

THE RESURRECTION
ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND RELEVANCE

BY

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GRAHAMSTOWN
RHODES UNIVERSITY

1958

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INAUGURAL LECTURE DELIVERED AT
RHODES UNIVERSITY

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An Inaugural Lecture I conceive to be properly concerned either with the method a professor proposes to follow within his department, or with some theme he desires to make central to his teaching. It is because I hope it will always be the pivot of my theological teaching that I have chosen as my subject tonight the Fact, Significance, and Relevance of the Resurrection of our Lord.

What is the core of the Christian Faith? Our Lord's own words are explicit and clear: 'I am the resurrection and the life'; 'I am come that they might have life.' The centre is not the cross alone but also the resurrection: For the christian Faith, as Dr. John Baillie has said, 'the ultimate fact is not death but life, not the Cross but the Resurrection and the Crown. It is what it is only because it is persuaded that the sting of death has been drawn and the grave robbed of its victory; so that death has no more dominion over us¹.'

It is therefore the more strange that the resurrection of our blessed Lord should be so neglected in the thought and teaching of theologians. Innumerable books have been written on the cross and its saving power: but books on the resurrection comparatively can be counted almost on one's fingers. And it is a commonplace, if an oddly curious one,

¹ *And the Life Everlasting*, p. 285.

that in the majority of dogmatic structures the resurrection is barely, and sometimes never, mentioned. This strange tradition reaches back into the early middle ages, and persists to this day; so that one may study the works of most of our leading modern theologians, works devoted even to the meaning and purpose of Christ, and find the resurrection passed by without comment, or treated as an addendum which cannot or need not be fitted into the systematic or dogmatic scheme. To attempt an explanation is not appropriate to the scope of this lecture; but latterly the liberal mind, so timid and defensive when confronted by anything that savours of miracle, has clearly tried to evade the fact or explain it away.

In radical contrast was the apostolic message and the teaching of the early Church. The New Testament rings with triumph. Beginning at Pentecost, when Peter cried with vehement re-iteration, 'Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved by God among you, . . . ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it' (Acts 2, 22-24); 'This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses' (2: 32); 'Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ' (2: 36).

Examples could be multiplied to fill pages, for there is no doubt where the emphasis lies in the New Testament. It is clearly seen that if there was no resurrection Christ was not Lord, but only one more in the noble company of martyrs who through the ages have died for their convictions, sometimes true, sometimes mistaken, yet always enhancing the annals of men by their sacrifice, steadfastness, and courage. 'There be of them that have left a name behind them that their praises might be reported: and some there be which have no memorial; who are perished as though they had never been' (Ecclesiasticus 44: 9). They are a goodly company, but Jesus of Nazareth was not one

of them. He is unique, and therein lies his saving power. He suffered death, but was not overcome of it: on the third day he rose again from the dead with great power and victory. Remove the fact of resurrection, and the christian Faith withers at its heart. It is the sublime reality which gives enduring and saving texture to our Faith. Accordingly St. Paul could say, and must say, ' If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith also is vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ ' (1 Cor. 15: 14-15).

The christian tradition is simple and clear, and is not myth but history. This is not the place to attempt a critical discussion of the narrative of the Gospels, but it is merely factual to remind you that we have no texts or MSS giving evidence of any other figure of the ancient world so nearly contemporary or so abundantly repeated as those of the New Testament. These texts and MSS have been submitted to a scrutiny and analysis, incomparably more piercing and searching than that applied to any other historical documents. And they have now been arranged with an *apparatus criticus* which makes them accessible to scholars everywhere. Although our evidence for the existence, life, and teaching of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, let us say, is much less surely based than that for Jesus of Nazareth, it does not occur to us seriously to doubt what has come down to us concerning them. Is this because they do not challenge us so closely or demand of us so radical a change of outlook and attitude? We may dispassionately study their life and teaching without being compelled to accept or reject any one of them as Lord. Yet to deny the historicity of Jesus, as is often done today, without examining the evidence, is behaviour which in a laboratory would invite the most stringent strictures as being patently unscientific.

The christian tradition, richly supported by a galaxy of texts and manuscripts of which some fragments reach back to within a generation or two of the longest surviving of the apostles themselves, is embodied in detail in the New

Testament². Its central core is expressed in the baptismal creed (itself very ancient) in a series of stark verbs which fall with hammer-like blows: 'He was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead'. These describe one event and are not to be taken separately. You find this in the excited vehemence of St. Paul in his letter to the Romans, when he says, 'It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us' (8: 34). He was crucified, but is not a martyr to be remembered; he is a living Lord who reigns in power (for such is the meaning of the metaphor 'the right hand of God'), and in his exaltation intercedes for us within the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Of this the New Testament leaves us in no doubt.

