

shall not only lead, direct and rule us in all this, but also that from an inner impulse all this shall form and clothe itself in the way which we know and understand is well-pleasing unto God. Above all else it is his will that we do this not from a sense of duty, because we must, though of ourselves we would like to do otherwise; and not for the sake of escape from the wrath to come or of earning heaven thereby; but from love, purely from love for God, because for the sake of God we can no longer allow ourselves to use this costly gift of our consciousness in ways that will grieve God.

And though, as we think of all this, we may realize that in actual life we are still far distant from this high ideal, in reading and re-reading the great commandment the true child of God will be arrested in his course by this claim also, that he must love God with all the mind. He will seek to control his conscious life far differently than before. And if he succeeds in making his love for God more evident in all his thoughts and in all his plans, the deeper experience of the love of God will be his daily gain, and in his inmost self secret fellowship with the Eternal will become ever more sweetly known.

41

“WITH ALL THY STRENGTH.”

Nothing is more grievous to a Christian soul than the superficial fencing and boasting of love, which is current in our loveless society life. This play with what is highest in heaven and on earth is especially trying, when in unbelieving and semi-

believing circles, especially by entire and partly emancipated women, the high ideal of love is used as a weapon with which to oppose the faithful confession of the Gospel.

Love is then said to be "the whole of religion." There is no need of anything more. The Old Testament is by far too unmerciful. Paul was too severe in his anathemas, and only saved his honor by the hymn of love in I Cor. 13. Only St. John, the apostle of love, is a man of whom to be proud. That he should have asked for fire to come down from heaven to destroy the enemies of Jesus, is probably not true. His advice not to show hospitality to one who denies the doctrine of Christ (II John 10) occurs indeed in his epistle, but these epistles are unauthentic. Moreover as devotees at the altars of love, they make Jesus their boast. He never allowed himself to be governed by anything save gentle, tender love. At times, indeed, Jesus could be hard, even sharp, in his retorts to the Pharisees, but these Pharisees are the so-called orthodox Christians of today, whom they themselves do not spare because this is not necessary. These slaves of the letter are outside of the law, outside therefore also of the law of love.

This false mania of love is inexorably condemned by Jesus in what he said about the first and great commandment. Truly, love is of the highest importance. It is the one and only thing that is required, provided that it is conditioned by this rule: That all your love goes out from your love for God. That is to say, that in the love-life love for God stands in the foreground, and that it shall so dominate all of your love,

that you love him with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength. And as though this does not state the case sufficiently sharply and definitely, and as though to make the last misunderstanding and misconception impossible, Jesus adds a fourth claim and binds it upon the conscience that this love for God answers to the high ideal only when it is also love for God with all the strength.

Hence Jesus does not do what many professed christians do. He does not say: "God is love, but you should also count with his holiness." No, the Savior puts nothing above, and nothing alongside of love. Love to him is all-sufficient. But he objects, that in principle, this love counts only with the neighbor. He demands and wills that in our love, the love for God shall be the all-dominating starting point. He will not let you go until you understand that no boundary of any sort may ever be put to this love for God, and that therefore it must likewise be a love for him with all your strength.

Love for God with all the heart, all the soul and all the mind may be lost in sentiment or in vague idealism, but when it is required that we love God also with all our strength, the claim is laid upon the actual life, the entire personal existence and upon the whole outlay of personal and vital powers.

Strength is what goes out from us as utterance of the talents wherewith we are endowed, of the powers and capacities that are at our disposal, of the means at our command, of the influence we exert, of the time that is apportioned unto us, and of the circumstances which call out

the exhibition of our strength. Jesus demands that all the powers that are entrusted to us, on the condition of responsibility to him who gave them, shall be exercised in such a way that in their working the love for God shall show itself as the dominant element.

Do not take this in a sickly-spiritual sense. The idea lies at hand that love for God really only shows itself in our work and influence when we apply our strength exclusively to religious and spiritual things. For then it is imagined that a clergyman loves God better than a lawyer or a physician; that a missionary is more devoted to God than an editor or a publisher; that an institution for the saving of unfortunates is nobler than one for scientific investigation. In brief, that love for God is more fully expressed by service in the realm of particular grace, than by life in the broader domain of common grace.

