
A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

The Day that I do Make.

By the Reverend A. J. Matthews, Sunderland.

'The day that I do make.'—Mal 3^{17} (R.V.).

God is going to make a day! God makes all the days. The days of rain, and the days of sunshine; holidays and work-days; birthdays and death-days—God makes them all. But this day that the prophet speaks of is a special day. A great day, a golden day, a perfect day. It has not come yet, but it will come, because God has promised that He will make it. I believe He is making it now. Days take a long time to make. Have you ever tried to make a day?

Some of you are skilful in making things, and the things we make are more to us than the things we buy. Like the little boy who was proud of the boat he had made. 'Somebody helped you,' said the other boy. 'No, indeed not,' blurted out the little boat-builder; 'I made it out of my own head,' and then he added, 'and I have plenty of wood to make another.' Of course he did not mean that his head was wood, though his words seemed to carry that idea.

Have you ever tried to make a day? Do you think you could make one? I am sure you could. There was a little boy named Tony, and he had a birthday. Most boys and girls have birthdays, haven't they? although 'Topsy' in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* said she hadn't one. She 'just growed,' but most boys and girls have birthdays that are thought about, and prepared for, and celebrated in all sorts of pleasant ways.

Tony thought about his birthday for a long time beforehand, and talked about it too, because, you see, he expected to have a great many presents, and he believed the day was going to be the happiest day he had ever known. Sure enough, when the day came, he received a lot of presents. He was up early in the morning, because he expected the postman would have something for him, and he was not disappointed, and he danced with glee. You see he was only seven.

Among the presents was an engine that one could wind up, and it would go round and round the track that was prepared for it. Tony was delighted with this, and thought it the best present of them all.

Now Tony had an elder brother named Harry. Harry was ten years old, and on the morning of Tony's birthday, he came downstairs late. Tony was waiting for him, and shouted, 'Come and see all my lovely presents!' 'Come and look at my beautiful engine!' 'I don't want to look at your presents,' growled Harry. 'Oh, do come,' said Tony, and he dragged Harry into the room where the presents were. 'Just look at my lovely engine. Isn't it a beauty?' 'It's a silly, stupid, ugly old engine,' said Harry. 'I hate birthdays, and all your presents are horrid.' He swung his arm across the table, and over went the engine and, falling on the floor, off came two of the wheels. 'Oh! oh! oh!' cried Tony as he burst into tears, 'you have broken my precious, my lovely, my darling engine.' And he sobbed as though his heart would break. So Tony's day was spoiled, made unhappy, miserable. Who made his day so wretched? Harry, of course. If he had come down and said in a jolly way, 'Many happy returns of the day, Tony; let me look at your presents; what a fine engine; let me wind it up and see it go,' what a different day he would have made for Tony. You can make a day happy or unhappy, bright or sorrowful. I believe God wants us to help Him to make His day. I believe it will come quicker if we help Him. How can we help Him? By trying to make each day a happy day for those about us. Then others will see what a jolly thing it is to make happy days, and will try to make them too, and then when everybody is trying to make happy days, God's great, golden, splendid day will come, and the whole world will be filled with its glory.

Watched!

By the Reverend Lawrence J. Stagg, B.A., Higher Broughton.

'I am with you alway.'—Mt 28^{20}.

Here is a story told about our Prime Minister.

Mr. Macdonald has been on a visit to Rome recently to talk with Signor Mussolini about important international questions. The Italian Government picked out some plain clothes' detectives, whose one duty was to guard the Prime Minister while he was the guest of the Italian Government. Wherever Mr. Macdonald went one of these detectives had to go; of course, none of them made himself a nuisance—just followed along behind and kept a watchful eye on Mr. Macdonald

—and on other people as well! One of the disadvantages of being famous is that one has to be looked after very carefully, for it is strange that there is nearly always some one ready to hurt a man as famous as the Prime Minister of England.

One morning Mr. Macdonald went for a stroll to see Rome; he walked on for a while, and then discovered he did not know where he was—he was lost in Rome! Not a very terrible thing, because he only had to ask some one to direct him to the British Embassy, where he was staying. But he thought the quickest way to get back was to go by taxi, the driver would know the way; so he hailed one, and was soon at the Embassy. When he reached there he put his hand in his pocket for the fare, but the driver said, 'No fare, thank you, sir.' 'No fare,' said Mr. Macdonald, 'what do you mean? Do you carry folk about for nothing?' 'I am a police officer,' said the driver, and Mr. Macdonald understood. The officer had seen the Prime Minister leave the Embassy; he had started up his engine and followed him, threading his way in and out of the traffic, but never losing sight of the Prime Minister. When the Prime Minister was lost he was so close up that Mr. Macdonald could not help engaging him.

Have you ever been lost? Perhaps not! But do you remember when you went out to do an errand for mother and you had to go a bit farther away from home than you had been before, and as you went mother said, 'You are sure you know the way? you will not get lost?' And you replied very independently—and a little indignantly too—'No, of course I shall not get lost.' You did not know how anxious she was all the while you were away, especially as you were a bit longer than you need have been; you stopped for a gossip here and joined in a game for a few minutes there, and mother was looking for you at the door when you came round the corner of your street. But now you have grown up, and you do not need any one to watch you or be on the lookout for you; you are old enough to take care of yourself.

