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BE YE PERFECT

Talks on the Scout Law and Promise

by

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TO THE NINTH
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Stigmata Christi Portamus

THERE is a danger of teaching other *what* to do; but not *why* they should do it; and *how* they can do it. The result is likely to be bankruptcy of thought, and discouragement at failure. And there is a danger, too, of teaching to avoid wrong instead of to seek right. This is neither Christian; nor Scouting; nor likely to attract those who seek an adventurous life.

It is hoped that these talks, which necessarily deal only with limited aspects of the Law and Promise (and often not the obvious aspect but one which it had been thought useful), may stimulate a right attitude towards these things; and encourage others to seek after that which is always just a little out of their reach, which is surely one of the most attractive features of Scouting.

Though the writer alone is responsible for the talks, Lord Rowallan is mainly responsible for the enthusiasm which produced them, for month by month in the *Scouter* (as elsewhere) he inspires us to seek the best and the difficult.

It is hoped that these talks may be of some use to Senior Scouts and Rovers; and to Scouters both for themselves and for teaching others. Most of the material has been used on P.Ls. and Senior Scouts of no outstanding qualities without any apparent boredom!

Some will recognize in the dedication opposite a reference to the Epistle to the Galatians (vi. 17); a reference which is applicable to St. Francis, patron of the writer's Group, who carry on their scarves three nails crossed, symbolical of the saint's Stigmata. But all the baptized bear the wounds of Christ; and those who are Scouts have a special responsibility in bearing them. In fact they are the essence of Service.

E. J. ROWLAND.

INTRODUCTION

IT'S an awful bore to be told to "be good"! It reminds one of best clothes on a Sunday afternoon with the possibility of falling into a mud pond. *That*, of course, is the point. What many people really mean when they say, "Be good," is "Avoid wrong." And that *is* a bore. There is nothing exciting in avoiding wrong.

Not one of the Scout laws tells us to avoid wrong. And have you realized that our Lord never told us to "be good" in the sense of avoiding wrong? But He did say, "Be ye perfect." He paid us the compliment of telling us to aim at nothing but the very highest. If we aim at the very highest we shall never get there in this life, but we shall get very much higher than if we aim at the moderate. Two Scouts set out to climb mountains: the first, one of 1,000 feet; the second, one of 5,000 feet. The first gets to the tops of his; the second half way to the top of his. Most people would say that the first was successful; the second unsuccessful. But who climbed the *higher*?

Unless we aim at the highest we shall get nowhere except lower than we are. Our Lord, in the last book of the Bible, condemns a certain body of people: "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth." Being lukewarm is the most dangerous of all states to be in. The bad person knows he is bad, and he may change. But the person without ideals, who is neither very good nor very bad, is never likely to change, except for the worse.

Imagine yourself on a very tall ladder, its foot in a swamp, its tops at the summit of a mountain. If you look down at the swamp the chance are that you will get dizzy and fall down. If you look up the chances are that you will get to the top. Scouting, like Christianity, teaches us to look up. It never gives us the chance of becoming self-satisfied; of resting on our oars. The Tenderfoot aims at Second Class; the Second Class Scout at First Class; the First Class Scout at Bushman's Thong; the Scout with the Bushman's Thong at King's Scout. And then it's more or less time for Rovering!

But nowhere in Scouting are we told to aim higher than in the Scout Law. In the Scout Law we are not told to aim just a little higher than we are, but to aim to be *perfect*. The Scout Law does not tell us to be moderate, but to be what Christ commanded, "Be ye perfect." It does not say that a Scout is moderately honest, but that his honour is to be trusted — *always*! It does not say that he is to be a friend of those he likes — but of *all*! He has got to aim at being perfect: the goal which our Lord gave us.

B.P. gave us a tremendous challenge when he gave us the Scout Law; and as Scouts we ought to be proud to accept the challenge. Though remember that God does not expect us to be perfect in this life; but to *aim* at being perfect. St. Catherine of Sienna said, "God does not ask a perfect work but infinite desire." God asks us to aim at the highest; to persevere towards it; and not to worry about the result. We may leave the result to Him, and we may be sure that He will judge very differently from the way the world judges.

The following talks on the Scout Law and Promise do not aim at making life easier, but more difficult! They suggest that in the Scout Law and Promise we may find a challenge to aim, not at being moderate, but at being perfect.

May God give us infinite desire for the most difficult; and grace to persevere towards it.

A SCOUT'S HONOUR IS TO BE TRUSTED

IN most of the things we think and say and do there are three standards: wrong, moderate, right. This is certainly the case in this first Scout Law. There are boys who can never be trusted: they tell so many lies that one is never certain whether or not they are speaking the truth. There are the boys (probably the majority) who are moderate: honest according to the ordinary standards of honesty, but not honest in

everything. There are the few who can always be trusted; and who hardly, if ever, let one down. A Scout should be among these last.

