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EASTER MORNING

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"The Protestant Faith"

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We ought not to let Easter go without asking how we stand with regard to the facts of Easter. I heard a woman announcer on the T.V. a day or two ago speak about the Easter legend. Of course if Easter is only legendary, we need not give it a second thought, and if we never investigate the matter we might convince ourselves that it is legendary so that we do not have to do anything about it. But there is nothing legendary about Easter, only hard facts which are very uncomfortable and will be more uncomfortable still if we do not relate ourselves to them correctly. Consider the situation, Jesus had lived an exemplary life, but had been framed, and executed. In it all His reactions were without fault. Because the Sabbath was just beginning when he died, his friends wrapped His dead body in grave clothes, put them in a tomb in a garden nearby which one of them owned, and rolled a heavy stone in front of the entrance of the tomb to keep out marauders and animals.

At first light on the morning after the Sabbath, the women amongst the group of disciples came bringing the spices to wrap in the grave clothes which they had had no opportunity to do at the time of His burial. There were several groups of women, coming doubtless each from her own lodgings, perhaps with a pre-arranged understanding to meet in the garden. Although details differ, they were all agreed on one thing. They were amazed to find the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. When the other disciples learnt of this, some ran to the tomb like Peter and John and confirmed that the tomb was in fact empty except for the grave clothes which had been discarded, doubtless as emblems of death which no longer applied because Jesus had risen. And his rising to life from the dead was confirmed by His appearing to some of the women in the garden itself and then to some of the disciples as they returned home, and to all of them that evening as they met together. It was the same Jesus, though now with His body transformed. The Gospel gives further accounts of how Jesus appeared to the disciples at various

times after they had returned to their families back home in Galilee, and then again in Jerusalem when they had again congregated for the feast of Pentecost. Some years later St. Paul filled out further details. So Jesus had appeared not only to all the apostles but on one occasion to 500 disciples most of whom were still living when he wrote.

The resurrection of Jesus with the empty tomb and the grave clothes left behind is as true an episode of history as is for example the Battle of Waterloo. There is nothing legendary about it. After all if there was no difference of the outcome of the perfect life that Jesus lived and the life of a self-seeking rogue whether a business man or petty thief something would be wrong with our moral sense. But we need not worry about this point because the resurrection is a fact so that there is a life after death and the way we live has significance beyond this life.

Two conclusions may be drawn from the facts of Easter. First, that God will judge the world, though in His patience that day is still in the future. The time for our repentance and turning back to God is still open so that if we seek Him now we will find Him. The other conclusion is that those who are God's friends, through repentance and faith in Christ, will continue on as His friends into eternity through resurrection after death. Death is not the end, Easter is not legendary. Whether death comes to us suddenly or its process is prolonged through physical disintegration, we will at death leave the tomb and the grave clothes and all the mortality of life to live in fellowship with God and with one another in the resurrection life beyond this life. God's purpose in creating us and in redeeming us and establishing us as friends through forgiveness in Jesus is sure of fulfilment because it is based on the facts of what has already taken place on Easter morning.

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