

means of hard and perilous times, which try us to the utmost; by contact with different people who are met by the way; by impressions of angels that hover about us at his command, and by his secret workings in the heart. It is an embroidering which God works upon the soul in all sorts of colors and forms. But however different and inscrutable these operations may be, the outcome is assured. God seeks us. He finds us. And at length we discover that we have been found. For then God's presence in the heart is vitally enjoyed again.

In the seeking of our God let us not hinder the finding. Not merely doubt, but even the inclination to prefer doubt to assurance is sin against the love of God. When the Lord seeks you and lays his hand upon your shoulder, do not draw back. Kneel at his feet. Offer thanks to him and worship.

22

STRENGTHENED WITH MIGHT.

It is no longer doubted that atmospheric conditions vitally affect health. Fresh air builds up and invigorates. They who breathe pure mountain air have iron in the blood, while they who live in low and marshy regions breathe air that is impregnated with poisons from the swamps, so that their strength is sapped and their vital forces are weakened. It can not be otherwise. With every breath we take in air with everything it contains, and through countless pores in the skin we absorb atmospheric elements which open the way to influences that affect the constitution. The pale and the anaemic are constantly advised there-

fore to seek fresh air and a healthy atmosphere. In hot and sultry summer days we pant for the relief which evening brings. And they who are in easy reach of the shore revel in the cool invigorating air of the sea.

And since we are two-sided, that is to say, since we consist of body and soul, the atmospheric influence upon our physical health finds a counterpart in the effects of the moral character of our surroundings upon our moral development. This, too, is above question. Sad and joyous events continually show that low moral standards in life injure character, while moral and healthy environments quicken our own moral sense. In education the light and shadow sides are largely dominated by this atmospheric influence. The secret of mother influence upon the early formation of character is largely due to the fact that childhood days are almost entirely spent in her constant presence. The moral life also has laws of its own. It expresses itself in acts and in events. It reflects itself in writings and in conversations. But apart from all this, moral life is still something else. It is even a sort of moral sky, a moral atmosphere which is either healthy and bracing, poisonous and hurtful or neutral and weakening. However strong our character may be, the influences of this moral atmosphere work out our spiritual benefit or bane.

Nor is this all. Not only does the air which we breathe affect our bodily health, and not only does our moral environment shape our moral life, but a personal atmosphere also affects us strongly. Close fellowship with world-minded people close fellowship with people who are worldly-minded and

of little elevation of character degrades us. Daily intercourse with people of nobler disposition, of more seriousness of thought, and of holier aims in life, spur us on to better things ourselves. A good man is like a good genius to us. Pure environments hold us back from things that pull us down. We notice this particularly in the case of men of sterling qualities and women of dominant spirits. They exert a power of attraction upon each other which tends to make them alike. One is stronger than the other, and the stronger is bound to mould the weaker into likeness with himself. Imitation is a fundamental trait of human nature and gradually and involuntarily the weaker inclines to do and to be like the stronger, which extends sometimes even to the inflection of the voice and to the manner of conversation. And this personal influence leads of itself to religious influence, which is entirely apart from the moral. At heart all religion is personal. Moses put his stamp upon all Israel. The Gospel has been carried into the world by the Apostles. Augustin inspired the Middle Ages. Luther and Calvin are spiritual fathers of the Reformation. And to this day in every community, large or small, where a strongly inspired, religious life dominates, the persons can be pointed out from whom this healthy, bracing atmosphere has emanated. Fire in the heart of one strikes fire in the heart of the other. A devout Christian life wins the souls of its associates for God.

Now we reach the highest round of the ladder, of which as a rule too little account is taken. We may breathe mountain or sea air. We may drink in the moral atmosphere of our environment. We

may partake of the inspiration that goes forth from a finely-strung nature among our fellow men. But the highest of all, the influence of which for real strengthening of heart far exceeds all others, is the secret walk with God. Paul prays for the Ephesians (3:16) that they might be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man. This is the highest and holiest atmosphere that can and ought to inwork on us. Imagine that our Lord were still on earth and that every day for a month we could be with Him, we would breathe an atmosphere of exalted and holy living, which in an altogether unequalled way, would strengthen us with might in the inner man. It was the privilege of the Apostles, exceeding every other, to spend three years in this holy atmosphere, and look, with what strength in the inner man they went out into the world. This is impossible now. Jesus is no more known after the flesh. But through him we have access to the Father, and through him we can have daily, personal, secret fellowship with God.

If we think that everything ends with the brief moment of prayer, we remain but a short time in this holy atmosphere. Average prayer, as a rule, does not cover more than half an hour out of every twenty-four. This is not the way the Scripture takes it. David sang: "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever," (Ps. 23:6). Both before and since this royal harper the saints who have sought and found and known and enjoyed the secret walk with God have always understood that it means repeated thought of God, constant lifting up of soul to him, considering all things with an eye to him who loves us, ever dwelling

near unto him, continual consciousness of his holy, encouraging and inspiring presence, personal realization of God's nearness on every side, with all of life immersed, as it were, in the glory that shines out from the Divine Being, and feeling in the heart the throbbings of the Father-heart of God. Churches that are so conditioned are alive. They may be pure in doctrine but without this they are dead. Preachers who bring this to their congregations are ambassadors of God. They who have no eye for this because the heart does not go out after it, are tinkling cymbals.

When "to be near unto God" is our joy and our song; when we dwell in the house of the Lord, and the secret walk with God is daily our delight, we experience the mighty, strengthening influence of the holy atmosphere above, which angels breathe and from which departed saints drink in the never-fading freshness of their soul. Then the powers of the Kingdom flow into the inner man. Heavenly ozone ministers to the soul. Spiritual power restrains what is unholy and impure in us. Draughts from the Fountain of Life make the breast swell with fresh vigor and vitality. Even as in the Holy Ghost God himself touches us, and inspires us to render nobler exhibits of power.

The whole social fabric of daily life would wonderfully change if every soul could breathe this holy atmosphere. Alas, for sin. When the anaemic is advised to try mountain or sea air he at once craves the means to do it. But when it is said, "Get away from your environments, seek the company of those of higher moral worth," someone may be moved, but the larger numbers continue their pleasure in their own evil ways.

And when the matter is pressed, and it is said, "Cultivate the secret walk with God and drink in the atmosphere of the life above," no one responds, except as God draws him. And if we are privileged to know this secret fellowship, it but shows what excellent grace has been bestowed upon us. Let us therefore with St. Paul bow the knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that this glorious privilege may be not taken from us, but that from this secret walk abounding might may continually be granted to strengthen us in the inner man.

23

"TO WHOM IS THE ARM OF THE LORD
REVEALED?"

No thought lifts us more securely above the power of material interests and above the temptation of the appetites than the confession, "God is a Spirit;" from which of itself the second flows, that he who worships Him can not and must not do so except in spirit and in truth. This excludes from God and from the worship of his name everything that is material, sensual or what is bound to form. God is a Spirit. This liberates the soul from every chain that might bind or oppress it contrary to its nature; always on condition, of course, that God, who is Spirit, is worshipped in spirit and in truth with all the love of the heart. That God is Spirit brings all idolatry to naught, all creature-worship, and dismisses every sensual horror which idolatry brought with it and which hastened the downfall of the nations of antiquity. Not to analyze the riches