

Memories

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

¹³ But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

We are given, I think, to use the marker of the new year to assess ourselves. I am no exception. This year I find the process strangely troubling. I have suffered losses in 2023! They cannot be recovered in this world. With the death of my last sibling, I find myself almost haunted by the fact that I am the last person living who has personal memories of the events of my early home-life and childhood.

Below, I am including a short essay that I wrote upon the death of my father almost forty years ago. The reader will be aided to know that Garner's Creek is the name of a little country cemetery in Tennessee where some of my family have been buried since the late 1700's.

"Along the Garner's Creek Road there is a small cemetery. A Thinning carpet of grass and mosses covers the ground and enfolds the markers that are of varying age and condition. Trees overspread the graves providing shade and shelter for the occasional sojourner. On the evening of my recent visit, I found that some caring soul had mowed the little plot, delaying, but not arresting the process of gentle decay.

In the past, at infrequent intervals, I had stopped there with my father. Together we would move among the stones. It was his wont to pause and utter, as an aid to my acquaintance and to his remembrance, a respectful précis of each slumbering soul. He had been connected in life to most. As we would stand, arm in arm, I felt no less joined, albeit through him, to the dead interred there.

Touching each monument and straining to make out the names and dates my mind would flood with conjured images from the past. Family, dressed in dark apparel and brought hence by humble wagons and buggies, would surround each new-made wound in the red earth. Without instrumental accompaniment the old hymns would be sung, and comfort taken in the old promises. There were grieving widows, sorrowing parents, and dismayed children, who, each in their own turn and season, were destined to be gathered there.

At such times, I think my father and I each had a heightened sense of the reaper's closeness. We stood amid the evidence of his inexorable scythe. I had always been conscious of its' working. Occasionally the blade would reach into the row where I stood, but usually it thinned ahead. As my father would

continue to speak in hushed tones, I could hear the callous sweep. The dark presence worked the ground immediately before me: my father's row.

Now I stand in the first rank. The rows before mine are swept clean. Only stones at Garner's Creek mark the places of those cut off and I feel a renewed closeness.

Now the years no longer press them.

Time forever without end.

Here each waits the resurrection.

Husband, lover, wife, and friend."

Dear Bereans, if these losses have not yet fallen upon you, know that if Our Lord tarries – they will! Thanks be to God, though the dead may not come again to us, we shall go to them. And so shall we ever be with the Lord.

George Moore

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