

"TO WHOMSOEVER THE SON WILL REVEAL HIM"

When we read in Romans 1:20 that "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made," and in Matthew 11:27 that "no one knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him," these two passages seemingly contradict each other, but not in fact. Every man can know God in all sorts of ways. This was not only so in Paradise, but still continues so in this fallen world, even in those parts that are under the curse of heathendom. The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth his handiwork, Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor country, there is no people known, even unto the world's end, which does not hear the voice of the heavens. And not only does nature, which pulsates with life, pour forth speech for every one who does not purposely stop his ear; but there is a speech of God in the conscience, that goes forth to every people and nation. It is not recorded of the first created human pair in Paradise, but of the heathen in the corrupted age of the Cæsars that they "shew the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness. and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another" (Rom. 2:15). The form in which the knowledge of God and of his Will expresses itself, may be idolatrous and oftentimes offensive, but the im-

pulse from which it proceeds, is never anything else, then the mistaken interpretation of the speech of God in nature and in the conscience. This is the seed of religion of which Calvin bore witness, the increased knowledge of God and the given knowledge of God, which was ever confessed by our fathers. This was not confessed for the sake of glorifying man, who fell, but contrariwise, to render the sinner inexcusable before God. Fallen humanity as such, and every individual sinner in the same, stands deeply guilty before God, because he whose eye is fully open, and whose conscience reacts properly, perceives the eternal power and Godhead of the Lord Jehovah in himself, and everywhere around him in nature and in history. Such being the case, how are we to understand the words of Christ, that no one knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him?

It does not say, that no one can have any knowledge of God save through the Son, but that no one knoweth the Father, except he to whom the Son has revealed him. Of Satan and his angels it is clearly stated that they know God and tremble. This could not be otherwise. Satan's fall was nothing else than rebellion against God, evil lust to dethrone the Almighty and to put himself in his place. And how could this have been thinkable, unless he had known the existence and omnipotence of God? But every one understands at once that although Satan knows God, he has never known the Father. He who knows the Father is comforted and reconciled. Satan, on the contrary, whenever he thinks of God,

trembles. The knowledge of the Father maketh rich, gives peace and eternal rest. The knowledge which Satan has of God makes him tremble. This is the difference between Satan and a great sinner on earth. While the criminal can take a sleeping draught to quiet his conscience and to forget God, Satan can not do this. This sleeping-draught of sin is impossible for him. His perception of God's Almighty presence speaks to him loudly from moment to moment, and therefore he trembles. From this the miserable estate of the lost in the eternal fire is equally clear. The ungodly in the earth can put their conscience to sleep and as a rule live free from anxiety in the midst of sin. There are those whose consciences are so seared, that only now and then, in moments of intense commotion, they feel the wrath of God, and for the rest of the time live on in their sin, without any disturbing fear of God, just because they close their eyes and stop their ears. But when once this life is ended, and they go into eternity, this too will end. Then their eyes will fully open, so that they will never be able to close them again, and their ears will be unstopped, so that they will never be able to stop them again. And with open eye and ear eternally to be subject to the omnipotence of God will be their miserable destiny.

If no one can know the Father save as the Son reveals him unto us, it is evident, that this does not imply the general knowledge of God, which is within human reach everywhere, but the knowledge of God's everlasting compassion, which the sinner can not share, until reconciled in Christ he has become a child of God, and has

learned to know God as his Father, and himself as this heavenly Father's child.

There is no mention here of a doctrine, which is committed to memory or of a revelation that has been given in so many words, which we are to make our own, but of a knowledge which spiritual experience of personal redemption and reconciliation imparts to us. This certainly implies a revelation to the understanding. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true" (I John 5:20). All revelation begins with the Word. When the Christ appeared, he went through the land preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. The gospel itself is a glad tidings of salvation which is to come, and of redemption which is announced. But this preaching, this glad evangel, these words of the gospel are not enough. These can be learned by rote. These can be committed to memory, but they can not bring us the knowledge of the Father. This glad evangel by itself, even though we accept it in its entirety, and without hesitation, never brings us further than to say "Lord, Lord!" It is with this as in the days of Hosea, (8:2) when all the people said: "Lord, we thy Israel, know thee," even while the anger of the Lord was kindled against them to the point of destruction, just because they knew not God. Even if therefore this doctrine, this message, this word of the gospel was carried into the world first by the apostles, and after that by preaching, and by the Scripture, by itself it can not impart the knowledge of the Father. This knowledge only comes, when the glorified Christ through the Holy Spirit

