

“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

almost every one has some sort of a manuel, illustrated if possible, from which to learn how the body is constructed, nothing is read about the soul. By far the larger numbers of people do not investigate it, but speak at random about the soul, and about the will, and the understanding, and everything is in a chaos, and so most people continue all their lives strangers to their own inner selves. Everything else can be described. One is familiar with his house, village or city, and sometimes also with foreign lands. But the key to the chambers and vaults of his own soul has never been found. And since lack of self-knowledge is punished with meagre knowledge of God, one deprives himself of his share in the eternal life, which far excels all things else. We therefore urge the remembrance of the distinction that has been made. When a martyr says: I will die for the name of the Lord Jesus, he must himself will to do it. It must be his own act. But that he himself so wills it, does not by nature spring from himself. It is wrought in him by God.

To illustrate: Bring to your mind a ship. It has an helm. Attached to the helm is the tiller, and this is held in the hand of the boatswain. If at sea the ship moves with the suction of wind and waves, without being directed, every time the ship turns the helm turns, and with it the tiller, and with the tiller the hand and the arm of the man. This is the image of a man without a will. He is adrift on the sea of life. As the wind and waves move, so moves he, subject to the currents and influences from within and from without, of inclinations and of circumstances. As

life moves him along, so he goes, and so turns the rudder in his inner purpose, and the tiller, and the hand that is upon it, i. e., his will. He is a man without a will. This is altogether different when there is direction in the ship. Then the man at the helm directs the course. He knows where he wants to go. And when wind and waves take him out of his course, he resists them. Then the hand takes firm hold on the tiller, turns it, and with it the helm, directly against wind and wave, and the ship that obeys the helm cuts the waves, not as tide and wind should will, but as the helmsman wills it. Such is the man of character, the man of will-perception and will-power, who does not drift, but steers. But there is still a third. On the bridge of the ship, far away from the helm, stands the captain. He knows the intended course, and as on the bridge he stands much higher, he can see far better whether the ship should turn to the right or to the left. Then all the man at the helm has to do is to listen for orders from the captain on the bridge and to obey them.

Applied to the soul, God is the captain on the bridge, and the man at the helm is ourselves. When with the tiller of the boat of our soul in hand we but will what God wills, and turn the helm to the right or to the left as God orders, then there is no danger to be feared, and presently through wind and waves, the boat safely reaches port. If this goes on for life, we become accustomed to it; in the end we learn to know ahead whether the captain on the bridge shall order right or left; we come to know God's will more and more as of ourselves; and so the knowl-

edge of God brings us nearer to the haven of salvation, i. e., to eternal life.

From the illustration we come back to the matter itself. When God so works in us that at length we ourselves will what God wills, the process is not outward but inward. It is not that we are here on earth below, and that far away from us, and seated high above us in the heavens, from immeasurable distances God imparts a mechanical impulse to us. Far from it. God enters our inmost selves.

To a certain extent this is even the case with the captain on the bridge who calls to the mate at the helm. For what is it to call? He who calls makes air-waves to vibrate and these vibrations extend themselves to the spot where the man stands at the helm. Thus the vibrating air-waves enter the ear of the mate, touch his auditory-nerve, which communicates the motion to his soul. Hence there is a direct, continuous movement, which from the captain penetrates into the soul of the mate. Thus the illustration covers the ground.

But with the case in hand it is yet stronger. When God worketh in us he is the omnipresent One, who is both high in heaven and close at hand. Even "close at hand" is still too weak a statement, for God is in every one of us. There is no part in our being where God is not omnipresent. This is the case with all men. But when God deals with one of his children, this inward presence is much closer and more personal, for God dwells in such an one by his Holy Spirit, If we believe that the Holy Spirit is himself God, we understand that God himself tabernacles

in his child, that he has his throne in the inmost recess of the child's soul, and thus has fellowship with him, not from afar, but in the sanctuary of his own person. There God worketh upon us by day and by night, even when we are not conscious of it. He is our Sculptor, who carves in us the image of himself, and makes us more and more to resemble his own Being. Thus he transforms us, and also the willing in us. It is God who worketh in us, not only our emotions, but also our willing, by transforming "the self that wills."

When we understand it this way, it is plain that there is a constant holy entering in of God's will into our will, thanks to this purifying and refining and transposing of our inmost selves. This work goes on in us mostly unobserved and unperceived, so tenderly and gently does God's hand direct the task. But not always just like this. Sometimes the sculptor must forcibly strike off a piece from the marble, so that it crashes and splinters as it falls. These are our times of violent inward struggles, when everything within us quakes with the reverberations of moral shocks. But whether it be gentle or whether it be violent, it is ever the process of sculpturing. And the sculptor works not after a model that stands before him, but is himself the model. He forms us after his own image.

This Divine labor in the realm of our will brings us ever into closer resemblance to the image of God. And to be more and more transformed after the image of God only means that God's will ever more deeply enters into our will, which in turn means an ever better understand-

ing of God, a better knowledge of him, and an ever clearer insight into his will and purpose. Thus we see that there is still another way of learning to know God than learning about him from books or sermons.

- Further on we will try to show that this knowledge of God from books and sermons is also indispensable, but we pass it by for the present. It is eminently necessary that eyes that are now closed against seeing God's work in the inner life of the soul shall open to see this glorious work. Without an understanding of the reality of the life of the soul, and of God's work therein, there is neither power nor outpouring of the same, nor fruit of that power in the life. In that case the Church is dead. It only echoes sounds when it thinks that it sings Psalms of praise unto God. Then the world pushes the Church to a side, and not the Church the world. All attention therefore must be centered on the will, on the willingness, on the self that wills, and upon God who in the self works the willing.

The poet in his songs prayed for feeling, imagination and heroic courage. For feeling, will-power and heroic courage let every child of God supplicate the Father.

"WHAT I WOULD, THAT DO I NOT."

The distance that separates the noblest and mightiest man on earth from God is immeasurably great. We fully understand that it can make us exclaim almost despairingly: "Why should we seek after knowledge of God? Behold,