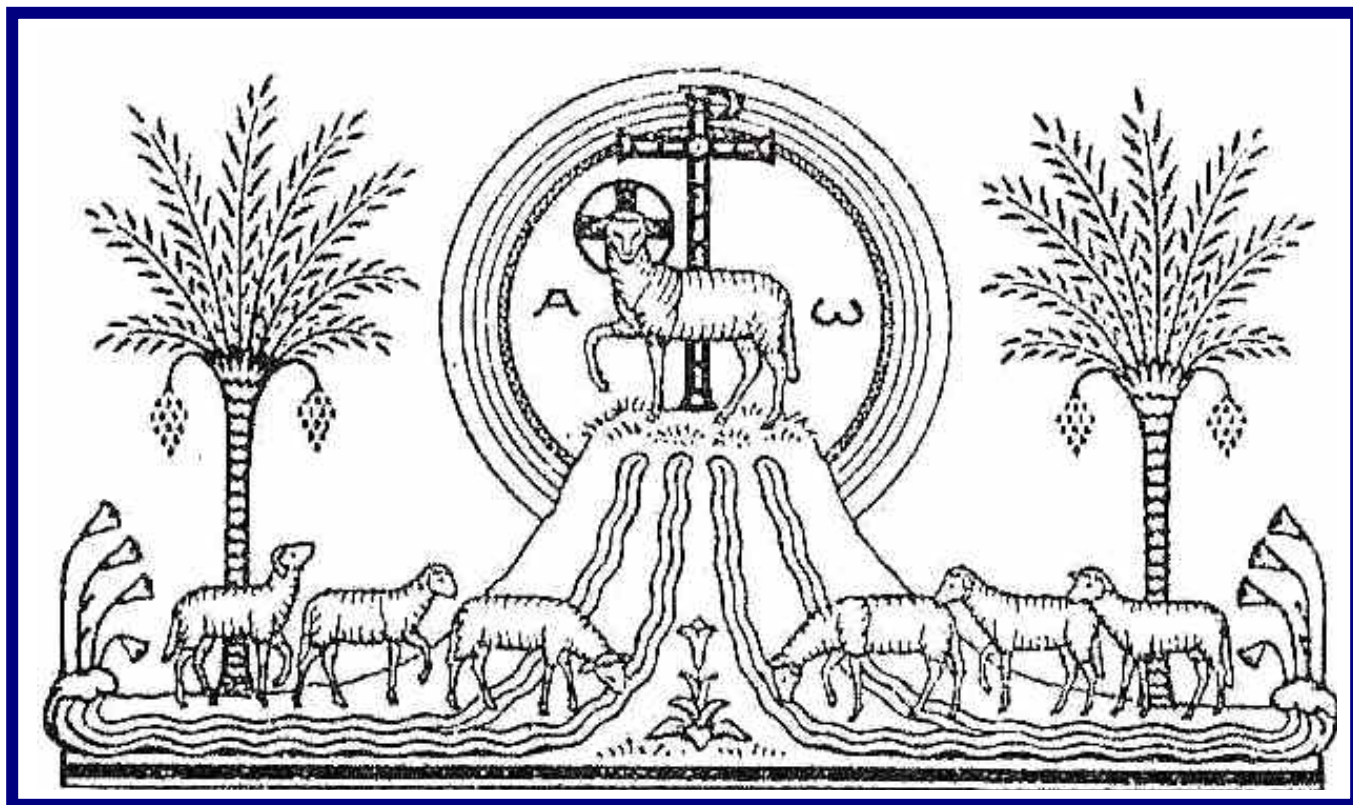


THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC



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THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC

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All sincere and legible contributions are welcome. These may be submitted to your local Correspondent or directly to the Editor by way of email (Microsoft Word, Open Office or similar program preferred) or standard postal delivery (preferably typed double-spaced on one side of the sheet only if sending by mail). Publication will be subject to suitability and availability of space as determined by the Editor. All editorial correspondence should be sent to the Editor. The deadline for the Michaelmas edition is **August 1, 2008**

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Editorial

The Rev. Ian Carman, Editor

WHEN the Presiding Bishop and I began work on *The Liberal Catholic Magazine*, it was agreed that, since this publication originally was intended for target audiences in academia and seminaries, that it was time to steer upon that heading once more. No longer will *The Liberal Catholic* remain an exclusive, ‘members only’ publication, especially when the individual Provinces and Synods of The Liberal Catholic Church already have publications for the ‘internal’ audience. The times and seasons for the Church are again changing; but just as the seasons follow a rhythmic cycle, so do the times and seasons of Christian thought and discussion run a similar course.

After the holy days of Easter and Ascension have passed, we shall again find ourselves in Trinity Season. We call it Trinity Season and not Ordinary Time for a couple of reasons. First, since we follow the traditional Western calendar, we have kept the traditional names of feasts and seasons as they had been for ages prior to the revisions of the mid to late twentieth century. Second, the very name, ‘Ordinary Time’ is a misnomer, as the faithful are given the wrong impression that it is ordinary in the modern sense of being commonplace (it is so called because it comes from the temporal cycle known as the *Ordinarium*, or Calendar of feasts and seasons outside of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent and Easter).

Each Collect, each Intent, each Epistle, each Gospel, contains within itself entire lifetimes of knowledge and wisdom to learn from.

Take, if you will, any single Sunday or Feast Day from the liturgical calendar, and you will find that there is nothing ‘ordinary’ about it. Each Collect, each Intent, each Epistle, each Gospel, contains within itself entire lifetimes of knowledge and wisdom to learn from. Indeed, through the eyes of Inspiration and with Divine guidance, it is likely to read the same Collects, Epistles and Gospels year in and year out and always discover deeper wisdom and hidden truths with each reading.

There are no coincidences, in this world or the next. Everything from the wording and phrasing of the Collects, the selection of Scriptures for the Liturgy, the schedule of Epistles and Gospels, down to the use of incense, liturgical colours and even the hymns used in The Liberal Catholic Church, are not chance occurrences, nor are they selected out of personal preference or to satisfy some aesthetic sensibilities. Each reading, each aroma or colour, each melody, and each Intent have been selected after very careful and deliberate study, to produce the maximum benefit from our use of the ‘Divine Economy.’ Likewise, *The Liberal Catholic* is not intended solely to entertain and inform (although it certainly may do so!), nor is it intended to incite controversy or be a vehicle for division or dissension. Like much of what The Liberal Catholic Church offers, this publication is intended to stimulate our awareness and understanding, in order to further us all upon the Path to enlightenment and to the Beatific Vision, which is ‘the glory of our spiritual heritage.’

In a way, *The Liberal Catholic* is experiencing a resurrection of sorts. In a resurrection, the past is not cast aside, but made whole, complete, and glorified in a new edition. While it may be premature to make so grand a boast for this publication, it is nonetheless reasonable to make the allegorical reference of rebirth and renewal of life, with the best of the past and the promise of the future. Now is the time to welcome back to our fold not only Liberal Catholics who have remained faithful to the mission and ministry of The Liberal Catholic Church, but also those who have made a serious study into the authentic field of study which is esoteric Christianity, and which made The Liberal Catholic Church

possible.

In this issue, we have opened the doors not only to The Liberal Catholic Church but to many of those whose works and studies deepen our awareness of 'Liberal Catholicism' as a whole. We have here a reprint of 'Easter: Myth, Hallucination, or History?' by Dr. Edwin Yamauchi, professor of history at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, U.S.A. concerning the Easter and Resurrection Mysteries from an historical perspective. Also, in 'The Resurrected Christ of Faith,' Rev. Ian Ellis-Jones of the Sydney Unitarian Church, shares an Easter sermon with us, and the Sisters of the Benedictine Convent of Perpetual Adoration were kind enough to allow us to reprint from their masterpiece, *The Treasures of The Mass*, a portion of which also appears in this Edition. Finally, Richard Smoley, editor of Quest Books and author of *Inner Christianity*, discusses the esoteric tradition of Christianity in 'Christianity's Real Secret.' Incidentally, Dr. Smoley is also pleased to announce that he will be playing a large part in a conference titled, *The Mystical Heart of Christianity: Moving Beyond Literalism* in Holyoke, Massachusetts from 31 October through 2 November of this year.¹

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It is our hope that you, the readers of this periodical, whether members of The Liberal Catholic Church or esoteric Christians in general, will find enough stimulation to challenge your thinking and incite you to explore more facets of this beautiful yet rewarding tradition, which is the true inner light of Christianity, that you may find 'Christ within *you*, the hope of glory.'²

Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam,
Reverend Deacon Ian Carman

Passion Sunday
March 2008



¹ For full details, please visit <http://www.theosophical.org/events/conferences/national08/index.html>

² Col 1:27

Message from the Presiding Bishop

The Most Reverend Graham S. Wale
Presiding Bishop of The Liberal Catholic Church

Once more we share together, across land, seas and continents the *sine qua non* of our Faith. Together we share in the Festal splendour of the Maundy Thursday Mass. Together we kneel to Venerate the Cross in the symbolic emptiness of creation – that profoundest of moments when the Light is no longer there and the whole of creation is in stasis. Together we stand in awe as the Light is once more with us, wrapped in its own manifest Trinity. Together we share in the beauty of the moment when the Paschal candle is lit and we hear those words: “... *Let the whole earth also rejoice, illuminated with such resplendent rays and let it feel that the darkness of the world is dispelled.*” Together we meet on Easter morn and greet one another with the words: “*Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!*”

Together we share in the beauty of the moment when the Paschal candle is lit and we hear those words: “... Let the whole earth also rejoice, illuminated with such resplendent rays and let it feel that the darkness of the world is dispelled.”

