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## SANCTIFICATION ACCORDING TO CHRIST.

(JOHN XVII. 17-19.)

THE Last Prayer of the Lord Jesus for His disciples, recorded in the 17th chapter of St. John's Gospel, turns mainly upon three petitions: "Holy Father, keep them in thy name" (vv. 11-15); "sanctify them in the truth" (vv. 17-19); and "that they may all be one, as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee" (vv. 20-23). After this He has no more to wish for them on earth, only "that where I am, they too may be, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me" (v. 24). He asks, in three words, for the *preservation* of His disciples, for their *sanctification*, and for their *perfected union* grounded in His eternal oneness with the Father. And He appears to contemplate these three blessings as destined for His Church, in some sense, successively, in the order and connexion thus specified. On the realization of the last of the three wishes of Jesus for His own the belief of the world in His mission is made contingent (v. 23).

Imminent upon the departure of Jesus was the danger of defection in the body of His disciples, the breakdown of faith in Himself and of hope for the messianic kingdom, which His death, under the circumstances, was calculated to bring about. The apostasy of Judas now decided (v. 12), and the cowardice of Peter which He had predicted (cf. Luke xxii. 31-34), brought this possibility home to the mind of Jesus. His sheep, as He foresaw, would be scattered by the blow smiting their Shepherd (Matt. xxvi. 31; John xvi. 32): it is for the Father now to see that the

little flock is rallied from its panic, that the faith which would be stumbled on this night "should not fail," that the dear treasure which He "has given" to the Son of His love, and which His Son has gathered and "guarded" for Him with so much pains, should not fall a prey to Satan in this dark hour, and be lost at the very moment when the Son is returning to the Father and reports His task on earth accomplished (*vv.* 4, 9-13). In this immediate peril our provident Lord anticipated the future perils of His Church, the terrors and the seductions sure to beset His disciples while remaining "in the world." He knew the long conflict and heavy strain through which human faith in Him must pass, between the present crisis and the joyful hour when He should come again to receive His brethren to Himself (see *e.g.* Matt. xvi. 18; Luke xviii. 8; John xv. 18-xvi. 3, etc.). Jesus appeals to the Father, "Keep them *in thy name*"—as if to say, "Since indeed Thou art their Father, and I have told them so at Thy bidding, show Thyself a Father to them. Let them not be as disowned or orphaned children, for I cast them upon Thee. Let their faltering faith grow strong as they name this Name, which I have put into their lips; let their hearts now filled with grief be filled again with hope and joy, as they take hold of its strength. Let Thy Fatherhood be their souls' anchor in the night of storm." Above all things the chosen Twelve—those who remained, with the traitor now gone—must stand firm; the honour of Jesus (*v.* 10) and the salvation of the world depended upon the fidelity, the courage of this handful of weak and frightened men. By so slender a thread hung the spiritual interests of mankind. This solicitude upon the part of Jesus is true to the occasion, and to the apprehensions ascribed to Him in the Synoptic record; it was a trait of the situation most unlikely to have been preserved and thrown into this strong relief in any legendary or inventive expansion of the Passion story

proceeding from a later age. For the pupils of the Johanneine School, in the second century, the Apostles had become spiritual heroes, in whose case the failure deprecated in this prayer could hardly have been imagined. We catch here the beating of the shepherd-heart of Jesus as He "seeth the wolf coming" (xiv. 30; Luke xxii. 31): "Holy Father, keep them—keep them in thy name, keep them from the evil one."

