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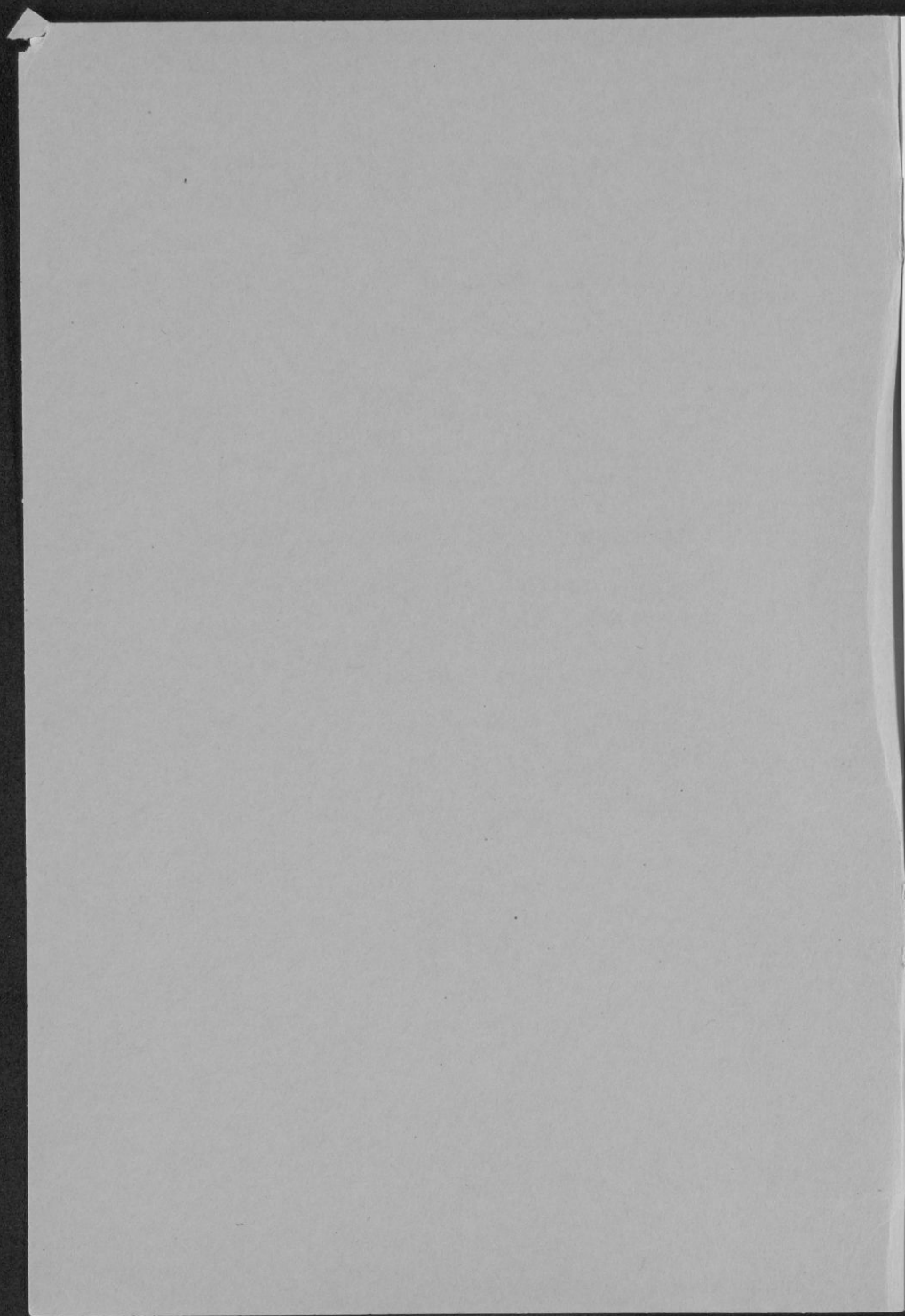
Duffy, Alfred
- The Poetry of duty
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The Poetry of Duty

by

Alfred Duffy





THE POETRY OF DUTY

by

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(Five addresses delivered in the Catholic Hour on Sundays
from July 12 to August 9, 1936)

- I. Providence—Specifications of Success.
- II. Representative Authority—God in the Tribunal.
- III. Asceticism—Duty as an Art.
- IV. Christ the Exemplar—God Dressed as Man.
- V. Prayer—Visiting Home.



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PROVIDENCE—SPECIFICATIONS OF SUCCESS

(Address delivered on July 12, 1936)

God is the master of the universe, not only in the sense that He is entitled to the submission of His creatures and can exact service from them, but also because He is the only One competent to direct creation to the accomplishment of its best success.

Only God knows the workings of His own mind. Only God knows the complete program of creatural existence. He has implanted into everything the instincts and powers which enable it to function according to His will. He has established for everything in the universe the best and most favorable destiny it can have. Not that this world is the best that God could have created, that God could not have invented a higher scale of dignity for a great many of His creatures, that every stone could not have been a precious stone, or that every vegetable could not have had a rare fragrance, or that every beast could not have won prizes, or that every man and every woman could not have been both clever and handsome. But even though God might have improved creatures to satisfy a higher standard of human excellence, nevertheless, once He has located a creature in the great mosaic of nature, that creature can best succeed by accepting the limitations He has divinely set for it. And whether we find that creature in the infinitesimal world of interacting atoms or in the bewildering reaches of space; whether it be an insect hidden under a stone in the forest, or the king-beast of the jungle, or man, the history of its mission in the world is known not at all or only inadequately to itself. Its full career is a secret in the mind of God.



The name of God is the only possible response to that question of Isaias: "Who has wrought and done these things, calling the generations from the beginning?" The response is "I the Lord, I am the first and the last." And so, there is no dignity, no reason in saying—I will—when God has said—Thou shalt not. Such an exhibition may be called self-expression, or a daring of conventions; but it was just such an exhibition that made hell the house of Lucifer and changed Eden into a vale of tears. The best thing Lucifer could have been was a good angel. He could not have been like God in the manner he attempted; neither could man. And these were the only two creatures who could unlawfully aspire beyond themselves. But while a creature cannot move outside the strictures God has fastened on it, it can take full advantage of its native powers. Incidental circumstances, such as where it happens to be, or what force moved it there, or what its neighbors are like; these things cannot make it better or worse. A glacial boulder buried in the strata of the earth where God put it, can be as good a stone as one quarried for a cathedral. A farmer can be as good a man as his king. A layman can be as good a man as his bishop. Neither God nor man judges a broom-handle by the buds it grows, nor a man's morality by the cut of his coat. Everything in creation is qualified to succeed, provided it observes the standard of success established by God. Such observance takes complete care of its own destiny.

