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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE VIEWS OF LUTHER AND CALVIN
CONCERNING
THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

By

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A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
in
The Biblical Seminary in New York

New York, N. Y.
January, 1952

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"Oh that my words were now written!
oh that they were printed in a book!
That they were graven with an iron pen
and lead in the rock for ever!

"For I know that my redeemer liveth,
and that he shall stand at the latter
day upon the earth:
And though after my skin worms destroy this body,
yet in my flesh shall I see God:

"Whom I shall see for myself,
and mine eyes shall behold, and not another;
though my reins be consumed within me.

Job 19:23-27

Gift of Author

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INTRODUCTION

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE VIEWS OF LUTHER AND CALVIN
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INTRODUCTION

A. The Subject

1. The Subject Stated and Delimited

"Every one must fight his own battle with death by himself, alone."¹ So spoke the piercing voice of Martin Luther in a sermon preached at Wittenberg in Lent, 1522. The Reformers had important things to say about the death that all must face and its consequences for the one who puts his faith in the living Christ. Is it possible that this One who became conqueror over death² has the answer for man's bewilderment concerning the unknown experience of separation from this life on earth? This thesis will attempt to determine the use of the resurrection which Luther and Calvin made in answering questions such as this and in proclaiming the truth as found in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. The Subject Justified

If the great stone before Christ's tomb can be

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1. Luther: Works, Vol. II, p. 391.
2. Revelation 1:18a.

the spiritual equal of the law and human traditions,¹ then this stone is still an obstruction to many religious people who cannot see the resurrection of Jesus because of the importance they place on the law and tradition.² Because this law and tradition are so predominant in the lives of many Latin Americans today, as it was in the times of the Reformers, it would be well if some modern Luthers and Calvins in Latin America would preach the importance of the gospel, which includes Jesus' resurrection from the dead.³ Since the author hopes to be one of these reformers in Venezuela, the study of the use which Luther and Calvin made of Christ's resurrection and its relation to believers in Him should be most beneficial.

B. The Method of Procedure

To find the use the Reformers made of Christ's resurrection, it is necessary to find from their writings

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1. William Hazlitt: The Table Talk of Martin Luther, p. 104. Spiritually, the great stone can be taken as the law and human traditions which must be rolled away from the heart, if we are to find Christ, and believe that He is risen from the dead. "For through him we are delivered from the power of sin and death, Rom. viii., so that the handwriting of the conscience can hurt us no more."
2. Karl Adam: The Spirit of Catholicism, p. 2. "We Catholics acknowledge readily . . . that Catholicism cannot be identified simply and wholly with primitive Christianity, nor even with the Gospel of Christ, . . . And we go further and say that thousands of years hence Catholicism will probably be even richer, more luxuriant, more manifold in dogma, morals, law and worship, than the Catholicism of the present day."
3. I Corinthians 15:1-8.

what they believed and spoke on the subject. When examining these writings, which consist of sermons, meditations, correspondence, books, introductions to books of the Bible, informal recorded conversations, and other miscellaneous writings; the Reformers' use of Christ's resurrection will be found.

After analyzing the teachings of Luther and Calvin, it will be observed that the work of each man will naturally fall into two main divisions: 1) the simple presentation of the Biblical accounts of Christ's resurrection; and 2) the meaning of this miracle for the believer in Christ. Chapter One will give examples of Martin Luther's presentation of the resurrection, while Chapter Two will study the implications Luther believed to be inherent in the resurrection story. In Chapter Three, John Calvin's teaching on the resurrection will be investigated, while his views of the resurrection implications will be studied in Chapter Four. After investigating the views of both men, it will be important to compare and contrast their methods of proclaiming the resurrection; and this will be the substance of Chapter Five.

Chapter Six will finally summarize the study and attempt to give certain conclusions and suggestions for contemporary Christian consideration.

CHAPTER I

LUTHER'S INTERPRETATION OF THE RESURRECTION

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE VIEWS OF LUTHER AND CALVIN
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CHAPTER I

LUTHER'S INTERPRETATION OF THE RESURRECTION

A. Introduction

Just as there were earthquakes when Christ arose from the dead bodily, there were also earthquakes when this resurrection was proclaimed in Luther's day.¹ But according to Luther, these earthquakes were to be desired more than peace, for in spite of them the true Christian had the quietness of a conscience which was not guilty before God. In fact the trouble which the resurrection preaching stirred up proved to be wholesome for the believers.² This chapter attempts to illustrate the things Luther proclaimed which caused these tremendous upheavals of his day.

Not even those who claimed to be Christians in Luther's day agreed with him on the veracity of Christ's resurrection, for he wrote of this great miracle:

The Pope and his cardinals generally treat even this narrative as a fable to be laughed at; they are full-grown Epicureans, who smile with scorn when told of an eternal life to come.³

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1. Luther: Table Talk, pp. 109-110.
2. Ibid.
3. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, p. 11.

In the face of contemporary attitudes such as this, it was natural for Luther to proclaim what he believed to be truth both in the Creed and in the Bible. He preached that a person is not a Christian who denies the article in The Apostles' Creed concerning the resurrection of Christ; yet many reviled and abused it.¹ He also maintained that one must know the Easter narrative before he can know why Jesus' resurrection took place and before he can learn to enjoy the benefits it implied.² Because of Luther's use of the Creed and the Bible in declaring the truth of Christ's resurrection, this chapter shows what Luther spoke in explaining both the Creed and the Biblical accounts of this outstanding miracle of all time.

It has been stated previously that one must first know the Easter narrative before he can appreciate its benefits. Since Luther went to great detail in describing the benefits of Christ's resurrection, and since they will be dealt with in the following chapter, it is necessary first to study the comments he made on the narrative itself. It is the content of these basic beliefs in the Bible and also in the Creed that form the solid foundation which baffled the theologians of Luther's day; for they did not see the wealth in the words: "Did we in our own strength confide, Our striving would be losing."³ Thus as these preliminary

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid., p. 5.
3. I.V.C.F.: Hymns, p. 22.

beliefs are studied, a firm platform is built upon God's teachings for a later investigation of the resurrection's by-products.

B. Luther's Explanation of the Creed¹

Luther included the Apostles' Creed in the three documents the Christian should learn word for word.² In describing God's Son, it tells the important distinguishing facts about Him, including the fact of His resurrection from the dead on the third day after His burial. The importance Luther placed on the Creed is shown by the following quotation:

Ay, the entire Gospel which we preach is based on this, that we properly understand this article as that upon which our salvation and all our happiness rest, and which is so rich and comprehensive that we never can learn it fully.³

The explanation of each point of this Creed did not belong in brief sermons for children, but was better adapted to sermons which dealt with each point at length. Luther enlarged upon these sections as he spoke from the

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1. Luther: Large Catechism, pp. 113, 117, 121. "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy Christian Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen."
2. Luther: Concordia Triglotta, p. 577.
3. Ibid., p. 687.

pulpit throughout the year.¹ But in the larger, more detailed catechism he did explain that the resurrection took place for each of God's created people. As Christ died for men's sins, He was also raised for the justification of the same men.²

Much stress was placed on this thought (contained in Romans 4:25); for all things which Luther taught in opposition to the Pope and the whole world depended on this statement from God's Word. This was the first and chief article.³ It was fitting that Luther instruct the believers in the infallibility of this passage, for without it the whole world could gain victory over his teachings.⁴ There would be no point in believing about the Virgin birth and the death of Christ if the wonderful victory over death could not be believed.⁵

But even in the Small Catechism for children, the thought was written that the Christian serves a living Lord who will continue to live forever.⁶ God was to raise up the believer on the last day and give him and all true believers in Christ everlasting life.⁷ The real accomplishment of Christ's resurrection, then, was to devour death

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid., p. 463.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Luther: Works (Lenker), Vol. XII, p. 200.
6. Luther: Concordia Triglotta, p. 545.
7. Ibid.

and its power for the Christian.¹ This article in the Creed which dealt with the resurrection found opposition, and Luther said: ". . . even they who possess and believe the Word of God do not take it to heart as earnestly as they should."²

C. Luther's Interpretation of the Gospel Accounts of the Resurrection

1. The Resurrection as Important Doctrine of the Gospel

Luther was so insistent that Christ's death and resurrection was the central part of God's Word to man, that he refused to accept the Epistle of James as of Apostolic origin because it did not once mention the passion, resurrection or Spirit of Christ.³ In answer to what the Word of God is, Luther replied that it is the gospel of God concerning His Son.⁴ He believed that to fulfill the law was to have faith in the gospel, which portrays Jesus as God's Son and also man; and that He died and arose for the sake of others.⁵ This Christ was One who completely overcame death and sin, according to Luther. Although Christ expounded the law and worked miracles, He could only have been classed with the prophets if He had not worked the true good for which He came to earth. Luther says:

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1. Ibid., p. 687.
2. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, p. 11.
3. Luther: Works, Vol. VI, p. 478.
4. The Harvard Classics (Luther): Vol. 36, p. 365.
5. Luther: Works, Vol. VI, pp. 449-450.

The Gospel, then, is nothing but the preaching about Christ, Son of God and of David, true God and man, who by His death and resurrection has overcome all men's sin, and death and hell, for us who believe in Him.¹

2. Some Examples of Luther's References to the Resurrection

The disciples did not understand that Jesus referred to His own death and resurrection when He said: "A little while, and ye behold me no more; and again a little while, and ye shall see me."² This period when the disciples did not see Him can be likened unto the period when the Christian cannot see Christ, but knows that as He fulfilled the first promise of His coming, so He will also fulfill the second.³ As He did not leave His own in distress before, neither will He leave the true believer in sadness, but in His own time will rescue him for joy.⁴ The disciples' anguish at Jesus' death turned into comfort at His resurrection.⁵ But for the Jews who had to see and hear Jesus after His resurrection, all was not joy, for they had heard His words: "I will soon come to you again and make it worse and more bitter for them than it has ever been before."⁶

Another way in which Luther taught the resurrection message was by comparing and contrasting things he found in the Bible. He noted that the appearance of the

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1. Ibid., p. 441.
2. John 16:16
3. Luther: Works (Lenker), Vol. XII, p. 91.
4. Ibid., p. 93.
5. Ibid., pp. 90-91.
6. Ibid., p. 11.

angel at the empty tomb of Christ was joyfully welcomed by some, while to the soldiers the angel's appearance was terrifying.¹ Because many of Luther's sermons were scriptural accounts in his own words, he found it easy to use Paul's contrast between Adam and Christ²; that is, when Adam lived (and sinned) death overcame life, but when Christ died, life overcame death.³

Other Biblical portions Luther put into his own words were the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus to Mary Magdalene, to Peter, to the two walking to Emmaus, and to the disciples while they were at meat.⁴ The power of the simple Biblical accounts was evidenced in all Luther's sermons, and not usually complicated with intricate views of theology. In his preaching he tried to stimulate his listeners to think through what God was saying in the Bible. For instance in his "First Easter Sermon", he said that from Matthew's account it can be surmised that Christ passed out of the sealed tomb without disturbing it, for the guards were unaware that he was not in the tomb.⁵

This firm dependence which Luther held on the Bible speaking for itself gave him assurance for the individual believer. He spoke of Christ's physical body being

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1. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, p. 7.
2. Romans 5:17-21.
3. Luther: Table Talk, p. 390.
4. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, pp. 7-8.
5. Ibid., pp. 6-7.

a transient thing, for when He passed into the new life, He was free from the restrictions of the flesh; just as the believer will also be free according to I Corinthians 15.¹ This assurance for the individual was something of which the religious people of Luther's day knew nothing.

