APPENDIX B

The Resurrection: A Dialogue

No issue has been more widely debated in modern theology than the relationship of Christian faith and history. This issue comes to a sharp focus in the various interpretations of the New Testament witness to the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. The affirmation that God raised the crucified Jesus from the dead, far from being peripheral, stands at the very center of the New Testament proclamation. Without the Easter witness, Christian faith would either not exist at all or would be something very different — perhaps a religious sect that recalled the tragic death of its great founder and teacher. On this point there would be virtually universal agreement among Christian theologians. According to Rudolf Bultmann, the New Testament documents are so permeated with the Easter faith that all attempts to reconstruct the history behind the texts are exceedingly shaky. Karl Barth goes so far as to say that while we might imagine a New Testament that had only the resurrection narratives, we certainly could not imagine a New Testament without them. Wolfhart Pannenberg and Jürgen Moltmann place the resurrection of Jesus at the very center of their eschatological reinterceptions of Christian faith.

But while Christian theologians agree on the importance of the Easter witness, they interpret it in very different ways. Interpretations of the resurrection are like windows through which we may gain a glimpse of the salient features of a theology — most especially its particular understanding of the relation of faith and historical inquiry, the authority of Scripture, the sense in which God is said to act, and the hope Christians have for personal, political, and cosmic renewal. We may be able to get a better sense of the possibilities and problems of different theologies of the resurrection if we are allowed to eavesdrop on an imaginary conversation among four theologians. The participants are:


Karl Barth. Introduced in Appendix A, Barth engaged in a long-term controversy with Bultmann concerning the relationship of faith and history and the proper interpretation of the New Testament. Barth contended that Bultmann dissolved Christian faith and theology into anthropology, and Bultmann charged that Barth was philosophically and hermeneutically naive.

Pannenberg. This speaker may be considered a more or less faithful disciple of the contemporary theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg, who emphasizes the reasonableness of faith, the need for a new Christian apologetic to be developed in relation to modern science, and the inseparable link between Christian faith and the results of historical inquiry. Pannenberg’s writings include Revelation as History; Jesus — God and Man; Theology and the Philosophy of Science; and Anthropology in Theological Perspective.

Moltmannian. This member of the dialogue has obviously been greatly influenced by eschatological theology, or the theology of hope, whose primary voice in recent decades has been that of Jürgen Moltmann. The position represented is also akin to many political and liberation theologies. Moltmann’s writings include Theology of Hope; The Crucified God; and The Trinity and the Kingdom.

Resurrection and Historical Reason

Barth: Have I ever told you my joke about modern theologians? Bonhoeffer is good beer; Tillich is beer; Bultmann is foam.

Bultmann: Your attempt at humor is no more successful than your attempt to understand me. But I do share your view of Bonhoeffer. His theological sophistication was never more evident than when he called your theology a positivism of revelation. You throw doctrines indiscriminately at people: Virgin Birth, the Trinity, and all the rest. Then you say, in effect, “Like it or lump it.”

Moltmannian: Well, now that you two have had a chance to greet each other, maybe we can get on with our conversation. Did you all see the big news in the Sunday New York Times? Front page story! “Archaeologists have
uncovered the skeleton of a young man crucified and buried outside the walls of Jerusalem some two thousand years ago.”

Bultmann: Yes, and as might have been expected, the journalists and TV anchormen concluded their coverage with the comment: “And some people are raising the question whether this skeleton might be that of You Know Who.” I must say that I feel rather fortunate that I demythologized my theology some years back.

Pannenbergian: If that remark was supposed to be funny, I find your sense of humor rather tasteless. Your attitude toward history and its relation to faith is thoroughly cavalier. Just for openers, there is not a shred of evidence this skeleton might be that of Jesus of Nazareth. If anything, such an archaeological find gives support to the historicity of the gospel narratives. It shows that criminals were crucified by the Romans during the time of Jesus in precisely the manner described by the Gospels.

Bultmann: Faith is not dependent on the results of historical inquiry, as you seem to be suggesting. Of course, faith presupposes the fact that Jesus of Nazareth really lived and died. But the Easter kerygma is independent of the claims and counterclaims about the historicity of the traditions of the New Testament.

Mostly Barth and Bultmann

Barth: I suspect, Pannenbergian, that I am closer to you than to Bultmann on this issue. But let’s not forget that the heart of Christian faith — that Jesus was raised from the dead by God — can neither be refuted nor supported by historical evidence of the sort you mentioned. The resurrection is an act of God, and this makes it historical in a unique sense.