There is this difference, however, between the point of view of the creature and the point of view of the creator. If every creature could think, it would think only of itself. It would have to tend

only to its own work. The sun would merely have to shine, and not bother whether the earth was heated, or flowers grew as a consequence. Grass would only have to grow with no concern as to whether cattle grew fat on it. To the creature the world would seem to revolve around itself. But from the creator's point of view the vista is different. To Him, creation is not a series or pile of creatures with destinies. It is an organized thing. Creatures are not put into insulated compartments where neither sight nor sound of them can influence a neighbor. Their fates are so interlocked that a cough or a thought or a drop of water may rearrange forces and develop emergencies, which can register an effect in eternity.

Hence, whoever assumes the task of directing the destinies of each creature, so that one great common purpose will be served, must possess an infallibly correct prophetic mind and an infinitely masterful hand. He must have set the gears and tempered the bearings of the great world machine, so that one destiny would interplay with all other destinies, so that each would be forceful in the general movement, and none would interfere with the economies of another.

He must have provided that the stars would not have become jumbled, that grass should not accidentally grow oaks, that lions should not put men in cages, that the soul made for a man should not by some blunder inhabit an ape. It would be necessary that he forecast that humor and laughter and romance temper the seriousness of living, and that a head-ache or a heart-ache or a rainy holiday would not be mere nasty circumstances that litter the

smoothness of life, but that they would be events with a mission, and the mission one of benevolence to the whole world. These are the routine problems of the Master of the universe.

God designed and built the ship of creation. He alone knows the principles of navigation by which it is brought to port. Man rides in it as a passenger. He learns to make his way about and to name the ropes and braces and sheets and deck areas. He has been told by God some facts about proprieties of conduct, which will contribute to the efficiency of the order on board. But other matters that are no business of his, he has not been told. He knows nothing of the mystery of movement and direction by which he and all creation are being propelled toward their destinies, nor the secret by which these destinies are laced into a cooperative unity. Man may look back to a small event like the fall of a stone, or to a remote event like the fall of a star, and know how it changed the course of his life. But the history of the fact from the beginning, how it started, how it proceeded through an accumulation of causes and effects until its fall cut so sharply against the tide of his life, that the tide never flowed the same thereafter; these things he does not know. The destiny of a stone or of a star is to fall under certain conditions, but there is required an infinitely exhaustive knowledge of economies to make either event turn the course of a soul. "The works of God are done in judgment from the beginning, and from the making of them he distinguished their parts, and their beginnings in their generations." "Thou hast done the things of old, and has devised one thing after another; and what thou has designed

hath been done; for all thy ways are prepared, and in thy providence thou hast placed their judgments.”

There is only one formula for the realization of the benefits of whatever destiny God has devised for a creature. That formula is the observance of law. God does not launch us into existence and tell us to muddle through life as well as we can. Nor does God make a lottery of life and give a fortune to the one who makes the best guess. He has written a list of instructions for our direction. If we carry out these instructions automatically we are serving our best interests and the best interests of everyone else in the world. These instructions are God's law, and His law is the flawless prescription written by His wisdom to encompass the best destiny of every creature.

But while God makes laws, He does not rationalize those laws for us. God does not say for instance, that divorce is unlawful, and then proceed to explain that this law to human judgment will seem good in a great many cases, and will seem cruel in many others, but that in the light of His special analysis it is never cruel but always merciful. God does not say to the poor man: “Thou shalt not steal”, and then unroll the future to display the blessed function of poverty in his particular case. God does not say: “Honor thy father and thy mother”, and then write a volume of commentary to justify the inclusion of unworthy fathers and mothers under the scope of His legislation. God's law is divine medicine compounded to insure moral health. Man's duty is to take it.

Human reason is not valid against the law of

God. For divine law is the expression of divine wisdom, whether chiselled on tablets of stone and delivered amid the thunders and lightnings of Sinai, or written by the finger of God in the hearts of men.

Reason is a superb gift. It is the faculty which draws a line across visible creation and separates the aristocracy, that is man, from the proletariat, that is everything else. By the power of his intellect man has conquered the great forces of nature. He has harnessed the wind, compelled the sea and the air to bear up his ships, has weighed the stars and calculated their light and measured their speeding through the firmament, he has used the air to be his messenger. A thousand secrets has reason plucked from nature, and yet who will dare say that the limits have been reached of man's tremendous power of soul. Reason has its use, but among its uses we cannot concede it the title of God's competitor. When reason presumes to sit in judgment on the laws of God, it is in much the same situation as the blind men of the old story, who went to the zoo to observe an elephant. One of them felt the elephant's leg, and claimed that an elephant was like a tree. Another touched its side, and thought an elephant was like a wall. The third stroked its ear, and imagined an elephant was like a fan. The difficulty was not so much that the blind men could perceive nothing, but rather that they very definitely could perceive something, but could not perceive enough to effect an integrated idea of just what an elephant is like. If man wishes to feel important as the king of visible creation, he can justify the feeling, but he must remember that he is important just because of God's good pleasure in making him His pet. But

if man is reasonable he knows that as a constructive critic of God's administrative policies, he is utterly negligible.

God's law is the perfect formula for the coordination of that society of destinies which is called creation. Observance of divine law is an affiliation with the only adequate instrument of direction, the wisdom of God. Observance of divine law is, then, man's only guarantee, his only hope for personal and communal success.

Yet the history of mankind has recorded many a conflict between God's laws and human argument. It shows many a human court of conscience pronouncing a sentence subversive to God's will, rendering a verdict of invalidity against divine omniscience, detecting flaws and loopholes in divine constitutions. But when man presumes to take a position against the law of God, he cannot point to the earthly issue of his conduct and consider himself justified. He cannot point to happy remarriages of divorced people and claim that divorce is proved good even though God has raised a law against it. He cannot say that big business and politics and diplomacy are better off for the lies so opportunely told to make a successful case. He cannot vindicate war as an instrument of prosperity. And the reason why he cannot validly do these things is the same as the reason why he cannot collect today a bet that the sun will not shine tomorrow. The reason is precisely because tomorrow is the day that completes the event. In ethical matters, matters involving God's law, the tomorrow is eternity, that period which lies immediately after death and continues forever. The God who made observance of His law

the one condition of success is also the God who set the date for demonstrating the superiority of His methods over all others. That date follows time. It is not a part of it. God has legislated for man's eternal safety, and the efficiency of His legislation must be judged only in the light of man's eternal fate. Eternity not time, divine foresight not human strivings, divine economy not human statistics, form the only basis for comparison of standards of real achievement.

