

CONTEMPLATING CHRIST RISEN

By MARGOT DONOVAN

TO CONTEMPLATE the resurrection of Christ can be a confirming experience of the choice to follow Christ, especially when done whilst making the Spiritual Exercises for thirty days. The graces of the last two weeks, or stages, of the Exercises are a multi-faceted and evolving reality, which is progressively deepened as the exercitant is drawn into the actual living of the paschal mystery. Yet, in practice, how frequently are these graces experienced? My view is that often the graces of confirmation are inadequately received, or at least less richly experienced than they might be. There is much a director can do to assist the exercitants to dispose themselves to receive these graces and to ensure that every level of the person is engaged in this enterprise. I suggest — and this is the central purpose of this article — that ‘the one who gives the Exercises’ will be helped in this task, in proportion to a familiarity with and a careful integration of the insights of modern biblical and theological study on the resurrection. This in no way denies the necessity for persevering prayer on the part of the exercitant to discover that freedom from all that hinders the new life offered to each one by the risen Lord.

The exercitant, who in the previous three weeks has been progressively introduced into the riches of the mysteries of Christ, is now seeking in contemplating Christ risen the gift of a new life in the risen Saviour. How then does Ignatius propose that these contemplations be made? *Prima facie*, the ignatian setting is surprising, in that there is no contemplation of the resurrection as such; he begins by offering a contemplation of the apparition of the risen Christ to our Lady. As Ignatius remarks, although there is no explicit reference in scripture to such an appearance, nevertheless scripture supposes we have understanding (Exx 299). The word is used here in the sense of the spiritual understanding that faith gives: one which grasps the appropriateness of such an appearance as being in harmony with the revealed mystery. We shall see, when we consider the New Testament witness to the resurrection, it is primarily through the appearances that the apostles came to know that the Father had raised Jesus from the dead. Ignatius follows closely in the line of this original christian experience by directing the exercitant to contemplate the resurrection by means of the appearance-narratives (Exx 299-311).

However, there is another reason why Ignatius chooses the apparition to our Lady as the first contemplation of this Fourth Week. It is because, to quote Cusson, 'for Christ the joy of resurrection is not the joy of breathing again, but rather the joy of bringing to the new humanity his own life now capable of being welcomed in its fulness',¹ and only Mary is capable of taking possession of this new life immediately and fully.

Yet, even though our Lady figures prominently in this first contemplation, nevertheless, it is the person of the risen Lord that dominates the week. We find no direct reference in the text to the exercitant, as was the case with the contemplations on the Passion (Exx 197). All is centred on the Risen One, who consoles his friends. The first contemplation is so structured as to assist the exercitant to enter progressively into this experience of the consoling Christ. Further indication of this can be found by carefully reading the notes for this week (Exx 226-29). Here we find that the additions are adapted with a view to helping the exercitant to keep a delicate attention, in a spiritual attitude best described as follows: 'and the more it (the soul), is united to him, the more it disposes itself to receive graces and gifts from his divine and sovereign goodness' (Exx 20). Ignatius is intent on promoting a harmony, interior and exterior, which disposes the person to receive the gifts of peace, love and joy.

At this stage Ignatius considers that the exercitant, if the grace asked for is received, will experience a deep efficacious joy and gladness centred on the risen Christ, enabling him to turn his whole life towards the glorified Christ, present to him in faith. It is not a question of trying to make oneself joyful: Ignatius simply says this joy is a gift, which we are to ask for. The exercitant, having spent three weeks asking for what he wants, is well aware that all is gift, given to his good will in the midst of weakness and frailty. The bestowal of this gift is the proper function of the risen Christ (Exx 224), and is described in terms of spiritual consolation (Exx 316), which will be enjoyed to a more or less pronounced extent through the whole range of variations which Ignatius attaches to spiritual consolation. What the exercitant is asking is the purest form of consolation: that is, the movement out of himself to rejoice in the joy and glory of the risen Christ (Exx 221). 'This is the grace I ask for; to enter into the joy of the Lord, which is a joy of love, and for us, the joy of being the object of his love, his joy, of being delivered from evil, infallibly moving towards his eternal heart'.² Ignatius, it seems, understands the consolation given by the risen Lord as the sending of his Spirit. At this point in the Exercises, the faith-relationship with Christ has so deepened, over the long weeks of prayer, that the exercitant comes to see by experience that Christ, in comforting, is

giving a share in his Spirit. So William Peters suggests that this explains why Ignatius fails to round off the Fourth Week, as many wish he had done', because 'if the Exercises aim at ordering the exercitant's life, there must be no closed-circuit suggestion at all: part of right order is that he knows himself to be moving toward the Parousia, all the while being comforted by the risen Lord'.³ In reality, the Fourth Week has no end.

Throughout the entire time of the Exercises, Ignatius gives instructions for the director, to help to involve every level of the exercitant's being in the prayer. Now, in contemplating the risen Christ, the aim is that the affections of the risen Lord and the exercitant's affections will be more and more closely identified. The preludes of the contemplations serve to make the exercitant present to the mystery; the points develop familiarity with every aspect of the mystery, a familiarity deepened by the repetitions, until finally the life of the senses is drawn into the contemplation. This, in brief, is the structure of all the contemplations from the Second Week onwards. But in the Third and Fourth Weeks additional points are given which give a particular tone to the prayer on the paschal mystery. It can be a very rewarding task for a director of the Exercises to try to grasp something of this particular 'tone' in the prayer of the Third and Fourth Weeks. It offers him great facility in helping the exercitant to receive the gift offered in the contemplative prayer on the paschal mystery.

