

THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL

A Presbyterian weekly magazine devoted to the statement, defense and propagation of the Gospel, the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints.

VOL. XV NO. 22

SEPTEMBER 26, 1956

\$2.50 A YEAR

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From Another Age

By Gordon H. Clark, Ph.D.

John Donne was born in London in 1571 or 1572. He was reared a Roman Catholic and lived a dissolute life. After a time his studies led him to abandon the Roman church, and still later he became an Anglican. This change was undoubtedly based on a true conversion, for he broke off his evil ways, became a vicar, and preached with evident sincerity to his former companions in vice.

Donne was not favorably impressed with Calvinism. He considered reprobation a harsh doctrine. The diffidence, the gloomy tinge of Puritan character, the morbidity of the Reformed people repelled him. In one of his sermons he says that he met with seven diffident and dejected souls for every presumptuous one.

Well, times have changed. Today we no longer meet so many diffident souls nor so few presumptuous ones. Evangelists sometimes teach that assurance is of the essence of salvation; they even doubt the salvation of any individual who has not full assurance. This, of course, is not Reformation doctrine.

It is rather strange, at any rate, that Calvinism should be pictured as a gloomy religion. If Donne accepted the Arminian view, if he denied predestination and irresistible grace, we may wonder how he could be so happy about it? Those who believe that one may fall from grace, those who believe that salvation once possessed can later be lost, have no good reason for confidence. Their perseverance depends on their own power, not on God. How can they be sure that they will attain heaven? It is Calvinistic theology alone that can give solid comfort to the diffident heart.

Now, it may be true that the sixteenth century and early seventeenth had too much of a tendency toward timidity and doubt. John Bunyan, for all of his *Pilgrim's Progress*, was not a happy soul. But it is also probable that the twentieth century is too light-hearted, too insincere, too careless, too indifferent to the things of God, too comfortable in the sinful world. The times have indeed changed, but not necessarily for the better.

With an acknowledgement of great variety among personalities, each of us should seriously measure his life by the Scriptural standard. Let us then lay aside every weight and run the race with patience and circumspection.

The Reformed Doctrine of The Bodily Resurrection of Christ

By William Childs Robinson, Th.D., D.D.

This address by Dr. Wm. C. Robinson on the Bodily Resurrection of Christ, was a popular presentation based on a carefully prepared and fully documented paper. The full thesis was written for use in his course in Apologetics and possibly for publication in a theological periodical at a later date. If so used, it is hoped that the full text will be circulated in our Church. Meanwhile the Southern Presbyterian Journal is presenting from its tape recording that part of the work which was set forth in the address at Weaverville on August 15th.

H.B.D.

Forty years ago an old professor, Dr. L. A. Fox of Roanoke College, took the time and trouble to show to the students from the Scriptures that Jesus Christ really rose from the dead, and by His cross the living Christ, the risen Christ, called some of us into his ministry.

The incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the events which distinguish Christianity from Mohammedanism and Judaism. Whatever similarities there may be between the teacher of righteousness of the Qumran sect and Jesus, the Resurrection marks out the vast difference between the two.

A renewed emphasis upon the resurrection is, however, relevant at this time. In Latin Christianity the profusion of crucifixes focuses the eye

upon the crucified, dead Jesus, leaving to the evangelical church a special responsibility for proclaiming the risen living Lord. In American Protestantism the weight of old liberalism still swings many away from the bodily "physical" resurrection of Christ witnessed in the New Testament to a so-called "spiritual resurrection" at death befitting Plato's society of souls in an idealistic universe. European scholarship is disentangling the Hellenistic man from the Biblical man, recognizing that the body is God's handiwork and accepting the unity of the whole inner and outer man both in this life and in the age to come. Yet the influence of existentialism leads some of these scholars to present the death of Christ as the sole factual event in the Gospel with the resurrection as merely an expression of the eschatological significance of His

death, a myth whose meaning is real only in faith. The pessimism resulting from inadequate presentations can be lifted only by the proclamation of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ as a factual occurrence, an act of God's self-disclosure in truly divine dimensions.

