# WHO RAISED UP JESUS?

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THE cardinal position the resurrection of Christ occupies in the Christian Faith cannot be more forcefully expressed than in the words of the Apostle, "If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (I Cor. 15:17). But who raised up Jesus?

The answer to this question appears so obviously in the New Testament that it might seem superfluous labour to devote any space to elaboration of it. For surely it was God who raised Jesus from the dead. But to leave the answer, thus simply and truly stated, without further analysis or inquiry, is to miss the richness and fulness of meaning that resides in the question. When we say that God raised our Lord from the dead we must remember that our conception of God is trinitarian, and so there are inherent in the question additional questions. When we say God raised Jesus, are we using the name God in the more absolute and indefinite sense of the Godhead, or are we using the name more specifically of the Father or of the Son or of the Holy Spirit? Since the Father is God and the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God, and since the Father, the Son and the Spirit are distinct persons, it instantly becomes apparent that the simple answer, "God raised Jesus from the dead", does not of itself answer these further questions. It is, therefore, to the question more specifically asked that we now address ourselves.

The preponderant usage of the New Testament is that Jesus *was raised* from the dead. That is just saying that in the resurrection Jesus is represented as having been the *subject* of an act of divine and omnipotent power. The two verbs most frequently used in this connection are ἐγείρω and ἀνίστημι. Both verbs are used actively. In the case of ἐγείρω the usage is well illustrated by two passages in the Acts of the Apostles — ὃν ὁ Θεὸς ἤγειρεν ἐκ νεκρῶν (Acts 4:10), ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν ἤγειρεν Ἰησοῦν (Acts 5:30).

God raised Jesus. Likewise in the case of ἀνίστημι this usage is also well illustrated in the following passages — ὃν ὁ Θεὸς ἀνέστησεν λύσας τὰς ὠδῖνας τοῦ θανάτου (Acts 2:24), τοῦτον τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἀνέστησεν ὁ Θεός (Acts 2:32; cf. Acts 13:33, 34; 17:31).

When we ask the question as to the identity of the name ὁ Θεός in such passages, we are inevitably constrained under the direction of such passages as Romans 8:11, Galatians 1:1 and Ephesians 1:20 to regard the ὁ Θεός as the personal name of the Father. In Romans 8:11 Paul says, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you". Here it cannot be doubted but the primary agent in the resurrection of Jesus is stated to be the person of the Godhead who is distinguished both from Christ Jesus and the Spirit, namely, the Father. In Galatians 1:1 the reference to the Father is direct, "Paul an apostle, not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised him from the dead". In Ephesians 1:20 the subject of the action expressed in the clause, "when he raised him from the dead", is given in verse 17, "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory". With these might readily be coördinated Romans 6:4, "As Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father", though the aorist passive here (ἠγέρθη), as we shall see later on, may be rendered "rose" as well as "was raised".

There can, then, be no question but that the Father as the first person of the Trinity is represented as the agent in the resurrection of Christ. The Father is the agent and Christ is the subject — God the Father, by the exceeding greatness of His power, raised up His Son Jesus.

When ἐγείρω is used with reference to the resurrection of Christ in the passive voice the problem of the agency contemplated is more complicated. This difficulty proceeds from the fact that the passive of ἐγείρω may be rendered as the passive of the transitive verb "to raise", or it may express the intransitive verb "to rise" or "to arise".

In the active voice ἐγείρω, with the exception of the present active imperative (ἔγειρε), appears to be uniformly used

transitively, and so, when applied to the resurrection of Christ, always bears the meaning "raise". In every instance of the occurrence of the active voice except John 2:19, 20, to which we shall presently allude, Jesus is the object and not the subject of the verb.