Yet we are all being watched—every one of us here. We ought to be very, very thankful that God is always watching and following us, that we can always turn to Him and ask Him to show us the way when we are in difficulty, or afraid we are going to get lost. For you will find as you go on growing up that there are so many things to see, so many things to do, so many people ready to give you advice—each one saying something different—that you will need One who knows the right and best way to go, the right and proper thing to do.

God has given us Mothers and Fathers that we can ask them for help and guidance. Some one has said, 'God could not be everywhere, so he made Mothers.' I think he ought to have added 'Fathers' too! And we can always ask them for guidance; they will be glad to tell us the right way. I am sure God speaks through our parents to guide us in the journey of life, lest we should be lost. He speaks through our teachers and preachers also.

Then there is that little voice inside that we call the voice of conscience. You have heard it telling you to do this or not to do that, and when you have disobeyed you have become very unhappy and made other people unhappy too. But when you have obeyed you have felt happy and been able to make others happy too. God was guiding you in that voice to save you from becoming lost.

He has given us Jesus to show us the way to go through life, and following Him we shall not get lost. He is alive in the world to-day, and we can talk to Him as we pray, and He will always be there to guide us. Most wonderful of all, if we do get lost, if we do wrong, and feel we are getting in strange places that are horrid and make us unhappy, Jesus has been following us, He never allows us to get out of His sight. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. When we say we want to go back to the right way and do the right thing, He is always ready to lead us, He never grumbles, He talks to us so kindly that we wonder why ever we went astray and got lost.

'I am with you alway'—and that means YOU.

The Christian Year.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Chivalry of Jesus.

'He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.'—Mt 10^{39}.

In this brief sentence, Christ sets in strong antithesis that love of life which issues in the most tragic form of loss, and that fine carelessness of consequences which has for its recompense an eternal gain. He seeks to correct the common estimate of what life consists in. 'The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.'

'Old Daniel Quorm comes to mind. "I do often see it, friends!" said Dan'l, "I've watched it for years. Here's a young fellow doin' good in the Sunday school and other ways, promising to be a useful man when we old folks are gone home. But

somebody sends down word that he can make half a crown a week more wages in London. That's enough. No prayer about it; no askin' the Lord what He do see. No thinkin' about the Lord's work. 'I must get on,' he says, and he says it so pious as if it was one o' the ten commandments—but 'tisn't, friends, 'tisn't, 'though you do hear it so often!'' [1]

'For the man who possesses both capacity and character, and who, having selected his path, sticks to his plan of life undeviatingly, the chances of success seem to me to-day very great. But wisdom means more than attention to the gospel of getting on. Life will at the end seem a poor affair if the fruits of its exertions are to be no more than material acquisitions. From the cradle to the grave it is a course of development, and the development of quality as much as quantity ought to continue to the last. For it is in the quality of the whole, judged in all its proportions and in the outlook on the Eternal which has been gained, that the test of the highest success lies, the success that is greatest when the very greatness of its standards brings in its train a deep sense of humility. That was why Goethe, in a memorable sentence, said, "The fashion of this world passes away, and it is with what is abiding that I would fain concern myself." ' [2]

Who, to-day, is willing to lay up treasure in heaven? The dust of materialism has obscured the sky-line, and the vision of the City Beautiful has become remote. Some of us have been lamenting that religion has apparently lost its power to stir men's souls to lofty enterprise, and to nerve their arm for strong endeavour. We have looked back wistfully to the days when men hazarded their lives for the sake of the Lord Jesus, and we have wondered why that spirit has become so rare. It is because we have made religion seem too cheap. If we would reawaken the ancient chivalry, we must reassert the ancient challenge. If we would arouse the apostolic spirit, we must reiterate the apostolic call. Religion is not a moral pose—it is a spiritual passion. Discipleship is not merely an assent to certain propositions—it is a great conviction issuing in a glorious crusade. The lost vision of the Cross must be recovered; its primary enthusiasms revitalized, its neglected and forgotten obligations reconstituted and laid afresh upon each individual soul. The vigour of the Church can be renewed, not by lowering the standard, but by lifting the ideal. As a recent writer phrases it: 'The churches with a future are the churches with a high threshold; and when the day comes for any general movement towards faith amongst the people, they will be attracted not by appeals which are easy and obvious, but by appeals which are exacting and mysterious.' If that arresting passage has any significance at all, it means that we must get back to the original source of our religion, and rekindle the torch of the church's inspiration at the pure flame which glowed in the heart of the Nazarene. We must catch more clearly His accents of authority, and restate in more explicit terms His transcendent claims. Christ never sought to popularize His cause by compromise. He makes the gate of the Kingdom strait, and the way thereto a narrow one; and all who would enter there must struggle. His badge of chivalry is not a coronet, but a cross. His patent of nobility is bestowed, not upon those who lust for dominion, but upon those who are content to take the lowest seat and to become the bond-slave of all. His demands cut clean across the grain of men's most cherished vices, until selfishness, the darling sin, lies severed at the root and slain. In nothing is the kingliness of Jesus more manifest than the way in which He deals with the candidates for His Kingdom. God's warriors may be few, but they absolutely must be fit; and to secure their fitness He submits them to the sternest tests, and sifts the vacant chaff from grain.

