

XXIV.

Love in the Blessed Ones.

“That God may be all in all.”— *1 Cor. xv. 28.*



Sanctification and the shedding abroad of love are not the same. Before the fall Adam could not have been the subject of a single act of sanctification, for he was holy; but Love could have been shed abroad in his heart ever more richly, fully, and abundantly. And this would have been the work of the Holy Spirit.

The unholy alone need sanctification; but to suppose that Love is exhausted in the victory over selfishness is a great mistake. Of course, selfishness is utterly inconsistent with Love; but Love is not the mere *absence* of selfishness, as in Adam; nor its *rebuke* and blood-bought *victory* in the saint; in fact, Love begins to unfold and develop only after the last traces of selfishness are wholly effaced.

The same is true of health, which is not merely the throwing off of disease and its subtle poison; for then convalescents alone could be called healthy, and real healthful life and the life of health would be out of the question. On the contrary, health exists independent of sickness, antedates it, and drives it out when it invades the system; for this is one of its essential operations. And after its fight with sickness it goes on more richly and exuberantly, as tho there had been no sickness at all, developing powers and offering enjoyments that are ever new and glorious. So does Love antedate selfishness. And when selfishness appeared, Love immediately prepared to drive it out. And having succeeded, its work was not ended, but as tho nothing had happened it continued its life of Love.

Victory over an invading enemy does not end the national existence, but the nation's development and prosperity quietly and gratefully continue. Satan invaded Paradise, Love's dwelling-place, and with all his evil powers of selfishness opposed Love. Then Love had to fight, not because it was in its nature, but in self-defense. Indeed, it may not cease to fight until all selfishness is under perfect control. And when Love's rule is safe, Love does not recline in everlasting slumber, but with strong impulse and holy animation continues the unfolding of its holy and restful life.



This fight is not fought in every heart separately. The fact that Satan is the author and inspirer of all selfishness proves the mutual relation of selfishness in every heart. To some extent even selfishness is organized. Hence victory over individual selfishness does not avail so long as selfishness continues in others. The selfishness of one will necessarily affect the other, and Love can not celebrate its triumph.

It is true, in death God cuts off all sin from our hearts; and so far as we are concerned selfishness is cast out. He who awakes in eternity with selfishness in his heart is on the way to hell. But altho God in death graciously draws the last threads of selfishness from the hearts

of His elect, yet their warfare against selfishness is not ended. For even from heaven Christ wages war, until the hour when, as the true Michael, with all His angels He shall deliver the last blow upon Satan and his unholy demons. And if immediately after death the elect will enjoy with Immanuel the communion of Love, then of course they will engage with Him in the conflict against Satan and fight with Him day and night. No saint can see his Savior fight and remain neutral. Nay, the Love of God is so deep, stirring, and captivating that he can not but enter the conflict.

How in heaven the redeemed partake of the conflict we do not know. When in times of war husbands, fathers, and sons go out to meet the foe, wives, mothers, and daughters stay at home and never see the battle-field, but nevertheless they are partakers of the conflict: in their hearts and prayers; by their letters of love inspiring the men in the field; with their own hands providing for their necessities; by nursing the wounded and dying; by honoring the returning heroes and those fallen in battle. Even on earth one can be engaged in the fight without moving a foot, wielding no weapon other than Love. This answers in some measure the question how in heaven the redeemed partake of the warfare with Michael against Satan: *through the great Love in their hearts*; and by anticipation they enjoy the fulfillment of the promise that with Immanuel they shall sit upon His throne.

However, this condition is only provisional and will end with the dawn of that notable day when from heaven the cry will be heard, "It is done," as once it was heard from Calvary: "It is finished!" Then, the last enemy destroyed, all shall be subject to Christ. Then all selfishness, all unholiness ended, and all opposition to Love being vanquished, God's children shall enjoy an eternal and undisturbed existence in which Love shall reach its zenith; and this is, as the Scripture expresses it: "That *God shall be all in all.*"

"God all in all," considered in connection with the Spirit's work of shedding abroad the Love of God in the hearts of the saints, sheds new light upon the subject. If by His indwelling the Holy Spirit sheds abroad the Love of God in the hearts of the saints, and causes that Love like rivers of water to flow over the fields of their spiritual life; if this cultivating of Love is His most proper work, then this "God all in all" is at once flooded with light. For then it means no more nor less than that the Holy Ghost, having entered the last of the elect, shall dwell in the hearts of *all the saints*; shall have pervaded the whole body of Christ in such completeness that selfishness shall not only be cast out, and even the conflict with selfishness be ended, but it shall not even be remembered, nor its possible return be feared.

Altho "God all in all" has undoubtedly reference to Satan and the lost, for they shall forever abide under the anger of the Almighty and be consumed by His wrath; yet in its proper and full significance it refers only to the elect. In them alone He takes up His abode personally; in them alone He became *something*; in them alone He became gradually *more and more*; in them alone He became *all*. "In all," referring to the *number of the elect*, signifies



that in them, not individually, but collectively as the body of Christ, Love's triumph shall be complete.

