Touchstone

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Reading Jesus' Resurrection

Reviews

Editorial

Reading Jesus' resurrection

How is Jesus' resurrection described in the New Testament? What truth claims are made about it? What difference does it make, according to various New Testament texts? These are some of the questions that the articles in this issue explore. One issue of *Touchstone* alone could not examine the myriad descriptions, discussions of and references to Jesus' resurrection in the New Testament. So choices had to be made. This issue begins with Bill Richard's examination of three key passages in the Pauline letters where Paul reflects on the meaning of Jesus' resurrection. We then turn to examine the Easter narratives of the three Synoptic Gospels. Next Jo-Ann Badley examines how Jesus' resurrection is discussed in Acts. Finally, Mayang Longkumer joins the conversation from South India Biblical Seminary in the state of Karnataka, India, with an examination of how the Jesus' resurrection is presented in Revelation. These four essays explore how Jesus' resurrection is described and interpreted in these four very different parts of the New Testament. Following this comes a personal reflection on the meaning of Jesus' resurrection by Rev. Kathleen Anderson. Then there is a "Profile" of Douglas Jay, an important theologian and seminary principal in the United Church. Finally, come three book reviews. Enjoy!

The image gracing the cover of this issue is a reproduction of "Christ and St. Mary Magdalene at the Tomb" by Rembrandt Van Rijn, painted in 1638 CE. It appears courtesy of the Art in the Christian Tradition holdings of Vanderbilt University Divinity Library. The choice of this image was stimulated by some favourable comments by Francois Bovon about Rembrandt's depictions of the risen Christ in Bovon's commentary on Luke's Gospel. Some theologians are leery of visual depictions of the risen Jesus, on the grounds that these lead the human imagination to become preoccupied with conceptual details, so that we miss the transcendent message of Jesus' resurrection. However, conversely, we can see Rembrandt's painting as an invitation to draw the risen Christ into our own lives and to seek to actualize its meaning where we live.

I thank all the contributors to this issue for their work. I also thank Mary Ann Beavis for helping me plan the issue and Paul Miller and Michelle Robinson for their assistance with type-setting and the front cover.

Don Schweitzer (guest editor)

LIFE, DEATH, LIFE BEYOND DEATH: PAUL'S SEARCH FOR WORDS

by Bill Richards

> *What words can we have for death?*
> *What words restrained or spare enough*
> *for its totality? To render language chaste.*
>
> *What language can we have for the*
> *unknowable? What words for a mystery*
> *distinct from thought? We imagine the*
> *end, but not the beginning.*[1]

Prologue

Sometime around the turn into the Common Era a Greek-speaking Jew took the pen-name "Solomon" to explore what hope there might be for justice in social circumstances with the discouragingly cynical view of life as "a game, a mere market for money-making"[2] and where any attempt to see fair play done meets, not merely with indifference, but with outright hostility. "Let us lay a trap for the one who is just, who stands in our way" (Wisdom of Solomon 2.12), greedy schemers say, confident in their ability to erase not only those who resist them, but even the memory of that resistance.

"Fools!" "Solomon" calls these sociopaths, "Your schemes will come to nothing!" For it is those hungry for justice who will be the true immortals. Even if there be no next-of-kin to remember them, the good they sought will "find a place in God's temple to delight the human heart forever" (3.13-14).

A century later this Solomon's Wisdom[3] would become an important resource for early Jesus-followers searching for words to understand their hero, "crucified, dead, and buried". Here and there in their own writings Christians echoed *Wisdom's* "hope full of immortality."[4] Among them was

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[1] Anne Michaels, *Infinite Gradation* (House Sparrow Press: London, 2017), 9.

[2] *"Elogisanto paignion* ("game, joke") *einai tēn zōēn humōn, kai ton bion panergusōmen epikerdē.* ("profiteering combine"), *Wisdom* 15.12.

[3] Framed as an address, first to earthly rulers charged with seeing justice done (chapters 1-8), then to the God who appoints and administers their rule (chapters 9-19).

[4] *Wisdom* 2.20; 3.4. The citations index of Nestle-Aland (27) lists 49 allusions to *Wisdom* places within the Pauline corpus.

the circle around Paul who took up words "restrained and spare" to express the immortality they too believed lay behind their Jesus's "shameful death".

The language of life, death, and life beyond death appears explicitly at three key moments as Paul and friends thought through their hope in and for Jesus:

- a coming-of-age moment from early days (the late 40s CE?) in Thessaloniki (1 Thessalonians);
- a moment of mid-life crisis (the mid-50s CE?) in Corinth (1 Corinthians);
- and a penultimate moment (the early 60s CE?) in Philippi (Philippians).[5]

This study will focus on these particular moments to show how first-century Jesus-followers took their confidence in their hero into a deeper understanding of what lay ahead for themselves and their world.

"Those who have fallen asleep" - responding to the grief of friends in Thessaloniki

To recognize that *1* Thessalonians might more properly be called a "correspondence file" than a single "letter" is not just a nicety of epistolary form-criticism. It is also to appreciate that the weighty questions explored across this file's separate items comes out of a complex dialogue across time and place among the correspondents – a process of displacement, shock, discouragement, questioning, suggestion, hesitation, response.[6]

The dialogue began, of course, even before the present text, when Paul, Silas and Timothy first arrived in the Macedonian capital[7] sometime in the mid-40s CE, bringing their marketable skills as manual labourers[8] – a time of both toil and delight as a "post-card" back later remembers:[9]

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[5] The classic study of the dating of Paul's letters is John Knox, *Chapters in a Life of Paul* (New York/Nashville: Abingdon, 1950).

[6] For a careful analysis of the text see Earl J. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1995).

[7] Craig Steven de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1999) estimates the city's population in the first century CE at 40,000-50,000, the Christian gathering there perhaps twenty-five (129, 154).

[8] Traditionally, "tent-makers"; with at least three Roman legions then stationed along the lower Danube (*Penguin Atlas of Ancient History*: 79), there certainly would have been a need for tent-makers in Macedonia.

[9] The "post-card", 2.13-4.2, is discernible from some of the usual opening and

"With what unsparing energy we used to work! ... Slaving away night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you!" (2.9).[10]

The three colleagues also recall insights shared – "not as some human word", they say, "but as God speaking directly." Those insights, however, come to mind not without some anxiety. For the three know from personal experience how stepping outside the usual network of social-economic-religious relationships can lead to hostility from both family and neighbours. There, on the south-west horizon just across the bay from the provincial capital's harbour, towered Mount Olympus,[11] home of the old gods of Greece, a constant reminder of the web of belief they all had left behind. There was a personal cost in entering the quite different social circles that Jesus-followers like those into which the three tent-makers had invited them. The writers do not sugar-coat their concern for their readers: their friends in Thessaloniki face the same kind of humiliation and harassment as other colleagues back in Judea, hostility so lethal that, in the end, it got Jesus himself *killed* (2.15), a first, blunt reference to death, specifically to the deliberate *murder* of the master himself, the unjust death of a just person. And so, the three are understandably anxious for friends left behind in vulnerable social circumstances, an anxiety that prompts a quick return visit by one of the three, Timothy. The colleague's report back, however, has allayed the fears of all three: the Thessalonian comrades are hanging tight! And so the three, together again, draft their short note, expressing relief and commending the friends' commitment to one another, and to Jesus, who will come again "with all his saints" (3.13).

This original postcard, however, evokes a written response from Thessaloniki. An unnamed messenger brings back a letter with the unhappy news of deaths in the community, deaths that have raised specific concerns the Thessalonian friends ask Paul, Silas and Timothy to address:[12]

- "love within the fellowship" (4.9),
- "those who have fallen asleep" (4.13), and
- "times and occasions" (5.1).

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closing markers of Hellenistic letters.

[10] The writers will later (4.11) cite their own work-ethic as exemplary of what they expect of their Thessalonian friends.

[11] 80 kilometres to the south-west, across the Thermaic Gulf.

[12] As indicated by the longer, subsequent letter that now "brackets" the earlier note: 1.1-2.12, 4.3-5.28. Hellenistic letter-writers typically marked items to which they were responding with the phrase; "*peri (de)* ....", equivalent to our Latin abbreviation "Re:".

Though it does not demand a lot of emotional imagination to trace the connection here, the preamble to the response the three now draft spells it out: the love within this fellowship had practiced a care for one another in anticipation of a better world and a better time ahead *for all*. But now some of that fellowship have "fallen asleep" (a euphemism for "died") and those who survive are left distressed and confused. Have the former friends, now dead, simply slipped into that final sleep that is oblivion, forfeiting their place in the promised age to come? When is that age to come, anyway? And will any of us be left to see it? For that matter, do we *want* to see it – given how many seem to have been lost along the way? Such is the complex of grief to which Paul, Silas and Timothy must respond.

The three begin with the first item (4.9): *philadelphia* – the love and labour that binds friends to one another, not just in their own city, but across the whole region. None of you need to be taught what it looks like, the three begin. Whatever trade your hands were trained for, whatever labour you bent your backs to, it was God who taught you how to care for one another – you have known how to do it; and, whether you know it or not, you are still doing it!

And that bond tying them to one another (4.13), the writers spell out, is not lost when former colleagues in love or labour "fall asleep". Here the threesome go on to "disclose" an understanding of their hero Jesus not previously shared: the same God, who raised up the one murdered by human hands (4.14, 16), will, when Jesus again is present, bring all those now "asleep" along with him. Rather than being lost to memory, those now dead, the writers insist, have actually preceded those of us still alive into that new world about to come. They will, in fact, be alongside Jesus, welcoming us all into that new and better age.

So when – the final question to be addressed (5.1) – will that better age be? On this matter too, none of you need to be taught, the writers repeat. It's the child in the womb who decides the time for birthing. Your job is to be the mid-wives at that birth when it comes. Exercise then the midwife's watchfulness for that glorious birthday that brings not wrath but healing, not oblivion but life.

In the end, Paul, Silas and Timothy counsel their grieving friends in Thessaloniki: Jesus, whose death is our own, is life for us all – for those who watch, *and* for those who sleep. Hope is a solidarity with one another that death can never defeat.

"As to one untimely born" - countering the bravado of friends in Corinth

Seven or eight years on, in a different imperial province (Achaia) and capital (Corinth), 300 kilometres to the south, Paul and Timothy are in a very different social setting, with very different conversation partners.[13] We will focus on just part of the conversation – a "memo" (1 Corinthians 12-15) on *pneumatika* (roughly, "things spiritual") that was part of the extensive document Paul and his secretarial colleague Sosthenes drafted in response to questions Corinthian friends raised in an earlier letter of their own.[14]

Corinth in the first-century CE was a much larger city than Thessaloniki.[15] From the correspondence contained in 1 and 2 Corinthians it also seems likely that several distinct, and competing, Jesus-follower groups were gathering in the city at the time. There were perhaps as many as one hundred "Christians" of different stripes whom Paul, Sosthenes, and (later) Timothy hoped to address with their letters and visits.[16]

The memo on *pneumatika* is actually the third of five responses to specific questions.[17] From the answers Paul and Sosthenes draft we can tell that these questions were not exactly "innocent". In each memo we frequently hear the correspondents' own preambles being quoted back to them, in the manner, "Yes, you might say that (about marriage, food, etc.), but ...". All of which seems to have necessitated the lengthy overview (chapter 1-4) before any of the particular questions are taken up – an overview explicitly countering a celebration of their own "gifted-ness" their Corinthian friends now claim to enjoy. They are, it seems, people who

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[13] We also have a much richer archive for reconstructing how this new conversation emerged. See David G. Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996).

[14] In *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* (London: SPCK, 1965) John C. Hurd reconstructed the letter the Corinthians themselves had written.

[15] First-century CE Corinth: 100,000-130,000; Thessaloniki: 40,000-50,000.

[16] Estimates of both city size and number of Christians in the city, come from De Vos, 185 (Corinth), 204 (Christians).

[17] The five memos deal with, respectively:

- 1)Sex and Marriage (5-7);
- 2) Diet and Dining (8-11);
- 3) Things Spiritual (12-15);
- 4) Collection for the Saints (16.1-10);
- 5) Apollos's next visit (16.11-18). The Corinthians' letter requesting discussion of these items was likely delivered by Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus (16.17).

have "arrived." Their new religious association is seen as offering them an important step-up the social ladder. A rather brazen re-construction of self seems to be the sub-theme to all the specific concerns the Corinthian friends have put to them – marriages to arrange, dinner invitations to calendar, money-matters to settle.[18]

The third question posed, about *pneumatika*, "things spiritual", is no less loaded. From the way our writers frame the response, it seems that the "thing most spiritual" currently catching Corinthian interest is "language," specifically, the gift that the ancient hero Job at the end of his restored life supposedly bequeathed to his three daughters: *glossolalia*, facility with the languages of heaven.[19] While not undercutting this evaluation, Paul and Sosthenes begin their response by emphasizing that whatever this angelic "gift of the gab" might signify, the crucial thing to ask is: what does any of it say about *Jesus* (12.3)? Does it set him on the side-line (as *anathema*)? Or does it listen for him at the centre of life together, as the *kurios* to whom we, in our different ways, offer our *diakonia*? Out of consideration of the varieties of service, our writers, taking a cue from the Deuteronomic *shema*,[20] remind their Corinthian friends of what is at the heart of any and all *diakonia*: love of God and love of neighbour. Out of the song to love that follows (1 Cor 13) the writers build on the language of solidarity already raised with Thessalonian friends, to stress a preference among "things spiritual" for those that are articulate, understandable, and that contribute to harmony, not only of Jew and Greek, slave and free (12.13), but of those still alive and those "who have fallen asleep" – i.e., the living and the dead (15.6). And it is at this point, again using the language of "falling sleep",[21] that Paul and Sosthenes make the connection with *pneumatika*. When it comes to "things spiritual", if the greatest gift that can be spoken is *love*, the surest hope is *resurrection.* Whatever the language we use, earthly or divine, it is for the sake of all who name Jesus "the first-fruit of them that sleep" (15.20).

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[18] See, for example, memos 1, 2, and 4 (previous footnote).

[19] For the legend, see the turn-of-the-era text, *Testament of Job* 46-50. After donning the sacred sashes that their father bequeathed them, Job's daughters "Day", "Cinnamon" and "Cornstalk" were able to sing hymns, respectively, in the languages of the angels, the archons, and the cherubim.

[20] "Hear, O Israel, YHWH is your God, YHWH is one…"

[21] The euphemism, "fall asleep", *koimasthai* appears at *1 Cor* 7.39; 11.30; 15.6, 18, 20, 51. The more explicit verb "die", *apothneskein* appears at *1 Cor* 8.11; 9.15; 15.3, 22, 31, 32, 36.

In 1 Cor 15 the writers then walk their readers through the resurrection-appearance traditions, citing Cephas;[22] the Twelve; the Five Hundred; James; all the apostles. Paul (first-person singular now) concludes the list by speaking of his own experience in the presence of the risen Jesus. As much as some of their readers might think their gifts of language have taken them to heaven and back, Paul names his own experience much more modestly. He knows, he says, how unworthy he was to stand before the Jesus whom God would not let be defeated by death.[23] Jesus' hope belongs to us all: if in Adam *all* have died, so in Christ *all* have been made alive (15.22).

