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is all to the good that we now recognize, as Dr. Dakin so admirably says, that 'New Testament Introduction ought to be quite subordinate to the greater questions of the Faith.' Introduction is subservient to exposition, and exegesis deals not with isolated passages, but brings out the main lines of the writer's message.

A return to Biblical preaching in no narrow sense,

but in its widest sweep and in its highest inspiration, is one of the most clamant needs of our time. Let the Theological Colleges make their contribution to supply this want. But unless the message is proclaimed by men of living faith, of keen vision, and of broad sympathies, I am afraid that any discussion about the teaching of Theology will prove a purely academic debate.

In the Study.

Virginitus Puerisque.

'Please, can you tell me the right time?'

BY THE REVEREND D. W. ROSS, PRETORIA,
SOUTH AFRICA.

'It is time to seek the Lord.'—Hos 10¹².

I WONDER if you have heard your father and mother speaking about the message of the Archbishop of Canterbury, or perhaps you have heard him on the wireless yourselves, saying just what that wonderful old prophet Hosea said long ago, 'It is time to seek the Lord.'

Talking about time, what a lot of clocks have to say to us. You must have seen those funny old clocks that we call sundials, and how they often have some message or motto printed round the edge of the dial telling us how time flies, and how busy we must be if we are to get our work done. There is a clock in a church tower in this city of Pretoria which has no fingers, and no figures on its face. It is just a round red blank. The fingers and figures were made of solid gold, and somebody once thought they could make better use of them. But suppose you were passing this church with its blank clock one day, and some one said to you, 'What time is it by that clock?' Well, you would think them very silly, wouldn't you? Well, perhaps; but I remember another clock that didn't go. It had no fingers, and yet it told the time. That sounds like a riddle, doesn't it? It was in a funny old church about seven thousand miles from here, and it was in the back of the gallery from where it faced the pulpit. The years went by, and the clock was very old, and it couldn't be mended any more, and then its fingers dropped off, and no one put them back again. AND YET IT WENT ON TELLING THE TIME. How did it do it? Well, many

years ago when the clockmaker was asked if he would make this clock for the church, he wanted to make a very good one. I expect he had seen sundials with mottoes of the kind we have been talking about, and he thought, 'Why shouldn't my clock have a motto, too?' And then he thought again, 'Now this clock is to go in a church, I shall put a text on it.' And he began to rack his brains for the proper sort of text. It mustn't be too long else it wouldn't fit on the face. It ought to be something about time. So he took down his Bible and began to look for texts about time, and he found that there were a great many of them. At last he found just the right one in the Book of Hosea, and it was this: "IT IS TIME TO SEEK THE LORD." He could hardly have found a better one. It was just the right length, but best of all it says just the right thing, for that is exactly what people go to church for.

Many things happen in our churches. Fathers and mothers sometimes come with little babies to be baptized. There is a text which says: 'They that seek me early shall find me.' That is a time when people want to seek the Lord to ask him to bless their baby. There are other happy times when people come to church to be married. I can see the bridegroom shuffling nervously in the front row before the service, looking round at the clock and saying to himself, 'Oh dear, dear, is she going to be late? I wonder what time it is?' 'Time to seek the Lord,' says the little clock. Sometimes people come to church when they are very sad. What time is it, then? Why, still the same time, 'Time to seek the Lord.' Don't you think, then, that the clockmaker chose a rather wonderful text? That is what we go to church for; in any case it is what we have come into the world for. Some people are always so busy that they never have

time for the most important thing of all. They bustle about, and pull out their watches, or look at their clocks, and say, 'I shall never have time to catch that 'bus or that train.' They never have time to seek the Lord. I think it would be a good idea if that text were printed on the faces of all our watches.

That old clock told **THE RIGHT TIME**. Some of you will remember when playing games and you began to feel hungry and wonder if it was dinner-time, how you used to stop some kind-looking old gentleman with a big gold guard across his waistcoat and say to him, 'Please, can you tell me the **RIGHT time?**' Why the *right* time I am sure I don't know. Anyhow, that little clock told the **RIGHT time**. '**IT IS TIME TO SEEK THE LORD**'—time to love and serve our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Crown Jewels.

BY THE REVEREND R. E. THOMAS, M.A., BARNET.

'They shall be mine . . . when I make up my jewels.'
—Mal 3¹⁷.

Not many of you, I dare say, have seen the Crown Jewels. What do you think the Crown Jewels are? You might suppose they were simply the jewels in the crowns with which the King and Queen will be crowned at the Coronation. But they are more than that. By Crown Jewels are usually meant the various richly bejewelled articles, twenty-six in number and more properly called the Regalia, which are used in the Coronation ceremony. Let us think about some of them, and what they mean.

