

# Father Kelly's Idea – or SSM

## Introduction to the New Edition

This slim typewritten volume in the SSM archive is undated but was probably compiled in the 1960s as the Society discerned its future. Although not written by Herbert Kelly, it is largely made up of quotations from him, and provides a good introduction to his theology as it traces the development of his 'idea' through two key texts of SSM. The *Principles* were drawn up by Kelly in 1892 as he planned the establishment of his Society. They are the top level, policy statements relating to its foundation and ethos. The *Constitution* contains the administrative and institutional framework of SSM, first written by Fr Kelly with the assistance of Fr Herbert Woodward. This document was revised many times over the years.

Each chapter in this collection is divided into three sections: the first consists of quotations from the *Principles*. The second gives a provision from the *Constitution*. In some sections the original did not supply an entry from these sources for a particular chapter. This new edition has tried to remedy that and has supplied appropriate extracts to complete the overall narrative. The final section of each chapter is drawn from a range of Kelly's writings over a fifty-year period. These represent his reflections as he saw his original idea evolve and adapt to new situations. The source of these reflections is not given in the original and, while the dedicated Kelly scholar could take up the challenge to track them down, they are left as they are – relevant commentaries on the two key texts.

In essence the collection may be seen as a composite of traditional monastic documents. The three-fold guide by which the monks lived: the Rule of the Founder; the Constitutions of the Congregation and the Customary of the House, which provided a spiritual and practical commentary on the former. The *Principles* have many resonances with the *Rule of St Benedict* and it is most likely that Kelly was influenced by this. His copy of the *Rule* in the SSM archive is well-used and stamped: 'Herbert Kelly, M.A. Queen's College, Oxford' and 'House of the Sacred Mission Mildenhall, Suffolk', suggesting that it was his source of reference when drawing up the *Principles*.<sup>1</sup>

*Father Kelly's Idea – or SSM* was originally published to serve two purposes: first, to be the starting point from which the SSM of the day could develop the idea in ways appropriate to its current needs and, secondly, to be an introduction to SSM for interested outsiders. At the present time, SSM is winding down as a functioning religious community within the Church of England. However, it is hoped that these original purposes will still be fulfilled, by serving as a guide for those who continue to seek and follow God's call in today's world and also by providing a reference for students interested in the history of Anglican religious life and spirituality.

In seeking to fulfil its general object the Society shall interpret and apply the aims in the changing conditions of the world, considering not only the history of the Society but also any new opportunities for glorifying God which he may give.

*Constitution I, 2*

The purposes of the past are not bound by the systems of the past. This is where religious societies harden and die.

*Father Kelly's Idea*

---

<sup>1</sup> SSM/HK/MEM/22.

# Contents

1 THE CAUSE OF THE SOCIETY .....	3
2 THE CHURCH .....	3
3 KNOWLEDGE.....	4
4 LEARNING .....	5
5 WORK .....	6
6 AUTHORITY.....	7
7 SERVICE .....	8
8 UNITY .....	8
9 FREEDOM.....	9
10 THE ESSENCE OF THE SOCIETY .....	10
11 LIFE IN COMMUNITY .....	11
12 SELF-KNOWLEDGE .....	11
13 WORSHIP .....	12
14 PRAYER .....	12
15 POVERTY.....	13
16 REPUTATION .....	13
17 CELIBACY.....	14
18 PLEASURE .....	14
19 OBEDIENCE .....	15
20 SUBMISSION .....	16
21 SILENCE.....	16

# 1 The Cause of the Society

By this you were created – the will of God; and for this purpose – the praise of his glory.

*Principles I*

This Society shall be called the Society of the Sacred Mission and is formed of those who desire in it to sacrifice their lives after the example, and with the aid of the holy angels, for the promotion of God's glory by the performance of God's will.

The Society being constituted to this general object, must be prepared to avail herself of every opportunity of forwarding it which God gives.

*Constitution I. 1 & 2*

I have no particular aims. I want the glory of God.

The Society exists:

- a) *for* the service of the Church
- b) *by* the organised devotion of free minded members.

The purpose of SSM is to provide an organisation of devotion possible to ordinary men seeking the service of the Church. I always said that it made very little difference whether we did or did not come within the technical definition of a Religious Society. It only matters that we should please God.

The Society of the Sacred Mission consists of a number of private individuals who have voluntarily associated themselves together for the pursuit of such objects as may from time to time be determined amongst themselves in accordance with the rules made or used by that Society.

