

“I IN THEM AND THOU IN ME.”

The soul's nearness to God and our “mystical union with Christ” belong together. All the apostles placed the emphasis on this; and in their writings the fathers of the Reformation, with Calvin in the lead, always referred to the mystical union with Christ as an indispensable factor in all true religion. The temptation to which, alas, so many yield, of staying on Golgotha, and of there closing off their account with Christ, kills the faith. The course of procedure is, that the conscience awakens for a moment; that the weight of sin burdens the soul; and that fear of judgment strikes the heart. In such a moment the consolatory thought of the cross arises invitingly in the soul. If the atoning sacrifice is accepted, one is saved. Nothing more is needed save only to believe. And one is readily persuaded to do this. To express this as sharply as the case allows: One closes the bargain. And now he deems himself saved. He accepts it as a fact, that he is assured of eternal life. He thinks that the atoning sacrifice is glorious. It brings perfect salvation. Thus Christ has become his Savior. But in his conversation nothing is heard of a closer, tenderer relation of the soul to Christ. In the utterances of his spiritual life nothing is perceived that refers to it. He is now saved, and that is the end of it.

This, however, is nothing but self-conceit. Nothing but spiritual egotism is at play in this. Escape is sought from eternal punishment; one wants to insure himself for eternal salvation. But

there is nothing indicative in this of thirst after the living God; nothing of the child's longing for his Father's house; nothing of sacred jealousy for the honor of God's name. And from this, no spiritual power can proceed. No religion can operate in, nor go forth from, this. And what is more, it can not be true, that in this wise Golgotha can bring propitiation for the life of the soul.

The Gospel does not preach this. It does not explain the atoning sacrifice to us in this way. The Scripture never attributes power of salvation to Golgotha, except as the mystical union binds our inner life to the life of Christ. It must be a being buried with him in his death, in order to rise with him unto life. They alone who have become one planting with Christ, share the grace which he obtained. They alone who have become sheep of his flock, can come after the great Shepherd of souls. It is not Golgotha which saves us. He who saves us is Christ, who died on Golgotha. You must become one with him, as member of his body. You must be accepted and incorporated under him as your Head, before one drop of grace can fall on you. In the Father you must have been given to Christ, so that his glory may be revealed in you. The mystical union must have laid the tie of love eternally between him and your soul. Yea, it must become Christ in you, and the Father in Christ, so that through this middle link your life of nearness to God can become a reality. For so your Savior himself

prayed in his high-priestly prayer: "Holy Father, I in them and thou in me" (St. John 17:23).

If, however, our mystical union with Christ shall maintain its true religious character, and not degenerate into sentimental Christolatry, this relation to Christ must never be taken as an end in itself. Christ is the Mediator, and there can be no Mediator except for the sake of making our approach to God possible. To be near unto God, in sacred confidence to feel oneself to be close by God, to live here on earth in nearness to God through faith, and once, after death, to serve God eternally in the Fatherhouse above—that is and remains the end and aim; and everything the Scripture reveals to us regarding the Mediatorship of Christ, must result in this, and can never rest in itself. Once Christ himself shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all. He who stops short with himself, or has no further desire than to be numbered with God's people, arrests spiritual progress in his own soul.

The ideal end at which we aim, may and can not be less, than to enjoy God forever, and to exist for no other purpose than to glorify his name. And just because this is the ideal end, all religion on earth is imperfect, which does not already here bring us nearer to God, make us dwell in nearness to him, and induce us to spend all our strength and all our talent in his service. Piety that consists in soothing emotion and in spiritual recreation, lacks strength and inspiration.

And our piety only becomes energetic when we love God with such perfect consecration, that we know of no higher joy than to drink in his peace, no greater recreation than to be near unto him, and no holier ambition than to fight and to suffer for his holy name. And not even service of Christ may detract anything from this. The Savior himself has never desired or aimed at anything else than to bring us to the Father. Whosoever turns this into a sort of Christ-worship, making him the end and aim, and thereby losing from sight the approach to our Father who is in heaven, does not honor Christ, but opposes him, and does not confirm the mystical union with his Savior, but tears away the fibres thereof.

