

"The experience of being sprinkled with a few drops of water does not communicate any of the layers of baptism's meanings - not cleansing, not birth, certainly not death and burial. Is God's grace so minimal that Christians can be satisfied with sprinkling?" (46) She notes the growing number of adult baptisms, and claims, "It is a ritual and symbolic contradiction of the meaning of baptism to require an adult to bend over a font which looks like a bird bath." (47)

Stauffer's last chapter has interesting descriptions and pictures of large submersion pools set prominently in some modern Anglican & Lutheran churches in England and America. They could give us some ideas for the design of our own baptisteries.

More importantly the whole study might be of help to persons who have been baptized by sprinkling. The sincerity of such a person is not in question, but the form of that baptism certainly is. The sprinkled believer may be able to say "I took a step with Jesus and I was blessed by Him", but he or she cannot say, "I was demonstrating that being a Christian means a total cleansing of my whole self, a death to the old life and a rising to the new." Only total immersion demonstrates that.

So the inadequate symbol needs to be superseded by the adequate one. Then if the minimalistic ceremony has brought blessing, how much more an act of obedience with full biblical meaning. This raises the re-baptism bogey. But it is hard to see what biblical principle is offended by following up an inadequate baptism with an adequate one. The disciples at Ephesus and Paul saw no impediment to doing so (Acts 19:5).

J. Ayson Clifford

Resurrection and Discipleship

For Thorwald Lorenzen, formerly professor of Biblical studies at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, and now pastor of the Canberra Baptist Church, the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is not in question. For any who accept the authority of the Biblical message the resurrection is not only there, it is centrally there, the very nature and ground of Christian faith. The question for Lorenzen therefore is how can we best understand, grasp and respond to the resurrection.

Interpreting the unprecedented

First then, understanding. How can we interpret this

unprecedented act of God? In Part 1 of his book *Resurrection and Discipleship*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995) Lorenzen offers a helpful fourfold typology of interpretative models. The first of these he calls the "traditional" (or rational) approach, represented by two uneasy theological bedfellows, Carl Henry and Wolfhart Pannenberg. The second approach is the so-called "liberal" one. Finding the resurrection at odds with modern historical science the "liberal" approach shifts the emphasis to what is historically more accessible - either the faith of the disciples after Easter (Rudolf Bultmann and John Knox), or the pre-Easter Jesus with resurrection now a symbol of his historical importance (David Strauss, Heinrich Paulus, Rudolf Pesch and David Griffin). The third interpretative model, the "evangelical", views the resurrection as fact, but also as much more than that. This "much more" is accessible only to faith. Karl Barth is a prominent representative here along with Walter Künneth and (with some equivocation) Edward Schillebeeckx. Finally there is the "liberation" approach of Jürgen Moltmann and Jon Sobrino which sees the resurrection not so much as historical fact but rather as a history-creating (eschatological) event. In this understanding faith in the resurrection of Christ carries within itself the promise and the conviction that history needs to be and can be changed in the direction of justice. This promise calls in turn for praxis, a discipleship that seeks liberation for the wretched of the earth.

In outlining these four interpretative models Lorenzen is commendably even-handed. For each position he offers an appreciation of its strengths as well as an assessment of its weaknesses and lacks. Lorenzen expresses some sympathy for the "evangelical" emphasis on faith, but finally concludes that this still leaves the resurrection too much in the realm of theological reflection. If the life-changing and history-creating quality of the resurrection is to be realised we need to move in the direction of the "liberation" model.

Pinning down the stories

In the second part of his work Lorenzen reflects on the Biblical narratives. He considers the *novum* character of the resurrection and what it means to call it an "act of God". This is followed by a discussion of the nature of the appearances of the risen Christ, the early believers' experience of the Holy Spirit, and the narratives of the empty tomb. A chapter on the experience of the Holy Spirit and the relationship between the Spirit and the risen Christ with reference to the *filioque* is especially instructive.

