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Apostles' Creed only so long as it is taken in its original meaning, which was expressly purposed to safeguard the Church from what were then regarded as dangerous errors.

Those who still wish to repeat this Creed while unable to accept its original meaning are indeed confronted by an awkward dilemma. Either they

say what they do not mean or they impose upon the Creed a meaning which its authors expressly repudiated and condemned. Either alternative involves that they are not repeating the Apostles' Creed and are cutting themselves away from the catholic tradition which they delude themselves into believing that they are loyally maintaining.

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## In the Study.

### *Virginibus Puerisque.*

A CHRISTMAS TALK.

'Lighting the Lamps.'

BY THE REVEREND R. OSWALD DAVIES, Leicester.

'A light to lighten the Gentiles.'—Lk 2<sup>32</sup>.

1. HAVE you ever tried to catch a moonbeam? 'It is only fairies,' you say, 'who know how to do that.' But if you really wanted to catch a moonbeam, and were in dead earnest about it, then you would need a very delicate instrument, and with its aid you would, I think, be successful.

Certain men, whom we call scientists, did actually catch one the other day. They were working in the Observatory of Florence in Italy, and, with the aid of their instrument, they caught a moonbeam. Having caught it, they sent it on a very long journey. They first sent it to Rome, and from Rome it was flashed all the way across the Atlantic until it reached Chicago in America. Never was there a journey made in quicker time than that. It sped from Florence to Chicago in one-twentieth part of a second, and, three minutes after, the answer came back from America that it had arrived! Now, in Chicago a Great Scientific Exhibition was being held and all the lamps of its pavilions were waiting to be lit. That night they were all lit by the moonbeam that had come all the way from Florence.

That explains precisely what happened on the first Christmas Day. God sent His great and wonderful light to the world; and that light was Jesus. Like the moonbeam speeding across space towards the earth, so did Jesus speed down from heaven to earth, arriving in the little town of Bethlehem, and bringing with Him the light of heaven. He came into a dark and cold world—a world dark with ignorance, superstition, and sin.

It was not a happy place for girls and boys to live in. But after He came everything was changed. It was like lighting up those dark pavilions of Chicago, changing the place of darkness into a place of great light.

2. Further, those scientists in Florence caught the light with the aid of their delicate instrument. They pointed their telescope to the heavens, and, when all was ready, they caught the light. It was so when Jesus came. There were people who caught His light. They caught it because they were ready for it; in other words, because they possessed the necessary delicate instrument, which was a good and honest heart. Did not the shepherds, watching their flocks on the hills of Bethlehem on a cold and dark night, see His light? They hurried to Bethlehem to see the Child. Did not the Wise Men see the light of His star in the far-off East, shining with such brilliance as to outshine every other star in the heavens, and follow it across the wide deserts until they, too, knelt before the Child?

Then there were the disciples who caught His gleam, and there were others, such as Mary Magdalene, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. There was something in their hearts which was sensitive to His light; and when they saw Jesus they knew Him as the true light of God. I hope that we, too, this Christmastide, shall catch His light because we have good and honest hearts.

3. Those scientists of Florence not only caught the light; they sent it across the Atlantic to distant Chicago to light up the dark pavilions there. They did not keep it to themselves. Lamps in a distant land were lit by it. That is true of the light of Jesus. It was first caught by people who knew and loved Him in Palestine. The lamps of their own lives were made to burn. But it did not end there. They spread it abroad.

The light was flashed forth with amazing rapidity from life to life, from place to place, and from country to country. There was Paul, the lamp of whose life burned so gloriously with the light of Christ. He was a great shining light, who first brought the light of Christ to Europe. From that day the light spread across the continent of Europe. In the end the light reached the shores of England, lighting up the whole of England and making her the great country that she is to-day. And the light is shining still this Christmas Day.

We, too, I hope, not only catch His light for ourselves, but also shed it abroad. Let me say that those scientists, when they made their experiment, did a very gracious thing. They used the telescope which Galileo, the pioneer astronomer, had used centuries before when he first saw the mountains and valleys of the moon. To that they attached their own modern instrument with which to send forth the light. They enjoyed advantages which Galileo never enjoyed; but advantages, nevertheless, made possible through the great work of Galileo. We thank God for men like Paul, who spread the light. But our advantages are far greater than theirs. We have books, the wireless, motor-cars, and aeroplanes with which to spread His light to the distant parts of the earth.

4. Finally, those scientists of Florence received a message from America telling them that the light had arrived. How delighted they must have been when they heard that their wonderful experiment had succeeded!

God sent His light into the world when He sent His Son. He wants to know whether the light that beams forth from Bethlehem down the centuries and is still beaming through the year 1933 has yet arrived in your life and mine. Has it yet lit the lamp in the pavilion of your life, making it a place of light? God wants to know. If it has, how delighted He must be!

Has then the light of Jesus arrived in your life?

Is your little lamp burning with His light this Christmastide?

#### A Bowl of Nuts.

BY THE REVEREND CHAS. M. HEPBURN, B.D.,  
MOULIN, PITLOCHRY.

'I went down into the garden of nuts.'—Ca 6<sup>11</sup>.

