

X.

Organic and Individual.

"Where is He that put His Holy Spirit among them?" --*Isa. lxiii. 11.*



The subsequent activity of the Holy Spirit lies in the realm of grace.

In nature the Spirit of God appears as creating, in grace as re-creating. We call it *re-creation*, because God's grace creates not something inherently new, but a new life in an old and degraded nature.

But this must not be understood as tho grace restored only what sin had *destroyed*. For then the child of God, born anew and sanctified, must be as Adam was in Paradise before the fall. Many understand it so, and present it as follows: In Paradise Adam became diseased; the poison of eternal corruption entered his soul and penetrated his whole being. Now comes the Holy Spirit as the physician, carrying the remedy of grace to heal him. He pours the balm into his wounds, He heals his bruises and renews his youth; and thus man, born again, healed, and renewed, is, according to their view, precisely what the first man was in the state of rectitude. Once more the provisions of the covenant of works are laid upon him. By his good works he is again to inherit eternal life. Again he may fall like Adam and become a prey of eternal death.

But this whole view is wrong. Grace does not place the ungodly in a state of *rectitude*, but *justifies* him—two very different things. He that stands in a state of rectitude has certainly an original righteousness, but this he may lose; he may be tried and fail as Adam failed. He must vindicate his righteousness. Its inward consistency must discover itself. He who is righteous to-day may be unrighteous to-morrow.

But when God justifies a sinner He puts Him in a totally different state. The righteousness of Christ becomes his. And what is this righteousness? Was Jesus in a state of rectitude only? In no wise. His righteousness was tested, tried, and sifted; it was even tested by the consuming fire of God's wrath. And this righteousness converted from "*original rectitude*" into "*righteousness vindicated*" was imputed to the ungodly.



Therefore the ungodly, when justified by grace, has nothing to do with Adam's state *before the fall*, but occupies the position of Jesus *after the resurrection*. He possesses a good that can not be lost. He works no more for wages, but the inheritance is his own. His works, zeal, love, and praise flow not from his own poverty, but from the overflowing fulness of the life that was obtained for him. As it is often expressed: For Adam in Paradise there was first work and then the Sabbath of rest; but for the ungodly justified by grace the Sabbath rest comes first, and then the labor which flows from the energies of that Sabbath. In the beginning the week closed with the Sabbath; for us the day of the resurrection of Christ opens the week which feeds upon the powers of that resurrection.

Hence the great and glorious work of re-creation has two parts:

First, the removing of corruption, the healing of the breach, the death to sin, the atonement for guilt.

Second, the reversing of the first order, the changing of the entire state, the bringing in and establishing of a new order.

The last is of greatest importance. For many teach differently. Altho they grant that a new-born child of God is not precisely what Adam was before the fall, yet they see the difference only in the reception of a higher nature. The state is the same, differing only in degree. This is the current theory. This nature of higher degree is called the "*divine-human*," which Christ bears in His Person, which being consolidated by His Passion and Resurrection is now imparted to the new-born soul, raising the lower and degraded nature to this higher life.

This theory directly conflicts with the Scripture, which never speaks of conditions similar yet differing in degree and power, but of a condition sometimes far inferior in power and degree to that of Adam, but transferred into an entirely different order.

For this reason the Scripture and the Confession of our fathers emphasize the doctrine of the Covenants; for the difference between the Covenant of Works and of Grace shows the difference between the two orders of spiritual things. They who teach that the new birth merely imparts a higher nature remain under the Covenant of Works. Theirs is the wearisome toil of rolling the Sisyphus stone up the mountain, even tho it be with the greater energy of the higher life. The Scriptural doctrine of Grace ends this impossible Sisyphus task; it transfers the Covenant of Works from our shoulders to Christ's, and opens unto us a new order in the Covenant of Grace in which there can be no more uncertainty or fear, loss or forfeit of the benefits of Christ, but of which Wisdom doth cry, "and Understanding putteth forth her voice, standing in the top of high places," ([Prov. viii. 1, 2](#)) saying that all things are now ready.

The work of re-creation has this peculiarity, that it places the elect at once at the end of the road. They are not like the traveler still half way from home, but like one who has finished his journey; the long, dreary, and dangerous road is entirely behind him. Of course, he did not run that road; he could never have reached the goal. His Mediator and Daysman traveled it for him—and in his stead. And by mystic union with his Savior it is as tho he had traveled the whole distance; not as we reckon, but as God reckons.

