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If, on the one hand, we have no vision, if our eyes have never been blest in seeing, we have little to dwell upon, when vision is denied. If, on the other hand, we have not times when faith is proved in darkness, we never value the things that are ours, never probe below the surface-wonder to the spiritual reality beneath.

In some such way Henry T. Hodgkin interpreted illness and the impossibility of planning his future which illness brought with it. 'My discipline these days has been in part that of uncertainty. We don't see much on that subject, and when a person's whole life is without any certainties it must be almost impossible to find any values to be learnt through uncertainty.' (This sentence hints at the association of the two beatitudes. If we have not been blest with vision, we shall not qualify for the blessing on those who have not seen!) 'For my part, I have been caused to think of some of the amazing surenesses that I have as anchors—The love and trust of friends, the confidence that one's work is worth while, the belief in values for which it is worth dying, the quiet assurance that one's life has been and is in God's hands and that, through all one's mistakes, it has been guided to a goal. Such things are so much bigger than the uncertainties of what to do next or how to plan for this or that. *I suppose Jesus knew that men sometimes have to come to the big certainties by losing the lesser ones.*' That must be part of the meaning of this beatitude. How often we clutch at the lesser certainties and lose our hold on the larger!

The blessing on those who have not seen is closely

connected not only with the depreciation of faith based on miracle which is a feature of the Fourth Gospel, but also with another characteristic of the Gospel, its interest in those who will believe through the apostolic preaching. All subsequent generations of Christians are within the compass of the High-priestly prayer of ch. 17. Only a few of the first disciples could enjoy the privilege claimed by Thomas and granted to him. Those who come after must depend upon the witness of others and be content with historic tradition. Yet in this very dependence and in the limitations it implies, those who do not see may be blest. For, as Erasmus wrote of the Gospels, 'These writings bring back to you the living image of that holy mind, and restore to you Christ Himself, teaching, healing, dying, rising, in a word so completely present that you would hardly see Him better could you look on Him with your bodily eyes!' And it must be remembered that the Evangelist is not concerned with the relations of faith and sight in general, but with faith in Jesus Christ and physical contact with Him. There may even be an echo of the beatitude in the sentence in 1 P, 'Jesus Christ whom not having seen ye love; in whom ye trust, although as yet ye see him not, and believing, rejoice with joy unspeakable.' This verse at least describes the subjects of the beatitude, which finds fresh fulfilment as the generations pass.

Yet, though I have not seen, and still
Must rest in faith alone,
I love Thee, dearest Lord, and will,
Unseen but not unknown.

In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

Barriers.

BY THE REVEREND W. H. CAULDWELL, KETTERING.

'Who hath . . . broken down the middle wall of partition.'—Eph 2¹⁴.

If you go into the parks and open spaces of progressive towns and cities you will find very few restrictions such as 'Keep off the grass' or 'Don't do this, or 'Don't' do that.

Sometimes these notices are phrased in a more polite way: 'Please keep to the footpath' or 'Please keep off the grass.'

However, more and more towns are doing away with such notices; in many places even the railings round the pleasure parks are coming down.

That may not seem very remarkable or new to you boys and girls because you have become used to this freedom. Some of you younger ones have known nothing else but open spaces free from restrictions. To those of us who are older this is a great step in the right direction. We remember the struggles it took to get the barriers removed.

When we went to the park there were railings round it, and on the grass were those commands or requests about 'Keeping off,' and there was the

park-keeper with his cane (and he knew how to use it), who struck terror into our hearts when we saw him coming our way. If we managed to escape him it would be weeks before we dare go near the park again.

Those things seem to have gone, or are quickly going, and for that we are thankful for your sakes.

But years and years ago when people said, 'Open the parks to the children, take down the railings and pull up the notices, let the children have freedom'—when people said that, other people replied, 'Why, if we allow people to walk where they like and do what they like we shall not have a flower left in the park. People will come and pick the flowers and walk off with the plants, and the children will trample on the beds.'

Yes! Some people really believed that if the boys and girls were allowed to run about all over the park they would do injury to the beautiful things it contained.

In time one town tried the experiment to see what would happen. Fences were removed, notices were pulled up and taken to the potting-shed to be out of the way, the children ran about in perfect freedom and their laughter was a joy to hear.