Pannenbergian: After that comment, I’m not so sure you are closer to my position than to Bultmann’s. You seem to be tearing the resurrection out of history and locating it in some nebulous theological domain where God acts, a domain far removed from the nitty-gritty of actual human history. The resurrection of Jesus is a historical event. It is a public fact, if you like. If it isn’t something that really took place in history, then the message of the church is a deception, and we are still in bondage to sin and death.

Barth: I think you misunderstood what I said. My point is simply that the resurrection, while an event that really happened, is not historical in the same sense as, say, Caesar’s crossing of the Rubicon, or even the crucifixion. The resurrection is a historical event in the sense that it really happened in space and time. But I should willingly concede that it is not a historical event in the sense that it can be shown to have occurred or not to have occurred by the modern historian with his critical method and assumptions. I do not subscribe to the weak-headed idea that the resurrection was merely a change of mind on the part of the disciples. The idea that nothing has happened except what modern historians by their critical procedures can establish to have happened is pure myth and deserves to be demythologized.

Bultmann: I suppose these pontifical comments about weak-headed people and myth were spoken for my benefit, so let me try to make my position clear. I also think that the Easter faith is historical. But this does not mean that Christian faith asserts that the resurrection can be historically demonstrated, which it obviously cannot. Nor does it mean that, as Barth says, the resurrection is an event that happened in space and in time, even though historical science has no access to this event. In my judgment, this is a completely unintelligible claim. We cannot disregard what Ernst Troeltsch has taught us about the principle of analogy in modern historical reasoning without bringing Christian faith into a disastrous clash with the ethics of modern critical inquiry. It is an axiom of critical historical reason that we can understand the past only on the basis of some analogy with present knowledge and experience.

Barth: Now who’s pontificating? Your principle of analogy is going to compel you to reduce the event of the resurrection to a subjective experience of the disciples.

Bultmann: To believe in the resurrection is not to commit oneself to unintelligible and nonsensical claims. To believe in the resurrection is to believe in the redemptive significance of the cross of Jesus for one’s own life. The believer says, “When I am confronted with the message of Jesus crucified, I know that faith means radical dependence on the grace of God.” To make that confession is to accept a completely new self-understanding. As a historian, I am interested in the archaeologist’s discovery of a skeleton of a crucified Jew. As a Christian, I couldn’t care less.

Barth: Talk about unintelligibility! Your interpretation of the resurrection seems to me completely incoherent. What you appear to be saying is that the resurrection didn’t really occur at all and that the rise of faith in the disciples and in us is the resurrection. You rob the Easter faith of an objective basis and put it in the category of a hallucination. Unlike you, when I say that the resur-
reconstruction is an act of God, an event of revelation. I do not empty this act of its objectivity and concreteness. I do not reduce it to a mere cipher for a change of mind by the disciples.

**Mostly Pannenberglass**

PANNENBERGIAN: Hold on, you two. Don’t you see that you are both equivocating? You both talk about the resurrection as historical in some very strange sense — an inaccessible event of revelation or new self-understanding. This is utterly out of touch with what the word “historical” ordinarily means. Thus you both end up divorcing faith from concrete history. You are both prisoners of the principle of analogy. To speak of history is to speak of the singular, the particular, the unique. The modern historian does not say: This could not have happened because it is not part of my experience. He says: What is the evidence? This is the question that in different ways both of you want to bypass.

MOLTMANIAN: I agree with you, Pannenberglass, that the principle of analogy, as Bultmann apparently insists on using it, should not be allowed to go unquestioned. If we demand that something can be considered historically real only if it can be conformed to our present experience, history is closed a priori, and our understanding of it can never allow for the coming of the genuinely new and unexpected. I prefer to speak of the resurrection as an “event of promise,” an event that makes history, that opens it up, that disturbs all our so-called established facts, and that makes us dissatisfied with the status quo of human alienation, suffering, and injustice. If this is the direction in which you are moving, Pannenberglass, then I am with you. But you seem so preoccupied with verifying the resurrection as an event of the past that I wonder if you will do justice to its future-orientation, its promissory character. I could subscribe to the idea of the “eschatological verification” of the resurrection, but I simply do not think we are now in a position to offer proof of the historicity of the resurrection witness.

