

early Church. Even if one waived all reference to the gospels we have the means of demonstrating that in Paul's undisputed epistles. Nobody has questioned that he wrote the First Epistle to the Corinthians. The date most generally assumed to that letter brings it within about five-and-twenty years of the crucifixion. In that letter, in addition to a multitude of incidental references to the Lord as risen, we have the great passage in the fifteenth chapter, where the apostle not only declares that the Resurrection was one of the two facts which made his "gospel," but solemnly enumerates the witnesses of the risen Lord, and alleges that this gospel of the resurrection was common to him and all the Church. He tells us of Christ's appearance to himself at his conversion, which must have taken place within six or seven years of the crucifixion, and assures us that at that early period he found the whole Church believing and preaching Christ's resurrection. Their belief rested on their alleged intercourse with Him a few days after His death, and it is inconceivable that within so short a period such a belief should have sprung up and been universally received if it had not begun when and as they said it did.

But we are not left even to inferences of this kind to show that from the beginning the Church witnessed to the resurrection of Jesus. Its own existence is the great witness to its faith. And it is important to observe that, even if we had not the documentary evidence of the Pauline epistles as the earliest records of the gospels, and of the Acts of the Apostles, we should still have sufficient proof that the belief in the resurrection is as old as the Church. For the continuance of the Church cannot be explained without it. If that faith had not dawned on their slow sad hearts on that Easter morning, a few weeks would have seen them scattered: and if once they had been scattered, as they inevitably would have been, no power could have reunited them, any more than a diamond once shattered can be pieced together again. There would have been no motive and no actors to frame a story of resurrection when once the little company had melted away. The existence of the Church depended on their belief that the Lord was risen. In the nature of the case that belief must have followed immediately on his death. It, and it only, reasonably accounts for the facts. And so, over and above apostles, and gospels, and epistles, the Church is the great witness, by its very being, to its own immediate and continuous belief in the resurrection of our Lord.

A DEAD MESSIAH.

The mission upon which the disciples were sent forth was, that they were to be Heaven's appointed witnesses to the fact upon which the whole scheme of redemption turned, viz., the Resurrection of Jesus. The rulers had thought by that death to prove conclusively the imposture of His claims. He had died like the rest of his race—died as a transgressor; and there was the perfect demonstration that He was not the Holy One of God—the living Saviour promised to Israel with sovereign power over death and the grave. He could not even keep alive His own soul, much less open the graves of His saints. The fact has been overlooked that it was the universal belief of the Jewish nation that the Messiah was not to be subject to death. "We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever, and how sayest thou that the Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?" This shows how the Jews understood their Scriptures. They expected that the Messiah would continue, that is, live without seeing death; and for this opinion there was no slight foundation. The Scriptures did promise that He should live—that His Name should endure forever. "His Name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed."—Ps. lxxii. 17. Numerous statements are found like these. Besides this, also, He was

the promised One to prevail against death, and put that enemy, with all others, under His feet.

It is not strange, therefore, that the doctrine was accepted by all, that the Messiah was not to come under the power of this destroyer. Neither can we properly understand the Gospel narrative, without keeping in mind this popular Jewish faith. Here was the incomprehensible mystery of his sufferings and death to the disciples, of which Jesus so often spake to them, which he laboured in vain to make them understand, and of which they were afraid to ask Him. When, therefore, He was delivered over to the grave, even they gave up all hope, regarding the matter as settled that He could not have been the Saviour they looked for. "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." But alas, our fondest hopes have all been blasted. We have seen death triumphing over Him, and His body laid in the sepulchre. We fondly trusted that this was Death's Conqueror.

The joy of the rulers, however, was unbounded. They had proved themselves at last to be in the right. Their triumph was complete.

This argument and demonstration against Jesus must be set aside, and that in the most powerful manner. This was done by His Resurrection. God put His seal upon Him as His Holy One and Well-Beloved, by reversing the Decree of Death and bursting his iron bars. It was to this fact that the disciples were made witnesses, and in addition to this human testimony, there was the infallible witness of the Holy Ghost, whose presence was manifested in the Church and in Jerusalem, just as clearly as that of the Apostles themselves. Christ had promised that he would send Him: "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, *He shall testify of Me.* And ye also shall bear witness of Me, because ye have been with Me from the beginning."—*Economy of the Ages*

Missionary.

WALDENSIAN CHURCH MISSIONS IN ITALY.

No. II.