3. Some Examples of Luther's References to Post-Resurrection Events

It was not Luther's intention to fully explain the resurrection of Christ, for he believed it was necessary for the Lord Himself to explain it to the individual.² This concept was taken from Jesus' appearance to the two who walked to Emmaus, for he told them that Jesus' resurrection was a fulfillment of prophecy; and Luke added: "He then opened their minds to understand the Scriptures."³ This divine teaching superseded all the comments Luther made in expounding the Biblical accounts, for the nature of the message was supernatural and therefore the understanding of it was also supernatural in essence.

The messages of the prophets were another source of supernatural teaching of the resurrection truths. The angels who brought the glad tidings reminded the women that Christ's resurrection was foretold.⁴ The women who should have known the prophecies were foolish, for they sought

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1. Luther: Works, Vol. V, pp. 229-230.
2. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, p. 38.
3. Luke 24:45.
4. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, p. 21

"the living among the dead"¹ and because they prepared spices when they knew that a great stone sealed the sepulchre.² Instead of anointing His dead body, the women were given the joyful task of telling the disciples of this wonderful miracle.³ This appearance of the angels proves that they desire to be the friends of sinners, because it was for sinners that the Lord died and arose.⁴

Added to the appearance of angels was the supernatural appearance of the risen Lord in the midst of the disciples on the first night after His resurrection.⁵ Because the disciples thought Jesus was a spirit, they were undoubtedly accustomed to seeing spirits. Luther believed the Devil to be real and to appear in various shapes and forms. Because of the existence of such an evil and powerful being, Luther claimed it was therefore necessary that Christians willingly hear God's Word, meditate upon it and converse about it.⁶ Luther's firm belief in a personal Devil was no stronger than his belief in a personal God, for he said that the mere appearance of Christ made the Devil flee.

After seeing the great supernatural content of the resurrection story, one can understand why Luther used it with such power; for he was deeply convinced of the supernatural.

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1. Luke 24:5
2. Luther: Table Talk, p. 103-104.
3. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, p. 24.
4. Ibid., p. 21.
5. John 20:19.
6. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, pp. 34-37.

D. Summary

Since the facts about Christ's resurrection were not generally accepted or known in Luther's day, he took it upon himself to proclaim this good news as part of the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He spoke and wrote of the resurrection in connection with the Apostles' Creed and the Biblical accounts, proclaiming that on the third day after His burial, Christ was raised from the dead. The proclamations were no more than reworded Biblical narration; but because they implied that the individual could read these things and understand them for himself, they caused earthquakes in the existent form of Christianity.

Luther claimed the resurrection to be a necessary fact in the series of qualifications of the Savior, for it not only displayed Him as a conqueror of death, but also proved His role to be true to the predictions of the Old Testament prophets. By comparing and contrasting facts about the resurrection, Luther was better equipped to display the reality of the supernatural in the whole story. His extensive views of the supernatural included the fact that it was necessary for the Lord to reveal these things Himself. Christ said: "When the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all the truth . . ."¹

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1. John 16:13a.

CHAPTER II

LUTHER'S TEACHING ON THE RELEVANCE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION
TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

CHAPTER II

LUTHER'S TEACHING ON THE RELEVANCE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

A. Introduction

The great worth of the gospel, which included the resurrection of Jesus, is not understood by angels, much less by human beings.¹ Yet Luther concluded that because the angel messengers came, the death and resurrection of Christ were for him and his contemporaries. But what about the resurrection could be for the individual of Luther's day?

He believed that a heart belief in the resurrection could give one freedom from sin, condemnation and fear. It also could defeat the power of death that faces everyone. And with these blessings came the obligation of telling the truth of the gospel abroad.

B. The Necessity of More than Mental Assent

It is not enough to know the events concerning the resurrection, for it is also necessary to realize their meaning and importance.² Luther said that even the Devil believes that Christ arose from the dead in a physical way;

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1. Luther: Works (Lenker), Vol. XII, pp. 98-99.
2. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, p. 17.

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so one must go beyond a mental assent to the truth.¹ True belief in the resurrection includes a faith in its spiritual significance; that forgiveness of sins and redemption have been effected.² The doctrines of Christ should be cordially received and be the object of continued confidence; for in this is the guarantee of salvation.³

Luther was not speaking of the Pope and his crowd when he warned of the danger of mere mental assent, for he believed that the resurrection story was unknown to them.⁴ An anecdote is told of Pope Leo X (who excommunicated Luther) that to amuse himself he would have two monks debate on the immortality of the soul. At the end of the debate the Pope would say to the one maintaining the affirmative:

Although you have brought forward sound reasons and arguments in support of the immortality of the soul, I prefer to hold the negative view, that we die as other beasts do. For the affirmative view makes for melancholy and sadness, but the negative view produces a happy, care-free mood.⁵

The Pope, then, was not the object of Luther's exhortation, for he did not care to have even a mental assent to the physical resurrection.

But Luther did speak to the German nobility, burghers, and peasants; saying that if they had a heartfelt conviction about Christ's resurrection, they would

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1. Luther: Works (Lenker), Vol. XII, p. 200.
2. Ibid.
3. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, p. 29.
4. Ibid., p. 18.
5. Missouri Synod: Doctrinal Essays, p. 24

seek eternal things rather than temporal.¹ He said that the duty of the one who is risen with Christ is to seek the things which are above, and to set his affections on heavenly things which are with Christ. As a result of a high position in Christ, the Christian is obligated to do his Father's will on earth.²

The Holy Spirit was believed to have been the power which resisted sin and enabled the believer to keep "the feast" with sincerity and truth;^{3,4} and faith to believe in a risen Christ was not present where the Holy Ghost was absent.⁵

C. Three Implications of the Resurrection

1. Freedom from Sin and Condemnation

In his First Easter Sermon, Luther said that in order to understand the benefits of Christ's resurrection, the believer must keep two pictures in mind; the awful view of His suffering in atoning for our sins, and the bright view of His new life.⁶

These pictures immediately bring to mind the purposes of Christ's work as Luther spoke of them in the same Easter sermon. He quoted Romans 4:25 which speaks of the Lord being "delivered for our trespasses" and "raised again.

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1. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, p. 11.
2. Ibid., pp. 30-31.
3. I Cor. 5:8.
4. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, pp. 30-31.
5. Ibid., p. 18.
6. Ibid., pp. 8-9.

for our justification".¹ The Christian was urged to depend firmly upon Christ's resurrection for freedom from sin and condemnation. He was immediately to claim this freedom by faith, and later the day would come when faith would be sight.² At the present he had opposition from the Devil but eventually his body was to be perfected so that sin and death would no longer have power over him.³ God's true pardon was found in the power of Christ's resurrection. The fact that man was sinful was not important; because Christ, the Head of the believer, arose from the dead, conquering sin and death. Luther went on to preach that good works and religious observances can never be a substitute for belief in this Christ.⁴ It is faith in this Christ which makes the individual righteous and not works of his own.⁵ In counter-acting the teachings of the doctors and colleges of his day who claimed that good works helped to gain salvation, Luther said:

You must believe it and confidently rely upon it that the thing is as the Gospel says, that not your work but the Lord Jesus Christ's death and resurrection takes away your sin and death. This you cannot attain to except by faith.⁶

Because he was convinced of this, Luther claimed a present freedom from condemnation and a future deliverance

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1. Ibid., p. 9.
2. Ibid., p. 16.
3. Ibid., p. 17.
4. Ibid., p. 18.
5. Luther: Works, Vol. VI, p. 442.
6. Luther: Works (Lenker), Vol. XII, p. 186.

from the body of sin and death.¹ He said that the resurrection itself consoles one with the assurance of sins departed, and in addition gives a new life and righteousness which Paul explains as justification.² The only reason the Christian claims to be holy is because he believes in One who died for his sins and arose from the dead.³ The true believer, then, has reason to rejoice because of the victory of life over death.⁴

2. Freedom from Fear

Another of the ways that the resurrection affects the individual, is that it gives him freedom.

Luther's tract "On the Liberty of the Christian" says:

The soul has nothing else in heaven nor on earth whereby it can live, become pious, free, and Christian than the gospel, . . . God's word preached by Christ, as he himself says (John xi. 25): 'I am the resurrection and the life . . .'⁵

It is worthy of note that by freedom, Luther did not mean a freedom from trouble. In his sermon for the third Sunday after Easter (in which he was still mentioning Christ's resurrection frequently) Luther said that the disciples must be tested for a while along with their glorying in the Lord's death and resurrection.⁶ But along with trouble, the Christian possesses a hope. Luther described the persecution in this world as being only temporal and

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1. Rom. 7:25, 8:1.
2. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, pp. 9-10.
3. Ibid., p. 17.
4. Ibid., pp. 9-10.
5. Charles D. Warner: A Library of the World's Best Literature, Vol. 23, p. 9327.
6. Luther: Works (Lenker), Vol. XII, p. 104.

endurable, when the tormented one believes that Christ arose for him to give him eternal life.¹

In cheering a melancholy man, Luther told him not to think on his sins, death and damnation but to turn his eyes to the man Christ; and then he quoted what the Creed states about Christ. He told him that there was no cause to be afraid, for Christ suffered death for him and prevailed for his comfort and defence.² Instead of allowing fear to take control, Luther said that the Christian has power to rebuke sin, death and the Devil because nothing threatens since Jesus Christ arose from the dead.³ Even the angel at the tomb greeted the women with "fear not"⁴ for something tremendous had taken place and the believer had no need to fear. It is therefore God's pleasure that man have confidence in the angelic proclamation of the resurrection, and thereby have comfort.⁵ In fact one cannot properly celebrate Easter without the realization that fears are banished, together with the other joyful aspects of the Christian heritage.⁶

3. Victory over Death

A new freedom which the believer has because of Christ's resurrection from the dead is death itself. The death of the Christian is unlike the death of

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1. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, p. 23.
2. Luther: Table Talk, pp. 387-388.
3. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, p. 19.
4. Matt. 28:5.
5. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, p. 21.
6. Ibid., p. 31.

others, according to Luther, for his sufferings are only the beginning of freedom.¹ Death is the means by which sin's corruption is removed. It is a thing to be longed for, since Christ's touch has made the curse a blessing and death the gateway to life and joy.² The heart who receives the consolation of Christian liberty learns with the Apostles to scoff at sin and death. Luther writes:

For death is swallowed up in victory, not only the victory of Christ, but ours also, since by faith it became ours, and in it we too conquer.³

Again it is seen that the believer, and not only Christ, sees good through death, because of the ultimate resurrection.⁴

If Luther did not believe in the reality of the lake of fire, he would not have been so involved in the meaning of Christ's resurrection. But through his concentrated study of the Bible, Luther found that sinful men send themselves to everlasting punishment. In his sermon on II Thesalonians, he said that men, by contempt and hatred of God and His Word, ". . . bring upon themselves everlasting pain and damnation . . ."⁵ And in explaining the 82nd Psalm, he said that rulers who are mere men without God's Word will be eternally under the Devil's power in death.⁶

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1. Luther: Works, Vol. I, pp. 138-139.
2. Ibid., pp. 137-138.
3. Eliot: The Harvard Classics, Vol. 36, p. 337.
4. Luther: Works, Vol. I, pp. 139-140.
5. Luther: Works (Lenker), Vol. IX, p. 384.
6. Luther: Works, Vol. IV, p. 321.

