

the following assisted at the Holy Week ceremonies:—Right Rev. Mgr. Mackay, V.G., and Rev. Father Woods (Oamaru), Very Rev. Mgr. O'Leary (Lawrence), Very Rev. Dean Burke (Invercargill), Very Rev. Father O'Donnell (Gore), Rev. Father Hunt (Cromwell), Rev. Father O'Donnell (Queenstown), Rev. Fathers Delany and O'Neill (South Dunedin), Rev. Father O'Reilly (Port Chalmers), Rev. Fathers Liston (Rector), Buckley, Morkane, Scanlan, and Collins (Holy Cross College). The students of Holy Cross College assisted at the ceremonies during the week, and the Christian Brothers' choir and the students sang the 'Benedictus' and 'Miserere' each evening at Tenebræ. The Cathedral was crowded on Friday afternoon at the devotion of the Way of the Cross.

II. THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

(Specially written for the *N.Z. Tablet* by 'Ghimel'.)

'If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain' (I. Cor. xv., 14).

One great question that must for ever come before the minds of men is this: When Our Lord died on the cross and when His Body was laid to rest in the tomb, was that the end of all? There was One Who claimed to have been sent to do the Father's work, Who asserted publicly that He was the Son of God. In proof of His claims, He explicitly declared on at least two occasions that He would rise to life after death. When the Jews asked Him by what sign and, therefore, by what authority, He presumed to drive the money-lenders and the sellers from the Temple, He replied: 'Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up'—St. John, who narrates the incident, adding: 'But He spoke of the temple of His Body' (St. John ii., 19-21). The second prediction is given by SS. Matthew and Luke. Some of the Scribes and Pharisees attributed Our Lord's casting out of a blind and dumb devil to Beelzebub, the prince of devils, and yet were bold enough to ask for a sign. The answer they received was: 'An evil and adulterous generation seeketh a sign, and a sign shall not be given it but the sign of Jonas the prophet: for as Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights, so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights' (St. Matthew xii., 39-40; St. Luke xi., 29). Our Lord, therefore, looked forward to the Resurrection as setting a seal on His life and teaching, as sanctioning His death, and as giving a pledge of His power and glory.

If, after making this prediction, Christ was raised from the dead, He must be what He claimed to be, the Son of God; and the miracle linked with the prophecy of the Resurrection more than justifies us in believing the revelation of Him Who thus prophesied and rose again. On the contrary, if His Body saw corruption in the tomb, then sin remains unconquered and still holds unbroken sway over the human race. 'Without the Resurrection His life would be as meaningless as religious life without immortality, or the hope of a future reward. Of what avail would have been the example set by Christ in humility, self-denial, charity, patience, and obedience unto death, had the Holy One been allowed to see corruption? His example would lack force and life; it could not inspire courage and hope, unless, in addition to strength in suffering, it had shewn forth victory in temptation, triumph in persecution, life in death' (Schanz: *Christian Apology* ii., p. 501). In other words, 'If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.'

If, therefore, the Resurrection means so much for us, belief in it must be based, not on mere sentiment, but on solid proof: we must believe not because we wish to believe, but because our reason tells us to do so. The proofs of the reality of the Resurrection are both historical and psychological.

(1) Historical. Four Evangelists as well as St. Paul (all of whom for the present purpose we may regard not as inspired but simply as trustworthy writers)

record both the fact of Our Lord's Resurrection and His subsequent appearances. Here is a brief summary of their evidence. The women who came early in the morning of Sunday to embalm His Body found the stone rolled back and the sepulchre empty (St. Matt. xxviii., 5-8; St. Mark xvi., 3-8). Peter and John, too, on their arrival a little later, saw that the tomb had given up its dead (St. Luke, xxiv. 12; St. John xx. 2-3). And, as if to make assurance doubly sure, even the soldiers on guard bear witness to the same fact. 'And behold there was a great earthquake. For an angel of the Lord descended from heaven: and coming, rolled back the stone and sat upon it. And his countenance was as lightning, and his raiment as snow, and for fear of him the guards were struck with terror and became as dead men' (St. Matt. xxviii. 2-4). And 'behold some of the guards came into the city and told the chief priests all the things that had been done' (ibid). The tomb 'sealed with official wax and guarded by picked men' was empty—here was a fact which none could gainsay: the Jewish priests could only stumble on this lame and self-contradictory excuse: 'And they being assembled together with the ancients, taking counsel, gave a great sum of money to the soldiers, saying: say you His disciples came by night, and stole Him away when we were asleep. And if the governor shall hear of this we will persuade him, and secure you' (St. Matt. xxviii. 12-14). The risen Christ then appeared to Mary Magdalene (St. John xx. 14-18), to Peter (St. Luke, xxiv., 34), to Cleopas and another on the way to Emmaus (St. Luke xxiv., 13-35), to the eleven and others, and to these last He showed the wounds on His hands and feet, reminding them that 'a spirit (a ghost, a phantom) has not flesh and bones, such as you see Me to have' (St. Luke xxiv. 35-43), St. John, xx., 19-21). Later on, He appeared to five hundred disciples (I. Cor. xv., 6), to James (I. Cor. xv., 7), to the doubting Thomas and the rest (St. John, xx. 25 and xxi., 1-2), to the seven by the lake (St. John xxi., 1-23), to the eleven on the hills of Galilee (St. Matt. xxviii., 16-20), to the eleven before ascending (St. Mark xvi., 19-20). After His Ascension, He showed Himself to St. Stephen (Acts vii., 55-56), and last of all to Saul, the persecutor, who was to become Paul, the Apostle. Looking at these testimonies, are we not justified in claiming that the proofs in favor of the Resurrection are as convincing and as strong as anything that can be produced for the best accredited fact in history?

(2) Psychological. (a) The holy women came to embalm His dead Body—and they found Him risen! So we cannot say that when their risen Master appeared to them they saw what they had expected and 'were in reality only reading from the hope of their hearts instead of from the sight of their eyes.' (b) Thomas would believe only if he saw in His hands the print of the nails and touched His wounds: he saw and was convinced. (c) Only one disciple was brave enough to follow his Master to Calvary, the others had run away and one had even denied that he knew the man: and, notwithstanding Our Lord's frequent predictions of His Resurrection, they sadly concluded that Death had claimed Him for ever. Untouched by hope, they could not even credit the first report that He had risen. Yet, within a very short time, before scheming or reflection was possible, these same men, in the face of grave danger, boldly declare that Jesus was risen. How can we explain this remarkable change in their feelings, how account for their firm faith, unshaken conviction, and undaunted courage, unless they were certain of the fact of the Resurrection? 'It is impossible that such unbounded faith should have welled forth from a bottomless ocean of grief' (Weizsacker).

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