But to be kept, this is by itself only a negative salvation. Had Christ sought and obtained for the objects of His prayer no more than this, had His personal disciples merely held fast and cherished in their own breast the faith committed to them, Christianity would have perished in a single generation; at best, it would have been transmitted to select and recluse initiates—no longer "apostles" but privileged "friends" of Jesus (xv. 15)—who though "in the world" would be careful to be only "not of the world," unknown to it and glad to remain unknown, while they guard amongst themselves their priceless heirloom, the glorious "name" of His Father and theirs, which the Son of God had once taught them. Had the prayer of Jesus ceased at verse 16 of the chapter, this is all that we could fairly have augured from it taken by itself. It might have seemed that Christ, rejected with contumely by the world and resuming His place of glory by the Father's side, now casts off the world in turn, that He renounces the impossible task of its salvation, and centres His affections and His hopes upon the little flock gathered already under His shepherding, content if His mission should terminate in them and seeking in the assurance of their devotion the one comfort that should cheer His dying moments.

It is when we arrive at the second movement in the great Act of Intercession that our Lord's policy of conquest discloses itself, and the ground becomes apparent of His hopes for the spread of His kingdom through the world:

“Sanctify them,” He says, “in the truth; thy word is truth. . . . On their behalf I sanctify myself, in order that they too may be sanctified in truth.” Their Lord “has sent them forth into the world,” even as He had Himself been “sent forth”: for this mission they must be “sanctified”; to this they were designated by their title of “apostles.” By way of prelude and preliminary trial He had already sent them out (see especially Matt. x.). Let this sanctification be realized in Christ’s present servants and take effect, it is possible then to foresee “those who will believe through their word” (v. 20), for whom He will ask that they also may be grafted into the Divine fellowship of which these His brethren are part-takers. Let this process of sanctification continue, extending from the Head to the multiplying members, and the filial union of men with Christ in God will embrace a wider and yet wider circle, until the day appears when, as Jesus assures Himself before the Father, “the world,” that now proclaims Him a blasphemer, “shall believe that thou didst send me” (v. 23), when “the authority given” to Him “over all flesh” shall be made good and Jesus shall be Lord of the full heritage which is His right amongst men (v. 3). It is evident therefore that our blessed Lord looked to the sanctification of Christian men, under the action of the Holy Spirit (xv. 26 f.), as the means of the world’s conversion to faith in Him. Here He discovered the aggressive, assimilative principle of His religion, that which should give to Christianity its positive character; in this lies its working energy, its propulsive force.

From this historical point of view we must seek to gather the meaning of Sanctification as it was conceived by our Lord, as it was in fact experienced by Himself and desired for His Apostles. This particular passage, assuming it to be authentic, is decisive in the matter. For here is the only instance, so far as the recorded sayings of Jesus go, in which

He speaks specifically of the sanctification of His people; and it belongs to the critical epoch of His mission. The language of Christ, when compared for instance with that of the Apostle Paul, shows a noticeable reserve upon this subject. He is addressed as "holy" by the demons (Mark i. 24, etc.), and so confessed by His disciples (John vi. 69); but, up to this last moment, we cannot find that Christ Himself applied the epithet, either *ἅγιος* or its derivatives, to men—only to "the (Holy) Spirit" and, in this prayer, to the Father (v. 11)—although its human application was not unusual in Jewish speech (see for instance Mark vi. 20; Matt. xxvii. 52). This avoidance can hardly have been accidental. It would seem as though our Lord, with the deep sacredness which He must needs attach to the notion of Holiness, could not until He came to the close of His work, until His sacrifice was on the point of being accomplished and His disciples were entering under the shadow of the cross, nor until the bestowment of the Holy Spirit on them was speedily to be made and had been brought clearly into their view (chaps. xiv.-xvi.)—not until these conditions were fulfilled, does it seem to have been possible or fitting for Him to speak in the hearing of His disciples of their *sanctification*. Because in Him, and for them, holiness imported something—far more and other than it did in the religion of the day. The term was to take a new complexion and to be developed to a strange issue. Only on the basis of the "finished work" of the Son of God (v. 4) could His brethren even begin to understand what holiness must mean for them, who were the legatees of that completed work and themselves its proper fruit. Only as they saw their Lord devote His person in the consummating sacrifice, would they be prepared to realize what their Christian consecration involved, what the spirit, aim and measure might be of the sanctification demanded by their calling.