There is a significant shift in the nature of the petition of the Fourth Week, in comparison with previous petitions; now the request made is for a knowledge of Christ in terms of what happens to him as he contemplates the Father (Exx 223). In resurrection, Jesus is for the first time in the presence of the Father. The beloved Son, now raised by the Father, knows in his humanity what it means to be glorified. What we are now seeking is an interior knowledge of what the resurrection means for Jesus, because, in the last analysis, this is what it must mean for us.

A careful study of the text of the first contemplation on the resurrection reveals the two key-points in the exercitant's prayer at this stage: what happens to Christ in the resurrection (Exx 223); and how he exercises the office of consoler (Exx 224).

In considering Christ exercising the office of consoler, Ignatius suggests that the exercitant compare the way in which Christ consoles with the 'way in which friends are wont to console each other' (Exx 224). He is directing the exercitant's attention to the aspects of encouragement and consolation to be found in the gospel-texts to be prayed over. In the accounts of the resurrection-appearances, the risen Christ is described as giving joy, confidence

and peace to those who, because they remained open to him, were in a position to receive the gift of christian faith. The appearance-scenes in the gospels show how the disciples, despite their misgivings, were yet certain that the One they encountered was the same as the earthly Jesus they had known. The Lord is portrayed as consoling primarily by reassuring his friends of his identity in difference; the consolation that he gives is that he is alive and with them. This assurance of his presence is essential to his function as consoler, helping his disciples to accept the reality of his presence in their lives after his resurrection, even though he remained for the most part unseen.

We are now in a position to give a clearer description of the kind of prayer that Ignatius hoped would be evoked in the Fourth Week. The general aim at this stage is to confirm and strengthen the exercitant in his choice of the way in which he is called to follow Christ, so that the prayer will centre around the two pivotal points of Christ's experience of resurrection and his consoling of his brethren. It is intended to evoke what might be called an experience of resurrection, a gift God wishes to grant today. It is understood that the experience of the original chosen witnesses of the resurrection always remains their special privilege. While there is a sense in which only the disciples could experience Jesus as the same Jesus they had known on earth, as the risen Saviour in glory, yet it is possible, indeed it seems almost essential to the contemplations as proposed by Ignatius, that he expects the exercitant to have an encounter with the risen Christ: one which develops his faith in the risen Christ alive and present to him now. This encounter, it is hoped, will also be graced by the gift from the Father to the exercitant, of an intense joy in the joy and glory of Christ. Ignatius, himself a man of great desires, all but assumed as certain that after the preceding weeks of purification and immersion in prayer, this gift would be given (Exx 227).

The prayer to be evoked will be such as to underline that death issues into life. There is a paschal shape to Jesus's life, and a hint of it is found in the Exercises (219), which makes a direct and firm connection between the cross and the resurrection contemplation: there is also to be a paschal shape to the life of the believer. At this point, the exercitant is, as it were, looking through two lenses, to see suffering and glory together. The process is that the suffering blossoms forth into the glory of resurrection; and the veil between the two is almost translucent (as in John's gospel, where he speaks of glory and exaltation in reference to the cross). By praying to know and grasp how death issues into life, the exercitant is in fact seeking Christ's paschal shape for his own life.

In the light of what has been said about the kind of prayer the fourth week presupposes, what help can be derived from the insights of modern biblical and theological study of the resurrection? Secondly, how do these insights help us in contemplating the appearances of Christ risen?

The New Testament witness to the resurrection: Paul to the Corinthians

What do the New Testament writers say about the resurrection, and what did they intend to proclaim by means of the resurrection narratives? The evangelists and Paul represent the varied attempts to be found in the New Testament to give expression to the apostolic faith in the resurrection, and to describe the genesis of that faith. In particular, the resurrection narratives result from the combination of historical narrative and theological reflection.

The earliest text dealing comprehensively with the resurrection is found in First Corinthians. It is generally agreed that Paul is citing a tradition he received; but when and where he received it, how much belongs to the original formula and what is Paul's addition, whether this text is one formula or a plurality of formulae; all these questions remain open to discussion. The tradition he received was:

That Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day, in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas. . . .

There follows a listing of people to whom Christ appeared (1Cor 15,3-8). What can be learnt from this text about the early christian understanding of the resurrection?