Some of the Master's sayings are appalling in their austerity, peremptory in their demand for utter sacrifice. 'No man,' He cries, 'having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.' 'If any man will come after me, let him say no to his Self, and let him take up his cross and follow me.' 'He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.'

Is this the way in which to gain a kingdom? Will not such autocracy repel rather than attract the people to His cause? Surely, the Nazarene is ill advised to appear so arbitrary when only a dozen volunteers have gathered to His standard, and one of them is a traitor. It is early in the day to dictate terms. Ought He not to adopt a more conciliatory tone, to ingratiate Himself by pleasant speeches, and thus to win the favour of the crowd? That is the method of the charlatan. Every pretender to a throne, from Absalom to Perkin Warbeck, has endeavoured to pave his way thereto by specious promises.

Had Christ's demands been less exacting, we should have known Him for an impostor and no true heir of universal dominion. The empire of the

[1] F. W. Boreham, *The Luggage of Life*, 205.
[2] Viscount Haldane, *The Conduct of Life*, 27.

world can be won upon no lower terms than these. But is it not a fact that we have sought to cheapen them and to debase the standard which Christ Himself set up? We have eliminated the element of sacrifice, erased the stigmata, suppressed the Cross, and kept a guilty silence as to suffering for His sake and for the gospel's. And we have failed, as we deserved to fail. A religion made easy, men will not have—no, not even as a gift.

It was the heroic age of the Church that witnessed its most rapid growth. Faggot fires and the headsman's axe, which were intended to destroy, succeeded only in establishing more firmly the sway of Jesus Christ. When Nero and Diocletian were ravening like beasts of prey there was no lack of converts. The Church they sought to devastate and to devour was adding to its ranks daily such as were being saved. Danger was their discipline, martyrdom their magnet, and suffering their sacrament. The baptism of pain was the prelude of victory; and through the travail of human souls a new era was born in which the King of the Cross shall yet proceed to His inevitable triumph in the final conquest of the world for God.

To aid that triumph we must recover the heroic note inherent in the call and claim of Christ. We must reproduce in our own hearts the temper which it originally fostered and inspired. The luxurious Church which dwells at ease in Zion is not only impotent against its foes, it is morally incapable of winning the allegiance of its own sons, and disciplining their souls for the battle in which it is their privilege to fight. We must put the trumpet to our lips and sound an alarm in all God's holy mountain. We must set up the ensign and rally the scattered forces. Nothing else will arouse the latent valour of their souls. No base expediency or prudent compromise will win their hearts' devotion. But as they hear the imperial call they will feel the imperious constraint of Christ, and the clans of God will muster, and on the march make this their battle-song:

Strike for the King and live! His knights have heard
That God hath told the King a secret word.
Fall battle-axe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.

. . . . . .

Strike for the King and die! and if thou diest
The King is King, and ever wills the highest.
Clang battle-axe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.[1]

[1] R. M. Gautrey, *The Chivalry of Jesus*, 7.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Great Irrelevance.

'The dial of Ahaz.'—2 K 20[11].

King Ahaz was remembered, for a time at least, by the people of Judah as the king who erected and bestowed on the nation a gift of striking novelty—no less than a sundial. In fact, that was the monument of Ahaz. Now a sundial was not only a novel gift, it was also a useful gift, if the lines were rightly drawn. Ahaz must be credited with a certain practical intent, as well as with an artistic sense. And if, as seems evident, he went for the idea, perhaps for the actual structure, to Syria or Assyria, then, of course, we must give him credit as a man of catholic taste, whose culture is not to be limited by the bounds of a prejudiced little country like Judah.

What we want to ask is if the gift is worthy as a monument.

Let us look at the story of Ahaz. He came to the throne at a difficult time. Surrounding peoples were restless and turbulent, and far away beyond the horizon was the sinister power of Assyria, a growing menace to all the weaker nationalities. But trouble sprang up nearer home. Ahaz and his people were startled to hear that Syria and Damascus had formed an alliance against them, with the deliberate purpose of putting an end to the Davidic Dynasty and of establishing in Jerusalem a king of their own choosing. The confederate nations moved rapidly and made a notable capture, the seaport of Elath. An assault on Jerusalem failed, and with the strongest fortress in Palestine in his hands the position of Ahaz could not be considered desperate; but he and his people were seized with unreasonable panic, and appealed to Assyria for help. An embassy was dispatched with a huge tribute, which is called a 'present,' the treasures of palace and temple were rifled, and the Assyrian king, Tiglath-pileser, must have been gratified to learn that the King of Judah regarded himself as his 'servant and son.' Of course, the great king fell in with the scheme. The armies of Assyria were soon in motion. Damascus was taken; Gilead and Galilee also came under the yoke, and their inhabitants were led captive. Ahaz travelled to Damascus and offered his personal homage to Tiglath-pileser. However other people took this, there was one man in Jerusalem whose cheeks burned with shame. Isaiah, the prophet, had vehemently protested against this alliance with Assyria, and when he saw Ahaz passing out of the gates on his embassy he must have felt that the depth of humiliation had

been reached. But Ahaz does not seem to have been troubled much. He returned to Jerusalem, his head full of artistic curiosities he had seen on his journey. You find him presently erecting a new altar in the temple on a pattern brought from Damascus. On the roof of the temple he builds altars designed for the worship of the Host of Heaven—an ornate idolatry which his catholic taste had encountered in his travels. And, finally, he built the sundial by which he was long remembered.

