

a step that will not be taken; it is an exertion from which we shrink, or it is sin in some material direction, or in the home, in public or in church life which we seek to harmonize with the privileges of Divine grace. But it will not do. In God's mind it is unthinkable. And as long as we persist in sin the sun will shine and sometimes his heat will be so fierce that no fruit of the spirit can ripen and the very intensity of the grace of God will harden us. "Thou Lord art the sun of my soul," is the language of faith with which to enter eternity. Let us see to it that it may not some day testify against us. "The fall and rising again" has an application also in this matter.

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## UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE ALMIGHTY.

Every creature is a thought of God. All created things therefore are symbols of the Divine. To hail winged creatures as symbolic expressions of the life of God is not original with us. The Scripture sets us the example. The devout believer is accustomed to its figurative language and he readily admits that it greatly cheers and blesses him. What Jesus said in these figurative terms regarding Jerusalem fell within the scope of common understanding. The hen with her chickens is a symbol of divine compassion, which moves even an outsider by its beauty and tenderness. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and ye would not" (Matt. 23:37). But this word of Jesus has a

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deeper meaning than even an outsider, who admires it, thinks. It speaks of protection and compassion for the sake of which the little ones are gathered together. It implies that the chickens belong with the mother hen. And except they return to her they can not be shielded against cold and other dangers. The striking figure indicates that the natural place of refuge for the chickens is close by the mother hen. And that they can only be safe and warm in her immediate presence under the cover of her outspread wings.

This striking word of our Lord was borrowed from the figurative language of the Old Testament, which also in turn explains it. The first verse of Psalm 91: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty," is an instance of this metaphorical representation. It is the epitome of what the Psalmist describes elsewhere (61:4): "I will trust in the covert of Thy wings." The same thought was expressed by the wings of the cherubim covering the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant. It is ever the same thought. God has created the fowl that lovingly gathers her brood under her wings that she might shield and shelter them. And this beautiful figure is held before us that we might seek refuge under the shadow of the Almighty, and trust in the covert of his wings.

This imagery is not borrowed from that which moves in the waters, nor from that which glides along the ground. It is almost never borrowed from four-footed beasts, but mainly from winged creatures that lift themselves above the earth, and live, as it were, between us and heaven.

The angels before God's throne are pictured with wings as seraphs. The Holy Ghost came upon the Son of Man descending like a dove. The secret prayer of the troubled soul is that it might have wings to fly away. That winged creatures should be used as symbols to express what is most tender and affectionate in saintly character, and that boldest imagery should serve to portray what it is "to be near unto God," to make it, as it were, visible to our eyes and perceptible to our feelings, is entirely in keeping with the order of creation. It corresponds to the divinely appointed state of things. It appeals to us as altogether natural. But this symbolism must not be taken too literally. We must be on our guard lest sickly mysticism interprets holy mysteries to us in a material way. God is Spirit. Every effort to be in touch with him, except in a purely spiritual way, avenges itself. For it leads either to idolatry which makes an image of God from stone or precious metal, or it loses itself in pantheistic mud, which intermingles spirit and matter, and ends in sensual excesses, first defiling and then killing what spiritually began.

But however necessary it is to maintain the spirituality of our fellowship with God, it will not do to take spirituality to mean unreality. This, alas, is a common mistake and accounts for much spiritual barrenness. For then we only see what is before our eyes; nature round about us; the blue heavens above us; our body with its several parts; all which we consider real, because they have form, consist of matter, are tangible and have actual existence. Apart and distin-

guished from this is what we think, what we picture to ourselves, what we study out in our minds, what we take as the abstract world of thought. We interpret all this to be an unreal world, the center of which is God. An infinite Being who exists merely in our thought, in our mind, in our idea, with whom there is no fellowship except along the avenue of thought. But this provides no mysticism for the heart; no uniting of heart to fear the name of God; no experience of secret fellowship with God. If God does not exist outside of our thought, the self-sufficient soul can not come near to God, nor can it dwell in his tent.