Now we turn to the details of the apostolic tradition.

'He was crucified': the dreadful, ghastly fact is recorded with immeasurable restraint. His was not only a criminal's but an accursed death: 'Cursed is he that hangeth on a tree', the Jewish Scriptures had said (Deut. 21:23; cf. Gal. 3: 13). It was expulsion and utter rejection by his people. 'And sitting down, they watched him there'.

Yet Christians have always seen more than this. 'Behoved it not', records St. Luke in the early tradition, 'the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his

² See e.g. Kirsopp Lake's *Text of the New Testament* (a convenient guide) or *Interpreter's Bible*, XII. pp. 617-8. The earliest known fragment of the New Testament, the Rylands Papyrus 457, is dated ca. 120-150 A.D.; in the 3rd century larger fragments become available; the first complete copy is Codex Sinaiticus, 4th century. No classical records approximate this antiquity by centuries. Nevertheless, the essential witness to Christ in the New Testament is by the Holy Spirit to our spirits; it is never merely historical and anthropological but also soteriological and eschatological. The truth of Christ in Holy Scripture can be perceived only from within the Body of Christ, the Church, and by the enlightening of the Holy Spirit. This is because we never apprehend God in Christ merely by our intellects but by our spirits, and never merely of ourselves. Knowledge of God requires disclosure; it is accomplished by an act of God, and not of man alone; and ordinarily it is given through the Community to whom the tradition is committed and within which the Holy Spirit is at work pointing to its living Head, Jesus Christ. 'Despite the frailty and fallibility of the Church, despite the errancy of Scripture, . . . the living Lord makes Himself known to us through their testimony.' Thus, 'Scripture has always been what it is in the Church, and its testimony has always been accompanied by the testimony of the Church . . . This is not to say that it is the Church that makes the word effectual. The word becomes effectual by the testimony of the Holy Spirit—but it is only within the context of the Church's faith that its efficacy is known'. (G. S. Hendry. *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology*, pp. 95 and 94).

glory?' The cross was the road to victory, and it was the only road. 'Art thou a king then?' asked Pilate; and Jesus acknowledged that status in a simple affirmation: 'Thou sayest that I am a king; to this end was I born'. Thus the earliest christian art, deep in the catacombs, the hiding-place of martyrs, depicted him on the cross not in naked agony but as a king, robed in triumph, *Christus Victor*.

A further interpretation occurs throughout the New Testament, namely that his death was for us and for our salvation. It is vividly portrayed not only in definite statements but also in the chronology of the Gospels, and is concisely expounded by St. Paul, who writes in his first letter to Corinth, 'Christ our passover is sacrificed for us' (5: 7). At the very hour when the lambs were being slain to keep the Passover, Jesus was hanging upon the cross. Already he had been hailed as the Lamb of God (a phrase which was used of great national heroes, and conveyed strength and victory as well as sacrifice), and now, dying at the hour of Passover, the regulations of the old ritual of salvation are fulfilled in him. Thus we can understand the ascription of triumph offered to the risen Lord in the Apocalypse: 'Unto the Lamb be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever' (Rev. 5: 13).

'He was crucified, dead.' "Dead"; that is life's termination. 'That', says Barth, 'is the judgement under which our life stands: it is waiting for death.' That is true of us all. It is into and under that judgement that our Lord entered by crucifixion and death.

'And buried.' This is finality, utter finality. The narratives leave no shadow of possibility that this was coma. 'It is death, and corruption, the corruption of the tomb.' He was 'buried', and the tomb was sealed. 'They took the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices . . . In the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man laid. There they laid Jesus, for the sepulchre was

nigh at hand' (John 19: 40 sqq.). 'He was crucified, dead, and buried.'

'He descended into hell': this is an article of the christian creed we tend to evade, or say that it is no more than a metaphorical way of describing Jesus as being really dead. Looked at superficially, the descent into hell seems to be little in accord with essential Christianity or the rational spirit of our age, and many eminent theologians, such as Barth, Brunner and Quick, to name only these, have quietly dropped the phrase. To do so is to flout the New Testament witness explicit in St. Peter's first epistle: 'Christ being put to death in the flesh . . . went and preached unto the spirits in prison' (3: 18-19); and again, 'For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit' (4: 6).

