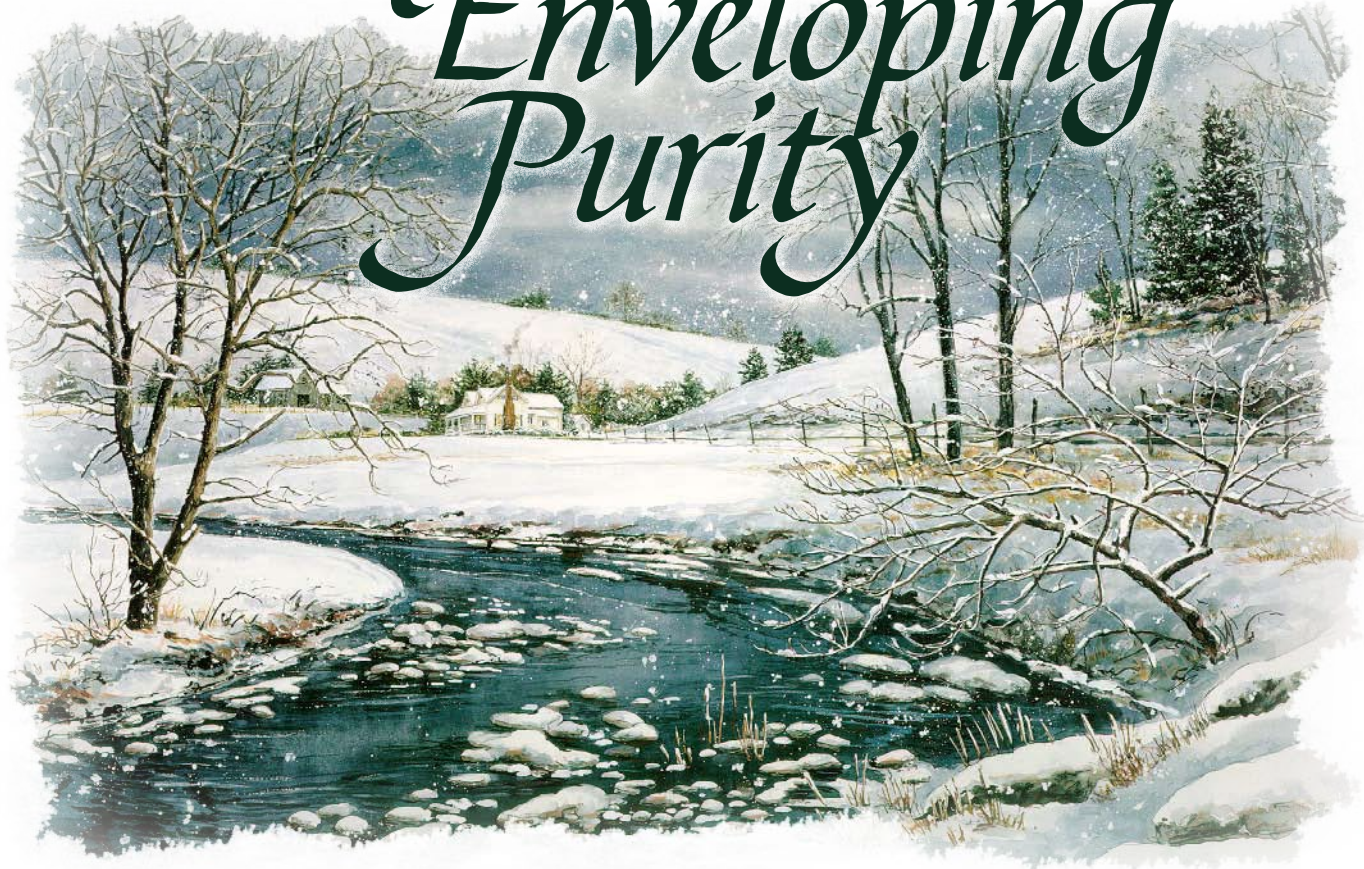


# An Enveloping Purity



AND THERE WAS A MAN IN

JERUSALEM WHOSE NAME WAS

SIMEON; AND THIS MAN WAS

RIGHTEOUS AND DEVOUT, LOOK-

ING FOR THE CONSOLATION OF

ISRAEL; AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

WAS UPON HIM.

LUKE 2:25

**I**T SNOWED LAST SUNDAY NIGHT. FINALLY. Now the world around us—which, only a few days ago, was a dull, persistent gray—is now a beautiful winter wonderland. Early Monday morning, as the sun tipped its focused light down into the valley, glittering sparkles danced across the landscape. Above the blanket of snow all the bare trees, bushes, and exposed grass and weeds in the fields were frosted in white, everything coated with hoarfrost. And, as if the landscape were dusted with faceted diamonds, the clean morning sunlight created brilliant, powdery sparkles across field and wood.

