

# THE VOICE



Mennonite Brethren Bible College  
Quarterly

APRIL, 1970

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MENNONTIE BRETHREN BIBLE COLLEGE  
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# The Voice

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Vernon Ratzlaff

The Voice, founded in 1952, continues to serve its constituency each year by dealing with theological and church-related concerns and issues.

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## EDITORIAL COMMENT

### THE EASTER EVENT — THEN AND NOW

The Easter season comes but once a year; that obvious fact, as pastors have ample opportunity to notice and perceive, explains why it calls forth more than ordinary interest among members and adherents of our churches. But Easter also comes every year and there is no immediate prospect that this annual commemoration of an event in the history of the Christian Church, and of mankind, will be disrupted or prohibited, at least in our part of the world. This second fact, we are obliged to think, must induce second thoughts, perhaps even troubled thoughts occasionally, in pastors and preachers about the continuing, and actual, significance of this commemoration for themselves and for those to whom they declare, or with whom they share, the truths of the Christian Gospel.

Such, at any rate, was the experience of one of England's great preachers, Robert W. Dale of Birmingham. One day, while preparing an Easter sermon in his study, Dale was suddenly and strangely gripped by the fact of "the aliveness of the risen Christ." Later he recounted the experience in his private diary, thus: "Christ is alive," I said to myself: "alive!" And then I paused: "alive!" And then I paused again: "alive!" Can that really be true? Living as really as I myself am? I got up and walked about, repeating: Christ is living! Christ is living!" At first it seemed strange and hardly true, but at last it came upon me as a burst of sudden glory; yes, Christ is alive. It was to me a new discovery. I thought that all along I had believed it; but not until that moment did I feel sure about it. I then said, "My people shall know it. I shall preach it again and again until they believe it as I do now."

Here is one preacher's challenge, now revealed and flung across several decades to those of us who shall preach and teach during the 1970's: to "preach the Resurrection again and again until my people believe it as I do now"! But such conviction, felt within our own hearts and sensed throughout our preaching, is not the outcome of experiential and divine ecstasy only, as the above excerpt may (at first) suggest; its roots reach back, also, into the faithful and careful study of the Scriptures over the years, as the wider context of Dr. Dale's experience and ministry—and the ministry of a host of God-honored preachers—does in fact reveal. We believe ourselves to be in good company, therefore, and quite within the bounds of legitimate pastoral and homiletic preparation and aid, to suggest, by means of individual essays,

how the central but multi-faceted truth of Christ's resurrection may be comprehended, illustrated and defended, in terms of **theological** and **apologetic** viewpoints as well as in terms of a **practical** (or ethical) viewpoint. Indeed, Archbishop A.M. Ramsey, in his illuminating and widely-read book, **The Resurrection of Christ**, insists that "it is therefore both **historically** and **theologically necessary** to begin with the Resurrection. For from it, in direct order of historical fact, there came Christian preaching, Christian worship, Christian belief." Several faculty members at MBBC—Herbert Swartz, David Ewert, and Vern Ratzlaff—have attempted as much in the main articles of this issue.

In his feature column, "The Preaching Lab," John Regehr also contributes if less obviously so, to our understanding and appreciation of the truth of Christ's atonement in terms of the temptations he faced at the beginning of the three years which resulted in his death by crucifixion.

Several book reviews, prepared by other members of the College faculty, bring to our attention recent studies—some essentially theological, and others more devotional in cast and content—which deal with the Resurrection truth or, also, with that other great truth of the Gospel which can never be separated from it: the atoning and redeeming death of Christ. It is our modest and sincere hope that the several courses on the menu served up in this special issue of **The Voice** may not produce either distaste or indigestion of any harmful sort, but, much rather, increase and, in part satisfy, an existing desire within our readers to know more intimately, and preach more compellingly, the "power of His resurrection."

Herb Giesbrecht

## THE RESURRECTION AND DAILY LIFE

David Ewert\*

Had the story of Jesus ended with the cross, it would have been unmitigated tragedy. And if Easter were not true, we would be, as Paul admitted (I Cor. 15:19), of all men most to be pitied.

Chronologically, the earliest written evidence for the resurrection of Jesus comes from Paul. However, he admits (I Cor. 15) that he had "received" this tradition through earlier witnesses. Peter and James were dependable sources, together with the "five hundred brethren" who could check and control the tradition (I Cor. 5:3-8).

The Gospel records, with all their variations, witness to the great event of the resurrection in such a convincing way that only the most incorrigible sceptic could speak of them as fictitious, as did, for example, the atheist Bertrand Russell, who argued that Christian optimism was "built on the ground that fairy-tales are pleasant." It was the unshakeable conviction that Christ was alive that made the disciples of Jesus into such powerful witnesses to a living Christ. The Lord's Day, the New Testament, and the Christian Church, would all be inexplicable without the resurrection.

The story is told of a meeting between the French philosopher, Auguste Comte, and Thomas Carlyle. Comte said he intended to found a new religion which would sweep away Christianity and everything else. Carlyle's devastating reply ran something like this: "Splendid. All you need to do is to speak as never man spoke, to live as never man lived, to be crucified, rise again the third day, and get the world to believe you are still alive. Then your religion will have some chance of success."

By the resurrection, Christ "forced open a door that had been locked since the death of the first man. He has met, fought, and beaten the King of Death. Everything is different because He has done so. This is the beginning of the New Creation: a new chapter in cosmic history has opened" (C.S. Lewis, in **Miracles**).

Little wonder, then, that the early Christians were excited about proclaiming the resurrection of Christ. Not only was the resurrection **true**, but the message of the resurrection was **relevant**. However, among those who have no doubts about the facticity of the resurrection we often find little to convince us that the great truth of the resurrection has any bearing on life, either.

This article concerns itself with the question: Whether the Christians claim, that the resurrection makes a real difference in everyday experiences is true? Some of the lives of thought devel-

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oped here were suggested to me by the reading of Micael Green's booklet **Man Alive**.

### I. The Resurrection and Our Guilt

When the apostles were hailed before the Sanhedrium to answer for the disturbance they were causing by preaching Jesus as Lord, they answered (among other things): "The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree . . . to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5:30, 31)

We all know what it means to feel guilty. It may be caused by an exhibition of greed or lust or temper or dishonesty. This feeling of shame and of failure varies with individuals, depending on the norms according to which their conscience functions. Whenever a person acts contrary to any ideal that he has accepted, he feels guilt (although conceivably this feeling of guilt can be greatly mitigated by overruling the voice of conscience over a period of time).

However, Scripture insists that we are guilty, whether we feel guilty or not. Our dilemma is not so much guilt-feelings (for which there may be a psychological explanation) as real guilt: we are all genuinely morally responsible before a holy God whom we have affronted and disobeyed. Our guilt is the consequence of our sin, and it is with this predicament of ours that Jesus Christ dealt at the Cross. He died to settle our debts for us.

For Paul and the other apostles the Cross was the burning center of the good news which they preached. But how could a crucified Christ atone for sins? For a Jew, a crucified Jesus meant two things: One, that he was not the Messiah. For instead of leading Israel to victory he went down into ignominious defeat. Two, that Jesus was under God's curse, for Deut. 21:23 explicitly stated that a hanged man is accursed by God. That Jesus cried out on the cross, "It is finished," might have been the last step in a great drama of deception—but for one thing: the resurrection.

The fact that Jesus rose again is the assurance that he did cope with the load of sin and guilt on our behalf; he did win that titanic struggle with the power of evil. Now we know that his sacrifice is sufficient, that our acquittal is assured, that our sins are forgiven, that our guilt has been removed.

Let us turn to the testimony of the apostles to substantiate further what we have just said. When Peter spoke the good news to those gathered in the house of Cornelius, he recalled that the Jews had done our Lord to death and hung him on a tree (Acts 10:39). But this was not the end: "God raised him on the third day" (10:40) And what did all this mean? "That every one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (10:43). Our guilt is gone.

