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In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

Learning to Pass.

By the Reverend Stuart Robertson, M.A., Glasgow.

'Ready to distribute.'—1 Ti 6[18].

This is the story of a very remarkable football team. Its name is not in any famous league, nor has it, so far as I know, ever won any celebrated cup. But it is a very remarkable team for all that. Its home is Beyrout in Syria, and it was organized by a young Scottish missionary. The centre-forward is an American, the forwards on either wing are Turks; a couple of Jews, a Negro, a Copt, and a few other international odds and ends make up a mixture that makes you think of the Tower of Babel. It sounds like mixing oil and water, or, rather, fire and gunpowder; for Turks and Armenians have been bitter enemies for centuries and are so still, and both dislike Jews, and all despise Negroes. Yet, there they were playing together in the same football team instead of trying to kill each other. What was it that made them lay aside old hatreds and old scorn like this? It wasn't just the fascination of football. Perhaps that drew them closer together and made them better friends; but it was something else which drew them together to begin with, and made them friends who had been so long enemies.

There is only one power that can work that sort of miracle, the power of Jesus. They were Christians. They had become friends with each other because each had first found a friend in Jesus. He is the Great Friend, and the first effect of His spirit in men is to make them friendly.

Now, then, do you know what was the most difficult thing for the missionary to teach them? It was to teach them *to pass the ball to one another.* Each one was eager to get the ball at his toe, to dart down the field and score a goal himself; and when the missionary had got a man to understand that he must play not for himself and his own glory, but for the team, when he had taught him to pass, he knew he had done a good bit of work not only for the team but for the man's own life. And that is just what we all need to learn in the greater game of life. St. Paul says Christians must be 'ready to distribute.' That just means that they must learn to pass. The world to-day is unhappy and anxious, because every nation is playing its own game. They are fixed on their own plans. They want to mend the world in their own way. They want to score the goals and gather the glory single-handed.

This won't do in football. The selfish player spoils the team. The 'inside' that starves his wing man and won't pass must learn or he will find himself dropped. And it won't do in life, and things will never be right until each nation forgets itself and denies itself, looks 'not on its own things but on the things of others,' and all pull together for the good of all. Then the League of Nations will be a team; it is not a team yet.

In our own nation we see the same thing. We were one nation in the war, pulling together like one team, all ready to give up something for the sake of the nation. That is how we and our allies won the war. The splendid thing was when that great and good man, General Haig, offered to serve under General Foch. Now we are all at sixes and sevens again — miners, engineers, railway men, employers, workmen—each determined to score for himself, and nobody scoring at all for that very reason. It isn't a team when every man is playing for his own hand and won't pass to the next man; and we are not really a nation to-day in the full and perfect sense. We are just a lot of jostling people, not playing the game, not 'ready to distribute.'

This is the master secret for us all. The great lesson is to learn to pass. If you have comfort, it is not yours only. Pass it on. There are others being starved in the wings because you don't pass to them. They lose heart and drop out of the game discouraged. Pass on your comforts—your friendship, your money, your sympathy—pass, and play the game for the team and not for yourself. This is the spirit of Jesus. It is what He did, and being a Christian means being 'ready to distribute.'

Look farther than our own nation. We have good news to pass on, the good news of the love of God that has come to us through Jesus Christ. This is not for ourselves alone; it is for the world. There are millions in the world who know nothing about it. Pass it on to them. This is what we call 'Foreign Missions'; I call it 'Playing the Game.' These heathen folk are being starved

of what they have a right to, and a great need of.

God wants us all to be one, working like a team, all the nations together for God, all the people in each nation together for God, all for each and each for all. We are too fond of 'my' and 'mine,' but when Jesus taught His disciples to pray He left these words out and told them to use 'our'—'*our* father, *our* daily bread, *our* trespasses.'

And listen to the way St. Paul talks—'ready to distribute,' 'bear one another's burdens,' 'members one of another'—that is a team playing together under one Captain, Christ. 'If I come to Jesus,' we sing in a hymn, 'He will make me glad.' How? By teaching us to pass. It is the first lesson He will teach, it is the hardest to learn thoroughly, and it is the most worth learning, for it is the key that opens the door to an immense treasure of gladness.

Submarines.