Let us not discuss, or even dispute, the various meanings and interpretations of this time that can occupy so much of our thoughts and speech. Let us simply focus on the joy of the moment. Let us all share in the uplifting feelings from our innermost selves – let us all acknowledge this moment when the true reality of those ancient words vibrate within our essence: “...*and thus didst offer Thyself as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, dying in very truth that we might live!*”

Let us all reinvigorate each other with our own sense of vocation, our own sense of service – however that may manifest. Let us recognise that the

quality of any gift is not dependent upon the giver, but what the recipient actually does with the gift. Each of us is a recipient of His gifts – I pray that we may all find the wisdom to use His gifts in His service for the fulfilment of all of His creation.

We must not forget that this Church is also His gift. Therefore let us all acknowledge with thanks this wonderful gift, so freely given, and by that acknowledgment let us all re-establish and reawaken our own sense of commitment and dedication to our work together in His service.

Finally, I wish you, your families and loved ones, a most joyous and blessed Easter.

Christ is risen!

✠ Graham



Easter: Myth, Hallucination, or History?

*Edwin M. Yamauchi*¹

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That the Easter faith in the Resurrection of Christ is the core of Christianity can hardly be denied. Whether that conviction is rooted in myth, in hallucination, or in history has often been debated. Some have maintained that the Resurrection of Christ is a myth patterned after the prototypes of dying and rising fertility gods. Others argue that subjective visions of the risen Christ were sufficient to convince the disciples that their leader was not dead. Even those who do not doubt the historicity of Christ's life and death differ as to how the Resurrection may be viewed historically. Let us examine the evidences for these alternatives.

EASTER AS MYTH

A. Dying and Rising Fertility Gods

John H. Randall, emeritus professor of philosophy at Columbia University, has asserted: "Christianity, at the hands of Paul, became a mystical system of redemption, much like the cult of Isis, and the other sacramental or mystery religions of the day" (*Hellenistic Ways of Deliverance and the Making of the Christian Synthesis*, 1970, p. 154). Hugh Schonfield in *Those Incredible Christians* (1968, p. xii) has declared: "The revelations of Frazer in *The Golden Bough* had not got through to the masses.... Christians remained related under the skin to the devotees of Adonis and Osiris, Dionysus and Mithras."

Christ was "a saviour-god, after the manner of an Osiris, an Attis, a Mithra.... Like Adonis, Osiris, and Attis he had died a violent death, and like them he had returned to life...."

The theory that there was a widespread worship of a dying and rising fertility god - Tammuz in Mesopotamia, Adonis in Syria, Attis in Asia Minor, and Osiris in Egypt - was propounded by Sir James Frazer, who gathered a mass of parallels in part IV of his monumental work *The Golden Bough* (1906, reprinted in 1961). This view has been adopted by many who little realize its fragile foundations. The explanation of the Christian Resurrection by such a comparative-religions approach has even been reflected in official Soviet propaganda (cf. Paul de Sury, editor, *The Resurrection and Modern Biblical Thought*, 1966, pp. 1, 131).

In the 1930s three influential French scholars, M. Goguel, C. Guignebert, and A. Loisy, interpreted Christianity as a syncretistic religion formed under the influence of Hellenistic mystery religions. According to A. Loisy ("The Christian Mystery," *Hibbert Journal*, X [1911-12], 51), Christ was "a saviour-god, after the manner of an Osiris, an Attis, a Mithra.... Like Adonis, Osiris, and Attis he had died a violent death, and like them he had returned to life...."

¹ Edwin Yamauchi is a professor of history at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio.

B. Re-examination of the Evidences

A re-examination of the sources used to support the theory of a mythical origin of Christ's resurrection reveals that the evidences are far from satisfactory and that the parallels are too superficial. In the case of the Mesopotamian Tammuz (Sumerian Dumuzi), his alleged resurrection by the goddess Inanna-Ishtar had been assumed even though the end of both the Sumerian and the Akkadian texts of the myth of "The Descent of Inanna (Ishtar)" had not been preserved. Professor S. N. Kramer in 1960 published a new poem, "The Death of Dumuzi," that proves conclusively that instead of rescuing Dumuzi from the Underworld, Inanna sent him there as her substitute (cf. my article, "Tammuz and the Bible," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXXIV [1965], 283-90). A line in a fragmentary and obscure text is the only positive evidence that after being sent to the Underworld Dumuzi may have had his sister take his place for half the year (cf. S. N. Kramer, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 183 [1966], 31).

What is meant of Osiris being "raised to life"? Simply that, thanks to the ministrations of Isis, he is able to lead a life beyond the tomb which is an almost perfect replica of earthly existence. But he will never again come among the living and will reign only over the dead....

Tammuz was identified by later writers with the Phoenician Adonis, the beautiful youth beloved of Aphrodite. According to Jerome, Hadrian desecrated the cave in Bethlehem associated with Jesus' birth by consecrating it with a shrine of Tammuz-Adonis. Although his cult spread from Byblos to the Greco-Roman world, the worship of Adonis was never important and was restricted to women. P. Lambrechts has shown that there is no trace of a resurrection in the early texts or pictorial representations of Adonis; the four texts that speak of his resurrection are quite late, dating from the second to the fourth centuries A.D. ("La 'resurrection' d'Adonis," in *Melanges Isidore Levy*, 1955, pp. 207-40). Lambrechts has also shown that Attis, the consort of Cybele, does not appear as a

"resurrected" god until after A.D. 150. ("Les Fetes 'phrygiennes' de Cybele et d' Attis," *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, XXVII [1952], 141-70).

This leaves us with the figure of Osiris as the only god for whom there is clear and early evidence of a "resurrection." Our most complete version of the myth of his death and dismemberment by Seth and his twofold resuscitation by Isis is to be found in Plutarch, who wrote in the second century A.D. (cf. J. Gwyn Griffiths, *Plutarch De Iside et Osiride*, 1970). His account seems to accord with statements made in the early Egyptian texts. After the New Kingdom (from 1570 B.C. on) even ordinary men aspired to identification with Osiris as one who had triumphed over death.

But it is a cardinal misconception to equate the Egyptian view of the afterlife with the "resurrection" of Hebrew-Christian traditions. In order to achieve immortality the Egyptian had to fulfill three conditions: (1) His body had to be preserved, hence mummification. (2) Nourishment had to be provided either by the actual offering of daily bread and beer, or by magical depiction of food on the walls of the tomb. (3) Magical spells had to be interred with the dead-Pyramid Texts in the Old Kingdom, Coffin Texts in the Middle Kingdom, and the Book of the Dead in the New Kingdom. Moreover, the Egyptian did not rise from the dead; separate entities of his personality such as his Ba and his Ka continued to hover about his body.

Nor is Osiris, who is always portrayed in a mummified form, an inspiration for the resurrected Christ. As Roland de Vaux has observed:

What is meant of Osiris being "raised to life"? Simply that, thanks to the ministrations of Isis, he is able to lead a life beyond the tomb which is an almost perfect replica of earthly existence. But he will never again come among the living and will reign only over the dead.... This revived god is in reality a "mummy" god [*The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 1971, p. 236].

C. Inexact Parallels from Late Sources

What should be evident is that past studies of phenomenological comparisons have inexcusably disregarded the dates and the provenience of their sources when they have attempted to provide prototypes for Christianity. Let me give two examples, Mithra and the *taurobolium*.

Mithra was the Persian god whose worship became popular among Roman soldiers (his cult was restricted to men) and was to prove a rival to Christianity in the late Roman Empire. Early Zoroastrian texts, such as the Mithra Yasht, cannot serve as the basis of a mystery of Mithra inasmuch as they present a god who watches over cattle and the sanctity of contracts. Later Mithraic evidence in the west is primarily iconographic; there are no long coherent texts.

Those who seek to adduce Mithra as a prototype of the risen Christ ignore the late date for the expansion of Mithraism to the west (cf. M. J. Vermaseren, *Mithras, The Secret God*, 1963, p. 76). The only dated Mithraic inscriptions from the pre-Christian period are the texts of Antiochus I of Commagene (69-34 B.C.) in eastern Asia Minor. After that there is one text possibly from the first century A.D., from Cappadocia, one from Phrygia dated to A.D. 77-78, and one from Rome dated to Trajan's reign (A.D. 98-117). All other dated Mithraic inscriptions and monuments belong to the second century (after A.D. 140), the third, and the fourth century A.D. (M. J. Vermaseren, *Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae*, 1956).

There is inscriptional evidence from the fourth century A.D. that, far from influencing Christianity, those who used the taurobolium were influenced by Christianity.

The *taurobolium* was a bloody rite associated with the worship of Mithra and of Attis in which a bull was slaughtered on 'a grating over an initiate in a pit below, drenching him with blood. This has been suggested (e.g., by R. Reitzenstein) as the basis of the Christian's redemption by blood and Paul's imagery in Romans 6 of the believer's death and resurrection. Gunter Wagner in his exhaustive study *Pauline Baptism and the Pagan Mysteries* (1963) points out how anachronistic such comparisons are:

The *taurobolium* in the Attis cult is first attested in the time of Antoninus Pius for A.D. 160. As far as we can see at present it only became a personal consecration at the beginning of the third century A.D. The idea of a rebirth through the instrumentality of the *taurobolium* only emerges in isolated instances towards the end of the fourth century A.D.; it is not originally associated with this blood-bath [p. 266].

