

XIX.

The Manifestation of Holy Love.

“And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.” —*1 John iv. 16.*

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The question which now presents itself is: In what way is the divine, majestic act of making man a partaker of true love accomplished? We answer that this is—

1. Prepared by the Father in Creation.
2. Made possible by the Son in Redemption.
3. Effectually accomplished by the Holy Spirit in Sanctification.

There is in this respect, *first* a work of the *Father*, which the Heidelberg Catechism designates, “Of God the Father and our Creation,” following the example of St. Paul, who wrote: “But to us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things” (*1 Cor. viii. 6.*) By this we do not mean to deny that God the Father works also in redemption and in sanctification, for all the outgoing works of God belong to the three Persons. We only wish to indicate that seeking for the *origin* of things, one can not stop at the Holy Spirit, for He proceedeth from the Son and the Father; nor at the Son, for He is generated by the Father; but at the Father, for He neither proceedeth from any one, nor is He generated.

In this Scriptural sense we say, that the work of making man a partaker of Love is prepared by the Father in creation.

For every exercise of love, both in man and animal, finds its ground in *creation*. In the animal God created instinctive love directly; in the man He created love by making all men of one blood, by ordaining husband and wife to be each other’s helpmeets, and by creating in the blood itself that wonderful attraction of the one to the other.

Moreover, He also implanted in man’s consciousness the *sense* of love. The animal loves, but without knowing it. On the contrary, not only does man feel the *impulse* of love, but this impulse is also reflected in the mirror of his soul wherein he beholds the *beauty* of love; thus he learns to cherish love and to rise to the act of loving with full consciousness.

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Finally, by His providence, which is but an effect of creation, the Father ordains that man should meet man, come into contact with man, that in this way the sense of love may become *active* in him. For whether it be a poor sufferer whose distress arouses my love, or a bold character that appeals to my sympathy; or lastly a pure and beautiful figure that attracts me irresistibly, it is always God the Father who allots me these meetings, who by His providential leadings makes the kindling of love possible.

This is followed, *in the second place*, by the work of the *Son*, who became flesh to reveal to us the fulness of divine Love in the flesh. Hence the manifestation of Love in the *redemptive* work.

This is entirely different from what the Father did in creation; for, altho in creation divine love was foreshadowed, its conception implanted, and its imperfect exercise made possible, yet the divine Love itself was not revealed. But it is revealed in the advent of the Son: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish, but have everlasting life” (John iii. 16); “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave us His son to be a propitiation for our sins.” (1 John iv. 10) This is the “Peace an earth, good will toward men” (Luke ii. 14) of which the angels sang in the fields of Bethlehem; this is the mystery that the angels desire to look into.

Here we notice again two things:

First, the Love wherewith God loved the world proven by the fact that he spares not His own Son, but delivers Him up for us all.

Second, the love of Christ for the *Father*, whose work He finished, and *for us*, whom He saved.

The *second* is of greatest importance to us. In Christ, whom we honor as God manifest in the flesh, the divine Love is seen; in Him it appeared and scintillated with all-surpassing, brightness. The reality of the divine Love appeared to men for the first time and once for all in Him: “That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, declare we unto you” (1 John i. 1-3); and that was always the glory of the eternal Love which had captivated and pervaded their whole soul.

Until now men had walked in Love’s shadow, but in Immanuel Love itself appeared in the flesh and after the manner of men. It was not merely a radiation of Love, its reflection, an increated feature, sense, or inclination, but the fresh, irresistible waves of Love’s own constraining power issuing from the depths of His divine heart. It was this Love which, in the heart of Immanuel, brought heaven down to earth, and which by His ascension to heaven uplifted our world to the halls of eternal light. Even tho Europe had felt nothing of it, and America had never thought of a Savior, tho Africa had not heard the tidings, and it was but a small spot in Asia where His feet pressed the ground, yet it was the heart of Immanuel that bound every continent and the world—yea, the very universe around it, to the divine Mercy.

That Love shone forth as a love for an *enemy*. Man had become the enemy of God: “There is none that doeth good, no not one.” (Psalm xiv. 3; liii. 3; Rom. iii. 12) The creature hated God. The enmity was absolute and terrible. There was nothing in man to attract God; rather everything to repel Him. And when all was enmity and repulsion, then the Love of God was made manifest in that Christ died for us when we were enemies.

Love among men and animals rests upon mutual attraction, sympathy, and inclination; even the love that relieves the sufferer feels the power of it. But here is a love that finds no



attraction anywhere, but repulsion everywhere. And in this fact sparkles the sovereign liberty of divine Love: it loves because it will love, and by loving saves the object of its love.

Since this Love attained its severest tension on Calvary, its symbol is and ever shall be the Cross. For the Cross is the most fearful manifestation of man's enmity; and by the very contrast the beauty and adorableness of divine Love shine most gloriously: Love that suffers and bears everything, Love that can die voluntarily, and in that death heralds the dawn of a still more glorious future.

But even the work of the Son does not finish the work of putting the impress of God's Love upon the human heart. Wherefore as the Creation is followed by the Incarnation, so does Pentecost follow the Incarnation; and it is God the *Holy Spirit* who accomplishes this *third work* by His descent into the heart of man.

