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"Fear Not; I am the first and the last and the Living One; and I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."—Rev. 1: 17, 18.

"The Resurrection of Jesus stands fast as a fact, unaffected by the boastful waves of scepticism that ceaselessly through the ages beat themselves against it; retains its significance as a cornerstone in the edifice of human redemption; and holds within it the vastest hope for time and for eternity that humanity can ever know."—Dr. Orr.

Easter Day

O Day of days! shall hearts set free,
No "minstrel rapture" find for thee?
Thou art the Sun of other days,
They shine by giving back thy rays;
Enthroned in thy sovereign sphere,
Thou shedd'st thy light on all the year;
Sundays by thee more gloriously break,—
An Easter-day in every week;
And week-days following in their train
The fulness of thy blessing gain,
Till all, both resting and employ,
Be one Lord's day of holy joy.—Keble.

April is so called from *aperis*, which signifies to open, because nature now begins to reveal its hidden charms, and expand its beauties. In Saxony, it was called "Oster," or "Easter Monat," because the feast of their goddess, Eastre, was then celebrated.—*Loaring*.

The Vision That Forbids Fear

SOME shadow of fear always mingles with anticipation, however bright.

There are dark possibilities and darker certainties hid in the future, which warrant fear only too fully. He must be strangely sanguine and foolishly self-confident, who can front the unknown-to-morrow without some tremor. The vision which John saw in Patmos, and the words which the glorified Christ spoke, as He laid His strong and gentle hand upon him, are the best antidote to such dread. If we see Him standing above the future, and hear Him say "Fear not; I am the First and the Last, and the Living One," we shall be made strong to meet all that may be concealed in the days that are to come.

The vision of Jesus as "the First" will inspire with true courage, springing from quiet trust that He is throned above all events, and directs all things. For that epithet "First" expresses more than priority in time. It distinctly asserts that He is cause of all things. By it Jesus claims for Himself what John has asserted for Him in the prologue of his Gospel, that "all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that hath been made." The hands that were nailed to the cross hold the helm of the universe. John saw in his later visions the closed book of what should be in successive epochs the history of the world and the Church, and wept because none were able to loose the seals, and, as it were, send out the imprisoned destined events on their career. The Lamb that had been slain opened the roll, and at His bidding the riders galloped forth on their steeds, and the trumpets blew. What is that but the presentation in magnificent imagery of the thought of Christ's supreme power administering the affairs of the world? And the affairs of each unit of us, small as they are, are guided by the same hand that broke the seals and holds the seven stars.

Since the direction of our lives is in the hands of the Lamb that was slain, we may be sure that the purpose of all which befalls us is in harmony with the purpose of that great sacrifice. He who has died to redeem us carries on our redemption by His providences, and seeks to make us more entirely His, and more like Himself thereby. His perfect Love wielding His sovereign power should cast out all our fear.

The vision of Jesus as "the Last" will inspire with courage. Just as "first" points to something deeper than chronological order, so does "last." It declares that, as all things come from, so all things tend to, Him who is their goal.

The approach may be devious and often it seems as if the whole course of human affairs tended away from Him; but, however great the deviation, the path of history will return to its true direction. So is it also with our little lives. And if these contribute to His glory and advance His purposes, what can there be in them to frighten us? Only one thing need we fear, that by our opposed wills we thwart His aims and turn the providences of our lives into hindrances to His effecting His loving designs in us.

When we look onwards a short distance, there may be grounds for dread, but if we look ahead far enough, and see how all the chaos is shaped into order, and how at last, "to Him are all things," we shall not fear. If we make Him our end, we need fear nothing, for then we are on the same side as all the forces of the universe, and our welfare is secured by the irresistible drift of things. We are soldiers in the army that is destined to conquer, and may go into every fight without fear.

The vision of Christ as "the ever-living One" will inspire with courage. The title belongs to the Eternal Word, whom incarnate we name Jesus the Christ. That fulness of essential "life" which was "in Him" ere He was manifested as man, was not diminished by His passing through death, any more than the sunlight is quenched in eclipse. That august form, radiant with life, should rise before us from every tossing ocean of change, as the fabled goddess from the foam of the vexed sea. We see the fluctuations of time for their highest purpose, when, by the force of contrast, they reveal to us the unchanging Christ. Blessed will our looking forward be, if we can see in the dimness the calm figure of Him walking on the water, and coming near us in the storm! Happy are they to whom every change proclaims the name of the Unchanging Cause of all changes, and all death speaks of the Living Christ!

That vision will give us courage, suggesting the limits within which change and decay can operate. Whatever goes, He remains. Other love may fade, or turn into hate, or die within the heart in which it dwelt, but He is the ever-living lover of our souls. The clouds in the lower sky are wind-tossed and swept away, but the calm blue above is always there. We need not fear what time can do "with this wide world, and all its fading sweets," for it has no power over Him, and we shall always have Jesus.

—Dr. Alexander McLaren.