

the love of God has come first, and that with all our imperfections and shortcomings it has been our deepest desire and will to have God's love be our supremest inspiration, and that it has prepared us for what is highest and best. And this is the mystery of being a Christian, that as we hide ourselves in the perfect love wherewith Jesus has loved God, through the glow of his love for God, we feel the spark of our love for God burn in our own heart, and that, when it goes out, Jesus kindles it again.

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“WITH ALL THINE HEART.”

Underneath, still deeper than the heart, lives the soul. When God searches a person he tries not merely the heart, but enters still more deeply into his being. The Scripture expresses this plastically by saying that after God has tried the heart he also trieth the reins (Jer. 11:20) in order to examine us in our inmost parts. In moments of extreme tension it is felt, even among us, that the heart is not yet all, but that we must reach down to the marrow of our inmost self. We see it in the case of Jonathan. When David had sworn that he would always be faithful to him and to his house, Jonathan, deeply moved, replied: “Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee” (I Sam. 20:4).

In all seriousness the only element of worth in the heart is that which comes into it from the soul, and passes through it to the soul. What goes on outside of the soul may indeed be very attractive. It is less captivating when only the

outward appearance interests us. It is more strongly attractive when we admire a man's courage and energy, devotion and self-sacrifice. But all this passes away. We do not assimilate it into our life. As a rule, the emotions of the heart, which do not touch the soul, do not rise higher than the feelings, sometimes not higher even than the pseudo-life of sentimentality. The function of the heart only derives all real, abiding worth from the relation which it sustains to the soul.

This does not imply by any means that the heart is a superfluity, and that the soul alone is important. On the contrary the heart has been given us of God as an absolutely indispensable organ of the soul. That which stirs in the soul can only come through the means of the heart to that supreme perception and lofty utterance which we glorify as love. In the great commandment, therefore, Jesus puts the heart in the foreground. First: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and only then: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul.

This could not be otherwise. Love does not have its beginnings in the soul, but in God. It comes to us from God. And only when this love from God enters through the heart into the soul does it awaken in the soul the life of reciprocal love for God, which now presses from the soul into the heart and makes us to love God. But this last stage is only reached through the heart. In the heart only is the flame ignited, and there the fire of love burns. As long as love is confined to the soul it partakes more of the nature of worship. The heart alone breathes forth tenderness and warmth. Only when we love God

with all the heart does this love begin to glow in us with real human feeling.

Love of the heart is irresistible, mutual attraction. The Scripture speaks of it more than once as: "a cleaving of the soul unto God." When the magnet draws the steel so closely to itself that there is even no more air between, the steel cleaves unto the magnet. Hence when so tender an affection springs up between people, that at length everything that separated them falls away, heart cleaves unto heart and soul cleaves unto soul. In the same way there is no perfect love for God until everything is removed that made separation between him and us. And it also applies to this love that our heart, and through the heart, our soul cleaves unto God.

This is a strong and forcible expression, such as the Scripture uses again and again. So strong that we ask: Shall it ever be true with us? But this is no question for the child of God. As a rule, indeed, a mountain of hindrances rises between the soul and God. In spite of this, however, every child of God has known brief moments, in retirement and solitude, in which the love of God drew him so strongly and irresistibly, and God's blessed fellowship in Christ overwhelmed him so blessedly, that really everything fell away, and for the moment the cleaving of the heart unto God was the only true expression of what the soul enjoyed and felt towards God.

What is called power of attraction in nature, in the spiritual is called love. Love is not something artificial, something studied, but is of itself. When any one loves you, you feel it. You feel whether the love which interests you, and draws

you, is strong or weak. And when a great love directs itself to you, goes out after you, and begins to affect you, you likewise feel the irresistibility of its drawing.

Jesus himself calls this outgoing of love "drawing." The Father draws his elect. Of himself the Savior said I will draw all men unto me. That is to say, I will play upon your heart with such power of grace and love that you will come with me, surrender yourself to me, and serve me. There is overwhelming power therefore in this love, but so far from violently inflicting injury, it affects one most blessedly. As the sun draws the flower-bud upward, and by his cherishing warmth makes it to unfold, so this love of God draws you up to himself, fills you with most blessed sensations that make the heart to leap with holiest joy. You drink in this love, or if you like, it is richest enjoyment for the soul. And in the wealth of this tested love of God, pure and tender love for God awakens of itself in your heart.

There is also love for the impersonal. We can speak vaguely of love of nature, when it interests us by its beauty and loveliness, or awes us by its sublimity. We can love science, righteousness, everything that is noble and of good report. But all this is visionary love—love in general, which finds no rest because the soul that personally lives and loves, can only find satisfaction in personal love. For this reason there is something tender already in the love for a song-bird or domestic animal. Here love concentrates itself upon a definite object and there is a reciprocal utterance. The attractiveness of a dog can be

very great, because there is personal response. This is not the case with nature, nor with science or jurisprudence; but it is with a dog that will risk his life for you.

All this, however, is but the prelude of higher love, and only with man it begins to speak in richer language, and to reveal its higher nature. And here, too, is ascent with differences. The love of mother and child, of father and son, of brother and sister, of friend and friend. Until at last we come to holy wedlock. This may at times be degraded by sin, but in its ideal interpretation it is highest love on earth, and therefore it is stamped by God himself as the symbol of the love that binds him to his elect.

But even in marriage love does not reach its full fruition. According to its nature it is conscious of an impulse which rises higher still. And when finally love begins to reach out after the Highest Being, and you feel that the spark of love for God has been kindled in your heart by God himself, you perceive that love in you is now where it ought to be, that it can rise no higher, but also that it has no such desire, and that therefore it is thrice blessed.

The conflict which then ensues is caused by our inequality with God. He is everything, we nothing. He the High and Exalted One, we the vain creatures of his hand. We owing him everything. He needing nothing. And therefore he can take nothing at our hand. Among ourselves love is mutual as between equals. No great personal love can develop between a strong man and a small child. The little child can not rise to the level of the fully developed man. Nor can he

descend to the child otherwise than by disinterested kindness.

And this is just what God has done for us. He has done it in Christ. In Christ he has come to us as man, to make the inequality equal, to join himself to our life and in everything to become like unto the brethren, only sin excepted. This is the great mystery, by virtue of which with those who have joined themselves to Jesus, who believe in him and have become one with him in soul, true love for God can develop itself independently of the hindrance of inequality.

And if now you say that Jesus gave you everything, and that therefore you can put no crown on his head which already he does not have, then bring to mind that there is one thing left which God alone can claim from his people, and that this one thing is the love of the heart. But then it must be love with all the heart, until the heart shall yearn after God, as God's heart has yearned after us.

"WITH ALL THY SOUL."

If you begin to feel troubled and even guilty that with the passing years you have made so little advance in love for God, then examine with more care than before the rule of Christ regarding it. You have known the great commandment from childhood. You have learned it by heart, and your conscience has admitted unconditionally that Christ is right. In your love for God nothing can be wanting. With all the heart and soul and mind and strength it must be