But no one stole the flowers or did any of the terrible things some people said they would do. This town has two parks and you may walk anywhere without fear. There is a gold-fish pond in the middle of the rockery and the children do NOT fish in it.

There are, however, several notices about the parks but they have on them these words: 'Not Mine, not Thine, but Ours'—how different from the 'Keep off' kind! This notice is merely a gentle reminder to behave because the park belongs to all.

The world to-day seems to be made up of a number of old-fashioned parks each having barriers round it besides notices to 'Keep out.'

The park-keepers use guns and tanks and bombs to see that other people really 'Keep out.' And do you know that the people who own these parks—the nations—talk just as the people on the old Town Councils used to speak. When it is suggested that the nations should be free and open, friendly and trustful, and that barriers should be taken down, the world leaders say: 'What! take our barriers down; open our frontiers! What nonsense.' Why, as soon as we do that the other nations will come and steal our trade and trample over our land and steal our flowers.'

But, boys and girls, in years to come you will live to see how silly and wrong that kind of talk is, just as we know it was foolish to suggest that people

would despoil our parks once they were made free.

Jesus came to break down barriers between man and man. In His Kingdom there is to be no slave, no Jew or Greek, no male or female, but all are to be one with the same privileges under the reign of God's Fatherhood.

Now I want you boys and girls to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and live to break down barriers that separate nation from nation, and divide man from man. I want you to believe that the breaking of barriers is the beginning of friendship and love.

The only real way to break barriers is in the spirit of Love. The boys and the girls, the men and the women of the world must be one under the Kingship of Jesus and with Him build an everlasting Peace.

When you next sing:

'The whole wide world for Jesus'

think of the fences that must be pulled down before the wide world can be His, and determine that in His spirit of love you will play your part for His sake.

The Good Ship of the Gospel.

BY THE REVEREND R. G. KINNIS, KINCARDINE-ON-FORTH.

'And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria.'—Ac 28¹¹.

This summer there is a great stir in the city of Paris. Traders and merchants of all nations will be thronging its streets and walking round the stalls of the Great Exhibition to look at the products of many nations and see if there is anything worth buying. Not everything in the Exhibition, however, is for sale. The Protestant Church in France has seized with both hands this opportunity of doing some advertising on its own account. You know how much work a Church has to show to the world; its education, philanthropy, charity, missions, and publishing. What an interesting lot of stalls these will make! Yes, but the Church must remind people at the same time that all its labours are inspired by the gospel of Christ. Well, the French Protestants have conceived a very striking and original way in which to demonstrate this fact. They have so arranged their stalls that they are focussed on one point; all the avenues lead to a ship lying at one of the quays on the famous River Seine, which the people of Paris are also using for their Exhibition. This ship has been specially designed by a naval architect, and is made of teak and mahogany wood; so, you see, it is a

very valuable ship. Below her decks you will find a very quaint little church with a vaulted roof of timber shaped like a ship's cabin. There, tired people will go and get refreshed in body and soul; there, congregations will gather to worship and hear lectures. This ship bears the beautiful and most appropriate name: *La Belle Nouvelle*, 'The Good News.' This gospel ship reminds us of certain truths.

1. *The part ships have played in spreading the gospel.*—Paul did a lot of his travelling by ship. In the last two chapters of 'Acts' we read about his last voyage, when he was taken from Jerusalem to Rome. It was a great day when Paul set foot on Italian soil and took the road for Rome, for the very summit of his ambition was to preach the gospel there. In their Bulletin which describes their part in the Exhibition, the French Protestants tell us how the gospel first came to their land by sea, and then was carried up the River Rhone. How did Christianity come to our own land? Had not Augustine to cross the sea? Didn't Columba use a ship to get from Ireland to Scotland? Hundreds of years later, the Pilgrim Fathers sailed for America, taking the gospel and its freedom with them. The great missionaries of recent days have had to use ships: Paton sailed for the New Hebrides, and Livingstone for Africa. I like the story of the successors of Livingstone. Two Scotsmen went to London to get a special collapsible boat made to sail the African rivers. They only met with head-shaking until, as they emerged from one office, they ran into a young man, who asked them: 'Can I do anything for you, gentlemen?' They explained their need, and he promised to do his best. Soon he produced a suitable boat, and the expedition started; thus, the name of Alfred Yarrow, so honoured in British shipping history, is linked with Robert Laws, the veteran missionary.

