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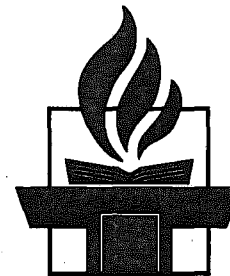
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Reformation
& Revival



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There is nothing which my heart desires more than to see you, the members of this church, distinguished for holiness. It is the Christian's crown and glory. An unholy church! It is of no use to the world and of no esteem among men. Oh, it is an abomination, hell's laughter, heaven's abhorrence. And the larger the church, the more influential, the worse nuisance does it become when it becomes unholy. The worst evils which have ever come upon the world have been brought upon her by an unholy church.

C. H. Spurgeon

God does not save us to make us happy but to make us holy.

Vance Havner

Holiness is its own reward.

Thomas Brooks

Sanctification is always a progressive work.

J. C. Ryle

The Holiness of God and His Redeemed People

William Still

Certain impressions about the words "holy" and "holiness" still tend to create an emotional reaction. Part of this is possibly good, and part probably bad. Although it takes longer for emotions to change than thoughts, we ought to try to rid ourselves of notions of awe which are associated with terror or revulsion against the words "holy" and "holiness," as if holiness was something unattractive. If the essence of holiness is the Holy One of Israel, Jesus Christ, how can holiness be unattractive? To those whose eyes have been opened to see the beauty and glory of His saviorhood and friendship, He is anything but unattractive!

The holiness to which we refer is the holiness of God. We must consider His nature, character, and being to understand what holiness is. What He is in righteousness, holiness and love, He desires to impart to His creatures. This indeed is the purpose of Creation and Redemption. It will be the chief glory of heaven, beyond the sight of Christ Himself, that He will show the full beauty of His holy character by filling heaven with a people who are perfect and complete in Christ, and yet each one absolutely and uniquely different. That is what the fulness of Christ means—the church, the body of Christ (see Eph. 1:23).

The purpose of Creation and Redemption is that the Holy One might display Himself by reflection in the lives of an innumerable host of redeemed creatures. Any unpleasant reactions we may have to the idea of holiness can be dispelled by associating the word and all it stands for with beauty—the beauty of holiness.

Holiness: Its Meaning

There is a principal word for "holy" in both the Old Testament and the New. Each conveys two ideas: 1) that which is set apart, and 2) the idea of brightness. The Hebrew word for "set

apart” conveys the notion of “separated” or “cut off,” and is applied to things as well as persons; e.g., the temple, the vessels of the Lord, etc. But that belongs to the old dispensation. Mere things can be set apart for God only in relation to persons.

Two ideas, “set apart” and “brightness,” belong together, for it is the otherness of God that is His ultimate glory. This is particularly evidenced in our Lord’s transfiguration. What took place was the inner excellence of our Lord’s perfect human character shining out for a supernatural moment, as if the light which was in Him was suddenly “switched on”; or that His flesh, and even His clothes, were radiant—a tremendous experience! This will constitute our out-shining as the redeemed when Christ returns in power and glory; i.e., all the essential virtue of the Holy Spirit of Christ residing and working within us will shine out. It is this which our Lord speaks of in Matthew 13 when He says, “Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (v. 43). (In Daniel 12:3, we are told that the saints will shine “like the stars in heaven forever and ever.”)

Let me put it this way: The essence of the beauty and glory of holiness is the deposit of the Spirit of God, the gift of faith. The believer presently appropriates, exercises, and develops this faith in his daily life, storing up a divine deposit which will be seen hereafter as beauty and glory, but is now seen as steadfast faith and utter devotion to God and His holy law. The energy of electricity stored in the power station is seen as light in the town and in the homes of the people. Power produced in one place shines out in another. The light that shone from Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration was that of His perfect humanity. If the light of His eternal glory as Son of God and Son of Man had shone out then as it will do one day (Matt. 24:30), the whole universe would have been burned up and reconstituted (2 Peter 3:10-13).

We have, therefore, these two ideas of “holy” in both

Testaments, as “set apart” and “brightness.” If we regard the idea of set apart as negative, and that of brightness as positive, we may better comprehend the relationship between the awesome and the beautiful. This will help us to go on to a more constructive attitude towards Sanctification.

I am continually appalled by how negative and legalistic young evangelicals often become. Whether it is due to their background, training, or certain doctrinal influences upon them in school and college, there is often an undue tendency to emphasize the negative. This is the work of the enemy, to keep us from working through the negative to the positive. He labors to prevent us from seeing that God begins with the positive (compare His promises to the patriarchs in Genesis given long before the Law) and leads us hopefully through the negative to the fulfillment of the promised positive.