Towards the end of this memo on "things spiritual" Paul and Sosthenes clarify that whatever "gifted-ness" might inform our speech, angelic or human, it is but a pale intimation of the much more "glorious" way of being that we will only see when Jesus comes with "those who have fallen asleep." Then, "all tongues will cease" (13.8) and we ourselves "shall be changed ... clothed with immortality" (15.53).

If the driving force in the Thessalonian conversation about life and death was *grief*, in the Corinthian conversation it has been *bravado* – a bravado around language that Paul and Sosthenes counter with a reminder of what solidarity under Jesus' death and resurrection means: a hope in our grieving for the bonds of absent friends, yes; but also a humility with one another about what can and cannot be put into words, cognizant of all the ways absent friends help to prepare us for better things yet to come.

"To be or not to be" – bracing for the final sentence with friends in Philippi

A further seven or eight years on find Paul and Timothy back with conversation partners in Macedonia, now in the much smaller Roman garrison town of Philippi.[24] Where exactly the authors themselves are they do not say, though Paul does describe himself as "in chains," under the watchful eye of the Praetorian (imperial) guard,[25] and awaiting the final stage in a trial process that has just concluded with the defence's

[22] Cephas has already appeared in the overview (1.12). Some of the readership, apparently, were trading on his good name.

[23] *Thanatos* appearing at 1 Cor 2.22; 11.26; 15.21, 26, 54, 56.

[24] De Vos (239) suggests a first century CE population for Philippi of 9,000-11,500; Christians there may have numbered thirty (261).

[25] "An elite corps of about 5,000 soldiers stationed in and near Rome whose duty it was to protect the emperor."
Jo-Ann Shelton, *As the Romans Did* (Oxford: University, 1988): 236.

apologia.[26] From the implied possibility – a guilty verdict and a sentence of execution – the charge, it would seem, is treason.[27]

Like 1 Thessalonians, the text of Philippians is best read as a correspondence file.[28] For example, the conclusion of the text as it now stands (4.10-23) offers a separate short but poignant thank-you note, expressing in clearly straightened circumstances, Paul's tongue-tied yet heart-felt gratitude for the very material support the Philippian friends have recently sent. As much as he might pretend to be able to "get by" whatever the situation – hunger, trouble, weakness, want – it is clear that the friends' "fragrant offering" has arrived just in the nick of time. And he is so grateful.

Besides the material support, the Philippians' messenger Epaphroditus has stayed on to offer such personal service as he can. The subsequent report (1.1-3.1) makes explicit the cost of his staying on: after his arrival Epaphroditus fell seriously ill. Now recovered, he is ready to return home; but with him Paul and Timothy will send the hard news they have drafted to the friends in Philippi (2.25-30).

And it *is* hard news: a matter, in fact, of life and death; no euphemism here about "falling asleep". Paul awaits a verdict and sentence that will determine his future. The search for words must come to grips with the stark reality confronting him – to be allowed to "remain" or to "let go"; to be or not to be. The choice, Paul knows only too well, is not his to

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[26] We should not presume to understand the exact nature of the judicial process alluded to here. "Although we have an apparent wealth of information about Roman law, our knowledge about its application is quite limited. . . And we have little information about the extent to which legal rules might be subverted by bribery, corruption, or the threat of force." (Shelton, 243-244).

[27] Paul and Timothy's report does not indicate what actions might have precipitated a death-penalty. Roman legislation governing religious activity suggests several possibilities: unauthorized persons were not permitted either to preside or serve at "cult ceremonies"; nor could such ceremonies be financed from a "common fund", or be held "in secret". They were limited to a maximum of five attendees, no more than two men or three women. (Shelton, 400-401, citing the inscription CIL 1.2.581 [bronze, southern Italy], 1st century BCE).

[28] On the composite nature of this "file", see William Richards, "Reading *Philippians*: Strategies for Unfolding a Story." *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 34 (2005): 69-79. Three letters seem to have been stuck simply end-to-end: a "thank-you note" (4.10-23) the "trial report" (1.1-3.1), and an "intervention" on problems at Philippi (3.2-4.9) similar in tone to Galatians and 2 Cor 10-13.

make. That rests with the magistrate hearing the case. What Paul *can* do is to choose how he will understand what follows, whatever the legal outcome.

So, whether it is to stay or go, to live or die, Paul declares, it will be Jesus with him. To live will be "Christ"; but to let go will also be "Christ" (1.21, 23), Christ who himself "accepted death, even death on a cross" (2.8). Paul now knows in his own body that – whatever he has claimed for, or trusted in, or hoped from, or loved with, Christ – that must now become his own personal reality, alive or "asleep". To find words for the "comfort" of that reality Paul reminds himself and his Philippian friends of all the warmth, affection, compassion, and happiness that has been theirs over many years together. That experience was Christ in their midst, Christ who died his own death, and theirs; Christ who lives his own life, and theirs (2.1-4).

As hesitant as these reminders may be, there is neither grief nor bravado here. Yes, there is a hope expressed (twice) that he yet may be able to make one more visit (1.26, 2.24). But we also hear in the hard news a Paul realistic enough to close by commending Timothy's "record" to their friends, the undertone to this endorsement being that Paul anticipates a guilty verdict, and a sentence of death. And so, he "makes his arrangements", entrusting his beloved Timothy and the Philippian friends into each other's future tender care (3.1).

Epilogue

The conversation about life, and death, and life beyond death winds its way through various moments along the way as Paul, Silas, Timothy, Epaphroditus, and friends in Thessaloniki, Corinth and Philippi search for words to face their grief, their bravado, and their sudden realizations of finitude. In Thessaloniki that search discovers the solidarity of love and labour that continues to bind "those who watch" with "those who sleep". In Corinth the search insists on a solidarity of modesty and humility before what can and cannot be put into words, trusting that, in and under the give-and-take of life together, a glory awaits us all that we cannot begin to imagine. And in last words, to friends in Philippi, we hear the search becoming the personal challenge of willingly, deliberately entrusting oneself to that "immortal" solidarity of love and labour, of modesty and humility, of life, of death, of life beyond death – a solidarity based in Jesus, our end and our beginning.

READING THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS' EASTER NARRATIVES
by Don Schweitzer

Narratives of Jesus' resurrection conclude the four gospels. These narratives provide "suspended endings "[1] that shine a new light on the preceding story, transforming its meaning. They also point into the future, inviting readers to enter the story themselves and carry it forward in their own lives and contexts. The central message of these narratives is that God raised the crucified Jesus to new life.[2] This overcame Jesus' death and bestowed saving significance upon it, validated his teaching and preaching, exalted his person to new life and divine status; bringing hope for the final overcoming of injustice, suffering, evil and death, and commissioning all who hear the gospel to carry forward his message and work. This central message makes the Easter narratives suspended endings.

What follows will first discuss common themes running through these Easter narratives. Then we will examine those of Mark, Matthew and Luke individually. Lack of space precludes an equal discussion of the Johannine Easter narratives. All the Easter narratives, like the gospels they conclude, are "faith responses to concrete historical situations."[3] They should be read as such. Yet their message projects an eschatological horizon and proclaims a hope with universal meaning that seeks to be celebrated in worship and put into practice wherever the gospel is read or heard. The standpoint from which they are read also needs consideration. Their themes of hope and forgiveness have particular importance for white settlers like me who belong to churches that accepted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. Climate change and the need in church and society for transcendent sources of hope and an encompassing moral vision should also influence how they are read.

Common themes

The Easter narratives are testimonies to "the occurrence and meaning"[4] of a unique and decisive event. They describe what happened

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[1] Morna, Hooker, *Endings: Invitations to Discipleship* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 82.

[2] Francis Maloney, *The Resurrection of the Messiah* (New York: Paulist Press, 2013), 153.

[3] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 33.

[4] Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Resurrection of Jesus and Roman Catholic

to Jesus, interpret its meaning and challenge readers to respond appropriately. They make three main truth claims. First, they proclaim that God raised Jesus from death to new life. This is their primary focus. This proclamation discloses a vision of reality in which God's love is ultimately greater than death. It illuminates the life of Jesus and the lives of those who receive it. It provides a language that stands up to death.[5] It brings hope and meaning that empowers one to love, to seek justice and resist evil, to accept oneself and others.

Second, these narratives make a historical truth claim. They insist that the vision of reality they disclose is based on historical events. Yet they focus more on interpreting the meaning of these events. They received their present form decades after these events happened, when the gospels they conclude were composed. They describe the origin of Easter faith, but also experiences that the early church had in living this faith and insights gained from this. They incorporate traditions, some of which originated decades earlier, that have been altered and incorporated to express each gospel's understanding of Easter. In certain respects, they all tell the same story. But they each tell it in their own way. This makes these narratives uncertain historical sources. There are irreconcilable differences between them.[6] They indicate that women played a key role in bringing news of Jesus' resurrection to the disciples.

However, we cannot learn much from them about the nature of the appearances of the risen Christ.[7] The list of witnesses given by Paul and analysis of the appearance narratives indicate that whatever they were like, appearances of the risen Christ did occur with transformative effect.[8] This does not prove that Jesus' resurrection occurred. But the experiences the disciples and others had of these appearances did lead them to believe that he had risen to new life. The historicity of the empty tomb is more difficult to determine. Some scholars judge that evidence weighs slightly in favor

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Fundamental Theology," *The Resurrection* edited by Stephen Davis, Daniel Kendall and Gerald O'Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 223.

[5] Ingo Baldermann, *Auferstehung sehen lernen* (Germany: Neukirchener Verlag, 1999), 13.

[6] For a list of these see A.J.M. Wedderburn, *Beyond Resurrection* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 24-5.

[7] Pheme Perkins, *Resurrection* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1984), 94-5.

[8] Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 490, 496, 503.

of its historicity,[9] but only slightly. With the exception of the beloved disciple in John 20:8, the Easter narratives portray faith in Jesus' resurrection as beginning from encounters with the risen Christ. The appearances gave rise to the faith that explains the empty tomb. The tradition of the empty tomb, though, does indicate that for all four evangelists, Jesus died, was buried, and his resurrection involved his body.[10] The tradition of apocalyptic hope that provided the "cultural and linguistic context"[11] for understanding of Jesus' resurrection in early Christianity envisioned resurrection as the transformation of a person's entire self into a new eschatological existence. All four gospels endorse this. Through the narrative of the empty tomb they affirm that Jesus' resurrection involved the whole of his person.[12]

This historical truth claim, meagre though it is in some respects, affirms that the Easter message is grounded in reality. But the resurrection narratives emphasize that Easter faith involves more than affirming a historical fact. It is a response to the eschatological future breaking into history. "It means being possessed by the life-giving Spirit and participating in the powers of the age to come (Heb 6.5)."[13] It is not enough to affirm that Jesus rose on Easter morning. He must also rise in our hearts.

These narratives make a third truth claim concerning where the risen Christ is to be experienced and how one can come to faith in Jesus' resurrection. The risen Christ is present everywhere.[14] But Mark and Matthew indicate that discipleship is key to experiencing Jesus' risen presence. Luke and John identify worship, particularly the eucharist, and the study of Scripture as other activities through which the risen Christ is encountered.

All the Easter accounts indicate that Jesus' resurrection was as scandalous in its own way as his death. They portray it as difficult for human reason to accept and understand. Faith in it is almost always accompanied by doubt and astonishment. Yet the Easter narratives also

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[9] Dale Allision, Jr., *The Resurrection of Jesus* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2021), 162.

[10] Larry Hurtado, *Ancient Jewish Monotheism and Early Christian Jesus-Devotion* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 451-2.

[11] Reginald Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* (London: SPCK, 1972), 18.

[12] Roger Haight, *Jesus: Symbol of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 125.

[13] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 218.

[14] Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John Volume 2* (Westmont, Ill: IVP Academic, 2015), 30-31.

testify that faith in Jesus' resurrection brings a fulfilment and increase to human life and reason. The disciples went to Galilee to meet the risen Christ because they sought this fulfilment. In Luke and John the risen Christ is a source of joy and peace.

In Jesus' resurrection, God is the giver, and the risen Jesus reveals himself. The "language of the resurrection appearances … accentuates not the experience of the recipient, but the revelatory action of Christ or God."[15] Something greater than human reason can fully conceive entered history here, transforming it in a way that language, categories and analogies drawn from history can never completely grasp. Easter is so saturated with meaning that it triggers an endless process of interpretation. The assurance and hope it brings must be appropriated in and critically applied to each new context which it enters.

The Easter narratives emphasize both continuity and discontinuity between the historical and the risen Jesus. The risen Jesus is the Jesus who was crucified. His resurrection validates his teaching, proclamation and implicit claim about himself. Yet the risen Jesus has a new, transformed existence, beyond death and the limits of natural human life, and has been given new authority through exaltation to a status close to God. The confession of Thomas in John 20:28 takes this even further. For the Johannine church Jesus' resurrection revealed his oneness with God.

This pattern of continuity and discontinuity is also present in the mission to which the disciples were called. There is continuity with their discipleship prior to Jesus's death. They are to follow Jesus, sharing in his work and proclaiming his message, as they did before his death. Yet while their mission continues, its horizons and parameters have broadened and become more inclusive, and they carry it out with a new understanding of Jesus. A new era of salvation has dawned that looks forward to the fulfilment of eschatological hope, and a new relationship to God through faith in the risen Jesus is now available.

Each resurrection narrative takes up themes from the beginning of the gospel it concludes. Each also puts special emphasis on Jesus' appearance to the disciples. When Paul lists various resurrection appearances in 1 Corinthians 15:5-8, he treats them as of equal weight. But in the gospels the appearance to the disciples is a defining moment. As each evangelist invokes or describes this appearance, they use it as a stage upon which they mount the essence of their vision of the church and its mission.

Finally, each gospel is written from the perspective of faith in

[15] Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives*, 32.

Jesus' resurrection. The resurrection narratives point forward to the church's mission and the eschatological future. They also point back to the ministry of Jesus, keeping the church focused on him as central to discerning its way in the present.

We turn now to examine the resurrection narratives of the synoptic gospels individually. We begin with Mark's, which Matthew and Luke expanded on.

Mark's Easter narrative (Mark 16:1-8)

Mark's gospel was probably written for Gentile Christians around 70 CE, just before or after a Roman army destroyed Jerusalem. Its Easter narrative is only eight verses long and poses two enigmas for interpreters.

First, it does not describe an appearance of the risen Christ, though its author knew of one (Mark 14:28). Was an account of this omitted on purpose? Or was there originally a longer ending describing an appearance that has been lost? The scholarly consensus at present is that Mark's gospel must be interpreted as is, ending with the silence of the women.

Second, how is the women's silence in Mark 16:8 to be interpreted? Did they tell no one and fail to fulfill their mission? This would be in keeping with Mark's theme of the disciples' failure.[16] Or does "and they said nothing to anyone" (16:8) mean that they only told the disciples to whom they were sent about Jesus' resurrection and said nothing of this to anyone else?[17] Good arguments exist for both interpretations.

There is a disturbing starkness to Mark's Easter account that challenges the reader. It unfolds in three stages. First, three women go to Jesus' tomb, not expecting what awaits them. Mark portrays them as "true disciples of Jesus."[18] They witnessed Jesus' death. Two of them observed his burial. Their presence connects Jesus' death, burial and resurrection; the three main elements of the Easter kerygma. They and the young man in the tomb are the visible characters in Mark's narrative. The use of the passive voice to describe what happened to the stone sealing the tomb and to Jesus (16:4, 6) points to God,[19] the story's central character, who remains offstage yet whose action is central to the narrative. The mention that the women went to the tomb "when the sun had risen" (16:2) may symbolize the effect of what God has done.

