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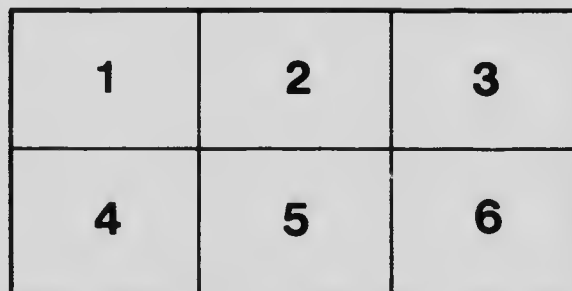
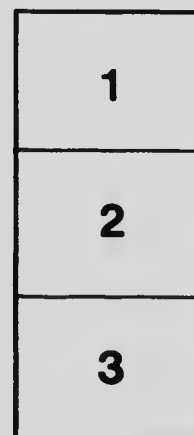
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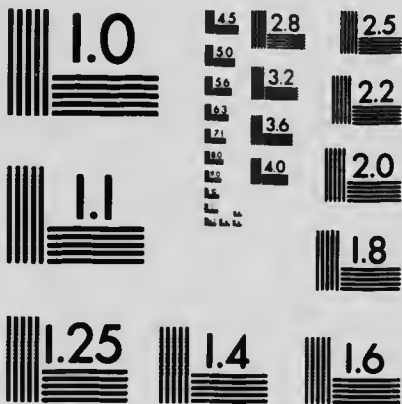
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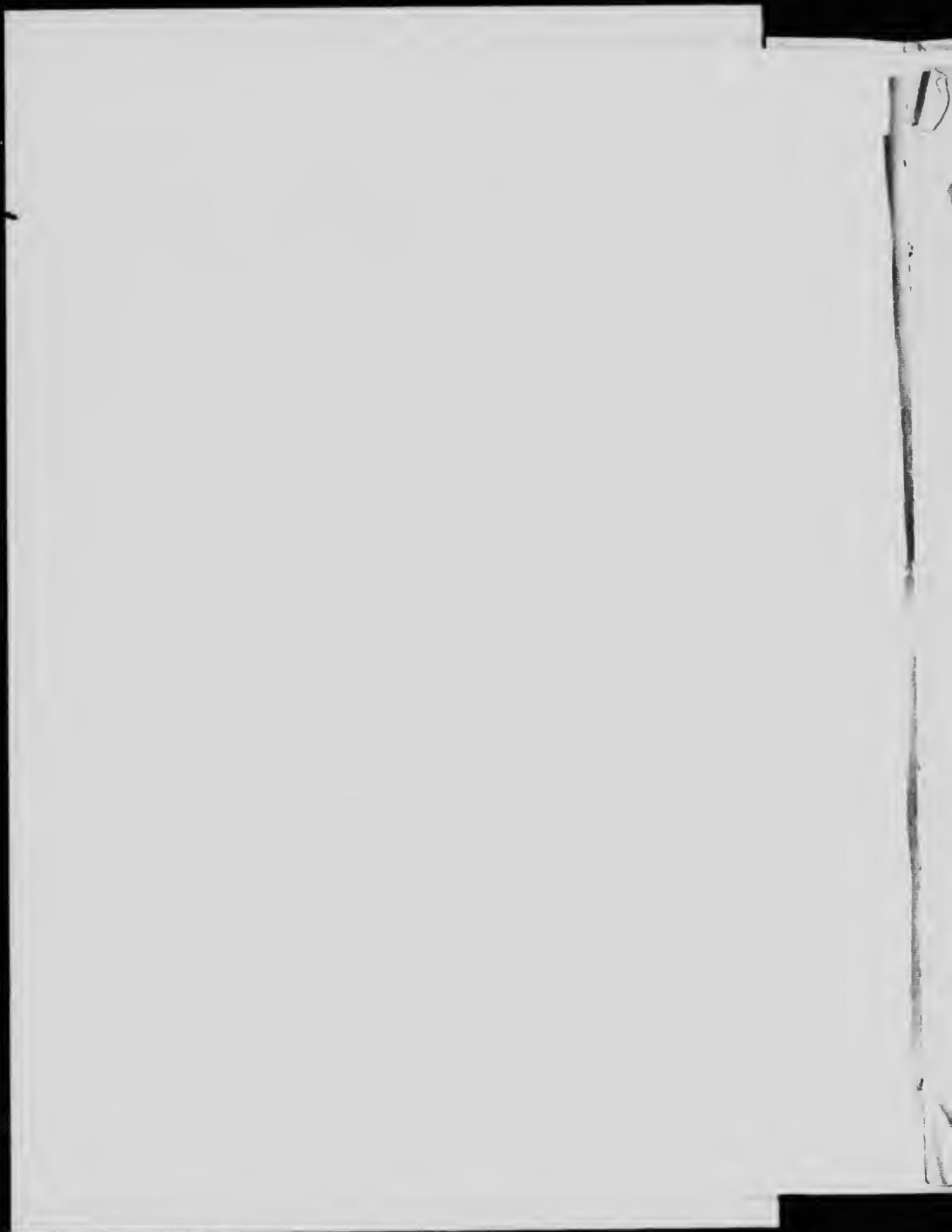
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13  
THE WILL TO LOVE