"It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you." (John xvi. 7) This implies that the Holy Ghost would give the disciples still a higher good than the Son could give them. This is not independently of the Son; for the Scripture teaches emphatically that He neither will nor can do anything without the Son, and that He receives of the Son only to give unto us. However, the difference remains that, altho Jesus suffers and dies and rises again for us, nevertheless the actual work in the souls of men awaits the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit. It is, as St. Paul writes to the Romans, that "the Love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." (Rom. v. 5)

And this is the proper work of the Holy Spirit, that shall remain His forevermore. When there remains no more sin to be atoned for, nor any unholiness to be sanctified, when all the elect shall jubilate before the throne, even then the Holy Spirit shall perform this divine work of keeping the Love of God actively dwelling in their hearts. *How*, we can not tell; but this we understand, that it is the Holy Spirit who, being the *same in all*, unites all souls in blessed union. When at the same moment spiritual life is wrought in your soul and mine and in the souls of others, the mutual bond of Love must be the result. For, altho men and things are grounded in the Father, and the souls of the redeemed are united in the Son, yet personally to enter into every soul, making it His temple and dwelling-place, is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Hence it is the same Spirit who as God enters the heart of every one of the redeemed, and as God performs and perfects His work in every heart irresistibly. And, tho different circumstances and manifold sins have caused differences of opinion among the persons in whom the same Holy Spirit has been at work, so that at times they have held strongly opposite views, yet the fact of their inward union remains, which by the working and indwelling of the Holy Spirit in their hearts is made a real and even indissoluble union.

This may not always come to the surface, but inwardly the matter is all the more real and glorious. Moreover, the Holy Spirit is always actively at work to remove every outward



obstacle. And if this is not altogether a success before we die, there is no need of fear so long as in death the scales shall, as it were, fall from our eyes, and Love shall conquer. Compared to eternity, life on earth is but a moment. Hence it may not be denied that the bond of union, the intertwining and interlacing that must bind the children of God together in the divine fire of Love, is, by the working and indwelling of the self-same Spirit, a real fact. It is the self-same Holy Spirit who, dwelling in every heart, directs them altogether to one end, who, consecrating every soul to be His tabernacle, in that He is God and therefore Love, brings it about that, in and through and with Himself, the Love of God is shed abroad in every heart. Think of Him as banished from their souls, and the Love of God has fled from their hearts; but let every grace be concealed and slumbering, let the outward appearance deny the inward grace, so long as we are assured that the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts we may rest assured that even the Love of God dwells in us.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit is not a *Stranger* in our hearts, but penetrates our deepest selfhood and brings to each of us a gift, a word, a consolation peculiarly adapted to our individual need. Of course this is a much varied work; but, despite its multiformity, it is not a *pieced* work without inward connection, but an executing of the plan of the Father in accordance with the eternal counsel. Wherefore, however delicate its nature may be, it is always aiming at that pure and perfect harmony which in God's counsel is prepared not only for every one of the redeemed, but for the whole house of God, and the body of Christ in all its proportions.

As the selfsame Spirit, He not only works in all, uniting all, but, since He proceeds from Father and Son, He also arranges and directs His work in one soul with regard to that in another, so that the interlacing and welding together of the souls of the saints must be the result. When according to the same glorious plan one Worker works in all, then every wall of separation must fall; Love must prevail, and all its sweet and blessed influence be felt; not as something that proceeds from ourselves and belongs to us, but as a Love even foreign to us which coming from God penetrates and refreshes the soul; not the mere ideal of enthusiasts, but a divine power that masters and overcomes us; not an abstract conception merely charming us, but the Holy Spirit whom we feel and discover in the soul as Love; a warm, full, blessed outpouring of Love that is stronger than death and that many waters can not quench.



XX.

God the Holy Spirit the Love which Dwells in the Heart.

"It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments." — *Psalm cxxxiii. 2.*

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The fact that love can radiate within man does not insure him the possession of true and real Love, unless, according to His eternal counsel, God is pleased to enter into *personal* fellowship with him. So long as man knows Him only from afar and not near, God is a stranger to him. He may admire His Love, have a faint sense of it, be pleasantly affected by it, and even rejoice to see others drink from its Fountain, yet never come a step nearer to it. In God's hand he may be the means of showing others the way to it, without knowing it by personal experience.

The true Love is one with and inseparable from God. It may radiate its brightness even in the animal, but Love itself can not enter the heart except God come first. And God's elect have the royal privilege of calling this gift their own. All their wealth and treasure consist in the fact that from the hand of their Lord they have received this gold tried in the fire.

Not, however, as tho this love, wholly possessing them, shall henceforth be of all their actions the only impulse. From St. Paul we learn that, while the Love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, much evil may be found among us; wherefore we are admonished to exercise patience and self-denial. But tho, like faith, Love may be in the germ and nothing be visible on the surface, in the warm soil, germ-like, it may swell, sprout, and strike out its roots in the ground. Hence, however defective and incomplete its form, Love itself dwells in our hearts; and by our own experience we are conscious of it. Who of God's children does not recall the blessed moments when this Love fell upon the soul as mild dew drops upon the thirsty leaf, filling him with a felicity unknown heretofore? This blessed experience was heavenly and supernatural. The soul actually felt the everlasting arms underneath, and acknowledged that God is good and essentially Love. It is true the divine Majesty as it were consumed the soul, but at the same time it uplifted and glorified it. The soul realized that it was surrounded by Love, uplifted above the low plain of vanity, and, more blessed still, that it had received power to embrace God with the arms of its own love. It is true this does not last. The evening star of hope is followed again and again by the dawn of the common, every-day life; but by that experience we have seen the heavens opened, the sign of Eternal Love descending, and, heard the music of its voice saying: "*Behold your God.*"

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Hence these *two* must always go together: (1) Love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, and (2) the glad tidings that our God has come to us. And these are one and the same, for, as we have seen before, when the Eternal One comes to dwell with man, it is not the Father, nor the Son, but the *Holy Spirit* whose office is to enter into man's spirit and