We need spend no time discussing the first case: the “little liar.” Except to give this word of warning: by all means condemn the lie, but be careful not to condemn the liar. All people do not find it equally easy to speak the truth; just as all people do not find it equally easy not to get drunk. Most people say of *one* sine, “I do find it *very* difficult to avoid committing *this* one.” And *that* sin of yours may be far worse than lying, especially if you don’t realize that it is a sin!

Let us consider the boy who is considered honest according to *ordinary standards*; and, in the opinion of many Scouts, to be keeping the first Law. But does he ever give a wrong age in order to travel half price; or knowingly travel beyond the fare stage? (“But everybody does that!”) Does he give a wrong age to visit a friend in hospital where children under 14 are not admitted into wards? (“*That* must be all right because it’s doing a good turn.”) Does he ever raid an apple orchard? (“Come, come, boys will be boys. And in any case the farmer may be waiting at the bottom with a stick!”) Would he tell a lie to get another boy out of trouble? (“You’re not going to say it’s good Scouting to get another boy into trouble? Anyway I’d rather be a liar than a prig!”)

Before we go any further let it be said that a lie is *always* wrong: it must be, because it is denying the Truth. Of course, there are different degrees of lying — some worse than others; and sometimes a choice has to be made between two ways, both of which are wrong; but be careful of this argument for it does not arise as often as we like to think it does. If you think that I am wrong in suggesting that all or any of the above examples are dishonourable in one degree or another, put our Lord in each situation and ask yourself what He would do.

I do not intend to solve these problems for you, but to say a few words about each excuse. (1) Never judge a thing to be right “because everyone does it.” I shall have more to say about that in the next talk. (2) Doing a good turn to someone does not turn a lie into the truth. It may not matter if you do visit your friend in hospital, as long as you don’t faint and make a nuisance of yourself. But a lie always lets down the standard of truthfulness. (3) Many make the excuse that “boys will be boys”. That expression is really an insult to boys: it suggests that there are certain standards of behaviour which are too high for boys to aim at. But there are not! (4) The fact that the farmer may be waiting at the bottom does not make the thing right or wrong. The possibility of punishment never does. Nor is a thing right because it is dangerous. (In any case there are plenty of *right* things to do which are dangerous!) (5) Admittedly the lie to get another boy out of trouble raises a very difficult problem. But remember two things. We often let down our friends by not correcting them or by not having their faults corrected. Make quite certain when you say you do not want to get *him* into trouble, that you do not mean *yourself* as well. Because you *will* get into trouble if you speak the truth in this particular case.

Getting into trouble takes us to the heart of the problem. Aiming at perfection, which I said was the standard of the Scout Law and of Christianity, *is* going to get us into trouble. Our Lord told us to take up our Cross. To be a *practising* Christian, and Christian who is trying to put Christianity into practice, means the Cross — that is suffering. The Cross is as much a part of the Christian’s uniform as the hat and staff are a part of the Scout uniform. Why? Because the standards of Christ are quite different from the standards of the world, and the world does not like to be told so, and laughs and persecutes those who try to follow them. That was why they crucified *Him*.

If you are going to aim at being perfectly trustworthy you will suffer for it. But to what other standard than perfection does the first Scout Law call us? *A Scout’s honour is to be trusted.*

A SCOUT IS LOYAL

THE second Scout Law is a very difficult one to understand; and a very difficult one to practise. Though it speaks of loyalty to the king, one's country, Scouters, parents, employers and those under one, we will consider loyalty in general, because we do owe loyalty to everyone.

What does loyalty mean? Let's us the dictionary...The Oxford Dictionary defines loyal as "true to obligations of duty." And it defines duty as "that which one ought or is bound to do."

What makes a thing "ought-to-be-done"? The fact that one believes that it is right to do it.

We are up against problems at once. Is it *always* right to obey my Scoutmaster — if not, what is the test? Is it *always* right to protect a friend? (We have already considered this in the first Law.) Is it *always* right for a man to fight for his country?

In the first Scout Law we saw that people who are satisfied with a moderate standard of honesty pretend that things are right which they know to be wrong. But the trouble with the second Law is that those who do not aim high, often to what they think is right, without knowing that it is wrong. Why? We said that loyalty means doing a thing we believe to be right. Now believing involves thinking; and many people do not try to think for themselves, and even *cannot* think for themselves. The result is that they cannot judge whether a thing is right or wrong. So they often do wrong things without realizing they are wrong; or they do right things for wrong reasons. And of the latter T. S. Eliot in *Murder in the Cathedral* make the Archbishop say,

The last temptation is the greatest treason:

To do the right deed for the wrong reason.

Loyalty means doing a thing because I believe it to be right: and *that* involves reasonable thinking. How can I decide if a thing is right or wrong? By taking all reasonable trouble to find out. First a warning. Never do a thing because "everybody else does it": that is not a sufficient reason in itself. The number of people who do a thing does not make that thing right or wrong. If every boy at school tells a lie about his age it doesn't make it right. Nor does the *number* make it wrong: but the *lie*. Certainly be suspicious if you are the only person holding a certain opinion; but do not let the fact that you are alone be the reason for your final decision.