By the Reverend T. Crouther Gordon, D.F.C., B.D., Pitlochry.

'Whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.'—Ps 8^8.

One of the great things that passes through the sea is the submarine. You remember some months ago the H.29 sank when she was in her harbour. We were all very sorry when we learned that some of the crew were drowned. It brought back to us what happened during the war.

One day I was taken down in a submarine. It was lying in Portsmouth, and when we got aboard the commander took us out into the sea, and, when we were out of sight of land, he bolted up the conning-tower and barred up the holes, and then we sank farther and farther into the water. For a time we could see through the periscope, and we watched the waves passing over us, but soon the periscope too was under the water, and we could see nothing. Then the commander explained to us one or two of the instruments. One instrument, he said, tells me the speed I am going at. Another tells me if there is any ship near me, and this one tells me how deep I am. I stood watching this instrument. It had a large dial and a long pointer, and every second the pointer went farther and farther down. Ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty feet. We could breathe easily, there was plenty of air, there was nothing to tell us, except the pointer, that we were sixty feet below the waves. We did not feel ourselves going down, but the pointer told us.

And you and I, boys and girls, like the submarine, may go down and down, and yet not feel ourselves going down. You may think you are just as good as the next boy. He swears, and, when his father is not looking, he smokes too. He can tell as tall a story as you can. But, if you will just look at the pointer in your heart, you will see it pointing very low. And that pointer is your conscience.

In the middle of the submarine I noticed a seat. It was not like an ordinary chair. It was for all the world like a music-stool. And about three feet above the stool there was the bottom of the periscope, and there was a handle on each side of it for swinging it round. Now the commander of the submarine, when he is watching for the enemy, sits on that stool and swings the periscope round. And this lets him see all the ships that are near him on the ocean. But although he can see all round about him with the periscope, he cannot see straight above him. Now this is dangerous, for a seaplane might be flying right above him, and, before he could see it, it might drop bombs and destroy his boat. You see how very serious it might be for him and all the crew, because he could not see straight up.

And there are a great many boys and girls just like the commander in the submarine. They look round about them, but they do not look straight up, and they forget that God is watching them from heaven. And this leads to all kinds of evil. They do mean things, they say mean things about their chums, they let down their side when they are playing games. *You* don't do that, but boys and girls very like you do it. But if you will look straight up to God every night and every morning, you will keep clear of all trouble.

We were all very sad about the sinking of the H.29 submarine, but what made it very much sadder was that it sank just where it was lying in the harbour. It had come home from its cruise, and the damage was not done in the angry ocean, but when she was at home moored to the dock. She sank at her moorings.

I once knew a boy who lived in a house, and the name of the house was 'The Moorings.' Now you are living at home, and that is your mooring. But the sad thing is this, that so many are sinking just at their moorings. Not at school, where the teacher keeps them from talking, and where they dare not tell lies, but at home where we can go into a room all by ourselves and nobody sees us, and do things that we never tell to mother. Home, that is the place where you make your little sister do

what you want, because you say she is just your sister. It is at home that you lie in bed when you ought to be going to school. It is at home that you sit over the fire reading a detective story when you should be doing your sum until you get it out right. And so you must be very careful that you do not get lazy or fall into nasty habits, because, though it is sad that, like the submarine, you should sink and come to ruin, it is sadder still that you should sink into sin in your own home.

The Christian Year.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Eyes of Purity.

'Come and see.'—Jn 1^{39}.

'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.'—Mt 5^{8}.

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' So Jesus reveals the condition of the beatific vision, and sets us in that cleft, more surely scored than that wherein Moses gazed on the retreating procession of God, from which we may look up and see God face to face.

1. What is this thing Purity? The answer is to be found in those Scriptures which the word and spirit of Christ inspired. It is both negatively described and positively revealed. In its negative aspect it is certainly *the negation of all that goes by the name of fleshly Lust.* The carnally impure see not God. Their passions create a red mist, which, though it be as rosy as the light in the cavern of the Venusberg in which Tannhäuser tarried, hides the face of God. This truth is native to the human spirit. The endeavour of our race to reach the wisdom and communion of eternal things is starred throughout its course with the forlorn conviction that they must be clean who would enter those holy mysteries. Humanity is in thrall to this conviction, and knows that all that is said by those who deride the Christian ideal of purity is given the lie by the oracles of its own heart.