In regard to the resurrection narratives Lorenzen adopts a traditional critical approach. The result is a minimum of historical foundation with a great deal of kerygmatic and apologetic superstructure. As Lorenzen explains, with increasing chronological distance from the resurrection event it became necessary to expand brief confessional formulas ("God raised Jesus from the dead" and "Christ appeared to Cephas") into more or less extensive narratives. Thus encounters with the risen Christ may reduce to just three, to Mary in Jerusalem, to Peter in Galilee, and to Paul on the Damascus road. Appearances to the male disciples occur only in Galilee, and if Luke locates them in Jerusalem that is because of his theological conviction that Jerusalem must be the centre. Again Luke's separation of the resurrection (Easter) and the coming of the Spirit (Pentecost) by 50 days is a theological construction. It is most unlikely, avers Lorenzen, that there was a period between Easter and Pentecost when the Spirit of God was inactive. In those early meetings in Jerusalem the disciples "must have had intense experiences of the Spirit".

Admittedly the resurrection narratives are not easily correlated. But do we have to believe that they are really a sophisticated version of "Chinese whispers"? By deft use of four adverbial scalpels - probably, possibly, likely and maybe - Lorenzen essays to cut away all the accumulated verbiage. What he ends up with is rational and well-behaved. It no longer wriggles, but is it the resurrection? Are the stories nothing more than latter day inventions, or is the reality wilder than our logic can allow? Life has a habit of eluding dissection and life from the dead must surely be the hardest of all to pin down.

Won't you join the dance?

Can one really understand the meaning of a dance apart from dancing it is the rhetorical question at the beginning of the third part of the book. Lorenzen's answer is a resounding no. The dance called faith is the proper Biblical mode of response to the reality of the resurrection. Faith of course may be distorted and Lorenzen offers an excellent six point analysis of possible distortions. But if faith is the proper response how does it come about? This is explored under the headings of word, promise, remembering, witness, partnership, worship, praxis and knowledge. The end result is discipleship and Bonhoeffer's "costly grace".

Part 4 deals with the consequences of faith in the resurrection. In his book *The Crucified God* Jürgen Moltmann asks

"What does the cross do to our idea of God? Lorenzen asks the same question of the resurrection. Who is the God who raised Jesus from the dead? Like Moltmann Lorenzen sees the resurrection as leading to a Trinitarian understanding of God. A further consequence of faith in the resurrection is an understanding of salvation as all-encompassing including the issue of justice for the wretched of the earth and the salvation of the cosmos itself. Lorenzen makes a plea for the freeing of nature from the domination by human history that has plunged it into ecological crisis. The book concludes with a brief treatment of the church and its mission.

Discipleship now

Resurrection and discipleship is an impressive work in the tradition of European scholarship. Lorenzen's erudition is undoubted. The bibliography is formidable, the footnotes exhaustive. Despite his learning Lorenzen is generally readable and makes his points clearly and well. A number of familiar "political" concerns keep re-surfacing - justice for the poor, the ecological crisis, women in the church. In his anxiety to recruit the resurrection to the cause Lorenzen can be guilty of overstepping the scholarly mark. The appearances of the risen Christ, he tells us, may be interpreted as *Legitimationsformeln* (formulas of validation) that serve to establish the authority of leaders in the early church. Lorenzen is impressed that one of these appearances is to a woman, Mary. In several places he laments the fact that the Church over its history has ignored this clue to the role of women in ministry and leadership. But if the appearance of the risen Christ to Mary validates her authority, the same Christ might at least have ensured that she had a subsequent ministry parallel to that of Peter and Paul. Intent on his eisegesis Lorenzen can only feebly opine that while Mary of Magdala did indeed have a call to ministry, the churches of the time could or would not recognise her.

Injudicious speculation aside we can be grateful to Lorenzen for this stimulating volume. Most significantly with his emphasis on discipleship he takes the resurrection out of the realm of something that happened "back there" into the realm of what should happen now.

Brian Smith