On the other hand, his belief in life everlasting in glory was equally strong. He repeated Paul's contrast of the way in which the Christian dies and the way in which he is raised:

corruption————>incorruption,
dishonor————>glory,
weakness————>power,
natural body————>spiritual body.^{1,2}

In speaking of God's works, he added that since God gave us His only Son to deliver us from sin and death and to purchase for us life and salvation; it is certain that the believer does not die as a beast, but Luther writes:

. . . so many of us as sleep in Christ, shall through him be raised again to life everlasting at the last day, and the ungodly to everlasting destruction. (John. v, Dan xii.)³

Luther also claimed that the Creator showed this inevitable life through His creation, as an object lesson. One of his sayings about this was: "Winter is death; summer is the resurrection."⁴

Because of the reality of hell and heaven in Luther's thought, he could give advice to those who were at the brink of death. He would tell those in trouble that the hope of the resurrection conquers spiritual and temporal struggle, and it is because of the resurrection that God's Word is heard, that Christ is believed, that He is awaited with comfort, that salvation is obtained, and that other

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1. I Corinthians 15:42-44.
2. Luther: Works, Vol. VI, pl 288.
3. Luther: Table Talk, pp. 53,54.
4. Warner: A Library of the World's Best Literature, Vol. 23, p. 9347.

benefits are derived.¹ Luther went on to say that the reason why persecution for the cause of Christ exists, is that "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."² On another occasion he encouraged a persecuted minister who was about to leave his post by saying that it is merely a trifle if he were to die for the Lord's sake, for the believers will rise with Him and abide with Him in eternity.³ To the same minister, Luther wrote of Abraham's faith in offering Isaac and finished by saying: "We say, 'In the midst of life we die.' God answers, 'Nay, in the midst of death we live.'"⁴

Luther explained to his group of believers that the enemies of Christ's words would kill many of them, but even this was not a cause for fear, because the promise of Christ was in their possession: ". . . because I live, ye shall live also"⁵ and ". . . where I am, there ye may be also."⁶

To those who had lost loved ones through death, Luther would say that those who have no hope grieve, and rightfully so; but Paul told the Thessalonians not to grieve as those who have no hope (I Thess. 4:13). The Christian should consider death as precious and the coffin as Paradise. He then told them how that Christ spoke of Lazarus and Jairus' daughter as sleeping; removing the hateful aspects

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1. Luther: Table Talk, p. 53.
2. Matthew 22:32b.
3. Roland H. Bainton: Here I Stand, p. 150.
4. Ibid.
5. John 14:19b.
6. John 14:3b.

usually connected with death.¹ He did not intimate that the Christian would not die in a physical way, but rather that the believer would not feel death as the unbeliever, and would fall into death as into sleep. For this reason, Luther encouraged the believers to be strong in the hour of death by saying: "I believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God; I ask no more."²

Christ Himself knew what it was to go through death; and in the contest between life and death, God won out, giving life. This should be contemplated often.³ What a privilege to know that sin, death, and the Devil have been defeated by Christ,⁴ and that those who were dead spiritually have been made alive together with Christ.⁵

It has been said that the best way to propagate one's beliefs is to get people to sing them.⁶ Since Luther was talented in music, this proved to be true with his beliefs. In 1524⁴ he wrote two hymns which deal with Christ's resurrection: "Jesus Christ Our Savior, Who Overcame Death" and "Christ Lay in Fetters of Death".⁷ On other occasions he put Christian words to existent popular or religious tunes.⁸ Such was the case in a book of Latin

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1. Luther: Works, Vol. VI, pp. 287-288.
2. Luther: Table Talk, pp. 385-386.
3. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, p. 16.
4. Ibid., p. 15.
5. Ibid., p. 13.
6. Dr. D. G. McKee: Lecture in Historical Theology, Biblical Seminary, 1950.
7. Luther: Works, Vol. VI, p. 302.
8. Albert E. Bailey: The Gospel in Hymns, p. 313.

and German songs he edited. He remarked that the songs were chosen ^{because} their texts honored the resurrection, instead of singing about purgatory and torment. He used some of the same tunes, however, because the notes were pleasing, and it would have been a shame to lose the value of the beautiful music.¹

Luther claimed that even in death, there was cause for gladness and singing, for Christ Himself, after death, found complete joy.² When He was resurrected, He removed the sorrow that lingered because of His bodily absence.³ Even at the time of His resurrection, joy overflowed, for He was known as the living Savior.⁴ A greater portion of rejoicing and comfort was later experienced in Luther's day, when the Christian firmly believed that Christ arose from the dead. In fact, it was impossible not to be glad upon the realization of His triumph.⁵

Because joy was appropriate, Luther thought it fitting to conduct funerals in praise and joy as a defiance of death. He took the patriarchs for an example, who displayed splendor and pomp at their burials, using herbs to do away with even the smell of death; thus proclaiming their hope of a resurrection. These things proved to be of comfort to the weak and sorrowing.⁶ Another example

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1. Luther: Works, Vol. VI, p. 289.
2. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, p. 18.
3. Luther: Works (Lenker), Vol. XII, p. 93.
4. Ibid., p. 94.
5. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, p. 11.
6. Luther: Works, Vol. VI, pp. 288-289.

of rejoicing was taken from the early Christians who sang in Latin and in German: "Christ from all His sufferings has arisen, and will our solace be, hence we all should now rejoice." Luther commented that this writer had a true Christian concept of the resurrection. The Devil attacked an eternal life and because of this was defeated.¹

Following these earlier examples, Luther and his followers did away with the "hocus pocus" in behalf of the dead; such as vigils, masses, processions and purgatory. Mournful songs were not sung either; but instead, songs of comfort, life, rest, forgiveness and resurrection, so as to strengthen the faith of the believers and to move others to worship God.² Suggestions were also given so ^{that} those suffering the loss of a loved one could more clearly take the Christian attitude through this trial. Luther noted that epitaphs put into rhyme had the advantage of being remembered more easily and gladly.³ He said that Bible verses and inscriptions decorate the graveyards better than symbols such as the shield or helmet.⁴ For the benefit of those who wanted Bible verses carved near the graves, he gave the following verses as examples:

Exodus 37:12, Job 19:25, Psalm 3:5, 4:8, 17:15, 49:15, 116:15, Isaiah 25:7, 26:19-20, 57:1-2, Daniel 12:2, Hosea 13:14, Matthew 22:32, John 6:39, 11:25, Romans 14:7-9, I Corinthians 15:19, 22, 54-57, Philippians 1:21, I Thessalonians 4:14.⁵

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1. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, p. 12.
2. Luther: Works, Vol. VI, p. 288.
3. Ibid., p. 292.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid. pp. 290-292.

Suggested German songs for use upon returning from the burial were: "With Peace and Joy", "We All Believe in One God", "Now We Pray" and "Now Let Us Return from Soul to Body". Latin songs suggested were "Now Cease Mournings", "For If We Believe", "The Bodies of the Saints" and "We Are in Peace".¹

In speaking words of comfort, Luther preached that earthly joy would be mingled with sorrow at times until sorrow would be turned into joy forever. He continued:

Then the true joy of the heart commences and the soul sings an eternal Hallelujah, and Christ is Risen--a joy which will in the life beyond be perfect, without a defect and without an end.²

D. The Christian Obligation to Tell the Glad Resurrection Story

But until the time of joy in the life beyond, the Christian is obligated to fulfill Christ's desire that poor sinners enjoy the benefits of the resurrection.³ Luther reminded his audience that there was a second part of the angelic exhortation "Fear not" which said, "Go and tell".⁴ This phrase was a help to the weak disciples who had gathered secretly for fear of the Jews and disbelieved when they were told that Christ had risen from the dead.⁵ Because the joyful message helps others, and the believer is aware of its truth as he repeats it in the Creed; he should not only

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1. Luther: Works, Vol. VI, p. 292.
2. Luther: Works (Lenker), Vol. XII, p. 108.
3. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, pp. 21-32.
4. Matthew 28:10.
5. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, pp. 21-32.

learn it for himself but should speak of it to others.¹

God Himself went to a great deal of trouble to get His message to mankind. He cared so much that He gave the world a Savior. The believer, in return, should go to enough trouble to speak often of Christ's death and resurrection.² The power of this gospel is to be told abroad by faith until some day a full vision of it will be plain.³

In Christ's desire that the world know His new teaching, He meant that His death and resurrection should be preached throughout the world; for His death and resurrection were the essence of the new teaching.⁴ The mere recognition of Christ's resurrection as a historical event does not fulfill His desire to have the story preached to the world.⁵ Luther insisted that the reason Christ suffered, died and rose again was that the remission of sins could be proclaimed in His name throughout all the world.⁶

Reception of the gospel is not assured the one who proclaims it, for the resurrection is of no value to those who are too timid to believe it or who choose to remain in their sins.⁷ Luther's day found the Turks, Jews and Papists believing they had no need of the Easter story because they thought themselves upright in God's sight. But Luther be-

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1. Luther: Works (Lenker), Vol. XII, pp. 97-98.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 99.

4. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, p. 34.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., p. 37.

7. Ibid., p. 32.

lieved that it was only as he looked to the risen Christ that it would be well for him, for his own holiness was insufficient.¹ He advocated an attitude of pity rather than enmity toward those who abuse the Christian, because they are not of the eternal brotherhood.² Christ's commission did not regard the opposition but merely told His disciples to carry the news of the resurrection and sins overcome to the world.³

E. Summary

The resurrection of Christ as narrated in the Bible and mentioned in the Creed had implications for the Christian, according to Luther. It is important to note that these implications are associated only with the one who believes from his heart through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; for a mental belief in the resurrection is insufficient for the realization of the meaning and importance of its benefits.

