

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.

11

"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

the case of the little child, who, on being left alone, first becomes frightened and then begins to cry. If less striking, with adults as a rule, court- ing solitude or shunning it is marked with suf- ficient clearness to suggest something of their char- acter. Some embrace every opportunity to escape from busy surroundings and hide themselves in solitude, while others feel oppressed when they are alone, and only in company with others find themselves again.

This shows itself in three ways. The most strik- ing borrows its character from the choice that was made at the fork of the roads of good and evil. One must needs hide himself to do wrong. The evil One works by night. But when wrong has been done and the conscience has been aroused, solitude is oppressive and diversion is sought in company. In a somewhat less striking way love or dislike of solitude shows itself in the difference between meditative or more active dispositions. One is more inclined to live within himself in order to think and ponder seriously. Another lives in externals. He runs and slaves, and enjoys making a show of his several activities. This dif- ference even shows itself among nations. One people lives within doors, another, when possible at all, lives in the street. In most cases this dif- ference is accentuated by climate and settings of nature. And finally this habit of seeking or shun- ning solitude explains itself from the conscious possession or lack of strength. Diffident natures are almost afraid of the face of man and draw back with downcast eyes, while he who is clever and full of energy mingles freely among all sorts of people.

Solitude, moreover, is loved by men of study. It lures the aged more than people of midlife. In a run-down state of health, with weakened nerves, people shrink from excitement. But this springs from accidental causes and is no index of character. In connection with it, however, it is significant that the Psalmist twice calls the soul "the solitary One." Once in Ps. 22, the Passion-Psalm, prophetic of Golgotha, v. 20: "Deliver my soul from the sword, my solitary one from the power of the dog;" and again in Ps. 35:17: "Rescue my soul from their destructions, my solitary one from the young lions."

The soul is "the solitary one." This is an index of its greatness. An only child is more precious to its parents than one of seven on which others may pride themselves. When this only child dies, the family passes out of existence, and the line of succession is cut off. The soul exists independently of property and of the body. However much we are attached to our belongings, their loss can be made good. And though the body will go down into the grave, it can be restored in the resurrection. But such is not the case with the soul. The soul is the only possession which can not be replaced. If lost, it is lost forever. For this reason Jesus solemnly warns us not to fear him who can kill the body, but rather to fear Him who can destroy the soul. All loss can be made good, but not the loss of the soul. And here your self-consciousness separates itself from your soul. Thou child of man, who viewest thyself and thinkest about thyself, in the midst of this busy world you find yourself clothed upon with a visible body which prospers with bounding

health or wastes away with disease. But there is something more in you, something that is hidden in your inner being; and that hidden something is your soul, which you must love. For in death you must return it in all honor and holiness to God who gave it.

From this the sense is developed that the soul is solitary. There is mutual approach between the soul and the world. We have been endowed with the capacities of sense, which like so many windows, afford us outlooks upon the world, and place us in communication with it. God imparted unto us the capacity to feel and to sympathize, so that even when we are alone we can share the feelings of others, and at long distances of separation rejoice with those who do rejoice, and weep with those who weep. We have received the gift of speech whereby the soul can express itself and the soul of another can speak in our ear. Speech has been committed to writing and thanks to this wonderful invention, which likewise has been given us of God, the soul can commune with preceding generations and with contemporaries whom we have never met. Moreover, we have a sense and a knowledge of a higher world above, which makes it seem at times as though angels of God descended upon us, and from us ascended again. And the highest of all is the gate of the heart through which God can draw near to the soul and the soul can go forth to God.

But in spite of all this the soul itself is solitary. It remains apart from the world, from nature, from angels and from God. And thus by itself it is something, it has something, which remains its own, pure and simple, and with respect to which

the inner solitariness can never be broken. And one of two things is bound to happen: Either the soul may be left too solitary or its solitariness may not be sufficiently appreciated. ..

The soul is too solitary when we are bereft of our means of support and of the sweet companionship of life. This is the solitariness of grief and of forsakenness, which as burdens, weigh us down and make us afraid. For the soul is disposed to sympathy, to friendly intercourse with the world, to give and to win confidence, to live as man among men, and to spread its wings in spheres of happiness and peace. When these are withheld, when hatred repels, and slander persecutes, instead of love that attracts and sympathy that refreshes, shy and shivering the soul draws back within itself. It can not unburden itself. It can not tell what it feels. And shut up within itself it pines away in loneliness and grief. Again, when the joys of life take flight, and cares make heavy hearts, when sorrow overtakes sorrow, and the horizon narrows itself and the outlook becomes darker and darker, and the star of hope sets behind ever-thickening clouds—then, in distressing loneliness, the soul is thrown back upon itself and the solitary one pants for breath, and then is the time for Satan to come in with the thought of suicide.

As the soul can be troubled and distressed in this way by too much solitude, it can also suffer loss, when as the result of superficiality, thoughtlessness and want of seriousness, its solitude is not properly estimated. At such times the soul is not known, neither is it honored in its individual, solitary and independent existence. Then the only

resort is endless rounds of diversion and recreation. But never a turning in upon oneself. Never a collecting of the soul together for the sake of quiet thought. Never a search after the soul for its own sake. On the contrary the soul is kept in a state of constant excitement. It is held captive to serve its environments. It is never permitted to rest for self-examination and for finding inward peace.

The world at large is divided into these two great companies. On one hand they who are wretched and distressed of soul and who pine away in inner solitariness. On the other hand the merry-making multitudes who are always hurried, who are continually engaged with the art of externalizing themselves and never have a thought about their own solitary soul.

The only medicine at hand for both these conditions of soul is fellowship with God. For the soul has its holy of holies as well as its holy place and its outer court. The world does not come nearer to the soul than this outer court. There it remains, and has neither vision nor understanding of the several elements that constitute the soul.

Intimate, spiritual friendship makes closer approaches to the soul. There are some congenial spirits that understand us and see more clearly through us, and who are therefore better able, with tenderness, to sustain and to comfort us. But even they do not enter into the holy of holies. There is always a deep background into which they can not come, and where the soul remains in its solitariness.

He who alone can enter into this holiest and

most hidden recess of the soul is God by his Holy Spirit. He alone can fully break this solitariness of the soul. He alone can comfort him who is caught in the snares of death. He alone can save the soul of him who has long sought diversion in the vain pleasures of the world.

12

“GOD CREATED MAN AFTER HIS IMAGE.”

All true religion and godliness springs from the fact that we have been created after the Image of God. Some of us have passed from the period in the Christian life of “milk for babes” to that of “strong meat for adults.” We understand therefore that calling upon God and walking in the ways of his laws do not by themselves constitute true religion and godliness, and that the secret of salvation is unveiled in all its fullness only when we have fellowship with the Eternal and abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

Outward forms of worship are not without value. Provisionally they are the only thinkable ones. Although they do not make sure of heaven, they exert binding influences upon many thousands of people which prevent the dissolution of society. But the plant of spirituality outgrows at length the outward form and goes on, in the words of the Apostle, unto perfection. It comes to blossom in the very gleam of God’s majesty. It is fostered by the outshining of his glory and watered by the dews from above. Thus it comes to a personal knowledge of the Lord, as a man knoweth his brother; to a dwelling of the soul in