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Sermon Study on 1 Cor. 15:12-20

Eisenach Epistle Selection for Easter Sunday

In no other chapter of the Bible is the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead treated so thoroughly and comprehensively as in the fifteenth chapter of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. The irrefutable fact and reality of Christ's resurrection; its importance for Christian faith and hope and life; the reality, the time, and the manner of the believers' resurrection; the marvelous effects of the believers' resurrection on their bodies, all these facts are revealed in this uniquely remarkable chapter with such clarity, in such beauty of language, in so convincing a manner, engendering and strengthening faith unwavering and assurance immovable, as only God, the Fountainhead of life and the Author of resurrection unto life eternal, can reveal these truths transcending human understanding. The Eisenach epistle selection for Easter Sunday, 1 Cor. 15:12-20, speaks of the importance of Christ's resurrection for the Christian's faith and life and hope.

"Now, if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" v. 12. Very significantly the Apostle does not write, If it is preached that Christ rose from the dead. He so words his thoughts that two important truths are emphasized. The one, that Christ is being preached; Christ, through whom alone they became what they are, chap. 1:2-9 (eight times the name of Christ is mentioned), Christ, in whom they still believed, whom they were not willing to reject, 15:1, 2. The second, and in this connection the more important, truth, is that this Christ, their only Savior, is being preached "that He rose from the dead." The Corinthians had heard and were hearing of no other Christ than the Christ who rose from the dead. The conditional clause "if Christ," etc., does not mean to cast any doubt on the fact of this preaching. On the contrary, from the beginning of Paul's apostleship, Acts 9:19, 20, to the day he penned his letter to the Corinthians, the risen Christ had been the sum and substance of his preaching. Cp. 15:1-11.

Christ "rose," rather "has been raised," ἐγέρθη. Paul uses the perfect in order to denote the resurrection as an accomplished fact whose consequences still endure. While the passive ἐγείρωμαι is often used intransitively in the sense of awake, rise, as a synonym of ἀνίσταμαι, Paul quite evidently used it here in its transitive sense, to be roused, raised, in order to show that the same God who raised Christ from the dead is able to raise other dead people. Christ was raised "from dead," the absence of the article stresses the qualitative force. Christ was raised from such as were dead. Before He was raised, He had actually been numbered among those

dead and buried. So it had been foretold in the infallible word of Scripture. Ps. 16:9, 10; 22:15; Is. 53:8, 9, 12; Zech. 13:7. Friends and foes, the judge and the plaintiffs, were convinced that He was dead. Matt. 27:63; 28:13 f.; Mark 15:42-47; John 19:30-42; Acts 5:28. This dead Christ has been raised from the dead, His body reunited with His soul, brought back to life. This second fact the apostle had proved beyond the possibility of refutation by appealing to the remarkable change the preaching of the risen Christ had wrought in the Corinthians, 15:1, 2; to the witness of Scripture, wherein God Himself spoke, vv. 3, 4; to the unanimous testimony of many trustworthy witnesses, vv. 5-7; to the miraculous appearance of Christ and its life-changing effect upon Paul, vv. 8-10.

That is the Christ continually being preached among you, a Christ, a Messiah raised from the dead. Now, if that is as the case stands, how, then, is it possible that some of you are saying that there is no resurrection of the dead? There were some, *τινές*, whose names the Apostle does not want to mention. How many and who they were, whether they formed a large or a small group, we are not told.

The congregation as such had not yet accepted the view of these "some." Yet the congregation had not taken the proper stand against them. Apparently the deniers were being tolerated, for Paul writes, "They are saying," *λέγουσιν*, they were still continuing to hold their error. Nor do we read a syllable of any action on the part of the congregation against this dangerous falsehood. If there had been any action, it must have been too feeble and halfhearted to be effective. Error spreads, like cancer, from a small beginning, often disregarded because it is seemingly harmless. In order to win back these erring brethren and to prevent the whole congregation from being infected by this dangerous, soul-destroying error, Paul proceeds to show the real nature of this subversion of the very foundations of Christianity. Yet he does not treat these erring members as heathen men and publicans, nor does he call upon the congregation to put away such wicked men out of their midst as he did 1 Cor. 5:1, 13. From the fact that Paul argues with them on the basis of the resurrection of Christ and proves to them that the denial of the resurrection of the dead is tantamount to a denial of Christ's resurrection, we may safely conclude that these erring Corinthians still accepted the fundamentals of Christianity, the death and resurrection of Christ. Vv. 1-11 had been addressed to all the members of the Corinthian congregation to which these "some" belonged.