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[16] Perkins, *Resurrection*, 121-2.
[17] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 302.
[18] Hooker, *Endings*, 18
[19] Frank Matera, *Resurrection* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015), 40.

In the second stage the women encounter a young man sitting in the empty tomb. Their alarm is a typical response to encountering a heavenly messenger. It signifies that something transcendent is about to be revealed. The young man explains why the tomb is empty. His speech is central to Mark's Easter narrative. It encapsulates the Easter kerygma, commissions the women to tell others, and indirectly commissions these others too. His naming Jesus "Jesus of Nazareth" and the women's response reach back to the beginning of Mark's gospel, where Jesus' exorcism of a demon who used this name for him generated amazement (Mark 1:23-27). The Jesus who cast out demons is the same person in whom God's power over death is now revealed.[20] The work begun there has culminated in this decisive overcoming of sin, evil and death.

Crucifixion was a Roman punishment. Describing Jesus as having been crucified (16:6) rather than simply as having died may indicate that Roman power and authority have in principle been overcome. As Jesus' death was intended to terrorize those oppressed by Rome, his resurrection expresses God's alliance with victims of oppression. The empty tomb traditions take "suffering and death seriously but do not see them as having the 'last word'"[21] on life. That last word belongs to God. It has been spoken in Jesus' resurrection.

The disciples forsook Jesus in his trial and death. Yet the women are instructed to tell them that the risen Jesus has gone ahead of them to Galilee. There they will meet him as he promised. For Mark, Matthew and Luke, Jesus' resurrection fulfills what Jesus promised. Here God's saving power succeeds despite the disciples' failings and offers them forgiveness and a renewed future.[22] The young man's message also says that the risen Christ still has more to do.

All the gospels portray the risen Christ as remaining active. In Luke and John, he ascends to heaven and assumes an intercessory role. In Mark and Matthew, he remains on earth. In Matthew he is present with the church and in the victims of society. In Mark he goes before the disciples to Galilee, which for Mark symbolizes the place of Jesus' ministry before his passion.[23] The disciples will meet the risen Christ as they take up their renewed mission of following Jesus. For Mark 'following Jesus' defines

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[20] Raymond Brown, *A Risen Christ in Eastertime* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 14.

[21] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 125-6.

[22] Hooker, *Endings,* 27.

[23] Perkins, *Resurrection*, 120.

what it means to be the church. This mission will continue until the eschaton.

The third stage of Mark's narrative is the women's response to the angel's message. Regardless of how one interprets their silence, this message spread. Mark's Easter account focuses on primordial themes of suffering, death and the overcoming of death.[24] It comforts and empowers. God has overcome death and offers forgiveness and a renewed calling to fallible disciples. But its ending also poses a challenge. How will we respond to what God has done? For Mark, faith in Jesus' resurrection means following the crucified and risen Jesus.[25] This inevitably means taking up one's cross (Mark 8:34-5).

Matthew's Easter Narrative (Matthew 27:62-28:20)

Matthew was probably written in Syria, perhaps in Antioch, shortly after 80 CE. It incorporates about ninety percent of Mark's gospel and was perhaps intended to replace it.[26]

Matthew takes over Mark's Easter narrative, deleting some details and adding others. These changes give Matthew's version a different tone. The somberness of Mark's account is replaced by confident hope and the assurance of the risen Christ's authoritative presence. Matthew was written in a "contentious atmosphere,"[27] when Matthew's community and surrounding Jewish communities were coming to terms with the disaster of the Jewish war, the destruction of the temple, and the emergence of gentile churches. The risen Christ's concluding words establish Matthew's gospel as Scripture for its community,[28] along with the Hebrew Scriptures.

Matthew's Easter narrative begins in 27:62 with a story[29] not found in other New Testament gospels that is woven into the account of the empty tomb. Jewish religious leaders ask Pilate to post guards at Jesus' tomb. These guards function as negative counterparts to the women. The women go to the tomb out of faithfulness to Jesus, receive the angel's message and carry out their commission, participating in God's saving act. The soldiers, sent to Jesus' tomb in a vain attempt to prevent the unstoppable, fall asleep

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[24] Norman Perrin, *The Resurrection according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 34-6.

[25] Brown, *A Risen Christ in Eastertime*, 16-17.

[26] Alan Culpepper, *Matthew* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2021), 6.

[27] Culpepper, *Matthew*, 27.

[28] Culpepper, *Matthew*, 584.

[29] Matthew 27:62-66; 28:4, 11-15.

and fail to carry out their orders.

Throughout the gospels the use of armed force to stop Jesus and his work is repeatedly shown to be futile and sometimes ironically to serve what it was intended to prevent. At the beginning of Matthew's gospel Herod seeks to kill Jesus and fails. After Jesus' death soldiers attempt to keep Jesus in his tomb. The use of force in both cases is ultimately unable to stop what God is doing through Jesus – "a lesson of encouragement to Matthew's readers (and to us)."[30]

The story of the guards defends the message of Jesus' resurrection against anti-Christian polemic and heightens the empty tomb's miraculous nature. The author of Matthew may have taken this story from a popular narrative or invented it. Its backdrop in Matthew is the request of Jewish religious leaders for a sign from heaven in Matthew 12:38-42 and 16:1-4. Jesus answered that they would receive "no sign … except the sign of Jonah" (Matthew 16:4). They receive this when the soldiers report to them what happened (28:12-13). The Gospel of Peter also describes soldiers at the tomb of Jesus, but Matthew uses this tradition differently, primarily for apologetic purposes. This story concludes in 28:15 with a reference to the author's own context.[31] It falsifies itself at several points[32] and is problematic. Though Jesus' resurrection is not described as a publicly observable historical event, this story implies "that only wicked people refuse to be convinced by it."[33] In light of the Holocaust, faithfulness to Jesus requires repudiation of this story's defamation of Jewish religious leaders.

Matthew's account of the empty tomb (28:1-8), like Mark's, is framed by the actions of the women but centres on the angel's announcement of Jesus' resurrection. Matthew adds the miraculous details of an earthquake happening as an angel rolls back the stone sealing the tomb. The stone is moved not so Jesus can get out, but so the women can see in. The angel's appearance designates him as a divine messenger. His rolling away the stone indicates that God is intervening in history "with clear, visible, and traceable consequences."[34] Jesus' resurrection is portrayed as unexpected, miraculous, and disruptive, but is not itself described. Though it was an event that left traces in time and space, it

[30] Brown, *A Risen Christ in Eastertime*, 25.
[31] Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21-28 (Hermeneia)* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2005), 609.
[32] Culpepper, *Matthew*, 579; Brown, *A Risen Christ in Eastertime*, 25.
[33] Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 609.
[34] Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 595.

remains mystery that can only be proclaimed. In the synoptic accounts of the empty tomb, divine messengers are needed to announce it, as Jesus' resurrection is something "that human beings can neither discover nor rationally infer."[35] The angel's appearance renders the guards helpless and frightens the women, but his message consoles and empowers the latter. The Easter message imparts more than facts. It strengthens and comforts those who receive it.

As in Mark, the angel reminds the women[36] that Jesus had predicted his resurrection. For Matthew, Easter is not a new beginning for Jesus as the Son of God, but God's confirmation of his ministry, message and person,[37] through which he attains a new status as the one to whom all authority has been given (28:18). For the women it is a new beginning. They are commissioned to go and tell the disciples what they have heard. Here Matthew makes several changes to Mark. First, special mention of Peter is dropped. All "disciples are recipients and proclaimers"[38] of the Easter message, not just Peter. Second, the women explicitly obey the angel, whose message fills them with joy as well as fear or awe.[39]

Leaving the tomb, the women are greeted by the risen Jesus. They respond by worshipping him. Their journey to faith in Jesus' resurrection is now complete. Matthew 28:9-10 and 28:16-20 are "concise"[40] appearance narratives that focus on Jesus' followers recognizing his risen presence and then receiving a commission from him.[41] Matthew does not elaborate the theme of non-recognition of the risen Jesus as Luke and John do. But Matthew does emphasize this theme's import: the initiative in encounters with the risen Christ lies with God, not with people. Faith in Jesus' resurrection is a response to God's revealing grace that makes this event known.

Jesus comforts the women and repeats the angel's commission. Unlike Paul, Luke and John, Mark and Matthew do not describe the risen Christ's body. Matthew is interested in the risen Christ's words and actions, not his appearance. Here the risen Christ first appears to the women, not Peter. This appearance points to one yet to come. Twice the women have

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[35] Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 604.
[36] "as he said," Matthew 28:6.
[37] Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 597.
[38] Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 597.
[39] Culpepper, *Matthew*, 577.
[40] C.H. Dodd, "The Appearances of the Risen Christ," *Studies in the Gospels* edited by D. E. Nineham (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955), 11.
[41] Dodd, "The Appearances of the Risen Christ," 33.

been told to tell the disciples they will see the risen Jesus in Galilee. The stage is now set for this all-important event which will chart the future course of Matthew's community.

Matthew concludes the story of the soldiers, then takes us with the disciples to meet the risen Jesus on "the mountain" in Galilee to which, Matthew tells us, Jesus had directed them (28:16). "The mountain" is a symbolic term for Matthew.[42] It designates a place where significant teachings like the sermon on the mount and revelations like the transfiguration occur.

Matthew 28:16-20 is the climax of the gospel. Its five verses look back over the course of Jesus' ministry and ahead to the eschaton, summarizing and extending many of Matthew's central themes. The disciples worship the risen Christ, but some doubted (28:17). This presents Matthew's understanding of the Christian condition. The disciples are repeatedly exhorted in Matthew to have greater faith, but remain to the end, people of "little faith."[43] As such, their hope lies not in themselves, but in Jesus and God's saving power. Jesus does not reprimand them for their little faith, but instead reassures them. Though he was always the Son of God, his cross and resurrection have inaugurated a new age and exalted him to a new status with unique authority. He "now belongs to the same realm as God and the Spirit"[44] and is continuously present with the church and in the victims of society (25:31-46). In keeping with his new status and risen presence, Jesus now extends the disciples' mission to all nations. They are to make disciples by baptizing in the triune name of God (though the doctrine of the Trinity was not yet developed), following Jesus' teaching, and by teaching this to others. Jesus' resurrection is such that it must be appropriately proclaimed to others.[45] It is an enduring source of hope and joy through which Jesus' became continuously present with the church.

Luke's Easter Narrative (Luke 24)

Luke's gospel is the first part of Luke-Acts, a two-volume work. It was written between 75-125 CE, probably by a Gentile steeped in the faith and Scriptures of Second Temple Judaism, who had the social status, education and resources to write a stylistically sophisticated account of Jesus and the

[42] Hooker, *Endings*, 36.
[43] Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 623.
[44] Matera, *Resurrection*, 49.
[45] Matera, *Resurrection*, 50.

early church.[46]

Luke's Easter narrative provides the climax and conclusion of Luke's gospel, and a transition to Acts, which describes how under the Spirit's inspiration the early church carried further what Jesus inaugurated. In keeping with this twofold purpose it recounts two parallel movements: the completion of Jesus' departure (Luke 9:31) through his resurrection and entry into glory, and his followers' journey to faith in his resurrection.

Luke uses geographical location and temporal markers to help impart the gospel's meaning. Like Matthew, Luke adopts and revises Mark's account of the empty tomb (24:1-12). Perhaps the most significant revision is that Luke locates all the Easter appearances in or around Jerusalem and has them all occur in one day.[47] Luke's gospel begins (1:5-8) and ends (24:53) in Jerusalem, which is the goal of Jesus' earthly journey and then the jumping off point for the Christian mission, which will spread to all nations. The journey of Jesus' followers leads to joyful belief in Jesus' resurrection and their return to the temple, where the gospel narrative began. There they await the sending of the Holy Spirit which will guide them on the journey that Acts will describe. The journey of Jesus from Galilee leads, by way of the cross, to heaven. This "constitutes a promise that the journey of his disciples to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8) will also end in heaven."[48] Thus the journey of Jesus helps empower his followers to carry his work further.

Though Luke seeks precision in plotting these movements, he repeats himself frequently and modifies his account each time. Also, the text of Luke's Easter narrative has many variations. A definitive version of it is probably unattainable.[49] None of this affects his account's ability to communicate its central message: in Jesus' resurrection the ultimate power of death has been overcome and a new era of salvation has dawned.

Luke is especially interested in a) how one comes to faith in Jesus' resurrection and b) with providing assurance about its reality. On a surface level, all the human actors in Luke 24 are reproached for not believing in it. All should have expected it, as Jesus' death and resurrection were foretold by Jesus (24:7) and in the scriptures (24:46). Yet on a deeper level,

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[46] John Carroll, *Luke* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 2-4.

[47] Paul's list of witnesses to appearances of the risen Christ in 1 Corinthians 15:5-8 suggests that these appearances continued for anywhere from one and a half to three years; Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology Part I* (London: SCM Press, 1971), 301.

[48] Brown, *A Risen Christ in Eastertime*, 40.

[49] Francois Bovon, *Luke 3* (Hermeneia) (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 390.

it takes the whole of chapter 24 for his followers to come to believe in his resurrection. Divine assistance is needed to recognize the reality of the Easter victory of life over death and its significance. According to Luke, once one comes to believe in Jesus' resurrection, one can understand it as a decisive moment in God's overarching work of salvation. Yet coming to believe in it requires experiencing the presence of the risen Christ. Luke will describe how this happened for the first witnesses, and how and where it can happen for subsequent generations. For Luke,

> Easter is the day of openings: opening the tomb (24:2), opening the eyes (24:31), opening the Scriptures (24:32), and … opening the mind (v.45). …The transformation involves entire persons, especially the inner being.[50]

This process begins with the women who accompanied Jesus from Galilee (23:55) going to the tomb early on the first day of the week (24:1).

The women are at first perplexed to find the tomb open and empty. They become afraid when confronted by "two men in dazzling clothes" (24:4), who explain the tomb's emptiness: Jesus is not there because he has risen from the dead (24:5). Having proclaimed the Easter message, they urge the women to recall how Jesus foretold this. Luke emphasizes more than Mark and Matthew that Jesus foretold his death and resurrection. Remembering this establishes that not even death can prevent what Jesus promises or prophesies from coming true. Therefore, credence should be given to Jesus' parting instructions. What he promises then will also come true.

The women return to "the eleven and to all the rest" (24:9) and report what they witnessed. Their words seem ridiculous to the disciples (24:11). Here Luke acknowledges that from its beginning the message of Jesus' resurrection has been haunted by the spectre of irrationality. Luke will endeavour to exorcise this. We are not told that the women believe the Easter message yet. Peter though, checks out their story and is amazed to find the tomb as they described it (24:12). His mind has begun to be opened.

Luke next interjects a story of two of Jesus' former followers walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus. It is unique to his gospel and probably based on an earlier tradition that Luke reworked.[51] As the two walk they discuss the events of Jesus' passion. Though they will confidently describe these to Jesus, the direction of their journey, away from Jerusalem, indicates their incomprehension of these. They are going the wrong way.

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[50] Bovon, *Luke 3*, 394.
[51] Bovon, *Luke 3*, 369.

