



for they shall see something never told
and witness something never heard before . . .

The Thinking of Jesus

By FR. WALTER M. ABBOTT

Once more I would like you to run your eye over the whole span of Luke's Gospel. This time let us try to discern from it what Jesus himself thought through the years, for example, about the kingship and messiahship he publicly acknowledged on entering Jerusalem.

We are skating over generations of controversy in this quest. There have been scholars who held, and many still do today, that it is impossible to tell from the Gospels what Jesus himself said, and still less what he thought, because, they say, the Gospels can only give what the Church of the second half of the first century said and thought about Jesus. In the view of these scholars, the Gospels were composed in Christian communities many decades after Jesus had died and after the oral traditions had been shaped and reshaped to express various theological developments among the Christians.

There is, on the other hand, a long line of noted scholars, among them many saints, going back to the early centuries of the Church, who labored mightily to show that everything written by the Gospel writers fits together perfectly and gives a fair picture of what Jesus himself said and thought. If there are various versions in the Gospels of what seem to have been one and the same event or saying, they would explain that Jesus must have done similar things several times or must have said similar things in different ways on different occasions.

We are going to steer a middle course, in the conviction that a Gospel like Luke's gives many clear pictures not only of what Luke said and thought but also of what Jesus himself said and thought. Let us first show one reason why we can probe Luke's Gospel and come up with some hard facts about Jesus and not merely opinions of late first-century Christians about him.

Every commentator on Luke will tell you what a gentle soul Luke was, how joy pervades his Gospel, how considerate of women he was, etc. The commentators often give the impression that the Jesus Luke

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presents, therefore, is similarly gentle, joyful, considerate, etc.

I agree Luke was everything that is said of him, but I draw your attention to the fact that often in Luke's account Jesus actually explodes with anger or some kindred emotion, and often the explosion is directed rather generally at the people who are present. Luke may be a gentle soul, but his Gospel definitely shows a Jesus who felt much stronger needs and emotions, including anger—in fact, I would say, especially anger. There is a quality here that surely was not invented by Luke.

Look, for example, at 11:40 ff. During a dinner in a house where he was a guest Jesus used some remarkably strong language, and even called his host a fool. One of the other guests then speaks up and says he has been insulted by Jesus' remarks. He gets a withering reply which you can read in full.

Look, for example, at 9:41: "How unbelieving and wrong you people are! How long must I stay with you? How long do I have to put up with you?" Jesus did what he was asked to do on that occasion, but he certainly complained vehemently about it.

On another occasion it is clear that Jesus exploded with anger in a synagogue, and on the Sabbath: "You imposters!" he shouted (13:15). I do not think I am exaggerating when I use the words "exploded" and "shouted." I don't think anybody uses the expression "You imposters!" unless he is exploding and shouting—or at least raising his voice. It is the kind of word one just doesn't whisper or use in a matter-of-fact way.

One wonders what Jesus said to his apostles James and John on another occasion when they asked him if they should "call fire down from heaven" and destroy the people of a Samaritan village who refused to receive Jesus and his disciples

"because it was plain that he was going to Jerusalem" (9:54). Luke doesn't say any more than that "Jesus turned and rebuked" his two disciples, but it was very likely a vivid memory for them.

Sometimes it is obvious that Jesus is not irate but simply snapping back a fast answer, e.g., 11:28. But contrast what happens in the very next verse, 11:29: "How evil are the people of this day!" This is not an expression one uses without some heat. Look again at other places where you may have thought Jesus was calm and majestic, e.g., 6:41-2, 6:46, 7:31 ff. But be careful. You can go too far and begin to see everything only one way, like a debater who will try to make everything support his argument. You cannot really make 8:22 into an angry outburst, and 12:1 may be a completely calm warning against hypocrisy.

Of course Luke presents Jesus also as calm and majestic, at times gentle and considerate, even sweet and even ecstatic (see 10:21 ff.). The point I want to make here is that clearly the records Luke consulted gave him indications that Jesus had a powerful temper.

Luke may have toned down this trait of Jesus. He may have left out some manifestations of it. But he did not, perhaps we should say could not, leave out all evidence of this characteristic of Jesus.

In this way we have begun to probe authentic feelings and thoughts of Jesus himself. We are now ready to take another look at what Luke says that Jesus said and did about kingship and messiahship.

All Things Are New Through Him

By DONALD GRAY

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is an event of promise. Such an observation may seem so commonplace as to verge on the banal for many Christians today. Of course, the resurrection of Jesus is an event of promise—it promises and guarantees my own life after death. But is that a fully adequate interpretation of this promise or is it, rather, an impoverishment and narrowing down of the promise? It is that question we should like to explore briefly here through the connected question: to whom is the promise given?

Is the promise contained in the resurrection of Jesus given only to Christians? We do not and can not maintain that Jesus died only for Christians and so we should not think that the promise of his resurrection is given only to ourselves either.

Christians indeed hope for the new age already inaugurated by the resurrection, but they hope for this new age (when they are really being Christians) not only for themselves, but for all men. This promise, then, is given not to a few isolated individuals or specially chosen ones, but to the whole human community.

Is this promise made to the whole man, however? This curious question is designed simply to point up the fact that we must not allow ourselves to forget the resurrection of the body. By resurrection of the body we mean the resurrection of the

whole person, including the corporeal, bodily dimension of his life. The resurrection of Jesus as promise to the whole man is sometimes obscured by the expression the immortality of soul.

While this is not a biblical way of speaking, it is a tenable way of speaking (so Catholic Christians maintain at least) as long as it does not serve to hide from view the necessity of a bodily resurrection. Bodily resurrection is necessary for man not only because he is what we would call today a psychosomatic unity, but also because man's life is essentially a social and communal life which is made possible only in and through bodily presence to others.

The doctrine of the resurrection of the body also lights up another aspect of our question about the resurrection-promise given in Jesus. If it is true that the promise is made to the whole human community and to the whole man within that community, it is nonetheless true that the promise is also made to the whole cosmos.

This is possibly the most mysterious dimension of this all-embracing promise, for it is so difficult for us to imagine what it could or will mean in the concrete. Its difficulty, however, should not lead us to minimize its importance. The Christian hope for the renewal of the whole of his cosmic environment reveals, as nothing else can, man's essential solidarity with the world of nature, out of which he has emerged and for which he has a continuing responsibility of stewardship.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is, then, a promise for the whole human community, the whole man, and the whole cosmos.

When, we may ask, is this promise to the whole of things to be redeemed? From a certain point of view, of course, we simply do not know. It is a matter of hope. However, from another point of view, we do know because this promise is already being fulfilled within our own lives and communities and environment.

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