

tions on this Pauline theme, describing it as a "rebirth", an "illumination", a "sealing" with the Spirit, a "washing white in the Blood of the Lamb".

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THE BELOVED DISCIPLE AND THE
RESURRECTION ¹

At first sight it might appear that the fifty-six verses which St John devotes to the Resurrection are not very much. The experience had been so new and overwhelming. Indeed "newness" is the quality of that "Day" which began at the Resurrection and will last through all eternity.

As we read, we find that the Resurrection has caught up the former facts and loves and transformed them. Jesus, triumphant, recalls his Passion by showing his hands and feet and side. The tender gladness of the Apostles at seeing their Lord again is followed by the promised giving of the Spirit and the passing on of Christ's redemptive mission with the power to forgive sins (xx.20-3). The crucified man is recognised for what he is: "My Lord and my God". Jesus is the same tender Master who cooks breakfast for his hungry disciples and manifests himself to fishermen by a miraculous catch of fish, as he had done before (xxi.6-9; Lk. v.1-10). As then it was Peter who was told that he would catch men, and Peter's boat from which they were fishing, so now it is Peter who draws the net to land. And his triple denial is transformed by a triple declaration of humble love. In answer to that declaration, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, commits to Peter the feeding of his own flock for which he laid down his life, a flock which will include others who are not of the Jews (x.11-16; xxi. 15-17). Here, then, is John's own account of Christ's foundation of his Church, and it completes what we already know.

John is a master of characterisation. Let us study the effect of the Resurrection by taking three of his characters and seeing how they are transformed. We have just spoken of Peter. There is the same affectionate impetuosity which sends him running to the tomb (apparently rather out of breath, for the younger man outruns him) and makes him blurt out the question concerning the Beloved Disciple: "Lord, what about him?" There is a certain incompre-

¹ [This article has unfortunately been considerably reduced owing to lack of space. —Ed.]

hension which needs correcting, as when he does not recognise the meaning of what he sees in the tomb, and is grieved at the triple question about his love. But he is no longer the boastful Simon who declared that he would never deny Jesus even if all the others did. He will not say now that he loves him more than the rest do. Yet Jesus knows his love, for he commits his flock to him, and to feed that flock he must love them. And he is ready now to be told by what a death he will glorify God (xxi.18, 19 ; cf. I Pet. iv.16).

St John begins his narrative of the Resurrection with Mary's coming to the tomb. As usual he presupposes the Synoptic accounts which mention the other women. Mary must have gone straight to the tomb, probably leaving the others to buy the spices, for she arrived "when it was still dark", whereas the others came "when the sun had now risen". She saw that the stone had been taken away. It would seem that she just waited until the arrival of the others, and then ran, one idea in her mind. "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him". We may note in passing that Peter's leadership is taken for granted in spite of his denial of his Lord. After he and John have visited the tomb they go back home. Not so the woman. "But Mary had stood near the tomb without, weeping. And while she went on weeping, she stooped down into the tomb, and she sees two angels in white garments, sitting one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had lain". But in her preoccupation and her tears they make no impression, and to their kindly question, "Woman, why are you weeping?" she merely reiterates her trouble: "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him". Having made sure for herself that the tomb is empty, she turns outside again, where she sees Jesus standing, and takes him for the gardener. "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Jesus prepares her gently by the further question. But she is utterly absorbed in her quest: "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him". He says one word: Mary! She turns right round and "says to him in Hebrew, Rabboni. That is to say: Master!" St John has quoted the exact word she used, more solemn than "Rabbi", and often addressed to God.

And now Jesus is going to send this great lover, the contemplative whose single-mindedness he had defended, to her mission as apostle of the Apostles. Into that mission her womanly powers of loving are to be turned. The translation "do not touch me" misses the point, and suggests the extraordinary idea that he who had let her touch him at the supper in Bethany and also, perhaps, in the house of the Pharisee (Lk. vii.36-50) would not do so now. Besides, it is a bad

version. The present imperative means, "Do not keep clinging on to me", and the reason is that the Ascension has not yet happened, but will happen soon, so that he is sending her to prepare the Apostles by telling them the fact of his Resurrection, and that he will ascend to his Father—preparing them, then, for the separation which will lift their minds to heaven. "Do not keep clinging on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brethren, and say to them: I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God". Mary went at once, and we have her vivid message: "I have seen the Lord, and this is what he said to me" (XX.II-18). It is a woman, a contemplative, transformed by the sight of the Risen Jesus, who is the active witness and apostle of Jesus to the men. History will often tell the same tale.