Are we so certain now that this monument is worthy? The monument cannot be worthy unless the man is worthy. Here is no mark of personal distinction. It is a symbol of national disgrace. A monument, it seems, after all, means nothing. It can be only a symbol at the best. What matters is the foundation on which it is built—the life that lies beneath. A nameless tombstone may be monument enough for one whose life has been kind and gracious and true; his name is safely enough inscribed on the heart of God. But all the sundials in the world will not serve to redeem the history of the base and the cowardly, betrayers of nations, dishonourable men.

Some may think this a ruthless way of dealing with a king who is evidently a man of artistic taste. Is there no place in religion, in life, for the artistic temperament? Surely. The world and religion also are endlessly debtors to every living soul that strikes some spark of genius from the hard realities of life, or catches some gleam of truth or beauty in dark valleys of human struggle and defeat. But the artistic temperament must not claim freedom from the ordinary requirements of human honour and sincerity, and if it does claim such freedom, it must be flatly denied to it. The fact is that we need not trouble about a monument if we make sure that as foundation we have the three things which Ahaz lacked.

(1) *A real concern for our own people and nation and age.* Ahaz was not really a human at all, in the sense of having in him the genial blood of charity or the hot blood of patriotism. To abase himself and his people without an effort at resistance, this was worse than a humiliation; it was a treachery. And no character of any consistency can be built save on the ordinary loyalties of life, a genuine concern for national well-being and the general progress of mankind. It is easy to isolate ourselves; easy to cut ourselves off from responsibilities; easy, when emergencies arise, to make futile and disastrous compromises; but we shall have to pay for all that, and others will have to pay for it, when the folly of selfishness begins to appear, when the aloofness which we once practised becomes our torture and our punishment, and when there fall dark and irretrievable about us the shameful consequences of betrayal. There is no worthy character nor any enduring monument without the sense of social responsibility.

(2) We must also build on *personal honour* as well as on a keen social responsibility. Ahaz was seemingly indifferent to his personal honour, or insensible of it. Yet there was not one moment in all his transactions with Assyria, since the time of panic began until he erected his fatuous sundial, in which personal honour was not involved. Our personal honour is involved in the life of every day, every hour of every day. Our honour is being compromised not only by the unmanly deed, the sneer, the slander, the cowardice, the meanness, the treachery, which stand out dark and fateful to the general view; it is affected by our course of action, by the general line of life we have elected to follow. If Ahaz says, 'Assyria let it be,' then every moment of his career will besmirch his personal honour. For Assyria means surrender of nationality and the death of freedom. So if you say, even tacitly, 'Let money be my chief concern,' or 'Let me have the best time I can,' or 'Let me just accept a policy of drift in a difficult world,' then your honour is involved. Out of such straits it is hard to see how your personal honour can emerge with such credit as merits a monument.

(3) And this, further, we miss in Ahaz, apart from which every monument rests on sand: *loyalty to the best he knows.* He has fallen from the highest that he knows. He has betrayed the nation, he has betrayed himself; and he ends by betraying his God. Think of it; a king of the House of David who is contemporary in Jerusalem with Isaiah, one of the great spiritual forces of history, comes back from Syria with plans for a new altar on which sacrifices may be offered to the heavenly bodies.

To find a child of Abraham, in line of all the glorious traditions of Jehovah's power and grace, reverting to this because he has seen something of it in Syria—this is as if a Christian stopped 'working at' the Christian religion and began to worship Mahatmas. It is the mark of a silly, unbalanced, and unethical mind. It also marks a mind without humour. But for any type of mind to stop short of reverencing the highest it knows is so fatal that character, strong, generous, and great, is quite impossible on such a basis.

So the sundial of Ahaz is an irony, a satire, a pitiful irrelevance, the sundial of a man who could

not read the time of day, who could not discern the signs of his age. Why will men play with fate? Why will men be so afflicted with shortsightedness—the myopia of which the writer of 2 Peter speaks? He tells us why; because they lack faith, knowledge, virtue, patience, temperance, brotherly kindness, and charity. Why do men act so foolishly? At the root it is because their nature has never really come in contact with a greater, never been caught into the eddy of a great cause or been smitten by the fiery gleam of a great ideal. And we have but one name for that Ideal and that Cause. It is a name that stands for honour, because it stands for absolute reality and absolute purity. It stands for humanity, because it is the essence of compassion and love. More than that. No other name to us stands so truly for God, as the Name which is above every name, Jesus Christ our Lord. On this foundation, if any man build, his work will abide. His memorial is secure.[1]

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Merciful.

'Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.'—Mt 5[7].

The commendation of the merciful comes next after that of those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. This is not without meaning. The heart that is set on righteousness is prone to be intolerant of moral weaklings and hard on those whose standard is not so high. When that happens to us we have merely escaped one peril to fall into a deeper. The world values a kind heart more than a scrupulous conscience, and, in its rough judgment, the world is right. How terribly devastating that which seems the way of right can become when it loses the spirit of love we can see in the Inquisition, when the very body of Christ was crucified afresh in an effort to keep it pure. Jesus bids us remember that the way of right is the way of love, and the only right way of love, in such a weak and sinning world as this, is the way of mercy.