(1) First, the Ampulla and the Spoon. Now an ampulla is a Roman bottle or flask for holding oil. The ampulla which will be used at the Coronation is in the form of an eagle, made of gold, and it holds the holy oil with which the King will be anointed. The spoon, which is said to be as old as the twelfth century, also contains oil. The Archbishop of Canterbury will anoint the King by pouring oil from the eagle, and also with oil from his fingers after they have been dipped in the spoon. This part of the Coronation ceremony is regarded as specially holy. It signifies that only he whom God or His servant anoints is fit to be king, the oil, of course, being a symbol of God's Holy Spirit.

(2) Next notice the Sceptres. The dictionary says a sceptre is a 'rod symbolizing sovereignty.' The sceptres which the King and Queen will hold at the Coronation are rods of gold, about three feet

long and richly adorned with jewels, and they will, as the dictionary says, indicate sovereignty. But note this about these sceptres: at the top of each is a cross. How right that is. Christ, the King of kings, has a cross on His sceptre. The Cross is His symbol of sovereignty, for the Cross, Christ's Cross, means love, and by love He rules. A cross is thus the finest symbol of sovereignty.

Another thing about these sceptres. The King will hold a sceptre in each hand, and that for the King's left hand has not only a cross, but sitting on the cross is a white enamelled dove, with outstretched wings. This dove represents the Holy Spirit. It means that God's Holy Spirit must be the King's guide and inspiration. Indeed, no king could rule by love if the Holy Spirit were not guiding and inspiring him.

(3) Then there are the Swords. There are several of them. Now a sword sounds rather a cruel thing, an instrument of destruction. But this will not be the thought in our King's mind as he handles these swords, as we see if we inquire further into their meaning.

One of the swords is called the Jewelled Sword of State. It is the most valuable sword in the world, so finely made and richly adorned with jewels is it. At the Coronation the King must offer this in homage to the Church. The Archbishop will receive it and place it on the altar. The King will get it back, but this offering of the sword to the Church and placing it on the altar, reminds him that he must look upon the power he wields in a sacred light, and never use it wantonly or cruelly.

Another sword is called Curtana—Sword of Mercy. It is said to have been the sword of Edward the Confessor. The point is cut off square—this blunted sword representing the quality of mercy. These swords show that the wielding of power is a sacred thing, and that justice and mercy go together.

(4) Another part of the regalia which has somewhat the same meaning is the Staff of Edward the Confessor, otherwise known as the Rod of Justice and Equity. This is supposed to guide the footsteps of the King. It is interesting to know that some such staff is said to have been used as early as the coronation of Æthelred II.

(5) Then, of course, there are the Crowns. There are several of these, and very magnificent they are. We can notice only this about them now: in the front of the Imperial State Crown we find again the cross; while the design of the Queen's Crown signifies the dominion of the Christian faith over

the whole world. So these crowns remind us of Him about whom we sing:

Crown Him with many crowns.

(6) And then there are, lastly, the King's Orb and the Queen's Orb. These orbs will be placed in the hands of the King and Queen after they have been crowned. They are golden globes, surmounted by a cross. The orb is said to be the oldest symbol of Christian sovereignty. It also signifies the dominion of the Christian faith over the whole world.

Now we shall all be thinking about King George VI. and his Queen when the Coronation ceremony takes place, and praying that God will bless them. But at the same time let us not forget a verse of the Bible which says that He who loved us 'hath made us kings . . . unto God and his Father' (Rev 1⁶). True, we shall not be crowned in Westminster Abbey, nor shall we handle the Crown Jewels. But we may know in our lives the things of which the Crown Jewels speak. We may know what it is to be anointed with God's Holy Spirit, and to have the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire us, for God offers this precious gift to the young as well as to the old. We may hold the sceptre of love in our hands. Whatever strength we have we may wield as a sacred thing, not forgetting that to do justly by others and to show them mercy is a first charge from God to us. And in the forefront of our hearts we may wear the symbol of the Cross, and so doing we shall be living for the time when 'the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ.' Then, possessing in our lives these precious things which the Crown Jewels signify, God will say of these lives of ours, 'They shall be mine, in that day when I make up my jewels.'

The Christian Year.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Finding God.

BY THE REVEREND WILLIAM SOUTER, B.D.,
CUPAR-FIFE.

'Oh that I knew where I might find him!'—Job 23⁹.
'Whither shall I flee from thy presence?'—Psa 139⁷.

Those who listen-in to the wireless services in these days will be struck with the frequent call of preachers to return to God. Things have not been quite healthy spiritually for a long time, but now many feel that matters are coming to a head.

Hence the message—'Return to God'; 'Back to the faith of our fathers and their devotion to the Church.'