Now here we are in the realm of mystery, but mystery is not synonymous with unreality. We cannot visualize this event, and therefore our words cannot describe it. Yet, as Canon Kelly has said in his learned treatise on the early creeds, 'the belief that Christ spent the interval between his expiry on the cross and his resurrection in the underworld was a commonplace of christian teaching from the earliest times'². It is an authentic part of the christian tradition and must be taken seriously. It cannot and must not be brushed aside. It signifies three cardinal events, as Stauffer avers: first, that our Lord's death was a real death, i.e. that he descended, as did all men (so it was conceived) to Hades, the abode of the dead; second, he declared his gospel of salvation and wrought redemption among the departed; and third, he defeated Satan on his own ground, for 'to this end was the son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil' (1 John 3: 8). However we may express it, reality lies behind this necessarily figurative account. 'The incarnation of Christ meant the coming down of a heavenly nature to this world; his death meant his going down into the underworld', i.e. into the state

² J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p. 379.

of death⁴. But the underworld had no power over him: he rose on high invincible. The topography of this early preaching may be too vivid and localized, and here it is metaphorical for it refers not to a place but to a state or condition. But can we deny that it represents and declares truth basic to our christian Faith? It also faces and suggests the solution of a problem which often troubles us, namely the redemption of those who died before Christ came.

'The third day he rose again from the dead', or in the words of the apostolic declaration, 'This same Jesus whom you crucified, God hath raised up'. By a mighty act of God, Christ is raised up!

What does this event signify? We may usefully clear the ground by first stating what it does *not* mean. It does not mean, first of all, that our Lord was resuscitated or revived. There is often confusion of thought here, so it is necessary to emphasize without any possible equivocation that 'Christ did not come from the grave like Lazarus in his previous body, but in a new one to which the laws of mortality no longer applied⁵. He did not return to our state, like a corpse come to life. Secondly, this was no demonstration of the immortality of the soul, as for instance it was conceived by Plato or others of the Greeks. And thirdly, the risen Christ is not a ghost, a subject of inquiry by the Society for Psychological Research. Resurrection as understood by christians is not the mere continuance of life. Indeed, as Professor John Baillie has perspicaciously reminded us, such a continuance would be 'what the New Testament calls eternal death rather than what it calls eternal life. It would be the continuance of Hades and Sheol—and it is a very significant fact that in the Christian tradition Hades and Sheol came to be alternative names not for heaven but for hell'⁶.

As we examine the New Testament narratives of our Lord's resurrection, we find some variety and even contra-

⁴ E. Stauffer, *New Testament Theology*, p. 133.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁶ *And the Life Everlasting*, p. 159.

diction of witness. This might easily have been smoothed out, but that the narratives stand as they are is weighty witness to their authenticity. As any judge or barrister knows, and as all of us in common experience should know, it is rare indeed for any two accounts even by eye-witnesses to agree in the description of some unusual or surprising event. The resurrection to the first witnesses was not merely surprising but cataclysmic—though warned to expect it, it was the last thing they did expect. As Professor H. E. W. Turner has said: 'During the Passion this particular joblot of humanity had hardly distinguished themselves. One deceived, another betrayed, and the rest forsook him and fled. They were left stunned by the events of Holy Week, looking nowhere very certainly, but not in the direction of an expected resurrection'.⁷ No wonder their descriptions varied and even conflicted. It is evidence of their truth that they did so, and the New Testament has preserved unmolested these early records of eye-witnesses. What emerges seems clear, namely, that although he was 'this same Jesus' his resurrection body was not his same earthly pre-resurrection body. He had been transfigured, changed, glorified—we search for words to describe this change. Yet he was recognizable; and though he appeared 'in another form' he himself was unmistakably 'this same Jesus'. What does it mean to have a body? Professor Turner asks, and replies, 'If a body may be defined as the instrumentation of a self, and if the resurrection-body of our Lord expresses a risen self, then it may be expected to fulfil the varying purposes which may on occasion arise'⁸. That is precisely what it does. The empty tomb, therefore, well authenticated in christian tradition and not denied by the Jews even in their polemics against christianity, is not significant of the revivication of the old body but a reminder that God did not permit 'his Holy One to see corruption'. In the resurrection his body was not decayed but was 'transfigured' and it is now no longer a 'materialistic' body but one which belongs to a new realm of existence. At the same time, the

⁷ Expository Times, lviii, 12, p. 371.