The first implication of the resurrection is that it is a source of freedom from sin, death and the Devil. Since Luther believed that God's condemnation to eternal fire was a reality, he could speak boldly of the freedom which Christ gave the believer when He overcame death. His purpose in death was a substitutionary work for the individual because of his sin, and His resurrection was

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1. Ibid., p. 20.

2. Ibid., p. 30.

3. Luther: Works (Lenker), Vol. XII, p. 201.

performed so as to make the individual just before God. This complete work of Christ counteracted the contemporary beliefs that one could obtain justification by the merit of his good works.¹

The second implication of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead gave the individual comfort in knowing he had nothing to fear. This did not mean a freedom from trouble, but a comfort in knowing that persecution is temporal and endurable, when Christ has given that person eternal life.² Luther even claimed that the Christian had a right to rebuke sin, since Christ arose from the dead. Realization of this freedom from fear was necessary for one to celebrate Easter properly.

The third implication was that death itself was defeated for the individual when Christ was raised from the dead. Death was now thought of as a blessing instead of a curse, and the means by which one is free from sin. Since Luther knew that Christ overcame death, he gave valuable encouragement to those who were facing death and who were disheartened by it. He did this by quoting Scriptures, by writing and using joyful resurrection hymns, by suggesting epitaphs for the departed Christians and by suggesting songs to be sung after the funeral. Luther also recalled the burial of the patriarchs and the attitudes of early

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1. Ante, p. 16.
2. Ante, pp. 17-18.

Christians, and patterned his thinking after their joyful actions. He owed his own freedom from death to One who died, rose again and reigns forever.¹

In addition to the freedom from sin, condemnation, fear and death, ^{there} was another implication of Christ's resurrection for the believer; namely, his obligation to tell others of the gospel. The angelic exhortation to "go and tell" was not only meant for the women at the tomb, but was for all who experience the joy and benefits of Christ's resurrection.² Because God gave expression to His love for the world, Luther believed that the Christian too should fulfill Christ's commission to tell the whole world that He is alive.

The first three freedoms which Christ's resurrection gave were directly for the true believer, and the last freedom was an object yet unattained in Luther's day; the freedom of the whole world from sin through the proclamation of the gospel.

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1. Luther: Sermons on the Gospels, Vol. II, p. 13.
2. Ante, p. 25.

CHAPTER III

CALVIN'S INTERPRETATION OF THE RESURRECTION

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A. Introduction

For Calvin, the very essence of the gospel would have been changed if Christ did not rise from the dead, for salvation would have been incomplete without this demonstration of immortality.¹ He proclaimed with the Apostle Peter that Christ, who is the Author of life, could not be held in the grasp of death.² Calvin developed his interpretation of the resurrection along the following lines: 1) the proofs of the resurrection; 2) the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies; 3) the united witness of Christ's death and resurrection; and 4) the great implication of the resurrection: the deity of Christ. The following chapter will make a study of these reasons, as Calvin wrote and spoke of them.

B. Proofs of the Resurrection

John and the other Evangelists are careful to give many proofs of Christ's resurrection because it is the most important article of the Christian faith. The

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1. Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. II, p. 609.
2. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. I, p. 99.

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hope of eternal life is extinguished if Christ did not rise from the dead.¹ The quietness of this proof of Christ's Sonship might not be the way some would have liked to see it proved; but He chose the emptiness of the grave to be the silent and dynamic first witness to His resurrection. The order of the other witnesses was: the angels, the women and then the Apostles.²

The women did not understand the principal fact that it was necessary for Christ to rise from the dead to complete the salvation story. Yet Christ chose to reveal Himself as risen to the women who were firm to believe in Him.³ The ointment the women brought signified that the dead body was not to decay beyond the hope of resurrection on the last day. But Christ did not receive the ointment on His body for He was exempt from corruption. This more vital fragrance of the living Christ has permeated the centuries that many may have life. These women were commended for their act of devotion, but reprimanded for their fear.⁴ The witness they bore to Christ's resurrection was based both on the declaration of the angel and the sight of their risen Lord.⁵ Spiritual truth is sometimes revealed

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1. Calvin: Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Vol. II, p. 247.
2. Calvin: Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Vol. III, p. 338.
3. Calvin: Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Vol. II, p. 248.
4. Calvin: The Deity of Christ, pp. 189-190.
5. Calvin: Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Vol. III, p. 346.
6. Calvin: The Deity of Christ, p. 192.

gradually, as it was to the women who first heard the angel speak of Jesus' resurrection, and later heard His voice and saw Him.¹

The indifference of the Apostles to Jesus' resurrection was punished by allowing the women to become the first witnesses of the resurrection. This thought may be coupled with Paul's statement that God chose the things which are weak to confound the wise (I Cor. 1:27).² Not only the weak but the sinful were given the message first, for His revelation to a woman who had been possessed with seven devils demonstrates His grace in showing Himself to the vilest of sinners.³ Although only a little faith was displayed, they had a certain heaven-sent zeal to find the Lord; and God continues to use such zeal in the lives of His own, although they too are often of little faith.⁴ Calvin adds:

Now if he did not permit them to come in vain to his grave, we may conclude with certainty, that those who now aspire to him by faith will not be disappointed; for the distance of place does not prevent believers from enjoying him who fills heaven and earth by the power of his Spirit.⁵

God did not openly show His Son to all men because He wanted to give a chance for the exercise of faith

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1. Calvin: The Deity of Christ, p. 192.
2. Calvin: Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Vol. III, p. 339.
3. Ibid., p. 346.
4. Calvin: Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Vol. II, p. 250.
5. Calvin: Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Vol. III, p. 340.

on the part of believers.¹ But Christ did appear to the disciples many times after His resurrection, eliminating doubts that could have arisen in their minds from a single appearance.² There were doubts even among the disciples at first. One wonders why the disciples remained in doubt as to what they should do, when they had before seen the stone which had sealed the sepulchre now removed. Calvin believed that the Christians could continue to learn a lesson from this perplexity.³ There seemed to be some doubt in the mind of Peter and of others that Jesus had really risen, before they saw Him.⁴ A few weeks later, being an eye-witness of Jesus' new body was an important point in Peter's message at Solomon's porch!⁵ What an impression the pierced hands and side must have made on the unbelieving! One can almost be glad for initial doubt, for then one can enter into the situation more easily and find that the miracle was not merely a sudden impulse of the disciples' desire.⁶

Other witnesses take a secondary place to the great fact that Jesus appeared bodily to Peter, James, the

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1. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. I, p. 446.
2. Calvin: Ibid.
3. Calvin: Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Vol. III, pp. 341-342.
4. Ibid., p. 366.
5. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. I, p. 146.
6. Calvin: The Deity of Christ, p. 186.

twelve Apostles and to more than 500 others.¹ This matter of His reappearing was known all about Jerusalem and the scribes had no way of refuting it.² And while the Lord walked about Jerusalem, the linen cloth lay in the tomb as a silent witness. Not a friend or an enemy would have stripped a dead body of its grave clothes, but John tells us that the linen cloths were lying in the tomb.³

Even the fear of the guards was a strong witness against those who would believe that the miracle was all a figment of the imagination.⁴ It has been said that the ungodly were convinced of Jesus' resurrection by merely hearing the soldiers' story, for they attempted to hide the truth by a money bribe.⁵ If the guards had stopped to think through their fable, they would have realized that sleeping men could not have known that someone was stealing the body.⁶ Thus, not only Christian witnesses whom scoffers criticize were believers in the resurrection of Christ, but Pilate and the guards, by their silence and falsehood, became heralds of the great miracle. To their testimony were added angel voices which proclaimed Jesus to be no

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1. Ibid.
2. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. I, p. 530.
3. Calvin: Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Vol. II, p. 251.
4. Calvin: Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Vol. III, p. 47.
5. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. I, p. 446.
6. Calvin: Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Vol. III, p. 352.

longer in the tomb, but risen.¹

C. The Fulfillment of Old Testament Prophecies

Paul reasoned with the Jews from the Old Testament that the quality of Jesus' life was eternal. In the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia he told them that Jesus was once raised that He might live forever.² Calvin elaborates on the meaning of His eternal life in his comment on Romans 14, where he says:

The words 'arose' and 'lived again' mean, that by resurrection he attained a new state of life; and that as the life which he now possesses is subject to no change, his dominion over us is to be eternal.³

Paul would not have had to use the Old Testament Scriptures had he been speaking to Gentiles. But the Jews to whom he spoke knew what to look for in their Messiah, and they had to be reminded of the prophecies concerning Him. Paul used these reminders to persuade the Jews that Jesus the son of Mary died and rose again. The office of Christ as mediator was consequent.⁴ When Paul proved the death and resurrection of Jesus from Scripture, certain of the Jews believed and also a great number of Greeks with them.⁵ At another time, Paul explained that the fruits of

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1. Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. II, p. 612.
2. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. I, p. 536.
3. Calvin: Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to The Romans, p. 500.
4. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. II, pp. 130-131.
5. Ibid., pp. 132-133.

Christ's resurrection were for both Jews and Gentiles, according to Moses and the prophets.¹ Some of the Scriptures Paul used were the same ones which Peter used to prove the doctrine of the incorruption of the Messiah. Peter, after declaring the necessity of the resurrection of the Christ, said that Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled these requirements.² Peter was also given another wonderful chance to tell of the risen Savior who performed miracles, after the healing of the lame man at the gate. He said that the One who had so much power was their risen Messiah.³

The God of the prophets is truly the God of the living. The Prophet speaks this thought in Habakkuk 1:12 where he says, "Thou art our God from the beginning: we shall not die." But the life was dependent upon the relationship of the people to God.⁴ In fact the Old Testament is full of references to the hope of the resurrection of the body. Not among the least of these are Isaiah, Job, Ezekiel and the Psalmist.⁵ David wrote that his body would not see corruption because he had a hope of life to come. Calvin believed that because David's body did decay in the grave, the Scripture had a deeper meaning than a mere ref-

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1. Ibid., p. 385.
2. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 109.
3. Ibid., pp. 170-171.
4. Calvin: Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Vol. III, p. 52.
5. Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. II, pp. 613-614.

erence to David.¹ At any rate, the Jews of Christ's time should have been more thoroughly acquainted with the doctrine of the resurrection.

