

XXV.

The Holy Spirit in the New Testament Other than in the Old.

“By His Spirit which dwelleth in you.”—*Rom. viii. 11.*

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In order to understand the change inaugurated on Pentecost we must distinguish between the various ways in which the Holy Ghost enters into relationship with the creature.

With the Christian Church we confess that the Holy Spirit is true and eternal God, and therefore omnipresent; hence no creature, stone or animal, man or angel, is excluded from His presence.

With reference to His omniscience and omnipresence, David sings: “Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up to heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me.” These words state positively that omnipresence belongs to the Holy Spirit; that neither in heaven nor in hell, in the east nor in the west, is there a spot or point from which He is excluded.

This simple consideration is, for the matter under discussion, of the greatest importance; for it follows that the Holy Spirit can not be said ever to have moved from one place to another; to have been among Israel, but not among the nations; to have been present after the day of Pentecost where He was not before. All such representations directly oppose the confession of His omnipresence, eternity, and immutability. The Omnipresent One can not go from one place to another, for He can not come where He is already. And to suppose that He is omnipresent at one time and not at another is inconsistent with His eternal Godhead. The testimony of John the Baptist, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode on Him,” and that of St. Luke, “The Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the Word,” may not therefore be understood as tho the Holy Spirit came to a place where He was not before, which is impossible.

However—and this is the first distinction which will throw light upon the matter—David’s description of omnipresence applies to *local presence in space*, but not to *the world of spirits*.

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We know not what spirits are, nor what our own spirit is. In the body we can distinguish between nerves and blood, bones and muscles, and we know something of their functions in the organism; but how a spirit exists, moves, and works, we can not tell. We only know that it exists, moves, and works in an entirely different way from that of the body. When a brother dies nobody opens a door or window for the exit of the soul; for we know that neither wall nor ceiling can hinder it in its heavenward flight. In prayer we whisper so as not to be overheard; yet we believe that the man Jesus Christ hears every word. The swiftness

of a thought exceeds that of electricity. In a word, the limitations of the material world seem to disappear in the realm of spirits.

Even the working of spirit on matter is wonderful. The average weight of an adult is about one hundred and sixty pounds. It takes three or four men to carry a dead body of that weight to the top of a high building; yet when the man was alive his spirit had the power to carry this weight up and down those flights of stairs easily and quickly. But *where* the spirit takes hold of the body, *how* it moves it, and where it obtains that swiftness, is for us a perfect mystery. Yet this shows that spirit is subject to laws wholly different from those that govern matter.

We emphasize the word *law*. According to the analogy of faith, there must be laws that govern the spiritual world as there are in the natural; yet owing to our limitations we can not know them. But in heaven we shall know them, and all the glories and particulars of the spiritual world, as our physicians know the nerves and tissues of the body.

This we know, however, that that which applies to matter does not therefore apply to spirit. God's omnipresence has reference to all space, but not to every spirit. Since God is omnipresent, it does not follow that He also dwells in the spirit of Satan. Hence, it is clear that the Holy Spirit can be omnipresent without dwelling in every human soul; and that He can descend without changing place, and yet enter a soul hitherto unoccupied by Him; and that He was present among Israel and among the Gentiles, and yet manifested Himself among the former and not among the latter. From this it follows that in the spiritual world He can come where He was not; that He came among Israel, not having been among them before; and that then He manifested Himself among them less powerfully and in another way than on and before the day of Pentecost.

The Holy Spirit seems to act upon a human being in a twofold manner—from without, or from within. The difference is similar to that in the treatment of the human body by the physician and the surgeon: the former acts upon it by medicines taken inwardly; the latter by incisions and outward applications. A very defective comparison, indeed, but it may illustrate faintly the twofold operation of the Holy Spirit upon the souls of men.

In the beginning we discover only an outward imparting of certain gifts. On Samson He bestows great physical strength. Aholiab and Bezaleel are endowed with artistic talent to build the tabernacle. Joshua is enriched with military genius. These operations did not touch the center of the soul, and were not saving, but merely external. They become more enduring when they assume an official character as in Saul; altho in him we find the best evidence of the fact that they are only outward and temporal. They assume a higher character when they receive the prophetic stamp; altho Balaam's example shows us that even thus they penetrate not to the center of the soul, but affect man only outwardly.

But in the Old Testament there was also an inward operation in believers. Believing Israelites were saved. Hence they must have received saving grace. And since saving grace is

out of the question without an inward working of the Holy Spirit, it follows that He was the Worker of faith in Abraham as well as in ourselves.

The difference between the two operations is apparent. A person outwardly wrought upon may become enriched with outward gifts, while spiritually he remains as poor as ever. Or, having received the inward gift of regeneration, he may be devoid of every talent that adorns man outwardly.

Hence we have these three aspects:

First, there is the omnipresence of the Holy Spirit in space, the same in heaven and in hell, among Israel and among the nations.

Second, there is a spiritual operation of the Holy Spirit according to choice, which is not omnipresent; active in heaven, but not in hell; among Israel, but not among the nations.

Third, this spiritual operation works either from without, imparting losable gifts, or from within, imparting the unlosable gift of salvation.

We have spoken so far of the work of the Holy Spirit upon individual persons, which was sufficient to explain that work in the days of the Old Testament. But when we come to the day of Pentecost, this no longer suffices. For His particular operation, on and after that day, consists in the extending of His operation to a *company of men* organically united.

God did not create humanity as a string of isolated souls, but as a *race*. Hence in Adam the souls of all men are fallen and defiled. In like manner the new creation in the realm of grace has not wrought the generation of isolated individuals, but the resurrection of a *new race*, a peculiar people, a holy priesthood. And this favored race, this peculiar people, this holy priesthood is also organically one and partaking of the same spiritual blessing.