If a man sins against the law of God and then honestly repents, his sin may be the act of a reasonable but humanly weak creature. But when a man makes a philosophy of his rebellion, and substitutes it for the law of God as his moral code and formula for success, when a man does this, his philosophy rates on a par with that of the cat on the hearth, the canary in the cage, the mouse in a hole of the wainscoting, mentioned in the story. They were all watching the king at his desk. They all had their own reasons for thinking him a fool. They all wanted to suggest an improvement in his routine. The mouse criticised him for exposing his life to the cat. The cat could not figure why he did not eat the canary. The canary sadly pondered his stupidity in not seizing his opportunity to fly out the window.

Men so often judge God by their own tiny measures and short sight. They consider His laws a tyranny, when they are actually the specifications of real success. They consider obedience a drudgery, when it is actually the poetry of being wise with the wisdom of God.

REPRESENTATIVE AUTHORITY—GOD IN THE TRIBUNAL

(Address delivered on July 14, 1936)

There is only one theory that satisfactorily accounts for the life of man on earth. It is the simple and very old one—God gave man life that man might use it to win a better and permanent one, a life free from the tantalizing recurrence of little and big griefs which beset him on earth. This is the only theory that enables man to fit history and his own experience with his reason. It is the only theory that explains the orderliness and the goodness persistently outcropping in the road he travels. The world came from the artful hand of God and is circling back to that same origin. And so it is not strange that it should savor of its Maker. This is the only theory that explains man's sense of honor, that sense of personal cheapness and impending doom, which follows the most secret violations of his ideals. For sin is not merely an offense against a statute, it is a betrayal of one's own dignity. This is the only theory that rationalizes the unfinished problems of justice which man sees strewn through history, even his own personal history. Men are to live through another life that will see the unfinished businesses of justice completed.

God is not so thriftless as to leave work half done. He cannot will the end without willing the means necessary to its accomplishment. He cannot give man life that he might earn a better life and then surrender him to a principle of luck. God would not set man down in the midst of creation and leave him to be the prey of every stronger man who

came along. He would not permit him to pioneer all over again to learn the lessons that he might learn from the experience of others, nor allow him to attain nothing just because many of the necessary tasks of life cannot be done alone, but must be done by harmonious team work. We would not expect God to do this. We would rather expect Him to invent a system of guarantees and protections for man's life and freedom, a system that would correlate the public efforts of one man with the public efforts of another, so that they would not hinder each other, when they might just as easily help each other.

God has invented such a protective and unifying agency. It is called the State. Its function is to aid man to live freely and efficiently. It takes care of one part of man's destiny—the preservation of his life and of the opportunity to use his life in the service of his conscience.

There is another critical aspect of man's destiny which is taken care of by another tribunal. Man must not only live efficiently from a political point of view, but he must live in such a way as to earn from his Creator a better and permanent life. He must be taught certain important facts about this other life, its value, the method by which it is to be gained, the obstacles to the winning of it. This aspect of man's destiny calls for an educational system which is capable of matching human conduct with eternal truth, which can state the solution of the religious problems of mankind. It calls also for a system of aids to cure his waywardness and strengthen his good purposes. This side of man's destiny is cared for by the Church, which is specifically a tribunal

authorized and equipped to teach religious truth, to minister spiritual strength, and to organize and make these two services available by legislation.

Both of these tribunals to which the care of man's destiny is entrusted are invested with the authority of God. Each in its own sphere holds a commission as God's agent. Each in its laws truly reveals the will of God with reference to the public conduct of men. Each is sacred. Each is entitled to reverence. Each is entitled to the obedience that God Himself would command if He in His own person stood before men and told them what to do.

The greatest obstacle to the observance of human law is the fact that people do not look far enough behind the law. They are so familiar with the mechanics of legislation, the parliamentary processes by which a bill is brought to vote, the divisions of opinion during debate, the names of those who sponsor an act, and the antics of some legislators who discuss it—they are so familiar with these commonplaces of law-making that the law itself loses a great deal of its dignity. It seems to have come into existence by a kind of accident. It appears an arbitrary thing, the whim of men who had to find some way of justifying the salary they receive. But these are not the reasons that give law any of its cogency. These are not the facts by which the sacredness of law stands or falls. The dignity of law is rooted in a truth, which stands behind all these—the truth that it is God Who dictates all just law. Human lawmakers rate merely as His secretaries. He speaks. They write His law into a book. "By me kings reign, and lawgivers decree

just things. By me princes rule, and the mighty decree justice."

And so the first fact that makes the observance of law easier, that makes it something more than a nuisance tax on the liberties of life, is this—observance of human law is an act of obedience to no man. It is an act of obedience to God. "Let every soul be subject to higher powers: for there is no power but from God: and those that are, are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. And they that resist purchase to themselves damnation." A legislator cannot feel flattered that as he stands in his tribunal the commonwealth is subservient to him. The community has no more reverence for him as a man than the quality of his manhood can command. Any other reverence, is given him because he represents God. And since he represents God his judgment before the tribunal of God will be made on the basis of his own reverence for his own responsibilities. "Give ear, you that rule the people, and that please yourselves in multitudes of nations: For power is given to you by the Lord, and strength by the most High, who will examine your works, and search out your thoughts."

A position of political authority is not a season of leisure. It is not a season of fortune hunting. It is not a stepping stone to financial or social security. If any of these things come in the course of an honest discharge of duty, they are well earned. But even then they are the incidentals of office, not normal pay. Consequently, obedience to a law written by a legislator is obedience to a law written by a man who is himself subject to God and responsible

to God for his stewardship. Obedience to law is obedience to God. It is an act of worship, for it is an acknowledgement of God's sovereignty, of His right to rule us.

Another fact that makes the observance of law easier is this—observance of law is not merely one of the routine acts of life like shopping or shaving or riding in the subway. It is an act of chivalry. It is a very fine courtesy toward God. It is not a deed that goes into the maw of forgotten history, something so insignificant that it might just as well not have been done. Its value as a bit of human conduct is not suggested by the inattention of executives to law-abiding citizens and their consuming interest in law-breakers. It is true that there is no earthly bonus attached to the average good record of law keeping. A pedestrian or a motorist who obeys traffic laws is not congratulated by every policeman he passes. He does not receive medals. But he has done an act of service to God. And if the world does not notice it, or does not remark about it, well—it is hardly the world's business to go so far out of its way. The affair is between men and God. God has challenged loyalty. And men have proved themselves His obliging friends. He is the timekeeper and He is the paymaster. His sense of appreciation is great and the wages He pays are very good. "Whatsoever you do, do it from the heart, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that you shall receive of the Lord the reward of inheritance."

