

wherever they may look, there will be nothing behind which to hide from the sight of the majesty of God. It then becomes the heat of a sun which does not cherish, but sears. The Scripture calls it hell, and so it is, but only by what God through his sacred presence makes it. If God could be done away, or if one could withdraw himself from the Eternal, or hide from before his Face, hell would be ended. But this is impossible. God's holy presence will not cease to deluge the lost, and that is eternal death. It is well with him, therefore, who in this life has sought the knowledge of God in Christ. After death this knowledge will be for him the drinking in of Divine sympathy. But woe to him who shall only learn to know God in the judgment. For him this knowledge will be nothing but horror.

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### “DYING HE WORSHIPPED.”

In connection with the knowledge of what lies beyond the grave the moment of dying is deeply significant. The way in which we see others die, and in which we die ourselves, contributes to our knowledge of God. In this hour many things that stood between God and the soul fall away. We then stand on the threshold of the unseen life, and the words of the Psalmist: “Our feet stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem,” are applicable to the entering in through the gates of the new Jerusalem.

Let us take dying in this connection in its real true sense. Dying is an act. In our natural

birth we are passive. Life then only begins. But when God has privileged us to reach the years of maturity, and the end has come, the servants and handmaidens of the Lord should not be dragged out by death against their will, but of themselves they should face it with a will. And by the way in which they do this, they should reveal the fruit of their labors of faith. The first Christians sang hymns of praise as they carried out their dead. And St. Paul said: "For me to die is gain, for to be with Christ is by far the best." Thus dying was the last struggle, but not of one who defends his life against the waylayer. It was much rather the struggle of the hero, who bravely went ahead, in order jubilantly to come to God.

Indeed, we may not court death. It is our bounden duty to guard our life unto the end. Suicide is no dying, but self-destruction. Dying is an exhibition of courage. Suicide is cowardice. It is failure. It is lack of daring to continue the battle of life. It is desertion from the ranks. But though until the end, as long as there is hope and chance, nothing must be left untried to continue God's service on earth until he issues forth the call,—when it comes, the smile of sacred joy is more in place than the heaving of a sigh. He who believes has always confessed that he does not belong here, but that his home is above. Dying must make this real. In dying the seal must be put upon all our life of faith. Dying is nothing to a child of God save the entrance into an eternal life. And this it can not be, unless it is an act. We must not be overtaken, lifted up and carried off. We must hear the call, and

answer in reply: "Behold, here I am, Lord," and then bravely enter the valley of the shadow of death and go through it, knowing that the Lord awaits our coming, and that by his hand he leads us through this darkness to the light.

Let it be said at once that such ideal dying is rare. The woes and sorrows of death often rob dying of its ideal, exalted and sacred character. A state of coma not infrequently prevents conscious and willing dying as an act of the soul. It even happens, alas, that a narcotic potion is administered, whereby dying is degenerated into a sleeping of oneself away. As long however as the person himself is irresponsible in this matter, let not such an impossibility of dying manfully in the faith on the part of a child of God be turned into reproach. In this matter also God is sovereign. As a matter of fact, the Lord frequently withholds heroic dying in the full consciousness of faith.

Care however should be taken not to condone too much along this line. The Scripture always avoids sentimentalism. It rarely pictures a death-bed scene. In fact it only outlines the death of Christ on Golgotha, and that of Jacob. Of the latter we are told that when he felt the end draw near, he strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed, and leaning upon the top of his staff, worshipped, and blessed his sons (Heb. 11:21).

Jacob strengthened himself, that is to say, he did not allow himself to be overcome by weakness and regret, but struggled against it, took hold of himself, and gathered together the last of his

waning strength, in order that in dying he might glorify his God. He had no thought of caring for himself, of being concerned about his own spiritual estate, or about breathing forth his latest breath. And when he blesses his sons, it is no family affair, but an holy prophesying that through his sons, as founders of the tribes of Israel, the kingdom of God should come and flourish, and the Messiah would arise. "Until Shiloh come!" this was the zenith of his prophecy. He blesses his sons, but in and through them his prophecy points to the coming of the Kingdom of heaven. Hence the Epistle to the Hebrews describes this as his greatest act of faith. "By faith, Jacob when he was dying, blessed his sons and worshipped" (Heb. 11:21).

We do not deny that in dying, darkness can overtake the soul. Satan can be let loose to harass our latest hour. But as a rule, we may say that life is given us for the purpose of making sure our faith, and that in dying the results of this assurance must be shown to the glory of the Lord. And therefore we should not allow ourselves in dying passively to be overcome by weakness and grief. In the article of death the will, the courage and the elasticity of faith must still struggle against the weakness of the flesh. In this holy moment, the spirit, and not the flesh should conquer. Such was the case with Jacob. He strengthened himself in order to be able to die in a godly manner. Had he not done so, in all probability he too might have passed away in a semi-conscious state. But this he did not do. His

mighty spirit shook itself awake. In dying he glorified God. In doing this he left a shining example for every Christian to imitate.

