

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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and wooed him. The crown awaited him. But yet he tarried. He still remained in the sphere of this world. Not because it attracted him. On the contrary, between the risen Savior and the world, which was still submerged in misery, every tie of connection was severed. With respect to this world he had ceased to dwell in its midst. He had died unto this world, and his resurrection had not restored him unto it, but only to the circle of his saints. And so there was something anti-natural for him in this forty days tarrying on earth. He no longer belonged to it. He had become estranged from it and it from him. Even though he still tarried in it, the world would see him no more. He would still be in it, but out of all connection with it, no longer belonging to it, but to an higher sphere, into which he had actually entered by his resurrection.

But Jesus loved his disciples. The touching parting with them in Gethsemane, the parting with Peter in the court room, the parting with John on Golgotha, could not be final. Not the world, but they must see him after his resurrection. They must be initiated into their new relation to their Lord. Regenerated in his resurrection itself they must receive the apostolic anointing. They must be prepared for the transition into the new relation, when they would be alone on earth and their Master in heaven. And for this purpose Jesus had brought this last sacrifice, that he did not ascend to heaven immediately after his resurrection, but only weeks afterward,

and that for those many days he forewent the glory which awaited him on God's throne.

But this could not last. The end must follow. It was an holy pause in his glorification, entered upon from love, but which of necessity had to be as short as possible. It could not, and was not, permitted to be a continuous intercourse with his own. That would not have answered his purpose. It would not have accustomed them to the parting that was to follow. And therefore there was nothing but an occasional appearance in order to withdraw himself again. At first more frequently, then more rarely, in order presently at Damascus and on Patmos to reveal himself but for a fleeting moment. In between these lies the final parting. The last meeting on the Mount of Olives, with Gethsemane at its foot, Jerusalem stretching itself behind it, and back of Jerusalem Golgotha and the cave from whence he rose. Jesus had given them his last command. The moment of parting was at hand. And then from the top of the Mount of Olives he lifted himself from their midst, and ascended so that they saw it, higher and ever higher, until a cloud received him out of their sight, and angels from the spheres of light came down, who gave them the last word of comfort: "He is gone away from you, once to return. Once the whole world shall be his."

Where those heavens are, whither Jesus went, remains a mystery to us. We look for them above, and all Scripture tells us, and our own heart returns an echo to it, that the heaven of glory must arch itself above us. It is an increaded need

of our soul to look for God's throne not in our proximity, nor yet underneath, but above us. The heavens are God's throne and the earth is his footstool. We look up to the heavens, from whence light comes to us, where God's stars twinkle in the firmament, from whence rain descends to us and waters the earth and spreads blessing all around us. But dimensions here do not count. The heavens of our God are not of our materiality, they do not count with our distances, they are not comprised in the measure of the finite. Once they will open themselves to us from a direction where we did not expect it. They will not be where we surmised it. But in unknown glory they will open their gates to us. And into this glory, when he ascended, Jesus has entered.

"Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens!" exclaimed Isaiah (64:1) in great distress of soul. For, taken in its deepest sense, our misery consisted in the fact, that by its sinful degeneracy our world was shut off from the heaven of our God. The holy above and the unholy round about us and in our own heart. And then there was every time a looking up to heaven above which seemed like brass, and whose closed gates and windows scarcely allowed our prayers to pass through. We were disposed to that heaven. We were designed for it. Only a life in communion with that heaven could impart the Divinely intended lustre to our existence here on earth. We were not able to climb up to those heavens, in order to unlock their gates. All we could do was to look up to

that heaven, stare at it, and call to it and supplicate, that our God, or he who alone could do it, would rend those heavens, and afford us access again to them.

And this prayer has been answered in Christ. First in that he descended from heaven, and then in that he ascended thither again. By the latter far more strongly than by the former. For, surely, when Jesus was on earth, there was always an opened heaven above him, and angels of God ascended and descended above the Son of Man. But only by Jesus' ascension has communion between heaven and earth been established on a broad scale, durably and permanently. He ascended, not as he descended, but he carried up our human nature in himself. He came to us from heaven as the Son of God, but as the Son of Man he returned into heaven. His ascension is no break of fellowship with his own, but rather an anchoring forevermore of the tie which binds him to his saints on earth. This fellowship is even wonderfully mutual. He our Head, and in him our life hidden with God, but on the other hand, he, our Savior, taking up his abode in the hearts of his own and staying near them with his majesty, his grace and with his spirit. And now there is not a moment more of interruption, far less of a breaking of the tie which binds our earth to heaven, but in the sacred mystery we have an ever continuing, living, holy outpouring of light and brightness, of power and might from on high, and by the side of this, in an equally

sacred mystery, a restless ascent of our faith, our love and our hope up to the throne of glory.

By his ascent up to heaven Jesus has not become farther removed from us, but he has come nearer by. What now vibrates and lives and operates is fellowship between the King of glory and his saints on earth, no longer confined to the upper room, no more limited to a mountain in Galilee, but beaming forth throughout the whole world, wherever there are souls which he redeemed and saved and who, in supplication, go out to him.

It is now an invisible, unobservable, but a forceful and systematic operative Divine regiment which Christ as our Head makes valid in all the earth. In the wilderness Satan showed Jesus the kingdom of this world and mirrored to him a diabolic authority over them all. Jesus refused this, and for what he then refused he now received as crown upon his work of Redemption the spiritual and Divine government over all peoples and nations. Thus he perfects over all this world, wonderfully and majestically, the gradual preparation of spiritual conditions which will once bring about the consummation, in order that then he may establish his eternal kingdom, in all its completeness, in this selfsame world, from which he ascended.

Thus have the heavens been rent, thus have the windows and gates of heaven been opened, never to be closed again, nor even to be veiled. He who with his prayers now stands before a heaven of brass, has no one to blame but his own unbelief

and lack of spirituality. But for him, for her, who believes, the heavens are opened, and from thence pours forth into the darkness of this world and into the darkness of our own heart, a soft, blessed glow of light, love and life. And the soul that is cherished thereby, has already now "walks above" among the saints of God, and with the smile of joy on his face, he sees the approach of the hour when, having finished his earthly course, he, too, shall enter upon the fulness of that glory.

The early Christians realized this, and therefore, clothed in white garments, they carried out their dead who had fallen asleep in Jesus amid songs of joy. We, at a greater distance from the Mount of Olives, follow other customs, only, let it never be with less fixedness of hope in the heart in behalf of our beloved ones who have fallen asleep.

### "WITH ALL SAINTS."

In your most pious frame of mind, and urgent longing of soul to be near unto God you may not claim the Lord your God for yourself alone. This is a sinful abuse which is readily committed by passionate devotion. In the "Our Father" a plural is used, where we, when left to our own impulse, would readily use a singular. It does not say: "My Father," but "Our Father," who art in heaven, and the plural "us" is used in the Lord's prayer to the end. This does not mean that we may not use the singular in our devotions. In