Indeed, there is inscriptional evidence from the fourth century A.D. that, far from influencing Christianity, those who used the *taurobolium* were influenced by Christianity. Bruce Metzger in his important essay "Methodology in the Study of the Mystery Religions and Early Christianity" *Historical and Literary Studies: Pagan, Jewish and Christian* (1968), notes:

Thus, for example, one must doubtless interpret the change in the efficacy attributed to the rite of the taurobolium. In competing with Christianity, which promised eternal life to its adherents, the cult of Cybele officially or unofficially raised the efficacy of the blood bath from twenty years to eternity [p. 11].

Another aspect of comparisons between the resurrection of Christ and the mythological mysteries is that the alleged parallels are quite inexact. It is an error, for example, to believe that the initiation into the mysteries of Isis, as described in Apuleius's *The Golden Ass*, IS comparable to

The death and resurrection of these various mythological figures, however attested, always typified the annual death and rebirth of vegetation. This significance cannot be attributed to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Christianity. For one thing, the hero, Lucius, had to pay a fortune to undergo *his* initiation. And as Wagner correctly observes: "Isis does not promise the *mystes* immortality, but only that henceforth he shall live under her protection, and that when at length he goes down to the realm of the dead he shall adore her . . ." (op. cit., p. 112).

On the other hand, the followers of Dionysus (Bacchus), the god of wine, did believe in immortality. But they did not hope for a resurrection of the body; nor did they base their faith on the reborn Dionysus of the Orphics, but rather on their experience of drunken ecstasy (cf. M. Nilsson, *The Dionysiac Mysteries of the Hellenistic and Roman Age*, 1957). In any case, the

death and resurrection of these various mythological figures, however attested, always typified the annual death and rebirth of vegetation. This significance cannot be attributed to the death and resurrection of Jesus. A. D. Nock sets forth the most striking contrast between pagan and Christian notions of "resurrection" as follows:

In Christianity everything is made to turn on a dated experience of a historical Person; it can be seen from I Cor. XV. 3, that the statement of the story early assumed the form of a statement in a Creed. There is nothing in the parallel cases which points to any attempt to give such a basis of historical evidence to belief (Early Gentile Christianity and Its Hellenistic Background, 1964, p. 107).

EASTER AS HALLUCINATION

The Latin word that is the root of "hallucination" meant "to wander in thought" or "to utter nonsense." The modern concept defines "hallucinations" as "subjective experiences that are consequences of mental processes, sometimes fulfilling a purpose in the individual's mental life" (W. Keup, editors *Origin and Mechanisms of Hallucinations*, 1970, p. v).

David Strauss in his famous *Life of Jesus* (1835) suggested that the recollection of Jesus' teachings in the clear air of Galilee produced among some of the more emotional disciples hallucinations of Jesus appearing to them. In a more positive vein, Theodor Keim in his work on *Jesus* (1867-72) proposed that the basis of the Easter faith resulted from God-given "telegrams from heaven."

Hallucinations do play a major role in religious cultures, but they are induced either by drugs or by the extreme deprivation of food, drink, and sleep (cf. E. Bourguignon, "Hallucination and Trance: An Anthropologist's Perspective," in Keup, p. 188). These factors were not present in the various appearances of the risen Christ to his disciples. The details of the varied epiphanies of Christ, which in

several cases were to more than one individual and on one occasion to more than 500, are not typical of hallucinations. A visual hallucination is a private event; it is by definition the perception of objects or patterns of light that are not objectively present (*ibid.*, p.] 81). The variety of conditions under which Christ appeared also militates against hallucination. The appearances to Mary Magdalene, to Cleopas, to the disciples on the shore of Galilee, to Paul on the road to Damascus, all differ in their circumstances. C. S. Lewis suggests:

And any theory of hallucination breaks down on the fact (and if it is invention it is the oddest invention that ever entered the mind of man) that on three separate occasions this hallucination was not immediately recognized as Jesus (Luke xxiv. 13- 31; John xx. 15, xxi. 4) [Miracles, 1947, p. 1531.

Hugh Schonfield in *The Passover Plot* (1966) concedes: "We are not dealing in the Gospels with hallucinations, with psychic phenomena or survival in the Spiritualist sense" (p. 159). He further remarks: "What emerges from the records is that various disciples did see somebody, a real living person. Their experiences were not subjective." (p. 173).

Finally, what rules out the theory of hallucinations is the fact that the disciples were thoroughly dejected at the death of Christ and were not, despite Christ's predictions, expecting a resurrection of their leader. H. E. W. Turner remarks:

"We are not dealing in the Gospels with hallucinations, with psychic phenomena or survival in the Spiritualist sense.... What emerges from the records is that various disciples did see somebody, a real living person. Their experiences were not subjective."

The disciples to whom they [the women] finally report do not believe for joy. There is here no avid clutching at any straw. Something quite unexpected had happened, rather than something longed for having failed to occur [*Jesus, Master and Lord*, 1960, p. 368].

EASTER AS HISTORY

A. An Existential Concept?

It has become common in circles that find the supernatural aspects of the Resurrection incredible to place an existential interpretation on the Easter event. According to Bultmann's thinking, "Jesus ist auferstanden ins Kerygma" - Jesus arose in the faith and the preaching of the disciples. For Emil Brunner the Resurrection is not an event that "can be fitted into the succession of historical events"; it is a fact only if it has taken place "for us." Karl Barth is more positive though still ambiguous in affirming that the Resurrection is a real event though inaccessible to historical investigation. Barth denies any connection between the appearances of Christ listed in First Corinthians 15 and the Resurrection, for if these should be brought within the context of history, the Resurrection "must share in its obscurity and error and essential questionableness."

In a conference held at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Professor Samuel Sandmel of Hebrew Union College made the following suggestion to Christians:

I think, if I understand right, the issue about the resurrection which has preoccupied us this afternoon stems from the fact that what was once readily credible is in our environment not credible.... If I were a Christian, I think I would not be dismayed by the idea of resurrection. I think I would find simple prose that would say: Here is a message that has to do with man's potential perfection.... I would not let this array of values suffer because one element - in view of the present environment - has to be interpreted allegorically or be divested of its pristine meaning and given a different meaning. The world too badly needs Christianity at its best [D. G. Miller and D. Y. Hadidian, editors, *Jesus and Man's Hope*, 1971, p. 324].

B. A Historical Question?

It is certainly not to be denied that there must be a personal decision for the Resurrection to be

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meaningful to us as individuals, and that the Resurrection of Christ transcends ordinary history in its significance. But what is at issue is whether the Resurrection of Christ is rooted in history as an objective event or is simply a creation of the subjective faith of the disciples.

Some demur that to make the Resurrection a question of historical research would be to assume that God's ways are open to our observation. But is not this indeed a distinctive

feature of God's revelation as recorded in both the Old and the New Testament? Others object that since historical judgments can never achieve absolute certainty, they should not be the basis of our faith.

To this fallacious argument Peter Carnley replies:

The important thing is that it is not legitimate to argue that faith cannot be based on any historical judgments or must be totally independent of historical research and autonomous, because no historical judgment is ever justifiably claimed with certainty [S. W. Sykes and J. P. Clayton, editors, *Christ, Faith and History*, 1972, p. 189].

That is, historians deal not in certainties but in probabilities, but this does not render historical investigation without value for the question of the Resurrection. In his presidential address to the American Historical Association, Kenneth Scott Latourette concluded with these words:

The historian, be he Christian or non-Christian, may not know whether God will fully triumph within history. He cannot conclusively demonstrate the validity of the Christian understanding of history. Yet he can establish a strong probability for the dependability of its insights ["The Christian Understanding of History," *The American Historical Review* LIV (1949), 276].

As J. C. O'Neill has argued:

It will immediately be clear that in asserting that the resurrection is an historical question I have not been asserting that an historian as historian can establish that Jesus rose from the dead. The historian in this case can only show whether or not the evidence makes it at all plausible to assert that Jesus rose from the dead [Sykes and Clayton, *op. cit.*, p. 217].

C. Ancient Concepts of the Afterlife

If the Resurrection of Christ can be investigated as a historical question, one may inquire about the ancient concepts of the afterlife at the time of Jesus and ask whether the Resurrection of Christ was a doctrine that arose from contemporary beliefs.

The ancient Mesopotamians had a pessimistic view of the afterlife, which they conceived as a gloomy, shadowy existence. Gilgamesh sought in vain the secret of immortality. When Ishtar tells the gatekeeper of the Underworld "I will raise up the dead," she utters this as a threat "so that the dead will outnumber the living" - a calamity and not a hope! (cf. S. N. Kramer, "Death and Nether World according to the Sumerian Literary Texts", *Iraq*, XXII [1960]. 59-68; H. W. F. Saggs, "Some Ancient Semitic Conceptions of the Afterlife," *Faith and Thought*, XC [1958], 157-82).

The Egyptians, as noted in our discussion of Osiris above, did have a more optimistic view of their afterlife. But to call the survival of the Ba and Ka, hovering over the mummified body, a "resurrection" is to obscure the essential differences in concepts.

