

## A HUMAN PICTURE OF GOD.

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(From Quiet Talks with World Winners.)

Illustrations of God from our common life are never full, and must not be taken too critically, but they are sometimes wonderfully vivid and very helpful. Anything that makes God seem real and near helps.

A few years ago I heard a simple story of real life from the lips of a New England clergyman. It was told of a brother clergyman of the same denomination, and stationed in the same city with the man who told me.

This clergyman had a son, about fourteen years of age, who, of course, was going to school. One day the boy's teacher called at the house and asked for the father. When they met he said:

"Is your son sick?"

"No; why?"

"He was not at school today."

"You don't mean it!"

"Nor yesterday."

"Indeed!"

"Nor the day before."

"Well!"

"And I supposed he was sick."

"No, he's not sick."

"Well, I thought I should tell you."

And the father thanked him, and the teacher left. The father sat thinking about his son, and those three days. By and by he heard a click at the gate, and he knew the boy was coming in. So he went to the door to meet him at once. And the boy knew as he looked up that the father knew about those three days.

And the father said, "Come into the library, Phil."

And Phil went and the door was shut.

Then the father said very quietly, "Phil, your teacher was here a little while ago. He tells me you were not at school today, nor yesterday, nor the day before. And we thought you were. You let us think you were. And you don't know how bad I feel about this. I have always said I could trust my boy Phil. I always have trusted you. And here you have been a living lie for three whole days. I can't tell you how bad I feel about it."

Well, it was hard on the boy to be talked to in that gentle way. If his father had spoken to him roughly, or had taken him out to the wood-shed, in the rear of the dwelling, it wouldn't have been nearly so hard.

Then the father said, "We'll get down and pray." And the thing was getting harder for Phil all the time. He didn't want to pray just then. Most people don't about that time.

And they got down on their knees, side by side. And the father poured out his heart in prayer. And the boy listened. Somehow he saw himself in the looking-glass of his knee-joints as he hadn't before. It is queer about that mirror of the knee-joints, the things you see in it. Most people don't like to use it much. And they got up from their knees. The father's eyes were wet. And Phil's eyes were not dry.

Then the father said, "My boy, there's a law of life, that where there is sin there is suffering. You can't get these two things apart. Wherever there is suffering

there has been sin, somewhere, by somebody. And wherever there is sin there will be suffering, for some one, somewhere; and likely most for those closest to you."

"Now," he said, "my boy, you have done wrong. So we'll do this. You go up-stairs to the attic. I'll make a little bed for you in the corner. We'll bring your meals up to you at the usual times. And you stay up in the attic three days and three nights, as long as you have been a living lie." And the boy didn't say a word. They climbed the attic steps. The father kissed his boy, and left him alone.

Supper-time came, and the father and mother sat down to eat. But they couldn't eat for thinking of their son. The longer they chewed on the food the bigger and drier it got in their mouths. And swallowing was clear out of the question. And the mother said, "Why don't you eat?" And he said softly, "Why don't you eat?" And, with a catch in her throat, she said, "I can't, for thinking of Phil." And he said, "That's what's bothering me."

And they rose from the supper-table, and went into the sitting-room. He took up the evening paper, and she began sewing. His eyesight was not very good. He wore glasses, and tonight they seemed to blur up. He couldn't see the print distinctly. It must have been the glasses, of course. So he took them off, and wiped them with great care, and then found the paper was upside down. And she tried to sew. But the thread broke, and she couldn't seem to get the thread into the needle again. How we all reveal ourselves in just such details!

By and by the clock struck ten, their usual hour for retiring. But they made no move to go. And the mother said quietly, "Aren't you going to bed?" And he said, "I'm not sleepy, I think I'll sit up a while longer; you go." "No, I guess I'll wait a while too." And the clock struck eleven; then the hands clicked around close to twelve. And they arose, and went to bed; but not to sleep. Each one pretended to be asleep. And each knew the other was not asleep.

After a bit she said—woman is always the keener—"Why don't you sleep?" And he said softly, "How did you know I wasn't sleeping? Why don't you sleep?" And she said, with that same queer catch in her voice, "I can't, for thinking of Phil." He said, "That's the bother with me." And the clock struck one; and then two; still no sleep. At last the father said, "Mother, I can't stand this. I'm going up-stairs with Phil."

And he took his pillow, and went softly out of the room; climbed the attic steps softly, and pressed the latch softly so as not to wake the boy if he were asleep, and tiptoed across to the corner by the window. There the boy lay, wide-awake, with something glistening in his eyes, and what looked like stains on his cheeks. And the father got down between the sheets, and they got their arms around each other's necks, for they had always been the best of friends, and their tears got mixed up on each other's cheeks—you couldn't have told which were the father's and which the son's. Then they slept together until the morning light broke.

When sleep-time came the second night the father said, "Good-night, moth-

er. I'm going up with Phil again." And the second night he shared his boy's punishment in the attic. And the third night when sleep-time came again, again he said, "Mother, good-night. I'm going up with the boy." And the third night he shared his son's punishment with him.

That boy, now a man grown, in the thews of his strength, my acquaintance told me, is telling the story of Jesus with tongue of flame and life of flame out in the heart of China.

Do you know, I think that is the best picture of God I have run across in any gallery of life? It is not a perfect picture. No human picture of God is perfect, except of course the Jesus human picture. The boy's punishment was arbitrarily chosen by the father, unlike God's dealings with our sin. But it is the tenderest and most real of any that has come to me.

God couldn't take away sin. It's here. Very plainly it is here. And he couldn't take away suffering, out of kindness to us. For suffering is sin's index-finger pointing out danger. It is sin's voice calling loudly, "Look out! there's something wrong." So He came down in the person of His Son, Jesus, and lay down alongside of man for three days and nights, in the place where sin drove man.

That's God! And that suggests graphically the great passion of His heart. Sin was not ignored. Its lines stood sharply out. The boy in the garret had two things burned into his memory, never to be erased: the wrong of his own sin, and the strength of his father's love.

Jesus is God—coming down into our midst and giving His own very life, and then, more, giving it out in death, that He might make us hate sin, and might woo and win the whole world, away from sin, back to the intimacies of the old family circle again.

## BORN OF GOD.

This it is to be born of God, when we have a temper and mind so entirely devoted to purity and holiness that it may be said of us in a just sense, that we cannot sin. When holiness is such a habit in our minds, so directs and forms our designs, as covetousness and ambition directs and govern the actions of such men as are governed by no other principles, then we are alive in God and living members of the mystical body of His Son Jesus Christ. When by an inward principle of holiness we stand so disposed to all degrees of virtue, as the ambitious man stands disposed to all steps of greatness; when we hate and avoid all kinds of sins, as the covetous man hates and avoids all sorts of loss and expense; then are we such sons of God as cannot commit sin.—William Law's Practical Treatise on Christian Perfection.

How sad the blunder of mistaking the profile of the sinner for the saint, and hanging it up for imitation by believers.—Dr. D. Steele.

The Lord for whom I had waited came suddenly to the temple of my heart and I had an immediate evidence that this was the blessing I had been for some time seeking. My soul was all wonder, love and praise.—Bramwell.