

# RESURRECTION AND LORDSHIP REALITIES SHEDDING LIGHT ON JESUS' WAY

André Myre

In one single verse, Paul succeeded in fully expressing the Christian faith which emerges from the vast majority of texts in the New Testament:

Rom 10 :9 For if you confess with your lips that Jesus is the Lord, and if, from deep within your being, you trust that God raised him from the dead, you will be set free.(saved).

This text refers to two fundamental, specifically Christian realities: Jesus' lordship and his resurrection. Before speaking of these, however, I must say something about the diversity to which the New Testament bears witness, yet is so often overlooked. Hope, as a matter of fact, can be expressed in different ways.

## I. OTHER EXPRESSIONS

### 1. Jesus

Before speaking of Jesus' resurrection and lordship, it is important to point out that these two expressions were not a part of the many words, symbols or images used by the Nazarene.

#### Resurrection

Hope in the resurrection, in particular, had found its way into the collective consciousness in Judea during the first ten years of the second century before the Christian era, when the Maccabees had attempted to become free. At that time, Judea sought to disengage itself from the guardianship which had been imposed upon it since Antioch, and many had perished in the turmoil. People began to be extremely scandalized by the prospect of seeing the faithful sons of Abraham obliged to go down into Sheol, the abode of the dead, to share the destiny of their oppressors there. To alleviate the scandal, they referred to an understanding found during their exile in Babylon, and the first guidelines of hope in the resurrection were thus drawn. Galilee, conquered nearly a century later, did not seem to share this new understanding. Jesus, in any case, possibly never spoke about it. Hope in the regime was more than enough for him.

I will make a short digression here to draw attention to something important: the vast majority of believers who lived at the time of the Old Testament lived with the prospect of descending into sheol after their death and living there like unconscious shadows with the rest of humanity whose life had ended. They knew no other Beyondness and had no hope of survival. They thereby tell us something we must not forget: whether we are with or without hope concerning the Afterlife, all that matters is that we become an authentic human being in this life.

#### Lordship

Jesus never spoke about lordship either, a reality, as we will see later, which according to the New Testament, attained him after his death. He didn't identify himself as the Messiah; he was even a kind of anti-messiah, since he thought there was a need to go back to the ancestral system of government shared among the twelve tribes of Israel. To lead the country under God's regime, he saw twelve men from the grassroots.

Mt 19:28/Lk 22 :28.30 You who have followed me, you shall likewise take your place on twelve thrones to govern the twelve tribes of Israel.

He did not want a king (messiah<sup>1</sup>) ruling over Judea or Galilee. He wanted nothing to do with power for himself, since he did not even see himself as being part of the twelve. He announced and prepared the coming of God's regime. After that, his task would be completed.

It is paradoxical that, believing neither in his resurrection nor in his lordship, he had never been Christian. Nor had John the Baptist. Nonetheless, from the point of view of the Christian faith, these are the two greatest men in history.

## 2. Source Q

We must not be surprised if Paul's summary of the Christian faith is not shared by all of the New Testament. That is because, in his way of expressing himself, Paul's faith is based on the reflections of the Christian scribes of Jerusalem, who were all steeped in the language of resurrection developed in Judea at the time of the Maccabees and in the Judean ideology centered on Jerusalem taking back its power through David's royal lineage. It was they who, after Jesus' death, expressed the faith with the help of the categories of resurrection and lordship. In Galilee, things were expressed differently.

We can get some understanding of this from a document called "source Q" The evangelists Matthew and Luke used Mark and this Source to compose their gospels. It consisted above all of statements attributed to Jesus. It is to this Source that we owe learning about texts as popular as the Beatitudes and the Our Father, for example. This document was probably compiled in the north of Galilee, twenty years after Jesus' death. The scribes to whom we owe it must have known at least Jesus' followers if not Jesus

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<sup>1</sup>"Messiah" is a title which designates the king once he has been enthroned by being anointed with oil

himself. In it, there is no talk of resurrection and there is a refusal to use the categories of Lord or Messiah to refer to Jesus. Jesus is seen most of all as "the Son of Man". This expression, which I prefer to translate by "the Human" also dates all the way back to the time of the Maccabees. On Jesus' lips, it

stands for a mysterious person who one day will come on the clouds, in God's name, to judge all of humanity. In Source Q, it means Jesus himself.

