

“THOU DIDST MAKE ME TRUST WHEN
I WAS UPON MY MOTHER’S
BREASTS.”

The secret walk with God is not only different for one child of God than for another, but the difference is inwardly connected with individual disposition, character, nature and temperament. Where there are two persons who live close to God, one not only doeth it differently from the other, but the way and manner in it of each, is related with his condition and frame of soul and even of body. To be near unto God can therefore never be imitated. It is no lesson that can be learned by heart. Every one must seek his own way to God, until by Divine grace he finds it. To be near unto God can never be anything else than the outcome and the fruit of our own personal spiritual life. If then it shall be real, and no imitation, it is bound to assume a form of its own, which entirely corresponds to our nature, and which would not do for another.

Let this first of all comfort you and put you at ease. It frequently happens, that a dear, true but very plain child of God hears others tell of a walk with God, which he can not grasp, or that he reads of Augustine and others, who communed with the Eternal Being in a measure and form that far, very far transcends his own experience. This makes him doubt whether he will ever himself come near unto God. Such it can never be with him and yet, such the hidden walk must be. In this way Satan detains the souls of the humble. For it is not so. With

Augustine, that great spirit, it must needs be so and not otherwise, and for this very reason it never can and never will be so with the humble and the plain. As it was with Augustine or Calvin would not meet their case.

But next to this comforting thought, it contains a strong stimulus and a spur. It imposes the obligation to produce from one's own being and in connection with one's own spiritual existence and life of the soul an own form for the hidden walk with God. It will not do to say: I can never attain the height of an Augustine. Just because you are not an Augustine, it will not do to imitate him. For you are called of God, and you are bound, to seek from and for yourself, this own and only path, by which you, and no one else, can attain the hidden walk, and continue in it. This does not mean to say that there may be no blessing in learning how others have sought and found it, or that reading what some great spirits have written about their nearness to God may not inwardly edify us. Even the humblest poet can learn from Bilderdyk and DaCosta. The humblest artist-painter can profit by the works of Rubens and Rembrandt. All this can be productive of great good. Only, as one and the selfsame bread forms an own blood in every individual constitution, and maintains an own life of the nerves, thanks to the inner workings, so also it is one sacred material on which many subsist, but always in this way, that with every individual the inner spiritual feeding has a process of its own, and leads to an own result.

Not only in the case of Paul, but also of

Jeremiah and David the Scripture describes this particular character of every individual's hidden walk with the Eternal Being. Although Psalm 22 bears a strongly marked Messianic character, and although this song of the most grievous woe only attains its fullest significance in its application to the Man of Sorrows, it would be misleading, if we did not take it as an interpretation of David's own experience, and if we did not apply it to the Psalmist first.

As St. Paul declares, Gal. 1:15, that it hath pleased God to separate him from his mother's womb, and to call him by his grace, and as it reads in Jeremiah (1:5) "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee," so also David confesses that the Lord's interest in him began before he was born. "For thou art he," sang he in Ps 22:9, "that took me out of the womb: Thou didst make me trust when I was upon my mother's breasts: I was cast upon thee from the womb, Thou art my God from my mother's belly."

Entirely apart from the deeper significance of these words when applied to the Messiah, it was from the life of David's own soul that this conviction sprang regarding his own walk with God, and it should not be lost from sight, that entirely apart from his calling as the elect servant of the Lord, he applies it altogether in a general sense to the forming and creation of a human being. "Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made, marvellous are the works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was

not hid from thee, when I was made in secret and curiously wrought in the lowest part of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet these was none of them." Psalm 139: 13-16). This was said apart from David's special calling in an altogether general way, and the church has never hesitated, in singing Psalm 139, to apply this to herself.

Thus, in order to form a just estimate of the beginning and the development of our hidden walk with God, we have to go back not merely to our conversion, but back of this to our conception and to our birth. The way in which each one of us shall find his own, personal walk with God, was written in God's book, in days before we were born.

