

by the Apostle, in the thought of the "good pleasure" of the will of God, which finds its satisfaction in life and not in death, which is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. iii. 9).

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## THE EARNEST OF THE SPIRIT.

### II. CORINTHIANS V. 5.

ST. PAUL opens this verse by saying, "Now he that wrought us up for this very thing is God." What *is* this very or selfsame thing? *What* is the end which God has in view in all that He does in, and for, and upon those who walk by faith and not by sight? It is, as we are told in the previous verse, that "mortality may be swallowed up of life." *This* is the end He has set before Him, and keeps before Him,—that all which is mortal in us, all that *can* die, may be lost, absorbed in, transmuted and glorified by that in us which cannot die.

And *when* is this end to be reached? It is to be reached, as we also learn from the previous verse, when this mortal shall have put on immortality, when we shall be clothed upon with the white raiment of a spiritual and imperishable life, when the frail tenement of our mortality has been replaced by the house of God, the building not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens.

1. The first thought suggested by this passage is, therefore, that our true life does not and cannot consist in that which is mortal, or perishable, in us. So far from consisting in that of which death may rob us at any moment, our true life is, according to the holy Apostle, hampered, clogged, restrained, thwarted by our mortality. It groans

under the limitations imposed on it by this tenement of clay. It cannot rise to its proper freedom and perfection until it has shuffled off this mortal coil. Whoever may find "in matter the promise and potency of all things," St. Paul finds in matter, even where it is most finely organized, even in "the miraculous organs" through which the spirit of man utters and reveals itself, even in "the temple of this body," an antagonist to be subdued and conquered. Whoever may reduce life to a mere result of organization, or a mere function of the brain, St. Paul detects in the brain, and in the senses by which the brain is brought into contact with the world around us, that which limits, that which betrays and thwarts, our true life. According to him, all that is mortal in us is a burden which our true life, the life of the spirit, has to bear, a burden which costs us many sighs and groans; and it will never be well with us until even that which is mortal is penetrated, suffused, transfigured by the energies of this inward life, and the spirit dwells and moves in a form as vital and as immortal as itself.

2. And *this* is the end which God has in view for us; mortality is to be swallowed up of life, that which is mortal in us by that which is vital. We are to lose nothing—how should we lose anything?—by becoming perfect. The whole man, body and soul, form as well as spirit, is to be saved unto life everlasting. All the redeeming energies of God's love and grace have it for their aim to consummate and perfect our inward life, our true life, to make us of one will and of one heart with Him; and when this aim is reached, the life of the spirit, the life which He has made perfect, will, by its own interior and inherent force, fashion for itself a body appropriate to itself, "a spiritual body,"—swallowing up that which is mortal, shedding into it the power of an endless life, weaving out of it a body as pliant to all the influences and conditions of the spiritual world

as this mortal body is to all the conditions and influences of the present visible world.

It is a great promise, a great hope ; but, great as it is, it is perfectly reasonable, perfectly consonant with the facts of our daily experience. Day by day the outward form and vesture of our life changes, and changes into a closer correspondence with the spirit which inhabits it. Our present bodies are the same, yet not the same, that we have had from our birth. Science itself affirms that amid the constant flux of the particles of which our bodies are composed, some hidden type, or law, or specific form, which gives them shape, remains unchanged, or changes only as the spirit within us changes. We do not lose our identity though we die daily, and daily rise again from the dead. And if the spirit remain after death, we shall not lose our identity then, nor the power of appropriating a body from the materials at hand and of giving them an appropriate shape. For as life goes on, and character settles and unfolds, we can see how, here and now, even this muddy vesture of decay accommodates itself to the character of the spirit which animates it ; so that even this mortal body, ever changing, grows to answer more nearly to, more adequately to correspond to and express, our individuality and bent. We are the same from infancy to age ; and yet through how many changes we pass, each more individualizing and expressive of the inward man than the last. And if, under all these physical changes, *that* in us which thinks and feels and wills remain the same, why should the physical change of death touch or impair our personality ? If through all these changes *we* have grown more spiritual, and have shaped our very bodies into more adequate and readable expressions of the spirit which resides in them, why should we not retain this mysterious but indubitable power through one change more, even though it be that which we call the last ?