## 2 The Church

Private prayer includes both aspiration and obligation, but as the revelation was given to the Church, which alone has the covenant, so the fulfilment of obligation is hers, in which we join by obedience.

*Principles V*

Since there is no other way to the glory of God but through his will, and since his will has constituted the Church alone among all societies to be his kingdom upon earth and the minister of his grace to men, this Society in the pursuance of the divine glory can have no end or aim of its own except the good of the Church.

*Constitution I. 2*

The Church, then, is the fellowship of the Spirit, by which I mean, that fellowship which the Spirit did make, and is forming about himself. I am speaking of a continual operation of life eternal in that it is not measured by time even while it takes place in time.

It is the Holy Spirit who holds the Catholic truth, and, on earth, derivatively, the Church as a whole, to whom the Spirit imparts it; but even so, never wholly in one age, for the Catholic Church is the church of the past, of the middle ages, of the whole present, but also of the future – which, so far, God is keeping in his own hands.

Have we not made our conception of Catholicity too technical? Properly speaking the Catholic faith is that which is simply human, common to everyone. Tested historically because in continuity, the simple necessities stand out. It is not right to say, ‘there is nothing new which is true’, but it is reasonable to say that nothing new can be Catholic, since what is merely modern cannot be a common necessity. Our Catholicity limps because we have allowed it to become conventionalised along pietistic lines, forgetting that the essence of it must lie with the common man.

God will never sell himself to any system or any priesthood. Whatever the cost, and sometimes it is very heavy, God will always find outsiders to break down the fences of the vineyard, whenever we begin to treat it – we are always trying to treat it – as our own private park.

The Society is a trust which receives on behalf of the Church lives dedicated to her service, provides for the perfection of that spirit of dedication and for its maintenance, and directs its employment to the best advantage.

If a man gives himself to the Church, the Society forms a ‘Trust’, its Constitution is a ‘Trust-Deed’, its superiors are ‘Trustees’ who administer him [i.e. the man] for that purpose.

We do not exist to provide a religious dedication for ourselves, we exist solely for the good of the Church.

### 3 Knowledge

Next to the gift of wisdom, which is love, is understanding, which is faith. By it we penetrate from that which is seen and accidental to that which is unseen and is the real essence of things. Be not in haste to know many things but to understand one; since for all things there is but one efficient cause, even the will of God. As many sciences there are, so many are the roads to that knowledge, but it is well if you reach him by one. Many sciences make much vanity, but a little understanding of the will of God tends to self-abasement and adoration.

*Principles VI*

Let all learn to weigh carefully, to think clearly and to speak only as God gives them to understand.

*Constitution VI.1*

What men in any age find hardest is to believe that God really means anything more than an idea. The Old Testament tells us, not how this people reached an assured faith in God’s reality, but how they were brought to it. It shows how difficult this belief in a living God was to them; how much easier it was to ask what God is like than to ask what God does; how much nicer it was to imagine (image) God, than to believe in him.

Does God do anything or is God only a name for Ideals? Is God’s purpose something which God is doing, is carrying out, or only something which he would very much like to do but which he is

powerless to effect and wishes you to do for him? Is the gospel this – that God is niceness and in him nothing is nasty at all?

If I am to tell what God actually has done, how he actually did reveal himself to men, only the facts are of any use at all. Our Creeds set forth four historic facts, the Birth of the Son of God, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, not as the expression of certain theistic notions, but as the basis of our faith in God.

The real and central hinge of all hopes of a religious regeneration lies in:

- a. Substituting faith as the dominant religious motive instead of feeling
- b. For the actual power of God to be recognised rather than a mere show of observance or ‘piety’
- c. For the delight of learning, beholding, obeying in the presence of all the width of its (the faith’s or the Church’s) operation – to replace mere enjoyment and possession of a comfortable sentiment within one’s own individuality.

If human life goes by what people do (free will) and nature by what nature does (natural law) then whatever God meant or proposed once, he has ceased to be a factor in human life. He may have a good deal to say when he gets a chance at us in another world, but so far as this life is concerned, we are left, as St Paul says, ‘without God in the world’. When things so flare up as to constitute a real challenge to our religion, we are more anxious to defend God’s character than his effectiveness. The evil is our fault.