A famous man, Lord Grey of Fallodon, died not long ago. Lord Grey was a statesman, and also a great Nature-lover. He had a bird sanctuary at his home, where crowds of wild birds nested in safety. But he was fond of more than birds, for his

study window was never closed, and on his desk there was always set a bowl of nuts, because every day a squirrel popped in and ate some of them and took others away.

When I read about that little incident it brought back to my mind a lovely text, though not a very familiar one: 'I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley.'

I don't suppose you have ever walked in a garden of nuts, but I am sure you have walked in woods where there are thousands and thousands of nuts. What heaps of them there have been this autumn, carpets of them in the glowing woods—acorns, beech-nuts, and gleaming chestnuts. Somebody, I can't say whom, put it all in a little verse:

Come with me into the brown woods,  
Where the leaves are falling fast,  
And the fairies dance in the moonlight,  
Amid hazel, beech, and mast.

So 'Come with me into the brown woods,' and we'll read the parable of the nuts.

Outside, to start with, is the shell of the nut. We must begin by cracking it. Otherwise we get no nut. Isn't it like that too in life? Our difficulties are our nuts. Before gaining success we must break through them. One wintry day after a snowstorm a small boy was trying to cut a path through a great snow-wreath which had got piled up outside his Grannie's door. Some one passing saw him, and cried, 'However do you expect to get through that great drift?'

Do you know what he said?

'By keeping at it.'

He was determined he would crack his nut. We won't achieve anything without an effort. Our shells must be got through to get at our nuts.

But think, too, of the relation of the outside to the inside of the nut. A good shell may not always mean a good nut. I believe that, especially by the side of streams, hazel bushes often have large crops of what look like excellent nuts. But when the shells are broken, there is nothing inside. So sometimes with people. Jesus once said about certain persons that they were 'whited' or white-washed outside, while inside they were not just all they ought to be. One evening Coleridge was at a dinner party. Sitting opposite to him at table was a stranger who had a magnificent forehead and a finely shaped head. Coleridge thought this must be some great person. He also imagined the wonderful things such a man would say when he spoke. Suddenly he did. He leant over the table and said in a loud voice, 'Hand me them

dumplin's, them's the boys for me.' Despite his looks he turned out to be an ignorant and empty-headed fellow. It rather spoilt poor Coleridge's dream. But it just shows we can't judge what is inside a person, any more than what is in a nut, altogether by a good outside appearance.

But we come to the inside of the nut, known as the kernel. It is the most important part to us. It is what we crack the shell to get. But what is of most importance about us? Surely what we have inside us, in our minds and hearts. In a certain temple at Canton in China there used to be an unusual idol. Its breast was cut open, and it had inside, sitting right at its heart, a small image of Buddha. Now suppose I could see not just your outward appearance. Suppose I had the power to look into your heart. Whom would I discover there? I would like it to be Jesus.

### The Christian Year.

#### FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

##### Prayer.

'In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.'—Ph 4<sup>o</sup>.

Prayer is as needful for the student as for the practical man. It will save the one from falling into a vague idealism; it will save the other from losing touch with the spiritual world, and becoming the mere servant of expediency, and the slave of materialism.

Prayer is necessary to every true life, and, since every man has been placed by God in a twofold relation, as an individual and as a member of a community, and since, on the one hand, no man can realize aright his personal life unless he bears a true part in the life of the community, nor, on the other hand, be true to the community unless he is first of all faithful in his personal life, the man who is striving to be true in both relations will give himself to private and to public prayer. No life can attain its best that omits either.

Trace the causes of the great Christian movements in history; search into the story of foreign missions; examine the records of the heroes of Christian enterprise—such men, to take a few names almost at random, as Raymund Lull, John Wesley, Henry Martyn, Shaftesbury, George Müller, Hudson Taylor; interrogate the men who to-day are doing yeoman service in the Kingdom of God, and you will find that in all cases the secret of success is

the same, and that is believing, persistent, expectant prayer.<sup>1</sup>

The weary ones had rest, the sad had joy

That day, and wondered how—

The ploughman singing at his work had prayed  
Lord, bless them now.

Away in foreign fields they wondered how

Their simple word had power—

At home the Christians two or three had met  
To pray an hour.

Yes, we are always wondering, wondering how!

Because we do not see

Some one—perhaps unknown and far away—

On bended knee.

It is obvious that prayer as a function of our personal as well as of our public life must have its fixed times in private and in public. But even independently of this fact, prayer cannot be left to become the mere creature of our changing moods, a thing dependent on our inclinations or disinclinations; in fact, we need prayer most, and can least of all dispense with it, when we feel our need of it least.

As to *the object of prayer*, the object of prayer is not, as the heathen conceived it, and as many debased forms of Christianity still conceive it, to alter God's will and to bend God's will to ours, but to bring our will into harmony with God's will. For the due shaping of our life we need a constant supply of spiritual and temporal gifts. For spiritual gifts we pray to the Father unconditionally and without any reservation. As for temporal blessings, we can pray for these also, but conditionally: we must always ask them subject to God's will. We cannot indeed doubt for a moment God's willingness to bless us therein, if we are fit to be blessed; but He alone knows whether particular external blessings are good for us or not. Accordingly, to all our prayers for things temporal we attach, as our Lord did, the words of trustful submission: 'nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.'

From the object of prayer we pass naturally to *its conditions*, and the first condition is *earnestness*.

