005). Craig's work is the latest and the definitive word on the importance and place of Bishop Medley in Canadian and Anglican history.