Paul still regards them as brethren, but as erring brethren, erring in a doctrine directly affecting the very foundation of their faith; still they had, owing to a blessed inconsistency, not yet

drawn the unescapable conclusion from their premise. In the Second Letter these erring brothers are not mentioned. It seems, therefore, that Paul's instruction bore fruit, that they saw the error of their way and returned to soundness of faith, so that there was no need of proceeding against them as obstinate errorists or heretics, Titus 3:10, 11.

There is no resurrection of the dead, was the bold assertion of these men. Note that they denied the possibility of a resurrection, an ἀνάστασις, an arising from the grave, a return to life, of such as were dead. Death and resurrection seemed to them contradictory opposites. "Rising again" is an activity and every self-activity presupposes the life of the individual, while here not the living but the dead are under consideration. Death, however, excludes life and activity; death brings on decay, a dissolution of the body into its component elements. How, then, is it possible that dead people shall rise again, that their decomposed bodies should ever be able to come back to life?

How does Paul meet their argument? We read: "But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen," v. 13. Paul does not meet these erring brethren on the ground of reason and philosophy. Every argument that reason can advance for the possibility of a resurrection of the body may be refuted or at least rendered doubtful by other arguments seemingly or actually just as plausible. The Christians could never be sure of their faith if it rested on human reasoning, on arguments of man's fallible mind. Therefore Paul goes to the infallible source of truth, to God's revelation. The Corinthian Christians believed that Christ had risen from the dead, and they believed this on the basis of God's revelation in Holy Writ and in the Gospel as preached by the Apostles, vv. 1-11, the accredited ambassadors of God, who proved their divine authority by miracles such as only God could perform; compare Mark 16:20; Acts 14:8-13; 15:12; Heb. 2:3, 4. On this divine revelation concerning Christ's resurrection the Corinthians had based their eternal salvation, v. 2. Now, if the statement of "some" were true that "there is not a resurrection of dead," then there is not, and never was, and never can be, a resurrection of Christ.

"And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain," the Apostle continues his argumentation.

The ἄρα designates what follows as a matter of course. If Christ has not been raised, then the obvious inference is that Paul's preaching is vain. Note the emphatic placing of κενόν at the beginning of the clause. Vain is our preaching! Κενός signifies that which is void of content, having no substance, no reality. Consistently Paul had been preaching a Christ that had risen, while

in reality Christ had not risen since dead do not rise. Then Paul would indeed have been what the Athenians had called him, a babbler, and worse than that, a proclaimer of falsehood. His preaching would not have been a message of such importance, a tiding of such great joy, as to warrant the sending of a special emissary. It would not have been a κήρυγμα worthy of this name. It would have been empty fiction without foundation in fact. Paul's proclamation that Jesus Christ is the Lord would have been the deification of a man dead and buried, on the same line as the apotheoses of their heroes by blind pagans, an unfounded myth spun out of thin air, a fairy tale without the semblance of reality. And since the Corinthians would have put their trust in this vain, empty, lying proclamation, since their faith would have rested on less than sand, on something void of truth and reality, their faith and trust would have been empty, as unfounded and unreal as its foundation, the preaching of the resurrection of Christ. Paul, a storyteller, a dispenser of fairy tales! Christian faith a nonentity, an empty fancy, deprived of its content, the risen Christ! For if dead are not raised, then is Christ not raised! And if Christ is not raised, our preaching is vain, and your faith is vain.

Nor is this all. "Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ; whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised," vv. 15, 16. If so be, εἴτερ ἄρα, supposing it to be sure. If that were an assured fact that there is no resurrection of dead, v. 12, that dead men are not raised, v. 15, then, indeed, the Apostle and all his fellow preachers would be found false witnesses, ψευδομάρτυρες, witnesses that testify to a falsehood. The preachers of such a Gospel could not be God's emissaries. They would be despicable, damnable liars, far more wicked than those false witnesses that rose up against Naboth, charging him with doing what he did not do; 1 Kings 21:13; more wicked than the false witnesses against Jesus, Matt. 26:59, 62; 27:13. Naboth was a human being, a fellow mortal; Jesus was standing before His accusers in His state of humiliation, Phil. 2:7. The preachers of Christ's resurrection, however, would stand convicted of being false witnesses of God, of telling a falsehood concerning the Most High, yea, of witnessing against, κατά, God, in opposition to Him, in flat denial of and contradiction to His will and truth. Paul and his fellow preachers of the risen Christ claimed that they were heralds, messengers, of the only true God and that their message was given to them by revelation of the God of truth. This claim would, like their message, be without the slightest foundation, the mistaken claim of deluded fanatics deceived by their own hallucinations or the lying boast of deceivers, swindlers, deliberately