It is just possible that in these days with a material and worldly spirit abroad many may feel rather puzzled over this call to return to God. Many people are giving themselves to service, are living for something outside themselves, and yet make no claim to formal religion, and frankly confess that the speech and phraseology of religion leave them confused. Religion is often described as an experience of God, but there are those who confess having passed through no emotional experience. They are lacking in the mystic sense, and therefore conclude that they are out of touch with God. Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin of New York mentions, in his book on preaching, a case in point. A young graduate of Harvard had gone to Dr. Coffin with this very difficulty. He was a young man from a high-principled and reservedly devout family; he was himself patently loyal to truth, responsive to the beautiful and the true. 'And what could one reply,' says Dr. Coffin, 'but to ask him: "Have you ever got away from God, who is Truth and Beauty and Righteousness?"' All such longings and uncertainties were voiced long ago by Job: 'O that I knew where I might find him!' G. K. Chesterton has put down the soul's desires and wonderings thus:

For in my soul one hope for ever sings,
That at the next white corner of a road
My eyes may look on Him.

And all such longings and uncertainties have been answered in a psalmist's discovery of the inescapableness of God: 'Whither shall I flee from thy presence?' God is above all and over all; He is far beyond the sweep of our imagination, and the full grasp of our minds, yet He is everywhere, in all and through all. His presence enfolds us, and the very constancy of His presence makes us often miss Him, just as we become unconscious of certain things in our homes and in our lives. Never for a moment absent, we forget about them, or miss them. Where may we hope to find God?

I. First, we would suggest *in the world around us*. It may require the soul of a Wordsworth to sense that Presence deeply, but we can experience it in part for we feel our being stirred as we read such lines as these:

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

In the Gospels we find Jesus meeting with God everywhere. Birds, lilies, the shepherd with his sheep, the sower and his seed—all Nature's scenes and sounds led His mind into the presence of God. We, too, feel it :

The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills,
and the plains—
Are not these, O soul, the Vision of Him who reigns ?

'Why do we not speak more often,' Dr. Fosdick asks, 'of the spiritual ministry of Nature, the literal meaning of the psalm :

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures :
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul.

'One of the most powerful influences that has played with dire effect upon religion in recent generations has been city life. How can a person who lives merely in a city be profoundly religious? Everything he sees is man-made. What is there in the mechanical externalities which environ him to suggest God? Whenever religion vitally survives in the city, you will find souls who are not simply city-made, but are at home with mountains and woods and the sea and the open sky, that vast background of Nature's wonder and mystery which man did not create and before which he is still a little child.'

II. Again, we meet with God *in the world of Beauty and Goodness, of Truth and Righteousness*. If we take a good picture, a real masterpiece, and gaze on it, we find something in it that seems to complete our life, something in it answers a longing and a hunger in the soul. Something satisfies. It is an experiment that any one may try. That is one way in which we meet with God. He is everywhere, waiting to speak with us, anxious to enter into communion with our souls. Or think of some noble work of literature, the product of a master mind : a play of Shakespeare's, a sonnet of Wordsworth's, a poem of Tennyson's : here, again, something moves us, an inner chord vibrates, and it is God who has struck the strings. Not every one who goes to hear a symphony concert can interpret in any detail what he has heard, yet if he has a soul for music it will have meant for him what is best described as a meeting with God, an experience of God. Others may find Him in a great human love, in a deed of friendship or act of sacrifice.

The heart responds to the act of goodness and self-sacrifice. It is the soul in contact with God.

On the 17th of March, just twenty-five years ago, there occurred an act of supreme courage and self-sacrifice—an act which has lived on in the memory of his countrymen. The story is well known. Led by Scott, a party of five reached the South Pole, only to find that they had been forestalled by Amundsen. A ceaseless blizzard held them up a few miles from the food supply base. It was here that Captain Oates, in order not to imperil the slender chance of life that remained to his companions, went out to his death in the Antarctic snows, saying, 'I am just going outside, and may be away some time.' A special service was held on March 14th in the Colchester Garrison church to commemorate the deed, and Admiral Sir Edward R. G. R. Evans, one of the survivors, who was second in command of the expedition, spoke movingly of Oates's heroism and of the influence it had had.

When the conscience makes us uneasy, or blesses with approval an action of ours, when we yield to a temptation, and the moment after are ashamed, we may be sure that God is speaking to us, and calling us to turn unto Him and live. 'Oh that I knew where I might find him!' But God is not far. He is near, and we cannot hope to flee from His presence.

III. We experience God *in Jesus Christ*. Up to this point we have been trying to show how in life's common day we may have contact with God, for He is the Author of all goodness and beauty :

every virtue we possess,
And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness,
Are His alone.