When once we recognize prayer as necessary to our individual and social life we must be in earnest, alike in our thought and in our action consequent on our thought, else prayer, whether private or public, will become an empty ceremony instead of a living communion. How many of us are praying

<sup>1</sup> E. S. Woods, *Modern Discipleship*, 88.

for what we really do not want, or even think of, as we use the high and solemn words of supplication? How many of us are attending Divine service for the sake of example to others? How many of us are simply fulfilling a task—a repetition of so many prayers, confessions, thanksgivings?

'When thou shalt have entered the church,' says St. Bernard, 'for prayer or praise, leave outside the tumult of wavering thoughts, and be inwardly forgetful of all care as to outer matters, so that thou mayest be free to devote thyself to God alone. For it is not possible that there should at any time talk with God one who at the same time is also silently chatting with the whole world. Give attention, therefore, to Him who giveth attention to thee. Listen to Him as He speaketh to thee that He Himself may hear thee when thou speakest to Him. It will thus happen that if thou assistest at the utterance of Divine praises with due reverence and thoughtfulness, if thou hearkenest intently and diligently to every word of Holy Scripture, thou wilt hear God speak to thee. Not that I say that I do these things; but I wish to do them; I grieve at not having done them; I am vexed when I do them not.'

The object of prayer being, then, the fulfilment of God's will, to the fulfilment of such prayer no uncertainty, our Lord assures us, can attach, if we are but in earnest. The prayer that God grants must be the expression of our chief desire—that is, the desire that is backed by our whole personality, not merely one of the crowd of lesser desires competing for our allegiance. If we fail to become true, if we fail to become pure, if we fail to become perfectly honest in our dealings with our neighbour, if we fail to overcome our besetments, our distractions, our vanities, and resentments: if, in short, we fail to become in some measure Christ-like, it is because it is not our chief desire to become so.

There are some people nowadays who believe in no personal God, and yet give themselves to prayer because they believe that praying exercises a beneficial reflex influence upon them. But prayer is not an attempt of the mind to work upon itself by expressing the thoughts and simulating the desires of devotion; it is not an effort to cleanse and uplift ourselves through self-knowledge, through unsparing confession, or the agonies of repentance. All such experiences are not prayer; they may render it effective service, but they cannot in themselves deliver us from the sense of alienation from God's presence.

So the second condition of true prayer is—that

we must not address ourselves to the empty air, or to some illusion of our own making. Prayer is the direct and *personal communion* of the spirit of man with God—a communion as real as the daily intercourse of a man with his fellow-man, but infinitely closer, possessing evidence as certain, and exercising an influence as assured.

Such, then, being the nature of prayer, it is our duty not to engage in it heedlessly. It requires a reverence of approach, a disengagement as far as possible from turbulent disquietudes, a consciousness of the great Presence before whom we kneel. Our prayers, of course, cannot be confined to fixed occasions in private or in public. The spirit of true prayer can be exercised at all times, and under all circumstances. It is a veritable communion of man's spirit with the Divine. Hence we must guard against the habit of merely *saying* our prayers.

What *service* does prayer render to those that truly engage in it?

By prayer our God becomes more and more to us an ever-present Personal Reality. This is the first and greatest service, from which all the others flow. And if we would measure in some degree the gains of such fellowship, we have only to consider what we gain from communion with men whom we reverence and love. Almost without being aware of it, we are raised into the atmosphere in which they live and move, and so become capable of our best and highest. For, though, in their company we are deeply conscious of our failings, we find, nevertheless, with a surprised delight, that we are capable of higher things than we imagined, and can rise into sympathy with thoughts and feelings beyond the ordinary range of our aspirations.

How immeasurably more must this be the case when our communion is not with man, but with the living God. In this communion our hearts come consciously under His immediate influence, and are thereby opened to receive His inspirations. For it is God Himself that gives the vision of holiness, and the repentant sorrow, that suggests the high thought and the unselfish purpose, that inspires the merciful act, and kindles the generous feeling, that wakes the hunger for righteousness, and the spiritual thirst that only He can satisfy. It is ours to work out in life the inspirations that in such high communion our God works in us; for inspirations of truth and mercy, of love and righteousness, are also calls to practical duties, duties which, in our lower moods, wholly failed to appeal to us, but which, in the clearer vision of His Presence, are recognized and undertaken as tasks of God's own setting.

Again, communion with our God brings to light our weakness, our cowardice of spirit and half-heartedness of devotion, our shrinkings from the Cross our Lord has laid upon us; and yet, if we continue instant in prayer, if, despite our natural reluctance and fears and self-distrust, we still present ourselves as ready for His completed will, then our weakness will be swept away by the inflowing tides of His Almightyness.<sup>1</sup>

We kneel how weak, we rise how full of power.  
Why therefore should we do ourselves this wrong,  
Or others—that we are not always strong,  
That we are ever overborne with care,  
That we should ever weak or heartless be,  
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,  
And joy and strength and courage are with Thee?

#### CHRISTMAS DAY.

##### Cheerful Mercy.

'He that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.'—  
Ro 12<sup>9</sup>.