PANNENBERGIAN: Then you are also engaging in a lot of woolly thinking. All of you want to claim that the Easter faith is historical, but from that point on you all engage in systematic ambiguity. This results in a de facto divorce of the resurrection from history. Barth says that the resurrection takes place in history, but the history it takes place in is not accessible to ordinary historical investigation. What is this suprahistory? Faith and theology are brought into total disrepute by this talk of suprahistory, *Heilsgeschichte*, and *Hornemanier*.

The Resurrection: A Dialogue

geschichte. If historical evidence is not relevant to the affirmation or denial of the alleged event of Jesus’ resurrection, then what we call the resurrection is no more historical than the dying and rising of the ancient Egyptian god Osiris.

MOLTMAANN: Your criticisms are appropriate if they are directed against Barth, but you can’t seriously lay these charges against me. I am just as concerned as you are to engage in critical conversation with modern historical reason.

PANNENBERGIAN: Well, Moltmann, even though I much prefer your description of the resurrection as an event of promise to Barth’s talk of it as an event of revelation, I think your disregard of the factual evidence for the Easter faith finally puts you in the same position as Barth. I, too, have spoken of an “eschatological verification” of faith affirmations, but if this sort of language is not to remain mythological and meaningless — in short, a cop-out — we will have to engage in some hard-nosed analysis of historical reasoning. We will have to show that history is open, that the meaning of an event cannot be separated from the interpretative context in which it originally occurred, and that the full meaning of any event can finally be determined only at the end of history, when it can be seen in the context of universal history. The openness of history and of historical reason has to be shown convincingly to the modern world. Otherwise the proclamation of the resurrection will get a hearing only in the church, and Christianity will retreat more and more into a pocket of unintelligibility and irrelevance.

BULTMANN: You don’t have a corner on the concern about the intelligibility of the Christian message. I have spent my entire scholarly career on the issue of faith and understanding.

PANNENBERGIAN: Sure you have, but you say in effect that the resurrection was not something that happened to Jesus but is something that happens in *us*. We understand ourselves anew as we discover the redemptive meaning of the cross of Jesus for us. Well, read the New Testament accounts. If they say anything at all, they say that the resurrection was something that happened first to Jesus and was subsequently made known or revealed to the disciples. So you see, I find myself disagreeing with all of you. You all disengage the resurrection from the domain of public history, the history that we live, the history that critical historians deal with. Whether you locate the resurrection in some suprahistorical sphere and call it “event of revelation” or “event of promise” or place it in some existential domain and call it a “new self-
understanding” really makes little difference. There's more than a touch of Docetism in all of your positions.

**BARTHE:** I do hope that this discussion isn't going to degenerate into a name-throwing contest, though I've got a pretty good arsenal if you want to try me out. Let's get one point straight: I did not say that the resurrection takes place in some suprahistorical sphere. Those are your words, Pannenbergian, and they do not represent my position. What I did say was that the resurrection of Jesus took place in space and time and in this sense is like every other event. In addition, I said that there could be no historical demonstration that this event occurred in space and time, at least short of the conclusive and universal revelation of Jesus' lordship at the parousia. The Easter faith of the disciples was not a conclusion reached by reasoning from facts on which everyone could agree. The resurrection really happened, but that it happened was revealed. Jesus himself appeared to the disciples. This act of his appearance is quite beyond modern historical inquiry and its procedures of proof.

**PANNENBERGIAN:** But that is what I emphatically reject. You are splitting apart revelation and reason, faith and history. Of course the historian cannot demonstrate that the resurrection occurred in the same way that the chemist can demonstrate that water is composed of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen. You are assuming a positivistic notion of historical knowledge that has long been abandoned by most historians. The historian does not provide conclusive demonstrations in this positivistic sense. I have said that each historical event can be fully known only at the end of history, and this obviously precludes the positivistic model of what is involved in historical interpretation. Still, we are not excused from the task of offering the most reasonable interpretation of the evidence at hand. We make inferences on the basis of available evidence. We then make informed judgments that we are prepared to support with arguments. Historical judgments cannot be arbitrary and capricious; they must be reasonable and arguable. When we say “Jesus is risen,” we are making a truth claim. We are advancing a claim to the historicity of this event. We are claiming that the judgment that this event took place in space and time is the most reasonable historical explanation of the evidence, and we must remain open to correction on the basis of additional evidence or more convincing interpretations of the evidence. The apostle Paul, at least, was not squeamish about citing eyewitnesses to the resurrection to support the claims of faith.

