

## II.

### Sanctification Is a Mystery.

“Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” — *2 Cor. vii. 1.*



Sanctification belongs to the mysteries of faith; hence it can not be confessed but as a dogma.

By this statement we intend to cut off at once every representation which makes “sanctification” to consist of the human effort to make oneself holy or holier.

To become more holy is undoubtedly the duty which rests upon every man. God has condemned all unholiness, as an accursed thing. Inferior holiness can not exist before Him. Every man more or less holy is bound to forsake all unholiness, to resign all lesser holiness, and let perfect holiness dwell and be manifest in him instantly. The commandment, “Be ye holy as I am holy,” (*Lev. xi. 45; 1 Pet. i. 16*) may not be weakened. The laxity of the current morale requires that God’s absolute right to demand absolute holiness of every man be incessantly presented to the conscience, bound as a memorial upon the heart, and proclaimed to all with no uncertain sound.

In the innumerable territories of heaven where God gathers His redeemed, all unholiness is excluded and absolute holiness is the never-failing characteristic. And as it is in heaven, so it ought to be on earth. God, the sovereign Ruler of all the kingdoms of this world, has strictly forbidden the least unholiness in heart or home, or any other place on earth under the penalty of death. In fact, there is on earth no unholiness of whatever name or form, that does not exist in defiance of His express will.

It must be conceded, therefore, that it is His revealed will and commandment that all this unholiness must cease immediately, and be replaced directly by what is holy and good. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

It must be equally conceded that it is every man’s duty to remove unholiness, and to advance the things that are holy. He that caused the hurt must also heal it. He that destroyed must also restore the things destroyed. He that desecrated the holy must also reconsecrate it. Men still alive to a sense of justice will not contradict us.



The obligation to resanctify this world’s life rests in its deepest sense upon Satan. He instilled into our veins the poison which generates the diseases of our souls. The spark that caused the fire of sinful passions to break out inhuman nature was kindled by him. That Satan is hopelessly lost and condemned, does not annul God’s eternal right. Even Satan himself, according to this right, ought immediately to repent and stand before God holy as in the beginning. And this world of men, which he corrupted, was not his, but belonged to God. He should never have touched it. Hence the obligation continues to rest upon him not

only to stop his unholy working in it, but also to reconsecrate perfectly what he has so bitterly and maliciously profaned.

That Satan neither will nor can do this justifies his fearful judgment; but it does not annul God's right and never will. If in Paradise man had *unwillingly* fallen a victim to Satan, the obligation to resanctify the life of this world would have rested upon Satan, but not upon him. But man fell *willingly*; sin owes its existence not only to the fatherhood of Satan, but also to the motherhood of man's soul; hence man himself is involved in the guilt and included under the judgment of death, and therefore obliged to restore what he has ruined.

God created man holy, with the power to continue holy; holy also by virtue of the increasing development of the implanted germ. But man ruined God's work in his heart. He soiled the undefiled raiment of holiness. And doing this he violated the right. If he had belonged to himself, if God had allowed him to do with himself as he pleased, the right would not have been violated. But He did not give man to himself; He retained him for Himself as His own property. The hand that ruined and desecrated man destroyed *God's* property, encroached upon the divine right of sovereignty—yea, upon His very right of ownership, and thus became liable (1) to the penalty for this encroachment, and (2) to the obligation of restoring the ruined property to its original state.

Hence the undeniable and positive obligation of man's self-sanctification. This obligation rests, not upon God, nor upon Mediator, but upon man and Satan. The prayer, "Lord, sanctify me," upon the lips of the unconverted, not under the Covenant of Grace, is most unbecoming. First wilfully to destroy God's property, and then to take the ruined thing to Him demanding that He heal and restore it, antagonizes the right and reverses the ordinances. Nay, outside of the mysteries of the Covenant of Grace, under the obligations of simple justice, we are not to, ask: "Lord, sanctify Thou us," but God is to enforce His righteous claim: "Sanctify thyself."

Sanctify thyself does not mean that man should *fulfil the law*. The keeping of the law and sanctification are two entirely different things. Let the sinner first be sanctified, and then he shall also fulfil the law. First *sanctification*, then *fulfilment of the law*.

It is like a harp with broken strings. The harp was made to produce music by the harmonious vibration of the strings. But the production of music is not the mending of the harp. The broken strings must be replaced, the new strings must be tuned, and then is it possible to strike the melodious chords. The human heart is like that harp: God created it pure that we might keep the law; which an impure heart can not do. Hence being profaned and unholy, it must be sanctified; then it will be able to fulfil the law.

For the sake of clearness, two acknowledged facts should be noticed:

First, if man had never been profaned by sin, it would never have entered his mind to sanctify himself; and yet the law would have been fulfilled without disturbance. This shows that sanctification and fulfilment of the law are two entirely different things.

Second, sanctification continues until a man dies and enters heaven. Then he is holy. Hence there is no sanctification in heaven. Yet the only occupation of the saints in heaven is the doing of that which is good. Hence sanctification is a matter by itself; it does not consist in the doing of good works, but must be an accomplished fact before a single good work can be done.

Since man profaned himself, he is called of God to resanctify himself. Hence the *claim* of sanctification contains not even the shadow of a mystery. It has nothing to do with the mysteries, therefore is no dogma. It is the simplest and most natural verdict of God's right in the conscience. That we speak of unholiness implies that we are convinced that we ought to be holy.