THE GOSPEL OF THE RESURRECTION

By the resurrection of the Lord Jesus as the summation of his whole ministry, God brought the blessings which Israel looked for only in the future into the present. Since Christ died for our sins and rose for our justification, in Him we have today the forgiveness of sins and the peace which passes human understanding. Since the risen Christ breathed upon his disciples and poured upon them at Pentecost His Holy Spirit, therefore, God's Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. Since God raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, He has raised us from the death of sin to the newness of life with Christ, and His resurrection is the measure of the exceeding greatness of God's power to work in believers. As our faith receives the mighty work of God in the resurrection of Christ, we share in the Christian hope of the new Heaven and a new earth. We believe in the Almighty who makes the dead alive and creates the things that are from nothing. The God who raised Jesus the Lord from the dead is able to save and keep and raise those who are Christ's. Each of these blessings comes from the nail-pierced hands of the risen Redeemer. The whole New Testament Gospel is inseparably one in the proclamation of the Risen One as the crucified. The present exalted one is expressly the crucified, the sympathizing High Priest, the Lamb in the midst of the throne.

The gospel not only includes the fact of the death of Christ, but also the fact of the resurrection of Christ, and in I Corinthians 15 the fact of the witnesses to that resurrection. On their eye-witnessing the gospel of the Church was built, and to that ocular testimony the Church must constantly return if She would fully safeguard the self-communication of God which came to us in Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus is not a mere product or precipitate from our present meeting with Christ. It is the other way around.

The event of the resurrection is prior to faith in the risen Christ. It is the resurrection which creates, makes possible, calls forth and directs faith to the Risen One. The fact of the resurrection proclaimed in the gospel calls us to a meeting with Christ in faith. The Church proclaims the forgiveness of sins and the hope of glory on that ground. The resurrection of Jesus as the deed of God is the presupposition of the preaching of the Cross, of the Church of God in Christ Jesus, of the Christian faith in the triune God. The resurrection is the center that holds the whole gospel together.

THE LORD OF THE RESURRECTION

In revealing Himself to men today, the Risen Christ is sovereign as truly as He was sovereign in the various encounters He had with His disciples recorded in the New Testament. The Lord is free to deal graciously with us in our presuppositions and in our places as, and when, and how He will. He may use the whole gospel with one man on one occasion, a particular part on another occasion. We remember that one disciple was led to faith by the empty tomb, namely John; Peter by the appearing of Christ to him; Thomas by the appearing *plus* the command to put his hand in the nail prints; some disciples after such a command only when the Lord had table fellowship with them. And so the Holy Spirit continues to bring people to faith in Christ in His own way, and we may not direct Him how.

While Christ is the Lord, we are not the Lord. It is our duty as His servants to proclaim the whole counsel of God.

Jesus was Lord in the New Testament appearances, Lord in the early appearances of the forty days as truly as He was in the later one to Paul. His activity has the ruling place in the accounts of the resurrection appearances. The disciples didn't seek out and find the Risen Lord. Each appearance was initiated and carried out by Him. He came, He drew near, He went with them, He appeared to Peter, He met the women, He stood in the midst, He vanished from their sight. Even when He was seen and heard, He was only perceived as He willed it. He appeared not to all, but to chosen witnesses.

In these primary appearances the purpose seems not to be to magnify His glorious state. There is not one word in the appearances during "the forty days" about a light shining from the Risen Jesus Himself. I know there is at the transfiguration. I know there is later to Paul and to John on the Isle of Patmos and to Stephen, but not in the forty days. In fact, in that period He was even mistaken for a gardener. Each story, however, reaches its climax in a recognition scene. In the Old Testament Theophany stories proof is usually offered of the supernatural or the divine character of the Visitant. In the gospel stories the proofs tend to show His real humanity. He has flesh and blood. He bears wounds in His body. He even eats human food.