Unrecognized, the risen Jesus comes to their aid by joining their walk and conversation. The result is an ironic, almost comic exchange. The followers' account of Jesus' ministry and death and his explanation of how these were a necessary prelude to his resurrection summarize the gist of Luke's gospel and theology.[52]

Here and in Matthew's and John's Easter narratives the resurrected Jesus does not appear as a divine figure signified by dazzling clothes (24:4), a blaze of light (Acts 9:3), or gigantic height (Gospel of Peter, 40). Instead the risen Christ appears simply as Jesus,[53] though in the crucial appearance to the disciples in Luke and John, he bears the marks of crucifixion. Yet though Jesus' appearance remains unchanged, in Luke's narrative, recognizing his presence requires divine assistance. For Luke, the risen Jesus is "real but invisible."[54] In this way Luke affirms the continuity and discontinuity of the historical Jesus and the risen Christ and the nature of the latter's presence. The risen Christ, having entered into glory (24:26), is always already present. Yet apart from faith he is invisible, as here where he stands unrecognized before the two travelers. Luke now indicates two activities through which recognition and experience of the risen Christ's presence can occur: the opening of Scripture and the eucharist.

The unrecognized Jesus enlightens his followers by interpreting Scripture for them, showing how they prophesy his death and resurrection (24:27). The meaning of his words here and in 24:44 "is that from one end of the Hebrew Scriptures to the other they bear testimony about him and his fate."[55] All four gospels make this kind of claim,[56] but each makes it on the basis of faith in Jesus' resurrection and messianic status.[57] Faith in Jesus' resurrection provides new insight into reality, including into the meaning of Scripture. Yet it should be noted that here and in 24:44 Luke imposes "a christological reading on Israel's Scriptures,"[58] and that the travelers portray Jewish religious leaders as solely responsible for the Roman execution of Jesus.

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[52] Bovon, *Luke 3*, 368.

[53] Perkins, *Resurrection*, 137.

[54] Bovon, *Luke 3*, 375.

[55] Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV* (AB) (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 1567.

[56] Lidija Novakovic, *Raised from the Dead According to Scripture* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), 174-5.

[57] Novakovic, *Raised from the Dead*, 216.

[58] Bovon, *Luke 3*, 394.

Recognition of Jesus comes when he acts as their host at the evening meal. Their later description of this has an obvious Eucharistic overtone (24:35). Enlightened by their encounter with Jesus, they now journey in the right direction, back to Jerusalem. There they hear that Jesus has risen and appeared to Simon (Peter) (24:34). This appearance, listed as the first in 1 Corinthians 15:5, is never described. Luke's Easter narrative has momentum now and is headed towards Jesus' definitive appearance to the gathered community. The group that will witness this includes the eleven disciples, the women, the two travelers and possibly others (24:33). However, Luke's combining and reworking of independent traditions of the empty tomb and three appearances does not produce a seamless chronology. In 24:34 Jesus' resurrection is announced to the returning travelers, who have encountered the risen Jesus themselves. Yet during the climatic appearance, the "they" of the gathered group is described as "disbelieving and still wondering" (24:41). For Luke, though other appearances have preceded it, this appearance to the gathered community is the definitive revelation of Jesus' resurrection and charts the church's future course.

This appearance first establishes the identity of the risen Jesus and the reality of his resurrection (24:36-43). The second part explains what this means and the role of the gathered community in it (24:44-49). Luke's account of this appearance draws upon a tradition also used in the Johannine account of it.[59] The appearance unfolds along the same pattern as that of the women's experience and two travelers. The risen Christ is not recognized at first and his appearance frightens his followers. They think they see a ghost (24:37). To overcome this, Jesus invites them to look at his wounds, to touch him, and then eats a piece of fish. This provides assurance that he is no ghost, but Jesus, risen from the dead. As Stefan Alkier notes:

> [b]y way of contrast to Mark and Matthew, Luke allows no room for doubt within faith. He wishes to make faith certain, as he explains at the beginning of his gospel. In the face of so much evidence, the disciples can only remain silent.[60]

Luke follows Paul here in the belief that "for the resurrection to be personal it must be bodily."[61] But while Paul emphasized that "flesh and blood

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[59] Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1575.

[60] Stefan Alkier, *The Reality of the Resurrection* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), 132.

[61] Bovon, *Luke 3*, 391.

cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 15:50), Luke seems to have followed a trend that developed late in the first century which increasingly used "the vocabulary of the flesh"[62] to describe the resurrected body. In Luke's account the body of the risen Jesus "no longer obeys the bounds of space and time,"[63] but it is flesh and bone in a way that Paul suggests it wasn't.

Having established his identity and the reality of his resurrection, the risen Jesus opens the group's minds to how his death and resurrection are foretold throughout the Hebrew Scriptures (24:44) and to how these promise that the group will have a role to play in his resurrection by preaching repentance and the forgiveness of sins in his name to all nations (24:47). For Luke this encapsulates the church's mission.

Jesus' resurrection is not complete without those who believe in it and live accordingly. Only through their witness (24:48) can the news of his resurrection and the new age it inaugurates enter into history and the hope this brings be kept alive. The gathered community is to wait though, until it has been empowered by the Holy Spirit before embarking on this mission (24:49). Where Matthew affirms the risen Christ's continuing presence with the church, Luke and John emphasize Jesus' ascension and the resulting presence of the Holy Spirit.

Before the risen Jesus leaves, he blesses the community as a departing biblical patriarch blesses their children and as a priest blesses their people.[64] The gathered community responds by worshipping him. This completes their journey to faith in his resurrection. This faith brings them great joy and leads them to bless God. Luke's Easter narrative ends on these notes and looks forward to the subsequent story of the Holy Spirit and the church.

Conclusion

Having examined the Easter narratives of Mark, Matthew and Luke, we come back, as they do, to where we began, while looking forward to the future. These narratives should be read critically, as testimonies to an event that produced a great hope. Their central message, that God raised the crucified Jesus to new life, can address several crises of the present in empowering ways.

Mark's Easter narrative addresses the disciples' failure yet commissions them to a new vocation. It characterizes the church as "both

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[62] Bovon, *Luke 3*, 391.
[63] Alkier, *The Reality of the Resurrection*, 133.
[64] Bovon, *Luke 3*, 407, 411.

a penitent and a hopeful community,"[65] that can face and confess its sins, yet still abide in hope and act on that. This is an important message for churches that ran residential schools. Burdened by guilt and charged with accepting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation in Canada, these churches need to hear the message of forgiveness and hope that Mark's narrative bears.

The narrative of the empty tomb and Luke's stress on the physicality of the risen Jesus' body embarrasses some. Yet both bring all embodied life into the horizon of eschatological expectation and implicitly call for faithfulness to the earth. This aspect of Jesus' resurrection brings hope in a time of ecological crisis and a call to care for the environment.

Finally, the resurrection of the crucified Jesus is pertinent for a time when the moral resources of secular thought are wearing thin and violence unleashed by brutal regimes kills and wreaks havoc in people's lives. As Jesus' resurrection upset "Rome's theatrics of terror"[66] by associating ultimate power with Jesus, so it subverts all contemporary political theatrics of terror. This subversion can inspire resistance to oppression and struggles for peace and justice today.[67]

[65] Rowan Williams *Resurrection* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2002/1982), 21.
[66] Mark Lewis Taylor, *The Executed God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 102.
[67] I thank Michael Bourgeois for helpful comments on an earlier version of this essay.

BECOMING A WITNESS: READING RESURRECTION IN ACTS

By Jo-Ann Badley

Early in the book of Acts, Peter proposes that the followers of Jesus waiting in Jerusalem for the promised Holy Spirit choose a replacement for Judas (1:15-26).[1] Judas' death, after his betrayal of Jesus, has left an opening for a twelfth apostle.[2] Peter describes the apostolic role as *witness to the resurrection* (1:22) and he names the qualifications for such a witness: the man must have been present with the disciples through Jesus' public ministry, from his baptism by John to when Jesus was taken up.[3] Peter's initiative provides a preliminary indication of the central importance of the resurrection for understanding the book of Acts. According to Luke, the resurrection is significant both as an event in Jesus' life and as a primary tenet of the witness of the early church.[4]

Critical studies of Acts since the time of H.J. Cadbury (1959) have affirmed the importance of attending to the resurrection to make sense of Luke's agenda.[5] In his more recent commentary (2009), Richard Pervo

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[1] References to texts in Acts are given with chapter and verse. Otherwise, the name of the book is given.

[2] Matthew's Gospel gives a different account of Judas' demise (Mt. 27:3-10).

[3] "Witness to the resurrection" is also used in 3:15, 4:33, and 10:39-41. "To be taken up" is also a significant phrase in Luke's gospel, marking the beginning of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem where his death, resurrection and ascension happen (Luke 9:51).

[4] There is no consensus in modern critical studies about whether Luke and Acts were written by the same person, although Carl R. Holladay says it is a "plausible assumption," *Acts: A Commentary*, New Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 4. As well, we have no certain information about the person(s) who wrote Luke and Acts. I think that the Acts of the Apostle was written in light of the gospel, certainly by someone who knew and valued the gospel if not the same person, and so, it is important to read Acts with the Gospel of Luke in view. I call the author(s) of these books Luke. The final canonical order puts the Gospel of John between them which makes Acts the narrative framework for the epistles (both Paul's and the General Epistles). Acts is, therefore, a key narrative for the integration of the New Testament books as a whole. With most gospel scholars, I think the canonical gospels were written in the last quarter of the first century and Acts was written soon after, either at the end of the first or start of the second century.

[5] H.J. Cadbury's work, *The Making of Luke*-Acts (London: SPCK, 1959) is an important work in the early critical study of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. See Kevin L. Anderson, *But God Raised Him From the*

states that Luke's theology of the cross, in contrast for example to Paul's, is best seen as "a tragic and revelatory act reversed by the resurrection" and that resurrection is, for Luke, "the defeat of Satan."[6] In Pervo's opinion, the Christology of Acts is focused on the resurrection, in contrast even to Luke's gospel which includes a narrative of incarnation (Luke 1-2).[7]

Such attention to the resurrection, however, creates more questions than answers for readers of the accounts. First, no one in either the Gospel of Luke or the Acts of the Apostles actually sees Jesus rise from the grave. According to the gospel, the followers of Jesus witness his public crucifixion (Luke 23:49), they see the empty tomb (Luke 24:1-12), Jesus appears to them after his death (Luke 24:13-51), and they see him ascend into the clouds (Luke 24:51). The last two events are recapped in Acts (1:3, 6-8; 1:9). But there is no description of the actual resurrection. Thus, when Peter proposes naming a witness to the resurrection, it is a witness to an event that none of them have seen and suggests that Peter is using the word 'resurrection' as shorthand for all aspects of Jesus' *being taken up* (1:22).

Second, in Luke's resurrection appearances, Jesus is both recognizable (his hands and feet are marked by his crucifixion, Luke 24:39) and unrecognizable (he walks seven miles with two disciples to Emmaus who don't know who he is, Luke 24:13-24). He is both embodied (he eats fish, Luke 24:43) and disembodied (he comes to them like a ghost when they are gathered, Luke 24:36-37).

Finally, while the post-crucifixion events are clearly important to Luke—he includes them twice (Luke 24 and Acts 1:1-11)—the two accounts are different. In the gospel, the time from discovery of the empty tomb to ascension is one long day, and Jesus ascends at Bethany. In Acts, Jesus presents himself to his followers for forty days and he ascends from the Mount of Olivet. Thus, while we acknowledge that the resurrection is important for reading Luke's account of the early church, understanding the resurrection as Luke understands it will not be a straightforward task.[8]

Complicating the issue further, resurrection, as a concept, was

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Dead: The Theology of Jesus' Resurrection in Luke-Acts (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), chapter 2 for academic studies on resurrection in Luke-Acts since Cadbury.

[6] Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary,* Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2009), 23.

[7] Pervo, *Acts*, 23 n116, 19.

[8] This would be further complicated if we were to consider seriously Jesus' words to the thief on the cross: "Today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43).

contested in the ancient world as much as in our own.[9] As we know from the New Testament, the Jewish world was divided: the Pharisees believed in the resurrection, and they disputed with the Sadducees who did not. The same spectrum of views on the afterlife can be found in Greco-Roman sources. The Athenians' response to Paul's speech to the Areopagus demonstrates this: some scoffed and others expressed interest (17:32). Then, as now, there was no single opinion about what happens to people after death, about whether resurrection was likely and significant, or unlikely and irrelevant.

With these three premises laid out—that Jesus' resurrection is important to Luke, that it is not a straightforward concept in his writings, and that it was not a transparent concept in the ancient world—we can proceed to consider what Luke says about the resurrection. I argue that Luke's story of the early followers of Jesus is, in itself, a witness to the resurrection.[10] Thus, Peter's statement provides a reading lens for Luke's narrative(s) as well as for the appointment of the twelfth apostle. However, to make sense of Peter's words, we need to look carefully at what is claimed for the resurrection with respect to Jesus' identity and the identity of Jesus' followers. Luke's narrative connects Jesus' resurrection to his public life and is programmatic for the early Christian community. To make my argument I will use both the speeches of main characters (notably Peter and Paul) and the progression of narrative.[11]

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[9] J.H. Charlesworth, ed., *Resurrection: The Origin and Future of a Biblical Doctrine,* Faith and Scholarship Colloquies Series (New York & London: T&T Clark, 2006).

[10] Joel B. Green says "one may without hyperbole go on to say that Acts is not only a narrative about the propagation of the testimony to Jesus having been raised up by God but is also itself a witness to the resurrection and its significance for the realization of the ancient plan of God," "'Witnesses of His Resurrection': Resurrection, Salvation, Discipleship, and Mission in the Acts of the Apostles," in *Life in the Face of Death: The Resurrection Message of the New Testament*, edited by R.N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 227-8. Holladay helpfully recalls Paul Ricoeur's distinction between documentary (providing facts), explicative (interpreting) and poetic (creating communal identity) history, *Acts*, 12.

[11] Much of Acts is given over to speeches made by Peter and Paul (and a few others). Historically, many scholars have given priority to them as an interpretive framework for understanding Acts. More recently, the narrative has recovered a place of importance for interpreting the Acts. To use both is to acknowledge that the narrative form of the account is integral to its content.

Rising Up in Acts

Recent historical and philosophical discussions of resurrection typically focus on whether the resurrection was an objective or a subjective event.[12] To paint the two positions in strong contrast: Is resurrection something that happened to Jesus and the disciples saw him alive? Or did the disciples have a religious experience of the risen Jesus which gave them confidence he was alive? As interesting as this question is, and as important as it may be for a twenty-first century audience, Luke does not seem to frame the question in this way. The narratives which describe seeing the resurrected Lord in Acts offer evidence for both perspectives. Jesus' walk with two disciples to Emmaus seems to be an objective event. But then the eyes of the disciples were opened as Jesus broke bread so that they recognized him before he vanished, which would seem to be their religious experience (Luke 24:31). The disciples apparently had group conversations with the risen Jesus (1:6). Unless we imagine a group religious experience, such a conversation would seem to be an external phenomenon. When Luke describes Paul's experience of meeting the risen Lord on the road to Damascus, it is an experience that is partially shared with his travelling companions (9:7),[13] so external. But when Paul recounts the experience to Agrippa, he calls it a heavenly vision (26:19). These ambiguities are indications that we are looking at the text with a different lens and need to look more closely at the words in their context to see what Luke is saying.[14]

There are two verbs used interchangeably in the New Testament to speak of rising up or resurrection.[15] When one follows the use of these verbs (and their related nouns) through Luke's gospel and Acts, several meanings become obvious.