⁸ Ibid.

risen Lord is no spirit, but a full, complete, and recognizable Person, and he is not disembodied. As Stauffer expresses it: 'The risen Lord is no spirit, but is rather to be thought of as having a spiritual body which is as different from a purely physical body as it is from a purely pneumatic existence',⁹ while Professor John Baillie speaks of it as 'a glorified body . . . subject neither to the physical needs nor to the spatial limitations of earthly existence.' Stauffer adds an important footnote: '1 Cor. 15: 12 ff. tells us that in Christ God has wrought something he has never accomplished before. This disposes at one and the same time of two misinterpretations of the Easter occurrences: the metaphysical, which thinks of Easter as simply a pattern of the essential immortality of the soul; and the occult which views Easter as a materialization of a departed spirit.'

Aulén says much the same thing in another way, after warning us of the limitations of rational thought and systematization when we deal with the nature and being of God and the mystery of Christ. 'Sometimes [in the New Testament]', he writes, 'it is asserted that the risen Christ appeared to his own in virtually the same form as in the days of his flesh, and at other times it is said that one body is buried in the earth and another spiritual organism arises. Paul does not conceive of a continued bodily existence of the same nature as the earthly. But in neither case do we find a purely spiritualized conception. It is evident that the primitive christian resurrection-faith is of a different nature from the philosophical doctrine, which regards the "soul" as in itself immortal, and immortality as the liberation of the soul from the prison-house of the body. Such a distinction between "soul" and "body" is absolutely alien to the resurrection faith of the early Church. It is evident that in the New Testament we meet various ideas of the manifestation of the risen Christ, but it is also evident that the disciples regarded him as having a certain "corporality,"

⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 135.

however spiritualized and "transfigured" this might have been. These ideas emphasize the contrast to the philosophical and idealistic conception of immortality. At the same time it is clear that the main concern is to assert the identity between KURIOS-CHRISTOS and Jesus of Nazareth, and to present the resurrection as God's act of exaltation'.¹⁰

The Ascension completed the exaltation. During forty days our Lord re-appeared to his disciples and taught them, opening to their understanding much they could not apprehend before his death and resurrection, and showing forth in their Scriptures (the Old Testament) much that had been then hidden from them. An example is given us in his teaching on the way to Emmaus, where we read 'beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself' (Luke 24: 27). What has become of this teaching? Some of it may well be embodied in the Fourth Gospel, but its influence and effect is clearly evident in all the Gospels, and particularly in the Gospel according to St. Matthew where so much in the Old Testament is linked to our Lord's words and deeds. Its influence is also seen in the early teaching of the Church as exemplified in the Fathers, and in the Church's polemical encounters with the Jews. The hidden meaning of the Old Testament was revealed, and for some centuries the Church revelled in its allegorical and analogical exegesis of the old Scriptures. Sometimes the early christian exegesis of the Old Testament was fanciful and exaggerated no doubt, but it contained truth which by our coldly critical scholarship today we often pass by and fail to discern. Here is a field of inquiry, in particular, the rabbinical interpretation of the Old Testament as related to the New, and the early christian exegesis of and studied *selection* from the Old Testament to indicate its secret witness of Christ. This once again after long neglect is at last inviting the attention of some modern scholars, of which Canon Selwyn was forty years ago a brilliant pioneer, and among which there are now many erudite advocates.

¹⁰ Faith of the Christian Church, p. 248.

At the end of the forty days, ' a time of accommodation or weaning of the disciples from the fellowship of sight and touch to new forms ',¹¹ our Lord ' having blessed them, was parted from them, and carried up into heaven ' (Luke 24: 51). Here again we are not to allow ourselves to be over-concerned with topography. The ascension, as we call this event knowing that we are speaking figuratively and not merely literally, signifies our Lord's returning to the Father and to the state of power. It is the coronation of the King. Words will always fail fully to embrace this mysterious and regal event, but its meaning and purpose are clear. To be *with* his people always and wherever two or three meet in his name he must be a spiritual and no longer a physical presence, though no less a real presence. Thus paradoxically, he withdrew from them to be for ever with them; and to be with them not only as a gentle, sustaining, binding, and directing presence, but also in great power and majesty as King and Lord. ' *Dextra dei ubique est,*' said Martin Luther — ' the right hand of God is everywhere.' Thus Aulén can write, ' The exaltation does not therefore imply separation from the life and struggle on earth, but, on the contrary, nearness, presence. It is an affirmation that Christ is continually and everywhere active in and through his spirit,' and it denotes his continuous work. ' Thus Christ enters upon his dominion and his kingdom in and through his exaltation '.¹² The disciples perceived this clearly, for they returned to Jerusalem not sadly, feeling that they had parted with him never again to behold him, but ' with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God ' (Luke 24: 53). We have become so familiar with these words that we may miss the astonishing contrast to the normal: for joy not sorrow, presence not absence, fellowship not separation, were from that hour the key-notes, the ' marks ' of the young Church. They even ' shewed his death ' with thanksgiving, and when death came among them they dressed in white garments. The