We do find, however, the verb "sanctify" (*ἀγιάζω*), of this prayer, thrice elsewhere given in the Gospels from the lips of Christ. Once in the saying parallel to this, in John x. 36, where our Lord, who is alluding to His birth (cf. Luke i. 35: τὸ γεννώμενον ἅγιον κληθήσεται υἱὸς θεοῦ) in controversy with the Jews, describes Himself as "him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world." The same connexion exists there as here between the ideas of *mission* (or *apostleship*) and *sanctification*; in both instances *the world* is the object aimed at in the sanctification of God's servants. One thought runs in the mind of Jesus throughout; He is leaving the world now with the very end in view for which He first entered it, viz. for its salvation. But there is a difference: His mission is now not His alone; there are those identified with Him whom the Father has given Him out of the world; the consecration of Himself which the Son of God is about to make, will carry with it their consecration; and they will remain to represent Him in the world, as He departs. He entered the world upon a solitary errand; but He is drawing after Him a train of many brethren. One principle animates the entire course of Jesus; in the Atonement the purpose of the Incarnation fructifies; the seed "falling into the ground" to "die," does not "abide alone," it "bears much fruit"; and its first fruitage in the sanctified Apostles will become in turn the seed of a world-wide harvest.

The second instance to be noted of Christ's use of the word *ἀγιάζω*, outside of John xvii., is in Matthew xxiii. 16-22, where He speaks incidentally of "the temple which sanctified the gold" stored for its use, and "the altar which sanctifies the gift" brought unto it. The temple is holy, since God "dwells in it"; temple and altar "sanctify" what is given to them, since they appropriate all gifts for God's appointed service. Most impressive and most instructive is the third of the parallels in question, found in

the first petition of the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father, . . . hallowed (*i.e.* sanctified, ἁγιασθήτω) be thy name." The two Lord's Prayers—that dictated by the Lord to us, and that offered by the Lord for us—are linked in a wonderful way by the "name," which gives the keynote of them each; and by the longing for "sanctification," which takes expression in the primary supplication of the one prayer and the central supplication of the other. The former of these great requests interprets for us the latter: God's children are to be "hallowed" in the same sense and to the same effect as His name; that name is committed to them, is lodged in them (*vv.* 6, 8, etc.; cf. Rev. iii. 12, xxii. 4); only through them can the Father's name come to be hallowed, or even to be known, on earth. In the sanctification which Christ contemplates, the "name" of the Father and the men who bear it are identified, to all intents and purposes. Just as that name is set apart amongst all human words and separated from profane and sinful use, that it may be the means of setting forth God's glory, of making known God's character and perfecting His worship amongst mankind, so it is to be with those who receive God's father-name; they will partake of and communicate its holiness; they will be hallowed in its hallowing and for its hallowing. They are set apart from other men for this purpose, as it is from other names; they are separated henceforth from all profane and sinful use, that *they* may be the means of setting forth the Father's glory, of making known God's character and relationship to men, of carrying on and perfecting His worship in the earth. Hence they will know themselves afterwards as Christ's "holy apostles" (Eph. iii. 5); and they will impress on all who accept His message through them the same character of "saints" which He now stamps upon them. The vocation of saintship, in the specific form which Christ gives to it, is in truth His legacy to the Church,—the calling which devolves by His death



upon His representatives and witnesses before the world; and here lies, we may presume, the reason why the Apostles spoke so freely of the sanctification of Christians, and why Christ Himself did not thus speak until quite the last hour, not indeed till the Father's "word" had been fully conveyed and His revelation virtually complete, not till those crowning facts came into view which constitute the chief part of "the truth" wherein men are sanctified.

