

efficient fulfilment in our midst of the ministry of catechising by the clergy in the churches of the land. That the obligation of this ministry rests on the clergy is beyond question; it is clearly stated in the Prayer Book. "The curate of every parish shall diligently, upon Sundays and holy days, openly in the Church, instruct and examine the children sent unto him in the Catechism." From the obligation of catechising personally in the church the parish priest has no escape. And the Church, in laying on him this obligation, acts in obedience to the Word of God. She recognizes the abiding authority of the direction given by St. Paul to Timothy for the ministry of the Word in the Church of Ephesus, "Give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching." (1 Tim. iv. 13.) She is at one with the Church in every time and age in maintaining the freehold ministry of the Word in lessons, in preaching, in catechising. And in thus acting she is faithful to the will of God as revealed in His Word. No Church that does not enroll her clergy to give heed to the teaching would be faithful to her Master. Yet, clear as this is, it is certain that this personal obligation of the priest in the ministry of catechising has very generally not been recognized among us. We are living in a generation which has too generally grown up in ignorance of the Christian faith as the Church has received it. The letter of the Catechism is unknown. The truth it teaches is also unknown. A vague, indefinite pietism is that in which our children have been trained, but they know not "The truth as it is in Jesus," as expressed in that faith which down through the Christian ages has been taught "everywhere and in every church." I utter no censure or condemnation on our Sunday-schools in saying this. We owe to them a debt we cannot fail to recognize if we read their history without prejudice. We cannot afford to lose their ministry in the present. As really as the Milanese system of Sunday instruction was God's gift to that people through San Carlo Borromeo, so truly is the Sunday-school system the gift of God to the English Church and people. I believe that the continuance of this system is as necessary for the full efficiency of the catechism system among us, as I am sure that in that system is found what is needed for the perfecting of their work. There is no antagonism between the two. The one is the complement of the other. Sunday-schools can never be a substitute for the Catechism service, but they can in a special degree prepare its way and advance its efficiency. No parish priest can, without incurring a serious responsibility, delegate his ministry of teaching his children to Sunday-school teachers. But he can welcome them as fellow-laborers with himself in this ministry. Then as the teacher in the Sunday-school prepares the children for the Catechism, and the priest in the Catechism perfects the work of the teacher in the Sunday-school, they shall "rejoice together" as each shares in the order of the body of Christ a common work. But for the practical expression of this ideal, the first condition is, the recognition by the clergy of their obligation to fulfil personally, and in the Church, this ministry of catechising. And my hopes go out with this treatise that it may be used of God to bring about this result." In closing let me suggest to the clergy who are interested in this revival of positive and catechetical teaching, a careful study of the system as described in the book which has given the keynote to this subject, "The Clergy and the Catechism," by the Rev. Spencer Jones. Let me further suggest, after studying out this subject, the advisability of establishing for themselves in their cures and parishes a Catechetical Class, in which the rector of the parish shall come into direct touch with the children of his parish and of his Sunday-school. For the last five months I have met my children in the Church every Friday afternoon, from 5 to 6 o'clock, and have been more than delighted with the results of this close and vital relationship to the young of the flock. I do not try to crowd upon the instruction on the Lord's Day, which is already in thoroughly competent hands. But in this successful application of the St. Sulpice method to the problem, I am surprised at the ease of it, at the results of it, and of the great necessity of it. It was to Simon Peter, an Apostle, and not to a group of miscellaneous disciples, that our Lord gave His charge, "Feed my lambs." And it is to the priests of the Church to-day and not alone to a band of Sunday-school workers that the same Master adds this same command, a command which applies to us here and now in our busy life, as well as it applied to His followers of old by the Sea of Galilee.

THE DUTY OF ASKING.

SERMON BY THE REV. CANON SCOTT HOLLAND.

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."—St. Matt vii. 7.