There is a meeting with God in such dying, which enriches Divine knowledge, both in the one who is about to depart and in those who watch at the bedside. It is generally reported, as a most desirable way of dying, that one quietly and peaceably fell asleep. This almost always means that without giving any further signs of life, the patient passed away in an unconscious state of mind. This may very well be the case with unbelievers also. Of those who die without Christ it is continually said, that they died equally quietly and calmly; even perhaps with less perturbation of mind, than many a child of God that is harrassed by anxiety and doubt. Nothing of a serious nature was said to them. They themselves made no reference to anything. The physician assured them that there was no need of alarm. And so the patient passed quietly away, without having known any terror of death. And others, seeing this, were impressed that there is really nothing to dying; it was all so quiet and gentle. Then came flowers to cover the bier. Visits of condolence are no longer paid. In this way nothing connected with death is spoken of. And when the funeral is over, ordinary matters form the topic of conversation, but not the things that are eternal. And thus the mighty lesson of dying is lost. Death ceases to be preacher of deeper seriousness. And the Lord of life and of death is not remembered.

We, Christians, should not encourage this evil

practice. And yet, we do it, when imitating the way of the world we say of such dead that they "peaceably passed away." Not calmly and peacefully, but fighting and conquering in the Savior, should be the dying bed in the Christian family. He who has not the heart for this, but is careful to spare the patient all serious and disquieting thought, is not merciful, but through unbelief he is cruel.

In dying Jacob has worshipped. On the death bed one can pray. One can pray for help in the last struggle. Intercession can be made for those that are to be left behind, and for the Kingdom of God. By itself such prayer is beautiful. On one's deathbed to appear before the face of God. This last prayer on earth, when every veil drops away, and the latest supplication is addressed to God, who awaits us in the courts of everlasting light. Such prayer teaches those, who stand by, to pray. Such prayer exerts an overwhelming, fascinating influence.

But Jacob did more. In dying he worshipped. In dying he felt impelled to offer unto God the sacrifice of Worship, and to render unto him praise and thanksgiving and honor; to lose himself in the greatness and majesty, in the grace and mercy of God; and thus to offer him the fruit of the lips, better than he had been able to do in life. Such solemn worship on the deathbed is the summary of the worship which we have offered unto God in life; except that now it is felt more deeply, more intensely, immediately preceding the moment, in which among angels and saints above, we shall bring God the honor of his Name.

All the knowledge of God that has been acquired before concentrates itself in such deathbed worship, and in that moment it is wonderfully illumined, enriched and deepened. Now the dying saint knows God more clearly than he ever did before. He almost sees God face to face..

This worship also bears fruit in behalf of those who watch and minister at the bedside. At a deathbed, love is strongly aroused. The beginnings of mourning already struggle in the heart. This makes it more receptive than ever, and the impression which it receives at such a time is overwhelming. Ordinarily it is taken for granted that one believes. But frequently no indications of it are seen. The contrary rather is suggested by narrow-mindedness and sin. But when the moment of dying has come, and children see it of their father, a husband of his beloved wife, that in this affecting hour the faith does not fail, but is maintained; that at the gate of eternity its language becomes more animated and forceful, and it seems that one hears an utterance of the soul after God, then the prayer of worship from the lips of the dying brings you as it were in the very presence of God, and makes you feel that he is nearer at hand than you ever knew before.

Much dying would be far different than it now is, had life been different; if in dying, faith would waken up more fully; and if God's child would understand that even in dying he has to fulfil a duty, which he owes to God and to his fellowmen. Then dying would be far more than now a preaching of sacred reality, and the results of it would be effective in life to the honor of God.

## “GIVE YOURSELF TO FASTING AND PRAYER.”

It is a contradiction in terms, that while members of the churches of the Reformation profess to live according to the precepts of Holy Writ, they do not fast. It is certainly a Scriptural rule of life, not only in the Old, but also in the New Testament. Christ himself fasted forty days and forty nights. St. Paul exhorts the children of God, that they give themselves not only to prayer but also to fasting. What is possibly stronger still, Christ has said, that there is a kind of evil spirits that “goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (Matt. 17:21).

In the days of Jesus' ministry on earth the question arose: “Why do the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not.” Though it may be inferred from this that in those days the disciples did not observe the Jewish fasts, Jesus settles the question by saying: “When the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, then shall they fast” (Mark 2:18-20). History shows that from the beginning the Church of Christ has practiced fasting. We learn from Acts 13:2 that at Antioch, where the followers of Jesus were first called Christians, as they fasted and prayed, the Holy Ghost gave them a revelation. It is well known that in Roman, Greek and Nestorian communions fasting is observed. It is also known that in Reformation times, days of prayer went hand in hand with fasting. Is it not therefore in contradiction with the significance which Scripture and history attach to fastings, that among us fast-