When, however, we turn to the passive of ἐγείρω, the case is very different. Here the intransitive meaning of the verb comes into distinct prominence. It must not, of course, be supposed that the transitive meaning disappears. In Matthew 11:5 — καὶ νεκροὶ ἐγείρονται, Luke 7:22 — νεκροὶ ἐγείρονται and Luke 20:37 — ἐγείρονται οἱ νεκροί[1] (cf., also, I Cor. 15:15, 16, 29, 32, 35, 42, 43, 44, 52), the rendering "raise" is surely distinctly to be preferred to the rendering "rise", even though the latter is not impossible grammatically. When we come to the usage as it respects the resurrection of Christ, it would appear that the transitive meaning "raise" is, to say the very least, distinctly possible in the following passages: Romans 4:25; 6:4, 9; 7:4; 8:34; I Corinthians 15:4, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 20. It would admittedly be very difficult to decide with any conclusiveness which would be the preferable rendering in some of these cases. But the context would in some of them distinctly favour the rendering of our English transitive passive. In some of the cases just cited, on the other hand, it may very well be that the intransitive verb "rise" or "arise" is less awkward and therefore more felicitous and accurate.

There are other cases, however, where the preponderant usage of the New Testament in the use of the passive of ἐγείρω appears entirely natural and preferable. That the preponderant, if not uniform, meaning of the passive of ἐγείρω in non-resurrection passages is the intransitive, the most cursory examination of the numerous instances will disclose. Citation of examples would be quite superfluous. This usage in non-resurrection passages would naturally create a strong presumption for the same intransitive force in strictly resurrection passages, whether it be the resurrection of Jesus or of others.

[1] ἐγείρονται, so far as form is concerned, might be present indicative middle. In such a case it would be intransitive. The reasons for regarding it as present indicative passive need not now be argued. Neither is it necessary in this article to discuss the use of the middle of ἐγείρω.

While for the reasons given already it would not be feasible to apply this force of the passive universally (for there are those passages where the transitive force must be allowed and indeed preferred), yet in many cases which directly refer to the resurrection, mostly, of course, to that of Jesus but in a few cases to that of others, the intransitive force is the distinctly natural. In Matthew 8:15 the ἠγέρθη does not refer to the resurrection of Peter's wife's mother, for she had not died. But there is rather close similarity in that Jesus performed a miracle. The ἠγέρθη obviously does not mean "was raised", but, parallel to the idea of the other coördinate verb (διηκόνει), means "arose". In Matthew 9:25 we have the raising of the damsel — καὶ ἠγέρθη τὸ κοράσιον. Surely, the obvious meaning is, "And the damsel arose" rather than, "And the damsel was raised" (Cf. Matt. 14:2; Mark 6:14, 16; Luke 9:7). In Luke 7:14 when Jesus says, Νεανίσκε, σοὶ λέγω, ἐγέρθητι, again the natural rendering is "arise" rather than "be raised". It is apparent, then, that in the usage as it bears upon the resurrection of Christ it becomes distinctly possible to adopt this intransitive rendering. In the judgment of the present writer this rendering is to be preferred in certain passages. The following will serve as examples: Matthew 27:63, 64; 28:6, 7; Mark 14:28; 16:6; Luke 24:6, 34; John 21:14; II Cor. 5:15; II Tim. 2:8. It would, at least, require rather artificial handling of a goodly number of these examples to try to impose the transitive rendering upon them. Consequently, in view of the preponderant meaning of the passive of ἐγείρω in non-resurrection usage, and in view of the same meaning as the natural and preferable one in several passages that deal directly with the resurrection of Jesus, we have to conclude that the mere use of the passive of ἐγείρω does not of itself imply that Jesus in His resurrection is viewed as the subject of action by another. So there is the distinct possibility that even in passages where the passive of ἐγείρω is used, Jesus' own activity in His resurrection is contemplated or expressed.

To *insist*, however, that there is reflection upon the agency of Christ in His own resurrection, in such usage as we have now been discussing, is not warranted. The mere fact that the same intransitive use of ἐγείρω appears in connection with

the resurrection of others, who could not have been resurrected by the exercise of their own agency or power, prevents us from any such insistence. All we can say is that the possibility of Jesus' own agency is present, and that the mere use of the passive must not be taken as excluding the exercise of His own agency.