While circumstances may put a tax on our reason to see the authority and wisdom of God in some individual laws, the validity of these laws is

not thereby affected. God delivers his messages through human representatives; and it is a way with all human beings that they can make mistakes, that they are so often only partly right. Nevertheless human law is fortified by the authority of God, provided only that it is not unjust. It is no objection against the validity of law that the legislator may not be a good man, any more than it would be a proof of a man's incompetency as a musician to say that he has poor taste in neckties. Credentials to represent someone is almost always a fact entirely disassociated from one's grooming, whether sartorial or spiritual. Neither is it an objection against the validity of a law that it is made incidentally to serve party purposes. If the law is good, it has God's backing. If it is experimental, it must be conceded the same cogency, until it be proved harmful to the community. A doctor's prescription does not cease to be good medicine just because he tries to make friends with his patients. It is no objection against the validity of a law that its purpose missed fire in certain cases. Human law is at best a cumbersome machine. It is usually constructed so as to exclude too much intrusion of personal bias on the part of executives and the judiciary. Its ideal is to be a simple and almost automatic device adjusted to prevent license and at the same time to permit a maximum of fundamental liberty: But at times the mouse trap catches the dog and at times the mouse makes off with the cheese. The mouse trap is a dead thing and cannot be taught to discriminate. So is the letter of the law. Both, however, have justification for their existence. The mouse trap catches the average mouse, which is a good thing; and the law

catches the average offender, which is another good thing. The law cannot be made as flexible as the human reactions of a good man. Men must often submerge their sense of fairness in judging the value of law in order to rise to the higher fairness of allowing for its limitations.

A great number of specific things could happen without affecting the integrity of law. A president could be impeached and still legislation which he suggested could stand. A pope might be a scandal to the Church without involving any release of obedience on the part of his spiritual subjects. A bishop might make a regulation for his diocese which could be suspected of having been instigated by some interested party, and whether the suspicion should prove fact or fancy, the regulation would command obedience. A couple who are to be married must suffer that the public be informed of it by proclamation in church, even though they and the whole world may know that there is nothing to impede their union. A driver must stop his car at a red light even though he can see that there is no traffic within a mile of him.

But though human law is an instrument which helps society to function smoothly, it is, by no means, a complete code of conduct. A man can abide by all the legislation directed at him and still be a villain. The miser in the old fashioned melodrama, who was always bedevilling the poor with a mortgage foreclosure, and always on the verge of exploding a romance, had the law on his side. Nowadays he has left the field of real estate for more complicated operations, but his soul is still cut to the same pattern. For human law to achieve its

highest efficiency, it must be fused with divine law. Personal honor and conscience must supervise conduct when the law is looking the other way. We are discovering this forgotten principle lately. With all our law there continues to be a host of fundamental injustices in society. Legislation cannot be made as fast as methods of evasion can be thought up by clever men. Human law is the voice of God. But His voice also echoes in conscience. Man cannot serve Him by obeying one and not the other.

In this country of ours we find a rather unique attitude towards legislators. The attitude results from the spirit of democracy that has worked its way into practically every tissue of American life. It is the tendency to subject our lawmakers to a persistent and good-natured ribbing. They are caricatured and joked about and called by nicknames. This is good sane fun up to a point and does not seem to be resented by the victims. It is a little wholesome realism which insists upon emphasizing that the mere fact of occupying office does not change the size of a man's nose or the perspective of his chin or his record as an angler. But this attitude can be carried too far. A legislator is much more than the mere butt of public horseplay. And the public would be better off if reminded of this fact occasionally. It should not be left in the position of the little boy who practised crossing his eyes until he could not straighten them again. A people which too often sees its governing body as a group of funny looking tinkers puttering around mending leaks in the ship of state, is likely to miss the vision of God doing His sacred chores on earth.

Everyone who grants that religion has a prac-

tical mission in life, concedes that righteousness, goodness of soul, is a matter of acting as God would have us act. Such a principle implies the need to know God's desires as a condition to fulfilling them. But God is far away in a place called heaven and the walls of eternity must be penetrated before we can challenge Him to a personal expression of His will regarding us. In the meanwhile our lives have got to be made or unmade. We must know. We cannot wait. It is for this reason that God sits in those tribunals of human law, the church and the state. The face we see there is not the face of God. The cadences of voice, the mannerisms of speech, have not the grandeur of the divine. But the lips speak the message of Him Who rules the earth. Man seems to preside, but he is only a manikin chosen to occupy the chair of God.

ASCETICISM—DUTY AS AN ART

(Address delivered on July 26, 1936)

Duty can be defined as an obligation to fit conduct to reason—to do what we know we should do, and to refrain from doing what we know we should not. It is a selective act. It implies that more than one course of action is possible, but that not all possible courses of action are right. If a man has the duty of going to church, we understand that he is able to go to church, and is able to stay home. We do not consider that a man has the duty to see when his eyes are open, or the duty to occupy space, or the duty to fall if he steps out of a window. The reason is because his field of conduct in these instances is confined to one act. He has nothing to say about what he will do in these matters. There is no duty, because there is no choice.

Duty implies choice not only in the sense that it demands an assortment of things to choose from, but also in the sense that it involves the ability to make up one's mind. It excludes the situation described in the fable about the beast, which died of starvation between two stacks of hay, because both were equally inviting, and he could not decide which one to eat. There could be no such thing as duty if a man could not choose the less attractive of two courses. There could be no such thing as duty, for instance, if a man had to kill his enemy just because it would be more pleasant than letting him live. There could be no such thing as duty if a man could not help but rob the community bank because wealth is more comfortable than poverty. Duty implies the ability to tolerate having a crumb, when it is reas-

nable not to take the whole loaf. It implies that a man can do the pleasanter of two things, but can also refrain from doing it when it is unreasonable.

The most practical statement of the problem of conduct is this—it is the problem of refusing to do an attractive thing which is wrong. Spiritual success would be an easy matter if a man were indifferent in every crisis he met, if the side of law and conscience had an allure equal to the side of sin, if passion pulled as strongly and consistently toward heaven as it does toward hell. But this condition does not prevail in human nature as we know it. The average typical duty is one that we feel reluctant to execute. It is a botheration at best and an agony at worst. It places before our eyes, say, one of the possible comforts of living, and then forbids us to take it. It imposes a burden which would be light if it could be laid down immediately, but then weights it, with the monotony of years, by asking us to carry it as long as we live. It forbids us, for instance, to lie, though often a lie might seem the ideal lubrication for the machinery of circumstance. It forbids us to cheat, though some mild cheating might seem to be the one spark that would kindle our mediocrity into the blaze of success. Duty is constantly beating against the course of natural preference, and correct morality sets us the task of halting the movement of preference to make way for it.

