

Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart

331

Author George Croly

Composer Frederick C. Atkinson

Deuteronomy 6: 5

John 14: 15-21

Titus 3: 4-7

Acts 2: 1-21

John 1: 29-41

Thoughts on the Text

One of the greatest lines in all of Christian hymnody is found in this hymn. It is stanza two:

"I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies, no sudden rending of the veil of clay, no angel visitant, no opening skies; but take the dimness of my soul away."

I write what some of our brothers and sisters might say upon hearing this line spoken in a sermon: "My Lord."

The hymn writer does not ask for supernatural occurrences in order to be convinced of God's presence, the writer simply asks to see God in all the existing, natural evidences around us. Such a seeing, awareness of this sort, will require the removal of the dimness of our souls. "The dimness of my soul" is an intriguing image.

What dims our soul to the brightness of God all around us and within us? There may be some large, sweeping answers, but the personal answers are evidence of the closeness and personal-ness of God.

Even as fire fell from Heaven to consume the offering of Elijah, so the Spirit, descending as a dove, witnessed at Jesus' baptism, can spark a fire of compassion in us. The fire will consume whatever dims our soul. This hymn/prayer means business. One who sings/prays it should mean business as well.

This gentle hymn packs the power of true commitment to God. It needs no additional musical punch. No cymbals here, no trumpet fanfares, no rhythmic trance. A simple, profound, life-changing prayer is offered. Sing it if you will. Sing it if you dare. Sing it, knowing your singing is a prayer.

Amen.

Terry W. York