

true destiny and its highest honour when, like a gem in the finest setting, it hangs as a resplendent jewel on the fair form of Christianity.

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EXEGETICAL NOTES FROM SERMONS.<sup>1</sup>

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE BODY.

Phil. iii. 20, 21.—The verb “to transfigure” means “to change the figure” or “fashion,” as to transform means “to change the form” or proper shape. This distinction, too subtle to be always observed, rather applies in usage to the simple nouns “Form” and “Figure,” “Form” denoting the permanent and visible outline of shape which may characterize this or that being and implying that under that exterior lurks a corresponding invisible nature—whereas Figure or Fashion indicates something changeable, shifting, impalpable, accidental, which may be assumed or discarded, such as demeanour, appearance, expression, behaviour, air.

Hence the Greek Fathers in proof of Christ’s divinity used to quote that famous text from this epistle, “Who being in the form of God thought it not a grasp, or *catch*, to be equal to God,” arguing that he who had God’s proper form had God’s proper nature. And it is not improbable that St. Paul with special design uses the term “transfigure” here, his thoughts recurring to that memorable scene in our Lord’s life, I mean the Transfiguration. That bright exception of glory to the dreary uniformity of His humiliation was probably a fact familiar to the Apostle’s mind. The evangelists, it is true, in their account of that miracle use the expression “He was transformed before them,” but their description of it is better repre-

<sup>1</sup> Canon Evans has kindly allowed the Editor to select various exegetical notes from his sermons preached in Durham Cathedral.

sented by the term which the Church has applied to it and which St. Paul here employs. For according to the narrative in the three Gospels the alteration consisted not in a change of form or of feature or of raiment, but in a change of fashion or appearance. We read, "the fashion of His countenance was altered." "His face did shine as the sun." Again, "His raiment became dazzling white, white as snow, as no fuller on earth can whiten." So that we may infer that while the form of our Lord remained the same, the fashion of that form underwent a change. His whole sacred Person seemed to be living with light, light flashing outward from within, and rendering luminous and bright in unspeakable glory His face and form and dress.

The dazzling brilliancy after the glorification of our Saviour radiating from His Person, St. Paul beheld in his journey to Damascus. "At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me." This celestial glory St. John also beheld in a vision on Lord's day: "I saw one like unto the Son of Man" (the beloved disciple recognised his risen and ascended Master) "clothed in a garment down to the foot and girt about the breasts in a golden girdle. His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes were as a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters. And His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

Like unto this luminous body of surpassing glory will our present bodies become in that dread hour, when the moment of their transfiguration arrives. Of what substance they will be we know not; we know that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, and we know that as there is a natural so there is to be a spiritual body. But in this expression *spiritual body* no indication

is given of the substance of that "house not made with hands:" for the term "spiritual" does not signify made of spirit or of an airy texture; it signifies "suited to a spirit;" it implies a celestial body meet to entertain a saintly spirit, a new tenement with a new organism attuned to the harmonies of the invisible world and adjusted to the glories of the heavenly Jerusalem.

St. Paul apparently wrote these words in that attitude of expectation, to which I have alluded, under the impression of the near approach of that great day which at other times he sees afar off, when he says that "he has a desire to depart and to be with Christ," when he states that "he has fought the good fight, he has finished his course," when he speaks of a fearful apostasy looming large in the far distance, a confederacy of infidelity to be dispersed and confounded by the brightness of the coming. But on the other hand, as in this passage, so in the Epistles to the Corinthians, he sees the gates of heaven ready to open and the King of Glory ready to descend, when he expresses an earnest desire not to put off his earthly body but to put on over it the body celestial.

But this stupendous change, which will be sudden and instantaneous (for though we shall not all sleep, yet we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye), whether we shall then be out of the body or in the body, this stupendous change we shall undergo by virtue of our intimate union with our Lord Jesus Christ, who was the first, as in the transfiguration so in the resurrection. This is most true, for as there is for all men a union with Adam, so for the elect there is an intimate union with Christ. The first man Adam was made a "living soul"—which is another phrase for the "natural man," one in whom the highest part of our complex humanity *the spirit* is overridden by the lower part *the soul*, in which reside the animal powers, the passions,

appetites, instincts, and the intellectual powers, understanding, fancy, memory.

These powers, both animal and intellectual, which constitute us sons of Adam so many living souls, are not themselves the seat of our immortality; they are doomed to decay; the eye shall lose its lustre, the limbs their strength, the passions their fervour, the mind its grasp. It is not from what we inherit from Adam that our bodies shall be glorified, for he was made a "living soul," but it is from what we hold from Christ that we shall be glorified, for he was made a "quickening spirit." As by our union with Adam we fade, we die, we sink under the earth, so by virtue of our union with Christ we live, we rise again, now in the spirit and hereafter in the body. We become fellows of that holy society and citizens of that Divine commonwealth which is founded and established in the heavens: out of which heavens shall He one day descend, who shall transfigure the bodies of His faithful followers, of all who have repented of their sins, of all in whom the empire of the spirit dominates and regulates the province of the soul, who having risen by faith to the life spiritual, hope to rise still higher, even to the life immortal, all by virtue of their membership in Christ.

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*THE AIM, IMPORTANCE, DIFFICULTIES, AND  
BEST METHOD, OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY.*

THIRD PAPER.

OUR search for the unseen realities around and above us has now reached an historical stage.

We have heard in the whispers of our own hearts and in the moral judgments of our fellow-men what seem to