Look at our two ideas again. To be “set apart” expresses position, while “brightness” is the result of a condition which sends forth light. These two correspond with the main ideas in Salvation, namely, Justification and Sanctification—what God has done *for us*, and what God does *in us*. The first is objective: God writes us down in heaven as His, and accepts us by virtue of our faith in Christ. The second, Sanctification, is subjective: God plants His Spirit in our hearts to work out that Sanctification, which is God’s will. These truths belong together like two sides of a coin: you cannot have one without the other. The first is transcendent, the second immanent.

Therefore, holiness has to do first with what God does for us. Only afterwards does it address what He does in us by His Holy Spirit, granting us the gift of faith. We are to use this gift to grow in grace and to store up that faith which, as Peter says so often in his first epistle, will hereafter become glory. Our Lord expresses this otherwise in the Sermon on the Mount, where He describes it as laying up treasure in heaven.

Notice that in regard to our two terms “set apart” and “brightness,” expressing both position and condition, these

are terms of relationship applied to persons, whether divine or human. There is nothing abstract here, nothing subhuman; i.e., there is no application of the word “holy” to things such as the vessels of the Lord. We may set apart church furnishings for the service of the Lord, but this is always quite a secondary consideration to the holiness of persons. Everything here is essentially personal, and it is this that makes biblical notions of holiness satisfying. We may love beautiful things, and even admire the beauty and skills of lower creatures, but the satisfaction one derives from a picture or a pet is nothing to the satisfaction of fellowship with persons. In fact, you could sum up our theme thusly: holiness is a person—God, while holiness for us is a *personal relationship* with the holy God.

To say that God is holy is fundamentally to say that He is set apart. It is an eternal fact with regard to the Almighty’s eternal self-existence, that He is altogether other and apart from all He has created (Isa. 43:11-13; 44:6-8; 45:5-7, 14, 18, 21-22; 46:8-9; 47:8, 10; Hosea 13:4). He is pure Spirit. “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24; see also John 1:18; 1 Cor. 2:11b). The glory and the wonder of the Gospel is that God, who is altogether Other, has made Himself known to man, the crown of all His creatures, in fully understandable human terms.

This is the amazing and almost incredible thing about our humanity, that God actually became Man and yet contained His complete deity in human form. When Philippians 2:7 speaks of our Lord as emptying Himself and “taking the form of a bond-servant,” it can only mean then that He laid aside the outward insignia of His glory, yet nothing of His essential deity. It is as very God that He comes to earth and is born of Mary, the Babe in the manger. He is equal with the Father, although as the Son He is eternally subject to Him in glad obedience.

It is as the true and proper Man that God comes to us,

although the Father Himself is pure, uncreated, unbegotten, personal spirit. He is the source of all mind, intelligence and rationality. He is the source of all rectitude and morality. He is intimate and eternal, self-existent and independent, omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. He is altogether apart from all that He has made—this is His transcendence. He is also immanent, in that He does not stand apart from the universe He has made. He is involved in its life and purpose, and has a unique relationship with His crowning creation, man.

Perhaps the best way to understand all this is to read some of the finest lines ever written on God and the Holy Trinity. They are from the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter Two.

There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will, for His own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him; and withal most just and terrible in His judgements; hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.

This is the first paragraph of Chapter Two. The second paragraph is even more wonderful:

God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of Himself; and is alone in and unto Himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which He has made, not deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting His own glory, in, by, unto, and upon them: He alone is the fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom, are all things; and has most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever Himself pleased.

In His sight all things are open and manifest; His knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to Him contingent or uncertain. He is most holy in all His counsels, in all His works, and in all His commands. To Him is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience, He is pleased to require of them.

The third paragraph is shorter and states the unity of the Godhead in the three persons of the Trinity:

In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.

This is a full expression, all drawn from Scripture, of what God is in His tri-unity.

Now let us return to this particular attribute of the divine holiness—the Almighty’s altogether otherness, as found in a sequence of Old Testament Scriptures. First, Moses at the burning bush:

Then He said, “Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” He also said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God (Ex. 3:5-6).

The place was holy, not of itself (any more than a building or other material object is holy) but by the presence of God. It was that which made Moses take off his shoes and tremble.

“Who is like Thee among the gods, O Lord? Who is like Thee, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders? Thou didst stretch out Thy right hand, the earth swallowed

them” (Ex. 15:11-12).

In the year of King Uzziah’s death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.” And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke (Isa. 6:1-4).