¹¹ Turner, *op. cit.*

¹² *Op. cit.*, p. 247.

early hymns of the Church were hymns of acclamation, like 'Kyrie eleyson' which translated literally as 'Lord have mercy' or in the West 'miserere nos', 'Lord have mercy upon us,' becomes a penitential supplication for mercy and pity, when in the Mediterranean world, it was the shout of recognition at the Emperor's coronation now applied by christians to Christ, as King of kings, and Lord of Lords. The glory and honour with which he was invested shines through the New Testament and reaches its culmination in the Book of Revelation, which resounds with the royal music of trumpets and ascriptions of blessing and praise. We see it also in the transformation of these trembling men who at Calvary and afterwards had slunk away into the shadows. Now, after Christ was risen and they had received the promised gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, they appeared in the open, declaring the gospel of Christ, exulting in his resurrection and victory, and proclaiming it through the corridors of the world. And an outstanding mark of these men who at our Lord's arrest and death had been cowards and deserters was their courage, for early in the records of the new Church we read that 'when they saw the boldness [courage] of Peter and John . . . , they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus' (Acts 4: 13). By the resurrection followed by the gift of the Holy Spirit this transformation was accomplished, and by this factual reality the Church has lived through two thousand years.

The plain fact is that without the resurrection there would have been no gift of the Spirit, no gospel and no Church, no records, no survival of a community. The Church was sustained and empowered by the living risen Christ, who continued his work among his people and sent his Holy Spirit. In contrast to and as distinct from a great body of theology, the New Testament and the primitive Church never saw our Lord's death as the climax or consummation of his saving work. He was not (as we have said) another martyr, leader, or teacher, put to death for his opinions and living on in the hearts of men, his words

cherished by the wise and loved by the simple. It is true that he had spoken 'as no other man ever spoke', and that he had done many mighty works which showed him to be a 'man accredited by God' (Acts 2: 22). Those nearest to him had discerned even more than this, for we have St. Peter's famous declaration at Caesarea Philippi, 'Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God!' But the crucifixion destroyed that embryonic insight: under its impact faith shattered and hope vanished. 'The chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel,' Cleopas and another said to him on the way to Emmaus. (Luke 24: 20-21). The cross, dark and black on Golgotha, extinguished the light of hope and faith¹³.

The resurrection, seen as a mighty declaratory act of God, renewed and re-integrated the faith evoked by his dwelling among us, full of grace and truth, and vindicated him as the son of God. 'Designated son of God in power,' wrote St. Paul, 'by his resurrection from the dead' (Rom. 1: 4). The resurrection turned catastrophe into triumph, and called the Church into existence.

Now, this much has been generally seen to be so by most theologians; but, seeing no more than this, many have felt no compulsion to integrate it into their theological systems as essential and pivotal. It is regarded as an appendage—a vindication and authentication of our Lord's life and teaching, and of his person and work, but no more. It is 'like a seal attached to a letter which can be torn off without affecting the inner contents of the letter'.¹⁴

Reading more than was necessary into our Lord's cry upon the cross, *tetelestai*. 'It is finished', it has long been the view generally held that our Lord's work was finished on Calvary, and by it men are

¹³ On this, see Prof. J. M. Shaw, *The Resurrection of Christ*, and W. Milligan, *The Resurrection of our Lord*, from whose writings I long ago received my first insight into the meaning of our Lord's resurrection.

¹⁴ Shaw, *op. cit.*, p. 221

forgiven and delivered from the guilt and punishment of sin. This is the religion that Karl Marx calls a 'dope' or 'opiate', and that some modern psychologists describe as 'escapism'. It is not the teaching of the New Testament—there Christ saves a man, not that he may escape from his burdens and conflicts, but that by entering a new realm his vision and attitude may be enlarged and new power be given him to rise into nobler and free living: 'He died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who for their salvation died and was raised' (2 Cor. 5: 15). 'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above . . . set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth' (Col. 3: 1-2). Our Lord made atonement upon the cross, but his work does not end at the cross: his earthly incarnate life was finished there but not his whole work of salvation. The resurrection is always linked with our Lord's death in the New Testament; and they must not be separated. It is through death and resurrection that he entered into that state of power from which he could carry on his saving work and fulfil his promise of the Comforter. The resurrection was not an authenticating sign only, but an essential and constitutive part of our Lord's work by which he could give effect to the atonement he had made on earth. 'The very ABC of Apostolic Christianity is that we are saved, not by believing in a fact of the past—even the fact that Christ died for our sins—but by surrendering ourselves to, and thus coming into vital, energizing union with a crucified but now risen, living, exalted Lord'.¹⁵ Thus the christian life here and now becomes not merely a redeemed life—and certainly not a safe life—but, as St. Paul tirelessly taught, a risen life, a life of new vision, purpose, and power, a life caught up with God. As Stauffer has said, 'Without the resurrection the work of Christ is not finished, and salvation-history does not reach its goal. Without Easter, there can be no "Kyrie eleyson" [i.e., no acclamation and submission]. For the Christ to whom the Church lifts up its need [and