The phrase 'that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures' is a summary of a passion-tradition; but there is here an addition not found in the primitive passion-narrative, namely the motive, 'for our sins'. This could indicate how soon the motive came to be linked with the understanding that Christ's death was in accord with the scriptures. Next it is stated that 'he was buried'; this early tradition had no doubt about the reality of his death. Yet though Paul knew of the burial, it does not necessarily follow that he also knew of the 'empty tomb' tradition. The subsequent phrase, 'he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures', shows that the primitive christian community proclaimed the resurrection, rather than narrated it. This was an event the inner nature of which could not be perceived but only its accompanying phenomena, the appearances and the empty tomb. The verb used here by Paul, *egēgertai*, 'was raised', is the passive of *egeirein*, meaning 'to wake up', or 'to rouse from sleep', expressing how Jesus was raised from death. 'The verb *egēgertai* is a reverential passive denoting an interventive

act of God'.⁴ The Father raised Jesus. The language here, of God's raising from the dead, has echoes of Jewish apocalyptic; for Paul it is a means to describe Jesus's transition from one mode of existence to another: one which the Christians understood as resurrection, not as the resuscitation of a corpse. Jesus has been raised to a new and transformed mode of existence: one of the basic elements of the resurrection-contemplations is 'what happens to Christ in the resurrection'. Paul goes on to say that Christ's resurrection is the first break-through into a new kind of existence and the pledge that others will follow him (1 Cor 15,20).

The debate amongst scholars as to the meaning of the phrase 'on the third day', is inconclusive. Some think it could be a way to date the 'absence': 'he is not here but raised'; but how does one date such an eschatological event? Some commentators connect the phrase with the early Christian celebration of the resurrection on the Sunday, others with hints in the Bible of a three days' triumph over evil. Other scriptural texts are cited, for example Hosea (6,2) and Psalm 16 (8-11). I incline to Dr Fuller's suggestion that the source for this phrase is apocalyptic: assuming that apocalyptic was the matrix of the earliest Christian kerygma and colours these primitive formulae. On this view, 'on the third day' is not a chronological datum but a dogmatic assertion, through a conventional phrase meaning 'in next to no time'. Christ's resurrection marked the dawn of the end-time, the beginning of the cosmic eschatological process of resurrection. If 'in accordance with the scriptures' is taken with the verb 'was raised', this would indicate that the resurrection, like the passion, was part of God's saving plan.

Paul uses the verb *ōphthē* four times, which is normally translated 'appeared'; though literally it means 'was seen'. Earlier in the letter, Paul writes: 'have I not seen Jesus our Lord?' (1 Cor 9,1), using another form of the same verb, where the activity referred to is that of the witness. When *ōphthē* carries dative it is translated 'appeared', or 'let himself be seen', the action is initiated by Christ. Following both the Septuagint and New Testament usage, G. O'Collins considers *ōphthē* to be a technical term for the resurrection-appearances, and as such, it '... underlines in the first place the objective action of the risen Christ in disclosing himself, but also secondarily implies a subjective perception ...'.⁵ It is Christ who initiates these encounters with those who were open to what seems best described as a revelatory disclosure by God of the eschatological event of resurrection. This understanding of the appearances as Christ-initiated encounters can be effectively used to encourage a modern exercitant that he can also encounter the risen Christ in faith.

The Pauline text shows that the resurrection was central to

christian proclamation from the earliest times. Its strength lies in its early date and the widespread nature of its testimony. Nothing is said about the 'how', but resurrection is asserted as a fact naturally and confidently with reference to tradition and to the witnesses still available. It indicates how an early tradition put a salvific interpretation on Jesus's death and linked it with the resurrection, making the latter an integral part of the plan of salvation.

The picture presented by the gospels of the easter event is rather confused and inconsistent. Each gospel gives a different account and there are divergences regarding circumstances, witnesses and so on. It is, of course, impossible to harmonize the gospel texts; but when it is understood that they were meant to be read, not as a direct account of what happened at the resurrection, but as a way of proclaiming faith in resurrection, this presents no problem.

According to Mark

In Mark's gospel no appearances are mentioned (16,1-8). The account commences with the narrative of the women going to visit the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus. Mark is not wholly consistent; he has already written that the body had been prepared and buried by Joseph of Arimathea (15,46). Some attribute this inconsistency to the fact that the story of the burial by Joseph of Arimathea is a later, legendary account: records say that Jesus was buried by his enemies (13,29). The pauline text simply says he was buried, without any indication by whom or how. The questions of how, by whom and where Jesus was buried have no easy answer: there are various opinions as to which New Testament tradition is the earliest and closest to the actual burial. If the story of Joseph of Arimathea is later and legendary, and/or if the body was hastily buried, then the marcan text could be on the right lines in stating that the women were going to anoint the body properly. Whichever view is taken about the burial, Mark says that the purpose of the women's visit to the tomb was to anoint the body; but on arrival they find the stone rolled back, and a young man sitting inside the tomb tells them: 'He is risen, he is not here' (Mk 15,6). This is how Mark proclaims the resurrection. Leaving aside for the moment verse 7, which most scholars agree is an editorial interpolation, in verse 8 the reaction of the women to what Léon-Dufour has aptly described as 'their stumbling upon the easter mystery',⁶ is amazement and fear. There have been numerous interpretations of Mark's intention in describing the women's reaction to the news of the resurrection, all of which in the last analysis must remain on the level of speculation. I think the explanation given by Léon-Dufour is as close to the intention of Mark as it is possible to get, when he says, '. . . the

evangelist Mark did not feel it necessary to reproduce any of them [narratives of the appearances]. He preferred to place his reader in the company of the women who experienced no more than the earthly presence of Jesus. They stumble upon the easter mystery, but are not yet able to receive it. Yet it is proclaimed'.⁷ Mark's gospel, when used in the giving of the Exercises, illustrates well the sense of awe which is usually the accompaniment of an initial grasp of the implication of resurrection. The resurrection statement, 'he is not here, he is risen', points to transformation not resuscitation; and it is feasible to think that Mark took the women's report of an empty tomb, a report the disciples possibly heard on their return from Galilee, and used it as a means to proclaim the resurrection which the disciples already believed in on account of their own meeting with the risen Lord.

