

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.

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"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

of this all-dominating thought too closely, the fact that God is Spirit lifts human life above the whole visible world and exalts the spirit within us to the high spheres of the invisible world where God dwells in light unapproachable. For if God is Spirit, he is altogether independent of this visible creation. He was, before the mountains were brought forth. There was an eternity when nothing material was as yet created; so that in dependent relations all visible things occupy a secondary place; physical death does not end all; existence can be prolonged, though for a while we are only spirit; and we can revel now in the supreme riches of the thought that if needs be we can despise the whole world and yet occupy high spiritual vantage ground and be spiritually rich in God.

But however strong and superlatively rich the confession is that God is Spirit, it, too, has been corrupted by sin. We see this most clearly when we think of Satan and the world of demons. Some people who deem themselves civilized and highly cultivated may hold Satan and his demons as mere fabrications of weak minds. They who believe, correctly hold that with respect to this matter also Jesus knew more than they who pretend to be enlightened. In the "Our Father" he taught us to pray: "Deliver us from the evil One," and he wove the good rule into it when he furthermore made us pray: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." "In heaven" must mean: by thy angels. And angels are pure spirits without bodies. If Satan was not evil by creation, which can not be otherwise, if originally he was a good and a brilliant creature of God, who felt himself at home in the world of angels, it must

be confessed that he, too, is a spirit and that his demons are spirits. This does not make sin purely spiritual, neither does it exclude sin from the world of matter. But it means that all sin, including voluptuousness and drunkenness, originates in the spirit, and that the Psalmist was correct when he prayed: Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me; then shall I be upright and I shall be innocent from the great transgression (19:13).

Nothing offends more greatly therefore than that in the social world immorality is taken to consist exclusively of intemperance, debauch or voluptuousness, and that its attendants of scorn, bitterness, anger and revenge are seemingly no blots on the good name of celebrated people. Along this line the glorious confession that God is Spirit is abandoned to pantheism, while presumptuous pride leads at length to such high esteem of self as to make one dream that he himself is God. This has given rise to the monstrous idea, even among devout souls, that with the "new man in the spirit" all responsibility can be disowned for sins of sensuality which "the old man" has committed. And this in true is entirely the same error as that which is revived again in the school of Maeterlinck that the pure soul within is not stained by sensual misdeeds of the body.

Holy Scripture subverts all this by impressing upon the soul that God is Spirit and that all the workings of God are the personal doings of One who is everywhere present with us. God is a Spirit. upon the soul that God is Spirit, and that all the pervading the whole creation; not a vague working, elusive and inapprehensible. No, thrice no.

He is a God who is our Heavenly Father, who speaks to us, who hears our prayers, in whose breast throbs a heart full of Divine compassion. He is a personal God, who companies with us as a friend, who turns in with us for the night, and who allows us to dwell in his holy tabernacle. The works of God are constantly described therefore as personal acts, in connection with which references abound to the face of God, to the mouth of the Lord, to the ear which he inclines toward us, to the footsteps of the Holy One, to the hand which is over us in blessing, and to the arm of strength with which the Lord breaks all forms of opposition. All this is in part personification, by which what is found in man is applied to God. But there is more to it than this. He that planted the ear, the Psalmist asks: Shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? (94:9). The eye and the ear, the hand and the arm are but bodily manifestations of our inward powers, which God has so made, because he created us after his image. When we say that God hears, sees, speaks, blesses and fights, it is not said so, metaphorically, after the manner of men, but by it is asserted that all this is original in God and that it only appears in us after his image. When the Scripture speaks of an arm of the Lord, it means that there is not merely a vague outflowing of power from God, but that God governs his indwelling and outgoing power, that he directs it to definite ends, that he uses or leaves it unused according to his good pleasure, and that when God employs his power to protect or to oppose us, it is equally much, and in a still higher sense, a personal act, as when we lift

up our arm to protect a child or to ward off an assailant.

When the prophet Isaiah asks (53:1): To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? and the question in turn is put to you: Is the arm of the Lord revealed to you? it does not mean in a vague general way whether you believe that there is a God, and that there is a power of God, and whether you believe that this power is operative. But rather whether in your position and in your experience in life you have discovered that Almighty God has personal dealings with you, that as God he has turned himself in person to your person, and has come in contact with you as a man comes in contact with his friend or with his assailant, and whether in this strictly personal relation you have discerned the arm of the Lord lifting itself up to cover and protect you, or turning itself against you to assail and cast you down.

This is what most lives lack, even among those that confess Christ. They lack what is recorded of Moses: that he endured as seeing him who is Invisible. They do not understand what is told of Jacob, that he wrestled with God as with a man. They have vague impressions that there are certain influences, operations and powers abroad, but they do not see the Holy One, they have no dealings with God as with a Father who comes to his child, looks it in the face with his eyes, listens to it with his ears, puts his hand on it and covers it with the arm of his power. They pray to God and praise him, but they do not meet him in the way. They do not feel his presence with them by night. They do not feel his holy breath upon their cheek. And they do not see the "arm of

strength" which is all their assurance and salvation. It can not be insisted upon therefore with sufficient urgency that Bible reading be made a more serious business; that we wean ourselves from the false tendency to take everything in Scripture metaphorically. God's word is a lamp before our feet and a light upon our path, because it alone engraves these two things upon the heart: that God is Spirit, and that, as Our Father who is in heaven, this God meets us in the way and deals with us as a man with his neighbor; invisible and yet seen.

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THAT THEY MIGHT KNOW THEE.

"This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God" (John 17:3). No human word can express a deeper thought or higher aim than this. It was not spoken by a seer to men, but by the Son to the Father. And it must be heard anew by him who would seek God, since it has been put on record for this purpose.

No prayers of our Lord during his more than thirty years' life on earth, in Joseph's home at Nazareth, in mountain or desert place, by day or night, have been recorded in the Gospels, save a few sentence prayers and the cry of distress in Gethsemane. In John 17, however, the high-priestly prayer of our Savior has come down to us in all its sublime grandeur. He who gave us the Scripture to guide us on our pilgrim journey has ordained that this prayer of Jesus to the Father should awake an echo in our own praying heart.