setting out to hoax mankind. For they preached contrary to facts, contrary to God, that God had raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if so be that the deniers of a resurrection of dead were right. "For if dead are not being raised, then neither Christ [who was dead and buried] has been raised," v. 16.

The Apostle repeats what he has already stated, v. 13. We may be surprised that he repeats in so short a time the same fact, moreover, a fact so obvious, so incontestable, so self-evident, that it might seem a waste of energy to repeat it. Yet it was just this simple fact that some of the Corinthians had forgotten when they followed their proud reason, which regarded the doctrine of resurrection of the body as folly, and when they made bold to say, "There is no resurrection of dead." Paul knows the need of hammering home the essential truths of Christianity by constant repetition. Luther learned that lesson from him. At Marburg he had written the brief word "This is My body" on the table before him and constantly recurred to these plain and simple words to refute all the arguments which his opponents advanced to prove the impossibility of the Real Presence in the Lord's Supper. It is the gravest mistake a pastor can make when he thinks that he need not emphasize and re-emphasize the essentials of Christianity, that there is no necessity to reiterate and impress upon the minds of his hearers over and over again those simple yet so vital truths without which our faith cannot exist, against which Satan rages with all the fury of hell, which seem so foolish or so impossible or so needless to our own flesh and blood, while our eternal life and salvation depends on them. Phil. 3:1 b.

The repetition v. 16 serves also to introduce a new train of thought, that of the utter uselessness of Christianity, the futility of Christian faith and life and hope, if there is no resurrection of the dead. "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins," v. 17.

Paul calls attention to the dreadful consequences if Christ has not been raised. Not every trust misplaced, not every faith unfounded, is a matter of great importance, of decisive significance. Misplaced confidence, *e. g.*, in weather reports, in advertisements, etc., may merely result in some inconvenience, in some slight loss of time or money or pleasure. If our faith in Christ is unfounded, then this faith is not only a baseless fancy, which we may discard without serious consequences. Faith in the risen Christ is a matter of vital importance, on which the whole structure of Christian life and practice, Christian assurance, Christian hope for time and eternity, is founded and with the collapse of which Christianity collapses. "Vain is your faith!" *Μάταιος*, differing from *κενός*, describes faith as ineffectual, lacking power, devoid of result.

Your faith, just because it is empty, without a real object, cannot help, cannot deliver, cannot save you, just as little as the firm belief that a counterfeit dollar is legal currency will help the owner, will buy the object desired.

In order to show the utter uselessness of Christian faith without the risen Christ, the Apostle names three items, each one of utmost importance. You are yet in your sins! Your dead fellow Christians are lost! You are of all men the most miserable!

Ye are yet in your sins! Deliverance from sin, redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sin, that was the glorious boon promised to all men in Christ Jesus. Yet that was a vain promise if Christ had not risen. Christ had been pointed out as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Already in the word of prophecy the Messiah was foretold as the Servant of God on whom the Lord hath laid the iniquity of all, Is. 53:6. Had Jesus of Nazareth remained in the grave, then that would have been proof conclusive that sin still held Him captive; that He had not been able to break the power of sin to condemn to death and corruption all those numbered with the transgressors; that even Christ, who, knowing no sin, was made sin for us, could not by His holy life and innocent suffering and death atone for sin, expiate its guilt, procure for all mankind justification, forgiveness, righteousness, without which no man shall see the Lord. For, while Christ died for our sins, it is only by His resurrection that we are justified. A mere man cannot save himself, cannot possibly save others from sin. Ps. 49:7, 8. And had Christ died and remained dead, that fact would have proved him beyond the possibility of refutation a mere man. He upon whom our faith and hope of eternal life rests, would himself be a mortal man, unfit to be our Savior from sin, lacking the most essential qualification of a Redeemer of mankind, Deity. It was the Man the Lord in whom Eve trusted; it was the Lord to whom Jacob turned in expectation of salvation; it was Immanuel, God with us, who was to be born of the Virgin that He might save His people from their sin. If Christ is not risen, if Christ remained in His grave, He was a mere man, and then we are yet in our sins. Not a single farthing of our debt is paid! The praying of the Fifth Petition—empty babbling! That entire awful burden of our sin still lying on our conscience! That dreadful guilt amassed by our transgressions still crying out against us before the judgment throne of the Holy One! Not a single moment of that eternal damnation awaiting every sinner canceled! For we are yet in our sin, hopelessly, helplessly, forever and ever held in its fetters, if Christ is not raised; and Christ is not raised if the dead are not raised!