As Christians our faith starts from the vision of God, but we do not walk by sight but in faith, that is, in much darkness, never quite knowing where we are, only certain that God knows, and that if we trust in him, he will lead us to the final vision. You never know finally where you are, or what he is going to do – you cannot even clearly explain what you mean by trusting in God, but I am inclined to stick to it all the same.

## 4 Learning

However many things it may be useful to know, the first object of study is to discipline the mind to hold nothing either rashly or vainly, but on the other hand to seek patiently, and to behold reverently, since only that which is without is reached easily, but that which is within is of God.

Seek therefore first what the wise, what the saints, have thought. Meditate much, for it is better to understand one thought, than to repeat many words.

*Principles VII*

Although the knowledge of God and of his will transcends all human power and reason; yet, since all that concerns him must be handled with the utmost reverence, it is necessary for all, but especially for those concerned in the service of his glory, to exercise the greatest care and study, that whatever through his goodness may be known or said of him shall be clearly and intelligently held and accurately expressed.

*Constitution VI.1*

To us theology is not a technical professional knowledge. We were studying God's view of human life. What God was doing on the Somme, at Westminster, and at Tilbury Docks. I do not want to know what you can do with Christ in a church building half so much as I want to know what Christ is doing in the street.

We come to history to learn God's ways and what we can of his leaning for things. To be genuine learners we must force our minds to face all relevant facts, even if their apparent meanings are a bit awkward for us, and we must check our imagination by exact evidence.

Your opinions are never more than very partially adequate – often ludicrously inadequate – to the complex of the whole thing; and it is the whole with which you have to do. Therefore learn scepticism (open-eyed watchfulness) especially of yourself and what most attracts you. It is not that opinions are worth nothing but that the worship of opinions is idolatry.

Catholic tradition must have great weight, Anglican tradition some, Scripture you must study constantly, but in the end you must think your own way through, and ask what it all means. Not the memory of incidents or canons or controversies, but thoughtfulness, patience, insight, reverence are the real end of study.

## 5 Work

God is glorified when his will is done.

Some fulfil it by patience and prayer, and some in teaching, some in labour.

Pray daily 'Your will be done'.

Your work lies in what you have done, not in how many things you have attempted.

Work wisely: for it is better to do a little according to God's will than to do many things according to our own notions.

*Principles XI*

Inasmuch as the object of the Society is by its rule to maintain the spiritual life of its members, and by its organisation to hold them for that service free from all attachments; the Society, regarding the opportunity for glorifying God as the revelation of what he wills should be done, must be prepared to adapt itself to the conditions and requirements of each case.

*Constitution VII.2*

Your vocation is to do something. The team must go out to a match and the clergy to a parish with a single purpose – to win. The individual has a duty to shoot every possible goal. Even if by some miracle of guidance you knew God meant you to lose this afternoon's match, it would be your duty to play to win just the same.

Go out into the world. Find out what is best worth doing as God shall lead you. Work at it reverently and carefully. Everything, big or little, has in it the substance of glory. You will do what God lets you do. It may not be what you meant to do, and you may never know what it is. You will see what God gives you to see. Don't be afraid of it but remember that it is not all there is.

God's will is an infinite whole purpose and however long the process, God does not fail neither in prevision nor in power. We may learn something of what God has done, but the significance of it, and of what he is doing, we may, or may not, live to see. What God is doing perhaps through us, perhaps with us, is much more momentous than what God wants us to do.

## 6 Authority

If your conduct be disapproved, especially by the superior, do not be in haste to justify yourself.

*Principles XIII*

It is the province of superiors and especially those in highest authority to direct and harmonise all that is done. Let them assign to each of their subordinates his own part and responsibility, explaining carefully the purpose of the whole, but encouraging every individual to use his own intelligence and judgment for its achievement, so far as is compatible with the order.

For this there are three reasons: 1) in every association self-willed ability is the first source of weakness, but the strength of the whole is proportioned to the sum of all disciplined individual power used in harmony. 2) Because God has willed to make people diverse after the variety of his glory, so will each work best in their own way. 3) While the will of God is one and immovable, the circumstances with which we have to deal according to his will cannot be known exactly.

It belongs to the authorities of the Society to discover what each member can do best and to develop to the utmost in each case the powers God has given for the opportunities God may give.