2. *The Church is like a ship.*—The French Bulletin says that the well-being of the gospel seems to be in the keeping of a frail vessel like a canoe which is buffeted by the tempests and yet never sunk. That vessel is the Church, which is the Witness to the gospel and its Guardian among men. The first Christians perceived this likeness and called the part of the church where the congregation sits 'the nave,' which is from the Latin *navis*, 'a ship.'

Jesus Himself used boats—fishing-boats. He calmed the waves of the lake and spoke words of authority from a boat. For Jesus' sake Paul did what he did. For His sake Paton, Livingstone, and Laws did their part. What are you doing for

His sake? What is your place in the good ship of the gospel?

The Christian Year.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

A Harvest Thanksgiving Sermon.

BY THE REVEREND R. W. STEWART, B.D., B.Sc.,
KILLERMONT.

'He brought me to the banquetting house, and his banner over me was love.'—Ca 2^d.

The American novelist Frank Norris describes thus how wheat poured into the great Chicago market called the 'Pit,' and thwarted all attempts to hold up the price. 'The new harvest was coming in, huge beyond the possibility of control, like a tidal wave, bursting through, dashing barriers aside, rolling like a measureless river from the farms of Iowa and the ranches of California, on to the East, to the bakeshops and hungry mouths of Europe.' While no festival is more faithfully observed in country places than Harvest Thanksgiving, the world's harvest equally concerns the city worker. For, apart from some tribes of uncivilized huntsmen, all mankind depends on the labour of farmer and shepherd, on seed and soil and the order of Nature. In this region there can be no question, as in office or factory, of man claiming all the credit; for even while he sleeps the mysterious growth goes on; and when harvests ripen, it is after escaping perils of flood and storm and drought that human power could not have averted. Nothing might seem so fitted to unite men in reverence and thankfulness and praise as the perennial bounty of the harvest.

As he thought on these lines about his thanksgiving service it occurred to this minister that one very slack member of his congregation would be there. Though seeming to show no real interest in the gospel or the work of the Church this man had spoken in shocked tones a few days before about a neighbour who he said was an atheist, 'had no belief in a Maker,' he said. Ought one then, this preacher asked a friend, seeing that people of this careless type would be present whose religion was a sort of minimum bare belief in a Creator, to choose some simple text about God's power and liberality and avoid deeper themes.

The question was like a match to gunpowder. The answer came in an explosion of indignant protest. With passionate intensity his friend scorned the notion that the thoughts of a Christian congregation should be centred for even one service on corn and potatoes. Harvests, comforts, pleasures

these are all extras thrown in by the way. There is but one real subject for Christian praise—God's unspeakable gift in Jesus Christ. And because prose could not convey his feeling he turned to the poetry of the Song of Solomon, taking the music and passion of its language, not like a modern scholar as the speech of romantic human love, but as the old mystics and theologians did who fancied that they read beneath the surface or between the lines a spiritual sense, and used its words of devotion and gratitude and surrender to signify the love of the soul for its Redeemer. 'Here is a text for you,' he exclaimed.

"He brought me to the banquetting house,
And his banner over me was love."

Say that it is not the feast that counts, but the love with which it is spread. Preach not on the banquet, but on the banner, the banner of the Cross.'

Was he not right in the contention that it is useless to make worship broad and thin and vague in the hope of roping in people who care for nothing but harvests? A thanksgiving moved only by such gratitude is hardly worth while. The love of God is not a careless liking for people as they are so that He keeps them alive. It is a seeking, suffering love with a redeeming purpose in it. Harvests and every lavish gift of Nature come from One who has given far more. The right note to strike even at this festival is the high note of Christian adoration for the love of God for sinful men in Jesus Christ. Over the banquetting house hangs the banner of this love that cost Him dear.

First things first and always in God's worship. It is God's way. When the palsied man was brought to Jesus the first gift he got was pardon; then healing was added. The great climax of the Parable of the Prodigal Son is surely reached when his father fell on his neck and kissed him, though after that came the ring and the robe and the feast. The daily, yearly gifts of Providence are not looked upon rightly till they are seen as additions to the blessing of salvation. Masfield, in 'The Everlasting Mercy,' has described how everything looks different to a converted man. The 'golden harvest's yield' makes him think of the Bread of Life:

All earthly things that blessed morning
Were everlasting joy and warning.

