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## **THE FIFTH WORD Thirst for Truth and Righteousness TRUE BODY -2**

On this fifth Sunday of the Lord's Resurrection – the fourth after Easter – we rejoice in the fruit of the Son's Fifth Word from the Cross. "Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was a set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth" (St. John 19:28, 29). This fifth word reveals the terrible thirst of the crucified man, yet even more Christ's resolute determination to fulfill the will of God for our salvation, with the result "that the scripture might be fulfilled". His torment of thirst is a sign of his desire for God's truth and righteousness. Desire for God has consumed him.

In today's (rather difficult) gospel lesson (St. John 16:5-15), we learn how the crucified and risen Lord shares his thirst for God's truth and righteousness with us, by the gift of his Spirit. For when Christ goes to the Father, the Spirit is sent in his place to "reprove" (i.e. convict) the unbelieving world of its sin, of Christ's righteousness, and of the judgment passed by God against the prince of this world. He is also sent to guide the apostles into all truth revealed in Christ. In the exposure of its sin, and of the devil's lies, the world learns to thirst for, and drink in, God's righteousness and truth revealed in Christ.

The epistle lesson (St. James 1:17-21) teaches the practical application: "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God....receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls". Not in anger (the inordinate thirst for justice), or in any other disordered passion, but in receiving the Word of truth, is the thirst for truth and righteousness satisfied: "O sing unto the Lord a new song, alleluia: for the Lord hath done marvelous things, alleluia: in the sight of the nations he hath showed his righteousness, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia" (Introit. Psalm 98. Cantate domino).

### TRUE BODY -2

The English Reformers found a way to an understanding of the "true and spiritual presence" of the Lord's Body and Blood in the Sacrament

that was realistic ("true") without being material-istic, and "spiritual" without being merely symbolic. Though the natural substance of bread and wine remain, they held, yet by a sacramental conversion, they become the means of a supernatural participation in Christ's body and blood, and in all the benefits of his sacrifice. Thus there is in the sacrament both natural and supernatural, each in its own integrity: outward and invisible sign, inward and spiritual grace.

According to Fr Robert Crouse, the basis for this understanding was found in the orthodox doctrine of Christ formulated at the ancient council of Chalcedon in 451 A. D. At Chalcedon the Church affirmed the duality of distinct natures, human and divine, which were conjoined without confusion, each in its own integrity, in the unity of Christ's person. This doctrine showed how realities natural and supernatural are harmoniously related in Christ. The same idea appears in the Augustinian and Thomistic principle, that grace does not abolish nature, but perfects it. The Chalcedonian definition thus supplied the analogy on which the Reformers were able to affirm both the outward sign and the inward grace of the Sacrament.

This thesis, so convincingly demon-strated by Fr Crouse, is to be comple-mented by another aspect of the Reformers' doctrine, that Christ's body and blood are not present in the sacrament in the same way that they were present upon the cross, but as they now are, risen and ascended into heaven, and at the right hand of God. As Cranmer put it, in language that echoes but silently corrects that of Ave verum corpus, "we receive the self-same body of Christ that was born of Mary, that was crucified and buried, that rose again, ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, and the contention is only in the manner and form how we receive it. For I say (as all the old holy fathers and martyrs used to say), that we receive Christ spiritually by faith with our minds, eating his flesh, and drinking his blood: so that we receive Christ's own natural body, but not naturally or corporally".

The body which we receive is the body born of Mary and once crucified and buried, but now received under the conditions of his resurrection and ascension, the body now liberated and transformed, charged with divine freedom and power, which Saint Paul describes as the "spiritual body" – a real body indeed, but now entirely conformed to the motions of spirit, and made a means of spiritual life to those who receive it. When all has been purified and set right, Body is not opposed to Spirit, nor Nature to Grace, nor Man to God. In Christ they find their true relation, the former as the means of the latter, and the latter fulfilling and transforming the former.

**The Rev'd Gavin G. Dunbar**

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