

than when again and again it throws distractive discord into the harmony of the Psalm of life. And to break with sin, and to lose self again in worship and blessed fellowship becomes of itself the rising impulse of the heart.

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“THY OVERSIGHT HATH PRESERVED  
MY SPIRIT.”

The spirit within us is that by which we live. It is at the same time our breath of life and our spiritual inner self. The spirit is what we are above and besides the body. It is that which has been breathed into the “unformed lump” to make us man, to make us live as man, to make us a person among the children of men. “To yield up the spirit,” as a rule, is nothing but to die, to breathe out the breath of life. When on the other hand the apostle says, that no man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him (I Cor. 2:11), the word “spirit” indicates our conscious ego, our spiritual existence as man, our inner personality.

Although this seems to be something entirely different, in Holy Writ the breath of life, the spirit which we yield up in dying is never separated from our spiritual existence. Both our life and our person are expressed by “spirit,” and both are called “our soul.” When the Psalmist cried: “O Lord, deliver my soul,” or rejoices: “Thou, Lord, hast delivered my soul from death,” it refers in Psalm 116 to the saving of life, to deliverance from danger, and not to spiritual redemption. But our inner spiritual existence is also called our soul. “As the hart panteth after the water brooks,

so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God" (Psalm 42). In verse 4: "I remember these things and pour out my soul in me." Again: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me." The Scripture makes no distinction between our life and our spirit. In God's word our life and our spiritual existence are one. In Paradise God forms man from the dust of the earth. But the material form is not man. He only comes into being when God breathes life into it. Then there is life, then there is human life; and there is no human life except as utterance of the life of a soul; and there is no life of a soul apart from an ego, a person, a spiritual being that hides in our heart. Any man can sully this spiritual existence in himself, can sin it away, corrupt it, but he can not shake it off, nor lay it aside. Death does not annihilate it. It abides, it continues to exist, even with the lost in the place of perdition.

Man's spirit is his real self. All the rest is but the house, the tabernacle, as the Apostle calls it. The real, essential man is the spirit that dwells in this tabernacle. The spirit in us is our ego, our person, including our disposition, character, consciousness, feeling, will powers, gifts and talents; in brief, everything that forms our inner existence, constituting a particular being, bearing a particular stamp, and expressing itself in a particular character. In Scripture it is always the same antithesis. In Paradise it is the form which is made of dust and the spirit which God breathes into it. In Psalm 139 it is the unformed substance which, as a piece of embroidery, is curi-

ously wrought, and in addition to this the ego that was made in secret. And in Job 10:9-12: "Thou hast made me as the clay; Thou hast poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese. Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced (crocheted) me with bones and sinews," and over and above all this "Thou hast given me life," i. e. my spirit. What is visible, and tangible, comes first, and into this enters the invisible, that which exists in the secret places of the heart, and that is our spirit. And God does not abandon the spirit within us to itself. It remains in his hand. It is ever under his care. He watches over it. He has the supervision of it. And regarding this Job declares: "Thy oversight hath preserved my spirit" (Job 10:12 Dutch version. See Marg. read. R. V.)

At first we know nothing of this Divine oversight of our spirit. The infant in the cradle is utterly unconscious of mother's care. The sick man in his slumber is not aware of the nurse at his bedside. Only when in later years the eye of the soul is opened to the supervision and faithfulness of God, we become slowly conscious of this Divine oversight of our spirit. Provisionally it is the discovery of the heavenly Father's supervision with respect to our outward life, and then only on special occasions, when, for instance, we have been delivered from sudden danger. We are under the impression that life goes on of itself, and that only in particular instances God considers and looks after us. For many years prayer and thanksgiving assume a warmer and more personal character only in moments of special need or anxiety. The larger part of life is spent before

the calm and blessed feeling of assurance takes hold of us, that by day and by night, in ordinary and in extraordinary circumstances we are watched over, cared for and looked after by God.

We also come to discover that the inner life of our soul is in God's hand. That he has charge of it. That his care is constantly at work in it. That he has continual oversight of it. This discovery arises first in the conscience. He who has oversight not only takes care but also looks out, examines, estimates values, exercises authority and power, praises or blames. This aspect of God's oversight of us is the first that comes to our notice. As a rule this happens after a wrong has been done, when we are painfully conscious of Divine displeasure. Then we learn that God has the oversight of us, that he regards the least significant of our acts, and that in everything he exercises care over our entire person, over what we do and leave undone, over our inclinations and desires, over our thoughts and words, yea, even over the impulses of our imagination.