With respect to the verb *ἀνίστημι* the question is in several respects similar to that which we have just found in the case of *ἐγείρω*. The verb *ἀνίστημι* is also used both transitively and intransitively. It is used with reference to the resurrection of Christ in the following passages: transitively in the active voice — Acts 2:24, 32; 13:32, 34; 17:31,[2] intransitively — Mark 8:31; 9:9, 10, 31; 10:34; Luke 18:33; 24:7, 46; John 20:9; Acts 10:41; 17:3; I Thessalonians 4:14. There are a few other cases where there are variant readings. But even if, in these few cases, we adopted the variant which reads *ἀνίστημι*, there would be no change in the facts, so far as our present inquiry is concerned. It will be noted that in all five cases where the transitive meaning appears, God is said to be the agent and Christ the subject of the resurrection. In each case Christ is the object of the verb. In the instances of intransitive use, it will be noted that, except in Mark 9:10, Jesus is in every case the subject of the clause. The four parts of the verb used are *ἀναστῆναι* (second aorist infinitive), *ἀναστήσεται* (future middle), *ἀναστῇ* (second aorist subjunctive active) and *ἀνέστη* (second aorist indicative active), in all of which cases *ἀνίστημι* is used in the intransitive sense "to rise" or "to arise".

Now, as we already found in the case of the intransitive use of *ἐγείρω*, this intransitive use of *ἀνίστημι* may denote the

[2] In Acts 3:26 it might possibly be argued that there is reference to the resurrection. The present writer does not, however, think so. In Acts 13:32 it might be argued that the reference is not to the resurrection but to the incarnation. The context and particularly the sequence in relation to verse 34, where allusion to the resurrection is explicit, lead the writer to conclude that *ἀνίστημι* in verse 32 also refers to the resurrection. In Mark 14:58 *ἀναστήσω* rather than *οἰκοδομήσω* occurs in some manuscripts. But if we should even read *ἀναστήσω* here we should not be justified in basing much argument upon it. All the truth that underlies this statement of the false witnesses is embraced in John 2:19–22, which will be discussed later.

activity of Jesus Himself. The usage in other cases clearly establishes this as a distinct possibility in the use of ἀνίστημι as it applies to Jesus' resurrection. In some instances the present writer is disposed to think that this is the probable meaning, that is to say, that the activity of Jesus is distinctly contemplated. But again insistence on such an import is impossible, for the simple reason that the very same parts of the verb are used in the case of the resurrection of others who could not have risen by the exercise of their own agency or power, as, for example, Mark 5:42; Luke 16:31; John 11:23, 24; Acts 9:40; Ephesians 5:14; I Thessalonians 4:16.[3]

We have found, then, that the resurrection of Christ is distinctly referred to the agency of the Father, that Jesus is repeatedly represented as being the subject of resurrection power exerted upon Him. We have also found that, while, in the intransitive use of the passive of ἐγείρω and in the intransitive use of ἀνίστημι there is the distinct possibility, in some instances perhaps probability, that Jesus is regarded as active in His own resurrection, yet there is no conclusive evidence that there is allusion to the activity of Jesus in these cases of the use of either of these two verbs. The question then remains: Is there any support for the position that Jesus rose from the dead by the exercise of His own power? Or, in other words, are we justified in believing that Jesus was active in His own resurrection? To that question the answer is emphatically in the affirmative.[4]

There are two explicit statements to this effect from the lips of our Lord Himself, recorded for us by John. They are John 2:19–22 and John 10:17, 18. These two passages, since they are explicit, afford us strong presumption in favour of regarding other passages, to which we have already referred but which are not in themselves conclusive, as reflecting on the activity of Jesus Himself in His resurrection.