Very often my conscience tells me what to do: I *know* that one thing is right; I *know* that another thing is wrong. But if I keep my arm in a sling and never exercise it, it will become useless. And if I do not use my conscience, but disobey what it tells me to do, in time it, too, will become useless. My conscience, like my arm, has to be used, and had to be used *aright*!

But what about those difficult problems when I cannot make up my mind? How can I decide what to do? By taking advice from people whom I think are honest *and* able to give advice on the particular subject. Some of this advice I shall nearly always follow because I have so high an opinion of the person giving it. You will find that people who give *good* advice, always give good reasons, and do not try to force their advice on you, but leave you to decide yourself.

But if advice differs, how am I to *know* what is right? Often you will not know. But remember that God does not ask more of us than that we should try as carefully as possible to find out what is right. And provided we do that, He will not blame us if we do what is wrong; in fact it will not be wrong *for us*. Such a case arises in fighting for one's country. If a man thinks it is wrong *under all circumstances* to kill another person, and has taken every opportunity to seek good advice on the subject, then it is right for him not to fight. But another man, who dislikes killing even more than the first, might decide it was right to kill in defence of his country, and the decision to fight would be right *in his case*.

I am afraid that this is all very difficult! So let me finish up with some advice:

(1) Don't follow the crowd, but learn to think (and *how* to think) for yourself.

(2) Don't be too proud to seek advice from other people; and remember that older people usually have had more experience than young people.

(3) If another person, after making honest efforts to find out what is right, holds views different from yours, don't condemn him; and *don't* pretend that the differences don't matter. Admire his honesty; expect him to admire yours; and agree to differ. (This is particularly important in matters of religion.)

(4) Don't expect Christianity to provide you with a ready-made solution for every problem. As a matter of fact it *produces* a lot of problems!

(5) Pray. But do not expect an immediate answer in black and white. Usually we have to pray about a problem for a long time, and then we gradually come to see that a particular path is the right one.

(6) Having reached an honest decision, stick to it. *And don't worry!*

A SCOUT'S DUTY IS TO BE USEFUL

THE special feature about this law is, of course, the word 'duty' which occurs only in the third Scout Law. B.P. is underlining this law for our special notice. All men in the army are soldiers, but some specialize in artillery, others in signalling, and so on. Scouts are to follow all ten Scout Laws; but they are to specialize in the third. Service — the motto of the Rover, the complete Scout — is the special *duty* of all Scouts.

Nowhere is Scouting closer to Christianity than in the third Law. For our Lord gave a special meaning to service the night of His betrayal. After supper He said "I am among you as he that serveth," and then He showed them what He meant by service. For He girded Himself with a towel and washed His disciples' feet and said to them "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."

True service is the result of love. The service that is done for our own glory has no value to ourselves, though it may help others. Service that is done out of love for others has great value. Service that is done for love of God has the greatest value.

There are few sayings more misused than "charity begins at home." It is generally used by those who want an excuse for spending money on themselves. But it is a very true saying. Charity, or love, (of this we shall have more to say in the next talk) begins, or should begin, at home. And as service is the result of love, service should begin at home. There are many people who spend most of their lives in helping others, but who are always too busy to help at home.

As Scouts we must aim at the highest. I suggest one of the ways in which we can decide if we are aiming at the highest in the third Scout law is to ask ourselves whether our service *does start at home*.

A SCOUT IS A FRIEND TO ALL

A SCOUT is a friend to all! What a law! Of course it all depends upon what you mean by friendship. If you mean the casual acquaintanceship with people you meet in your daily life, who pass out of your life quite easily, whom you quite like, but who make no real mark on you, then, of course, it doesn't mean much. But if friendship means that bond of affection and love one person has for another so that, though their interests are different and their ages are perhaps far apart, yet there is a bond between them which nothing, not even death, can destroy, then we *are* up against a problem. *That* kind of friendship we cannot have for more than one or two people. So how can we say that a Scout is a friend to *all*?

I think we can find a clue in the word 'love' which I suggested as one of the marks of friendship. Though it would seem impossible for a Scout to be a friend to all, he can *love* everybody.

“But,” I can hear you say, “if friendship with everybody is impossible, then loving is more impossible. In any case I *know* that it is impossible. I cannot love everybody.”

“Cannot”? Our Lord said we were to, “Love your enemies.” He said, and if we love our enemies then we shall love everyone. So before we say that it is impossible to love everyone, let us remember that we have been told by our Lord, who is God, to do so. Let us think it out, as I hope you are prepared to do in view of what was said about thinking in the second Law!

