

age to speak, with being blind to wrong practices. Mere sentimental goodness is no sacred art, but cowardice. But this is sacred art: to stand strong and courageous, in everything, and yet so to take hold of things, deal with them, and settle them, that no unholy spark starts fire in your own mind, and that you do not disturb for a moment the inward peace of those who are around you.

He whose piety is more appearance than reality, cares for none of these things. But he who strives unto the end in every way to keep sacred his secret walk with God, and to be continually near unto God, can offer no resistance to the stress of this apostolic word. He feels in his own soul that the atmosphere of love and peace makes him dwell near unto God, and therefore he flees from the sphere of strife and unrest, because it draws him away from God.

“A DECEIVED HEART HATH TURNED
HIM ASIDE.”

The world, our environment, our business, yea, and what not, as a rule leads us away from God. This means that it takes definite effort, in the midst of daily activities, to keep our thoughts and utterances of soul directed toward God. There have even been whole days of which at night on bended knee, it had to be confessed that the mind and soul had not once been lifted up to God. To picture this in brighter colors than the case warrants, will not do. Thus and not otherwise is the sad reality with many whole days of life in which God has had no remembrance. We were

too busy, too overwhelmed, too much diverted and preoccupied than that at night we could retire with the blissful experience of how good it was "to be near unto God."

This is, of course, exclusively a result of the sinful character of our earthly life, for by itself there was no need that anything should draw us away from God. God does not stand by the side of things. He is in all things. From him, by him, and to him. Diversion is a necessity when too onesidedly and too exclusively our spirit has been engaged with one thing. This is noticed by the staring eye, the expressionless face, and the constant return to the same subject. And the specialist recognizes the danger of this. When the soul and the mind are directed to one thing too onesidedly and too continuously, so that one thinks of nothing else, forgets everything else, and involuntarily keeps busy with the selfsame thought, there is the beginning of mental disorder, and diversion is the proper medicine.

This is not the case with thinking of God. In the created world a number of things stand side by side of one another, each with their own claim, and our mind is normal when in just proportions we pay proper attention to them all. If this order is broken, by thinking too much of one thing, and too little of the other, equilibrium is gone and the spirit fails at length in its own confusion. God, on the other hand, never stands by the side of a created thing. It should never be ninety parts of our attention for the creature and ten parts for God. Neither should it be ten parts for the world and ninety parts for God. In the full one hundred parts of everything God is to be

worshipped. Jesus emphatically declares: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy strength, with all thy soul and with all thy mind. In the same way the one hundred parts of our strength should be operative in created things. But both should proceed so as to enter into and permeate each other, and together constitute one blessed life. Thus it is in the Fatherhouse. Thus it was in paradise. Thus it sometimes is here for the space of one brief moment. But as a rule it is so no longer. There is division. There is distraction. The struggle of godliness is to oppose this division, to resist this distraction, and yet, at least parts of each day and parts of each night, "to be near unto God."

What divides and distracts should be justly estimated. With respect to this, Adam is still inclined to put it upon Eve, and Eve to charge it to the serpent. The world, the many activities of life, the diversions of the moment are held accountable for our distractions and life without God. One is busy from early morn till late night, and in dead weariness one falls asleep, sometimes before prayer is said. There is no time for God and for his service. There may be for those who quietly remain at home, but not for the man of business. And so life is ever held accountable, the restlessness and noise, the ever-enticing world. Or complaint is made of the body. One does not feel well, headaches, fevers and other troubles keep the spirit bound. Only there is almost no complaint of one's own soul. And against this Isaiah enters his striking accusation: Your deceived heart hath turned you aside.

Surely the world has come in with its entice-

ments, life with its activities. Thereby you have allowed your heart to be deceived. But it is not the world, nor its activities, but your deceived heart that has turned you aside. It has even turned you aside to this extent, Isaiah adds, that your soul can no longer save itself, i. e. it can no longer escape from its own intoxication. Isaiah declares this regarding the man who has an idol for himself. A tree has been taken home. The knotty parts have been cut off, and of the smooth part the poor soul makes an idol. And it is not the idol that is at fault, but the idolatrous thought in the soul, which had captivatèd the heart, before he made his idol. That piece of wood, that idol is but the expression of what went on in his heart. Not the idol, but his deceived heart turned him aside, even so effectively that at length he no longer sees the difference between a piece of wood and God. Or, as the prophets put it: "He is turned aside so far that he can not come to discover that there is a lie in his right hand" (Isaiah 44:20). This selfsame evil operates, not only among the heathen, but, if in another manner, among Mohammedans, Jews and Christians. It is a human evil. An immediate outcome of our sinful nature.