And when it has come to this, we know two things. First, that God has the supervision of our lot in life, of our adversity and prosperity, of everything that happens to us, and that there is a line drawn through our life which binds our present to our past, and leads the present into the future. We then know that we are creatures of God, that we are his possession, his property; that he disposes of us and not we of ourselves; that the plan of our life has been drawn by God; and that the course of life is in full accord with it. But, secondly, we also know, that in our inner life we are not our own lord and master, but that

our moral existence as man is constantly under the supervision of this selfsame God, who judges us at the bar of our own conscience, as often as we go contrary to his holy will.

And from these two there arises gradually the still higher sense, that "God's oversight of our spirit" bears not only an admonishing and a judicial character, but also that of faithful care, which we learn to adore in our lot in life. The soul perceives that God not merely spies our inner existence in order to estimate it, but that he is continually active in it, that he constantly cultivates it, and ceaselessly devotes his care to it. The apostle delineates this in the image of an husbandman who guards the crops that grow in the field which he has cultivated and sown. Thus our soul is as a garden of the Lord, in which his plantings germinate and bloom, which he fosters by his sun, which he waters with his dew, which he weeds and protects, and in which he causes fruit to ripen.

We train the soul ourselves. Good and evil influences affect us equally from the world of men and spirits. But the constant activity of God in the soul bears a far more significant character. Though we do not observe it, God always has access to our hearts. Even in our sleep he comes to us, in order to operate upon our inner life. He prepares in us the powers which we presently shall need. He disposes and orders in us the powers which must be applied to a given end. He is even now busy in preparing in us what is to show itself in us ten or more years after. In the inner life of the soul nothing escapes him; sensations, tendencies, rising feelings, everything

is under his holy supervision. He revives in us what is ready to languish. He bends straight in us what threatens to become crooked. And as a mother cares for her babe in outward things, so does our faithful Father provide against every difficulty and every need of our soul.

This is a work of God, which began in his council, which was reckoned with in our ancestors, which from the cradle has been accomplished in us, and never ceases all the days and nights of our lives. A work of God upon the soul, which goes on when we are alone, and when we mingle with the multitudes; which does not desist while we are at work, and which, with a firm hand, is directed to what God has determined by himself to make of us now and forever. Our own plan regarding our development and the formation of character, as a rule does not extend further than this brief life, but "God's supervision of our spirit" extends to all eternities, while it prepares in us here, what will only unfold itself on the other side of the grave.

This "oversight of God" is both guardianship and training. It is the work of the Supreme Artist, in preparing from the life of your soul an ornament for the house of the Father above. This activity of God upon and in the soul, this Divine oversight of our spirit can be resisted, whereby the Holy Spirit is grieved. But as workers together with God we can do our part. This is the aim of the sacred impulse of childship, ever seeking strength in the humble prayer of Psalm 138:

"Forsake not what Thy hand began,  
O, Source of Life,  
Grant Thy assistance."

“EVERY ONE WHICH SEETH THE SON.”

The one thing of all others among men is to believe on Christ. The Scripture announces in every way that God has given his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. To this is added with equal emphasis that he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him (St. John 3:16, 36). When asked what the great work is, which we have to do in obedience to God, Jesus answered: The work of God which ye have to do, is, to believe in me. Faith in Christ shall once bring about the division in eternity, and this same faith leads to decision here on earth. Not a certain general religiousness, not personal pious inclination, and not a general faith on God, but solely and very definitely faith in Jesus, in its presence or absence, determines eternal destiny, and decides the question already here below whether one belongs to the flock of the Good Shepherd, or whether he stands outside of it.

The whole Gospel hinges on this faith. The entire Revelation of God—read it in Heb. XI—from the days of Paradise was directed to this faith in Christ. The *sola fide*, through faith alone, is still in another sense than that in which Luther used it, the fundamental thesis of all higher human life. There are also all sorts of other marks and signs and utterances of soul and relationships among men which indicate another tendency in our life, or which can impart another tendency to it. And all this can have worth and significance, but only in a small circle, for a