This is the simple answer to the question, why sin is an established fixture of normal human life. The world does not go out of its way to sin. It sins because it would have to go out of its way not to. There is no heroism attached to crime. The criminal is not one who has driven his soul up to a rarer

plane of existence. He is a man who has been lazy enough to lie down in the muck. When a person makes no spiritual effort, he drifts. And the drift of any stream is downward. A law of gravitation exists in the moral order, as well as in the physical order. And the general features of moral gravitation are the same as those of physical gravitation. An object will fall unless it is supported by a force equal to that which draws it down; and it can rise only at the expense of more energy than the force which draws it down. Nobody considers sin as a victory of human stamina over the hostile forces that beset it. They regard it as a compromise, a let-down. Even those philosophies that attempt to justify sin and incorporate it into the dignities of human behavior, do not characterize it as an act of bravery, in the sense that it is a struggle to take circumstances into hand and shape them to fit the design of life; they confess sin to be a submission to the whims of sentiment. This is precisely what all their pretty talk about the release of the libido really means. Any bravery that they couple with the idea of sin is a braving of conventions, a disregard of respected standards of decency, a bravery of the same quality found in the man who is not brave enough to keep away from the bottle, but who is brave enough to lie drunk in the gutter before his neighbors.

Such a description of duty may seem to make it a very bleak and forbidding thing, something which has us beaten from the scratch line, with a score of defeat posted before we play the game of life, and destined so to go into the records. But duty is really a more hopeful case than that. At least there are no

mysteries about it. Ordinarily it is perfectly accomplished by acting in a way in which we are capable of acting, but a way in which we experience some difficulty. A man's normal method of moving is to walk, but he could choose some other method. He could dance, for instance. Dancing is a more complicated operation than walking, a more difficult kind of movement. But it can be learned. Practise can make it so easy that it becomes enjoyable. Moral reactions can be trained just as physical reactions can. A man can learn to fulfill his duties with facility and grace, just as he can learn to dance with facility and grace. His soul can be trained to reject sin, just as his fingers can be taught to play the piano. There is a place for art in the discharge of duty just as, for example, there is a place for art in public speaking.

If we look back over our lives, we discover a host of experiences which started out to be almost insurmountable difficulties, but which the practise of years has smoothed into matters of spontaneous conduct. We learned to read. We began by learning the alphabet and the elementary sounds of the letters of the alphabet, how these letters are joined to form syllables, how syllables are built into words, and the ideas represented by the words. We spelt laboriously and chanted lustily of the momentous event that the cat caught a rat, and John has a new hat. But as the years went by, and our elementary technique was checked against the facts of life, and books became one of our chief avenues of information and one of our chief adventures in living beyond the narrow horizons of our home town, and our country, and our age, and our profession—then

reading became not only easy, but a consolation, not only an exercise in education, but a release from the commonplaces of life, not only an experience, but one of the fundamental departments of existence. And the issue was the same with so many other things, with table manners and mathematics and tidiness and unfaith in day-dreams. All these accomplishments we had to learn by tedious and constant effort. But there came a time when no more effort was required, at least no considerable effort. Practise had succeeded in making our difficulties easy.

Our ordinary duties are certainly no more difficult of execution than these. Worshipping God is a simpler act than reading. It does not require so intensive a training. It does not call for such a thorough study of elementary facts. Loving our parents and reverencing authority are not nearly such dull and lifeless exercises as computing sums and products and differences by arithmetic. It is as easy for a man to respect the personal and property rights of his neighbor as it is for the child to keep his dessert until the end of the meal.

The Church has always recognized this fact as the heart of the question of ethical behavior. She has been aware that a man's morals are susceptible to improvement by exactly the same method as his golf. And the method is practise.

The Church knows that the necessities of life are pretty much what we make them ourselves. She knows that in morals there are many things which, if we never become used to them, will never become needs, just as in diet there are delicacies for which we never become hungry if we have not acquired a

taste for them. This is one of her reasons for encouraging us in self-denial. Except in the old case of curiosity, a person has no desire for high living if he has grown accustomed to simple living. Such a condition is all in favor of duty, as the duties of life fit better with simplicity than with luxuriance. And violations of duty ordinarily result from wanting too much, rather than from wanting too little.

The Church also understands that experience is the greatest builder of confidence and morale. We are more likely to try if we have succeeded before in the same kind of enterprise. If a man abstained from smoking, when he wanted very much to smoke, he will certainly feel more security about tolerating other more important abstinences which duty imposes on him. The Church is not being a fusty old grandmother burdening us with the tyranny of her whims, when she makes us forego eating flesh meat on Friday, and when she makes us curtail the quantity of our food during Lent, and when she forbids that marriages be celebrated with any spectacular ceremony during Lent and Advent. She is breaking us to the bit of duty. She is putting us through the finishing school of obedience. She is rehearsing us in the etiquette of meeting the obligations of life, and teaching us the strategy of conquest.

The Church has been accused of trying to dictate a formula for every step her children take; and we her children have been accused of being law-ridden slaves. She has been criticized for not allowing sufficient liberty of spirit, sufficient latitude for unlegislated service of God. She is condemned for having forgotten that Christ said that the kingdom of God is within us, and that the day He desired to

hasten was a day when God would be worshipped in spirit and truth. But she has continued to be the long suffering realist, who believes that the horse which on parade prances and bows and side-steps and rears, is not acting on the promptings of the moment, but is rather repeating the lessons learned on the exercise field. The Church has the knack of making her philosophy correspond with what everyone sees and knows. She no more expects a child to be born with a perfect passion for obedience than she expects him to be born with a proficiency in using a knife and fork. She rather anticipates that he will need some training, and perhaps a casual spanking, before he becomes a good man and a creditable citizen. And this is why she asks us to acquire the habit of self-control by the only known method of acquiring it—by practise.

The Church realizes that the grace of God is the most important element in the accomplishment of our eternal and even our temporal salvation. But she also remembers that Christ said something to the effect that if we want to come after Him, we must take up our cross daily and follow Him. She recalls that He elaborated a program of perfection by saying: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." And while she acknowledges that such an intensive pursuit of perfection is not a native obligation of every man, she does not miss the point of Christ's consistent preaching. She holds that the grace of God does violence to no one. It is nothing like an assault upon the fortress of an unwilling heart. It is given as an auxiliary to human striving. When a man does what

he can, grace fills out the measure of success. But in the case of salvation, the Church interprets "doing what he can" as an effort at least comparable to his efforts in other lines where his interests lie. If the salesman considers that he is doing right by himself only when he makes his salesmanship an art, and the diplomat only when he makes diplomacy an art, and if everyone who has an ambition in life will fuss and ponder trying to school his wits and his energies to yield the best results, then the Church surely has her excuse for insisting that a man's main job in life has at least an equal claim on his attention, and that duty should also be made an art.

