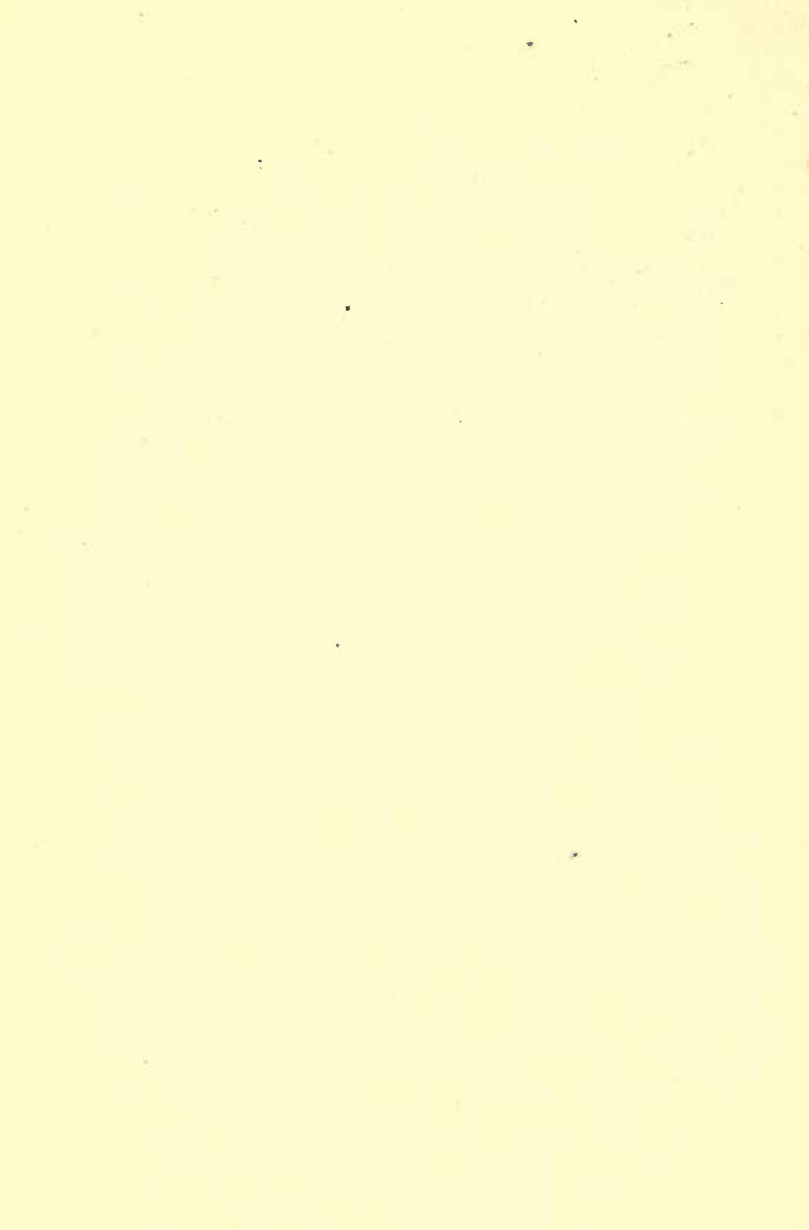


REGIS COLLEGE LIBRARY



3 1761 05806344 7



COLL. CHRISTI REGIS S.J.  
BIB. MAJOR  
TORONTO



# DUTY

## TWELVE CONFERENCES TO YOUNG MEN

BY

REV. WILLIAM GRAHAM

COLL. CHRISTIANITY  
REV. GRAHAM  
LUNARD

137  
145  
16  
11



1932

JOSEPH F. WAGNER  
NEW YORK

**Nihil Obstat**

T. B. COTTER, Ph.D.

*Censor Deputatus*

**Imprimatur**

† JOHN M. FARLEY, D.D.

*Archbishop of New York*

NEW YORK, AUGUST 11, 1910

# CONTENTS

---

	PAGE
I. Meaning and Source of Duty . . . . .	I
II. The Limits of Duty . . . . .	12
III. Conditions of Duty . . . . .	21
IV. Law: Outward Rule of Duty, and Its Administrators . . . . .	30
V. Conscience: Inner Rule of Duty .. . . .	39
VI. Its Sanction . . . . .	49
VII. Our Duties to God . . . . .	60
VIII. Duties to Parents . . . . .	70
IX. Duties to the Church . . . . .	79
X. Our Duties to the State . . . . .	91
XI. Personal Duties (Soul) . . . . .	101
XII. Habits of Duty . . . . .	112





# DUTY

## CONFERENCES TO YOUNG MEN

---

### I. MEANING AND SOURCE OF DUTY

As the best goods are said to be packed in small parcels, so great thoughts are often expressed in short words. Such words as God, the soul, life, death, duty are of no great length, yet to the thinker how deeply rich and suggestive they are. World-wide controversies rage, ever have raged, and presumably ever will rage, round their meaning, origin, and application. Now, it is to the last of these little words, *viz.*, duty, that I mean to draw your attention, in a few homely discourses, during the next twelve months. The use of the word duty, by all men, in all times, and in all tongues, is witness to its reality and importance. Though a dry topic, yet this fact, as well as the close connection of duty with our happiness here and beyond, offer sufficient apology for its choice. To-day I propose to speak :

I. Of its meaning.

II. Of its source or origin.

I. There are many words in a language apparently easy and commonplace, and yet so subtle, elusive and many-sided as almost to baffle analysis and definition. Of such is the word duty. It is on everybody's lips; and yet it is not very easy to put its meaning clearly and tersely in other words. Speaking loosely, duty is what we ought to do. It implies what is due by us to others, and is said to sum up what we morally owe to God, our neighbor and ourselves. It tells us, in one short term, what we are bound, *i. e.*, what we

*ought* to think, say and do, by virtue of the great moral law or law of God.

Thus, the noun *duty* and the verb *ought* embody the whole science of ethics, from a rational, and of moral theology, from a Christian standpoint. The word duty reminds us of a debt, which, as honest men, we must do our best to pay. For a moral being to shirk duty, *i. e.*, to refuse to pay his life-debt, when he both can and ought to, is dishonest, a failing to pay what is strictly due. Debt never gets off the conscience till paid; so it is with duty, it is a kill-joy and a mar-feast, ever reminding us, as long as it is left unfulfilled, that we are placed in this world, not to do what we like, but what we ought. To have joy in life we must make peace with it, as "with our enemy in the way," for it is the sworn enemy of pleasure unless we come to terms with it.

Though duty connotes law, it is distinct from it. Duty is subjective and personal, law objective and impersonal. Laws in the moral order are rules of conduct emanating from some being endowed with authority to frame and have them carried out. Duty is compliance therewith. Our attitude toward all just laws affecting us should be one of duty. Spiritually duty is the same as obedience to lawful superiors. In the abstract, it may be described as the binding force of what is morally right. It is defined by Webster as "That which a person is bound, by any natural, moral or legal obligation, to do or refrain from doing." Like most other words, it is used by transfer of meaning in other senses. Thus, it is often limited to service, civil or military, applied to certain forms of work, taxes and the rest; but we here use the word duty in the sense above described, *i. e.*, as compliance with the moral law, discharge of the obligations binding on us by the law of God and its legitimate extensions.

To get a good hold of what is meant by the term duty, it will help us to reflect that law means order or regularity in any and every sphere of action—material, intellectual, or moral; hence we speak of the laws of nature, the laws of mind or thought, and the laws or rules of conduct. God as supremely intelligent and moral, by the very force of His nature, must wish order to be observed, or kept, in nature, mind, and conduct. "Order is heaven's first law." By the light of common intelligence we perceive this. A well-balanced mind revolts against disorder and confusion in every department, and feels an instinctive desire to put all the "crooked things of life" straight. Science, art, truth, conduct are all a perception of the need of order. To break God's order entails evil. If we break the laws of nature we may bring on ourselves sickness or death; if we run counter to the laws of thought, we fall into error, and if we infringe those of conduct or duty, we fall into the greatest evil of all, sin. The moral order, which it must be God's will for every free intelligent being to observe, is called the moral law, the rules of which it is our duty to keep, and which, indeed, form the sum of our duty. Now this moral rectitude, this straightness of soul, this good conduct or behavior, is the object of duty, or rather is duty itself. It makes what we call an all-round honest man, and an "honest man" is truly "the noblest work of God." As Matthew Arnold says, "Good conduct is nineteen-twentieths of life." All moralists hold this view, whatever their opinions, as to the basis or origin of duty. Deflection from duty, or ordered conduct, is living *down* and *away* from the fulness of life. Morality, another name for duty, is admittedly the highest function of man. Physically, a man may be as strong as Hercules; intellectually, he may rival Solomon or Plato, and yet if he is immoral, *i. e.*, undutiful, unmindful of the rules of good conduct, he is condemned, and rightly condemned, as false, as untrue

to the lofty ideal of human nature, as we feel it should be, and as we know it to be wrong and sinful not to be. The moral plane, or plane of duty, is felt to be the highest, as indeed it is the chief meritorious plane of life. We do not blame a man for being in body weak or ugly, or mentally stupid; but we *do* blame him for being immoral or undutiful.

Again, duty, it must be remembered, is quite the antithesis of pleasure or self-interest; nay, it is often in complete antagonism to both. No doubt it would be both agreeable and useful for a poor man, with a starving wife and child, to find and keep the purse of a Morgan or a Rockefeller, dropped accidentally in the street, and yet duty, plain, commonplace duty, compels him to return that purse without abstracting a single cent, even though the owner were neither to know of the loss nor would perceptibly suffer from the loss if he did. Duty is hard, stern, unrelenting. It is pitiless and merciless to passion, pleasure, and in some respects to self-interest alike. It tells us emphatically, through the voice of conscience, to do what is *right* and shun what is *wrong*, be the consequences what they may. When duty is in question, mere calculation of gain or pleasure is irrelevant! As well weigh spirit against matter, or virtue against gold, as duty against carnal pleasure, or worldly wisdom. For duty, I repeat, means what is *due*, by you and me, to God and our neighbor, and that in justice we *ought* and *must* pay. However high the standard of Christian duty may be, yet what in duty we are bound to do or omit, that, with God's grace, we can both do or omit.

II. So much for the meaning of the term duty. We have now to examine whence springs its binding force. Why should I be morally forced to do what is right, and avoid what is wrong? All moralists own that we *ought* to do our duty, but differ as to why, or on what

basis this moral obligation rests. Is the foundation of duty *within* or *without* ourselves? Is man autonomous, *i. e.*, a law to himself; merely seeing the need of ordered conduct, and acting accordingly, without any reference to or dependence on any light, law, or authority other than that furnished by reason? Is duty or morality independent of a divine Lawgiver enlightening reason and binding conscience?

Remember, this is not an idle, useless, or merely *dogmatic* question. It is vital to the very notion or idea of duty. If duty originates with self or other men, if there is no right to command outside of or beyond ourselves, why do we feel stung with grief and remorse on leaving duty unfulfilled? In fact, if duty is based only on reason, without reference to external authority, why should there be any such thing as duty at all? Why should I, irrespective of all consequences, obey any one power of my soul rather than another? Why obey the law of reason any more than the law of lust? Why, if so inclined, should I not be free to follow my animal instincts in preference to my rational? If self has no master to dictate what is right or wrong, in the line of duty, then all that self approves of may be right and justifiable—free love, suicide, and the rest. If there is no element in duty but what is human, then it is based or resolved into force, on the one hand, for the sake of public order; or, on the other, license, *i. e.*, unrestricted freedom to do what one likes—in other words, there is no such thing as duty. “In those days there was no king in Israel, but everyone did that which seemed right to himself” (Judges xxi, 24). The result of this craze for independent morality, *i. e.*, duty not based on dogma, is seen in the attack directed by unbelievers to-day, not so much on speculative belief, as against the practical authority of Christian duty. Formerly the idea of duty or conduct, as proclaimed by Christ and His

Church, was deemed impregnable. Rationalism even admitted our moral code as the most perfect treasure of the age, even when tracing it to a merely human origin by way of evolution. To-day in romance, in poetry, in drama, duty is assailed as an undue interference with liberty, and pleasure put to the front. "Let us eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die" is an ideal of life commonly taught both *on* and *off* the stage. The assault on dogma is no longer limited to Christian belief, but extends even to Christian ethics, *i. e.*, to duty. As an appeal to passion, against pure reason, and clad in the garb, or rather mask, of science, it meets with considerable success among the crowd, and is a veritable trap to the unwary.

Now to escape this disaster we must get a thorough idea of the groundwork of duty from a Catholic, and, let me add, rational point of view. First of all, there is no special sense or faculty of duty. It is rooted in the understanding or reason—reason, not independent of, but subject to and enlightened by God the Supreme Reason. Duty or morality is not the quality of an action, like color, weight, or shape; but is known and wilful conformity with a law, founded on reason and binding in conscience. As well say that the eye is independent of light for vision, as to say that our reason, through which duty is apprehended, is independent of God—the "Light of lights." Duty is rooted in the felt obligation to obey God or His lawful representatives; and the voice of conscience enforcing it in the same act implicitly reveals God as lawgiver or supreme framer of duty. Duty is thus, in its origin, the voice of the Eternal; and it is mere sophistry, a juggle of words and ideas, to try to make it out a creation, or outcome of the human mind. It sprang from the inmost life and supreme reason of God: and was traced in rude outline on the heart, or reason of man, as a rule of conduct peculiar

and suitable to free self-determining beings. Its essence is to mold that conduct not in conformity with the passing ephemeral fashions of time, but with a higher standard of law, fixed, unchangeable, and universal—the moral law, tersely put in the Ten Commandments, which sum up the whole duty of man. Now this is only found in basing duty ultimately on the supreme reason of God, recognizing order, and willing, which is the same as decreeing, it to be observed. Duty divorced from religion, and not based on God, loses all its force to sway the heart and mold the whole conduct of man. If not rooted in God, it dwindles, at best, into a cold, lifeless branch of human law, held up only by brute force. As experience shows, duty reared not on the fluctuating reason or varying opinions of men, but on the transcendence and independence of God, can alone sustain moral effort in the mass of mankind. Duty that does not strike root in the divine element of religion deals only with outward acts, leaving untouched the whole field of motive, which we all feel to be the very soul of duty. Gain, or greed, or lust, or other base motives may be at the back of deeds of heroism apparently, yet they rob these very deeds of the sacred name of duty.

Hence nearly all nations have sought for the sanction of the duties imposed on their citizens in religion. However false or visionary, yet what appeared to them as the "high will of heaven" seemed the only solid foundation on which to raise their laws and base the duty of the people called upon to observe them.

But it may be said that people are and were moral, *i. e.*, obedient to the call of duty, without either knowledge of or reference to God whatsoever, nay, that there are many moralists who perhaps do not believe in God at all. Buddhists and others have a very strict code of duty, without belief in a personal God of any kind. Any man, moreover, may be honest and dutiful without being religious.



The reply is obvious. We sing and play without adverting to the theory of sound on which music is based. We think and will, and otherwise energize, without paying heed to the soul in which these actions are rooted. We live in a house without minding the foundations on which it is built. By reflection and analysis we come to recognize that the source of moral truth, as of all truth, is in the divine Mind. We likewise feel in the impulse of conscience the divine Will commanding this moral truth or order in conduct to be kept. To do right it is not necessary to advert to its origin. Even if there were no human mind or reason in existence, it would still be eternally true and binding that "good is to be done and evil avoided."

Duty is not, be it remembered, an arbitrary enactment of the divine Will. It lay in the vision of the divine Mind. Duty as moral truth precedes it as volition. Conduct is not moral or immoral, not commanded or forbidden, because God willed it to be so; but He willed the moral law, or order, or duty, or law of nature, to be obeyed because in His divine mind He saw it to be right. The perception of duty, or obligation of living up to moral order, as the standard of conduct is prior in the order of thought, *i. e.*, antecedent to God's commands that it should be observed. Duty, therefore, is not only conformable to right reason, which is also divine reason, but is also the expression of the divine Will. He must wish us to act in conformity with reason, and this will of His is law in our regard. A breach of duty is a breach also of the divine Will or law. It is thus a sin. Hence it follows that sin or moral evil is more than an infraction of right reason. It is an *offense* against God. Men at all times and in all religions have felt and taught the transgression of duty to be a violation of the order willed and approved by God. The remorse and pain felt by conscience in a breach of



duty bears witness to this. No doubt the perception of duty varies both in nations and individuals, according to their intelligence, education, and religion; still it is at least rudimentary in all—sufficient to make them answerable for their conduct, and so deserving of praise or blame.

The feeling of sinfulness or wrong doing that arises in the soul when we wilfully fail in duty proves clearly its divine origin. If duty had no higher source than reason or custom, we should feel no remorse in secretly breaking it. We may infringe all the laws of good breeding, etiquette, good taste in the world, we may violate all the rules of science and art, and yet never feel a twinge of remorse; but we can not transgress the laws of justice, we can not steal, lie, or blaspheme, without feeling that we have done morally wrong, that we have violated the will of God, who planted the sense of duty within us. It is only the divine element in human law, *i. e.*, the divine sanction, or approval of it, that makes us ever feel guilty of a breach of duty in transgressing it.

Duty, therefore, as I said, is based on the divine Will commanding order to be kept; and the rules that go to make up this order form the moral law, often called the divine law, or law of nature.

The perception of this law in general outline, called the knowledge of right and wrong, good and evil, is traced on the mind of every human being endowed with reason, and, more than aught else, distinguishes man from the beasts. Its observance raises us immensely above them, just as its transgression degrades us below them. Whatever they do, they remain innocent; we, by a breach of duty, become sinful. For we are free, they are not. They are the slaves of their animal instincts; we are, or ought to be, the masters of ours. There is no compulsion, no restraint in the law of duty. We are free to keep or break the moral law, but we can not escape the conse-

quences of either course. We are still by duty under the law, even when disregarding it. Duty ever binds. We may do as we *like*; but we still remain bound to do as we *ought*. We may slay, steal or slander; but always at our own risk and peril. No lawgiver, much less the Supreme Lawgiver, who has written His law on our hearts, will allow his laws to be broken with impunity. Pains and penalties, remember, ever follow a free transgression of duty. Every law, as we shall see, has its sanction.

By way of conclusion, I may say, that two thoughts have engaged our attention up to the present—the meaning of duty and the foundation on which it rests. Divested of technical language, duty is keeping the moral order or law made known to us by enlightened reason and conscience. It is thus the harmony of human conduct with divine law. Its proximate basis is the will of God expressly ordering this law or order to be observed. To trifle with the order called the law of nature, is to invite swift and stern retribution: water drowns, fire burns, poison slays, without pity or mercy; and so the violation of the higher order of duty brings on us the terrible evil of *sin*—prelude and threat of untold disaster to follow.

Can anything *better* be said of duty than that it is doing God's will; can anything *worse* be said of *not doing* it than that such conduct is a violation of His will? Duty, therefore, sums up all that is worth living for in this world.

Two paths lie before young men to-day: the path of duty and the path of pleasure. They are free to choose either. One is doing God's will, the other is doing our own. The one is living up to the best that is in us, the other is living down to the worst.

Speaking as "one less wise," putting the matter on the low level of worldly wisdom, duty pays; pleasure leads surely and fatally to bankruptcy both of body and soul. Except as a rest from toil and

as a stimulant to duty, pleasure is fraudulent. It can never lawfully be an end, only a means, to something *better* and *higher*. It will land any young man who takes it as his aim and main object in life into weariness, disillusion, disappointment and despair. A soul given over to it has only before it a vision of lost time, wasted opportunities, blighted hopes, the bitterness and sorrow that invariably haunt the pleasure seeker of living, and having lived, an idle, worthless, godless life. Duty, no doubt, has its trials and pains; but they brace up and strengthen the soul. They bring peace and well-being and the respect and esteem of one's friends. The sweetness of pleasure is but honeyed poison; the weariness of duty is soon past; its memories are ever sweet and its reward never-ending.

## II. THE LIMITS OF DUTY

It is no easy task to exhaust the contents of the word duty. We have spoken of its meaning and the foundation on which it rests. To-day we propose to say something of its limits, or rather, extent, which, in this matter, is nearly the same thing. Duty covers the whole field of conduct, and is, therefore, conterminous with it.

While still on the threshold of our subject, it is advisable to correct some palpable, though very common, errors about duty. First of all we must not forget that duty has a positive or affirmative side as well as a negative. To a Catholic it means more than merely "ceasing to do evil." We must also "learn to do well." "To enter the kingdom of heaven" it is not enough to have empty hands, they must be full. In the weighing of the soul in judgment, duty, on its negative side, *i. e.*, the mere absence of evil, would make a poor show in the way of assets against our life's liabilities. We can not be said to do our duty unless we are able to say not only that we avoid wrong-doing, but also "leave not undone what we ought to do."

The young man who is said to do no harm, is far, as yet, from having done his duty. He may be, withal, a worthless and mischievous person. So far he is but an empty vessel at best.

Owing to the long prevalent, though now utterly discarded, belief in the worthlessness and uselessness of good works, quite a distorted notion of duty gained ground in many quarters. To pay no heed to personal efforts, but simply to appropriate the righteousness of another, was an easy way of "fulfilling all justice," *i. e.*, of doing one's duty, but it did not long hold. Good sense and sound theology were opposed to it alike. And yet in practise this irra-

tional view of duty is acted upon quite as much, if not more, in Catholic circles as in Protestant. Not merely individuals, but whole classes and nations, are judged and lost, even in this world, through it. The reformation in the north of Europe, the corrupt renaissance and revolution in the south, were the direct outcome of the clergy and people forgetting or failing to act on the principle that duty has its *positive* as well as its *negative* side. This error, wheresoever prevalent, spells decadence and degeneracy.

Again, duty is not to be confounded either with ability or heroism. They are quite distinct. A man may be heroic and clever, and yet anything but a model of duty. Some of the greatest scoundrels in history were both heroic and clever, and yet highly immoral in the sense of undutiful. So far from acting on high motives—the very soul of duty—narrow professionalism, gain, greed, or glory, were their main incentives to action. Able they were, patriotic, too, perhaps, but models of duty, in the Catholic sense of the term—the only sound one, rationally, be it observed—*never*. And yet nothing more common even in books on duty than to find the names of soldiers, sailors, scholars, statesmen, financiers, and merchants, praised as heroes and martyrs to duty—a quality which, if the truth were known, they most lacked, except in a very narrow sense. Their names are trotted out, as if success or eminence in one's business or profession were the real marks of duty, whereas they are no proofs that their lives were those of duty at all. Duty is simply doing what we ought to do. Hence, even high sanctity is not exactly duty, as it is doing *more* than one is bound to do by the law and light, both of reason and faith. Indeed, strictly speaking, there are no heroes or martyrs to duty, or rather, we are all, or ought to be, heroes and martyrs to duty, because everyone is bound, *i. e.*, *ought*, to do his duty in life.