This chapter is a chapter about Christian duty. The Apostle gives in it his instructions as to how Christian people ought to act in the various activities of life. For there is a distinctly Christian way of doing most things, and this is the only way that is open to the Christian man. Of course our first concern must be to see to it that what we do is in itself right; but second only in importance to the character of the deed is the way in which we do it. And the Christian way is the great way, the generous way.

Notice the exhortations of the text: 'He that giveth . . . let him do it with liberality,' or, rather, 'with singleness of mind.' Giving is a Christian duty. No Christian must forget his obligation to care for the needy and the sick and the poor. But there is a right and a wrong way of giving. Tolstoy tells a story about a man stopping to bestow an alms upon a beggar, and finding, to his dismay, that he had nothing in his pockets. He began stammering out his apologies. 'I am sorry, brother,' he said, 'but I have nothing.' But that word 'brother' was more to the beggar than any money he could have given. 'Never mind, brother,' was the beggar's reply, 'that too was a gift.' Then gifts may not only be offered in the wrong spirit but they may also be given from the wrong motive. That is what the Apostle has specially in mind here. He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity, with singleness of mind.

<sup>1</sup> R. H. Charles, *Courage, Truth, Purity*, 203.

Giving, when not inspired by the single motive of love and a desire to help, ceases to be giving at all. There are people nowadays who give large sums to charities, to hospitals and orphanages and excellent institutions of that kind, not simply out of a desire to help such charities, but in the hope that some recognition may come to themselves, in the shape of public honour. In such a case, giving degenerates into purchase. Christian giving must be done without any thought of personal advantage or gain, but simply out of a single desire to help men and glorify God.

Then we have, 'He that ruleth with diligence.' Whether the sphere of his rule be the family or the Church or the State, it is to be 'with diligence,' with zeal, and energy. The Christian man will not 'slack' in his duties. 'Woe unto the land whose king is a child,' says one of the Old Testament writers—a child in wisdom and knowledge, he means; for such a person cannot rule 'with diligence,' and the land suffers as a consequence. Some men envy and covet the ruler's place for the power and public honour it brings. The Christian man, if he is set in such a place, will think little or nothing of the personal honour or glory; he will only seek to discharge his duties with diligence.

And then comes the clause of the text upon which we want to concentrate attention: 'he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.' 'With cheerfulness'—and the word so translated is really our English word 'hilarity.' The Christian man is to show mercy, as if he were finding tremendous joy in it. To see the beauty of a stained-glass window there must be light shining through it. A passer-by in the daytime, should he chance to look up and notice the great west window of the cathedral, would perhaps see little in the window itself to admire. Indeed, with those wavy lead divisions, made necessary by the pictures, it might seem less attractive to him than the perfectly plain windows. But should he pass at night and chance to look up, he would suddenly realize that the window was a thing of beauty—for, lit up by the light within, all its glowing richness of colour would stand revealed. A deed of mercy done with a grudging spirit is like that stained-glass window without any light behind. But a deed of mercy done with gladness and smiles and laughter is not simply a good thing—it becomes a beautiful thing, a radiant thing, a thing which, by its sheer loveliness, melts and subdues, charms and takes captive, blesses and heals the human heart.

Now, what exactly does the Apostle mean by 'shewing mercy'? The phrase ought not to be

restricted or limited in any way. Any kind deed is a deed of mercy, but it is legitimate, in order to bring out the meaning of the exhortation, to illustrate it by specific instances of deeds of mercy.

1. Let us begin by taking that particular deed of mercy suggested by Dr. Moffatt's translation: 'The sick visitor must be cheerful.' In so translating the phrase and making 'shewing mercy' equivalent to the visitation of the sick, Dr. Moffatt is unduly limiting it. But perhaps that was the form that 'shewing mercy' oftenest took in the early Church. One of the things that the glorified Lord says to the blessed who are summoned to inherit the Kingdom is this, 'I was sick and ye visited me.' Under the inspiration of that word, Christian people in those early days gave themselves with wonderful zeal and tenderness to the task of visiting the sick. Jesus still identifies Himself with His suffering people, and by ministering to them we minister to Him. But, if we are to visit the sick so as to make our visits helpful, we must do so with cheer and sympathy.

2. Next let us take that word 'mercy' in its strictly literal sense of forgiveness and pardon. Let him do his forgiving as if he enjoyed it. That is the only kind of mercy that does any good; it is the only kind of forgiveness that is a real forgiveness at all. That is one of the gracious influences of this Christmas season—it moves us to think kindly of those with whom we have differed and from whom we have been alienated.

But many people forgive grudgingly and so take all the grace and joy out of the forgiveness. They say, 'I forgive you, but take care you do not do it again.' Or, 'I forgive you, but I can't forget.' Or, 'I forgive you, but you can't expect me to trust you as I did.' There are illustrations of this grudging kind of forgiveness in this Bible of ours. David pretended to forgive Joab for his many crimes; but he had really never forgiven him at all. In his last charge to Solomon he recalled those deeds of Joab which had rankled in his mind. This is not really forgiveness at all, if we continue to cherish memories of wrongs. God forgives and forgets! He forgives royally, absolutely, utterly. And we have to forgive as God forgives—with the same lavishness and completeness.