What He means by mercy here is often understood in a narrow sense. It is often restricted to mere humanitarianism and pity. The work of mercy is limited to kindness to those who are broken and beaten in the battle of life. It is Red Cross work, so to speak. No doubt this comes within the scope of Christ's great word. Every hospital is a home of mercy. It is worth while to remind ourselves that it is the spirit of Christ which has kindled the compassion whereby these things are done. Mercy, in this sense, was barely known among the ancients; and where it was known it was regarded as a kind of extra goodness—not, as we see it now, the very least that goodness will do. If we have risen so far above the jungle as to care for the weak and the suffering instead of carrying them out into the forest to die, it is Christ who has led the way and made pity for the feeble a commonplace of goodness. And only through the pity which Christ sustains can this be effectively done. As Mr. Stephen Graham says, 'Philanthropical societies, parliaments, reform movements, and the like, are doomed to failure, unless they are served by men and women with Christ-faces.'

This kind of blessedness needs no description for those who have stretched out strong hands of pity to their fellows. No one can help to heal another's trouble without finding some wound in his own heart dry up. That is indeed the only real way of healing for ourselves—to pass out of self-absorption and self-pity on the tide of a great compassion. It does not always follow that, because you care for the weak and suffering, others will care for you. It did not happen so with Christ. There are times when it almost seems as if the very people we try to help dislike us for it. 'I do not understand why that man should hate me,' said a cynic once. 'I never did him any good.' This virtue, like all others, must be its own reward. But if our hearts are turned from ourselves we do have our reward; for a well of sweetness is opened up in our own hearts and often in the world around us, in which our own dry spirits are refreshed and comforted.

The song is to the singer, and comes back most to him;
The gift is to the giver, and comes back most to him;
The love is to the lover, and comes back most to him;
It cannot fail.

But this use of mercy is a narrowing of the word. Christ meant by mercy a far wider thing. He is thinking of our attitude to the morally, as well as the physically, unfit. The word outlines our whole policy to those who have gone wrong. There are many classes of wrong-doers. There are those whose sin is very largely private and limited in its consequence to the wrong-doer himself, though 'no man liveth to himself.' There are those, again, who have done some ill to ourselves; and some, like our criminals, both individuals and nations, whose sin has done damage to society, and brought evil on the community in which God has set us to

[1] A. Connell, *The Endless Quest*, 113.

live together. How are we to treat these people? That is a very practical question. It is this relation to the wrong-doer which Christ has mostly in mind in this beatitude.

What does mercy in this sense mean? It means, for one thing, the kindly judgment, not of the sinful deed but of the man himself by whom it has been done. How sweeping we are in our condemnations! And they are often apt to be artificial. The things we condemn in others are not always the things which Christ would condemn. What the world seems to need more than anything is a healthy hatred of wrong. But notice: Christ is not speaking of the sin; He is speaking of the sinner. Christ's interest is always in the man. How is he to be cured? It is with this in mind that He calls for the merciful judgment. And is He not right? How can we judge till we know the facts? And how can we know the full facts till we know the man himself—know what hidden fires of passion burn in his blood kindled long ago by others' sin, what lurid temptations have tracked him down, how far the community has contributed to his fall? Aye, and what struggles he made before the ship went down at last.

But mercy means more than a kindly judgment of the wrong-doer. It means the effort to restore him to righteousness. That is always what Christ is interested in. How to get the sinner back—back to his place in our friendship, back to his place in society, back to his place in the love of God.

Mercy's campaign of restoration operates in various directions. There are those who may have wronged ourselves. Mercy there means the attitude of forgiveness. It is perfectly true that forgiveness is not complete till there is repentance, which just means that there is no complete restoration till the prodigal comes home a son. As a matter of fact, we can have no fellowship with a man whose spirit is not in harmony with ours. But do not let us forget that the thing that wrought in the Prodigal's soul was the father's forgiving love. Had the father taken up a standoffish position and locked his door, there would have been little hope of the Prodigal's repentance. His sense of sin would never have broken out in prayers and tears; it would have stiffened into a stubborn defiance. 'Blessed are the merciful,' for it is they, and not earth's ruthless judges, who awaken the prayer for mercy.

This has its application also to society's treatment of the criminal. Nothing needs more overhauling than our thought about crime and punishment. Our outlook on this matter is largely based on retribution and fear, not on mercy. It is partly based on giving a man what it seems to us he deserves, not that which will make him a better man, and partly on the need to protect society from being robbed or hurt, by making the would-be criminal afraid. That is very roughly our theory of punishment, and, with all its appearance of being watertight, it is as full of holes as a sieve. So far as putting an end to crime is concerned our system is three-parts a failure; for a large number of the crimes of the country are committed by the same people who need an army of officials to watch them, both when they are in prison and when they are out of it; while statistics prove that crime is decreased according to the humanity of our dealings with the criminal. But the difference between us and Jesus is that, while we are studying how to keep our goods, His question is how the thief is to be kept from stealing them, not by locks and bars, but by being turned into an honest man. 'I was in prison and ye visited me.' That shows how His mind was running. That is His thought of the true goal of mercy.

But what about justice? we ask. What of the consequences which follow sin, and *must* follow sin? No one can ever escape the consequences of sin, whether society deals with them or not, for the worst consequences of sin are in the soul of the sinner. As for what we call our justice, where would we stand if our rough-and-ready methods of punishment were to be applied with the standards of Jesus?

