

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.

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“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,

ever more full and overflowing with Divine sweetness, must of course be apprehended in the clear consciousness, and be poured over as it were into the doctrinal standards of the Church of Christ, and into our personal confession. Unless this is done, mystical corruption quickly enters in as well as mania for hallucinations and weakening sentimentality. It fills one with sorrow, when in Church and out of it barren school-learning is seen in the place of life, and the knowledge of God is treated as though it were a corpse rather than an inspiring, elastic life pervading the soul. This is not in accord with, but diametrically opposed to, Scripture. Hear the proclamation of the apostle of the Lord: "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love" (I John 4:8).

If this puts it strongly, the fact remains: that by being most like God in what we do we enter into the pure knowledge of God. With this in view consider the forgiveness of sin, and you will understand the mystery of this knowledge of God. The chief question of your life and of your future which concerns you personally is now and always will be whether God forgives you your sin. This is not the way in which it is presented in the preaching of the day. For this makes the great question of life to consist in ridding ourselves of sin and in working out our own sanctification. And this is self-delusion. It is and always will be even as St. Paul and Luther and Calvin bound it upon the soul. The great question of life is, how shall I be just before God? Forgiveness of sin is the way to dying unto sin; not otherwise. How we, who are in the midst of sin until we die, can be called unto sonship with God, to dwell

forever in the Father-house above, this and this alone is the mighty problem of life which immediately touches our relation to God and our knowledge of the Eternal. Thus the riddle of the world and that of our soul always comes down again to this one inquiry: Is there grace for me also, and forgiveness and perfect reconciliation?

It is exceedingly significant that in the Our Father the brief petition for forgiveness links itself as with an iron hand to the declaration, that we ourselves forgive. "Give us this day our daily bread," is immediately followed by the prayer for the daily bread of Divine forgiveness for the life of the soul. And this is joined to the honest and fully-meant declaration: As we forgive those that trespass against us. In other words: You must love, with that best love, which makes you forgive, from the heart, those that have wronged you. And he alone who loves like this knows God. He alone knows God in this his highest love, that though our sins be as scarlet he will make them white as snow, yea, though they have risen mountain-high, he casts them into the depths of the sea.

Actually, therefore, in the Our Father itself is expressed this significant thought which it seemed so bold to utter, that we, by forgiving others, learn to understand that, and how, God forgives us; that is to say, that by loving others we learn to know God in his love for us. And that he that so loveth that he forgives his enemy entirely and altogether from the heart increases in the knowledge of God, learns to know God, and learns to understand how God loves him.

Does this begin with you, so that you love first, and that afterwards God loves you? Far from it. Love never begins with you. Back of the first stirrings of love that ever moved the soul, it was God who put it there. Neither can you ever forgive from yourself. You can forgive in a way which makes your forgiveness itself to be new sin to you, but never in the way which can release the soul. Frequently we hear of a man of the world who forgives. Indeed, as such, you have done this yourself from a sense of superiority, in order to show that your enemy was of too little consequence than that he could offend you; or to make a show of your own virtue in not carrying a grudge, and so to rid yourself of him and to be at peace with yourself.

Such forgiveness, however, has nothing in common with real forgiveness, except appearance and name. What the Our Father means on the other hand is forgiveness from love, which is so warm, honest and real as to make you feel: if God will so forgive me I am saved. For then it is God himself who has quickened this love in my heart, who from his own love has made this love to forgive flow into my soul, and who in my forgiving of my enemy makes me to know his eternal, compassionate and unfathomable love for me, who was once myself his enemy, but now his child.

At the sound of the Apostolic word: "He that loveth not knoweth not God," the conscience as a rule falls asleep with self-satisfaction. What man is there who loves nothing and no one. Even robbers have been known to love an animal, a child or wife at great sacrifice of self. But what

is that? When it says: He that loveth not, it means: He who does not live by love; he who is not governed by love; he who does not rejoice in love, and has no love that can endure the test of fire. And love is put to this fiery test, not with respect to those who are necessary to us, and who are agreeable to us in life, but only with respect to the man who stands in our way, whom we can call our enemy. The genuineness of your love therefore is only evident in forgiveness, even in the forgiveness of him who has offended you, who has opposed you, and who has embittered your very life. To forgive such an one, not from duty but from love, this alone is proof that there is this love in you which makes you learn to know God.

But you say, "This is impossible. I can forgive for God's sake, and also because I myself am sinful. I can forgive from the sense of Christian duty, but not otherwise." And yet Jesus demands it: Love your enemies, bless them that curse you. Consider it well. Thou shalt love God with all thy soul, with all thy heart, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. And the second like unto it is: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself; and he is thy enemy. Not only must I love my neighbor also, but this second commandment is like unto the first. When it is asked: "How can this be?" we reply: only when you love in your neighbor what there is of God in him. Nothing more. Not his sin, neither his wrong committed against you. These you should rather hate. But even as you love nature because it shows forth the power and glory of the Lord, and an animal because it is wonderfully organ-

ized and endowed with instinct by its Maker, so you should much more love your neighbor as man, because God has created him after his image and has endowed him with wonderful talents and gifts.

If all this has been corrupted and spoiled and has become hopelessly satanic, so that there is nothing more of God in him, then love ceases and turns into hatred, even as it should. Satan also was a most wonderful creature, but he has sinned away his all, and therefore every child of God hates this monster. But however deeply fallen he may be, man in this life is never like this. The murderer on the cross rejoices before the throne. Jesus has renewed unto life those who have wandered farthest away from the fold. And this is the glory of the Gospel that in every man, thus also in your enemy, there is a point of connection where grace may enter in. By this alone is the gospel our salvation. And he who for God's sake heartily loves this remaining spark even in those who have wandered farthest away, loves with a love which learns to know God in this his eternal love wherewith, while we are yet sinners, he also loves us.

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**"CLEARLY SEEN AND UNDERSTOOD BY
THE THINGS THAT ARE MADE."**

From of old the Church has pointed to nature and to the Bible as the sources of our knowledge of God; that is: the knowledge of God which comes to us from without; which can be expressed in abstract ideas; and therefore has a place in