Is there contradiction, then, when we say, first, that sanctification itself is a mystery, and can be confessed only in the dogma; second that the *demand* of sanctification has nothing to do with the dogma?

Not in the least. Sinners of whom God demands that they sanctify themselves are, individually and collectively, totally unable to satisfy that demand. To a certain extent they can withdraw from sin and worldliness, and often have done so. Many unconverted men have done many praiseworthy works. In many cases lives have been reformed, the whole tone of existence has been improved from mere impulse, without a trace of real conversion. And, conceiving sanctification to consist in the doing of less evil and of more good, and that from an improved motive, it was thought that unholy man, tho unable to satisfy this divine claim *perfectly*, might satisfy it to some extent. But all this has nothing in common with sanctification, and can be accomplished wholly without it. With all his self-betterment he can not effect the least part of it; tho told a thousand times to sanctify himself, he is both unwilling and unable.

Hence the question: *How, then, is sanctification to be accomplished?* And since the question never received an answer from any of the sages, but only from God in His Word, therefore not the *demand*, but the *means*, of sanctification is for us incomprehensible and mysterious. Hence the *character* of sanctification must be emphasized as a mystery.

And what is the reason for denying that sanctification is a mystery, *i.e.*, the content of a dogma? The supposition that it is of human origin, that man is not totally unable, and that sanctification is betterment of character and life. Hence it is tantamount to (1) a lowering of holiness to the human standpoint; (2) an opposing sanctification as a work of God. And this is a very serious matter. We should again become clearly conscious of the



fact that the holiness without which no man shall see God is not attained by the departing from some evil and the habitual doing of some good.

The *demand* of sanctification belongs to the Covenant of Works; sanctification *itself* to the Covenant of Grace. This makes the difference very obvious. Not as tho the Covenant of Works commanded man to sanctify himself; given to holy men, it excluded sanctification. But God gave the Covenant of Grace to unholy men. And the only connection between the demand for sanctification and the Covenant of Works is, that the latter ever pursues fallen man with this demand, and with the terror of Horeb. Unholiness destroys the foundation of the Covenant of Works and renders compliance with its conditions impossible. Hence the absolute contradiction between it and the sinner's personal life. The one must make room for the other; they can not stand together.

In this painful conflict we are often tempted to ask whether God is not unjust in His law to demand of us the impossible, and to lay the blame on Him; for did He not make us so? And from this difficulty the Arminian in our own heart seeks to escape, either by denying that there ever was a Covenant of Works; or by substituting the fulfilment of the law for sanctification.

Wherefore it is our aim, especially regarding this doctrine, to escape from this harmful confusion of ideas, and to arrive at a correct understanding and purity of expression. The preaching must not add to the chaos, but lead us to clear insight and understanding.

Instead of sweetly cradling ourselves upon the Word, we must earnestly endeavor to *understand* it. In city and country church the Word must be preached persistently, and with ever-increasing purity, until, convicted of personal unholiness, men begin to see that by absolute sanctification, not mere self-betterment; they must restore unto God His right; until, feeling their inability, with broken hearts they turn to God to receive the *Mystery of Sanctification* from the treasures of the Covenant of Grace.



## III.

**Sanctification and Justification.**

“Yield your members servants to righteousness unto sanctification.” —*Rom. vi. 19.*



Sanctification must remain sanctification. It may not arbitrarily be robbed of its significance, nor be exchanged for something else. It must always signify the making holy of what is unholy or less holy.

Care must be taken not to confound sanctification with justification; a common mistake, frequently made by thoughtless Scripture readers. Hence the importance of a thorough understanding of this difference. Being left unnoticed, it may lead to confused preaching, which causes one-sidedness; and active and thoughtful men, invariably systematize their one-sidedness.

What, then, is the difference? According to our ancient theologians it is fourfold:

1. Justification works *for* man; sanctification in man.
2. Justification removes the *guilt*; sanctification the *stain*.
3. Justification imputes to us an *extraneous* righteousness: sanctification works a righteousness *inherent* as our own.
4. Justification is at once *completed*; sanctification increases gradually; hence remains *imperfect*.

In the main the answer is correct, but insufficient to meet present error. It is shallow, external, and incomplete; makes too much of righteous-*making* and holy-*making*, while it does not consider righteousness and holiness, a correct idea of which is absolutely necessary for the clear understanding of justification and sanctification.

Let us examine these fundamental ideas, first, in God Himself. It becomes evident at once that the words, “Our God is righteous,” impress us otherwise than, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord!”

The latter impresses us with the feeling that the name of Jehovah is infinitely exalted above the low level of this impure and sinful life; we discover a distance between Him and ourselves which, as it widens in more transcendent holiness, casts us back into ourselves as impure creatures, while it causes His Being to be resplendent in the light unapproachable. If the angels exalting His holiness cover their faces with their wings, how much more ought we sinful men consider it with covered face and in godly fear! “The Lord is of purer eyes than to behold evil,” impresses us with the deep sense of God’s unspeakable sensitiveness, which is so keen that even the faintest suggestion of sin or impurity arouses in Him such antipathy that He can not bear the sight of it.



But *guilt* is out of the question. In the presence of the divine holiness we do not feel guilty, but are overwhelmed by the consciousness of our utter uncleanness and wickedness. Even among men we do not always feel quite satisfied with ourselves. Our brother’s warmer