'Preach, then, not on the banquet, but on the banner—the banner of the Cross.'

It is, however, inevitable and right to dwell at a thanksgiving service on the generosity of God's love, and the question a man of conscience will ask him-

self is how far in any human way open to him he follows the Divine example.

How to share the gifts of Providence has of course come to be a problem, perhaps *the* problem of statesmanship and world economics. If it is true that the world is suffering not from scarcity but from plenty, from the glut rather than the dearth of commodities, is there not both sin and folly in the situation? In a world containing millions of ill-nourished, scantily-clad, miserably-sheltered, poorly-paid people, science increases the yield of agriculture and man-production makes comforts cheap, and a wail goes up that prices are falling and that abundance means ruin. It seems queer and wrong, and indeed it is a commonplace to say that it is on the side of distribution, that is, of sharing, that civilization fails. If any one feels that these are matters beyond him let him consider what is in his personal control. Is there some lavishness like God's in his own charity?

Of Edgar Wallace, who had from his stories and played the income of a millionaire and died bankrupt, having squandered it in luxury and gambling, some beautiful things are told among all the absurdities of his career. His wife describes his eagerness to share everything. His not particularly useful idea of charity was often to invite an enormous number of people to a banquet in a huge hotel. And then, she writes, 'he was always frightfully particular to see that the less important guests were having a good time. "After all," he would explain, "we don't have to worry about the stars. Everybody will be hanging round them. I want to be sure that the others are enjoying themselves." Edgar's philosophy had for its cornerstone loving-kindness.' Now one need not be a millionaire to be warmly charitable. 'Give alms,' said Jesus, 'of such things as ye have.'

A man may take God's large and lavish way in service. A sharp distinction used to be drawn between trades and professions. Though perhaps partly snobbish, the idea was this, that trade is based on weights and measures and money's worth and an exact bargain. But an artist, for example, would not paint a slightly more beautiful picture for ten pounds more. One buys with a lawyer's or a doctor's fee nothing exactly measurable, just his utmost skill and whole-hearted effort to do his best for the case. People speak of this professional standard being lowered to profit-making. One may also speak of raising the standard of every manner of life to the highest ideal of unstinted personal service. Every man may imitate the Divine pattern, giving generously all he can in faithful work, in personal

interest, adding something of goodwill and helpfulness and love at every turn.

And in that special connexion which comes at the beginning of his own relation to God, a man should ask himself if he is liberal and generous in forgiveness. 'Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.' It is difficult to forgive at all, still harder to forgive freely and kindly so as to renew friendship and make life glad and sweet once more. It may be something stupid or malicious, or careless. Well, suppose it is! Had God's mercy been stated bluntly and baldly, that men were to be let off, not punished, even so men would have had to be grateful. But how much more He has added, the grace of His friendship, peace and joy, every blessing of this life and the hope of glory. Shall not the recollection of the lavishness of God rebuke man's unrelenting temper and inspire him to show in forgiveness of his fellows a generosity such as he has received?

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Quest for Health.

BY THE REVEREND RODERICK BETHUNE, M.A.,
ABERDEEN.

'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.'—Jn 10¹⁰.

There is no quest more in evidence to-day than the quest for health. Certainly there is no more laudable quest, nor any with a greater following.

Health is of supreme importance. There are exceptional people, like Robert Louis Stevenson, who, despite a crippling infirmity, face life gallantly, answering all its demands without hesitation and with irreproachable exactitude. But, for the mass of us men and women, the condition of our health determines our attitude to life, makes us either happy or sad, careful in the execution of our duties or the reverse. Given health, most of us find life easily within the compass of our powers, its work a pleasure, while 'irritable' is the last word our friends would think of applying to us. Deprived of health, most of us are as different from our former selves as night is from day. The slightest duty is exacting; the most trifling worry makes clear thinking impossible; and to be courteous to our friends is sometimes quite beyond us. Realizing that, the majority of men and women have endeavoured to safeguard that upon which so much depends.

I. We may say with some assurance, I think, that there never was an age which set more store by

health than the age in which we live. Most of us are engaged in the quest, the statesman and his constituent, the teacher and his pupil, the doctor and the patient who invokes his aid.