The ancient Greek attitude was an essentially tragic outlook. Epitaphs reflect an almost universal pessimism about life beyond the grave. Achilles in Hades says he would rather be a landless peasant on earth than king of the Underworld. After Homer's time, a hope for a blissful existence in the Elysian Fields was held out, but only for heroes (cf. Lewis R. Farnell, *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality*, 1921).

In the classical period the immortality of the soul was stressed in opposition to the body, which was described by the Orphics as *soma sema*, "the body a tomb." Plato in *The Phaedo* taught that the body is the chief hindrance to wisdom and truth. In the Hellenistic age the Greek philosophers varied in their views on immortality but agreed on the undesirability of reviving the body. The Stoics, who were pantheists, believed that souls left the body to ascend to the celestial regions of the moon before being absorbed in the All. A Stoic epitaph reads: "The ashes have my body; the sacred air has borne away my soul" (cf. Franz Cumont. *After Life in Roman Paganism*, 1922, reprinted 1959, p. 15). Seneca, the Stoic tutor of Nero and Paul's contemporary, spoke of "the detestable habitation of the body, and vain flesh in which the soul is imprisoned."

That the concept of bodily resurrection was just as difficult to accept at the dawn of Christianity as it is for some today - for different reasons, to be sure - is shown by the reaction of pagan critics and of the Gnostics.

Epicurus, whose philosophy was based upon the atomistic cosmology of Democritus, taught that at death the atoms of the body simply disintegrated. There was no immortality but instead freedom from the terrors of the Beyond. The Epicurean indifference to the afterlife is reflected in such epitaphs as: *Non fui, fui, non sum, non curo*, "I was not, I was, I am not, I do not care," and *Es, bibe, lude, veni*, "Eat, drink, play, come hither" (cf. I Cor. 15:32). It is therefore not surprising that the Stoics and the Epicureans at the Areopagus in Athens disdainfully dismissed Paul when he began to preach to them the Resurrection (Acts 17:31, 32). According to Robert Grant ("The Resurrection of the Body," *Journal of Religion*, XXVIII [1948], 189): "In educated circles only the soul of man is valued. For those who took this standpoint as axiomatic, fulfillment of the Christian hope was impossible and in any event undesirable."

That the concept of bodily resurrection was just as difficult to accept at the dawn of Christianity as it is for some today - for different reasons, to be sure - is shown by the reaction of pagan critics and of the Gnostics. The raising of a corpse was ridiculed as a shameful act by Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian. Gnostic teachers such as Valentinus taught a Docetic view that the "resurrection" involved only the non-

corporeal elements of personality (cf. Malcolm Peel, *The Epistle to Rheginos: A Valentinian Letter on the Resurrection*, 1969).

If the early apostles of the Gospel had altered their teaching of the resurrection to make their message more palatable to their contemporaries, as we are sometimes advised to do, there would have been no historic continuity of Christianity but only shifting patterns battered to and fro by every passing intellectual fashion.

D. Jewish Concepts of the Resurrection

As is well known, faith in the resurrection of the dead rose but intermittently and gradually in the Hebrew consciousness, culminating in the declaration of Daniel 12:2 (cf. R. Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life*, 1960; G. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*, 1972). On the basis of Ugaritic lexicography M. Dahood claims that there are more references to the resurrection in the Psalms than we had realized (cf. Elmer B. Smick, "Ugaritic and the Theology of the Psalms," J. B. Payne, editor, *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, 1970, pp. 104-16).

Faith in the resurrection of the dead rose but intermittently and gradually in the Hebrew consciousness, culminating in the declaration of Daniel 12:2

Faith in the resurrection, generally for the righteous alone, is clearly expressed in some of the Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphical books such as Second Maccabees, Second Baruch, and Fourth Ezra, but is not mentioned in Jubilees or the Book of Enoch. Philo in his *Legum Allegoria* (JII, 69)

holds that the body "is wicked and a plotter against the soul, and is even a corpse and a dead thing."

According to the Pharisaic *Mishnah*, *Sanhedrin* X, 1:

All Israelites have a share in the world to come.... And these are they that have no share in the world to come: he that says there is no resurrection of the dead prescribed in the Law, and [he that says] that the Law is not from Heaven, and an Epicurean.

The Sadducees, on the other hand, rejected the resurrection—a division of views that Paul exploited in his trial before the Sanhedrin (Acts 23:6). Despite the rash claims of a few writers that the leader of the Qumran community was believed to have risen from the dead (cf. my article, "The Teacher of Righteousness From Qumran and Jesus of Nazareth," *Christianity Today*, X [May 13, 1966], 12-14), it is not at all certain whether the Dead Sea Scrolls affirm, a faith in the resurrection. John Pryke comments: "The bliss of the elect as described in the Manual is much nearer to the 'immortality of the soul' than to the 'resurrection of the flesh' " ("Eschatology in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in W. F. Albright et al., *The Scrolls and Christianity*, 1969, p. 57). Matthew Black also notes: "It is surprising that no unambiguously clear evidence has so far been produced for any belief by the Qumran sect in the resurrection or in resurrection" ("The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins," *ibid.*, p.106).

Though there were scattered indications in the Old Testament of a germinating faith in the resurrection and though important segments of Judaism did maintain this conviction, neither in the Old Testament nor in contemporary Jewish tradition was there a belief in the resurrection of the Messiah (cf. P. Grelot, "The Resurrection of Jesus," in P. de Surgy, *op. cit.*, pp. 24, 136). As Merrill Tenney concludes:

The idea was not so essential a part of Jewish theology that it would be read into the phenomena of the life of Jesus or arbitrarily superimposed upon His teachings. His predictions of rising from the

dead and His interpretation of the Old Testament were original with Him; they were not the echoes of current theology that He had absorbed and repeated unthinkingly [*The Reality of the Resurrection*, 1963, reprinted 1972, p. 28].

E. The Pauline Evidence

No one questions the centrality of Christ's Resurrection in Paul's teaching (cf. D. M. Stanley, *Christ's Resurrection in Pauline Soteriology*, 1961). Nor does anyone deny the genuineness of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, written but 25 years after the crucifixion of Christ. In First Corinthians 15: 1-8 Paul gives a list of the appearances of the risen Christ to various believers including himself. Moreover, Paul says he received this tradition in a manner that indicates its great antiquity. According to M. Carrez:

The gospel narratives are free from the legendary embellishments of later apocryphal accounts. They simply recount the surprise of the empty tomb and the gradual realization of its significance after encounters with the risen Christ.

Framed by these two words, gospel and kerygma, we find a text and a tradition whose Aramaic tenor, archaic character, and primitive catechetical form have been recently pointed out by B. Klappert.... The appearance to Peter, confirmed by the allusion to Lk 24,34, and the appearance to James . . . show the Jerusalemite character of this tradition. What should we derive from it? That, in any case, this formulation already existed in an established way six years after the events of the redemptive drama at the latest and that everything concurs in underlining the great antiquity of this formulation ["The Pauline Hermeneutics of the Resurrection," in F. de Surgy, *op. cit.*, p.40].

Of crucial significance is the fact that Paul can claim in First Corinthians 15:6 that of the more than 500 disciples to whom Christ appeared at the same time, most (*hoi pleiones*, not just "the greater part" as in the King James Version) were still alive at the time Paul wrote. As William Lillie, head of the Department of Biblical Study at the University of Aberdeen, notes:

What gives a special authority to the list as historical evidence is the reference to most of the five hundred brethren being still alive. St. Paul says in effect, "If you do not believe me, you can ask them." Such a statement in an admittedly genuine letter written within thirty years of the event is almost as strong evidence as one could hope to get for something that happened nearly two thousand years ago ["The Empty Tomb and the Resurrection," in D. E. Nineham et al. *Historicity and Chronology in the New Testament*, 1965, p. 125].

F. The Evidence of the Gospels

The canonical Gospels were all written before the end of the first century A.D. at the latest, and Mark may have been written as early as A.D. 50. Although they differ in details, they concur on the basic point: the two factors that together convinced the disciples that Christ had risen were the empty tomb and the appearances of the risen Christ on at least ten occasions. As C. H. Dodd has pointed out, the gospel narratives are free from the legendary embellishments of later apocryphal accounts. They simply recount the surprise of the empty tomb and the gradual realization of its significance after encounters with the risen Christ. The apocryphal Gospel of Peter is not content with such artless

narratives. It claims that the soldiers on guard beheld:

...three men come out from the sepulcher, and two of them sustaining the other, and a cross following them, and the heads of the two reaching to heaven, but that of him who was led of them by the hand overpassing the heavens [E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha 1*, 1963, p. 186].

One feature of the Resurrection narratives that indicates they were not late inventions of the Church is the striking fact that the first appearances of the risen Christ were not to the apostles but instead to women. As C. F. D. Moule comments:

Further, it is difficult to explain how a story that grew up late and took shape merely in accord with the supposed demands of apologetic came to be framed in terms almost exclusively of women witnesses, who, as such, were notoriously invalid witnesses according to Jewish principles of evidence [C. F. D. Moule, editor, *The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ* 1968, p. 9].

If one rejects the traditional interpretation of the empty tomb as resulting from the Resurrection of Christ, one is obliged to supply a better alternative. Such theories have been often discussed - e.g., Frank Morrison, *Who Moved the Stone?* (1930, reprinted 1963); Daniel P. Fuller, *Easter Faith and History* (1965). We may briefly summarize these proposals and the objections to them.