3. And now let us take the phrase in its very broadest sense. If we have any deed of kindness to do—no matter what it may be—let us do it as if we enjoyed it, as if it gave us the keenest sort of pleasure. It is then goodness becomes really charming, when in it there is an eager and happy spirit. Here is Christmas with us once again—

and Christmas is marked by an outburst of beneficence. We give presents to one another. We think of absent friends. We remember our poorer neighbours. It is all very beautiful and delightful when it issues from a loving heart. But there are some people in the condition Scrooge was in before the spirits appeared to him—the Scrooge who wouldn't give a subscription to make a happy Christmas for the poor; the Scrooge who accused Bob Cratchit of robbing him of a day because Christmas Day was a holiday; the Scrooge who called Christmas humbug and who wouldn't go to his nephew's for his Christmas dinner. But Scrooge *after* the visits of the spirits is the man to imitate—the Scrooge who sent the prize turkey to Bob Cratchit's, 'not the little prize turkey; the big one'; the Scrooge who, meeting the old gentleman whose appeals he had so ruthlessly refused the day before, takes his breath away by the largeness of the subscription he offered; the Scrooge who turned up at his nephew's after all, and who had such a wonderful party; the Scrooge who, next morning, said to Bob Cratchit, 'I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer, and therefore I am about to raise your salary.' What a Christmas Scrooge had, and what a Christmas he gave! For that is the quality of 'mercy' which comes from a glad heart. 'It is twice blest. It blesses him who gives and him who takes.'

It has become almost a convention with some of our novelists to depict the man who has a heart of gold as being rough and rude in speech, while the villain is generally represented as smooth-tongued and pleasant-mannered. It is a stupid and foolish convention. Goldsmith, apologizing for Dr. Johnson's occasional rudenesses, said of him, 'He has nothing of the bear but his skin.' But why wear even the skin of the bear? Why take away from the kindness of a deed by caustic speech or roughness of manner? The kindly, sympathetic word often does more good than the material gift. The one ministers to the body, the other to the soul. At any rate, the Christian will seek to match his kindness of heart with kindness of speech and manner.

4. And in exhorting us, when we show mercy, to do so with cheerfulness, the Apostle is only exhorting us to act after the Divine pattern. For God is a God who 'shews mercy.' He keeps mercy 'for thousands,' says the old Book. The mercy of God to the world found expression in the great event which this day celebrates—when God sent His son into the world to save the world. There was nothing constrained about that great and

tremendous event. God sent Jesus and Jesus came, because both delighted in mercy. No doubt there was pain and shame involved in it all—for the cradle carried the Cross along with it. But the great sacrifice was cheerfully made. On the night on which Jesus was born, the joy of the angels could not be kept within bounds so that mortal ears heard them praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest.' God showed mercy with a certain Divine joyousness.

And Jesus was continually 'shewing mercy' when He was here on the earth—a mercy royal, unreserved. There were no hard words to take away from its grace. 'Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace,' He said to the woman who had sobbed her penitence over His feet. Not a word of reproof, only that gracious word of pardon, full and unreserved.

We are to be imitators of God as dear children. So, on this day which reminds us of the great mercy of God to us, let us also show mercy—let us remember the sick and the poor, let us forgive one another, let us do the good we can—and let us do it, not grudgingly or of necessity, but with a glad heart and free. Let us do our kind things in the finest way. So shall we make Christmas Christmas indeed.<sup>1</sup>

#### SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

##### Thankfulness and Courage.

'He thanked God, and took courage.'—Ac 28<sup>15</sup>.

These are words which we often quote, for they express briefly but very suggestively what should be the attitude of a Christian man. They tell us what Paul felt and did on a memorable occasion. A casual observer would have seen little in his circumstances to suggest either thankfulness or hope. He had just landed after a terrible voyage and a disastrous shipwreck. And he was on his way to Rome to behold for the first time the glories which had filled his imagination for years, but he was going bound, a prisoner to his trial. And Appii Forum, to which he had come, was not a place calculated to cheer a pure, high-souled man like Paul. It was a sort of gathering-ground for the criminals and outcasts of the great city, and we should not have been surprised to hear that his heart sank for a moment. But his memory was full of other things. He remembered how at every stage of that long journey, which was now nearly over, a supernatural power had preserved him. He had even found friends in the soldiers who guarded

him, and received no little kindness from the barbarous people among whom he was shipwrecked. And now at Appii Forum there were Christian brethren from Rome waiting to welcome him and to tell him of what Christ was doing in that great city. As he looked upon the faces of these men, who were united to him by the dearest sympathies and hopes, he forgot past persecutions and perils. 'He thanked God, and took courage.'

First, there is no doubt that the grace of thankfulness is one of the secrets of a good and happy life. A man cannot serve God cheerfully unless he is conscious of a sense of God's mercies. Perhaps there never was a more thankful heart than the heart of the Apostle Paul. Would you know, asks William Law the mystic, would you know who is the greatest saint? It is not the man who prays most or who does most. It is the man who is most thankful. And certainly, tried by such a test, you might search the annals of the Christian Church and not discover a greater saint than Paul.