Paul and Barnabas, preaching at Antioch of Pisidia, give an extended overview of the history of salvation. The climax of the sermon is the resurrection. "This he has fulfilled to us . . . by

raising Jesus" (Act 13:33); "He whom God raised up saw no corruption" (in contrast to David) (13:37). And what is the upshot of this? "Let it be known to you, therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you." (13:38). The resurrection means that there is no more guilt.

Paul wrote; "he was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:22). "And you, who were dead in trespasses . . . God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses" (Col. 2:13, 14). The bill of debt was cancelled at the cross, and the evidence for this is Christ's triumph over all evil powers by his resurrection and exaltation (2:15).

Throughout the centuries men have found in the resurrection the assurance that God has removed their guilt. John Bunyan, in **Pilgrim's Progress** describes it thus: "He ran thus till he came to a place somewhat ascending; and upon that place stood a cross, and a little below in the bottom, a sepulchre. So I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from his back; and began to tumble; and so continued to do, till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre where it fell in, and I saw it no more."

The relief and freedom we enjoy in being able to dissociate ourselves from the dark deeds we have done or might do arises out of the fact that Christ atoned for our guilt at the Cross. But this deep assurance of forgiveness is possible only because we are in fellowship with the Christ who is alive.

### II. The Resurrection and Our Loneliness

Loneliness is one of the great maladies of our modern generation—a generation more closely tied together by the mass media and other means than any former generation. This feeling of homelessness and estrangement strikes young and old, married and unmarried, rich and poor. People join clubs, attend sports events, hurry to cocktail parties, crowd theatres, and concert halls, but to no avail.

Dr. Paul Tournier, in his recent book, **A Place for You**, points out that every individual wants a place in life, and that our day is suffering from a 'vagabond complex'. The mobility of modern man may add to this feeling of alienation, but there are those who spend much of their time away from home, and yet do not suffer from the malaise of loneliness. Others are always at home but find no place to stand in life.

Malcolm Muggeridge, in **Jesus Rediscovered**, tells of the awful feeling that crept over him, when after World War II, while with the British forces in Algiers, the term "Displaced Persons" was first used. He thought, then, that it was the most devilish term ever invented.

As we turn to the Scriptures, we find in the first pages of Holy Writ that poignant story of how man rebelled against God,

and so became an alien. He lost paradise, his home. He pushed God out of his life, for he wanted to live independently of God. And the next tragic step in the drama of the fall of man was the alienation of men from one another—Adam from Eve, Cain from Abel. C.S. Lewis (in *The Great Divorce*) describes hell as the place where people live astronomical distances from one another, for the same selfishness that drives men away from one another (and that brings men to hell) continues its work there.

No one, however, has experienced such utter loneliness as did our Lord. On the cross, when even his relationship with the heavenly Father was cut off, he cried out in anguish, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” No man has ever experienced loneliness at such a depth.

But what does this knowledge that Jesus of Nazareth was the loneliest person that ever lived mean to me? It means that we will never be abandoned and left to ourselves, for this same Jesus rose from the dead; he is alive. The parting words of the risen Christ to his disciples were: “Be assured, I am with you always, to the end of time” (Matt. 28:20).

But how, we ask, can the risen and ascended Lord be present with us, to overcome our loneliness? Yes, by his Spirit. In his Farewell Discourses, our Lord promised: “I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth . . . I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you” (John 14: 16-18). Paul says that in baptism the believer is united with Christ in his death and resurrection. He shares the resurrection life of Christ through the Spirit (Rom. 6:3-5). What transformed the anguish of the Last Supper into the joy of Communion the world over was the deep assurance that the Lord was present in the same way in the elements (I Cor. 11:26). The short eucharistic prayer (I Cor. 16:22 and Didache 10), namely, **Maranatha**, means: “Our Lord, come.” It was a prayer for Christ to be present when the church gathered, and to be present at the end of the age. And they knew he was present, for he had promised that where two or three would gather in his name, he would be present. The resurrection opened up the glorious truth of the universal presence of Christ. This presence is very personal, for by his Spirit the risen Lord dwells in every heart. “The Lord is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:17). The risen Lord, who has promised never to leave us or to desert us (Hebr. 13:5), is present in the life of the individual and in the life of the Christian community by his Spirit.

### III. The Resurrection and Futility

There is a frantic search in our day for some cause to live for, something to invest one’s life in, some new frontier to discover. Underneath it all is that haunting fear that if one hitches the wagon of one’s life to a star, that this star may in the end fall to the ground (as the writer of the Apocalypse has it). This creeping

pessimism seems to be much more apparent in affluent countries than in those areas where men still fight for their livelihood. A British novelist who had attended the dedication service of a Christian girl, who was leaving for the mission field, wrote later that evening in her diary: “Oh to have something to live for, entirely, and for ever.”

The reason for much of the apathy in the lives of people today is to be found in the fear that nothing we give ourselves to will last. Either a world holocaust or Death, that grim Reaper, will destroy our life’s work. And Paul was perfectly right when he wrote: “If Christ is not risen then our preaching is vain . . . and your faith is vain . . . your faith is futile . . . If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are af all men most to be pitied” (Cor. 15:12-19). Now, the worst attitude toward death that a man can possibly have is the one that attempts to ignore the fact. Michael Green says, “It is not in the least fortuitous that in our day the rise of atheistic humanism should have coincided with the decline of religion and the increasing attempt to brush the ugly fact of death under the carpet.”

To find meaning in what we do, we must be sure that our work will abide. This assurance can be ours if we believe in the resurrection. At the end of the great chapter on the resurrection, and after that outburst of triumph, “O death where is your victory?” Paul concludes: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain (1 Cor. 15:58).

Not only are our labors not futile if Christ is alive, but our sufferings also take on meaning. If death were the end of it all, we would not risk our lives for the sake of Christ. We would not waste our energies seeking to build his Kingdom. Paul, writing about his sufferings in Asia, says, “We felt that we had received the sentence of death; but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead” (2 Cor. 1:9). A bit later, in the same letter, he confesses that, although death works in his life, he does not cease to speak the good news, “knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus” (4:14). The cry of the innocent martyrs is: “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long?” (Rev. 6:10). The answer is: Wait just a little longer; your suffering is not meaningless; God will yet redress the wrongs done to you.

Before Dietrich Bonhoeffer was led to his death by Hitler’s guards, he spoke to the prisoners on the text, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his mercy gave us new birth unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet. 1:3). And as they took him away, he sent this last message to the Bishop of Chichester, “This is the end—but for me the beginning of life.”

Take away the resurrection and the foundation for Christian

ethics also crumbles, and all efforts to do right are vain. Why should we try to live upright and godly lives, if death ends everything? "If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die'" (1 Cor. 15:32). In an apology from the second century, the *Apology of Athenagoras*, we read: "Were we convinced that this life is the only one, then we might be suspected of sinning, by being enslaved to flesh and blood and by becoming subject to gain and lust. But since we realize that God is a witness, day and night, of our thoughts and our speech, and that by being pure light, he can see into our very hearts, we are convinced that when we depart this present life we shall live another . . . In the light of this it is not likely that we would be purposely wicked, and deliver ourselves up to the great Judge to be punished."

#### Conclusion:

The resurrection is the answer to our guilt, our loneliness and to the feeling of futility. This is what makes the gospel of the resurrection so relevant, so vital, so meaningful. It is not enough to confess that Christ rose from the dead two millennia ago; nor is it sufficient when the church acknowledges its faith in the resurrection annually during the great Easter festival. We must, as Paul suggests, "celebrate the festival" daily (1 Cor. 5:8). And how do we do this? By finding meaning in our daily tasks which we do in Christ's name (they are not futile). By practicing the presence of the risen Lord in our daily life (we are not alone). By rejoicing in the deep assurance of sins forgiven (our guilt is gone).