He is incomparable. Isaiah records the question: “To whom then will you liken Me that I should be His equal?” (40:25). To answer, the Lord bids us lift our eyes to the heavens and count the stars, if we could. He says we would find not one missing!

The concept of incomparability runs through chapters 45, 46 and 47 of Isaiah.

“I am the Lord and there is no other; besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me; that men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me” (45:5-6).

He says it again and again. We have it in Isaiah 43:11; 44:6, 8; 45:5-6, 14, 21-22; 46:9; 47:8, 10.

The divine attributes of this transcendent and incomparable God are incommunicable. Their divine perfections have no analogy in human character. For instance, how can you reflect the self-existent God in man the creature? You cannot, precisely because it is beyond man. How can you show that God cannot change and has no need to change? How can you demonstrate in human analogy that He is omniscient? How can you analyze His eternity in human terms? We are lost in a world of divine attributes altogether incommunicable.

But God is not only transcendent; He is immanent. Many of His attributes are communicable. We learn from Scripture that He longs to impart wisdom, love, goodness, righteous-

ness and justice to us.

The Holiness of the Redeemed

“For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am holy” (Lev. 11:44).

Peter takes this up in his first letter: “You shall be holy, for I am holy”(1:16).

We see the holiness of God in action strikingly in how He deals with His angelic creatures when they have exercised their free will against Him. He instantly casts Satan down:

How have you fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit (Isa. 14:12-15).

You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you. By the abundance of your trade you were eternally filled with violence, and you sinned; therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, that they may see you (Ezek. 28:15-17).

The Almighty’s implacable antipathy to sin is seen in His outright and final rejection of fallen angels, and His appointment of another governor of the universe—man (Gen. 1:26-28). This is an involved story which may be pieced together with the aid of certain biblical assumptions. It is clear from the revelation of the nature of Satan, as we see in Isaiah 14 and

Ezekiel 28, that God created Lucifer a resplendent creature and gave him certain authority within the universe yet to be created. This is plain from such passages as our Lord’s temptation in Luke 4. It is also plain in Job 1 and 2, and in our Lord’s three references to the Devil as “the prince of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). This can also be seen in Paul’s reference in Ephesians 2:2 to Satan as the “prince of the power of the air.”

It is amazing that when Satan was cast down, he was not stripped of his authority, but was superseded as a “reject” governor of the universe. God appointed in Lucifer’s place, man, who was formed as the climax of creation (Gen. 1:26-28). Hence the clash of interests, which Satan sought to bring. This, in the first instance, he succeeded in doing (Gen. 3:1-8); but God at once made the almighty declaration (Gen. 3:15) that He would set the enmity of faith between the serpent and the woman, and between his seed and hers (a specific act of grace), so that while redemption would cause God’s chosen Seed a bruised heel, by that Seed (singular, meaning Christ, see Gal. 3:16) the serpent’s head would be bruised, i.e., his power would be vanquished.

In all of this we see the radical but redemptive action of the Almighty, both in preserving the altogether otherness of His holiness, and yet proceeding to redeem the world and His chosen ones. Indeed, for all His mercy and grace to fallen men, and the astonishing status He accords His own as royal children, we see by our Lord’s own words that He places His deity and divine relationship to the Father in a unique category, as compared with our relationship with the Father. Although our Lord bids us to say in prayer, “Our Father,” He never joins His disciples in actually saying, “Our Father.” It is “My Father and your Father,” and “My God and your God.” Of course we are junior brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, for He is our Elder Brother (Heb. 2:11-12), yet we never share His deity. He is “very God of very God,” and we remain creatures,

even when ultimately glorified.

But we are holy creatures “in Christ”—saints: “For this is the will of God, your Sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3). There would be no point in the Lord exhorting us in Leviticus 11:44 and 1 Peter 1:16, “Be holy, for I am holy,” if it were impossible for man to be so. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit ensures that the source of true holiness, the distilled essence of the altogether otherness of the Holy God, mediated but not diluted, is imparted to elect and believing man, so that it is possible for him to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12-13).

The astounding thing about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is that through the radical cleansing of the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7), the Holy Spirit, “very and eternal God,” comes to join Himself with the spirit of man, formerly dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). Paul tells us that “the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16), and we have his plain word that “the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him” (1 Cor. 6:17). It is this that forms the indissolubility of our union with God in Christ, which not even mortal death can affect.

