

communion. A headache may depress us and prevent the mind from free utterance, or lessen our sensitiveness. This also may act as a spur to give the body rest and calm in behalf of fellowship with God.

At times, however, the failure of obtaining a Divine hearing can not be explained from one cause or from another. We find nothing that accuses us. And yet God withdraws himself from us. But even then conjectures regarding the cause do not fail us. The believer on God sometimes overestimates his piety. He enters upon terms of familiarity with the love of God. He loses sight of the distance that extends between him and God. He takes it as a matter of course, as a something that ought to be, that fellowship with God is his portion. He even counts it at times as a mark of special holiness that he seeks Divine fellowship.

This can not be permitted. It makes common what is, and always will be, holy grace. Experience teaches at such times that nothing strengthens and deepens the appreciation of fellowship with God as the temporary want of it. When for long times the soul has had no hearing, and when at length an answer comes from God, there enters into this secret communion a still deeper blessedness, and the soul bathes itself in the fulness of the love of God.

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### “SEEK YE MY FACE.”

It was common at one time for Christian people to speak of their conversion with joyous pride. It was said: “At such and such a time I came to know the Lord.” Afterward this was changed. Then it was said: “In such and such a way I

came to know myself," or, "I was converted then and there;" or, "Then and there I gave myself to Christ;" "In this way or in that I found my Savior." And in whatever way it was expressed, it always meant the narrative of personal religious experience.

Every form of expression has its own value. It can scarcely be denied, however, that the older way of saying, "I have come to know the Lord," is in nowise less accurate, profound and fervent than the later ones. Jesus himself declared: "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee (John 17:3), and in saying this he confirmed the complaint of Hosea (4:1) that "there is no knowledge of God in the land."

It must be granted, however, that with the lapse of time the saying, "I have learned to know the Lord," has not proved satisfactory, because it has come to mean intellectual and doctrinal knowledge of God, apart from its mystical background. For this knowledge of God has more than one significance. He who knows nothing of the Divine Being, attributes and works, can not be said to know the Lord. But neither can he be said to know him, who has not learned to worship him in his Holy Trinity. In connection with this, moreover, the saying of our Redeemer should never be lost from sight: "No man knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him (Matth. 11:27). This revelation must include, without doubt, the light that shines forth upon us from the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

But as readily as this is granted, it is maintained with equal emphasis, that this does not constitute the whole knowledge of God. True knowledge of

God includes a spiritual reality which far exceeds mere intellectual acumen, and which merely employs the abstractions of dogma and doctrine as means by which to clarify impressions that are received and to explain sensations of soul and inner experiences. And this has gradually been forgotten. Knowledge of God in the abstract has been retained. It has come to consist largely of the studies of formal and doctrinal expositions. And the man who can most cleverly explain some point of dogma is deemed to be best grounded in knowledge of the Lord.

This could not permanently satisfy. And so the experience of grace in the heart has gone over into the other extreme and mysticism has begun to interpret religion altogether, or nearly so, from the work of redemption by Christ, in connection, of course, with personal experience of grace. This was undoubtedly a partial gain. This inward state of soul warmly delights itself in the work of Christ's redemption, and glories in the way of salvation and is far better than a kind of Christianity that merely weaves webs for itself out of doctrinal intricacies.

But this is not yet the highest. The oldtime worthies were far more correct when they interpreted the knowledge of God to be both doctrinal and mystical. At this viewpoint God himself was always the central object of interest and religion (i. e., the service of God) came to be better understood. As we have been created after God's Image, it is only natural and indeed necessary, that in relation to God, our experiences should be as nearly as possible like those which we have in our relation of man to man.

There is language in nature and in the animal world. But human language is altogether different and far richer, even though no word is spoken. The countenance speaks; it speaks through the facial expression, but particularly through and by the eye. Through the eye, as a window of the body, we look into a man's soul. And through the eye he steps forth from his soul to look upon, examine and address us. Compared with the face the rest of the body is dumb and inanimate. Charms, indeed, are also effected by the hand. In Southern lands it is customary to accompany and emphasize every word with gesticulations. In moments of great excitement the whole body forthwith is tense and expressive of emotion. All this, however, does not deny that the farther one advances in culture and self-control, the more calm and composed the rest of the body remains in order that the face may speak. For thereby the expression of the countenance becomes far nobler and much finer. A rough fellow in the street speaks with both hands and feet. A king from his throne speaks with his look and majesty of face.

From this it necessarily followed that in our speech regarding our relation to God, "the face of God" appeared in the foreground, and that distinctions were made in that face between what proceeded out of his mouth, what was expressed by his eyes, and what breathes in anger from his nose. In the nobler sense we disclose ourselves by meeting each other face to face. Hence of human fellowship with God it could not be said otherwise than that the highest form of it is to meet God face to face.

This can not be taken in a material sense. Temptation leads to this and the Divine Father has been pictured in the form of an old man. Even Moses went astray in this direction when he prayed for a sight of God's face. It was a bold prayer. It brought this answer: "Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see Me and live" (Exod. 33:20). This, then, is impossible. We should never think of our Holy God in an earthly way. The metaphorical language which is our only point of support in this matter, remains enveloped in mystical darkness. A visible face only accompanies what is corporeal. God is Spirit. Hence no physical features can be attributed to Him. In fact, when we look anyone in the face so intently as at length to grasp, as it were, his inner self, the external face is but the means by which we obtain knowledge of his inner existence. It can be imagined in the last instance that all outwardness may fall away and the knowledge of the person still be retained. But it is different with God. Physical means do not come in between him and us. Only as God's Spirit enters into us can our spirit enter immediately into the spirituality of God. As a result we obtain an equally vivid, and even a better, spiritual knowledge of the Existence, Being and Nature of God. Hence we only use figurative language that we might explain this knowledge.

The main point is that we should no longer be satisfied with an idea of God, and a scientific knowledge of God, but that we should come into touch with God himself, so that there is personal contact with him, as in and by our daily life he discloses himself to us, and personal relationship is

established between the Living God and our soul. The Scripture expresses this mystical knowledge of God in various ways. It speaks of the "secret walk with God," of "dwelling in the House of the Lord," of "walking with God." And the Gospel develops this into the rich and glorious thought that "The Father comes and tabernacles with us." But the most commonly used term for this higher knowledge is: "The face of God." The highest tribute that distinguishes Moses from all the prophets is that God "spoke with him face to face as a man speaketh with his friend." The meaning of "face" in this connection shows itself.

Hence when in Scripture the Lord meets us with the exhortation, "Seek ye my face," it is deeply significant. We can see a person afar off, we can hear from him, we can become conscious that he is near by without having yet gone to him or having yet placed ourselves before him, so that he looks at us and we at him. So there are times in the life of the Christian when he feels impelled to have no rest until he finds God; until, after he has found Him, he has placed himself before Him; and standing before Him, seeks His face, and does not cease until he has met God's eyes, and the consciousness dawns full and clear that God looks him in the soul, and that he looks God in the eye of Grace. When this comes to pass, the mystery of grace discloses itself.

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### "MY SOLITARY ONE."

When we consider how solitude affects people, it may well be taken as a standard by which to estimate them. This is shown most strikingly in