Last Sunday we spoke of our mental and spiritual attitude towards our neighbour, and we found it w

all summed up in the maxim "Give"—unlock your sympathies, unseal your heart, be forthcoming, be generous, be trusting, let yourself be at the disposal of others freely and abundantly! You will find that they return your confidence if only you begin. Now, to-day, we will turn to ask, "And what about our duty towards God? What is to be our relation to Him, our spiritual type, our characteristic temper?" And in answer we meet with a recipe which exactly reverses matters. Towards God you are to be as one who is forever asking. You are to be insatiable, clamorous, insistent, urgent, always wanting more and more. The temper of a beggar, that is what is to characterize you. A beggar that will not be put off. You must ply God with requests. You must be on the watch for opportunities of pressing your case. You must nurse a hunger at your heart which will not be gainsaid. Ask and you shall have, demand a great deal, expand your wants, increase your desires: God's complaint against you is that you do not ask enough. Therefore He sends His Son to stir up your capacities for asking, to prompt and provoke a larger thirst for good things. "Why are you not more discontented with what you have?" So the Son of God inquires, "Why do you rest satisfied with such pitiful results, such meagre resources?" You ought to be ashamed of them. Ask, and if asking is not sufficient, then set to work to seek. Sorrow, labour, contrive, that what you require may be obtained. Go about hither and thither to discover how it may be done. It may be in your seeking you come up against some blind doors that bar your way, against bolted gates that invite no entry—silent, and stiff, and grim. Then, still do not give up. Do not lower your demands, do not accept the resistance of facts, do not acquiesce in the cramping force of circumstances. No, let your passion for more in your invincible quest go boldly up to the darkest doors and knock. Insist on admittance, clamour against refusal. Beat up against anything that would pinch and curb your needs. For you, as a child of God, there is but one motto, one invariable rule, "Ask!" "Seek!" "Knock!" But is this really the typical Christian character? Is it a pleasant temper this, which would besiege God with everlasting petitions? Surely, it may be said, this is a queer motive to lay before the conscience, the motive of having. What is this greed, this ambition, this covetousness which our Lord recommends? How does it avoid the accusation of inherent selfishness? "Ask, and ye shall have." What should we desire to have? It seems to be the very opposite of the childlike mind. The child in the security of its father's love. The true child knows that things are well, we say. It is content, it relies upon the good will of the Father, who is bound to be ordering all things for the best. The child has perfect trust; it accepts its limitations, it takes what is given. It would consider it monstrous to whine and complain and be unsatisfied. How tiresome is the child that is forever vexing us with restless questions, that fills the home with its cries and its hunger, the child that will know why it may not have more, and will never accept a plain refusal, and is cross because it cannot find all it wants, and is furious because this or that gate is not to be opened to it. We all know that child. We dislike it extremely, and we draw gloomy forebodings of what its after career will be. Is that a temper which a Christian should foster who lives as a child in the house of his Father? We thought that the deepest note in his character would be faith, and faith surely is passive, humble, unselfish, acquiescent. Faith wants nothing for itself. It throws its whole self upon God, and there it leaves its case. Its desires are chastened, its heart is resigned, its will is surrendered. It is, above all things, content with what it has. What has faith to do with this urgent, strenuous, active type of life which is so ardent to get, and which is so resolute to have and to find, which batters so loudly against all obstructive gates, which forever asks, and seeks, and knocks? It has been too often supposed that Christianity cherishes only the passive virtues; that by its doctrine of faith it has taken the fire and heat out of all those energies in man that aspire; that it has nothing to say to those indomitable activities which push, and thrust, and spur us on to victories which subdue the earth, and enrich human society, and expand the range of knowledge and art. It is doubted whether the Christian type has served the cause of progress, of citizenship, has helped man to win his way forward in storm and stress. It is assumed that the effect of faith must be to withdraw the believer from those activities, to kill down in him the hunger, the discontent, the throb of the irresistible impetus which all work together to propel him along the perilous path of advance. Faith puts these concerns aside, it is supposed. It lapses into mild indifference, into gentle mysticism, into the fatalism which finds a sufficient excuse for every deplorable situation in the will of God. So it is said, and no doubt it has often been in fact. But this Christian fatalism can only have come about through the neglect of such precepts as these in my text. Ask! seek! knock! Here are words that

