

of the Lord's supper springs from the focus of this fellowship. The holy supper bears witness to him of the glory of Christ, but only in the congregation, not without it. Hence no higher and holier institution could have been given to men, than when "in the night in which he was betrayed" Christ brake the bread and poured the wine, and called the Holy Supper into being. This is the centrum; here all lines become one, along which fellowship is established between the soul and God.

Nothing therefore is more heinous, than the sinful doing of those who by quarrelling and by passionate contention for the right of particular views cause this fellowship of God's saints to weaken and to grow faint. Our Savior gave us a new commandment, even that we love one another. This new love, which he commanded, is the tenderest love that is thinkable on earth, since it is in the flood-tide of this new love, that God will draw near unto us, and lift us up to himself. And what does he do, who, failing to understand this new love, abuses the church and this holy fellowship of love for the sake of propagating his own particular views, but break down Salem, destroy the tabernacle of the Lord, and as far as he is able obstruct fellowship with God?

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"THE NIGHT IS FAR SPENT."

After conversion we are in an intermediate state until death. The night is far spent, the day is at hand, but it is not yet noon. That only comes when the glory of Christ shall break in upon all spheres. Until that hour we are ever approach-

ing the day in its fulness, though in fact we walk in twilight. It is light, but that light is dim. Even after conversion we continue therefore provisionally in a certain kind of sleep, and the convert can only gradually escape its after-effects. Such was the case in the days of St. Paul, when the change was far greater for the convert than now. Speaking for himself and for the converts at Rome the Apostle emphatically declares: "It is now (i. e. so and so many years after their conversion)—it is now high time to awake out of this sleep (which was still upon us) for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." And then he adds: "The night is far spent, the day is at hand" (Rom. 13:11, 12).

This detracts nothing from the incontrovertible truth, that he who came to conversion today, and tomorrow falls asleep in Jesus, is sure of everlasting salvation. But it does say, that he who after conversion is given yet many years of life upon earth, passes from the mists into ever clearer light, gets farther away from the night, and is conscious of the ever closer approach of the light of day. In nature there is no sudden disappearance of night, in order to give place with equal suddenness to the day and the noontide sun. There are transitions in nature from darkness into dawn and from dawn into broad daylight. Transitions which are of longer duration in some parts of the world, than in others, but which occur everywhere. And so it is in the spiritual life. The new convert does not become holy in his purposes, tendencies and manner of life, all at once. From "being alienated from the life of God" he does not at once come into full fellow-

ship with God. Where it was night in the soul, the sun does not immediately after conversion stand at the zenith. Here also are transitions. Beginning with a first ray of light; a first parting of clouds; a first breaking up of mists until a glow from higher spheres strikes the eye of the soul. And then it goes farther and farther. From grace to grace. More quickly with one, and with another more slowly. First a waking out of the sleep of error and sin. Then a shaking of oneself loose from this sleep. Afterward a waking up. And presently a going out into the light. And in this transition we have the incessantly moving power of the Christian life. Not to continue standing where we stand, but going on, and going on ever further. It is first a star that rises out of Jacob; presently the sun of salvation is at the horizon; and at length the sun, which sheds clear light on those that wandered about in darkness. It is all one course of triumph and victory for those to whom the lack of such light would mean eternal night, but it is a growing light, that ever rises higher, and at every moment becomes brighter; and Christian life would be worthless in this world, if the eye of the soul, as it gradually becomes accustomed to stronger light of grace, did not obtain thereby an ever clearer insight into the riches of God's mercy.

This brings a threefold growth. Growth in inner strength; growth in the more effective exhibition of the powers of the kingdom; and growth in fellowship with God, which is the heart of all religion. There is growth in inner strength through the fuller strength imparted from the heavenly kingdom. The night is far spent, and light shines

ever more clearly in the soul. God shows this favor in the personal life. Increasing brightness in our personal skies. Less night and more day in which ever more and ever clearer light is sown on our pathway. As an effect of this inner growth, there is greater exhibition of power. He who must travel in the early dawn makes little headway, but when clearer daylight illumines the way he quickens his pace. Hence the exhortation of the apostle: "Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the whole armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day." For as long as light and darkness strive for mastery in the soul, there is continual hesitancy and slipping of the foot. But with more light there comes more moral courage. We become more animated, we become more bold in holy undertakings, and more light shines out from us upon others. Instead of tottering, the step becomes firm; instead of work half-done, labors are finished and made perfect. Nor is this all. For however far we may be developed along moral lines, development in piety is more significant, and the rich gain which the clearer in-shining of heavenly light brings, is the growing tenderness of our fellowship with God.

Dark night prevails in the human heart at large through the oppression of error and sin. God truly is, and he truly is close by, but though mankind may feel its way if haply it may find him, it is not aware of him, it does not see him, and discovers nothing of his holy presence. Thick darkness compasses it about and makes it feel oppressed, and the sense of uncertainty, and of anxiety, as a serpent of suspicion, creeps into the

heart. This thick darkness is the explanation of all idolatry and of all heathen oppression. And therefore Simeon rejoices in Christ as in "a light," so great, so beautiful, which having come down from the throne of heaven, lightens the darkened vision of the Gentiles. The densest darkness of the peoples is that they know not God, that endless night excludes them from God, that no ray of heavenly light illumines their pathway, and that, without God in the world, they hasten on to judgment.

Every convert therefore is called a child of light. He does not merely walk in the light, but from it he is born a child of God. Light in the soul from above, even though but a single ray is perceived, is inward wealth. It is peace in lieu of distress, rest in lieu of care, trust in lieu of despair, courage in lieu of inward faintness. This light shines on his way, it makes him know his own heart and the heart of his fellowmen, it brings wisdom in place of self-conceit, and ennobles all human existence. But highest and holiest of all, this light discloses to him more and more the way of access to God; it lifts the ban that separated and excluded him from God; and now by degrees begins the tender, blessed life which enters upon the secret walk with God, which makes him aware of God at every step of life's way, as his Father who loves him, and as his Shepherd who leads him. This fellowship and walk with God, this dwelling in the house of the Lord, is not always the same that it provisionally was, but it advances, it makes progress, gains in intimacy, warmth and clearness. Not only is the night, that hid God from the inner eye, far spent,

but he gets farther and farther away from it. The transition is continuous from night into clearer day, until at length there is fellowship with God, which the world neither knows nor understands, but which to him is highest reality, the source, the ever free-flowing fountain of the strength of his life.

Many Christian people, alas, after conversion love to remain in slumber, and consequently lose the joy of this closer communion with God. They are the sick ones among the brethren, from whom no virtue can go out. There are others, however, God be praised, who know nothing of standing still, who enter ever more deeply into the secret of the infinite, and now waken every morning with God, labor all day long with God, and lay themselves down at night to sleep with God. And they are the salt of the earth, and of God's church among the saints, and they keep the church from desecration and from languishing away in death.

“WITHOUT GOD IN THE WORLD.”

Not only with individuals, but in broad and influential circles denial of God breaks forth, stalks abroad, and puts every mask aside. This was different even twenty years ago. Individual atheists openly boasted of infidelity, and thereby aroused aversion, which with many turned into abhorrence. Many people were done with religion in any form, but to be taken for atheists was considered an insult. They were not atheists. They had broken with traditional views of Divine things, but the eye of their soul was open to the eternal,