First notice that we are told to *love* everyone, and not to *like* everyone. Most people think that they cannot love someone they do not like. They think that loving means enjoying a person’s company; approving their characters; having pleasant feelings about them. That is liking, but it is *not* the Christian meaning of loving. The Christian meaning of love is to wish (or to will) the good of another, and that is a very different thing. Christian love is an act of the mind and of the will, and need not necessarily have anything to do with the feelings (though in practice it generally includes feelings). Worldly love, on the other hand, *is* entirely a matter of the feelings.

When I say that Christian love is an act of the mind and of the will, I mean that when I come across someone I don’t like (and there is nothing wrong in not *liking* a person) I must get to work something like this: “I don’t like this person; in fact, he is objectionable, unkind, unpleasant. But God made him and loves him and wants him changed (there is the mind at work); and I intend (there is the will at work) to do what I can to help him by kindness; by help; if needs be by correction; certainly by prayer.”

Can’t you imagine the mind of St. Francis of Assisi working as the leper approached him? “How horrible! The sight, the smell — it makes me feel sick! But God made him and loves him. He is avoided by everyone, but I will show him sympathy, and that I am a fellow-creature more fortunate through no fault of my own.” And so he kisses him, loathing what he is doing, and yet loving the leper. *That* is Christian love. (Of course, it is not *always* like that; because we very often do like those we love.)

So different is Christian love from worldly love that the first Christians had to find another word to describe it. Up to the time of our Lord the Greek word *eros* had been used to describe love, the love of the feelings. The first Christians said, “That’s no use, because we want to describe something quite different; something quite new to the world.” So they used the Greek word *agape* to describe Christian love, the sort of love I have been trying to describe to you. This word, *agape*, is translated in the New Testament sometimes as love and sometimes as charity, which is pity. But remember in future when you read the New Testament that the word love and charity both refer to the kind of love which St. Francis had for the leper; and which our Lord had for the men who were nailing Him to the Cross. It is the strong love of the mind and of the will; it may have something to do with the feelings; but it need not.

In the middle of Piccadilly Circus there is a beautiful statue of the Greek god *Eros*; it’s rather a suitable place because there is so much love to the wrong sort in that part of London. Not many yards away, in a church, there is a statue of *Agape*: the figure of Christ on the Cross. *That* is the sort of love which the fourth Scout Law means us to *try* to have for everyone.

It’s very difficult to acquire; in fact, we cannot produce it ourselves. It is a gift from God and we have got to ask Him for it in our prayers. If you want to know if you love another, don’t worry whether you *like* him, but just ask yourself whether you *pray* for him. You might start keeping the fourth Scout Law in this new way when you say your prayers to-night: by praying for the fellow in the Troop (or elsewhere) whom you don’t *like*. And if you persevere in loving him with your mind and will, you will almost certainly find in time that you are beginning to like him, though not necessarily approving of all he says and does.

A SCOUT IS COURTEOUS

THE dictionary defines the word courteous as “having the manners that befit the court of a prince.” So though we think of courtesy as meaning *good* manners, I suppose strictly speaking it might mean *bad* manners! For the manners that befit the court of a bad prince are presumably bad manners! In practice we *do* find that the courtiers of a good prince have good manners, and that the courtiers of a bad prince have bad manners.

Behaviour depends upon belief. A person, or at any rate a thinking person, acts in a certain way because of a certain belief; remove the belief and he will generally stop acting in that way. If a person believes that God has said that those who have been joined together in marriage *cannot* be divorced, nothing will lead him to seek a divorce. But if he does not believe it, then under certain circumstances he will probably seek a divorce.

I know that there is a great danger of older people saying without justification that “things are not what they were,” but I think it right to say that “manners are not what they were.” People push on trains without thinking of others; men and boys do not give up a seat in a train as they used; walking on the outside of the pavement is not much practised. Admittedly some of these things do not matter in themselves, but they are signs of deeper things. A boy who gives up his seat in a bus or train; or walks on the outside of the pavement when he goes out with his girl, probably treats old people and girls with the respect that he should. To allow others to go out of the door first does suggest that one is not entirely selfish. To offer someone else the last piece of cake does suggest that one has a measure of self-control. (Of course, if the other person is also courteous you will get it! But that does not lessen your courtesy in offering it.)

If we are going to keep the fifth Scout Law and be courteous, we have got to have reasons for being courteous: *behaviour follows belief*. Yes, behaviour follows belief: this is a tremendously important thing to remember. However much thinking people condemned the horrible things which were done in the last war, they were not *surprised* at them, for once you believe that man is a piece of machinery, and not made in the image of God, you will probably treat him like a piece of machinery.

Let us go back to our definition of courtesy: the manners that befit the court of a prince. In whose court do we Christians serve? The court of the Prince of heaven, Jesus Christ. Our manners must befit His court. We shall try to behave as He would have behaved; and we shall try to behave as we would behave in His presence. And remember that we *are* always in His presence.

There is the standard; there is the reason. And the result? That beautiful consideration for others which is the hall-mark of the true Christian and of the true Scout, and which does so much to make easier the lives of others.