Now the top side of every oak and hickory limb is pasted with white frosting, and the brown grass has been covered over. The birds must now scratch through small drifts for their seed, and the roaming deer must paw through the covering for sustenance. The persistent ugliness of a deciduous winter landscape without snow, has now been covered over with a white, crystalline beauty.

...and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

One might say that the snow is *upon* the ground.

It is not with a light touch; the snow is not hovering gently a few inches above the ground, dipping down only occasionally to teasingly brush the blades of brown grass. Nor is the covering of snow a rigid plane, knocking sharply against only the taller weeds and bushes.

No, the snow is a *blanket*, folding and forming itself over and around every contour of the ground. It has molded itself onto every subtle curve and roll of the terrain, every notch and bend, every stone and boulder, no matter its shape. In most areas the snow has completely eliminated everything else from sight. All around, the world is white; it's all one can see.

## North Wind

And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple...

Luke 2:26-27a

When we accept Christ, the Spirit rushes into us like the north wind that makes the snow blow parallel to the ground. He invades us, seeking out and filling every nook and cranny, molding Himself—without compromise of His own purity—to fit our essential being. As a true intimate, He shapes Himself over and around who *we* are without altering in any way who *He* is.

The Spirit comes upon us, blanketing us with His comforting touch. We have no say in the matter, no vote. He comes with Christ, and there is no turning Him back.

through the walls of our house; we have relationships with the people who live in the house.

The Spirit is a person living within the four walls of our corporeal house. As He fits Himself into that house, making Himself comfortable, we are to make ourselves comfortable with His ways. We are to mold our lives to His shape and dimensions. As He comes upon us, we are to accept His presence as something familiar—and wonderful.

## Good Manners

The arrogance of our epoch turns this around. By its lights, if a supernatural presence chooses to come in and make Himself at home within one or more of us, then surely it must be for the expressed purpose of learning from *us*. This is only sensible, for, you see, *our* way is real, it is reasonable, it is logical. How else to explain this Spirit's

## From God Above

There are few things more warming and comforting on a cold winter night than a thick, enveloping blanket. We live in a cold world—a world cold to God, His ways, and His Spirit. For believers to live in this world without giving up to despair, we are given the warm, comforting Holy Spirit. He leaves no part of us untouched and unwarmed, but He is only as effective as we permit Him to be.

The snow comes down from above, covering the earth with its gentle purity. But soon the pristine blanket is disrupted by deer hooves, turkeys scratching for hidden food, and the clomping of thick rubber boots.

The Spirit comes down from God above, covering the lives of His children with His gentle holiness. But the world soon tries with all its might to disrupt the effect of His enveloping purity—and, to varying degrees,

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*Oh how the thought of God attracts  
And draws the heart from earth,  
And sickens it of passing shows  
And dissipating mirth!*

*God only is the creature's home,  
Though rough and straight the road;  
Yet nothing less can satisfy  
The love that longs for God.*

*The freedom from all wilful sin,  
The Christian's daily task,—  
Oh these are graces far below  
What longing love would ask!*

*Then keep thy conscience sensitive;  
No inward token miss:  
And go where grace entices thee;—  
Perfection lies in this.*

*'Tis not enough to save our souls,  
To shun the eternal fires;  
The thought of God will rouse the heart  
To more sublime desires.*

*Oh utter but the Name of God  
Down in Your heart of hearts,  
And see how from the world at once  
All tempting light departs.*

*The perfect way is hard to flesh;  
It is not hard to love;  
If thou wert sick for want of God,  
How swiftly wouldst thou move!*

*Be docile to thine unseen Guide,  
Love Him as He loves thee;  
Time and obedience are enough,  
And thou a saint shall be.*

Frederick William Faber

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He weaves Himself in and through the tangled network of our intellect, our imagination, our reason, connecting us to the intellect, imagination, and reason of God.

## Something Familiar

Some people think of the Holy Spirit as some ghostly apparition, hovering, floating out there in the ether—always in the vicinity, but never within reach. To them, He is more of an “it,” and something, if perhaps necessary, more often to be avoided. The Spirit is, to them, a little too spooky.

Some think of the Holy Spirit as radiant energy, and thereby find it impossible to establish a meaningful relationship. He glows in the dark, and makes mysterious, other-worldly things to occur. To them He is something like invisible, yet admittedly powerful, electricity. But we do not have a relationship with the electricity coursing

willingness to mold and shape Himself to our convolutions, rather than His own.

But, once again, the citizens of this self-centered time have mistaken good manners for deference. It is not from capitulation that the Spirit treads lightly upon our own. Rather, as with most everything else from God, He comes in, makes Himself available, but waits for us to draw insight and encouragement from Him. He is a friend who will not force His friendship upon us.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

1 Corinthians 2:12-13

finds success. No guarantee of daily righteousness comes with the Holy Spirit; after the basics of salvation, the measure by which the believer draws upon what the Spirit has to offer is determined by the individual.

He offers us the very mind of God. It is up to us to listen.



But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

Galatians 5:16-18