THE RESURRECTED CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

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Abstract: The article investigates the relationship between the Church and its teaching on the Resurrection of Christ from a systematic theological perspective. It does this by examining the significance of the resurrection of Christ for Christology, for salvation and lastly for the Church. In bringing to the fore the inextricable link between Christ's resurrection with Christology, soteriology and ecclesiology, the article explains and theologically justifies the resurrectional character of the Orthodox Church especially as this is witnessed in its worship, monasticism and in the popular piety of its faithful. It concludes by highlighting that the entire life of the Church ought indeed to be a witness to the Resurrection precisely because the purpose of Pentecost was to reveal the Resurrection everywhere to all.

As it is well known, we Orthodox Church members could never conceive of greeting each other during the period between Easter and the Ascension in any other way than with the old message of the Apostles: 'Christ is risen!' But nevertheless, one has to admit that the notion of the Lord's resurrection is one which still generates much confusion, and which is inextricably tied to convention – as is also the case with Christians of other confessions. It would be unjust and short-sighted, however, to try and explain such a phenomenon by linking it solely to the ever increasing secularisation of the Church. No less has this regretful situation been brought on than by systemic theological practice and the employment of rather outdated and apologetic methods in accounting for the important religious event of the Lord's resurrection.

PHRONEMA, VOL. 27(1), 2012, 1-18

If one were to claim that Christ's resurrection could be proved through scientific analyses and tests, then no doubt sooner or later one would have to realise that such ventures - representing nothing more than the temptation of positivism - were doomed to fail from the start.

On this note, and with barely disguisable irony, the Jesuit F. Lentzen-Deis asked:

> Had we not by the time of the Second World War – and no less with seemingly plausible reasons and evidence meeting the scientific world's demands for exactitude – sufficiently proved that Christ's resurrection really *had* [own emphasis] taken place?[1]

To this quite mortifying remark we must add that such an ironic stance will continue to present itself so long as Christians forget the Apostle Paul's formulation of the concept of the Spirit - that spiritual truths must invariably be taught with words furnished by the Spirit.[2]

But do not let these preliminary remarks lead you into thinking that the present article seeks to meddle in the historical debate surrounding the Lord's resurrection. This in no way represents the object of the current discussion, and so let me clearly distance myself at the outset from the concerns raised by exegetes relating to the resurrection. For our concern is not so much the *occurrence* of Christ's resurrection as it is the resurrected Lord himself, and in turn his rapport with his Church. Thus, treatment of the topic will follow a more outwardly dogmatic and theological framework rather than a strictly exegetic one. This means that the particular approach adopted here raises questions of a purely dogmatic nature.

If I am not mistaken, then, there are three main questions that need to be answered with respect to the current debate: (a) to what extent do the beliefs surrounding Easter correspond with the Church's understanding of Christ; (b) how great an effect have these beliefs had on the Church's understanding of the concept of salvation; (c) exactly how constitutive for the Church have such beliefs been considering their centrality to Christ's personality and work?

It is obvious that the three above questions are all very closely related. Nevertheless, such a close relationship could never be so readily inferred without first acknowledging the respective theological fields to which each one belongs – the first belonging to Christology, the second to Soteriology and the third to Ecclesiology. So let us now try and answer each of these questions in greater detail.

To what Extent do the Beliefs Surrounding Easter Correspond with the Church's Understanding of Christ?

Since the time that the Bible began to be studied by way of biblical criticism, the historical-critical method, as well as other philological methods - whereby the New Testament seemed to be at the centre of inquiry - certain problems have plagued the conscience of Church people everywhere.

An offshoot has been that, as far as much of what is reported in the Scriptures is concerned – or alternatively, parts of the Bible deemed uncomplimentary to the values of the Church in particular eras - it has been usual for academics to use discretion in interpreting, demythologising, and in some extreme cases rejecting and denouncing, biblical texts. There is no real solution to this problem - it is a curious phenomenon no doubt rooted in God's assumption of corporeal form. But such was the destiny of God's Word in its being imparted to humanity in the first place: Like a form of *kenosis* it was bound to be stripped down and emptied out by someone!