Mercy has its application to nations as well, and we are coming to see it. Here it means the effort to restore international fellowship. That was the real point of Christ's word about loving our enemies. His purpose was, not only that we should not become like them, infected by their spirit of enmity, but that they should be turned into friends. It is fellowship, not mere security, which must be our aim in international life; and indeed only in the way of fellowship can real security be obtained, as we are beginning to see.

And now we are in a position to understand what Christ means by the last clause of His beatitude—'for they shall obtain mercy.' His meaning becomes clear when we see forgiveness as restoration to His fellowship. How can we be restored to His fellowship except as we have His Spirit and are ready, at least, to live in the Divine order, which is the order of love? It is not that God refuses to forgive the unmerciful spirit. It is a matter of literal fact that He *cannot*. For the man who has not the spirit of love has not really returned to the

Father's house. We have not found our place in the great family of God till we are cherishing the Father's spirit.[1]

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Science of Prayer.

'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'—Mt 7^7.

If there is any truth in religion at all, the spiritual world is not only real, but *the* real world. 'The things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are unseen are eternal.' It is difficult to believe this. And 'worldliness'—that hard-worked and much-abused and variously defined word—is simply not believing it. Worldliness is not enjoying this world, but regarding this world as an end in itself. Worldliness is saying to the soul, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, eat, drink, and be merry.' That is what it says: but what it means is, 'to-morrow we die.' That is the essence of worldliness. Eating, drinking, and being merry are not wrong. That is where so many definitions of worldliness miss the mark. It is in trying to feed the soul with these things: to make these things an end in themselves. It is like putting water in a petrol tank or feeding an engine with wholemeal bread.

Here, in the text, are the laws of Prayer—part of the science of the spiritual world. 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' They are not only to be accepted, but to be studied. Not only to be received, but to be put to the test. Let us, by the help of the Holy Spirit, attempt to get a little below the surface of these laws of the spirit.

Turgeniev, the Russian writer, once said that 'all prayer is, in effect, an effort to prove that two and two don't make four.' A man who believed that, of course, wouldn't pray. The idea that prayer is a means of altering the will of God is childish. On the contrary, prayer is one of the chief means of getting the will of God done. 'Prayer is the boat-hook that brings not the land to the boat, but the boat to the land.' There is no means of proving what prayer will do except by praying.

The first thing to see is that these three brief phrases are not mere repetitions—redundancies. Ask, seek, knock, don't mean the same thing in slightly varying language. They mean different things. They are like the Courts of the Temple: the Outer Court, the Inner Court, and the Holy of Holies. They stand for the doctrine of progressiveness in prayer—a point that few people grasp. And as you enter by different doors—ask, seek, knock—so you get different results. Here is not merely the injunction to pray, thrice repeated: but something of the science of prayer.

'Seek' is more than 'ask,' and 'knock' is beyond them both. But it begins with the simplest and goes on to the deepest.

It begins with the injunction to ask:

> Prayer is the simplest form of speech
> That infant lips can try.

It is that: but it is only that to begin with. If you want to test prayer begin by asking. And you will get anything you ask for? Certainly not. Christ never placed the treasures and the powers of the Unseen at the behest of the immature and irresponsible. You don't give your children everything they ask for: why should God?

There is nothing about which there is more confusion in the average mind than 'unanswered' prayers. 'I have prayed and I have not received; therefore, prayer is an illusion.' What have you not received? 'The thing I asked for.' But looking at it in that light, are you not setting your will against God's? What does Christ say? 'Ask, and it shall be given you.' What the words mean literally is, 'Ask, and there shall be given you.' Christ does not, He could not, promise all the resources of the Unseen to the spiritually immature. If we put it to ourselves, are there not many things we have asked for that afterwards we know would not have been the right thing?

Even in this earliest stage of initiation Christ is under pledge to vindicate prayer to us: to prove the reality of the spiritual in virtue of our sincere approach to it. Ask, and there shall be reply. Are we doubtful about prayer? Does it seem that prayer has failed? Is it not because even the elements of this mighty power of the spiritual world are unknown to us? So many sincere and baffled souls have failed to find, because they do not know what they are looking for. They do not know what the promise really is; or perhaps they are expecting the splendid richness of the scientist's achievement when they are only on the very threshold of knowledge. We do not treat the spiritual with ordinary common sense. We ignore its laws as we should never dream of ignoring the laws of a physical science.

The first condition is not to know, or contrive, or analyse, or agonize, but to ask. Asking is a cause: and the corresponding effect in the spiritual world is 'there shall be given.' But many a man

[1] J. Reid, *The Key to the Kingdom*, 127.

fails to see the answer to prayer because, distressed or rendered indifferent by not finding the thing sought, he fails to see the thing given. Remember, the secret of prayer is not to be asking for this or that—the secret of prayer is to be asking *God.* Let us make our requests in our own way, and look for God's answer in His way.

No man—however limited, however hesitant, however doubtful—ever asks without receiving, in terms of spiritual reality. Remember—the spiritual is a comparatively unknown land to many, and it is necessary to get acclimatized, so to speak, to learn our way about. When Christ once opened a blind man's eyes, at first he could hardly see anything at all—'men as trees walking'—and only little by little 'all things clearly.' We have never thought of spiritual things in terms of such everyday experience. But that is because we have forgotten, or never realized, that there are laws in the spiritual world as real and as binding as the laws of light and sound. We know very little of them. But we know something. And the first is, 'Ask: and there shall be given.' 'I sought the Lord in my distress, and He answered me—*with strength in my soul.*' 'Father, if thou be willing, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.' 'And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.'

