

*THE REALITY
of the
RESURRECTION*

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Preface

Ever since the apostles of Christ invaded the Roman world with the gospel, the Christian church has been endeavoring to formulate its theology in language relevant to the times. The essential truth of divine revelation remains unchanged, for God is eternally the same, but the problems and fashions of human thought vary from century to century. Each succeeding period demands some new adjustment, discarding the phraseology of the past and adopting eagerly the current formulas that seem more significant.

In this creedal flux the definition of Christianity often seems to be dependent upon the terms of the latest philosophy that it encounters. During the Middle Ages Thomas Aquinas attempted to combine Biblical truth with Aristotelian reasoning. Later Immanuel Kant's philosophy led to the theology of Schleiermacher and Harnack, and today existentialism wields a powerful influence over Barth, Brunner, and Bultmann. Is there any inherent principle or symbol by which the gospel can be defined without resorting to extraneous forms?

The author believes that the resurrection of Christ can supply the framework for Christian theology because it marks the intersection of the temporal and eternal worlds, of material existence and spiritual life. Because the event is supernatural, it expresses the essence of God's revelation; because it is historical, it is a genuine part of human experience. The resurrection is a permanent witness to the love, power, holiness, and redemptive purpose of God and is also a fact which must be accepted as part of history. It cannot be dismissed as a speculative venture of the intellect which is possibly, but not necessarily, true.

For this reason the resurrection is perpetually relevant to the intellectual and spiritual problems of the world. The event provides a foundation for faith; its imagery contains the framework for a new life. The New Testament recognizes both of these uses, for it says, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (I Cor. 15:17), and, "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1). By this one great fact all theology can be integrated. Revelation, incarnation, redemption, sanctification, and eschatology reach their fullest development in the demonstration of the divine triumph over death.

The purpose of this book is not to defend a doctrine that is no longer tenable but to show that the resurrection has a direct bearing upon contemporary intellectual and spiritual tensions. A coherent system of theology that will embrace the emergent problems of the age must also include the continuum of God's historical action in His past dealing with the world. The intent is not to debate detailed philosophical issues but to present a cogent statement of the Biblical truth and to let the reader apply it for himself.

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