AN ADDRESS

TO

CHRISTIAN PARENTS AND SUNDAY  
SCHOOL TEACHERS

BY

RICHARD ROBERTS

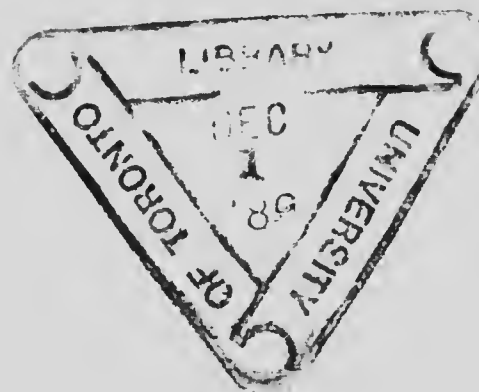
THE FELLOWSHIP OF RECONCILIATION,

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15

*This Message is sent you by  
the Committee of the Friends'  
First-day School Association  
in the hope that it may help  
you in your work with the  
Children.*

*July, 1915.*



## THE WILL TO LOVE.

---

I WANT to ask you, parents and teachers and, indeed, all of you who are present who have children, to consider the character of the world which is laid upon us by the circumstances of the present time. By common consent this war represents the end of an age. It shows that the principles which have governed Western civilisation are bankrupt; and that the historical conditions which have issued in this terrible catastrophe must be completely transformed. On every side the determination is expressed that this must never happen again. What is not so clearly apprehended is that, if this is never to happen again, we must create a new world. We have fostered the illusion that we could, by Arbitration Treaties and Hague Conventions, if not stop war, at least retard it and humanise its methods. But we are discovering to-day that that principle of national life of which war is the result cannot be moralised; that, carried to its logical end, it involves methods of ruthlessness and barbarism; and that, if this is



never to happen again, we must apply a more radical and drastic remedy than those well-meaning expedients upon which men have hitherto based their hopes of peace.

And the task before us is the gigantic task of creating a new world. I repeat this, because I do not want you for a moment to forget it. I am not using words of mere rhetoric, but stating a cold, sober truth. For our encouragement we may recall that in some directions the process is already afoot. It has abolished slavery, and is leading to great changes in the position of women, the nurture of child-life and in other things. Nevertheless, there is a task before us which can only be described as colossal. Yet it is true that there never was a time when it was so hopeful. For men are turning away in despair and disillusionment from the principles and methods of life which have led us to the present exhaustion and bankruptcy of the world, and are asking if there is not some better way. And the great fact that you and I have to remember is that we are the trustees of that better way. The real task before us is that of imposing Christianity upon the life of the nations, or, to put it in another way, to banish the present system of international competition and rivalry, and to establish in its place the reign of international co-operation and mutual service.