A SCOUT IS A FRIEND TO ANIMALS

I THINK that people have become much kinder since B.P. first gave us the sixth Scout Law. So, though we must not lessen our good example in this matter, let the sixth Scout Law now teach us a higher lesson.

Why should we be friends to animals? Because God created them and therefore they deserve the consideration and love that is due to everything that He makes.

Most people accept God’s creation without thinking. The yearly round of nature; the regular movement of the earth, sun, moon, stars; food and drink. They may appreciate, but do they realize, that God is the cause of all that is beautiful: trees, flowers, animals; sunsets, stormy seas, snow glittering on mountain ranges? And what about their bodies: seeing, hearing, speaking, thinking, loving, doing — do

they realize how wonderful all these things are and that God is their cause? All these things God created out of nothing for love. How often do we *thank* Him for them?

Thanksgiving plays far too small a part in the lives of most of us. How often, when we were children, were we told to say “thank you” when we were given something by a visitor. But how often do we say “thank you” to God for His far greater gifts? It’s bad Scouting: a Scout is courteous. And it’s bad because thanksgiving leads one to look for what is best in life, and in doing that we often forget to look for what is worst. Thanksgiving leads to happiness; lack of it to grouching. So let the sixth Scout Law teach us good manners towards God in the matter of saying “thank you.”

How often have you thanked God for having made you; for having given you sight, hearing, speech: for the things you can do; and the things you can see and hear?

St. Paul frequently refers to thanksgiving in his letters. He bids the Ephesians to sing and make “melody in your hearts to the Lord, *giving thanks always for all things* unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And St. Paul had many opportunities for grouching!

A SCOUT OBEYS ORDERS

THOUGH the seventh Scout Law refers to obeying the orders of parents, Patrol Leaders and Scoutmasters we may usefully consider the whole question of obedience.

Many people, if honest with themselves, would have to admit that they only obey two kinds of orders; those they do not mind obeying; and those they are forced to obey. To make oneself obey all *outward* orders without question (except those which are wrong) is very difficult. But it is very much more difficult to train oneself to obey all *inward* orders. In fact it is to train oneself to obey the second Scout Law: to do what one believes to be right.

Inward obedience, self-discipline, leads to freedom. “What nonsense,” says the world, “it’s a sign of a weak character and leads to slavery. I do what I like: *that* is freedom.”

Is that true? Training oneself to obey the orders of one’s conscience is certainly not the sign of a weak character, as those know who try. To get up immediately on being called of a morning; to speak the truth and not to cheat; to say one’s prayers; to keep one’s temper; not to join in loose talk — are these the signs of a weak character?

And are the people who do whatever they like really free? Most certainly not. Take the example of smoking (and I give it as an example without expressing any views on smoking!) Who is the freest; the person who chain-smokes; the person who has taken a solemn vow not to smoke; the person who can smoke or not as he wishes? The first is free to smoke; but is not free to not smoke. The second is free not to smoke, but cannot smoke without breaking his vow. The third is free to do either. He is self-disciplined, at any rate in regard to smoking.

The person who had learned inward discipline will find outward discipline easy. But he will have learned something much more: he will have learned self-control. He will have learned to control his thoughts, and that is all-important, because thoughts lead to words and deeds. He will have learned to control his words, and that will save him from one of the very worst of all sins: talking scandal about others. He will have learned to control his deeds: he can get up of a morning; climb mountains and do other difficult things for the sheer joy of doing them; and “keep himself unspotted from the world.”

How is this self-discipline to be learned? By starting with *small things*. Do remember to start with *small* things. Most people *intend* to do big things but of course fail when the time comes because they have never learned to do small things. The greatest pianists have to learn scales, and the greatest cricketers the simplest rules of bowling, batting and fielding. I remember a very well-disciplined person telling me that whenever the bell sounded for meals (he lived in a community), if he was writing, he *immediately* put down his pen, even in the middle of a sentence. Train yourself to do things like that, and

then apply it to thinking: deal with temptations of thought immediately they come into the mind. They can be dealt with then, but probably not later. The time to decide not to commit suicide by throwing oneself over a cliff is when the thought first comes into the mind, perhaps twenty miles away from the cliff: *not* when in the air hurtling to the ground.

So we shall *aim* at perfect self-discipline. We shall never reach it. *One* did: Christ “became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.” It was His perfect obedience which won for us eternal life. We can never be thankful enough for that, but we can show our appreciation by trying to follow His example.

A SCOUT SMILES AND WHISTLES

JUST as one can obey outwardly and one can obey inwardly; so one can smile and whistle outwardly and one can smile and whistle inwardly. And just as inward obedience is better than outward obedience; so inward smiling and whistling is better than outward smiling and whistling.