In the former passage Jesus says, "Destroy this temple

[3] ζάω is used of Christ's resurrection in Romans 14:9, and ζωοποιέω may have reference to the resurrection in I Peter 3:18. But nothing determinative regarding our present inquiry can be elicited from these passages.

[4] There is, no doubt, the agency of the Holy Spirit in the resurrection of Christ. But discussion of that subject would require the treatment of a distinct line of evidence.

and in three days I will raise it" (ἐγερῶ αὐτόν). John's comment is to the effect that, "He spake of the temple of his body" (περὶ τοῦ ναοῦ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ) and that, "When he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he spake this, and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken". (It is probably to this occasion that we have allusion in Mark 14:58). The directness of Jesus' claim and the obvious allusion to the resurrection cannot be doubted. This passage takes on the added significance that it was at the earliest stage of His earthly ministry that this disclosure was made, and so it witnesses to the fact that Jesus from the outset of His ministry was aware of His death and of His possession of that transcendent power by which He would in His own case break the bonds of death and raise from the dead the temple of His body.

The second passage, that of John 10:17, 18, bears features that are altogether unique. It contains not only the information that Jesus was active in His resurrection but also the most pregnant disclosure of the relation that that act of His own power and authority bore to His Messianic death and mission. To the analysis of its teaching we shall now proceed.

(I) Jesus says, "I lay down my life, in order that I may take it again". Here we are apprised of a relationship that exists between His death and resurrection that too often escapes our attention. It is that the laying down of His life was to the end that He might take it again, that His death was to the end of His resurrection. We are, no doubt, quite familiar with the fact that the resurrection of Jesus was the *actual* sequel to His death. We are, no doubt, familiar with the fact that the resurrection was the *necessary* sequel to His death — God raised Him up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it. And perhaps we are also familiar with the truth that the resurrection is the *vindicatory* sequel to His death — God the Father glorified His servant Jesus in that He raised Him from the dead and thus gave open demonstration to His righteousness. But on the truth here enunciated, that He died *in order that* He might rise again, our minds do not so familiarly dwell. And by it we should be reminded of the following facts.

a. The death of Christ is not an end in itself. It is subordinate to a great purpose that can be achieved only through resurrection.

b. The death and resurrection of Christ must never be separated; they are not only factually inseparable, they are causally inseparable. They stand related in such a way that they must together be regarded as the conjoint sources of our redemption.

c. To be a Saviour, Christ had to pass through resurrection. It was an integral part of the experience and task assigned to Him in the economy of redemption. The resurrection power exercised by the Father in the raising of Jesus, and the resurrection power with which, in virtue of that fact, Jesus is endowed are necessary facts in the plan of salvation. But if so, there needed to be death. For without death resurrection has neither existence nor meaning.

Our minds more commonly and quite properly move in a somewhat reverse direction, namely, that the resurrection was necessary in order to give meaning and efficacy to the redemptive fact of Jesus' death. In other words, the resurrection was the indispensable sequel to the redemptive efficacy wrought and secured by His vicarious death. But fulness of interpretation and of statement requires that our minds move in the direction of appreciating that the resurrection is also a redemptive fact. And so Jesus laid down His life in order that He might take it again. It is an impoverished doctrine of the resurrection that fails to take cognisance of this truth.

(II) Jesus says, "This commandment have I received from my Father". The laying down of His life in order that He might take it again was wrought in pursuance of the Father's commandment. The commandment to which Jesus refers cannot be restricted to the laying down of His life nor to the taking of it again. It covers both, and that in the causal relationship which they are stated to sustain to each other.

