

ASCENSION DAY

Very odd for those disciples
talking thus with one another
suddenly to have there Jesus
in the flesh – their friend and brother;

he whom they had just abandoned,
he whom they had left behind
each betraying him who came there
to redeem all humankind.

Yet he died for them – so lonely,
visited with every shame –
they had left their Lord and Master,
bearer of God's holy name.

Still, he came to stand among them,
showing them his hands and feet
bearing marks of crucifixion –
came once more entire, complete.

Could this be their risen Saviour –
could his prophesy be true –
that he'd rise and vanquish death, so
saving them? They hardly knew.

What on earth can they have thought then
–
if on earth's the proper phrase –
was the Judgement Day upon them;
was this day the End of Days?

Would they now be justly punished
for their pusillanimous retreat,
for their failure to accept that
this was vict'ry – not defeat?

Not just bread did he break for them
but the Scriptures also; so
that they might finally believe him –
murdered thus but risen so.

Then he told them of their mission –
how they must leave all they knew,
face all perils in the knowledge
that to him they must be true.

evils, serpents, curing sickness,
speaking tongues they'd never known?
How could all this come to people
who had left him all alone?

While they puzzled, out he led them,
off to Bethany nearby,
blessed them – just as into heaven
he was taken from their eye.

Now they worshipped him in earnest,
now they knew what they must do –
preach the Gospel of their Saviour,
keeping faith and staying true.

Risking wrath of those who shunned them,
facing danger every day,
nonetheless they'd serve their Master,
fearing nothing, come what may.

They, the very last to see him –
man among us, here on earth –
handed down to us the message
of the one whose humble birth ...

gave no hint of later greatness –
tender baby in a manger –
yet who conquered death for ever,
for us facing every danger.

Gone from sight from the disciples,
thus ascending to his throne,
yet he is with us for ever –
never shall we be alone.

Glory be to God the Father
and the Spirit and the Son;
this Ascensio[n]tide we praise thee,
one in three and three in one.

Amen.