What one expects (and rightly so at that) of such critical scholarship, however, is a certain consistency and logic in the argumentation. This has not always been observable, especially in more recent criticism.

It is not to be our concern here to occupy ourselves with that small number of liberal academics who try to deny that Jesus Christ was a real historical figure. Their theories are schizophrenic because they seek to relate the historical consciousness of the Church to a sort of religious *fata morgana*.

As a result, we need only engage with those thinkers who, in full inclusion of the notion of his messianic self-consciousness, heed to the historicity of Jesus, even if they do not believe his resurrection should play an important role in the formation of the Church's beliefs.

For these thinkers, Jesus' life on earth until his death on the Cross has assumed so dominant a position in Church doctrine that his resurrection need not be regarded as a confirmation nor a validation of that doctrine. According to their standpoint, the 'paschal beliefs' of Jesus' followers sprang more from what Jesus said and did during his lifetime than from what occurred after his death, whereby that which actually provides the basis for celebrating Easter in the first place fails to qualify as a good enough source of these beliefs!

Such ideas have been put forward by (among others) W. Hermann and E. Hirsch, and they are ideas which have driven a certain stream of Protestant theology. It is gratifying to know, however, that even some Protestants will attest to the insufficient nature of such argumentation, and with quite poignant reasoning at that.

P. Althaus, for instance, has the following to say in his discussion of these theologians' ideas:

> From a dogmatic perspective one must admit that it is preposterous for a theologian to claim that the disciples' account of the resurrection should be left to one side, and instead that solely Jesus' life and history before his hanging on the Cross should form the basis of any beliefs surrounding him. Whoever appraises the situation in this way fails to take seriously the fact that Jesus constitutes the mandate of our faith in God, and so his death must arguably play a crucial role herein - because the porter of this mandate is no longer with us. What use is the thought that the deceased one now lives by God's side? According to such an interpretation, he cannot be said to still reside with us in God's mandate. But this is where what happened at Easter plays such an important role: against all expectation the one who was hanged on the Cross proved himself to be a living actor who committed his actions to the present through his calling on and appointment of the Apostles. So long as theologians label this a 'myth', they risk becoming caught up in their own Christological historicism.[3]

Althaus' judgement is basically right, but I still believe that one could venture deeper so as to do proper justice to the original concerns raised by the theologians in question.

There is no doubt as to whether their theories are rooted in a fundamental misunderstanding, from which two errors arise. Here, they have not only failed to understand the *bearer* of God's absolute authority but have also applied a purely positivistic approach in their conception of religious truth.

The misunderstanding relating to the person of Jesus Christ is rooted in the tendency to apply a moralistic interpretation to his words and work, thus levering him to the ideal of the virtuous life devoted to God. Moralism is *anthropocentric* whereas Jesus' life and work are essentially *theocentric* matters. Therefore, it is important to consider the full breadth of the said one's messianic titles – not just the introductory name *Emmanuel*, but also the majestic names furnished by the New Testament, like *the Son* and *the Lord*.

Above all, these New Testament titles express the idea of Jesus not simply as the embodiment of the Messiah (as laid forth in the Jewish Apocalypse), but rather as the unique being in which God chose to commit his love and authority to man and to the world for all time. In this context the title *Son* is to be understood as relating to the rapport between God and Jesus (through which God's love is able to find its expression), whereas the title *Lord* denotes the relationship existing between Jesus, man, and more widely the world, through which the former exercises his rule aiming to lead us to deliverance.[4]

And so whoever acknowledges these New Testament titles must at the same time accept the fact that Jesus represents the embodiment of God's absolute love; and love is eternal, so obsessing over the minute details of Jesus' death must fall by the wayside.[5]

The other part of the problem, so we recognised, was that the thinkers in question wanted to apply a purely positivistic approach in their conception of religious truth. The same sense of anthropocentrism

that stopped them from seeing Jesus as the true Son of God, also prevents them from recognising the truth of that which stands above ordinary human experience. In addition, the biblical texts of the New Testament tend to report the Lord's resurrection in a more or less legendary way, and so the problem becomes fraught with increasing difficulty.