But even then the work of the Holy Spirit is not finished, but thenceforth shall continue forevermore. Then the heavenly felicity will only *begin* to unfold itself in a way wholly divine, and without the slightest impediment the Rose of Love will disclose its brilliant beauty. When, as a bridegroom coming forth from his chamber, the sun rises from the womb of the morning and causes his golden rays to wrestle with the dark clouds of the parting night, till, having scattered all, he stands forth magnificent conqueror in the deep azure of a cloudless sky, his splendor does not then decline with the last vanishing vapors, but only begins to shine out in greater brightness and power. And the same is true of the Sun of Love. He first fights and wrestles to vanquish the resistance of the darkened clouds and vapors of selfishness; and only gradually, after what has seemed an endless conflict, He succeeds in scattering and in driving them away before the splendor of His brightness. But when the victory is His, and the Sun of Love stands at last in dazzling glory in the cloudless sky, then, and only then, does He begin to show His perfect beauty and to radiate His blessed, cherishing rays.

After the day of judgment the Holy Spirit can not cease to feed, cultivate, and strengthen the Love of God in the elect; for, if but for a moment He should withdraw from them, they would cease to be His children, and the body of Christ would lose the bond which binds it to its sacred Head.

God's elect do not exist without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We derive all that we are not from ourselves, but from that rich Dweller in our hearts. We, His poor host, have nothing, and from our own treasury can produce not even a grain of love; but our rich Guest works in us with all His wealth. Or rather, not with His own, but with the riches of Christ's cross-merits; and with lavish hands He spends these cross-merits upon the poor owner of the house, making him unspeakably rich. But He does this, not in such a way as to make the saint the possessor of an independent capital, to be spent without the Holy Spirit. Nay, it is the Holy Spirit who from moment to moment holds the lamp that radiates Love's brightness in the heart in His own hand. Hence, if after the judgment, the Holy Spirit should cease to work in, or depart from, the hearts of the saints, all their life, light, and love would at once be quenched. They are what they are by His indwelling, and Love can celebrate its triumph only by pervading their whole personality with His influences. And what is this, but that "God is all in all"; for by the Holy Spirit even the Father and the Son come to dwell in them.



Owing to the many obstacles that now prevent Love's light and brightness from pervading them, this indwelling is very imperfect. Even in heaven it is more or less hindered, owing to the conflict of Christ and His people against Satan. But after the judgment, these internal hindrances and external conflicts being ended forever, the Holy Spirit's working shall penetrate from center to circumference and gloriously unfold the inward beauty of the body of Christ.



XXV.

The Communion of Saints.

“There is one body and one Spirit; even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.”—*Ephes. iv. 4.*

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To classify Love among the works of the Holy Spirit is not a new invention. In this connection, to assign Love such a conspicuous place may be new, but the doctrine itself is as old as the Apostolic Creed, which confesses: “I believe in the *Holy Ghost*; in the Holy, Apostolic, Christian Church, *in the communion of saints.*”

For what is the communion of saints otherwise than Love in its noblest and richest manifestation? And how is it here presented but as the very fruit of the Holy Spirit? The work of the Father is confessed *first*; that of the Son in the Incarnation *second*; and coming to the work of the Holy Spirit, the Church confesses that this is not in the creation, nor in the Incarnation, but in the communion of saints, which, among men, is Love’s tenderest and most glorious expression.

“Communion of saints,” *i.e.*, the rule of Love, not among the selfish, the half-hearted, or still untried, new beginners, but among the initiated children of God, whose life is from God; a communion the foretaste of which is enjoyed on earth, the full enjoyment of which can be found only in heaven; a communion sweet and blessed, because it is unalloyed, and proceeds only from holy impressions; not springing from man’s heart, but shed abroad in him from above when from a sinner he became a saint, and developing in him more warmly and tenderly as in his person the new man becomes more pronounced; a communion found among saints, not by chance, but because it is born from the fact that they are saints, rooted in their being saints, and derived from Him who sanctified them to be saints. Hence it is a love which death can not destroy; which, stronger than death, shall continue as long as there are saints, unquenched, forevermore.

From which it is evident that the fathers had a thorough grasp of the magnificent thought that the Spirit’s real, characteristic, and perpetual work is the *shedding abroad of love*; and they have expressed it in a beautiful and artistic form. The Holy Spirit was to them not a mystic Person in the Godhead, to whom they looked up in holy wonder, but God the Holy Ghost working with omnipotent power within and around them. Hence they followed the confession of the Holy Spirit by that of His creation, *i.e.*, the Holy, Catholic, Christian Church, which is the body of Christ; and that by the confession of the communion of saints, wrought by the Holy Spirit in the Church.

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The *Church* and the *communion of saints* are two things. The former originated and existed before there was the slightest sign of the latter. The Church exists and continues, tho in unfavorable times the communion of saints suffers loss. The new-born child is unconscious of his relation to the family. He lives, but without any attachment, inclination,