And even that is not all. "Then they also which are fallen

asleep in Christ are perished," v. 18. "Then," ἄρα, again emphasizes that the statement introduced is a necessary corollary of what has been said. If Christ is not raised, if therefore the Christian's faith is in vain, if on that account the Christian is still in his sins, then it is a matter of course that all Christians that have died in the faith of Christ are lost. Paul uses the term κοιμηθέντες, those fallen asleep. Throughout the New Testament this term is used exclusively of such as have died in the faith of Christ, to whom death is indeed made a sleep and the grave a resting chamber, since in life and death they were united with the risen Christ, in death and in the grave the Lord's own. Rom. 14:8, 9. But how could Christ be the Lord of the living and of the dead, how could He save from eternal death those who were united with Him in their life and their death, if He Himself had remained in death? Then they would be united not with a living Christ, but with a dead person and, like Him, be doomed to the same fate that overcame the Champion of their cause, death and destruction. Lost! Ἀπόλοντο. That would be the dreadful sentence imposed upon them in spite of their faith in Christ. Lost, perished, of course, does not mean annihilation. They are lost as such as are still in their sins, and the penalty of sin is not annihilation. That would be far preferable to their actual fate, that of being cast into hell, where their worm dieth not, Is. 66:24; Mark 9:43-48; Matt. 25:46; Rev. 14:11. Those fallen asleep in Christ include not only the martyrs, as Chrysostom, Grotius, and others hold, nor only the New Testament believers, as many of the modern commentators assert. We see no reason why Paul, who wrote Rom. 3:21-25; 4:1-25; Gal. 3:5-18, did not include the Old Testament believers, since they also had placed their trust and hope in life and in death in the Christ, the Messiah, promised to them in ever-increasing clarity from Gen. 3:15 to Mal. 3 and 4.

All that have fallen asleep in Christ lost! Jacob, cp. Gen. 48:16; 49:18; Job, chap. 19:25-27; David, Ps. 14:7; Simeon, Luke 2:28-32; Stephen, Acts 7:58; Paul, 2 Tim. 4:7, 8, lost, every one of them! Our parents, who lived and died in Christ and brought us up in the fear and admonition of the same Lord, lost! Our spouse, fallen asleep after a life of exemplary Christianity, lost! That child committed to the Friend of children in Holy Baptism and gone to meet Him in heaven, lost! All, all, that fell asleep in Christ lost, eternally lost, because they still were in their sins, for their faith in Jesus as the Savior from sin was vain, futile, since Jesus was not raised from the dead, since the Christ on whom they pinned their faith was dead, buried, lost!

How gloomy a darkness! How hopeless an outlook! How miserable all that trust in Jesus Christ! That is the next thought brought out by the Apostle.

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable," v. 19. In the original, "only," *μόνον*, is placed at the end of the conditional clause, modifying the entire statement. The sense is, If that is the only thing that can be predicated of us that we are in this life such as have come to hope in Christ and are continuing in this hope, then are we most miserable. To have come to hope in Christ, to live with Him in intimate communion and in the sure hope of life everlasting, is the highest joy, the purest bliss of which man is capable in this life. That does not mean that the life of a Christian is one constant round of joy and pleasure as the world and the flesh of the believer count pleasure. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," says Christ. The life of the Christian is a constant battle against the enemies of his salvation, a constant crucifying of his flesh, 1 Cor. 9:26, 27; Gal. 5:24; 6:14. This conflict is waged not only by our soul; also our body suffers in consequence of it; it suffers together with the soul. The Christian is affected by the anguish caused by insults, shame, dishonor, heaped upon him for Christ's sake, by the agony of an awakened conscience, roused by his deeper recognition of his sinful depravity. Paul after describing this conflict, Rom. 7:14-23, breaks forth in that anguished cry, O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? And he finds comfort and reason to thank God only through Jesus Christ, his Lord.