Whether we die on the battlefield or amid the tender cares of home, we should all die martyrs to duty. For duty is *being* where one ought to be, and *doing* what one *ought* to do. All else is accidental.

It is to be observed, however, that all are not called alike. Each post in life has its duties. Light, talent, rank, occupation, modify and determine what one has to do, and ought to do; but all men, without exception, have their duty to fulfil in their respective spheres. None are exempt. Duty is universal; it applies to all. The form, not the substance, of duty changes. Howsoever exalted one's position, be he king, Pope, ruler, or aught else, duty follows him and claims observance. Indeed, one reason why we, who stand on lower and safer ground, should not envy those who occupy these dizzy heights, is that their responsibilities, in other words, their duties, are higher and more exacting than ours, and a fall from them entails more serious consequences. One thing, therefore, is certain, that none are outside the limits of duty. Whatsoever shape or form it assumes it binds us; and the only difference that God, from whom it receives its binding force, discerns among His children, is the manner in which each one pays the debt he owes in duty. In face of duty there is no favoritism. All are equal. Each and every human being is bound to do what he ought to do.

So universal is this debt of duty that in its primary precepts it can not be dispensed with, even by God himself. For to do right and shun wrong is founded in the very nature and essence of things, the opposite of which would be a contradiction and unthinkable, and thus irreconcilable with God's attributes. To understand this we must bear in mind that there are certain truths and laws founded on unchangeable relations, such as geometrical truths or those of number; and which we can not conceive to be otherwise

than they are. They do not depend on the will of God, but were ever present as true in the divine Mind. The divine Will or action does not, and can not, terminate in unreality or nonentity. He can not contradict himself. There are certain other facts or laws, however, such because God wills they should be so—such as the laws of nature, attraction, movement, chemical combination, and the rest. These may be conceived as otherwise, had God so ordained. It is not unthinkable that the present distribution of land and water, or the shape and character of plants and animals on our earth, should be reversed, if God so willed it; but on the supposition that He made man a moral and intelligent being, we could not, without entangling ourselves in a contradiction, conceive God not willing that a man should escape. He is necessarily a God of order, and duty is the ordered conduct of a rational creature—the living up to and in accordance with his faculties. Duty, in fact, is the *being* and *living* true to our nature.

Moral truth, *i. e.*, the principles of duty, are absolute and unchangeable. The different views that have prevailed as to what is right and wrong merely indicate that the application of these truths or principles has varied, not the principles themselves. Cruel and vicious actions, or what appear so to us now, have, in some times and states of society, been regarded as right, but never cruelty or vice as *such*. By a law of his nature, man ever seeks good in the abstract, even though the thing is bad in the concrete. Sinful pleasure is only indulged in because *apparently* good. In the same way, if to do a wrong thing is, or ever has been, deemed a duty, it is done not as *wrong*, but as a *matter of duty*.

But, you may say, if even God can not exempt a man from doing his duty, how is it we hear so much in the Catholic Church of dispensations from certain religious duties, prayer, fasting, hearing



Mass, and the rest? In reality, this does not touch the point of duty at all. The general law of doing what we ought to do, *i. e.*, our duty, remains intact. The Church, like any other society, endowed with authority to make laws, can dispense, not from divine, but from human laws, of her own framing; and it may be even a duty to accept and act upon such dispensation. The broad principle of duty ever binds, even though special conventional forms of it are dispensed with, changed, or modified. As I said, the form and particular application may vary; but the essence of duty remains ever the same. Though in certain circumstances we may not be bound to hear Mass on Sundays, abstain from meat on Fridays, or fast in Lent, we are not released from duty for all that. The human element in duty ceases, but the divine remains. Indeed, conflicting duties often meet, when it is sometimes difficult for conscience to decide which binds. One thing is certain in duty, "we must obey God rather than man." The human must ever give way to the divine. The bell rings out, for example, for holy Mass, or any other form of divine service on Sunday, but a child falls ill, or a fire breaks out, endangering human life and property. Now common sense and the voice of conscience tell us that the divine duty of brotherly love is more binding than the human one, though grave, of worshiping God at a particular hour on a specified day. Duty binds on that occasion as strong as before, but under a new form.

Life, therefore, is a network of duties. We live in a world where it presses in upon us from every side. We can no more get away from duty than from the planet we live on. We are, of course, free and may discard it, but it binds notwithstanding. It is not limited by space, though, like the air and the soil, it may vary. We find duty awaiting and imperatively claiming observance in every region of the globe—north, south, east, and west. We may change



our home and country, adopt new professions, enter into fresh complicated relations with others, but wherever we go, or wherever we are, there duty stares us in the face. Men differ in habits and views, they are at variance as to art, politics, literature and religion, but all agree as to the imperative claims of duty. That duty binds the conscience, is thus a truth, recognized by all mankind whatsoever their differences in other respects. They may call things by wrong names, as we think; one may look upon as a duty what another would call a sin; Christians may eat as clean what Jews and Brahmins shrink from as unclean; what may be thought right in one place, or age, is deemed wrong in another; but is not all this a confession of the very power and universality of duty? Duty makes all things sacred, and is a world-wide avowal of the force of moral law and the existence of a divine Lawgiver, who alone can bind the conscience by the universal sense of duty. Light to distinguish wherein it lies in certain complex circumstances, or grace from without to act up to a high standard of it, may be altogether wanting, or at least vary much, in strength and intensity; still the knowledge of it, conveyed by conscience as a controlling and impelling force, is never altogether absent from any normal healthy mind.

Again I repeat, it is no valid objection to the universality of duty to say that men's ideas of duty differ with time and clime—that duty conveys one meaning to a Catholic, another to a Protestant—one thing in one age, or country, another in another; for wherever there is the use of reason there can never be perpetual darkness in regard to the main obligations of the moral law and man's duty to observe them. All men, whether "Jew, Greek or Barbarian," have, and ever had, a standard of right and wrong, and owned it was their duty to live up to the requirements of this standard.

But not only is duty universal in point of space, *i. e.*, all the world over, it is so, too, in point of time. It binds always, at least on its negative side. This is the same as to say that a man should ever conduct himself well. He must be *always* on duty. He may be *off work*, but never *off duty*. There is always something that a man *ought to be* and *do*, and that is duty. The best form of recreation, Mr. Gladstone used to say, and act on, is a change of work. In regard to duty there is, morally, no other choice. To be free from duty, if it means anything, means simply a change of duty. The duties of public life give way to those of the home. The duties of the tradesman, the clerk, the teacher, the workman, have ceased; but those of the father, the husband, the son, or the brother, begin. A man's work is done for the day. He comes home from mart, or farm, or office, or factory, fagged out and tired. With a sigh of relief, perhaps, he says the day's duties are over. But are they? Far from it. A new set of duties face him there. There is something that he *owes* or *ought* to be to his parents and neighbors, or wife and children. There is a duty of kindness, patience, good example, to be discharged, just as important as the duty he has left behind. A knocking off duty, as is sometimes said, no more means a cessation of duty than a change of air means a stoppage of breathing. Ever present, duty follows one all through life.

A man, for example, is born rich, or, by a stroke of good luck, rapidly grows rich. He never did and never needs to do a stroke of hard work in his life for a living. Has he thereby escaped duty? Is he free from all responsibility? Far from it. Like every one else, he owes a debt of duty to God, his Church, his country, his family, and all depending on him. He, too, is in this world meshed in a network of duties. Increase of wealth, indeed, brings increase of duties. And if a man neglects these duties, lives as if in nowise

indebted to God or his neighbor, then he is dishonest and fraudulent. He shirks his work, his life duty, and is no better in the sight of almighty God than an able-bodied tramp, who has work to do, and won't do it.

What is called the day of rest comes round. We are glad that the duties tying us to counter, mill, or office, are over; but even Sunday brings its duties too—the most important of all, those specially dealing with public worship, such as the hearing of holy Mass, and the rest. There is no day of rest from duty—as well escape the air around us as fly from it. What seems farthest away from it—sleep, pleasure, amusement—must all be regulated by duty. Or to take another instance: A man is stricken down with illness. He has to knock off work and resign his post. All life and energy seem gone. Brain, and nerve, and muscle, strike work, and he is simply fit for nothing. Yet he is fit for duty, *nay*, bound to it. It follows him into the sickroom, tells him to be patient and resigned to God's will under suffering; and show himself grateful to the devoted wife, sister, or nurse, who out of a sense of duty also devote themselves to caring for him.

Or, again, opportunities are offered us of easily winning fame, wealth, and pleasure, at the expense of principle. A word has to be said, a deed done, that duty tells us is wrong. The tempter is at hand to whisper, "All these things that eye and heart crave for shall I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me." To whom must he listen? The call of the tempter, or the call of duty? No choice is left a true man. He must follow duty, cost what it may. Temptation to, and opportunities for, wrongdoing abound. What is to hinder us enjoying or profiting by them? No human eye sees. No human voice or arm is raised to interrupt our unholy work. But there is one voice that no human being can silence—the voice

of conscience in defense of duty, crying out, even though it be in the wilderness, that we must do our duty, ever do what is right, and ever shun what is wrong.

Duty, therefore, shadows us all through life. It has no limits of time or place. It is in extent boundless. Like God, it is present everywhere. It has a sentry in every human soul watching over its due performance, and ever giving a warning signal when neglected or badly done. This still, small voice within us is a high witness not only of the Spirit of God within us, but also reminds us of the ever present and ever pressing calls of duty. Even in the midst of our sinful excesses it ever reminds us of what we ought to be and are not. It reminds us of the urgent duty of repentance. Seeing that we can not escape duty, let us make up our minds as reasonable beings to accept the inevitable. We can not prevail against God—no more can we against duty.

Let us divest ourselves of the idea that a life of duty is a life of dulness and hardship. In reality it is a life of pleasure, and the only possible one. Our own experience, as of all the world, testifies to the "hard ways of sin," which every life is that is not one of duty. But it must be duty, as we have described it to-day, in the full extent of the term—and not limited to some favorite or congenial form of duty. What happiness is comparable to that of the man who feels he is doing his duty, and can look back on duty already done? All misery is the result of duty left undone by some one or other. Let us gird ourselves, then, to the great task of doing our duty, in thought, word, and deed, to God, our neighbor and ourselves. In truth, there are no limits to duty. The limits of duty are the limits of life.

## III. CONDITIONS OF DUTY

To-day I propose to speak of the conditions required for duty. Let me frankly say that I speak of duty in the full, round, Catholic sense of the term. I am not speaking to pagans, or even university scholars, but good believing Christians. Duty is good conduct, the soul of life, and not culture, which is merely varnish. No doubt man is born a moral, *i. e.*, dutiful, just as he is born an intelligent being, and more or less conducts himself as such; yet the theory and practise of duty that go to the roots of conduct are found only in Christian ethics. Away from religion, it is a mere wreck. To divorce duty from God is pulling it up by the roots. When it will wither and die is only a question of time. Christ as man even was admittedly the world's greatest moralist, and He has put *morals*, *i. e.*, duty, under the care and guardianship of the Church. In matters of conduct, she is the high court of appeal, as well as in those of faith.

And happily so, because to judge of recent contributions to moral science, the world is going back rather than forward.

Just as Christ came to perfect, not to destroy, the law, so has He elevated and spiritualized the natural elements of duty taught by reason. The old Greek and Roman moralists were, and are, our pedagogues leading to Christ. They drew nearer, immeasurably nearer, the divine fountains of duty in Him, than those who boast to-day of founding a school independent of "God and His Christ."

Unaided human reason fails to teach even, and much less enable man to live up to, the standard of duty to which he aspires. He is, therefore, naturally supernatural—a state for which he was destined,

and in which our faith tells us he was created. Hence we put down grace as a necessary condition for fulfilling one's Christian duty. Light, liberty and grace are thus the three necessary conditions for duty on its practical side. Grace, so far from destroying nature or reason, perfects it, braces and tones it up.

I. Before touching on these conditions it may be helpful to remind you that the matter of duty is human acts, *i. e.*, acts that are *personal*—our *very own*—and for which we are responsible. Man is the only creature on earth, that is a person, which means that he is intelligent, self-conscious, self-centered. He alone can say or think *I* and *mine*. He is said to possess himself—to be his own master. He can call his powers and capacities his own, and acquire other things that he calls his property; have the use of personal and possessive pronouns in all languages. Things and animals are not persons; they are only chattels. They have no sense of duty, nor can they have—except by a figure of speech. They are irresponsible, and have neither rights nor duties. What we call the rights of animals, and our duties toward them, mean that we are bound not to abuse the creatures of God, or turn to evil purposes the supreme dominion He gave us over the rest of creation. Cruelty to animals does not cease to be a sin on our part because animals are not persons and have no rights or claims on us. This cruelty is, on our part, a breach of the duty we owe to God, and therefore a sin—a gross, unmanly sin of cruelty to a helpless, albeit irrational, creature.

This capacity of possession gives a man personal rights that may be either inherited or acquired. Duty is the correlative of right. As every man is born into certain personal rights, and acquires fresh ones in the way of property or otherwise in the course of living, these rights of his impose on everybody else the correspond-

ing duty of respecting them and leaving him in full possession of them. As everyone has rights, so has everyone corresponding duties. Rights imply duties except in the case of almighty God. The great cardinal virtue of justice is the assigning to each one his rights and duties. Duty is, therefore, a form of justice—a giving each person what is due, what we owe him. Hence we aptly call duty a debt that in justice we are bound to pay; and if we don't, we are consequently unjust. A man who does his duty all round is therefore a just and righteous man—a saint in the full sense of the term. But, as in the complex life we now lead, duty is a tangled web of obligation, often opposed to passion and self-interest, than which nothing is more blinding, we need, as a condition of duty, light, and great light.

We can not, or rather *will* not, do what is right, unless we see it to be right, and without light we can not see, or what, in the matter of duty, is the same thing, know. Hence we speak of the light of reason or of faith as an essential condition of duty. What it is and whence it springs is not our purpose here to determine. All we want to impress on you is that without this strange light of knowledge duty would be impossible, and, indeed, man would not be man. Let the world cease to be flooded with light and forthwith life, movement, energy cease. Light is the world's soul. So in the moral order the soul is bathed in light, making clear to even the most degraded human beings the difference between right and wrong, good and evil. Through it duty in rude outline at least is seen and felt by all. The universal sense of sin that oppresses all evil-doers is witness to the universal light or knowledge of duty, of which sin is the breach.

There is no part of the earth's surface that escapes the light. The sun shines for long periods even over its poles; and in his



absence other sources of light take his place. In the world of duty, likewise, there is ever shining on men's souls the mystic light of reason, or faith, that enables every normal person in possession of his faculties to say, I see clearly enough that I *ought* to do what is right—*i. e.*, I ought to do my duty.

We may compare the two great sources of this divinely spiritual light to the sun and moon, that in turn rule the sky, day and night.

The light needful to know what we have to do in the way of duty may vary in measure and intensity, but is never altogether absent from any healthy mind. As I said, the most degraded nations have an idea of duty, calling some actions good, others bad; one character or line of conduct right and straight, another wrong; thus showing the presence of this all-pervading, needful light. Though there may be, and are, various degrees of it; yet there is not, and never will be, total absence. It is the light "that enlighteneth every man who cometh into this world." The material world, with its living freight, would not probably survive the extinction of all light for a single day—no more would the moral world the suppression of light of duty. Ordered life would cease and earth would become a pandemonium or a hell.

II. The next postulate of duty is liberty. An act of duty is what is technically called a "human act," *i. e.*, an act for which he is responsible, an act that he is free to do or omit, and of which freedom, therefore, is a necessary element. Men are never praised or blamed for doing what they can not help; but they are for doing their duty, or leaving it undone; thus showing that they are free. In popular language, we speak of forcing people to do their duty, but if force does not mean persuasion then the result is not duty at all; it is no more than mere mechanical movement, the husk and matter of duty without the soul. As well speak of forcing a steam



engine to do its duty because we make it move. Duty is necessarily free service. Otherwise it is only forced movement. An act done under compulsion can not be an act of duty, for the very reason that it is not free. Liberty is of the essence of duty.

Hence beasts have no duties because they are not free agents. We force them to work, but to speak of them doing their duty except as a metaphor is absurd. Though free in their movements, and thus not under compulsion, they are yet irresistibly urged to act as they do under the impulse of instincts they can not resist. Passion in them is not subject to control as in us. They are its slaves, while we are, or ought to be, its masters. We are aware of the double element of necessity and freedom within us, certain functions of soul and body that go on independently of our will, others that we freely determine, and among them all acts of duty.

God frames and rules His creatures according to their nature, rigidly and fixedly in the domain of matter. Without constraint, yet necessarily by compelling instinct, in living irrational creatures; freely, in conscious, intelligent, self-determining agents. These last alone are capable of duty. Many, no doubt, deny us real freedom, saying we are only self-adjusting machines, like clocks or watches. We sway, or swing, in any particular direction under the irresistible force of determining motives, and, in truth, are no more free than a balance spring or pendulum. But all this is gratuitous sophistry that a little reflection soon dissipates. In going through acts of duty we feel that we are acting under a full sense of freedom and personal responsibility, without which indeed duty were an empty sound. Whatsoever the weight of motive, or force, or impulse, we all realize in the depth of our own consciousness—the facts of which are to us, in matters of truth, the last tribunal of appeal—we feel, I repeat, that we are quite free to do or leave undone, to

determine on a course of action or refrain even under pressure of the weightiest motives. We are free in the selection of the motives that determine our action. We choose, no doubt, under pressure of what we call the strongest motive; but we know very well that we are free all the time. Duty, as we understand the term, would be inconceivable without liberty. We excuse thieving and killing in babies, idiots and the insane, because they are not free, they are incapable of crime thereby, like animals; but the liar, the forger, and the burglar we condemn because they can avoid, if they choose, the gross breaches of duty that label them what they are.

That man is a free agent, both within and without the sphere of duty, ever is and ever will be the unbroken belief of the race. It is as deeply imbedded in language, law and custom as gold in the rock. No theory of moral necessity has ever held its own in the world of thought, or has ever been professed, much less acted on, by its adherents, outside their own studies. Like abstract scepticism, determination is a mere paper theory.

But men are so merged in matter, their gaze is so fixed on nature and her stern, unbending laws that they hardly cast a thought on the moral and spiritual world around them, wherein God rules and reigns over free subjects by morally binding laws that they ought to observe, yet *may* or *may not* obscure. This is the great world of service faithful and free, *i. e.*, of true and earnest duty.

In few, if any, treatises on ethics nowadays do we find any mention of grace as a necessary factor of duty, yet it is *the* factor. God is not alluded to in books of science to-day; yet if divine action and influence in the material universe that science deals with were withdrawn for an instant, it would instantaneously perish. He is the mainstay of all that is, but more especially in the moral and spiritual order. Both "to will and to act" are His, and "without His aid,"

*i. e.*, His grace, "we can do nothing." What we ought to do, and in duty are bound to do, that with the grace, and only with the grace, of God we can do. Even scientifically ethics more than any other branch of knowledge has its roots in theology. It finds the basis of duty in God seeing the need of order in conduct, and willing and commanding us to observe it. Duty in the full sense of the word—duty, I mean, that does not rest in the mere outward body of moral action, but goes down to intention, to motive, the very soul of conduct, is the joint effect of grace and free will. No doubt we are naturally good; we find within us a love of the ideal, an inborn approval of righteousness as opposed to wickedness; still we were stricken in the fall. Man is like a wounded bird, made to fly, but forced to hop and tumble over the ground. He can no longer raise himself above the earth without help from on high. Duty is a gigantic task if carried out fully, and overtaxes the powers of unaided nature. It is like trying to meet a huge debt with nothing or next to nothing in the till. Duty with us is not narrowed down to mere outward good conduct, or, at best, a fulfilment of the claims of natural justice. So far from being distinct from religion, it covers the same practical ground as religion. It is whole-souled service. It has not dwindled into a branch of human law, but, under the guidance of the Church, has expanded into a great tree. It no longer deals with the body of conduct, but the soul also. It surveys the whole field of the heart.

Three nations have made their mark in history and given shape to actual life, the Greek, the Roman and the Jewish. All three had lofty notions of duty—but duty based on widely different motives. The Roman grounded duty on law and force, the Greek on culture, the Jew, or Hebrew, on God. Rome, once strong, just and so far dutiful, sank to a mere name. The only idea of duty we inherit

from her is blind, enforced obedience to law. It is cold and lifeless, effectual only when backed by material force. To Greece we owe an ideal of duty, based on culture, but, alas! it is an ideal that saved neither herself nor her imitators from the most debasing sensuality. Refinement and education are but veneer and enamel. They often serve but to cloak the base material underneath. Culture trains the head, but leaves the heart and will, seat and center of duty, uncleaned. Judea, on the other hand, in and through Christ the Messiah, has given us the loftiest and noblest idea of duty the world ever received—a view of duty that permeates the whole moral being—that makes the true liver and doer, that makes all men who rise to it pure, upright, transparently truthful to the inmost recesses of the heart. Old Rome was masterful, Greece intellectual, Palestine, or rather the Church, the outcome of Judaism, spiritual.

Christ by the grace He has won for us, the light wherewith He has enlightened us, and the liberty of the children of God, which He has purchased for us, has put new life into duty, or the moral law, He has made its observance possible and feasible. From a dead and lifeless theory duty, under His magic touch, has grown up into a living force. From a mere department of human law, it has become glowing, vital, personal conduct.

Duty elevated and sanctified by grace is no longer a mere affair of correct behavior, a code of rules, written in a book or traced in brass and stone, cold, lifeless and motionless—but engraven on the the heart, vivified by the spirit of God—it brings us into close personal union with the living God, making us His true children. "Whosoever are led by the spirit of God they are the sons of God."

In conclusion, then, hold as a life-long principle that man is born into this world, not to seek selfish ease and pleasure, but to do God's

will, *i. e.*, His duty. Be assured that there is no genuine peace, rest, or contentment away from duty. God put them in duty, and who dare or can put them elsewhere? All calculations of worldly prudence or personal gain must be laid aside when conscience rings out a clear call to duty. It is strange, yet true, that the happiest, and at the same time the most trying, moments of life are those passed in doing our duty. Ever to strive for what is right, ever to dare to be what we ought to be, ever to be bold enough and fearless enough to say no when tempted to swerve from duty, this is true manliness, because conduct alone worthy of a man.

Let us beg, therefore, the great Father, whose children we are, to give us that light of intelligence, that freedom of will from slavery of passion, and, above all, that grace, that divine force, needful to do His holy will, in which lies our duty.

