

imagination, does it form one whole. All these together constitute that full knowledge of God, which is eternal life. Only do not lose from sight that the daily increase in the knowledge of God is obtained solely and alone in the way of the will.

There is a two-fold will of God: the one is over us, the other is concerning us. The will of God over us determines our life, our career and our lot in life. It was with reference to this will of God that Jesus prayed: Not my will, but thy will be done. But the will of God concerning us shows us how to will, what to do and to leave undone; and regarding this will of God we pray in the Our Father: Thy will be done as in heaven by the angels, so also on earth by me. And it is this second, this last-named will of God which if we live in it, and conform ourselves to it, unconsciously makes us increase day by day in the knowledge of God.

“BESIDE THE STILL WATERS.”

If there is a desire to know God, the will must be studied still more closely. In the days of our fathers the field, in which the will operates, was not sufficiently plowed and harrowed. The great question was whether the will was free or bound. For the rest, even in preaching and in catechising, the supreme significance of the will was ignored. Is not even now almost the whole realm of the will left fallow?

Of course this does not mean to say, that both in the times of our fathers, and in our own past, there has been no increase in the knowledge of

God through the will. How could this be otherwise? The will does not come into action by what is written about it in a book, or preached on it from the pulpit. It is the Lord who inspires the will to act, and in action to direct it for good. It is he "who worketh in you both to will and to do his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13), and how could the Lord be bound to sermon or lecture?

We only mean that he who is so fortunate and blessed as not only morning by morning and evening by evening to be refreshed with a drop of grace from the fountain of Divine Compassion, but also to have time and insight to meditate on holy things, does wrong when he neglects the investigation of such an important component part of the power of the soul as the will. This makes poor; while to give one's mind to it makes rich. For the will is inscrutably wonderful. In the creation of the soul it constitutes a marvelous piece of Divine workmanship, and it is so deeply engraven a trait of the image of God, which reflects itself in us, that to leave it unstudied betokens lack of reverence and wonder. It is, moreover, so mighty a tool that the thoughtless use of it readily does harm.

We must also distinguish between times and times. There is a time of childhood followed by that of early youth, when we live by instinct, and are not able to give a reason for the acts of the will. But then there comes a time when the troubled waters settle, and the mirror of the consciousness becomes clear, and we begin to think. Our age is farther advanced than that of our fathers, because it is older. Earlier instinctive life gradually becomes a conscious life. He who

takes no part in this transition is left in the rear.

The whole church will understand that she loses power when she adheres to the old, without harmonizing her insight into the past with the claims of our clarified consciousness. She then loses her touch upon life. Her preaching does not join itself to what stirs and moves in the world. She does not equip the faithful with needed armor, and becomes herself the cause, that in ever weaker positions in the conflict of spirits she is incapacitated. Confess, in times such as these, when in every way the will has become the object of investigation and thought, will it do for Christians to act as though the knowledge of the will did not concern them?

Here we confine ourselves to our subject. It is the aim of these meditations to bring the soul into secret fellowship with God. This requires knowledge of God, even that knowledge which is itself eternal life. In that knowledge of God we must increase. And this increase is more possible through the will than through the understanding. This is the point which we emphasize. The holy apostle expresses it so clearly: "Walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, whereby we shall be fruitful in every good work, and at the same time increase in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10).

He who bends his will so that at length he has no other will than to forgive his debtor, comes through his own will to the knowledge of the compassionate God who forgives him. To God forgiveness is no outward rule, which he applies. To forgive proceeds from his will. And this will to forgive proceeds from his Being. If we come

to will like this of ourselves, we become conformed to our Father who is in heaven. The words of Jesus: Be ye perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect, are then realized in us; they are realized in this particular; and conscious that we are of the family of God we come to this knowledge of God, which is not a lesson learned by rote, but which proceeds from our divine relationship itself. Do we understand the beauty and godliness of this?