If verse 7 is an editorial addition (probably linked to 14,28), the intention might be to show that the purpose of the resurrection-appearances to Peter and the disciples was to send them on mission beyond the borders of Galilee, taking Galilee as a marcan theological term. Other views are that Mark is using 'Galilee' strictly in the sense of location, or that it is a reference to the Parousia.

Mark's gospel, then, proclaims the resurrection as God's action, and uses the story of the empty tomb as a vehicle for that proclamation. It is plausible to conclude that the empty-tomb story rests on an early tradition, perhaps derived from a basic nucleus of a report given to the disciples by the women. But it must be kept clearly in mind that it was the appearances to the disciples, not the empty-tomb story, which were the origin and cause of their easter faith.

The longer ending of Mark's gospel, 16,9-20, appears to be a later addition to the text, to supply for what was thought to be the lost ending of the gospel. It is a combination of sources based on the other gospels, and therefore does not merit separate comment, apart from the fact that Trent declared it to be canonical.

The matthean gospel

The account of the resurrection in Matthew follows fairly closely the marcan text, omitting only the reference about the appearance to Peter (Mk 15,7). Matthew adds, for apologetic purposes, the story of the guard on the tomb and various miraculous phenomena like earthquakes (28,1-4). The new element he introduces is to relate the angel's appearance and proclamation of the resurrection with an appearance of Jesus to the women, which in turn is linked to the final appearance to the disciples. Jesus's words are those attributed to the angel in the marcan account. The final appearance is to the eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee, where Jesus gives the

mission-command to them (16,20). The setting for this appearance is very likely Matthew's own composition: there is an obvious matthean touch in the phrasing of the elements of the great commission (18,20). Matthew emphasizes aspects of the Church's mission and of the teaching of the earthly Jesus as the new Law. Probably this mission-charge, in its original form, was the creation of christian prophecy and was later attributed to Jesus. The command to evangelize would have stemmed from the easter tradition. The declaration of Jesus's authority is probably a reference to Daniel (7,14); whilst the promise to be with them always could be a reference back to the beginning of this gospel, where Jesus is called Emmanuel, 'God with us'. In this final scene, mission and promise are combined — a characteristic of mission scenes in the Old Testament, where God's presence is acknowledged and a mission given. Some writers consider the matthean promise 'lo I am with you always', as an equivalent to the johannine promise of the Paraclete.

Luke's account

Luke's gospel presents the first full developed resurrection-narratives, describing meetings with the risen but not yet ascended Lord. It is fair comment to say that Luke is an interpreter, and an exceedingly artistic interpreter, of tradition. His story of the women at the tomb is different from Mark's. Luke solves some of the difficulties found in the marcan account with a characteristic smoothness of approach. Verses 6-8 are an editorial addition, recalling that Jesus's life and death were the necessary prelude to his resurrection. The mention of the apostles doubting the women's report (v 11) is followed by Peter's visit to the tomb, from which he returns home wondering; and these incidents are so placed to show that the apostles come to their resurrection-faith first-hand, and not through other witnesses. Peter, the primary witness, must testify to the empty tomb in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the place of the appearances, because of the city's importance in lucan theology.

The Emmaus story is based on some nucleus of historical fact, but it has undergone a considerable process of development. Luke introduces into this narrative three main theological motifs; that Jesus was a prophet, that his Passion and death were necessary preludes to his entry into glory, and that the scriptures speak of him. Luke emphasizes the need to know the Old Testament if one is to understand the significance of Jesus's life and death. This story is an excellent scriptural example of how Christ acts as consoler, and can be used to advantage to explicate what Ignatius says: 'as friends are wont to console one another' (Exx 224).

Luke's account of the appearance to the eleven (24,36-52) is

almost a 'physical' way of interpreting the resurrection. A similar mode of description is to be found in John's gospel. The tradition employed by Luke and John is concerned to stress the identity of the Risen One with Jesus of Nazareth; but an identity in difference.

His concluding verses (44-49) are a summary of kerygmatic instructions. Jerusalem is the centre from which the mission goes forth and the power for mission comes from the gift of the Spirit. Finally, he describes Jesus's departure to heaven. Some scholars say this ending is non-lucan, whilst others think it fits in well as his first presentation of the ascension, looking back over Christ's finished work and at the blessing of the disciples, who then return to the temple in Jerusalem. The phrase 'and was carried up to heaven' (v 51b), could be based on a primitive kerygmatic statement which Luke developed into a narrative in Acts. He differs from the rest of the New Testament tradition in putting the ascension after the resurrection. His source for this is not identifiable, and one may justifiably surmise that the deciding factor here is his theology. With the expansion of the resurrection into a fuller narrative form, the ascension becomes a witnessed event, not just a brief kerygmatic statement. This evidently entails a reversal of order to resurrection, appearances, ascension. For Luke's theological purpose, the ascension ends the regular resurrection-appearances, so that the Spirit may be given for the mission required in view of the delayed Parousia (see Acts 1,6-8). The ascension for Luke is the climax of Jesus's pilgrimage from Galilee to suffering, death and resurrection in Jerusalem and thence to glory.