It is our way of looking at life that makes all the difference between gloom and sunshine. If we look into a shallow pool, we may see the mud at the bottom or the bright heavens reflected on the top. So we may look on each day's or each year's experience, and see chiefly its weariness and troubles and losses; or we may see the guiding power and grace which have been in it all. It was the Apostle's gratitude that made him so happy in his work, so untiring and resolute and undaunted amid its many buffetings and hindrances and disappointments. It is not the happy people who are thankful. It is the thankful people who are happy. Happiness does not depend on what we have, else those who have the most would be the happiest. As a matter of fact, how often do we find that those who have the most are not the happiest. Happiness depends upon our point of view, and he who has won this view-point is always on the highway to be glad. In life there are a thousand things that have an equal power to vex us or to bless us, according to our different point of view. No one who murmurs and no one who worries is ever really happy. And it is only when, through Christ our Saviour, we come to see His loving hand in everything that we win the grateful heart without which nobody ever can be glad. The more we are thankful for our common mercies, the more does life become a joyful thing, and we see a worth in things we never saw before.<sup>2</sup>

Paul drew men to the gospel, because he presented that gospel in a glorious setting of radiant

<sup>1</sup> J. D. Jones, *The Inevitable Christ*, 299.

<sup>2</sup> G. H. Morrison, *The World-Wide Gospel*, 55.

joy. He never forgot one kindly or gentle action that was done to him, whether it came from Heaven or men. How often do his letters brim over with prayerful acknowledgment of the faith and love and generosity and sympathy which he had witnessed in his converts. Religious thankfulness makes a man lovable and loving towards all. It refines and elevates the general temper and bearing, and a man who thinks that Heaven has used him coldly and neglectfully is apt to revenge himself by putting on a surly mood towards men. He makes his neighbours pay for God's unkindness. But he who thinks much and joyfully of the Divine loving-kindness is ever seeking to repay it by kindly bearing towards all. A man cannot be thankful to God without being generous to every child of God. Religious joy is an all-pervading joy. When Bunyan's pilgrim was delivered of his burden, he told the trees and the sky and the running streams about it. What man can think of his own redemption without being kind to every thing that breathes?

The grateful soul is also the hopeful soul. When a man thanks God, he inevitably takes courage. If love and mercy have woven the web of our lives heretofore, they will work after the same pattern to the end. Paul could face the unknown terrors of Rome without fear, because he had just passed through the milder terrors of the sea without harm. Nero could not be more cruel than the Jews, from whose murderous plots he had recently escaped, and the shield of the Almighty, which had defended him thus far, would not fail him to the end. We know that God, in all the changing experiences of our lives, must and will for ever repeat Himself. That which has been is what will always be; His love and mercy are like the Lord Jesus—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. If we remember how He has kept us from falling, and in times of sorrow saved our hearts from breaking, there will come to us the same cheerful and gallant outlook, the confident step of those who walk in the light and love of God.

Think of the past, then, as Paul did, and like him be brave of heart. Do not think much of that which was done or omitted by your own fickle and feeble will, of your moral failures and broken vows. If these things have been sincerely repented of, it is best to have done with them, not to unearth them from the grave in which God's forgiveness has buried them. He tells us that He will forget them, cast them into the depths of the sea, and bids us do the same. And do not linger long on the pages which record losses, pains, frustrated hopes, un-

answered prayers. Turn them over quickly, as Paul was accustomed to do, and let us rest our eyes joyfully on the many more pages which speak of wonderful things. Has this year not been for us a year of mercy, if we but read its records with illumined eyes? It has given us songs in the daytime, and perhaps some songs in the nighttime of pain. We have been enriched with many new experiences. All of us, we hope, have been preserved from the ever-pressing temptations which try our faith. And though here and there the year goes out leaving behind it homes darkened, and lonely hearts, yet even to them is given the vast, great hope of reunion.

And now we look forward with courage to the future and a new service richer than that of the past, offered freely from grateful hearts to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.<sup>1</sup>

#### FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

##### The Fulfilling of the Law.

'For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'—Gal 5<sup>14</sup>.

That is not only a very daring, but in all the circumstances a very remarkable and unexpected, utterance, from whichever point of view we regard it. For there are two obvious points of view—that of the old Law, and that of the new. But there is a third point of view too, from which it is more remarkable still—that of the man who wrote it. Remember that it is the writer of the Epistle to the Romans who is speaking—the Apostle of justification by faith; the man who devotes whole chapters of intricate reasoning to the development and exposition of his doctrine of salvation. It is he who declares to us that the whole gospel may be summed up in one word—and that word, singularly enough, a quotation from the Old Testament—'thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'

But, we may say, is not the Apostle here expounding the old Law, which Christ had superseded? By no means. The context makes that abundantly clear. For this very chapter begins and continues for several verses as an almost scornful repudiation of the old Law. 'For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision.' And in the next chapter he goes on to say—'Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.' 'And so fulfil the law of Christ.'

<sup>1</sup> J. G. Greenhough, *Christian Festivals and Anniversaries*, 247.

The law of Christ—that is what he is talking about. And if this is so, what becomes of that great system of belief that ranges itself under the title of ‘Justification by faith’? And further, if the whole of the ‘law’ of Christ is fulfilled by a certain interpretation of an Old Testament word, what becomes of Christ’s own essential place in the new gospel? And in what sense, indeed, is it a new gospel at all? The answer is not far to seek. It is that the whole of the new gospel depends upon the interpretation of the word ‘love.’ ‘Who is my neighbour?’ said a certain Jew to Jesus. And, in answer, Jesus immediately lifted the old words out of their old setting and enshrined them, with an entirely fresh meaning, in the new. In a word, Jesus meant, and Paul meant too, that you can’t love your neighbour in Christ’s sense without implying all that Christ was and stands for. It is a simple gospel, but it is deep as eternity itself. It does go into ‘one word’ when it is spelt with a capital letter—‘The Word.’