No one seemed to have the courage to accept this in earlier times because it was believed that the credibility of the resurrection was reliant on its legendary telling. Today, however, one need not be afraid of exegesis, or of systematic theology, because we now know how to interpret the respective texts in an appropriate manner.

On this note, the aforementioned Jesuit F. Lentzen-Deis wrote:

> Present scholarship in no way shows that the Evangelists have succeeded in making us believe that the resurrection happened in just the way it is described in the New Testament. On the contrary, the narrative style employed (which must be contextualised in its contemporaneous environment), as well as the discrepancy existing between certain accounts of Jesus' life on earth, which are more or less congruous in their treatment of the same subject matter, make us aware of the fact that the event can only really be understood in the totality of its tellings. This totality is constructed on the point that the resurrected one formed part of the process and thus justified our belief in the Easter story himself. For it is on the resurrected Jesus' involvement that our understanding of his life and work is built, a legacy that was later transferred to the Apostles following his death.[6]

The point trying to be made here is that only through the resurrection were Jesus' worldly pronouncements and deeds truly given meaning. Had Jesus not risen, then his importance may not have been confirmed, nor would the lively proliferation of faith amongst his Apostles – in place of a normally expected sense of profound disappointment – have been truly comprehensible. It is necessary therefore to interpret the rather literary accounts of the New Testament in a differentiated manner, and in so doing take great care not to destroy their *unitary* Christological message, nor to reduce them arbitrarily. All this will become clearer and more complete, however, when in the next section we try and define the inherent character

of death, as well as reconcile the Church's understanding of salvation with the only yet briefly discussed Christology mentioned above.

How Great an Effect have Beliefs Surrounding Easter had on the Church's Understanding of the Concept of Salvation?

Death and resurrection are two correlative concepts. This means that one cannot begin to conceptualise resurrection without first knowing something of the nature of death. Therefore, we need first look at how to best approach the concept of death. In so doing, we must not forget that the Old Testament essentially lays the foundations in this matter, meaning that it is the Jewish spiritual world which prefaces the Christian one.

Nor can the Church forget to look with anything but a partial glance upon the Greek conceptualisation of death as the separation of body from soul, a formulation which clearly distances it from the Jewish interpretation. In place of such a Gnostic dualism the Church appears to believe more in a dynamic unity within man, that which underscores the need 'to place the death of man within the inherent ontological dialectic of spirit and matter, freedom and obligation, person and nature'.[7]

And so if death is to be conceived of as an experience which affects the *entirety* of a person, then it is foolish to think of it as a purely biological, or conversely a purely moral factum. In other words, Christian dogmaticians cannot relate biological death solely to man's sin, for this would be mere 'Gnostic speculation'[8], nor can they conceptualise death without making reference to this sin, because it does after all form a major part of the Church's teachings and the scriptures, and it is the pathway through which the human person attains the possibility of not dying (*posse non mori*).[9]

Thus it is clear that death represents a very complex problem, the solution to which might best be found in theology rather than in biology. For, even if biologists could one day explain just why organisms age and die, they still could then only account for the *cause* and not the *sense* of dying.[10]

The meaning of death is therefore a moral problem with both positive and negative connotations. It is positive insofar as it constitutes God's will in everything that concerns biological creation. It becomes negative when it is observed in relation to sin. But even in its positive sense, death only ever stands for a *provisorium* rather than a strict and ultimate reality. That the Christian Church has only ever preoccupied itself with the negative sense of death is not surprising.

It is symptomatic that the Old Testament knows the same word for death and hell, 'scheol', whereby the two concepts are characterised as practically one and the same.[11] In the same way the New Testament portrays biological death as but a mere minor point – through use of the rather harmless verb 'to sleep' – whereas death (on its own) is made interchangeable with a state of sin.

In defining sin in the theological sense as a separation from God, let us at the same time apply a theological interpretation to the meaning of death. So long as we do not separate ourselves from God, there is - in theological terms - no death, because even when we biologically die we still reside in the love of God insofar as we are his property. It is precisely this basic conviction that Paul wished to express when he said:

> We do not live for ourselves only, and we do not die for ourselves only. If we live then it is for the Lord that we live, and if we die it is for the Lord that we die. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord (Rom 14:7-9).