Luke's gospel highlights the way in which Jesus's resurrection opens up the future to the witness and preaching of the gospel by the apostles, now endowed with the Spirit by the risen Christ. Accordingly, the easter message refers also to the events of Jesus's earthly life: part of God's plan 'according to the scriptures'. The easter event puts the Christian in touch with the living transformed Christ, to be found here and now in the word and in the Eucharist.

The Gospel of John

The account of the resurrection in John is the end-product of a long process of transmission, in which two different sources have been used. The discovery of the empty tomb, first by Mary Magdalene and then by Peter and John, is described as the means to faith for the disciples, even though it had not been such for Mary Magdalene. This indicates how there is a significant 'transference of the rise of Easter from the christophanies to the empty tomb which represents the most advanced development of the easter narratives in the New Testament'.⁸

The appearance to Mary Magdalene is told in the form of a revelatory encounter (vv 11-18), recognition being followed by the giving of a mission. The johannine author adapts the story he received in terms of his own christology, in the warning to Mary Magdalene not to cling to Jesus as a figure of the past, because he is to be known now as the Ascended One. This story is an example of a combination of a high degree of theological sophistication with a simple narrative. The appearances to the disciples is another recognition mission-scene, which begins with insistence on the identity in difference of the risen Lord with the earthly Jesus, and is similar to Luke's. Peace and the Holy Spirit are given in view of the mission, and the recognition on the part of the believer is seen as the prelude to involvement in mission. The relationships between Jesus and the Father, and Jesus and his brethren are underlined. The appearance to Thomas is peculiar to John's gospel. In the synoptics the role of doubter is frequently assigned to Peter. Thomas's confession of faith, 'my Lord and my God' (20,28), is new, and its meaning has been much discussed. It would be congruous with John's gospel, throughout which Jesus is revealed as the eschatological presence of God, to say that Thomas's confession means that in the risen Jesus he believes he encounters this eschatological presence. The chapter ends with stating the purpose of a gospel: to bring people to belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, so that they may have fulness of life.

John's approach to the resurrection-accounts is more personal than that of the synoptics. He highlights the new relationship established between Christ and the believer, and also the restored relationship of the disciples to the Father. The Spirit is given as assurance of the Lord's presence; and the disciples are commissioned, in their turn, to witness to this presence to others. The johannine text, because of its personal tone, can be used in the Exercises to highlight the reaction and response of the individual to Christ, and to show how fear turns into joy and peace when the risen Christ is known to be present.

Most scholars agree that the so-called johannine appendix (ch 21) was written by a later hand with the purpose of assigning the authorship of the gospel to an eye-witness (cf v 24). It contains only one resurrection appearance as such. This different tradition may in fact be originally a pre-easter story about a catch of fish, transformed into a resurrection appearance by combining it with a eucharistic appearance.

However, Raymond Brown argues that this appearance, if the person of the beloved disciple — a johannine addition — is excluded and the catch of fish separated from the meal, can best be

explained as the first appearance to Peter (cf Lk 24,34). Brown puts forward various arguments in support of this view. The most convincing one for me is that this is a rehabilitation scene, and as such makes more sense in the context of a first appearance to Peter. The synoptics mention the first appearance to Peter, but do not describe it.⁹

In summary terms, the New Testament kerygma if the resurrection is based on the witness of those to whom the risen Christ had appeared. My reading of the New Testament evidence is that the resurrection-faith of these chosen witnesses was based on the vivid undescribed appearances. In time, these appearances were developed into stories which were the effect of the resurrection-faith, not its cause. These witnesses testified to the revelation that the Son had been raised from the dead by the Father; that this eschatological event, which occurred on the borders of time, was revealed to them; and that they are assured by encounters with the risen Jesus that he was the same as the earthly Jesus they had known. The risen One, as the first fruits of resurrection, opened up the future for all believers who could now hope to share in a new resurrected life; and the gift of the Spirit was the pledge of this future hope.

The reality and meaning of the resurrection

It is said that the New Testament was written in the light of the early Christians' resurrection-faith. If this opinion is accepted, then the resurrection of Christ will be seen as the central truth, shedding light on the earthly life and death of Jesus, as well as on his ascension and exaltation as Lord. In the previous section of this essay, it was shown that the early christian preaching about Jesus was that he lived, died on a cross and was raised from the dead by God. The reality of Jesus's death was accepted, certainly by the early christian community; and his burial was also an undisputed fact, even if the 'where' and 'by whom' were subject to query. The apostolic witnesses to the resurrection claimed that by reason of their personal encounters with the risen Lord, they could testify to the fact of his resurrection. The empty-tomb tradition, though an ambiguous one and not an essential part of resurrection-faith, was a strong christian tradition and a means of proclamation of the easter faith.