What *does* this mean? Let us first consider outward smiling and whistling. One can train oneself to smile and whistle when things are wrong, and the effect on oneself and on others is quite remarkable. A really bad morning in camp can become extremely enjoyable if one or two Scouts start to be cheerful outwardly when they are far from cheerful inwardly! That is excellent. But there is an even more excellent way: inward smiling and whistling. In the fifth Scout Law we said that behaviour depends upon belief. And if the eighth Scout Law is to teach us one of the most important and useful lessons in life (and very few people know anything about it) we have got to start considering this matter from the belief end. And for us that means Christian belief.

We believe as Christians that Jesus saved us from sin; or, more accurately, that He has given us the chance of being saved, because, of course, we have got to *use* the chance. How did He do this? By becoming Man; living on earth; and dying on the Cross. How does *that* save us? Sin is the result of two wrong things: disobedience and giving in to harmful pleasures. Jesus did the two opposites perfectly: obedience and suffering. On the Cross He was “obedient unto death”; and He suffered infinitely. God was able to accept this perfect obedience and suffering to set against the disobedience and wrong pleasures of all time. And so men can be saved.

Now God allows us to help in the work of saving souls, both our own and other people’s, which Jesus made possible on the Cross. We help chiefly by prayer. *But prayer is not only speaking and thinking: it can also be doing*: we can pray by talking, by thinking, *and by doing*. We can offer to God the happenings of the day as acts of prayer for special purposes. We can use the joys and sufferings of everyday life as prayers.

So when, for instance, things go wrong, as they do go wrong every day; or you have a bad headache; or a friend or relation dies; or whatever it may be — you can offer these sufferings to God either for His general use, or for a particular purpose.

When someone makes an unkind remark, say immediately, “God, I accept this unkindness, and offer it to You, in union with all the unkind things said to Jesus, so that I may not swear so much”; (or bully so much, or whatever it may be.) Or if you have a bad headache: “God, I accept this headache in union with the suffering of Jesus on the Cross: please use it to help Bill speak the truth.”

It probably sounds rather strange. But remember that you can say and do *things*; and you can say and do *prayers*. However, try it, and see what happens. At any rate the saints, the greatest Christians, do it and recommend it. (You will find that St. Paul writes about it in the 24th verse of the first chapter of his letter to the Colossians). And remember that the Cross was the greatest of all prayers: and it was a “doing” prayer.

What has all this got to do with the eighth Scout Law? Outward smiling and whistling are good. But inward smiling and whistling are even better: the inward joy which comes from being able to use our

sufferings. That is why people in very great suffering, perhaps dying of cancer, sometimes have faces glowing with joy.

Like all difficult things, this takes time to acquire. So go on smiling and whistling; but meantime start this new way of using your daily sufferings (and joys, as well). *And start first thing in the morning.* As soon as you get out of bed, kneel down, and offer God the coming day, with all its joys and sorrows. It's very important to see that the engine is on the railway track at the *beginning* of the journey!

A SCOUT IS THRIFTY

A SCOUT is thrifty. A Scout doesn't waste. What do we mean by waste?

It's sometimes waste to *save* money and time! A miser who hoards money and starves his wife and children, is wasting it, just as much as the spendthrift who starves his family by spending all his money. And being thrifty with one's time does not mean that we must always be studying and doing so-called "useful things." There are occasions when one is using time best by reading detective stories and lying in a deck-chair!

But what a lot of waste there *is* in the world! How much in our own lives! We shall not know *how much* until our lives are ended and we look back upon so much waste. Waste of money by unwise spending or unwise saving. Waste of time by too little study or too much study. Waste of enjoyment by using it selfishly, or not using it enough. Waste of God's gifts to us; leadership, example, music, languages, or whatever it may be. Wasted opportunities of travelling; of helping others; of thankfulness to others.

But how are we to judge between thrift and waste, when sometimes what seems to be thrift is really waste?

If a thing is to work properly we must know why it was made, and we must use it for that purpose. If you see a particular kind of knife lying on the table, you must know that it is a surgeon's knife, and you must not use it for whittling your Scout staff. If you do use it for this it will be of no use for surgery: the purpose for which it was made. And the same with us: we will only work properly if we know why we were made, and then live in such a way so that we may fulfil the purpose for which we were made.

Who made me? Why was I made? God made me so that I might know and love and serve Him here on earth and be with Him for ever in heaven. If I realize this, and lead my life with this knowledge in mind, then my life will make sense, and I shall be happy. (Of course, that does *not* mean that I shall never suffer.) And God has given me brains, possessions, money, and so on to help me to carry out the purpose for which He has made me. If I use these things for this purpose, I am *not* wasting them; if I use them for any other purpose, I *am* wasting them.

Of course, we can't ask ourselves about everything we do "Am I doing this, using this, to help me to know and love and serve God better?" But provided that I *do* know why God made me, and have a general intention to lead my life accordingly, then at least I shall be walking in the right direction. I shall sometimes lose my compass direction, *but I shall know that I am losing direction and I shall know how to get it back again.* That is why we should regularly examine our lives in our prayers to see in what direction we are going; and if we find we are going astray from the path we know to be right, we shall do something about it: ask forgiveness for the past, and make fresh resolution for the future. That is why many people find it useful to get away from the world occasionally into "retreat," to be alone with God to think about these matters.