One of our British statesmen, in a book entitled *Wanderings and Excursions*, describes the recreations in which he engages for the preservation of his health. The desire to get away from work that he may return to it again with greater zest constrains him, he says, 'to keep in his cupboard a friendly old suit of comfortable wear that has paled under the fervent eye of the sun, and been matured by dust and mud and rain, and with that, a pair of honest boots nailed like the oak door of an ancient keep which of themselves direct one's way o'er moor and fell and bog and bypath away from the offence and clamour of cars and trains.' It saves his soul, he says, it keeps his windows open to the winds of heaven and his heart to the song of the birds. And there are many in our day, like him, out upon the quest for health. Our roads are peopled as they have not been for years. Men and women are cycling, walking, running, touring—all in quest of health. Like the poet, many in our time would appear to hear a voice saying:

Away, away, from men and towns,
To the wild woods and the downs—
To the silent wilderness
Where the soul need not repress
Its music, lest it should not find
An echo in another's mind,
While the touch of Nature's art
Harmonizes heart to heart.

And, of course, all of us who are engaged in this quest are doing a great service for ourselves. No time we devote to it is ever wasted.

II. But I desire to go a little further. One cannot help wondering what attitude some have towards Jesus who are engaged in this quest for health. From their fitful attendance—if they attend at all—at the services of the Sanctuary, one cannot but deduce that they believe that Jesus and His religion have no point of contact with them. Religion seems solely concerned with obligations they are unwilling to acknowledge, and Jesus with a way of life lacking in attractiveness.

To decry those who assert a preference for the open is not my purpose. Nor have I a desire to criticise any for a failure to fulfil duties which, to my mind, may seem obligatory upon the entire human race. But I am concerned to show that Jesus has a very definite point of contact with us in our love of the open and in our quest for health, and

that He has a very definite contribution to make to your health and mine.

Poets and lovers of the open may sing of—

. . . wild woods and the plains
 . . . the pools where winter rains
 Image all their roof of leaves,

but their enthusiasm is infinitesimal beside that of Jesus, who glimpsed the beauty of the Galilean lilies, who watched with interest the farmer sowing his seed, who heard the song of the birds and whose heart sang with them. Men may insist upon the necessity of their withdrawing from workaday scenes and worries, but their insistence and even their practice lag far behind those of Jesus, who stole time from sleep to see the sun rise and gild the world with the beauty of a newborn morning. Many protest their sympathy with those to whom comes no hint of change, no opportunity to refresh themselves in the soft, fresh air of the open, unpolluted places; but our desire to help such is nothing beside that of Jesus, who found His chief task among men and women who were handicapped in the race of life and who, on that account, were unable to undertake the common duties of the common day. It was a supreme joy to Him to see men and women glorying in their health and taking everyday duties comfortably in their stride.

Jesus has no point of contact with those engaged in the quest for health. Nothing could be more untrue! From Him who enjoyed the open spaces and knew their recuperative qualities we have much to learn, and this among other things: that something more than fresh air is necessary sometimes for the restoration of health. It was not fresh air, or exercise, or recreation, that restored to the Woman of Samaria her zest for life, but contact with the radiant, health-giving personality of Jesus Christ. Nicodemus, he who came to Jesus by night, found life more than a little unintelligible, its duties more than a trifle exacting. He was unfit, was dissatisfied with his ideas about things, until he met Jesus, who put him on the way to health when He said, persuasively, 'Ye must be born again.' Peter was unfit because life held for him a peculiarly seductive temptation against which, he feared, his resources would be quite inadequate. 'I have prayed for thee,' said Jesus, thereby making His disciple strong in His strength. Are there not people, like the Woman of Samaria, Nicodemus, Peter, to-day who require something more than fresh air and exercise and recreation if they are to take their duties comfortably in their stride?

III. The contribution Jesus made to the health of men He makes still. He commends all who are seeking the refreshment of the open spaces, but He goes further. Because He does go further we may have reason to be glad. It may be that the contribution of Jesus is what some of us are needing.

Some, harassed by business, haunted by worry, pursued by memory, have sought healing in some quiet strath or glen. But, if we would be honest, there have been times when we have found the relaxation ineffectual, when we have returned to our task feeling as unequal to it as when we laid it down. Fresh air cannot do everything, nor can exercise, nor can recreation, we discover. Has it occurred to us that Jesus may have something pertinent to say to us as He had to men of His own day whose hands performed their tasks awkwardly and even unwillingly? Instead of seeking leafy lanes, or the green fields, or a quiet glen, we should do well to turn sometimes to Him who enjoyed such radiant health Himself and who longed to make others healthy.