## IV. LAW, OUTWARD RULE OF DUTY; AND ITS ADMINISTRATORS

By what standard are we to regulate our conduct, in other words, what is the rule, or norm of duty? Is there any fixed, unerring guide of morality, or duty, beyond that furnished by the light of reason, common to every man born into this world?

It is commonly admitted that there is a twofold rule or standard of duty, one external to and independent of ourselves—the moral law, law of nature, or law of God; the other internal and personal conscience. Of the former of these rules, *viz.*, law, I propose to speak to-day. Not that law and conscience are two distinct and divergent rules of conduct. Both converge in each act of duty. Law is the general rule, and conscience applies it to details, or concrete action. The result is duty.

Now, what is meant by law? Wherever and whenever we observe regularity or fixed order, we at once say there is a rule or fixed law at work. Hence, we speak of the laws of nature, the laws of thought, and the rest. Indeed, as order and regularity are observed in all things, we say the reign of law is universal. God is necessarily a God of order, and by one supreme act of will binds all creatures to act, according to their requirements and nature. What is called the eternal law is supreme order or regularity, in the divine Mind, working itself out in creation. Nothing escapes it. It embraces rational and irrational creatures, physical, intellectual and moral. It is infinitely simple, yet, owing to the narrowness of our minds, we break it up into phases, or facets, to which we give various names: we say the law of nature, the moral law, the laws of thought; and science is the discovery and grouping of the facts and rules that make up this order in any given line or branch.

Strictly speaking, there neither is, nor can be, any break or interruption of this supreme, eternal law. What we call disorder, or violation of law, is but part of a higher order. Miracles, and answers to prayers, are phases of supreme law, like the jar produced by a change of key, or chords, held in suspension in music, they are parts of the great harmony of the universe. Both in its physical and moral aspect the natural order of things is interfered with and set aside by free will of man, but the will of God expressed in supreme order, or law, ever gains its end eventually. Man works in time, God in eternity. His purpose is never defeated, His law or will never defied in the smallest detail, with impunity. If we interfere with the order He has established, we must take the consequences, "What a man sows that he will reap," in any and every order.

Now this eternal law of God, recognized as dictating rules of conduct to free, intelligent beings, we call the moral law. Man is a free agent, and is ruled in accordance with his nature. The moral law binds, but does not compel to a fixed mode of action. Its main outlines are traced by way of knowledge on the reason, and acts on the will by way of motive. For free creatures there is no such thing as blind, determining impulse; there must always be within the region covered by liberty more or less deliberation, followed by free choice. Hence, light and freedom ever accompany duty or guilt. Within the mind and consciousness of all rational creatures God has written His law in characters sufficiently clear to enable them to guide and regulate their conduct. Men ever had, and still have, the light of reason, making known to them all, in dim outline at least, their Creator's will—the essential difference between right and wrong—the rudiments of duty, in short. All find the alphabet, the primary elements, of duty, as it were, traced on reason by an un-



seen hand. Hence St. Paul says, "The Gentiles were inexcusable, inasmuch as they had the law, *i. e.*, the rule of duty, written in their hearts, their own conscience bearing testimony to it." Every human being all the world over has this law, this sense of right, this feeling that justice should be done, more or less developed. It is simply the moral law, fixing roughly men's rights and duties; rights that are due to others, duties that ought to be done by ourselves. Now, this law shining on the reason is the outward, eternal, never-changing standard of duty. It is the ideal of justice, with which all human laws, customs and regulations of duty have to be compared, to test their worth and binding force. Legislators of all times have embodied it, wholly or in part, in their codes. Summaries of its main precepts were committed to writing, as we find on Assyrian and Babylonian tablets still extant, previous even to its summary and promulgation in the law of Moses. The most perfect epitome of the natural or moral law, however, is that summed up in the ten short, pithy, precepts known as the Ten Commandments, or law of God, revealed to Moses. It is the expression in substance of what is already contained in right reason, but put in such a way as to come home to the multitude and give them a clear, short, working law of duty.

It is by the rule of duty made known to reason that all men, outside the light of revelation, *were*, and *are*, judged. But the moral law alone avails little for the "healing of the nations" or the observance of duty without supernatural light and aid. Look at the sad moral history and present state of non-Christian nations, or individuals, and masses, that break away from revelation, and you will be readily convinced that reason and the moral law are utterly insufficient to teach even, and much less to enable, men to live up to anything like a high ideal of duty. Apart even from the fall, the



supernatural would seem a necessary corollary of the natural. And so it has ever been. The light of revelation has always supplemented that of reason in teaching the race its duty. From its cradle and the early dawn of its history we find the race in personal touch, so to say, with the Almighty, receiving divine instruction and commands over and above those furnished by reason, and handing them down traditionally through patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets, till Christ, the Messias, came, in whom all nations were to be blessed," Christ, the head and founder of the Christian religion, the true light, "enlightening every man that cometh into this world."

He was, and is, the final teacher of duty, its Alpha and Omega, in whom ethical truth, gradually unveiled in the Old Testament, finally culminated; and, as true God, He has made due provision for its preservation and application to the complex, ever-changing moral problems of the day without losing any of its fulness, beauty and splendor in the one holy, world-wide body, called the Catholic Church. She holds up, without fear or favor, the highest, holiest and purest standard of duty of any teaching body in the world. Even those who dislike her dogma are compelled to admire the loftiness, reasonableness and speckless purity of her teaching on the vital subject of duty. Surely, then, if conduct determines the value of a life here, and hope of a favorable judgment hereafter, men are safest in her fold. No recognized school of morals even claims to uphold a higher or holier mode of living. By listening reverently and attentively to her teaching, we easily learn what our duties are in all the various relations of life. The heads of what we owe, by way of duty, to God, our neighbor and ourselves, are very briefly and clearly set forth in the Catechism put in the hands of all her children. Indeed, in what are called the "essentials," "what every Catholic is bound to know," *viz.*, the "Lord's Prayer,"

the Ten Commandments, and the moral dispositions of heart, needful for worthy reception of her chief Sacraments, even "the lowest in the kingdom of God possesses a code and standard of duty immeasurably higher than what was known to all the sages and moralists of antiquity or their would-be restorers in our own day.

But the fact is, we are not free in the matter. If the moral law is supreme, external to our reason, and binding, we must accept Him as its interpreter, whom God authorized to extend and expound it, and who is to us "the way, the truth, and the light"; as also the system He has framed and left to teach us our duty. Law, to be of any practical value, must be administered. Now, where is the court, and where are the judges, set up to dispense the law or ethical code of Christ in the kingdom of God? We are not pure spirits, but flesh and blood, and, therefore, need to learn our duty not from angels, but from men, like ourselves, provided only they are duly qualified and legally appointed teachers of this highest of all arts. God is "supreme reason"; and the service He requires, says St. Paul, a reasonable one; sure, then, the society that binds us together in discharge of this service or duty, must be formed on a rational basis. Now this it would plainly *not be* if every man were a law to himself; and, as in kingless Israel, "Each man did what was right in his own eyes." An external rule, or law, needs external application, even in divine things. Hence, the Church is the guardian of the moral law, wherein the teaching of the most perfect of all moralists is perpetuated, wherein, indeed, He promised to abide all days even "to the end of the world." She holds up the mirror of duty to reason and well ordered reason beholds therein all that is "high and holy and of good repute."

Do not mind the "can't" that is uttered about her dogmatism.

No doubt, like every other teacher, she talks in the indicative and imperative moods rather than the subjunctive, "Tanquam auctoritatem habens"; but all teaching, to be worth anything, must be dogmatic. And are not our ethical judgments, *i. e.*, truth about duty, as important as those that deal with the stars. Sound information, all the truth that can be had about the great outward rule, or law of duty, is as important in our eyes as true knowledge about the laws of health or the law of attraction. Many people glibly say, "Let us do our duty and leave the clergy to quarrel over the theory of it." But what is my duty? What is right and conformable to the moral law in the many dark ethical problems of the day? Can I commit suicide when useless and tired of life? Can I divorce a nagging, perhaps an adulterous wife? Was Onan justified in his views and practise of married life? Can we answer these and other perplexing problems of duty without dogmatizing? What more reasonable than that there should be a living voice, from which there is no appeal, to explain and determine the contents both of reason and the sacred books regarding the all-important question of duty, especially in view of the fact that away from this living voice there is a Babel of discordant notes even about its first principles.

On grounds that bear the test of reason, we hold that God has supplemented the light of reason with that of revelation, thus unveiling His will in regard to faith and morals, belief and duty. Christ's mission in this respect is still carried on by His Church, firmly rooted in the world for this very purpose. New phases of thought, and life, and conduct, call for new applications and interpretations of the moral law; and it is her function to set the world right in the realm of law and duty. She is their guardian. Be on your guard against the cry of morality, or duty, without re-

ligion and dogma. There is no such thing, nor can there be. People say Christ led and taught a simple life of duty. His life, they say, was a protest against the professional clergy of the day. So far is this from being true, His sayings bristle with dogma. He was self-assertive and positive, like His Church to-day. The Sermon on the Mount, wherein He proposed and enforced His new code of ethics, is in reality cemented in dogma.

By the nature of things, it must be so. All forms of truth, whether ethical or otherwise, are necessarily exclusive, *i. e.*, dogmatic. A teacher who tells me that it is my duty to be poor in spirit, love those that wrong me, and shun worldliness, is just as assertive and dogmatic as one who says that there is but one God in three persons. Dogma is at the back of duty, as of faith. Right thinking about matters of duty must go before doing it. We act on our thoughts and views. People, and there is a large school of them nowadays who think that individual self-interest and pleasure should be followed as guides in life rather than reason and conscience, make short work of duty in the usual sense of the term. They who would divorce duty from doctrine make merry over the fact that the good fathers at Nice nearly came to blows over a single letter in the wording of a dogmatic decree about Our Lord's person. The sneer is as ill-timed as it is vulgar, for those keen-witted Greeks saw, as we see to-day, that in the choice of that single letter there rested on them the awful responsibility of declaring whether Jesus Christ was a mere teacher of morals, like Plato or Aristotle, with no higher credentials than those of a modern professor of ethics; or Christ, the Son of the living God, sent to teach us our duty.

It is to Him, living in His vicar and holding court authoritatively in the New Jerusalem, that we appeal in knotty points, bearing on

the law of God. England was lost to the Church through a question of duty decided at Rome against the appeal of a king; yet all admit now that in the point of morals in question the Pope was right, and the university professors, lay and clerical, in favor of the king were wrong.

Two great dominating thoughts are absolutely necessary to keep mankind from committing intellectual and moral suicide—belief in a personal God and the duty of unquestioning obedience to His will expressed in law, *i. e.*, the moral law, and all just laws built on it. Now it is the Catholic Church that alone of all great social bodies witnesses to these two great facts. She holds aloft the banner of belief of a free, loving, personal God—our Father in heaven, to whom we are bound by the equally personal relations and duties of children. No doubt, as we have seen, reason teaches all the outlines of moral duty; but how powerless to persuade and impress. We crave and need the contact and force of personal authority. All law is remotely at least an expression of the divine Will.

Now the distinctive characteristic of duty in relation to Christ is not so much difference or originality of the matter of the law, but in His authority and power as a teacher. "He taught as one having authority." Many even of the sublime ideas in the Sermon of the Mount are found, perhaps, in works based on reason only; but He claimed to impose and authorize them personally, by virtue of His character and office. Other moralists could only exhort and propose; they could not impose, or help their pupils to act up to the ideals they dimly saw in reason. They could not even personally practise what they taught. The Church, like Christ her founder, speaks with no uncertain voice—points to her Lord and the crowds of saints, who bravely walked the roughest and highest paths of duty. She tells us to do the same, and if feeble and

unable, then must we draw moral strength to do so "from the Saviour's fountains" in grace.

We have now briefly dealt with the great external rule of duty—the moral law. All ramifications of duty are but phases of it, and they derive all their binding force from agreement with it. By it, too, shall we be judged, according to the light, liberty, and grace granted to aid us in keeping it. It is put before us in all its purity and splendor in Catholic teaching on duty. But remember the essence of duty in regard to law is not in *knowing*, but in *doing* it. Let us learn the law, *i. e.*, the will of God; but above all, keep it. Be it not said of us, as was said of the Athenians, "The Athenians know what is right, but the Lacedemonians do it." "Catholics know the great law or rule of duty, but outsiders observe it."

## V. CONSCIENCE: INNER RULE OF DUTY

Duty is correspondence in conduct with the rules of right and wrong. What are these rules? We have seen that they are two-fold—the law of God and the law of conscience. We dealt with the former in our last discourse. To-day we have to speak of conscience, the inner law of duty. The objective and essential morality of an action in the abstract springs from its conformity with law, the external, fixed, immutable, universal rule of duty. I allude, of course, to the moral law, the most perfect summary of which, in its main outlines, we find embodied in the Ten Commandments. All human laws to be just and binding must be framed in accordance with the law of God. All men find the law of duty traced in dim outline in *reason*. This law in its ideal perfection was proclaimed by Christ, and is upheld to-day in the Church as the one, perfect, external rule of duty.

But free human acts to be moral and worthy of the name of duty must conform with an inner rule, a norm of right and wrong, conscience. Law is for the body at large, conscience is for the guidance of the individual. It is through conscience that abstract law or duty is realized in action. It applies the outer rule of conduct to concrete acts. It is the law, *e. g.*, that slander is a violation of duty, "Thou shalt not bear false witness," etc. The words I am tempted to utter, rings out my conscience, are slanderous, therefore a violation of duty.

We may appeal for mercy and excuse owing to ignorance, or forgetfulness of the law, but no appeal can be lodged once a man acts against the plain rule of conscience. He sins and irrevocably. Law



is a map or chart of duty, conscience is a compass. If let alone the needle will invariably point true, *i. e.*, to duty. The law is light from without, conscience is the eye that receives and applies it in vision. Light is ever light; but the visual organs may be diseased or distorted, still we are bound to use and make the best of it, as we have nothing else to see with. The law of God, "pure and undefiled," like a ray of clear, bright light, is often broken up, and cast back from the mind or eye it falls on. The law is made applicable only through conscience. As it is conscience, not law, that eventually decides the momentous question of personal responsibility, therefore, it decides our moral state, before God. It makes or mars a man's life. It renders us good or bad, worthy or worthless, godly or godless. It is life's rudder. By following it or not we either steer to port or drift hopelessly to moral ruin. That it may be a safe inner rule of duty it will be helpful to dwell briefly (I) on what is meant by conscience, (II) on the lessons it teaches, and (III) indicate a few plain hints for its training and guidance; as, like all the other powers of mind and body, it needs schooling.

As I am not giving a course of lectures on moral science it is not my province to determine what conscience is physically or metaphysically. We deal with it only as a factor in duty. It may be observed, however, that in Catholic schools of thought conscience is not deemed a distinct faculty of the soul at all, but simply the mind exercising its activity on ethical or moral truth. The mind, meaning hereby the group of powers and functions coming under the head of intelligence, dealing with the rules and principles of duty or good conduct, is called conscience; or, loosely, the moral sense. Duty is not a matter of feeling or emotion, or of moral sentiment at all. It is based on the intellectual perception of law, as a force binding the conscience, and means conformity in action to



the light of external law and inner light of conscience. The principles of morals or duty are as much an affair of mind as those of mathematics. "Good ought to be done and evil avoided," is as self-evident an ethical or moral truth as "the whole is greater than the part" is in general knowledge. From these ethical principles we rapidly draw and apply conclusions to the facts of life that make up our daily round of duty. Conscience is an inference of an implicit, often intricate, act of reasoning in the sphere of morals. Thus "all forms of fraud are violations of duty," is a general ethical principle or law. The mind goes on to reason, that failing to pay just debts, gross misrepresentation as to the quality and price of goods, are forms of fraud; therefore, certain acts of mine in my business dealings are violations of duty. Conscience is, therefore, a necessary concomitant of our intellectual nature. Animals kill, steal, give way blindly to passion; but there is no remorse because there is no sense of duty. They are neither moral nor immoral. They are in a state of innocence. Children, up to a certain age, and some backward races up to a certain point, seem incapable of guilt. Conscience is dormant in them or undeveloped, like their minds. Hence, conscience supposes the possession and use of reason. In fact, it is reason, as I said, dealing with moral truth. Its authority over conduct is supreme, at least *subjectively*. It is evidently meant to sway and regulate all the complex movements of the heart. It is, or ought to be, in the soul of man what the flywheel is to the engine, a balance to the watch—it should regulate its escapement, so to say. If you think of it, no free action is meant to escape conscience, thought, speech, behavior. No other impulse or motive should sway it, nor indeed can, without involving the soul in moral disaster—such as passion, love, self-interest. Though thus supreme, inwardly this must not be understood to mean that conscience is

of supreme authority outwardly, or that, as is often foolishly said, there is nothing in the world higher or above conscience. Man is not God, nor is he a law to himself. Conscience is of subordinate authority—midway between the moral law to which it is bound to conform, and our conduct, which must conform to conscience, in turn. A man's conscience may be quite wrong. It may give false signals. It may be culpably erroneous; if we take no pains to enlighten and correct it. For conscience, after all, is only fallible, and no more shielded against error than any other judgment of the mind dealing with truth. A man may easily mistake both the law and its application to actual facts, yet acted up to in good faith it justifies individual conduct and saves us from a breach of duty, *i. e.*, from sin. It is the sole light to duty in action. Hence, we ever respect a man who we are sure acts conscientiously, however strange his conduct may seem. It is to each man the herald of the law. It pronounces authoritatively what is right and wrong in conduct; and when we do our best in the way of enlightening it by the aid of religion and morality, it is to us the voice of God. Hence, we esteem a man in proportion to his known conscientiousness. All other qualities yield to this. Conscience is, or ought to be, supreme ruler of the soul, for the very reason that it voices God. Bear in mind, however, that it is not the function of conscience to teach us what is right and wrong. That is the office of reason, helped by duly qualified teachers. Conscience only applies a law to the actual occurrences of daily life. As soon as I am convinced, rightly or wrongly, that the law binds me to do something, or leave it undone, conscience at once rightly orders me to do or omit it. Conscience, therefore, often saves from sin those whom we condemn. Hence, *we* should never judge another's conscience, "To his own Lord he standeth or falleth."

There are savage tribes who put their parents to death when old, out of sense of filial duty. The centurion who carried out the sentence of crucifixion and death of Christ acted under a strict sense of duty throughout. Murderers are criminals, whilst soldiers and hangmen are not, though they kill too. A man may be *subjectively* right and *objectively* wrong, and vice versa. Marcus Aurelius, as far as we can judge from history, and Titus also, were conscientious rulers; yet they made many martyrs to truth. "Yea the hour cometh," says Our Lord, "that whosoever killeth you will think he doth a service to God" (John xvi, 1).

Strictly speaking, conscience, even in its most perverse state, is *never wrong*. It never commands evil, as such. When we do wrong we act against it. Even when drugged and vincibly erroneous, *i. e.*, when we "*ought* to know better," it ever cries, at least feebly, "Do what is right, shun what is wrong." It is the mind that is wrong. The Scripture does not say, "Wo to you that obey a misguided conscience." No, but, "Wo to you that *call* evil good, and good evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness." The mind gives wrong names, and so perverts the conscience. The conscience was ever good in view. It is always loyal to duty. We may drug the mind with false views, we may use all kinds of sophisms to elude our plain duty, but conscience ever points to what is right, even though it is a wrong thing under a false name. Beware of corrupt literature and "new theologies," as they lead the mind astray and thus mislead the conscience also. There are poems and novels with a purpose or a set of views to uphold that would degrade the conscience of a band of angels. So true is this that in many cases it is almost a moral danger to learn French. But to proceed, conscience, to be a safe and sure compass to duty, must be certain, *i. e.*, we must be practically sure that what we are doing

is not a breach of duty. There can be no wobbling, no lack of straightness in its decisions. We can not act morally under persistent actual doubt; in other words, whatever the law may be, we must make up our minds in some way or other that we are safe in acting as we do, *i. e.*, with or against it. A soldier, *e. g.*, may doubt whether war at all is right, he may even be certain, as ~~many~~ in some wars were, that it is unjust; yet he may conscientiously fight; because, though wrong or doubtful in the abstract, yet he, as a soldier, must obey. If we can not settle our doubts or perplexities we must stop acting altogether; or, if action is necessary, choose the safer and more probable side, or the lesser of two evils. In matters where conscience is concerned what we do must at least be *morally* permissible.

II. We have next to examine what this mysterious voice of conscience within us that seems ever to say, "You ought to do right, you ought not to do wrong," teaches. As an inflexible inner rule of duty it bears witness to an ever present, overruling lawgiver, from whom the binding force of duty proceeds. Even science has come slowly round to proclaim the "*immanence*" of God in His creatures. The word is not objectionable, if it means that He is distinct from and above them; but duty and conscience declare His presence quite as forcibly, more so, indeed. No two thoughts disturb the peace of sinful men more than those of an ever present God and an ever intruding conscience. What systems have not been devised to explain away, and get rid of both; but in vain! As Our Lord foretold, the holy spirit of God in and through the voice of conscience is ever "convincing the world of sin." Were these two concepts mere creations of fancy—shadows of self—we should have banished them long ago. Great thinkers were not and are not wanting to help weaker brethren in the process; but no! The law that con-

science calls us to observe is not of our making, or of that of our fellowmen. We suffer no remorse in eluding an act of Congress or the by-laws of a village council. We judge their worth and justice and force by comparison with a supreme law above ourselves—the moral law; and the Supreme Being who framed it, Almighty God. We say that conscience is our judge; but we mean God judging in us. We feel that we are being daily weighed, sifted, tried by one not ourselves. We may elude a carping monitor, we may escape the arm of justice, we may kill an aching nerve; but the worm of conscience we can never utterly destroy. Passion, pleasure, gain may drown its voice for a time, but it soon gets heard again above the world's din. It stands the most hardened hearts—even those of the Pharaos, the Herods and the Neros, past, present and to come. It is God's holy spirit doing His wish in the human heart.

Again, conscience bears witness to the paramount supremacy of duty. It teaches us the lesson of the need of submission to its own authority. Even in spite of ourselves—against all the passions of the heart combined in common league against it—it persists in affirming that duty is supreme; that its fulfillment, even if it did not lead to happiness in this life, which it mostly does, and assuredly will in the next, is the main purpose of life; and that its transgression by sin is the deepest wrong we can inflict on our own souls. Conscience will not tolerate a rival. It will never leave us at peace till we reckon its authority as supreme in the soul. Now, it has but one theme—a theme it never varies—viz., do your duty. It excuses everything else almost. It never stings, pains or wounds, except when we commit a breach of duty bending under sin. A man may break all the rules of grammar. He may trample on the whole code of etiquette, he may offend against every canon of good taste and refinement, he may be a boor, a bounder and a

Philistine, and know it and feel it too; and yet he will never suffer a single pang of conscience; but let him slander or defraud, or turn sensual, and his conscience will be up in arms against him at once. Hence Our Lord's warning to "make peace with our enemy on the way," *i. e.*, with our own conscience by repentance. Conscience has but one command—one lesson—one counsel, *duty*; one enemy, *sin*.