*Constitution III*

The work of the superior is to guide and utilise power, to direct and harmonise, to maintain unity; but the power available is not his own. It is the power of the team, the harmony of co-operation is amongst the team, hence he is to encourage independent judgement. The business of authority is to co-ordinate ideas, but his first business is to make sure that there are any – other than his own.

Our Constitution is autocratic in form. But that is for two reasons: 1) we are a military community and soldiers ought to be under a general, not a board or chapter, and 2) we are a young community. I think it is very possible that the community will grow too strong for its head and then the chapters will grow. But it is better that the community should *take* the power out of my hands than that I should give it. This is a sound Constitutional principle of development. If it is not strong enough to demand it, it is not wise enough to use it.

Wise government can be tested by the leisure of the governor. It is seen when things run themselves.

## 7 Service

Knowledge is good and work is useful, but the love of God is above all; for this is one with the gift of wisdom by which your whole life must be ordered: as it is written ‘How blessed are the peacemakers, God shall call them his sons’.<sup>2</sup>

He who works for his own pleasure will work as he chooses as well as what he prefers. He who does God’s will for God’s glory alone must be ready to go on or to stop, to take up or to lay down, to rule or to serve, to continue or to change, without hesitation.

There may be a reward, as there may be a rest we need even now, but there is only one rest we may confidently hope for – and that is not yet.

The highest service you can render to him is the worship of your own spirit, ‘Those who worship him must worship in spirit’.<sup>3</sup>

*Principles III*

In an active even more than in a contemplative community it will be important continually to impress on the minds of all that no service rendered to God by an external labour, whether by hands or mind, can be more acceptable to him than that of the individual soul.

*Constitution V.2*

Turn next to the Cross. You want to do, mean to do, big things. Stick to it! You will do a good few miracles if God is nice to you. Yet on the Cross he himself does nothing and says next to nothing. What is done, is done to him, he just suffered; what is said is said about him.

True religion is the forgetfulness of self, faith in God’s will, purpose in its acceptance, joy in his operations and in the manifestation of his glory. Its substance is nothing more than to rejoice in God.

## 8 Unity

It is not easy to live well in a religious community, but there is one rule that will fit you as well for the community of the brethren as of the angels: *ut diligatis invicem*.<sup>4</sup>

*Principles XXII*

The brothers of the Society are banded together not as seeking something for themselves; they offer their lives within the Society that they may live in detachment for the divine service.

*Constitution I.3*

The two-fold principle of the Society is FREEDOM – the development of individual power, responsibility, and UNITY – this individuality is only serviceable in organisation by harmony of

---

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 5.9

<sup>3</sup> John 4.21

<sup>4</sup> Love one another (John 13.34)

cooperation. The ideal of the Society is the concentration of many people of diverse powers upon a single aim. Independence and responsibility develop power, interest and intelligence, which are worth paying for even at the cost of mistakes. There would be no fun in life without risks, and a dull life means a dull energy.

The Society has to unify the gifts of the Spirit given ever so diversly to minds that are independent in their understanding. The ideal is to leave individuals as free as possible to use their own intelligence and to follow their own minds. How are you to get people to play as a team? The unity can only be that of common minds understanding a common purpose, not merely prescribed acts. Real unity is a very slow growth as the common mind comes to recognise needs and responsibilities of which it had never thought.

If one thinks of the community as a living whole, then the superior's decisions are not according to his own personal ideas of what is best. He is formulating the mind of the body, i.e. what is best and will carry the body most effectively with it.

## 9 Freedom

You came to serve God and not to please yourself. Find your pleasure in doing his will and beholding his glory.

*Principles XIX*

Freedom must be allowed for the development of individual gifts. In the work of the Society the utmost use must be made of individual rather than collective authority and responsibility. While self-willed ability is a source of weakness, all should be practiced in self-reliance since the loss of opportunities through timidity is as great an evil as the confusion of work through self-will.

*Constitution III.1*

The moment you make the explicit and particular opportunity God has given you into a final and exclusive end, you make an idol of that opportunity. This is where religious societies harden and die.

The purposes of the past are not bound by the systems of the past. We are not wedded to one particular system. We are watching every hour and day to see what we can do. Every suggestion or hint from every quarter is fully considered.

As to my religious ideas: I am all for everything – or anything at least. My own belief is that everything has to be learnt *de novo*.

Our business is to turn up men – trained men – but men trained to be the very best of *themselves*. It is most important to allow souls to grow along their own lines; but if one recognises the principle, one must be prepared to suffer for it.