Moreover, these several appearances recall the earlier meetings with the disciples. He Who fed the thousands and sat as housefather at the Lord's Table is again made known as He blesses and breaks the bread. The Risen One finds the fishermen at their old haunts, and the second miraculous draft of fishes reminds us of the first. Peter's leaving the boat to go to Jesus on the land reminds us of his earlier leaving the boat to walk upon the waters. The Great Commission in Matthew

reminds us of His instruction to the disciples earlier in the 10th chapter of Matthew, and the Church Order in that Great Commission reminds us of the Church Order in Matthew 18: 15-20. Mary recognizes her Master when He calls her by name.

Three times Jesus is reported as directing to His hands, His feet, or His side the eyes of His disciples. Moreover, when He raised up His hands to bless the bread, the wounds would have been made visible there. Thus, our Risen Lord identified Himself to His disciples as Jesus of Nazareth and His body as the one that had been crucified for us.

THE COMPLETENESS OF THE RESURRECTION

The Bible sets forth the unity of the whole inner and outer man as God's handiwork. The Bible idea of personality is an animated body, not an incarnated soul. The Bible does not teach a Platonic, an Orphic, or a Gnostic dualism which places the soul, or spirit, over against the body as different in source, origin, and ultimate destinies. According to the Bible our bodies are not prisons of the soul; they are temples of the Holy Ghost. They are members of Christ and are not to be made the members of a harlot. Death is not the great friend of the soul, but the last enemy of Christ. It is death not the body which is conquered in the resurrection of Christ, for his resurrection is a bodily resurrection.

It is not that a part only of Jesus lived again, or was resurrected. The whole man Jesus died and rose, emptying the grave. The Risen One had a body. He could draw near, walk with the disciples, recline with them at the table, break the bread, eat and drink, and thus, had a real body. The Risen Jesus had his own real body, the body which had been crucified.

While the resurrection was a corporeal or a physical event, it was, of course, not merely a bodily event. The wisdom of the Risen One opened the minds of the apostles to interpret the Old Testament Messianically. His Lordship challenged their wills with the Great Commission. His love made their hearts burn with a new devotion. His spiritual blessings endued them with peace, repentance, pardon, restoration. His fellowship with them established the Church of God in Christ Jesus. And each of these impacts of the Risen Saviour upon His disciples was an added confirmation of His resurrection. Each of the several modes of manifestation buttressed the others, making a cumulative effect upon the apostles' perception. They established the objective character of the resurrection as a thing of God's doing, not of the disciples' making.

THE WITNESS OF SENSE PERCEPTION

Our Lord showed the fullness of His victory over death and the grave and the completeness of the Creator's control over earth as well as heaven

by the bodily nature of His resurrection, and by its attestation to the physical senses of the disciples.

In revealing His risen presence, Christ appears to them that their eyes may identify Him as their Master of Galilee and Saviour of Calvary. He directs them to handle Him that their hands may attest that He is no apparition, but Himself in the body. Since the ultimate purpose of the resurrection is the unveiling of God to men, every appearance is bound to a revelation in words. Even on the road to Damascus Paul not only saw the Lord, he also heard the voice of His mouth.

The several appearances and the meeting with a number of persons (above 500 at one time) removed the possibility that these phenomena could be merely one individual's hallucination. In accord with Jewish prejudice the eleven dismissed the testimony of the women, but when they made their testimony to Thomas, he also doubted.

Indeed some even doubted on the Mount, and unbelief is repeated over and over again in the longer ending of Mark. The Holy Spirit used their physical as well as their social, intellectual, and spiritual contacts with the resurrected Christ to draw the company of disciples around the corner from unbelief to faith in the victory of their Lord and Saviour. In the light of His resurrection, the corporate witness of the apostolic body is: God has reconciled us to Himself by the death of His Son.

THE TESTIMONY OF EYE-WITNESSES

The New Testament accounts do not present the appearances of Jesus as the imaginings of false witnesses, but as facts outside the witnesses which on that account called them to faith. Luke 24:34-43 is a kind of comprehensive gospel of the resurrection in which Jesus stands in the midst of the disciples. In reciprocal conversation He meets the doubts and dialectics of their troubled hearts.