¹⁵ Shaw, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

adoration] is the exalted Christ, the heavenly King and Priest'.¹⁶

In brief, let us now summarize what this means for us.

First, it is a living pledge of our Lord's eternal presence with us, and in two thousand years this has not been confounded. Empires and civilizations have risen and fallen but the Church abides, and the secret of its resilience and imperishableness is the presence of its risen Lord. As he said, after he was risen and before he ascended: 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' He is not an absent but a present Christ.

Secondly, the risen Lord is our fore-runner of everlasting life. 'In my Father's house,' he said, 'are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you . . . , that where I am, there ye may be also' (John 14: 2-3). In seeing him, the risen Lord, we have a glimpse of what 'everlasting life' means in the christian's creed. It is not a passing into the shadows but into a realm of light, where personality survives not as a shade but embodied and transfigured. We are the same persons, recognizable, real, and in a new fullness and richness. The New Testament and christian poetry have often used what seem curious figures of speech to describe the new risen life: they were never meant to be taken literally. It is simply that to describe the new state transcends language. If I hear a physicist say, 'The sun rose at six o'clock this morning', I do not suppose him to be pre-Galileo. Let us be sensible about this: because of our finite limitations we are unable to speak profoundly about anything without employing metaphor, symbol, and imagery. For language itself is imagery. It is foolish to believe that metaphors in christian literature mean precisely what they say—they are simply devices to transcend the limits of our mortal tongue. "Rest", for instance, does not mean "idleness" or "inaction" but tranquillity of mind and spirit, that gift

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 137.

we covet here but never completely attain; "streets of gold" in a heavenly city, and all the other gorgeous imagery we find in the Book of Revelation, for example, is intended to quicken in us a sense of the indescribable splendour of the presence of God. In fact, our minds can never properly imagine what the after-life is—it is a state foreign to our earthly experience, and we cannot picture it. But we can see in the risen Christ all that it is essential for us now to know, and can rest in his word, that 'where I am, there ye shall be also.'

Of course, as Professor John Baillie has rightly pointed out, the resurrection of our Lord is not the only basis for the christian hope of the life everlasting. It lies also, and logically in particular, in the belief in God's presence with and care for us, and in the conviction that we are for ever safe in his hands and that he will not suffer us to be separated from him. Professor Baillie writes these wise and necessary words to help us to retain the right focus: 'The disappearance of the hope of a life beyond the grave is far from being the saddest or most serious of the consequences that flow from disbelief in God. The denial of immortality always seems to me to be more disquieting for what it is a sign of than for what it is in itself. That a man should be doomed to go through this present life without any sense of God's accompanying presence is a much greater tragedy than that he should be faced with the prospect of extinction when at last he dies. There are indeed some men whose main reason for desiring to "get religion" is that by means of it they may get assurance of immortality, just as there are others whose main reason for desiring it is that it should put them in possession of the secret of self-control. But true religion will not thus consent to be made a tool of [he might have added, 'like true learning']. God must be sought and loved for his own sake, and not merely as a Purveyor either of moral power or endless life. At the heart of religion lies this significant paradox, that it is only by coming to care more about God than about either our own character or our own destiny that either our char-

acter can be transformed or our destiny in any wise foretokened'.¹⁷

Thirdly, it reminds us that our life in Christ is now a risen life—that it should be here and now a life on a new and ascending plane of being and service. To this we do not all attain, but we should in St. Paul's metaphor, 'press toward the mark'. A saved life is not a life of security but one of endeavour, and we have no reason to believe that endeavour will end with the coming of death.