'You complain of Catholicism,' said Chesterton's Mac Ian to the very modern Turnbull, 'for setting up an ideal of virginity; it did nothing of the kind. The whole human race set up an ideal of virginity: the Greeks in Athene, the Romans in the Vestal fire.'

It is this innate conviction in the race, that purity is the threshold of the shrine, and the shekinah that lights up God for us, which comes to its flower in the Christian revelation. Have you never been struck by the way in which the New Testament links together such impurities as adultery, uncleanness, fornication, lasciviousness, and the like, with idolatry. Now the idolater does not see God; the block on which he gazes is a stumbling-block in the way of that holy vision. But let us detect this further, that, as those Scriptures reveal it to us, the idolater is set about by these impurities, and it is by their feverish hands the idol is so lifted up that the stars among which God waits for us are all obscured. Tennyson, in his Idyll of 'The Holy Grail,' makes very sure of this. It was impurity that barred from Sir Lancelot the vision of the Cup, that symbol and vehicle of the very blood of God. All that was 'pure, noble, and knightly' in him 'twined and clung round that one sin, until the wholesome flower and poisonous grew together, each as each, not to be pluck'd asunder.' Even when he came to Castle Carboneh, down the hall of which the Cup floated in luminous air, it was veiled from Lancelot. 'A stormy glare, a heat as from a seven-times-heated furnace, blasted and burned and blinded' him. It was his own heart heated with his unexorcised passion that bred that blinding storm!

2. But now let us note that Purity means freedom from other humours than lust. It means also *freedom from Pride.* No man who regards himself as sufficient for himself may hope to 'see God.' Still less if his pride be that of material possessions and worldly pomps in which he has laid up his soul. 'Pride,' as one has written, 'is a weakness in the character; it dries up laughter, it dries up wonder, it dries up chivalry and energy.' With such drought the wells of God dry up for a man, and he beholds no more than a mirage of fountains among their groves. Thus it is that many thinkers of our own day cannot see more of God than a dream that the world had of Him in its superstitious childhood, or a dream which the Universe in its slow labour is 'unconsciously' trying to bring true. They cannot because of pride, an intellectual self-sufficiency which limits the things that man may know in heaven and earth to their own philosophy. They lack that humility and selfless reverence by which alone Truth comes with her sensitive approach within our compass. St. Peter in his Epistle declares that we purify our souls by obedience to the truth. So; but it is by purifying our minds from pride that we first of all address ourselves to that 'obedience.' All revelations come only to those who, as Maeterlinck says, accustom themselves 'to live like an angel who has just sprung to life, like a woman who loves, or a man on the point of death.' In these moods there is no

room for self-sufficiency. And the vision of God needs that vacancy of the proud self more than all else. No one may hope to have even a 'sense of God,' to use William Watson's phrase, until he banishes pride in himself:

When, overarched by gorgeous night,
I wave my trivial self away;
When all I was to all men's sight
Shares the erasure of the day;
Then do I cast my cumbering load,
Then do I gain a sense of God.

3. In the third place, Purity means *freedom from Scorn*. The flavour of this spirit grieves us in the words of those who, having 'outgrown' the antique and workaday conception of 'God,' seem content to wander among those half-formed shapes and incipient divinities which whisper about their self-sufficient minds, and call to them dumbly in the twilight created by their own thought. They carry themselves scornfully to the 'humble and meek,' and so sterilize their own fields. At times their scorn becomes hate. Jesus was subjected to this. 'They have seen,' said He, 'and they have hated both me and my Father.' Scorn is the flavour of the greater part of Thomas Hardy's treatment of those who will not and cannot share his bleak agnosticism. No doubt he has kindlier moods, but he has so overborne those childlike thoughts in his heart, and set forth their dead bodies with gentle scorn, that that revelation which is denied to the 'wise and learned,' but revealed to babes and the 'simple-minded,' has passed him by.

