

RESURRECTION

Interpreting the Easter Gospel: Rowan Williams

DLT 2002 (orig version 1982)

Chapter One: to judge is to be exposed to judgement. Jerusalem.

1. Events rarely *concern* readers but Luke's 'THIS Jesus' placed in Jerusalem concretises the happening. Jerusalem is where he was Judged and condemned and where judges remain. Luke has: stay in the City! So the Victim is now the Judge, but it is saving justice and a vindication of victim. Paul likewise knows his saviour as the 'one you persecuted'. The persecutor has to confront himself.

2. We are victim and oppressor! Jesus is the only pure victim. So we recognise our victim as our hope – and not abstractly nor general, it is 'this' Jesus in Jm. Jesus is IN the world and so Father gives judging authority to Son 'in particular', and it is Father's will that Son loses no one, so we know judgement as forgiveness.

Furthermore, in Resurrection Father gives Son back into locus of judges, thus transcending violence in situ, in particular.

3. In Marxism (eg) God is with victim in order to make oppressor the new victim; indeed our 'justice' makes new victims by imprisonment etc (cf Dachau & Palestine) But God refuses to recycle violence in human way, and the Resurrection stops it in its tracks with a new Way. It is justice which will not act against us.

We 'forget' our sin but we must remember and confront, not try to rise above it, as if humanity is transcendent. We hit out as defence to reverse our sinful history by control. We are born into a world like this (Original Sin) and even our birth is violent against us, so our hitting out just leads to more death and no reconciliation. But Jesus as pure victim without violence breaks the chain. God cannot destroy even in judgement for he is life inexhaustible, not death..

Chapter TWO: MEMORY & HOPE: Galilee

1 We are largely determined by history and society but we have pretence of self-transcendent choice. But this requires loss of memory of boxed-in sinful reality. (cf Imperialist refusal of indigenous culture) Augustine says only when we truthfully remember do we have choices. But the memories can be of horror!

2 'Galilee': Mark 16:7 – 'going before you to Galilee': (John turns this reference into a fantasia in Chap 21) Jesus 'recalls' them and they go fishing. Mk: they return as if it never happened but Jesus calls to fish and shares fish he has ready to share (and says 'bring yours' too) They are recalled to their violence (Simon and the fireside) so that Resurrection can happen for them ~ 'Do you love me?' Peter must see that for God he is still the betraying Simon who is called to ministry (feed my lambs) despite betrayal. This is God's judgement; but God is faithful even if we are not.

3 Apparition stories are essential for disciples to remember and receive forgiveness (God's Truth) before they can preach Resurrection. Saul has his 'persecuting me'; others have Emmaus; new Upper Room, etc) to restore their memory.

p.36 "Our connection with truth, with Jesus, has led to the cross; *his* connection with *us* remains, indestructibly, to assure us that our betrayal is not the ultimate fact in the world ... the incarnate truth, 'risen from the dead', establishes the faithfulness (of God) as the ground of inexhaustible hope in the world, even in the midst of our self-deceits."

4 Resurrection Community lives with its stories – apparition stories essential. We then move from shame to gift (Simon becomes Peter with a vocation to feed lambs) So begin to see yourself as a gift to the community, and a gift to yourself. So, Mary is named, thereby remembering herself, and given apostolic vocation. She turns to tomb of hopelessness, remembering the horror as oppressor, but is given as consequence her very self. She is not dead but Jesus lives. Identity in Vocation. Such life is a protest against the death that hangs in the air of our society. And this resurrection life is for all as 'gift', not for all to activate for ourselves.

Chapter Three: The Resurrection Community: a voice for voiceless

1 **Eucharist:** To be forgiven is not to live a happy fantasy but to know what relationship with God and Neighbour should be and *can* be! This needs Spirit of discernment and empowerment, which is gift of God in Resurrection Community. Bringing others to forgiveness is not to bludgeon them with guilt but open doors of conversion change, so guard against our own will to victimise the oppressor. So we must resist without blame (to act the prophet often falls for this mistake) So don't use suffering of martyr to bludgeon, as terrorist does. Eucharist 'remembers' we can all betray and remembers Jesus' sharing of new life.

2 Baptism Resurrection Jesus sends Apostles to Baptise (Matt) Enters again world of 'chaos' speaking of his death as baptism. Now released from incarnation he is life of Christian Community confronting us there. Catholicity is church reaching out to world Apostolic Succession is acknowledging that slave-owners were us, but letting that remembrance open us to penitence, and confessional deposit which makes for that succession is the Easter penitential forgiveness. So the Church is mandated to name the world's victims (cf Bell for saturation bombing; Bonhoeffer for Jews) as a call to conversion. This comes from a deep self-identification of self with Easter sacraments of Resurrection.