O, it is not the mere identity of particles, nor the mere resurrection of relics, for which we look, and of which St. Paul here speaks ; but that we ourselves, in our several individualities, shall survive the stroke of death, and as readily adapt ourselves, in body as well as in soul, to our new and larger conditions,—putting on a nobler and more spiritual body in the nobler and happier conditions of the new and more spiritual world into which we shall then pass and rise !

In short, the hope which the Apostle sets before us is, that, after death, we shall be the very men we were before death, still preserving the personal identity which has already survived so many changes ; but that, as we ourselves shall rise into a higher life, we shall clothe ourselves there, as we have done here, with a body which, while it corresponds to and expresses our individual character, will also correspond to and express the higher spiritual life on which we have entered.

3. How, then, shall we best prepare ourselves for this great change? No doubt we best prepare ourselves for it by a growing spirituality ; in proportion, that is, as we walk after the spirit and not after the flesh ; in proportion as we cherish large thoughts, pure and kindly emotions, high and noble aims—in a word, heartfelt devotion to the will of God. For, as St. Paul here reminds us, we reach the true spirituality, not by mortifying the flesh, but by fortifying the spirit. According to him, death is not, as we sometimes conceive it to be, simply the liberation of the soul from the body, but the transition of the spirit into a more spiritual body. He does not long to be “unclothed,” but to be “clothed upon.” Simply to escape from the frail and hindering tent of mortality will not satisfy his large desires ; but only the assumption of an immortal vesture, the transition into an eternal building. In other words, he groans and yearns for a spiritual life so pure and strong, that it will

vitalize and spiritualize the very body itself, and make it meet for all the uses and enterprises of a higher nature and a higher world. He believes that as there is a Divine ideal for the spirit of man, so also there is a Divine ideal for the body of man ; and that only by attaining an ideal perfection of spirit can he attain an ideal perfection of body.

And thus he corrects another error into which men are apt to fall. For if there are some who would materialize the very spirit that is in us, accounting our highest life no more than a function of the brain, there are others to whom matter is the source of all evil. To be delivered from this body, and from *every* body, is, for them, the only hope of life and peace. Only as they macerate and mortify the flesh, with its appetites and lusts, do they expect to enjoy any measure of peace here ; only as they utterly and for ever escape all contact with material forms do they hope to enjoy a deep unbroken peace hereafter. To be condemned to wear a body, any kind of body, in the world beyond the grave would be, as they think, to be condemned to the old struggle with evil and imperfection of which they are weary and ashamed.

Not thus, however, not by mortifying and punishing the body, but by cultivating and invigorating the spirit till it can subdue the body and change it into its own substance, are we, according to the Apostle, to enter into the fulness of life, whether in this world or in that which is to come. His prescription for the nature diseased and enfeebled by sin is not, "Starve the body," but, "Feed the spirit." And thus he goes straight to the very root of the matter. For, after all, it is the spirit, it is the indwelling life, which gives form and shape to the body, which animates it and moulds it to its own likeness.

Does any man ask: "But how are we to feed and cherish the spirit?" I reply, "You would not need to ask that question did you but remember what you yourself

have seen and felt in hours of insight. For there come hours to us all in which we see that the ordinary aims of men are not their true aims. When you have stood in the wilder solitudes of Nature, or have had to contend with its ruder forces—wind, storm, excessive cold or heat or rain; when you have been called to suffer a great loss, or to endure a piercing sorrow, or to stand face to face with death; whenever, in short, you have been made to feel your own weakness, and how vain was the help of man, you have seen clearly enough what it was to live and walk after the spirit, and that you ought to do it. You have seen that to acquaint yourself with great truths and make them ever present and ever governing facts, to get a pure and kindly heart, to be reconciled to God and to make his will your will, to live for others rather than for yourself, for that which is spiritual and eternal rather than for that which is sensuous and temporal, to reach an unwavering trust in God, to study how to do good and to do the most good you can,—you have seen that these and the like are the true and highest ends of life, the ends for which you ought to live, since, if these be gained, you are saved from all want, all fear, all harm, and can meet whatever may come. And you have only to carry these ends, which in hours of insight you have seen to be the only true and satisfying ends of life, into your daily round and common task. Do but that, and *you* will be living in the spirit, and walking after the spirit, *i.e.* you will be fortifying and cherishing your spiritual life—the life that will give form and colour to your whole nature, to both body and soul, whether in this world or in any other.”