CHRIST THE EXEMPLAR—GOD DRESSED AS MAN

(Address delivered on August 2, 1936)

One homely truism which Jesus Christ respected in the days of His mortal life was this—example speaks louder than words. In fact, example so predominated in His method of teaching that His public ministry could be described by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles by the one sentence: "Jesus began to do and to teach." Example is the most satisfactory kind of pedagogy, and God, in stooping to practise, in inviting us to follow Him, instead of standing behind us and driving, was merely giving another exhibition of His infinite wisdom by being a great pedagogue. And so we find in the redemptive operations of Christ, not only elementary atonement, but the luxury of example; not only sublimity of doctrine, but the personification of all that is right and good in human life. At the time of His transfiguration He was proposed to man by the Eternal Father: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him." And the Savior says to Himself: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me." "Men whom we see," says St. Augustine, "were too imperfect to serve as a pattern, and God who is holiness itself, was too far beyond our gaze. Then the Eternal Son of God, His living Image, became man and showed us by His example how man could here on earth approach the perfection of God." Jesus Christ, God dressed as man, becomes for us the expositor of perfect dutiful life in human circumstances.

There are only three lessons in conduct that can

be taught to men, because there are only three human operations involved in growing perfect. The first is creaturely obedience. The second is that finessing of creaturely obedience, which is called charity. It is the formula which reduced ten commandments to one, a kind of gyrocompass which needs only to be set in order to take care of all the navigating problems of life. The third is rehearsal, exercise in self-denial which develops fluency and facility in obeying.

These three lessons are given demonstration in the person of Christ from the beginning to the end of His earthly career. He obeyed.

Before Gabriel brought his message to Mary, the Son of God had made a contract with His Father. "In the head of the book it is written of me, that I should do thy will: O my God. . . behold I come to do thy will, O God." After the chill bleakness of a cattle stall, the tedious commonplaces of a carpenter's workshop, the uncouth vagaries of uncultured colleagues, the apparent failure of a public ministry, Jesus Christ was still mindful of that contract to obey. "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized: and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" As He lay prostrate in the shade of Gethsemane's olive trees and previewed the history of the next day, and sweated blood over the vision of its horrors, when He would be alone and the reptile, sin, would wind itself about Him, and He would accept the blame and take the punishment for crimes that could never be His, when the world would think Him a fool, and heaven would appear to treat Him as an enemy—then, again, duty overcame revulsion and He confirmed His pledge to His

Father: "My Father, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, thy will be done." The will of His Father was His sacred rule of life, and the one consuming passion of His life. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." The will of His Father was His only sanctuary of success. All other sanctuaries housed failure.

His Father spoke to Christ in the unlikeliest of places, in the strangest of tones, in the person of men who ruled in the name of God and whose lives profaned that Name. But His Father's authority was there, and He obeyed. Nothing in the features of Annas or Caiphas or Pilate reminded Him of His Father, but He saw the oil of anointing on their heads and the credentials of His Father's authorization in their hands. He observed the law of Moses. He fulfilled the tax laws of Rome, and when His poverty had not the wherewith to pay, out of a fish's mouth came the coin of the tribute. His enemies could probe His life in vain to find one word, one deed, that might be construed as inimical to Rome or Roman precept. He could safely challenge the High Priest, Annas, who sought a pretext for a Roman condemnation: "I have spoken openly to the world: I have always taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither all the Jews resort; and in secret I have spoken nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them who have heard what I have spoken unto them: behold they know what things I have said."

The last command which Jesus Christ received on earth was from a very menial state servant, an executioner, and hands were stretched and feet extended that riveting nails might fasten an obedient God to a cross.

But while Christ obeyed, He did not obey in a stolid impersonal way as if He were a kind of obeying-machine touring the world to demonstrate the mere mechanics of obedience. He obeyed with the verve and grace and versatility which transforms obedience into charity and emphasizes the fact that human life is perfect only when it helpfully invades and seasons the rest of the world. In the early days of His ministry when the disciples of John the Baptist questioned him: "Art thou he that art to come, or look we for another", He answered: "Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them." Christ sounded the keynote of His public life. He was not merely the executor of human redemption. He was the friend of His fellowmen and a member of human society. When St. John the Evangelist closed his gospel story of Christ, his three year's acquaintance with the Master led him to write: "There are also many other things which Jesus did; which, if they were written everyone, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written."

The charity of Christ had a universal scope. Class distinctions, the social and financial hierarchies, neither prompted nor hindered the exercise of His benevolence. From the time He changed water into wine to prevent embarrassment at a wedding banquet, until the time when He answered the prayer of a thief on the cross beside Him, Christ took miracle out of its hiding place and set it to the familiar task of sweeping the sadness from the lives He met.

Service that is worth the doing is worth doing graciously. And Christ surrounded His charity with a spontaneity that exquisitely revealed the charm of His character. The tears he shed at the tomb of Lazarus, His friend, have forever sanctified the manifestation of natural grief and sorrow at the passing of dear ones. There was not only forgiveness but also courtesy and encouragement in good for the woman taken in adultery, and for the public sinner who bathed His feet at the banquet table.

There was not only wisdom in His words but a graciousness in His manner which made Him equally the honored guest at the table of publican and pharisee. Tolerance was coupled with beneficence at the home of Jairus, one of the rulers of the synagogue at Capharnaum, where a disconsolate mother grieved the death of her daughter, where already the professional mourners were weeping and chanting their lamentations, where many friends had gathered to offer their sympathy to bereaved parents. "Why make you this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth," said Christ. "And they laughed him to scorn." The child was dead, they had seen her, and their ridicule found vent in derisive mockery. But the Lord was not deterred by scorn. He would not be prevented by mockery from the doing of good. When the jeerers had been put out, Jesus took the mother and father, Peter, James, and John, and with them entered the room where the child was lying. And taking her by the hand, He said to her: "Damsel, I say to thee arise." Immediately the twelve year old girl rose up and walked. In the excitement over this intrusion of the supernatural, it seems that Christ alone remained realist enough to

recommend that the little girl be given something to eat.

The evangelist tells us that Christ went about doing good. It was not always a holiday sort of goodness. But it was always a perfectly human sort. And it has set the standard for the best that man can be. If Christ fulfilled His mission by the awesome staging of redemption on Calvary, He fulfilled it also by sitting with children at their games. If it is part of His perfection that He brought from heaven the meat that perishes not, it is also part of His perfection that one morning in Galilee He cooked fish for His friends.

While it was Christ's duty on earth to obey and to exhibit that perfection of obedience which is built upon charity, it was not His duty to practise self-denial to acquire facility in obeying. There was never a possibility of His being at fault. No emergency could develop in His life which could take Him unaware and create a warfare in His soul between a desire for right and an attraction for wrong. He could never be tempted in the sense that temptation is a test, because the test would be superfluous since there would be no possibility of the issue being to His disfavor. But for our instruction Christ did practise self-denial.