When the Lord Jesus therefore prayed to the Father for His disciples, "Sanctify them in the truth," it was a very practical object upon which His mind was bent. Sanctification, in the thought of Jesus, was both for Himself and for them nothing else than *consecration to a world-mission*. And this mission was now perfectly definite; it was that of revealing God to mankind in Him, and bringing back mankind to God through Him. Sanctification is often defined as "separation," but that is the preliminary step; it is the Old Testament conception of the state. Detachment from the world is the essential, but in itself merely negative, pre-condition of effective holiness, like the retreat of Jesus into the wilderness before His ministry or His retirement to "the mountain" in preparation for His most active days. Nor is sanctification a thing of frames and feelings, a subjective spiritual state indicated by warm emotions and high raptures and peculiar happiness in the experience of religion. Such enjoyments are very real and most delightful; they constitute a precious grace of the Holy Spirit (see John xv. 11; Gal. v. 22). But we should deceive ourselves and turn the grace of God into selfishness, if we supposed that "joy in the Holy Spirit" is sanctification, or that there is any fixed and necessary proportion between the two conditions. Jesus was sanctified when He "rejoiced in the Spirit" before His Father; He was sanctified—and that to the furthest degree—when He cried out, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Raptures are not sanctity;

ecstasy is not full devotion, nor any vital sign of it—no more than the song of some winged creature is its soaring flight, no more than the zest of the strong man and his joy in labour are that labour and work itself. Sanctification means the man setting out to do the work for God that God has called him to in life; it means the Church addressing itself to the task that its Lord lays upon it; it means the life and spirit of the Head taking effect in the action of His members upon the world. One cannot conceive of sanctification in any Christian sense so long as one leaves the unsanctified outside of its scope. Christ puts “the world” into the centre of His prayers for the holiness of His disciples, and the meaning and connexion of *vv.* 17 and 19 in this chapter will be altogether missed if we treat *v.* 18 as though it were an interpolation, or an abrupt and disturbing parenthesis. For these disciples, to be “sanctified” and to be “sent into the world” constitute the same vocation: the former supplies the impulse and bestows the equipment for the latter. The gold is “sanctified” as devoted to the uses and costs of the temple; the gift is “sanctified” when laid upon the altar to be consumed: so the man is sanctified when he is given up to God for the uses of a man,—to think, to feel, to act, to speak, to love and strive and spend himself his life through, for the glory of God in the uplifting to God of all his fellowmen.

Such is the import of the sanctification of Christian men as Christ represents it: let us look at the ground upon which He sets it, and the method of its accomplishment as thereby determined. “For their sakes,” He continues, “I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.” The sanctification of Jesus is made by Him the basis of ours; the former seeks in the latter its fruition and complement. His sanctification is taking place at this very time, for “the hour is come” (*v.* 1); and in this pro-

ness the Son of God realizes, on His own part, the object with which the Father first "sent Him into the world" (x. 36).

Now, what was happening to our Lord Jesus, that He should thus speak of "sanctifying" Himself at the hour of His departure from the world? Was He becoming, to His own consciousness or in the eyes of His disciples, any *purer* than before? We reject the thought instantly, as a slur upon His unstained and unchallenged innocence. "Which of you," He could say in the face of His enemies, "convicteth me of sin?" and lifting up His eyes to the Father, "I do always the things that please him." None of those who heard His prayer and have noted and recorded the words in question, could have surmised that Jesus was sensible of any moral unfitness for the work before Him, or that He described Himself in these words as attaining through His passion a personal purity which He had not possessed before. Or could He mean that He was now for the first time experiencing the love of God in its fulness, that He was learning as a man, according to His own law, to "love the Lord his God with all his heart and mind"? This, we are sure, was His intention as little as the former. "I have kept my Father's commandments," He professed, "and abide in his love." For our sin-spotted nature and alienated hearts, sanctification necessitates moral cleansing and re-admission into the love of God; naturally we look at holiness in the light of these attendant and correlated blessings, and may easily confuse it with them, since it so evidently connotes them. But for Christ Himself it is clear that to be sanctified denoted something quite distinct from all such qualities and experiences, something that lay beyond His individual relations to God, though arising out of them under the given conditions. And the sanctification which He asks for His disciples lies along the same line with His own, and is of the like order. He will have them

drink of the cup from which He is drinking and be baptized with the baptism coming upon Himself.