Commissioner Catherine Booth, in her newly published biography of her father, Bramwell Booth, quotes the following from one of his letters:

'Prayer has made me conscious of the new life unexpectedly emerging within the life I am living. It is in such moments as though I come to a rift in the great wall of circumstance and look out upon a free and boundless sea. . . . But there stand out in my life now various occasions when, in praying for help for myself or for the souls of men, there has been this same deep consciousness of something new added to me, some awakening of a new spiritual faculty, or, shall I say, a new spiritual sense, with which to realize the Divine. I have had many remarkable answers to prayer in the way of material gifts and signs and leadings. Those, however, appear quite small in retrospect, so far as their permanent value is concerned, compared with *these inward* uprisings of my spirit—which have often had little or nothing to do with requests for any particular thing—to meet, I humbly believe, *to know and to meet the Spirit of God.*'

And so from 'Ask, and there shall be given,' we move on to 'seek, and ye shall find.' Seeking means persistence, and persistence means progress. There is nothing here of the idea that there is something more spiritual or prevailing in saying twenty 'Our Fathers' instead of one. Rather is it a matter of our own preparation than of God's readiness. 'I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.' The asker is often the man who is content just to touch the fringes of the spiritual world now and again, a sort of spiritual mendicant. He asks and 'there is given unto him.' He comes to the door in his need and passes on. But the seeker is the man who comes inside to dwell there. He has come to see not only that the spiritual is real, but *the* real. The first man discovers that there is something there. The other has begun to discover that everything is there: that that which is unseen is eternal. And what happens to him? He finds. To the first man the spiritual is something of which he receives occasional grace and evidence: to the second man, the man who from asking has become a seeker, his relation to the spiritual world is that not merely of one who receives, but of one who takes for himself.

When a child first goes to school learning generally is irksome. Such knowledge is more or less thrust upon him. He learns as little as he conveniently can: but later, if he is a seeker, he takes the secrets of knowledge for himself. He takes rather than is taught. He begins to explore for himself. In the first case, it is given to him: in this case, he finds.

Asking is more or less an instinct—an instinct of weakness, need, helplessness: seeking is a pursuit—the sense of growing power: the region in which a man begins to discover in the spiritual world a permanent place of his own. He finds. We may not always find what we are looking for, though we often will. But this deeper aspect of prayer is like the philosopher's stone. It was never found, but the search led to the discovery of many other valuable things. Though we cannot explain the working of spiritual laws, we can see their operation.

The last stage is, 'Knock, and it shall be opened.' The principle of this is in what has gone before. We have got to be very sure before we come to this. There are specialists in spiritual things just as there are specialists in medicine or chemistry. Not only is persistence here, but confident and experimental persistence: the personal certainty that the thing we have laid hold of is mighty beyond imagination. Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and ye shall *see.* The door swings back and you enter in. John had entered in: Paul had entered in. 'For me to live is Christ'—not will be—'is.' For most of us the door does not open very far on this side. We ask, and there is given to us. We seek, and we find. Sometimes some other great soul opens the door

and lets some of the glory through for us. But for most of us the door is yet fully to open.

But if we have asked and received: if we have sought and found, at least the final opening of the door that hangs between the temporal and the eternal will hold nothing but joyful expectancy for us.[1]

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Serpent and the Dove.

'Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.'—Mt 10^{16}.

Our Lord was not stating a paradox when He asked His disciples to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. For one thing He demanded it from them as a necessity for their work. As witnesses for the Gospel of Love they would naturally be simple and guileless in heart. That was the sort of life and character they were called upon to show forth to the world. But as reformers to overturn the world, to invade the strongholds, they would have to meet the world's wisdom with wisdom as great. They were face to face with terrible odds. The words were meant for a warning in the situation in which the Apostles were about to be placed, to beware of men, the hatred and malice and prejudice of men. But, like most of Christ's words, they have an application beyond the particular occasion. Here we have, not only a rule for the disciples' guidance in their first missionary enterprise, but also the practical ideal for character.

The difficulty which the disciples had in reconciling these opposites in their missionary enterprise corresponds to the difficulty we all have in some form or other. Business men have their practical problem in these days of reconciling integrity with keen competition. We have all to arrange unflinching honesty with necessary self-interest. Even in religious work the same problem must be solved of combining prudence with absolute truthfulness. Something of the wisdom of the serpent is needed to insinuate the truth, to gain men to guilelessness by holy guile. In the culture of individual character the same problem in some shape or other emerges for us all—how to be simple in heart and pure in aim, and at the same time display the wary caution needed to walk unfalteringly and live truly; how to be generous to others and yet to be wise even in our generosity so as not to do evil instead of good; how to keep ourselves unspotted from the world and yet to use the world as not abusing it; how to be prudent without being cunning, to be wise without being selfish, to be good without being foolish, to be simple without being weak.

We have seen the two factors, necessary even for practical life, and we can see at once how lop-sidedness of character arises from the want of either of the factors.