Thomas, the doubter, is like thousands of those turned out by our modern technical colleges: a good-hearted fellow, who will believe only what he sees and touches. When Jesus announces that he will return to the dangers of Judaea for the sake of the already dead Lazarus, Thomas, quite uninterested in any idea of a miracle, shows nevertheless a touching, dog-like devotion, and rallies the reluctant disciples, saying, "Let us go too, that we may die with him" (XI.16). When at the Last Supper Jesus tells his sorrowing disciples that he is going to leave them, adding, "And you know the way to where I go", Thomas, his unperceptive common-sense quite on edge by this time, exclaims not very respectfully: "Lord, we do not know where you are going; and how can we know the way?" And then Jesus in reply gives the matter-of-fact man just what he needs: a way which is a Person whom he can follow and believe and live by—"I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life". After the Resurrection the very man who so needed to see and touch Jesus was not there when the Risen Lord appeared to his disciples—probably he was the chief sceptic about the news brought by Mary Magdalen and had gone off to hide with his own grief, for he had not in the end even attempted to die with him. When told of the appearance of Jesus, his scepticism becomes increasingly neurotic: "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe". He probably flung out from the Eleven, and perhaps the words that after eight days "Thomas was with them" suggest that he was just creeping back after his sulk. And now it is the sceptic who makes the profession of faith which is the culmination of St John's Gospel (for the next chapter seems to be a sort of appendix, perhaps added later). Such is the power of the Resurrection. There are several lessons to be drawn. First, the evident one of the merit of faith, shown in Jesus' gentle,

smiling reproof: "Is it because you have seen me that you have believed? Blessed are they who have not seen and have believed". Second, the point made by St Gregory the Great, that St Thomas's incredulity brought forth a proof which helps us to believe better than the easy acceptance of the Magdalen; so we cannot do better than present the sceptic with the case for the truth of the Resurrection. But I suggest that there is a third point which is valuable and may be overlooked. Jesus gave Thomas exactly what his character asked: a proof from touch and sight (though Thomas probably did not touch him); and so he made of this good-hearted man a fervent believer. Do we use this method sufficiently in dealing with the products of an education in the physical sciences? Are we inclined to say "that man's a sceptic who will never believe, and without belief, there is nothing to be done"? Should we not rather enable him to see Christ living in his members—in a television of the Mass, in a Catholic institution, or just in an ordinary holy Christian? It was for Thomas that Jesus made that second appearance and every detail answered his demands. "Then he said to Thomas: Bring thy finger here, and see my hands, and bring thy hand and put it into my side; and be not unbelieving, but believing. Thomas answered, and said to him: My Lord and my God".

There is a certain danger that we may so concentrate on the proofs of Christianity triumphantly afforded by the Resurrection, that we forget its inner significance for our own lives and for the life of the Church. To understand what this is, we need to go to our Lord's great Discourse at the Last Supper (XIII.31—XVII.26). For there Jesus opened his mind to his disciples to tell them the meaning of his Passion and Resurrection, and of the coming of the Holy Spirit who would complete his work. The Jewish feast of the Passover commemorated the passing of the People of God, after the sacrificial meal of the Paschal Lamb, from Egypt, land of sin and slavery, through the "baptism" of the Red Sea to God's Land of Promise. On the way they were given the Ten Commandments. Jesus, about to pass from this world to his Father, offers himself in sacrifice for his own in a last feast of love, and gives himself to them in communion before consummating his union with them in suffering and death. But death was not the final word, for the consummation of his sacrifice according to his Father's will was the passing to his Father. "If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father". After the Resurrection Jesus is in the glory of his Father, and his prayer is fulfilled: "And now do thou glorify me, Father". Into this glory, this union in love of Father and Son, the Divine Redeemer brings his disciples and all those who through their word will believe in him.

This unity will be the sign of his divine mission. "The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one". Here is the inner picture of the Church of the Risen Christ, as it shines out also in the First Epistle of St John.