If one rejects the traditional interpretation of the empty tomb as resulting from the Resurrection of Christ, one is obliged to supply a better alternative.

Heinrich Paulus in his *Life of Jesus* (1828) suggested that Jesus was not dead when he was taken from the cross. The coolness of the tomb revived him. After exchanging his grave wrappings for the gardener's clothes, Jesus spoke to his disciples for forty days and then walked into a cloud on a mountain and went off somewhere to

die. The implausibility of this reconstruction was recognized by Strauss, who wrote:

It is impossible that one who had just come forth from the grave half dead, who crept about weak and ill, who stood in need of medical treatment . . . , and who at last succumbed to suffering, could ever have given to the disciples that impression that He was a conqueror over death and the grave . . . [The *Life of Jesus* 1879 1, 412, cited by Wilbur Smith, *The Supernaturalness of Christ*, 1940, p. 208].

A modern variation has been proposed by Schonfield in his celebrated work *The Passover Plot*. Jesus plotted with Joseph of Arimathea, Lazarus, a Judaeen priest, and an anonymous "young man" to arrange a feigned death on the cross by taking a drug. Schonfield seeks to maintain that neither Jesus nor his accomplices were guilty of any fraud. Yet the mysterious young man is mistaken for the risen Jesus on the four occasions of the "appearances" admitted by Schonfield without ever correcting the misapprehension of the disciples. We are asked to believe that the skeptical disciples were confused by the appearance of this young man into believing that Jesus had arisen, and that they were so transformed by this confusion that they turned Jerusalem upside down with their preaching (cf. my review in the *Gordon Review*, X [1967], 150-60; reprinted in the *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*, XXI [1969], 27-32).

Kirsopp Lake in *The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus* (1907) emended Mark

16:6 so that it read: "He is not here, behold (pointing to the right tomb) the place where they laid him." His ingenious theory that the women saw an empty tomb but the wrong one hardly explains their amazement and fear. Nor it is plausible in view of the fact that Jesus was buried in the private garden of Joseph of Arimathea, and that the women noted where he was buried (Mark 15:47). J. Jeremias has demonstrated that about fifty tombs were venerated by the Jews before the time of Jesus. In the view of such interest in the tombs of holy men, J. Delorme asks:

In these circumstances, is it possible that the original community of Jerusalem could have been completely uninterested in the tomb where Jesus was laid after his death? . . . Can the existence of this tradition at Jerusalem, centered around a specific place, in a relatively short lapse of time after the events, be explained as a pure legendary creation? Could one show an ordinary tomb as being the tomb of Jesus? Can one question without foundation known persons, the women designated by name and Joseph of Arimathea? ["The Resurrection and Jesus' Tomb: Mark 16, 1-8 in the Gospel Tradition," in P. de Surgy, *op.cit.*, pp. 88, 101].

If the tomb where Jesus was laid was indeed empty, could his body have been stolen away by someone? To assume that the body was stolen one must first of all disregard the story of the guard posted at the sepulcher (Matt. 28:65, 66). We need then to ask: Who would have stolen the body and why? The Romans had no reason to do so; they had surrendered the body to Joseph of Arimathea. It is illogical to suppose that the Jews stole the body, since they could easily have suppressed the nascent Christian movement and exposed the Christians' claim of Christ's Resurrection by simply producing his body.

It is illogical to suppose that the Jews stole the body, since they could easily have suppressed the nascent Christian movement and exposed the Christians' claim of Christ's Resurrection by simply producing his body.

Hermann Reimarus, whose works were published posthumously by Gotthold Lessing in the eighteenth century, did suggest that it was the Christians who removed the body and hid it somewhere. But this is psychologically incredible since the disciples would not only be perpetrating a fraud but also be dying for a deliberate deception. The neatly deposited graveclothes and napkin observed by Peter and John (John 20:7) are evidence against tomb robbery by ordinary thieves, as they would not have taken the time to tidy up the sepulcher.

G. The Impact of the Resurrection

Not even the most skeptical can deny the historical attestation of the faith of the early Christians in the Resurrection of Christ. This simple fact is of importance if we accept as genuine the numerous predictions of Jesus concerning his death and resurrection (Matt. 16:21; 17:9, 22,23; 20:18, 19; 26:2; etc.). Charlatans such as Theudas (Josephus, *Antiquities* XX. 5.1), who claimed to have the power to divide the Jordan River, or the Gnostic Menander, who claimed his disciples would remain ageless, were quickly exposed by the failure of their claims. The Qumran community, which has some features in common with the Christian community, did not survive the destruction of its monastery by the Romans in A.D. 68 because the people had no comparable faith to sustain them. Something earth-shaking must have transformed the despairing disciples. A. M. Ramsey (*The Resurrection of Christ*, 1946) reminds us: "It must not be forgotten that the teaching and ministry of Jesus did not provide the disciples with a

Gospel, and led them from puzzle to paradox until the Resurrection gave them a key" (p. 40). It should be obvious that the early Christians were completely convinced of the Resurrection. If this were not so, they had everything to lose and nothing to gain. By preaching the Resurrection of Christ they further antagonized the Jewish authorities and in effect accused them of slaying the Messiah (Acts 2:23,24, 36; 3:14, 15, 4:10; etc.). As H. C. Cadbury notes:

The effect of the belief in Jesus' resurrection on the early Christian belief in the wider resurrection experience can hardly be overestimated. It was the kind of assurance, contemporary and concrete, that the most ardent though speculative convictions of Pharisees or other non-Christian Jews could not have equaled ["Intimations of Immortality in the Thought of Jesus," in T. T. Ramsey et al., *The Miracles and the Resurrection*, 1964, p. 84].

Professor Lillie concludes:

The followers of a religious group do not preserve traditions of their leaders forsaking their

The historical question of the Resurrection of Christ differs from other historical problems in that it poses a challenge to every individual.

master and behaving in a cowardly and despairing fashion unless these traditions happen to be true. The fact that the Gospel was boldly and successfully preached by these same followers is attested not only by the New Testament record, but by the historical fact of the growth of the Christian Church. It is indeed one of the few New Testament facts for which we have

independent evidence outside the Christians' own traditions. The Roman historian Tacitus (*Annals* XV. 44) states that "a most mischievous superstition thus checked for the moment (by the crucifixion of Jesus) again broke out" [in D. E. Nineham et al., *op. cit.*].

I would argue that only the appearance of the risen Christ can satisfactorily explain how Jesus' skeptical brother James (John 7:5) became a leader in the early Church (I Cor. 15:7; Acts 15), how despondent Peter became a fearless preacher at Pentecost, and how a fanatical persecutor of Christians became Paul, the greatest missionary of the Gospel.

A CONCLUDING CHALLENGE

I have tried to show that theories attributing the Resurrection of Christ to the borrowing of mythological themes, to hallucinations, or to alternative explanations of the empty tomb are improbable and are also inadequate to explain the genesis and growth of Christianity. To be sure, the Resurrection of Jesus is unprecedented, but Jesus himself is *sui generis*, unique. As Tenney remarks: "Although the resurrection was without precedent, it was not abnormal for Christ.... He rose from the dead because it was the logical and normal prerogative of the Son of God" (*Op. Cit.*, p. 133).

The historical question of the Resurrection of Christ differs from other historical problems in that it poses a challenge to every individual. Christ said (John 11:25): "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." For the Resurrection of Christ to be more than a beautiful Easter story, each person needs to believe in his heart that God has raised Christ from

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the dead and to confess with his mouth Jesus as Lord.

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-Edwin M. Yamauchi



The Resurrected Christ of Faith

Ian Ellis-Jones

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Being a revised précis of a sermon delivered at the Church of Saint Francis, Gordon, Australia, on Low Sunday 2007 and reproduced by kind permission of the author.

Today is the first Sunday after Easter, also known as “Low Sunday”.

Some clerics facetiously explain the title “Low Sunday” because attendance is typically so low on this Sunday in comparison to Easter (or “High”) Sunday. Be that as it may, prior to the 1970 Roman Missal, this Sunday was almost universally called Low Sunday, which it still is in the Liberal Catholic Church’s liturgy as well as in several others. However, since 1970 Low Sunday has been officially known as the “Second Sunday of Easter” (referring to the Easter season) in the Roman Catholic Church.

The origin of the name “Low Sunday” is uncertain, but it is apparently intended to indicate the contrast between it and the great Easter festival immediately preceding (and, in particular, Easter Sunday). However, it is more likely that the word "low" is a corruption of the Latin word *laudes* (“praises”), the first word of the Sequence of the day, *Laudes Salvatori voce modulemur supplici* (“Let us sing praises to the Saviour with humble voice”).

Low Sunday is also known in some places, for example, parts of France and Germany, as “Quasimodo Sunday” (or the “Sunday of Quasimodo”), from the first two words of the opening Antiphon (the traditional Introit for this day) of the Latin Mass, *Quasi modo geniti infantes, rationabile, sine dolo lac concupiscite* (“As newborn babes, alleluia, desire the rational milk without guile”). This is a reference to the newly baptized neophytes as well as a general allusion to our spiritual rehabilitation as a result of the Easter *resurrection* experience. (Readers may recall that in Victor Hugo’s famous novel, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1831) the character Quasimodo was found abandoned on the doorstep of Notre Dame Cathedral on the Sunday after Easter and was named after this day.)

“As newborn babes, alleluia, desire the rational milk without guile” This is a reference to the newly baptized neophytes as well as a general allusion to our spiritual rehabilitation as a result of the Easter resurrection experience.