This makes the union mystical, i. e. it is not lost in emotions, sensations and meditations, but rests in the nature of the soul. The feelings which you cherish for Christ, the sensations wherewith the Person and the gracious work of the Savior affect you, the thoughts concerning him on which you ponder, and on which your confession is based, truly possess supreme merit. They are indispensable. All of your conscious life must be saturated through and through with Christ. But without more, this gives you no share in the mystical union. That which is mystical in a holy sense, lies deeper than the consciousness, and roots in your being itself. Hence, the Scriptural teaching concerning regeneration, the new creature, the new man. There is not merely atonement and forgiveness, and on your part confession, faith

and singing hymns of praise. No, Christ has entered into our nature. This was possible, because our nature was created after the image of God; and therefore that which shall take you away from yourself and from sin, must touch you in your own nature, in your very manner of existence, it must bring about the change in your person, in your outward life, and thus it will be an holy and a Divine work, which does not take place in your lips, nor in your brain, but in the mystical underground of your being.

And this wondrous work is not directly brought about by the Father, and in every one by himself, but is effected through Christ, is bound to him as Mediator of all, and finds in this Mediator its indestructible guarantee. For the tie which Christ establishes between himself and us, is so sacred, that he compares it with the tie that binds him in his Divine nature to the Father. "I in them, and Thou in me, O Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (John 17:11).

No outward, mechanical representation should be made of "the body of Christ." Among ourselves we speak of the body, the corps, the corporation of those who are like minded, who work together for a given aim. They who belong to it, are called members, and the management is the head. But with the body of Christ all this has a far deeper sense and a far more serious significance. No one becomes member of the body of Christ by making application, or by subscrib-

ing to a doctrine. No one is incorporated in this body by a military oath. No one becomes a member here, in order presently from choice, to resign his membership. No, the body of Christ is anchored in the soul, as an organism which forms one whole, no part of which can ever be alienated from it. It is invisible to the eye, but known of God. Even an infant can belong to it as an integrant part, before it has ever lisped the name of Jesus. We do not join that body, but God adopts us into it, incorporates us in it and appoints each of us, as members of Christ, an own, fixed place in it. At the same time our calling and destiny are thereby forever fixed. In this body we are fellow-members with other members, not from our choice, nor from theirs, but pursuant to Divine disposal, we and they form a unity which never can be broken. And with them all we are under Christ, as our living, quickening and inspiring head, from whom alone warmth of love is obtained. And our existence as members in that body and under that Head has no other aim than through the mediator to bring us near to God again, to assure us of an eternity in his holy presence, and thus to guarantee the highest end of our existence: even an existence throughout everlasting ages for the sake of the honor of the thrice holy God.

This is the mystical end, which the mystical union with Christ serves as means, and therefore Christ intertwines the tie that binds him to his own with the tie that binds him to the Father

in the: "I in them and Thou in Me." A unity sealed of God.

87

"FOR THE SPIRIT OF GOD RESTETH
UPON YOU."

It was a wonderful word which Jesus spake—one which still pours balm into many wounds, and revives courage when ready to faint; a word which has made heroes and martyrs, and has strengthened and comforted them—when at the end of the beatitudes he said: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake."

This word reaches farther than the prophecy, that prison and martyrdom awaited the disciples. These would be limited to certain periods in the struggle of Jesus' church. But what is not bound to any age, but always goes on, is the malice and hatred, the mockery, scorn and disdain, from which the world can not restrain itself, whenever the Lord's people gather strength to oppose it and courage to resist it. Persecution unto blood is exceptional. This other persecution, which with the lancet of scorn and abuse, strikes at the heart, goes on in all ages. And therefore, this beatitude of the Lord enters so deeply into our human life. It betrays the tender sympathy of Jesus for what awaited his own. It finds application, now here, now there, every day. No day passes but it imparts courage and comfort. It does not mean