Instead of being expressed with the help of categories of resurrection and lordship, hope, in the Source, is worded as follows:

Christian life consists in living like Jesus, by being united in solidarity with the poor (mission)  
Immediately before the End, there will be a judgment carried out by "the Human"  
He is the one who will decide who will enter into God's regime

As an example, here are some statements which clearly indicate the spirit of the document. Mission is what is most important, and mission is lived in a tough world.

Q 10:32 Go! See! I send you like lambs among wolves.<sup>2</sup>

Mission is carried out on behalf of the poor.

Q 6:20 He looks at his followers and speaks to them  
Blessed are the poor, God's regime is for their benefit

To live their mission, those who are sent are equipped with a way of praying which expresses their solidarity with the poor. First of all, the prayer is based on the personality of the Parent who hides from the great and reveals himself to the little ones (Q 10:21). That is why the latter are able to hope in his regime; they also call upon him to make it come about and thereby reveal his true personality. In the meantime, they need their Parent to establish the conditions that will allow them to find bread; that he take action along the lines of their efforts to counteract the oppression to which they are subjected and that he avoid adding to the already too heavy weight of their misery. According to the Source, the Our Father is the prayer of the poor.

Q 11:2 Parent,  
Make your Regime come  
<sup>3</sup>give us today our bread to last us until tomorrow,  
<sup>4</sup>forgive us our debts, for we also have forgiven those of our debtors  
and do not make us pass any tests

The Parent is called upon to help his poor children stand firm until the day – close at hand – where he will establish his new Regime. This being said, it is clear that the logic of economics, finances and commercialism is incompatible with God's logic.

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<sup>2</sup>The references to the Source follow the numbering in Luke's gospel. Word for word quotations are the fruit of a reconstruction from Mathew's and Luke's versions.

Q 16:13 You cannot be a slave of both God and Money

Therefore everyone has to make a fundamental choice.

Q 11:23 Who is not with me is against me  
and who does not gather with me, scatters.

The proclamation of God's support for the poor greatly upsets those in charge of the system and those who profit from it, and they make their displeasure weigh heavily on Jesus' followers. Certain ones will even lose their lives as a result. But it is at that price that one becomes an authentic human being.

Q 17:33 Whoever has found his/her life will lose it  
and whoever has lost his/her life because of me will find it.

Before the implementation of God's Regime, "the Human" will evaluate the life of each human being, according to whether his/her life is consistent or not with Jesus' choices.

Q 12:8 Whoever acknowledges me in front of people  
"the Human" will acknowledge in front of God's messengers (or angels).  
<sup>9</sup>but whoever denies me in front of people  
will be disowned in front of God's messengers.

There will be one criterion only for the judgement: following Jesus by taking action. The simple proclamation of the lordship of Jesus will not serve as a pass to enter the door to God's Regime any more than having known Jesus or having celebrated the Eucharist.

Q 13:24 Come in through the narrow gate. Many will seek to enter but very few will succeed.  
<sup>25</sup>The master of the household will then get up to close the door. Having stayed outside,  
you will start to knock on the door  
- Lord, open the door for us!  
- I do not know you.  
- <sup>26</sup>But we ate and drank with you. You spoke on our territory  
- <sup>27</sup>I do not know you. Get away from me, you do nothing good.

According to the Source, no human situation is worse than that of having received the gift of mission and using it for one's own benefit by exploiting faith for oneself.

Q 14:34 Salt is a good thing  
But if salt becomes tasteless, with what can it be flavoured?  
<sup>35</sup> It is good neither for the soil nor for the manure.  
It has to be thrown out.

Like Mark, the Source is harsher for Jesus' followers who turn away from their mission than for the Gospel's opponents.

The work of judgement once over, many people will be under God's regime, people from all backgrounds who have come from everywhere.

Q 13:29 They will be many, coming from the East and from the West to sit at the table  
<sup>28</sup> with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob under God's regime.

The house of God must be full.

<sup>Q14:23</sup> Go forth on the byways and invite all those you will find there.  
My house must be filled.

A house governed by twelve followers close to the needs of the people.

<sup>Q22:28</sup> You who have followed me 30 you will be seated on twelve thrones to govern the twelve tribes of Israel.