But that is not all that is meant by returning to God and finding Him. True it is that God is everywhere, and if we were not blind we could see Him in the grandeur and glory of Nature, in the charm of little children, and in the sublimities of human story. There is vastly more, however, and an even deeper experience made possible through God choosing a special means of drawing aside the veil, and bringing us face to face with Himself. At a point in human history which God in His wisdom judged to be the most fitting, there came to earth One who was to unveil God, and through whom we can have *the* experience of God. Though that be two thousand years ago, we can still enter into His story in the Gospels. Thus they are the most important writings in all literature. As we read of

Him there we feel as those nearest to Him felt in those days: 'The Christ of God'; and then, 'My Lord and my God.' And the New Testament teaches us that He triumphed over death, and is alive for ever more. Not only is He alive for ever more, but He is with us, by our side, in every joy He is with us, and in every pang that rends the heart He is with us too. 'Oh that I knew where I might find him!' Yes, but blessed be God, we have found Him in Christ. If we are in any way vague when we hear the call, 'Return to God,' let us think of Jesus, and use our imagination to strengthen faith. See Him with our mind's eye talking with His friends, feeding the multitude, and healing the sick. See Him at the grave of Lazarus, and helping Martha and Mary in their grief. See Him in the garden with His soul exceeding sorrowful, and before His accusers, and on the Cross. Hear Him praying for His enemies, forgiving the penitent thief, and committing His soul into the Father's hand. See Him alive, radiant, triumphant on that first Easter morning. Let us keep on thinking of Him, remembering that He is with us as He was with Peter and James and John, with Martha and Mary and Lazarus. Let us have stated times when we directly remember Him and His presence. Now we see through a glass darkly, but gradually it will become face to face. Now His presence may be fleeting and occasional, one day it will prove an abiding presence.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

The All-Round Christian Life.

'Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me. . . . Take Mark, and bring him with thee. . . . The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.'—2 Ti 4⁹⁻¹³.

Hardly anything is more impressive or more convincing to the student of the Bible, that is to say, to all Christian people, than its sheer naturalness. Its appeal is so evident to ordinary people. Its intention is obviously to do something quite superhuman for them by directing them to God. But let it be always borne in mind at the same time that it is not out to make them inhuman, or abnormal, or in any way odd. Certainly not that. Its aim is beyond question to make saints, but never to make eccentrics. It identifies no peculiarities, no oddities, with piety. On the contrary, there is perfect balance in its declarations, just as there is in the ideal character at the creation of which it aims, and as also there is in its selection of the

human examples it holds up for our emulation. It is all so essentially sane. Indeed, its gospel, the gospel of the Living Christ, is the only certain safeguard against that freakishness which is positively deadly, the life that is devoted to and dominated by the spirit of the world, which orders itself as though it were its own centre.

All of which leads to the consideration of the all-round Christian life, in the hope that we may endeavour to make our personal witness to Jesus Christ increasingly worthier, more convincing, and hence of larger value to Him and to His cause. For, whether we bear it in mind or not, the fact is that He is judged by what people see of Him in the lives of those who bear His name.

Paul is in the Mamertine prison, an old man whose days are numbered. He is writing to Timothy, to whom his work must now be handed over. And probably quite unconsciously and unintentionally, as he passes from lofty spiritual themes to mention lowly personal concerns, he discloses himself. Incidentally also, and, of course, undesignedly, he suggests the outstanding features of that all-round Christian life the qualities of which he has all along so splendidly demonstrated.

The discomforts of his imprisonment are intensely real. He is lonely, and longs to feel around him the warmth of friendship. So he says, 'Do thy diligence to come to me: bring Mark with thee.' He is suffering from the severe cold, and is most likely ill-clad. So he begs Timothy to bring 'the cloke I left at Troas.' He is conscious, too, that, shut away from the free intercourse with his fellows to which he is accustomed, his mind needs refurbishing and refreshing. So he requests, 'Bring my books also.' Above all else, he longs to know more of his Lord and of His unsearchable greatness. So he adds, 'especially the parchments'—doubtless bits from the prophetic writings and the Psalms, possibly also some of the letters of Luke, Peter, and John.

Let us look at the significant suggestion which these personal requests of the Apostle make, that the physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual combine to make up the 'all-round Christian life.'

1. Thinking of them in that order, it is full of interest that Paul makes no apology whatever for bringing his concern for the welfare of his body into a letter the subject of which is Jesus Christ and His service.