The implications of the above are infinite. For one thing, for our comfort and encouragement, we must never forget that the Christ of God whose Holy Spirit indwells believers, is not merely the eternal Son of God who was with the Father before His incarnation, but is the Christ who was born of Mary. The Holy Spirit, therefore, who was sent to the waiting disciples at Pentecost, carries with Him not only the whole experience of the incarnate Son of God and Son of Man, but bears all the fruit of His redemption, even to our full and final glory at the coming of Christ—although that ultimate blessing we must now regard as but the “seed” of God (1 John 3:9) planted in our believing hearts as the earnest of ultimate redemption. Therefore with the *Shorter Catechism* we can say: “The souls of

believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection” (37).

The wonder of this is that the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer is not merely a gift *from* God, but is a gift *of* God.

We can carry this to its ultimate conclusion by asserting that there is only one Holy Spirit of the eternal God in the whole universe; both angelic and human spirits are created. How, then, can the one Holy Spirit of God indwell the life of every believer? We must not think of the Holy Spirit as distributed (although His gifts are distributed), as if He were diffused, dispersed, or dissipated as a quantifiable essence. He is a Person who cannot be divided, for He is either present in the totality of His personality in the believing life, or He is not there at all; there is no middle way. A man is either born again of God, or he is not.

The union of our human spirit with God’s Holy Spirit is therefore a mystery beyond our conceiving, and perhaps we may be helped to understand the truth and reality of it by the analogy of the union of the two natures of Jesus Christ, His Godhead and His manhood. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* says:

Two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man (VIII.ii).

In the next paragraph the *Confession* says: “The Lord Jesus, in His human nature thus united to the divine, was sanctified and anointed with the Holy Spirit above measure” (VIII.ii).

It is this Christ, the Son of the eternal God, who, by His equally divine Holy Spirit, indwells us.

The integration of the one, eternal Creator Spirit with our

personal, human, created spirit, is a wonder of great complexity, and yet is a factor of endless practical significance.

Stephen Neill, in his excellent book, *Christian Holiness*, includes chapters such as: The Biblical Idea of Holiness, The Perfectionist Error, The Conformist Error, The Place of Holiness, The Spirit of Holiness, and Conflict and Temptation. In his chapter, The Place of Holiness, Neill writes:

Consider in some detail the principle that the Church is the only place in which a Christian form of holiness can be worked out. We must recognize the existence of certain mystical types of holiness, which concern themselves only with the withdrawal of the human spirit upon itself, and its purely interior relation with the divine Spirit. But mysticism of that kind is not to be found in the Bible. In the Christian world, holiness is to be thought of primarily in terms of relationships; and, since the two great commandments, to love God and to love the neighbor, are in fact simply two parts of one commandment, the relationship of the soul with God cannot be thought of in separation from its relationships with other men (p. 64).

So, the two go together: the love of God, and the love of our neighbor. How then do we gather this all up? By thinking first of the holiness of God (as with all His other attributes, communicable and incommunicable) as transcendent; yet God himself is immanent in the world, and concerned with it. He has always controlled it, but since "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19), He is now in it in a *new* way.

So we have to think of the Holy God as transcendent, but, at the same time, we must constantly realize that since the Holy God cares for His creation, and particularly and uniquely for His highest creature, man, He in His holiness has come down to indwell man to impart His holiness to him. We are partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), and this must include His holiness.

We have, therefore, to hold these two poles of truth to-

gether—that God in His holiness is altogether Other, transcendent; yet, by the Holy Spirit, He is personally present in our lives to sanctify and make us holy. There must be, therefore, two elements in our worship: first, an awe of the holiness of God, who is terrible in His wrath against sin and fearful in His judgment. He is so holy the angels veil their faces from Him. We, being rebels, also ought to bury our faces in the dust and confess our utter unworthiness to look upon Him. Second, because of the biblical revelation, we are drawn irresistibly near to Him by His grace, so that our dread melts away in thoughts of His forgiveness and cleansing, and in new desires to be pure and holy, in gratitude for His mercy (cf. Heb. 4:14-16). Thus holiness and love, as well as fear and love, are combined as we think of God and approach Him.

The first of these, the awe and dread, is perhaps the more natural for those who have studied the Scriptures deeply. But if we were to approach God only with such terrifying thoughts, we would remain in a state of misery, which is hardly God's desire for us. At the giving of the Law at Sinai, God said to Moses and to Israel, "Stand back!" (see Heb. 12:18-21); but at Calvary the word is "Draw near!" (Heb. 10:22; 12:22-29). Our boldness to draw near (Heb. 4:16) is grounded not only in the sacrifice of Christ, which is the only means by which we may draw near to the Holy God, but also in the great encouragement we have to draw near when we realize that He has already planted His holiness in our hearts by virtue of the new birth. We are already saints.