## 10 The Essence of the Society

By this you were created – the will of God, and to this end – the praise of his glory.

He asks of you yourself, first in will, then in faculties; as it is written: ‘My sacrifice O God is a broken spirit’, and again, ‘What is it that the Lord asks of you? Only to act justly; to love kindness and to walk wisely with your God’.<sup>5</sup> He who has done this has done all, and has fulfilled all works, for he alone did this who by doing it redeemed the world.

You will be judged by what you are, and of what avail will it be to you at your last, if you have glorified God very little in yourself, that you have talked of his glory in many lands?

*Principles I & II*

The Society is formed of those who retain in it the profession of their intention and desire to sacrifice their lives after the example and with the aid of the holy angels for the promotion of God’s glory by the performance of God’s will.

*Constitution I*

I want to say crudely in the first place that I have never been taught to believe in religious orders – but only (with the Creed) in the Catholic Church. My whole life aim is to further her work. I took up with this system because I had been for years dreaming of something which should enable the Church to develop force.

True monasticism is enclosed. It might do good – but such vocations are *very* rare. Those who offer for it are nearly always fanciful in my experience. Fancy, in the religious life, is an awful snare. Any religious life which is to become a wide power is the perfecting of all that is best in the spirit of its age. What is not thus in harmony becomes either a fad or a constant pressure to reach that which is not natural.

Salvation is, in Scripture, only a salvation of individuals in so far as it is a salvation from individualism. There are two things in the end for which a man may live – God and himself. The stronger a man is, the greater his ability, the keener his individual power, the harder such a sacrifice may seem to be. Yet by the very same token, the clearer should be his vision of the glory and the joy, of the infinite issues, of the infinite value of what God gives him to do.

Self-sacrifice is necessary in three respects: surrender of personal preferences, surrender of personal ambition, and steadfastness. Many of us are ineffective people, however well meaning, but steadfastness, continuance of the end, is always something of a power.

---

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 51: 17 and Micah 6:8.

## 11 Life in Community

Be always cheerful as well in failure as in success, as well under rebuke as when commended.

Love to help: 'Let each look not only to his own interests but also to those of others'.<sup>6</sup>

Do not think too much about yourself.

Learn to bear with the imperfections of others. You are not their judge and without doubt you have much need that others should be patient with you.

Flee jealousy like fire.

Do not despair about yourself, for that has ruined many souls and vocations. God who is infinite holiness has borne with you a long time; you may well bear with yourself a little till his grace shall have done its perfect work.

*Principles XXII*

The peculiar strength of the Society is only attained when many men work together as one organisation.

*Constitution VII.1*

How can an idea so new be really set before the Church in any way likely to lead to an effective result? Nothing will do it – except doing it – 'the life was manifested and we beheld'.<sup>7</sup> It is the thing which is visibly done which makes all the difference.

## 12 Self-Knowledge

There are many things which it will not profit you to know, but next to the knowledge of God you are most concerned to know yourself.

If you wish to learn something effectively and to share it; learn to be unknown and to be counted for nothing.

*Principles XI*

In the divine service the sacrifice of things is chiefly of value in so far as it sets us free for the more difficult sacrifice of self-will [and gaining of self-knowledge].

*Constitution I.5*

When we consider our vocation, we think of what we can do best; God will often get you where he wants you by what you couldn't do.

---

<sup>6</sup> Philippians 2:4.

<sup>7</sup> John 1:14.

You can never know the whole truth. With patience, care and humility you are likely to be quite wrong, but you have at most learned a little.

## 13 Worship

Worship, in which is included the whole attitude of the soul towards God, is either aspiration of the soul for communion and knowledge or is the result of union and knowledge, that is covenant and revelation.

Private prayer includes both aspiration and obligation but as the revelation was given to the Church, which alone has the covenant, so the fulfilment of the obligation is here, in which we join by obedience.

The obligation is three-fold: a) prayer according to divine command, b) meditation upon the divine nature, and c) praise and thanksgiving. The first is taught by the Church in litanies and intercessions. The second primarily in the recitation of the Psalter. The third especially in hymns and canticles. The divine liturgy includes all three.

*Principles IV*

Since alike through envy of the evil one and the frailty of human nature the life of absolute devotion and sacrifice is of especial difficulty and temptation, it is therefore of proportionate necessity that the soul be restrained and fortified therein by the calm of systematic and perfected worship.