It is probable that professed Christians to-day do not require to be reminded that it is part of their Christian duty not to neglect their bodies, so much as they need to be warned that over-care of the

body is an actual infidelity. For in too many instances it occupies so much of their thought, engages so much of their attention, and actually demands the outlay of so much of their resources, that many of them have little interest left for aught else. Keep fit by all means. An unfit Christian is a contradiction in terms which reflects upon His name. But let us be quite clear as to what it is we are keeping fit for. And in speaking thus of the body we speak of the entire material area of life of which it is the centre. For if our bodies, their appetites and claims, their energies and selfishnesses, are not made sacred they will most certainly and rapidly secularize life through and through. Let the cloak, and by that we mean all that Paul's cloak stands for in our life, all that corresponds to it, be entirely at our service and Christ's.

2. Paul's request that his books should be brought to him suggests that in the all-round Christian life the mind has its own important part to play.

Paul is himself an author, an author indeed whose works will live on when those of most other writers are long forgotten. Yet he wanted books! He enjoyed direct intercourse with Christ in a measure beyond that to which most men have ever attained. Yet he wanted books! He knew himself to be in-dwelt by the Spirit of God, and under His power had been preaching the gospel for thirty years. Yet he wanted books! The confidence of inspiration did not render study and mental effort unnecessary to him. And it is quite clear that the books he wanted were by no means all 'Christian' books nor even 'religious' books. There is abundant evidence that Paul kept himself abreast of the contemporary thought of his age. He had no intention at any time of letting Christ's cause down by stupid mental *gaucherie*.

Dr. Fosdick writes of reading: 'So many of the turning-points in man's spiritual history have been caused by it, as with Saint Augustine hearing the voice in the garden, "Take up and read," or, as with Luther rising up from the study of the Epistle to the Galatians to shake Europe with his proclamation of the gospel's freedom! Many a perplexing question about Paul we do not know the answer to, but this we know, that he was a great reader. . . . To-day we read to keep up with our professional or business specialities. But a man who uses books in this way only, as Pharaoh used slaves to build ever higher the pyramid of his practical success, does not know what real reading means. Or we read to keep up with the swiftly moving times. Or, again, we read because other people read, and

because we are expected to read the books they are talking of. Of all social coercions nothing is much more compulsive than the exclamation, "What! Have you not read So-and-so?" I celebrate to-day another and higher kind of experience, the spiritual friendship of great books intently read, deeply pondered, one of the abiding experiences of life.'

3. There is something intensely pathetic in Paul's request that Timothy will do his diligence to come quickly to him and will bring Mark also. In his loneliness he longs for friendly intercourse with men of kindred mind.

The suggestion in this entreaty is that there is a social expression of the all-round Christian life which we should set ourselves to cultivate. For in regard to it many are deficient. Their contacts with others are not those of friendship. They only want friends to fill some blank in their own lives and their own resources. But the essence of true friendship is mutuality and unreserve. What would not a revival of the spirit of friendliness bring to the world to-day? More than half the troubles in the life both of men and of nations are there because the springs of friendship have been poisoned at their source. Nothing but a revival of mutual trust and goodwill will save society from still further disintegration and decay. And who should minister to the diffusion of unaffected friendliness more readily and certainly than we of the Christian Church?

4. More than his cloak, or his books, or even his friends, Paul wants 'the parchments.' With all his rich experience of Christ and His service he cannot do without the Word written.

No Christian life can be all-round, no Christian life can be anything but empty profession, in which the Word of God is not read, and pondered, and laid to heart, and prayed over, and applied.

We recall that not only Paul but Jesus Himself also fed His soul upon it, stored His mind with it, resorted to it in all the crises of His life, and in ordinary times, too, found in it meat to eat that the world knew not of. And if it was indispensable to the Redeemer, it surely is likewise indispensable to the redeemed.

Let us guard the physical! Look well to the mental! Do not come short in the social! Above all be vigilant of the spiritual! Take time for the cultivation of the all-round Christian life! And especially for 'the parchments'! For all else depends upon our attitude toward them. Christian life fails, fails in any and in all of these respects, unless the Holy Spirit fills it.¹

¹ J. S. Holden, *A Voice for God*, 225.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

The Promise and the Power of Prayer.

'And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'—Lk 11⁹.

Perhaps the undertaking thus given on God's part is not always rightly understood; and it requires not only a more earnest faith, but a more enlightened and discriminating faith, if our prayers are to prevail with the completeness and satisfaction which our Lord here assures us.

Ask, seek, knock: the triple invitation is no vain repetition, no trick of rhetorical emphasis. The three expressions give to prayer a wide scope; they indicate the calling out of many faculties in its exercise. Prayer is a various, rich, and multifarious thing; for it covers the entire range of the soul's converse with God. Prayer embraces all the activities of religion, and promises to them complete attainment.

1. Jesus begins with *asking*. That is prayer in its elementary and essential form, the form most often exemplified by His own practice. The asking prayer is the simple, unstudied, direct expression of faith in God.