Dr. R. W. Dale, one of England's great preachers, was preparing an Easter sermon. Suddenly the truth that he had held for years, that Christ rose on the third day, caught fire within him. It mastered him—this aliveness of the risen Jesus, and he wrote in his diary: "Christ is alive, I said to myself: 'Alive!' And then I paused: 'alive' And then I paused again: 'alive!' Can that really be true? Living as really as I myself am? I got up and walked about, repeating: 'Christ is living! Christ is living!' At first it seemed strange and hardly true, but at last it came upon me as a burst of sudden glory; yes, Christ is alive. It was to me a new discovery. I thought that all along I had believed; but not until that moment did I feel sure about it. I then said, 'My people shall know it. I shall preach it again and again until they believe it as I do now'." Dr. Dale insisted after this experience that his congregation should sing at least one hymn every Sunday that struck the resurrection note.

## THE THEOLOGY OF THE RESURRECTION

by Herbert Swartz\*

The resurrection of Jesus is central to the Christian faith. Such a declaration seems to contradict our usual approach to the Gospel. Surely one ought to look first at the ministry of Jesus, the events of His life, the words of His teaching, and then to approach the Resurrection as a finale which seals and confirms all the others. This is the difference between the historical and the theological consideration.

The essential confession of faith is not a recital of historical data, as relevant as these might be, but rather a personal theological commitment,—"If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). The title Lord is an early Christian equation for God. Its validity rests on Jesus' resurrection,—"For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living" (Romans 14:9).

Likewise the resurrection functions as the basis for the redemptive events set forth in the New Testament. The close relationship of the cross of Jesus Christ and the resurrection gives it a unique redemptive meaning, as Paul declares: "Jesus our Lord was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Romans 4:25) and consequently, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (I Corinthians 15:17). It is then the risen Jesus who commissions the disciples (Matthew 28:18-20) and who appears to Paul and commissions him to launch the mission to the Gentiles (Acts 26:16-18). And since Jesus' resurrection insures the final triumph over death and evil, it is also the certification of a future judgment of all men before God (Acts 17:30-31).

There can be no question that the New Testament regards the resurrection as an historical event. The place and time are carefully recorded (Mark 16:6, I Corinthians 15:4). But the meaning of this event for faith is the crucial thing. On the basis of the evidence, the Christian asserts that redemption from sin and death has come, and will continue to come, to pass. And this because God entered decisively and supernaturally into history in the

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resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, as an act that summed up God's purpose in history, it also became the vindication of the grandeur of man in and through God.

We shall resist the temptation to examine either Christ's early claim concerning His resurrection (Matt. 16:21), and the many assertions of the Acts record that God raised Jesus from the dead (e.g. Acts 2:24, 32), or the revelatory understanding of the Fourth Gospel in its assertion that Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25 f.), and Paul's lengthy demonstration that faith in the resurrection of Christ actually includes faith in the resurrection of the body (I Corinthians 15)—in favour of an exegetical study of the theological implications of Paul's statement in Philippians 3:10-11.

"That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, tha if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead."

In a passage vivid with colour, Paul advises us to rejoice in the Lord (3:1) and to beware of those who put confidence in the flesh (3:2). While he might have reason for confidence in the flesh, as he enumerates (3:4-6), he has met Christ Jesus whom he now calls Lord (3:7). The loss of "all things" which gave a former confidence is related to the reckoning of these as refuse for the purpose of gaining Christ (3:8), and for the purpose of knowing Him in a particular way. The latter is the subject of our study.

The action words leap out of our text—know (*ginōskεin*), power (*dunamis*), fellowship (*koinōnia*) and conformity (*summorphizesthai*), while the descriptive words delineate the direction of the action, know - **Him**, power - **resurrection**, fellowship - **sufferings**, and conformity - **death**. A study of these terms should guide us in our search for a life abandoned to Christ as we know Him in this particular way.

The infinitive of design is used here with the verb to **know**. This then sets forth the end contemplated in the righteousness of faith. Technically, the verb implies a personal relation between the knower and the known, involving the influence of the object of knowledge upon the knower. The necessary result of intimate communion with Christ is a personal knowledge of Him.

As in the Old Testament, the knowledge of God involves both an awe and a fear of Him, and an understanding of the revelation He has given of Himself (cf. Isaiah 11:2). This movement from ignorance to knowledge is accompanied by a kind of familiarity, perhaps because to know Christ is to have the key which unlocks the secrets of life's meaning. In Galatians 4, Paul uses the image of sonship which he says is a coming "to know God, or rather to be known by God" (verse 9). It is on His account that we are to count everything as loss. The knowing of Christ Jesus as our Lord is of surpassing worth.

With the unveiling of this deepest secret of Christian experience we are to realize that this knowing of the believer includes a) the power of Christ's resurrection, and b) the fellowship of His sufferings in which there is a conformity to His death. The regulating idea in both considerations is the organic connection between Christ and the Christian.

The power referred to here is not primarily that by which Christ was raised from the dead, nor that possessed by Christ to raise up believers. It is rather the power of the Risen Christ which becomes a subject of practical knowledge and experience in the inner life of the one in whom Christ lives. As a result of His victory over death and sin Christ has all power in heaven and on earth. It is this power and this victory that Christ imparts to His own.

While in verse 11 of our text Paul will speak of the resurrection as a hoped-for experience after death, and realizing that the historical experience of the Christ in the resurrection is an inspiring remembrance, there is here, however, an articulated desire for the death-overcoming spiritual life as a present and continuously active force in the war against the power of sin in us. Then one can truly claim to have a righteousness from God.

But, as Karl Barth reminds us in his commentary on Philippians, "to know Easter is to be implicated in the events of Good Friday." Part of the effect of the power of Christ's resurrection is to clothe us with the shame of the Cross. A conformity to His death is a spiritual process which is a result of a true uniting with Christ (cf. Romans 6:3-12 and Galatians 2:19-20). Involved in this mystical union is an identifying with Christ in His obedient life, sufferings and death, then glory. It is this attitude, a crucifying of the flesh, which invites contradiction, reproach, and persecution from those who do not know the Christ. But this process of development works for good and a conformity to the Son for those in whom He lives (cf. Romans 8:28,29).

When considering the final resurrection in verse 11, Paul's "if possible" is not an indication of doubt but an expression of humility and self-distrust. There is here an implied idea of purpose. The goal of the apostle is a perfect knowledge of Christ and an unbroken fellowship with Him. This will be possible only in the final resurrection from the dead. The need of the hour is for watchfulness and a constant striving (cf. I Corinthians 9:24-27). The experiences of our lives warn us that while God is faithful, the difficulty lies with us and our being so conformed to Christ's death that sin will not have mastery over us.

The great crisis of our existence will come in that resurrection when Christ acknowledges His faithful servant and makes him a full sharer in His glory. This is the consummation of our mystical union and fellowship with Christ. The true child of God, who glories only in Jesus Christ, will then be at home.

## HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF THE RESURRECTION

by Vern Ratzlaff\*

One of the sharp issues in religious study today is the attempt to validate religious claims objectively. Having occupied myself this past year with two different religions, both of which have been influenced by the Judaeo-Christian faith (i.e. Islam and Mormonism) and both of which attempt objective verification of claims, I have been struck by the close parallels between their apologetic literature and that of the Christian faith.

### Claims Common to these Religions.

What are some of the claims common to these religions? One of the most widely used which purports to establish the divine nature of, respectively, the Bible, the Koran, and the Book of Mormon/Doctrine and Covenants/Pearl of Great Price, is that each is free of inconsistency, that there are no self contradictions within it. But while freedom from inconsistency might be regarded as a **necessary** condition of divine revelation/inspiration, it is by no means a **sufficient** condition. Most contemporary geometry texts are free of internal inconsistencies, and yet their authors seldom, if ever, lay claim to divine inspiration on that score.