Childlikeness, 'simple-mindedness,' humility, a heart that brings all its native simplicity of response to the light which shines behind the commonplace—these are the positive elements in that purity by which we 'see God.' It is a spirit which tends to shepherds telling of what they saw and heard on the hills, as readily as to princes of learning who come over to us, purged of their faith, in the wake of 'the high, white star of Truth.' It is a spirit which seeks the oracle of the Academy or the Porch with no humbler a reverence than it shows to a teacher of little tales about sheep and shepherds, sowing and reaping, sparrows and daffodils, women cleaning houses or baking bread. It is true that this vagrant prophet begat a superstition which has filled the earth with temples, books, worships, and incredible adventures. But what good thing can come out of Galilee? Whatever it be need not concern us! Thus those who assume the leadership of thought among us pass Christ by.

It is this attitude of quiet contempt or sheer ignorance where the Galilean is concerned that hinders these men from 'seeing God.' They have not yet sufficiently learned the fundamental lesson about God, that it is the 'pure in heart' who see Him. Some of them, like Huxley, have learned well that the scientific mind cannot read the truth of a flower, or find the law that is held in a child's daisy-chain, unless they 'sit down before it like a little child.' But they have yet to try that scientific method towards Christ. How many of them do so? They read books, many or few, that are critical of religion, or they hear of Christ by the weary hearing of the ear. But as for going face to face with Him as He gathers the childlike about Him in the Gospels, that is the last thing many of them have ever thought of doing. If they will but do so, and suffer their soul to *take* upon itself the direct glow and impress of His soul, with no other spirit of submission than they offer when they sit with Huxley before the face of Nature, *they shall in Christ see God*! They shall know that they have reached God.

Whoever or whatever God be, we have all come forth from Him. We live in Him as intimately, surely, as the animalcule lives in our body. Every breath we draw depends on the pulse that beats out its vital rhythm from the heart that throbs in the Innermost. Can it be, therefore, that we should light at any time or anywhere upon the home and heart of this our parentage, and not know that we had discovered it? It cannot be. It cannot be that a bird of the air knows by the prompting of its homing heart when and where it has come home, and the soul of man stand blind and irresponsive when he lights on God. It is this 'instinct,' or 'intuition,' or 'sense of the holy' which knows that, in meeting Christ, God is met, that they who have seen Him have seen the Father![1]

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Value of Religious Reserve.

'See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.'—Mt 8^4.

The Gospels are no doubt full of instances of our Lord's desire to efface Himself, to escape the foolish notoriety with which the wonder-lust of the multitude surrounds every true greatness to its real

[1] A. Boyd Scott, *The Twelve Take Stock of Us*, 53.

belittlement. Yet there is surely something more in the deliberate gravity of this command. It is not of Himself He is thinking, but of the man to whom He speaks. It is a lesson, not a request. It is the lesson of religious reserve and religious sincerity.

Every religious experience is profoundly real and personal. And just because it is so, it will feel the tug of two conflicting impulses, neither of which is to be immediately trusted. It will want to declare itself, and it will want to hide itself. Everything that touches what is most personal in us comes as a renewal. A great joy that comes to us apart from our deserts or beyond them, a great purpose that takes possession of us, a great success which, however much it may have been hoped for, will always seize us with the sense of the unexpected—these things renew us, or we are incapable of being renewed. But indeed there is none of us such a clod as not to feel the thrill of a new life, however feeble, however evanescent, through such visitings. And even a great sorrow or a great failure will try whether there is life in us to be renewed or only the hopeless dulness of a stagnant spirit to be more painfully endured than before. And if renewal comes, however it comes, it wants to express itself. It is an expansive moment, and at the same time it is a morbid moment—a moment both of feverish self-expression and of unhealthy reserve. At such times we would say everything and say nothing; we would take the world into our confidence and again withdraw into a moody and stubborn loneliness of spirit.

Both moods are dangerous, or rather would be dangerous if they could prove permanent. They both witness to the soul's concern about itself. They may be innocent and harmless in that moment of the renewal of life. But they have no permanent correspondence with the stern and somewhat prosaic demands of life as a whole. And so it is well that from the beginning we should be taught to avoid them or rather to conquer them. And that was our Lord's lesson to the leper whom He had healed. He knew the inevitable impulse which would drive the poor victim of a loathsome disease, who suddenly found himself clean, to proclaim abroad the great miracle of his cleansing. He knew, too, the vacancy of spirit, of will, which the very excess of joy can induce in us. And so He uttered the double warning: 'See thou tell no man; but go, shew thyself to the priest and make the customary offering.'

