

II.

Two Standpoints.

“By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.” — *Psalm xxxiii. 6.*



The work of the Holy Spirit that most concerns us is the *renewing of the elect after the image of God*. And this is not all. It even savors of selfishness and irreverence to make this so prominent, as tho it were His only work.

The redeemed are not sanctified without Christ, who is made to them sanctification; hence the work of the Spirit must embrace the Incarnation of the Word and the *work of the Messiah*. But the work of Messiah involves preparatory working in the Patriarchs and Prophets of Israel, and later activity in the Apostles, *i.e.*, the foreshadowing of the Eternal Word in Scripture. Likewise this revelation involves the conditions of man’s nature and the historical development of the race; hence the Holy Spirit is concerned in the formation of the human mind and the unfolding of the spirit of humanity. Lastly, man’s condition depends on that of the earth: the influences of sun, moon, and stars; the elemental motions; and no less on the actions of spirits, be they angels or demons from other spheres. Wherefore the Spirit’s work must touch the entire *host of heaven and earth*.

To avoid a mechanical idea of His work as tho it began and ended at random, like piece-work in a factory, it must not be determined nor limited till it extends to all the influences that affect the sanctification of the Church. The Holy Spirit is God, therefore sovereign; hence He can not depend on these influences, but completely controls them. For this He must be able to operate them; so His work must be honored *in all the host of heaven, in man and in his history, in the preparation of Scripture, in the Incarnation of the Word, in the salvation of the elect*.

But this is not all. The final salvation of the elect is not the last link in the chain of events. The hour that completes their edemption will be the hour of reckoning for all creation. The Biblical revelation of Christ’s return is not a mere pageant closing this preliminary dispensation, but the great and notable event, the consummation of all before, the catastrophe whereby *all that is shall receive its due*.



In that great and notable day the elements with commotion and awful change shall be combined into a new heaven and earth, *i.e.*, out of these burning elements shall emerge the real beauty and glory of God’s original purpose. Then all ill, misery, plague, everything unholy, every demon, every spirit turned against God shall become truly hellish; that is, every thing ungodly shall receive its due, *i.e.*, a world in which sin has absolute sway. For what is hell other than a realm in which unholiness works without restraint in body and soul? Then man’s personality will recover the unity destroyed by death, and God will grant His redeemed the fruition of that blest hope confessed on earth amid conflict and affliction in the words

“I believe in the resurrection of the body.” Then shall Christ triumph over every power of Satan, sin, and death, and thus receive His due as the Christ. Then wheat and tares shall be separated; the mingling shall cease, and the hope of God’s people become sight; the martyr shall be in rapture and his Executioner in torment. Then, too, shall the veil be drawn from the Jerusalem that is above. The clouds shall be dispelled that kept us from seeing that God was righteous in all His judgments; then the wisdom and glory of all His counsels shall be vindicated both by Satan and his own in the pit, and by Christ and His redeemed in the city of our God, and the Lord be glorious in all His works.

Thus radiating from the sanctification of the redeemed, we see the work of the Spirit embracing in past ages the Incarnation, the preparation of Scripture, the forming of man and the universe; and, extending into the ages, the Lord’s return, the final judgment, and that last cataclysm that shall separate heaven from hell forever.

This standpoint precludes our viewing the work of the Spirit from that of the salvation of the redeemed. Our spiritual horizon widens; for the chief thing is not that the elect be fully saved, but *that God be justified in all His works* and glorified through *judgment*. To all who acknowledge that “He that believeth not on the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abiding on him,” (John iii. 36) this must be the only true standpoint.

If we subscribe this awful statement; not having lost our way in the labyrinth of a so-called *conditional immortality*, which actually annihilates man, then how can we dream of a state of perfect bliss for the elect as long as the lost ones are being tormented by the worm that dieth not? Is there no more love or compassion in our hearts? Can we fancy ourselves for a single moment enjoying heaven’s bliss while the fire is not quenched and no lighted torch is carried into the outer darkness?

To make the bliss of the elect the final end of all things while Satan still roars in the bottomless pit is to annihilate the very thought of such bliss. Love suffers not only when a human being is in pain, but even when an animal is in distress; how much more when an angel gnashes his teeth in torture, and that angel beautiful and glorious as Satan was before his fall. And yet the very mention of Satan unconsciously lifts from our hearts the burden of fellow pain, suffering, and compassion; for we feel immediately that the knowledge of Satan’s suffering in the pit does not in the least appeal to our compassion. On the contrary, to believe that Satan exists but *not* in utter misery were a wound to our profound sense of justice.

And this is the point: to conceive of the blessedness of a soul not in absolute union with Christ is unholy madness. No one but Christ is blessed, and no man can be blessed but he who is vitally one with Christ—Christ in him and he in Christ. Equally it is unholy madness to conceive of man or angel lost in hell unless he has identified himself with Satan, having



become morally one with him. The conception of a soul in hell not morally one with Satan is the most appalling cruelty from which every noble heart recoils with horror.

