

Concerning the Resurrection

“For if Christ be not risen, then all our preaching has been in vain and your faith is also in vain” ...And if Christ be not raised, you are still in your sins.”
(Paul) 1Cor 15:13-14

Certainly, given this, the resurrection is the lynch pin upon which Christianity depends. I am not going to rework the proofs that countless preachers have given during Easter week. Nor the proofs laid out by Paul in 1st Cor. 3-8 where He is seen first by Mary Magdalene and later by upwards of 500 at one time. Thus, if the resurrection is so crucial there should be ample evidence in God’s creation showing or typifying resurrection.

Walt Whitman’s central theme in his epic, “Leaves of Grass,” is rebirth: he saw it, pondering the child’s question: “What is the grass?” “The smallest blade tells us there is really no death, etc.” “It is the handkerchief of the Lord out of hopeful green stuff woven.”

But one can see resurrection in countless places. Simply awakening from sleep is one, or each morning’s sun rise, some glorious indeed, as a daily reminder that our hope of a resurrection is not in vain. “Some bright morning when this world is over, I’ll fly away.” {popular hymn}

Even the fond recollection of a departed loved one can bring great moments back to life. The Bard: “When in the sessions of sweet silent thought,/ I summon up remembrance of things past,/...But if the while I think on thee, dear friend/ All losses are restored and sorrows end.” Many of his sonnets sing that theme beautifully, bestowing on his readers the pure pleasure that comes from blissful reverie.

And memory itself is a gift giving rebirth: “It’s only the good times I remember/ Whenever I think of you.” (Tommy Edwards’ great 1950’s hit ballad.)

Then there are the uncanny symbols in nature’s specialized types and tropes. The butterfly prepares his winding sheet (chrysalis), and goes to “sleep” an ugly worm, but, after a long winter’s sleep, he awakens to become a gorgeous butterfly, soaring gaily and borne aloft by updrafts out of heaven.

And certainly every fly fisherman has in his hat imitations of the four stages the Mayfly assumes as it changes from larva, to pupa to nymph and finally glorious, translucent adult. I’ve seen mornings on Big Stone Lake when the shoreline was literally coated with millions of dead mayflies, spent from their one night of life, sustaining romance.

Of course Robert Frost “had an eye for such mysteries.” I cite him often because he was my true mentor in teaching the magic of the metaphor. And I think his speech, “Education by Metaphor: a Meditative Monologue,” is as essential to wordsmiths, as Orwell’s “Politics and the English Language.”

Frost’s best known resurrection symbol is the woodchuck: “Were he not gone, the woodchuck could say/ Whether my dead-tired sleep coming on “is like his long sleep/...Or just some human sleep.” The chuck is reborn on groundhog’s day after 3 months sleeping as one dead. The parallel is obvious.

And Paul is, as always, inspired with the parallel between the sowing of any seed and the change all undergo when they are buried: “So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption and raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in

power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body..." (1st Cor. 15:42-44)

Paul's final goal is the famous passage in Phil. 3:10, 'That I might know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering; being made conformable unto His death.' And he got his wish by staying on in Rome where he too met a violent and agonizing death.

But the true "fellowship of His suffering," says Joseph Prince, lies not in our trying to imitate His martyrdom but in deeply appreciating the horrible agony Christ suffered in our place; three days of constant agony unbroken by any moment of relief whatsoever. He literally "became sin, that we might enjoy his righteousness." "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." (Is. 54:17) That makes self-righteousness about the sorriest display of hypocrisy there is.

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