This will show why the work of the Holy Spirit appears more powerful in re-creation than in creation. For what is the road spoken of, but that which leads from the center of our degenerate hearts to the center of the loving heart of God? All godliness aims to bring man into communion with God; hence to make him travel the road between him and God. Man is the only being on earth in whom contact with God means conscious *fellowship*. Since this fellowship is broken by the alienation of sin, at the end of the road the contact and fellowship must be perfect, so far as concerns man's state and principle. If fellowship is the terminus



and God's grace puts His child there at once, at least so far as his state is concerned, there is an obvious difference between him and the unregenerate; for the latter is infinitely distant from God, while the former has sweetest fellowship with Him. Since it is the inward operation of the Holy Spirit that accomplishes this, His hand must appear more powerful and glorious in re-creation than in creation.

If we could see His work in re-creation all at once as an accomplished fact, we should understand it more thoroughly and escape the difficulties that we now meet in comparing the Old Testament with the New regarding it.

Re-creation brings to us that which is eternal, finished, perfected, completed; far above the succession of moments, the course of years, and the development of circumstances. Here lies the difficulty. This *eternal* work must be brought to a *temporal* world, to a race which is in process of development; hence that work must *make* history, increasing like a plant, growing, blossoming, and bearing fruit. And this history must include a time of *preparation*, *revelation*, and lastly of filling the earth with the streams of grace, salvation, and blessing.

If it did not relate to man but to irrational beings, there would be no difficulty; but when it began its course man was already in the world, and as the ages passed the stream of humanity broadened. Hence the important question: Whether the generations that lived during the long period of preparation before Christ, in whom the work of re-creation was finally revealed, were partakers of its blessings?

The Scripture answers affirmatively. In the ages before Christ God's elect shared the blessings of the work of re-creation. Abel and Enoch, Noah and Abraham, Moses and David, Isaiah and Daniel were saved by the same faith as Peter, Paul, Luther, and Calvin. The Covenant of Grace, altho made with Abraham and for a time connected with the national life of Israel, existed already in Paradise. The theologians of the Reformed churches have clearly unfolded the truth, that God's elect of both Dispensations entered the same gate of righteousness and walked the same way of salvation which they still walk to the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

But how could Abraham, living so many years before Christ, in whom alone grace and truth have been revealed, have his faith accounted unto him for righteousness, so that he saw the day of Jesus and was glad?

This difficulty has confused many minds regarding the Old and New Dispensations, and causes many vainly to ask: How could there be any saving operation of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament if He were poured out only on Pentecost? The answer is found in the almost unsearchable work of the Holy Spirit, whereby, on the one hand, He brought into the history of our race that eternal salvation already finished and complete which must run through the periods of preparation, revelation, and fruit-bearing; and, whereby, on the



other hand, during the preparatory period, this very preparation was made the means, through wondrous grace, of saving souls even before the Incarnation of the Word.

XI.

The Church Before and After Christ.

"All these having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise." *Heb. xi. 39.*



Clearness requires to distinguish two operations of the Holy Spirit in the work of re-creation before the Advent, viz., (1) preparing redemption for the whole Church, and (2) regenerating and sanctifying the saints then living.

If there had been no elect before Christ, so that He had no church until Pentecost; and if, like Balaam and Saul, the bearers of the Old Testament revelation had been without personal interest in Messiah, then it is self-evident that, before the Advent, the Holy Spirit could have had but one work of re-creation, viz., the preparation of the coming salvation. But since God had a church from the beginning of the world, and nearly all the bearers of the revelation were partakers of His salvation, the Spirit's re-creative work must consist of two parts: first, of the preparation of redemption for the whole Church; and, secondly, of the sanctification and consolation of the Old Testament saints.

However, these two operations are not independent, like two separate water-courses, but are like drops of rain falling in the same stream of revelation. They are not even like two streams of different colors mingling in the same riverbed; for neither did the one contain anything for the Church of the future which had not meaning also for the saints of the Old Covenant; nor did the latter receive any revelation or commandment without significance also for the Church of the New Covenant. The Holy Spirit so interwove and interlaced this twofold work that what was the preparing of redemption for us, was at the same time revelation and exercise of faith for the Old Testament saints; while, on the other hand, He used their personal life, conflict, suffering, and hope as the canvas upon which He embroidered the revelation of redemption for us.

Not that the revelation of old did not contain a large element that had a different sense and purpose for them from what it has for us. Before Christ, the entire service of types and shadows had significance which it lost immediately after the Advent. To continue it after the Advent would be equivalent to a denial and repudiation of His coming. One's shadow goes before him; when he steps into the light the shadow disappears. Hence the Holy Spirit performed a special work for the saints of God by giving them a temporary service of types and shadows.



That this service overshadowed *all* their life made its impression all the stronger. This shadow lay upon Israel's entire history; was outlined in all their men from Abraham to John the Baptist; fell upon the judicial and political systems, and more heavily upon the social and domestic life; and in purest images lay upon the service of worship. Hence the *Old Testament* passages which refer to this service have not the meaning for us which they had