If it is said that Jeremiah and Paul did not state this fact in connection with their personal initiation into communion with God, but very distinctly in connection with their special callings, one as prophet, and the other as apostle, it is readily granted. But on the other hand it is equally true, that for their callings, as prophet and apostle, their own personal, spiritual development was of highest significance. In their prophetic and apostolic calling they had to fight the spiritual fight. Their official life was not lived outside of the life of their own soul. The fact that before their conception God had fore-ordained in them everything that they would need for their calling, also implies that their spiritual quickening, training and development had been provided from God's side before their birth,

and that in their conception and in their birth such a human person was called into being, as would be able to enter upon such a spiritual condition and to fulfill such a spiritual calling. In whatever way therefore we take it, the three strong declarations of David, Jeremiah and Paul always contain this positive teaching, that already before, as well as in their conception and birth, the Lord God has ordained and created them in such a way, both after soul and body, that in their spiritual and bodily creation every necessity had been provided, which later on would fashion them in this especial manner, and construct their spiritual stature.

Applying this to ourselves, we should not doubt but that our conception and birth, quite apart from our own as yet unconscious condition, was a work of God according to God's plan and compass, and under his holy inworking. That which characterizes the disposition of our soul, our gifts and talents, our form of existence, and even the particulars that concern our body, is no play of chance, no arbitrariness, no fate, but the plan and working of our Providential God. Hence we are not made, as we are, in order that only later on God might see what he might make of us. No, everything here has been thought out, everything here forms one whole, everything here has been appointed from the beginning by an omniscient, fore-seeing and almighty God with a view to the appointed end, and directed at the same time, at every point of the way, with the view of obtaining that end.

If that final end is your eternal salvation, and

if the spiritual life of the soul, including the secret walk with God, leads to this end, the whole appointment regarding the form in which you were to be born, both after soul and body, was of necessity directly connected with what you once will be as a child of God, and with the particular way in which God will be willing to receive you, in distinction from others, into his holy, secret walk. If in your intercourse with people, you daily meet with those who have much in common with you, and you with them, but never meet with a person of whom you can say, in every particular: "He is just like me. He is my exact double," there must be something in the disposition of your soul and in your bodily existence, which is different from that in others. And this is not by chance, but after God's will and appointment. And every peculiarity that constitutes your person, is in turn no play of the riches of nature, but has been so disposed and not otherwise, because each of you have to seek your secret walk with God in your own way and after your own method; and that you might find that way, and walk in it, you were in need of just such a disposition of soul, and of such natural temperament.

Thus are you free from people, even from pious people who press their piety upon you. But in everything, from your conception and birth you are personally bound to God. For consider and do not forget in Psalm 22 it says: "Thou didst make me trust when I was upon my mother's breasts." To make one trust, in such a way, that the soul itself trusts, is to evoke an inner working of the soul itself. David reckons

the life of his soul from the moment when as infant he cradled at his mother's breast.

“AND WORSHIP HIM THAT LIVETH
FOR EVER AND EVER.”

Prayer and worship are not the same. This is felt at once when we consider the distinction between religion in heaven and religion on earth. Here on earth we are in all sorts of need and misery. We endure a thousand anxieties. We struggle with disappointment and adversity. And every day our life is a concatenation of needs that call for fulfilment. This condition of itself impels us to make prayer and supplication, to invoke help and deliverance, to implore for redemption and the grant of our desires. In religion here on earth prayer, supplication, the invocation of higher help is entirely in place.

This is altogether different in heaven. Undoubtedly in heaven also there is prayer, even much prayer. Christ himself lives to pray for us. But prayer in heaven, on the part of Christ and of the angels and of the blessed, bears an entirely different character from our prayer on earth. “Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” can also be prayed above. The Kingdom of glory tarries. The conflict between the power that opposes God and Christ continues. The end is not yet. And therefore it is natural that everything in heaven invokes this end, and prays for the coming of the Kingdom of glory.