He directs them, "Behold my hands and my feet and convince yourselves that it is I myself. Handle me and see, because a spirit has not flesh and bones as ye behold me having," or as Dr. Dodd renders it, "Feel me and look. A ghost has not flesh and blood as ye see that I have." The Holy Spirit brings the Church back to these eye-witnesses again and again that She may be sure of the reality of the revelation which God made of Himself in Jesus Christ.

THE TESTIMONY OF HEARING THE RISEN CHRIST

In the gospels the Risen Jesus speaks to His disciples as one weeps in the garden, as two walk by the way, to some at the table, to others by the sea, to an appointed gathering on the mountain. He engages in conversations with them, meeting their questions with His assurance, "It is I myself." At times he calls one sheep by name "Miriam,

Thomas, Simon, Saul." At other times the address is to a group, "All hail!" "Peace be unto you." He uses the familiar words of blessing at the table. He reminds them of the words He has spoken before His crucifixion. He teaches them again of repentance and forgiveness. He asks for food. He promises the Spirit. He gives solemn commandments, charges, commissions.

Matthew gives the Great Commission in a stupendous sweep that is worthy only of the Lord Jesus, the conqueror of death. Luke records His showing the disciples in the Old Testament that the Messiah must suffer, rise from the dead, enter into His glory, and that repentance and forgiveness be preached in His name unto all nations. Thus were the disciples made apostles that they might bear witness of the things which they had seen and heard, supporting their testimony by the word of prophecy and looking to the Spirit to use it to bring their hearers to faith in Christ, crucified and risen.

THE TESTIMONY OF HANDLING THE WORD OF LIFE

When the Risen Jesus met the women returning from the tomb, they laid hold of his feet and worshipped Him. The account of Jesus' meeting with Mary Magdelene (John 20) is variously interpreted. The King James' rendering may be understood thus: "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended, but I am about to ascend to my Father, and thereafter I can be touched and handled." When the Risen One did appear later that day to the apostles and breathed upon them the Spirit, presumably He had already ascended to the Father, had already been glorified, for He bids them handle Him.

Since the present imperative with "Me" (the Greek is *Me Mou Hoptu*) means to "make an end of an existing situation," several translations and commentaries render Jesus' words to Mary: "Stop touching me. Do not hold me. Do not keep clinging to me." The same is then interpreted: "Cease holding me. It is true that I have not yet ascended to my Father and your Father, but I am about to do so. This is what you are to tell my brothers." According to Dr. Barrett, the most recent English commentator on the Gospel of John, John was of the opinion that the resurrected body was physically real.

Luke 24 records the command of the Lord to the disciples to handle Him that they may know He is not a spectre, but flesh and bones. In his epistle to the Smyrnian Ignatius of Antioch who wrote about 110 is the following: "And when the Risen Jesus came to those with Peter, He said to them, 'Take hold, handle me and see that I am not a bodiless demon.'" The Johannine record refers to the same appearance. Here the Lord bids the disciples to see His hands and side and probably lays His hands on them as He

breathes on them the spirit and ordains them apostles.

Thomas could find some ground for his insistence that he put his finger in the nail holes and his hand into the pierced side in the word of the Lord to the other disciples to handle Him and see that He had flesh and bones and in their reports of doing what their Lord commanded them to do. The natural longing of the human heart is to grasp again a loved one. Moreover, only by an assurance of the reality of the resurrection could Thomas give his testimony with full conviction. The Risen Lord met his request in every detail that the apostolic faith might be distinguished from an illusion and the apostles' witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus might sound forth with power and great grace be upon the people.

On this appearing to the apostles, the risen Lord again bared the wounds of the cross in His hands and in His side and bade Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger and see my hand. Reach hither thy hand and put it into my side and be not faithless, but believing." Thomas answered and said unto him, "My Lord and my God!" Amid various interpretations of this meeting the following is offered from Professor Markus Barth now of Chicago. "While John 20:29 only mentions the seeing, there is scarcely any room for assuming that the touching which Thomas had requested and which Jesus now commanded was not carried out." Thomas' "My Lord!" was no abstract affirmation. As the disciple obeyed his risen Lord, it was true of Thomas as of the other apostles "that which we have seen with our eyes and our hands have handled declare we unto you."