*Constitution V.1*

The true object of times of prayer is to enable us by their separation to keep in mind that reality which is most easily forgotten – the reality of God.

## 14 Prayer

Aspiration proceeds from man and is individual. It can be guided and controlled, but not easily regulated.

Pray much, and that God would count you worthy; for the will of God is known only to him to whom God will reveal himself; as it is written, 'How blest are those whose hearts are pure, they shall see God'.<sup>8</sup>

It is a great vanity to be always busy, so that we can find little time for prayer and none for study.

*Principles IV, VIII & XIX*

Every brother shall reserve a period for silent prayer each day and shall spend at least six unbroken days in retreat each year.

*Constitution V,2*

---

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 5.8

No service rendered to God by an external labour, whether of hands or mind can be more acceptable to him than that of the individual soul. Devotion is a way of simplifying our lives by concentrating them on one thing.

The boys ask, ‘What am I to do?’ and I reply, ‘Pray, it’s all men ever can do. Do what God lets you – that is prayer. Don’t ask what will come out of it – for that isn’t prayer. God will do with it what he will’.

The soul is like a steamer; the mind is on the bridge, but devotion is the ship’s engine. If you are careful and keep to course, you will get in – provided the engines are kept up. If you stop loving God, you may be ever so clever, but you will get nowhere.

## 15 Poverty

In regard to outer things, first it is necessary that you should so exercise yourself in self-mastery that there shall be nothing which you cannot easily lay aside.

Secondly, it is not poverty to be without money, but to have to go without the things you want. Notwithstanding, detachment is not inconsistent with the enjoyment of anything God has made to be enjoyed and permits us to have.

*Principles XX*

The fulness of sacrifice demands the sacrifice of all earthly goods. No brother may therefore claim anything his own, either for possession or enjoyment; since one may not give up personal possessions and yet claim the comforts and pleasures of their use.

*Constitution I.4*

The essential and primary office of the religious life is to show the valuelessness of earthly things [...] Better to share the poverty of Christ than the throne of kings, and the obedience of Christ than the independent majesty of emperors.

## 16 Reputation

In the service of God’s glory, it will be of very little help that you should yourself be counted learned and be had in repute amongst men. Be not anxious therefore about human tests and judgments. We have many teachers, but there is only one judge. Fear him and you will not be concerned about men.

*Principles X*

The value of any utterance depends on its intellectual honesty as the expression of what God has given some person to see; but while this implies freedom of independent thought, it implies no less reverent fear of mere self-pleasing, and therewith a readiness to listen to the criticism of others.

*Constitution VII.1*

Just because things are in God's hands, we need not be afraid of failing or blundering. A happy, laughing indifference as to what befalls, or is required of him, is often the only thing which can carry a man safely.

We must not forget that the laity are the true masters and judges of the clergy – just as boys are of their school masters and patients of their doctors; not because they know more, but because the work in each case is a ministry.

## 17 Celibacy

To each God gives his own vocation, but 'a soldier on active service will not let himself be involved in civilian affairs'.<sup>9</sup>

It is clear that he who would live in absolute poverty and keep himself in single regard to God's will, must be free from considerations of duty to any other person.

*Principles XXI*

The sanctification of human life in the following of Jesus, born of Mary, calls some to consecrate their natural affections in marriage, others in celibacy.

*Constitution I.3*

We shall never keep a really high ideal of marriage as a special divine calling till we recognise that there is also a special calling to celibacy.

## 18 Pleasure

You came to serve God and not to please yourself. Find your pleasure in doing his will and beholding his glory.

*Principles XIX*

While simple pleasures and enjoyments are not forbidden, the life of all must be kept in real simplicity, and no one should have anything which he cannot willingly lay aside.

*Constitution I.5*

---

<sup>9</sup> 2 Timothy 2.1

Only give yourself in simplicity, and in a very simple life you will find a joyous happiness such as you never knew before, a serenity and peace such as the world cannot bestow. The life may be heroic in itself, yet it is not meant for heroes, but for simple and average people.

We are only witnesses that all is good if God is seen in all. We, being just the commonest possible sort of men, are witnesses to just the commonest and simplest things.

We cannot be ascetic. To appreciate, to enjoy the reasonable pleasures which God gives are really part of our work and witness. We cannot seek a separate life. We cannot seek a separate and distinct work.