The mission is concrete, hope is of the earth. For Jesus, as for the Source, there was no other world besides this one. God lived under the dome of the firmament, constantly following human beings with his gaze. It is interesting and enlightening to see that the Source has no need of the concepts of resurrection and lordship to express its faith in Jesus and to plan a mission to follow him. Its faith is not contained in a creed, and what holds the community together is not the sharing of common declarations. Believing in Jesus means trusting him enough to make a commitment to the way he has outlined, even if it is what led him to the cross. The community is united in a common vision of life, in the same judgement on institutions, in the same hope that the path ultimately leads to Jesus. It knew that elsewhere, things were said differently, but in its opinion, humans would not be judged on their manner of saying things, but on what “good” they did or did not do. (Q 13:27)

I would like to mention in passing that John the evangelist expressed the same reluctance as the Source concerning the language of resurrection and lordship. For John, Jesus is the “authentic way of life” (“the way, the truth and the life” Jn 14:6) And whoever makes a commitment to live like Jesus will pass through death intact. He does not need the concept of resurrection to express his hope.<sup>3</sup>

In its diversity, the New Testament witnesses to the fact that the brotherhood/sisterhood of faith is not based on sharing a common creed (belief system) but on the experience of walking together in a direction aligned on that of Jesus.

## **II. THE RESURRECTION AND THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS**

As I said at the beginning, the New Testament as a whole is founded on the resurrection and the lordship of Jesus. In the framework of an exposé it is therefore not possible to demonstrate the wealth

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<sup>3</sup>Near the end of the first century, however, under pressure from the great Church, a previous editor inserted notions of resurrection and lordship in his text.

of meaning these books witness. Consequently, I will seek to present what seems to be the essential purpose of using these concepts. I will therefore concentrate on Jesus’ resurrection, for everything that is said about the resurrection of the believers is a broadening of the meaning of Jesus’ resurrection. It is noteworthy, moreover, that in the Gospels and in Acts, very little is said about the resurrection of the believers.

## 1. The resurrection

To speak of Jesus' resurrection, I will rely on Acts and on Mark's gospel. What the New Testament essentially has to say on the subject is found there.

Acts

There are four particularly significant statements about Jesus' resurrection in Acts. Despite the fact that they all resemble one another, I will present them all so you might clearly see on what they insist. Peter makes the first three statements; Paul makes the fourth. Three of them are addressed to the Israelites in general, but the third, through Cornelius and his entourage, is aimed at the pagans.

The first is spoken on Pentecost morning, and it announces the content of the three others.

“ Jesus, the Nazorean, a man whom God sent to you with mighty gestures, wonders and signs that God performed through him in your midst – this you know – <sup>23</sup> this One... who you removed by nailing him at the hands of criminals, <sup>24</sup> God raised him up and released him from the suffering of death, for it was not possible that death retain him <sup>32</sup> Of this Jesus who God raised up, we are all witnesses.

The statement accentuates the following elements:

- . Jesus did great things
- . his fellow-citizens had him put to death by criminals
- . but God raised him from the dead
- . Peter and his own bear witness to this

In his second statement, also delivered in Jerusalem, Peter emphasizes his presentation of the resurrection differently.

<sup>Acts 3:13</sup> It is the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our ancestors who glorified his servant Jesus that you handed over and betrayed in Pilate's presence when Pilate judged it necessary to release him. <sup>15</sup> You put to death the Author of life, whom God awakened from the dead. And we are his witnesses.

This statement is more accusing than the first:

- . the only thing said about Jesus' life is that he was God's servant
- . the people of Jerusalem did not judge Jesus in the same way as did the God of their ancestors; they even betrayed their fellow man in front of Pilate who was ready to set him free. Therefore it is they who put him to death.
- . God glorified or awakened Jesus and made him the Author of life.<sup>4</sup>

The third, at Caesarea on the sea, is addressed to the pagans, in the person of Cornelius and his entourage (Acts 10:37- 43). Since it is somewhat lengthy, I will simply summarize its main elements:

- . Jesus went about doing good and healing all those who were in the grip of the devil, in Judea and in Jerusalem (verses 38-39)
- . the Judeans put him to death by hanging him on the wood of the cross<sup>5</sup>
- . but God woke him up (verse 40)
- . Peter and the others (verse 39), as well the Scriptures (verse 43) are witnesses of this.

Therefore everything is in place in order to form a group of believers of pagan origin.

In 13:26-52, at Antioch of Pisidia, it is Paul who takes up the torch. He addresses the descendants of Abraham (verse 26):

- . The people of Jerusalem and the rulers rejected Jesus and the Prophets and asked Pilate to put him to death.(verses 27-29)<sup>6</sup>
- . but God raised him from the dead and he appeared to his witnesses ( verses 30-31)
- . many, of Judean as well as of pagan origin, began to follow Paul ( verses 30-52).