What was it then which still remained for the perfecting of our Lord? What can He mean by "sanctifying himself"—He who is already the Holy One of God, undefiled and separated from sinners? We follow Him from the chamber of the Last Supper to the garden of Gethsemane, and we begin to understand the self-consecrating of Jesus. We hear Him say to the Father, after a thrice-repeated agony, "If this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, thy will be done." He steps from the shadow of the trees into the moonlight, that brief struggle ended, to confront Judas and his soldier-band with the clear words, "Whom seek ye?" surrendering Himself without fear or reserve to the hands of evildoers, since "power is given them from above" and this was the road the Saviour's feet must travel. So through the hours of that hideous night and cruel day—when before Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate He "witnessed the good confession," when He bore the stripes, the spitting, the mock royalty, the horror, indignity, and torment of the cross, in utter meekness, without an accent or look of anger, "dumb as a sheep before her shearers," while a word, a lifting of the finger, would have brought to His aid "more than twelve legions of angels,"—emptying Himself to the very bottom of the soul in the sheer cutting off and letting go of happiness, honour, life, of wisdom, will, and conscious hold upon God—foregoing all at the Father's good pleasure, who chose to work out through wicked hands of men man's redemption, in the sacrifice of best for worst. And marching to the cross, the Lord Jesus says, "If any man serve me, let him follow me!"

In the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is contained the secret of our sanctification no less than of our justification. His death is the spring of the entire life of those who

are in Him; the first half of the doctrine of the cross is a single and halting limb without the second. It is precisely this that the Apostle Paul labours to show in the sixth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, where he defends his teaching respecting the gratuitous pardon of sinners from the charge of immoral consequences. Our justification is our release from past sin, racial or personal; it is our restoration to the status of righteous men before God, brought about by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Our sanctification is our conformity to that sacrifice, our learning to live in the spirit and for the ends of Jesus Christ Himself, who "died for all that the living should no longer live to themselves, but to him who died for them and rose again" (2 Cor. v. 15). In the first aspect His death is vicarious, unique, concluding the sinful past—the death of One for all; in the second it is representative, universal, inaugurating a holy future—the death of all in One, who rises again that He may live to God evermore in them. The two are therefore integral parts of the same operation, no more to be severed in experience than were the burial and resurrection of the Redeemer (Rom. vi. 4 ff.). The second is in its initiation the concomitant, and in its perfection the sequel, of the first; the first is our dying from sin, the second is our living to God. The doctrine of justification is taught by our Lord in the sacrament of the Last Supper, where He speaks, in words that are assuredly no later theological comment, of "my blood of the covenant, which is being shed for many for remission of sins"; and the doctrine of sanctification is taught as plainly and strongly in the sacramental prayer that followed. Both are virtually contained in the reproof addressed to Simon Peter at the feet-washing before the Supper—in the protasis and apodosis of the sentence respectively: "If I wash thee not,—thou hast no part with me." To "have part" with Jesus is, above everything, to share in that which was *His part*, in the business upon which