3 Voice of Voiceless Spirit gives power of utterance for voiceless. Careful analysis and word and action. A witness to Jesus as Lord of the world, and an affirmation of the Abba relationship we have. Offer that to the world from the Church as a naming of oppression and violence where we discern it with Jesus of Good Friday. We seek to offer to the world a language to understand its predicament and its possible solution. Resurrection happens outside the church but is not named. This language names the world as Christ's Kingdom.

Chapter Four: Talking to a Stranger

1 Must not use cross as legitimization of *my* cause 'Oh how I have suffered'. God does not endorse my pain by his cross – terrorist uses this excuse to inflict vengeance. Others suffer in order to prove innocence. But if we come to tomb to find a body to vindicate our cause we 'will not find' Him. For the women only find a stranger (Mk16) I am also a crucifier – I also transmit pain and play my part in allowing structural violence. But protest is possible. So we begin diminished but can reform. Church meets Jesus as risen Other. So cannot see cross as suffering without glory and Easter as glory without suffering, for they are one – but to learn this we go back around, starting again in Galilee to meet incarnate one. We must not interpret it all in light of our story, but understand ourselves in light of his Easter story.

2 All this argues for decentring of self, detachment from rewards in prayer – asceticism – to acknowledge my deep lack, egotism as expression of that lack. But don't fluster, for Jesus shows acceptance, so must accept Grace. Then we'll want to share it (which is the only acceptable 'need'). Mark shows disciples as frightened and feeling abandoned. It is a moment rather of Confession (Augustine says two

meanings, repentance and proclamation). If it were Calvary alone, its answer to violence is passive but Easter makes answer positive in mission – the risen Christ still has his scars but he sends. In the Resurrection suffering is still presented as the universal question but engenders compassion and therefore action to transform the world (Matt 25) Resurrection displaces the ego from its domineering position and grounds the self instead in love of the Father. So Jesus forever confronts us wounded and us as complicit and forgiven. When we see these two sides of our self (complicit and forgiven) then we are freed for compassionate action. We are not innocent but we are loved – and this is the whole of us.

3 ‘We hoped he was the one to free Israel’: But Jesus/God is not controllable like that, instead Jesus frees us from our projections onto God. Instead he hides amongst the poor and alien (Mtt 25) Telling us to *let* the other be strange, but not rejected. Now we belong to those who *share* Easter, it is a community. Jesus is now a statement of how world really is, of God’s will for it – a creative purpose we can share. But despite this perspective evangelists refuse to speak of Jesus outside of history – for it can all happen *here!* The experience is bewildering so their accounts are muddled – it’s all a shock, and the actual resurrection event can never be described.

Chapter FIVE: The Risen Body

1 The ordinariness of resurrection body is strange and distinctive element. If it were a glorification body it would ‘cancel’ Good Friday. Establishes his Presence and Continuing relationship with disciples. God still relates to matter and History. So the resurrection grace is not abstract, and we remain close to embodied love of God even after death. Thomas wants private experience apart from community, but only given it as part of the group. Church is now where Jesus is met, it is his Body. Question if the apparition is the embodiment of community’s experience of remembering and forgiven grace?? But something happened to individuals too, and also it is a message from outside (go tell the disciples) they did not understand, and worship was moved to Sunday very early on – to mark resurrection *event*. The person who brings it from outside is an outsider: a woman not of the twelve. After that comes encounter with a Jesus who is still part of fabric of history. These stories have been overwritten and edited but the historicity is boldly there.

2 Jesus has always rejected the rejections of the world and accepted outcasts and made victims into gifts. This love which opposes violence shows as self-gift on cross; and the prior meal makes this remembered. He shares body and has them share. So Eucharist is a Sunday Easter event for it “enacts risen-ness of crucified as inexhaustible gift of mercy among us.” We take food as if from the hand of Jesus after Easter – the gift of himself to you. We must see world not as ours but gift to share – so wherever we recognise material world as gift, not possession, it becomes Eucharistic. Bread represents realisation of ‘all I have is yours’. Page 103: “here is a part of the material world wholly and unequivocally given over to the significant being of Christ” embodying his transformation of possession into gift, so that “the material, habitually used as a means of exclusion, of violence, can become a means of communion.” When matter is used as means to sever, it is a sacrament of death and isolation. Eucharist reveals ultimate identity of matter. Normally in cosmos matter dominates meaning, so at death meaning becomes passive and defeated. But Christ gives meaning which cannot be dominated – The goal of the cosmos is to be discovered not invented for it does not depend on us, it cannot because we use its matter violently. Jesus is this cosmic meaning, its Logos. So as we live eucharistically we uncover Jesus as Alpha and Omega – the world with its meaning and ground in God. That is, there is creation simply because God is self-sharing: Understand sharing and we have arrived at the fundamental truth. So the Church’s task is the universalizing of Easter: to live a community of gift with the Eucharist recognising and calling us to God’s transforming action of victim to gift. So not to trust risen Jesus is not to trust we and others to be forgivable. We as community need the story – the apparitions – to keep us true to this life.