Every deeply spiritual life in Holy writ protests against this danger. Such was not what Psalmists and prophets experienced of God. They found Him as the real living One who came near unto them, and bare them on the arms of his everlasting compassions. He was a God unto them whose love they felt as a fire burn in the marrow of their bones, with whom they found peace, comfort and rest for their weary soul as they realized that He sheltered them in the covert of his wings and allowed them to abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

This thrice blessed state of mind and heart can not be analyzed. It must be experienced. It must be tasted. And having it, it must be guarded lest it is lost again or interrupted. But it can not be analyzed, interpreted or explained. That would give place to the wedge of criticism and chill the warmth that fosters it. The way to obtain it is to learn that self-sufficiency deceives. High-minded self-sufficiency is the canker which

gnaws at the root of all religion. It is the futile dream of a little, insignificant world, of which self is the great center, whose mind understands everything, whose will controls everything, whose money can buy everything, and whose power carries everything before it. This makes self a miniature god in a little temple. In this sinful isolation one is, of necessity, icy cold, frozen away from the living God and unfit to dwell under the shadow of his wings.

If in all honesty we can say: Such is not my case, because I feel my dependence, my lack of strength and my utter helplessness, then that we might have fellowship with God, we must unlearn our sinful leaning on people. We need not necessarily cut ourselves loose from every one. Far from it. The faith of another strengthens ours. The courage of another shames us out of cowardice. The example set by another can double our strength. We are disposed to society both in matters of life and belief. But we must give up all sinful dependence upon others. Dependence that takes a man for more than an instrument appointed of God for our help, as long as he allows it, is sinful. We must not build on man, in order when human help fails to turn to the Divine. Our help must always be from God, whether power to save springs from ourselves or comes to us from without. Even in this way, that when at length all human help fails, nothing is lost. For the unchangeable God always remains the same.

This assured confidence is maintained, as long as we faithfully endeavor to eradicate, root and branch, the doubt which wearily makes us ask whether salvation is for us. To entertain this

doubt, even for a moment, unnerves and breaks us down. Then we are like the little chicken that anxiously looks around for the mother hen, and not finding her anywhere, helplessly flies hither and thither until snatched away by the hawk. Then all confidence is gone; and gone the perception of one's calling in life; and gone the faith that God has led us hitherto and shall lead us to the end. Then all strength fails. And prophecy is dumb in the heart. Until at length, in despair, fellowship with Satan becomes more natural than the secret walk with God.

The Psalmist not only glories that he rests in the shadow of God, but also that he hides in the shadow of the Almighty. This must needs be added. Compared with the defenceless chicken, the mother hen, which to save her young flies the hawk in the face and chases him away, is the symbol of a power that reminds us of Divine Omnipotence. For else resting on the Fatherheart of God avails nothing. He who rests under the shadow of God's wings, but does not trust, puts God to shame. It but fosters the fear that one who is stronger than God can snatch us away from under the Divine protection. When we are far away from God, unbelief can be forgiven, in so far as we fly to him for refuge. But when we have once taken refuge with him, unbelief in the heart is a fatal wrong. It profanes the love which God looks for from us. The blessed peace, the hallowed rest, the childlike confidence which God's elect have always enjoyed, even in seasons of bitterest trial, is not the result of reasoning. It is not the effect of deliverance. It is solely and alone the sweet outcome of taking refuge in the

secret place of the most High, of abiding under the shadow of the Almighty, of knowing what it means, "To Be Near Unto God," and of enjoying it.

If then we have thus far been strangers to God, let us not imagine, that in time of danger, when thunder-clouds have gathered thickly overhead, and all human help has failed, we can at once find refuge in the shadow of the Almighty. This has been tried in the hour of calamity by those of a transient faith, but the effort has proved futile. It is here the other way. The secret walk with God is not found as a means of deliverance in the hour of need. They who had found it in times of prosperity and ease knew the wings under which deliverance would be sure. And when they came to be afflicted and grieved they found rest and safe shelter under the wings of God. It is not the case of a hen without chickens, which spreads her wings for whatever would hide under them. But it is her own brood, which she has hatched, and for which she will risk her life, that finds shelter and protection with her. This states the case of the shadow under the wings of the Almighty. They whom he will cover with his eternal love are his own children. These are they whom he calls and awaits. These are they that are known of Him. They who are at home under the wings of God shall in the hour of danger dwell under the shadow of the Almighty.

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## IN THE WIND OF THE DAY.

There was no violence in the displays of nature in Paradise. No other wind blew in the Garden