

God, and that in co-operation with Satan we oppose God. And if this be the case what is it to make confession of sin, save that so soon as you realize this, you at once step out from among the ranks of Satan and return to the battle lines of God, imploring mercy, that you may be counted worthy again to fight under his banner, and again to join forces with him?

And now the heart appeals to the omniscience of the God of all compassions. Did you mean to desert the ranks of God and to join the forces of Satan? No, no; and once again, No. You did not mean to do it. The thought of such an evil did not rise from within yourself. You allowed yourself to be taken unawares. You slipped without realizing the dreadful wickedness of your deed. And now as you perceive that this is the sin that you committed, you appeal to God. In the inmost recess of your heart there was no desire to desert God. And your sorrow of soul, your remorse, your self-reproach is, that in the face of it, you have incurred the guilt of an act of enmity against God. And, therefore, you plead with him and ask him, the all-knowing, whether as he tries your heart, he does not see, and does not know, that in its deepest depths, as against Satan, it is with him.

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**“GET THEE BEHIND ME, SATAN!”**

It can not be denied, that in former times, especially in the middle ages, too much was made

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of Satan by dragging him, as it were, rightly or wrongly, into everything. But does it not seem that now we rather incline to the other extreme, and forget, if not deny, the very existence of the Evil One? With this denial, self-conceited freedom in matters of belief makes singular shifts with the Gospel of our Lord. For then it is said that one frees himself from the Old Testament, but for this very reason adheres the more closely to the Gospel. These wavering spirits are not concerned with Moses but with Jesus, and frequently do not hesitate to criticize you, who hold to the whole Scripture, as being too Old-Testamentish and consequently only half Christian.

But see how these people, who are so loud in their praises of the Gospel, themselves deal with it. It is true that Satan has almost no mention in the Old Testament, and that he is broadly dealt with in the Gospel. And not this alone, but in his words as well as in his works, Jesus continually shows that he reckons with Satan. Only think of the temptation in the wilderness, of the constant casting out of devils, of the great conflict of evil spirits against the Savior, how he understood that all his sufferings and death was a struggle with this Prince, and how, without multiplying instances, in the short "Our Father" he added the petition as a final prayer for all his people: "Deliver us from the Evil."

All this, however, will not do. The half friends who have put the Old Testament aside, in order to adhere solely to Jesus and his Gospel, do not

hesitate to dismiss this whole matter of Satan's influences, part and parcel, from their Gospel. And with respect to this it is evident again, that every such effort aims not at forming the mind and thought after the Gospel, but at moulding the Gospel after their own world of thought.

With respect to this they who, while more faithful to the Gospel do not deny but forget the real workings of Satan, are not free from guilt. Or is it not extremely rare, that in spoken or written address, in psychology or in revelations of the inner life, the Evil One is reckoned with as a real factor? It should be carefully observed, that like a thief, Satan is most pleased when his presence and his work are not noticed. In circles where his existence is denied or ridiculed, his hands are altogether free to murder souls according to his liking. But that he can be so strangely forgotten by those who are more inclined to believe the Gospel, offers him the finest chances to poison souls. We may be sure that in all this denial and in all this forgetting of the actual existence of Satan, a trick of Satan himself operates. When the mighty spirit of Christ moved the waves of the sea of life in Palestine, Satan did not succeed with this for a moment, and Jesus compelled him to show himself. But now he succeeds in keeping himself in hiding, and unseen and unnoticed, from the ambush, to inwork his character, and consequently with better effect.

How the working of Satan proceeds is not revealed unto us in its particulars. We only know

that the world of men is not the only world of conscious beings. There are myriads of other spiritual beings who are known as spirits, angels, cherubim, seraphim, etc. It is also certain that this world of spirits is not separated from our world of men, that it exists by the side of it, and is in all sorts of ways related with it and inworks upon it. And in the second place it is additionally revealed, that in this world of spirits the antithesis between holy and unholy has broken out, even earlier than here on earth, and that from this world of spirits it has entered into our world of men.

Hence there is a certain alliance between good spirits and good men, and also a conspiracy between unholy spirits in the invisible world and unholy spirits in the visible world. Joy among good angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, and smiles of derision among evil spirits when the effort to bring about the fall of a lost man meets with success. It is all one conflict, one warfare, one struggle with Christ as the Head of holy spirits here on earth and outside of this world against Satan, who is the head of all unholy spirits among men and among devils.