Besides the direct discussion of eternal life, Calvin believed that the Old Testament contained several types of the resurrection of the body. Jonah and Isaac were types of Christ as they lived their experiences. The whale which swallowed Jonah represents death and his release from this captivity represents the safety of the body and soul. Isaac, in a figurative sense, came back from the dead to his father Abraham because the ram was substituted for Isaac.²

D. The United Witness of Christ's Death and Resurrection

The death and resurrection of Christ are inseparable and interdependent. By His death sin was washed away; by His resurrection righteousness and life gained pre-eminence. The power and importance of His death is revealed to the believer by means of His resurrection.³ Paul illustrates this unity in the sixth chapter of Romans where he speaks of baptism. In his commentary on Romans, Calvin wrote of this illustration:

The Apostle, however, meant to express nothing else but the efficacy of the death of Christ, which manifests itself in putting to death our flesh, and also the efficacy of his resurrection, in renewing within us a spiritual nature.⁴

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1. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. I, pp. 537-538.
2. Calvin: Tracts, Vol. III, pp. 438-439.
3. Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. II, p. 65.
4. Calvin: Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans, pp. 223-224.

It also seems that in Paul's witness before kings and authority, the principal point of dispute was the unity of the events around Christ's death and resurrection from the dead.¹

These two main pillars of Christian doctrine, Christ's death and resurrection, are necessarily connected to produce heavenly power.² One who condemns the believer not only discounts the value of Christ's death, but also the power of His resurrection.³ The victory of the second over the first is spoken of in Romans 6:9 as freedom from death's dominion. On this Calvin comments as follows:

The meaning is, that Christ, who now vivifies the faithful by his Spirit, or breathes his own life into them by his secret power from heaven, was freed from the dominion of death when he arose, that by virtue of the same dominion he might render free all his people.⁴

There is, then, a unity of thought in Scripture concerning the final events in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Belief in His resurrection does not discount His death, but rather points to the triumph, conclusion and completion of Christ's work. The resurrection points to the assurance of salvation which was wrought on the cross.⁵

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1. Calvin: Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles, Vol. II, p. 385.
2. Calvin: Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Vol. II, p. 159.
3. Calvin: Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans, p. 325.
4. Ibid., p. 227.
5. Ibid., pp. 392-393.

E. The Great Implication of the Resurrection:
The Deity of Christ

For the believer, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the proofs of His divinity.¹ This was Paul's thesis in Romans 1:4, where he says that Jesus was declared to be the Son of God by rising from the dead. This gives a sure support for faith in Christ.² It was truly God's doings in the work of His Messiah, which caused this dynamic miracle.³

But Jesus also was true man, and it was this same body which died that was raised from the dead. In John 2:19 Jesus prophesied that in three days His temple would be raised after its destruction; and the body which came from the tomb was a changed body having a more excellent aspect.⁴ Calvin explained this in more detail by saying:

For if death, which originated in the fall of man, is adventitious, the renewal produced by Christ must be in the same body which began to be mortal.⁵

Only Christ who is both human and divine is entitled to be the Judge of the world. In Acts 17:31 Paul told the Athenians that Christ's resurrection proved Him

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1. Calvin: Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to The Romans, pp. 45-46.
2. Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. II, p. 65.
3. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. I, p. 533.
4. Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. II, pp. 621-623.
5. Ibid., p. 620.

to be the Judge of the world.¹ Peter agrees in Acts 10:42, adding a note of universality by saying that Christ arose so that he could be the Judge of both the dead and the living.² His court of justice will be perfected and completed when death, the last enemy, will be defeated.³

F. Summary

Calvin stated several reasons for believing the gospel accounts of Jesus' resurrection as given in the New Testament. In the first place, there are many proofs of the miracle, including His appearances, the empty tomb, the linen cloth, and the behavior of the guards, the angels, the women, and the Apostles. Secondly, Calvin believed the resurrection story to be a fact because of the Old Testament doctrine of eternal life, and the incorruption of the Savior which was to come. Thirdly, the nature of Christ's death and resurrection as a unit gave Calvin a conviction of its truth. And lastly, the nature of Jesus Christ was inherent in the truth of the resurrection story. John and Paul led Calvin to believe that He was both God and man. His appearances after the resurrection also supported this theory; the wounds testifying to His humanity and His very living presence testifying to His divinity.

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1. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. II, p. 177.
2. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 447.
3. Calvin: Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, Vol. II, p. 28.

Calvin's joy in his belief can be summed up in the following hymn by Bishop Wordsworth:

Alleluia! Alleluia! Hearts to heaven and voices raise;
Sing to God a hymn of gladness, Sing to God a hymn of
praise:
He who on the cross a victim For the world's salvation
bled,
Jesus Christ, the King of glory, Now is risen from the
dead.¹

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1. Lavina H. Date: Hymns for Worship, p. 118.

CHAPTER IV

CALVIN'S TEACHING ON THE RELEVANCE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION
TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

CHAPTER IV

CALVIN'S TEACHING ON THE RELEVANCE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

A. Introduction

If Luke had not written Acts, it might seem that Christ's death and resurrection did not leave any earthly fruits.¹ But believers have a great heritage in knowing that they are related to Christ as brothers and are partakers of the fruits which the resurrection brings.² Calvin found that the New Testament had much to say about the relation of Christ's rising from the dead to His people, and deemed it of great importance that the benefits of Christ's resurrection be commended to the believers.³

In his Catechism of the Church of Geneva, Calvin stated the three-fold benefits of Christ's resurrection as being: 1) gaining righteousness for His own; 2) a definite pledge of immortality; and 3) the enablement of the believer to live a new life, obeying God's will.⁴ These tremendous benefits are followed by tremendous responsibilities in the

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1. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. I, p. xxix.
2. Calvin: Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Vol. III, pp. 348-349.
3. Calvin: Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans, p. 222.
4. Calvin: Tracts, Vol. II, p. 48.

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areas of believing, steadfast living and witnessing.

B. Personal Benefits Received
from the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

1. Victory over Sin and Death

Paul could never prove the efficacy of Christ's death without His resurrection. Through this he was able to proclaim Jesus as Savior from sin.¹ In fact, the last part of redemption is Christ's resurrection, for in this lies the assurance of sinners' being reconciled with God.² Sinners were made friends of God through Christ's death, and much more so because of His resurrection. This fact gives "an extra layer of protection" and great strength and confidence of the heart toward God.³

Death, the consequence of sin, is experienced by the faithful as well as the wicked, but death does not completely wound the faithful, for they have protection against all such enemies. It is significant that the faithful are not free from death itself, but they are free from the fear of death. This is what Peter tried to express in Acts 2:24 when he declared that Christ had the victory over death.⁴ If Christ had yielded to death, He could not have freed the

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1. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. I, p. 530.
2. Calvin: Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Vol. III, p. 338.
3. Calvin: Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans, p. 197.
4. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. I, p. 99.

faithful from its power, for the previous scenes were of agony and weakness.¹ But He arose on the third day and by doing this, He became conqueror of sin and death.² Because He conquered death, He is King forever, making His people immortal with Himself.³

A further implication of Christ's bodily resurrection was the astounding fact that many of the saints' bodies arose from their graves immediately following the resurrection of Christ (Matthew 27:53).⁴ And not only these saints had the joy of a resurrected body, but all believers have the hope of receiving a body like the glorious body of Christ.⁵

2. Immortality of the Soul

The question of the immortality of the soul was one which Calvin took pleasure in presenting. He expounded Paul's beliefs as they were spoken to the Epicureans at Athens who did not believe in the immortality of the soul, and to the Stoics who believed that God was not the ultimate power. Paul set forth Christianity as differing from these other religions by proclaiming the risen Christ as the sole mediator and by pointing to the last resurrection of the

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1. Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. II, pp. 64-65.
2. Calvin: Tracts, Vol. II, p. 48.
3. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. II, p. 386.
4. Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. II, pp. 620-621.
5. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. II, p. 375.

dead.¹ Then there were others in Calvin's day who accepted the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, but who did not assent to the resurrection of the body. Calvin told these people that the fact of the resurrection is beyond human comprehension, and only faith in Christ, God and the Scriptures is necessary to surmount the difficulty of believing in the unseen.² It was impossible for Calvin to forget that the thief on the cross who implored mercy was told that he would be with the Lord in Paradise that very day.³

Calvin insisted that Christ always had the gift of life from His Father. The eternality and deity of Christ were so much a part of Him that death could not possibly overtake Him. His soul was always alive and there was no reason to believe that death imbedded the human soul in slumber until a general resurrection.⁴ To illustrate his position, Calvin often used the conversation which Christ had with the Sadducees which declared Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to be alive in Christ's day. If Jesus did not have living subjects such as these, He could not be Lord over the living and the "dead".⁵

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1. Ibid., pp. 150-152.
2. Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. II, p. 610.
3. Calvin: Tracts, Vol. III, p. 446.
4. Ibid., p. 437.
5. Ibid., p. 445.

In his bitterness over the Anabaptist doctrine of soul-sleeping, Calvin used every kind of psychological argument possible. In his Psychopannychia, the refuting of this evil doctrine was done with a touch of humor at times. It was in this way that he spoke of the passage in Revelation 6:10-11 where the souls of the martyrs are given white robes to wear. To the soul-sleepers, these robes may have been used as pillows on which to lie down and sleep, but to Calvin they were clothes for the wide awake.¹ The Psychopannychia showed in several ways that the victory Christ displayed over sin and death was necessarily combined with the idea of the soul's immortality.

3. The Hope of Bodily Resurrection with Christ

It is hard to imagine what the religious leaders taught, when most of them did not have a resurrection hope. They knew that man was formed in God's image and yet they believed he died like a beast. Punishment and reward, according to the Sadducees, was given completely in this life.² Christ blamed the error of the Sadducees on their ignorance both of the Scriptures and of God's power (Matthew 22:29).³ He set an example for the believers in His method of refuting the opposition. First He showed the Sadducees their primary error of disbelieving God's Word, and then He proceeded to tell them what God thought about the resurrection of the

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1. Ibid.
2. Calvin: Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Vol. III, pp. 48-49.
3. Ibid., p. 50.

dead.¹ The accounts of this discussion are almost identical in Matthew 22:23-33, Mark 12:18-27 and in Luke 20:27-40.² There was no little amount of astonishment at Jesus' doctrine of the resurrection of the body, for the religious teachings were so corrupt that the people were not accustomed to hearing beliefs (and especially the resurrection hope) proved from the Law.³

The Apostle Paul was also wise in his dealings with the Sadducees, for as he stood on trial before a group who had divided beliefs on the resurrection, he told them that the reason for his questioning was that he believed in the resurrection from the dead. Paul did not lie when he said this, for he was very much aware that his new life was dependent upon a living Christ.⁴ The Sadducees were not often pleased with this type of witness, as Peter tells in Acts 4. Since they disbelieved in any kind of life after death, they were opposed to Peter proclaiming the resurrection from the dead through Jesus.⁵ No one but a living Lord could have helped these men teach a living truth to people such as the Corinthians who were exposed to philosophers who disbelieved in the immortality of the soul, and to the Sadducees and the

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1. Ibid., pp. 51-52.

2. Ibid., pp. 46-47.

3. Ibid., p. 54.

4. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. II, pp. 319-320.

5. Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 165-166.