**BULTMANN:** You know, of course, that I think Paul undercut his message with that list of eyewitnesses to the risen Jesus in 1 Corinthians 15. As for the traditions of the empty tomb, they are clearly later legendary accretions.

**PANNENBERGIAN:** I am not arguing that we have to accept all the New Testament traditions uncritically. Of course, the tradition of Easter faith underwent a development and some legendary additions were made. But we will only understand the meaning of the claim “Jesus is risen” as we enter into the horizon of interpretation of the early Christian community instead of prematurely judging that this can't happen or that is simply impossible. We won't even know what in the world we are talking about when we use the word “resurrection” until we grasp what meaning it had in the context of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic. For apocalyptic all of history is oriented toward the eschatological future of God. The early disciples believed that the resurrection of Jesus signaled and anticipated the general resurrection and final judgment toward which universal history moves. Neither for New Testament believers nor for us can affirmation of the resurrection of Jesus be separated from one's understanding of the whole of reality. My main point is that we have to be reasonable, rather than irrational, in our effort to communicate the faith to the modern mentality. Unless we are able to offer reasons for our belief in the resurrection of Jesus, as the early church itself tried to do, we render Christian faith completely arbitrary and authoritarian. We evacuate the Easter message of all intelligibility and truth claim.

**BULTMANN:** Now listen, Pannenbergian, your position strikes me as fantastically naive and presumptuous. You take upon yourself the task of telling historians how to do their job. I am not sure you really appreciate the critical rigor of historical investigation. You speak of historians as if they could never pose a threat to the historicity of the biblical narratives. Critical historians interrogate their sources like a prosecuting attorney interrogates a witness in a courtroom. They say, “This is what we are told happened. But did it really happen that way, or at all?” And historians carry out this inquiry on the basis of presuppositions rooted in common human experience.

**PANNENBERGIAN:** “Common human experience” is a pretty vague notion.

**BULTMANN:** Is it? I don't accept as historical fact reports of a person walking on water, because this completely contravenes our present knowledge and experience of reality. Suppose someone who tried to assassinate the President of the United States were brought to trial and said to the court: “I didn't fire the gun at the President. It was an act of God. The Holy Spirit pulled the trigger.” What would you do, Pannenbergian? Would you say: “Let's look at the evidence. Check the FBI files and see what we have on this Holy Spirit character.” My point is that we often argue from the analogy of common experience.
This is why I simply can't see how a resurrection from the dead could function as an historical explanation.

**PANNENBERGIAN:** That's because you have an incredibly narrow idea of what historians do. History is precisely the arena of the unique, the singular, the once-for-all. There are no a priori laws of history that can be used to answer historical questions or exclude certain possibilities without first looking at the evidence. The resurrection of Christ from the dead cannot be called unhistorical simply because it violates some general law like "resurrections from the dead don't happen."

**BARTH:** Well, I certainly agree with that. Bultmann has always seemed to me to take his radical skepticism much too seriously. But I must say, Pannenbergian, that what bothers me about your line of argument is that you seem to make faith dependent on the conclusions of historical-critical reason. Your approach seems to be first knowledge, then faith. As you know, I simply reject this as the proper method of theological inquiry. *Fides quaerens intellectum,* "faith seeking understanding" — this is the right procedure for theology. Otherwise faith ceases to be faith and becomes the conclusion of a historical or metaphysical argument. We simply have to begin with the reality of the resurrection of Jesus. We do not establish the truth of the risen Lord; his truth establishes us as forgiven and liberated persons.

**Mostly Moltmannian**

**MOLTMMANNIAN:** OK, Barth, we have heard this line from you before, and up to a certain point it makes sense. But I think that Pannenbergian has grasped something about the resurrection that is missing in your theology of revelation, and that is the proleptic, anticipatory, promissory nature of this event. If we are rightly oriented to the resurrection of Christ, we should not be facing the past but should be moving into the future of righteousness, peace, and new life promised by God in this event of the raising of the one who was crucified. The resurrection is the ground of Christian hope and the basis of the commission of the church. If we really believe in the resurrection of Jesus, this will manifest itself in our being a pilgrim people, an exodus community, a people called to take part in the struggle against injustice and for the liberation and transformation of all things from the chains of the law and of death.