Fourthly, it illustrates for us God's method of overcoming evil. Impatiently, often, thinking in terms of God's omnipotence and not of love, we wonder why he does not crush evil and evil men by his superior force. We do not pause to consider that this would involve the negation of all reality in human personality, and would utterly destroy human freedom, the freedom even to be lost. Thus by death God overcame evil: by bearing it in love to its uttermost. 'If thou be the son of God', they shouted of Jesus, when he was hanging in agony, 'come down from the cross'. We are always tempted to prevail by force, and Christ was bidden to use power to save himself. So it is, as H. A. Williams has said, 'What looked like the utter defeat of goodness by evil was in reality the final defeat of evil by goodness. What looked like the weakness of a dying man was in reality the strength of the living God. What looked like tragedy was really victory . . . Neither the glory nor the power were evident at the time . . . These were revealed three days later when Jesus was raised up from the dead. For his resurrection was no reversal of what had previously happened, as though at the twelfth hour God had set everything right by a *coup de main*. It was rather the lifting up of the cross into the proper realm of truth. It was the manifestation of Calvary for what it really was. It was a proclamation that God's power is made perfect in weakness

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 160.

and that it is through death itself that death is for ever overcome'.¹⁸

Fifthly, it was only after death and resurrection that our Lord could send the Holy Spirit to strengthen, illumine, and unite his people, and to abide in each heart: 'The Spirit is *after* Christ in the divine economy; the earthly ministry of Christ must be completed before the Spirit comes'. The Holy Spirit is his perpetual witness, who testifies not to himself but to the things of Christ, normally ministering through the Scriptures and the Church's ordinances. The gift of the Holy Spirit as delineated in the New Testament and given at Pentecost was dependent and consequent upon our Lord's incarnation and resurrection.¹⁹

Finally, we may examine briefly the meaning and relevance of our Lord's resurrection for the two chief sacraments which are the life-blood of the Church.

Its relation to baptism has often been observed, for the imagery St. Paul frequently uses when he speaks of dying to sin and rising as new men in Christ describes the inner meaning and effect of the outer ceremonial action of christian baptism by immersion. Thus Westcott could write that, 'so thoroughly was the faith in the resurrection of Christ inwrought into the minds of the first christians that the very entrance into their society was apprehended under the form of a resurrection'²⁰. This was more evident in the outward ceremony of Holy Baptism as it was practised in the early Church than it is today, although the old meaning is still conveyed in the words, even if obscured in the now attenuated ceremonial. Today baptism is generally of infants and normally

¹⁸ H. A. Williams, *Jesus and the Resurrection*, pp. 27-28. Williams confines this new quality of life to the moral, but surely the 'abundant' life promised by Jesus includes much more than this; it is an enhancement and liberation of the whole personality. It brought to these men, 'life of a new quality, life which quickened deeper levels of personality and related men to one another and to God in a bond which neither death nor life could break' (Anderson Scott, *The Fellowship of the Spirit*, p. 46).

¹⁹ See e.g. H. J. Wotherspoon, *What Happened at Pentecost*, and (more recent) G. S. Hendry, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

²⁰ *The Gospel of the Resurrection*, p. 111.

performed by sprinkling; in the early Church by contrast baptism was chiefly of adults and performed by immersion. The converts, after long instruction, came to the great hour of their baptism and initiation into the Church. At the font, turning towards the West,—the realm of darkness and death where the sun went down,—they renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil, then turning, made their confession of faith. Then, putting off their clothes (an action itself symbolical of putting aside the old corrupt nature), they went down into the water till completely immersed as those who go down into death and the grave: 'we were buried therefore with him through baptism into death', writes St. Paul (Rom. 6: 4). Coming up out of the water, as out of death and the grave, and facing the East,—the realm of the sunrising and resurrection,—they were clothed in white garments (as with the resurrection-life of Christ) and then went on to receive at their first eucharist the Body of Christ, the Bread of Life, the 'medicine of immortality'. The meaning of all this was underlined by the fact that the ceremony took place at midnight on Holy Saturday, and the newly-baptized rose new men in Christ on his day of resurrection. Thus the centrality and place of the resurrection in the meaning of christian baptism was clearly displayed. We must not allow its significance to escape us today. It reminds us that God who raised Jesus can with him "raise" also the man who has been baptized into Christ and give him the power to live a new quality of life. This new quality of life in the believer is as it were an extension of the risen life of the Redeemer.²¹ Thus St. Paul can describe our life as 'hid with Christ in God' (Col. 2: 3).