## 19 Obedience

Obey gladly; even if it cannot be, at least hide your unwillingness. If you have given your whole life to God, why should you prefer to lose it in this way rather than in that? If your life is not your own, your time belongs to God.

*Principles VIII, XII & XIII*

In the divine service the sacrifice of exterior things, whether of the body or of goods, is chiefly of value in so far as it sets us free for the higher and more difficult sacrifice of self-will. Obedience is the virtue by which the whole being is made over to God through the ready concentration of every power upon an end not our own.

*Constitution I.5*

We dare to lose sight of that which lies far beyond our strength, equally beyond that of any man, but wholly within that of God. Enough for us if we live now for the glory of God by obedience to what his will assigns.

The essence of community spirit is detachment. In a community the individual may be given work to do but he has no claim on it. His abilities and even preferences will be reasonably considered, but they are not rights on which he can insist. He has to work with others. His ideas are part of a common stock – to be carried out so far as the community can work with them, or allow scope for them, in the pursuit of a common purpose. The member has to shape his way of thinking accordingly, for a community is not so much an organisation as a way of thinking.

You must accept and work within the system of your team, and not insist on freak systems of your own; for the system you find is that which God gives you to work. But you must never simply accept it 'as it is'. From a common-sense view that is stupid, from a theological point of view, it is idolatry. The will of God is *here*, but it is not a dead and finished thing, the will of God is a living growth, with infinite possibilities as God leads people on.

## 20 Submission

It is better to obey than to rule. He who rules is in every moment in danger lest he mistakes his own preference for God's will, but he who serves is assuredly glorifying God.

*Principles XIII*

When a brother has authority committed to him in the Society he must continue to live in the spirit of obedience and must use that authority impartially and not for the indulgence of his own preference.

*Constitution I.5*

We have to appeal to men not only of one but of every class within the Church, in the diversity of their powers, to make the highest of all sacrifices, the sacrifice of themselves.

Surrender to Christ of soul and life, of all purpose and action is the central aim of every Christian system. There is about the word 'surrender' an important ambiguity. Ordinarily we think of surrender as an act. Like laying down one's arms, it implies a change from resistance to submission, such as we used to call 'conversion'. By itself however, 'surrender' simply denotes the state or attitude of will towards another will or power above it. In this sense it is identical with submission; it is one aspect of what we call love.

The glory of God is just the fulfilment of his will in us, and from this nothing keeps us back so much as the notion that to it our activity is capable of adding something.

We learn that patient love, obedience and submission were perfected when the thought of God was most withdrawn. It was by love to God, and obedience to God, by cleaving to God, when God was least to be found, that humanity was redeemed.

Our interest and attention are concentrated on what we do, but our life is mostly made up of what we 'suffer', not in the sense of things painful, but in the true sense of what is done for us or happens to us. God made us this way, and we resent it, but this is the way Christ took. He gave labour and teaching, example and power beyond comparison – but it was by what he let men do to him in patience, helplessness, failure and death, that the victory was won. Achievements do not want redeeming – verily they have their reward. These things do want redeeming, and only God could turn them into victory. No part of a self-purpose they are part of the whole eternal purpose shown to us. Thus treated, and thus revealed, they become the door of a new life open to all believers.

## 21 Silence

The conversation of the brethren should help and cheer us, but God's voice speaks most often in silence.

Keep some part of everyday free from all noise and the voices of men, for human distraction and the craving for it hinder divine peace.

He who cannot keep silence is not contented with God.

*Principles IX*

In all priories provision shall be made for the maintenance of the rule of silence during some part of the day.

*Constitution V.3*

All thinking starts and works more or less by words; all truth, as one draws near to its infinite reality, goes beyond these.

It is well to get all things said – but words cheapen everything. If that is what you feel, you have seen the vision. Mostly you will just go over it in silence.

Holy scripture is an abiding witness to how helpful and necessary words can be, but all ultimate vision, all the most real meanings, go beyond expression.

The meaning of God and of surrender, the vastness of God and the wonder of his doings, the redeemed sanctity of all in Christ, the continual drawing of God, which is the Holy Spirit; in silence one is not exactly reflecting on these things so much as gazing at them, letting them soak into and possess the soul.

You cannot really teach anyone, nor can they teach you. Nothing really happens till the Lord comes. No one can really see anything till God sends the vision.

You cannot think too much, you cannot talk too little – wait in God's time.