Every child of God is furious at Satan. Satan is simply unbearable to him. In his inward man (however unfaithful his nature may be) there is bitter enmity, implacable hatred against Satan. Hence it satisfies our holiest conscience to know that Satan is in the bottomless pit. To encourage a plea for him in the heart were treason against God. Sharp agony may pierce his soul like a dagger for the unspeakable depth of his fall, yet as Satan, author of all that is demoniac and fiendish, who has bruised the heel of the Son of God, he can never move our hearts.

Why? What is the sole, deep reason why as regards Satan compassion is dead, hatred is right, and love would be blameworthy? Is it not that we never can look upon Satan without remembering that he is the adversary of our God, the mortal enemy of our Christ? Were it not for that we might weep for him. But now our allegiance to God tells us that such weeping would be treason against our King.

Only by measuring the end of things by what belongs to God can we stand right in this matter. We can view the matter of the redeemed and the lost from the right standpoint only when we subordinate both to that which is highest, *i.e.*, the glory of God. Measured by Him, we can conceive of the redeemed in a state of bliss, enthroned, yet not in danger of pride; since it was and is and ever shall be by His *sovereign grace* alone. But also measured by Him, we can think of those identified with Satan, joyless and miserable, without once hurting the sense of justice in the heart of the upright; for to be mercifully inclined toward Satan is impossible to him who loves God with love deep and everlasting. And such is the love of the redeemed.

Considered from this far superior standpoint, the work of the Holy Spirit necessarily assumes a different aspect. Now we can no more say that His work is the sanctification of the elect, with all that precedes and follows; but we confess that it is the *vindication of the counsel of God* with all that pertains thereto, from the creation and throughout the ages, unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and onward throughout eternity, both in heaven and in hell.

The difference between these two viewpoints can easily be appreciated. According to the first, the work of the Holy Spirit is only *subordinate*. Unfortunately man is fallen; hence he is diseased. Since he is impure and unholy, even subject to death itself, the Holy Spirit must purify and sanctify him. This implies, first, that had man not sinned the Holy Spirit would have had no work. Second, that when the work of sanctification is finished, His activity will cease. According to the correct viewpoint, the work of the Spirit is continuous and perpetual, beginning with the creation, continuing throughout eternity, begun even before sin first appeared.



It may be objected that some time ago the author emphatically opposed the idea that Christ would have come into the world even if sin had not entered in; and that now he affirms with equal emphasis that the Holy Spirit would have wrought in the world and in man if the latter had remained sinless.

The answer is very simple. If Christ had not appeared in His capacity of Messiah, He would have had, as the Son, the Second Person in the Godhead, His own divine sphere of action, seeing that all things consist through Him. On the contrary, if the work of the Holy Spirit were confined to the sanctification of the redeemed, He would be absolutely inactive if sin had not entered into the world. And since this would be equal to a denial of His Godhead, it can not for a moment be tolerated.

By occupying this superior viewpoint, we apply to the work of the Holy Spirit the fundamental principle of the Reformed churches: "That all things must be measured by the glory of God."



III.

The Indwelling and Outgoing Works of God.

“And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.”—*Psalm xxxiii. 6.*



The thorough and clear-headed theologians of the most flourishing periods of the Church used to distinguish between the *indwelling* and *outgoing* works of God.

The same distinction exists to some extent in nature. The lion watching his prey differs widely from the lion resting among his whelps. See the blazing eye, the lifted head, the strained muscles and panting breath. One can see that the crouching lion is laboring intensely. Yet the act is now only in contemplation. The heat and the ferment, the nerve-tension are all within. A terrible deed is about to be done, but it is still under restraint, until he pounces with thundering roar upon his unsuspecting victim, burying his fangs deep into the quivering flesh.

We find the same distinction in finer form among men. When a storm has raged at sea, and the fate of the absent fishing-smacks that are expected to return with the tide is uncertain, a fisherman's awe-stricken wife sits on the brow of the sand-hill watching and waiting in speechless suspense. As she waits, her heart and soul labor in prayer; the nerves are tense, the blood runs fast, and breathing is almost suspended. Yet there is no outward act; only labor within. But on the safe return of the smacks, when she sees her own, her burdened heart finds relief in a cry of joy.

Or, taking examples from the more ordinary walks of life, compare the student, the scholar, the inventor thinking out his new invention, the architect forming his plans, the general studying his opportunities, the sturdy sailor nimbly climbing the mast of his ship, or yonder blacksmith raising the sledge to strike the glowing iron upon the anvil with concentrated muscular force. Judging superficially, one would say the blacksmith and sailor work, but the men of learning are idle. Yet he that looks beneath the surface knows better than this. For if those men perform no apparent manual labor, they work with brain, nerve, and blood; yet since those organs are more delicate than hand or foot, their invisible, indwelling work is much more exhausting. With all their labor the blacksmith and sailor are pictures of health, while the men of mental force, apparently idle among their folios, are pale from exhaustion, their vitality being almost consumed by their intense application.



Applying this distinction without its human limitations to the works of the Lord, we find that the outgoing works of God had their beginning when God created the heavens and the earth; and that before that moment which marks the birth of time, nothing existed but God working within Himself. Hence this twofold operation: The *first*, externally manifest, known to us in the acts of creating, upholding, and directing all things—acts that, compared to those of eternity, seem to have begun but yesterday; for what are thousands of years in the presence of the eternal ages? The *second*, behind and underneath the first—an operation