So the Christian throughout his struggles and conflicts is buoyed up and comforted by his hope in Christ, the hope of a glory to be revealed in us when on the Last Day the trump shall sound and we shall be raised incorruptible, 1 Cor. 15:52. On that day we shall enter upon our inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, 1 Pet. 1:4; cp. Job 19:25-27; Phil. 3:21; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17. That is the hope, centered in the risen Christ, sustaining, comforting, strengthening the Christians on their journey through life.

Now, if the dead are not raised, then Christ, on whom we base our hope of future life and glory, is not raised. Then He is the victim of death and corruption. Then it is impossible that He should be able to give to others life and glory which He Himself failed to obtain. Then our hope in Christ ends with our life. The Christian's expectation of unending joy in the company of Him whom we loved though we saw Him not—nothing but a pleasant daydream! The Christian's assurance that, having fallen asleep in Christ, he has finally entered peace and shall rest in his bed till the grand day of resurrection—an illusion! The weary child of God lies down to his last sleep in calm confidence that at last he has forever escaped the rage and fury of the roaring

lion seeking whom he may devour, and the savage bear thirsting for the Christians' blood, and lo! even his last home on earth is not the place of rest he had hoped for; but there he will be bitten by the serpent, stung with the sting of eternal death and damnation. (Cp. Amos 5:19.) What bitter disappointment! What blackest despair! The Christian's lifelong battle in vain! The crucifixion of his flesh useless agony! His daily sorrow for sin, his constant struggle against temptation, his ever-repeated denial of himself, all needless labor and anguish, because all was barren of the desired result! If Christ be not risen, it would be far better to make the most of life and the opportunities for enjoyment and pleasure it may offer than to deny oneself its pleasures in the vain and futile hope of a life to come. The traveler in the desert without water is sure to perish, and perish miserably, tortured by one of the most agonizing forms of death, that of death by thirst. Yet far more miserable will that traveler be when he sees in the distance a green oasis with palm trees raising their heads high in the air, promising refreshing shade and an abundant supply of life-giving water, inviting the wearied, famishing traveler to hurry on his way, urging him to exert all his waning strength to reach the fountain, only to see the *fata morgana* vanish in thin air, only to have all his hopes dashed to the ground, only to perish in agonized despair. That would be the fate of every one trusting in Christ as his Savior from death and damnation. Of all men he would be the most miserable if Christ be not risen!

In vv. 12-19 Paul has shown the dire consequences of a denial of a resurrection of the dead. Twice he has reminded his readers of the indisputable fact that, if dead rise not, neither is Christ risen. He has added to each statement a detailed picture of the utter hopelessness and vanity of a Christianity without a risen Christ. Unreal our message; unreal your faith; we preachers of the risen Christ false witnesses against God, vv. 14, 15; futile your faith; you are yet in your sins; your dead are lost; the living are of all men most miserable, vv. 17-19. These inevitable conclusions ought to be sufficient to convince every Christian of the insidious, soul-destroying character of doubt concerning the resurrection of the body. The Apostle, however, not only advances negative arguments against this vicious error. In triumphant assurance he brings out the positive facts which give the deathblow to any denial of resurrection. This he does in the next paragraph, vv. 20-34, of which the opening verse is the fitting close and climax of the Easter pericope.

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the First-fruits of them that slept." V. 20.

But, δέ, retains here its full adversative, antithetic force. Over

against the hopeless outlook pictured vv. 13-19, the very opposite is now introduced as a glorious fact. Now, *vuví*, does not denote time here, but is used in its logical and emotional sense "as the case really stands," "as it cannot be otherwise," cp. the proof vv. 1-11. Now is Christ raised! The perfect is used, has been raised, not to die again, like the youth of Nain, the daughter of Jairus, Lazarus, etc. No; He has been raised, and the consequences and effects of His raising continue both with regard to His own person (cp. Is. 53:10; Rom. 6:9, 10; Heb. 7:23; Rev. 1:18) and to all His believing followers, as the Apostle points out in the following context.