But we find further proof in Jesus' cry to God from the Cross, whereby death is depicted as a frightening reality arising from the abandonment of God.[12]

In consideration of all this, it is understandable how the Church in its conceptualisation of salvation demands not only that all sin be forgiven but also that death itself be lifted. In reality, this provides the basis for the notion of the resurrection. But just as death cannot be regarded as a biological factum, neither can the resurrection be seen as a return to a former physical life. Indeed it is wiser to consider it a final penetration into the realm of God. On this point, W. Küneth is right in his appraisal of the Lord's resurrection when he said that it should

> be understood as one of God's creationary deeds - made glorious through Jesus of Nazareth's death – which, rather than being relatable to one of those wondrous events of history, is in its incomprehensibility to the immanent human mind more comparable to an extension of God's creation of the universe.[13]

We therefore notice just how little the resurrection of the Lord, which can but only evoke the faith of Christ's first disciples, possesses a miraculous character. It constitutes much more an extension of God's manifestation in the flesh and thus gives us more of a reason to believe Jesus' claims of being the Son of God. It is fundamentally important to remember just how inseparable Jesus' *work* and *person* are, how quite on the contrary, 'the decisive element of faith in Jesus can be found in the inseparable unity of the two words "Jesus Christ", in which the experience of identity conceals itself from both existence and mission.'[14] So let us in this knowledge now try and answer our third question.

Exactly how Constitutive for the Church have Beliefs Surrounding Easter been Considering their Centrality to Christ's Personality and Work?

The connection between the three questions posed here is so evident that one could say, in correctly answering the first two, one need not even pose the third. Because, as soon as one admits that the resurrection forms a necessary and accepted part of the Christian Church's concept of Jesus, as well as validly and innately expresses humanity's general need for salvation, then it seems superfluous to ask whether and to what extent the resurrection represents a constitutive element of the Church. Nevertheless, it is not wholly meaningless a pursuit to try and establish just how deeply the resurrection permeates the Church's beliefs, and thus evaluate the extent to which the Church can be called a 'Church of the resurrection'.

As a first point, it must be mentioned how Jesus' becoming Lord arose specifically as a result of his resurrection. He was only regarded as Lord, in his glory, in his resurrected state, after which he would then be recognised as *kyrios* to whom 'all force' should be transferred. All godly

worship should be owed to him, so Paul communicated in the Epistle to the Philippians:

> For this reason God raised him to the highest place above and gave him the name that is greater than any other name. And so, in honour of the name of Jesus all beings in heaven, on earth, and in the world below will fall on their knees, and will openly proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:9-11).

If we take this fundamental belief as our point of departure, then it follows that we are able, in the etymological derivation of the word 'church' [*kirche*], not only to find a much better term than the word *ekklesia*, but also to glean from it just what was envisaged for the community that Jesus founded.

For, as is quite well-known, the word 'church' derives from the Greek word *kyriake*, which itself is derived from *kyrios*. The idea of the Christian Church being expressed here is not so much the notion of a number of people meeting in a cult-like setting in order to advance a particular religious principle in the name of God (as it had been in the case of the Old Testament), but instead the notion of a community assembling in the name of the Lord and thereby, in recognition of the resurrection, acquiring a new 'taste' for life and death. The reality of the resurrection did not just determine the name of Christ's new community but, as we will see, its teachings and its whole sacramental life.

The placement of word and sacrament beneath the sign of Christ's resurrection is expressed most poignantly in the Lord's Great Commission, which at the same time represents a baptismal commission. A passage from Matthew's gospel treats it in the following way:

> Jesus drew near and said to them, 'I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age.' (Mt 28:18-20).

Let us analyse this quite momentous passage so that its content becomes a bit clearer.

In the first place, it must be noted how Christ's words, spoken in the form of a commission to the Apostles, were only ever uttered after his resurrection. So too were they delivered from the authoritative position of the resurrected Lord.