All men are not alike either in mental capacity or in the disposal of time. Some are able to analyze all things and to study them out deeply and accurately. But more by far can not do this. We would not call them stupid for this reason, but as a matter of fact few people can make exhaustive studies of every part of our glorious confession. They simply can not do it. They have not the ability. Freedom of time also differs greatly in given circumstances. The day-laborer, who is away from home from morning until night has little or no time for the study of sacred things, especially as compared with the clergy or professors of Theology, who can devote all day to it. And apart from time, opportunities differ widely. Such study requires education, books and retirement. And see the difference between a farm-hand at the plow and a university trained clergyman in his study, who is well supplied with books.

If we take the knowledge of God as consisting mainly of book knowledge; if we say that the knowledge of God obtained in this way is eternal life, are we not cruel? For does not this imply

that eternal life is a right that belongs to the man of study, and not to the swain who follows sheep? And we know this can not be true. If the knowledge of God is eternal life, the increase in this knowledge must be for sale for something which is at every one's disposal, the professor in his study, the day-laborer at his work, the busy mother in her home. This brings us of itself to the will. Intellectual attainment is not enough. Many students of great learning appear to have no knowledge of God at all, while many hard-working plain souls exhale the fragrance of eternal life.

Here we touch the sensitive nerve of life itself. In every person operates a will. It comes into action every day. The will is in all and is active in everything. The working, the action, the power of the will, its impulse and passion may differ widely, but without will there is no action, no deed, no career in life. Every difference between man and man here falls away. Every one faces it daily for himself. In whatever high or low position one finds himself, there is a will that wills, a will that operates. It proceeds in a quiet and peaceful way. It is not something apart that is added to life. It is the urgency of life itself that beats and throbs in every artery. Softly, by the side of very quiet waters, this action of the will continues all day long throughout life. It is a never resting, but an ever newly-fed stream of choice of will, decision of will, action of will, continually, quietly rippling along, bearing life company and partly carrying it. Thus by these utterances of the will it is in the power of every one to continuously increase in

the knowledge of God, and thereby to obtain ever larger possession and fuller enjoyment of eternal life, provided we separate this utterance of the will less and less from the will of God and derive it more and more from the will of God. Thus every idea of cruelty falls away. Whether life is limited or large, makes no difference. Even though it wears on like the quiet flow of a gentle stream, every day the knowledge of God can be enriched by it, and we can increase in everlasting life; a queen on her throne as well as the farm-hand behind the plow, a professor in his study who is no better than he who moves the shuttle in the loom.

This goes softly, as by the side of very still waters, and the glory of it is that it asks for no extra time outside of the daily life. Every kind of learning demands special time. The daily task is broken up for it. Special time must be set apart for it. On the part of many people this is almost impossible. For most people's life is a mill which never stops. But even this is no drawback to the knowledge of God through "the willing of the will." For the will never operates outside of, but always in the life. Whether, therefore, you walk behind a plow, or stand behind the school-desk, or care for your children at home, or nurse the sick, it is all the same. It is all utterance and activity of will. And provided we do not oppose our will to the will of God, and do not diverge from it, but bend our will after God's will, it is all one process of activity, whereby we increase in the knowledge of God, in order through this knowledge to mature in eternal life.

“WHO WORKETH IN YOU TO WILL.”

By doing willingly what God wills us to do, we increase in the knowledge of God; not in barren book-knowledge, but in living soul-knowledge, which is itself eternal life. This springs from all sorts of causes, but not least from the fact that our willingness is not born from us, but is wrought in us by God. “He it is, writes the apostle, who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). Hence there is first the willing, after that the working through and according to our will, and while we work this action of the will in the soul, it is God who worketh it in us. It is self-evident that in this connection this last distinction must be made. Otherwise our willingness would merely be on the surface, and the child of God, in good works, would merely be a puppet moved mechanically. This distinction should be clearly understood. We ourselves will, not because of ourselves, but because God so worketh in us, that now we ourselves truly and actually will to do thus and not otherwise. It takes some pains to see this clearly, and it is easy to follow the advice not to concern ourselves with the several distinctions. But when we lend our ear to this advice of spiritual sloth, we do ourselves a wrong.

Ask any physician how many distinctions he makes in a single group of nerves, or how many differences he observes in germs of disease in the blood. And will it do, that so much pains are taken in behalf of the body, which perishes, and not in behalf of the soul, which is so much more precious? But this tendency prevails. While