The risen Lord appeared and spoke to his apostles that they might accept and proclaim the revelation in Him. He offered them His body to be handled that by the grace of God their bodies might bear witness to Him. He bared to them the precious wounds that they might stand when they were called to be martyrs for Him Who died for them and for us.

On two occasions when the disciples were gathered within, the doors having been closed for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst. In these cases we have something which is an absolute miracle. Our acceptance of these unexplained miracles does not in itself contradict other elements in the account, such as the Lord's bidding Thomas handle His wounds. Neither does it reverse the doctrine in John's Gospel that the resurrection of the dead means their coming forth out of the tomb and the rebuilding of the temple of the body. Most of all this acceptance accords with what is evident in all the appearances, namely that He Who has all authority in heaven and earth is Lord.

If, however, instead of starting with the miraculous fact THAT our Lord came and stood in the midst of the disciples one begins with rationalistic

inferences as to *how* He entered, sundry hypotheses are possible. Yet it is not evident that the writer of the Gospel favored any of them. One view is that He passed through the closed doors. The Bible doesn't say that. It is only a hypothesis. From this some assume that he must have been or have become a ghost in order to accomplish the feat. This thinking often ends in a Doketic resurrection and a Christ over whom man's inferences and the mere doors of the house were lord. The angel of the Lord twice brought Peter out of prison, the doors of which had been closed and locked. Yet the disciples' inference that the one knocking at their door was only Peter's angel was in error as you will find if you read Acts 12:10-15.

Many of the first century houses were built around an open court. Their two massive doors, one following the other, were on the side adjoining the street while the dining room was regularly on the opposite side of the court. If the disciples were in such a triclinicum or dining room absorbed in discussing the reports of their Lord's appearances they would not have known if these outer doors had opened before and closed behind the entering Lord, as the iron gate opened of its own accord before Peter and the angel. Our older reformed exegetes such as John Calvin and Matthew Henry understood that the doors were opened to admit the Lord. Indeed, by His death and resurrection the Lord opened for His Church even the gates of death and the doors of the Kingdom. (Matthew 16).

A third hypothesis (or, if you want to call it that, a third guess. These are all guesses) is that our Lord descended into the open court (if he ascended at all he had no trouble descending into the open court), leaving the great doors still closed. As we do not know how the Lord saw fit to accomplish the miracle of His coming and standing in their midst, we may not say that He had to be a bodiless spirit in order to enter.

THE TESTIMONY OF TABLE FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST

At the Last Supper the Lord spoke of eating and drinking again with the disciples in the Kingdom of God. After the resurrection there are accounts of our Lord's having table fellowship with the disciples, twice in Luke, once certainly and twice probably in Acts, once in John, once in the longer ending of Mark, once in Ignatius to the Smyrnians, once in the Gospel to the Hebrews. These occasions are reflected in Revelation 3:20 "If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with Me."

The risen Jesus came close enough to the disciples to eat with them, to touch and be touched by them, to breathe upon them. Until the resurrection they had been concerned with fragrant ointments for His burial. Yet so tremendous was the actuality of the resurrection that many days

after His death there was no suggestion of that which Martha feared at the tomb of Lazarus. On the contrary, the oral gospel in Acts uses the phraseology of the Psalmist "His flesh did not see corruption" to set forth the reality of the resurrection as God's victory over sin and death, the enthronement of Christ in His heavenly reign.

There is an interesting testimony, if we have time to mention it, that has recently been discovered from the middle of the second century that shows the disciples using their five senses. This comes from the sermon called *The Gospel of Truth*:

After the resurrection of Christ, He gave them the possibility of knowing, for as they *saw* and *heard* Him - He granted them to *taste* and *smell* and *touch* Him — the Beloved Son. He came in the flesh without anything hindering His path.