He began it in a stable and concluded it in a tomb. Neither the stable nor the tomb was His own property. In both instances He could feel like an intruder on the hospitality of others. How easily He could have arranged things otherwise! He was the greatest man in the world, and He had the power to live on a scale that would measure up to that character. The hand that stilled the tem-

pest and the word that withered the barren fig tree could have built Him a palace which would shame the architecture of earth. The eyes that saw where the fish net should be dropped and that read thoughts out of other men's souls could have mined all hidden wealth and forestalled every move of an enemy. But Christ held His power in abeyance.

And while He unleashed it to serve the afflicted of the world, He never accounted Himself in that category. Not even when the storm clouds burst and the hour of His bitter Passion and final rejection came; when men had bound Him with ropes, when perjury and double dealing had won a death sentence against Him, when a king had mocked Him and a vacillating governor had ratified the faulty findings of jealousy and hatred, nor when nails had pierced hands and feet, and a cross had been planted on Calvary. The friends He made were normally of the poorer class, so that no one might cite His example to justify the courting of the great as an approved method of achieving essential success. He often went hungry, so that sociologists might learn the lesson that man lives not on bread alone, but on the word of God, and that hunger of soul is at least as dreadful an experience as hunger of stomach. He ministered with His own hands, so that the world might understand that personal service is as great a beneficence as the philanthropy that consists in merely writing a check. Christ walked, when He could have been riding. His skin was tanned by the elements and the dust of the open road was upon Him. He slept under the sky and had no pillow for His head. He lived a hard life that men might be impressed that a good life must be a hard life. Life

that is a probation, a time of trial, must be replete with an assortment of nuisances that challenge the temper of souls and measure the quality of devotion to God. And, if a good life is necessarily a hard life, and if the prize of heaven is worth the game of winning it, then man must copy to some degree the privations of Christ for the simple purpose of learning to say "no" when he would much rather say "yes".

Christ's mission on earth was principally to effect human redemption. But on the side He offered to those who saw Him and listened to Him a vision of God, transfigured to the semblance of man, perfect God bonded to the common circumstances of human life, breathing, and moving, and eating, and speaking, according to the familiar formulas of human experience. What was divine in Him did not disrupt the functioning of what was human in Him. He was recognizable as man, and only on the rare occasions, once on Tabor and a few times after His death, when He was glorified and transfigured, did His divinity seem to encroach upon His humanity and make Him appear alien to earth. But for the rest, He was what He invites every man to be. He was obedient to His Father, with an obedience of the savory kind which is called charity, and which makes duty a recreation rather than a task. What indulgences He allowed Himself in life were admitted only up to the point that they fostered and did not impede His mission. Obedience, charity, self-denial—these three words made a cross, hung our redemption on it, concluded the mortal career of Jesus Christ, and set the only correct fashion for moulding the human soul.

PRAYER—VISITING HOME

(Address delivered on August 9, 1936)

Everyone in the world is called to holiness. "Be ye holy, because I the Lord your God am holy." Holiness is the only way to eternal happiness. The providences of God over human souls are all directed to the development of virtue, which is a necessary condition for correct living. And correct living is just another name for holiness. St. Paul says: "For the grace of God our Savior hath appeared to all men; instructing us, that denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world". But holiness is not an easy conquest. It cannot be referred to as the simplest matter in the world. Everyone's experience would give the lie to such a claim. Being holy implies being in a state of combat against three powerful enemies—against the glamor with which the world invests its sins, against the native fickleness of the flesh, and against that shrewd tactician, the devil. Like all competitive games, holiness has its pessimists, men and women, discouraged at little setbacks, waiting to be beaten by luck which they feel is sure eventually to break against them, proclaiming by their outlook that sustained virtue is impossible. They are wearing dark glasses to look at the sun of justice. And while the glasses may permit them to look steadily at the sun, they rob the light and color and cheer from its rays. Pessimism is an unreasonable anticipation of failure. It is not a wholesome reaction in any department of life.

The Catholic Church teaches that God gives to all men sufficient grace to work out their eternal sal-

vation. She holds that in building His Church to serve men as the tutor and guardian of their spiritual lives, Jesus Christ established a system of helps, called Sacraments, the functions of which are primarily to give grace to men or to add to the quantity they already possess. She holds that God by mysterious manipulations of minds and hearts and circumstances provides seasonal helps to men, so that the right things happen at the right times to bear them to heaven. But she insists that besides these periodic visitations, which are coupled with the sacraments or which are bestowed at the discretion of God, divine light and strength are available to us on call. She teaches that Christ proclaimed a doctrine of prayer, which is briefly to this effect—that God will grant us anything we ask for provided it is best for us in securing our eternal destiny.

In the sermon on the Mount Jesus Christ expounded His first lessons on prayer. A multitude had surrounded Him, and He went up into a mountain, sat down, and taught His disciples. Occupying a considerable portion of that discourse was an instruction in the technique of communicating with God to advantage. First He warned against one state of soul that always violated His sense of fitness and brought to His lips words of scathing denunciation: "And when ye pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites, that love to stand and pray in the synagogues and the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men; Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. But thou when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee." Prayer must

not be considered an opportunity to advertise our holiness to the world. It is a social adventure with God, not a campaign to thrust ourselves into the admiration of the public. "And when you are praying," Christ continued, "speak not much, as the heathens. For they think that in their much speaking they may be heard. Be not you therefore like to them, for your Father knoweth what is needful for you, before you ask him." Prayer is not an attempt to convince God or make Him understand. It is not necessary that we propound our case and use our most touching tones and our most select vocabulary. All that is required is that we ask sincerely. Christ offered a specimen prayer for the use of those who might be vague about the etiquette of addressing God. "Thus therefore shall you pray:" He said, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our supersubstantial bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. Amen."

This is the great classic prayer, for the reason that it is the Master's own prayer, constructed out of the wisdom of His mind to fulfill all the conventions of creaturely communion with God. This Lord's prayer illustrates perfectly all that had ever been said to define worthy prayer. Prayer is conversation with God. It is an elevation of the soul to God. It is the asking of seemly things from God. This Lord's prayer suggests the answer to the question, why God Who knows our needs likes to have our story from our own lips. Prayer is a

sanctifying contact with God. It is a creature's act of adoration. It is a child's confident appeal to God, his kind Father.