But such prevalence with God implies a childlike relationship between the prayer-offerer and the Answerer. In St. Matthew's record of the promise our Lord illustrates its working from the familiar experience of domestic life: 'What man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask for a loaf, will give him a stone?' 'If ye, then,' so He concludes, 'evil as you are, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall he, your Father in heaven!' You see, the whole basis of the asking, and the certainty of compliance lies in the home-feelings that link the asker and the giver. The force of the appeal consists absolutely in the kinship of the two parties, in the heart-bond uniting them, in the father's care for his offspring and the child's trustful, clinging affection toward his parent.

This illustration goes far to explain why so many of our prayers to-day remain unanswered. To appeal to God in this fashion, we must become as little children. We are too wise and self-sufficient, too designing, too artificial and conventional, to ask with the child's straightforwardness. When we know God the Father whom Jesus has shown to us; when we know ourselves, feeble, unworthy but with many needs, prayer will become a vastly more interesting and more successful business than it seems to be in our churches at present.

Further, the asking, as distinguished from the

seeking prayer, is directed toward those objects in whose obtaining human effort and contrivance have no part, the things which 'are not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.' The remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the joys and powers that His coming brings, we cannot earn or procure for ourselves in any degree; we can only *ask* them, and 'wait' in respect of them (as Jesus said) 'for the promise of the Father.' Even as between ourselves, the things that are dearest, that make life sweet and the heart rich, are not bought; they come by asking and by trusting: how much more as between the soul and God! In the pardon of our sin, in the witnessings and quickening of God's Spirit, in the daily light of His favour and the guidance of His providence, we have the innermost links that knit the soul to God, the experiences which are the very essence of religion as imparted to us by Jesus Christ.

2. But the case is not always quite so simple. When Jesus says, '*Seek, and ye shall find,*' there is something more than the bare asking in His thoughts. The very term '*seeking*' implies in certain instances more than mere words: it must be put into deeds; it involves acting, as well as speaking to God in the expression of our wants.

Compare, for example, the fourth and fifth petitions of the Lord's Prayer. In praying, 'Forgive us our trespasses,' you ask in penitent faith; you can do nothing to effect it for yourself. The pardon of sin is the sole and simple act of God. But in uttering the fourth petition, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' the situation is very different. You do not stop at the asking and wait for the needed provision to drop into your idle lap. You set to work. God blesses your honest toil, and gives the increase. Such is the *seeking* prayer. The whole is God's work, who 'fillet all things in all,' as truly as in the other blessing of forgiveness, but not as simply and directly. Thus, as St. James teaches us, 'Faith by works is made perfect,' developing its own energies and reaching its appointed goal. So the student seeking divine knowledge prays, 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law'; but he expects God to answer that prayer, not by superseding, but by inspiring and directing his own study and diligence.

'Seeking' means forethought, diligence, strenuous manful toil; it means the yielding of all our powers to God, heart and head and hands, in pursuit of the manifold ends He sets before us. It means that we not only trust in God's sovereign working for us, but set ourselves to be 'workers together

with God' for our own and for the world's benefit. Such practical seeking is of the nature of prayer : it is prayer translated into action, prayer animating and commanding the activities of life, prayer sustained and made good by corresponding deeds. Such seeking is necessary for the attainment of Christian character. 'Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly love, charity.'

We are feeling throughout our churches to-day our lack of progress, the shrinking of our numbers, the flagging of our work. Is it as St. James tells us, that 'we have not, because we ask not'? If our prayers, private or public, are to mean anything, they must be seeking, and not idly asking, supplications.

Our loitering and ease, our softness and self-indulgence, our grasping at Christian privilege in the neglect of Christian duty, our lack of courage and the ambition proper to Christ's good soldiers, have been the Church's undoing, and make the accomplishment of great things for God in these days of great opportunity impossible. 'Seek' the highest and best that God has placed before you, with your whole being set upon it and every power bent to the pursuit, 'and you shall find.' The prayers of men who make no striving toward the things they ask of God, justly remain unanswered ; neither man nor God believes in them.

3. But there is a third element in effectual prayer on which our Lord insists when He bids His disciples '*knock*,' that the door may 'be opened to them.'

