

THE CORNER STONE OF THE HOUSE

The way back to God has to be the way back to a strenuous exercise of all the powers of the will that are within the limits of our human ability: our power to control our temper; our power to control our deep-set addictions to food and drink and etc.; our power to control our intemperate ambitions; our power to control our hunger for power and might; our power over our passion for money and wealth; our power over our eagerness to control those around us; our power to bring under control the force of the demands of the flesh; and etc., etc., etc. These are but a few of the things that must be brought under control before our homes can be instrumental in the formation of the Christ-life.

Each of our appetites, whether physical or mental (or spiritual), must be brought into regulation or they will take control and regulate us and keep us under subjection to them. Penitence is not a tumultuous stirring of sorrow for the lack of control over our appetites. Penitence is not an emotional mental stirring because we gave into weakness. Rather, penitence – that is, penance, contrition, remorse – is the circumspect harnessing of all the faculties under the single command of an enlightened will. Every power of the soul **MUST** be formed in obedience: the lower faculties cooperating in their fidelity to the higher, and the higher faculties cooperating in their fidelity to Christ – the identification with Christ being identification with the Cross.

Not until the Divine Authority is established through the whole kingdom of the soul is either the Christ-life or the life of penance made sure. This means that penance and “putting on Christ” are one and the same thing. If one can form himself to “walk in Christ,” he is forming himself in penance. If the contemplative life of a monk in a monastery is to “walk before the Lord,” then the penitential life of the lay person is no less. In all that one does and in everything that one gives up one must accustom himself to keep Christ before him as a practical and constant living model. Christ must be the role model of anyone who intends to lead any kind of spiritual life.

One must forget all the sophistications that are promoted by spiritual leaders of sophisticated bent, and which are therefore identified with Christ-likeness. Such sophistications wreak havoc with true spiritual living. In the spiritual life there must never be found any fragment of radicalism, severity, self-righteousness, exclusiveness, bigotry, arrogance, or any such like. Thus penitence, which assumes both recollection and true submission to the Will of God, raises one’s life and whole outlook above temporal things and places one in the element of eternity. Only when this happens will we begin to see the architecture of the house built on the Corner Stone: CHRIST! □