the Father sent Him into the world; it is, to use again St. Paul's vivid terms, to "know the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death," to be "crucified with Christ," and thus "to fill up on one's own part (*ἀντ-ανα-πληρῶ*, Col. i. 24) the things that are left (*τὰ ὑστερήματα*) of the afflictions of Christ" (cf. 1 Pet. iii. 21-iv. 2). When the dying Saviour asks that His disciples may be sanctified along with Him and in virtue of the sanctification which now awaits Him, He is asking for them the lot which He had promised to their leader under the sign of the pre-eucharistic washing, and which belongs to all the companions of His table. This, to be sure, was the primary element, though not the whole, of that "glory given" to the Son of God by the Father in His earthly course, which, as He says immediately afterwards (v. 22), He "has given" in turn to His brethren, through the attainment of which they will "be one" with each other as being one with Him. Christ's sacrifice therefore, offered to God for the world's redemption, was His own sanctification, as He conceived and accepted it; and it becomes in effect the sanctification of His true people, who, "since Christ suffered in flesh, arm themselves with *the same thought*" (1 Pet. iv. 1), identifying themselves with the purpose of their Saviour's death, and finding in it their equipment for toil and suffering in His service.

But to regard Christ's death on its sanctifying side as an ideal, a pattern only, is an insufficient view. He is in every office more than our pattern—to limit Him to that is to make Him only the best and first of men—He is our representative, and stands toward men as head to members and vine-stock to branches. His sanctification sanctified His disciples in a deeper and more efficient sense than that of exemplary precedence. In what He said and did, Jesus Christ carried with Him all men believing in Him. Let us illustrate for once the original by "the likeness of his

death." When the individual Christian man "sanctifies himself," when in seeking the true life of fellowship with the Redeemer he comes to see and accept in its simplicity the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning him, he then commits to God, for all Christ's uses, himself in one decisive act, and with himself whatever is his, or may<sup>e</sup> be his in the future, in this world or any other—not his bare personality of body and soul alone, but his family, his business and his purse, his influence, his moral and material belongings, everything in which he has in any degree invested and laid out himself; all that goes to the make-up of the man, goes into that total and conclusive surrender. So with *Him*! Jesus Christ gave to God the Father, for the definite purpose of His sacrifice, with His person all that was or might be His in possession or in prospect. "All mine," He confesses to the Father, "are thine!" *All*—but how much was that? Little enough, as it seemed, had this dying, deserted man to give either to God or man. Nothing was left to Jesus on the cross but His stripped and tortured body and His dying spirit which He gives back to the Father; once so rich, for our sakes He became poor. But how much was really His! He *had* those eleven men, for whom in the first instance He is praying. Though they failed Him for the moment, He knows that they are His for ever—every limb of their bodies, every feeling and fibre of their hearts—His to live for Him, to die for Him as He is dying now for them. And these were the earnest, to His prophetic knowledge, of a multitude which no man could number, of the hosts and nations of men who, He says, "will believe on me through their word." He saw the peoples bending at His feet; He saw the love and hope of the ages streaming out to Him. And He gave it all to God. Jesus could not for an instant think of anything as His, without rendering it instantly to the Father: all His dearly-purchased rights in humanity He lodged with God, at

that solemn hour when He sanctified Himself. Can Jesus possibly have meant less than this, when He says, "*On their behalf I sanctify myself*" ?

These things being so, the matter of sanctification is settled irrevocably and from the first for every Christian man ; and all believers, as St. Paul insists in the first line of his Epistles, are "called saints"—saints by the simple fact and inevitable consequence of their calling of God in Jesus Christ. The gospel summoned them to saintship ; and if they are not "saints" in the Christian meaning of the term, devoted and holy persons, they are not under the gospel call. We were committed beforehand, and that without qualification or reserve, to the life of holiness. We are not our own, we "were bought"—and no sooner bought than given away ! Christ redeemed us to God by His death, and in the same act presented us to God with His life. The Head had every right to choose for His limbs, and He has chosen. We cannot repudiate nor ignore the act of our Mediator ; nor may we pretend to endorse by our faith the one half of the covenant made in His blood, that secures forgiveness for the past, while we withhold endorsement from the second half of the same instrument, which claims the consecration of our future being. This would be to mock Christ indeed. "*In the which will,*" writes the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, speaking of that all-comprising, all-commanding will of God under which the Son of God consecrated Himself a willing victim for the sins of men—" *in the which will we are sanctified*, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

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