Do we not feel the general significance of this warning? All strength is full of a noble reserve. And the feeling that would acquire strength and self-certainty must learn this lesson of reserve. Our Lord indeed spoke only to the need of a particular moment. When He said, 'See thou tell no man,' He was not counselling a habitual secretiveness. For such secretiveness is the reserve of the cowardly or the cunning. The nature that is sure of itself needs no concealment and has no temptations to concealment. There is a splendid freedom and a fine appropriateness in all its self-revelation. It is incapable of weak concealment and of weaker boasting. But it is when one is learning to be strong that it is necessary to keep watch on the waywardness of the spirit. It is then that we need to remember our Lord's counsel, 'See thou tell no man.' For to that stage in the soul's growth it was directed. It is the moment when self-expression may too easily become self-betrayal. We may think we are only uttering a spontaneous gratitude. But when we give ourselves time to think, when we have gained the power of dealing sincerely with ourselves and look back upon that moment of expression, we recognize in it the momentary intoxication of an unworthy vanity. It was of ourselves we were thinking, of the something great that had happened to us. It was not the miracle of renewing power in itself that had impressed us. It was the fact that we were the objects of it. It was that which had unloosed our tongues and at the same time had weakened the real reverence in our hearts.

Are not much religious profession and confession of this puny kind? We dare not, indeed, make loose charges against any particular form of religious expansiveness. But at least let us be sure for ourselves that we never dare to speak of the things that have come to have the most profound meaning for us till the need comes which we dare not resist, till silence would prove itself a greater betrayal than speech. And let us honour the great silent natures about us from whose lips we have never heard any of the current religious phrases, but whose quiet steadfast lives have so often been our reproof and our inspiration.

But, it may be argued, the great religious teachers were not afraid to urge their own experience upon their disciples. If they had been they would never have made disciples. St. Paul's teaching is surely personal enough. It might seem, indeed, at times to be an almost extravagant insistence upon what he himself had felt. He seems unable to recommend a general truth save through what had been immediately personal to himself. It is true, and more than that, it is doubtful whether

any religious teacher has ever spoken with effect save out of his own personal certainties. Yet St. Paul provides the very example to which we would appeal in support of what has been said. For in him the personal has become the universal, and it has become somehow the universal pleading with each. If he speaks of himself, it is not that we may take note of him personally, it is that we may see in him what we can be and have and know, it is that we may feel through him who has known it something that is the common need and hope of humanity. The secret of St. Paul is that when he speaks of himself most directly, when he places himself in the very centre of the picture, he has entirely forgotten himself, he hardly knows that he exists or counts. 'Not I, but Christ that dwelleth in me.'

The merely individual experience, the experience which feels its separateness, rejoices in it, and exposes itself lightly, does not exist in St. Paul's religion. His is the experience which has ceased to be merely individual and become truly personal, representative of what a broadly human experience may be and ought to be. For the personal is the note of the Divine life, of the life that can be wholly itself and yet can enter into communion with all other life that is; and we never completely attain it. The individual is the note of unregenerate human life, of the life that cannot be itself at all without insisting on its separateness; and we never wholly escape it. And all the genuine religious experience of the human soul is an ascent from the merely individual to the truly personal. Here is the key to the true and worthy religious reserve.

And again there is great meaning in that other counsel of our Lord's, 'Go and shew thyself to the priest and make the offering that is customary.' It is the temptation of every religious feeling which is at all really individual to be self-sufficient. It tends to ignore customary religious forms, to feel itself magnificently independent of them. There seems to it something cold and insufficient in their formal routine. Yet it is just then that the soul needs the correction and discipline which they can supply. We need to be humbled by the bracing discipline of the common levels.

'Go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.' Only that, and yet, if we obey, we will learn that the renewal which might have proved fruitless and illusory is at last beginning to accomplish itself in us in earnest.[1]

[1] A. L. Lilley, *The Religion of Life*, 34.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

HARVEST SERMON.

God's Disapproval of a Grudging Spirit.

'When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands.' —Dt 24^{19}.