It is His company the world needs to-day, the world which is emphasizing the importance of physical fitness. Will the fact that Russia, Germany, and other nations are concentrating upon raising a super-race mean the solution of all our international problems? The physical, let us recollect, is only one element in the matter of health. Physically sound men may be seriously unfit through the possession of false ideas. If unfit, then irritable. If irritable, then ready to take offence at the slightest indiscretion. The world needs Jesus if it is to be healthy.

If you and I and all who are crowding our roads to-day are as interested in the quest for health as declarations suggest, then we cannot ignore Him who came that we might have life. If the nations' testimony to their interest in health is sincere they must logically take Jesus and His utterances into their calculations. To make men healthy, equal to all life asks, was why He came.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Perfection of Love.

BY THE REVEREND C. G. WILKES, WIMBLEDON.

'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' R.V. 'Ye therefore shall be perfect . . .—Mt 5⁴⁸.

This is a command with something of a promise in it. It is a promise with something of a command in it. In either case a staggering saying! Perfection, human perfection, who can attain it?

Perfection, as the perfection of the Heavenly Father, who can essay it ?

1. *What is the perfection here spoken of?* Not perfection of power. God makes His sun to shine on the evil and on the good. We have not the power to make the sun shine at all. He is not unreasonable and does not require from us that which He has set out of our reach. There are powers of body, mind, and spirit that we do not possess. He does not demand five talents where He has given but one. Some are slow of speech. Others are plagued with a poor memory, incoherency of thought, and the like. And though training can make some difference, yet there the disability is. Nor is the perfection here spoken of perfection of knowledge. There are many things we do not know : about God, about duties, about ideals, about the physical world, about human nature, about the training of children, about the use of money, about the cause and cure of poverty, about the inter-relation of nations and colours, about the Bible, about our life here, about our life hereafter. With all this ignorance there is necessarily error. The error may be committed in good faith, but it is nevertheless error. Obviously this is not the kind of thing of which Jesus is speaking.

Christian perfection is the perfection of love. It is the perfection of loving deeds done to all and sundry. Just as God makes His sun to shine on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust, so if any man compel us to go one mile we are to offer to go another ; we are to love our neighbours and we are to love our enemies, and to pray for those that despitefully use us and persecute us.

That word 'therefore' in the text is important. It shows that the command is not to be taken away from what has gone before. Here Jesus is not even speaking of love to God, though He does that elsewhere. This is an emphasis on the second commandment. The first is one form of Christian perfection, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart.' The second is, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Now in letting the emphasis in perfection rest upon conduct towards others, Jesus brings the doctrine down from heaven to earth. The usual objection felt to it is that it is all in the clouds. Far from it. It is very much upon earth as Jesus sees it. It is not a state of ecstasy in which we are caught up into the third heaven ; but it is returning good for evil ; treating enemies with goodness and the unlovable with loving deeds. So is the subject brought on to the level of everyday life.

You have known a woman who towards her little child showed the perfection of love. There was nothing too good for him. Her own interests were always secondary to his. She showed him the love which, as Paul says, is very patient, very kind, which knows no jealousy, makes no parade, is never selfish, never resentful. When the boy was fretful and cross and disobedient, he made his mother's life harder ; but it did not alter by one jot her attitude of love towards him or thoughtful kindness. That is the perfection of love shown to one. Christian perfection is that love shown to all. For if we love our children only, what do we more than others ? If we are kind to our own set and friends only, why, that is the way of the world. If we are generous to those who are generous to us, do not even quite disreputable folk act up to that ?

2. *Is it possible?* Jesus' method of concrete examples makes perfection more understandable, but seemingly less attainable. It surely leaves us in no doubt that we have not attained. The answer to the question, 'Do we love the Lord our God with all our heart?' is found by looking within, and it is quite easily possible to make a mistake and to think that we do so love God without reserve when, as a matter of fact, it is not so. But no such mistake is possible about loving our neighbours and enemies. The facts are too painfully obvious to us to be overlooked—the facts of our self-interest and self-centredness, of our aloofness and our envies. We do not find perfection of love in our attitude to the unlikeable. Is it indeed possible? The question is forced on us. Can any man ever attain to it ?