How does this show itself? Very sharply and clearly, as soon as a magnet operates upon the heart, which attracts, interests and holds the attention, and which involuntarily and of itself again and again stimulates the soul and the senses, fills the thoughts, animates conversation and brings one into a fanatical state of mind. This does not mean the tension and activity of spirit, when duty, business, the course of con-

versation, etc., arrest the attention to itself. On the contrary, in this case lack of attention and neglect of due examination of the interest at stake, is a fault; and may even be a sin. No, the idolatrous turning aside of one's inner self only becomes apparent when this magnet continuously draws, and even without occasion, and when the drawing does not operate from without, but from one's own heart.

There are people who, when they come to you, you instinctively know in advance what they will talk about. There is but one thing that fills their minds. One interest to which they are continually awake. With one it is money, the idea of becoming rich, of increasing gains in every way. With another it is pleasure and the desire to shine. With a third it is art, music, a concert, a piece of literature, a museum, so long as it is dedicated to art, and makes an artistic showing. With another, again, it is a scientific problem which constantly pursues him. With another, again, it is politics, or society gossip, or the hunt, or sport. In all this, spiritual sickness is symptomatically present as soon as one particular interest, even apart from special occasion, of itself engages the attention, animates and preoccupies, and renders one dense and unsympathetic with respect to other things.

For then there is one-sided concentration of mind upon one given point. This one thing is, then, the main thing, to which everything else is rendered subservient. This means to say that this one thing takes the place with him, which in a normal condition of soul, is only accorded to God. And thus it becomes idolatrous. It is the

one absorbing subject of thought. One never gets through talking about it. No sacrifice is deemed too great in its behalf. One devotes himself to it with all his soul and mind. Nothing higher is known and respected. With respect to it even brotherhoods are formed, insomuch as one is interested only in those who live in behalf of the same interest and are absorbed by the selfsame thing. With those who live like this the equilibrium is broken, and the highest place, which is God's right to fill, is occupied by this other thing, which they love with all their heart, and with all their mind, and to which they devote themselves with all their strength.

Now, it is self-evident, that being magnetized in this idolatrous fashion, does not occur with Christians in this literal sense. This neither can be so, nor is it so. He with whom this is the case may announce himself as a Christian, but a Christian he is not. But from this it by no means follows, that the child of God is not exposed to this danger. It is even confessed, of those who have most earnestly sought after the secret walk with God, that no sin was so constantly at the door of their heart as this inclination to allow themselves, by the workings of their own heart, their soul and their mind, to be turned away from God to creaturely things or creaturely thoughts. To be full of the Holy Ghost means, that the desire of the heart, which goes out after God and holy things, is constant. He with whom this is the case does not need to repress other things from his thoughts in order that he might think of God. Involuntarily he thinks of God, and of other things only by special effort.

But what continually occurs, even among Christians, is the very opposite, to-wit: That of itself all sorts of other things are subject of thought, and that only by determinate effort the soul is engaged with God. If, now, these are every time other, alternating things, the danger is not so great. For then it is not one given thing that captivates the heart, and the worship of God stands high above every other interest. On the other hand, however, the danger is great when the heart allows itself to be turned aside onesidedly to one given thing or to one special sort of things, which enthuse us and engage the heart, for then they are apt again and again to take the place in the heart which belongs alone to God.

You can not be near unto God and have part in his secret walk, when involuntarily and of itself magnetically you are every time turned aside again to things that are finite. For then the heart has deceived itself and the deceived heart has turned you aside. And, therefore, when you struggle, and feel that your life is not one that is near unto God, then cease to complain onesidedly of the world, of your environment and of your busy life, as though these alone turn you aside from God. Rather turn in upon yourself. Spy your thoughts, conversations and perceptions. And when you see that not alone, and not even mostly from without, but from these thoughts within there arises the diverting working, which disturbs your fellowship with God, and prevents you from living near unto God, then cast down this idol within and destroy it.

There is no room for Christ and Belial in one and the selfsame heart. Or do you not know,

with St. Paul: "Do ye not know your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you?" (II Cor. 13:5).

**"WHATSOEVER YE DO, DO IT HEARTILY,
AS TO THE LORD."**

God, in his word, opposes every tendency and every effort to break up life into two parts; one for ourselves and one for God. He allows no division, no separation; no six days of the week for us and Sunday for God. No unconsecrated life interspersed with consecrated moments. No unhallowed existence through which at distances a sacred thread is interwoven. No life apart from religion marked here and there with piety. No, the claim of Scripture on this point is absolute, and though it seems strange to us, the claim remains: "Pray without ceasing;" in everything give thanks; rejoice in God always; and: "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord" (Col. 3:23).

To Thessalonica Paul writes: "Pray without ceasing. Rejoice evermore. In everything give thanks" (I Thess. 5:16, 17, 18). To the Philippians: "Rejoice in the Lord always" (Phil. 4:4). And to those at Colosse: "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord" (Col. 3:23). There is no respite given. No compact made with you. God takes no pleasure with anything less than all of your life. Where faith becomes the rule of life, its dominion aims to be absolute. No finds, no excuses, no half-measures are tolerated. He who would live this life as a child of God, as a servant of Jesus Christ, inspired by the Holy Ghost, must