All this is clearly, broadly and exhaustively set forth in the Gospels, Epistles and in Revelation. We know this, we believe this, and are obliged to direct our doings and non-doings in accordance with this. But how these workings of unholy spirits upon the world of men proceeds, is wrapt in shadows, so that only some vague features give

direction to our thoughts. This much, however, is certain, that a threefold working severally delineates itself with sufficient clearness. There are workings from the unholy spirit world, which, without definite attack, of themselves find a vehicle observable by us, in public opinion, customs and habits of life, and sinful human nature. This is the common, the everyday recurring, the ever continuing process which, as it were, is in the very air, and of which we all undergo a certain influence. There is a second working which is better defined when one of the many evil spirits makes itself master of the spirit of a given company of people or of the spirit of a given individual. Sometimes several wicked spirits do this at once. Bring to mind the parable of Jesus (Matt. 12:45). And, then, there is a third, still more definite, yea, even the most definite working, when Satan does not employ the agency of one of his adherents, but when he prepares himself for battle, in order to make a leading assault in the world of spirits.

In accordance with the spirit of the times, and of persons, the first, second or third working appears more conspicuously in the foreground. This is seen in the days of Jesus. The main dispute had then to be settled, and all three of these workings were strongly evident. Satan himself, in array against Jesus and his apostles, evil spirits arrayed against chosen victims, and the ordinary workings among the rank and file of the people. Escape there was none. Hiding would not do.

The conflict was in the open. Altogether different from now.

Even in those days, however, Satan tried to hide himself. We refer to this for our instruction. Peter, with his sensitive nature and excitable mind, was used as instrument. "His Jesus to die on the Cross! Never!" Love for Jesus was the motive of antagonizing this dreadful thought in Jesus. And so we read: "Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, 'Have pity on thyself! This shall not be unto thee!'" (Matt. 16:22). The working of Satan was concealed in this. Peter did not realize it. But Jesus saw through it at once, and in turn rebuked the disciple, who was adrift on his feelings instead of resting on the prophesied plan regarding the man of sorrows. "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of man." Thus Satan did not gain a hair's breadth. Jesus unmasked him at once. Even with his attack from the ambush he could make no advance against Jesus.

But this event is of infinite value to us. It shows that a direct attack of Satan can lurk in loveliest forms of devotion, when apparently no evil intent is at play, even when we have the impression of walking very tender ways. This does not say, that Satan ever attacked you personally. It is very possible that he confined himself in this to the use of one of his subordinate spirits. It is even possible that as yet he has never influenced you otherwise than by his gen-

eral workings in the spiritual atmosphere. But the incident with Peter shows that you might be mistaken. That there might have been an attack of Satan when you did not in the least suspect it. And in any case, that the daily prayer: "Deliver us from the Evil!" is no superfluous wealth for anyone of us.

Thinking of a temptation that was endured, the question sometimes rises long afterward, entirely objectively: Was not this a direct attack of Satan on my heart, and was it not God who delivered and saved and preserved me? It is not always in the temptation to some particular great sin. See it in the case of St. Peter. He deemed rather that he was doing good. But this is certain, that the greatest obstacle in the way of the world of evil spirits is your seeking and striving to be near unto God, to live in his secret fellowship, to choose your path in life and to follow it unto the end, in conscious communion with God.

And for you, on the other hand, there is no safer stronghold in which to hide and safeguard yourself against these unholy influences than in being much in close nearness unto God. For this reason Satan is ever on the alert to interrupt this fellowship with God in your heart. That you seriously seek this hidden walk with God, is reason enough for Satan to venture an attack on you in a particular way, by no means always to allure you into a great sin, but very frequently, as in the case of Peter, by imparting unto you diverting workings of the affections.

Be, therefore, on your guard. As soon as you become aware of spiritual coolness, as soon as you perceive that this, that or the other thing renders it difficult or prevents you from being, and continuing, near unto God, then consider what influences you are becoming subject to, what unnoticed inworkings take place in your soul. Shake yourself free from them all. And do not rest until you have found your hiding place close by the heart of God. Hesitation, procrastination will not do. Jesus broke the spell immediately, and at once repulsed Peter with the words: "Get thee behind me, Satan!" Brief, forceful and aggressive! Thus only the snare breaks, and you can escape.

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**"OH, THAT THOU WoulDEST REND  
THE HEAVENS."**

Ascension day is a Divine memorial day. It is the glorious memorial day of our Savior. The work of redemption which was to be accomplished on earth was now finished. Not only his bearing of the form of a servant; not only the way of the man of sorrows; not only entering in upon eternal death, but also the sojourn of forty more days on earth, in order to consecrate his apostles to the holy, gigantic task, which awaited them from now on.

These forty days again were a sacrifice of love brought by Jesus. The glory of heaven allured him. The place at the right hand of God called

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