True, it may for a time be deadened with spiritual morphine and chloroform so deftly furnished by some moral specialist in soul diseases to-day; but it is sure to wake up, and gnaw, and torment as before. It can not be extracted, or cut off, like an aching tooth or diseased limb, for it is God asserting His rights to supreme sway, even over our free will.

III. The higher and better self, in contradistinction to the lower and animal self, is simply the soul living up to conscience. We live our best in living conscientiously.

But, like every other God-given faculty, the conscience needs training. All the powers of the soul coalesce in an act of duty, intellect, memory and will; so that conscience, the inner rule and measure of duty, loosely speaking, is a combination of them all. Now, look at what training does for the mind. Compare a stupid savage with a modern professor; yet both are dowered with the same essential mental powers; education makes the difference. To master the lowliest art or trade one must train hand and eye. All success in life is due to the special training of some one faculty or other with which we are endowed. Training is use. Though conscience, more than any other power of the soul, is divine, yet it, too, is subject to the general law of development and growth—in other words, it must be trained—it must be educated. We meet people who seem to have lost all conscience—who appear to see no

perceptible difference between right and wrong—who, in short, have no sense of duty. If there is any conscience left it is rudimentary—a mere stump, like a limb withered away through lack of use. Grace, no doubt, is necessary to duty; but grace must find something on which to fasten, *i. e.*, a trained conscience. And just as we see a vast difference between the skilled and the unskilled, the ignorant and the highly intellectual, so is it in the field of conscience. In fact, there are individuals, classes, nations in whom it seems dormant or lost. And yet, even in its natural state, it is man's highest endowment, and the very cement of the social fabric. No conscience, no duty; and without duty society must, sooner or later, collapse.

The body in its every nerve and muscle, to be fit and alert, calls for air, light and exercise. So does the conscience, morally. It needs light and saving grace from above and daily, nay, hourly practise from within. It is unjust to our conscience to let it grow wild and untilled, just as it is to let a child grow up without training.

What conscience needs most, in the way of guidance, is a knowledge, deep and extended, of God's holy law—the will of God—the eternal never changing standard of right and wrong. Hence, the value of daily religious instruction in and out of school. Knowledge of duty, it is true, is no guarantee of its observance; but ignorance for certain entails its neglect. An enlightened Catholic conscience is the loftiest index of moral truth and duty. There no false weights or measures are to be seen, say what her enemies may. And why? Because they are duly stamped and measured in accordance with "the pattern on the mount," the truth as it is in Jesus, *i. e.*, in God. We set our time pieces with the sun. Therefore, keep your conscience straight and trustworthy by making



them echo the great external rule of duty, the law of God. In her authorized catechisms and manuals of instruction you have the safe and guaranteed standard of the supreme law.

From earliest childhood we should be trained, as indeed most Catholic children are, to listen to and follow this inner law of duty. It is the bell of God's law. It is the clock that tells us the hour when duty is to be fulfilled. If honestly acted up to conscience is God's call to us. Its decisions, even when erroneous, are not to be resisted without disaster to the soul. By it we stand or fall before God.

In our formulas for night prayer there is usually a pause inserted for the examination of conscience: it is a necessary preliminary, moreover, for a good confession. Now, all this indicates a daily searching of heart as one of the best means of keeping the conscience bright and lustrous. The daily practise of it at stated times and by regular methods is the secret of the wondrous delicacy of conscience that characterizes those high schools of refined and cultured piety—convents and monasteries. Hearing is lost by stopping the ears to sound, the sight by closing the eyes or shutting out the light; and so conscience by closing the eye and ear of the soul to God's holy law. Daily examen means practise and training of our highest faculty, that of apprehending right and wrong. Yet, like any other power, it may by disuse become warped, scared and deadened. This evil we shall avoid by ever keeping our conscience tuned and strung in unison with God's law, witnessed to and expounded by the Church.



## VI. ITS SANCTION

*Introduction.*—In our previous discourse we dealt with conscience as the inner and secondary rule of duty, as law is its primary and outward. To-day we propose to speak of the rewards and punishments attached to the observance or infraction of duty. Every breach of the law of conduct, in the sense in which we use it here, every violation of conscience, is a sin, because a known transgression of the moral law. This makes it an offense against God, for the reason that the moral law is the expression of His will. To run wilfully counter to this law of God, and its just derivatives, is, therefore, to oppose His will, in which the essence of sin rests. There is a tendency to-day to separate morality from its author, and make of law a sort of idol, or fetish, quite independent of a divine Being, whose will it voices. Now we can not too strongly insist on the truth—which really gives to duty its sanction that law is always the expression of some will determining some sort of order to be kept. If we fall in with this order we get rewarded; if we oppose it we get punished. Even the laws of nature—the regular course, the constant sequence of cause and effect, that we observe in the material world, are not independent forces or entities in themselves; but the supreme Mind, arranging all things, and the supreme Will carrying them out. The sanction accompanying law is measured by the will and power of its framer. We have a faint image of will as the fount of law, duty, obedience and sanction, in our own wills, impressing their commands on the various muscles of the body and in directing the conduct of others. The

will of man within certain limits, and acting with the laws of nature, effects marvels in this world. We see what one powerful will can do in the way of law or influence on others, in such instances as those of a Caesar, a Napoleon or a Bismarck. But the divine Will is infinite and supreme. All order is subject to it; and all beings are carrying out this supreme order, either consciously or unconsciously, willing or unwillingly. If we do not choose to comply with this order in one line or direction, we must do so in another. Even chaos, moral or physical, has its laws, from which divine order will duly come. The permission of what we call evil does not mean that God lets go the reins. He remains as supreme and absolute a master as ever. His will, though not always done in one way, yet *must* be done in the end. The all pervading law we see reigning in and around us is but another word for God's will in action. Many see only blind forces obeying blind law in the world; but surely behind this "reign of law" visible either in chemical affinity, the march of planets or the wonders of life, anyone "with eyes to see and ears to hear" can clearly observe infinite mind and infinite will—in other words, God acting through fixed law.

But in dealing with duty we deal with moral, not physical, law. One striking peculiarity of the order reigning in the world of matter is that we can conceive the laws making up this order reversed without any inherent difficulty or absurdity. The relation they give rise to are contingent. If the law of attraction ceased or acted in another way, if the sun rose in the west and set in the east, if fire ceased to burn or water to flow, there would be no inherent contradiction in the change. No necessary truths or relations spring from these laws. But it is different with the moral. I could not possibly conceive a good and just God approving a lie,

condoning injustice, or looking with equal indifference on virtue and vice. By the very nature of His being He must love and wish what is right and good and loathe what is wrong and vile. It is the foundation of ethics that a moral person or will loves good and hates evil. Every will is drawn to and motived by good, either real or apparent. There are certain truths founded on essential relations, such as those of number two plus two equals four, or "the whole is greater than its part," the opposite of which is unthinkable, because involving a contradiction; so in ethics, or moral science, there are certain necessary moral relations giving rise to certain necessary moral truths. That theft or ingratitude, or neglect of and cruelty to children, should be *virtuous*, and not *vicious*, we deem absurd and morally contradictory. That duty should not bind, or that God should be indifferent to its neglect or observance, is morally unthinkable.

And this brings us to the main subject of our discourse, the sanction of duty. We may elude or evade a physical law without any consciousness of doing wrong. We are morally free to make water flow up hill or hinder the course of nature in its physical aspect. And yet, if we thwart or infringe the laws of nature, we get punished for our mistakes. If we breathe bad air, take bad food, wear unseasonable garments, the result is disastrous. Good health is the reward of keeping the laws of nature; bad health, or even death, avenges their infringement. The result, call it punishment, if you will, of transgressing physical laws may be separated by a long interval from its cause. We sow groundsel or thistles; it may be in error, but we pay for our mistake when the harvest comes round.

The same holds in moral law, only with much more disastrous results. We fail in duty—we sin, and we feel conscious of guilt. A

mere error is often followed by great, deep and long suffering. Witness the effects of disregarding the laws of health; yet sin, or failure in duty, seems to escape. But it is only apparent, the punishment of transgressing a law, from which even God could not dispense, if not swift, is sure.

It is true we should fulfil the moral law out of a sense of duty, for its own sake; out of love, in fact, and not through any selfish motive of fear of punishment or hope of reward. But granting all this, sanction, *i.e.*, reward or punishment, is an inherent part of law. Duty, according as it is observed or neglected, necessarily entails one or other. The great driving force impelling to duty should certainly be love; but taking men in the mass, they can not even be ruled, much less made dutiful, in full sense of the term, without whip and spur. And, after all, even the semblance of duty in forced observance of law is better than anarchy.

Apart from this, rewards and punishments enter into the nature of law. If people did not benefit, *i. e.*, if they were not rewarded, by law, laws would not be made. No law-giver is, or possibly can be, indifferent to the observance of the laws he enacts. Indeed a code of laws often reads like a list of punishments following their violation. Now, if this is so in merely civic affairs, touching only the surface of life, how much more in duty, cutting down to the division of soul and spirit—made up, in great part, of necessary laws from which even God himself can not dispense. Punishment is, therefore, the necessary consequence of the violation of duty. It is part of justice, the reverse of the medal. It is like a sequence in logic or physics. If I owe one man fifteen dollars and another five, I am necessarily in debt to the amount of twenty dollars. If a man casts himself down from a high tower on the stones, he must inevitably fall and kill himself; as easily escape these issues as the

punishment inherent in the infringement of duty. Moral law thus broken can no more be flouted with impunity than any other. It is but a branch of eternal order that must hold sway in spite of all resistance. Impressed on dead or irrational creatures, it bears down irresistibly; impressed on free, rational beings, like men, it may be resisted and violated by sin; but the debt thereby incurred must be paid down to the last farthing. There is no outlet. The guilty must restore the balance of divine order he dared to disturb, or suffer, till someone restores it for him. By strict law a shadow is cast if we stand in the light, so in morals or the realm of duty. Who shall remove the shadow cast by a sinful world on the divine sun-dial? It needed the incarnation and atonement of a God.

And yet most people flatter themselves that they can escape the violation of duty with impunity. Each singly thinks himself secure—the spoilt child of an avenging God. He *will* and *must* punish others, we know and admit, in due course; but there will always be a loophole of escape for us. But God can not compromise. He can not condone sin. Even if forgiven through Christ, it has a certain sanction left in punishment. God could make a man imponderable, He could make fire stay its devastating march, He could suspend the law of gravitation; but He could not sanction a lie or condone illicit love. To any moral being, least of all the Supreme, this would be impossible.

One main reason, now that faith in a future life, to be determined by one's conduct in this, is growing dim, of the widespread disregard of moral duties, except externally, is that we are so accustomed to see effect follow cause immediately in nature, and not observing punishment follow sin, we rush to the conclusion either that there is no sanction at all attached to duty, or that if its secret violation is punished we may minimize, if not escape it altogether.

We see very well that if, unable to swim, we leap into the ocean we drown; if we fall into the fire we burn; if we take poison we die; but it is not apparently so in morals. Men often steal, lie, calumniate, kill even, hate, and the rest, without any harm, nay, often with great pecuniary gain, and they are tempted to think all danger of punishment is over. "I have sinned and what evil hath befallen me?" is an expression as much in vogue among sinners to-day as in David's time. But it is not true even in this life that effect immediately follows cause. Early death or long drawn out diseases are often separated by long intervals from the errors or sins of youth that gave rise to them. Ignorance, poverty and ill-success in life are often the result of idleness at school. Sowing and reaping are parted by long intervals of time. An acorn is dropped into the ground—is forgotten, or utterly lost to view; and yet after many years a noble oak tree, with its yearly crop, is the reward of our slight labor in planting. We are reaping to-day the harvest of good or evil planted by our forefathers thousands of years ago. In morals or in nature the harvest is far from being contemporary with the sowing. What we know for certain is that in both, "What a man sows that he will reap," and that usually each grain sown is reaped a hundredfold, whether the seed be wheat, grapes or thistles.

It may be objected that "duty, like virtue" is its own reward, and infraction of it its own punishment. The trend of opinion is against belief in any sanction for duty beyond this; and, moreover, that all punishment, to be just, must be meant for *correction* and not for *vengeance*, which is immoral; hence the mildness of prison discipline and the growing repugnance to the penalty of death. No doubt a great deal of barbarism existed formerly, and in some places still lingers in the methods of administering justice—but it still

remains just that the violation of duty should and must be punished. Mere *vengeance*, implying unjust anger and rage and brutal treatment, is imperfect; but the punishment of wrongdoing merely as such is sound and right. To wreak vengeance for private wrongs, to exceed the just measure of chastisement, may be denounced, but not otherwise. Apart from all idea of correction, example or deterrent force, sin rightly brings punishment in its train. Who will say that the brute who outrages and murders an innocent child, or the man who betrays his country to the enemy, should not be punished apart altogether from any thought of correction. And yet such punishment expresses the cry of vengeance, or indignation, if you will, on the part of society against the wrongdoer. We neither blame nor punish an animal, or madman, because there is, nor can there be, any violation of duty; but we punish a criminal. For crime or sin, or any dereliction of duty whatsoever, is no mere bodily disease: It is a human act—the free, deliberate choice of a depraved will; and as such ought to be, and eventually is, punished. Blame and punishment are as much deserved results of free action as praise and reward. The contrary is the mere cant of determinism, a mere euphemism for fatalism. “Punishment,” says Hegel, “is the other half of sin.” “If a man,” says St. Anselm, “chooses to evade the will (*i. e.*, law, one’s duty) of God commanding, he falls under the same will punishing.” The high capacity for duty involves also the low capacity of sin—a terrible responsibility, which no free creature in the present order can escape.

II. Now there is a double sanction attached to duty—imperfect in this life, perfect in the next. Though the reward of duty here and now is only imperfect, still it is very real, tangible and visible. In fact, duty even in this world more than pays its way. Though duty binds against all risks and consequences, even death itself, yet



in most, I may say, all cases, it meets with heaven's sanction in its results here below. So true is this that the utilitarians themselves confound the pleasure and other temporal advantages of duty with duty itself, whereas it is by its very nature opposed both to pleasure and utility. If these are its sole motives and foundations, it ceases to be duty, as we have already said. They are only consequences. First of all, broadly speaking, the fulfilment of duty perfects self. It roots, strengthens and develops what is best in us—will, reason and conscience; and, therefore, produces that inward essential peace and happiness for which we were made. A man who habitually shirks duty is at war with self in its higher aspect. To violate known duty is to act against conscience, and such a man can never be truly happy within, whatever his outward circumstances may be. And no matter what the outward results of dutiful conduct are, the inward self-satisfaction and contentment more than make up for any loss, trial or misfortune that may fall upon us in being true to duty.

On the other hand the violation of duty is its own avenger, the feeling that we are not living, I do not say, up to our Christian standard, but even up to our common nature. Man is man not through his animal nature, but his rational—his intelligence, will and conscience. Hence the neglect of duty usually produces either feverish restlessness or intense and settled melancholy. Even from a purely natural point of view, the conscious infringement of duty must wear away eventually every shred of self-respect, and with that everything goes. Cleverness, wit, genius, wealth and health may be left, but the soul that animates and gives value to them has fled. There is nothing left to enkindle and keep alive anything like sustained effort and self-sacrifice; and what is man without them? "A mere reed shaken by the wind."



Then, again, duty, though not necessarily, nor in all cases, conduces to health of body and competence, if not wealth. Putting aside the supernatural altogether, duty limited even to the exercise of the four cardinal virtues, prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude, tends, and in the nature of things must tend, to make both men and nations "healthy, wealthy and wise," so to say. The practise of the three common duties of truthfulness, honesty and sobriety is the best insurance one can make for "peace and plenty" in one's old age. The honest and truthful servant, the sober and industrious workman, the upright tradesman, lawyer, doctor and clergyman have ninety-nine chances to one in their favor of succeeding well in life against those who lack these qualities—who, in short, neglect their common duties in life.

But apart altogether from mere worldly success, duty ever wins influence, respect and esteem. It is no rare thing to find people without any aid, arising from name, wealth or talent, commanding the lifelong confidence of their fellowmen, raised almost against their will to positions of trust and power, their sole recommendation being that they are men of duty. It is the old story, personality means character, and character, good or bad, is determined by the way in which a man does his duty. Where duty decays, all worth goes, too. What we call a good, sound, public spirit, the very life and soul of a nation, depends entirely on the way in which citizens discharge their duty. Character is built on duty. In proportion to the way they fulfil or neglect their moral duties, the character that people form is worthy or worthless. And, after all, the main asset of a nation is the character of its people. Art, wealth, learning, all that goes popularly to make up civilization, soon get swept away if there is not a strong dutiful race to guard them. People forget, too, that the greatness and happiness of a people depend entirely

on their moral character, *i. e.*, on their doing their duty. Existing material prosperity may be the reward of past, not the substance or even proof of actual duty. Worthless nations, like worthless individuals, may inherit and waste the inheritance, material, moral, or intellectual, of dutiful ancestors. Duty to be rewarded, even imperfectly in this life, must be *personal*. The reward is mainly interior in the peace and content that accompanies a life of duty.

But when all is said and done, duty never finds nor can find its full, adequate sanction in this life. All we can say is that in most cases its observance brings more decided temporal advantages to mind and body than its violation. But how very few would even attempt to face the difficulties of a dutiful life, in all its integrity, if there were no beyond? If all ends at the grave then the only wise man is the sensualist. Duty, if death ends all, would be supreme folly; pleasure, the height of wisdom. All men are naturally drawn to pleasure, in fact they hunger and thirst for it; whereas duty is cold, hard, and, considering the force of animal passion, repulsive. Individuals would never think of the common good or weigh the prospective advantages of the observance of duty over the actual pleasure of its violation. If all is over at death, they would think, and rightly think, only of themselves, *i. e.*, of their own butterfly pleasures during the short summer day of a brief life. I speak now of duty in the full extent of the term, duty based on high, worthy motive and covering the whole field of rectitude in thought, speech and action. Now duty in this sense never receives full recognition or reward in this life, nor its opposite due blame and punishment. Duty is, as I said, often taken in a narrow, limited sense to mean the conduct that goes to form a good soldier, a good citizen, a good husband, or the rest—a sense quite compatible with the grossest moral delinquencies in all branches of duty save one. Now the

highest types of perfect duty which our race has produced have all been men and women that suffered most in this world—the saints and martyrs. All men were made for happiness, and seek it, either by the paths of duty or pleasure, yet in the full perfect sense it eludes all. None reach it, but least of all those who deserve it most by their self-sacrificing lives of duty. The others have, at least, the fleeting joys and pleasures of a sinful life. If duty found its full sanction here, its full measure of reward or punishment, then the higher life, the life of reason, will and conscience, would be irrational. No! God often detaches pleasures, happiness, contentment from the practise of the loftiest duty, but only for a time. Justice and equity so marked in the other realms of God's kingdom will resume their natural course and duty meet with the reward it merits, and vice that escapes punishment here its due measure of retribution hereafter. Should Christ suffer poverty, insult, torture and death, while a Nero or a Caligula revel in delights? No! rest assured that God's rule is not one of anarchy and injustice. "What a man sows that he will reap" either in his land or his conduct. Every law that God has framed, whether in the material or moral order, will, in due time, work out his divine Will and bring us sanction. His moral law, if observed, brings its reward partly and imperfectly here; fully and completely hereafter. Heaven is the only rational answer to the suffering and obloquy of the just; as hell is to the success, pleasures and carnal joys of the wicked.

Remember that heaven is high and reached only by the steep, hard, thorny road of Christian duty; hell is low and easily reached by the broad, flowery path of pleasure. Choose, now that opportunity is offered. Work, *i. e.*, do your duty, while you have the day of life, for the night of death is fast approaching, when no man can work.

## VII. OUR DUTIES TO GOD

We have hitherto dealt with the subject of duty, in theory, we now come to deal with it in practice. Abstract duty is a mere empty word, unless it becomes concrete, in action. And yet what more common than to know what is right, and do what is wrong. To make duty vital—to reach the end for which God made us moral, *i. e.*, beings capable of duty, it must live in head, heart and hand; in other words, we must know, love, and do our duty.

As was observed, duty is a debt, due by us to others; it is what we owe to Almighty God by the moral law, which includes likewise what we morally owe to ourselves and other men. Now it is self-evident that our first and main duty is to discharge our debt to God by what is called worship or religion. Duty is a form of relations. As soon as mutual relations begin duties emerge and continue as long as these relations last. When people marry, or become parents, or enter any new state of life, they find a new set of duties awaiting them. If death or separation intervenes they cease, or change into others. But there is one relation that never changes—one stringent tie can never be broken, and that is the relation between the Creator and the creature—between God and ourselves. We are absolutely dependent on Him, body and soul; and His rights to our worship and service are unquestionable and unqualified.

Our discourse, therefore, to-day will turn on our duties to Almighty God. They hold the first rank in importance, inasmuch as they spring from the ineffably close relations that bind man to the Being who made him. God's right to the worship of His creatures

is self-evident. Only one whose mental vision is extinct, or distorted, would think of questioning it. Hence, wherever there is an idea of duty at all, that is, among all sane, rational beings, there religion of some sort or other exists; and has ever been to the front in their history. Indeed, religion plays, ever has played and ever will play, the most important part in human life. I say human life because the lower animals are incapable of rising to the idea of duty at all. Religion is a distinctive badge of man; and so far from irreligion making an advance in civilization it is but decay, a reversion to the beast. Religion, right or wrong, true or false, is worthily deemed the main need of the heart, as it is our first duty. To be in harmony with the infinite power, force, love, God in short, that meets us at every turn in life, must strike any thinking man as a matter of supreme importance. There are no doubt isolated cases of atheism, as of insanity, but no large connected groups of atheists. The most degraded savages have religious rites, showing their sense of the duty of worship. The recognition of a superhuman power, or powers, and the duty of expressing dependence thereon by some outward signs or ceremonies, is an essential mark of all beings raised above the order of the brutes. Atheism or irreligion, if sincere, is a disease, or rather a crime. The fact that there are endless forms of religion is no argument against the evident need and duty of some form of it. We do not speak here of revealed, but of natural religion—religion made known by the light of reason, and involving the duty of worship. All men, with few exceptions, have admitted this. Indeed any form of religion, however grotesque, is better than none. Diversity and abuse of religious rites is only an argument in favor of a revelation clearer and more emphatic than that given in reason alone. All, indeed, who live up to the higher self in conscience must see and

feel the duty of loving, respecting and adoring the author of their being—of offering, in short, the tribute of prayer and praise, and other forms of worship summed up in the word religion according as their lights dictate.