These facts were all based on human testimony; and so the question naturally arises as to the quality of this testimony. Certain pointers indicate that it is at least reasonable to credit their witness with objectivity. The apostles were not expecting the resurrection; but after the resurrection-appearances they show an enthusiasm to witness to it, even to the point of accepting death, as well as an indifference, in the sense that their message was centred not on

themselves but on Christ. These marks of authenticity allow it to be said that at least the resurrection is credible. Also the historical traces of resurrection (the appearances and the empty tomb) allow that it can be said to be believable. It is these traces that were the facts interpreted by the apostles in terms of resurrection. The apostolic witness of resurrection-faith thus had an historical basis, and was in no sense unreasonable, even if it could not be reduced to historicity, since faith is itself a gift of the Holy Spirit. There are theologians who hold a different view, and see the resurrection as merely an expression of faith already reached by the early Christians. Some, like Bultmann, consider the resurrection unhistorical because it cannot be proved to be an historical fact: resurrection-faith is no other than faith in the significance of the cross. Others, like Marxsen, view the resurrection as an interpretative statement which is secondary to the resurrection-witnesses' main concern; the continuation of Jesus's kerygma.

I would suggest that the resurrection remains a reality, whether men believe in it or not, a reality which can only be known through faith, never merely through historical investigation. For 'faith may not exist independently of historical knowledge but it cannot be reduced to it',¹⁰ because 'ultimately an assent to the reality of Jesus's resurrection combines knowledge of past facts with an interpretation of present experience'.¹¹

In the strict sense, the resurrection is not historical because it does not fulfil the conditions of historicity. To be historical an event must first be observable by ordinary physical means; and clearly no one saw the actual resurrection. The appearances were confined to persons who were hardly neutral observers. Secondly, the historical event must be known to have occurred and there must be knowledge of its causes; but the resurrection could only be known to have happened through God's revelation; nor could its causes be studied. The third requirement is that the event be to some extent intelligible; but resurrection transcends our understanding. Fourthly, the event should be somehow comparable with other historical events; and this condition cannot be met. According to the New Testament, there is an element of the unique in this event. Yet though the resurrection does not strictly fulfil the required conditions for historicity, there is, as was said previously, an historical basis for belief in it. Walter Kasper brings out this point when he says:

It needs to be made clear that (for the first witnesses) it was a believing-seeing. To express it better: it was an experience in faith. But although they were an experience in faith, the 'appearances' were not simply the expression of belief. There were actual

encounters with Christ present in the spirit. Faith did not establish the reality of the resurrection, but the reality of the resurrected Christ obtruding in spirit upon the disciples established faith.¹²

Yet some historical assessment of it must be allowed. 'The historian has every right to investigate the record of the happenings at Easter . . .',¹³ to decide whether or not they occurred. Indeed, the tendency to deny any historicity to the resurrection can have the effect of denying that it ever happened, as Raymond Brown explains: 'the eschatological character of the resurrection has prompted some modern scholars to refuse to speak of the resurrection as historical. This is an unhappy development, because the statement that the resurrection was not historical will be misinterpreted to mean that the resurrection never happened'.¹⁴

With regard to the empty-tomb tradition, it is difficult in practice to separate the question of historical reliability from theological significance, because such a discussion raises a more basic question: that of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. This latter has important theological implications, raising as it does the relationship between the temporal and the eternal: in other words, God's purpose in creating. The model adopted with regard to God's ultimate plan for creation — 'the eventual destruction and new creation, or the model of transformation'¹⁵ — influences one's attitude towards the world and the corporeal. My own view is influenced by my opinion that the resurrection was a unique and creative event, closely linked to God's creative purpose of transforming the world and redeeming human history.

The four gospels recount the discovery of the empty tomb, and John alone omits the angelic interpreter. It seems feasible to hold that the real reason why the tomb was empty would have become apparent after the appearances; then the empty tomb and the appearances would mutually enlighten each other. The historical fact of the empty tomb was open to a variety of interpretations; in itself it proved nothing about the resurrection. But once it was used as a vehicle for the proclamation of the resurrection, it could become the bridge between the passion-narratives and the appearance-narratives. The New Testament clearly emphasizes the appearances as witnessing to the resurrection; and I would accept that the empty tomb is ambiguous and does not compel faith. Nor need it be an original or essential part of the easter message. Yet, although it is not an integral part of resurrection-faith, it appears to have been a significant part of the witness of the early Church. It is not unrelated to christian faith, because it coloured the manner in which the faith was proclaimed. The silence of Paul (1 Cor 15) about the empty

tomb is not sufficient evidence to claim that he did not know about it. His omission could have been deliberate or non-deliberate.

If the empty tomb is accepted, does it have theological value? Can it be integrated into a resurrection-faith? Negatively, it is valuable in guarding against any docetic interpretation of the resurrection; positively, it asserts God's intention to save the whole man, to transform the world: the work of re-creation has begun in the transformation of the earthly Jesus. It does not seem necessary, on grounds of the incarnation (that Christ must share fully our fate) to reject the empty-tomb tradition. He underwent death; but in being raised by God to a new, transformed, eschatological existence, he was the subject of a unique and creative action of God. Jesus, although a man, was not in every respect like other men; he had no personal experience of sin, he was in some respect different from the rest of men. Perhaps the empty tomb points up this difference, as well as indicating a whole new vision of God and his plans for mankind. Some hold the view that there is theological value in the fact that the empty tomb is an indispensable sign which confirms the appearance — the primary grounds for faith.

