

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

Christian creeds. This does not include experimental knowledge of God, which comes to us personally from spiritual experience, from communion of saints and secret fellowship with God.

The knowledge of God which comes to us from without is majestic. Confining ourselves to what nature brings, the Reformed confession truly and beautifully declares, that all creation is as a living book, the letters of which are the creatures. But the book of nature brings us no further than the recognition of the attributes of God, his power, wisdom, goodness, and so much more. It has nothing to say about life in the spiritual kingdom, of direction and rule by the Holy Ghost, of making our will one with the will of God, of having Divine love poured out into our hearts, of drawing closer to him, who is love, or of mystic contemplation.

The Confession is a banner with clear inscriptions, which we lift up before the world in order to declare the glory and majesty of him whom we worship; but it is not the intimate communication of that knowledge of God which comes from the knowledge of self and from one's own experience.

In these meditations we have put this more intimate knowledge of God in the foreground. Devotional literature is not acceptable to the world, because it speaks from and in behalf of communion of saints and from spiritual experience to those who have enjoyed the same, or at least know the yearning after it. But we have repeatedly sounded the note of warning against sentimental emotionalism in this sanctuary of mysticism. So we come to the knowledge of God

from nature, not that we might interpret it in a material sense, but rather that we might weave it into our spiritual life.

In this respect also the erring soul frequently impoverishes itself. It has been learned by heart, and in general it is agreed, that Divine attributes exhibit themselves in the works of nature. From these we can infer that God is great in power, in wisdom and in goodness. But now that this is known, we are through with the book of nature. The sum of the knowledge of God, which it brought, is made out. So the book is put aside, and there is no personal, lasting impression of the majesty of God which nature was intended to convey. No one looks for it. No account is made of it. And there is almost a feeling of impatience, when in behalf of their superficial religion the men of the world appeal by preference to nature. It saddens one to hear it said with certain exultation, that the Church has served its day, that the Bible has lost its significance, and that there is a far richer religious joy "in the temple of uncut wood."

But here the faithful are at fault. However much they deserve praise for their love of the Church of Christ, and however precious the treasures are, that have come to them from the Scripture, they should not have been indifferent to the fact, that we are equally called to remember that the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, i. e. from nature, even his eternal power and Godhead (Rom. I:20).

There are three progressive stages in the knowledge of God. It begins with nature, it goes on

to man as created after God's Image, and finally is made perfect in Christ, in so much as He is the express Image of God's Person. And these three do not stand loosely side by side, but form, if we may say so, a climbing pyramid. Nature forms the broad ground surface, it ascends in the rich unfolding of human life, and reaches its highest point in the Incarnation of the Eternal Word.

Christ is not clearly seen, nor understood apart from the knowledge of man, and man is not clearly seen and understood apart from a sympathetic touch upon unconscious nature. Hence the faithful should always live under the deep impression of the majesty of God in nature. Believers must live the life of mankind, i. e. history, over again in themselves. Only thus can they obtain the clear, full, living impression of Christ, who reveals God to them in the riches of his grace.

In this way Almighty God began, and continues until now, the revelation of himself. First in unconscious nature. When this was ended, as a richer revelation of himself, He created man after his own image and likeness. And when man had corrupted his way, and in part had worked out sin to its baneful end, as the richest revelation of himself, God sent his Son.

These three links of the holy chain perfectly fit into one another. First there is the material world. In this world of matter man is created from dust. And in our flesh and blood comes the revelation of the Son of God, as man.

The starting point here is, that God is invisible. Let us understand this well. In himself the

Eternal Being is not invisible, and we are definitely told that once we shall see God face to face. We shall know him, even as we are known. Intellectual knowledge, and even spiritual knowledge is not the highest. The highest is vision; clear, immediate sight. Seeing without intermedium; without mirror; seeing essential Being itself. How this will be possible, is the mystery of the life to come, although however latent, the organ for this is even now present in the soul. It is not given us to use it in the present. This is the dispensation of limitations, of the finite, and of the things that are bound to form, color and dimensions. And since God is not limited, and has no form, dimension nor end, He is, in this dispensation, the Invisible to us. There is no clear vision of God in this life. The question was, how in this life, God could reveal himself to us in his Majesty, even in such a way as would crystalize itself as a clear and fixed impression in us. And God has realized this aim, 1st by revelation in nature of his Omnipotence and Divinity in dimensions, which give us the impression of the infinite, even through we know they are finite; this is what we call the sublime; 2nd by the imprint of his life in the personal existence of man, creating him after His image; and 3rd by the restoration in full of this ruined and broken image, and by showing it to us, in Christ.

Hence God himself is in and behind nature. Hence nature is not a finished work of art, that exists by itself outside of and apart from God. But God himself gives us to see and to hear his Majesty in the starry heavens by night, in the colors of light by day, in the wonders of the

vegetable and animal-world, in the splendor of the sea, in the roar of the hurricane, sometimes even in the rolling of his thunder. In all this, is, and lives, the God Whom we worship. In the throbbings of the life of nature throbs his own Divine life. Whatever moves in creation, flows through it, and addresses itself to us from it, is the inner motion of God's own life. All nature is nothing else than a living, throbbing veil back of which God hides himself, and in whose folds and undulations he reveals Himself to us, clothed with Majesty. In the profound saying of the Apostle: The Invisible God is not only understood in nature, but is also clearly seen.

This clear sight is the all-important matter. Though this screen, this veil, this investiture of nature, God must be seen in his Omnipotence and Divinity. We are not to look upon nature as upon a dead palace which is beautiful by reason of its vast variety of lines and forms, but we must feel and know, that standing before the firmament, the cloudy heavens and the varied scenes of earth, we stand before God. That it is He who presents himself to us in it all, enters into us through it all, addresses us by it all, and who throughout the length and the breadth of it all gives us to behold the workings of the fingers of his Majesty. It is God who makes the lark sing for us. It is God who cleaves the sea, so that its waters foam. It is God who calls forth the sun from his tent, and at even-tide directs his return therteto. It is God who every evening lights the twinkling fires in the stars. It is God whose voice we hear in the thunder. And only he who in all this, feels the

very life of God, and clearly sees in it all, the Divinity of Omnipotence, understands the glory of the Invisible.

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“AND THE SECOND IS LIKE
UNTO IT.”

God is invisible. He hides himself behind the veil of nature. But the folds of it move in undulations and in vibrations, from which we perceive that God behind it, is close by. In everything that lives in nature, rustles, throbs, and stirs itself, we feel the pulsebeat of God's own life. The Scripture has nothing to say of a dead nature, but in all sorts of ways it makes us watch that we might hear “the voice of God” and his “footsteps” in nature. When the earth trembles, it is because He is “wroth” and makes “the foundations of the mountains to shake.” In the darkened firmament “God bows the heaven and comes down.” In the whirlwind “God rode upon a cherub and flew.” When “the deep abysses of water” foam, it is God who “rebukes” them and drives them forth with “the blast of his nostrils.” The flashes of lightning are arrows, which He shoots forth into the firmament. When it grows dark the stars appear, because God calls them, and behold not one faileth. He drenches the mountains from his heights. He sends forth the fountains, so that they walk among the hills. He makes grass to grow for beasts, and for man bread to come up from the ground. It is He who cleaves the sea, so that its waves foam. And he whose ear is spiritually