Can any human being in whom reason and a sense of duty still linger look up to the starry skies, or around him, on sea and land, without recognizing a God, and feeling both the need and duty of adoring Him as the Lord and Master of all?

As I am addressing Catholics I understand by duties to God not only those imposed by natural, but also by supernatural, or revealed religion. Indeed, the two sets of duties merge and intermingle. Revelation perfects and completes what reason begins. They stand in the relation of moonlight and sunlight. These duties are for us summarized in the first three commandments of God, as explained authoritatively by the Church. As mentioned in a previous discourse the Ten Commandments, or law of God, first traced on reason—written on the tablets of the heart ere being transferred to tablets of stone on Sinai form the universal code of duty for all mankind. God confirmed His natural revelation of the law of conduct by a supernatural one to Moses. Though under different formulæ, the sense of duty implied in the law of Moses, solemnly re-enacted and imposed by Christ, is now the “law of nations.” No code of law, or duty, is deemed just, even in non-Christian countries, that does not conform to the Ten Commandments.

The first three, as observed above, applied by the Church to suit the altered conditions of times, places and persons, form a summary of our duties to Almighty God. There were, and are, many odd standards of duty to God afloat in the world, yet there is but one true ideal standard—that delivered by Himself in the Ten Commandments.

There have been, and are, many strange forms of religion in the world to teach and enforce that duty; but there has never been more than one true, the religion of Israel in the old, and of Christ in the new, dispensation; just as there are, and have been, many strange Gods and grotesque ideas about God; but only one true—the God of Israel and Our God. Though many say of the “Kingdom of God,” as of Christ, “Lo, it is here, and, lo, it is there; yet is there but one visible kingdom, that founded by Christ and built on Peter, the rock.” Now it is in this house of God that man learns in all their fulness what his duties to God are. Say not, as so many do, that this is narrowing the kingdom of God within the limits of the Roman Church. She is the only one that ever claims universal or world-wide dominion. Apart from this, before Christ’s coming, the tangible and visible kingdom of God on earth had shrunk to the isolated hill country of Judea, and the one legal form of ritual and sacrifice was narrowed to the rocky summits of Jerusalem. Whereas to-day “the clean oblation mounts to God from the rising to the setting sun.” Now, as then, there are many “true Israelites” and “children of Abraham” not “far from the kingdom.” Though bodily, not of it, yet belonging to it in spirit, and praying for the coming of His kingdom, already established in their souls, they are led and guided by His spirit; and we know that “whosoever are led by the spirit of God they are the sons of God.”

We now come to specify in detail the duties that we “of the kingdom” owe to Almighty God. These duties summed up in the word “worship” fall under two headings—internal and external.

The duty of internal worship, or worship of the heart, as it is called in Scripture, arises from the fact that man is chiefly man by virtue of his spiritual soul, and its internal powers, intelligence and free will. It is only by our understanding that we can know God



at all; and only through our will that we can love Him. Now it is our first duty to use these noble faculties in silent adoration and homage. The source of all true worship is interior; and there must be some measure of it behind all outward words, forms, rites and ceremonies, if we would not have it sink into empty and soulless formalism, like that of the Jews, of whom Our Lord said, "This people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." For us the internal duties of religion are summed up in the worship of the one true living God, by the divine virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, in their subjective or inward aspect. It is our duty to use our minds in learning all we can about God, through reason and revelation, the approved sources of faith or belief, and furnished with this knowledge, using our will and affections in acts of hope, or truthfulness and charity, or love. No higher form of inward worship than to believe, hope and love God, especially when expressed in the shape of inward effective prayer. This is true union with God, and anyone who sincerely and in his own way thus worships God, is sure eventually to reach His kingdom, either here or "to come."

But our duties to God do not begin and end with silent, solitary worship. We are not pure spirits, but creatures of flesh and blood. Our bodies are as much the gift of God, and part of ourselves, as our souls, and, therefore, they, too, must take a share in divine worship. Moreover it is natural, not to say obligatory and necessary, to give vent to inward feelings, by outward acts. Thought and its outward symbol, as we see in the deaf and dumb, are so closely related and dependent that one needs the support of the other. The Church, therefore, echoes nature and voices God's will in requiring the body to unite with the soul in praising God. The body is one of the marvels of material creation,



and vivified by a living soul is called the temple of the Holy Ghost. Man sums up the universe he represents, is the high priest, in fact, of this visible world. In the Scripture, sun, moon, stars, seas, mountains and rivers are called upon, and unconsciously, in displaying the glory and attributes of God respond to the call to praise and bless God and shall not the whole man—body and soul—take part in the homage of creation to its Maker! We are by nature fond of ceremony, display and splendor. Every social function, nay, every private interview, is marked by them in greater or less degree; and shall we lay them aside in meeting either singly or collectively for the grandest and noblest act of which we are capable—the worship of God.

Man is a gregarious creature. He is born for society, in which alone his powers can be trained and developed. Social life is not a matter of choice, it is a necessity. Hence, he worships God in common. The family was the first Church. It is a duty, therefore, and ever has been deemed so to take part in public worship. Now, reason requires that this should be done “decently and according to order”; in other words, that there should be a fixed ritual, that all are bound to follow. The rites and ceremonies that made up the ritual of the old dispensation, as well as those that prevail in the Church to-day, form the rule that all are bound to follow. It is, therefore, a breach of the duty we owe to God to worship Him by unauthorized rites. The Church authorized by Christ, our law-giver, claims to regulate all matters touching not only doctrines, but ritual.

We may sum up the outward duties of religion binding on Catholics under these heads, prayer, holy Mass and regular frequentation of the Sacraments. Though called outward, they must proceed from inward devotion. This devotion is their very soul and life. If there is no belief—no conviction of a divine presence—and worse

still, if there is positive evil in the heart, either in object or in motive, then our semblance of divine worship is but a hollow mockery. We offend, rather than propitiate, Almighty God.

Prayer is the oldest and most instructive form of worship. To invoke God in need and in trial, to praise, bless, adore and call on Him in trouble, to raise the mind, or turn the affections toward Him, are forms of prayer binding on all as a necessary duty. To engage outwardly in this exercise, either jointly or privately, every morning and night, is by custom looked on as a duty. Indeed, few good Catholics feel easy in mind if they wilfully neglect their daily tribute of prayer and praise to Almighty God. Apart from the word duty prayer is the very breath of the soul. It is a vital practise to those who would live to God. A man who has renounced prayer practically declares himself devoid of divine life.

The second great outward duty we owe to God is the devout hearing of holy Mass on all Sundays and holidays. The sacrifice of the Mass is the highest and holiest act of divine worship in which a creature can take part. At all times sacrifice was deemed the main, public and social act of homage to the Creator. It can be offered to God alone in recognition of His supreme dominion over all creatures. Hence, the death of the Victim or destruction otherwise of the matter of the sacrifice, was effected to show God's supreme rights over all living beings. I do not speak of the inward sacrifice of prayer and self-immolation, common to all times and places, but of the grand, external public liturgical act shown under the name. It was practised in all religions, true and false. It is out of place in a discourse on duty, to speak of the nature, origin and value of the august act of worship known as the Mass. The sacrifices of the old law have been abolished; and the Mass, perpetuating the Sacrifice of Calvary, now sums up in one grand mys-

tic act the whole essence of public worship; and is daily offered the clean and new oblation, "for the living and the dead, all the world over from the rising to the setting sun." Every word, every ceremony, every vestment worn by the officiating priest, is pregnant with meaning. The central act of offering, made by Our Lord at the last supper when He commissioned His first priests to "do this in remembrance of Him," enlarged, arranged, adapted to suit all times and places, is ever the same. Whether we assist at it in a lonely hillside chapel or are present at a solemn high function in St. Peter's at Rome, the obligation of hearing holy Mass, as the chief act of supreme worship, is one of the six principal laws of the Church. Unless we are excused by some pressing and valid cause we are bound to be present at holy Mass on Sundays and holidays under pain of grievous sin. The dispositions we are to bring with us, as reason and faith suggest, are reverence, attention and devotion. The Mass is the center and sum of public worship. All the outward splendors of religion—all the pomp and ceremony we can command—all the gifts of gold and silver—all that art and piety can afford are brought to adorn the altar whereon it is offered and the edifice wherein that altar is enshrined.

Religion is a tie that binds man to God. Now this union with God—forming what is called the divine or supernatural life of the soul, is effected by grace, the channels of which are prayer and the Sacraments. Hence the administration and reception of the Sacraments form a very important function and duty of our holy religion. To keep in touch with infinite God we must not merely pray and hear holy Mass, but devoutly and regularly frequent the Sacraments. In a spiritual sense they are to us sources of air and light, and food, and drink. "Ye shall drink water with joy from the Saviour's fountains." "He that eateth this bread, this mystic,

Sacramental bread, shall live forever." Needless to add, therefore, that one of our main duties to God is preparation for, and worthy reception of, the Sacraments. When we lapse from our baptismal grace into grievous sin, there is one sole means for us of restoration by repentance, effected in the Sacrament of Penance, or, as it is usually called, Confession. But this union, effected in Confession, is perfected, consummated, in holy Communion, the Sacrament of the Eucharist. A table is spread in God's house—the new manna, the bread of Christ's body—laid on this table or altar in holy Mass is distributed to all who choose to come. By command of the Church we must, as a matter of strict duty, receive these two Sacraments at least once a year; but anyone who is conscious of his many spiritual needs, and the loving goodness of God, will make it at least a duty of love to approach them frequently, especially when in need; *e. g.*, after lapse into sin. Daily Communion is now the practise of the choicest souls in God's Church. The body needs daily food, and we pray God to grant it, why not the soul? The confessional is ever open and the eucharistic banquet spread, and all, even the lame, and the halt, and the blind, are invited to enter.

So important a part does the worthy and regular approach to Confession and Communion take in the discharge of our obligations to Almighty God that the practise has popularly acquired the name of "going to one's duty."

We have now touched in brief outline the chief duties we owe to God. They are by far the most important and binding of all. If we are false to God, debtors to Him and fail to accept the compromise He offers, what will all, what will even life itself, avail. They are summed up as you have heard in the word *worship*, both in its internal and external aspect. What that worship is we are not left in doubt of by our guide, both in its doctrinal and prac-

tical side. Glance at your Catechism, or prayer book, and there you will find that we discharge our duties to God by keeping the first three Commandments, further summarized, we may say in practising in their full extent, the three divine or theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity. This is the service of God—the observance of our duty to Him. “Be ye therefore doers of the duty, not hearers only.” Carry out these three commands and prove your possession of these divine virtues by the lifelong practise of *daily prayer*, *Sunday Mass* and regular approach to *Confession* and *Communion*.

How little people think and what little sacrifice they make in the discharge of the all important duties of piety to God! To say nothing of private, or interior worship, or vocal prayer, how sadly they neglect even outward worship! What trifling excuses will justify them in their own eyes from going to holy Mass and the Sacraments. The very people who will face a blizzard to go to a theater, or a circus, join in a dance, or a card party, will stay away from church, even on Sundays on the flimsiest pretext of weather, health or convenience. And why? Their heart is in the world; not in God. They love the creature and forget the Creator. Learn that the shortest and easiest path to duty is the path of love. Love needs no dry formal precept—no force, no violence to obey, *i. e.*, to be dutiful. Hence Our Lord and Master teaches us that the first command of all—the main duty of life is love. We would then faithfully comply with our duties to God. Love Him. All rocks of difficulty—all hardships on the path of duty—melt away before love. Love is duty, or rather hard, dry duty melts into love. “He that loveth God delighteth in His Comandments,” *i. e.*, actually finds a pleasure in doing all that duty to God requires of him.

## VIII. DUTIES TO PARENTS

The oldest, firmest, and most enduring social unit in this world is the family. It has, in some form or other, weathered every storm, and therefore, seems to be a divine and indestructible organization. All other social bodies, tribes, nations, church even, are but agglomerations of families. The very word family, has something of a sacred character about it. From the various complex relations of its members, all duties arise. Even those we owe to God are first probably awakened by the practise of duty to parents. Nothing gives a higher or more tender idea of God, than to say that He is the common Father of all. Hence the most inspiring of all prayers is the Our Father. Devotion and loyalty, and a keener perception of their influence on our lives, are imparted by the application to our Lady and the Church the endearing title of mother.

Having spoken of the special duties we owe to almighty God, it is but natural, then, that we should next deal with those we owe our parents, who, in a manner, shadow forth to us and represent "Our Father in Heaven."

As we observed, the spring or well-head, of all duty, is the law of God, summed up in the Ten Commandments. Parental authority, therefore, derives its force and sanction from divinity. Wherever there is a right, there is a corresponding duty to respect that right. God's right to our duty comes first, and hence the first table of the law contains the duties we owe to Him, in three Commandments. The remaining seven point out the duties we owe our neighbor. Now, the nearest to us, in kin and rank, come our parents; our

duties toward whom hold the first place in the second table of the law, "Honor thy Father and thy Mother."

Never, perhaps, was it more necessary to insist on parental rights and filial duties than at present. What with growing loose views on marriage, and the consequent weakening or breaking of family ties; the advance of Socialism; the invasion by the State of parental rights and other causes, the just authority of parents over their children seems declining; while filial piety is disappearing. And yet, the rights of parents are inalienable. They are but a transfer of God's, so that the duties of children, to love, respect and obey their father and mother are unquestionable.

I. Duty in the abstract, is vague. It seems to hang in the air, till specifically applied. A concrete rule of conduct, indicating a single point of duty, with time, place and manner of fulfilment come home to us impressively. Such is the duty of children to their parents. Though it occupies a vast space in the field of ethics, and has a wide range of application, yet in its primitive sense, as we use it here, it is limited to the practical, every-day duties we owe to our father and mother in the flesh, by virtue of the fourth Commandment of God.

To understand the actual force of this precept, before indicating the duties it imposes in detail, it may be observed that the whole idea of duty in the infancy of the human race, just as in our own infancy, was summed up and limited to what parents exact in their homes. In patriarchal days, all law imposing duty sprang from the parental will. The head of the family was father, king, priest and teacher, all in one. The complex distinctions since introduced by the spread of the race were quite unknown. Family relationship was the source of all duties. Divine authority, so to say, centered in parents. What we now name codes of law, whether civil,



hearts beat with the love of father and mother. Personal unworthiness affects neither their rights nor our duties. It is the *office*, not the *bearer*, that we must look up to and honor in this case. Indeed, the compelling motive of obedience, a branch of this duty of honor, should ever be the divine authority represented to us in all lawful superiors, our parents more than others.

But apart altogether from any express command to honor our parents, it is to them, under God, that we owe everything. We owe them life, food, clothing, care. Indeed, God alone knows the sacrifices that most parents make to see their children better off, happier, richer and more prosperous than themselves. The parental instinct is the source of untold and often unrecognized heroism. Neither tongue nor pen has yet exhausted what parents do out of love for their offspring. Honor, therefore, to whom honor is due. It is the cry of nature, as well as the voice of God, and duty. One of the oldest monuments in the hoary East is Absalom's tomb, standing in the Valley of Jehosaphat just outside of Jerusalem; but to this very day the people as they pass cast stones at it, because it is raised to a son who failed grievously in the duty—the honor he owed to his parents. Various forms of religion, politics, civilization, and philosophy have arisen and perished, yet one thing remains ever firm amidst the wreckage, and that is the belief by all men that filial piety is a duty—that all, in the words of the fourth Commandment of God, are strictly bound "to honor father and mother."

II. We next come to examine the precise meaning attached to the word honor in this precept. The duty of honor to parents may be arranged under three headings—love, respect and obedience.

If love is ever a duty, and the founder of our holy religion tells us it is the fulfilling of the law, surely it must be strictly due to the earthly authors of our being whom God has chosen to impart the



spark of life. If every heart is a center of love, which, like fire, its symbol must spread, surely the first to catch its rays must be those nearest and dearest to us—part of ourselves—our own dear parents on earth. Love is the law and condition of life; let it cease and death reigns supreme. But love must have an object, and next to God, what worthier than our parents. The wildest and fiercest beasts apparently made for hate and war and slaughter, yet show love to their parents; witness how the cubs of the lion and the tiger gambol round and fondle their dam.

In children when instinct gives place to reason, love is and must be an essential element of the honor due to parents. To cover the requirements of duty this love must be heartfelt and sincere. True love comes from within. Filial love must show itself in a feeling of affection, gratitude, and desire for their well-being and happiness, as well as in a life-long desire to avoid wounding their feelings or causing them pain. Children often expect everything from their parents and give nothing in return—not even the easy duty of love. They look only at their faults without a thought of their virtues, and sacrifice; and yet all true love, and above all, true filial love, is blind—blind, I mean, to defects inseparable from everything human. Moreover, love, like all earnest feelings, never hides itself in the breast; but proves its reality, by act and being. It is seen not merely in kind thoughts, but in kind words and kind deeds. A dutiful son who loves father and mother in the true, Christian spirit, will pray for them, help them spiritually and bodily in time of need, sickness and old age. It is a duty to see they are attended by priest and doctor, and have all the care that true filial love can afford. The duty of love should not stop short at the grave, but see that a parent's last wishes are carried out; and due respect paid to his or her mortal remains.

hearts beat with the love of father and mother. Personal unworthiness affects neither their rights nor our duties. It is the *office*, not the *bearer*, that we must look up to and honor in this case. Indeed, the compelling motive of obedience, a branch of this duty of honor, should ever be the divine authority represented to us in all lawful superiors, our parents more than others.

But apart altogether from any express command to honor our parents, it is to them, under God, that we owe everything. We owe them life, food, clothing, care. Indeed, God alone knows the sacrifices that most parents make to see their children better off, happier, richer and more prosperous than themselves. The parental instinct is the source of untold and often unrecognized heroism. Neither tongue nor pen has yet exhausted what parents do out of love for their offspring. Honor, therefore, to whom honor is due. It is the cry of nature, as well as the voice of God, and duty. One of the oldest monuments in the hoary East is Absalom's tomb, standing in the Valley of Jehosaphat just outside of Jerusalem; but to this very day the people as they pass cast stones at it, because it is raised to a son who failed grievously in the duty—the honor he owed to his parents. Various forms of religion, politics, civilization, and philosophy have arisen and perished, yet one thing remains ever firm amidst the wreckage, and that is the belief by all men that filial piety is a duty—that all, in the words of the fourth Commandment of God, are strictly bound “to honor father and mother.”

II. We next come to examine the precise meaning attached to the word honor in this precept. The duty of honor to parents may be arranged under three headings—love, respect and obedience.

If love is ever a duty, and the founder of our holy religion tells us it is the fulfilling of the law, surely it must be strictly due to the earthly authors of our being whom God has chosen to impart the

spark of life. If every heart is a center of love, which, like fire, its symbol must spread, surely the first to catch its rays must be those nearest and dearest to us—part of ourselves—our own dear parents on earth. Love is the law and condition of life; let it cease and death reigns supreme. But love must have an object, and next to God, what worthier than our parents. The wildest and fiercest beasts apparently made for hate and war and slaughter, yet show love to their parents; witness how the cubs of the lion and the tiger gambol round and fondle their dam.

In children when instinct gives place to reason, love is and must be an essential element of the honor due to parents. To cover the requirements of duty this love must be heartfelt and sincere. True love comes from within. Filial love must show itself in a feeling of affection, gratitude, and desire for their well-being and happiness, as well as in a life-long desire to avoid wounding their feelings or causing them pain. Children often expect everything from their parents and give nothing in return—not even the easy duty of love. They look only at their faults without a thought of their virtues, and sacrifice; and yet all true love, and above all, true filial love, is blind—blind, I mean, to defects inseparable from everything human. Moreover, love, like all earnest feelings, never hides itself in the breast; but proves its reality, by act and being. It is seen not merely in kind thoughts, but in kind words and kind deeds. A dutiful son who loves father and mother in the true, Christian spirit, will pray for them, help them spiritually and bodily in time of need, sickness and old age. It is a duty to see they are attended by priest and doctor, and have all the care that true filial love can afford. The duty of love should not stop short at the grave, but see that a parent's last wishes are carried out; and due respect paid to his or her mortal remains.

The next element in the duty of honor to parents, is respect. In the language it comes from, respect means to look back. It implies in dutiful children a regard, a looking to the wishes and views of parents in the regulating of one's conduct. Respect of parents implies a feeling of fear, mingled or rather tempered with reverence and esteem. It is a feeling somewhat akin to veneration. In its highest degree we both respect and venerate the very name of God, and all sacred things. So in the name *parent* there is a sacred element of fear, mingled with love and confidence. Well-bred children entertain a sort of reverential awe toward their parents. Even the tender love of a mother does not remove this. When they fly to her, and cling to her, it is as if she were to them a divine being. This feeling of respect accompanies a dutiful child all through life—urging him or her according to the circumstances of age, time and place, to speak and act respectfully, even in the intimacy of family life, receive correction rightly and consult them in all matters of importance. Hence, no child out of respect for his parents will dare to mock, ridicule, or despise them, much less threaten violence, or, what is worse, actually raise hand or foot to strike those to whom they owe the gift of life.

But of the three branches of duty involved in the honor we owe our parents, obedience is the best and surest test of its reality. Duty is the preservation of moral order. Now, obedience is the soul of this order. The peace and ordered life of families and nations depends entirely on how authority is obeyed. Socially and morally, disobedience spells disorder. The very test and touchstone, therefore, of filial duty is obedience to parental authority. "Children obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord" (Coll. iii, 20) is the sweeping command summing up this point of duty, as given by St. Paul. Indeed, unqualified

obedience is the hinge of all community life. Anarchy and misrule follow its cessation. Utter lack of it makes a man either a savage or a criminal, or both, and if we don't practise it early in the loving atmosphere of home, under the mild rule of fathers and mothers who love us even in correction, we shall have to learn it in the hard life-school of a cruel and selfish world.

To carry out this measure of filial duty our obedience must be prompt, willing and exact. A truly obedient son and daughter will be only too pleased to afford proof of their filial love, by *promptly* complying with all the just and reasonable commands of their parents, without alleging endless objections and indulging in irritating delays, which mar, if they do not utterly take away, the merit of obedience. Fancy a soldier, or a sailor, or a servant, or anyone under authority, obeying, as many so-called good children do. Discipline would fall to pieces. The work of the various State services would collapse. And yet why should worthy children obey less perfectly, less promptly from love than those moved only by fear, force or self-interest.

Next, our duty of obedience should be discharged willingly. "God loves the cheerful giver" in obedience, as in other things. Our manner of obeying our parents should manifest the ready heart from which it springs. A work of duty should be a work of love, even when involving a high degree of self-sacrifice. Murmurs of unwillingness, or volleys of excuses, prove that we have not yet learned the alphabet of the duty of obedience.