To draw near to worship the Holy God in the full assurance of faith, we need to know as thoroughly as we may what gift we have received from God by His Holy Spirit. "Think what Spirit dwells within thee," wrote Henry Francis Lyte. We need to consider the heart of all theology, namely, the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Bible is exceedingly careful to distinguish the three persons of the Trinity. It never violates the order of these

persons (although there may be doubt occasionally in the New Testament as to whether certain pronouns refer to the Father or to the Son).

“The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son” (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, II.iii).

Not only so, but the three persons of the Godhead in their due order are none the less equal in substance, power and eternity (Phil. 2:6).

Therefore, the fact that the submissive and obedient Son is equal in deity with the Father, and the Holy Spirit is equal with both, means that it is nothing less than the life of God which descends to man and indwells him by the Holy Spirit. We are indeed, as Peter says, “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4).

This then, as we have said, is a second reason for approaching the throne of grace to worship God with boldness, albeit with humility—not only that Jesus died, but that He is risen from the dead, is glorified, and has descended into our hearts in the person of the Holy Spirit to dwell there forever and make us children of God. It is this knowledge which transforms the human heart, as experience proves.

Because of the indwelling Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, he is a saint. The Holy Spirit has joined Himself to man’s human spirit, quickening him into holy life by the seed of God (1 John 3:9). You have holiness if you have the Holy Spirit; it is what you do with Him that matters.

The Spirit’s Role in Our Holiness

Christians today are involved in various movements for realizing the potential of the work of God in the human soul and in Christian fellowship. Indeed, many overreach themselves and are affected adversely, psychologically and physically, by striving after a particular experience. They crave a

blessing here and an experience there, and are almost always on the go looking for something new; but the new, if they are born again, is already within them as a seed of God, with all the infinite potential of God’s Holy Spirit. When we receive His Spirit and are united with Him (1 Cor. 6:17), we have received potentially all that God has to give us as His royal children, just as Christ on the cross was able to declare before He died that His work was finished, and that work was effectually completed with His resurrection, ascension, and the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost. When the penultimate goal of that work is reached in the planting of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer we are assured of the ultimate—the glorification of the body. In feeding the seed of God with its only food, the Word of God, by the Spirit, we look within to that which is given as the source of all growth and development in piety and holiness.

This is why we choose to put such stress on the line from the hymn quoted earlier: “Think what Spirit dwells within thee.” When this is taken along with the verse, “The one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him” (1 Cor. 6:17), we have sufficient seed-thought to begin to work out the true life of holiness in our lives.

The integration of the one eternal Creator Spirit with our personal, human, created spirit, is a wonder of great complexity, and yet is a factor of almighty and practical significance.

The fact that there is but one personal Holy Spirit of God and that He not only indwells the church as the entire company of believers but also personally indwells each believer, is a mystery which defies explanation and understanding. How one Spirit, infinite and eternal, can give Himself in the entirety of His person to each believer, is a thought so staggering that our minds need to readjust to this truth constantly. Above all, this teaches the unity of believers. If the one Holy Spirit indwells each and all, then we are bound together in a divine and eternal unity which transcends all

difference and distinction. No wonder the apostle, in writing to the Ephesians, makes a great deal of the Christian endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).

But, we may ask, if there is only one Holy Spirit, is it possible for saints to be diverse in spirit when they are so bound together? The answer is that the world is full of other, created spirits, mostly alien, who, like their master, "an angel of light," love to masquerade as the Holy Spirit and attempt to deceive the elect (2 Cor. 11:3).

The practical importance of this fact of one Spirit in the church is that Christians can commit no greater sin than to disturb the church's unity. The most hurtful and terrible thing a Christian can do is to rend the body of Christ, and allow any divisive spirit to enter into its fellowship. It is of such paramount importance that we must be prepared to suffer among ourselves great differences of opinion upon many matters (as long as they do not affect the substance of the faith); in order to contain the unity of all true believers.

This raises questions of how far we can hold diverse views on the fundamentals of the faith without becoming apostate and denying the Lord who bought us. There are infinite instances in the history of the church of true believers having erected their less-than-fundamental differences to a level at which they felt permitted to rend the body and disrupt the fellowship—a fellowship which ought to be maintained in honor of the Holy Spirit, each agreeing, cordially and humbly, to disagree on matters not part of the substance of the faith. To go further, without biblical warrant, is to rend the fellowship, much as a human body may be torn limb from limb. There are perhaps few physical agonies so extreme as those which follow the tearing of an arm or leg from the human body. What then, can it mean to Christ to have His body rent in this way? When it happens, radically and ruthlessly, we may take leave to question the reality of the life of the Holy Spirit within professing believers, whoever they are, who dare advocate or

practice such schism!

