

THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

He Rose On The Third Day

Do you believe in the Resurrection? The great issue; but many treat it as a simply historical question, like the question of who won the Battle of Waterloo. This is quite improper and useless; it is much more personal, much more vital, and of a different order from history.

From the Tomb

It is vital, of course, that we affirm the historical truth of the Cross and the burial of Jesus. These are events, locked into the great hard disk of facts - the sort that can be looked up in lists and records. But mere facts don't make *history*. Walking round a graveyard may give you facts; what it will not give you is faces. Bodies of the people whose names stand fixed in marble lie beneath our feet, but their reality is veiled from our sight. Visiting the cemetery isn't the same as the Easter comings to the Sepulchre which form the Gospel proclamation today. Jesus rose *from the tomb*; the "closed" life-story which ended there is like that of the people in the cemetery. The Resurrection isn't something added, a tailpiece to that. It is a transfiguring in a different order, not to be tested against the same tables as time and tide and the size of the Red Army. Such is its power that the tomb is indeed empty; the Resurrection does impinge powerfully on present history; but it isn't a fact that can be contained in time. That doesn't *weaken* it - unless we have decided that our earthly history is all that will ever matter. Rather it demolishes the walls which limit our meaning and lets us out into a new and horizonless realm where the domination of evil is relegated, where our previous glimpses of, and guesses about, goodness are confirmed and revealed as the new ultimates, the final truth: it is from this perspective beyond time that the love of God is revealed as the final fact, or, as we sometimes say, the last word. The grave is no longer the bottom line for humanity - and therefore it is no longer the bottom line for you, for me, and for the way we must now begin to live.

In the beginning

Many people have a sense of love and goodness that lies in their *past*; once upon a time there was childhood, innocence, simplicity; love, friendship, health; perhaps wealth, certainly happiness were once ours, and it's nice to have our memories. *Resurrection explodes that view of life*. In the beginning was the Word: and the Word in the beginning is the Word who is the end -

Alpha and Omega, as the Vigil says over the Paschal Candle which represents Christ our light, *the same yesterday and today and for ever*. Resurrection today and for ever - healing, confirmation, faithfulness and enduring love, a power beyond the worst of our weakness: Easter floods the historical stage with eternal realities which have power to change everything. It is in the name of this transfiguration that Jesus, founding the new covenant, raised his head from the Cross and said, "*It is accomplished!*"

Awake, Sleeper! Rise From The Dead!

Your life at this time may be gloriously fulfilled and happy (amen) or it may be tough and threatening. Easter is clearly for either reality and - more importantly - it has the power joyously to embrace both of them. *What good would life have been to us, had Christ not come as our Redeemer?* We can rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep because our imprisonment in our lives has been ended. Imprisonment is consignment to a tomb; we have all allowed it to happen to us, allowed sentence to be passed on us by the Prince of this world. Now that sentence has been passed on him, our exit from the tomb is the only appropriate thing for us to do. We are no more children of the darkness, but of the light; let us live in the light, and do the deeds which are worthy of freed people.
Fr Philip