1. To physically rise up, typically to do some other action.
   Frequently, *rise up* vocabulary is used for the simple physical action of getting up to do something. Peter stands up to speak

[12] For an overview, see John M.G. Barclay, "The Resurrection in Contemporary New Testament Scholarship," in *Resurrection Reconsidered*, edited by G. D'Costa (Rockport, MA: Oneworld, 1996), 13-30; or Dale C. Allison, *The Resurrection of Jesus: Apologetics, Polemics, History* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2021).

[13] Note that Paul's fellow travellers hear but do not see the apparition (9:7); or see the light from heaven but do not hear (22:9 and 26:14).

[14] Beverly R. Gaventa speaks of reading a text on its own terms, "'You Will Be My Witnesses': Aspects of Mission in the Acts of the Apostles" *Missiology* 10 (1982): 414.

[15] *Egeirô* and *anistêmi* and cognates.

(1:15) as do Gamaliel (5:34) and Paul (13:16). Philip is commanded by the angel to rise up and go down the road to Gaza (8:26). Peter prevents Cornelius from worshipping him by raising him up (10:26).

2. To become prominent or noticeable.
   The words for *rise up* are also used metaphorically to indicate someone's coming to prominence. Gamaliel recalls that previous troublemakers Theudas and Judas the Galilean rose up but led ineffectual resistance (5:36-37). God makes prophets prominent (7:37). Paul says that God raised David up to be king (13:22). In Paul's charge to the elders from Ephesus, he warns that some of their own community will rise up to distort the truth, leading others astray (20:30).
3. To rise from a sick bed or even from death.
   Sometimes the action of rising up overcomes sickness or death, which had prevented such movement previously. Peter heals the man at the gate of the temple by raising him up, and his feet and ankles become strong to jump and walk (3:7). Similarly, Paul heals a man who could not walk (14:8). In these situations, sickness or disability are overcome by health and strength. On two occasions in Acts, the *raising up* is from the dead: Peter prays for the enlivening of Tabitha, also called Dorcas (9:40), and Paul raises Eutychus who fell from the third floor window (20:9-10).[16] In these cases, death is overcome by life.
4. For Jesus' resurrection from the dead.
   The vocabulary of *raised* is used, of course, to speak of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. There are several contextual differences to distinguish Jesus' resurrection from the raising of Tabitha or Eutychus. First, God acts in Jesus' resurrection without an intermediary such as a prophet (e.g. 2:24, 3:15, 4:10, 5:30, 10:40, 13:30).[17] Second, after being raised up, Jesus is not subject to death. Peter speaks of God having freed Jesus from death (2:24).[18] Citing Psalm 16 (LXX), Peter says that Jesus was no

[16] These actions remind the reader of Jesus' actions for the child of Jairus (Luke 8:55) and the widow's son (Luke 7:14).

[17] Steve E. Harris notes these distinctions and documents that they were significant in pre-modern exegesis, "On the Three Kinds of Resurrection of the Dead," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 20 (2018): 8-30.

[18] The gospel texts which use this vocabulary with respect to Jesus' resurrection are either predictions of his death (Luke 9:22, 18:33, 24:7) or witness to his

longer subject to corruption (2:31-32).[19] Peter says that God has raised the Author of Life (3:15). Third, because Jesus' resurrection can be distinguished from other similar events, its significance for God's redemptive purposes is also different. Peter proclaims that God raised his servant, this prophet like Moses, to bless Israel (3:22 and 26). Peter heals in the name of the risen Jesus (4:10). Resurrection is part of Jesus' exaltation, by which repentance and forgiveness are offered to Israel (5:30-31). Peter says that Jesus is the one ordained by God to judge the living and the dead (10:40-42).[20] Paul speaks of Jesus' resurrection as fulfillment of God's promises to Israel (Psalm 2, in 13:33; Psalm 16 in 13:35; in general, in 17:3). And Jesus, as the first to rise from the dead, provides light to both Jews and Gentiles (26:23).

For clarity in English, we might speak of rising to die again as resuscitation and rising to never-ending life as resurrection, but it is important to note that there is continuity between Jesus' resurrection and the rising of Tabitha and Eutychus. In both situations, life overcomes death.

5. General or final resurrection from the dead.

The vocabulary of *rising up* is also used in Luke's writings to speak of an anticipated moment of God's judgment and restoration. The noun is typically used rather than the verb to express this meaning.[21] Peter's and John's preaching annoys the Sadducees because Jesus' disciples speak of a resurrection of the dead (4:2). In Athens, Paul proclaims the resurrection, which his audience finds both bizarre and intriguing (17:18, 32). Belief in a general resurrection creates friction between Pharisees and Sadducees (23:6-7) and is part of Paul's defense before Felix (24:15, 21). Jesus' resurrection is understood by his disciples as the first example of this general resurrection (26:23).

Risen Life

For many of us in the twenty-first century, the remarkable quality of resurrection is that it is an unusual act of divine power in a world where

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resurrection (Luke 24:7, by the men in dazzling clothes, 24:34 by the eleven and their companions, and 24:46 by Jesus).

[19] Cf. 13:36-37.

[20] Cf. Paul's sermon in 17:31

[21] This is especially true in the gospel: Luke 2:34, 14:14 and four times in the exchange with the Sadducees (20:27- 33).

such interventions are largely thought to be unlikely or even impossible.[22] Because the resurrection is unlikely, a proclamation of resurrection requires an apologetic to demonstrate why the impossible might be possible. We look to reimagine the event with touchpoints in our reality. The study of religious experience offers models by which such experience can be imagined: ecstatic religious experience, apparitions of Mary, and vivid encounters with loved ones who have died are examples.[23]

In Acts, resurrection is primarily an affirmation of life over death, death being the final human adversary and God being the One who creates and advocates for life.[24] Although belief in resurrection was not universal in the ancient world, divine power in day-to-day affairs was more widely acknowledged.[25] As a result, Acts is not an apologetic for resurrection power as much as a witness to its life-affirming implications. In God's action to resurrect Jesus, life has overcome death; death no longer has the last word in human affairs. This affirmation of life is developed in two ways in the Acts narrative. First, Acts proclaims that the life of the prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, is the life which God has vindicated by raising him from the dead. Second, Acts describes a community of people whose communal life is a gift of God given so that they can be witnesses to God's life.[26]

Luke repeatedly affirms in the Book of Acts that the one who is resurrected is the one who had ministered in Galilee—teaching, healing, feeding, exorcising, giving sight—and who had died on a Roman cross in Jerusalem.[27] The witness to Jesus' life on earth (the Gospel of Luke) is thereby linked to the witness of his life beyond death in the community of his followers.[28] The life of the one who proclaimed that the kingdom of

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[22] Many of the theological and philosophical writings address this. See notes 9 and 12 above for bibliography.

[23] Allison incorporates all these possibilities, *Resurrection of Jesus*.

[24] This was a primary concern in the pre-modern worldview. See Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) and Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Shape of Death: Life, Death, and Immortality in the Early Fathers* (New York: Abingdon, 1961).

[25] The historical transition is documented by, among others, Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

[26] I suggest the centrality of life, whether meaning Jesus' life or the community's life, is in view, e.g. in Acts 5:20.

[27] Jesus of Nazareth as the resurrected Lord in Acts is ubiquitous: e.g. 2:22-24, 2:32, 10:36-41.

[28] The preface to Acts also makes this connection (1:1-2).

God had come near (1:3),[29] is now the basis of life for the community what lives in that kingdom (9:12 and 28:23). Thus, Peter looks for a twelfth apostle who participated in Jesus' life and ministry (1:21-22). Paul's experience of the risen Lord begins with an identity statement that Paul is persecuting Jesus (9:5, 22:8, 26:15). The resurrection is not a random act of divine power. In Jesus' resurrection, God vindicates the particular life of Jesus of Nazareth. The resurrection is an act of God to signal that the life of Jesus of Nazareth was a life lived pleasing to God in every way. Jesus' way of life is the way of eternal life.[30]

Second, the resurrection is not an isolated event. On the one hand, it is the central movement of a three-part *rising up* that started with Jesus' crucifixion in Jerusalem and ended with his exaltation into heaven (3:13-15, 5:30-31). God's act of vindication does not rescind the martyr's death but includes suffering in the life of a disciple. Stephen's death imitates Jesus' death (7:59) and Paul accepts the possibility of death as he turns toward Jerusalem (21:10-14). On the other hand, Jesus' rising up is necessary for the gift of the Spirit (1:5), initially to followers in Jerusalem (2:4), eventually to God-fearers (10:44), and then to believing Gentiles anywhere (15:8). After his ascension to heaven, the Spirit descends to the community.[31]

Finally, resurrected life is divine life. The triptych of death-resurrection-ascension was part of God's plan and conforms to the promises of God as given in the prophets and law (3:18, 17:3).[32] The actors in the arrest and death of Jesus made choices, but, in Luke's account of the event and in his recalling of the event in the preaching of Acts, all these things happened by the will of God, in accordance with the scriptures (3:17-18, 13:27). Somehow human agency and divine necessity are not incompatible.

Acts also bears witness that the resurrected life of Jesus, empowered

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[29] Luke 9:11, 10:9 and 11.

[30] Luke 1:22, 9:35

[31] Thus the Acts narrative is nascent to development of the Trinity.

[32] Luke uses the phrase "it is necessary" to indicate divine necessity in both the gospel (Luke 9:22, 13:33, 15:32, 17:25, 22:37, 24:7, 24:26, and 24:44) and in Acts (1:16, 1:21, 3:21, 9:16, 14:22, 19:21, and 23:11). The frequent citation of scripture, especially the Psalms and prophets, is the clearest evidence for this claim: 2:16-21 citing Joel; 2:25-28 and 2:34-35 citing Psalms; 7:42-43 citing Amos; 7:32-33 referring to Isaiah, to give just some examples. More general claims such as "all the prophets testify about him" (10:43) are more difficult to relate to particular events. Note that Luke primarily uses the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures (Septuagint).

by the Holy Spirit, continues in the life of the community who are gathered as believers in Jesus' resurrection. This is an inclusive community of Jews and Gentiles.[33] Their ignorance and transgressions are forgiven.[34] They live selflessly, in unity, worshipping God, caring for one another.[35] The apostles of Jesus do the same deeds that Jesus did: bring good news to the poor and proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, interpret the scriptures in light of Jesus' life and rising up, heal and exorcise,[36] resuscitate, defend themselves before authorities, release the captives.[37] They are fearless in the face of death. And, finally, they anticipate their own eternal life, when they also will be raised as Jesus was (3:21, 10:42).

Conclusion

At the start of Acts, Jesus promises that those who have seen him lifted up will also receive the Holy Spirit and be witnesses (1:8). This is not a command, but a promise to those called to be witnesses to God's actions in the world and to participate in God's hopes for the life of the world.[38] Our world is enamoured with power and does its best to put death at a distance. Acts witnesses to a God who is committed to life and is not daunted by death.

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[33] E.g., Gaventa structures her commentary as the story of the inclusion of Gentiles in the people of God, *Acts,* Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2003), 55-6. The narrative unfolds geographically with believing communities formed first in Jerusalem, then among God-fearers like Cornelius and the Ethiopian eunuch, and then in Gentile cities around the Mediterranean as far as Rome.

[34] Acts 2:38, 3:17-19, 5:31, 8:22, 10:43, 13:38-39, 17:30, 22:16, and 26:17-18.

[35] Acts 2:43-47 and 4:32-37.

[36] Luke calls these "signs and wonders" echoing the language of the Hebrew scriptures (e.g., 2:43, 4:30, 5:12; cf. Dt. 6:22, Ps.135:9).

[37] These acts are the ones Jesus said would characterize his ministry (Luke 4:18-19) and the ones Jesus told John's disciples validated his ministry (Luke 7:21-22). Peter does them: 3:1-10, 4:23, 5:15, 9:32-35, 9:36-42; and Paul does them:13:4, 16:18, 16:25-40, 20:7-12.

[38] Gaventa, "'You Will Be My Witnesses'," 416.

READING THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS IN THE APOCALYPSE OF JOHN

by Supongmayang Longkumer

The resurrection of Jesus is as important today as it was for the ancient eyewitnesses. The testimony to Christ's resurrection in the New Testament is a major factor in the emergence of the Christian religion. The study of Jesus' resurrection has been one of the central theological themes throughout the history of the Church. The question of the resurrection is also crucial to every Christian because it addresses the often confusing and troubling question of what happens to us after we die. In this essay I will explore how the resurrection is depicted in the Apocalypse of John.

The Literature of the Apocalypse of John

The Apocalypse as a literary work emerges from the confluence of a cosmic vision, the prophetic experience of the author, and a specific social milieu. Historical and internal references can help to shed light on the date, authorship, and literary genre of the book.

Date

The question of whether the book was composed before or after the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE will influence how we interpret its contents. Two sources of evidence ─ external and internal ─ are examined. Sources from the early Church assign four different dates to the Apocalypse. Epiphanius places it during the reigns of Caligula and Claudius (37-42 CE and 41-54 CE respectively). The Syrian versions date it to the time of Nero (54-68 CE), Irenaeus and his followers dates towards the end of Domitian's reign (81-96 CE); Dorotheus to the time of Trajan (98-117 CE).[1] Further, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Eusebius agree with Irenaeus' dating to the reign of Domitian.[2] However, some scholars like Robert B. Moberly are not convinced by Irenaeus's conclusions. Moberly argues that the testimony which Irenaeus heard should not be taken as the standard date, for it was not chronologically dated nor fixed

[1] Charles H. Talbert, *The Apocalypse: A Reading of the Revelation of John* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 8.

[2] Mark Hitchcock, "The Stake in the Heart – The A.D. 95 Date of Revelation," in *The End Times Controversy: The Second Coming Under Attack*, ed. Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice (Eugene: Harvest House, 2003), 126.

with a time of a particular period.[3] Nonetheless, most traditions place John's Apocalypse around the end of the first century, circa 95 CE, towards the end of the reign of Domitian though most Greco-Roman and all the Jewish apocalypses are pseudonymous.[4] This question cannot be settled on the opinion of Irenaeus and his supporters solely, but further examinations of the internal claims have to be regarded.

Those who hold to an early date rely on internal references to Roman emperors found in chapters 13 and 17.[5] J. A. T. Robinson, for example, supports the internal evidence found in chapters 11, 17 and 18, which links to the historical events related to Jerusalem and Rome (64-70 CE). Yet, it is very difficult to determine whether the context is one of actual persecution and only impending danger; or to what extent the author experienced persecution himself, or was just drawing on reminisces of Nero's ruthless persecution.[6] Moreover, the later date seems likelier because the conditions prevailing in Revelation reflect the last years of the first century CE. In chapter 2:8-11, the church at Smyrna is pictured as having suffered trials for a long time; but Polycarp noted that the church did not exist until after the time of Paul (circa 60's). Also, in chapter 3:17, the wealth of Laodicea is mentioned, yet that city had been almost completely demolished by an earthquake around 60 CE.[7] In addition, if the temple in Jerusalem (11:1-2) was standing during the time of the author, this would indicate a date before the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. However, there is no suggestion that the author actually saw the temple, which favours a date during the time of Domitian.