Where there are possibilities of strife or strain, or even vague estrangements, it must be the Christian's constant endeavor to heal such potential divisions, and come to an understanding that avoids disruption of fellowship. Where there are disagreements on matters less than fundamental we must seek to display the supreme Christian virtue of love which accepts even where it does not understand, or where it cannot agree. Let us go on "to be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." It is the persistent pursuance of this attitude which fosters in Christians that tremendous respect, love and care for each other which we ought to have of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We ought constantly to say to ourselves, "The Lord Jesus loves him as much as He loves me, and indeed loves me in him, and him in me!"

So much for the unity in the Spirit. After mentioning the seven "ones" (Eph. 4:4-6), Paul speaks of the diversity of the gifts of the Spirit distributed among believers. The Holy Spirit Himself is not distributed (a person cannot be distributed) but the gifts of the Spirit are distributed (see Rom. 12:4-6; 1 Cor. 12:4-30).

The New Creation

We return to the fountainhead of the integration of the one eternal Creator Spirit with our personal and created spirit. Second Corinthians 5:17 says that "if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature." Christ, by His Spirit, is not only "in" the believer, but the believer is "in Christ." These two belong together. Place a bucket in the sea, and the sea is in the bucket and the bucket in the sea! We are placed in Christ in His kingdom, and so we are in Him, and He in us. Look at the number of times we read "in Christ," or some similar expression, in Ephesians 1 and 2.

In Christ, then, we are a new creation. But then a young Christian may say, "I am not sure about that: sometimes I feel

as bad as I was before I believed, sometimes worse!" Jesus said to Nicodemus, "You must be born again" (John 3:7). A newly delivered natural babe is not aware that he is born, yet he is! Its experience of this world is so primitive that it can have no intelligent awareness. Jesus suggested this mystery to Nicodemus when he said the new birth was a mystery, like the motions of the wind.

Paul also speaks of the new creation when he writes, "For neither is circumcision (the outward rite) anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them and upon the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:15-16).

Which rule? The rule of the new creation. It is not a mere law, it is a principle of life, and the principle is the life. We are new creatures, and are partakers of the divine nature. We are thus to regard ourselves as potentially transformed, from the care or throne or headquarters of our being and personality, from the very seat of executive authority, but not the circumstance. Christ is now on the throne and He says, "I am in charge here!" And He calls us to sit on His throne, with Him, in our lives. He does not say "we," but "I," because the two spirits (His and ours) are integrated, and "I" as a Christian, a Christ-one, will now live His life in my body. It is beyond our understanding that regeneration can be so radical. It involves the whole thinking apparatus, with the mind coming first.

This is what many do not understand, and it is sad that there is so much preaching and teaching of theology which is not matched with a concomitant psychology. No one can adequately teach or preach the Word who does not understand something of both God and man.

What people do not understand is that they may be truly converted, even though the relics and remnants of the old sinful thoughts and feelings persist. God can work miracles of transformation in a person so thoroughly that he scarcely recognizes himself. The changes may well be, however, gigan-

tic even when the thoughts are radically changed by the Holy Spirit, the feelings and emotions may take much longer to change.

There were three men on a journey—Fact, Faith, and Feeling. To reach their destination they had to walk in a certain order. Fact had to go first, followed by faith, then by feeling. The facts of our faith are the objective truth of what the historical Jesus Christ has wrought for us, along with the later historical fact of our faith in Him; we were there when it happened! Faith takes hold of these facts and holds them through thick and thin, and so the life is transformed by what Thomas Chalmers called "the expulsive power of a new affection." The emotions eventually come to conform, although sensitive and obsessive spirits may find that this takes longer. When Satan has made deep ruts in our psyches (souls), the smoothing-out may take a long time.

Take an example of how this works. The martyr saints overcame the Devil "by the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony" (Rev. 12:11). They overcame, first, by standing upon the fact of Christ's victory and by exercising their faith in that fact and believing it, even unto death. "They did not love their life even to death." That is, they applied their minds to the truths about Christ, and faith took hold of these facts and kept them steadfast.

To say this may imply that since our minds are involved in the apprehension of Christ's salvation, intellectual people have an advantage. Not necessarily so. In my youth a number of exceedingly simple souls used to follow the Salvation Army Band, but it was clear that they had grasped the truth of God savingly, and knew Christ, even though their knowledge of other things was limited.

