

## THE RESURRECTION AND A COLLECTION

Dr. Jowett, in one of his illuminating comments, points out the seeming incongruity between the closing verse of the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians and the opening verse of the sixteenth chapter. Taken in succession, they read as follows:

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order \* \* \*"

It is as though at a religious meeting deeply surcharged with emotion, someone, at the mention of a collection, were to say:

"Why, at this point, introduce the dampening mention of money. We are in a more rarefied atmosphere now."

But there is no incongruity. Paul, spiritually sensitive as he was, did not feel it so. After shouting, "O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!" he is not afraid to connect a collection directly with the resurrection, for of what value is a Christian hope, if that hope has not the power to make the believer abound in the work of the Lord—a work that can often best be done by sacrificial giving!

Let no church leader ever feel for one moment that the matter of encouraging giving is subordinate, or, what is worse, a disagreeable part of his responsibility. It belongs to the very essence of the Christian life. Paul furthermore tells us that the spirit of liberality is a Christian grace—a fruit of the Spirit, and the cultivation of this spirit is of the utmost importance.

To promote this spirit of liberality, this love of giving, this sense of privilege that we are co-workers together with God, is a most vital and difficult task. It is vital to the life of the church, for "God loveth a cheerful giver," while He regards unwillingness to give, as idolatry. In this connection, the apostle also tells us that he that soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly. At the same time, willingness to give becomes the acid test of a church's spirituality.

To cultivate this spirit of liberality is not an easy task, for we are immediately confronted with the weeds of selfishness which have their roots deep in human nature. It is in this region that one easily barricades himself. To counteract this spirit without that nagging and fault-finding which defeats its own purpose, requires all the skill, consecration and prayer a minister can muster. But, though difficult, it is also a glorious task, for if we succeed we have made a definite contribution to the spirituality of the church. Here, then, comes the challenge to a minister's own spiritual life. Where he is deeply, earnestly and sincerely interested in the cause for which he pleads, that same spirit will, by induction, tend to pervade the church which he serves. There are instances where this influence of devoted pastors lingers for years in the communities they served, long after they are gone to their reward.

We must be reminded that contributing to the support of our own church can hardly be called giving to the Lord, except in a very subordinate sense: for he who contributes to his own church has his reward. That reward is a suitable place to worship, the privilege of hearing more than a hundred sermons a year, the opportunity to attend many more

mid-week meetings, religious training for one's children, and a counsellor in times of joy, sickness and death. Many pay larger dues, without thinking that it is charity, to secular organizations which do not nearly give them the return. Christ plainly tells us that charity begins at the point where we pass on the undeserved blessings of God, whom we cannot repay, to others who cannot repay us. The collector of which Paul spoke was of exactly that nature—it was collected by Gentile Christians in Greece for the poor Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, who could never repay their benefactors.

It is not a lack of money which hinders people from giving, but a lack of consecration. Paul tells us that the people of Thessalonica had given from the depth of their poverty; and the reason for this was that they had first given themselves to the Lord. When a man really gives himself to the Lord, he brings his money along with him. We know of rural churches in regions where the heat and the drought of summer have blasted the farmers' hopes and expectations for many successive years, but in spite of that, their per capita gifts to benevolences are higher than those of other churches in regions where the earth each year has produced by handfolds.

Every effort should be made to make the objects for which we ask people to contribute as definite as possible. The plan for collecting for all the benevolences of the church at once, and dividing the same according to a set ratio would be quite ideal if human beings were not what they are. But human beings, being what they are, it is to be doubted whether this is using the best psychology. There is nothing quite so discouraging, quite so deadening to the generous impulses of a congregation as the announcement, "We will now take a collection for benevolences." The appeal, if appeal it can be called, is so indefinite, covers so much ground and takes for granted so much knowledge that it fails to arouse any real response. No wonder the collections are often disappointingly small.

Where people are asked to contribute for some object they can grasp, something that is definite, such as foreign or domestic missions, the readiness to respond generously is far greater. So every effort has to be made to make the objects understandable and real. Would it not be possible to take definite collections for foreign missions and domestic missions, for instance, and to group some of the other objects in order to make things more comprehensible? At least the pastor should constantly keep before the minds of his congregation the various objects in order that he may awaken an adequate emotional response. Where churches support their own missionaries, the definiteness of the object has often greatly raised the standard of giving.

Above all, we must connect giving most closely with the Gospel itself. We love because He first loved us. Only if our hearts and those of our members are set aglow by the fire of divine love, shall we feel we are debtors, and be ready to sacrifice, saying:

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That was an offering far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my heart, my life, my all."

—Religious Digest, January, 1943

The test of every religious, political or educational system is the man that it forms.—Amiel.

## THE MESSAGE OF EASTER

Once long ago, outside the walls  
Of old Jerusalem,  
The Roman soldiers led to die  
The Saviour of all men.

Out upon Golgotha's summit  
The angry mob stood still.  
There they crucified my Jesus  
On that lone and rugged hill.

They put Him in a rocky tomb,  
And set a guard to keep  
It safe, from friends and foes alike  
And they went to sleep.

The first day of the week dawned clear;  
The Sabbath Day was past,  
And women came with spices sweet  
And thought the tomb was fast.

But, lo, the stone was rolled away,  
The grave gave up its dead!  
And looking in there met their gaze  
Bright angels by the bed.

"He is not here," they sang that day  
"He's risen as He said."  
"Go tell His friends, He's burst the tomb,  
The first fruits from the dead."

Oh Easter means so much to me,  
Far more than I can tell!  
The Christ who died and lives again;  
Has rescued me from hell.

—Selected

## MISJUDGED

No doubt you read the story of the trapper in the north woods who had lost his wife and while he cared for his traps must needs leave the baby in the care of his great dog which was half wolf. Coming home through a storm one day, he found the cabin door open and the crib empty. Blood was smeared about. From under the bed crawled the dog, himself bloody. In his agony the trapper jumped to the conclusion that the wolf nature had gained the ascendancy and that the baby had been killed and eaten by the one left to guard him.

Snatching an axe, he split wide open the head of the dog. Then he found in one corner of the cabin a timber wolf, dead. And under the bed the baby, alive and unharmed. The true story was then easy to read, but the faithful guardian had been misjudged and, in too much haste, slain.

Perhaps this is just a story of that north country. But something almost as tragic has often happened in life. Many a man or woman has been judged before all the facts are in and, if not killed with an axe, stabbed by an unsympathetic tongue. The suffering may be as bad as death.

What business have Christians to judge another anyway?

"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand."

Will it not be at least disconcerting and humiliating, having passed the judgment and having used the axe or the tongue, to find that God causes him to "stand"?

Lord, help me to be faithful in the judgment of myself—I have all the facts in this case—and be very slow to judge the other one—especially since I have not *all* the facts

And if I had all the truth, still I am not the judge and surely not the executioner.—*Editorial in Free Methodist.*