Authorship

The ancient tradition going back to the second century, cited by Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, identifies the author as the beloved disciple of Jesus. Others have suggested that the author was John Mark (Acts 12:12), still others, John the Elder. Of course, all of these suggestions come from

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[3] Robert B. Moberly, "When was Revelation Conceived?" in *Biblica*, 73 (1992): 376.

[4] David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987), 240.

[5] Thomas B. Slater, "Dating the Apocalypse to John," in *Biblica*, vol. 84 (2003): 256.

[6] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Revelation," in *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp and George W. MacRae (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 414-415.

[7] Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code: Understanding the Book of Revelation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 16-17.

external sources.[8] From the internal evidence, we note that the author identifies himself as John by name (1:4, 9; 22:8) and indicates that he is among the prophets of the church (22:9). John calls himself a *servant* of Jesus Christ (1:1) and a *true Jew* in opposition to those who falsely claim to be Jews (2:9; 3:9).[9] John does not refer to himself as an apostle; nor does he portray himself as a superior leader (cf.1:9). In fact, he is represented as an agent sent to proclaim a message. The author did not feel it necessary to elaborate on his identity further since it is understood that his readers were familiar with his prophetic responsibility. John wrote his Apocalypse while on Patmos, a place where convicts were sent. One can infer from this that his location was not a solitary place; however, he seems to indicate that he was in deep solitude. The language used to describe the seven churches in Asia Minor shows that John was personally familiar with them. It is evident that the author John has written as a Christian prophet without claiming to be an apostle, which suggests that if he was the apostle John, he conceals that fact. It is fair to conclude that John could have been one of the earliest followers of Christ, but not necessarily an apostle himself.

Genre

Identifying the genre is important in any biblical literary interpretation. In the case of John's work, there are three major genres to consider: apocalyptic, prophetic and epistolary.

K. I. Nitzsch first used the term apocalyptic to refer to the Apocalypse of John during the early 19th century.[10] Apocalyptic is a term used to indicate writings related to "mysterious images and visions in the course of history to its end as well as the future of the world and humanity."[11] The literature belonging to this category purports to reveal hidden things or messages.[12] The term is used not only to indicate the literature to which it belongs but also the concepts typical of such literature.

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[8] J. Ramsey Michaels, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation* (Secunderabad: Authentic & OM Books, 1992), 27-28.

[9] Edmondo F. Lupieri, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse of John*, trans. Maria Poggi Johnson and Adam Kamesar (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 35.

[10] M. Barker, "Slippery Words," in *The Expository Times*, vol. 89 (1978): 324.

[11] Jürgen Roloff, *The Revelation of John: A Continental Commentary*, trans. John E. Alsup (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 3.

[12] Leon Morris, *Apocalyptic* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972; reprinted, 1984), 20.

A common characteristic of much apocalyptic literature is its pseudonymity, but John is different in that he identifies himself as a prophet who openly speaks on behalf of God.[13] The author understands himself as a Christian prophet and intends his work to be a *word of prophecy*. He employs most of the traditional prophetic forms, such as summonses, warnings, threats and exhortations, technical legal language, oracles, laments, symbolic actions and proclamations of salvation. In many passages (1:3; 22:7,10,18-19) the author speaks of the coming *eschaton* as a contemporary prophet of the first century CE, where the final consummation had already begun through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1:4-8; 4-5). This reinforces the conclusion that the Apocalypse belongs in the prophetic genre.

The book begins with a typical greeting such as we find in the other letters of the New Testament. John is writing directly to the situation and needs of the seven churches in Asia Minor.[14] The apocalyptic visions he records are explained through the letters to these churches. The text sets the epistolary framework on which the apocalypse appears on the time period stretching between the address and the conclusion, which is reminiscent of early Christian literature.[15] Similar to many letters of the time, the book begins with an epistolary prescript and concludes with a postscript. The prescript found in chapter 1:4-8, contains typical epistolary components: sender, addressees, greetings, and the added feature of a doxology. The postscript (22:10-21) follows the form of a good ancient letter.

Uncovering John's Thoughts on Jesus' Resurrection

The Greek term *anastasis* can be understood in three senses. First it can describe a change in the status implied by a *rising up* and or *being raised.* Secondly, *anastasis* can mean resurrection from the dead. The third meaning of *anastasis* is *new divinity* that is closely related to Greco-Roman understanding of a deity within a polytheistic system.[16] This essay will

[13] Christopher R. Smith, "The Structure of the Book of Revelation in Light of Apocalyptic Literary Conventions," in *Novum Testamentum*, vol. XXXVI (1994): 379.

[14] George R. Beasley-Murray, "Revelation," in *New Bible Commentary*, ed. G. J. Wenham, *et al.*, 21st Century Edition (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 1421-1422.

[15] Paul Feine, Johannnes Behm and Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 14th rev. ed., trans. A. J. Mattill (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), 321.

[16] *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and the other Early Christian*

focus on the second sense of *anastasis* as resurrection from the dead. Resurrection can be understood as new life emerging out of death. Not only witnessed by the first eyewitnesses of resurrection, the early Church as a whole believed that Jesus had been crucified and placed in a tomb and was then resurrected. The unexpected early death of Jesus was confusing to his disciples at first until they came to faith that Jesus was alive. No doubt, the central message proclaimed by the early Christians was the resurrection.

In the Apocalypse of John, the concept of resurrection is expressed in the phrase *firstborn of the dead* (1:5), which alludes to Psalms 88:28 (LXX), and words from Christ himself, "*I am alive*" (1:18). These two passages connect the idea of the risen Christ closely with salvation. The author's personal encounter with the risen Christ, described in 1:9-20, also points to resurrection with attention to Christ's divinity. John did not see resurrection as a tool to escape from the reality of his context (the Greco-Roman world) but rather a concept to emphasise Christ.[17] The following considerations will uncover some of the major thoughts which describe the position of Jesus' resurrection.

Introducing the Resurrected Jesus

By following traditional opening patterns typical of ancient letters, John introduces Jesus Christ as the *firstborn of the dead*. In chapter 1:5, we find three titles that illuminate the work of the resurrected Jesus: first, *the faithful witness* which signifies that he was faithful in delivering the message about God and therefore is to be trusted. Second, *the firstborn of the dead,* identifies Jesus as the first of many to be resurrected. And third, *the rulers of kings on earth,* proclaims Jesus as king above all the earthly kings whose dominion is universal.[18] This trustworthiness of Jesus is expressed in kinship terms: he is the firstborn child/Son of God who is resurrected from the earthly dead and raised to be ruler over all. The first Christological title (the faithful witness) is expressed with greater clarity in 3:14 as a *faithful and true witness*. The term *witness* occurs elsewhere in the book (2:13; 11:3; 17:6) in connection with those who die for their faith. However, as David Aune points out, the term "faith" (*pistis*) in the Apocalypse always has the sense of *faithfulness or trustworthiness*, rather

Literature, 3rd ed., rev. ed., Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 71.

[17] Beate Kowalski, "Martyrdom and Resurrection in the Revelation of John," in *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, vol. 41/1 (2003): 56-58.

[18] Robert G. Bratcher, *A Translator's Guide to the Revelation to John* (London: United Bible Societies, 1984), 10.

than the connotation of human belief/faith in God.[19] This first concept is directly connected to the second title *firstborn from the dead* which focuses on resurrection and the third title *the ruler* which points to Jesus' post-resurrection exaltation. Moreover, the central emphasis on *the firstborn* reflects the trustworthiness of Jesus who conquered the dead.

While considering the *firstborn from the dead* in the context of Colossians 1:18, Paul provides a similar understanding of Jesus' resurrection. This indicates that John the author was very much in line with the traditional conception of resurrection.[20] Moreover, the resurrection in the Apocalypse of John testifies about Jesus being the true ruler associated with the firstborn, which is royal/messianic in origin.[21] Thus, introducing Jesus' resurrection in epistolary form conveys a clear message of who Jesus is by the author to his audience: Jesus' faithful witness is the fulfilment of the earthly mission where the power of death was broken.

The Vision of the Risen Christ

The presence of prophetic and apocalyptic genres is evident in the text (1:9-10a) which describes the situation of John's vision. "I, John" is echoed at the end of his work (22:8) where the author describes himself as "the one who heard and saw these things."[22] Identifying himself by name avoids any confusion with the previous verse 8 which refers to God as "I". John calls himself "your brother who shares with you in Jesus," meaning that he is one among his fellow Christians as a brother, sharing the fellowship in suffering which was a mark of early followers of Jesus.[23] Being faithful to the Gospel and the testimony of Jesus in times of tribulation is a sign of sharing fellowship with Jesus who himself has been *the faithful witness*. This fellowship can be attained when the believers share their testimonies of Jesus. On the other hand, the testimony of Jesus' can be also understood as a *witness (unto death) to Jesus* in the light of proclaiming the resurrected Jesus as the Saviour.

In chapter 1:10a, John writes, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's

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[19] David E. Aune, *Word Bible Commentary: Revelation 1-5*, vol. 52A, ed. David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, John D. W. Watts, and Ralph P. Martin (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1997), 37-38.

[20] R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation* (Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), 43-44.

[21] David E. Aune, *Word Bible Commentary*, 41.

[22] Frederick J. Murphy, *Fallen Is Babylon: The Revelation of John* (Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1998), 83.

[23] R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T. & T, Clark, 1975), 21.

day," an expression of the supernatural experience that led to his vision. It is more of a prophetic trance where the encounter with God's Spirit can be understood. A similar occurrence can be found in Micah 3:8 ("But as for me, I am filled with power, with the spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might") where the power of the Spirit took hold of Micah the prophet (cf. 4:2; 17:3; 21:10). This confirms that John was not *in the body* but 'in the spirit' when the vision was revealed.[24] Timing is significant. It took place on "the Lord's day." Since the earliest apostolic period, Sunday has been considered Christians' day when worship is conducted. Sunday was the first day of the week, the day of Jesus's rising from the dead.[25] Every Sunday, the early church commemorated the resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor 16:2; Acts 20:7). Nonetheless, the vision that John received in Patmos on *the Lord's day* remains crucial for the recipients of the letters for it reminds them of the resurrection event and the victory over death to which Jesus testified.

The Appearance of the Risen Jesus

When John heard a loud voice behind him like a trumpet (1:10b), he did not hesitate to turn and see whose voice it could be. Turning, he says, "I saw one like the Son of Man." In the following verses he describes the appearance of this exalted figure who is clearly Jesus (1:13-16). "Son of Man" is a technical term common in apocalyptic literature to describe a supernatural, not merely a human being. It is a Messianic designation (cf. Dan 7:13).[26] After seeing the image of Jesus, John "fell at his feet as though dead," underlining the intensity of an experience more profound than merely bowing down in the presence of God. When Jesus revealed himself to John, John was still alive physically and with the divine presence in spirit. Then Jesus said, "I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades" (1:17b-18). Jesus declares that he is God, echoing the divine words found in verse 8. More significantly, Jesus himself proclaims that he is the living one, the one who "was dead" but is "alive forever and ever" (1:18). There is no question here of Jesus' divinity being temporary. John recognises in Jesus the presence of the living God. The one who died on the cross submitted to humanity so that the truth of his oneness with the Father could be made known.

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[24] David E. Aune, *Word Bible Commentary*, 82-83.

[25] R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation*, 57.

[26] R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, 27.

Furthermore, the living one is for eternity (cf. 4:9; 15:7), the ages of the ages in the resurrection which is Jesus' nature. God is understood in the Old Testament as *the living God*, in contrast with the other earthly gods. This God is the one that has created everything from the beginning. Jesus took supreme control over both death and hades, "a sign of divine sovereignty."[27] The message is that neither death nor hades is able to resist the authority of the resurrected Jesus. John receives and witnesses to this vision of the resurrected Jesus through a direct encounter in the Spirit rather than mediated through a messenger or an angel.

The Truth Claims of the Resurrected Jesus

The Apocalypse of John aspires to uncover for readers the truth of Jesus' resurrection by means of a clear revelation. The book seeks to assure its audience that the resurrection event that took place in the past provides reassuring promises of hope for all the faithful from the One who was raised from the dead. Historically, the event of Jesus' resurrection reveals who Jesus is for both John and his readers. His proclamation of the resurrection is intended to establish that Jesus is divine. He is the One who is, was, and will be forever the ruler over the whole cosmos. The divine being human and raised from the dead declares that death is not the end. The resurrected Jesus testifies of himself as the one who is living; who was once dead because of his identity and faithful testimony. Through his dying and rising, the living one gave his followers the evidence they require; not only for what happened in the past but also for future hope. Resurrection itself has the power to generate hope for life beyond the grave for eternity.

Conclusion

Jesus is depicted as the one who is not only *the faithful witness*; *the firstborn of the dead*; and *the ruler* but the One who has total control over death and hades. The truth of the resurrection is not merely a testimony to an event that happened in the ancient past, but the message about death and life that should matter to us today.

[27] Frederick J. Murphy, *Fallen Is Babylon: The Revelation of John*, 94.

FROM THE HEART

JESUS REMAINS BRINGING US HOPE

By Kathleen Anderson

Resurrection theology has never been my strong suit. In seminary and in the pulpit, I've always had an easier time with Advent and Christmas than Holy Week and Easter. I am drawn to the image of God coming into the world to be with us, and I have a much harder time with the suffering of divinity and the subsequent resurrection. I want to be drawn to the resurrection though. I want to find something past pain and death. I want there to be something beyond the suffering. I live with multiple chronic illnesses, chronic pains and daily needles, and I need there to be something to give meaning and hope to these permanent, daily, struggles.

Illness—be it acute or chronic—is not the result of sin, at least not in my theology. "Who sinned, this man or his parents?" the disciples ask in John 9:2. Continuing, "Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him." This shifts the focus away from personal sin and to the works of God. But it also paints the picture of the blind man as a mere tool for God to use, and not an active agent of the divine, or a beloved child of God in his own right. Where's the hope, the eternal life, the resurrection in that? Perhaps in the knowledge that no one is created perfect?

Illness—be it acute or chronic, mental or physical—is not the result of demon possession, at least not in my theology. And besides, is not Jesus also the one who casts out demons? In the story of the Gerasene demoniac in Luke, when the people "came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind" (Lk 8:36). Jesus not only rids the man of his demons—named Legion in this case—but also reorients him and places him firmly within community. Though both the community and the man are not entirely sure what to do with the upending of what had been the status quo. Where's the hope, the eternal life, the resurrection in that? Perhaps in the reorientation possible through and with community?

Our God is the one who provides all we need, even in the midst of our despair. Elijah seeks to end his life, asks the Lord to take it, and instead is given what he needs to live and told to "get up and eat." (1 Kgs 19:5) Our God is not one who wills suffering, illness, or dis-ease. Numerous times in scripture we are told of suffering that God and Jesus ease, either through the physical provision of resources and direct healing, through re-integration into community, other means, or some combination of

methods. God wills wholeness, integration, and hope. Yet, despite God being a God of sustenance and support, of grace and mercy, of healing and wholeness, chronic illness and chronic pains exist and persist – and I am hardly unique in experiencing these things.

How then am I to reconcile my daily experience of pain, pills, and needles with the glory and perceived perfection of a resurrected life in Christ?

With transformation, interdependence, and hope.

I know that all people have value, are fully created in the image of God, and are beloved children of God. And I know that this absolutely includes people with chronic illnesses and disabilities. Furthermore, I know that people with chronic illnesses and disabilities do not need to be transformed in order to be worthy of love. All people have value just as they are, not by virtue of what whey do, but by being who they are—each and every person contributes to the community just by being part of it. Though we certainly do not always see this lived out. Many times the question of 'who is at the table' is forgotten. And other times, the answer may be seen as more trouble than it it worth. The resurrection brings about a new way of being community— one in which all people are valued and cherished, no matter what.

