

Sunday Reading

THE INVINCIBLE PROOF OF THE RESURRECTION

Perhaps the ordinary reader of the New Testament hardly realizes how utterly the faith of the followers of Jesus was destroyed by His death and burial. His enemies were exultantly confident that He had been thereby proved to be a false Messiah, and that His cause was at an end. And what could those who had believed in Him say? They had never credited that He was going to die, His own assurances to that effect falling on uncomprehending ears. Death is for sinners, but He had been 'holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.' Death is not for the Messiah; the true Messiah must live and reign and put all enemies under His feet. God could not allow Him to die. If He approved of Him, as He declared that He did more than once by a voice from heaven, then He could not but interpose on His behalf, confounding His enemies and snatching Him from their grasp. That this must happen they believed to the very last moment of His life.

But even the last moment had passed; and He who, upon every ground they could think of, could not die, had died, and was buried in the cold grave. The conclusion was inevitable; they had been the victims of a deception or hallucination. Now they were disillusioned, and the higher their hopes had been, the deeper was their despair. There was nothing for it but to hide their heads in distant Galilee, and be scoffed at for the rest of their lives as the men who had followed a pseudo-Messiah.

Such must have been the state of their minds. Those by whom the resurrection is denied always assume that the reason why the disciples thought they saw their risen Master was that they were expecting Him to rise. Being excited, it is argued, with this hope, they believed in their excitement that their hope had been fulfilled.

But no assumption could be more at variance with the situation; and it is equally at variance with the records. The women went to the sepulchre, not to assume themselves that He had risen but to embalm Him. When they returned to tell the disciples that the grave was empty, their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. Thomas doubted; so did some of the five hundred on the mountain in Galilee. The two disciples on the way to Emmaus summed up the situation perfectly when they said, 'We trusted it had been he who should have redeemed Israel.'

Never were any persons in this world more broken, and never was any cause more hopeless. Yet within the space of three days these same persons had rebounded to the opposite extreme; they were declaring that the cause was not dead, but alive; and they were prepared to be its witnesses and champions. Its witnesses and champions they actually became, carrying their testimony from land to land and founding thereby the Christian church. This is the demonstration not of words, but of fact and of power. Their explanation of their own joy, boldness, and success was that they had seen their Lord again; and no other explanation ever attempted has even an appearance of accounting for the facts.

THE RELIGION THAT MAKES ONE FAITHFUL

The railway superintendent came down to his office on Monday morning, sat down at his desk and began to open his mail. The first letter was from the wife of a discharged conductor, which said:

"I take this opportunity to write while my husband is at church. He has been going regularly the last three Sundays. He has been to see the minister, and the minister gave him good advice and drew up a pledge, and he signed it, and every morning and night he asks God to help him keep it. I am sure he will never drink again. We have only seven dollars in the house. I am doing my own work, though I am not strong enough to do it. The baby is sick, and I do not know how

we are to live when the little money we now have is gone. For God's sake, pity us and give my husband his train again, and I am sure he will never drink another drop!"

The superintendent read the letter and handed it across the desk to a friend who had entered. "Read that," said he, "and tell me what to do."

"What has been his record?" asked the friend.

"This is the third time he has been found drunk on duty. Each time I warned him, and the second time I suspended him. This time I discharged him for good. I can't place human lives in the care of a man who can't be trusted. If I take him back it won't be three weeks before he is drinking a little on the sly, and within three years he will wreck a train, as sure as the sun rises to-morrow."

"Have you another place where you could use him, some place involving less responsibility?"

"No, he is physically unable to do hard work, and there is no other kind at which I can put a man of that sort. I don't dare set him even to watching a crossing. In fact, there is no position on a railroad for a man who can't be trusted to do his duty."

Later in the day the conductor himself came in. The superintendent received him kindly, but with no encouragement in his manner.

"I knew you would come," he said, "and I must be frank and say that I should have thought more of you if you had stayed at home and helped your wife with the housework, instead of going to church so that she could write me about it."

"But," said the conductor, "she wanted me to go, and I did not know about the letter until she told me afterward, and really, I am sure I shall never fall again. I have asked God to help me. Trust me once more and have pity for my family."

The superintendent shook his head sadly. "You want me to pity your family," he said, "but you didn't pity them yourself, and you never thought about asking God to help you, except to help you out of a scrape. You have got your religion too late so far as this office is concerned. It will help you to forgiveness for your sins, and I hope will make a better man of you, but it is too late for a job of running a train. The kind of religion that we have to insist on in this office isn't the kind that helps a man to get his job back; it is the kind that makes him keep it. I believe in religion, and wish every man in the company's employ was a religious man; but the kind of religion this company needs is the kind that makes men faithful to their work."

The discharged man went out and the superintendent's stern face relaxed. "I am sorry for that wife and the sick baby," he said, "but I can't trust human lives to a man who gets his religion so late."

The true faith is the faith which makes faithful. It is never too late to look to God for forgiveness, but penitence sometimes comes too late to restore a lost opportunity.

What is a Home?

Home is the sweetest type of Heaven. Home is the sanctuary of Virtue.

Home is the golden setting in which the brightest jewel is Mother.

Home is a world of strife shut out and a world of love shut in.

Home is the blossom of which Heaven is the fruit.

Home is a hive in which, like the industrious bee, youth garners the sweets and memories of life for age to meditate and feed upon.

Home is the best place for a married man after business hours.

Home is the place where the great are sometimes small and the small often great.

Home is the coziest, kindest, sweetest place in all the world, the scene of our purest earthly joys and our deepest sorrows.

Home is the father's kingdom, the children's paradise, the mother's world.

Home, in one form or another, is the object in life.

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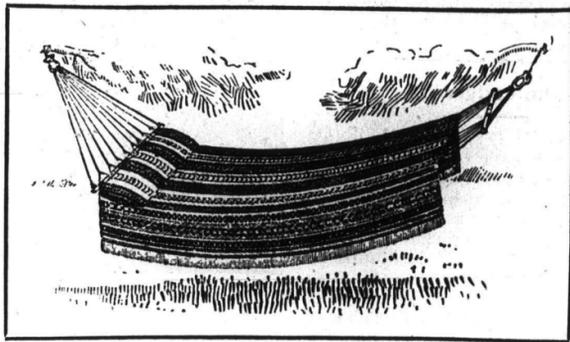
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