The classic reference to the transformation of the mind is Romans 12:2, where Paul appeals to the Romans by the mercies of God to present their bodies to God, a living and holy sacrifice, which is their spiritual service of worship. They are

not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. As the notice on the bookstall said, "Don't just stand there—read something!"

There is a tremendous resistance, even among evangelical Christians, to applying the mind to the Bible: they won't think. They say, "Oh, I am not educated, I am not an academic." Yet their concentration on, for example, crossword puzzles or intricate calculations or regulations concerning wages, may seem to suggest that they have greater powers of mind than they are prepared to apply to the Word of God. This plea, "I am not educated," often turns out to be a delusion of the Devil. The mind must come into play if we are to grow spiritually.

The apostle Paul reminds the Corinthians of this when he refers to those who speak in tongues, mystifying their hearers: "For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also" (1 Cor. 14:14-15).

The danger here is very real—if we separate the mind from the Spirit, an alien spirit can intrude. It would appear that this separation is acceptable where a tripartite view of man is held (spirit, soul, and body). The Reformed view of man (which I believe to be biblically sound) is that man is bipartite, spirit and soul being synonymous terms for the spiritual part of man. Certain enthusiastic groups, and certain teachings of Watchman Nee, which seem to separate soul from spirit, incline Christians to advocate a level of spiritual experience which tends to bypass the mind. This is exceedingly dangerous. It is totally erroneous to think that by by-passing the human mind we may attain to a higher spiritual state. If God is anything, He is mind as well as heart; and even in the highest flights of the apostle Paul's transport (as in 2 Cor. 12:1-7), we may not assume that his mind was short-circuited, but, rather, that it was elevated into the realms of heavenly thought.

This fact ought to be regulative of our whole "feeling" life, because however long it takes to change perverse or malign

feeling patterns, they have no hope of change, even at length, without new thoughts. Doubtless one can hold tenaciously to right thoughts (as dictated by Scripture; cf. Phil. 4:8) without improper or inconvenient emotions changing their deep-rutted patterns. Other proper psychological help may be needed in such cases, but even that will have no hope of success unless the mind turns to right thoughts, and holds firmly to them.

In all of this we need to emphasize that it is only the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16) in our new birth that has any hope of inclining our thoughts to right ways. We must not forget that the mind of Christ is set within us in the midst of the remnants of our old corruption. The vile Adam is displaced, but the residue of his malign influence remains, and is still open to stimulation by the enemy himself. Nonetheless, the Christian believer is a new creature in Christ Jesus, and cannot be two persons, as Romans 7:17-20 makes plain.

My friend David Preston captured the proper emphasis well when he wrote to me from Northern Ireland in September 1972:

More and more this seems to be fundamental, that I have not got two natures at all. Either I am, or I am not, a child of God. If I do wrong as a child of God I am acting contrary to my true nature. Paul's appeal in Romans 6:12 is not based on what I should be, but on who I am, and, of course, knowing myself as one with a new nature enables me to put sin and the devil at a distance, because it is not part of me. I am thus not indulging in a harmful splitting of my personality when I feel that resisting sin and Satan is to resist part of myself. I am resisting that which is not part of me. I find this extremely liberating.

However, while we have a radical new nature in Jesus Christ, it is twofold, belonging both to the potency of Christ crucified (unto our sin), and Christ risen (unto God and righteousness; see 2 Cor. 5:21).

The apostle Paul wrote illuminatingly about this in Romans 6:2-11, but this is not to say that sin is dead within us, because the remnants of corruption remain. As Christians, we sit on a throne with Jesus, we have died to sin, and we are new creatures in Him. See how absolute this is. It is quite startling, actually. John's first epistle states this in such categorical terms that it is impossible in a world of imperfect creatures not to seek to qualify it in order to explain what he means.

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him (1 John 3:4-6).

But you may say, "I sin every day." Yes, but see what John is saying here. You do sin every day, but you do not set yourself out to live a life of sin—you are at least aiming determinedly to live the Christian life, and to the extent that you do not, sin and its remnants and very often Satan are involved. In other words, when you commit sin, you are being untrue to your Christian self. John says categorically, "No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him." I know that people sometimes paraphrase this to read, "No one who makes a practice (or habit) of sin," but John Murray is unhappy with that since it leaves too much of a loophole. Rather, he says, that where absolute terms are used, such as "No one who abides in Him sins"—John is thinking of some specific sin which must be eschewed, and Murray gives three examples of such from John's Gospel (John 9:2-3, 41; 15:22). We must give no permission to sin since, as John says, "He who practices sin is of the Devil" (1 John 3:8).

