

# Sunday Afternoon Readings

(By RIGHT REV. MGR. POWER for the N.Z. Tablet.)

## XXXIV—REIGNING WITH CHRIST.

We have been considering death, but not as pagans. To the pagan, ancient and modern, death means defeat, an utter rout, annihilation so far as life is concerned. See that dead body on its back, laid out, awaiting burial. The civil law will tell you that it belongs to no one. Well, it is not worth belonging to anybody if paganism and rationalism be true; it is laid out, it is "knocked out." But it is the body of one who has made his mark on life, of one who was distinguished in the world's service. The world and paganism will pontificate at his apotheosis, will heap his coffin with the flowers of the earth that will next day be thrown under the oven, will mark his grave with their silly consecration, will raise a cenotaph above it, and will murmur "peace to his ashes!"—a meaningless prayer, for his ashes are at peace.

But now, look at this body! It is also on its back, it is laid out, but not knocked out, for it is the body of a Christian, dead indeed, but it has died in Christ and therefore destined to arise again with Christ. Is it worthless? Nay, it is of priceless value, it belongs to God. This house of man's habitation and of God's creation, is once more in the hands of the Divine Architect for reconstruction, and the immortal tenant simply moves while the work of reconstruction is going on. As St. John Chrysostom puts it: "God being about to rebuild your house removes the inhabitant while the demolition takes place, that you may not be incommoded by the dust and disorder: then when the new edifice is ready to receive you, you shall return."

Heap no flowers upon the body of the Christian as you follow it to the grave; this is not the apotheosis, the triumph, the final consecration of the whole man; all this will come in God's good time, when He will crown both soul and body. Death is not the end: the soul has left the body, but it preserves its native dignity, and in immortal vision looks with love on the now lifeless body that had surrounded it. But not even of the body is death the end: We stand beside the grave and see it sown in corruption, but only, as we are confident, that it might arise in incorruption; sown in dishonor that it might arise in glory; sown in weakness that it might arise in power; sown a natural body that it might arise a spiritual body, fit for the spiritual and immortal soul. The corruptible will put on incorruption, and the mortal immortality.

It is sad, at first, to see the silver cord broken, the golden fillet shrunk back, the pitcher crushed at the fountain, the wheel broken upon the cistern, and the dust returned unto its earth whence it was; but hovering above it all we hear the words: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," even as we hear the voice of Job from the dunghill: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the Last Day I shall rise out of the

earth, and I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God, Whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold. This my hope is laid in my bosom." Thus can we challenge death and the grave, Whose now is the victory? O Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The body is "laid out," but not defeated. Let the pagan and the materialist carry out their shabby triumph at the grave and crown their dead with fading flowers; the triumph of the whole Christian man is not yet, but it is assured.

The Saducees, prototypes of our twentieth-century rationalists, said to Jesus: "There is no resurrection." "You are far out," said Jesus, answering them in a swift word, and He showed how wide they were of the fact, by raising Himself soon after from the dead. And St. Paul carries on the proof in his beautiful teaching on the Mystic Body: "And in Christ all shall be brought to life, each in his own order: the first fruits Christ, then they that are Christ's, at His coming: then the end." Yes, then the end, not now, not yet!

Our meditation on the passion of Christ, if fruitful, has created in us a resolve to suffer for and with Him; this on the Resurrection will remind us that if we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified with Him. These two thoughts therefore have a twofold inspiration, as the two facts themselves have a twofold effect. By His passion and death, Christ atoned for our sins, bringing us redemption and justification; but it is in and with the risen Christ we must individually arise from our sins and work out our salvation; in and with Christ communicating to us, the members of His Mystic Body, the power and glory of His Risen Life. It is not Christ dying on the Cross, but the risen Christ Who is our supernatural life. We live now not any longer ourselves, it is the Risen Christ Who lives within us. I have not space to detail here the beautiful teaching of St. Paul on this point; sufficient for us to know that if we arise from sin and walk in newness of life by the power of the Resurrection, we shall share also in its glory.

And it is in Heaven we shall enjoy all this glory; in Heaven, where the grand triumph and crowning of soul and body—of reunited man—shall take place, and the dawning of a new day shall be ushered in which shall never know a close. Christ must not sit alone upon His throne, He must have His courtiers around Him. The day will come, at the Angel's trumpet, when Christ will rise from His throne in Heaven, and descend once more to earth; the Cross, the sign of the Son of man, shall be borne before Him. Then, "He shall sit on the seat of His majesty, and all nations shall be gathered together before Him, and He shall separate them one from another as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats." Then shall He say to His sheep: "Come ye blessed of My Father!" And the procession

shall return—the faithful band, the glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and blameless, the Risen Christ and the Risen Saints. Be ye lifted up, O eternal gates that the King of Glory and His crowned, that Christ and His complement may enter in! Fair as the morning, bright as the sun, glorious as an army, the grand procession enters, the gates are shut, Christ and His crowned are at home.

At home in that city described by St. Gregory: "That city, no darkness obscures, no light overshadows, no lapse of time consumes: there shines not any light of the sun, nor brightness of moon, nor lustre of stars. The brightness of God enlightens it. Lit up with this light, immense, un failing, brilliant, the holy Jerusalem welcomes sons of the light and of the day, sons of adoption, partakers in the eternal inheritance. There are the holy and humble of heart, there the spirits and souls of the just, seeing the King in His beauty and exulting in the glory of His power. There flourishes in all one perfect charity, one common joy, one delight. Good Jesus, Word of the Father, Brightness of the Father's glory, on Whom angels long to look, teach me to do Thy will, that, guided by Thy good Spirit, I may arrive at that blessed city, where is eternal day and one common spirit, where is assured security and secure eternity, and eternal tranquillity and tranquil happiness, and happy sweetness and sweet delight; where Thou, God with the Father and the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest world without end. Amen."

[THE END.]

Note.—Those who have read with any fruit at all this first series of Sunday Readings now brought to a close, will be determined to do God's holy will to the utmost of their power, and gain for themselves eternal life. "Now, this is eternal life, that they know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent." Thus, our second series will be concerned with God, Jesus Christ, and the Church. Here again our chapters will be short and simple, and well within the understanding of the children in our primary schools, and of parents who will discuss them with their children on the Sunday afternoons.

### WHITE HART HOTEL

NEW PLYMOUTH.

Superior accommodation. Commercial and Public Service Tariff.

Speight's Ale on Draught.

J. B. DUNN

Proprietor.

### BLINDS

HOLLAND BLINDS of every description. VENETIAN BLINDS made and repaired. CASEMENT CURTAINS.

Samples and prices on application.

SCOTT & WILSON

ST. ANDREW STREET, DUNEDIN.

R. H. Todd

LADIES and GENTS TAILOR

145 BATTERY STREET

Dunedin