sting, that stir, that goad. They suggest no mild-eyed acquiescence in the will of God, but a robust violence vehemently asserted to invoke the Divine Will, to discover what it keeps back, to press in where entry appears forbidden by God. For it is God Himself whom we are told by the text to besiege with our calls. God Himself whose further treasures we are to persist in unearthing and utilizing. God Himself, at whose bolted gates we are to persist in knocking. The words describe the temper which should inspire our prayers when we pray, when we look towards the Father. Do not be satisfied, our Lord tells us, with what merely arrives and happens. As if that were God's intention or good will on your behalf. No, you will never know half of what the Divine will can do for you if you passively accept every issue. You must attack it, you must raise your demands upon it, you must exercise a holy and busy curiosity about it, you must study it, and watch, and experiment with it, and inquire how, and why, and what, and when you must thrust through into the secrets, you must push through doors, you must stand on and on when the road is barred, refusing to go back by the way you came. Ask! seek! knock! if you would take the real measure of God's will. Faith, according to the Christian ideal, is an energy, a desire, a passion. It works like a fire to kindle, like a force to compel. It stirs every faculty, every capacity, every bit of the entire being into motion, and this it is, and this it does, by the sheer necessity of its nature, for it is faith in a God who is Almighty, in a Father who is universal and everlasting. In believing in Him it believes in His inexhaustible goodness, in His immeasurable love. The more intensely it believes the more imperative becomes the necessity that this goodness should verify itself, that this love should be victorious. Faith cannot endure that the witness to God should fail or slacken. It is convinced that He is bent on establishing on earth a kingdom of righteousness. It knows that the ear hath not heard, nor the eye seen, nor the heart conceived all that God has prepared for them that love Him. If the disclosure of this glory is hampered or withheld, faith out of its very loyalty must protest, must cry out, must go about to discover the why and wherefore, must be impatient, disturbed, urgent—not for itself, of course! Selfish appetites have been quelled and purged according to the measure of our faith. The believer himself will be content to endure, to be straitened, and be bidden to ask, seek and knock. Faith looks away from itself and fastens itself on God, but for that very reason that it requires to see God everywhere paramount, everywhere recognized, everywhere glorified. And wherever its eyes fall on an earth filled with darkness and cruel imitations, on black places of shame, and wastes of ignorance, and cruelty, and misery and sin, faith is fired with the holy flame of Pentecost. It refuses to believe for a moment that this, which it beholds with such dismay, is at all what God wills. It is His will, indeed, in the sense that where sin goes before, judgment follows; where men neglect the laws of human kindness, there they find themselves tangled in the snare and in the pit; that where they ask for very little they get very little. But it is not His will that they should ask so scurvily and seek so poorly, and never knock at all. It is not His will that they should expect nothing from Him, should never look to see a manifestation of God on earth, a kingdom of holiness and peace. If they will not hope for it, strive for it, work for it, even His pity cannot bring in the good day in spite of themselves. But His one desire is that they should demand it, that they should call upon His power and love, that they should clamour at the gates, that they should send up again and again the passionate, importunate prayer, "Thy kingdom come." Why is it not yet arrived, O Lord? Thy will be done on earth. How long? O Lord, how long? So it is that we come round to reconciling our two texts, the one that bade us to be always giving, and the other that forbade us to cease from asking. We are to be ever "asking," in order that we may be ever "giving." For we have nothing to give but that we have received. Back we go again to the doctrine of grace. God must give us what we give out to our neighbour. God lies behind all our giving, initiating that act by which we go out towards our fellows. By our drinking of the living waters of Jesus, the streams flow out from us at which others may drink. Drink then, drink deeply, of the waters of the Spirit! Let thy thirst be unquenched. Ask again, seek again. Go back to the fountain. For this thirst is no selfish craving. It is the thirst for the kingdom, the thirst for God. Heart and flesh cry aloud for the living God. And, therefore, they thirst for the kingdom of God to come to all, God's love to be made manifest everywhere. Such thirst cannot rest in self. It yearns over others, over all who are parched in the arid sands, gone astray in the wilderness out of the way. And to them its sympathy flows, its pity moves. And if it has tasted itself of the blessed waters, then it can draw upon its own stores. It can put the cup of cold water to the lips

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