Lastly, obedience to parents must be exact. Right is on their side. It is doing what we are ordered to do, and not what we wish to do, that will enable us to say, "I have done my duty," "I have rendered to my parents the tribute of obedience due to them." Exactness is the soul of obedience; and exact obedience is disci-

pline, without which the whole moral world would fall to pieces. It is the soul of law, order, life we may say, for life depends on absolute obedience to blind laws.

Home is the best school; and one of the most needful lessons that we can practise is exact obedience. It fits children for the after discipline of life. All life's training is a breaking of our will into submission to that of God, and to accomplish this, obedience under the name of discipline, must be strictly and sternly upheld. We can not escape obedience. We meet it at every turn in life. We must submit necks to the yoke. The only thing left us is a choice of masters. Let us, therefore, begin by obeying the voice of God speaking to us through the just and saving commands of our parents, and let that obedience ever be prompt, willing and exact. Let us begin by being obedient in small things, and we shall be faithful also in the greater and larger things, "in which our whole life's happiness often hinges."

## IX. DUTIES TO THE CHURCH

The soul of duty is obedience to lawful authority, obedience even when blind in matters not plainly wrong, is highly moral and rational. A soldier is praised for doing his duty, though acting on a wrong signal. "Into the jaws of death marched the six hundred" in dutiful response to an insane command. Authority may err—fallible authority, I mean—but never those whose duty it is to obey. Duty, even acting in the dark, as I said, is always right. Its justification is the will of one "having authority," and exercising it in commanding; and, because ultimately based on the will of God, commanding order to be observed in the conduct of life. This supreme will of His, extending through every department of existence, is the eternal law of God.

In this life we are subject to this law in a double sense, political and religious, natural and supernatural. We are subjects both of Church and State, or, as our Lord phrases it, "We have to render to God the things that are God's, and to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." We owe duties to both. They are both empowered by God to rule us within their respective spheres, but with this difference, that we claim for the Church, directly, a divine origin and guarantee of permanency, and special aid in carrying out her wish of training men for a higher and better world. The State is for this life and world, and may vary in form, constitution and government, according to time, place and other circumstances. In both legally established authority is divine; but in the State, its working, permanency, and application are human and fallible; whereas in the Church they are sacred and infallible.



I. We deal to-day with the duties we owe the Church. Why there should be a power in the world other than the State, and claiming rights against it, is not my purpose to explain. Our main object is to point out the exact duties we owe to the Church of which we are actual members. A word or two of explanation, however, about the function of the Church, may help us to understand these duties better. It might seem that duty is laid down clearly enough in the great moral law, traced on reason and indicating well enough for all practical purposes what we owe by way of duty to God, our neighbor, and ourselves, without the huge encumbrance of a spiritual state, always at war with the world we have to live in, and interfering with our soulborn liberty of thought, speech, and conduct. Now, my answer to this is, that the moral law, as revealed in reason, never *did*, never *does*, and never *will* suffice for man's spiritual needs. For mankind at large it was practically a dead letter, till Christ came, warmed and put life into it, and embodied it whole and entire in the religion He founded; which religion finds its only true, full, and adequate development and expression in the worldwide humanity-embracing Catholic Church. In the material order we live in, we need facts and persons in religion, not fancies and abstractions. On her doctrinal side, no doubt, the Church teaches us abstract truth; but hers is a philosophy, a wisdom, which, while it enlightens the head, does not leave the heart cold and empty; for, she even teaches the way of God, in truth and "as having authority." When the critics, moralists, and divines, who lecture her so severely from without, have made up their own minds once and for all, amongst themselves, as to whether there is a personal God above us, or a *responsible* soul within us; or whether we have any reason to fear Christ's "hard sayings" about death, judgment, hell and heaven, then, perhaps, shall we be tempted to compare their credentials



with those of the Church, to be our guide, "in the way of life." Meanwhile, it is safer and wiser to cling to the rock of Peter, though at the risk of being rated as unwise for doing so. "Give ear to me, you that follow that which is just, and you that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence you are hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you are dug out. Look unto Abraham, your father, and to Sarah that bore you" (Isaias li, 1, 2). We are children of the Lord of Abraham. We are and will remain sons of holy Mother Church, and as such obey her laws; in other words, discharge our duties to her. She has maternal rights to our obedience, stronger, because directly granted by God, than those of the country or State we live in, and the laws of which, as good citizens, we gladly obey. She does not rule by the sword, by physical force, but in Christ's name claims conscientious fulfilment of the duties we owe her.

Many, it may be said, lead lives of duty to God and their neighbors, are scrupulous observers of the moral law, who are not even Christians. Unitarians and agnostics, and others outside the body of the Church there are who, in their practical lives, put us Catholics to shame. But this fact, if true, is altogether irrelevant. The question is, did Christ found a Church, into which all are bound to enter, and did He impose corresponding duties? Apart from this, however, it is not by isolated cases we can judge a system. Good Samaritans are found everywhere, though "salvation is of the Jews," and "at Jerusalem is the place where men must adore." Many now rejecting Catholicism are living on its sap. A few isolated leaves, or even a large severed branch, may appear greener, healthier, and more vigorous than many on the tree; but they are cut off from the stem with all that, and bear within them the seeds of death. To work out our salvation, God

never meant us to live in detached and antagonistic bodies, but in one. The peculiarity of the great society, founded by Christ for this end, the Church, or Kingdom of God, as it is called in Scripture, is to make us feel our common brotherhood, that in Him "there is neither Jew nor Gentile," that all are one family in God. "Go, teach all nations," without distinction of race or color, is her commission.

Duty to a Catholic, *i. e.*, a worldwide church, is a necessary corrective of that narrow and exclusive patriotism which would confine our love of, and interest in, our fellow men within the limits of the territory we live in. It opens our eyes to a larger, wider, and holier brotherhood than that bounded by sea, river and mountain, the Church that is the common home and country of the nations.

Like all other communities or States, the Church is a society founded for a common object, but not narrowed by race, clime, or territory. Though only one body of believers with head and members, yet is it rooted in the idea of the common brotherhood of men and fatherhood of God, with the "bounds of the earth as its inheritance." There is room enough in it for all other legitimate societies, from the smallest family to the largest State. Men crave for unity with God and one another, and the Catholic, *i. e.*, the universal Church, answers to this craving. The instinct at the back of socialism, the solidarity of the race in one common bond of union, can only be ratified when men do their duty to the Church God has planted in their midst, as an ark of salvation for all. This society is free and open to all who wish to enter under due conditions. The Church is no secret society, but visible: a house raised on the hills, founded on a rock, and such that all may recognize her, and by submitting to her just claims dis-

charge their duty toward her. In this life, good and bad, saints and sinners are found within the fold. She is a field wherein grow both wheat and cockle—a net containing fishes, good and bad—the ark in which were found animals both clean and unclean.

Now, like all other societies, she has a sovereign right to frame and enforce laws for the benefit of the members at large. All self-governing bodies can impose duties on their members, and, therefore, why not the most perfect of all, founded by Him, who claimed “all power in heaven and on earth,” and who said to her first rulers, “Whatsoever you bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven.” To bind is to impose duties. He came to found a Kingdom, of which He is still the invisible head and ruler, carrying on His work and office till the end of time through its visible head, Peter and his successors. They are key-bearers, *i. e.*, office-holders to bind and loose, to make and unmake laws, binding in conscience the better to be able “to feed his sheep and lambs.”

The Church is no mere ideal “reign of justice” on earth, framed in men’s fancies, no mere Utopian or Platonic republic, but a real living, working, Divine state. She is not the product of human hands or brains, but fashioned by God. She is the “new Jerusalem” let down to earth from heaven, the “*civitas Dei*,” or city of God. Though ideal and spiritual in her aims and her purposes, yet she uses, and must use, human means and persons to attain these ends. She has a body as well as a soul—a visible, palpable, human, and, therefore, imperfect side, as well as invisible and divine. She is eminently fitted for the office of training and fitting fallen humanity to regain the high estate from which it fell and making its members good citizens both of this world and of the next. Though the oldest, she is withal the most vigorous, of all social bodies. She has outlived all the political commonwealths that filled the earth at

her birth, and now numbers more citizens in her ranks than any actual and undivided religious organization in existence. Say what her enemies may, the Church is no wreck, no mummy, no empty tomb, but "the Kingdom of God on earth," "the bride of the Lamb," without spot or wrinkle, "and ever ready to meet her spouse."

II. Now, what, as loyal members of this Kingdom, should be our attitude towards the Church: in other words, what are the special duties we owe her? We call her, as she really is in our regard, "holy Mother Church," to whom we owe the same filial duties of *love*, *respect* and *obedience* that are due to our parents in the flesh. However, as our duty is mainly that of *obedience*, in which, indeed, duty chiefly consists, we shall dwell particularly on this point. It is the test and barometer of filial piety. A worldly son or daughter is false to the name, if he fails in obedience to his parents; and so is a Catholic, if disobedient to Mother Church; the more so, as she has inherited from her Divine Founder the power that was given to Him in heaven and on earth. Besides being Saviour, He was King and Legislator, and to His Kingdom, as a perfect, well-organized, social body, He granted the same power He had himself, of making laws that bind in conscience: in other words, of imposing duties, "He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me." And just as in a well-ordered State, there are and must be, rulers and ruled—in a school, teachers and pupils; so, in God's Kingdom, the Church, which is both a commonwealth and a school, there are rulers and subjects, teachers and taught, *i. e.*, clergy and laity; or, as our Lord touchingly expresses it, shepherd and sheep.

We all singly come into contact with the whole hierarchy or ruling and teaching power of the Church, in and through our own immediate pastor, duly sent by the bishop, who, in turn, was sent or

deputed by the Pope, our chief shepherd, the direct lineal successor of St. Peter, made the rock on which the Church or house of God was built, and who was commissioned by Christ to feed His sheep and lambs. "I have prayed for thee . . . and thou, being confirmed, confirm thy brethren."

Now, the Church claims to keep the world straight in two very important points, faith and morals, *i. e.*, belief and conduct. They are essential to our spiritual well-being; and experience shows how helpless unaided reason is to answer pressing questions, as to God, our soul, and our destiny. Hence, she has a double aspect, doctrinal and moral. Our first duty, therefore, once reason is satisfied with her credentials to lead men aright, is to submit to her guidance in the realm of faith or belief. We say *guidance*, because the Church does not originate or reveal Divine truth any more than a teacher of arithmetic reveals the truths of the science he teaches. Her function is to explain, determine, and bear witness to God's truth "as it is in Jesus." She is prevented by the Holy Ghost from error. The Pentecostal Spirit is still with her in her office of teaching and ruling the flock of Christ. To-day our Lord requires unflinching and unshaken faith in His person and mission, just as when "He walked on earth and was seen by men." To elicit that faith, He says, speaking of the pastors and rulers of His Church, "He who heareth you heareth me." Our pastors voice and personate Him in our regard; and it is our plain duty to accept their guidance. Whatever be their personal gifts or characters, they stand to us as authorized teachers and expounders of Christ's gospel message. The Catholic clergy do not preach themselves, their private opinions, or virtues, but Divine truth and morality, as witnessed to by the Church at large. We do not attend a place of worship to hear the popular preacher of the day expound *his* views on the Trinity, or Holy

Spirit, or the Incarnation, or the atonement, but the pure gospel, as handed down by its authorized guardians and interpreters.

"Ubi Petrus ibi ecclesia," where Peter is, there is the Church; and where the Church is, there is Christ, who promised "to abide with her all days even to the end of the world." The Church is His body, and as such has only one head, the organ of His mind, whose voice to us is His. Christ Himself, no doubt, is the invisible head; but the successor of St. Peter is the visible and earthly head, to whom is entrusted the care of His sheep and lambs.

The first duty of obedience we owe the Church, therefore, is to bend the mind to her teaching. It is guaranteed free from error in all essential points. Nothing more in accordance with reason itself than this submission to faith; as, like children in school, we cannot find out its truths otherwise. She knows her own mind and the limits of her commission in her pastoral office. To whom shall we go? As voicing Christ, she is to us "the way, the truth and the light." She does not hide, cloud, or obscure Christ, as her enemies says: she reveals Him. And just as Christ did not obscure the Father, but manifested Him to men, so does the Church "show forth Christ, till He come." There are spiritual cravings in our nature that we cannot still; there are mysteries about our souls and bodies, in relation to God and the future, that we cannot unlock, if we seek not the key in holy faith. Our duty, plainly, is to choose God's appointed guide in this all-important realm of truth, "Obey your prelates and be subject to them" (Rom. xiii, 1), "Remember your prelates . . . whose faith follow" (Heb. xiii, 7), to whom it is said "the Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops to rule the Church of God" (Acts xx, 28) in faith and morals, in true belief and right conduct. These are the two momentous issues on which our happiness here, and destiny hereafter, depend. The duty of mental

submission is our sole safeguard. Jesus Christ, speaking in and through His Church, is the light of the world. All questions bearing on belief and conduct once decided by her are as a matter of duty, and happily so, closed questions. The truth of the Trinity, or the lawfulness of suicide, or divorce, are not open to discussion. Our duty is to obey the Church, to us "the pillar and the ground of truth." Divine faith, taught by the Church, is the highest form of certainty. Heed not those who say that her teaching, "cribs, cabins, and confines" the free soul of man. They know not what they say. All truth binds, and, as far as it goes, chains freedom, or rather, license of thought; so does school, so does discipline of every sort. It is "the truth that makes us free," free from error, doubt—all the mental ailments of the day. So far from obedience to Church checking true science, you may rest assured that the highest culture and most ennobling knowledge are quite compatible, nay enlarged, by compliance with this duty. Faith is the complement of reason. The mind craves for, and gladly submits to, a light higher than its own.

So much for the duty of obedience to the Church in her doctrinal aspect as authorized teacher; but we must also obey her laws in the practical department of life, also. She has, like every other society, power to make laws suited to her sphere of action in the world—laws dealing with public and private worships—the teaching and spread of the gospel—the administration of the Sacraments and the rest. The law of the Church forms a special branch of study, called Canon law, and as her empire covers the whole earth and deals with a period of some nineteen centuries, we need not be surprised at its complexity and extent. The bulk of its contents deals mainly with particular classes and special circumstances, and hardly concerns the laity at all. It may be stated that as she herself



has framed these laws, she may, like any other legislative body, change, modify, or abolish them. This does not apply, as is evident, to the fixed unchangeable moral law, summarized in the Ten Commandments or law of God. This she claims only to *teach* and *expound*, never to change, modify, or abrogate. No power on earth can dispense with the law of God in its moral and doctrinal side.

As I said, the chief commandments of the Church, pointing out our practical duties to her, are reduced to six, and are really the application and development of some of the commands of God. Thus, the first of these duties, "to hear Mass on Sundays and holidays and rest from servile work," specifies the way in which we are to keep the first Commandment of God. The second duty, "to keep the days of fasting and abstinence appointed by the Church," points out how we are to fulfil the law of penance and self-sacrifice, specially enjoined by Christ. Though the Church may frequently modify or suspend fasting, or abstinence, yet her law, her second command, reminds us of our Lord's words, "Except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish" (Luke xiii, 5). "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself" (*Ibid.* ix, 23). Our third practical duty as Catholics is "to go to Confession at least once a year"; and the fourth, "to receive holy Communion at least once a year at Easter." The power of forgiving sins and distributing the new manna of the Eucharist was entrusted to the Church; and, though recommending daily Communion, she determines the least interval that can elapse without our using this power. Repentance for sin is a law of Nature. The means to be used by us lies in the Sacrament of Penance. Our Lord Himself laid down the law of Communion, "Except you eat the flesh of the son of Man . . . you shall not have life in you." The Church merely enjoins the time and



place of its fulfilment. The fifth duty of a practical Catholic is "to contribute to the support of the clergy according to his means." St. Paul enjoins that "they who preach the gospel should live by the gospel" (I. Cor. ix, 7), and this duty puts it into actual shape.

The sixth and last of the commandments of the Church and of our chief duties is, "Not to marry within certain degrees of kindred or at certain seasons"; a duty that reverence to blood relations, health, and respect for the great Sacrament of Marriage alike suggest.

May she not, then, justly say in the name of Him who was at once her Founder, Law-giver, King and Mystic Spouse, "Tollite jugum meum super vos," "Take my yoke upon you, for my yoke is sweet and my burden light." Her authority to impose duties upon us comes straight from the authority of God, fountain of all just rule. We are not our own masters. We are not free. The dent of the collar and the yoke is upon us all. Our very beliefs and opinions, our faith, in fact, whatever it is, is imposed by others. We are hedged in and hampered with laws and burdens on all sides far heavier than those of the Church—burdens, too, we can't escape. The yoke of religion put on us by the Church is neither galling nor intolerable. It sweetens all the bitter waters of life. There is in reality no truer, safer, broader, holier or larger life possible than what we may enjoy within the limits of the Catholic Church when we are dutiful subjects, or, rather, children. Every faculty of soul and body, every legitimate interest, every feeling and affection, may be nursed and developed to the fullest capacity within her fold. The long roll of pure, noble, unselfish spirits of every age, rank, and sex that adorn her history proves this. One condition is essential, and that is, whole-hearted discharge of the duty we owe her—obedience of mind to her teaching and conformity of conduct with her law. Duty to her is carrying out into practise our Lord's law

of life, "Seek, first, the Kingdom of God, and all else will be added." A good citizen of God's Kingdom, the Church, is the best asset, even of the kingdom of the world. Be it then, ever our glory to love, obey, and defend our holy Mother Church. Her cause is God's cause. Her aim is to strengthen the Kingdom of God in our hearts—to train and fit us for His Kingdom without end.

## X. OUR DUTIES TO THE STATE

From a Catholic point of view, a twofold authority under God rules the world—Church and State. Having dealt in our previous lecture with the duties we owe to the Church, we now proceed to speak of those we owe the State. Both have a mission from God, viz., to aid and guide us in working out our destiny in this world. The aim of the Church is mainly spiritual, that of the State, material. Both have claims to our allegiance; and to each, in its sphere, we owe certain duties, binding in conscience, “Render, therefore, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s; and to God, the things that are God’s.” Men are, by nature, gregarious and social; and instinctively form themselves into ordered groups, a circumstance that brings with it rights and claims on the one hand, and duties on the other. Indeed, it is only in society, based on the recognition of mutual rights and duties, that man can develop the intellectual, moral and religious endowments, that raise him to such a dizzy height above the other creatures of the earth. Isolated, he could never protect himself against beasts of prey, or the forces of nature, arrayed against him. Some form of combined union, therefore, is a necessity. But any union for a common purpose needs rules or laws, thus implying duty, on the part of its members, to keep those laws. Without civil government, another term for an ordered state, violence and anarchy would reign supreme. And just as any kind of law is better than no law, so any kind of fixed and ordered state rule is better than none. So necessary is compliance with the duties, justly imposed by the State, that in cases where appeal to con-

science and a sense of duty fails, resort must be had to violence and force. Sad, indeed, is the condition of a community where "No king reigns and each man does what seems right in his own eyes."

Any kind of social body living under fixed rules, customs or laws is a State, or the nucleus of a State. The oldest form of community or State was, presumably, the family, or a group of families, forming themselves into clans, tribes or nations, for mutual protection and help, under the oldest, wisest or strongest members as heads or rulers. In the patriarchal State, so often alluded to in the Bible, the head of the family was often king, priest and law-giver in one. The family, therefore, is the original germ or unit of the State, howsoever complex and extended it may afterward grow into.

Hence, the fourth commandment of God, in laying down the love, respect and obedience we owe to our parents, is the source of all codes of law for the government of men in all departments of life. Our duties to the State, therefore, are rooted in our duty to God, who must will ordered life, and, consequently, some form of State. There can be neither peace, progress nor reform, social, moral or religious, unless in a community, bound together by law, inspiring a sense of duty. Hence, St. Paul says, "Let every soul be subject to higher powers, for there is no power but from God. . . . Therefore, he that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God. Princes are not a terror to the good, but to the evil" (Rom. xiii, 1, 2, 3). Whatever, therefore, the actual form of a government, whether monarchical, imperial or democratic, whether it be a republic, a kingdom or an empire, whether vested in one or many, it is in its ultimate source and present right to rule "of God." That there are bad, tyrannical, unjust and corrupt governments is no more an argument against *all* government, than the existence of bad parents, husbands and priests is a proof against the divine origin of the

family and the Church. Hence, all efforts to replace, destroy or radically change what we call "the State" are doomed to failure. Anarchy is not only a crime, it is absurd and impossible. If possible at all, it would be "hell let loose." Outside of prisons and mad-houses men, as a body, believe in law, and the duty of obeying it both in rulers and ruled, *i. e.*, they believe in "*the State.*"

I. Now, in what does our duty to the State precisely consist? As this duty resembles that which we owe our parents, because the State is but an extension or enlargement of the family, it may be summed up under three headings: loyalty, respect and obedience. Loyalty to the State is somewhat akin to the duty of filial love. It may be loosely described as enlightened patriotism. The land we live in as citizens, either by birth or adoption, should be dear to us, as house and home. God has, so to say, parcelled the world out amongst His children; and just as we set a special value on the house, land or other property we rightly call our own, improve it, turn it to account and otherwise take a deep interest in it, so should we of the country God has given us as our common inheritance. Our membership of it is part and parcel of the talent entrusted to our care, and of which as being a duty we must render an account. The love of country, the unselfish use of any political power we possess for her benefit, is a distinguishing feature of every generous mind. Nay, more, it is a duty. Some may boastfully call themselves "citizens of the world," but surely none can be so dead to human feeling as not to have a special corner in his heart for the land that gave him a name; as well forget in one's love for the race at large one's own home and fireside and the faces that shine there. The man who is no lover of his country, *i. e.*, who fails in his duty of loyalty, who is ever ready for gold or title to corrupt, sell or enslave her, is rightly branded as a traitor and a parricide.

Though this duty of loyalty, regarded as patriotism, mainly regards one's country, rather than the government actually in power, still we must not forget that both together form "*the State,*" to which we owe allegiance. Even when power passes into usurping, corrupt, weak or incompetent hands the duty of loyalty does not cease. It binds us to do our best to reform, change or otherwise aid in "mending or ending" without violence or lawlessness, standing abuse of power or hopeless disorder. For "*the State,*" which claims our loyalty as a duty, is, in its fundamental aspect, a more permanent entity than any fleeting party in power. Democrats and Republicans may both be deeply loyal to the State, even when striving for mutual overthrow.

This duty of loyalty is rooted, as I observed, in the love we ought to have for our motherland, and is, therefore, placed on the same footing as filial piety to parents. Now love is the great motive-power, the strongest stimulant to duty, and what more natural than to love one's country. What duty, consequently, can be easier than loyalty to her, inasmuch as it is the form that true love of country assumes.