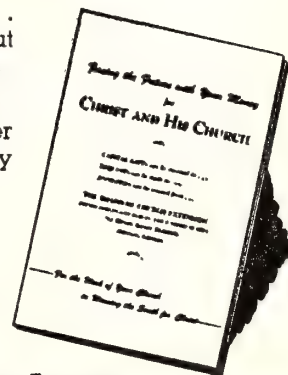
(Chairman calls time).

May I say this in closing? I have here before me a full discussion of Paul's treatment in I Corinthians fifteen, but there is not time to present it. Paul does not teach that our resurrection will not be physical. There is a translation to that effect in the RSV, but it is an erroneous rendering of the Greek. Paul says that our present body is psychical, not physical as the RSV gives. The future body will be Spiritual, but not in the sense that it is non-physical. This body is psychical, that is, its life-principle is soul or psychology. The

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resurrection body will be Spiritual in the sense that it will be raised by the Holy Spirit and of it the Spirit will be the life principle.

Neither does Paul say that the future body will not be flesh and blood as a hasty reading of I Cor. 15:50 may signify. "Flesh and blood" is the subject of that sentence, not the predicate. And "flesh and blood" does not mean the physical or material side of man as against his intellectual or spiritual side. In the Bible it means the whole man, human nature, as against God and His Spirit. This fallen human nature cannot inherit eternal life. It must be changed by the Spirit from its enmity against God and its corruption. Paul is talking Christian salvation in I Cor. 16; not Hellenistic dualism. When by God's grace through Jesus Christ the Spirit changes our corrupt human nature and takes away our opposition to God, we shall live with

God in our Spiritual bodies in a new heaven and a new earth. Paul believed in the bodily resurrection of Christ and of His people. He said, "He shall come and change our vile bodies and make them like unto His glorious body."

The resurrection is God's "Yes" to life, God's declaration that not death but life is the last word. The resurrection of Christ's body is God's "Yes" to the body. Jesus Christ was crucified publicly as a malefactor. That is not God's last public word about Christ. He shall come in His glory - publicly. As the resurrection reveals God's "Yes" to the body and "Yes" to life, so the resurrection reveals God. Only God can raise the dead. Those that believe in the resurrection of the body have a God-centered faith and a God-centered hope. Thank you.

A Biblical Study of the Position of Women in the Church

By JAMES E BEAR

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In this issue we are carrying two articles on the above subject, one by Dr. James E. Bear of Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va., the other by the Rev. Gabriel Abdullah.

This Journal will carry further articles on this subject. We believe our church would make a serious mistake to vote for the ordination of women elders. Among these reasons is the inescapable fact that such ordination would place women in a position of ecclesiastical authority over men, a position we believe contravenes the clear teachings of both the Old and New Testament. It is interesting to note that the Canadian Presbyterian Church has voted down the suggested plan to ordain women elders and deacons.

The Editor.

This is the title of the Ad Interim Report on the subject presented to the 1956 Assembly, which report, with its recommendations, was adopted by that Assembly. The Committee that prepared this report believes that it presented a *Biblical* argument which justifies its recommendations that women be allowed to speak in the courts of the church, and that women may be ordained as deacons and elders.

As the General Assembly has sent the question of amending the *Book of Church Order* so as to permit the ordination of women as deacons and elders down to the Presbyteries for their consideration and vote, it seems wise that the Biblical argument which moved the Assembly to this action should be discussed fully.

Since this Ad Interim Committee Report is rather long, the writer is undertaking to restate and condense the line of Biblical argument presented by the report. We believe the argu-

ment given below is in essential harmony with the thought of the report, but the writer takes full responsibility for this statement as it is here printed. We realize that no summary of a report can do it full justice. We only hope that this summary may lead many to secure and study the full report, so that they may be able to arrive at a balanced conclusion on the Biblical teaching on this subject.

THREE BASIC TRUTHS.

In discussing the Biblical teaching about the position of women in the Church, three fundamental truths must be taken into account.

First, *The Church*. The "church" in which the women are to take their proper position cannot be limited to the local, organized church with its deacons and elders. The church consists of all those who profess the true religion. (*Confession of Faith*, Ch. XXV, Sec. 2). Thus the church is found wherever God's people meet