Libertines who said the general resurrection was past.¹

The resurrection of Christ assures the believer of his own resurrection. Christ's own example is the representation which gives hope to the believer; for He died as other mortals and arose in a similar form.² The life which the believer has in Christ can be compared with a stream of water coming from the fountain. Even Christ, the main stream, was given His life from the Father, but He has channelled the life from the Father to those who drink of the water of life.³ Because He arose for others than Himself, the continued life Christ gives reaches down to Christians of later centuries.⁴

A new life is begun in the believer even before he dies physically, for a new life with God begins while a person is in the flesh. He is even then alive to God in a certain sense.⁵ Paul considered the present life as death and the entering into the next as the beginning of life. In addition, he looked forward to the time when Christ, who is the life, would appear.⁶

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1. Calvin: Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, Vol. II, p. 6.
2. Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. II, p. 66.
3. Calvin: Tracts, Vol. III, p. 437.
4. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. I, p. 536.
5. Calvin: Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Vol. III, p. 53.
6. Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. II, p. 607.

Believing in the heart Christ's resurrection denotes acceptance of Him as God's anointed whom He displayed power upon by raising Him from the dead.¹ No one dares condemn such a believer, for the Christ who had resurrection power bestowed upon Him is in the believer's heart by faith.² Paul could have merely said that the true believer will be reckoned righteous by God; but he added a clause describing God as the One who raised Jesus from the dead. It is this powerful life which assures the Christian of his own life.³ Calvin found that Christ's resurrection gave him a personal living hope as a basis for his faith; as he said, ". . . the victory of our faith consists only in his resurrection."⁴

For those who found it hard to believe, Calvin would use Paul's illustrations from nature. He said that the fact of the bodily resurrection would not be so hard to believe if the human eye were alert to the wonders of nature. For instance, crops are produced from the corruption of seeds.⁵ Then Calvin would continue as Paul did in I Corinthians 15, and teach that the believers too will be made alive.⁶ As the wounds in Christ's natural body were for the

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1. Calvin: Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to The Romans, p. 392.
2. Ibid., p. 325.
3. Calvin: Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to The Romans, p. 184.
4. Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. II, p. 65.
5. Ibid., p. 613.
6. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. I, p. 448.

believers, so too the wounds displayed in His risen body prove that He arose for the believers rather than merely for His own sake.¹ The purchase of eternal life was finally completed in Him.²

The close association of the believer with Christ is illustrated in the Scriptures; and the Christian is thus dead with Christ (to sin) but also risen with Him, seeking heavenly things.³ "As he died and rose again, so do we also die and rise again", Calvin explained. Christ no doubt knew the same kind of death as all mortals, and we are associated with Him in death and in resurrection.⁴ How can the eternal life which the believer already possesses be interrupted by death? John 6:54 reads: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." A true Christian has already been buried with Christ and as a result his resurrection is sure.⁵ If He died, then the death of mortals is certain; but if He lives, those ingrafted in His body can never find death as the finish. If Christ is a part of the Christian, then the one who believes that life ends in death will have to pull Christ down from His position in heaven and give Him over to the second death.⁶

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1. Calvin: Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Vol. III, pp. 370-371.
2. Calvin: Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles, Vol. I, p. 174.
3. Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. II, p. 66.
4. Calvin: Tracts, Vol. III, p. 436.
5. Calvin: Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to The Romans, p.171.
6. Calvin: Tracts, Vol. III, p. 439.

The contrast of the end of those who are not associated with Christ was given by the Savior Himself, who not only spoke of the resurrection to life, but also of the resurrection unto damnation.¹ Paul's opinion of the resurrection of the just and the unjust was only a repetition of what Christ said in John 5:28-29:

Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.²

Paul coupled the inescapable resurrection of the just and unjust with the truth of God's Word to show that the final resurrection will be according to God's wishes.³

But the Christian need not fear such a destiny, for resurrection power has been given him. The believer has not merely to follow the example of the risen Savior, but is in actuality endued with resurrection power to live righteously. This is the power by which faith is maintained.⁴ In Christ's new life, a power was demonstrated which belongs to every member of His church.⁵ In Acts 4:33 Luke tells of great power which accompanied His church in the preaching of Jesus' resurrection--the climax of the gospel.⁶ The believer

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1. Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. II, p. 620.
2. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. II, p. 349.
3. Ibid., p. 348.
4. Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. II, pp. 65-66.
5. Calvin: Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to The Romans, p. 292.
6. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. I, p. 191.

looks back to the power that accompanied Christ as He came from hell as the conqueror of death, proving Himself to be the Son of God.¹ This is the One with whom the Christian is united and by whom he is empowered.

4. Personal Holy Living through the Holy Spirit

In addition to the personal victory over sin and death, the immortality of the soul, and the hope of the bodily resurrection with Christ, the believer has a personal holy life through the Holy Spirit as a result of Christ's resurrection from the dead. This Holy Spirit who lives in the believer is life, because His final purpose is to enliven the mortal body.² He is the very Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead, and it is He who reveals the resurrection to the Christian and enables him to comprehend its meaning.³ As it was necessary for the Holy Spirit to enlighten the understanding of those to whom the risen Christ appeared (Luke 24:45), so it is still also necessary that the Spirit open the understanding of those who would hope in Christ.⁴

The believers' resurrection hope is made sure by their possessing the same Spirit which raised Christ from

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1. Calvin: Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Vol. III, p. 338.
2. Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. II, p. 611.
3. Calvin: Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to The Romans, p. 46.
4. Calvin: Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Vol. III, p. 375.

the dead; as stated in Romans 8:11.¹ This hope leads men to live godly lives and to persevere in their Christian walk.² Righteousness is imputed to the believer because Christ arose for this purpose.³ Calvin found this teaching in Romans 6:11: ". . . reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus." This, he believed, said that Christ was raised so that the believer may live a holy, righteous life.⁴

It was the Holy Spirit who declared Jesus to be the Son of God with power (Romans 1:4).⁵ Jesus needed no other power but His own in the person of the Holy Spirit to raise Him from the dead.⁶ Then a few weeks after the Spirit raised Him, the gift of the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost. This heavenly gift showed that Jesus' resurrection from the dead was not merely for His own benefit. The Holy Spirit is always working through true believers as an example of the resurrection.⁷ The final work of this indwelling Spirit is the enlivening the resurrection bodies of the saints, and the body which is now animal will then be spiritual.

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1. Calvin: Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to The Romans, pp. 292-293.
2. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. II, p. 349.
3. Calvin: Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to The Romans, p. 186.
4. Ibid., p. 229.
5. Calvin: The Deity of Christ, p. 193.
6. Calvin: Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to The Romans, p. 46.
7. Calvin; Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. II, p. 610.

As the present body is made alive by the soul, so the future body will be made alive by the Spirit.¹

G. Responsibilities Created by the Resurrection

Although Christ's own prediction of His death and resurrection did not impress His followers at the time they were spoken, after the resurrection the disciples called to remembrance His words to this effect.² This new era of realization of what had really happened carried with it not only blessings, but also responsibilities of believing, acting, proclaiming, bearing fruit, and giving God the glory.

1. A Firm Belief

Jesus' own disciples not only forgot His prediction of His resurrection, but disbelieved it.³ Because of this, Christ ate in His resurrected body to free the disciples from doubt.⁴ John was said to have believed when he saw the proofs of Christ's resurrection.⁵ But none is fully persuaded without an inner faith in the person of Christ. This is what Peter emphasized when he dealt with Cornelius at great length about Christ's resurrection; for this miracle, more than any of the others, required faith to under-

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1. Calvin: Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to The Corinthians, Vol. II, p. 50.
2. Calvin: Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Vol. III, p. 345.
3. Calvin: Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Vol. II, p. 252.
4. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. I, p. 447.
5. Calvin: Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Vol. II, p. 252.

stand it fully.¹ And back of this faith is the heart attitude of being willing to believe. One must be teachable to profit from the reading of gospel proclamations; and then what one learns from this humble reading should not be taken lightly or as foolishness.² Unless the doubter comes to God with a willing heart to believe even what seems to be incredible, he will have no foundation; as Calvin said:

. . . the gospel loseth his whole authority, unless we know and be also fully persuaded that Christ being alive, speaketh unto us from the heavens.³

2. A Steadfast Life

When speaking of the blessings and benefits of Christ's resurrection, the sanctified life through the power of the Holy Spirit was mentioned.⁴ Out of it grow the works which are a proof of its Godward interest. Paul was quick to emphasize this necessary steadfastness in the lives of believers. In I Corinthians 15:58, after having proved the resurrection fact, he exhorts them on the basis of this fact: ". . . be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord . . ." ⁵ Calvin is careful to emphasize this, for he found in Romans 6:10 that the new life Christ gives should be lived unto God, just as Christ's life was lived unto God.⁶ And again in Colossians 3:1 Paul teaches

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1. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. I, p. 446.
2. Calvin: The Deity of Christ, p. 186.
3. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. I, p. 36.
4. Ante, pp. 54-56.
5. Calvin: Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to The Corinthians, Vol. II, p. 66.
6. Calvin: Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to The Romans, p. 228.

that those who are risen with Christ must seek heavenly things.¹

3. A Positive Witness to the Fact and Benefits of the Resurrection

It was the risen Jesus who gave Paul his Apostleship,² which meant that he was to be a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ.³ Paul summarized this idea of a Christian by calling those who saw the living Lord "witnesses"; for that was their duty after they saw Him.⁴ Christ also gave the women at the tomb this responsibility of proclaiming the good news and that He was to ascend to God. He rose from the dead not to remain on earth, but to enter the heavenly life and take others with Him.⁵ The extensiveness of the gospel's outreach was described in the words "all nations".⁶ In actuality, the aspect of witnessing was another of the qualities of the new life which naturally grew out of the Spirit-led soul. Saint Paul expressed this in Romans 10:9-10 when he spoke of confessing the Lord Jesus with the mouth and believing the resurrection of the Lord Jesus in the heart. Calvin commented on this passage by saying:

. . . for no one can believe with the heart without con-

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1. Calvin: Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Vol. II, p. 259.
2. Calvin: Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to The Romans, pp. 46-47.
3. Webster: Collegiate Dictionary, 5th Ed., p. 50.
4. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. I, p. 530.
5. Calvin: Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Vol. II, p. 261.
6. Luke 24:47.

fessing with the mouth: it is indeed a necessary consequence, but not that which assigns salvation to confession.¹

The final cause of the resurrection of Christ is that through the new life He gives, fruit may be brought forth unto God.² The message which brings forth fruit is the fact of the death and resurrection of Christ; the very heart of the gospel. Calvin elaborated on this in explaining I Corinthians 15:14 by saying:

. . . the entire gospel consists mainly in the death and resurrection of Christ, so that we must direct our chief attention to this, if we would desire, in a right and orderly manner, to make progress in the gospel--nay more, if we would not remain barren and unfruitful. (2 Peter 1.8.)³

Accompanied with the proclamation, of course, is the power of the Holy Spirit which makes the gospel preaching effective. Paul earnestly and boldly proclaimed the resurrection but Festus did not bother himself about the message. This illustrates the uselessness of speaking, unless the Holy Spirit touches men's hearts.⁴