It is quite evident, to any one who reads the Book of Deuteronomy with attention, that it was written for people who were still in touch with country life. It deals with a state of things which has not yet become too complicated. The people to whom it addresses itself in the name of God—and this it does with a frankness which is very refreshing in these more sophisticated days of ours—are not very numerous. It is still possible to reduce all moral and religious life to a few plain precepts. At a later stage, when a population has come within sight of other civilizations and manners, words have lost their first meaning, and people's minds have become so subtle, so full of excellent arguments for whatever course suits themselves, that they cannot—unless in certain dark and tragical hours—feel the one tremendous call of life, the one holy and inevitable meaning which alone gives sense and substance to this human scene.

There are a few simple rules which have been right from the beginning, rules which it will always be necessary for us to observe if we would please God and have the comfort of our own thoughts. Always be careful when you hear it said of some simple old rule, that 'times are changed,' that what was once excellent enough is now no longer suitable! Times are changed; but human hearts are scarcely changed at all. A good man in our day is very like what a good man must have been in the time of Moses. Goodness is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. You may dash along the streets or along our railways at a speed which would have astonished our simple ancestors and put them for a moment at a disadvantage; but the moment you alight, the moment you are tempted to commit a sin, the moment you beat your breast over some sin committed, the moment you meet some disaster in the region of your love or your fortune, the moment you become aware of your own *self*—in that moment you are the same. Since God first spoke to man the rules for the true life have not been changed. All that has happened is that we have to play our part in other circumstances.

Therefore let us be on our guard when we are

told that some old rule for good-living is no longer applicable to our case, that some fine action which used to be the sign of a beautiful and religious spirit is not incumbent upon people like ourselves in these present days. 'When thou reapest thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, for the widow; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands.'

A verse like that takes us back in a moment to man's simple days; it may be to our own simpler days. For one moment we see golden fields, and the labour and the joy of harvest.

When the people of God were at that stage in their long career, here is a rule which God laid upon them—a rule which their own conscience must have accepted as good. When a man was clearing a field of grain, if he happened to forget a sheaf, he must *leave* it—and the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow should have it. A man is not asked deliberately to leave one sheaf behind—for the poor: that would have been the very opposite of the spirit of this law. He is not asked to look about him as the last load is leaving his field, and to say, 'Ah, yes, I see I have left one sheaf behind'—and then to go away, as though by leaving that one miserable sheaf he had discharged all his obligations to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. If you consult the laws of Moses you will find that very much more was expected of any man who claimed to be a good man.

Imagine for a moment the condition of the man who—knowing this law of his God with regard to the forgotten sheaf—goes back to fetch it. He has set out for the last time from his field walking by the side of his waggon. He has that tired and happy feeling which comes in the evening after a good day's work. God, too, has crowned the year with His goodness. So the man walks on, making melody in his heart unto the Lord—now and then cheering on his patient beast with some playful word. So they go on, the man and the beast and the golden grain, just as God, from all eternity, had proposed. Suddenly he comes to a standstill. He summons his beast to halt—he remembers that he has forgotten a sheaf! So back they go, man and beast, and grain no longer golden, but dull with the growing darkness. He finds the gate, passing some of the poor people—the strangers, the fatherless, and the widow—who had come to gather up the crumbs that had fallen from his table! For a moment he is uneasy; but he recalls his own excellent point about encouraging strangers, and passes doggedly on. He finds his sheaf, flings it on the top of the waggon, beats his poor beast—as though it were to blame—and hastens homewards. But there is no song now in his breast!

We are not farmers, but there is something in that old rule or custom which we must find out for ourselves as applying to ourselves. Every word which God ever spoke to man *stands*. It abides in spirit. And what is the spirit, the permanent challenge and demand of that ancient law of early Israel? It is just this: that we are all of us to practise a certain open-handedness in life. We are not to squeeze the last penny out of life—for our own sakes. We are not to make the great error—that we are here to wring out of life the last drop that will minister to our luxury or to our ambition. On the contrary, we are here to sit loosely to the world, thanking God if we have what we really need. We live in a world of men without whose friendship and assistance there are dark places in life which we should never pass alone. We are here not simply in order that we may get home in the evening with everything that we can legally claim and can heap up on our waggon. On the contrary, when all is said, we are here to leave something behind! To every man God has given a field on which to labour—until the evening. And God knows that we ourselves have need of bread and raiment. But unhappy surely is the man who, in order to minister to his own vanity, in order to promote his own ease and luxuriousness, leaves behind him a barren track as though a plague of locusts had passed that way!

