

that first period of grace. There is considerable increase in knowledge, as well as in spiritual experience and in spiritual wisdom, but there is no acquisition of higher strength. Sometimes even there is a relapse, which is not survived except with much difficulty. And so there is considerable satisfaction. There is no striving after higher things. And one remains what he came to be until death.

We do not say that this is the case with all. There are those, thank God, who burn as shining lights in the congregation, and who do not cease all the days of their lives to drink deeply from the cup of grace. But yet how different would the revelation of the kingdom of heaven be among the people, if all they who believe, who know themselves to be children of God, from the hour of conversion until the day of death, would cause the call of progress to be sounded in the soul. Who can say what it would be in the heart, in the home, in the church of God with every one of us if it were and ever continued to be, an uninterrupted going forward *from strength to strength!*

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“BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART.”

A truly sinless, pure heart is the precious possession in the eyes of a child of God which he always prays for, but which here on earth he never obtains. They who stand outside of the faith are not considered here. We fully grant that they value purity of heart. We do not deny that they strive after it. But what they mean by it is something else. For the child of God

purity of heart is the means of seeing God. For the others it is rather the way by which not to fail of high moral character. And these two can not be mentioned in the same breath.

"Blessed are the pure in heart" is a word of Jesus, which was purposely spoken to the children of God, as Matt. 5:8 clearly shows. For it immediately follows: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." And it is self-evident that the seven beatitudes together deal with the same class of persons. The peacemakers, the pure in heart, they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, they who are poor in spirit, and so much more, are always that people that puts itself under the guardian-care of Jesus and desire to enter into the kingdom of heaven which has come nigh.

Virtuous people, even moral idealists, are not considered here. Undoubtedly there is much in them that must be highly prized with respect to this earthly life. But this is not reckoned with now. They who have been initiated in the secret of salvation, they who have passed from the world into the kingdom of the Son of God's love, alone are here considered. Purity of heart which leads to seeing God is not anywhere conceivable save in a child of God.

This is not said without a tremor. It is exceedingly difficult to know who is, and who is not, a child of God. There are those who are, but who scarcely dare to confess it of themselves; and others appropriate it to themselves who exhibit little of its characteristics; while many more on the other hand make themselves known in a way that raises serious doubts whether their con-

fessed "childship" is not "stolen goods". But apart from this, it is certain, that the most faithful children of God are continually engaged in bitter combat, because there is still so much impurity in their hearts, which every time again is a stain upon their lives. Even this is not all. It must be confessed that not infrequently two men or two women stand side by side in life, one of whom zealously works for Christ while the other rejects him, and that, when the test is applied of purity of heart and behavior, the confessor of Jesus is put to shame by the denier of Christ. This is grievous for the faith; and is to be mourned with tears. It must not, however, be ignored. David did not do so, neither did St. Paul. "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Rom. 7:19). And in all ages this sore battle has been waged in the church of Christ. Hypocrites, false brethren, stand outside of this. They are not reckoned with here. Among true confessors, age on age, the same complaint has been current. It is even worked out sometimes into a sinful system of the old and the new Adam, even as Maeterlinck is doing now from his viewpoint of unbelief. But however it may be experienced, interpreted or explained, the phenomenon shows itself every time: there is true, sincere confession, there is faith of the right sort, and with it there is a hopeless struggle with the impurity of the heart.

To be pure in heart moreover is mostly misunderstood, as though it referred exclusively to purity from sensual sin. The voluptuary is then called unclean, the man who drinks to excess, the epicure, the miser, the effeminate. And cer-

tainly these gross sins should first of all be abandoned. But he who is free from these excesses is, therefore, by no means yet pure in heart. Purity of heart embraces the entire life of the soul. Pride, arrogance, dishonest practice, anger, hate, falsehood, and so much more, including even ordinary vanity and self-sufficiency make the waters of the human heart muddy and unclean. Whatever does not belong in the heart renders it unclean. As a pond becomes unclean by what passersby throw into it, so the human heart is defiled by everything that God did not create in it, but which has entered into it from Satan or from the world. And the awful part of it is that already at birth so many germs of impurity were imparted unto it, which until death are never wholly lost. That we live in a world which strongly furthers the growth of these impurities. That we mingle with people, who, inwardly impure, accustom us, so long as it does not lead to gross excess, to make light of this impurity in ourselves, and of like impurity in them. This weakens our moral sense, our moral judgment, and makes us dream of a pure heart, the whiles in many points we remain impure of heart.

If Jesus had meant that they only go out free, who never caught their own heart in any impure thought, inclination or sensation again, this beatitude would drive the soul to despair. For no one is like this. The struggle with impure germs in the heart continues until death. We make advances, but only by applying an ever finer test; by detecting impurity in things which before did not even suggest the thought of sin to us. The more we advance in faith, the keener the eye of

the soul becomes in the discovery of sin, and for this reason the more we shake ourselves free from sin, the sense of guilt does not diminish, but rather increases. The world does not understand this, when it hears an angel of love and mercy touchingly plead for forgiveness of guilt. But by itself there is nothing strange in this. They who have far advanced in godly living now discover sin in what before seemed to them perhaps even virtue. Jesus knew this, and therefore this can not have been meant. It does not say: Blessed are they who have a pure heart, a heart without sin, but: Blessed are they who are pure of heart.

In the heart the ego dwells, the person acts, the child of God thinks, ponders, decides and chooses. Hence there is a difference between what the self finds in the heart, and what it there orders and directs. And since no one dwells anywhere else than in a heart that is inwardly defiled, and from which all sorts of poisonous vapors arise, the question regarding purity or impurity of heart is only decided by the question, whether these corrupting tendencies of the heart are regarded with deep hatred and fiery indignation, or whether there is sympathy with them, and they are granted indulgence by the Will and by the Mind. Frequent failure is not sufficient proof of impurity of heart. The question is whether impurity is resisted, whether it is striven against with all the spiritual power one has at his command, whether with the invocation of the help of God and of his Christ and of his angels, everything that threatens defeat is avoided, and the supplication is continued: "Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil."

This alone is the point. In the heart self must stand pure in battle array against the impurities that proceed from the heart. When the distinction is ignored between the self that believes, and the inequalities that prevail in the heart, you are lost. For then you identify yourself with these impurities. Then you sink away in the evil waters of your own heart and are drowned in your sinful inclinations.

If, on the other hand, in the inner chambers of your heart you are bold, heroic and determined in your stand of bitter hatred against your sinful inclinations, as against your mortal enemy, the heart may remain full of impurities until death, but you are pure of heart, and by God's grace you triumph again and again over the sin that attacks you in the heart. Then Satan is not your tempter, but God is your confederate. Then the struggle which is never given up brings you the closer to God, and in the midst of battle there are moments when with the vision of the eye of the soul, you see, as it were, your God.

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**"IN THE NIGHT I COMMUNED WITH
MINE OWN HEART."**

Sleep and prayer have this in common that both he who prays and he who sleeps closes his eyes, and retires from light into darkness. But they are not the same. He who prays will close his eyes, in order not to be distracted by what is seen around him. If possible he would stop his ears in order not to be distracted by noises from without. There is also prayer with others to which other considerations apply. But by itself