Another claim made by the proponents of such writings is the pragmatic results issuing from their application to life—such as the fulfillment of prophecy from each and the numbers of converts, i.e. those whose lives have been “changed” as a result. But here again interpretation is not unambiguous, for many of the prophecies are not so clear but that a number of events could have satisfied them (and the convinced believer can always marshal interpreted events to establish his required case). Also, the pragmatic test appears to be a somewhat doubtful method of verification. Although most would agree that peace is better than war, that contentment is better than strife, the overwhelming presence of the latter of these pairs in society indicates that what pragmatically **is**, may not constitute what is held to be **true**. Also, history is replete with examples of discarded beliefs which at one time “worked” (i.e. beliefs which adequately served their purpose, such as the belief in aether, in the corpuscular nature of light, and there is nothing to suggest, *a priori*, that the beliefs now held will always work. Pragmatics, then, is not an infallible guide to truth. Furthermore, the number of adherents is no guide; to believe this

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is to fall prey to the **vox populi** fallacy; it is the pursuit of **demos** to the ludicrous, that “four million Frenchmen can’t be wrong.”

A further claim made by each of the previously mentioned religions is that which focuses on the experience of the individual. “Try this,” he is told; “pray that God will show you Mohammed/Joseph Smith to have been his prophet.” But such claims merely demonstrate the ability of the individual to internalize conceptions/ideas, since there is no objective way in which an individual experience can be doubted. This approach is the one frequently used by systems from the Moslem through that of Father Divine, and individual experience (if gained) is irrefutable. How can one convince a person he has not **really** experienced Allah? the immaterial person of a material God-head? the truth-claims of Armstrong? pink elephants? Individual/subjective experiences are irrefutable as long as we hold to the concept of private minds.<sup>1</sup>

What this introduction does, then, is to set the stage for my affirmation of the role of the resurrection in the Christian apologetic. The resurrection is asserted to be an historical event; “objective empirical evidence for Jesus Christ and his message is the only truly valid Christian apologetic possible, for it alone is subject to the canons of evidence employed in other fields of endeavour.”<sup>2</sup> This is an important statement, presupposing two important dimensions: Christianity is an historical religion; the documents of this historical religion rise or fall with historical investigation,<sup>3</sup> that is, the canons of historical methodology must be applied to these documents.<sup>4</sup>

First, why the emphasis on Christianity’s being an historical religion?

### Christianity as an Historical Religion

If the Tuebingen school did anything worthwhile (and in particular its founder, Ferdinand Christian Bauer), it was to emphasize the necessity for the historical. Thus, we do not start with speculative arguments or existential experience; “we start with Jesus, historically-critically, by examination of the literary sources, the Gospels, wherein his story is told.”<sup>5</sup> Thus “faith can be substantiated or repudiated, not speculatively, but historically-critically.”<sup>6</sup> Christianity is recognized as a historical religion—it is not a way of life, a philosophy or a particular Weltanschauung; it is embedded in the historical time-sequence, where God entered the time-stream, was “born,” “suffered under Pontius Pilate.”<sup>7</sup> If we remove that, Christianity ceases to exist as anything more than one ethical approach among many. The concept of God is inseparable from the concept of His acting concretely in history (cf. Wright & Fuller, *The Book of the Acts of God*), and his ultimate act in history is himself coming as man. To that extent Christianity is irrevocably bound to the historical process and, of course, must count on that factor in attempting to see the relation between

the view 1) of a force in history outside the cause-effect sequence, and that 2) in which reality is bounded by the cause-effect sequence.

Here, of course, one recognizes that the historical method can, at the most, grant only probability, never certainty. "Evidence exists, and it is certainly far from nothing . . . . But the total Christian hypothesis, so illuminating, metaphysically and compelling existentially,"<sup>8</sup> becomes the basis which grants coherence, then, to metaphysics, history and existential quest. Christianity is a historical religion in that much of its content (e.g. "Jesus rose") is found within the time-sequence, but that other elements in its content (e.g. "Jesus' resurrection grants me power for my life under God") give meaning to (i.e. they interpret) the previous historical datum. (It is this reciprocal relationship which Montgomery does not always sufficiently verbalize or seemingly recognize.)

### Christianity's Relationship to Documents

Second, are the documents reliable as historical evidence? Here the subject is again obviously too complex for more than a few general comments.

- a. How many documents are necessary to validate a given event?
- b. If more are necessary as the event becomes more unique, who establishes such a proportion, or the criteria for such a proportion?
- c. Are the NT documents acceptable in part or in whole?<sup>9</sup> that is, do we accept the parables, but not the miracles, on grounds of historical probability?

Of these and related questions, none have been more clearly and cogently presented than those by David Hume in his "Of Miracles," in **An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding**, wherein he dismisses the possibility of miracles (the resurrection in particular) on grounds both of their historical improbability and the nature of "scientific" generalizations.

But even if we grant a "chance" universe (which Hume through his categories cannot deny) or a consistent universe (which Hume through his categories cannot prove), the historical probability of any event's occurring (when touted either before or after the event) is infinitesimally small. Considered as a possibility in 1930 or in 1990, the historical probability of my ever sitting at my desk frantically finishing a paper on "Historical Aspects of the Resurrection" for publication in an April/70 issue of **The Voice** is a very minute one. Similarly, for any given event—ever, anywhere,—the historical probability of that particular event occurring is not one upon which even Las Vegas gamblers would stake many fortunes. Whately<sup>10</sup> develops an admirable case in which the

astronomical career of Napoleon is correlated with each of Hume's categories of disavowal of the miraculous. Whately concludes that "those who profess themselves advocates of free inquiry—who disdain to be carried along with the stream of popular opinion—to follow up their own principles fairly and consistently . . . . If they have already rejected some histories, on the ground of their being strange and marvellous—of their relating facts unprecedented and at variance with the established course of nature—let them not give credit to another history which lies open to the very same objection—the extraordinary and romantic tale which we have just considering"<sup>11</sup> (i.e., Napoleon's).

What implications are there in the preceding discussion for the historical consideration of the resurrection? What issue is at stake here in relation to historical methodology? The most obvious approach is this: when there are phenomena (historical "data"), an interpretation of the data (explaining/accounting for their origin, occurrence, inter-relationships, consequences) follows. Thus, the position which takes seriously the view that the corpse taken from the cross actually received life again, asserts that it is precisely this view which most adequately accounts for the transformation of dispirited followers, and for the emergence of a movement that "turned the world upside down."

The view that the resurrection took place in history—that is, that at one point in the time-space continuum there was a corpse, at the next point there was a complete transformation (into precisely what there is no clear indication),—arises from a belief in an empty tomb (the emphasis of the Gospels) and from a belief in the witness of those who had seen the risen Jesus. Paul's own view of the historical occurrence of the resurrection was two-fold: there were many witnesses of the risen Jesus who could still be contacted (1 Cor. 15:5-8); there were changed lives (Acts 3:15,16; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). (Again, the latter appears to be at the most a necessary condition; we must beware of committing the fallacy of affirming the consequent, e.g. If Christ rose, then people's lives can be changed. People's lives can be changed. Therefore, Christ rose.)<sup>12</sup>

What I have attempted to do in this short discussion of the "Historical Aspects of the Resurrection" is to draw attention to the following:

1. An historical resurrection is the central affirmation of the Christian apologetic as over against other faiths (e.g. Moslem);
2. This is so because Christianity is an historical religion;
3. If Christianity is an historical religion, it must meet the canons of historical methodology;
4. There are strong indications that the documents of Christianity are reliable;
5. Consistency in historical judgment should grant these

documents hearing along with other documents normally accepted without question;

6. The New Testament documents, stating the claims for a risen Jesus, provide a schema to interpret a wide spectrum of phenomena (e.g. the church);

7. The historical resurrection provides at least one objective point for investigating the claims of "competing" religions.

1 On this point, see E. J. Carnell, "Niebuhr's Criteria of Verification", in *The Case for Biblical Christianity*, Ronald Nash (ed.), Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1969.

2 J. W. Montgomery, "Apologetic Approach to Muhammed Ali", *Muslim World*, Hartford Seminary Foundation, Hartford, April, 1961, p. 121.

3 This must not be taken in an absolute sense, however. To state that we only have faith because we believe the Bible is to come perilously close to creating a "paper pope"; it is to place "faith" in our "belief".

4 J. W. Montgomery, "History and Christianity", *HIS*, Chicago, December, 1964; January, 1965; February, 1965; March, 1965.