II. The next duty we owe to the State is that of respect. To use this word nowadays, in relation to government of any kind, is "crying in the wilderness," so rampant everywhere is disrespect for all authority. It is an age of irreverence and criticism. The duty of the modern citizen toward all "clad in authority" would seem rather to be one of studied hostility, disrespect and contempt. The State, in his eyes, is often a mere butt for slander and ridicule. Now, this surely is a wrong, if not a sinful, attitude. We must be governed in some way or other and by some form of State. As a semblance, at least, of respect must be shown to authority outwardly, why not make it an inward tribute to duty as well. Sys-

tematic abuse, obloquy and unfair criticism do no good, and may do much harm.

To us Catholics respect for authority is a matter of principle, for it is founded on respect to God, the source and fountain-head of all authority. It is the embodiment and representation of His almighty will and power. Hence, there is a divine element or sanction in every duly authorized governing body, inasmuch as it shadows forth this authority of God. This respect that authority engenders begins in early years in the home, and thence by easy transitions passes to other and wider forms of it than parental. This respect, if duly fostered, becomes a duty. The accidental defects inherent in all things human can no more destroy the essential respect we owe the State than the well-known and often glaring defects of many parents can rob them of their rights to the respect due to them by us, as bestowed on them by the fourth commandment of the law of God.

Lack of due respect to authority is a marked sign of shallowness and ignorance. The very words, law, order and ability to enforce them, should inspire and command respect. Life, property and honor are in the keeping of the State. Respect for the State is their safeguard. It is for the criminal and the law-breaker to vilify the State, not the free, law-abiding citizen. Indeed, respect for the State is but an enlarged form of self-respect, without which, as we know, a life of high principle is impossible. The State is a magnified mirror of ourselves. To despise and infringe the laws that regulate our own bodily and spiritual well-being is sinful. An abuse of self-authority is an offense against God; so, too, is an abuse of the outer and larger self or State authority.

III. The third main duty we owe the State is that of submission or obedience in letter at least to the law of the land. God's right to



our submission is shadowed forth in parental or any other legitimate form of human authority. What we call free service is simply willing obedience to almighty God who rules and guides us not directly and in person, but indirectly through the authority vested in parents, the Church or the State. God is, therefore, the source of, and gives sanction to, all authority, law and duty. They who scout the very name and idea of obedience, who, in their hollow egotism boast they will serve no master, are but repeating the motto of the first rebel, "I will not serve," and thereby refusing to march under the banner of Him "who was obedient unto death." Law rules life in all its phases, and, therefore, implies obedience, forced or free. People can neither live, work nor combine together for a common purpose without rules or laws which are made to be kept, not to be broken. The very words, law, lawful and lawless, point out the need and sacred character of obedience.

Even liberty needs law, and its enforced observance as its best and surest defense. A truly free country is one wherein law is freely respected and obeyed. Amongst a people that disrespect, disobey or defy the law there can be no security for personal liberty.

It may be objected that State laws and their administration are often cruel, partial, one-sided and unjust. True, human law at the best is but a blurred copy of the divine, from which it derives its true force and sanction; still it is well to remember that we cannot mend even an image of the divine by breaking it. Not to obey the law because faulty is as illogical and unwarrantable as to say with the agnostics that, because our idea of God falls infinitely short of the reality, therefore we need not worship Him at all. We cannot surely stop breathing because the atmosphere we live in is foul and foggy.

So with human law. The State, it is true, has no guarantee



against error or injustice in framing its laws, and it is, therefore, wrong to make an idol or a fetish of any law not divine, withal, as "no man is judge in his own case," the law must be obeyed unless obviously unjust and against the law of God. Disobedience is an extreme proceeding, to be used, as we shall see, with great caution and under great reserve.

Law, even in its lowest and rudest form, is meant to be justice embodied in practical rules of action. It is the dim vision of the "eternal law" of God, as recognized and displayed by us in our natural love of justice. The essence and first condition of a law, therefore, is that it should be just, rooted and founded in justice. This it is that makes obedience safe. An unjust law is a misnomer, it can hardly be called a law at all any more than a crooked stick can be called a straight ruler. The well-head of all law, imposing just obedience, is the eternal law of God. He, as supremely just and rational, can only elect to bind His rational creatures to certain lines of conduct or action, not arbitrarily or tyrannically, but in conformity with and for the perfecting of their nature. Hence, in so far as human laws are just and worthy of the name of law, inasmuch as they follow the moral law or law of God. Man is ethical, or moral, and such also must be his law. Wo to the country where the fountain-head of law, the source of social order, is poisoned or corrupt. There is positive danger, therefore, to true liberty and enlightened progress in a godless State. For above the State, and regulating its code of law, is the moral law and its unerring expounder, the Church. Can we wonder that certain peoples and nations, under unfair treatment, hate the sacred name of law, seeing that it was never to them an instrument of order and progress, but a scourge and disaster. Ireland and Poland bear witness to this.

Hence, we find the Church so often in conflict with the world and

its rulers. Her vision of eternal law and justice and true righteousness is keener than theirs. Though ever a bulwark against lawlessness and every form of sedition and disobedience, yet, as her history proves, she does not hesitate to stand up in defense of the weak and oppressed, "against principalities and powers and the rulers of darkness in high places." Like her Lord, she ever proclaims with no uncertain voice, that whilst "rendering to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," we must not overlook God's rights in "rendering to God to things that are God's."

May we then resist the law with a safe conscience, you will perhaps ask? Have people, who deem themselves unjustly ruled, the right to secede? Is there such a thing as the sacred right of rebellion? Can we hasten the certain dissolution of a corrupt and decaying power? We may, perhaps, best answer this set of questions by asking another. May a man legally commit suicide when in danger of death? May children strike, rebel against or disobey their parents? May we kill those we cannot cure? Remember, that obedience to the State is an extension of the duties we owe our parents. And just as there are extreme cases wherein we may disobey and even raise our hands in self-defense against father and mother, so with kindred forms of authority. There is, and ever has been, such a thing as gross abuse of authority. Those who wield it may turn bad or mad, and, as a consequence, need putting under restraint. Nevertheless, disobedience or rebellion is an extreme and odious remedy that is never to be resorted to except as a sort of forlorn hope. Poison may, on occasions, act medicinally, but it ever remains a poison.

The ideal remedy, when natural reason and justice fail, would be appeal to the great central spiritual court of Rome, where alone brute force and animal passion get no hearing. Failing this, how-

ever, we must muddle on, through strife and hate, to a mere "vision of peace."

To justify rebellion against a State, four conditions are required seldom found united, and, in constitutionally ruled States, perhaps never.

(1) When the government of a country is hopelessly and incurably corrupt, pursuing only selfish and personal ends to the neglect or abolition of the civil and religious rights of the people.

(2) When all legal and constitutional means of redress have been tried and failed.

(3) There must also be some reasonable hope of success, else the movement may end in slaughter and disaster. What can an untrained or unarmed mob do against a trained soldiery?

(4) When the need of reform and resort to violence for securing it are proposed not by a small and hotheaded, but by the larger, better and more intelligent section of the community.

In a free country, however, disobedience to the law, much less rebellion, is hardly, if ever, justifiable. The people have the government they wish for and deserve. Besides, in most cases, it is the administration, and not the law, that is at fault; and this, a free people, by their votes can mend or end. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, revolution, or even disobedience, spells disaster, and is, therefore, a breach of duty. Constitutional methods, now within the reach of most people, are by far the safest, and, in the long run, the most effectual, means of redressing grievances.

Happily, God, though transcendant, is yet immanent in His own world, and guiding all to some great infinitely just and good end. Justice, therefore, is ever the mightiest force in the world. Its march may be slow, but, like all great and true growth, it is sure. To force the pace of divine justice by violent means is but to uproot

and weaken it. We can only hope that as nations advance in self-conscious and self-governing life, under the kindly rays of "the sun of justice," they will dispense with war and all forms of violence, and both initiate and carry out reforms solely because, like God, our supreme Ruler, "they love justice and hate iniquity."

In conclusion, therefore, let us obey, respect and be loyal to the State and its laws. In their origin they come from God, no matter through what muddy channels they may have been strained or passed. Let us specifically ever respect and carry out the law by ready obedience. It is part of the great debt of duty we owe to almighty God, and the whole of the duty we owe to the society we call "the State," which, whatever its defects, shelters, protects and defends us. We shall thus show by example that, whilst ever remaining true and loyal members of holy Church, the kingdom of God, we are none the less, rather all the more, good, peaceful and law-abiding citizens of the State.

## XI. PERSONAL DUTIES (SOUL)

Duty, like "charity, begins at home." "He is a wise man who is wise to his own soul," and, "What will it profit us to gain the whole world if we lose our souls," are words of deep meaning and true wisdom. Care of self, both soul and body, is not selfishness. On the contrary, when rationally carried out this care involves life-long self-sacrifice, the very opposite of selfishness. Our soul and body have personal rights, so to say, that impose duties on which I now propose to speak. My remarks to-day will be limited to what is due, on our part, to our souls. Though in some quarters a great deal is said and written about soul-culture, yet the most of us are so immersed in bodily and material cares as sometimes almost to forget we have a soul. And yet the soul is self. We are really our souls, not our bodies, even, when living exclusively for the body. Our eyes without the soul are blind; our ears without it are deaf; the most perfect bodily organs without a soul are but dead flesh. The whole body in all its beauty, strength and perfection of form and mechanism is but an agglomeration of a few chemical elements knit together and kept in movement by the soul. We get fresh bodies every few years. There isn't a single material particle left in me of the helpless little babe that emerged into life in this planet on my first birthday. The very brain I now use as an organ of thought and affection I had not twelve months ago; but my soul, *i. e.*, I myself, a thinking, living, responsible agent, is ever the same throughout those changes of my body and ever will be the same, even when my body lies "moldering in the grave." My soul or spirit will still go "marching on" in life.

The better to discharge the duties we owe to the soul, it is advisable, by way of preliminary, to enter into our real selves, *i. e.*, to study the nature of our own souls. To know oneself is to know one's soul, a branch of knowledge, declared by the wisest of the Greeks, to be "the first duty of man."

I. Now, this self-knowledge, long hidden from the wise, and now laid open to "babes and sucklings," this lofty wisdom, is within the reach of the poorest and the most unlettered. We all learn, as children, that the soul is "a spirit, and immortal, made in the image and likeness of God."

The soul is a spirit. It is neither matter, nor dependent on matter for action or existence. It is not light, heat, gas, or an electric current, which are all matter or material forces, divisible and perishable. However refined or subtle, all that falls under the impression of the senses is *material*, and subject to the laws of matter. Our soul is our life. We say, indeed, that the eye sees, and the ear hears; but it is the great force called soul, that sees and hears through them. The eye, without the soul, is as dead as an opera-glass or a trumpet. It is true, beasts also live, feel and know; but in a very different way. They are meant only for this world, living in, and wedded to, matter, depending on it; never transcending it. They have no thoughts or mind impressions—only sensations. They know and distinguish this man or that with eye, ear, or nose; but not *man* in the abstract. They cannot learn by ideas, or go to school; nor have they conscience or any perception whatsoever of moral right or wrong. They cannot pray, or know God, or themselves, or past, or future. They live only in the actual impression of the moment. Being made for matter, they perish with their bodily organs.

Our souls, on the contrary, know past, present and future. We remember and feel responsible for thoughts, words and actions done

in childhood. We think, and pray, and love, and distinguish right from wrong. Our souls are restless centers of energy, ever scheming, planning and looking forward to ever receding ideals, good or bad. To be a spirit is to be ever advancing, ever progressing, never to be satisfied with what it has, though drawn to matter and chained to matter; yet, it ever transcends it and is never to be sated with what a mere material world can promise or give. Its faculties and desires are boundless to such an extent, indeed, that the Infinite Good, very God, can alone fill them, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts shall not rest till they rest in Thee."

Besides being a spirit the soul is also immortal, *i. e.*, it will never consciously perish. By nature, it is not subject to dissolution, because, unlike matter, it has not parts. It is one inseparable, indivisible unit of energy. Death is only a breaking up into the original elements of which a thing is composed. "Dust thou art, and into dust thou wilt return," applies only to the body, not the soul. God destroys nothing, not even the elements of matter, "the primeval dust," and much less the soul. For weal or wo, it lives and will live on forever. We instinctively crave for life, not death; at end of the longest and most strenuous life, we are only waking to the fact that we have not reached a tithe of our possibilities—that we are but just beginning to live. All ancient and existing beliefs, religions and languages, testify to the constancy of faith in a world beyond the grave. The grave itself, in the care taken of it, and pains bestowed in adorning it, is a silent witness to man's belief in immortality. A future world, where justice will be dealt out impartially, has been ever deemed a necessary corrective for its absence in the present. Future rewards or punishments are the balance of life's inequalities. This world is the foreground of the



next, this life the prelude of another. In the world of matter, we see law and order throughout, all disposed in "number, weight and measure"; and we rightly feel that such must also be the case, eventually, in the world of spirits.

II. From these endowments, or rather essential qualities of the soul, spring the duties we owe to it. We are taught in the first page of our catechism that "we must take more care of our soul than of our body," another way of saying that the duties we owe the soul are far more important than those due to the body. And yet, is not the reverse of this the rule of most lives? The spiritual and imperishable element gets overlooked, neglected, sacrificed, to the perishable and the temporal. The soul is life; but this life is double, or rather, has a double aspect for believers, the natural and the supernatural. By nature we are intelligent and free, and it is part of our duties to train these powers. The culture of the natural life of the soul is a personal obligation. All lofty minds have recognized the training of mind, will and affection to be a duty of the natural order. But we live also by the spirit. We live the supernatural life of grace. We are called to a higher life. Hence, there are two sets of duties corresponding to this double aspect of soul-life. The first set of duties we owe to the soul consists in cultivating the soul's two great natural powers, the understanding and will. The power of conscience is only on application of mind to moral truth, and is included herein. Every being has to unfold and develop according to its nature and environment; and man, by nature, is an intelligent being—a soul, we may say. His mind and will, and by implication his heart and conscience, are part—in some cases the whole—of the talent entrusted to his keeping. Punishment swiftly follows; if buried out of sight, *i. e.*, if left neglected or untrained. The duty of perfecting the powers of mind and will is called "education," a duty

deemed so important for our well-being, that in most countries it is now taken over, up to a certain point and age, by the State. Withal, it ever remains a personal duty, both at home and in school; and, in some measure, all through life. The mind is made strong and forceful by knowledge; the will by character and conduct, a double process that should never stop. Divine knowledge and goodness, an ideal impossible to reach, are yet put before us in order to keep us striving and progressing. We have to work "whilst we have the day," "advance till the light of perfect day," "be perfect even as our heavenly Father is perfect." It is only by force of mind that man, physically so weak, holds an easy mastership over all other creatures of the earth. They cannot be trained or educated, except in a very limited degree. They lack mind, a power perfected and made available only by education, broadly speaking. There is a wide gulf between trained and untrained minds. A savage and a modern scholar seem to belong to different orders of being; and yet, it is only schooling that makes the difference.

Education, in the narrow sense of the term, is by no means a panacea for all evils; still, rightly applied, it goes a long way towards mitigating them. "The one thing great in man is mind." Human life is mind-life; and yet, mind is useless without education. Mind and education are convertible terms. Life is a hundredfold wider, larger, more enjoyable and morally better in the case of the educated. Schools close prisons. Duty and good conduct are but the best phases of mental training. Even supernaturally, as we shall see, God acts upon the soul by grace, *in and through mind, will and affection*. Christ was a teacher, so is the Church. Progress and development, in any direction, are forms of education. The first duty, therefore, we owe to the soul from a natural standpoint, is to train the intelligence by such education as we need in life, by good

use of the means within our reach. Young men who neglect their education, or idle away their time in school or other place of training, fail against this duty, and it may be, seriously. To say nothing of their sin of sloth and parental disobedience, they do themselves a grave personal wrong. Though not necessary to be a savant and take out a degree, unless part of one's profession, still it is each one's duty, in his own walk of life, to be well up to standard or pattern as is said. All should aim at winning a certificate of efficiency. Gold or silver may be genuine without a hall-mark; but to most of us this stamp is the only proof; so in education. Indeed, there are very few professions in which ignorance is not a sin. It injures not only one's self, but may inflict untold wrong on others. The priest, the doctor, the lawyer, the teacher, may be guilty of grave sin through ignorance of their duties—in other words, through neglect of education.

It is the duty of all men to learn their duties well, howsoever humble those duties may be. What we are in duty bound to know, that we are in duty bound to learn. We are all called to be perfect, not only in conduct, but in work, or rather our work in life is part of our personal duty.

Moreover, education does not end with leaving school; we have all to keep going to school as long as we live. The best school is that of experience, which never closes its doors. We daily need fresh light, and this comes with experiences, aided by study. We are apt to forget what we have learned, to say nothing of what is being constantly added to old stores of knowledge. It is not enough to draw on what one has. If we don't keep adding, putting fresh capital into the bank of the mind, we shall one day find ourselves intellectually bankrupt. Whether as citizens or Catholics, therefore, it is our duty not to let the mind rust. If not careful to keep abreast

of the times in this respect, we fall behind in the race morally, socially, and financially.

Though truth is mainly the object of mind, as goodness or virtue is of the will, yet the mind, or intelligence, too, is the seat of certain virtues. Indeed, the very conscience itself is the mind, dealing with truths relating to conduct.

Now, two chief virtues have an important bearing on the matter in hand—prudence and veracity. Both are intellectual virtues. They have their seat in the mind, not in the will. In fact, no two more pressing duties bind us in the care of our souls than to be wise and truthful.

Prudence, or wisdom on its practical side, as we may describe it, means setting about things in the right way, working out desirable ends by the right use of the proper means. It is almost synonymous with common sense, the art of discerning practically, how best to promote our own interest or welfare and that of others. Prudence, being a cardinal virtue, must permeate and be the groundwork, as it were, of every other virtue. To be rightly virtuous at all is to be prudent. It comes into play in all departments of life, temporal and spiritual, worldly and unworldly. Our Lord tells us to be "wise (*i. e.*, prudent) as serpents and simple as doves," and that, too, throughout the whole range of our affairs. Good sense and practical wisdom must no more fail us in the management of our temporal business and work than in saving our souls. Both make up the stewardship of which we have to render a strict account. It is a great help in this rough working world of ours, both to oneself and others, to display good sense. Show oneself tactful, and even worldly wise, in dealing with men and things. In the practise of this duty and of the virtue of prudence, it is well to remember two texts of holy Scripture, "The prudence of the flesh is death"

(Rom. xiii, 6), and "There is no prudence against the Lord" (Prov. xxi, 30).

Another no less important duty to the soul is the intellectual virtue of veracity or truthfulness. Truth is the object, the very food of the mind; and any tampering with it is sinful and irrational as well. Speech is the soul of intercourse. It was meant to *express*, not to *conceal*, thought. The liar is the pest and plague of a community, it is impossible to protect oneself against him.

This veracity must be both inward and outward. We often deceive ourselves. Through prejudice and wilfulness we judge not according to, but in direct opposition to, the light. We wish to believe. There is often as great a lack of candor with self, as with others. Nowhere is this seen more than in matters of conscience, wherein others see the baseness or imperfection of our motives better than ourselves. We are simply blind, or, rather, untruthful. Protests of honesty and straightforwardness often cover the most unwarrantable lying to self, as well as others. Inward candor is as binding a duty as outward, we should remember. Flattery is often the worst and basest form of outward lying. A real lie is never excusable; and yet it may be a duty of charity to dissemble, or at least keep silence, as to our real sentiments about others. Life would be intolerable if each thought fit to say out all he thinks rightly or wrongly about his neighbor.

So much for the duty we are under, of training the mind and passive powers of the soul; but a far more important duty weighs upon us of training the will, the heart, the active powers of the soul, as we may term them. They have to do mainly with action or conduct. What we do is more important than what we know. A man of good will is more to a community than one merely learned or clever. Learning is nothing, or, at most, veneering;

character is everything. To do one's duty to the soul in training the will, or heart, is building up one's character. Conduct is a very complex thing, covering the whole field of action. Matthew Arnold has very truthfully said that conduct is nineteen-twentieths of life. It is by our conduct, *i. e.*, the fruit of our will or active power of soul, that we are judged here and shall be judged hereafter. "Be ye, therefore, doers of the Word, and not hearers only," is a good scriptural rule in this matter. "Qui proficit in litteris et deficit in moribus, plus deficit, quam proficit," a saying akin to that of "the Imitation of Christ." "It is better to *feel* compunction than *know* how to define it."

Thus far we have spoken of the personal duties we owe to our own souls in the natural order. But "the soul is naturally Christian," *i. e.*, *supernatural*. Mind and will are capable of higher things—a higher life—than that possible within the realm of nature. "The carnal man," *i. e.*, the merely natural man, "understandeth not the things that are above." As experience shows, he is little above, often far below, the beast. Reason and merely natural love of goodness are powerless against the animal nature within.

Hence, we reason that man was never intended for, and as a matter of fact, never *was* created in a purely natural state. To perfect and enable him to develop the powers of his soul, a marvelous endowment, called grace, was bestowed upon him, and is still within his reach, by which he becomes a "new creature in Christ." The new birth, "the new man," made in the model of the ideal man, Christ, are terms that give us an idea of the supernatural life of grace into which we are born, in Baptism, from which we lapse by grievous sin and which we may recover, in the Sacrament of Penance. A new ideal is therefore opened out to the Christian, which responds to the higher and nobler aspirations of his nature. Nothing else

sates his cravings. The realm of nature, mere naturalism, as we may call it, never *will* and never *can* satisfy. Man tends to the Infinite, in other words, "the strong, living God," to be reached only *in* and *through* grace.

What the nature of this gift is, is not our object to inquire. Enough for us Catholics to know that it is a doctrine of our faith, that we need this sublime gift to lead the "higher life," to which we are called and in duty *bound*. God is author of both nature and grace. A merely *rational* life, if such were possible in our fallen state, is not enough. We are asked to mount higher. A gift, superadded to natural reason, will and affection, lifting up the soul to a higher level, enabling it to lead a life and elicit actions, that we call *supernatural*, is within our reach. This imposes on us a new set of duties, which we owe it to our soul to discharge. They form what we may call our religious duties, and they all concern the preservation or recovery of Divine grace. This is the one vital element of soul-life; in fact, it is *life*, the *divine life*, in man. We must hold to it as dear life. To cling to it if we have it, and regain it if lost, is saving our souls. "What will it profit us to gain the whole world if we lose them." What will it benefit us to be invited to the King's Supper, "the banquet of the Eucharist, in God's house," if at the end we are without the wedding robe of grace. The duties, bearing, therefore, on grace, are of incalculable importance.