4. “Do but that!” a whole chorus of voices may sadly exclaim; “but it is precisely *that* which we find it impossible to do, try how we will. Day by day, year after year, we have been striving to live in the spirit and to walk by it, to pursue the pure and lofty aims of which we have

caught glimpses—glimpses which have filled our souls with love and strong desire—in our best moments, our highest moods, when we have stood nearest to God and heaven. And yet, what are we the better for our long endeavour and quest? We have not *reached* the aims we have pursued; and now, foiled and weary, we no longer expect to reach them. We cannot give up the quest indeed; for it is better to live for the highest ends, though they evade while they allure us, than to sink into a base content with vulgar and inferior ends. But what hopeless work it all seems!”

The better men are the more likely are they to speak thus, to think ill of themselves, to despair of ever becoming what they fain would be, what they cannot but strive to become. Low aims are soon reached; but high aims have a strange trick of eluding us, of receding as we advance, of rising as we climb. And if our aim, being a high one, seem to be wholly beyond our reach; if, still pursuing it, we are nevertheless faint and hopeless in our minds—as so many of us are, St. Paul has a great hope, a great inspiration for us. For he assures us that our aim for ourselves is *God's* aim for us; and that, whatever we may think or fear, it is God's purpose and intention that we shall reach it. He assures us that it is God's will that, in us, life should gain the victory, and not death; and that, therefore, all that is mortal in us shall be swallowed up of life. “*God,*” he says, “*has wrought us up for this very thing*” which, to us, seems so hopeless. And what he means, what his words imply, is, that it is no one less than God who, by the discipline of the very struggle and endeavour through which we are now impelled to take our way, is training and preparing us for a life so perfect, so vigorous and intense that, having renewed the spirit in us, it will at last penetrate the very flesh and transform that into its own similitude, so making us of one

piece or substance throughout. The verb he employs—*κατεργασάμενος*, “*wrought us up*,”—implies effort, implies difficulty and resistance in the material on which it operates—the very difficulty and resistance of which we are so conscious that we well-nigh despair of ourselves. But be the resistance what it may, and however insurmountable the difficulties may be, or seem to be, God—who has not overlooked one of these—purposes to overcome them; and his purpose standeth sure, standeth fast. Nothing can turn Him aside from it. And what is there that He cannot do? All things are possible with Him, even our salvation, even our perfection. We may despair of ourselves indeed, and so throw one more difficulty in his way; but what are difficulties to Him? And yet how can we despair of ourselves when we know that *He* is working for the very end for which we are working, and that He means to reach it; that it is his fixed and eternal design to make us perfect, to feed and replenish our life till it can change even our mortal body into a living and immortal habitation of the spirit?

5. Is not *that* enough to inspire us with new courage and new hope, to set us on following the loftier aim we have set before us with a more stedfast and assured heart? If not, let us draw from the Apostle's words still another, and perhaps a more tangible and potent, incentive. For St. Paul not only gives us a hope of what shall be, by disclosing the purpose and intention of God, he also refers us to what *is*, to a fact of our own experience which he teaches us to interpret aright. By our own confession we *are* trying to live and walk after the spirit, however hopeless we may be of ever reaching a full and all-pervading spiritual life. But what set us on following so high an aim as this, when so many of our fellows are content to walk after the flesh? What is it that has made us to differ, not from many of our fellows simply, but also from our former



selves? For to walk after the spirit, *i.e.* to feed and cherish that which is spiritual in our nature, was not always our aim, or was not always our chief aim. How came it to be our aim, then? Whence did we derive the impulse that has so long led us to pursue an ideal which yet we have not been able to attain? Whence but from the Heaven to which we aspire? Whence but from the God whom we feel to be our chief good? It is *his* Spirit which has quickened our spirit, and made it impatient of all inferior aims. It is *his* Spirit which has sustained and impelled us in our pursuit of the highest good, and rendered it impossible for us to abandon that pursuit even when it seems most hopeless.