5 F. C. Bauer, "Das Christentum und die Christliche Kirche der drei ersten Jahrhunderte", quoted in Peter Hodgson's *The Formation of Historical Theology*, Harper and Row, New York, 1966, p. 103.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 102.

7 For a contrasting presentation of a non-historical religion, see H. G. MacPherson's "What Would a Scientific Religion Be Like?", *Saturday Review*, August 2, 1969.

8 J. V. L. Casserley, *Apologetics and Evangelism*, Westminster, Philadelphia, 1962, p. 115.

9 See F. F. Bruce's *Are the New Testament Documents Reliable?*, IVF, London, 1956 (copy. 1943).

10 Richard Whately, "Historic Doubts Concerning Napoleon Bonaparte", *Essays in Philosophy*, Pocket Library, New York, 1960.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 170.

12 Two books dealing succinctly, in standard "conservative" format, with the historical-critical approach to the resurrection are: Merrill Tenney, *The Reality of the Resurrection*, Harper & Row, New York, 1963; Leslie Weatherhead, *The Christian Agnostic*, Abingdon, Nashville, 1965, esp. pp. 124-141.

## THE RESURRECTION: FAITH'S INTERPRETIVE CENTER

by David Ewert

(Reprinted by permission from the MB Herald, April 19, 1962.)

In the story of redemption a number of focal points strike the eye of the reader of sacred history. The first act of redemption's exciting drama—the Old Testament—has the salvation of Israel out of Egypt as its fulcrum. By this unique redemptive event a company of run-away slaves became God's people. This deliverance out of bondage becomes the interpretive center for all of Israel's theology. It was, for the Old Testament saint, a clear proof that Yahweh was Lord of history, and that he was mightier than any other god. It was a guarantee of divine faithfulness, for this salvation was in keeping with the promises of God to the Patriarchs. It was a most convincing demonstration of God's love for His people. It was the fountain of hope in the dark hours of history, for if God could deliver from Egyptian bondage, He could save from any other foe.

But the first act of the drama of redemption receives its full significance only after the second act—the death and resurrection of Jesus—has been unfolded. With the triumph of Christ over all evil forces, the deliverance anticipated by the prophets became an actuality. The decisive point in the whole story of redemption has now been reached.

Misguided countrymen of Jesus had put Him to death. Their intentions were good, for they were trying to preserve the true faith of Israel in the face of Christ's daring denunciations of their religious institutions. But they failed to see God's real intention. By a strange paradox their very misunderstanding had resulted in Jesus' redemptive death and resurrection. By their treachery they had unwittingly shared in the fulfillment of the divine plan of redemption. Defeat had been turned to triumph. Christ was alive.

The resurrection became the foundation-stone, as it were, of the Christian community which came together again after the death of Christ. "There was no opposition between belief and fact, because belief is built on fact" (Cerfau). Just as the Exodus event had become the interpretive center for Israel's faith, the resurrection now became the interpretive centre of the faith of the new people of God. The entire New Testament was written from the post-resurrection viewpoint.

Just as Israel counted her history from the exodus out of Egypt, so the Early Church counted history from the midpoint of time—the resurrection. Although the numbering of years both forward and backward from the coming of Christ has not been in vogue longer than two centuries, for the early Christians (who showed no interest in the calendar as such) the resurrection of

their Lord was the turning point in history, and past history, the present order, and man's denouement, all were interpreted from his new perspective. It is therefore quite in order to speak of the resurrection as the interpretive center of New Testament faith.

## I. A NEW INTERPRETATION OF THE PAST

**The Life of Jesus.** From their post-resurrection standpoint the early preachers of the Gospel saw the life of Jesus in a new light. This is reflected in our written Gospels, and in the speeches of the Book of Acts. (The Epistles do not show any biographical interest at all.) The death and resurrection of Jesus are so crucial and pivotal that the interest in the first 30 years of Jesus' life is almost negligible. Of course we do have birth narratives, for a person who rises from the dead and ascends to glory must also have a unique entry into this world. But outside of the visit to the temple at the age of 12, we have no materials in the Gospels from which to construct a full life of Jesus. Later apocryphal Gospels tried to fill in this void. The ministry of Jesus, however, is described because it led him to the cross and to the resurrection. One can easily see where the interest of the Gospel writers lies if one looks at the space given to the Passion (used here to include the experiences of Jesus in Jerusalem from the time of his entry into the city in order to die, up to the resurrection). Of Matthew's 28 chapters, 8 are passion accounts, as are also 8 of Luke's 24 and 6 of Mark's 16. And in John, Jesus arrives in Jerusalem in chapter 12 and never leaves the city until His passion is completed. So, from the perspective given to the apostles by the resurrection, the life of Jesus was viewed in a new light.

**The Death of Christ.** The resurrection was of utmost significance for the meaning of the death of Christ on the cross. For Jewish minds the cross was a serious stumbling block in the message of the Apostles. The Apostles themselves found it very difficult to accept the Cross in the teaching of their Lord, and one can only surmise how utterly defeated they must have felt when the body of Jesus lay in the tomb. Had they not been taught from their childhood that only one accursed of God was to be impaled? Now He in whom they had set all their hopes had been nailed to a stake. How completely shattered all their expectations were can be seen from the dialogue between the risen Lord and the Emmaeus disciples (Lk. 24). The Cross had no place in the Jewish hopes for the Messiah. Isaiah 53 had not been interpreted by Jewish scribes in such a way that Israel anticipated a crucified Messiah. What a problem to resolve for the believers! But in the light of the resurrection the Cross was seen as an integral part of the whole pattern of redemption. Without the Cross there would be no risen Lord.

**The Hope of a Messiah.** Not only did the life of Jesus take

on a new meaning and not only was the death of Christ seen in a new light, but also the entire Old Testament was seen through eyes now opened by the light of the resurrection. The contrast refrain, "that it might be fulfilled," suggests the new perspective from which the Old Testament hopes for a Redeemer were interpreted. The whole sacrificial system of Israel was cast into a new light, for in it the New Testament preachers saw the anticipations of former days of an innocent death that should atone for the guilt of man. The prophetic utterance about the new covenant, and the hopes for a new people of God now received their full and deepest meaning. The risen Lord was none other than the Messiah for whom Israel waited and whom the Old Testament anticipated. So the last days had dawned; a new age had come; a former age, with its central sanctuary, its priesthood, its sacrifices, had come to an end. The whole of past history is given a new interpretation from the standpoint of the resurrection.

## II. A NEW INTERPRETATION OF THE PRESENT

**The Heavenly Dimension.** In the light of the resurrection, post-resurrection faith took on new dimensions for the present as well. "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). These words come from the first recorded Christian sermon and express the emphatic, divine reversal of the judgment men passed on Jesus. God exalted Him and so confounded all the wicked plans of men. This does not mean that the followers of Jesus did not think of Jesus as Lord and Christ prior to the resurrection, but the resurrection gripped the imagination of those first believers and revolutionized their outlook. "Not only did it convince the disciples that Jesus was richly and overflowingly alive; it wrote a new chapter in theology" (Turner). There was no doubt in their mind about the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth. They spoke of Him as "a man approved of God" (Acts 2:22); they remembered His words (Acts 20:35). Jesus, they said, "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). But if they had thought only in terms of the earthly life of Jesus, and confined their thinking to His humanity, their faith could never have surmounted the tragedy of the crucifixion. However, from the vantage point of the resurrection, the humanity of Jesus recedes into the background in the dazzling light of His divinity, His Lordship.

The attitude of the resurrection community to the living Christ can be seen in the names which they gave to Him. First in importance, here, is 'Lord.' The word was an ordinary form of polite address, much like our 'Sir.' It was used by the student addressing the teacher, like the Hebrew equivalent 'Rabbi.' With the article it could denote a man in an important position. But it also had a distinctly religious use in the Orient. In keeping with this use the Septuagint translators used 'Lord' to translate the divine name, Yahweh. When the Christians called Jesus 'Lord' they meant that He is God.

