

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.

"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

one time. Therefore we come back to it now and will presently do so again.

We have tried to explain what eternal life is. We did not undertake to reduce it to a single definition, neither have we subjected the idea to close analysis. All we essayed to do was, to make the life to be perceived in life itself, and to explain that eternal life means more than mere life without end. Mere endless life would drive us to despair; eternal life, which is altogether different, inspires and rejuvenates.

And now to the point. It does not say that he who knows the Father shall have eternal life. It does not say: If you are religious and earnestly seek to know God, your reward after death will be eternal life. On the contrary it declares that to know God is itself eternal life. The difference is seen at once to be heavenwide. To interpret eternal life as a reward for pains taken to know God is superficial, mechanical and affected. The thought that eternal life is itself the knowledge of God is unfathomably deep. Eternal life as the reward for knowledge is a part of school discipline. First much study, much memorizing, much taking notes of dictations, and then promotion from a passing existence into an endless one. This makes it all a sort of higher life-insurance, or turns it into a course of mental gymnastics, into the study of a work on dogmatics which is subtly composed, every sentence of which is carefully constructed, and which presents in an orderly way what in the course of centuries has been systematized regarding the Being, Work, Person and Attributes of the Infinite. And when at length everything has become dry as dust to the eye of the soul, and

when there is no more fragrance of life perceptible anywhere, the reward of this barren, dead knowledge is eternal life. All this falls away when the saying of Jesus is taken as it reads: The knowledge of God is itself eternal life. He who has it, has already, here and now, eternal life. He who dies without having found it here, will never find it in the hereafter. No eternal morning will dawn on him. And this interpretation, which seems to us the only permissible one, affects us like a power that pierces the conscience with the question: Have you this knowledge? And it urges us, now, before it is too late, to seek it with all our might, until in thrilling ecstasy of soul we feel the swell of the undulation of this eternal life.

And now comes Philip with the naive request: Lord, show us the Father (John 14:8). This was childlike in its simplicity, but he chose the right starting point from which to advance. He who asks like this shows that he means it, and that he is in earnest about it. He wants to know God. It shows that he does not care for book-knowledge, but for life-knowledge of God. And what is more natural than that he begins by asking: Show me the Father.

One of the defects of the religious life, as it has come down to us from the Reformation, is that in distinction from Rome it has been developed too dogmatically. This could not be otherwise. Doctrine can not be sacrificed. But when it appears too onesidedly in the foreground, there is something wrong. The same difference presents itself between the Gospels and the Epistles; the latter

are in part controversial. In the Gospel the distinction occurs between the sermon on the Mount and Jesus' controversy with the scribes. The first period of the Reformation was better than the later one. What rapture marks the language of the Confession and the Office of Holy Communion in distinction from the barrenness of later formularies. First there are bounding floods of life, and then we find drained river-beds with only some weak rill coursing through the sand. We will never know how greatly this has impoverished the church.

But Philip knows nothing about these contrasts and formularies. He faces the matter with child-like simplicity. To him God is really the Eternal Being. He longs for God. He seeks after him. The prayer of his heart is that he might see God. Hence the request: Show us the Father. When reports go the rounds about a person and someone asks: Do you know him? nothing is more natural, when you do not know him, than to say: I have not even seen him. For seeing is of first importance. An impression received through sight speaks for itself. Both in Old and New Testaments the desire to see God appears everywhere in the foreground. With Moses when he prayed: Show me thy glory, and Jehovah replied: No man shall see my face and live (Exod. 33:18, 20). And in I Cor. 13:12 St. Paul declares: But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory. In words like these the life of the Scripture beats and throbs. There is no dry as dust there. Everything pulsates with

reality. All interests center in God, in the living God, to see him, to behold him, and ardently to rejoice in this life-giving look. When, therefore, Philip asked: Lord, show us the Father, he made the right beginning, and it sprang from his burning thirst after the living God.

But alas, God can not be seen with our outward eyes. The reason for this is perfectly plain. We can only see things, whatever they are, when they present themselves as parts of the visible world and are sufficiently limited to fall within the range of our vision. No one can see the world as a whole, but only in fragments and parts; now this part, now that, as far as it falls within reach. But even if we could see the whole world, we would still be unable to see God, because the world is finite, and God is infinite. The greatest idea that can be formed of the world falls away into nothingness compared with the infinite God. We can only see what falls within our range of vision and what has form and appearance. But God is Spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. God can not be seen therefore outside of ourselves. To desire to do this is to bring him down to our level, to give him a form and to rob him of his spirituality. Here idolatry comes in. It began when people "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man" (Rom. 1:23). It did not spring from wickedness, but from piety. Not the worst, but the best people from among the nations built temples and placed an image of God in them. Then the priests showed them their God in an image which they had made.

They thought that they had thereby brought God closer to the people, while in fact the miserable image had caused all knowledge of God to be lost to them. With every representation of God, God himself is gone. Hence the searching warning of St. John: Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

Thus there remains the cry: Show us the Father. The cry from the soul, that is not satisfied with a dogma and a creed, but wants God himself; the truly childlike and devout heart that thirsts for the living God. And side by side with this remains the other fact, that no objective representation of God is possible, and that He can not be seen with mortal eye. He is the Invisible. With every effort to represent him by an image the Infinite is lost and man is exiled farther away from God. And the reconciliation of these mutually excluding facts: that we are inwardly impelled not to rest until we have seen God, and that by representations of him we lose him altogether lies in Jesus' answer to Philip: "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, show us the Father?" (John 14:9).

And how? There is an outward look and there is an inward look. But we can not have this inward look as single individuals. Not by ourselves alone, but in our human nature. In the Son of Man God himself appears to us in this human nature. Through fellowship with the Son of Man we see God, in Jesus, through Jesus, and through the Holy Ghost we see him in ourselves. Not the image of God in the temple of idols, but the image of God in Christ.

HE THAT HATH SEEN ME HATH SEEN THE FATHER.

There are sayings of Jesus that make one tremble and stand back—unless he believes on him. One of these is: He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me (Matth. 10:37). Imagine a man who would dare to say anything like this in a public meeting. Every hearer would take him to be insane. If a man were to come into your home and in your presence address your child like this, would you not take sure measures to prevent him from doing so again? But Jesus spake like this. And you teach your child that this saying is true—because you worship Jesus.

Such is the case with Jesus' answer to Philip: He that hath seen me hath seen the Father (John 14:9). This rouses the same repellant feeling. We would make a man, who spoke like this, harmless by securing him a lodging in an institution for the insane—unless we honored and worshipped God in him. There is no choice in this matter. In any nation in whose public conscience there glows a spark of religion, public opinion would demand the arrest of a man of such blasphemous pretensions. But to this striking saying of Jesus on the contrary our own heart echoes consent—because we worship him.

It all depends on this. The Sanhedrin and the excited Jews in the courts of Justice at Jerusalem acted consistently from their viewpoint, when they took Jesus for a blasphemer and cast him out.