Now Jesus would scarcely command the impossible, or charge us to love our neighbour if no one could do it. And there is one word in the text which speaks of hope and promise : 'Father.' If the command had been 'Be ye perfect, as the Creator is perfect' it would have left us cold. If it had run 'perfect as your heavenly King' we should have found no encouragement. If it had been 'perfect as the eternal Judge' we might have trembled. But 'Father' is the word of grace here. For an attitude possible to Father may be possible to son. There is a likeness. We are made in His image. He is not requiring of us something alien to humanity, but something the germ of which is within us and is our inheritance. The beginnings of it are discernible in us. It is only its perfection which seems so far out of reach. The mother giving up ease and strength and holiday and perhaps life itself for her little one is acting just as God her Father is acting ; the attitude is the same.

Yet a stronger hope comes in here. Where there is a father there is giving. But how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him! It is His desire to give us the gift of freedom from the sin of envy, jealousy, anger, irritability, meanness, selfishness. It is His desire to give us the gift of sweet temper, courage, truth, generosity, and purity. His giving is only conditioned by our desires and receptivity. An earthly father gives in accordance with capacity and desire. Where there is striving for a thing and desire for it, that can be given. The girl with music in her heart can be given a violin. The boy with mechanical bent can be given a chance to cultivate that side of his life. And the man who desires, and shows his desires by striving for them, can be given by his Heavenly Father purity and goodness and all the graces of the Christian character. He can become a real son, one who has caught the likeness of his Father. This likeness is a gift of God.

3. *Is it a long, long trail?* As long as life. For there never comes a time when no further progress can be made. A machine perfected may, bar wear and tear, be perfect a year later. It stays put. A human and living organism does not. The saint has still to progress. A year's non-progress is not only non-progress; it is decadence. He must grow in grace and in knowledge. And new knowledge means new opportunities and responsibilities and ideas of duty and living. So then let us ever be striving and ever ready to receive. For effort and trust are twin oars of this boat. The use of one without the other will merely send us round in a circle and will get us nowhere. Let us strive to show the attitude of our Father to our fellows. Let us strive with all our might. Yet nevertheless do we remember that it is after all the gift of God. Our effort does not obtain it; but it does make it possible for God to give it—even Godlikeness of loving-kindness to the good and the bad.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Consecration of Mind.

'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . with all thy mind.'—Lk 10²⁷.

No one cause accounts for the increasing estrangement of lay civilization from the Churches. But it is foolish to minimize the fact. Is not one of the most important causes of this failure the extent to which the Churches have overlooked the part played by reason in religion and forgotten that God is to be served not only with the soul and the heart but with the understanding?

And the Church, we may be sure, will remain a backwater as long as her official teaching includes beliefs which have been undermined by science and are in conflict with history; which survive as isolated and isolating forces in a world determined to live, to learn, and to advance to the full. As long as this is so, Christ's word to the Church is, 'One thing thou lackest.' 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind.'¹

A faith in which the mind plays no part is sure to end in folly. An unintelligent belief is in constant danger of being shattered. Hardy, in sketching the character of Alec D'Urberville, explains the eclipse of his faith by saying, 'Reason had had nothing to do with his conversion, and the drop of logic that Tess had let fall into the sea of his enthusiasm served to chill its effervescence to stagnation.'

But there is another danger. It is confining the mind within carefully restricted limits. There are those who use their brains busily in their religion, but outside certain limits their faith is an unreasonable assumption. Their mental activity spends itself on the details of doctrine, while they never try to make clear to themselves the foundations of their faith. They have keen eyes for theological niceties, but wear orthodox blinders that shut out all disturbing facts. Cardinal Newman, for example, declared that dogma was the essential ingredient of his faith, and that religion as a mere sentiment is a dream and a mockery. But he was so afraid of 'the all-corroding, all-dissolving scepticism of the intellect in religious inquiries' that he placed the safeguard of faith in 'a right state of heart,' and refused to trust his mind to think its way through to God. Martineau justly complained that 'his certainties are on the surface, and his uncertainties below.' We are safe as believers only when, besides keeping the heart clean, we

press bold to the tether's end
Allotted to this life's intelligence.²

'When the procession of your powers goes up joyfully singing to worship in the temple, do not leave the noblest of them all behind to cook the dinner and to tend the house,' said Phillips Brooks. 'Insist on seeing all that you can see now through the glass darkly, so that hereafter you may be ready when the time for seeing face to face shall come.' And again he said, 'The being who has intellect does not love perfectly unless his intellect takes part in his loving.'