**PANNENBERGIAN:** Since I interpret the resurrection as a proleptic event as you also seem to want to do, I am not sure what you find objectionable in my approach.

**MOLTMMANNIAN:** I am afraid that your preoccupation with a new interpretation of history and historical reason means a loss of the sense of liberation for service that is inextricably connected with the apprehension of the resurrection in the New Testament church. If I may baptize a saying of Marx, the real task of theology is not to provide a new interpretation of the world but to take part in its transformation. The proclamation of the resurrection of the crucified Jesus does more than create anticipation; it sets us in contradiction to present injustice.

**BULTMANN:** Well, without trying to baptize Marx, let me say that I too want to talk about freedom from the past, openness to the future, and the transformation of life by the gospel of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. This is precisely why I find the abstract way in which all of you speak of this message to be completely sterile and boring. You are so anxious about preserving its "objectivity." Barth wants to make sure that we remember to say that it happened in space and time. But he doesn't feel compelled to give any support to this statement. It just hangs in mid-air, and believing in the resurrection of Jesus comes to involve assenting to some unintelligible claim. This is dishonest. I don't think that Christian faith is this sort of sacrifice of moral and intellectual integrity. So, perhaps surprisingly, I have considerable admiration for Pannenbergian's refusal to allow faith to be equated with intellectual irresponsibility. The problem is that he ends up identifying faith with assent to objective historical statements. The New Testament has a different texture. It is a summons to you and to me to accept the crucified Jesus as God's redemptive act for us, a summons to us to say, Yes, God's presence in the world is realized in the paradoxical form of the crucified one — a summons therefore to live entirely in dependence upon God's forgiveness. This involves dying to my old anxious and grasping self and allowing God alone to be my future and my hope.

**MOLTMMANNIAN:** My future and my hope! That's just the problem with your interpretation of the Easter message, Bultmann. You individualize and privatize the message. Sure, you talk about transformation and new life. But what you mean is transformation of my consciousness. You have split self and world apart. I don't think the early church did that. When they proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, they understood this to be the beginning of world transformation. I appreciate your criticism of a false kind of objectivism and an anxious searching after proofs and demonstrations in theology. But your interpretation of transformation is much too narrow, too provincial, too individualistic. To believe in the resurrection of the crucified is not just to have a new self-understanding. It is to understand and relate to
God differently. It is to understand and act in the social and political world differently. It is to believe in the faithfulness of God in the face of personal and political structures of death. The confession that the crucified one has been raised always has been and continues to be the expression of a subversive faith with revolutionary implications for our social-political as well as personal spheres of life.

PANNENBERGIAN: Well, Moltmannian, I am certainly impressed by the way you have demolished Bultmann, and of course I agree with much of what you have said. I am interested in a public theology with all its attendant difficulties rather than a theology that simply caresses the convictions of an insulated community. But, Moltmannian, you’re evading the real issue of this conversation. We’re talking about the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus. Stop trying to play the role of junior social prophet and recognize that the real task of theology is to provide a responsible account of the claims of Christian faith.

BARTH: The real question is what theological responsibility means. When you say responsible, Pannenbergian, I think you mean engaging in apologetics, vindicating Christian truth claims before the bar of reason. However aggressive it may seem, apologetics is always theology that has lost its nerve. Real theological responsibility means being responsive to the one concrete and living center of the biblical witness, Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord. Bultmann says that I have no support for the claim I make that the resurrection is an event in space and time. The New Testament texts are my support! Surely they present the resurrection as an event in space and time, as a real happening to which the disciples responded.

BULTMANN: But the texts need to be interpreted! Your simple appeal to the fact that the texts say so would land us in biblicalism and fundamentalism.

BARTH: That was a low blow. You know full well that I am no fundamentalist. I fought that mentality for forty years. Of course the texts need to be interpreted. But if you think you can skirt around the claim that the resurrection was an objective event, an event that happened in space and time, you are not interpreting the texts: you are manipulating them to say what you want them to say.

BULTMANN: I see that the elderly Barth still possesses a volatile temper.

BARTH: You bet I do, particularly when there is as much at stake as there is here. We’re arguing about the heart of the gospel. You say that the message of the resurrection challenges people to understand themselves anew in the light of the saving significance of the cross. And I say that this will not do. The New Testament speaks of a second and victorious act of God beyond the cross of Jesus. You make the apostolic message a mere summons to realize what has become possible because of the cross. And I say that the apostolic message proclaims not the possibility of new life but the realization of new life in Jesus the risen Lord. The new world of God created in the resurrection of Christ is objectively true, even if only believers acknowledge it subjectively as true.