Jesus had always spoken as a bearer of God's authority but he had never before spoken with such definite authority as this. For the first time the demands he made eluded all temporal and spatial boundaries in reaching the full dimensionality of the divine. And indeed we must note expressions characteristic of this: 'all authority in heaven and on earth', 'all peoples, 'obey everything', 'always'.

Such unwavering say on the matter could never have been possible without the resurrection and in fact neither could the absolute authority of Christian doctrine. With great accuracy Paul recognised how this represented the crux of Christian doctrine, which he formulates rather succinctly with: 'And if Christ has not been raised from death, then we have nothing to preach and you have nothing to believe' (1Cor 15:14).

In betokening the unicum of all which is Christian, the important part of this sermon on the resurrection seems not so much to proffer a victorious overcoming of death as it accepts the paradox that only through death would such a victory have ever been possible. Indeed W. Küneth recognised this point when he said the following:

> It is precisely the old Christian belief that the crucifix embodies the still living "Lord" which has caused such a scandal and which has left the Church's thinkers divided on the issue.[15]

So long as we accept the paradoxical nature of the Christian message regarding the resurrection, then we are well-prepared to go on and grapple with not only the sacramental, but also the quotidian lifestyle of the Church's members in relation to this paradox.

It follows that we become ready to face the rather tragic double situation of the 'already' but also the 'but not yet' – a situation which claims to be *one*, but in actual fact has many facets; one which is *holy*, but which is in need of purification; one which is *catholic* but which is

constantly putting itself to the test; one which is *apostolic*, but which still begs for the Apostles' blessing.

If we now apply this perspective to Church sacraments, we see just how much of a bearing the paradoxical nature of the resurrection had on the ways of the Church. More specifically, both the Lord's death, as well as his resurrection, play a strong part in the sacramental ways of its members.

Paul, for instance, took the example of Christian baptism:

> For surely you know that when we were baptised into union with Christ Jesus, we were baptised into union with his death. By our baptism, then, we were buried with him and shared his death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from death by the glorious power of the Father, so also we might live a new life (Rom 6:3-5).

The same is also true for the Eucharist, provided one grasps its meaning properly. On the one hand, the Eucharist brings to mind the suffering of Christ the victim at Golgotha, on the other hand it commits to the world the eternal life of our Lord, which is why it is also honoured with thanks. One need not really delve in the other remaining Church sacraments, as naturally they follow the same pattern of thought: each sacramental action has the objective of releasing us from our sins, giving us a new life within the Lord, and thus strengthening us in this life.

If then the Church stands by the word and sacraments prescribed to it, and if within these two elements the Lord's resurrection forms the core belief, then it is hardly deniable that the resurrection represents a constitutive element of the Church. And so we have attempted to answer the three dogmatic questions posed at the beginning of this article.

It is now the current task to pose yet another question, that being: Is it at all possible to locate the resurrection elsewhere in the Church, and in so doing overturn the belief in its purely theoretical position by placing it at the very centre of spiritual Church life? In other words, outside of *dogma*, *blessings* and *sacraments,* is the resurrection present in such a way that it can be identified as a profound part of Church life - one which reaches a wider mass of Church-goers?

This question leads us into three main areas of inquiry, all less institutionally regulated than those mentioned above. It is these three areas that I would now like to examine from an Orthodox standpoint.

It should be mentioned how the viewpoints on these three great areas differ greatly depending on which side of Christianity one stands – the Orthodox or the Western side. They are: *monasticism*, *the representation of icons in painting* and *Church song*.

Without the resurrection, monasticism would be a farce, because its very premise is the belief in life after death. The philosophical groups of Antiquity, whose ways are said to have been formative for the development of Christian asceticism, are though quite different in spirit to their Christian variants. In the first place, they had the goal of fulfilling the purposes of philosophy through undisturbed, quiet meditation based on concerns for worldly and mortal problems. Christian monasticism, on the other hand, is based on the programmatic living out of life after death. With the advice given by the Evangelists, that is, to live in obedience, poverty and chastity, one is not allowed to see there being moral earnings and judgements to be made from and over other human beings, because this would revert back to the ways of Montanism (which had for so long been suppressed by the Church). Instead, it was their conviction that one needed to actively announce the existence of life after death and live this out manifestly. Its main principles are the eschewing of human desires, material needs and the removal of sexual difference.