But I would like to point out to you that this

principle operates not only in international relationships but that it governs also our personal and social and industrial relationships within the commonwealth. There is no name for it but the principle of self-interest. It is the parent of the competitive system in commerce and industry, in which every man is for himself and the weakest goes to the wall. It lies at the root of the class antagonisms which breed the strife of labour and capital; the jealousy of professional privilege; and all the divisiveness which dismembers the commonwealth and which, more than anything else, has vitiated our politics; and not ours only, but that of Western civilisation generally. And this principle of self-interest is the clean negation of the Christian principle of conduct, wherever you may find it. We recognise that it is so in the case of the individual. We are not quite so clear that it applies to the group, and some there are who deny that it can apply at all to the nation. But wherever we find it, it is unchristian. It has yet to be shown that nations cannot act in an unselfish way; and that many men are denying this to-day is due to a weak pessimism which would surrender the larger interests of the world permanently to the forces of evil.

#### THE GREAT OPPORTUNITY.

But you may ask me what this has to do with you. I answer, Everything. I know of no class

of people who should be more concerned to realise the inwardness of this matter than Christian parents and Sunday School workers. You are, remember, teachers of Christianity; that is your calling; that is what you have undertaken to do. And it is part of your office to share in the creation of this new world, to establish and to make supreme in the world the Christian principle of mutual service and co-operation on every plane of life. Further, let me remind you that you occupy beyond all others the position in which this work can be most effectually done. It has become a commonplace that the child is the real starting point of all progress. The Eugenists are proclaiming this truth at the top of their voices. What you do with the children of to-day determines the physical and moral quality of the nation to-morrow. The ideas that you instil into the minds of children are seeds which will bear their own characteristic fruit in due time. You are the people who are shaping the future; you hold it in your hands in your homes and Sunday School classes; and, if you choose, you have it in your power to do an immeasurable work in the direction of eliminating strife and war from the world.

#### WE ARE TEACHERS OF CHRISTIANITY.

You are called to be teachers of Christianity; and what Christianity is in the region of personal

conduct is revealed to us in the story of the life and death of Jesus Christ. "This is the way the Master went," and I want you to realise very clearly that that way was not the way of a soft and emasculated goodness. We all know that the Sunday School has become associated in the minds of many people with a rather weak and sentimental piety, a contemptible goody-goodness; and it has been for a long time the habit of a certain kind of literary critic to express his maximum contempt for books with a moral tendency by calling them "Sunday School books." I know better than most people how unfair this attitude is; but I also know that the Christian way of life has not been adequately represented in our Sunday School teaching. It has been too legal and negative, for one thing,—an affair of prohibitions; and for another it has been too sketchy and incoherent. The Christian way of life is the product of a single principle; and that is the principle which is represented and expressed in the life and death of Jesus Christ. If you want to sum it up in a single phrase, it is the "*the will to love.*" We have heard a great deal of Nietzsche in these latter days, and his passionate preaching of "*the will to power.*" This is the exact antithesis of the Christian principle of "*the will to love.*"

And it is this "*will to love*" which you are called upon to quicken in the boys and girls with whom you have to do. I do not suggest that you

are going to do it in your own strength, or by your own teaching skill. To establish the will to love in a human soul is a task which only the Spirit of God can accomplish; but you may be, if you choose, the Spirit's instruments for the work. And the time to do this is peculiarly the plastic and sensitive period of childhood. Certainly it can be done then to a far greater extent than later, when the soul has lost much of its sensibility through the infection of the world. Here is the point at which to lay the foundations of that new world the sovereign law of which is to be *the will to love*.

But when you are telling the children what the will to love is, you will be careful to show them, as you go along, in some detail, what it entails, and you will continually enforce the point you are making by an appeal to the example of Christ.