In all witnessing, the caution is inserted by Calvin that the one who glories, should glory in the Lord. In his Institutes of the Christian Religion he wrote:

But let us remember that none is truly persuaded of the

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1. Calvin: Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to The Romans, p. 394.
2. Ibid., p. 248.
3. Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to The Corinthians, Vol. II, p. 19.
4. Calvin: Commentary upon The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. II, p. 367.

future resurrection save he who, carried away with admiration, gives God the glory.¹

D. Summary

It is important to know that Calvin not only believed in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, but that he also saw a relevance between this mighty act and the Christian life. He found that several benefits applicable to the Christian life could be summarized under three headings; and he did this in writing the catechism of the Church of Geneva.² The first benefit, gaining righteousness for His own people, has been described in this chapter as the victory over sin and death. Calvin saw in the Scriptures that through Christ's resurrection the sinner was reconciled to God, the fear of death was banished, and the immortality of the soul assured. Calvin's second benefit in the Geneva catechism was the definite pledge of immortality, which has been outlined here as the Christian's hope of bodily resurrection with Christ. A heart-belief in the person of Jesus Christ makes the believer so closely associated with Christ, that He is spoken of as "risen with Christ".³ In contrast to this spiritual resurrection is the bodily resurrection of the unbelievers to eternal damnation. The third benefit listed in the Geneva catechism is the enabling of the believer to live a new, obedient life. As Calvin elaborates this thought, the emphasis on the indwelling Holy Spirit is seen in predominance. It is He who

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1. Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. II, p. 613.
2. Calvin: Tracts, Vol. II, p. 48.
3. Colossians:3:1.

empowered the raising of Jesus' body and it is He who empowers the new life of obedience to God's will. Calvin summarized these thoughts on the blessings of Christ's resurrection in one of his sermons, when he said:

Let us know, then, that the Son of God will adapt Himself to our limitations when we come to Him in faith, and we shall even find in Him cause for consolation and joy, inasmuch as it is for our profit and salvation that He has acquired lordship and dominion of the heavenly life.¹

With the benefits came responsibilities for the Christian to carry with him. One of the greatest of these is a firm belief motivated by a willing heart, for without a strong conviction of the resurrection one cannot hope to carry out the work of the other responsibilities. Another task given to the Christian because of the resurrection of Christ is the living of a steadfast, heaven-centered life, empowered by the Holy Spirit. The outworking of this abounding life is seen in the Christian's witnessing to the fact and blessings of Christ's resurrection, and the fruit that is brought forth unto God because of this witness. Then Calvin adds that only the one who gives God the glory is truly persuaded of the future resurrection. Paul's example no doubt reminded Calvin of this honoring the Lord, as he wrote to the Colossians about God the Son:

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.²

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1. Calvin: The Deity of Christ, p. 191.
2. Colossians 1:18.

CHAPTER V

COMPARISONS AND CONTRASTS IN THE TREATMENT WHICH
LUTHER AND CALVIN GIVE TO THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

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A. Introduction

Since both Luther and Calvin received their inspiration for teaching directly from the Bible, the content of their resurrection teaching is often duplicated. The variations lie mostly in the area of emphasis rather than in doctrine; emphases which grew out of the personality of the man and the problems he faced in his particular time. The procedure of dealing with the resurrection subject is also affected by the individual personality and the situation in which he found himself; but the over-all picture of procedure is very similar in both cases. The differences found in the teachings of Luther and Calvin can be generally characterized as the differences in the testimonies of a converted priest and a converted scholar.

B. A Comparison of Respective Treatments

1. Background and Methods

Both Luther and Calvin wrote under the basic premise that the Bible they quoted was true and was a basis for belief and action. This is seen clearly as they speak of Saint Paul and unconsciously come to the same conclusions as he did in regard to Christ's resurrection. There seems

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to be an inner conviction as to the authenticity of the Word of God with which they deal, although nothing to this effect is stated in connection with the resurrection. To them the Bible was God's teachings, in contrast to man's teachings.¹

Also common to both of these theologians was the attempt to establish the resurrection in the gospel in the form of a catechism which would be inscribed in the memory. Luther achieved this as he commented on the Apostles' Creed, in both the Small and Large Catechisms. Calvin achieved it as he wrote the Catechism of the Church of Geneva in the interesting form of every-day conversation. No doubt these symbols of faith contributed a great deal to establishing the doctrine of Christ's resurrection in the minds of church members.

2. Content

It is interesting to note that both Calvin and Luther were especially impressed with the same passages from Paul's writings: Colossians 3:1, telling of the responsibilities of the one who is risen with Christ;² and the 15th chapter of I Corinthians, the resurrection chapter.³ These passages tended to bring out the spiritual meaning of the resurrection which the reformers were wont to emphasize. The realization of the meaning and importance of the resurrection of Christ was more important to them than the mere

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1. Ante, pp. 3-4.
2. Ante, pp. 15, 57-58.
3. Ante, pp. 9, 51.

mental assent to the historical fact.

It was not the single fact of Christ's resurrection that made Calvin and Luther so profoundly interested in the Bible, but the combined value of His death and resurrection. They both caught Paul's interpretation; that His suffering paid the penalty for sin, and His new life vindicated the believer. The benefits of the resurrection had to be viewed with both the cross and the resurrection in mind; the two main pillars of the church.

Possibly one reason for the seeming urgency of the witness was their mutual belief in eternal damnation for unbelievers. In accepting the Bible to be God's Word, they also accepted its teachings that God will assign the lost to an eternal punishment under the Devil's power.¹ The assurance of such an existence was found in the words of the Lord Himself as He spoke of the last resurrection. For Luther and Calvin, it was not unethical to teach something which their Lord taught! They were careful, however, to show the true Christian that he had nothing to fear, because of the resurrection power which was living in the individual. Their mutual belief in everlasting life with God was equally as strong as their belief in the Lake of Fire, and they had a personal longing for the celestial city.

The blessings which are bestowed on Christ's own people as a result of His resurrection were also included by both men; emphasizing freedom from sin, condemnation,

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1. Ante, p. 19.

death, and the fear of death. This grand liberation was included in God's program of justification which was completed when Jesus was raised.¹ It was for the profit and salvation of the believers that He became Lord over life and death. The responsibility of witnessing to the facts of Jesus' death and new life was a co-existent factor in the complete story, according to both Luther and Calvin. They found the element of witness predominant in the New Testament, from the post-resurrection command of Christ to the words of Stephen, Peter and Paul. This testimony, both of the theologians agreed, was a universal proposition; and although Luther has been criticized for his complacent attitude regarding foreign missions,² yet an element of universality is found in the writings of both men.³

The most noteworthy item of agreement in these two men is their dependence on the gospel accounts of Christ's resurrection. Calvin proclaimed them as authentic because of their logical sense of reasoning, while Luther simply proclaimed them because of the resurrection power he had experienced. The combination of these two philosophies established a balanced witnessing program in the days of the Reformation.

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1. Ante, pp. 17,18.
2. Soper: The Philosophy of the Christian World Mission, p. 120. Soper says of Luther: "He thought that a man ought always to declare his faith and preach the gospel wherever he might find himself, but he was convinced that there should be no sending of missionaries--that belonged to the original apostles alone, and they had performed the task!"
3. Ante, pp. 25-26, 58.

C. A Contrast of Respective Treatments

1. Background and Methods

One cannot speak of the difference in procedure of Calvin and Luther without noting the period in which they lived. Calvin's theology was necessarily built on Luther's foundations (yet with its own insights) because of the earlier date of Luther's ministry.¹ As the gospel story is first told and later explained in more detail to the individual, so was the course of the gospel witness through the Reformation period. Luther was the dynamic, forceful public preacher who proclaimed the simple gospel account to an audience ignorant of truth. Calvin was the retiring scholar who explained the gospel meaning "without rhetoric, simply, directly, but with great weight".² Luther's words were spoken in the voice of a Christian soldier engaged in battle, for he was indeed in a battle with the Pope, the college professors and the theologians of his day. Yet he advocated an attitude of pity rather than enmity on the opposition.³

After Luther had won the battle, so to speak, Calvin was free to write and speak with joy and contentment over the validity of the Scriptural accounts and their implication for personal religious living. The community backgrounds of these men also helped them to play their

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1. Qualben: A History of the Christian Church, pp. 218, 260, 274, 279. Luther's life span was from A.D. 1483-1546; Calvin lived from A.D. 1509-1564.
2. Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 4, p. 633.
3. Ante, p. 27.

respective parts, for the abrupt and fiery German mannerisms had worked their way into Luther's personality, while the French and Swiss placidity and calm way of living influenced Calvin for a more composed way of thinking and acting.

As Luther told the Biblical accounts of the resurrection of Christ and its use throughout the New Testament, great upheavals arose in European society. The Holy Spirit had enlivened the resurrection message and used it to cause a desire among the people for the Word of God. As Calvin continued the work of Luther in the retelling Scriptural accounts, he added applications of The Scripture continually, so that the message became the truth in relation to contemporary issues. Since Calvin felt the question of the resurrection was settled, he took a more theological and apologetical approach, defending the resurrection by reasoning. He saw in the Scriptures proofs that unfolded the nature of Christ, and proceeded to interpret the Scriptures as he spoke and wrote. This element was, of course, present in Luther's works too, but not nearly to so great an extent or with such continued emphasis.

Luther's mother and most of the people of her times believed in the Devil and evil spirits almost more than they believed in God. As a child Luther heard many frightening stories of the evil spirits which inhabited many of the surrounding elements of nature.¹ The concept of the

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1. Qualben: A History of the Christian Church, pp. 218-220.

Wicked One held a prominent place in Luther's thinking and writing, even after he was converted, and his teachings reflect much more of the supernatural element than those of Calvin. Because the resurrection of Christ was not a natural happening, he was able to proclaim the good news with a fervor and conviction; while Calvin had to reason his way into it.

Another personality trait which helped Luther in his proclamation was his love for and use of music. He felt that the beauty and joy which characterized singing should be used with reference to the beauty and joy of Christ's resurrection. The hymns he wrote and edited found their way into the every-day lives of the German people much faster than the mere preaching of the message. In this respect Calvin could have followed Luther's example more closely and would have obtained even greater results.

A life experience upon which Luther capitalized was the funeral. According to Luther, this experience, common to all, could have a joyful consolation in the person of the risen Lord Jesus. Music which expressed the victory which Christ won over death was used to good advantage. The use of this became so widespread that he edited a funeral hymn book of Latin and German songs. Scriptural texts were used, and thus the gospel was presented in a new way. His joyful manner of conducting the funeral service was a great testimony to the Power which raised Christ from the dead, in contrast to the processions and mourning which accompanied the

burials in the Roman Catholic Church. Luther's suggestions for funeral services, songs, epitaphs, behavior upon returning from the burial, and comfort from the Scriptures all helped to proclaim the resurrection of Christ in a new and practical manner. It was Luther's fear of death in a thunderstorm which drove him to the Erfurt monastery,¹ so he could proclaim from experience the victory which the risen Christ can give. While Calvin also experienced this victory, he did not emphasize any certain aspect, other than discussing the details of the bodily resurrection a little more than Luther did.