imparts unto us the riches of his reconciliation, when he seeks us out as sinners, and makes us children of God. Only when Christ has made us children of God, does the knowledge of the Father become our blessed and glorious possession.

But again, Christ does not come to us for the first time in the work of redemption. He is the Eternal Word, which was before all things with God and was God. All nature, with the revelation of God which it contains is created by him. He is the Word. No speech goes forth from nature without him. Without the Eternal Word nature would be dead and dumb, and would have nothing to say to us. And not only has nature been created by the Eternal Word, and endowed with a language of its own, but we ourselves, in the midst of nature, would not have come into this world, but for Christ. The whole scope of our human nature is from him. We too have been created by him. Our whole spiritual disposition, and our capacity to overhear and understand nature, have been implanted in us by him. The same is true of our moral being. Christ has given us our conscience. He is himself the conscience of mankind. The fellowship of our hearts with the moral world order, our perceptions of good and evil, of right and wrong, of what fills one with horror and inspires one through beauty, of selfishness and love, of light and darkness—these have all come to us from the Eternal Word.

Hence it can not be said either that we know God apart from Christ, or that only in and by Christ this known God is revealed to us as our Father. For the broad foundation of the

knowledge of God, on which the knowledge of the Father is built, comes to us from the Eternal Word. The knowledge of the Father is not a flower, that has been wafted down from the heavenly regions, and has been tied by Christ to the withered stem of human nature; but the withered state of our sinful nature has been revived by him with a new life, and the knowledge of the Father has been engrafted upon the knowledge of God that comes to us through nature, and through the conscience, by virtue of our creation from the Eternal Word. Hence these are not two kinds of knowledge, without an inner relation, standing externally side by side and joined together. But it is one knowledge of God, which comes to us from the Eternal Word, which arises in us through the instrumentality of nature and of the conscience, and which in and through the redemptive work of the Messiah is elevated and carried up to the knowledge of the Father.

It is a detriment to the faith, therefore, which avenges itself bitterly, when he who is converted rests content with the work of redemption, as though it comprises the sole glory of Christ, and abandons the knowledge of God from nature and the conscience to the world. He who, reconciled in Christ, kneels as God's child before his Heavenly Father, must let the light that has appeared to him in Christ, operate reflexively upon the revelation of God in nature and upon the revelation of God in human nature, both of which have their origin in Christ. St. John begins his Gospel by pointing out the relation which Christ sustains to the creation of the world,

to the creation of our own nature, and to the creation of our own person. And this is the result. Thanks to our reconciliation in Christ the voice of God in nature and the voice of God in our conscience obtain a different sound. They increase in clearness and in significance. And by the opened ear they are heard with a clarity which blends the life of grace with the life of nature in glorious harmony and turns the whole world, and all history including our own lives, into one Mighty revelation of the Father, whom we worship in the face of his Son.

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“I AM CONTINUALLY
WITH THEE.”

We may sit for hours by the side of a person and hold no fellowship with him. In long railway journeys we may spend several days in the company of others, and not so much as learn their names, or know anything about them. On the other hand we may be miles apart from a friend, and be continually engaged with him, so that we scarcely think of anything but of him, and in spirit enjoy closest fellowship with his spirit. It may sound strangely, but such is the fact. A mother who has lost her darling child was never so closely united in soul with the soul of her child as during the first hours after death, when the little one went far away from her.

Fellowship of soul with soul may be greatly aided by personal presence, facial expression and mutual exchange of thoughts, but is not dependent upon them. In close fellowship of soul with soul