Our first duty, as I said, is to win and guard what is known as habitual grace, *i. e.*, to be ever in a state of favor, or friendship, with God. This is having God specially present in the soul—becoming its life. It is also called justification. To win and hold this treasure, we must pray and frequent the Sacraments, as they are the great channels or fountains of this divine life, this "pearl of



great price," to which all else in the world, if needful, must be sacrificed. Daily prayer, attendance at holy Mass, regular attendance at Confession and Communion, both insure and strengthen it within us and, therefore, sum up our duties to the soul in its supernatural aspect.

Should this state be lost by sin, grave sin, the death of the soul, as it is well called, our first and most pressing duty is its recovery by repentance, a repentance to be sealed and sanctified in the Sacrament of Penance. The first duty of a Christian, urgent beyond all others, even that of saving bodily life, is to make his peace with God, offended by sin; and this can be only effected by true, heartfelt repentance. So embedded in the minds of all is the duty of repentance for sin, present or past, joined to that of eating the Bread of life, in holy Communion, as a means both of regaining and keeping alive the life of grace in the soul, that on the lips of a Catholic going to Confession and Communion has come to mean, "Going to one's duties." They certainly yield to none in importance.

Life, in its highest aspect, should be our main concern. We live, it is true, but how? Are we carnal-minded or spiritual? There is no middle course. Though men may, and ought, to develop and cultivate their natural powers, and so live up to the standard of reason, yet they do not. We must raise, refine and perfect our *nature* by *grace*. We have two sets of duties to discharge, as we have seen, to be just to our own souls. In the natural order we must train mind, will, and affection; but this training or education serves only in a good Christian as a stepping-stone to a higher. We have, further, to guard the supernatural life of our souls, by a higher class of duty, those that are summed up in the phrase "living up to one's religion." "Do this, therefore, and thou shalt live" in the full and perfect sense of the word.

## XII. HABITS OF DUTY

By way of conclusion to all that has been said on the subject of duty, I would fain impress upon you to-day the absolute need of forming, what may be called, a habit of duty. To act on principle is to act on a habit of duty. To do one's duty in all the various relations of life only "by fits and starts," or in casual and isolated instances, helps us but little on the way of life. Loose stones, scattered all over a field, no more make a building than do stray acts of duty a dutiful man. What we call a good character is but repeated acts of duty, in one line or many, built up into something fixed, steady, permanent. How expressive is the phrase, "A slave to duty"; yet, if we don't aim at something like this, we are merely playing with duty. To do our duty properly, it ought to become a *necessity*; and it can only become so by habit. Not that a habit of duty imposes constraint on the will, as determinists would say. All habits are freely acquired and are the outcome of repeated free acts. We cannot call seeing, hearing, thinking, or digesting our food habitual just because they are *not* under control; whereas, to work, to pray, to study, to be chaste, sober and economical, are, or may become, habits, for the very reason that they are *free* and not *necessary* acts. And yet, if we know a man's character, *i. e.*, the habits he has freely formed, we can almost as safely predict his conduct and end, as if he were under the spell of fatalism. Habit, therefore, we may say, within the realm of duty, fixes one's destiny.

We must learn, therefore, to do duty by habit. Then only is duty trustworthy. If a man is good *at* anything, or *for* anything, he must be good by habit. We must try to grow into doing our duty

unconsciously and automatically, as it were, just as we learn to poise ourselves on foot, on horseback or on bicycle, without hardly knowing when, how, or why we came to do so.

Both in mind and body we are all under the law, or rather the *spell*, of habit. We are its creatures and thralls. What we usually do, and the same is true of what we usually say and think, has a tendency to recur, so that acts of duty, by dint of repetition, grow easy and natural, or, if neglected, hard and almost morally impossible. The law of habit, in this matter, is, therefore, both a blessing and a danger; for it makes vice easy, as well as virtue. Like the god Janus, habit looks both ways. It is a double-edged sword that cuts on either side. It shapes both saints and sinners, men of duty, or men of pleasure. It hardens and fossilizes the one, till, in the words of Job, "His heart shall be as hard as a stone, and firm as a smith's anvil" (Job xli, 15), or strengthens the good element in the other till temptation loses almost all power over him. We can, indeed, truthfully affirm of all that they *may* lapse from duty; yet, of those in whom the habit is deeply rooted, we are *sure* they never *will*. As soon might we expect the moon or stars to swerve from their accustomed paths in the sky, as for certain souls whose characters are set in habits of duty, to swerve from the straight course of righteousness: "A young man according to his way, even when he is old he will not depart from it."

The matter of our discourse to-day will deal, first, with the power of habit in relation to duty; and second, the application of this power to our own growth in habits of duty.

I. Life is but a growth of habits. Our powers of body and soul represent the result of endless repeated acts. To stop using a faculty, *i. e.*, to stop the growth of a habit, is to lose it. All trades and professions are mere habits. To learn a trade, or an art, or any sort of

business, is just forming a habit. To play an instrument of music, to speak a language, to be a doctor, or a lawyer, or a teacher, to walk, or ride, or swim, is simply to shape our habits in a certain direction, difficult at first, then easy, and finally automatic, almost. It is the same with the Divine art of doing one's duty. To be dutiful and good is to have acquired virtue, *i. e.*, habits of duty; to be bad and worthless characters, is to have fallen under vicious habits, *i. e.*, habits of neglecting duty.

So powerful is the force of habit, in one way or the other, that it will actually turn downright repugnance and pain into pleasure. Look at the feats of skill and agility to be seen in a gymnasium or a circus that make us shrink and squirm to witness, so hard and painful do they seem. And yet they are but acquired knacks, mere tricks of habit. Touching on comparisons more in accord with our subject, an unaccustomed palate, as in the case of a child, or even an animal, will turn away with loathing from alcohol or tobacco, in both of which devotees to the habit revel with delight. So is it in the vital affair of duty. Habit alone can root it in the soul. In this matter, too, we are faced with a serious alternative, *viz.*, the growth of vices. The soul of man is like a garden. If we cease to grow good and useful plants, weeds grow of themselves. They spring up unbidden. Sin or vice is the antithesis of duty—a breach of it. How pained and shocked we were at our first sin, our first conscious breaking away from duty. How the transgression of duty first stings and burns the untainted conscience as the remorse it awakens sweeps through the fallen soul like fire or plague. But let this breach of duty by sin become habitual, and it becomes not only easy but a pleasure. The abandonment of duty hardens into vice, or rather, vices, for sins go in groups, and by degrees crystallize into a set character. It is thus the devil's chain is wound round the soul,

and we become "fast bound with the ropes of our own sins." God's forgiveness, it is true, we may be always sure of; but every fresh breach of duty weakens the will—lessens its power of resistance. The acts of sin involved in these breaches of duty grow into those habits out of which character is woven; and we know that under the sway of character for evil the poor will becomes well-nigh paralyzed. A tree, when a sapling, may be bent, twisted and shaped as you like; but once full-grown and set, the very tempest that uproots it and hurls it to a distance cannot alter its shape. Hence, the need of early training in habits of duty, if we are to escape the fate of getting "rooted in evil," when all that is left us is to cry out with St. Paul, "Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death" (Rom. vii, 24). For "habit," in the way of duty, or its opposite, "is a second nature"; or, as St. Augustine expresses it, "Custom, unresisted, hardens into necessity"; "If the Ethiopian can change his skin and the leopard his spots, so may you also do well when you have learned evil." "A young man according to his ways, even when he is old he will not depart from it." Escape from the evil habits of neglecting duty is, humanly speaking, hopeless. As well might the struggling bird get free from the fowler's net, or the quivering fish from the baited hook, as we cast off the devil's fetters, when sinful pleasure, and not duty, is the law and measure of our lives. "His own iniquities catch the wicked, and he is fast bound by the ropes of his own sins." On forming a habit of duty, therefore, depends the loss or gain of life. To live in the only true sense of the word, is to train the conscience to act up to duty; in other words, to do right by habit, not by mere fitful impulse.

I would here warn you as good Catholics against taking a part for the whole. By a habit of duty I do not mean the observance, merely, of some duty, but of *all*. The "whole duty of man," as many

appear to think, does not consist in being a good citizen, or an honest tradesman, or a brave soldier, or keeping out of debt or jail. All this is only a very small fraction of the whole sum of duty. We must pay the whole debt of duty to the last cent. The doing so, or striving to do so, with God's help, is what we mean by forming the habit of duty. This is "fulfilling all justice," it is making "our justice exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees" with which the world is still full, who seem to think that all duty consists in man's willing response to the bugle cry from camp, office, workshop, or field, quite oblivious of the fact that "these things they ought to have done, and those not left undone," that the habit of duty takes in the regular discharge in thought, word, and deed, of all that we owe to God, our neighbor, and ourselves.

II. So much for the influence of habit on duty and its opposite. We have next to speak of its application to our own lives and those of others. It may well fill us with dismay when we reflect on our own habits and those of our fellow men, to note what a small space in our lives, duty, in the full sense of the term, occupies. We hardly ever, perhaps, gave the matter a thought, except in a very hazy or perfunctory way. And yet we are, and must be, individually, an agglomeration of good or bad habits. Each man has his character and ways; in other words, he is a tangled growth of habits. Are they habits of duty or of neglect of duty? There is no middle course. If good, so much the better for us; if bad, is there any hope? Can we rise from the slough of despond, of neglected duty, to be again children of light? Furthermore, is there any hope for the crowds of hardened sinners worse than ourselves, dead to all sense of duty in the Catholic sense of the term? We hopefully answer, yes. In the holy religion we profess there is no fatalism, no insuperable barriers of naturalism that ruthlessly bar resistance to habit, and entangle

poor sinners in the nets of their own weaving. We believe in free will, and, what is more, free will aided by grace. There is no unpardonable breach of duty, no criminal neglect of it, no habit of disregarding it, that the sacramental power of grace, joined to our own good will, may not reach and heal. We are not chained to moral goodness, neither are we, happily, to moral evil. If cripples through long neglect of duty, we may yet, at the Divine command, "arise and walk."

There is no door closed against us that the keys given to Peter, and ever bright with daily use, will not unlock. There are no incurables whom the fountains, gushing forth the healing waters of life, cannot restore. Howsoever far one may have wandered from the path of duty, were one as deeply sunk in crime as the thief on the cross, the publican in the temple, or the poor degraded creature about to be stoned, could one say with David before his conversion, "My iniquities have gone over my head," yet, with grace, may he be saved and healed, and walk again in the straight paths of duty and righteousness. Habits of pride, anger, gluttony, and lust, may paralyze the will and extinguish all sense of duty to such an extent as to make all hope of delivery seem chimerical; yet, there is no hopelessly fatal spell woven round the soul: "Dum spiro, spero": Whilst there is life, there is hope. There is no hoary prodigal even "living on the husks of swine," wandering naked of virtue and deeds of duty, like the madman of the tombs, that may not yet "arise and go to his father," and get clad again with the habits of a dutiful son.

Even apart from grace, the law of habit, as I said, cuts both ways. It has, therefore, an encouraging, as well as a discouraging, side. It tells powerfully as well in the casting off of bad habits, as in adopting new, so that under it "where sin abounded, grace may more abound."



To a great extent man is master of his own destiny. The shaping of his character is largely in his own hands. He is a plastic and adaptable creature, and, given the two factors of grace and free will working together, like horses in a team, he may guide himself in any direction. He can turn right round from bad roads to good ones. The first effort in the way of long neglected duty is hardest; but each succeeding effort is easier. Every temptation to evil, resisted, diminishes the force of the next; and so on, till the habit of duty and self-restraint gains the victory over self-indulgence and neglect. The tendency of our nature, doubtless, is downward. The weight of flesh and blood pulls us to earth and earthly ways and habits; but all the same we can, and by duty ought to, resist. "The lust," *i. e.*, the desire of, or consent to, sin, "shall be under thee and thou shalt have dominion over it" (Gen. iv, 7). The growth and choice of habits is, in some respects, as much under our control as the crops we plant in our gardens and fields. It is futile, a mere attempt to escape responsibility, in fact, to say that we are powerless against passion and other evil influences weighing down on our weak wills. We are free agents. We control and select amongst conflicting motives, and so determine our own choice. We feel ever conscious, no matter how powerful the motive under which we are acting, that we are still its master, and can stop or go on with it at will. Hence, we are responsible for our habits, inasmuch as they are built up of our own free and oft-repeated acts. If bad, they were freely adopted, and can, therefore, be freely abandoned. And if we find "the world, the flesh and the devil too strong for us," the resources of Grace, *i. e.*, the whole power of God, is at our command, "seeing," like St. Paul, "another law in our members fighting against the law of our minds," we may have lost heart; but like him we can also say, "I can do all things in Him, who strengtheneth me." All our efforts hitherto,

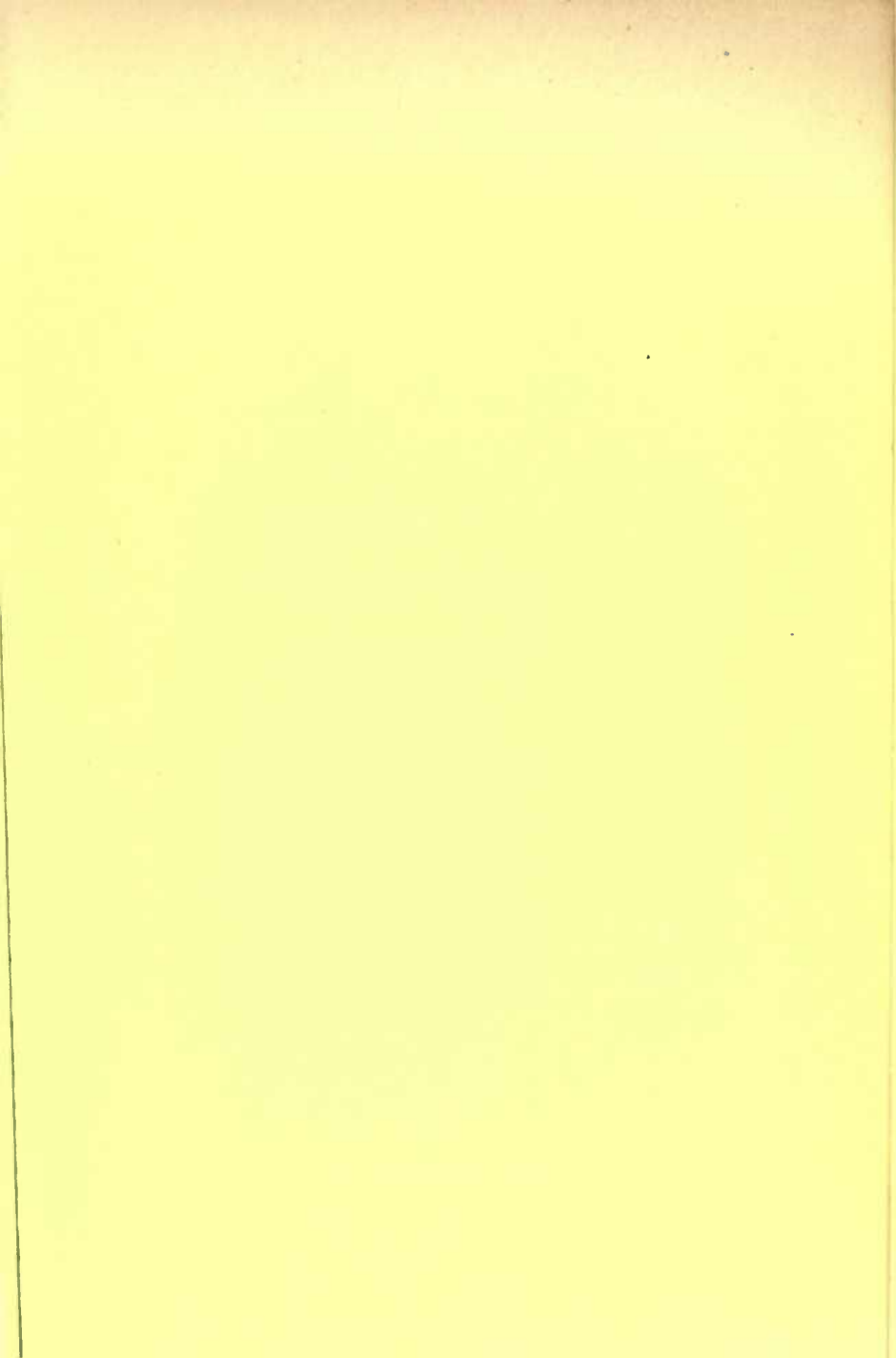
perhaps, to get back again to habits of duty and good conduct, may have ended in dismal failure and disappointment. But let us seek help from without. We live in God's Kingdom, and all its resources are ready in our defense. The forces marshaled in our favor are stronger and braver by far than those drawn up against us. The whole heavenly army is with us when we engage in sincere and earnest prayer.

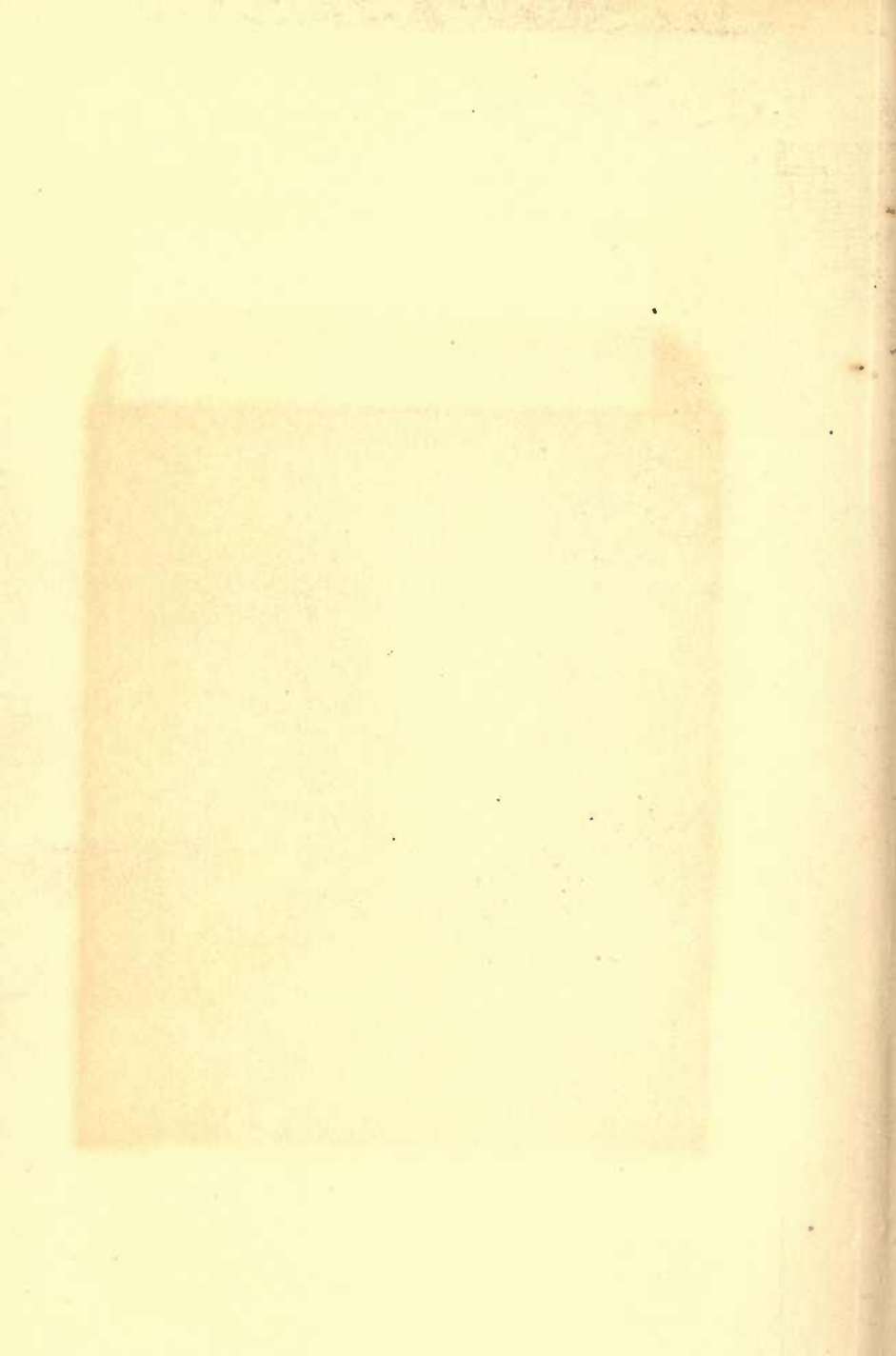
Most of us say daily, if not with heart at least with lips, the "Our Father," and at its close ask to be delivered from evil. Now, the saddest and worst of all evils is the habit of sin—the state of those who neglect their duty. Many there are who say this prayer with utter insincerity, not wishing to be delivered. They are thralls to sin, who hug and kiss the chains that bind them. Of them we can say nothing. God will not, and, be it said in all reverence, *cannot*, save them against their will. In the ordinary course of Providence the will is never forced, for it is free. But there are many waiting for the "stirring of the waters," many who would fain cast aside their sticks and crutches and walk in the full light of day—act freely and habitually in the full discharge of their Christian duties. They feel rapidly drifting down the stream of tendency, that is set, "opposite to God." They feel hopeless or apathetic, and yet, by a sort of contradiction, long too for "the coming of the Kingdom of God," by His reign, through the habit of full Christian duty, in their hearts. Mere naturalism will not save them and cannot cure them. A life of grace, of sustained Divine help, is what they seek and need.

"Unless your justice exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven," said our Lord. But our justice, *i. e.*, our goodness, our piety, rarely comes up to that of the Scribes and Pharisees. What can we do? Our Lord furnishes the answer in telling us of the new birth. But, "how can a man enter

his mother's womb and be born again when old," answered Nicodemus, doubtfully. This moral miracle, this utter change of habits, this new birth, is effected daily in those who cast aside the garb of sin and walk forth into life clad in Christ, ever acting from a sense and habit of duty—duty in its ideal and Christian standard.

Let us, then, be up and doing. Let us pray for good will and ever cooperate with grace offered us. A noble and truly Christian character is the highest reward of a sustained habit of duty. It means peace, happiness—the Kingdom of God, both here and hereafter. How hard people strive and toil to build a house, found a business, merely to leave a decaying and perishable monument behind. Shall we do nothing to build the house of God, found His Kingdom, mirror the likeness of His Son, the ideal man in our hearts. This can be only done by "putting off the old man and clothing ourselves with the new"; in other words, let us uproot bad habits and plant new ones. This is the purpose and aim of all that has been said on the subject of duty. It is good to know its meaning and worth; but the really important thing is to do it, *i. e.*, to carry out or fulfil *all justice*. This can only be effected by ever cultivating and acting out of the habit of duty.





✓  
1932 ●