The Christians who lived beyond the resurrection of Jesus confessed the Lordship of Christ in a meaningful way in that they chose the resurrection day of Jesus to be the day on which they gathered to worship their Lord, and they called this day 'the Lord's day.' The present life had taken on a heavenly dimension: Jesus was the exalted Lord whom they confessed and worshiped.

**The Horizontal Dimension.** The victory over evil forces was won at the resurrection, but life went on as always. The end was not yet. How was the new people of God to interpret its present existence with reference to the world of men—the horizontal dimension of its life. Jesus had expected His death and resurrection to be of decisive significance for the fulfillment of God's purpose. That event had now taken place. The Lordship of Christ had begun; a new age had dawned, an age that would end with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. What about the time between the two comings? The risen Lord points out the significance of the interim period to His disciples in Acts 1:6-8: "You shall be my witnesses . . ." In this period between the resurrection and return of Christ it is the duty of the Church to "go out into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." The resurrection, then, is the interpretive center for the mission of the church.

The church proclaims the victory which Christ won in the resurrection to a dying world. It does not go into all the world to conquer the world for Christ, but to announce that Christ has conquered. Oscar Cullmann has used a figure from the last World War to illustrate the church's situation in the post-resurrection period. Just as D-Day was a sure sign that V-Day would follow, even though the battle might still be hard and long, so the resurrection (D-Day) is a pledge that, although there may be momentary set-backs and although there may be much suffering to be endured and labor to be performed, the battle is fought in the faith that the Parousia (V-Day) is coming. The horizontal dimension of the church's existence during this interim period was given to it by the resurrection.

**The Human Dimension.** Not only did the resurrection have meaning for the church's faith in Christ; not only did it interpret to the church the role it was to play in this period of waiting; but the resurrection also had important implications for the behaviour of the believers who live on the borderline between this age and the coming age. It led them to a wholesome evaluation of the things of life. Since Christ had been raised, and now sat at the right hand of God, their affections were set on the things above and not on the things of this earth (Col. 3:1-3). It gave them great perseverance in suffering. "We are afflicted, but not crushed . . . knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence . . .

So we do not lose heart . . . because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen" (II Cor. 4:7-18). Why, says Paul, why am I in jeopardy daily, if the dead do not rise (I Cor. 15:30)? The early Christians did not count their life dearly because of the hope of the resurrection. The resurrection faith cut deeply into their conduct. "If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die'" (I Cor. 15:32). But death does not end all, so we must live soberly. No longer can the believers dare to live for themselves. "He died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised" (II Cor. 5:15). Nothing can separate the believer from his Lord any more, therefore, "If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord . . . For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord of the dead and of the living" (Rom. 14:8,9). Here was hope and comfort in the dark moments when death snatched loved ones away, "For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep" (I Thess. 4:13).

These and many other facets of the resurrection life suggest the new dimensions which were given to the conduct of the believers in the post-resurrection period. We live in that same period and must bear witness to the same resurrection life.

### III. A NEW INTERPRETATION OF THE FUTURE

**The Conquest of Evil.** The kingdom of Satan is made up of the demons and men under his sway. Only in the act of total dedication to the will of God by which Jesus went to the cross was it possible for Satan's stranglehold on the human race to be broken. For the early Christians the resurrection was the demonstration that this deliverance had been accomplished for all. The direct relation between the death and resurrection of Jesus and the routing of Satan is implicit throughout the New Testament. So there are cosmic dimensions in Christ's victory over the network of evil powers and forces. But there is also deliverance from guilt and the enslavement of sin. This aspect of Christ's triumph is underscored in a particular way in Romans 6, where the believer is said to share in the benefits of Christ's resurrection and so the life in sin has come to an end.

**The End of Time.** The early Christians were persuaded that the redemptive role of Jesus did not come to an end with the resurrection. The resurrection already determined the end of history, which was the triumph of God. "God has fixed a day," said Paul to the Athenians, "on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed, and of this He has given assurance by raising Him from the dead." Perhaps in no book of the New Testament is the 'end' and outcome of history so clearly portrayed as in the Revelation to John the Apostle. The

book is a challenge to the suffering saints to overcome "as I overcame." The issue between God and Satan is sharply defined, and out of the battle of Armageddon, the warrior-Messiah emerges triumphantly over the Beast and the false prophet. In the final scenes of the book the saints share in Christ's victory over Satan. This culmination of history was not a question of academic speculation to John or, for that matter, any early Christian. Their prayer was, "Come, Lord Jesus!" (22:20).

The rising of the Easter sun marked the dawn of a new day, but its rays also lit up the history of redemption; its light illuminates our present existence; as the clouds of wickedness and opposition to God become blacker as history draws to its completion, the Easter sun shines brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

### A BETTER RESURRECTION

I have no wit, no words, no tears;  
My heart within me like a stone  
Is numbed too much for hopes or fears.  
Look right, look left, I dwell alone;  
I life mine eyes, but dimmed with grief  
No everlasting hills I see;  
My life is in the falling leaf:  
O Jesus, quicken me.

My life is like a faded leaf,  
My harvest dwindled to a husk:  
Truly my life is void and brief  
And tedious in the barren dusk;  
My life is like a frozen thing,  
No bud nor greenness can I see;  
Yet rise it shall—the sap of Spring;  
O Jesus, rise in me.

My life is like a broken bowl,  
A broken bowl that cannot hold  
One drop of water for my soul  
Or cordial in the searching cold;  
Cast in the fire the perished thing;  
Melt and remould it, till it be  
A royal cup for Him, my King:  
O Jesus, drink of me.

by Christina G. Rossetti\*  
(1830-1894)

\* English poetess of Italian parentage; known for her ballads and mystical religious lyrics which are often marked by symbolism, vividness of detail, and intensity of feeling.

Ἐν ἡχῇ δὲ λόγος,  
καὶ ὁ λόγος τὸ πρόσ-  
τον θεόν, καὶ θεὸς δὲ  
ὁ λόγος. αὐτὸς δὲ τὸ  
λόγος πρόστιν θεόν.  
πάντα δὲ αὐτὸν ἐπέντε,  
καὶ χαρίς αὐτῷ ἐφένει  
οὐδὲ εἰν τῷ γένετον.

## THE PREACHING LAB

conducted by John Regehr\*

### The General Intent

Easter is coming, and with it the need to preach about the death and resurrection of Christ. Even though we see these as being the cardinal issues of the faith, we feel at a loss to know what to say. Has it not all been said over and over again?

Let's come at the matter from a distance, and decide on the general intent of the sermon? Shall we set out to explain, to inspire, to convince, or to actuate? Any one of these would be a worthy intent.

**Explain** - give insight into the meaning of the cross, the death of Jesus, the empty tomb, our resurrection, the resurrection life, etc.

**Inspire** - lead our hearers to rejoice in what we have (a multitude of benefits) in the redemption that results from Jesus' death and resurrection.

**Convince** - prove that Jesus really did die, and rise again; that this is an historic fact.

**Actuate** - to lead our hearers to decide to live the resurrection life.

The problem suddenly is not, "What is there to talk about?" Now it is, "How can I make a selection?" Any one of those general intents make room for a dozen sermons and more.

### Focusing the Intent

On the grounds of congregational need and personal inclination we decide on a combination: to inspire and to actuate. We want people to rejoice in what they have in Jesus Christ. Perhaps rejoice in the fact that Jesus actually chose the cross as the way to save the world. He had other alternatives. Our people are to make that choice with him.

It comes to our mind that the devil suggested other alternatives to our Lord.

**Text:** Matthew 4:1-11

### 1. Save the world by making stones to bread!

a) The immediate concern is that Jesus look after his own needs, like the contractor who makes bread for himself from stone

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and concrete and mortar. (The stones may also be the tradesman's skills on the doctor's pills).

b) But the deeper implication is that men must be saved from starvation. Why not exhaust your life doing that? Build great irrigation projects, and make a garden out of every wilderness! There are even divine promises for such undertakings, and men will honor you. Save the world from hunger!

c) But Jesus chose to save men from sin, and he moved deliberately to the cross.

