

"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

angels fulfil it in heaven," it stimulates our energy, stirs up the will, and when we overcome sin the heart overflows with the feeling of supreme joy. But when "Thy will be done" means: "Let things occur not as I desire, but in keeping with thy plan," there is need of submission and resignation that we might endure what God appoints and allows. In the lower school of suffering at least there is no development of energy at such a time, but inward enervation; no stimuli to spur the will, but cords that tightly bind it; no smile of courageous heroism, but the tear of poignant sorrow. It leads to deeper knowledge of God, but as a rule in a far more trying way, through dark mazes of many unknown and unsolvable riddles. Problems that try one's mettle to the uttermost, when it comes not merely to momentary suffering of pain, but to the endurance of a bitter lot, which begins early in life and ends only with the grave.

This frequently happens in life. Here is a woman who was a happy wife. Husband and child were her daily delight. She was not irreligious. Heartfelt gladness found frequent expression in thanksgivings and praise. "The love of the Heavenly Father was great. He made her happy and glad." But circumstances changed. Great illness broke in upon her peace. Husband and child were snatched away by death. And now that everything is gone she can not be comforted. The grieved and deeply-wounded soul rises up in rebellion against God. It has all been self-deception. She feels that in every way she has been misled. God can not be love. How

could a loving God cruelly cast her down from the heights of her great happiness into the depths of bereavement and woe? In perplexity of grief her language becomes that of despair and of defiant unbelief. "Speak no more of God to me. Cruelty can not be love. There is no God." And so the break of happiness in life becomes the break of faith on God. She thought that she knew the Lord. Now that he shows himself in a different way from what she had imagined she abandons all she ever believed. With husband and child she also lost her God. And nothing is left in the soul but the burned-out hearth where the last spark has been extinguished.

This shows how hard in the school of suffering the lesson is by which we increase in the knowledge of God. When for the first time in life the full weight of the cross is laid upon the shoulders, the first effect is the opposite from that for which it was imposed. It makes us numb and indifferent, and all knowledge of God is lost. The hymn of love was so beautiful. It sang itself as it were in the soul. A God who is nothing but love, who blesses and enriches our life and makes it glad, who would not treasure such knowledge of God. It is pleasing to us when love is shown, and nothing but love. How blessed and rich is the heart with a God who makes only streams of love, happiness and peace to flow out towards us.

But the day of adversity dawns, the day of trouble and disappointment, the day of sickness and bitter grief. "Where now is the love of my God? Where the outflow of love from the Father-

heart? Not only has he not saved me my dying husband and child, and left me praying without coming to my aid, but he has brought these sorrows upon me. He sent illness into my home, and O, it is almost too cruel for words, he has torn my husband from my heart and has killed my darling child." In the end this will lead to another and a better knowledge of God, which will make his doings plain. But the first feeling of the heart is, that with God, as we imagine and dream him to be, we can not get along. We lose the God we had, and it takes many bitter conflicts of soul before, purified in our knowledge of the true God, we embrace him in place of the other.

Thus the first lesson is, that in everyday life we learn to submit to an higher appointment and bow before an Omnipotence against which we can do nothing. This seems dreadful. But it is the discovery in actual life of God as God. When we have but just come into the way that leads to the cross, we take ourselves as the main object of interest. It is our happiness, our honor, our future, and God is added in. We look on ourselves as the center of things, and God comes in to make us happy. The father is for the sake of the child. And the Almightyness which is confessed is but to serve our interests.

This knowledge of God is faulty through and through. It turns around the order of things. In all seriousness it makes self God and God our servant. This false knowledge of God is entirely overthrown by the cross. Cast down in grief and sorrow we suddenly perceive that this great God

does not concern himself with us; that he does not apportion or regulate the course of things according to our desire; that there are different motives in his plan, which have nothing to do with our wishes; that if necessary his Might crushes us on the spot; and that in the working of the plan and of the might we are nothing else, and nothing more, than particles of dust that cleave to the wheel, and withered leaves that are driven before the wind. Hence we must submit. We must bend. We are utterly impotent before it. And from the heavens in which we beheld thus far only the play of light and clouds, darkness descends upon the soul, thunder-claps reverberate in the heart, and flashing lightnings fill us with dismay. This is the discovery of the reality of God, of his overwhelming Majesty, of an Almightyness that absorbs everything we call our own. And for the first time we realize what it is to have to do with the living God. For such is God. Now we know him.

And now begins the new effort of the soul to learn to understand this true God whom we have come to know in this way. Then we begin to wonder, to query and to ponder why Almighty God doeth thus and so. Then the troubled heart seeks an explanation. It looks for it in its own guilt and sin, in the after-effects of the past, in the purpose for which the cross was laid upon us, and in the fruit which it shall bear in the unravelling of eternity. For long times it is always the effort to find the explanation of God's doings in ourselves. Until the soul makes further progress and abandons the theory of Job's friends,

and like Job out of the whirlwind receives the answer from God himself, and now learns to understand that the government of God covers all suns and stars, all hours and centuries, and causes every creature to revolve itself about him, the Eternal, as the one and only center, for the sake of his majesty and honor; that therefore his council and plan are as high as heaven, and far exceed our comprehension; and that not the verification of his Council, but the entering into the life of it, whether through joy or whether through sorrow, is the honor and self-exaltation of the soul.

This breaks the passiveness which made us numb, and awakens again the impulse to willingly drink the cup; to drink it with heroic courage and not allow it to be forced upon us. To will to drink it even as Jesus willed to die on Golgotha; with a broken heart to co-operate in the work of God, and in this passive co-operation with God, who slays us, to find eternal life. It is even as the sentinel who lets himself be shot down at his post, and in dying receives the look of approval from his general, which exalts him, because he knows, and now understands, that he who exposed him to death, yet loved him.

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“I LOVE.”

At times there is something so overpowering, extravagant and unreasonable in the early love of a youth for the maiden of his choice, and of the