In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper the centrality of the resurrection has also been unmistakably preserved. The very action by which we 'shew the Lord's death' is a eucharist, a 'thanksgiving'; at holy communion the Church does not remember a dead Jesus but worships a

²¹ W. F. Flemington, *The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism*, p. 62.

living Lord. The ancient bidding at the prayer of consecration, the great thanksgiving, was 'Sursum corda', 'lift up your hearts' to join in the heavenly triumph, and one of the greatest eucharistic hymns is Johann Franck's which strikes this note superbly:

Deck thyself, my soul, with gladness,
Leave the gloomy haunts of sadness,
Come into the daylight's splendour,
There with joy thy praises render
Unto him whose grace unbounded
Hath this wondrous banquet founded.
High o'er all the heavens he reigneth,
Yet to dwell with thee he deigneth.

The Lord's supper is not a sad anniversary of a death but a joyous feast of resurrection: it is communion with the risen Christ.

Throughout its history, till the recent sad confusion so symbolical of our age, the Church has deliberately chosen one day in the year when it did not celebrate the eucharist, Good Friday, our Lord's death-day; and from primitive times has chosen as the pre-eminent day of celebration Sunday, the day of resurrection, and therefore 'the Lord's day', the day of the Sun, the day of light, the first day of the week, in the early morning at daybreak the hour of resurrection, and at the Holy Table has recited her prayers facing towards the East.²² The great eucharistic hymns are hymns of praise, and the sad and sentimental hymns we often now associate with the Lord's Supper are all of late origin. The consecration prayer itself is the greatest and most majestic act of praise and thanksgiving the Church knows, and the ceremonial at the altar has been rightly described by Fr. Ronald Knox as a sacred dance, pregnant

²² This is true of both forms of orientation of church buildings: in one, the sanctuary is at the east end of the church, and celebrant and people face eastwards; in the other, the basilica, the sanctuary was normally at the west end of the church, and the posture of the celebrant was to stand behind the holy Table and to face the east—in early descriptions he is called the 'gubernator' or helmsman, and he steers the ship towards the east on her voyage through a stormy world

with symbolical and joyful meaning. This is so on every Sunday, for every Sunday is an Easter. But in the early Church and still pre-eminently in the Eastern Church (though there is also magnificence in the West) at the great yearly Easter the ceremonies of the eucharist are ablaze with light, splendour, and rejoicing as the cry 'Christ is risen! Christ is risen!' rings through the church. Descriptions of this have come down to us from the early centuries.²³ Here more than anywhere, at the Lord's Supper, the Church is joyously conscious of her living Lord, really present in her midst, and also as her great High Priest and Mediator making constant intercession for her in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Conscious of this all her prayers are offered 'through Jesus Christ our Lord'. The Scottish paraphrase of Heb. 4: 14 develops this theme:

Where high the heavenly temple stands
The House of God not made with hands,
A great High Priest our nature wears,
The guardian of mankind appears.
He who for men their surety stood,
And poured on earth his precious blood,
Pursues in heaven his mighty plan,
The Saviour and the friend of man.

In her sacraments the living risen Lord is himself the minister and it is his presence that gives them validity. In the Lord's Supper, the Church with her Lord re-presents his eternal sacrifice before the Father, as with him she re-enacts what he commanded, renewing on earth what he offers with her in heaven.²⁴

Thus the resurrection is central to the Church's life, and if sometimes in her theology she has neglected it, she has yet thrillingly preserved it in her sacraments and worship. It was on the first Easter Day that he was 'made known of them in the breaking of the bread' (Luke 24:

²³ See e.g. 'The Pilgrimage of Egeria', translated in L. Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, pp. 541 sqq., especially 552-563.

²⁴ To enter into greater detail here is not possible, but the present discussions of eucharistic doctrine indicate that theologians are becoming in all communions increasingly aware of its importance.

35). And there is another illuminating episode which has the ring of authenticity, recorded not in our canonical gospels but in the apocryphal Gospel according to the Hebrews, which relates of our Lord's appearing after his resurrection to his brother James. It reads: ' Now the Lord, when he had given the linen cloth unto the servant of the priest [Malchus?], went unto James and appeared to him (for James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour wherein he had drunk the Lord's cup until he should see him risen again from among them that sleep)'; and again after a little, ' Bring ye, saith the Lord, a table and bread ', and immediately it is added, ' He took bread and blessed and brake and gave it unto James the Just and said unto him: My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of Man is risen from among them that sleep.'²⁵ Each time a faithful believer comes to the eucharist, he still hears these words: ' My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of Man is risen '.

Here we must stop. We have only begun to sound the meaning and mystery of our Lord's resurrection, yet I hope that I have been able to show its centrality to our christian Faith and the hope it affords of life to the full.

*Finita sunt iam proelia
Et parta est victoria.
Gaudeamus
Et canamus, Alleluia!*

²⁵ See M. R. James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, pp. 3-4.

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