It may not have been a good thing for those strangers, for those fatherless people and those widows, to learn to depend upon farmers leaving sheaves behind them in the fields. It may indeed have been a very bad thing for them, encouraging them in indolence and destroying their independence—although the Bible has little to say in praise of what we call 'independence.' And it may have been, socially, a harmful practice—this leaving of sheaves. But that is not the point. The point is that no man can look at himself with comfort who, having forgotten a sheaf, and remembering that poor people are looking for it, goes back—though his waggon is already laden—to fetch it.

Our blessed Lord once spoke a parable of a poor man sitting begging at a rich man's door. Our Lord did not there encourage begging. All that He did in that parable was to rebuke a man's hardness of heart. All that He did was to follow in imagination that hard-hearted man into a place

of utter loneliness where he could not but think of himself and of the miserable thing he had done.[1]

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

After Summer.

'The summer is ended.'—Jer 8^{20}.

We are all more or less sensitive to our environment, influenced and impressed by the scenery that is about us. The days are different; the seasons come and go; and in the changing face of Nature we find the mirror of our moods, the reflection of our experiences. When autumn days are here, the gladness and glee of the year have gone, and there is a tender sadness over the landscape. The corn is all cut and carried away; and we look across the pale stubble-fields, bare and empty—all stripped of their abundant loveliness; and we know that there has passed a glory from the earth. 'The summer is ended.'

Let us take one or two thoughts that such a word brings to us.

1. 'The summer is ended.' That is true, but let us thank God that we have seen another summer. It is something to be thankful for. No doubt, our first thought is the thought of what is gone. It is the difference between spring and autumn, like the difference between morning and evening. The glory of morning is that the light is breaking and growing and coming, and all the bright hours are yet before us. But when evening comes, the light is fading, diminishing, and the shadows creep on. So in the spring-time we live in hope for all the glory that is yet to be. There comes to us the promise of the summer with its wealth of life and beauty, its long, light, lovely days. But in autumn we think of what is gone.

'The summer is ended.' We have seen it; and what a season it has been of bounty and of beauty. We can remember days when it was good to be alive, out on the hills or by the sea, in field and wood, the sunshine and the skies, the sweet air, the radiant health, the verdure and the loveliness of trees and flowers. God gave us such summer days. Have we thanked Him for them? Such a world it is, telling of His delight in His creation and the love with which He loves us. 'The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord,' and of this fulness have all we received. Ended? Yes; but we have seen it again, seen it come and go, another spring and summer, the bloom and freshness, the wonder and delight. And in our brief life it means much. Henry Ryecroft writes in his *Journal*, after he had retired to the country: 'How many more springs can I hope to see? A sanguine temper would say ten or twelve; let me dare to hope humbly for five or six; that is a great many. Five or six spring-times welcomed joyously, lovingly watched from the first celandine to the budding of the rose, who shall dare to call it a stinted boon? Five or six times the miracle of earth reclad, the vision of splendour and loveliness which tongue has never yet described set before my gazing. To think of it is to fear that I ask too much.'

'Forget not all his benefits.' It is a great boon to be here alive and to have seen another summer.

2. Another thought is this. 'The summer is ended,' and we know what comes next. The year changes from sunny skies and soft showers and warm winds to storms and snows. But the gladness and the good have not gone from us. Winter has its own beauty and its own keen, eager life. Certainly the winter landscape has a loveliness all its own; and when we step out into the frosty air, or when we battle bravely against wind and rain, we feel the bracing influence of harder weather. The keen air does not depress; it quickens and invigorates. Frosty, but kindly, are the winter days, and soon we lose the sense of gloom and still rejoice. It is not difficult to see that for our health and vigour, and for our highest life, we need what winter brings to us. How clear the contrast between the races of tropical countries, self-indulgent and indolent, and those who are trained and disciplined in the more rugged and severe climate of the North!

