

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,

God is great, and we know him not. The most we can do is to kneel in worship before the unknown God."

This is what the doubters meant, who at Athens had reared an altar to the "Unknown God." They did not mean that besides the many gods, whose altars had been reared, there was still another God, whose name they did not know and to whom they brought their offerings as to an unknown god. No, that altar to the unknown God stood for a system and a viewpoint. By that altar they meant to say, "Our fellow-citizens in Athens, who kneel before Minerva or Jupiter are mistaken when they accept the stories about the gods. All that is said to be known of God is founded upon self-deception. Of the Infinite himself nothing can be known. There is an Infinite One, or at least there is something Infinite. Who or what it is, is an impenetrable mystery. Worship this Infinite as the great Unknown. Do it with the confession of ignorance. Candidly confess that all knowledge of God is withheld. And then mysticism will work wholesome effects. But let us not confess to have what we have not. Let us not pretend that we are introduced and initiated into the knowledge of God. For this is self-deception. It will only deceive others and is the key to priest-craft.

This was the thought of that small group of men in Athens. And among the ablest and noblest of our race there are many who think so now. From choice they call themselves "Agnostics." Their aim and purpose is to have it understood that they are by no means godless,

and least of all that they are irreligious; that indeed they are most religious and that therefore with deep humility they are frank to confess, that the God whom we worship is One who by his Supreme Majesty withholds his knowledge from men.

However devout this may seem, their viewpoint is essentially untenable. It is diametrically opposed to Christian doctrine. What Paul declared to the Athenians: "That God, whom ye ignorantly worship, him declare we unto you," remains unchangeably the confession which we hold in the face of these misguided people. Surely, had not God revealed himself, no one of us would have known him. But God has made a revelation of himself. This is the glad tidings which every true Christian makes known in the world. Wherefore in the face of this seemingly pious not-knowing of the Agnostics, we boldly maintain the word of Christ: This is eternal life, that they might know thee, the Only true God.

There is also excess on the other side. There are ministers and laymen who talk so familiarly about God, without reserve or constraint, and who speak to him in prayer so irreverently as to arouse aversion. These are men and women who have no actual fear of God in their heart, who think that they know well-nigh everything about the Most Highest, and who do not even faintly perceive that all our speaking about the Eternal, and all our speaking to him, is nothing more than stammering. Love truly casts out fear. But fear must be there first, and love must

struggle against it. In this way only the victory is gained of the child-like Abba Father.

When God is spoken of in a way which shows that there has been no fear of God, nor love to cast it out; that there has been no struggle and consequently no triumph, there is no child-like Abba, dear Father, but a pedantic show and pretense of knowledge, which exhales no fragrance of piety, but rather destroys the germ of vital godliness. To avert this it is needful that our knowledge of God is properly related to our whole inner self, to our creation after God's image, to our childship in the family of God, and especially to our will and purpose. Purely intellectual knowledge of God is a frozen crust of ice from under which the stream has run dry.

Another distinction must be observed. There are two kinds of willingness. One just remains what it is, the other is translated into doing. In our days the inclination is strong to attribute an inner excellence to the willingness that expresses itself in doing. There is something bold and almost brutal in the will-life of our times. All one needs is to will. He who wills must dare. Then let come what will. In every case the will must express a power that can do everything. "Where there is a will there is a way." And under the lead of such men as Ibsen and others, this will-effort has been driven so onesidedly, that in their effort irresistibly to carry out their own will many pride themselves on their indifference to opposition.

Compared with these present-day heroes of the will, a weakling like St. Paul cuts a very poor figure. He candidly declares that he has known

moments in his life when he had to confess: "What I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that I do" (Rom. 7:15). This is an honest confession, which age upon age has been shamefully abused, that under the cloak of piety one might continue in sin and keep the conscience quiet. An abuse which shall be judged of God. But apart from this abuse the language of St. Paul is the honest description of actual life, which declares that the ideal always stands above us, and that we always have to mourn our inability to reach it, and to make it actual in life.

There is willingness of heart, and an effort to realize it in life. This willingness of heart is for the most part free. He who restrains evil tendencies and conforms his will to the will of God, fosters an holy aim. This involves conflict, but only in connection with the remnant of the old nature that is in us. As long as we stand aloof from life, and take council with our heart, a child of God will inwardly triumph, and finally he will come to will only what God wills, and find happiness in this harmony of his will with the will of God.

Now, however, follows a still greater difficulty. And that is: to carry into effect what we will at heart, against the world, the flesh and the Devil. In connection with this it continually happens that with the best will of the heart we meet with stubborn resistance; that we find no power in ourselves to cope with it; and that in the end we leave undone what we honestly meant to do and still want to do. This tempts us all too often to underestimate this inner willingness of heart. What is the good, we ask, whether we foster the

best of intentions and cherish holiest purposes, when at the time of trial we are bound to fail? And this mood must be resisted. This is debasement of self. It not only unfits one for the battle of life, but severs the vital nerve which binds one to his Divine ideal. Better faint ten times and suffer the punishment of God's judgment in the conscience than to have part with the world in everyday sin without an accusing conscience.

This inner willingness of heart to will what God wills has supreme worth, even though as yet strength fails to carry it into effect. For it is the development of the life of God's child. It is coming into closer fellowship with God. It is the increase in the knowledge of God. It is a discipline which keeps the conscience tender, and the ideal bright, and makes progress in the way.

Of course the progress is greater when willingness of heart is carried out in the deed, until it becomes a part of life. For then the moral power of faith operates, the nature of the hero awakens and the power of the Almighty, which overcomes the world, becomes manifest in us. But it does not begin with this. It begins with the transposing of the willingness in the heart. This is followed by the sad and painful experience that the willingness is there, but that the doing still tarries. In that stadium the strong and penetrating working of the conscience performs wonders, for it brings us at length into the final stadium, where from bare willingness what God wills we are brought to the doing of his good pleasure.

## "NOT AS I WILL."

In the "Our Father," and in Gethsemane, it is each time the same prayer: "Thy will be done." But though the emphasis and the words are alike both times, the meaning is different. In the "Our Father" "Thy will be done" means: "Thy will, O God, be done by me." In Gethsemane it means: "Let thy will, O God, come upon me. Let come to me what may, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). The latter prayer brings a large part of the knowledge of God which is eternal life. We increase in this knowledge when our will conforms itself to the will of God, so that we think, speak and act in perfect harmony with his ordinances. Thus we grow in the knowledge of God, because his will then enters into us, whereby our will is transformed, and conformity to the Image of God becomes ever more apparent.

But there is another increase in the knowledge of God which comes to us when we are willing to suffer what God allows to come upon us, when we adapt ourselves to what in his council he has appointed in our behalf, and when we accept the things that come to us therein not merely without murmuring and complaint, but with heroic faith. This increase in the knowledge of God progresses differently and along lines of a far more painful discipline. The stress consists in this: That, accepting the will of God in our lot, we bear it passively. When "Thy will be done" means: "Let me fulfill thy will as the