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the whole difference between the Old Testament and the New may be interpreted in terms of what is really meant by loving one’s neighbour. To the ancient Jew it meant two things. First, loving the neighbourly: and second, the restriction of the scope of your neighbourliness to Jews. ‘Without are dogs.’ The caste system was just as deep-seated in Judaism as it is in Brahmanism. It was not natural to love the loveless, or the unloving, or the hostile, or the stranger. And it isn’t. And the basal fact of the New Testament is that the ‘natural’ man—in Paul’s sense—is the wrong man: and that before he can really understand Christ he must be ‘born again.’ And as soon as you really come to see what the New Testament means by ‘love,’ you find yourself at once up against all the great New Testament words and ideas, and face to face with the whole New Testament doctrine of salvation. When Christ says, ‘thou shalt love,’ you have got to ask what Christ meant. And the only adequate answer is in what Christ did—in His own life and death. We can’t understand anything that Jesus said, except in terms of what Jesus did. For He Himself tells us that the Son of Man came to give His life. That is not theology, but the gospel. Why? There are many answers, but this is what He says Himself, ‘I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto myself’: not save them from God, or hell, but ‘draw them unto myself.’

Suffice it that two things in that brief claim of Christ’s are clear beyond dispute: (1) However you may explain it, the amazing, the unmatched

drawing-power of the Cross *is* beyond all question or denial: and (2) that whatever it was, whatever it does, it was and it does equally for all men. This is how God illustrated and proved His neighbourliness: ‘As I have loved you—that ye also love one another’—that, briefly, is the new definition of neighbourliness.

‘Who is my neighbour?’ said the young man to Jesus. Jesus told the story of the good Samaritan. But it was only provisional and parabolical: His complete and final answer was on the Cross. And only with our feet on that rock, are we in a position to answer the other questions that gravely perplex us. This perplexing question, perhaps: What becomes of Christ’s own affirmation of the first and greatest commandment as ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart’? But the answer to that very natural difficulty is quite simple. And it is that you cannot love your neighbour like that—in a way that has the Cross deep in its heart, the way of sacrifice, of forgiveness unto seventy times seven, if needs be unto death—you cannot love your neighbour like that until you have seen God like that first—until you know what love means by understanding how first God loved you. You can’t love your neighbour like that—even your friend, to say nothing of your enemy—the man you know intimately, to say nothing of the man in Timbuctoo! No: not all at once. But all that Christ asks of you at present is to begin loving in the new way—the way of love with the Cross in it, of forgiveness without limit. And trying will make you happier than you have ever been in your life.

Why does not the Apostle say—‘Love Christ’—and be done with it? We said that, in order to learn the new interpretation of the word ‘love’ in relation to our neighbour, we have to seek its new interpretation in the heart of God—the Divine heart with the Cross in it. But how do we know that there is a Cross in the heart of God? Science in these topsy-turvy days is coming to believe more and more in God—a God of sorts—an infinite mind, a mathematical mind, says Professor Jeans. But that is not going to help me to love my neighbour. Yet the answer to this last question is quite simple too. It is that we do not know what love really is until we see it in God: that we do not know what God really is until we see Him in Christ: until we see God in Christ on the Cross—‘God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.’ In ‘the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world,’ we find humanity’s salvation from sin and from despair.

And in ourselves, an adoring, inextinguishable love of Christ.

So the reason seems clear. It is easy to love Christ, as soon as we have seen Him like that: and perhaps the more we see of our neighbour the less easy it is to love him. And so Christ makes the more difficult test the crux. For it is quite possible to love even Christ with a self-centred, almost selfish love: the way of the recluse and the mystic's cell. Really to love our neighbour as Christ interprets love, and as Christ defines our neighbour, is only possible—it is only possible to begin doing it—when it is based on a deep and overmastering passion for Christ Himself. You might quite easily offer your choicest gifts to Christ, without thinking much of them. But the converse is not possible. Paul was not belittling Christianity in stating it in the terms of our neighbour: he was stating it in the highest and hardest terms possible—in terms in which Christ Himself had stated it. 'Then shall the righteous say unto him, Lord, when saw we thee hungry and fed thee, or thirsty and gave thee drink, or a stranger, or naked and clothed thee? When saw we thee sick or in prison and came unto thee?' And the King shall answer and say unto them, 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' And to love all of them, and to love some of them at all, we must love Him most of all.<sup>1</sup>

#### SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

##### New Wine.

'Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.'—Jn 2<sup>10</sup>.

The whole of St. John's Gospel was written to teach that new life was what Christ came into the world to bring. There had been in the world something that we call life, expressing itself in, and by means of, that which was material ever since living creatures first existed. But God wanted them to rise still higher—much higher—towards Himself, animated by Life of an entirely new quality, eternal Life, 'the life which is life indeed.' Being eternal Life it was the Life of the eternal God, and was available for all men who strove towards Him in all ages. But in one Man it was expressed without striving from below. In the Incarnation the eternal Life of God came, in its

divine completeness into the world, available for 'as many as received him.'