It is sad to see the countless people who have no idea why they were made, and so have no purpose in life, and wander through it, doing nothing but pleasure-hunting. Pleasure *has* its place in life. It is *one* of

the things which makes life complete; but it is not the *purpose* of life. Pleasure is a means and not an end; there is always trouble when means and ends are mixed!

When B.P. said that the purpose of Scouting was to produce “happy, healthy, helpful citizens,” he was once again pointing the way to perfection. For the perfect person is a completely balanced one, using his soul, body and mind for the purpose for which God gave them to him: to know and love and serve Him here on earth so that he may be with God for ever in heaven. And a person who is leading his life along these lines will have little or no waste in it. For most people this does *not* mean giving up the pictures, dancing and exciting novels. But it *does* mean using these and other things wisely, and as a part of the whole: the whole life which is being lived for the purpose for which God made it.

Remember it’s no use saying a lot of prayers if we are turning out second-rate work. And it’s no use being efficient Scouts if we never say our prayers. *The whole of life belongs to God*: there is no part of it which we cannot offer to Him. And the easiest way to offer it to Him is to do it as well as possible; and to tell Him that we are doing it as well as possible *for His sake*. It is an insult to offer God second-rate stuff: untidy churches; slack uniform; badly said prayers; bad camping. If only we realized this, and did our Scouting for the glory of God, we should be more efficient Scouts and need fewer competitions to keep us up to scratch. You might try running your Troop for a short time without a competition, each Patrol trying to be as efficient as it can be, not worrying whether it is better or worse than the other, and telling God that you are doing it so that your Patrol and your Troop may be really worthy of *Him*. I think that you would be rather surprised at the result.

Two practical suggestions in conclusion:

First, get in the habit through frequent practice of saying to yourself occasionally during the day, “I am going to do this job (school work, office work, weeding, washing up, signalling or whatever *and however small it may be*) as well as possible for your glory, O God.”

Secondly, get a piece of paper and pencil, and make two sums. How much money do I spend each week on myself? How much money do I give each week to the things of God? Multiply each answer by fifty-two (or fifty, if fifty-two is too difficult!) and you will have the yearly figures. These figures *may* be a useful guide to your life in general.

A SCOUT IS CLEAN IN THOUGHT, WORD, AND DEED

THE tenth Scout Law includes the first nine. If a Scout is keeping the first nine, he is keeping the tenth; if he is keeping the tenth, he is keeping the first nine.

One can go even further: If a Scout is clean in thought, he will be clean in word and deed, for the mind is the source of words and deeds. If the reservoir is pure, the water in the tap will be pure.

In fact, the whole Scout Law centres round being clean in thought!

The tenth Scout Law is usually associated with purity in regard to matters of sex. I want to think of it in its widest sense: *all* thoughts, words and deeds, because the whole includes the part. If all our thinking, saying and doing are on the right lines, this specially difficult thinking, saying and doing in matters of sex will be on the right lines too. It is a very big subject so I will content myself with making a few suggestions.

(1) Realize that the most important think in keeping the Scout Law *is* the control of the thoughts. It is a matter which had got to be tackled vigorously: otherwise there will be no progress in any other direction. Wrong thoughts have got to be dealt with as soon as they come into the mind.

(2) Realize that there is a difference between temptation and sin. Temptation is the suggestion to do wrong, and is *not* wrong in itself. You see a hundred pounds lying on a table. “I would like to have it” — of course you would. “Why not take it?” temptation: you have done nothing wrong yet. “How can I get

it?” — you have given in to the temptation: sin has started, even if you never take the money. “I won’t take it because it is not mine” — temptation overcome.

Wrong thoughts, over which we often have no control, crowd into our minds. What we *do* with them is what matters. Give in to them, and we have committed sin. Fight them, and we are better off than if we had never been tempted. St. James in his Epistle wrote, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life.”

And remember that “there is no temptation taken you but such as is common to man”; that is a great comfort and should encourage us to fight temptation for the sake of others — other Scouts in the Patrol or in the Troop who are up against just the same problem. And remember too, that “God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape.” But more of that in the next talk.

(3) Learn to discipline your mind, as was suggested in the talk on the seventh Scout Law. And when temptations crowd into the mind think of our Lord and the saints; say a quick and short prayer for help. God loves you; trusts you; has great work for you to do if you will work with Him.

(4) “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report...*think* on these things.” Yes, St. Paul knew the importance of the thoughts! Fill the mind with good, not with bad, thoughts; surround yourself with beautiful things not ugly things — they are no more expensive.

(5) Realize that in tackling this problem you are in for a long struggle. Impossible? Yes, quite — apart from what we shall say in the next talk.