Low Sunday was also formerly known as “White Sunday” (as well as “Alb Sunday”), for this Sunday’s official liturgical name - in the Latin Missal and Breviary - is *Dominica in albis depositis* (the “Sunday of Putting Away the Albs”), or *Dominica in Albis* (“Sunday in White Garments”, or simply “Sunday in White”) for short. On this Sunday the neophytes, who had been baptized on Easter Eve, laid aside their white baptismal robes. Hence “White” and “Alb” Sunday, which is also the etymology of Whitsunday (Pentecost).

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The Sunday is sometimes also referred to as “Saint Thomas Sunday”, “Thomas’ Easter”, or simply “Thomas Sunday”, especially in the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Eastern Catholic Churches, so called because the traditional Gospel reading in the Roman and certain other churches was the story of the so-called “Doubting Thomas”, for it is written in the Gospels that the apostle Thomas came to believe in the Resurrection on the Sunday after the Resurrection, when he put his finger into the

nail prints of Jesus, who, we are told, made a special appearance to convince Thomas.

In 2000 this Sunday in the Roman Church's liturgical calendar was designated "Divine Mercy Sunday" by His Holiness Pope John Paul II. Ukrainians call this Sunday, "Sunday of the Dead", in memory of all those who have died in the past year. The Russians, on Tuesday of this week, go in procession to the cemeteries and place Easter eggs on the graves of deceased loved ones.

Now, our Collect for today refers to that "eternal sacrifice [by means of which] we exist". Here, we recall, not just that great outpouring of suffering love of Jesus on the Cross, but also that ongoing cosmic sacrifice - the self-limitation of life itself - in which the Spirit of Life ever descends into matter, ever offers itself, and ever gives of itself to itself in manifestation, so that life, in all of its multiplicity of form, is perpetuated.

In this sacrificial outgiving - the putting forth of the Eternal Principle of Life as the Logos who freely offers Itself as the ensouling life of matter - the one life manifests itself in all things as all things

Jesus is the Great Example - not the Great Exception - our Elder Brother, who shows us the nature of the truly saved life, which is a life of self-giving unto others.

but ever remains. Said the great avatar, Sri Krishna: "I established this universe with a portion of myself; and I remain." This is the enduring, eternal sacrifice by which the world is nourished and sustained, the sublimest myth known to humanity, the "Man Crucified in Space" of Hindu

mythology, the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" of Christianity - the Self-Givingness of life. In this cosmic sacrifice - in which the Life-giver is, as it were, crucified upon the Cross of matter and imprisoned in form - the indwelling life is poured out like wine.

This eternal sacrifice is a continuing process in which each of us has a part. When, in the Holy Eucharist, we partake of the elements of bread and wine, which also represent the common life in ourselves, we remind ourselves that we are all one, that all life is one and indivisible, and that every form that exists is a symbol of the supreme oblation, the Spirit of Life giving itself to its world that it might have life. Yes, the Spirit of Life, which breathes into existence all that is, is both transcendent and immanent in our universe, suffering, evolving, acting with and through all life.

This Church has a realistic view about human nature, believing that human beings are neither evil beyond measure nor good beyond credibility. We do not accept the view that it was necessary for Jesus to die in order for our sins to be forgiven. The doctrine of vicarious atonement is, for us, not part of Jesus' original teachings and more properly belongs to Mithraism and other pagan mystery religions. Jesus is the Great Example - *not* the Great Exception - our Elder Brother, who shows us the nature of the truly saved life, which is a life of self-giving unto others.

The Collect invokes the Lord Christ "in whose victory we triumph". Yes, we triumph when we lay aside the old self, that is, we "repent" of our self-centredness, pride and wilfulness, believing that the way of Jesus, involving self-sacrifice and love, is the answer to our lives. His selflessness sits in quiet judgment upon our selfishness. Jesus, the Way-Shower and, in a very special sense, the Way-Maker, speaks to our time, saying, "Follow me." His living personality and spirit, lying hidden in his words, is a powerful motivating force for individual transformation as well as a source of inward power. As we contemplate his suffering love we are moved to moral and spiritual transformation and become set free from ourselves. Self is nailed to the Cross, which is the answer to self-centredness and selfishness. We surrender to a Power-not-ourselves (a power over ourselves, over situations, and over circumstances) that works for righteousness, most compellingly and supremely revealed in the person of Jesus. We surrender to God's will (accepting and adjusting to whatever is, in the sincere belief that "whatever is, is best") and Jesus' way. This is the true way of the Cross, and it is not something that anyone else, even

Jesus, can do for us. We must do it for ourselves, walking in his steps.

The portion of scripture appointed for the epistle is taken from the 10th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, beginning at the 34th verse. We are told, through Peter, that Jesus “went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him”. Elsewhere in the New Testament we are told that Jesus “gave [his disciples] power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases” and that he “sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal” (see Lk 9:1-2). Now, what is the significance of this for us today? Metaphysically, it means that we too have power and authority over all “demons”, the latter referring to negative thoughts and emotions and circumstances that would otherwise defeat us or engulf us.

I have personally witnessed in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous the transformative power of the written and spoken word to heal. Alcoholics who make a decision that they really want to be sober more than they want to drink are resurrected into newness of life. They become changed persons. Now, the healing words of the Bible have power to change and transform our lives as well. Do you recognize the power and authority which has been entrusted to you as God’s son or daughter? Jesus gave his apostles both power and authority to speak and to act in his name - to cast out evil spirits, to heal, and to speak the word of God.

We too have power and authority over all “demons”, the latter referring to negative thoughts and emotions and circumstances that would otherwise defeat us or engulf us.

Our epistle talks about healing, and being resurrected into newness of life. This is the “resurrection experience”. It can happen to us today, if we make a decision to lay aside the old self, that is, “repent” of our self-centredness, pride and wilfulness. We become renewed in the spirit of our minds as we are lifted up into Christ’s perfected consciousness. We become new persons, our “best selves” (“God in us”). Our old sense of isolation and alienation is gone. Out of gratitude, we now desire to live selflessly for others and share our resurrection experience with them. We must continue to re-surrender and rededicate ourselves every day. We must remain open to truth and ever willing to change, no matter what. We must work to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth.

Our gospel reading is taken from the 24th chapter of St Luke, beginning at the 13th verse. It is the well-known story of the “Walk to Emmaus”. We are told that Jesus was seen in Emmaus, the very day of the Resurrection, after Jesus’ appearance to Mary Magdalene and after Peter and John ran to the tomb only to find it empty. While two disciples are walking along the Emmaus road, Jesus appears to them and begins interacting with them. When they reach the village of Emmaus, the disciples ask Jesus to stay with them to eat, and after he prays, and breaks the bread, they recognize him, and he disappears. Then they come back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples about it, and while they share their excitement Jesus appears once again.

The story illustrates what happens when we walk the spiritual path, that is, take our own Walk to Emmaus. Now, this is very significant. It was when Jesus broke the bread that they recognized Him. Indeed, the two men who had met with Jesus recounted this particular event as the point of recognition. So it is with us. We come to know Christ in the breaking of the bread, not just in the wonderful Sacrament of the Altar, but also in the ordinary events of life, in that “still, small voice” that says to us, “This is the way”. Yes, the Anonymous Christ comes to us through an idea, a word we hear, and a person who is suffering or joyful.

We read in Luke 24:30-31, “And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took

bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they

recognized him, but he vanished from their sight.” Isn’t it strange? As soon as the two men had this incredible spiritual awakening, Jesus vanishes from their sight. Yes, the Jesus of history *must* depart before the resurrected Christ of faith can be experienced in all its life-changing power. If only the more orthodox Christian churches would come to know that.

Each one of us is an altar on which sacrifice can and should be offered. We are present under the appearance of bread and

wine. We offer ourselves that we might die to self and, like the Master Jesus, be resurrected into newness of life. So, let us offer up ourselves to others, and to life itself, so that we might be used for the betterment of humanity and all life. By giving ourselves in loving service, in unselfish devotion and renunciation for the good of others, our lives as well as the lives of others are transformed. Yes, let us crucify our selfishness and egotism on the altar of love and be resurrected into newness of life.

-Rev. Ian Ellis-Jones



The Heart of the Mass

*(Reprinted from The Treasures of the Mass,
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Three parts of the Mass were instituted by our Saviour, namely, the Offertory, the Consecration and the Communion. “The Offertory,” says Father [Martin] von Cochem, “is the giving of thanks and blessing of the bread and wine, whereby both are dedicated to the service of God. This was done at the Last Supper when Our Lord took bread and wine, gave thanks to His Heavenly Father, and blessed them.

“The Consecration consists in the repetition of the words which Christ spoke on that memorable occasion: 'This is My Body... This is My Blood' (Matt xxvi. 26, 28). The Consecration is the most important part of the Mass, because by it Christ becomes present on our altars, and in it lies the essence of the sacrifice...

“The Communion is the consumption of the sacred oblation. This was also done at the Last Supper when Our Lord gave His Flesh and Blood to be received by the Apostles under the forms of bread and wine.”

