

Always let them feel that you care for their eternal welfare.

In order that you may do this, do not separate yourself, but take part in actual life. Be at home in what the things of the world, under God's providence, provide of interest and beauty. Always keep open a space where you can meet worldly people, discover yourself to them, and talk with them. Truly, their estrangement can become ill will and resistance. A moment may come, when, by forgetting yourself, you might turn the holy into ridicule. And then breaking away may become duty. But even as on the way to the cross your Savior ever had his eye on the world, and on the cross still prayed for forgiveness for those who knew not what they did, so should the eye of your seeking love be upon, and your prayer continue in behalf of, those who have wandered from the fold of God. In this seeking love and in this prayer you will have the surest sign that you are not mistaken, but that you yourself in all reality are near unto your God.

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"WHEN I WAS A CHILD."

Our secret walk with the Eternal does not follow a fixed, uniform model. That which presents itself in this exceedingly holy and deeply spiritual domain in an imitated form, arouses the suspicion of insincerity. Even in human fellowship all friendship of a more intimate sort struggles to free itself from the stress of conventional usage. Uniformity only prevails, and only may prevail in human intercourse when contact in broader

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circles is superficial, which brings the kindly smile to the face, but does not evoke it from the heart. Our life with God can not subject itself to the mechanical. Even as in nature, the utterance of life in the spiritual realm is organic. And as every tree unfolds a different leaf, and every stem a flower-bud of its own, so every human heart discloses itself to God in its own way, sings an own song unto God in an own tune, and in the secret walk with the Almighty tastes an intimacy of enjoyment which corresponds to the proper need of its own inner existence, and can not be enjoyed in just that way by any one else.

If anywhere, the apostolic word applies here: "With one after this manner, and with another after that." Sex exerts influence on this, and temperament, conditions of life, nationality, nature, disposition and character. And even where these data show themselves almost exactly alike in the members of the same family, there is yet such a great difference in what is personal that two brothers or two sisters only very rarely exhibit entire likeness of appearance in their mystic, religious nature.

A sharply marked difference with respect to this shows itself not only between two or more persons; a similar difference also shows itself with the selfsame person. Your own sacred sensations in your search after nearness to God are by no means always of like nature. It is evident that they differ moreover in degree of distinctness of impression. But that is not all. They also differ in character and nature. They are altogether different in moments of intense joy from what they are in moments of dire need and great

anxiety. Robust health or wasting disease imparts an altogether different stamp to your inner existence. After victory over self in the hour of temptation your fellowship with God is of an entirely different nature from what it is after fainting in sin and fall. Under all this the heart is always the selfsame organ, but entirely different combinations of registers are opened every time, and constantly changing is the chord. And this continuous changing and becoming different must every time be pointed out, because death reigns supreme in imitation, in sameness, in uniformity, and rich, full, blossoming life of godliness only revels in endless variety and uniqueness.

One difference can not be emphasized sufficiently: to-wit, the difference in age. The apostle describes it so accurately: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child" (I Cor. 13:11). But it did not continue so. Later it was altogether different: "When I became a man, I put away childish things." Consider carefully that the apostle mentions this difference between the existence of a child and that of a man, when he treats of the personal knowledge, which we have of our God. The working of this difference, of course, is far more delicate. For the sake of brevity the apostle merely places the child by the side of the full-grown man. It needs but a reminder, however, that the lad and the young girl exist differently from the youth and the young maiden. That the man in the strength of his life is different from the man in his declining years, and that at the end of the pilgrim journey the grey old man again presents an own image with own needs of

soul. And all these transitions in age and conditions of soul exert of themselves a necessary influence upon our communion life with God. What comes, develops itself from what went before. Thus with the regular, undisturbed development of person there is a continual enrichment, strengthening and deepening of personality. Moreover every new phase of life adds to what went before a newness of utterance, even in such strong measures that the old man finds it difficult to think himself back in the threatening struggle of passions, in which he had to defend or to recover his fellowship with God. But though modification, change and reforming of the secret walk goes on until the end, Christ himself indicated that with respect to this there is a striking difference between the child and the man, which lends an altogether proper type to the inner existence of each; and neglect to recognize this radical difference frequently ruins fundamentally the Christian training.

