

strength" which is all their assurance and salvation. It can not be insisted upon therefore with sufficient urgency that Bible reading be made a more serious business; that we wean ourselves from the false tendency to take everything in Scripture metaphorically. God's word is a lamp before our feet and a light upon our path, because it alone engraves these two things upon the heart: that God is Spirit, and that, as Our Father who is in heaven, this God meets us in the way and deals with us as a man with his neighbor; invisible and yet seen.

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### THAT THEY MIGHT KNOW THEE.

"This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God" (John 17:3). No human word can express a deeper thought or higher aim than this. It was not spoken by a seer to men, but by the Son to the Father. And it must be heard anew by him who would seek God, since it has been put on record for this purpose.

No prayers of our Lord during his more than thirty years' life on earth, in Joseph's home at Nazareth, in mountain or desert place, by day or night, have been recorded in the Gospels, save a few sentence prayers and the cry of distress in Gethsemane. In John 17, however, the high-priestly prayer of our Savior has come down to us in all its sublime grandeur. He who gave us the Scripture to guide us on our pilgrim journey has ordained that this prayer of Jesus to the Father should awake an echo in our own praying heart.

If all the prayers of our Savior had been preserved in writing, it would have been an inexhaustible treasure. First, the child-like prayers of his early life, which already at the age of twelve showed such Divine traits that even in its still undeveloped form it breathed perfection and apprehended it. Then the period in Jesus prayer-life from youth to manhood spent in retirement and in preparation for the great work of our salvation. Then the closing period of three years, so brief and quickly passed, but which is by far the richest, because of the storms that raged and which were battled through at the pains of who can say how many long hours spent in agonizing prayer.

Nothing of all the riches of these prayers has been handed down to us save this one. "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." And in the high-priestly prayer, this sacred diadem which has been handed down to us unchanged and unabbreviated, we discover what is at heart the same thought: "This is eternal life, that they might know Thee, the Only True God." In Matth. 11 it is not the prudent and the wise, but babes. In John 17 it is not the world, but them whom Thou hast given me out of the world. In both instances it is the knowledge of God; that which has been revealed of the Holy and the Highest. And what is to be adored in it all is the Divine good pleasure.

This is prayer: Not criticizing what is holy, but taking it in, drinking it in. And by the

entrance of the Holy One into our life, not merely to live forever, but to have a life which in its own nature is eternal.

When something stirs in a secret place and something proceeds therefrom, there is life. The pregnant mother feels life when she is aware of motion within, and then knows that presently life will be born from her. So it is with us. When everything is still within, when no voice is heard from the soul, and nothing stirs in our inmost parts, who can know whether the soul lives? We may live along with the life of the world and be affected by it, even as the motion of the sea leaves no single drop at rest, but communicates its own restlessness to it. This, however, is not a life of one's own. It is no inner impulse the momentum of which springs from oneself.

Moving along with the rise and fall of the world's life may develop warmth within, may enrich one intellectually, may deepen the affections and widen experience, but it has no root of its own, no individual impulse and therefore it can not convey permanent possession. And when at length death removes us from this restless life of the world, this purely impersonal life that has been lived with others, is shaken off and nothing remains. Real personal life, on the other hand, springs from a Divinely implanted seed, which inwardly germinates and unfolds. But, for its proper growth, it continually asks for food after its own kind. If it fails of this, it languishes and withers. Abundance of provisions, which are not meet, do not help it. It can not assimilate nor digest them. Insofar as they enter into it they only pervert it. Getting food after its own kind

only once in a while, in small measures, does not help it. To reach full development it must constantly be fed with food convenient for it.

This is "eternal life" for the soul. Not only life hereafter, but an unfolding here of the inner self, according to its disposition, nature and destiny. In this process everything that poisons the blood of the inner life is expelled, and every need of it is met. And the supply for this inner feeding, strengthening and sanctifying is so constant, permanent and essentially eternal, as to insure perfect fruition. This is eternal life for the inner self of man created after God's image.

According to the teaching of our Lord, the soul only finds this food for eternal life in the eternal God. The Lord is my portion, my everlasting good (Ps. 16:5). What can my heart desire on earth beside Thee? (Ps. 73:25). God is the highest good. In Thy light we see light. With Thee is the source of my life (Ps. 36:9).

Everything comes to us from God. We owe him thanks for everything we have. Every good and perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights. From him, through him, and to him are all things. But the end and aim is, and ever shall be, that God shall be all and in all.

It is beautiful to confess that our God is Lord of lords and King of kings. That he appoints, allows and governs all things. Far greater, however, is the confession that God the Holy Ghost enters into us and dwells in us, and chooses us for his temple, and makes intercession in us and for us with groanings that are unutterable.

In this alone the heart finds rest. Everything that grace bestows are but radiations of glory and

love. The burning hearth of all love and glory is in God himself. Every drop of the water of eternal life is refreshing, but the Fountain from which these waters spring is the loving heart of the Eternal. Throughout the entire Scripture therefore, and throughout the whole Church, and in every saintly soul, the confession of passionate delight: It is good for me, it is my blessed lot "to be near unto God," may always be heard. Him seeks the eye. Him desires the heart. And only and alone when the soul has found its highest good in God, can the germ of the personal life in us revive from its withered estate, and begin to develop and to unfold, until from the half-opened bud expands the blossom of everlasting life.

This can not be otherwise on account of the nature of the soul. We have not made it ourselves. The world has not determined its character. It has not become what it is by chance. God alone has planned what the human soul should be. Hence its nature is what he appointed that it should be. And so it continues to be whether it is the soul of a Judas or the soul of a St. John. It can develop itself in holiness, it can also degenerate in sin and become corrupt. But whether it unfolds in glory or in corruption, both are what they are by virtue of the nature of the soul as God has planned it. Every creative plan has gone out from God. A plan for the stars in the firmament, for the corn in the ear, for the lark that sings among the branches, for the angel that sings the Holy, Holy, Holy, in the sanctuary above. But the nature, the essential character of the human soul, was planned and ordained of God

to be different from the nature of everything else.

With charming clearness the Scripture defines the nature of the soul in this single phrase: that we are created after the image of God. This includes everything. From this everything explains itself. From this it comes that the soul can never have its "highest good" save in Him after whose Image it originated. The opposite truth no less holds good that everything that turns the soul to another good than God as the highest, wounds, corrupts and poisons it. It is painful to see that the nations with their seething multitudes have no understanding of this. But it is more painful to see that even among serious-minded people many lay hold on everything else but God. Most painful of all is the sight of many religious people who follow after everything that is good, but show that they have never tasted the "highest good."

But our blessed Lord does not despair. In heaven he continues to intercede for his saints upon earth: "Father, this is eternal life, that they might know Thee, the only true God." And in perfect accord with this is the disclosure, in constantly new-born children of the Kingdom, of the ardent life of the soul, which responds to this prayer with a devout: Amen.

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### "SHOW US THE FATHER."

In this meditation also the main thought is the striking word of Jesus: This is eternal life, that they might know Thee, the Only true God. Its meaning is too profound to be fully set forth at