It is normal that the Acts speak more of Jesus' resurrection, « the first risen from the dead », than the resurrection of Christians or humans in general. Everything is important in these texts. Peter is presented as the guarantor of the elaboration of Jesus' destiny as developed by the scribes of Jerusalem. It is in that City that the decisive events took place; that Jesus' life is presented only as an inescapable presupposition. The Judeans as well as the pagans participated in Jesus' execution. But God worked against their decision by raising Jesus from the dead, an action calling for faith in and witnessing of the life which followed. It is significant that in these four texts, the concept of resurrection is applied to Jesus with the same intention that had seen it emerge at the time of the Maccabees, that is, to alleviate the scandal of death. It is a backward look at Jesus' death, not a forward look towards hope and survival. The Christian scribes who used the term wanted to remove an important obstacle which blocked the way of the Christian mission.

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<sup>4</sup>A way of speaking of Jesus' lordship

<sup>5</sup>Notice that Peter avoids speaking of Jesus' crucifixion by the Romans, to a centurion of the cohort Italica (Acts 10:1)...

<sup>6</sup>Before a Jewish audience, it is Pilate, a Roman and a pagan, who executed Jesus...

## Mark

The essence of what Mark has to say about Jesus' resurrection is contained in four great statements concentrated in the central part of his Gospel, beginning with (8:22-26) and ending at (10:46-52) with the healing of a blind man. It is precisely through these words that the evangelist seeks to open the eyes of his community. Every time, Jesus speaks to his followers. The context in which he does this and the reaction of his followers reveal their meaning.

Mark situates the first statement (Mk 8:31-33) in the suburb of Caesarea of Philippi, a Roman city as its name indicates. In the Gospels, Jesus never enters one of the occupying power's cities. Here, it is very close, in one of their suburbs, that he dares express himself clearly.

Mk 8:31 He began to teach them. The Son of Man must suffer much, be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the scribes and be put to death and rise three days later. 32 He spoke like this, very clearly. But Peter took him aside and began to remonstrate with him...

The officials of Judea, centered in the Temple, the driving forces of transmission of the Roman Governor's orders, will succeed in putting him to death, but not in preventing him from "rising". Peter understands very well the challenge that Jesus is getting ready to issue, and he criticizes him harshly. Jesus, on the other hand, calls him the Adversary (Satan). And he continues by saying that the only way to save one's life is to lose it. He concludes his reply by referring to "the Human's" judgement against this corrupt generation (Mk 8: 38)

In the second statement, Jesus asks his followers, witnesses of the transfiguration, to say nothing about it until "the Human has risen from the dead".(Mk 9:9-10). His followers listen carefully, all the while wondering what "rising from the dead". could possibly mean Evidently it is not the meaning of the words they do not understand; it is what Jesus has in mind they do not want to accept, that is, his death at the hands of the officials. And that is precisely what Mark means, since immediately after, he refers to what happened to John the Baptist. (Mk 9:11-13)

The following statement is announced by the reference according to which Jesus passes through Galilee, but without his wanting it to be known. He wanted to speak to his followers about the death and resurrection of "the Human" (Mk 9:30-32). But Mark concludes by saying that they didn't understand anything; moreover, they didn't even want to talk about it. This context of secrecy is very interesting. It allows us to grasp the subversive dimension of hope in the resurrection. The disciples stubbornly refuse to understand, because they want to play the game according to the rules of society. Immediately after, Mark therefore declares that they argued about the identity of who was greatest among them. (Mk 9:34), then he shows them as being scandalized by the fact that people dared act in the name of Jesus without being part of their club. All of this is ridiculous in the context, and Mark's composition is heavy with sarcasm.