### THE WILL TO SERVE.

I. For instance, the will to love carries with it *the will to serve*. "Jesus, . . . knowing that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the end:" and then follows the story of the washing of the disciples' feet. "Ye call Me Teacher and Lord," said Jesus afterwards, "and ye say well; for so I am. If I, then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's

feet." This is the consistent note of our Lord's life. "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister."

We have been brought up in a generation for which the highest good has been expressed in the idea of "getting on." Youth has been urged to acquire and develop the "will to succeed"; and this is the mainspring of competitive commerce and industry. For in the realm of material things the will to succeed involves the will to beat others in the struggle for wealth and power. We have frequently been taught that there is "plenty of room on top"; but we know quite well that the way to the top is over the failure of other people. It would be a mistake to suppose that Christianity despises achievement; it certainly does not,—only it interprets achievement in different terms from those of the world. The kind of achievement which Christianity exalts is not personal success in the acquisition of wealth or fame, but success in service. Over against the will to succeed it sets the will to serve. And even if we have not acquired the will to succeed there are few of us who lack the will to stand for our rights, as we call them. It is the characteristic of the natural man that he is always more concerned for his rights than his duties; and he is always ready to square up to the man who infringes what he considers to be his rights. But all this emphasis upon rights is simply a phase of self-regard; and it is nearly

always exaggerated. It implies an attitude of antagonism to the other man, looks upon the other man as a possible usurper and plunderer who has assiduously to be kept at arm's length. A society which is composed of people who are all standing for their rights is not a commonwealth but a mob. It is true that there are rights, and there are times when rights must be jealously guarded; but no man ever knows what his rights really are until he has an equally vivid and lively sense of his duties. The foundation of a commonwealth is a common will to serve. That is the basis of unity and the mainspring of co-operation.

#### SEEK THE WELFARE OF ALL.

And what is true of the individual is true of groups, of classes and of nations. Think, for a moment what England would be if every class of people within it ceased to think of their class interests and rights, and acquired the will to serve. Think what the world might become if nations abandoned the policy of self-interest and realised the truth that the welfare of one was the welfare of the whole, and bound themselves together in a confederation of mutual service. This is the Christian law for the individual and for the nation, *the will to serve*. And this is the seed which you can drop into the young, fresh minds with which you have to do, and the measure in which you do it

is the measure in which you will be helping to create a new world.

It would lead me too far afield just now to enter into such detailed applications of this principle as you will be called to make in passing it on to younger minds. But I would like to remind you of two things. First of all, that in the child's native instinct of justice and fairness, you have the most invaluable ally in quickening the sense of duty,—for duty is after all what is *due* from us to others; and secondly, that the will to serve and the sense of duty must not be allowed to find their main impulse in the spiritual profit they bring to oneself but from the recognition of our common membership in the family of our Heavenly Father. The will to serve must spring from the will to love and not from the hope of personal satisfaction in service.

## THE WILL TO FORGIVE.

II. The will to love contains also the *will to forgive*. I need not recall to you the supreme instance of the will to forgive. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And in His teaching our Lord was constantly insisting upon the grace of forgiveness. We are to forgive until seventy times seven; we are to forgive seven times in a day; "if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you



your trespasses." Our natural instinct is the will to retaliate, to pay the offender back in his own coin, to get our own back, as we say. But the sin of retaliation is the same as the sin of offence,—it separates men from one another and confirms their enmity. The grace of forgiveness lies in this, that it not only refuses to widen the breach made by the offence, but heals it. I know that forgiveness is one of the most difficult things in the world: it requires the hardest kind of self-denial. But if ever we are to create a real commonwealth in the world we must become a forgiving people. And I specially want to emphasise the importance of quickening the will to forgive in children. It is one of the things which become increasingly difficult to acquire as one grows older,—perhaps the most difficult thing to acquire of all. And for that reason it is peculiarly necessary that we should guard the minds of children from the contamination of thoughts of revenge and hatred at a time like this. After all, this war is an adult affair: let us at least save the children, as far as possible, from the moral dangers of it. Whatever provocation an enemy may give you to harden your heart against him, it is bad for you to succumb to it. But, as the Lord liveth, see that the tender soul of the child is not for ever poisoned by the invasion of hard thoughts of vengeance and hate. So far as you can, keep the child out of it. You indeed owe it to the child to do so. He will have to live in and

