

## Hidden Realities

All the best stories contain a surprise. The moment when Dr Watson turns round to scan his bookshelves, long enough for the aged and decrepit bookseller who's wormed his way into the study to whip off the false moustache, straighten up, and say: *My dear Watson, I owe you a thousand apologies....* is one of my very favourite examples. It's so overwhelming that Watson faints. It is that total and electrifying surprise, the return of someone from the dead.

### Not Only The Resurrection

Conan Doyle must have had a sense of the Easter significance of this story (he was educated at Stonyhurst!) because for a Christian "back from the dead" can't be understood without the memory of the Gospel meetings with the risen Lord. But all stories have revelations, pennies dropping, *dénouements*; if they didn't, there would be little interest in them. The Gospel today speaks of the Kingdom of Heaven in similar terms. We live in a world that does not know Christ. Because of this, the world doesn't really know itself: because only in Christ was it created, and only in Christ has it anything to hope for. Every flowering, every fruition of the world depends for its meaning, its reliability, on the Resurrection, and that goes for every moment of life, every perception, enjoyment or happiness.

### Knowing The Love Of Christ

Jesus told his disciples that they were receivers of the truth, but *to those who are outside* everything comes in parables. We who read the Gospel are therefore in a special way the soul of the creation, the heart of the understanding world. Those who do not know the Gospel are *outside*, and their self-understanding will always fall short. Even John the Baptist, who had been *the greatest born of woman*, falls short: Jesus says: *The least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he is*. So we have a special calling, to bear witness to Christ in the sight of the world, so that the world can come to understand, to believe. We're vital heralds of the unseen, we unveil hidden truth to people who are in the dark. This doesn't mean that we are beings with a proud sense of superiority over our fellows. Everything

about God's truth gives us reason to be humble precisely because he has made it known to us: the truth is that we are poor creatures, dependent for our very existence on the almighty will of God. That doesn't suggest any reason for pride.

### But No Occult Religion!

We say that the Kingdom is hidden, not because it is secretive, but because people are blind to it. Lots of people enjoy the thrill of the occult, frightening themselves to death with hauntings and black arts. Our faith has nothing like that in it. Say rather that the world presents people with an alternative view of itself - as a system for selfishness, a human-centred reality that needn't seek for anything outside itself. Whether people really believe that, or just accept the desperate motto, *Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die*, makes little difference. It still makes God's reign a reality which needs *revealing* to people. Now, this needs stating; religious people sometimes treat it as *unsurprising*, natural, ordinary. That's when it ceases to have the excitement and sparkle which makes it *good news* for people. It becomes boring, dreary, old, second-hand, shop-soiled. It wouldn't just be a matter of *preferring father or mother* to it; you'd prefer the dog or the cat to it.

### The Duty To Proclaim

*Declare this, with a shout of joy: proclaim it! Tell it out to the ends of the earth, and say: The Lord has set his people free!* We've got to find the voice which can do this, the register which will carry the Gospel to the real world. If Sherlock Holmes had the power to make Dr Watson faint, we must be able to waken the world with the Resurrection of Christ. The truth we proclaim is massive and transfiguring. We shan't be able to carry it unless we ourselves are transfigured by it. I don't believe this is accomplished from a soap-box. It's done by the sincerer form of a reborn life, a deed that breaks out of the rut, by attitudes built on promise and trust, by our investing of our true lives in the Kingdom that is unseen. This is a brave thing to do. But the Lord's promise is, that if we do it, we will not lose our reward. But the question is: Do we believe him?  
*Fr Philip*