The Word of God expresses this by teaching that the elect constitute one *body*, of which all are members, one being a foot, another an eye, and another an ear, etc.—a representation that conveys the idea that the elect mutually sustain the relation of a vital, organic, and spiritual union. And this is not merely outwardly, by mutual love, but much more through a vital communion which is theirs by virtue of their spiritual origin. As our Liturgy beautifully expresses it: “For as out of many grains one meal is ground and one bread baked, and out of many berries, being pressed together, one wine floweth and mixeth itself together, so shall we all, who by a true faith are ingrafted into Christ, be altogether one body.”

This spiritual union of the elect did not exist among Israel, nor could it exist during their time. There was a union of love, but not a spiritual and vital fellowship that sprang from the root of life. This spiritual union of the elect was made possible only by the incarnation of the Son of God. The elect are men consisting of body and soul; therefore it is partly at least a visible body. And only when in Christ the perfect man was given, who could be the temple of the Holy Spirit body and soul, did the inflowing and outpouring of the Holy Spirit become established in and through the body thus created.



However, this did not occur directly after the birth of Christ, but after His ascension; for His human nature did not unfold its fullest perfection until after He had ascended, when, as the glorified Son of God, He sat down at the right hand of the Father. Only then the perfect Man was given, who on the one hand could be the temple of the Holy Ghost without hindrance, and on the other unite the spirits of the elect into one body. And when, by His ascension and sitting down at the right hand of God, this had become a fact, when thus the elect had become one body, it was perfectly natural that from the Head the indwelling of the Holy Spirit was imparted to the whole body. And thus the Holy Spirit was poured out into the body of the Lord, His elect, the Church.

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In this way everything becomes plain and clear: clear why the saints of the Old Testament did not receive the promise, that without us they should not be made perfect, waiting for that perfection until the formation of the body of Christ, into which they also were to be incorporated; clear that the tarrying of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit did not prevent saving grace from operating upon the individual souls of the saints of the Old Covenant; clear the word of John, that the Holy Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified; clear that the apostles were born again long before Pentecost and received official gifts on the evening of the day of the resurrection, altho the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the body thus formed did not take place until Pentecost. It becomes clear how Jesus could say, “If I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you,” and again, “But if I go I will send Him unto you”; for the Holy Spirit was to flow into His body from Himself, who is the Head. It becomes clear also that He would not send Him from Himself, but from the Father; clear why this outpouring of the Spirit into the body of Christ is never repeated, and could occur but once; and lastly, clear that the Holy Spirit was indeed standing in the *midst* of Israel ([Isa. lxiii. 12](#)), working upon the saints from without, while in the New Testament He is said to be *within* them.

We arrive, therefore, at the following conclusions:

First, the elect must constitute one body.

Second, they were not so constituted during the days of the Old Covenant, of John the Baptist, and of Christ while on earth.

Third, this body did not exist until Christ ascended to heaven and, sitting at the right hand of God, bestowed upon this body its unity, in that God gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church—[Ephes. iv. 12](#).

Lastly, Christ as the glorified Head, having formed His spiritual body by the vital union of the elect, on the day of Pentecost poured out His Holy Spirit into *the whole body*, never more to let Him depart from it.

That these conclusions contain nothing but what the Church of all ages has confessed appears from the fact that the Reformed churches have always maintained:

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First, that our communion with the Holy Spirit depends upon our mystic union with the body of which Christ is the Head, which is the underlying thought of the Lord's Supper.

Second, that the elect form one body under Christ their Head.

Third, that this body began to exist when it received its Head; and that, according to [Ephes. i. 22](#). Christ was given to be the Head after His resurrection and ascension.

XXVI.

Israel and the Nations.

“Because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.”—*Acts x.*
45.



The question that arises with reference to Pentecost is: Since the Holy Spirit imparted saving grace to men before and after Pentecost, what is the difference caused by that descent of the Holy Spirit?

An illustration may explain the difference. The rain descends from heaven and man gathers it to quench his thirst. When householders collect it each in his own cistern, it comes down for every family separately; but when, as in modern city life, every house is supplied from the city reservoir, by means of mains and water-pipes, there is no more need of pumps and private cisterns. Suppose that a city whose citizens for ages have been drinking each from his own cistern proposes to construct a reservoir that will supply every home. When the work is completed the water is allowed to run through the system of mains and pipes into every house. It might then be said that on that day the water was poured out into the city. Hitherto it fell upon every man's roof: now it streams through the organized system into every man's house.

Apply this to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and the difference before and after Pentecost will be apparent. The mild showers of the Holy Spirit descended upon Israel of old in drops of saving grace; but in such a manner only that each gathered of the heavenly rain *for himself*, to quench the thirst of each heart *separately*. So it continued until the coming of Christ. Then there came a change; for He gathered the full stream of the Holy Spirit for us all, *in His own Person*. With Him all saints are connected by the channels of faith. And when, after His ascension, this connection with His saints was completed, and He had received the Holy Spirit from His Father, then the last obstacle was removed and the full stream of the Holy Spirit came rushing through the connecting channels into the heart of every believer.

Formerly isolation, every man for himself; now organic union of all the members under their one Head: this is the difference between the days before and after Pentecost. The essential fact of Pentecost consisted in this, that on that day the Holy Spirit entered for the first time into the organic body of the Church, and individuals came to drink, not each by himself, but all together in organic union.

To the question where that system of connecting channels uniting us in one body under our Head may be found, we can give no answer. This belongs to things invisible and spiritual which escape our observation, of which we can have no other representation than that by an image.