PANNENBERGIAN: The way you two knock your heads together amuses me. You have so many things in common: a positivistic notion of historical inquiry, a fear of engaging in apologetics vigorously and unashamedly, a suspicion of every attempt to provide reason and evidence for the claims of faith, and, naturally resulting from all this, a curious ambiguity about the sense in which the resurrection can be said to be a historical event. You know, when I read the New Testament accounts of the resurrection, I don’t get the impression, as Bultmann does, that the biblical witnesses thought that the desire for evidence of the resurrection was illegitimate. When you disparage such evidence, you make faith in Jesus and his claims for himself completely arbitrary and authoritarian. The resurrection is God’s vindication of Jesus’ claims to authority. It is God’s certification that Jesus was who he said he was. It is that event in history that preceptically realizes the goal of history.

MOLT曼NNIAN: In my judgment, Pannenbergian, we must emphasize that the resurrection of Jesus is God’s vindication, God’s proof, God’s promise. Otherwise we will be pursuing a theology of glory separated from a theology of the cross. In my view, it is really the identity of God that is the basic issue of the resurrection narratives. Who is the God made known in the raising of the crucified Jesus? The God present in the cross and resurrection of Jesus is the triune God. To speak of God as triune is to say that the event of cross and resurrection defines God as the Father who in love surrenders the Son, as the Son who in love is obedient to the Father’s will, and as the Spirit of love who holds Father and Son in communion in their greatest distance from each other and who opens this communion to the world. On the cross God takes suffering and death into the divine life for the sake of the salvation of the world. In the resurrection the joy of God’s final victory over evil is promised.

PANNENBERGIAN: You are surely aware that my theology of the resurrection is also eschatologically oriented and that I am as thoroughly trinitarian in my theology as you try to be in yours. So I still don’t see what you find so objectionable in my theological work.

MOLT曼NNIAN: I suspect that it has to do with the lack of attention to the significance of the cross in your theology and to the consistently conservative
political implications that you draw from your interpretation of the biblical witness. As I understand the gospel message, to know this God of cross and resurrection is to take part in the suffering and joy of the history of divine love that wants to transform all things. We continue to live in the brokenness and incompleteness of history under the signature of the cross. The cries of the oppressed and the groaning of creation have not ceased. Authentic Easter faith manifests itself, therefore, not in impressive intellectual or historical proofs but in the spirit of sacrifice and service that comes from God's own history of suffering, liberating, and reconciling love for the world. I see you, Pannenbergenian, as advancing a theology of the resurrection that is continually tempted to become a theology of glory. My theology of the resurrection tries to avoid this by consistently emphasizing that God raised the crucified Jesus from the dead and calls us to solidarity with the victims of history in the hope of the renewal of all things.

Summations

BARTH: Since that last speech is probably going to require an interpretation as long as my Church Dogmatics, we had better call it a day. But before we do, I want to challenge each of you to say on what text you would preach your next Easter sermon. I have always believed that theology is for the sake of better, more faithful preaching. So what I am asking is this: How would our interpretations of the resurrection work themselves out in our Easter sermons? For my part, I would like to preach on the text in which the angel announces to the disciples at the tomb, "He has risen. He is not here" (Mark 16:6). I think I would emphasize that an angel brought this message, that it was revelation, and that above all else it was good and joyful news.

MOLTBERGIAN: I have always been especially attached to the Gospel of John. I think I would preach on the word of the risen Lord to Thomas: "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (John 20:29). In light of our previous discussion, I think my emphasis in this sermon would be pretty self-evident. Easter faith is an existential response to the scandal of the cross; it is not a matter of being a privileged eyewitness of a spectacular event in history called the resurrection.

MOLTBERGIAN: I would want to preach a sermon emphasizing the centrality of the fact of the resurrection for our faith. A good text would be the Pauline claim: "If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (1 Cor. 15:13-14). I would try to bring out both sides of Paul's argument: that the intelligibility of the resurrection of Christ depends on an understanding of reality as radically open to the new, and that the actuality of the resurrection is the basis of the Christian interpretation of reality and of the whole of Christian faith and life.