***Holy Church...desires that we
devoutly look at the Blessed
Sacrament.***

Full of faith and confidence, Holy Church now begs for the same sublime wonder as that which Our Lord performed at the Last Supper. What Our Lord did on that occasion, the priest now does in His stead. He takes the bread in both his hands, raises his eyes toward heaven, bows his head, blesses and speaks the holy words of Consecration:

“Who the day before he suffered, took bread into His holy and venerable hands, and with His eyes lifted up to heaven, unto Thee, God, His almighty Father, giving thanks to Thee, He blessed, brake and gave to His disciples, saying:
Take and eat ye all of this, for *THIS IS MY BODY.*”

When the Sacred Host is elevated, the faithful should look at It and then bow their heads in adoration. Keeping the head bowed low during the Elevation at Mass is customary among many Catholics. Many are scrupulously conscientious not to look at the Sacred Host or the Chalice, lest thereby they might fail in reverence towards God. This practice originates in a good will, no doubt, but it is, nevertheless, not praiseworthy. People are under the impression that it is wrong to gaze at our Eucharistic God!...

Holy Church holds an entirely different view; she desires that we devoutly look at the Blessed Sacrament. Otherwise, what significance would there be in the precept of the Church which obliges the priests to elevate the Sacred Host, after the Consecration, high enough to be seen by the faithful? In fact, it was in protest of a false teaching about the Blessed Eucharist that the Church, in 1197,¹ ordered as a renewed act of faith and at the same time as an act of reparation, that the Sacred Host be elevated immediately after the Consecration....

At the Elevation, the priest might in all justice say to the people, “Behold, O Christians, here is your Saviour, your Redeemer, your Sanctifier. Contemplate Him with sincere faith; pour out your hearts to Him. 'Blessed are the eyes that see what you see' (Luke x. 23).” Blessed, indeed, are the eyes that gaze

¹ This false teaching was begun by Berengarius nearly two centuries previously, and...was carried on after him by Tanchelm and later by Peter the Chanter [footnote from the original text. -Ed.]

with reverence on the Sacred Host and believe that Jesus is hidden under this lowly form. Each one of us can then say with the patriarch Jacob, “I have seen God face to face, and my soul has been saved” (Gen. xxxii. 30). And indeed we have a better right to employ these words than Jacob had, for he saw only an angel sent from God, whilst we gaze upon the Saviour Himself, concealed under the appearance of bread.

How pleasing to God is the desire to gaze at Him, even though He is veiled by the Eucharistic species, can be judged from a revelation to St. Gertrude. This saint received from Our Lord the assurance that for every look of love and devotion which we turn to the Sacred Host, we merit an increase of glory in Heaven; and when once we behold God face to face, we shall participate in as many special joys as we shall have directed loving glances toward the Blessed Sacrament, or even desired to do so when prevented. What a glorious promise!

Is not this gazing upon the Eucharistic Saviour a magnificent profession of our faith in the real presence of Christ, as it was professed by the incredulous Apostle Thomas? When Thomas said, My

It is of the greatest benefit to us to unite our prayer with that which our Divine Mediator offers for us upon the altar, imploring Him to make it one with His; for this union will render it so powerful that no other prayers can compare with it.

Lord and my God, we may be sure he did not keep his eyes cast down, but looked with open and sincere gaze into the eyes of his Master. We do not, indeed, see Him with our bodily eyes as Thomas saw Him, but the light of faith clearly reveals to us that the Sacred Host at which we gaze is no longer earthly bread, but Jesus, the God-man, the immortal King of heaven and earth, who at the word of the priest has become present upon the altar. We believe that just as

once the angel's “Ave” He assumed human nature in the bosom of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Ghost, so now by the sacred words of consecration He has become man sacramentally by the power of the same Holy Spirit.

How glorious a gift, how excellent an oblation, does the priest present to the Most Holy Trinity when he elevates the Sacred Host! But it is not the priest alone who performs this act. Jesus, our Divine Saviour, places Himself before the eyes of God the Father and offers Himself to Him in so sublime a manner that no created intelligence is capable of comprehending it. We read in the revelations of St. Gertrude that she was privileged to see, during the Elevation of the Sacred Host, Our Lord with His own hands lifting on high His Heart in the form of a golden chalice, presenting Himself to the Heavenly Father and making the oblation of Himself for the faithful in a manner past human comprehension. And Our Lord revealed to St. Mechtilde: “I alone know, and perfectly understand, what this offering is that I daily make of Myself for the salvation of the faithful; it surpasses the comprehension of cherubim and seraphim, and all the hosts of heaven”....

It is of the greatest benefit to us to unite our prayer with that which our Divine Mediator offers for us upon the altar, imploring Him to make it one with His; for this union will render it so powerful that no other prayers can compare with it. In virtue of the merits of Christ's Passion, the prayers offered in union with the Holy Sacrifice have infinitely more value than any other prayers, however long or however fervent. Therefore, if we unite our...petitions which we offer during Mass to the perfect prayer of Our Lord, they will, like a copper coin immersed in molten gold, be beautified and ennobled, and rendered meet to be borne to heaven as a precious oblation....



Christianity's Real Secret

Dr. Richard Smoley

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On the surface, it's hard to explain the astonishing success of Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code*. Many critics have pointed to its stale cliffhanger plot, its wan characterization, and even to the flaws in its research. And yet it has sold over 40 million copies in hardcover. Its appeal must run deeper than any of its surface details. It must speak to some acute need in the current imagination.

One aspect of the question could be explored further. Like many other popular works of recent years, *The Da Vinci Code* suggests that there is something lost in Christianity, some secret that Jesus may have passed on to his disciples but which has not managed to come down to us.

Or did it? Another part of the novel's appeal lies in the idea that this tradition was hidden but never lost. And this raises a key issue — whether the idea of a secret, initiatic teaching in Christianity has somehow been preserved.

Authorities differ on this point. The Theosophist Annie Besant, writing in her book *Esoteric Christianity*, lays out a long list of Christian mystics, but seems to assume that this initiatic tradition was lost:

The disciplina arcani, or “hidden teaching,” is, we are led to believe, a curriculum of systematic esoteric training that would culminate in a genuine knowledge of inner realities and the ability to navigate them.

Yet, as we reverently salute these Children of the Light, scattered over the centuries, we are forced to recognise in them the absence of that union of acute intellect and high devotion which were welded together by the training of the Mysteries, and while we marvel that they soared so high, we cannot but wish that their rare gifts had been developed under that magnificent *disciplina arcani*.

The *disciplina arcani*, or “hidden teaching,” is, we are led to believe, a curriculum of systematic esoteric training that would culminate in a genuine knowledge of

inner realities and the ability to navigate them.

René Guénon (1886–1951), the French esoteric philosopher, makes a similar assumption. His works speak of an “initiatic tradition,” but he believes that it was all but lost in the West. The Masons, according to Guénon, retain some fragment of it, but otherwise it has vanished. Guénon does, however, sometimes intimate that some initiatic traditions may have survived on a small scale in various pockets of Christianity.

Both Besant and Guénon had access to a tremendous amount of esoteric knowledge, so we can't dismiss their verdict offhand, but to me it is more likely that the initiatic tradition has survived in Christianity — only not in forms that either Besant or Guénon would have recognized. From a more popular point of view, this initiatic tradition bears no resemblance to the imaginary “Priory of Sion,” as described in *The Da Vinci Code*, which, as numerous researchers have pointed out, is nothing more than the fiction of some extreme right-wing European monarchists.

To understand what's going on, we'll have to go back to the earliest days of Christianity and to some cryptic utterances in the New Testament. Paul writes: “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory....And I,

brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able” (1 Cor. 2:7; 3,1–2).

What is this “hidden wisdom” that Paul could not share with the “babes,” who were “carnal”? Conventional scholars assume that these were the familiar doctrines of Christianity — the salvific work of Christ and the meaning of his passion, death, and resurrection. There is only one problem with this view: these teachings were never hidden, in Paul’s time or later. Therefore they cannot be the “hidden wisdom” of which he speaks.

Origen, a third-century Church Father, makes this point in his work *Contra Celsum* (“Against Celsus”), a refutation of a pagan critic of Christianity: “Then since he [Celsus] often calls our doctrine *secret*, in this point also we must refute him. For almost the entire world has come to know the preachings of Christians better than the opinions of philosophers. Who has not heard of Jesus’ birth from a virgin, and of his crucifixion, and of his resurrection, in which many have believed?...Moreover, the mystery of the resurrection, because it has not been understood, is a by-word and a laughing-stock among the unbelievers.”

But, Origen goes on to say, “the existence of certain doctrines, which are beyond those which are exoteric and do not reach the multitude, is not a peculiarity of Christian doctrine only, but is shared by the philosophers. For they had some doctrines that were exoteric and some esoteric....Therefore Celsus has no reason to attack the secrecy of Christianity and has no understanding of it.”

The “hidden wisdom,” then, the “doctrines not made known to the multitude,” cannot be the familiar teachings of Christianity, since even in Origen’s time they were widely circulated. These familiar doctrines are the “milk” of which Paul speaks, fed to “babes,” not the “meat” that is food for spiritual adults.

In esoteric Christianity, the story of Jesus recapitulates the fate of each of us in the past and in the future.

Who are the “babes” and who are the “adults”? Paul provides a clue when he distinguishes the “carnal” from the “spiritual,” for here he is talking about different stages of development and different levels of awakening.

“Carnal,” of course, means “fleshly.” Carnal people are those who view life from the exterior. The outer world of things and events and persons is their primary reality. They don’t have a great deal of experience with the spiritual world. A large number don’t want it or don’t believe it’s possible.