In this way, monastic life under Christianity comes to mean the preference for eternal life by God, whereby the celebration of and service to Him (in place of sadness and pessimism) define the relationship and in so doing possess a sense of everlasting doxology.

The doxological character of Orthodox monasticism is revealed by the Athonite monks in their complete replacement of everyday greetings in favour of a single, stereotypical, if not also liturgical greeting, whether or not they encounter a believer or a non-believer, a king or a simple beggar. One would never hear the usual greetings ‘good morning’, ‘good day’ and ‘good evening’ come from their mouths, but instead – and in total ignorance

of the hour of the day – the enthusiastic calling out of *evlogison*, which literally translates as 'Praise be to the Lord!'. This absolute orientation towards life after death is the reason why Orthodox monasticism must be judged based on its eschatological longing, rather than on its social achievements.[16]

But it is on this point that many misunderstandings regarding Orthodox monasticism have arisen and by which its ways have often been falsely judged. This, however, is mostly the work of heterodoxical minds that look favourably upon the supposed activism and allegedly more world-friendly character of the Western tradition. But Orthodox Church members and even some theologians have done the same!

Byzantine painting met the same destiny until not too long ago. So many people could not conceive of the works of this tradition in accordance with their original spirit and so tended to regard them as nothing but ghostly apparitions! But where do we find the original spirit of this so seldom displayed art? What makes it different from Christian art of the West? In essence, the difference exists in the aspect of life after death.

While the West supposedly paints the apparent and inherently known, Byzantine art seeks to express an entirely different order of things, in which perspective, three-dimensionality and even to an extent proportionality, play a relatively minor role. The West stays true to the laws and aesthetic criteria governing its art even when depicting supernatural subjects. By contrast, Byzantine art oversteps the boundaries of logic, for it seeks to depict a transfigured world – one pertaining to the resurrection.

As a result, you would never see a mortal stand as model for a holy icon in the East, whereas in the West this has been common practice. The halo encircling the heads of holy idols would not be fitting otherwise if it were not a transfigured world which was depicted.

For the same reason the Byzantine painters refused to see themselves as true artists, instead taking themselves for pilgrims and worshippers. This may help explain why they many of them lacked the courage to put their names to their works. In instances where they did not

want to remain in total anonymity, the painters would still sign their works in a rather humble manner with: 'From the hand of God's servant so and so'. For they tended to regard their work as the simple manifestation of God through the work of their unworthy hands - a task which necessitated days of devoted service to God in the form of preparatory fasting and prayer. And so one must say that Byzantine art is a self-professed dogmatic and liturgical art which cannot be judged in accordance with the aesthetic criteria of this world, but instead in light of Orthodox dogma.[17]

But so too is the Lord's resurrection at the centre of Church song and the hymnology of the Orthodox Church in its becoming each Sunday and at each celebration of the Eucharist the focus of real liturgy. Just as Easter is the biggest celebration on the Orthodox Church calendar, so too is Sunday the normative day for Church services during the week. In this way, the Church community could be said to live from one Sunday to the next, just as it could be said that Easter has a distinct presence in all of its hymns.

The characteristic presence of Easter on Sunday is also evident in the theological tone of the language employed by Orthodox members of the Church: the Greeks call Sunday *Kyriaki*, that is, the day of the Lord; the Russians, even more to the point, call it *Voskresenije*, meaning the Resurrection!

Here is not the place to give examples of texts from Orthodox hymnology so as to show just how much they have been influenced by the resurrection. The term *hymnology*, or *hymnography*, however, is already a good indication of this point in being derived from *hymnen,* which are words of praise. It should be mentioned how the Orthodox Church does not have a 'read mass'. In Orthodoxy, there is not one sacrament which does not possess a respective celebratory song. This encompasses burials and memorials, too, which are sung in the comfort of knowledge of the resurrection.