But what we are particularly interested in now is that the very resurrection of Jesus by the exercise of His own power is an act of obedience to the Father. It is this aspect of Jesus' teaching in this passage that is too infrequently noted or appreciated. The expression of Paul in Philippians 2:8, "obedient unto death", might seem to intimate that Jesus' death

was the terminus of His obedience. This is, however, a mistaken exegesis. This phrase in Paul does not mean simply that Jesus was obedient up to the time of His death. It points rather to the extent or intensiveness of His obedience. He was obedient even to the extent of giving His life in death. His death was the supreme act or consummate manifestation of His obedience. But while it is intended to show the extent to which His obedience led Him, we are not by any means required or allowed to regard the obedience that He rendered as the Messiah as having terminated with His death on the cross. It must not be interpreted in a way that will exclude, or do prejudice to, what Jesus says in our text, namely, that the exercise of His authority, executed in pursuance of the Father's commandment, extends even to the raising of Himself from the dead. For Jesus says not only, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life in order that I may take it again", but He also says, "This commandment have I received of my Father".

(III) Jesus says, "I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again". As in John 5:27 and 17:2, surely the "authority" of which Jesus here speaks is the Messianic authority that is committed to Him in terms of the economy of redemption. If this is so, then it was in the exercise of power and authority bestowed upon Him as the God-man, to the end and in the exercise of His Messianic task, that He raised Himself from the dead. Truly it was only as divine that He could assume the Messianic task, it was only as divine that He could be invested with the correspondent authority, and truly it was divine power alone that could accomplish resurrection. But it was divine power strictly bestowed and strictly exercised in His Messianic capacity as the God-man.

We must not then regard the Messianic office or functions as suspended during the period of death and burial. Though dead, He was still the God-man Messiah, and it was in the exercise of such an office that He broke the bands of death and took His life again. The Messianic authority that He exercised during the period of death and in the act of resurrection was indeed affected and determined by the fact that He had died. The reality of death determined the conditions

under which that authority was to be exercised and the very ends contemplated in the exercise of it, yet it was truly Messianic power, and Messianic power exercised, let it be remembered, in the accomplishment of no less a part of His redemptive work than that of resurrection from the dead. It was precisely that transcendent miracle that was wrought by His own authority.

(IV) Jesus says, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again". Our attention is hereby drawn to a striking example of trinitarian concurrence in the economy of redemption. We are perhaps surprised to find the laying down of His life and the taking of it again stated to be the ground upon which, or reason for which, the Father loves Him. For is not the Son the object of an infinite and unchangeable love by reason of the eternal and intra-divine relation as the Only-begotten? Can anything that the Son does in time be a reason for the outflow of the Father's love?

While there is an outflow of eternal love that can never be spoken of as grounded in, or caused by, the work that Christ performed as Messiah, and therefore a love that can receive no increase from, nor find any condition in, any *ad extra* relation, yet this text points us to those new relations that the persons of the Godhead come to sustain the one to the other in the economy of redemption, relations which do not by any means obtain in the eternal and immanent relations of the persons to one another. The particular aspect of these economical relations stated here is that of the outflow of the love of the Father to the Son on the basis of the Son's discharge of the Messianic task. In all its infinitude and immutability, and to the full attainment of its satisfaction, a satisfaction that must be realised if the economy of redemption is to achieve its purpose, the love of the Father comes to rest upon the Son, because He, the Son, lays down His life in order that He may take it again.

The leading thought, we must again remind ourselves, is the resurrection of Jesus. And so we are compelled to appreciate the truth, the truth upon which our minds are not perhaps accustomed to dwell, that the resurrection from the dead by the agency of Christ Himself in the exercise of the

authority given to Him as the Messiah, is the ground of the Father's love with reference to the Son.

We found at the outset of our study that the Father raised up Jesus. It was the *vindication* accorded to Jesus by the Father. It was the *proof* that the Father's love found full satisfaction in the redeeming work of Christ. It was the *seal* that the Father's eternal purpose of love with respect to men had been realised in their redemption through Jesus' blood. But that same resurrection was also the reason or ground of the Father's love. Here we have an example of that convergence or concurrence whereby the manifold wisdom of God is revealed and commended, and there is opened to us an avenue by which we may gain some added insight into the Apostle's word, "That in the ages to come he might shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace in lovingkindness to us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:7).

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