(1) One sort of lop-sidedness is the common one, to be all prudence and sagacity without simplicity of mind and purity of heart. Men of the world too often let the serpent in them swallow up the dove. They may have great success, as the world counts success, for they have no qualms of conscience. They are not hampered by the problem of reconciling simplicity with prudence. They escape the problem by omitting one of the factors. In the affairs of life, in politics and commerce and every branch of activity, these men often have what seems like complete success. They are turned out of the rough-and-ready refining pot of public opinion as pure gold, and the time is not yet when they are seen to be base metal at heart—but the time *shall* be. Such a man would smile at the notion that a man can be too clever, can have too much of the serpent's wisdom. He would smile at the notion that he has anything to learn from the simplicity of the simple man whom he despises, from the harmlessness of the dove or the weakness of a little child. He cannot see how the foolishness of God can be wiser than men. From of old has the world seen the quick feet of schemers stumble into the pit they have digged. Mere cleverness is a fatal gift; mere ambition brings its own nemesis. The serpent's head is crushed by the heel of a child. The omission which was at first an aid to success becomes a fatal loss, leaving a barren life, a bankrupt character, an impoverished soul. That is not success which does not enrich the soul and add strength to the spiritual nature. And we need to remember that there is nothing spiritual in itself about the wisdom of the serpent.

(2) But our Lord did not expect His disciples to make that mistake. He did not look upon them as wolves to learn from the sheep and as serpents to learn from the dove. But the opposite. His object was to warn them against the other mistake, the other form of lop-sidedness; that is, to neglect the prudence necessary both for character and for work. The danger they were warned against was that of being foolishly simple, over-confident, foolhardy, courting failure by expecting the impossible. The warning applies to us to-day in many ways. There is a danger of divorcing religion from life, the actual needs and facts of life. We can make

[1] H. E. Brierley, *Life Indeed*, 226.

religion a mystical thing with no basis of reason and no outcome in practice. We may neglect the command to be ready to give good grounds for the faith that is in us. Or we may have the coward's faith and the sluggard's trust, thinking that we are not called to devise means and work our brain, but must leave all things to God. Some things pass by the name of faith which God disowns. We are called to live in the world *for* the world. We need wisdom to do God's work. We need wisdom to guard our own faith and protect our own simplicity of heart and save our own Christian character. If we have not something of the prudence of the serpent we will not keep the harmlessness of the dove very long. A well-meaning good sort of man who is foolish and blundering can contrive to do a great deal of mischief in his time. Ignorance is no excuse for mistakes. In Browning's pregnant line, 'Ignorance is not innocence but sin.' For a useful life and for a strong character wisdom is needed, and nothing can excuse the neglect of seeking it.

There is a mawkish sentimentalism in some forms of literature which seems to make goodness synonymous with silliness. Even Dickens, a master in his art, makes many of his good people border more or less on lunacy, nearly always delightfully gullible and impossibly foolish. The folly in some way is supposed to enhance the goodness. But in practical life a man does not need to have a soft head in order to avoid having a hard heart. All such conceptions are due to a false notion of the Christian life. If that life is serious to us, we shall know that we must devote every power we have to attain and maintain it. Hear Paul's sane advice, the echo of his Master's words, 'Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be ye men.'

Paul's own life was an illustration of his words, his combination of zeal and knowledge, of unwavering faith and great statesmanship, ingenuous in character and ingenious in plans to bring men to Christ; simple and sincere in faith, wise and prudent in life. Such a man runs the risk of being misunderstood. His simplicity is treated as duplicity, his wisdom is called cunning, his innocence is deemed design. The world cannot comprehend the higher unity of his complex character.

Our Lord Himself is our great example here as elsewhere, combining both factors in harmony. What instances of His wisdom we could recall, and yet where were there such purity of purpose and innocence of heart and perfect uprightness of life? He remains for us the Perfect Man, wise and simple, strong and tender, winsome in His integrity, graceful in His strength, with depth of nature and charm of manner. The Christian, who cannot be satisfied till Christ lives in him, should 'see life steadily and see it whole.' He should look at life through Christ's eyes. He need not be troubled by those conflicting elements which go to the building up of character. He knows that it is Christ's purpose and desire for him to grow in grace and knowledge and Christ-like nature. He finds the unity of opposites in union with his Lord.[1]

[1] H. Black, '*According to my Gospel*,' 75.

Ezekiel.

By Professor John E. McFadyen, D.D., Glasgow.

The Book of Ezekiel is at the moment the storm-centre of Old Testament criticism. In Germany, America, and Great Britain the traditional view of the book and the man has in recent years been sharply challenged. Torrey, in his *Pseudo-Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy*, and James Smith, in his *Book of the Prophet Ezekiel: A New Interpretation*, despite the widest divergence in their respective estimates of the purpose of the book, and a difference of no less than four or five centuries in their view of the date of its composition, have independently reached the conclusion that its historical implications point to a background in the reign of Manasseh, and not, as has hitherto been all but universally believed, in the reign of Zedekiah at the close of the Judæan monarchy. Further, Curt Kuhl, in a review of Torrey's book in the *Theologische Literaturzeitung*,[2] confesses that twenty years' study of the book has made it increasingly clear to him that Ezekiel can scarcely have been a prophet of the Exile, and he maintains that Old Testament science will have to consider very seriously the question whether Ezekiel must not be

[2] No. 2, 1932, cols. 27–29.