It may sound elitist — and in a sense it is — to say that the vast majority of human beings fit into this category. But this sorting process has nothing to do with race, education, or social class: “carnal” people are found in every segment of society. For them, *exoteric* religion has been created. Exoteric religion views religion in an *outer* sense.

What does this mean? In exoteric Christianity, the truths are always somehow *outside* oneself. The story of Christ is about a man (or, if you prefer, a God-man) who lived 2000 years ago, who suffered and died for our sins, and who rose again on the third day. As the passage from Origen above suggests, this has always been the part of the Christian faith that was made public.

But how are these truths (if that is what they are) outside oneself? Isn’t conventional Christianity always insisting that we have a personal relationship with Jesus? Yes, but from the conventional point of view, the story embodied in the Gospels is ultimately about Jesus. It is not about us. Mainstream Christianity has always insisted on a radical and unbridgeable gulf between God and man.

Esoteric, or inner, Christianity says exactly the opposite. It does not focus on the historicity of Jesus’s life 2000 years ago. Some esoteric Christians believe these events happened as the Gospels

describe them; others do not. Rather, in esoteric Christianity, the story of Jesus recapitulates the fate of each of us in the past and in the future. This is the key to the meaning of the death and resurrection of Christ, and this is why the story continue to exercise such an extraordinary appeal. As one English esotericist put it, “all that is said and declared, and recorded in the gospel, is only a plain record of that which is said and done, and doing in yourself.”

The Son of God comes to earth. Despite his high stature, he is born in humble, even wretched circumstances. He grows up and takes his place on the stage of history, winning friends and disciples and making enemies as well. Eventually he suffers a brutal and humiliating death. But it does not matter. He is resurrected on the third day, in a new and more resplendent form.

This is Christ’s story, but it is our story as well. We, too, are sons of God, or, for that matter, gods. We have made our descent into the realm of matter, where we are crucified on a cross known as time and space. But for us, too, it does not matter: what is deepest and most true about us is immortal and indestructible.

The problem is that we have forgotten this fact. An allegorical Gnostic tale called “The Hymn of the Pearl” makes this point. It tells of a young man whose royal parents send him to Egypt (which symbolically represents material existence) to retrieve a pearl that has been lost at the bottom of the sea. The young man makes the journey, but while he is in Egypt, he recounts, the Egyptians “marked that I was not their countryman, and they ingratiated themselves with me, and mixed me [drink] with their cunning, and gave me to taste of their meat; and I forgot that I was a king’s son and served their king.”

This is Christ’s story, but it is our story as well....We have made our descent into the realm of matter, where we are crucified on a cross known as time and space. But for us, too, it does not matter: what is deepest and most true about us is immortal and indestructible.

Like the young man in this tale, we have made the “descent into Egypt” — into physical manifestation — and we have forgotten where we came from. In the story, the young man’s parents send him a messenger, an eagle, to remind him. He wakes up and goes on to accomplish his mission. In inner Christianity, the eagle symbolizes the teachings that can liberate us from our bondage to the world of illusion and remind us of our true nature.

Although this tale comes from an apocryphal text, we can easily see how it resonates with much of the New Testament. In the parable of the prodigal son, for example, the younger son asks his father for his share of his father’s inheritance and squanders it in a foreign country. When the money has run out, he repents of his actions and returns to his father. As in “The Hymn of the Pearl,” the foreign country represents the material plane and the father’s house the heavenly dimension.

How, then, is this liberation achieved? It is not merely a matter of repentance and salvation for sin. This is nothing but a preliminary. In the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, alcoholics admit “to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs; Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character; humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings; made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all” and “made direct amends to such people wherever possible.” This is a capsule summary of sin and redemption. Like the alcoholic, every human being has moral flaws and failings; he must acknowledge them, repent of them, and make amends. But this is not the end of the spiritual path. It is only the beginning. Something far deeper must happen. Consciousness itself must be liberated.

This has always been known in inner Christianity, for example, in the hesychastic tradition of

Eastern Orthodoxy. The word *hesychasm* comes from the Greek *hesychia*, or “inner peace.” The texts of the hesychastic tradition — gathered in a collection known as the *Philokalia* — speak of gaining this inner peace through the liberation of something called the *nous*.

Nous is a Greek word that has been translated many ways, often misleadingly. Essentially it means “consciousness.” It is that in us which says “I.” Remember that God, speaking to Moses from the burning bush, revealed his name as “I am that I am.” This is our innermost nature, as it is God’s. It is also the point within us where we connect with God.

But *what* in us says “I” and *how* it says “I” are crucial. This “I” is not the little self of the ego, even though we usually think it is. Most of the time we are identified with our thoughts, emotions, reactions, bodily sensations — what the esoteric Christian tradition calls “passions.” Living at this level is what Paul means when he speaks of being “carnal.” We limit our knowledge of reality to physical reality — the *nous* or consciousness has become stuck to what it desires. The process of detaching the consciousness from these passions is one of the central tasks of inner Christianity.

This consciousness, the true “I,” exists in all of us; it cannot be killed or destroyed; indeed it is the only part of us that is truly immortal. But most of the time it is submerged in the loud roarings of the body and the ego. And for this reason, this true “I” at first is very small and very weak. One of the most common metaphors for it in the Gospels is a “seed,” because initially it exists as a potentiality. It is up to us to cultivate it, to become aware of it, and ultimately recognize its unity with the larger Self that is the common life of all humans and indeed of all creatures. And esoterically speaking, this is the Christ. If we reach this level, we attain the state of which Paul speaks when he says, “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20).

This consciousness, the true “I,” exists in all of us; it cannot be killed or destroyed; indeed it is the only part of us that is truly immortal. But most of the time it is submerged in the loud roarings of the body and the ego.

Knowledge of these truths has always been preserved in inner Christianity. I have mentioned the hesychastic tradition (which still survives in Eastern Orthodoxy), but there have been many others: the Gnostics of antiquity; the Cathars of the twelfth and thirteenth century; and other medieval groups of seekers such as the Friends of God and the Brethren of the Common Life. In more recent times, it has been preserved in small groups that have studied the Kabbalah and the teachings of the Rosicrucians. And in the last century, many of these impulses bore fruit and reached a wide audience in various teachings of the New Age.

Although above I have only given the shortest and sketchiest description of this liberation and illumination of the true “I,” it should be clear even from what I’ve said that this secret is far more profound and far more central to our lives than are such questions as whether Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene or whether there was a Priory of Sion that kept their bloodline alive. Esoterically speaking, these latter issues are “blinds” — distractions to waylay the credulous. If you become preoccupied with them, you can, like the characters in *The Da Vinci Code*, spend endless amounts of time stumbling into dead ends and never find anything of the slightest value. And as long as you continue to believe that the essential truths of esotericism are about someone else — about Jesus, about Mary Magdalene, about any number of other figures, however alluring and mysterious — you will miss the essential point.

Although it is by no means bad news to be reminded that we are divine beings, it can be a hard and sobering truth to face. It is so because in a curious way we both overvalue and undervalue ourselves. We overvalue ourselves with ordinary egotism, in which we are constantly preoccupied with “my”

standing in the world, trying to set ourselves apart from and above everyone else. And yet at the same time and by this very action we deprecate ourselves, because we have forgotten that our true reality is

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not about such things; it is not dependent on them, and we do not need to be slaves to them. We are like the young man in “The Hymn of the Pearl”; we have forgotten who we are and why we came. As a saying attributed to the second-century Gnostic teacher Valentinus puts it, “What makes us free is the knowledge who we were, what we have become; where we were, where we have been thrown; whereto we speed, wherefrom we are redeemed; what is birth and what rebirth.” This knowledge has always been kept alive in Christianity, as it has in all the other great traditions, and although it may take many forms

and wrap itself in the guise of many systems and philosophies, if we look for it, it will always be there to comfort and to free us.

- Richard Smoley

Richard Smoley’s latest book is Conscious Love: Insights from Mystical Christianity. His other works include Forbidden Faith: The Secret History of Gnosticism; Inner Christianity; The Essential Nostradamus; and (with Jay Kinney) Hidden Wisdom: A Guide to the Western Inner Traditions. He is editor of Quest Books. Visit his blog at <http://smoley.alivemindmedia.com/>



Official

January 2008

Bishop William S. Downey was re-appointed Regional Bishop of the Province of the United States of America for a further term of seven years.

Bishop Pedro de Oliveira was elected as a Member of the Judiciary Committee. Bishop Pedro's term of Office is until 2015.

March 2008

Bishop Raymond Pointon was appointed as Regional Bishop of New Zealand with effect from the 9th April 2008, with **Bishop Walter Turvey** as Regional Bishop Emeritus.



Alphabetical Directory of Countries & Bishops of The Liberal Catholic Church

For all communication to any named representative of the Church, please send your correspondence to the Editor at theliberalcatholic@catholic.org who will forward it to the appropriate recipient.

NB: Any Bishop claiming to be a Bishop of The Liberal Catholic Church and whose name does *not* appear in the following List is not a member of this Church.

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Regionary Bishop:

Bishop Miguel Batet

Auxiliary Bishop:

Bishop Arnoldo Salzmänn

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Regionary Bishop:

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Bishop James White

Auxiliary Bishops:

Bishop Ian Hooker (Presiding Bishop Emeritus)

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Bishop Pedro de Oliveira

Austria

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Belgium

Bishop Commissary:

Bishop Christian Schoch

Brazil

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Cameroon

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