Very emphatically and significantly the Apostle repeats "from the dead," *ἐκ νεκρῶν*, from among dead. On that memorable Good Friday, Christ the Lord had not fallen into a deathlike trance, into a cataleptic stupor. No; He had died. He had been numbered with dead men, and from dead He had been raised. The living God (Deut. 32:40), with whom is the fountain of life (Ps. 36:9), whose power is great and whose understanding is infinite (Ps. 147:5), with whom nothing shall be impossible (Luke 1:37), actually has done what human unbelief sneeringly declares impossible. By the omnipotence of God, Jesus was raised from the dead, and eternal Truth and Justice declared this Nazarene to be the Son of God, Rom. 1:4, both Lord and Christ, Acts 2:36. Cp. Is. 42:8. By raising Jesus from the dead the Judge of all the world solemnly announced His satisfaction with the redemptive work of this Christ, His reconciliation with the world, and His justifying decree embracing all mankind; Rom. 4:24, 25; 5:12-21; 2 Cor. 5:18-21.

Now is Christ raised from the dead. Here is God's own irrefutable, joyous fact against man's doubt and despair; the miracle of the Omnipotent against the cavils and sophistries of puny mortals; the yea and amen of the Eternal against man's disbelief and ridicule. Now is Christ raised from the dead!

One more thought is added: "And become the Firstfruits of them that slept." The verb "become" is evidently a later addition, found in none of the best manuscripts. The phrase is added as an apposition to "Christ." Christ was raised as the Firstfruits of "them that slept," the believers who have fallen asleep in the faith of Jesus. The article "them that," *τῶν*, is generic, comprehending the whole class of such as died in unbelief. In the class of "them that have fallen asleep" belong all that have died in the faith of Jesus in the Old Testament as well as in the New. The perfect tense does not limit the sleepers to such as had died before Christ's resurrection or before the time that the letter was written. Since the resurrection of the dead will take place on the Last Day, all those that have fallen asleep in Christ before that day are included.

For those living to see that day there will be no resurrection, but a change. 1 Cor. 15:51-53; 1 Thess. 4:13-17.

This resurrection of the dead saints is an assured fact, guaranteed to us by God Himself. When Christ was raised from the dead by the omnipotence of God, He was raised as the "Firstfruits" of them that have fallen asleep. This expression is taken from the Old Testament sacrificial ritual. Cp. particularly Lev. 23:9-21; Num. 15:17-21 and, in the New Testament, Rom. 8:23; 11:16; 1 Cor. 15:23; etc. Before the Israelites were permitted to eat of the harvest, they were to offer the firstfruits of the harvest to the Lord. By this offering of the firstfruits and of part of the first dough prepared from the newly harvested grain, the whole harvest and all their bread was hallowed to the Lord (cp. Rom. 11:16), taken out of the realm of profane food and placed into the realm of consecrated food, suitable for a consecrated people, hallowed meat for a hallowed nation (cp. the analogy of clean and unclean animals, Lev. 11:44-47). So Christ was raised as a firstfruit and thereby declared God's own Son, the Holy One, worthy to be received into eternal life and glory. If the firstfruit is holy, then the whole harvest is holy, consecrated to the Lord and fit for food. If Christ's body is raised as the Lord's own to enter into that state of glory which was His before the world began, then the whole harvest, the entire multitude of sheaves, the whole number of believers, which He represents, shall, like Him, be raised to everlasting life and unending glory according to His demand, John 17:24, and His promise, John 10:27-29; 11:25, 26. The firstfruits in Israel were only sheaves of grain, products of the earth, with no inherent power to actually effect the consecration they symbolized. Christ in a far higher and nobler sense is a Firstfruit. He is not only of the earth, earthy; He is the Lord from heaven, 1 Cor. 15:47. He remained the Son of God even when His body lay dead in the grave. He consecrated at His resurrection not sheaves of grain, but His own body, in which dwelt the fulness of the Godhead. And therefore He could be Firstfruits of *all* that had fallen asleep. On the harvest fields of Israel some sheaves of the harvest were lost in spite of the care taken by the harvesters and the diligent search of the gleaners. There is no danger that any one blade of that huge harvest of believers will be lost or overlooked on the final resurrection day. He, the Son of God, has the power to raise all, and He, the loving Savior, will do what He promised and guaranteed by His resurrection. He watches over the graves of those whom He acknowledged as His own. In His sight they are priceless treasures, bought with His own blood. Carefully He watches over every particle of dust into which their bodies gradually dissolve, and on the Last Day He will gather all these par-