One interesting department of the work of this Italian mission is carried on by colporteurs, who go from house to house and from village to village selling and giving away bibles and religious books. The incidents they related speak for themselves:—

In the early part of the month of August I met a gentleman from Alba. I offered him some books; and after various difficulties he bought a Bible and the 'Biography of Luigi Desanctis.' Perceiving that he confused Christianity with the errors of Rome, I tried to show him the immense difference between them, insisting especially on the grand doctrine of free salvation through the blood of Christ. Some days afterwards the same gentleman returned to the town (Savigliano), with his wife and daughter. As soon as he saw me he made signs to me to come to him, and said, 'Here are my wife and daughter; I have brought them with me that you might speak to them about the Saviour, as you spoke to me the other day. This I did with all my heart, beseeching God to teach me what to say.'

The priests are, of course, most unwilling that the people should read the word of God, and are ever trying to hinder the work, as in the following cases:

"We arrived at Dolo, where, in the public square, we find the Bible-carriage surrounded by a number of people. A man has just bought a Scripture portion. Is he going to take it home delighted to read it? No, he tears it in pieces, and throws it at the carriage, calling out, 'Go to hell, you and your books!' It is sad! But it comforts us a little to hear those present sharply rebuke the poor fanatic, and oblige him to retire in confusion before the general disapprobation."

"On August 14th I was at Marrotica. About twenty persons stood round the Bible-carriage, listening to the reading of some passages of Holy Scripture. A young girl drew near, carefully examined a New Testament, bought it, and went away. Half-an-hour afterwards I saw her returning in a state of agitation. 'I entreat you to take back your book, and return me my money.' 'Why?' 'My mother desired me to bring it back. She says it is not made for young girls.' 'Well, make a present of it to your father and mother.' 'No, no; take it back, I beseech you, I would willingly lose half the price.' I felt that I could not insist further; so I took the book, and gave her the money. What was my surprise to see the girl rejoin a priest, who was evidently waiting at a little distance to know the result of the advice he had given. The next day, at Bassano, the same thing occurred with a young man, who, after having bought a Bible, brought it back, saying that the priest had forbidden him to read it. Before taking back the book I endeavoured to make him understand why he was forbidden to read it. 'You have intelligence enough to judge for yourself. Read the book, which is the Word of God, and you can always get rid of it if you find it bad.' After remaining some moments in thought, he exclaimed, 'You are right; I will read it.' And shaking my hand, he went away quite satisfied."

Ah! if the priests would not interpose themselves between the Word of God and the poor people! Is it not as if some one removed from the lips of a thirsty traveller the glass of clear, fresh water to give him that which was polluted?

Let us pass into the Romagna. At Pesaro, the colporteur offers a Testament to a person, who refuses it with rudeness. "It is the Word of God; you ought not to refuse it in that manner." "I don't know what to do with your pretended Word of God. I am an unbeliever. I listen to no one, but follow the dictates of my own conscience." "Well, may God bless you, and cause to shine on you the light which you need!" Struck with these words, our unbeliever recalled the colporteur, who was going away, apologised for his want of civility, and not content with making purchases himself, urged several of his friends to do the same.

Sometimes the evil dispositions of enemies manifest themselves otherwise than by bad words. Thus, at Castelfidardo the colporteur was attacked one evening by a man armed with a knife. It was well for him that he is strong and muscular, and that he was able to disarm his adversary without any other injury to himself than a slight wound in the hand. We might add to what we have already written, but the few simple facts we have given will suffice to show how much faith, self-abnegation, love and courage are needed in order that the colporteur in Italy may have some fruit of his work. The persons who have been spoken to by our colporteurs during the past year may be counted by tens of thousands.

Opposition diminishes in force from year to year, and those who have sympathised with us in the secret of their hearts now speak plainly of their new manner of looking at these things. It is by no means rare to hear persons unknown to us boasting of the books they have procured from our agents, and urging others to buy for themselves. At Pesaro a colporteur offered some Gospels to a priest, who, instead of breaking forth in invectives, like so many of the same cloth, took them and examined them, saying, "I do not take them, because I have them already, but I assert that they are all good books." All those who heard him hastened to become purchasers.

There are also signs of revival in old fields of martyrdom. Among the new centres opened to evangelization we note Savigliano, a pretty town of 20,000 inhabitants, at two hours' distance by train from Turin. We began our work there only last December, and already thirty catechumens give the best hope, so that a pastor has been placed there.

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