## 2. Save the world by doing the spectacular!

a) Men are looking for someone to bring them something from another world, or perhaps to rescue them for brief moments from the world in which they are. Life is a drab drudgery. The days are monotonous, the job is grey routine. Why not save men from this kind of existence?

b) You are no ordinary man. You have a hold on another world, and it is in your power to let men experience that world. Demonstrate its power, and defy the ordinary!

c) Numerous possibilities exist: daring sports, fine arts, education, music, entertainment of all kinds. All of these will save men from monotony. Is that not a worthy goal?

d) Jesus chose to save men more deeply. He saves at the heart of man's being. He saves from sin. For this the cross and the resurrection were necessary.

## 3. Save the world through compromise with its own structures.

a) The devil forces Jesus to look upon the kingdoms of the world: social, economic, political, educational, recreational, ideological. They are his kingdoms, and by them he is achieving his purpose: the destruction of mankind.

b) What will Jesus do about it? To defy them single-handed is utterly foolhardy! It will result in nothing less than the cross. Then why not compromise? Why not join the system and become influential within and through the structure?

c) Perhaps Jesus could become the leader of the civil rights movement, or the Prime Minister of Canada, or the general secretary of the U.N. These would afford great influence.

d) But that which the devil posed as a threat, Jesus chose as the means by which he would redeem men—the cross. That with which he was asked to compromise was the very bondage from which he wished to redeem men.

## Conclusion

I am grateful that Jesus did not stop at saving men from hunger, from monotony, or from the injustices of the kingdoms of this world. Aren't you?

Why then should we seek fulfillment of life in that which is less than Jesus' dominant purpose?



## BOOK REVIEWS

**Peacemakers in a Broken World**, John A. Lapp (ed.)

Herald Press, Scottdale, Penna., 1969

This book will find its readers among those concerned about our "broken world"—a world where peace has become the extraordinary condition. How can this continuous condition of war be changed: War-unrest-war-unrest-war-rebellion . . . ?- The problem seems to be so complicated that many stop believing in the possibility of peace. The Christian however is constantly reminded of his Master's words: "Blessed are the peacemakers . . ." (Matthew 5:9). How can he ignore the challenge of these words?

In our Mennonite community there are, fortunately, many men and women who search and struggle for a solution. To be sure, we all agree that we have a role as peacemakers, yet our understanding of this role and our interpretation of Christ's words may not be the same. The editor of **Peacemakers in a Broken World** must be lauded for his selection of twelve essays, each written by a different author. Thus he presents us with a good cross-section of views on the question of "peace and our role as peacemakers."

There is something to be learned in everyone of these essays although a critical reader may disagree with some of the statements made. For example, one detects the feeling that Americans are "credited" with an unfair share of responsibility. The ideal of the Black Panther Movement, as it is presented by one of the authors, is obviously outdated. Open to question is also such a statement as: "It will be a sign of progress when Mennonites stop

praising Latin American military regimes which stifle the liberty and expression of dissenters even though they give special privileges to favored minorities." Do we Americans understand certain realities of underdeveloped countries?

Most down to earth and yet closest to heaven I find the chapter entitled **Voices of Faith**. One of the authors, Shetler, says: "True peace among men can be established only when peace is first established in men's hearts and man is reconciled to God." . . . "Today, in many Christian circles the humanistic phrase of Shalom (peace) has become the gospel, with the divine dimension being almost forgotten."

As we read the three chapters: "Voices of Love," "Voices of Faith" and "Voices of Hope," we may discover our own position in one of the essays, but we should also carefully examine the position of those authors who seem to take a position contrary to our own thinking. We should read, compare, search our own hearts, and not last the Word of God, to find perhaps a new position for ourselves.

George Epp

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**Interpreting the Resurrection**, by Neville Clark.

London: SCM Press, 1967, Pp. 128.

Neville Clark is an English pastor. **Interpreting the Resurrection**, like his other books, is designed to interpret themes which are significant for the believer and the church. This book on the resurrection is a blending of a scholarly biblical interpretation, a contemporary Christian apologetic for the resurrection event and faith, and a pastoral concern for the church to continually experience the resurrection grace and power. The themes discussed in this issue of **The Voice** are all present in **Interpreting the Resurrection**.

The understanding of the resurrection finds its roots in the Old Testament. These are traced in chapter one under the caption, "According to the Scriptures." Here Clark shows his ability to compress the significant data into a small space, without causing the reader to get lost in the details.

"Between Two Worlds" (ch. 2) takes us to the Gospels and shows us Jesus who is both the fulfillment of the former and the initiator of the age to come. In His person, the two ages are

joined together. This is how Jesus perceives His place in history and redemption.

Only by his death . . . can the Kingdom come. He bears the future. Yet while the Ministry lasts, there is the continuing sense of being set between two worlds. As he moves towards Jerusalem, the inescapable eschatological suspension remains (p. 42).

The remainder of the book is devoted to explaining the significance of the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection of Christ meant that, for the Church, "tomorrow is now."

It meant fulfillment; and therefore a complete recasting of expectation . . . The proclaimer had to become the one proclaimed. The crucified and risen one had to become the content of the Church's gospel. For the Cross and Resurrection constituted the great eschatological intervention of God, the messianic reign had begun, and the End of history had taken place within history. Only the working out of the eschatological programme remained (p. 50).

The Church then is risen with Christ. For her also tomorrow is now! From end to end the New Testament rings with the note of fulfillment. The messianic age has dawned (p. 62).

The resurrection of Jesus is the key to our own resurrection and to the consummation of the age. Jesus' resurrection is the "link that joins the crucifixion on the one hand to the faith and proclamation of the early church on the other." This resurrection, contrary to the assertion of critical modern theological interpretation, is an historical event which finds its confirmation in the faith of the believer. In this sense, 'the third day' is linked with 'the Lord's day'.

There is no human way from the crucifixion to the Resurrection morning. He who proclaims the Gospel can not drag a man across the chasm. All he can do is to lead men to the exposed frontier where it is revealed that human faith can never break through the doors that shut men in with their broken dreams. This is the inalienable prerogative of the risen Lord (p. 107).

Clark leads us through to the resurrection faith by means of the historical Jesus. He faces the contemporary form of the problems related to the resurrection. At some points, particularly the historical validity of the Gospels, one enters into mental debate with the writer. At the central points, however, the reader's 'Amen!' is not only a voice of agreement, but a fresh assertion of the resurrection faith.

Allen Guenther

**Easter Faith and History**, by Daniel P. Fuller.

Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965. pp. 279.  
\$4.95.

The author is Dean of Faculty at Fuller Theological Seminary and son of the well-known radio broadcaster, Charles Fuller.

The point of the book is to enter into the current theological debate centering on the historicity of Christ's resurrection, with a vigorous apologetic for Luke's approach to that event. The major portion of the book investigates the historical problem posed by Lessing during the Enlightenment and similar problems posed by rationalism, nineteenth-century liberalism, twentieth-century dialectical theology and the new quest for the historical Jesus. The remainder of the book presents Luke's approach to the historical resurrection and its significance for the faith that saves.

Since the most central idea in the early Christian confessions is that Jesus is Lord because of his resurrection, Christian faith is irrevocably tied to, and based upon God's acts in history (p. 25). Can such a faith stand up to the problems posed by modern historiography?

Lessing maintained that historical events are "accidental" and cannot be a satisfactory basis for believing an eternal truth (p. 35). Kant likewise regarded faith and fact, or faith and history, as separated by an "ugly ditch," and historical fact as incapable of conveying eternal truths; such could come only from the depth of the soul (p. 35). Liberal theologians, influenced by philosophers, began to pare down New Testament events which suggested a divine entry into history by Jesus Christ and seemed contrary to the normal cause and effect events within the stream of history. Subsequently, all the miracles of the New Testament were explained away and Jesus became merely an ideal man. It was suggested that the New Testament accounts of Christ's life and his person were largely unhistorical and the product of the theological views of the early church (p. 63). One of the most influential champions of such views has been Bultmann with his theory of myth.