Resurrection firmly centres life, and rejects the idea that God wills death, sickness, and suffering. Resurrection and a resurrected life need not be perfect, for we know that faith is not a panacea. No amount of faith will rewire our brains for happiness if we are depressed. No amount of faith will quell the hallucinations brought on by mania or schizophrenia. But resurrection means that the God that journeys with us understands our suffering. And so we can acknowledge those times when we feel terrible, or sad, or depressed, or sick of all the pills and appointments, and in the midst of all of that we can find God that journeys with us in the suffering from a place of resurrection.

Our resurrected God in Jesus knows deeply our suffering and sorrows. Our resurrected God in Jesus knows our every ailment and pain. And he equally knows all our joys, our hopes, and our dreams. And while he walks with us in our pain, he walks with us in hope and support.

A robust understanding of resurrection cannot be reduced to so vapid a hope as hashtags like 'too blessed to be stressed,' as you can absolutely have hope and be living with faith in the resurrection or living a post-resurrection faith and be stressed, or suffering, or even dying. Knowing the resurrection and living a resurrection life and faith does not save us from suffering, but instead gives us hope and a new way of living in an imperfect world with our imperfect selves.

That new way of living allows for us to acknowledge and feel pain. It allows for people with disabilities and chronic illnesses to live fully in the love of God, regardless of what may be considered "wrong" with us. Living into the resurrection means that differences and disabilities are honoured and welcomed. Living into the resurrection means that all people and their presence are celebrated because they are beloved children of God. Living into the resurrection as someone with multiple chronic illnesses means never walking the journey alone; because even on the worst of the worst days Jesus is still there with me sharing the load. And that, for me, is resurrection hope.

Our story does not end with Advent and Christmas—with God coming to be with us. Nor does it end with Good Friday – with suffering and death. The story doesn't even end with the Easter Resurrection, for even that is ultimately another step along the way. But that resurrection does hold a special place, because it is at that threshold that the story ceases to be on the page, and entirely enters the realm of our daily lives where we shape where the story goes. Ultimately it is up to us to figure out what the resurrection means to us. And more importantly, what we will do with the new life that Jesus' resurrection offers.

As for me and my house, we will choose hope as we seek to serve the resurrected Lord.

C. DOUGLAS JAY: FAITHFUL VISIONARY
By Phyllis D. Airhart

My introduction to C. Douglas Jay was as a voice on the other end of a telephone call on a Monday evening in December 1983. A few days later I flew from Chicago to Toronto to be interviewed for the position in church history that was opening at Emmanuel College with John Webster Grant's retirement. It is not going too far to say that meeting Doug Jay for the first time changed my life. The search committee was willing to take what appeared then (and looks to me even now after retirement) to be a huge gamble. I was, after all, still a graduate student. I had applied in order to practice putting together my first curriculum vitae and was not expecting an interview, much less an offer. Yet he and the committee he chaired were somehow able to imagine me as a professor at Emmanuel—perhaps more readily than I at first saw myself in that role. My admiration for Doug's visionary leadership grew over the years as I learned more about the breadth of his accomplishments. What I experienced in the aftermath of my first encounter was typical of his various roles: his gift for imagining the potential of persons and institutions and a gentle but tenacious resolve in guiding them.

Ecumenical Trailblazer

Doug was a boy from rural Ontario whose theological journey took him around the world, making his mark in denominational, ecumenical, and interfaith circles along the way. He was born on 10 October 1925 in Monticello, Ontario, to the Rev. Charles and Luella Jay, four months after their Methodist congregation became part of the new United Church of Canada. He quickly showed himself to be extraordinarily accomplished. He graduated from the University of Toronto with a Bachelor of Arts in philosophy and history in 1946, marrying Ruth Crooker that same year. Queen's University was the first to recognize his promise as a teacher, hiring him after the war to teach logic to classes mostly made up of veterans around his own age. But he chose Emmanuel College rather than Queen's to pursue his theological education and graduated in 1950 with the Sanford Gold Medal for the highest standing. He was ordained to

further study that year and moved with Ruth to Edinburgh, returning in 1952 with his PhD in hand. After serving his required ministerial placement in two rural pastoral charges (Elk Lake and Trafalgar in Ontario), he returned to Victoria University yet again in 1955, this time to teach philosophy of religion and Christian ethics at Emmanuel.

A search of the University of Toronto Library database shows a list of articles and books authored by "C. Douglas Jay" covering subjects ranging from "Logical Analysis, Theological Positivism, and Metaphysics" to residential schools, Canadian identity, and theological education. What does *not* show up is arguably his most important work as a scholar faithful to the church. As secretary of the United Church's Commission on World Mission, he was principal author of a report prepared for the 1966 General Council that comprised nearly one hundred pages in the *Record of Proceedings*. The sixteen recommendations at the end formed the basis for a new direction in the United Church's mission policy, with the eleventh signalling an openness to other faiths that differed from past approaches to missions and evangelism: "The church should recognize that God is creatively and redemptively at work in the religious life of all mankind."[1]

Preparing the R.P. Mackay Memorial Lectures gave Doug an opportunity to introduce to a wider audience the church's emerging understanding of "world mission" and its relation to evangelism. In a series of lectures he delivered at theological colleges across Canada in 1966-67 and published as *World Mission and World Civilization*, he described how the ecumenical task had recently shifted from focusing on global missionary enterprises—"missions"—to making "an effective Christian presence in the world."[2] He later came to see the tragedy of the residential schools in Canada as an illustration closer to home of the consequences of earlier methods. He admitted that what was now considered cultural abuse or genocide closely paralleled past missiological approaches that were still practiced, especially in Third World contexts.[3]

Reflecting on the report of the Commission on World Mission thirty years later, Doug claimed that "the United Church pioneered in the establishment of an interfaith dialogue portfolio," ahead of similar

[1] "World Mission," *Record of Proceedings* (1966), 435.

[2] C. Douglas Jay, *World Mission and World Civilization* (Toronto: Board of World Mission, United Church of Canada, [1967?]), 2–4.

[3] C. Douglas Jay, "What Should We Learn from a Sorry Past?" *In Trust* 12, no. 3 (Spring 2001): 20.

initiatives in the World Council of Churches by several years.[4] As his Emmanuel colleague Roger Hutchinson looked back on Doug's accomplishments, he astutely suggested that the report's significance for the United Church itself was in pushing it "to the edge of where it was prepared to go at that time."[5] Its stance was more controversial than some members of the Commission perhaps realized, with no guarantee of acceptance in the wider church.

The implications of ecumenism and religious pluralism drew Doug's attention in other contexts. He was a consultant for the World Council of Churches, attending meetings that took him around the world as part of its program on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies.[6] He was also involved with the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) before and after his retirement, serving as its president from 1984-86. His presidential address urged theological educators to see ATS's bi-national association as "a modest sign or symbol of our intent to transcend national or other partisan interests which circumscribe the global dimensions of the gospel," insisting that "nothing less than a genuinely global consciousness" would suffice to meet that task.[7]

Adroit Administrator

Doug had new opportunities to put his ecumenical principles into practice when he stepped away from his teaching position at Emmanuel in 1969 to become the founding director of a groundbreaking venture that became the Toronto School of Theology (TST). On the occasion of his 90th birthday, TST's boardroom was named in his honour and his leadership commemorated with a plaque that recognized his role in guiding the new undertaking in ecumenical theological education "with clear-sighted

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[4] C. Douglas Jay, "Missiological Implications of Christianizing the Social Order with Special Reference to the United Church of Canada," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 12, no. 2 (1996): 278.

[5] "Ministry through Hope: C. Douglas Jay Exploring the Lines that Divide Humans," *EC News*, Autumn 2013, https://issuu.com/vic_report/docs/ec_news_autumn_2013, 2. Roger was interviewed for the Emmanuel College newsletter after Doug was honoured by the Emmanuel College Alumni/ae Association with the distinguished alumni/ae award.

[6] John Webster Grant, "Biography of C. Douglas Jay," in *Theological Education in Canada*, ed. Graham Brown (Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 1998), 6-7.

[7] C. Douglas Jay, "On Bi-Nationalism and Globalization: President's Address to the Biennial Meeting," *Theological Education* 23, no. 1 (Autumn 1986): 66.

vision, exceptional gifts of leadership, unstinting dedication, and enormous tact."[8]

Doug returned to Emmanuel in 1981 and until his retirement served as principal for what his obituary described as "nine challenging years." I admit that I had a twinge of conscience as I read those words in the *Globe and Mail*, for not everyone was happy with the announcement that the church history position had gone to a then young woman in her first academic job. I later heard from an acquaintance that Doug had joked that he was sleeping with the letter from my dissertation supervisor at the University of Chicago under his pillow. It was something we still laughed about years later. But I suspect he had more troublesome issues to deal with than my appointment.

There were hints at the formal installation ceremony of challenges ahead. John Webster Grant brought greetings from the faculty, lauding Doug's leadership at TST as showing "an admirable talent for bringing members of the community together in conference and ensuring that all points of view received a fair hearing." He expressed confidence that Doug's "enigmatic smile" and "proven toughness" would lead to "creative resolution of inevitable tension."[9] Doug acknowledged the prospect of tension in his own address, identifying its "basic source" as Emmanuel's "dual citizenship": belonging "simultaneously to the sphere of church and higher education."[10] Being seen by some as an unduly conservative institution, unwilling to change, and by others irresponsibly liberal or even radical was another challenge he anticipated.[11]

I can attest that Doug did indeed display patience in listening to all points of view, although his faculty didn't always appreciate the lengthy meetings that consensus-building entailed! His fairness was matched by a firmness more quietly wielded. I saw flashes of toughness as I thumbed through archival documents from his years as principal. He rightly

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[8] Pamela Couture, "A Tribute to TST's Founding Director, Rev. Dr. C. Douglas Jay," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 37, no. 1 (2021): 1-2. The article includes reflections on Doug's illustrious career made by Roger Hutchinson, who had served as the student representative on the search committee that selected him as director.

[9] John Webster Grant, "Faculty Greetings," 18 November 1981, Emmanuel College Principal's Office fonds, Victoria University (Toronto) Archives (cited hereafter as VCA), Installation Jay, C.D., 2004.088V, 8-7.

[10] C. Douglas Jay, "Installation Address," 3, VCA, Installation Jay, C.D., 2004.088V, 8-7.

[11] Ibid, 9.

predicted that the college's relationship to the church would be a source of tension, some of it related to a group of conservative ministers and members who came together as the Community of Concern in 1988. Although it was the ordination of gay ministers that galvanized the organization, other theological "concerns" had been smoldering for years. Matters came to a head for Emmanuel when the president of Community of Concern made headlines with a statement that questioned the theological integrity of the United Church's theological schools.

Doug's response was diplomatic but unyielding in his defence of Emmanuel's reputation. He drew attention to the college's recently revised mission statement that had affirmed "the central significance of Jesus Christ within a trinitarian understanding of God" and the centrality of the Bible as "the primary witness to God's creative, reconciliatory, redemptive activity in the world." The conciliatory tone turned tougher when he pointed out that it had never been his own practice to be "narrowly defensive, let alone threaten lawsuits even when statements are made that could be construed as libelous"; yet he warned that the college was being "grossly misrepresented by sweeping generalizations." Doug's letter did not end criticism of the college but seems to have lowered the temperature; at least no lawsuits followed![12]

Doug was also mindful of Emmanuel's university setting where excellence in both teaching and research were taken into consideration when assessing faculty performance and institutional accreditation. As chair of search committees for over half a dozen faculty positions, he had a hand in shaping an ethos where both were valued. He aimed to raise the profile of faculty research, and a grant from the Lilly Endowment that he oversaw was designed to provide seed money for initiatives such as the Centre for the Study of Religion in Canada that has since expanded its mandate as the Centre for Religion and Its Contexts. He brought together a mix of established and younger scholars in Bible, history, theology, and ethics to work with practitioners in a variety of pastoral areas. His intelligence and insight shaped us as a faculty in ways that had institutional repercussions spanning four decades. I was the youngest of those appointees, and the last to retire in 2020.

A grant from ATS after his retirement supported further research on the globalization of theological education. Reflecting on his findings, he declared: "If it was ever justifiable to ignore religious diversity in theological education, that time is past." Unless religious diversity was

[12] Letter from C. Douglas Jay to John Trueman, 4 June 1990, VCA, Community of Concern, 2004.088V, 3-2.

addressed in the theological curriculum, students would be left "miseducated." Rather than adding courses to an already crowded curriculum, he suggested approaching diversity in "the ethos throughout the whole curriculum."[13] That openness to sharing the curriculum with other faith traditions contributed to a spirit of theological hospitality at Emmanuel that led years later to initiatives in interreligious education.

Farsighted Christian Ethicist

Doug Jay never left behind the field to which he was first appointed at Emmanuel. On some matters of Christian ethics, his discerning analysis was ignored—or was perhaps too far ahead of its time to gain traction. For instance, how to deal with misinformation in a changing media environment was the subject of a TST symposium published as a booklet on *Truth in Advertising* that he co-authored soon after he became director. While it focused on how to analyze "truth norms" for various types of truth-claims in advertising, the concluding paragraph warned that newspapers, magazines, movies, and television programs were prone to the same abuses: "The shocking and terrifying danger we felt impelled to point out here … is the subtle slanting of news *in its very reporting*." The "patient search" for standards that the symposium called for is still ongoing some forty years later, complicated by the new quandaries of social media.[14]

"Environmentalists and Banks Square Off" was a headline in the *Globe and Mail*'s business section that caught my eye as I worked on this profile. Coming across Doug's correspondence related to a magazine article that was never published was a reminder that long before Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG), Canadian churches had been players in faceoffs with financial institutions. In 1981 Doug was invited by P.B.C. (Brian) Beauchamp, the public affairs manager at the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, to write about "The Role of the Church in Today's Society." The letter explained that the bank had

[13] C. Douglas Jay, "Theological Education beyond 2000: A Canadian Perspective," *Theological Education* 36, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 12.

[14] C. Douglas Jay, et al., *Truth in Advertising: A Symposium of the Toronto School of Theology, University of Toronto* (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside and Harper & Row, 1972), 37; emphasis in the original. The preface indicates that the material from the symposium was considered "a companion-piece to the already-published and highly-praised Report of the Committee on Advertising and Ethics," which Doug had chaired for the United Church; cf. *Record of Proceedings* (1971), 252-67.

launched *Spectrum*, a new publication dealing with issues of broad public concern. Beauchamp had turned to Doug seeking answers to "questions that are troubling sincere people, within the Church and outside" about its role in "an increasingly interdependent global society." Beauchamp listed eight questions that showed particular interest in the political activism of some churches and sensitivity to criticism of business practices. Was the "aggressive" activism of some church groups representative of the whole? Should the church be interested in social or political issues, some of them foreign rather than domestic, or "should it confine itself to spiritual and doctrinal matters?"[15]

Doug addressed the fundamental issue head-on in the opening paragraph of his article. He acknowledged that the Anglican and United churches, along with other church-related groups, had been at the forefront of outspoken responses to social issues that were to some "surprising and alarming." He went on to defend their activism, explaining that it was not a new or unprecedented role but inspired by a prophetic tradition that dated from biblical times.[16] He commended the work of interchurch coalitions that had brought Protestants and Catholics together, among them the Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility, GATT-Fly (focused on monitoring international trade), and Project North (an ally of Indigenous opposition to the Mackenzie Valley pipeline)—advocacy groups that might well have been on radar of business executives.[17]

Doug admitted that some religious activists had lost credibility due to prophetic zeal, deliberate misrepresentation, over-simplification of complex issues, and attention-grabbing tactics. Yet his measured conclusion was to urge cooperation among social justice advocates, specialists, government, and other agencies to solve social problems that were beyond the churches' expertise.[18] His attention to environmental issues was particularly prescient. To him it was apparent that "a finite planet" could not sustain unlimited growth and the environmental deterioration accompanying it.[19] There was, he added, much to learn from "native peoples…and other important allies in the environmental and ecological groups which are protesting the unrestrained exploitation of

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[15] Letter from P.B.C. Beauchamp to C. Douglas, 9 July 1981, VCA, Magazine Article, 2017.13V, 4-2.

