

This is salvation. Wherefore he who takes the confession of the Trinity as a mere doctrinal question, does not fathom by far what this revelation of Father, Son and Holy Ghost implies. Only the Triune God is the wealth and the delight of the soul.

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“WHO DWELLETH ON HIGH AND  
BEHOLDETH THE THINGS.”  
IN THE EARTH.

He who seeks to live near unto God, and does not know how to keep his distance from God, commits sin. This is sadly evident at times in prayer before others, and shows itself at once by the use of “you” in place of “thee” and “thou”. In countries where the language contains two forms of address, one more common and one more dignified, it has always been the custom to use the more common form in prayer. In France we have the ‘Notre Pere qui est aux cieus, ton regne vienne’; and in German: “Unser Vater der du im Himmel bist, dein Name werde geheiligt.” In addressing his father a Dutch child always used the terms du and dein, which in meaning lay in between the vulgar Dutch “jou” and the dignified “thee and thou.” But this has been changed. To address his father now otherwise than by “thee and thou” would be considered a breach on the part of the Dutch Child of the Fifth Commandment. When thus in addressing an earthly father a wholesome appreciation of language avoids the use of vulgar terms, it betokens a want of sufficient reverence before the Father who is in heaven, when one tries to show a certain daring, in thus ad-

dressing the Highest Being. It betrays the tendency to show how intimately the man who prays holds converse with his God. And while this is done at the expense of reverence towards God, it leads to sin.

Both what is exalted and what is ordinary have very naturally a certain trait in common. A king on his throne is exalted, his butler is only ordinary. Yet they have this in common, that their family name is rarely used. As a rule they are spoken of by name. In England people speak of King George. Almost no one thinks of his family name of Windsor. Likewise every one knows the butler by his first name, while in case of a payment of taxes his family name is frequently a subject of inquiry.

This is because the exalted departs from the ordinary measure of our life, and so does that which falls below it. As we read in Isaiah 57:15, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit". The lofty and the humble are here mentioned in one breath. Our ordinary life has certain measures, forms and dimensions, certain well known figures and appearances. All this together forms our human life. And it is the sin of every thing that is called heathen, that it brings the Almighty down to the level of the human. Thus the heathen make an image of a man, or of an animal, and kneel down to it, and so destroy the incalculable difference between human and Divine life.

In the face of it Holy Scripture discloses the holy sphere of the lofty, i. e. of a life that goes

out far and high above our earthly, human life. Nature gives us an impression of it in the firmament that arches high above us, in the sky that hastens upwards, and in the mighty thunder that rolls through the dark hosts of clouds. In a heavy thunder-storm, in the hurricane that rages upon the great waters, in an earthquake which makes the ground to vibrate under our feet, with a volcano that vomits forth its lava, every one feels that we have to do with powers that exceed the limits of our human life. They are the interpreters of the existence of a higher, mightier world than ours. Wherefore all this takes its place in what we call the lofty. It ascends higher still when we lift up our soul and mind to the world of angels and of the blessed in eternal light. But higher still is the Most Highest, Our God in his Majesty. And every portrayal which God himself gives in prophecy of the palace of the Divine King, and of the throne of his Omnipotence above, lifts itself so high and far above all measure of our common life that of our own accord we honor therein the Past in its completeness. This must be so, in order that we might continue to be man, and leave God to be God, and that we might never lose from sight the distance at which the Creator stands high above the creature. When we realize this distance reverence attends our worship, and in deep humility of spirit we kneel before his lofty throne.

This same God who dwelleth on high, in the lofty and holy places, also dwells with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit. He humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth (Ps. 113:6). The laborer and the

poor are frequently treated with far more consideration by those of assured position, than by those of lower social standing. When a subject approaches his king, as a rule he is surprised by the kind treatment which he receives. And since the Lord God is highly exalted above every one of us, it is no contradiction, but entirely along the same line, that when he turns himself to his creature, he refreshes and comforts it by an holy, Divine familiarity.

Sacred reserve therefore becomes us in our approach to God. Familiarity with the Eternal must always proceed from the side of God, and may never be presumed upon by the creature. When man makes bold to ignore the boundary of reverence, God repulses him. For then man exalts himself at the expense of the loftiness of his Lord. This interrupts the secret walk with God. At last he retains nothing but vain beating in the air after the Infinite, after a higher Being, a higher blessing, a name without content, a sound that volatilizes; and he has lost his Father and his God.

The Our Father puts us under solemn restraint. By grace we are permitted to invoke God as our Father. But for the sake of reverence it follows at once: Who art in heaven, in order that, as the Catechism warns us, no one should think of God in an earthly way.

That God is the Lofty and Holy One who dwelleth on high, and that there is a secret walk with him, because he humbleth himself to behold the things in the earth, creates of itself a two-fold endeavor to overcome the distance that separates him from us. One is, that God comes

down to us. The second is, that we lift up our soul to him. It begins with the first. The second follows. In Paradise after the fall God comes down to Adam, and this condescension on the part of God goes on throughout all Revelation. This coming down is made perfect in the manger of Bethlehem in behalf of our entire race. At the great feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem God the Holy Ghost comes down into human hearts. This descent of God still continues with every soul that passes from death into life. Then God comes to take up his abode in the heart. Then he prays for us, and in us with groanings that are unutterable, and he who dwelleth on high dwells at the same time in the contrite heart.

Parallel with this runs the lifting up of our soul to God. "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul" (Ps. 25:1). What we seek is "to dwell in the house of the Lord," to take refuge in him as our "high Tower," and to live our life apart from the world in order to dwell with the Holy One. "Seek the things that are above where Christ is" (Col. 3:1) and to you will be given "walks to walk among those that are above" (Zech. 3:7).

When God comes down to you, the idol of self, even as Dagon's image, must be thrown down. But when this is done, and your spirit is contrite, and you have come down from your imagined heights to humbler perceptions of yourself, the wall of separation falls down, the distance shortens, and the moment arrives when you feel that God is with you in your own heart, and that you cannot live otherwise than near unto God.

Reverence before the Almighty has always proved itself most deep and most true with those who stand nearest to the Lord. While on the other hand they who have never entered into secret fellowship with God, have become more and more devoid of all salutary fear, awe and reverence before the Lord our God. In many cases they even profane his Holiness by reckless and thoughtless use of his Name as an expletive.

It is grace, and grace alone, that the High and Lofty One takes his finite creature into his confidence, enters into secret fellowship with him, admits him into his tent and visits him in his heart. And they alone enjoy the delight of this sacred privilege, who receive it in a thankful and worshipful spirit. They have the promise that they will be translated one day from this earthly into the heavenly state, in order that in the high and lofty Fatherhouse of God, they may dwell forever with the Lord.

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“BEFORE I WAS AFFLICTED I  
WENT ASTRAY.”

There is also an entirely personal knowledge of God which comes to us through the ebb and flood tides of sorrow and of joy. But this must not be exaggerated. The idea that disappointment and sorrow as a rule open the soul to God, and that suffering always makes perfect, is loudly contradicted by experience. Undoubtedly great disasters, which strike heavily and suddenly, such as pestilence, storms that threaten shipwreck, destructive earthquakes, danger of death in sudden illness, remind the thoughtless for a