But can Christ's resurrection stand the scrutiny of the historical method? Fuller maintains that it can. Luke, in the Gospel and in the Book of Acts, indicates that the Gentile mission to all the world emerging out of the Jewish community, and led by Paul in large measure, was set into motion by the momentous event of the resurrection. The appearances of Jesus Christ galvanized Christ's followers into action (p. 220). Luke's account of how the apostles and Paul came to believe in the resurrection stems from the appearance of the resurrected Christ and the activity of the ascended Lord.

Marc Bloch and other historians, who refuse to allow the possibility in history of marked deviations (such as the resurrection), need to be corrected by Pannenberg's view that "overly-pronounced deviations can occur without destroying the possibility for historical knowledge, as long as it can be assumed that these deviations take place in a milieu that behaves according to analogy" (p. 251). Fuller concludes that the New Testament accounts do not make sense if Christ did not rise. The faith of his followers was based on the fact of the resurrection and ours must likewise be based on that historic event. It is that fact which makes possible our present knowledge of Christ (p. 261).

This book, by an evangelical scholar, is heavy-going fare but provides for a good introduction into current theological debate.

Victor Adrian

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**In Debt to Christ**, by Douglas Webster.

Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957, 158 pp.

In this book Webster's aim is not to settle a theological issue, but to make a theological truth intelligible and meaningful to those who have chosen the way of the cross. In his own words: "The sole purpose of this book is that it may help some to 'survey the wondrous cross'." (p. 7). The angle from which this topic is treated is best described as 'devotional'. The book is divided into five chapters:

1) **The Cross Outstretched.** How does the Cross in all its aspects of bloodshed, treachery, disappointment, waste of life, etc., relate to man's experience? When tasting such experiences, man asks 'Why?' Even Christ on the Cross cried out "Why hast Thou forsaken me!" The Cross emulates the "tragic in our daily living" (p. 15). And in that fact man finds the most profound interpretation of his own tragic experiences.

2) **The Cross Observed.** In this chapter the meaning of Jesus's seven sayings on the Cross for man's experience are analyzed. These sayings, Webster contends, claim our attention first, not our pity, and require obedience, not tears (p. 28-30). He again finds the lesson of each saying evinced in the grim and profound realities of human life. For example: "Woman, behold thy son . . ." indicates the transforming of human relationships

at the Cross. A new sense of mutual love, care and responsibilities, is its result.

3) The Cross Interpreted. The thrust of this chapter concerns the Apostles' interpretation of the Cross. Their conviction that the Cross represents God acting on behalf of man's salvation is emphasized. The Cross symbolizes the awfulness of man's sin on the one hand, and the capacity to be made good on the other. The "way of the Cross" is the path to being made good.

4) The Cross Transposed. The Cross of the Christian requires identification with the will of God just as Christ's Cross demonstrates his identification with God's will. This in turn leads to an immersion in the plight of men with a view to alleviating that plight. The cross also evinces, in one sense, utter failure of an expectation. But this is a failure that is accepted and then leads to a new and deeper commitment, which in turn generates contentment in the face of definite limitations.

5) The Cross Proclaimed. What part does the Cross play in the mission of the Christian Church? "To take the Cross seriously means taking seriously the world for which Christ died and the brother for whom Christ died" (p. 133). The Cross makes every Christian a debtor and binds him with an obligation to proclaim it through preaching but also in the act of living (p. 138).

A careful reading of this book does in fact make the Cross become alive and authentic in one's own experience and commitment.

Henry J. Regehr

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#### The Many-Sided Cross of Jesus by Alan Walker

Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962, Pp. 111.

In the "foreword" to the little volume Alan Walker describes the cross of Jesus as the centre of his religious life and experience. It is this author's personal appropriation of the cross as well as his explanation of the practical value of Calvary which gives this book its appeal.

The image of the many-sided cross is used to good advantage in presenting the various aspects and implications of Christ's death. The first of these is the idea that the cross rather than exclusive of God is actually God centered. The second side demonstrates God's love: love which is universal, judgmental and eternal.

In order to counteract the tendency to sentimentalize the cross Walker emphasizes in his third "side" the objective reality

involved in Christ's death and asserts that "the love of God in Christ wins a response from our hearts precisely because it was a real deliverance he was winning for us." To illustrate, Walker describes Christ as a "suffering scientist" who makes personal sacrifices in order to grapple with the powers of disease.

In discussing the side of the cross which deals with the benefits of Christ's passion Walker admits the difficulty involved in defining the practical benefits of the cross. "Jesus died for me" means substitution and representation. As representative Christ expressed what is deepest in man's life: his longing for God, his tenderness and compassion. As sinless representative he can, moreover, express deeply and fully our penitence. And, finally, as representative Christ becomes our spokesman before God.

To understand the fifth side of the cross we must assume a "bifocal vision." Christ on the cross was a victim of the evil in the world but he was at the same time victor in the struggle between good and evil. One must therefore link it, not only to what has preceded it, but also to what followed--the triumph of his resurrection. And in a day in which we have come to associate evil, not so much with demons which inhabit the air, but with the human arena (wars, concentration camps, communism) Christ's victory has indeed a very practical value.

In his final chapter Walker turns his attention to the "cross of identification" which is found in close proximity to the cross of Christ. It is the Christian's cross to which Paul alludes in Phil. 3:10. What does it mean to identify with Christ's cross? It means accepting the stance of a servant; it means witness in lonely places; it involves close identification with those whom we serve; but to the "follower of Jesus" it also means ultimate triumph.

Esther Wiens

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#### The Cross in the New Testament by Leon Morris.

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965, Pp. 454.

"The atonement is the crucial doctrine of faith," Morris says in his Preface, and it is from this perspective that his book is written.

The format of this volume is simple: he traces the doctrine of the atonement (i.e. the cross) in nine chapters (three on the

gospels, three on the Paulines, one each on Acts and Hebrews, one on the Catholic epistles and Revelation). In each chapter there is a meticulous attention to the text itself with a minimum of Greek used in the exegesis. Morris is obviously writing for an audience that will follow his development without a strong classical-language background. The result is a book which represents somewhat a one-volume commentary on the New Testament, where the commentary is "restricted" to picking out **one** theme—the atonement.

Most authors who use footnotes extensively tend to exhaust their reader. Not so with Morris in **The Cross**. Although Morris averages more footnotes to the read-inch than most other non-German authors, he has the happy facility of making the marginalia as exciting as his own text. It is in the footnotes that he traces the thinking of other writers on the same point he is concerned with, e.g. when Morris develops his own concept of the "shedding" of blood (p. 52), a footnote (number 103!) on Burton's comments on the same verbal give valuable additional information, while at the same time not detracting from the unity of Morris' own development.

The value of the book is manifold. It is foremost in terms of a biblical theology of the atonement, and in terms of the centrality of the cross in the New Testament writings stands as an indispensable aid for the pastor working on this theme in his sermons. Further, Morris' view of the centrality of the cross (read, "atonement") gives new perspectives for, say, the interpretation of parables and miracles. Preaching from almost any section of the New Testament can, then, benefit from that which provides a kind of new hermeneutical key. Where for Luther such a key was "Wass sich um Christus treibet," for Morris it is more specifically the mission of reconciliation/atonement of the Christ.

In his "Conclusion" (where he summarizes his understanding of the New Testament view on sin, guilt, salvation, incarnation, etc. and also the differing views of the atonement, e.g. penal, teaching), Morris emphasizes that "while the manysidedness of the atonement must be borne in mind, substitution is at the heart of it. I do not mean that when we have said 'substitution' we have solved all our problems . . . But I do not think that we can escape substitution if we proceed on biblical premises." (p. 404, 405) **The Cross in the New Testament** points out that "however man's need be understood, that need is fully and abundantly met in Christ." (p. 419)

Vern Ratzlaff

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NOTE : Please correct your January 1970 copy of  
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## ***Coming in the July, 1970 Issue***

- Church Planting in the India MB Field ..... *D. J. Arthur*  
The Covenant Community and Mission ..... *David Ewert*