Paul (1 Cor 15) is the main New Testament source in any consideration of bodily resurrection. He spoke from a background of pharisaic Judaism re-assessed in terms of his christian belief. He places the greatest emphasis on the idea of transformation (cf 1 Cor 15,35ff). He claims no special knowledge, but rather seems to be seeking means to express his thoughts and lights upon the analogy of the seed, to express the real yet undefinable continuity he considers to exist between bodily existence and the new eschatological existence. He clearly does not conceive the risen body in a purely physical manner, even though he does seem to point to a continuity in some way of the corporeal aspect of personal existence. Some scholars would contest this interpretation: Paul, they would say, is talking about continuity between the personal 'I' from one form of existence to another; he does not think of resurrection in physical terms. I do not think Paul is concerned with the 'how' of resurrection, because that cannot be answered. Our space-time language is inadequate to describe the eschatological; and doubtless a transformed body presents immense imaginative difficulties. There is a sense of extreme tension in Paul's balancing of the themes of transformation and continuity as he tries to use various ways to express his thought. He seems to be talking about a profound total change and not the re-animation of a corpse or reconstruction of scattered remains. The descriptive expression he employs is 'spiritual body', and what that means is hard to know. It could mean that in resurrection man is dominated by the Spirit; but it is

very unlikely that Paul considers that the 'spiritual body' means some kind of spiritual matter. In fact, Paul does not protect very adequately the idea of continuity; but given the paradoxical nature of the idea he is trying to express, perhaps this is not surprising. The language (1 Cor 15,35-44) swings between the idea of the 'same' and 'different' to express continuity in transformation; and perhaps this concept is better expressed in a narrative form, such as is found in the lucan and johannine narratives, where the seeing, touching, handling of the risen body is balanced by the other-worldly properties of coming through closed doors and appearing at will. Paul's view of the risen life apparently implies newness of life: a new, free, glorious life, in which a man will continue to be fully himself, and yet be different.

The central meaning of resurrection, according to a basic credal formula of the early palestinian Church used by Paul, is that Jesus is Lord (cf Rom 10,9). The resurrection has conferred on him a status, an authoritative function so that he is now forever Lord because the Father raised him from the dead. 'The resurrection was and remains, first of all, what God has done for Jesus . . . it was the sovereign action of God glorifying Jesus of Nazareth'.¹⁶ On the whole, the pauline writings attribute the resurrection to the power of the Father, pointing to the new and significant relationship thereby established between the risen Christ and the Father. This action of God confers on him the status of Lord; and so he is exalted to the right hand of God where he intercedes for men. In this new risen life, Jesus lives for God (cf 1 Cor 6,14; Rom 8,34; 6,10). The resurrection also makes him the source of salvation precisely as the one raised by the Father; which has its implications for men's salvation and future destiny. It seems to me that these implications are understood by Ignatius in the context of the Fourth Week of the Exercises: in that the exercitant acknowledges the paschal shape of his life because he has accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

To designate Jesus as Lord places the life of the historical Jesus in the perspective of eternity. He is now more than a prophet from Nazareth; he is the contemporary Lord. Jesus's earthly life can now be looked at with fresh insight; and the full implications of his words and deeds, as well as the meaning of his death, will be revealed. For the Christian, the earthly life of the Lord becomes the norm, the criterion of his own life.

In resurrection, Jesus's relationship to mankind is changed, because now he is the first born from the dead (1 Cor 15,20). Paul does not see resurrection as an isolated privilege for Jesus. Rather belief in resurrection points to a meaningful future for mankind, or at least to the resurrection of believers. Because the Father has raised

his son, new possibilities are opened up for those who come to believe.

Finally, the destiny of the world as a whole was definitively established in his resurrection. God has begun, in raising Jesus, to redeem and transform the world. The world, so closely tied to man, awaits its redemption too (cf Rom 8,19-22). The risen Christ is no longer restricted in his relationship to the world. He is freed from the personal and cultural limitations of his earthly existence, and is Lord of the Universe. So the God-centred world has become christo-centric, and Christ speaks from within life because he is at its centre.

In summary, I would express resurrection-faith as belief in the action of God the Father raising Jesus from the dead, so that he now lives the life of God. In Jesus has been realized the eschatological age of apocalyptic expectation. As Lord he is exalted to the right hand of God, intercedes for men and is the source of salvation for men and the world, the pledge of mankind's future resurrection. He is established at the heart of the universe. It is in the light of such a faith that the person contemplating the resurrection can with confidence seek the gift of new life in the risen Lord.

For the believer, the resurrection of Jesus is the beginning of a new history of mankind; and the christian vocation is to realize the love of Christ present in the heart of the cosmos. The risen Lord is to be found in all human experience and in the difficulties, trials, responsibilities and joys of life. Belief in the resurrection does not liberate the believer from involvement in all these; rather it helps him to act freely and responsibly. Resurrection brings salvation, in the sense that man is reconciled to God and can be reconciled to his fellowmen.

In this life, however, the Christian has always to live in hope of future, final resurrection (cf Rom 6,3ff). Now, the believer can be associated with Christ in his suffering and dying, especially through baptism, and so walk in newness of life whilst awaiting the completion of his salvation in future resurrection. Whilst still on pilgrimage to the future, the Christian's prayerful task can be to penetrate progressively the barrier between suffering and resurrection. Yet the future has begun, and it is through the saving realities of faith, forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit that the Christian experiences it.