This is all wrong. God's greatness and omnipotence do not limit themselves to the more restricted interests of the salvation of souls, but pervade all human life. And with every one of us, according to our talents and callings, love for God must show itself with equal zeal and strength in every department of life. An artist or sculptor can and ought with equal consciousness and purpose glorify God from love, as a missionary or a philanthropist. The humblest calling is not excluded here. A farmer, who is an elder or warden in a church, must serve God from love with all his strength in stable and granary as well as in his duties as church official. A mother in the bosom of her family has as sacred a calling to love God with all her strength as a nurse

or as a woman missionary in the foreign field. False dualism which relegates the mother or the servant to common life and pronounces the nurse sacred, does not feed the love for God, but poisons it.

Three forms of sin in this connection lower human life: *Neglect, misuse* and *abuse* of our powers. In each of these sins love for God is denied. No star has been placed in the firmament but has been called to shine for God's glory. God has imparted to no human soul a grain of gold, but the brightness of it must appear and glisten in his honor. But what the stars do not do is done by indolent man. Many people of conspicuous talent, instead of improving it for God do nothing with it at all. Of course it would require effort, sacrifice and self-denial to improve each latent talent to the full. But when they are not willing to make this effort, sacrifice and self-denial for the sake of God, where then is their love for God? Even among Christians God's honor would be far more glorious, if instead of being buried under mountains of self-sufficiency and indolence, all the particles of hidden gold could glisten in public sight.

The misuse of talents is different, but it is equally sinful and loveless before God. Here no efforts are spared; sacrifices are freely made; but the object of it all is to secure position for *one-self*; to make good along material lines; to please others; and to become rich, not in God, but in public esteem. Very hard work is done, but from selfish motives, and not for God's dear sake, and for love of God. It is not working while it is day, as a child from love for his Father, in the

sure confidence that he will supply all our needs, but slaving for the sake of providing the means oneself. It is for money and not for God.

And along this line the third sin is easily committed, even the yet worse *abuse* of one's talents in the face of God and of his sacred claims. O, who can count the men who might have shone as stars of the first magnitude in honor of the Lord, but who have abused their noble gifts in breaking down what is holy, in attacking the Word of God, in opposing religion, and at length in the daring attempt to eradicate faith in God from the lives of others. Who does not know them, the singers and the artists, who have abused their glorious talents in behalf of wantonness and artificial tastes, and in drawing souls away from God. How much wit has been abused in mocking at holy things and in making them appear ridiculous. What keenness of insight has degenerated into cunning and tricky slyness for the sake of cherishing lies and dishonesty. What maidenly beauty and loveliness has been sinned away in the passion to please and to cherish impurity of purpose. All this abuse has been banefully expressive of enmity against God and not of love for God.

By the side of this neglect, misuse and abuse of our gifts and talents, Jesus places nothing save the love for God. He does not bind this claim on the conscience of the world, for the world does not know true love, because it knows not God, and all true love proceeds from love for God. But he puts the claim in all its fulness and boundlessness upon you, who confess his holy name. He will not let you go until the scales fall from your eyes and you begin to see that you sin

your life away as long as you do not know that craving after the fullness of love for the Eternal which can not rest until it loves God also with all its strength.

42

“HE THAT LOVETH NOT KNOWETH  
NOT GOD.”

Knowledge of God is eternal life. Not that the one is something which is added to the other, for this knowledge is itself eternal life. This knowledge of God, therefore, can not be limited to what the understanding grasps or does not grasp, or to what has been committed to memory. Knowledge of God truly reflects an ever clearer image in the mirror of our consciousness, but it can never be outward, abstract or a barren jugglery with words. This knowledge comes to us in virtue of our second birth, even as a child knows his father and mother. In bold words, one might say this knowledge is in the blood. It is a Divine atavism. This knowledge is taken hold of in the will, when the will takes hold of the will of God. This knowledge continually increases in the secret walk with God, and it matures in the life of prayer. In the gloomy depths of sorrow and on the sunny heights of joy and prosperity this knowledge brings us ever nearer to the riches that abide. It is a knowledge which comes of itself continually from the stream of life to the surface; which uses our person as its organ; and which at times has moments when it seems that “seeing face to face” as through the veil of the sanctuary is already granted here.

This rich knowledge of God, ever more mature,