Knocking means persistence, a resolution that will not be denied, a desperate importunity. It seems that obstinacy, sheer force of will that has any kind of right behind it, counts with God. He is the sovereign will of the universe, and His image in man is seen above all in the mysterious, incalculable quality wherein the force of personal being mainly consists. You say of some man who lays his plans and his hopes in life before you, 'He is bound to succeed : it's not so much talent, cleverness, but courage and determination that will carry him through. There's *go* in the man ; nothing will stop him !' And this importunity Christ commends in our dealings with God, and God Himself delights in and rewards it. We put this power to proof sometimes in our children. There is some trifling boon you desire to give to your boy ; but you mean him to have a struggle first. The little fellow climbs on to your knee, and sets himself to work : he tugs and he tries ! Those soft tiny fingers

wind themselves about your stiff hand, straining their feeble strength, twisting and turning now in this direction, now in that, till at last you are weary of resisting : the father's hand flies open, and the blessing is gained ! God in some matters deals with His children in the like fashion. There are things He withholds from us, gifts that we should be unfit to handle, powers we should be too feeble, too slack, to use, until our strength of will and soul has been drawn out in the mightier energies and importunities of prayer.

'Ask, seek, *knock* !'¹

SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION.

The Ascension of Christ.

'Till we all attain . . . unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.'—Eph 4¹³ (R.V.).

In one sense it was the end ; in a truer sense it was only the beginning. The Ascension of Christ marked indeed the end of His humiliation upon earth ; it proved that He was no longer to be confined by the restraints of a bodily life lived in the company of a small circle in a small district of the wide world : we read, therefore, about the Ascension at the end of the Gospels. At the same time it marked the dawn of a new age ; He ascended in order that He might fill all things ; accordingly we read about the Ascension at the beginning of the Acts. It is the starting-point of the history of the Church. Behind the new life of the disciples, behind the mission and expansion of the Christian society, stands the fact that the Risen Christ is ascended and reigns in glory and sends His Spirit and gives gifts unto men. These gifts are of various kinds, but they have one common aim, they are all designed to produce one great result : the consummation of human life in the full-grown manhood, which is measured by nothing short of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Let us see how this works out ; it is a matter of vital importance to us.

We try to picture to ourselves the glory and the triumph of the Ascension ; we think of the Lord assuming again the splendours of the Godhead which for a time He had deigned to veil. Is anything wanting to complete that heavenly state ? Yes, daring as the word may seem, there is. It is His brethren, His Church, ourselves ! The fulness of Christ : St. Paul does not hesitate to describe it as the Church, the Body of which He is the Head. The ascended Christ is waiting to be fulfilled, until we all attain to a full-grown man ; the Body and

¹ G. G. Findlay, *God's Message*, 21.

the Head together make the full Christ. The process is begun already; but there stretches before us a long period of growth before we attain our perfect manhood.

Notice that we attain it only as members of a body. There is no perfection for us apart from the perfection of the whole. All of us together, with our different opportunities and endowments, go to make up the great unity, the unity of those who believe and know the Son of God. 'It is not good for man to be alone,' stands at the very beginning of the Bible as a fundamental law of human life. We have discovered already the way in which the spirit of corporate life develops our manhood. At home, at school, and later at work and in all our social contacts, the common life is revealing each man to himself, bringing out his greatness and his littleness, his powers of sacrifice, his need of sympathy, his capacity for common service.

But we shall miss the best part of our training if we are not strengthening our hold upon that great reality of our membership of the Body of Christ, the true brotherhood through which we attain to the full-grown man.¹

As the Rev. F. R. Barry, speaking at St. Mary's, Oxford, said: 'The adjustment of the claims of personality to the necessities of the social order—of liberty with fraternity—is too much for the children of this world. Only look, for example, at Africa. We are faced there with the attempt to reconcile the inevitably conflicting claims of the European settlers on the one hand, the African population on the other, of both with their Asiatic fellow-subjects. What can organize these diverse claims into effective co-operation? Or take the social problem at our doors: take the problem of India: take the dangerous issues of nationalism, racial minorities, and so on. Where can we find a common conviction to weave these dissonant elements into harmony? Where can we find a principle of unity save in the light of a controlling *purpose*, in which all share, to which all are committed, in which all and each find fulfilment? The world order waits for the Christ.'

There is this further point. We have seen that Christ, the Creator by whom all things were made, has already created in us the new manhood; but between the new man and the full-grown man there stretches a long period of slow, difficult, even painful growth.

'God offers to every mind its choice between Truth and Repose,' says Emerson. 'Take which you please. You can never have both.'

¹ G. A. Cooke, *The Progress of Revelation*, 173.

We choose repose and let truth go. 'And yet,' says Dr. Gossip, 'in the New Testament, however high they pitched their thoughts of Christ, they found these couldn't anything like meet the facts that came crowding in upon them from their own experience, that they must make their thinking of Him vastly ampler still, and they kept doing it joyously. And, indeed, it is a poor tribute to Christ to say that we have come to the end of Him, know everything in Him there is to know; that the men of Nicea or Westminster, or even Paul, saw out to the end of the universe, and that there are no other stars, no further constellations to be found and charted. Always when we cease growing, we have started to decay.'

