



## A Pause for Reflection

On a summer field trip to Mexico many years ago, a number of us faculty and students decided to hold a health clinic in a Chamula Indian village on a remote mountain in the highlands of Chiapas. Because the village was virtually inaccessible, we arranged to ride in a truck to the end of the road and then load our supplies on mules that village guides had waiting for us.

Upon arriving in the mountain village, we set up our clinic in an empty grain-storage shed. All day we were busy caring for patients. At nightfall people were still waiting to receive care. Fortunately, our host had candles and lanterns so that we could see. Long after dark, we finally finished and then loaded the mules to return down the mountain.

Because we had no lights and the heavily clouded sky was pitch-dark, we were worried. However, someone reassured us that mules were sure-footed and could readily see through the darkness. With that, we mounted our animals for the return trip.

Since we could not even see one another, we depended on the mules to guide us. But within minutes yells and screams pierced the darkness. The mules had become lost. They wandered off the trail and stumbled into trees and brush along the mountainside. One of my closest friends called out, saying that his mule was caught in a tree and that he had lost his eyeglasses.

We were close to utter panic, when we turned to see a tiny candle burning in the window of a hut in the now-distant village. Calling to each other, we agreed to turn our mules back toward the light. When we finally arrived back in the village, we found the home of our host. He was very apologetic and gave each of us corrugated cardboard to use as makeshift mattresses by laying it on the pews of the nearby church.

Early next morning we awoke to a clear, blue sky and to sheepish grins and laughter. My close friend traced the mule prints from the night before and found his

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glasses in the brush at the foot of a tree. Soon we had the mules loaded again and proceeded down the mountain with deep gratitude for the tiny light in the window.

## The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

For some years those involved in this publishing venture have been holding what we might call a historical and philosophical clinic. We have been reviewing the reality discerned by scientists examining the nature-shaped universe and by philosophers reflecting on the God-shaped universe. At times it has seemed like darkness is present to envelope us. But each time we have turned to see a clear light in the distance. That light is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Our persistent presupposition has been that Christ's resurrection is the definitive, eternal and universal reality. That event constitutes the embodied presence of the God who has become human. It is a Creational event

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representing the union of the Creator with his Creation. It is the true and ultimate "at-one-ment."

As we reflect on the resurrection, the challenge is to learn the significance of that event for all mankind. As most of our readers know, we have discarded the age-old presumptions that the resurrection of Christ represents the victory of the true God over a fallen god, over a fallen human race, over a fallen Creation, or over some other "original sin." We also have discarded the notion that the resurrection represents the deification of mankind — where man becomes God, possesses God, or somehow is an emanation of God. Furthermore, we have discarded the notion that the resurrection is a fiction invented by the followers of an executed Jewish peasant philosopher.

We believe that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is an epochal event in the ongoing journey of Creation. It is thus the ultimate covenantal union of the Creator "Logos [Word]" with his Creation. It is the ultimate triumph of relationality — relationship over isolated self-existence. It is the victory of a united Creator/Creation over the pre-existent necessities of divine autonomy, imposed law and inevitable death. The resurrection represents the inbreaking of historical reality into this world. It is decisive in the creation and elevation of human personhood, selfhood and human consciousness. The resurrection portends the ultimate fulfillment of those human relationships that alone constitute freedom and responsibility. It inaugurates the fundamental relationality that alone permits commitment and caring, meaning and purpose, value and all the other attributes that distinguish mankind (male and female) from other forms of life. The resurrection links the Creator "Knower" — the One Who Knows — with a universe that cannot otherwise be known. It assures the eternal, relational reality of the "I" and the "thou — the "I" and the "other," the "subjective" and "objective."

We believe that apart from the resurrectional presence of Christ all mankind is doomed to evolutionary extinction through "natural selection," through cultural predation and genocide, or through some cosmic accident. Because of the resurrection,

we also believe that current attempts to revive religious fundamentalisms in Christianity, Judaism and Islam are doomed to failure. Also doomed to utter failure are attempts to “deconstruct” all truth, reality, and “knowing” through philosophy, to discard the natural universe under the delusion of self-deification, or to aggressively dominate and control the universe through science or some “cosmic consciousness.”

Our hope rests in the embodied resurrection and living presence<sup>1</sup> of the God who has become human. It rests in the resurrection and presence of the Creator who has adopted Creation — the One who has inaugurated the fundamental relationality that assures both the “particularity” of the individual and the “universality” of all Creation. Such “relationality” or relationship is metaphorically defined in Scripture as the “new covenant” between God and man. Thus, we again can state that the embodied resurrection of Jesus Christ is the epochal covenantal act, the final covenantal advance in Creation, the ultimate covenantal reality.

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## A Concluding Word

To those who read, critique and suggest directions for further exploration, we express deep appreciation and gratitude.<sup>2</sup> In a world of peril and gloom, we pause for reflection. But we also continue toward the resurrectional light that penetrates all darkness and assures our eternal, living and relational destiny.

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## Endnotes

1. Rather than a nonrelational, *immediate* presence, in which we absorb the Transcendent (“God *in* us”) or are absorbed by the Transcendent (“us *in* God”), the evidence indicates that the Risen Christ *mediates* his presence *with* us in history. That is, he reaches us through our neighbors. We reach him through each other. We reach each other and our own objective selves through him. This relational “reaching” may therefore be referred to as Christ’s “intermediatorial” presence, which is defined by the gifts of faith, hope and compassionate love. See “The End of Human Alienation,” subhead “The True Resolution of Human Alienation,” *Outlook* (Prequel 1994.7).
2. Out of deference for privacy and confidentiality, we here refrain from mentioning readers by name. Nevertheless, we are deeply indebted to those who critique and those who applaud.

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