

“EVERY ONE WHICH SEETH THE SON.”

The one thing of all others among men is to believe on Christ. The Scripture announces in every way that God has given his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. To this is added with equal emphasis that he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him (St. John 3:16, 36). When asked what the great work is, which we have to do in obedience to God, Jesus answered: The work of God which ye have to do, is, to believe in me. Faith in Christ shall once bring about the division in eternity, and this same faith leads to decision here on earth. Not a certain general religiousness, not personal pious inclination, and not a general faith on God, but solely and very definitely faith in Jesus, in its presence or absence, determines eternal destiny, and decides the question already here below whether one belongs to the flock of the Good Shepherd, or whether he stands outside of it.

The whole Gospel hinges on this faith. The entire Revelation of God—read it in Heb. XI—from the days of Paradise was directed to this faith in Christ. The *sola fide*, through faith alone, is still in another sense than that in which Luther used it, the fundamental thesis of all higher human life. There are also all sorts of other marks and signs and utterances of soul and relationships among men which indicate another tendency in our life, or which can impart another tendency to it. And all this can have worth and significance, but only in a small circle, for a

limited time and in a given measure. Sympathy, inclination, preference, affection, all blossom with silvery blossoms, but never dominate all of life, do not change the ground of existence, and have no all-deciding and ever-abiding results. Faith in the Son of God stands far above everything else that flourishes in the world and acts as a uniting and inspiring factor among men. All other things are in part, lack the deep fulness of life, and are as the grass that flourishes, and when the wind passes over it, withers. What alone remains as foundation of the inner life, what gives the tone to life and forever guarantees life in endless unfolding, is faith in the only begotten Son of the Father, or as it was said in the prison at Philippi: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." This is the all-embracing, all-permeating, and in itself complete and perfect happiness, that endures unto the eternal morning.

We need not consider here what this faith is, how it operates, wherein it consists. It is a mystery which the church of Christ has tried again and again to express in words, but which she has never been able to state in all its fulness and in so many words, so as to exclude all misunderstanding. When the church outlined faith too distinctly it led to cold and barren intellectualism without spiritual fervor; when she entered more deeply into the mystery of the hidden life of the heart, she frequently crowned a scorching mysticism, which presently volatilized in excitement. But the sum and substance of it always was, that a lost world, an undone human heart, cried out for deliverance, and that age upon age all human ingenuity, heroism, and tender compas-

sion had tried to provide it, but in vain, until at length God brought it. He imparted it, not in the form of a gift, but in a most holy person; who was not one taken from among us, but one who came down from heaven; and not as an angel, which as God's servant and our helper stands outside of both Divine and human natures, but as one sent from heaven and come down to us as the only begotten Son of the Father, who having entered into our nature, brought God himself to our view. "Philip, he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayeth thou then, show us the Father" (John 14:9)

And therefore faith in Christ can never be anything else than the highest, the one and only thing. When God gives himself in Christ to the world, and enters so fully into our human life that this Son takes our nature upon himself, that the Word becomes flesh, which angels hail as Immanuel, God with us, the absolute and in itself complete revelation of Divine compassion has come to us. Hence it can neither go higher nor farther, since the end of what is eternally complete in itself has been reached. Nothing therefore transcends faith in Christ. Nothing can be placed by the side of it. There is nothing with which it can be compared. It transcends all human thought. It can neither be substituted nor excelled by anything else. Faith in Christ brings salvation, or there is none; without Christ there is no salvation for the lost world or for the heart that in itself is lost.

For the rising of this star of faith in the life of the soul Jesus demands an act on the part of the soul. Not, as is self-evident, that any action of

the soul can ever create faith in Christ, produce it, imprint and implant it. The seed of faith is a Divine sowing. Faith in Jesus is as much a gift as Christ himself is. Faith is a work of Divine compassion, wrought by the Holy Ghost. But all faith in Christ has this peculiarity and necessity, that it must be taken up into the consciousness, and that therefore it enters into the consciousness with irresistible power. Faith enters in as a sensation, as an impelling force, as an inspiring principle, and as a power which governs and changes all of life. And in behalf of our consciousness faith is bound to obtain a content, a form, an appearance. It brings also emotions with it, even unspeakable emotions of uncommon power. But above and outside of all this, it also has an intellectual content, which needs to be understood, a content which fills itself with what we know from the sacred Revelation, of the person of the Son of God, of his life on earth, of his works, of his words, of his sitting at God's right hand, and of his continued activity from heaven. This is what is learned by heart; there is memory work in it; memory of names, facts, conversations; memory of words and deeds, mortal sufferings and glorious resurrection. Only memory does not cherish faith. Ideas and faith are not essentially one. Learning ignites no glow in faith. And therefore Jesus declares, that in order to become ever clearer, stronger and more inspiring, the one thing faith needs is, that you see the Son of God. "Everyone which seeth the son, and believeth on him, has everlasting life" (St. John 6:40). This seeing of the Son of God alone brings the rapture of

soul, which maintains the glow of faith and makes it to burn brightly.

The entire content of the memory must be reduced from the memory to the unity of the image of the Son of God. It must all be united and brought together, in order to portray this image in sacred purity to the eye of the soul. And where this image makes itself perfect in you, all inner pressure and sensation and all holy emotion must fuse with this image in you, that you may enjoy it. This living image of the Son of God must impress you, and attract you, must not let go of you, must engage you and bring you into sacred ecstasy. Not as a knowing after the flesh. It must be a spiritual vision, but always such that the name of Jesus passes over into the person of the Christ, and that from the person of Christ the inner Divine being takes hold of you and with magnetic power attracts you. No glorification of Jesus, as in the days of Feith and Van Alphen, which brings the words to the lips: "Oh, were Jesus still on earth, at once I'd hasten to him." That would be the descent from the high to the low. The spiritual vision, the soul's seeing of the Son of God stands incomparably higher than what the disciples have ever seen and handled in Jesus' person on earth.

The Apostle knows the Savior far better than the disciple has ever known him. The Ascension has not impoverished, but enriched us. And the seeing of the only begotten Son of the Father which nurses the faith, feeds and every time refreshes it again, is such conscious fellowship of soul with the Lord of glory, that in and through him, the Eternal Being himself is reached, and,

spiritually seeing the son with the eyes of the soul, the child of God knows himself to be one with the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Hear the petition in the high priestly prayer: "Holy Father, I pray thee, that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (St. John 17:21).

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"MY FOOT STANDETH IN AN EVEN PLACE."

"My foot standeth in an even place," has a threefold significance. It is the expression of satisfaction on the part of the Sunday-child. It is the cry of relief on the part of him who has struggled hard and bitterly to succeed. It is the calm utterance of higher peace on the part of him who believes.

The imagery of the Psalmist is clear. A road can bear a twofold character. It can be smooth and even as a skittle ground, or macadam streets in cities and towns; or it can be like what we find in mountainous districts, where steep descents and ascents are common and the unevenness of the path brings weariness. With us, a stretch of sandy or muddy road may retard travel, but in the main our roads are even from north to south, so that no image could be derived from them for the pathway of our life. A way may seem long to us, it may be lonely, or it may repel us by its filthiness, but all this does not offer the antithesis which level road and mountain path present.

The Scripture, on the other hand, originated in