shape the world after you and I are gone out of it, and we have no right to handicap him beforehand by letting his mind be prejudiced by our quarrels. For the prejudices of childhood become the politics of maturity. And, indeed, your duty does not end in this merely negative process. You have even now to stimulate in the child the will to forgive,—the spirit of positive goodwill towards enemies. And you will all along remember that the ground of the spirit and the will to forgive is the love by which you are forgiven. "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." And never, never forget that no enemy needs your forgiveness as much as you need God's.

### THE WILL TO RESPECT.

III. And last of all the will to love contains the *will to respect*. And that rules out all those divisive tempers like suspicion and contempt, by which we are so easily overcome. Right through our Lord's life you will find a consistent will to respect other folk, to make allowances for their frailties, to put the best construction upon their actions. He set His face steadfastly against the spirit which suspects and despises other people. One of the pits into which we are all liable to fall is that of belittling in our own minds the man who does not belong to our tradition, the person who is

outside our set. Has it not, indeed, become the very expression of our contempt for a man to call him an "outsider"? Think of our attitude to the foreigner; and we British people are peculiar sinners in this matter. Latterly we have improved a good deal, but there still remains in us a very deep, instinctive sense of superiority to any and every foreigner. And the same feeling exists not merely in all of us towards the foreigner, but among us towards each other according to the class to which we may chance to belong. This is, of course, partly pure snobbishness; and it arises out of an inability to distinguish between the accidents and the essence of manhood. We think more of what a man has than of what he is. And that is why, in our dealings with those less fortunate than ourselves, our very goodwill is poisoned and nullified. Our compassion is muddied by contempt; our pity vitiated by patronage. If you are going to do any good in this world you must set out with the will to respect.

And, after all, this should not be difficult to acquire. There is a synthesis in which all men are gathered together in a noble and ennobling unity. They are our brothers for whom Christ died,—the foreigner, the duke, the dustman and the drunkard; they were all made like us in the image of God; like us they have sullied the image; but, as in us so in them, the image may be restored. We are called to respect the vilest for the sake of the

image he bears. Upon the will to respect will grow *the will to trust*. And there is no more powerful agent of reclamation in the world than the will to trust. Trustfulness breeds trustworthiness. That is just what you are endeavouring to do when you put a child on his honour. You are making him trustworthy by the process of trusting him. And this is a universal truth. The parent of strife is the readiness for strife, whether in the individual or the nation; and readiness for strife, is always born of fear and suspicion and distrust.

Some such thing as this, then, the *will to love* is; and I beseech you to believe that the singular opportunity that you teachers of little children possess of stimulating the will to love places you in a position of strategic importance for the future of the Kingdom of God and the world. The will to love is the energy of social regeneration and of world-peace; it is even more than that,—it is the deepest truth of the life of God. “For God so loved the world,”—that is the ground of our redemption; but it is also to be the pattern of our conduct.—“As God hath loved us so we ought also to love one another.” What God has given us we owe to our fellowmen. And it is given you to take into your hands the unformed, plastic manhood of the future, and to cast it into the divine mould of the *will to love*: and in so doing to lay well and truly the foundations of that new world which is to be, that world in which com-

petition shall be superseded by co-operation, from which goodwill shall have extinguished strife, and in which there shall be no war, the world of spear become pruning-hook, and sword become plough-share, the great ultimate Commonwealth of Man.

One last word, and the most important. Remember that in all this your practice is of infinitely more consequence than your precept.



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