Dr. Lang when Archbishop of York, speaking to a

¹ A. Fawkes, *The Church a Necessary Evil*, 74.

² H. S. Coffin, *Some Christian Convictions*, 29.

Student Christian Movement Conference at Liverpool, urged that in all dedication of the mind sincerity was the first requirement. Even a loyal disciple of Christ, he said, has to pass through searching discipline if he is also to be loyal to truth. Do not shirk that risk, great and awful as it is. In days of bewilderment, be quite relentless in the maintenance of your intellectual integrity; follow the argument where it leads. But all the time maintain also your religious practice, your prayers, your Bible reading, your meditation, your communion. The light you need to solve your problem may come through them. Never let them go unless or until it would seem to be sheer hypocrisy to persist in them, which can only be if you really become convinced that your religious faith is baseless. But even the risk of that must be faced in our loyalty to truth. We must solemnly recognize that loss of faith may be the price that has to be paid for the ultimate winning of deeper truth, just as the sense of dereliction by God was part of what Christ must pass through to win the joy that was set before Him, the joy of a world by Him redeemed from selfishness to love.

'In understanding be men,' said St. Paul to the Christians at Corinth, and he enjoins upon the brethren at Philippi to 'think on these things.' To many who are conscious of the poverty of their intellectual endowment and the slenderness of their educational opportunities this seems a counsel of perfection. But one of the outstanding marks of true Christianity is its power to confer upon commonplace and poorly-educated folk the distinction of a lofty spiritual intelligence. One may meet, not only in lonely glens but along the crowded highways, humble working folk who, in plain and homely speech, discourse upon the things of the Spirit with a grip and a discernment which are at once a delight and a rebuke. Without knowing it, they have by slow and patient pondering attained to a degree of mental concentration and penetrative insight, and developed a clarity of spiritual perception which many a highly-educated man might envy.

'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy will, and with all thy mind.' Thought is not a cold and rigid exercise of the mind, demanding the suppression of all emotion and calling for a loveless neutrality. Sympathy, not indifference, is the true key to knowledge, and one cannot even study a primer of geology rightly without bringing some degree of sensitiveness and fervour

of spirit to the subject. We cannot separate thought from either the will or the emotions, for the soul of a man is a unity. It never merely understands, or wills, or feels. In every act of understanding there are the potential dynamic of will and the latent flame of emotion. And where that understanding is exercised upon the things of God, there the will begins to energize towards the Divine and love bursts into flame.

There is an intimate connexion between thought and prayer. The mind feeds the heart, and an understanding irradiated with Divine wisdom is often the only thing needed to redeem our prayer-life from dullness and impotence. The prayers of the unthinking soul always tend to resolve themselves into a narrow cycle of petitions, bounded by individual need and lacking intelligent sympathy with God's larger plans and purposes. Such prayers carry the seeds of decline within themselves, and, however fervently begun, tend to become cold and perfunctory and to make the devotional life childish and trivial. To refuse the intellectual discipline that comes by pondering deeply upon spiritual verities implies, not merely a culpable laziness, but more often a cowardice which shrinks from 'thinking through' the deeper implications of the gospel, lest the life which passed muster on a superficial, childish view of things should stand condemned.

One true, deep thought of God, experimentally appropriated and worked out by Christian men and women, would change the face of England. 'Think, learn to think!' exclaims a shrewd observer. 'It will profit you—there is so little competition!' And from the heart of God there still wells up the moving plaint: 'My people doth not *consider*'!

Thought is the fuel of the soul's fire. Madame Duclaux tells us how one night, when Pascal was lying seriously ill and unable to sleep, as he read the Gospel of St. John a flame of fire seemed to envelop him. 'In the incomparable phrase of the *Imitation*, he was "all on fire," and with the Psalmist he cried: "While I was musing, the fire burned," a flame of mysterious, beneficent fire that inundated heart and flesh and spirit with a new sense.'

Conscious of coldness and impotence, we long for the experience of some great creative moment such as comes ever and anon to the saints of God. Our need calls for such a vivifying experience. It will surely come if, having yielded our will and affections to God, we also bring our mind to His searching and fructifying discipline.¹

¹ E. Herman, *The Touch of God*, 31.