I said in the first talk that the Scout Law, like Christianity, aims not at the moderate but at perfection. In the Sermon on the Mount our Lord said, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” Now the word translated “heart” would be better translated “thought”: “Blessed are *the pure in thought* for they shall see God.” Once again the Scout Law is bidding us to aim at the same heights as Christ. For did not the old tenth Scout Law actually say “A Scout is clean and *pure in thought*...”

That, surely, is the end of the matter. A Scout is to be pure in thought. The pure in thought, our Lord promised, shall see God.

May what we thirst for soon our portion be
To gaze on Thee unveiled and see Thy face
The vision of Thy glory and Thy grace.

THE SCOUT PROMISE

Many people know that the Bible is divided into two parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. But not so many know why the word ‘Testament’ is used. Testament here means covenant or agreement, and the Bible is the story of two agreements between God and man: one before the coming of Jesus Christ; the other after the coming of Jesus Christ.

When you consider it, it is *very remarkable* that God makes *agreements* with man. Most people want to become powerful, so that they may *force* their wills on others: yet God, who is *all-powerful*, does not force His will on us, but makes agreements with us. He warns us what will happen if we disobey Him, but He leaves us free to obey Him, *and* He leaves us free to accept or to refuse His gifts.

In the Old Testament there are many accounts of God’s agreements with the Jews whom He had chosen to be His special people in preparing the world for the coming of Jesus Christ. There are always two sides to an agreement (a person cannot agree with himself), and the agreements between God and the

Jews in the Old Testament were always on these lines: “*I will look after you; I will make you a great people. You must keep My commandments.*”

When Jesus came He made a *new* testament or agreement, and He called it new, showing that He intended that it should replace the old. At the Last Supper, when He gave the disciples the cup, He said, “This is My blood of the new testament (or agreement) which is shed for many for the remission (or forgiveness) of sins.”

What was the new agreement which Jesus made? He promised, among many other wonderful things, to give us the power to lead the kind of life we have been thinking about in these talks on the Scout Law. As was said in the last talk, it is *impossible* to keep the Scout Law apart from ... Apart from what? Apart from the power which our Lord won for us on the Cross, and which is called grace.

Grace, the power which Jesus won for us on the Cross, is the power which enables us to do things which would otherwise be impossible. And normally, but not always, God gives this grace through the Sacraments of the Church (such as Holy Communion), Sacraments being things which we can see and touch, and which contain and bring to our souls the spiritual power which is called grace.

There are two sides to all agreements. What are the two sides to this *new* agreement?

First, our side. We must put God first in our lives, which does not mean that we must always be thinking about Him (that would be impossible) but that we are to realize that we owe Him everything; that we are dependent upon Him. From this it follows that we should refer everything to Him. Whether we are doing this will be shown by our prayers. If you never speak to a person you are not likely to acknowledge that you are dependent upon him; nor will you be referring everything to him! We must pray to God regularly both privately and publicly in church.

And our side of the agreement includes, too, trying to keep God’s laws — the Scout law, if you like.

God’s side of the agreement is that He gives us the power to help us keep His laws by giving us grace *which we have got to use in our lives*. Petrol is not is no use in the tank of a car unless it is used!

Two words of warning:

(1) Even with God’s grace we shall not keep His laws completely. We shall often fail. But remember what was said at the beginning: God asks us to *aim* at the highest. And we are not to worry about the results. “God does not ask a perfect work but infinite desire.” God’s grace helps us to desire the highest; to strive after the highest; to get up when we fall; and to obtain forgiveness for our falls. If we do all these things we can safely leave the results to God.

(2) Don’t compare yourself with others. Quite possibly you are better than many others — it would be pretty poor show if Scouts were not. But that’s not the point. We are each one of us tumblers of *different sizes* and we are each to fill *our own tumbler*. Don’t condemn a man because you see him drunk six nights a week. Quite possibly on the seventh night he is making a far greater effort to keep sober than you and I ever make to fight temptation. We *never* know what other people are up against; or how hard they are really trying. The only person we do know quite a lot about is ourselves; and true knowledge of oneself teaches humility!

Let us finish where we started. The Christian life does not consist in trying to be good *but in striving to be perfect*. “Be ye perfect” said our Lord. “Be ye perfect” says the Scout Law. And in striving after perfection we shall find that we shall be gradually united to God in a very real and a very wonderful way: a union which God has planned for us, and of which our Lord spoke: “That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us.” *That* is the final goal of the Christian life.

“On my honour I promise that I will do my best...” What a thrilling thing is this Scout Law and Promise of ours, calling us not to the moderate, but to the highest; to a way of life which is so attractive, because it is so difficult.

Do you remember the words quoted in the first talk: “Because thou art lukewarm, and neither couldst thou be cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth”? A few verses later are these words: “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me on My throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with My Father in His throne.”

***T** EACH me, good Lord, to serve Thee as Thou deservest:
To give and not to count the cost;
To fight and not to heed the wounds;
To toil and not to seek for rest;
To labour and not to ask for any reward
save that of knowing that I do Thy Will.*