2. Content

The fact that Calvin's central ministry took place a few years later than that of Luther's, did not mean that he was exempt from controversy, for there was opposition on every hand. His most noted controversy was that with the Anabaptist soul-sleepers; possibly because he wrote them such a long dissertation. This Psycopannychia dealt with the state of the soul after death and its relation to everlasting life. Luther's main controversy, in contrast, was with the doctors, college professors and the Pope who hoped to gain salvation through works and faith. Luther answered them that faith in Christ's death and resurrection was the only freedom from sin and death.² This difference in content can possibly be traced to the years in which the respective

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1. Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 14, p. 491.

2. Ante, p. 16.

men ministered.

As Calvin contemplated often upon the relationship of Christ's resurrection to the Christian life, he found more references to personal holy living than did Luther. As a whole, Luther found the dynamic with which the Christian life is begun while Calvin discovered the power with which it is continued. Calvin discovered this Holy Spirit, the Spirit of power, to be able to lead men to live godly lives, as well as to enable them to persevere.¹ The progression of theology is seen again in these two great leaders; Luther, the initial leader, emphasizing the first steps of the Christian life, while Calvin, the second leader added the continuance of power to the concepts. And all of theology was related to the resurrection of Christ in some way. The essence of God's revelation to man was enveloped in the glad resurrection story, and the results of His revelation in human lives were supernatural because of the Spirit who raised the Lord from the dead.

With the exception of his reference to the Psalms, Luther did not use the Old Testament writings nearly to the extent that Calvin used them. Calvin's many commentaries on the Old Testament books could not help but include the promise of everlasting life through the living Messiah. Because of the more dynamic nature of his message, Luther necessarily centered his thoughts on the Gospels and their interpretation in the Epistles.

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1. Ante, p. 60.

D. Summary

When compared side by side, Luther and Calvin have much in common as to procedure and content of their message. Their converted lives glowed with a love and fervor for teaching God's Word and the message of life found in Christ's resurrection. A way of establishing the fact of the resurrection in the minds of believers was to include this teaching in memorized catechisms; and they both wrote such catechisms for their respective communities.

The content they stressed was not simply the fact of the resurrection, but the combined witness of both the death on the cross and the resurrection on the third day. They believed, with the Apostle Paul, that He was "delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification".¹ This unity was the essence of the good news which they found Paul to have set forth in I Corinthians 15:1-8. The theological implications of these facts were of much more importance to Luther and Calvin than a mere mental assent to the historical fact.

These men found similar blessings in the Christian life which resulted from the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In a spiritual sense, the Four Freedoms which Franklin Roosevelt desired for the world² can be also the program of freedom which the resurrection of Christ was given by Luther and

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1. Romans 4:25.

2. World Almanac, 1948, p. 401.

Calvin. Because of Christ's rising from the dead the believer has a freedom of speech and expression which proclaims the good news. The believer is also submerged in a new freedom of worship--the worship of a living Savior. The freedom from want is inferred in the whole philosophy, for the uncondemned sinner in God's sight is truly free from want. The fourth freedom, the freedom from fear is especially applicable here, for both Luther and Calvin were strong to emphasize that the Christian has no fear of death, since the Lord of glory arose from the dead. Christ's own words were: "If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."¹

Along with the positive aspects of Christianity, Luther and Calvin also believed in and preached the eternal punishment of unbelievers in the Lake of Fire. Although they assured true Christians that there was no fear of this to be contemplated in their minds, they felt it a duty to warn unbelievers of what Christ said would come to pass.

The contrast in their procedure and the content of their message was largely dependent upon two factors; 1) the period and place in which they lived; and 2) the individual personality. Because of Luther's earlier period of ministry, his witness to the resurrection was necessarily bold, dynamic and emphatic of the very fact of Christ's resurrection. His conflicts were with the Pope, school

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1. John 8:36.

authorities and doctors over problems of righteousness in connection with the death and resurrection of Christ. Calvin's controversies included these, but also involved the question of soul-sleeping which the Anabaptists believed.

Personality influenced the procedure and content of Luther's teachings. The early, formative years of this personality were built upon the importance of the supernatural and the love of music; and these factors proved to be a great help to him in preaching the gospel. The desire he possessed for others to participate in the victory he found over death was seen in his specialization of interest on the funeral and related topics. In all his ministry, Luther's fiery, outspoken personality was predominant while Calvin's calm, firm, life-centered qualities were revealed. The resurrection of Christ was a reality to both of these men, but their personalities and backgrounds changed the emphases and manner of proclamation of the joyful news.

CHAPTER VI
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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A. Summary

Since the study in this thesis has been that of comparing the views of Luther and Calvin on the resurrection of Christ; the respective men were studied separately in the first four chapters, and then their views were compared and contrasted in chapter five. Chapter one dealt with Luther's proclamation of Christ's resurrection, followed by his idea of its implications for the Christian in chapter two. Calvin was studied in the same way; chapter three dedicated to his proclamation of the resurrection, and chapter four dealing with his interpretation of the resurrection for the believer.

In chapters one and three, it has been shown that Luther and Calvin respectively felt the dire necessity of proclaiming the simple Biblical accounts of Christ's resurrection. In chapter one, Luther's approach was unique in that his boldness was used to proclaim the good news that had become so powerful in his own life. In chapter three, Calvin, although just as bold in his own way, used a more reasonable approach in explaining why the resurrection of Christ was necessary. The implications of the truth of

Christ's resurrection for the believer were seldom separated from the gospel story, but for the sake of logical form, this study has enumerated the implications in chapters two and four. In chapter two, Luther found that when the Christian had more than a mental assent to the resurrection, a freedom from sin, condemnation, fear and death were evident; as well as the freedom and obligation to tell the glad resurrection story. In chapter four, Calvin found as a result of the resurrection the victory over sin and death, the hope of bodily resurrection, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and a challenge to personal holy living through the Holy Spirit. In addition to what Luther found in the responsibility of witnessing, Calvin also stressed the necessity of a firm belief followed by a steadfast life.¹

When compared side by side in chapter five, both Luther and Calvin had much in common, for their common reliance on the Holy Scriptures was evident. Their differences lay mostly in the areas of emphases and personalities, interests and concern. The calm but firm scholar who reasoned out his beliefs, was the role which Calvin played, while Luther took the role of a dynamic public orator. The emphasis of Luther was mainly upon the personal victory over sin and death, while Calvin added that the resurrection also provided for a holy and steadfast Christian life.²

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1. Ante, pp. 56-58.
2. Ibid.

B. Conclusion

The war-torn world of today has a place for both of the roles that these men played. As it gropes for a living reality demonstrated in human experience, a testimony such as Luther's from personal dynamic experience with God could become a soothing agent. Various religious sects which claim to have the truth are springing up as never before and becoming strong in numbers and power. Biographies of contemporary men are constantly being read and sold; illustrating the fact that people are interested in the experiences of others. It is therefore the responsibility of those who know God's living truth to proclaim it with conviction from the aspect of personal experience. If the Christians are not convinced of Christ's resurrection enough to tell others about it, God is certainly willing to convince them, for He is not willing that any should perish.¹

Calvin's reasonable approach, too, is most applicable to today's world. Never before has such an emphasis been placed on education and learning, as it has been in America today, and as it has been in all the world. One who can tell logical reasons for his belief is much more likely to be accepted than one who can not. The student who is searching for the truth can be helped greatly by a like mind who has found for himself the reasons for believing in Christ's resurrection.

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1. II Peter 3:9.

But these aspects were not new with Luther and Calvin, for in the first century, Paul's testimony of what the gospel is included both a personal experience with Christ and a list of people to whom the risen Christ appeared, as proof for his beliefs. He wrote:

Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas; then to the twelve; then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep; then he appeared to James; then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to the child untimely born, he appeared to me also.¹

This gospel message should be proclaimed not only because of the world's interest in personal experiences with God, and its increasing interest in reasoning, but also because of its helplessness to live ^a steady, godly life. In its own power, the individuals and nations cannot conquer sin, no matter how many resolutions are made. In spite of huge sums of money given to New York authorities to eliminate the water-front crimes, they will continue to exist as long as sin remains in the individual. The power to conquer sin is given in the personal application of the gospel of Jesus Christ; and other remedies do not change the source of sin. Christ said that it was out of the heart that all

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1. I Corinthians 15:1-8.

these evil things proceed.¹

But further, the world is also searching for the truth about what happens after death. There is not a religion or cult but what has some philosophy of what happens after death. The Roman Catholic Church has maintained and proclaimed a theory about Purgatory, Limbo, Heaven and Hell and is strong to emphasize what does happen when a person dies. Because this theory has been proclaimed as truth, millions of people are satisfied in believing that they know what is going to happen when they die. But those who know what God has to say about the life after death are often too timid or unconcerned about what they know to proclaim God's message.

In this thesis, Calvin and Luther have mentioned a number of instances in Christ's post-resurrection appearances that demonstrate what the resurrection body will be like. It will not be, as some Protestants maintain, some ethereal spirit floating in time and space; and it certainly will not be an angelic form, as some of the Sunday School pupils who have been raised in Christian homes declare. It will be a real body, similar in form to the present body; it will eat, walk and talk in much the same manner as the earthly body; it will be neither male nor female; it will be subject to a joyful life in praise to God, or a painful life in separation from God; it will be able to transcend space

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1. Matthew 15:18-20.

and material objects; and it will be alive forevermore. Until the believer's soul is reunited with its resurrection body, it is in a blissful, active state in the presence of the God who made it. The great day for martyred souls, for the Christians on the earth; yes, for all of creation will be when the Lord Jesus returns to the earth to receive His own. Then the dead in Christ shall rise and all the saints will be gathered Home. The corruptible bodies will be incorruptible and all will be changed. The crown of righteousness will then be given those who love His appearing.¹ What a lively hope the believer has! Is not the hope of Luther and Calvin worth proclaiming to individuals who have eternal bodies and souls?

It has been stimulating to make this comparative study and to find that the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead and who inspired the reformers, is still present with those who ask Him to be their teacher. Resurrection power did not end in either the first or the seventeenth centuries, but is present today in the lives of Christians who believe it and act upon it. Because God's truth is eternal, there is nothing about the gospel which Luther and Calvin proclaimed which is not true today. A meditation on this thought will lead one to pray with the Psalmist: "Thy testimonies are righteous for ever: Give me understanding, and I shall live."²

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1. II Timothy 4:8.
2. Psalm 119:144.

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