The Lord's prayer, or any other prayer which corresponds to its formula, cannot be sincerely recited without bringing a man closer to heaven than he was before. Real prayer is more than a request for a favor, even though its words may say no more than that. It is not only an act of policy, it is an act of holiness. We leave for a time the general world and its strife and bustle and business and go visiting to heaven. We pay a call at the home of God. We speak to Him about our problems. We remind Him of our concern for His honor and glory, and express our wish that His name may be revered and known and loved and honored by all men. We speak of His kingdom, all creation, and of our hope that all men may become true subjects of His realm, rendering filial homage and rejoicing in the loving care of His providence. We ask Him to hasten the day when His will may be the guide of men, and when true obedience to His laws may be a habit with all mankind. And having expressed our praise and love to God, we remind Him of our needs, temporal and spiritual, and ask to be preserved from all those dangers to soul and body that might impede our service of Him.

This is precisely the content of the Lord's prayer. We can infer from it what the characteristic psychology of effective praying must be. Effective prayer must be motivated by an interest in the works of God, even though we think of these works only as they concern ourselves. Effective prayer is also motivated by an expectation of benefit to our-

selves, whether that benefit be the reward of successful petition or the experience of social contact with God.

At a more advanced point in the sermon on the Mount, Christ returned to the topic of prayer to say that when we address a request to God, we should be confident of the issue. He pledges that every proper petition shall be granted. "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." Being an artist of expression, He clarified His meaning by using a homely example, a father's reactions to his child's asking food. "What man is there among you," He said, "of whom, if his son shall ask bread, will he reach him a stone? Or if he shall ask him a fish, will he reach him a serpent?" Christ insists that even this example fails to do justice to God and indicates His readiness to help His children in their needs. "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?"

Ask, seek, knock,—what clear, forceful, significant words! How many important things there are to ask about in life, and how limited our sources of information! When we want inspiration, we can get only opinion! In how many corners of life might we seek and find the treasure of merit, which must be deposited as security in heaven, if we could only discover some fountain from which we might drink strength and courage for our search! At how many doors would we knock, if the sanctuary

within were proof against the siege that the world organizes against our souls! Christ solves the riddle most completely and picturesquely, by recommending prayer. God is the sage who inspires; we need only ask Him for direction. He is the ocean of good fresh strength; we have only to take the trouble to drink. His grace is the one inviolable redoubt; we can retreat to it on appeal at any time.

On two other occasions Christ extended His discussion of prayer to say that besides being confident in its issue, we should be persevering in its practice. He told the parable of the man, who at midnight went to borrow three loaves of bread from his friend, who at that hour had retired for the night, and whose family was asleep. The friend was none too pleased at such an interruption of his slumbers, and remonstrated to the effect that morning would be the proper time for making such a request. But Christ said: "I say to you, although he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend; yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth." And the other story was about a widow who sought justice against an adversary and went to a certain judge, who was evidently a precursor of some of the modern political philosophers, which consider that justice is unconnected with either the laws of God or the rights of individual men, but whose indifference to the responsibilities of his office was overcome by the widow's sheer persistence. "Altho I fear not God," said the judge, "nor regard man, yet because this widow is troublesome to me, I will avenge her, lest continually coming she weary me." Christ con-

cluded that God will quickly answer the prayers of those who appeal to Him.

This is not a guarantee that a specific request is executed as soon as it leaves our lips, or that the world immediately falls into line with our desires just because we express them to God. It does mean, however, that prayers are answered according as God sees it is good for us, and good for the world, to answer them. Christ has pledged that all worthy intercession will be successful. If favors do not come when or how we want them, it is because God knows a better time and a better manner of bestowing them. But He does not want to suffer the insult of being asked unwisely and then being discredited, because He does not deliver at the hour specified. He wants us to continue to trust Him, and to continue to ask.

Prayer is one of the aids which make the duties of life so much less formidable. If we had to face the array of obligations which conscience imposes on us, and face them with no more hope of success than the physical laws of the world would allow, we would certainly have a case for not trying at all. Physical science tells us, for instance, that there is a definite amount of energy released from the combustion of a definite amount of coal or gasoline or other fuel, and that this energy will heat a definite number of square feet in a building, or that it will run an automobile a definite number of miles. The heating system of a bungalow could never be adequate in the Empire State Building. We could not get twenty miles of transportation if the engines of the "Queen Mary" were supplied with only one gallon of fuel. But something very much like this hap-

pens when we pray. Prayer is a mere word, even a thought, or a deed done with a holy purpose. But it sets in motion all the machinery of salvation that there is in heaven. And it keeps this machinery running until God redeems the pledge He made us when He said that what we ask He will give us. Duties that are too tedious for our natural endurance, or too subtle for the natural powers of our mind, can be perfectly managed by the light and grace which prayer puts at our disposal.

Since duty is one of the perennial conditions of human life it calls for a practise of prayer which is habitual as an ideal. Christ exhorts us to pray always and not to grow fainthearted. Such an accomplishment is not confined to those who are professionally dedicated to a life of holiness. Every act of everyone's day can be a prayer. St. Paul expressly recommends in his epistles to the Corinthians and the Collosians: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever else you do, do all to the glory of God. . . all whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all things in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ." St. Augustine shows us how this can be done: "Let the harmony of thy life," he tells us, "ever rise as a song, so that thou may never cease to praise. . . if thou wilt give praise, sing, then, not only with thy lips, but sweep the chords upon the psalter of good works; thou dost give praise, when thou workest, when thou eatest and drinkest, when thou liest to rest, when thou sleepest; thou givest praise even if thou holdest thy peace." St. Thomas of Aquin briefly states the same thing: "Man prays so long as he directs his whole life to God."

Life finds its fullest meaning and its best secur-

ity when it is anchored to the one thing that does not drift with the current of creaturely change—God. No reckoning of any kind can be done without reference to some unchanging standard. A man afloat on a raft in the middle of the ocean under a clouded sky can gauge neither the direction or the velocity of his movement. He is moving with other things that move. He with other things may be approaching a hostile shore or he may be approaching home. If he could only halt his course while the current ran on, he could determine its set and speed. A similar situation occurs in the life of the spirit. The soul can go adrift. The fatigue of striving after the better things, the confusion that comes of contact with the shoddy philosophies some men live by, the fear that morale may break down under strain, the monotony of duty; these crises come within the experience of the average man and challenge him to find a reason which will prove his efforts worth while. The reason lies only in God, Who made us and guides us to heaven, Who through earthly tribunals speaks His will to us, both as citizens of the church and citizens of the state, Who has the will and the power to carry us through all spiritual emergencies. He is the anchor we can always cling to, while we make observations of the blind drift of other things. Our bond with Him is the bond of prayer, prayer which is a visit with God Our Father, at home. From the vantage of this communion with Him, this contact with eternal truth, we can take our bearings and distinguish the futilities of life from its wisdom. And God always dismisses us with a gift.

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