It is this season, too, that gives us all our indoor life. Indeed, 'home' is a northern word—a word not found in sultry, southern climes, not found where men are living out of doors. Only among those whom the cold drives to seek shelter and retreat, only at the hearth where the winter fire is kindled and the family gathered—there we know the life, the fellowship, the intimate bonds of love that make us live together and be at home.

We should not complain of our rugged climate. There is a moral influence in the severity after the softness; and we may thank God for the frosts and snows and sleets and bleak winds, even as when we see such changes reflected in our life, in hardship and suffering and adverse fortune. There are mild and genial influences under which we may expand and grow; but there are also influences that are helpful though hard, kindly though cold.

3. 'The summer is ended.' For most of us it means this too—coming home again, and coming

[1] J. A. Hutton, in *Harvest Thanksgiving Sermons*, 131.

home to our work. The holiday is past—the time of lighter, freer life; and we face the winter—the time of more steady, settled, strenuous work. We shrink a little from the first plunge into it. We know the feeling of the first days in the collar. But still we know that this is good—for life is work.

It is essential to any real welfare of spirit, essential to healthy-mindedness, that we should have a clear perception and a hearty acceptance of the work God gives us to do, finding in it what gives substance and value, dignity and nobleness to life. It is good to sit in the sunshine, to wander over moor and shore enjoying those hours of freedom and repose which are so healthful and so happy. But it is not enough. We find ourselves thinking of our work, looking forward to the winter days, planning some better method, cherishing a deeper desire to work well. We cannot satisfy ourselves with sport and play and pleasure. It is not these that contribute the elements of real strength and worth to our life. And it is good that we should remind ourselves of this when 'the summer is ended,' and our work is again in our hands.

We measure our life most truly when we are looking back upon it. And this is the only reflection and remembrance that awaken a satisfaction deep in the heart: 'I have finished the work.' Life is work and play, and there are just two kinds of life. There is one that makes the work less than the play—when we work in order that we may play. There is another that makes the play second to the work—when we play in order that we may work better.

4. Take this last reflection which is the thought of the text. 'The summer is ended'; another season has passed.

The text has an interesting meaning here which few of those who repeat it think of. It has most likely a political reference. Threatened by the great power of Assyria, the land of Judah was looking to Egypt for help, but the help did not come. The summer days passed. The time of campaigning was over. Kings do not go forth to war in winter. The long summer went past and there was no sign of help. The prophet hears the cry of the captive people, carried away by the victorious invader, because the hopes they cherished had been cherished in vain as they looked to Egypt through the summer months and no help came. 'The summer is ended, and we are not saved.'

But the words have passed into our common speech as a cry of despair over lost chances, seasons that have come and gone and been missed or misspent.

It is evidently true of the harvest. It is like another proverb taken from agriculture: 'Make hay while the sun shines.' It carries the same lesson of opportunity to be swiftly, diligently used or lost for ever. Harvests must be reaped in harvest-time. And it is true of our passing life. Like the year life is a succession of times and seasons, each of which has its destined work; and that being done, all is well; that left undone, all is not well.

God gives us our times—seed-time and harvest, and summer and winter. This is the Divine discipline under which we live. Large opportunities are put in our way, and it is left with ourselves whether we shall use them or neglect them. There is no coercion to compel us to turn them to account; and the wheels of time will not be reversed to bring them back once they are gone. There are measured opportunities in life—soon spent, easily lost, never recovered. What a wonderful gift is this of time! A little section cut out of eternity and given us to do our work in, the season in which we are saved or lost. Do we not feel it more and more with every returning season when 'the summer is ended' and the year sinks to its close? It may seem safe enough in spring-time to laugh and sing and play when every day brings summer nearer, when every day is longer than the day that went before it. But life has another aspect when the autumn leaves are falling and the winter storms begin. We realize that life is going from us; and life is opportunity. It is 'this thy day,' and if we miss it, our day is done.[1]

[1] J. Rutherford, *The Seer's House*, 307.

The Education of Jesus.

By the Reverend H. C. Carter, M.A., Cambridge.

We have a right to look to the facts, so far as we can know them, of the conditions under which Jesus grew up, as showing us the type of the perfect human education. For a perfect man there is needed a perfect germ of personality, and a perfect education—processes and conditions forming the