Inbred Sin and the Devil's Work

There is a monumental and appalling unwillingness even on the part of evangelical publishers, to deal with this vital

area—the distinction between the operations of inbred sin, and of the Devil working upon it. It is a vastly neglected field. The sinister dastardly work of the enemy in relation to Sanctification needs to be exposed.

The practical point is this—when we are drawn away and enticed by Satan working upon the remnants of our old nature, we are instantly inclined to blame ourselves only, and neglect the vile instigator himself. We find that sensitive believers are so susceptible to guilt-feelings that all thought of a malevolent interloper flees from them. Indeed, a major part of pastoral work is concerned with exposing this failure. Devout souls will go to any number of conventions for the deepening of spiritual life and enjoy much blessing from them for a time, but as soon as they slip and feel condemnation they blindly turn the whole searchlight of truth upon themselves and adamantly, even piously, neglect to give Satan his dues!

Why are we so unwilling to reckon with the enemy himself? It is almost as if, having done a dreadful work in the heart of a fallen man, he goes away and there is no one to blame but ourselves. Not so! We find this unwillingness strongest among intellectual and academic evangelical Christians who are frankly embarrassed by the dimension of what they would call the "ghostly" or "spectral." Are both spiritual worlds not real, both the evil and the holy? Surely there can be no hope of revival in the Christian church until the enemy involved in the awful sins of modern man is exposed.

We take, therefore, the words of 1 John 3:8 very seriously: "The one who practices sin is of the Devil; for the Devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the Devil."

The above is stated as the principal reason for the coming into the world of the Son of God. It is, therefore, a major calamity that we lose sight of the Devil and his hidden works in our own lives. Of course, when he beguiles us into sin we must own that sin, confess and forsake it, and instantly seek

forgiveness; but we must not let the Devil go unaccused. That is a major error, and one, we believe, which is fearfully common.

We go on to 1 John 3:9: "No one born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin because he has been born of God." That is categorical enough. Whatever may be said about the absoluteness of not sinning (whether it refers to a specific sin, as John Murray says, or whether it refers to a cessation of habitual sin—no longer making a practice of it), the *radicalness* of the change is indisputable. We are united with Christ and become new creatures; the old things have passed away, the new things have come into being. All that follows thereafter regarding holiness is a matter of process and progress, however fitful it may be. And it can be fitful. What are we to think of supposed "hopeless" cases, who keep coming to church, drinking in the truth, longing to be right, hating their sin, yet drawn away and tormented until their hearts are well-nigh broken with the seemingly unequal struggle? They need a good strong dose of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* on Sanctification (ch. 13). Although it is strong meat, that chapter is easier to read and understand than others. It has three short paragraphs:

They are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are further Sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by His word and spirit dwelling in them; the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified, and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. This sanctification is throughout in the whole man, yet imperfect in this life; there abideth still some remnants of corruption in every part: whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war; the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh (para. ii).

In which war, although the remaining corruption for a time may much prevail, yet through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part doth overcome: and so the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (ch. XIII, para.iii).

Further, here is another short chapter from the *Confession*, which is even simpler to read and understand, "On the Perseverance of the Saints" (ch. XVII):

They whom God had accepted in His beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end; and be eternally saved (para. i).

This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ; the abiding of the Spirit, and the seed of God within them; upon the nature of the covenant of grace: from all of which arises also the certainty and infallibility thereof (para. ii).

Nevertheless they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, fall into grievous sins; and for a time continue therein: whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve His Holy Spirit. They come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts, have their hearts hardened and their consciences wounded. They hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgement upon themselves (para. ii).

Temporal judgments! God can take away our life, prematurely. That is what 1 Corinthians 11:30 says. How grim God appears to be with His children. They may take away the means of punishment from schools, but God doesn't believe in that. He believes in chastening His children. He believes in punishing His naughty children, whether teachers and educa-

tion authorities do or not.

That is what is said by the apostle at the end of the Corinthian communion passage:

But let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number have died (1Cor. 11:28-30).

They have sinned against the body of Christ and the Cross of Christ within His very church. The Spirit of holiness is truly at work in them, and they grow in grace because the God who saved them is a holy God.

Conclusion

It is imperative that God's people understand they serve a holy God. It is also imperative that they understand how and why they are called to live as holy citizens of a holy kingdom. May God grant His mercy to us with revival blessings in our time.

Author

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