ticles and reunite them as a glorified body with their soul, which had awaited this happy day. As there was nothing to prevent the harvest to be eaten after the firstfruits were hallowed, so there is nothing in heaven or hell that will prevent the harvest of all of those who have fallen asleep, their being raised like Him from death and the grave in a resurrection as different from the resurrection of the other dead as heaven differs from hell, as life everlasting differs from eternal death. Luther writes: "The word 'Firstfruits' teaches us that Christ is not the only one, that others will follow. You must not regard this man as one who has risen for himself only; for then His resurrection would be a sorry consolation and would profit us no more than if He had never become man. . . . When Paul calls Christ the Firstfruits, he indicates that we should view the resurrection as an act which has already begun in Christ, yea, that is more than half completed. What is left of death is to be regarded as only a deep sleep. The future resurrection of our body will be nothing more than a sudden awakening out of such sleep. The chief and best part has been accomplished by the resurrection of Christ, our Head. If the Head sits above and lives, there is no more danger, no more need of fear; we who cling to Him must follow as His body and members. . . . No matter when or how we shall die, whether it be in bed or in fire or in water or by the rope or the sword, Satan, the lord of death, the master slaughterer, will do his job of slaying us well enough, so that there will be no need of our choosing any particular form of death. But no matter how he executes us, we shall not be harmed. He may give us a bitter draught, as it is given to those who should be put to sleep so that they no longer feel anything. Yet we shall again awake and arise on that day at the sound of the trump. That Satan cannot prevent, because we are now already in Christ more than half out of death, and Satan cannot keep our poor, miserable body, though it is food for worms." (Luther, St. L., VIII:1148—50.)

Modern unbelief, though cloaked in the garment of Christianity, still asserts that there is no resurrection of the dead, that Christ lives only in His message, in His spirit, etc. The preacher may choose as his theme *The Folly of Denying the Resurrection of the Body*. He may follow the argumentation of the Apostle and show that such denial is a negation of Christ's resurrection; empties Christian preaching; makes Christian faith baseless; blasphemes God; robs faith of its saving power; robs us of forgiveness; deprives us of eternal life; makes us miserable men. And then the grand climax, v. 20. — *The Glory of Christ's Resurrection*. It is an established fact; it is the foundation of our faith; it is the guarantee

of our hope. — *Now is Christ Risen!* In Him we have for empty philosophy a sure Gospel; for earthly helpers a divine Redeemer; for woeful misery heavenly joy; for fear of death a glorious hope. — *Let Us Thank God for the Easter Message!* It assures us of the Deity of Christ. It certifies to us our redemption. It guarantees to us our resurrection. — Vv. 17-20. *The Glorious Light of Easter Morning.* It dispels the darkness of sin, v. 17. The clouds of adversity cannot obscure it, v. 19. It changes the night of death into the day of life.

TH. LAETSCH

Luther: A Blessing to the English

VII. Dr. Robert Barnes in Trouble

On the Fourth Sunday in Advent, December 24, 1525, Hugh Latimer preached in the Augustinian chapel, and so Prior Barnes preached in St. Edward's Church and used Luther's sermon on Philippians 4: 4.

He denounced the observance of holy days, the temporal possessions and the secular jurisdiction of the Church, the extravagance of Wolsey. The only apostle followed by the bishops was Judas; the only prophet Balaam. Holy orders, church hallowings, and pardons were sold "as openly as a cow and an ass." Paul taught no bishop should be bishop of more than one city. He did not pray to Our Lady, nor for the souls in purgatory. It was not right for Christians to sue one another.

To the last remark he was roused by a clergyman who had just sued a person too poor to pay a vow made to the Church. And that greedy scoundrel sat brazenly in the congregation! And the preacher supported himself by St. Paul, Athanasius, and Jerome. Fox writes: "He so postilled the whole epistle following the Scripture and Luther's postil, that for that sermon he was immediately accused of heresy." Bitter enemies in the audience lodged twenty-five heresies against the bold preacher with Vice-Chancellor Edmund Natares, or Nottoris, also a personal enemy.

The prior had to face Natares, Ridley, Watson, Preston, Fooke, and Tyrell.

Would he submit himself? was the peremptory demand of the Vice-Chancellor.

He would recall anything contrary to the Word of God, or to St. Augustine, St. James, or of "the four holy doctors."

"Or to the laws of the Church," added Ridley and Preston. To this he demurred; not being a doctor of the law, he knew not what was included in that phrase.