On the way to the Promised Land the Israelites had been given the Ten Commandments. While celebrating his own Passover, Jesus gave them his own new commandment: "That you love one another as I have loved you". The Commandments are transformed. What is commanded is no longer a set of prohibitions, but a positive love, for love fulfils the whole Law (Gal. v.14; Rom. xiii.8), and this love goes further, becoming a love modelled on Christ's own love unto death (xv.13). St John's First Epistle shows it at work in the Church (I Jn. ii.8; III.11, 16), as do all martyrdoms. It is a commandment of joy, for "these things have I spoken to you, that my joy may be in you and your joy may be filled". And it is after calling forth a declaration of love, that Christ entrusts his Church to Peter in the loving terms of a shepherd and his sheep (xxi.15-17). Do we sufficiently understand and bring out the connection between the love commanded by Christ and the place of Peter in the Church? St Ignatius of Antioch describes the Roman Church as "presiding over the Love". It is this presentation which attracts many of our separated brethren. For the unity of the Church is not only a great Fact showing her divine origin, but a Fact of Love. But for each of us the Commandment remains, and we, with our free will, will manifest the unity in proportion as we love.

But how are the disciples to know that the Risen Christ dwells in them and they in him? "By this we know that he abides in us: by the Spirit whom he has given us" (I Jn. III.24). And again, "it is in this that we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit". After all, Thomas, when he cried "My Lord and my God", saw only the Risen Man who had been crucified. We come, then, to the consummation of Christ's work, the giving of the Spirit. We are so accustomed to speaking of the effect of our Lord's teaching and example that we may forget that he himself said that it was not enough. "I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go I will send him to you. . . . I have still many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you into all the truth. . . . he will glorify me, for he will take what is mine, and declare it to you" (xvi.7-14). Jesus had already spoken twice in his discourse of the "other Advocate". The Paraclete, or Advocate, whether Christ or "the other Paraclete", is not primarily the "Comforter". The Greek

word is the equivalent of the Latin *ad-vocatus*, and the original meaning (though extended by this time, cf. I Jn. II.1, where it is applied to Christ as intercessor) is of an advocate who came to the aid of a man who had to plead in court (and in Greece had to make his own speech, which the advocate composed for him and doubtless told him now to make). So while our word "comforter" implies that the other person remains wholly passive, the "advocate" is one who instructs and helps a man to stand on his own feet and bear witness to the truth of his case. The Apostles, who were natural witnesses to Christ because they had known him in his life on earth, were to be enlightened and strengthened by the Divine Advocate who inspired them.

We cannot understand the promise of the Spirit in the Last Discourse or his work in the Church of the Risen Christ except in the perspectives of Pentecost, when Christ sent the Holy Spirit in fullness to complete his redemptive work. The effect of his coming, both at Pentecost and through all the history of the Church to our own day, has been to instruct, fill with love, strengthen and send forth the witnesses to Christ's life and Resurrection (cf. I Jn. IV.13, 14). St John knew this very well when he transcribed the Discourse, although the account of Pentecost was outside his scope. But what he does record is the first glad imparting of the Spirit by the risen Redeemer to the Apostles that they may continue his mission of forgiveness. "Peace be to you. As the Father has sent me, I also send you" (XX.21). Then he breathes upon them, a sign since the creation of man, of the giving of life (cf. Gen. II.7). "You will see me", he had said, "because I live and you will live. In that day you will know that I am in the Father and you in me and I in you" (XIV.19-20; cf. Eph. III.17). And he gives them the Holy Spirit that they too may give spiritual life by remitting sins—a power to be used not capriciously, but humanly. All the supernaturality of St John is shot through with humanism. So when he had breathed upon them, he said to them: "Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; whose sins you shall retain, they are retained".

Thus St John's narrative of the Resurrection Days is given, with memories of the Passion, with examples of the tender love of Jesus, to each according to his need and character, and with the beginning of that life of the Spirit, which is to be the soul of the Church and of each of her members and the inspiration of their charity and their apostolate. As ever in St John grace and nature join in love, and the least things mingle with the highest. "Simon Peter, dost thou love me? Feed my lambs . . . feed my sheep".