Conclusion

In the light of the discussion of the New Testament witness to the resurrection and its reality and meaning, we can now see more clearly how some of these insights can be integrated into the fourth week contemplations, and can form part of the background out of

which the director gives the 'short or summary explanation' (Exx 2), as a brief development of the points Ignatius suggests for the contemplations.

Ignatius's ordering of the appearances in 'The Mysteries of the Life of our Lord' appears to be chronological, except that the appearance to Paul is put before the ascension (Exx 299-312). Gilles Cusson thinks that Ignatius did this because his primary concern is always to consider facts in their relationship to revealed mystery; hence he proposes the ascension for our contemplation as the sign of our return to the Father.¹⁷ Whether or not the ordering is deliberately chronological, Ignatius has in fact followed the general progression to be found in the gospel texts, from the brief vivid marcan proclamation of the resurrection with its underlining of the awe and astonishment of the women before the infinite possibilities the event opened up, and its assertion that this was the action of God, or through the more developed lucan narratives, and finally to the more personal johannine text.

As the director becomes increasingly familiar with the biblical texts, and the particular aspect of the kerygma underlined in each, then he will find increasing ease in allowing this familiarity to become integral to the manner in which the points are given to the exercitant. In a similar way, there needs to be an integration of the renewed theological understanding of the resurrection. This will help to make the basic credal formula, 'Jesus is Lord', come alive for the exercitant, bearing its full weight of meaning, as it did in the early Church. Further, a careful assimilation of these insights will assist in grasping more firmly the newness of the relationship which the resurrection establishes between the risen Christ and the Father, and the significance of this for the transformation of the world and the redeeming of human history.

The exercitant knows that his life is redeemed, changed; and through the prayer arising from these contemplations, there will be evoked what can be termed a resurrection-experience: that is, in some sense, an encounter with the risen Christ, developing the exercitant's faith in his living presence, and giving joy and consolation as accompaniments of this presence. It is possible for the modern exercitant to benefit, in his prayer on the resurrection texts, by the knowledge that he also can encounter the risen Lord, in a way not at all dissimilar to that in which the disciples encountered the Lord after his resurrection. Further, if it is true that a dynamic operates in the Exercises, whereby the rhythm of the exercitant is united to the rhythm of Christ, then the exercitant's instinct for Christ will develop along the lines of entering more into the glory of the risen Christ in so far as this is given to him by the Father.

Finally, how do these insights help the exercitant in contemplating the appearances of the risen Christ? First, it must be said that there will always be an essential difference between the experience of those first apostolic witnesses and that of any other Christian. Nonetheless, the exercitant can hope to discover, to come in contact with the unexpected, as the disciples did. They re-discovered Jesus and found he was alive; but it was not an easy discovery, nor was it given to everyone. Some saw him and worshipped, others doubted; yet others came to recognition by stages, for example, Mary Magdalene. The 'seeing' is recorded in the New Testament as a gift, a truth from God given to those who were open to it; and it seems to have been accompanied by an extraordinary joy and peace, both of which lingered on after the encounters with the Risen One. Today's exercitant can come into contact with the unexpected, to 'see', as a truth given from God, in so far as he remains open, 'disposes himself', to receive such a gift; one which will strengthen his faith and bring with it the correlative signs of peace and joy. In contemplating the apparitions, the exercitant will see 'how Magdalene is freed from her despair, Peter of his remorse and of his feeling of guilt; the disciples of Emmaus of their spiritual pessimism; Thomas of his doubts and hardness'.¹⁸ In other words, how Christ consoles, by strengthening our faith, freeing us from all hindrances and offering us freedom, life, joy and peace; calling us to accept the new life he offers. These contemplations help to move the exercitant back into daily life where, as was mentioned earlier, the comforting of Christ continues, as he gives us a share in his Spirit throughout our time of pilgrimage.

NOTES

¹ Gilles Cusson, S.J., *Pedagogie de l'experience spirituelle personnelle* (Bruges/Paris, 1976), p 361.

² Gilles Cusson, *op. cit.*, p 362.

³ William A. M. Peters, S.J., *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius: exposition and interpretation* (Jersey City, N.J., 1967), pp 148-49.

⁴ R. H. Fuller, *The formation of the resurrection narratives* (London, 1970), p 17.

⁵ Gerald O'Collins, S.J., *The Easter Jesus* (London, 1973), pp 8-9.

⁶ X. Léon-Dufour, S.J., *Resurrection and the message of Easter* (London, 1974), p 138.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p 138. ⁸ R. H. Fuller, *op. cit.*, p 136.

⁹ Cf Raymond Brown: *Gospel according to John* (New York, 1970), pp 1085ff.

¹⁰ Gerald O'Collins, *op. cit.*, p 73. ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p 69.

¹² Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* (London, 1976), pp 139-40.

¹³ G. W. H. Lampe and D. M. MacKinnon, *The Resurrection* (London, 1966), p 33.

¹⁴ Raymond E. Brown, *The Virginal Conception and the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus* (New York, 1973), p 125. ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p 128. ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p 128.

¹⁷ Gilles Cusson, *op. cit.*, pp 365-67.

¹⁸ Gilles Cusson, *Conduis-moi sur le chemin d'éternité*, p 167.