[16] C. Douglas Jay, "The Role of the Church in Today's Society, or What in the World Is the Church Doing?" 1-2, VCA, Magazine Article, 2017.13V, 4-2.

[17] Ibid, 4-5.

[18] Ibid, 12.

[19] Ibid, 4.

nature by the dominant technocratic culture."[20]

After submitting the *Spectrum* article Doug received a generous honorarium of $3,000. However, the bank withdrew the publication offer two months before it was scheduled to go to press in the April 1982 issue. An apologetic letter from Beauchamp delivered the news; after "considerable discussion," the editorial board had decided to delay it until "certain other areas of widespread interest have been covered" since it was likely to be of interest to "only a specialized segment" of the magazine's audience. The editorial board retained exclusive rights to the article "consistent with the payment of the honorarium."[21] Doug's reply expressed disappointment on learning that the decision was based not on his article's lack of merit but "on appraisal of addressing your target audience on this theme at this time." There was a hint of annoyance in his request to be kept informed "as to when the article might see the light of day."[22]

Doug had good reason to be miffed: he had covered the topics suggested by the public affairs manager's questions, though admittedly his in-depth responses were not "dumbed down" for a mass audience. Possibly the editorial board expected a viewpoint more favourable to the financial "establishment" rather than of a defence of a prophetic gospel. The article was never published; *Spectrum* appears to have ceased publication shortly thereafter.[23]

CONCLUSION

Doug retired as principal of Emmanuel College in 1991, was appointed as professor emeritus 1992, and at the time of his death on the first day of 2021 in his 96th year was principal emeritus. By then he had accumulated a long list of achievements and honours: member of the Order of Canada (1988), the Governor-General's Commemorative Medal for the 125th Anniversary of Confederation, the Award for Outstanding Service from ATS (1988), an Arbor Award from U of T (2001), medals for both the Queen's Golden and Diamond Jubilee (2002 and 2012), Distinguished

[20] Ibid, 10.

[21] Letter from P.B.C. Beauchamp to C. Douglas Jay, 10 February 1982, VUA, Magazine Article, 2017.13V, 4-2.

[22] Letter from C. Douglas Jay to P.B.C. Beauchamp, VUA, Magazine Article, 2017.13V, 4-2.

[23] Rod McQueen, *A History of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2021), 64 notes that bank changed the name of the publication *Commercial Letter* to *Spectrum* in 1979 but makes no reference to its demise. The University of Toronto Library catalogue has no record of it after the third volume.

Alumni Award from the Emmanuel College Alumni Association (2012), and five honorary degrees. Not to be overlooked are his more personal accomplishments and honours: husband to Ruth, who predeceased him in 2012; father to David, Ian, Garth; grandfather and great-grandfather to their children; and minister emeritus at Christ First United Church in Mississauga in the community where he and Ruth had lived for many years.

"Quiet wisdom" is a phrase that recurs in citations and tributes to C. Douglas Jay. His is a vision that still inspires the mission of Emmanuel College and its creation of an interreligious curriculum that fosters intercultural dialogue. He valued the wisdom that was to be found in other faith communities while remaining committed to the teachings of his own. He was, and remains in my memory, a faithful visionary.

That All Shall Be Saved: Heaven, Hell and Universal Salvation **By David Bentley Hart. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2019. Pp.221**

Reading David Bentley Hart is not – pardon the pun – for the faint-hearted. The eastern Orthodox scholar is ferociously intelligent, massively erudite, and freely pours withering scorn on those too obtuse to see the truth, as he understands it.

What always strikes me in Hart's books, however, is the contrast between his sometimes combative style and the charity of his theological vision which is breath-taking in its grandeur, beauty and clarity. *That All Shall Be Saved,* in which Hart tackles thorny issues of Christian eschatology, is an important contribution to that vision.

Hart is an unabashed universalist. Scripture, logic and moral sensibility compels him to reject the idea of an eternal hell where the wicked and faithless will suffer unending torment. This view, Hart argues, is not just morally reprehensible but logically and theologically indefensible. The only proper understanding of the ultimate destiny of creation, he argues, is that in the end, all of us and all of creation will be saved.

Hart dismantles many common misconceptions. One is that a belief in an eternal hell has always been the dominant position of the church and that universalism is a modern theological innovation. In fact, he argues, there is a rich and ancient universalist tradition going back to the earliest times, predominant in Eastern Christianity, represented by figures such as Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Isaac of Nineveh and Maximus the Confessor.

The idea of an eternal hell, Hart argues, is incompatible with the nature of God. Universalism is often regarded as a failure of nerve on the part of squishy liberals who do not have the courage to face head-on the awe-full holiness of God and the final, terrible accounting of our lives which will lead to eternal bliss for the saved and the everlasting torment for the lost. In fact, Hart maintains, universal salvation is the only position that is biblically, morally and logically consistent with the nature of the God. God created the world *ex nihilo,* meaning that the source of the created order is in nothing but the will of the God who is the ground of all goodness. God is not a moral agent who can choose the good. God is Goodness itself. "Anything willingly done is done towards and end, and… is defined by that end." Divine love is the end towards which all creation is directed. Creation's ultimate destiny will be complete union with God, which leaves no room for any rational souls to be condemned to an eternal

separation from God.

Christian soteriology, especially in the western tradition, is too individualistic, Hart argues. We forget that the image of God is a collective, not merely an individual, reality. Our ultimate destiny will necessarily encompass "the full community of all humanity … that is, alone, the image of God." The only possible outcome of God's reconciling of all things is that the image of God will be redeemed and brought to fulfillment in its entirety.

The idea of an eternal hell is incompatible with human freedom. The argument is often made that our God-given freedom necessarily includes the freedom to reject God. This, Hart says, is a fundamental misunderstanding. True freedom is not simply the autonomy of the will but an orientation towards the good which, properly understood, is an orientation towards God. No one willingly knows what the good is and chooses to reject it. Failure to choose the good is always, to some extent, an act of blindness, ignorance, a failure to fully recognize the good. But we are fallible and imperfect, therefore we can never know nor follow the good perfectly. And if our knowledge of the good is limited, so is our guilt in rejecting it or misunderstanding it. Absolute culpability that results in eternal condemnation, Hart argues, is beyond the capacity of any finite being.

Finally, the idea of an eternal hell is incompatible with the witness of Scripture. This may come as a surprise to many who, approvingly or disapprovingly, assume that the everlasting punishment of the wicked is an unequivocal biblical teaching. Hart does not deny that there is plenty in the Bible about divine wrath. However, most eschatological texts in the Bible are too metaphorical and evocative, he argues, to yield decisive dogmatic conclusions. Far too big a theological edifice has been constructed on an exegetically flimsy foundation. One of the most useful parts of this book is an extensive catena of passages that demonstrates the overwhelming orientation of Scripture to the ultimate salvation of all.

Hart does not deny the reality of hell, far from it. Hell is "the hatred within each of us that turns the love of others – of God and neighbor – into 'torment.'" Ultimately, however, the good news is that all hatred will be overcome by the goodness and love of God.

That All Shall Be Saved is an expression of joyful confidence that "even those who have traveled as far from God as it is possible to go, through every possible self-imposed hell, will at the last find themselves in the home to which they are called from everlasting, their hearts purged of every last residue of hatred and pride."

For preachers, scholars and faithful Christians of every calling, this inspiring and joyous good news.

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The Search For A Symbol: "A New Creed" and The United Church of Canada. **By William R. H. Haughton. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2022. xiii + 218 Pp. $31.00 (Paper).**

William Haughton is ordained in the United Church and serves pastoral charges in Springwater and Orillia, Ontario. In this well-structured book he examines the place, meaning and function of "A New Creed" in the United Church. He argues that, though it is popular, its predominance as a liturgical statement of faith does not serve the church well. Christian formation in the United Church and the faith experience of its members would deepen if it was used less and the Apostles' and Nicene creeds used more.

Haughton devotes chapters one and two to a history of why and how "A New Creed" came to be. The cultural turbulence of the 1960s shattered the theological consensus that had previously existed in the United Church and led to calls for a contemporary expression of faith that could be used in baptism services as an alternative to the Apostles' Creed. The United Church's Committee on Christian Faith was asked to develop this. Drawing on archival material from Committee meetings and telephone interviews with surviving committee members during 2009, he recounts how despite disagreements they eventually developed a text which was presented to General Council in 1968. General Council asked for revisions. The Committee went back to work and a revised version was presented to General Council Executive that fall and accepted. Haughton's account of this history is detailed and informative. He notes that "A New Creed" was revised in 1980 to make its language inclusive and again in 1995, when the line "to live with respect in Creation" was added. Chapters three and four show that "A New Creed" went from being an alternative creedal expression to become a central expression of faith for the United Church. Chapter five offers a close reading of its current text. Chapter six argues that the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds should be used more and "A New Creed" less as a confessional statement in United Church worship.

This book is thought provoking in its critique of the viability and efficacy of "A New Creed" as a creedal statement. Haughton ably raises

questions about the vagueness of some of its lines. "A New Creed" tends to be used in the United Church without critical scrutiny. This kind of questioning can stimulate critical thought about what is often taken for granted. Unfortunately, his analysis is marred by some exaggerated claims. For instance, he argues that "A New Creed" seeks to allow individuals "to mean almost anything they want in their own minds" as they repeat it (124). If this were true there would have been no need to revise it twice. Also, his repeated conclusion that "A New Creed" was developed to paper over theological disagreements is a reductive account of its origins. As he notes, it was worded so that people of different theological perspectives could see their beliefs expressed in it. But he fails to appreciate that the call for an alternative to the Apostles' Creed was a call for a contemporary expression of the United Church's understanding of Christian faith. This was in keeping with the United Church's Reformed heritage and ethos. The need for such was explicitly affirmed in the 1940 *A Statement of Faith.* "A New Creed" is popular in the United Church because of its positive content. It articulates the United Church's understanding of what Christian faith means today. It does not do this alone. Haughton's argument that it is 'the' expression of United Church theology does not take seriously the United Church's own teaching, that it has four subordinate standards of faith, and undervalues the importance of *A Song of Faith* in the United Church.

Haughton is right in some of his critiques of "A New Creed," such as that it only locates sin as external to the church (149). *A Song of Faith* has corrected this. His claim that using "A New Creed" less and the Apostles' Creed more would deepen the faith formation and experience of United Church members might be true for some. But this was not the case for many in the 1960s and would not be so for many today, for whom repeating an affirmation of the virgin birth clashes with the church's character as a truth-seeking community.

This is an important book for those concerned with the theology and faith life of the United Church. Though some of its judgements are questionable, it raises significant questions and deserves to be widely read and discussed by United Church clergy, educated lay people and academics.

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***Jesus and the Marginalized: Jesus Christ for Koreans in the United Church of Canada.* An Intercultural Adventure vol IV. By Don Schweitzer and Ohwang Kwon. Gyeonngi, Korea: Storybooks, 2020. Pp.143**

In process and product, *Jesus and the Marginalized* is an example intercultural collaboration born of a commitment to an intercultural church.

The authors of this book have brought their distinguished academic and ministerial credentials to bear on a project designed to enhance the mutual understanding of Korean immigrant and established Canadian Christians in the United Church of Canada. Rev. Dr. Don Schweitzer, McDougald Professor of Theology at St. Andrew's College in Saskatoon, has published extensively on the theology and history of the United Church including involvement in the three prior volumes in the Intercultural Adventure series. In addition to experience as a congregational minister, Schweitzer has developed and maintained a connection to Christian communities in India, testament to his longstanding commitment to interculturalism. Rev. Dr Ohwang Kwon, MDiv, PhD, is currently minister at the United Churches in Stettler, Erskine and Big Valley, Alberta. Awarded the Grand Prize for Academic Excellence by the Christian Literature Society of Korea for his PhD dissertation in the area of Christian Ethics, Kwon has a long list of Korean and English publications to his name. Together, these two theologians have worked to articulate a theology that both affirms Korean experience within the Canadian church and brings that experience into conversation with recent theological insights for the sake of finding common theological ground.

One of the most remarkable things about this book is the process out of which it came to be. As with the three prior volumes in the series, *An Introduction to The United Church of Canada for Korean Speaking Members*, *The Authority and Interpretation of Scripture* and *Mission and Migration*, the writing of the manuscript followed a multi-day consultation with Korean ministers serving across the United Church. From these conversations the content of the books were organized and produced. The results were then shared with the Korean and wider church community with follow up programs such as book studies. The result is a work that can claim to be intercultural in method as well as in content.

Jesus and the Marginalized is organized into six chapters. The reader is introduced to some of the history and basic patterns of both Christology and Korean immigrant experience. With each successive

chapter these two realms are brought into closer conversation. The result is a Christology designed to meet the needs of Koreans in the United Church, to affirm their unique experiences and gifts and encourage their participation in the wider Canadian church and society.

The book asserts that Koreans in Canada often feel like they are not able to fit in, are pressured to culturally assimilate, and are treated as foreigners. This is a form of "enforced liminalization," the experience of being pushed to the margins. The transformational theology the book offers to address this experience largely relies on the principle captured by the phrase "that which is not assumed is not healed." In other words, Jesus is only able to save us by virtue of experiencing every aspect of our humanity with us, including those unique lived realities of Koreans in Canada. The book explains how this Korean encounter with the Canadian context draws human and divine into closer relationship and stretches both into a fuller experience of love and divine glory.

The book argues that just as the Johannine community extended the meaning of Messiah to Son of God in a process of enculturation that resulted in the Gospel of John, so too Koreans in the United Church of Canada have an opportunity to expand the meaning of Jesus, not just for themselves but for the whole church. Indeed, the book even goes so far as to say that God's own self will be stretched in the encounter. The book leaves much of this work to be done by members of the Korean church in Canada but it is meant to be a springboard for this effort.

The writer of this review was able to lead a group of interested church members in a study of this book. The participants in the study represented an amazing diversity of experiences ranging from curious non-Korean theology student, to seasoned second-generation Korean-Canadian minister, to new Korean immigrant minister, to former overseas personnel with experience in Korea and more besides. Everyone who participated was able to engage with the book and came away with their own uniquely important insights, a testimony to the relevance and importance of the work.

Jesus and the Marginalized is more than a book. It is an encouraging signpost on the road to an intercultural church, the fruit of a committed engagement across cultures for the benefit of the whole people of God.

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