The highly dogmatic value of Orthodox hymnology has often been referenced – and rightly so. This is also the reason why today a passage

from a hymn can be just as legitimately cited in a discussion of Church teachings as a passage from the Bible or one from a patristic text. For more often than not the composers of Church hymns were at the same time the writers of theological treatises. A famous example is the great Church father, John of Damascus.

Just how profoundly theological the question regarding Orthodox hymnology should be considered is evident in the following striking example. According to Orthodox hymnology, the great and unutterable mystery is not so much the Lord's resurrection as it is God's taking bodily form in the first place. Each miracle shows itself as but a consequence of this, the greatest miracle. As a result, great amazement exists over the Christmas story to which the Eastern Church has dedicated the following hymn: 'A strange and paradoxical mystery it is to me that hell became heaven, the Virgin a cherub throne and the manger a place of such unfathomableness…' It is expected, therefore, with the unbelievable apparition of God in the form of his Son Jesus Christ already having occurred, that the resurrection, too, would take place. Accordingly, one is not so much surprised about the resurrection as one is about the Lord's death itself. This is why on Good Friday, during the well-known elegies of the Orthodox Church, not only does one hear it sung about hosts of angels, but also about how tragic it is that 'life could be laid in the grave in such a way!'

In rounding off one's argument on this matter, one should probably talk in depth about the people's general devotion to the idea of the resurrection. This, however, would lead us too far afield. I will therefore be satisfied to be able to mention but one endearing custom which still lives on today throughout much of Greece and in which one can see the level of faith simple Orthodox people have in the resurrection. When the grandmother cuts the fingernails of the grandchild, she does not let them throw the nail clippings out, but instead urges the children to stick them in their breasts with the explanation that all our bodily parts must stay together in order for the body to be full at the time of its resurrection! The one who believes in Jesus' word can in a similar way believe that 'even the hairs of your head have all been counted' (Mt 10:30).

And nevertheless we must conclude by saying that we have no real access to the resurrected Christ when it is not the Holy Spirit who guides us. This is explained by the fact that the first thing Jesus did after his resurrection was to breathe upon his disciples, and in so doing infuse them with the Holy Spirit[18]. In the various stories of the Apostles, we also see how they never dare to speak of the Lord's resurrection without first having imparted the message of the Holy Spirit to their audience[19]. This allows us to make another conclusion which retains its validity for all eternity: the person who has not experienced Pentecost can also not fathom Easter!

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Acknowledgement

Translated from the original German by Nicholas Enright. The article first appeared in *Kleronomia* 4:1 (1972) 1-17.

NOTES:

1 F. Lentzen-Deis, 'Auferstehungserfahrung und Osterglaube', *in*: *Theologische Akademie*, Vol. 7, ed. Karl Rahner & Otto Semmelroth, Frankfurt a.M., 1970, 65.

2 1 *Corinthians* 2: 13.

3 Paul Althaus, *Die christliche Wahrheit* (Gütersloh: G. Mohn, 1969), 432-433.

4 *ibid.*, 435.

5 Joseph Ratzinger explains this matter well in his book *Einführung in das Christentum* (Munich, 1969), 249-255.

6 Lentzen-Deis, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

7 Karl Rahner, *Zur Theologie des Todes* (Quaestiones disputatae, Vol. 2) (Freiburg i. Br., 1958), 30.

[8] Paul Althaus, 'Tod', in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, (3rd ed.), Vol. 6, Sp. 917.

[9] See this in Panayiotis Trembelas, *Dogmatics* (Greek), Vol. 3 (Athens, 1961), 369-372.

[10] Paul Althaus, 'Tod', in *RGG*, Vol. 6, Sp. 915.

[11] See Ratzinger, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

[12] See Ratzinger, *op. cit.,* p. 245.

[13] W. Künneth, 'Auferstehung Christi', in *RGG*, Vol. 1, Sp. 701.

[14] Ratzinger, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

[15] Künneth, *op. cit.*, Sp. 701.

[16] See S. Harkianakis, *The Church Constitution of the Second Vaticanum* (Greek) (Thessaloniki, 1969), 221-225.

[17] See K. Kalokyris, *The Orthodox painting* (Greek) (Athens, 1960).

[18] *John* 20: 22.

[19] *AG*. 4, p. 31.

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