Thought's a strange land.

Some dig its fields with diligence,

Some pass through it steadfastly as pilgrims to the Sepulchre,

Some haste in dust and heat—toward what goal?

Some climb its difficult hills, and clouds receive them from our sight.

Some take a neat villa, and plant geraniums in their borders,

And test the drains and trim the wandering roses,
And set up a paling to hide the restless road,

says Miss Underhill. Most of us do that last. For we are tired of footing it. We hide the restless road and settle down in some snug corner that we think will do. But she, for one, is all for pushing on and on, until the marshes and the salt winds and strange voyaging birds make clear that we are near the sea.

There on the fringes of thought when the night is falling

I'll wait the invading tide.

To us just now comes the message of the ascended Lord, giving us the true aim and direction. The perfect manhood, the consummation of human life, is that which is growing into the stature of Christ, which will in the end contribute to the fulness of Christ. This is no vague dream or strain of religious rhetoric; it is the most vital, the most practical of truths to live by. The Ascension of Christ is the primary fact of Christian history and Christian experience. He lives and reigns and sends His Spirit; so that, through His Church and Sacraments, the record of His earthly life, of the Cross and Passion, becomes no mere record of the past, but a living force in the present, a guide and pattern for us, showing us how we must follow, how we must grow.

To quote again the Rev. F. R. Barry: 'The gospel is not a programme for society: it is a faith in the meaning of life itself and a consecration to the will of God. But from the first this faith has proved itself the creative nucleus of a social order. It says that life has a spiritual purpose which is best interpreted by Jesus Christ. Since He emerged within human history, therefore, man's life, present, past, and future, has a worth, a significance, a destiny which is marching forward to a consummation. It was St. Paul's magnificent affirmation that "the mystery"—the meaning of our experience—flashes forth into palpable concreteness in the life of Christ and the results that flow from it. That all man is, and all that he inherits, is to be gathered into that Purpose—the embodiment of the Christ that is to be—"who

in all ways is coming to His fulfilment." It is not so much that individual Christians are to grow up into perfect men, but all together into "perfect man"—humanity as it is in God's purpose, the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. That is what the Christian Church means, as the fragmentary incarnation of that ideal in its wholeness.'

Christ lives and sends us His Spirit and His manifold gifts, in order that by entering the corporate life of His Body we may develop those powers which can be developed in no other way, and may thus attain to the full-grown manhood, together with our brethren in the great unity of those who believe and know; and then Christ will be fulfilled, the Body and the Head together making up the one Christ, the Christ that is to be.

The Beatitude of 'Them that trust.'

BY THE REVEREND WILLIAM MACDONALD, M.A., EDINBURGH.

JESUS standing on the Mount pronounced beatitudes on the poor, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the persecuted, and the peacemakers; but scattered here and there throughout the Bible we find a number of 'other beatitudes.' One of these beatitudes is the subject of this study. It occurs in the Book of Jeremiah—'Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is' (Jer 17^o).

We are not surprised to hear these words coming from the lips of this Old Testament prophet, for Jeremiah possessed a wonderful faith in God. He is often referred to as 'the weeping prophet,' and the general impression seems to be that he was sad and pessimistic. That, however, is to misunderstand him. If at times his head was 'a fountain of tears,' there was always reason for it.

The forty years of Jeremiah's public ministry coincided with the last forty years of Judah. It was an age of moral decadence and political corruption, and, just as a mother who, seeing her little child run too quickly down a hill, knows that he will fall, so the prophet saw the nations heading for disaster. With all the love of a mother for her child he warned the people. He told them of the doom that would inevitably overtake them unless they mended their ways and returned to God.

It was all in vain. The people paid no attention to Jeremiah. At first they laughed at him, and in the end they threw him into prison. So he was powerless to avert the disaster he saw overtaking the nation.

But his faith in God never wavered. Indeed, the calamities that overtook the nation corroborated that faith, for he, like all the Old Testament prophets, believed that God was righteous and that there is a moral order in the universe, and that if men or nations break God's moral laws they will suffer for it. The capture of Judah and the Exile were events that he had predicted and expected to happen.

This faith in God was for Jeremiah a continual source of strength and hope. There were many dark days in his life when it seemed almost as if God had forgotten him, and his faith was strained to breaking-point. He was persecuted. He was treated with indifference. His warnings were neglected. He was thrown into a dungeon. But amid all the suffering and calamities that befell him, he never lost his faith. He lost almost everything else, even his life, for he met a martyr's death in Egypt—but not his faith. This wonderful faith in God filled him with confidence and serenity amid all the hardships of his life. He is speaking to us out of his own deep