But if we admit that it is the Spirit of God which has moved us to pursue an aim which we should not have chosen had we been left to ourselves, and would not have continued to pursue when it seemed quite out of reach, let us learn from St. Paul how we are to regard, how we are to interpret, this action of the Divine Spirit on our spirit. According to him, this action or gift of the Spirit is "*an earnest*"; *i.e.* as the word (*ἀρραβών*) implies, it is both a present possession—something in hand, and a pledge of a larger inheritance to come. "Now he that hath wrought us up for this very thing," *i.e.* to have that which is mortal in us swallowed up by that which is vital—"is God, *who also hath given us the earnest of the Spirit.*" The Apostle is not content to inspire us with hope of the final victory of life, by assuring us that it is God's intention to give us that victory, that it is this for which He is working; he also confirms the hope by an appeal to what we have already received. That the Spirit of God has already quickened any measure of life in our spirit is the pledge that the life of our spirit shall one day be perfected, and that it shall one day penetrate and transform even the life of our body.

So that we are not altogether suspended on hope. We have something in hand, and something that guarantees our hope. For the word "earnest" (*ἀρραβών*) means something more than "pledge": it means that part of the very thing promised to us is already given us. My word, my bond, may be a pledge that I will one day confer a certain estate on you. Meantime, you cannot live on a mere bond or word. But if I give you "an earnest" in St. Paul's sense, I give you at once, not a word or a bond, but a part of the estate itself, which you *can* live upon and enjoy from the very moment you receive it, and on which you may lean as a guarantee that the whole estate will in due time be yours.

In giving us his Spirit to quicken a new life in our spirits, therefore, and to set us on pursuing new and higher aims, God gives us more than a mere promise that we shall hereafter enter into the full enjoyment of a perfect spiritual world, something more than the pledge of a life wholly free from any intermixture of death; though *from Him* even these would be much. He gives us *part* of that life, part of that world, for our present use and enjoyment, and in the part a sure and certain guarantee of the whole. For if in any measure we already possess the very Spirit of God, if *He* is really at work within us under whatever limitations and restraints,—is not the true spiritual life in that measure already ours? And if God has in any measure quickened that life in us, and holds stedfastly, as the Apostle declares, to the intention of making it ours perfectly and for ever,—have we not something more than a word of promise, something more than a hope, to go upon? In the Spirit of God, in this *gift* of the Spirit, we have part, and the best part, of the promised inheritance; and in that part a true "earnest" of the whole. He who has given us his own Spirit,—is He likely to withhold from us the spiritual body or the spiritual conditions in and through which alone

our quickened and renewed spirits can work happily and happily express all that is in them? He who has given us his Spirit, shall He not with Him freely give us all things that pertain to life and godliness? The gift we already possess—is not that the surest pledge, the strongest guarantee, that all which is necessary to complete the gift will be added unto it?

In fine, I know no verse in the New Testament richer in strength and consolation for as many of us as are apt to despond of themselves, if not to despair. As we enter into its meaning, we may well take courage and brush away our fears. We *have* the Spirit of life within us or we should never have been quickened to new life and new aims; and in that Spirit we have an infallible proof and assurance that at last, even in us, mortality shall be swallowed up of life.

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### CALVIN AS AN EXPOSITOR.

It must be admitted that Calvin is not an attractive figure in the history of the Reformation. The mass of mankind revolt against the ruthless logical rigidity of his "*horribile decretum*," and dislike the thought of the theocratic sacerdotalism which he established at Geneva. Above all, they find it impossible to forgive him for the judicial murder of Servetus. It may of course be pleaded, that in that deed of persecution, he only acted in accordance with the views of his own day, and that his conduct throughout the bad business was approved even by the mild and shrinking Melancthon. But the fact remains that Calvin has never inspired a tithe of the affection which has been lavished on the memory of the more passionate, genial, and largehearted Luther. It has been felt that in many respects he gave us back the