St. John shows it in our Lord's discourses, but he shows it also by relating a series of His wonderful deeds.

The first sign does not illustrate any particular aspect of the new Life; it illustrates in a single picture the whole subject of the Fourth Gospel. In the wedding feast at Cana of Galilee our Lord turned water into wine. It is not possible to be sure of the way in which St. John meant his story to be explained. But the interpretation of it, often given since Westcott, gives us a great meaning. There were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews. Our Lord told the servants to fill these up to the brim from a well out in the courtyard. But He did not make wine from the water in these pots. He told the servants to draw out now and bear unto the governor of the feast. That is, they were to go to the same well again, and when they drew up the water, they found it was not water but wine. In St. John's thoughts the new wine was the Christian religion, which far excelled the old Jewish religion, in that it meant the new Life brought by Christ. The pots were filled to show every one that it was ordinary, plain water. It is not impossible that he suggests something further by the six pots. Why six? If the water represented the Jewish religion, perhaps the pots meant the five books of Moses, plus the scribal tradition based on them. They contained the essential elements of the Jewish religion. And we know how our Lord constantly gave new and deeper meanings to commands in the Law, and how He swept away the scribal tradition altogether. Instead of Law and Tradition He offered the heavenly, spiritual teaching of the new life.

When we look at the story from our own point of view it can mean first that the entrance of Christ's new Life can transform human society. There are people who are content with a lower grade of existence, which is the possession of all human beings. Life consists for them of almost nothing but money, luxuries, food, dress, bridge, and gossip. These are six pots of very unsatisfying water. And many people simply do not know that there is anything higher or better. They think they are quite satisfied; or sometimes they feel a vague urge for something else, and they know not what it is. None of these six things is bad in itself, or others like them. Plain water is not bad, but it is not the best wine.

And then the story means that the entrance of

<sup>1</sup> H. E. Brierley, *Freedom and Faith*, 88.

the new Life can transform *us*. 'The mother of Jesus saith unto him, they have no wine.' We sometimes feel as though we had none; and we want to tell Him so. Let us fill our waterpots with water. Let us demonstrate to ourselves how insipid and stale and ordinary and unsatisfying our life has been.

For instance, our worship. We have sometimes spent an hour or more in Church, say at Matins, and gone out having *given* to God nothing that was of the least value to Him. We are apt to complain that the service has done us no good. The way in which the prayers were said, or the lessons read, or the hymns sung, or the sermon preached, did not appeal to us. But what we offered to the Father, who was wanting something from His children, was almost nil. We know that self-preparation before our Communion is a very great help to us, and yet we have often been content to do without it. We have got up for them in the morning without leaving so much as a minute before the service, either in church or at home, to put ourselves in touch with God.

Our private prayers have sometimes been entirely about ourselves, or about people and things that are in close connexion with ourselves; and we have felt little inclination to follow St. Paul's wish, 'Be ye also enlarged'; there has been little of the wide-flung embrace which takes all the world in, and prays and longs for the souls of all men, in union with the Love of Christ. Most of us badly need some new wine to be poured into our prayers.

And our love for our Lord. There is so much love of self mixed with it that there can be hardly any strong wine in it at all. Thy Love is better than wine, but ours is little better than water. Pour into it, O Christ, the richness of Thine own new Life, that ours may be transformed.

Then we can turn from our devotion to Him in prayer and love to our daily duties, at home or elsewhere. Are we content with the way in which we do them? Is Christ delighted with our care and diligence, our exactness, punctuality, self-sacrifice in time and trouble? Have we ever tried

to avoid part of what we know is our duty by doing as little as we could? Or doing things with as little trouble as we could? What about answering letters as soon as possible, and as carefully as possible? It is in the little things that the driving power of the Spirit of Christ most quickly and clearly shows itself. We want our life to be raised to a higher level by divine energy.

And there are not only our daily duties, but our daily kindnesses, daily courtesies, daily thoughtfulness in details. Are we content with being nice to people that we like, and not particularly nice to people that we don't care for? Do we take pains over something that will look well and get us praise or thanks, and less pains over something that will not? and so on. The Holy Spirit, by deepening our unity with Christ's Life, can change all that, if we ask Him, and if we let Him.

Once more, let us think simply of ourselves without reference to other people. There are men and women who live a life of sheer boredom. They are certainly bored when they are by themselves. We may not have dropped as low as that. But how often are we reduced to 'killing time' as we say? There are two very common ways of doing it. One is by reading trash. Not reading bad things, but snippets from useless papers, or stories with no strength or meaning. Not in order to rest a tired mind or body, which is sometimes as necessary as food or medicine, but, as many people do, merely because we cannot rouse ourselves to anything more useful.

And the other way is by day-dreaming. We sometimes wander away into useless nothings. 'Whether ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do,' work or rest or read or write or think or play, 'do all to the glory of God.' For that we need the divine exhilaration of life lifted to the strong air of a higher level, an effervescence which comes from the Presence of Christ alone. When we have drunk deep of this new Life, we shall be able to say, I hardly knew what it was to drink the best wine until now.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. H. McNeile, *Alive unto God*, 9.