Provided the family and other surroundings do not from the first choke the seed of religion in a child, the mind of the child is religious. Not by pretension, but by receptivity for holy impressions and by silent reverence for the Eternal Being. To teach a child how to pray, when it is done under Christian guidance, and in no mechanical way, is a beautiful and tender delight of soul. This is not so because of his knowledge of the holy. But because even when the child can not yet read, and is far less able to follow the catechism, let alone to understand it, he stands instinctively related with the world of hidden things. He can give himself no account of this.

He is not conscious of it, and therefore can not explain it. But it is evident even from his fear in the dark, or at strange sights and sounds.

This fear shows that the child knows and perceives the existence of another world from that which he sees with his eyes. Hence his faith in the reality of the phantoms that create his fear. This sense of the existence of a mysterious world, and the perception that this mysterious world can unveil itself, immediately governs the mind of the child. His delight in fables and fairy tales is directly connected with this, and imparts to the soul of the child that intensity and depth which addresses you so alluringly from his eye. And by this same trait the child instinctively opens his heart to religion. It is an unseen working that goes out from the unseen world upon the heart of the child. It is God himself who plays the tender harp in the child heart. This natural religiousness of the child is more closely related with the life of the blessed than the religion of us who are full grown. With us a whole world of thought, of reasoning and consequent doubt enters in between, which is only lifted out again at our death. Hence the word of Jesus, that "to become as a little child" is regeneration of our person which alone admits us into the kingdom of heaven.

Nothing therefore is more cruel and painful than to see a child abandoned to leading and training which has no understanding of this, and which treats the child as a small adult. This kills and destroys the childtype in the childheart. Cruel and painful is the artificiality which teaches the child to pray, but with a voice without tenderness, as a something that must be done, without

praying with the child, so that the child feels more disturbed in his religious impulses than led and helped. It is equally cruel and painful, in the presence of the child, to be unsympathetic, rough and hard in holy things. This hurts the heart of the child, and then it does not take long for the tender germ of religion in the heart of the child to be choked. It is cruel also to let the years of childhood pass without training the child in holy things, and to think that religion will come somehow to him later on. The early years of life are the appointed time in which to let the foundation of all religion, which is fellowship with God, crystallize in the heart of the child.

In the childheart there is natural receptivity which, when it is led and trained in a reverent way, imparts a bent to the heart whose effects will be beneficial for all of later life. On the other hand, if this is not cultivated, and this first receptivity is destroyed, even though the religious sense may awaken later on, it may always lack that fervor and tenderness which Jesus demands in our childlikeness.

This danger can only be averted by bringing the child at once, in his own way, after his nature and type, into fellowship with God himself. The child should learn to know sacred history, the sacred truths of the faith, and hymns and sacred songs. All this is excellent. But this will not avail unless first of all the child's instinctive perception of a mysterious world unfolds into an immediate perception of his fellowship with the all-seeing, all-knowing, omnipresent God.

“MAKE ABODE WITH HIM.”

The sublime note of joy with which the apostolate went out into the world, concentrated itself in the confession: “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” The Gospel did not first come in Bethlehem, it resounded already in Paradise, and both Moses and the prophets are ignored, when the gospel of grace is said to have begun with the Apostles. Nay, rather the Israel of the Prophets had the selfsame Gospel as we. You need but turn to the writings of New Testament evangelists and apostles to find yourself again and again referred back to the Old Testament, to see the proof of the truth drawn from this ancient source, and to find sharply outlined, and to us frequently surprising, indications that the treasures of the new covenant have been deposited ages ago in the old covenant, even though at first in germ form.

No, the difference and the antithesis between what lies before and after Bethlehem consist in something else. There is undoubtedly a positive and an absolute difference between the gospel before and after the manger cradle. But this difference does not consist in greater or lesser riches of the Old or New Testament gospel. No, the old and new covenant only differ in this respect, that the Old Testament lacks the reality of the New Testament. This was generally indicated by speaking of the dispensations of shadows and of fulfilment; but this statement is far too weak. The difference can be expressed more accurately by saying, that in the Old Testament the image