The fourth statement (Mk 10:32-34) takes place as they are on their way up to Jerusalem: "Jesus walked in front of them. They were in a state of shock and the others behind them panicked." The Nazarene hardly had time to tell them that after the death of "the Human", he "would rise", before James and John, numbers two and three, had started to argue again, this time about the exercise of power. Jesus therefore had to remind them of the harshness of the oppressors towards their subjects obliged to report. The population suffers from them every day, and he himself will have to die because of them. (Mk 10:42-45)

In rereading these texts from Mark, we can only be struck by their tone, that is, the serious warning addressed to his followers. Rome and Jerusalem, working together, will put Jesus to death, but he will rise again. His death will be the consequence of his resistance to the objectives of the Empire, actualized with the collaboration of the elite from Jerusalem. But the resurrection will follow, manifesting the

defeat of the Empire and of those who serve it. Mark's Jesus decides what he must do for his people oppressed by Rome and Judea. He has a vision of the situation, social, political, economic and religious. In the first text, he takes it upon himself to express this vision where the symbol of the occupation is visible: the suburb of the city built in honor of Caesar. He will repeat it in Galilee, and then on the way up to Jerusalem. He teaches his meaning of the resurrection to the group of his followers so as to forge their identity, to bind them together as a group. His teaching is intended to give a direction to their life: they will lose it if they want to save it at the risk of their identity, if they play the game of being great or of exercising power. His hope allows him to clearly consider the prospect of his end and to speak about it peacefully. It is his followers who are all worked up.

At the end of this part of his book, Mark says of Bartimaeus, who has just found his ability to see, that "he started to follow him up the road" (10:52). The evangelist hopes that his words on the death-resurrection of Jesus will bear fruit. If so, he will have succeeded in strengthening the bonds of his community by uniting it in a common vision of its situation within the Empire, by reorienting its activity and pacifying it in a time of crisis. Faith in the resurrection of Jesus is clearly at the service of a consequential action, whether it be resistance, dissidence or the promotion of another kind of human community in line with God's regime.

At the end of his account, Mark picks up the thread of what he had mapped out in his statements on Jesus' resurrection: "You will all be trapped". The shepherd will be struck, his sheep will be scattered. But he will be "awakened". They all affirm, Peter in the lead, that no! They will not allow themselves to be tricked. (Mk 14:26-31) Nonetheless, nineteen verses later, Mark says these devastating words: "Abandoning him, they all fled" (verse 50).

At the very end of Mark's narration, at last, a character dressed in white – which means he comes from God – announces to the women who are looking for the "Nazarene", the crucified One:

Mk 16:6 He has awakened  
He is not here,  
He had been put there.

God's messenger witnesses to the identity of the Risen One: it is truly the Nazarene, the one whom the supreme court of the people delivered to the Empire to be crucified. God took sides for him against the Empire and their collaborators. His resurrection announces that the struggle must continue. The women must go and tell his followers that they must leave for Galilee, where they will see him. It is not in Judea that the new faith must be born, but in the rebellious province. But God's messenger spoke in vain.

Mk 16:8 But they said nothing to anyone, they were so very afraid...

If we can read these words today, it is evidently because the Voice was strong enough to be heard by others, men and women who were not a part of Jesus' intimate group, not his family, nor the twelve, nor the women who had accompanied him, but those who had succeeded in conquering their fear, in going beyond the silence of his followers, in order to walk courageously in the footsteps of the Nazarene to proclaim their faith.

It is already a great deal, but that is all Mark wrote about Jesus' resurrection. It is impressive that these texts were all composed in a dark environment: an atmosphere of confrontation, of hiddenness, of

sharing in secret, of death announced, of a tomb visited. The Empire put Jesus to death, but God resurrected him. Do not get lost along the way, do not hold on to life, to so-called greatness, to the illusion of power, to the benefits the Empire promises its friends. Go to Galilee. A vision of the world is passed on. A disrupted group is formed anew; a frightened community – in Rome or elsewhere, anywhere, through the ages – tightens its ranks. Its identity deepens; the followers keep on hearing the call. Life takes a new direction. A little bit of peace in a troubled situation.

Neither in Source Q, nor in Mark is Jesus' resurrection announced as making an inroad into the Beyond, or as a factor to alleviate the shock of death, such as: "Hurrah! Death isn't so serious after all, we will rise again!" Even if it is scandalous to say this, Jesus' resurrection was not revealed to us so that we would give an intellectual assent to the personal existence of Jesus in the Beyond, but so that, as men and women of faith, we might walk in the footsteps of Jesus, at the root of society, with the little ones to whom the Parent reveals himself. There is only one way to show that we believe in Jesus' resurrection: to listen to the call to live like him. This faith shows us how to live here on earth, not how we will live in the Beyond.

## **2. Lordship**

In the New Testament, lordship is a category much more important than that of the resurrection. Somehow, it remains extraordinarily little known. The main reason is the development of faith in the divinity of Jesus from the time of the patristic era. When we believe that Jesus is God, it is difficult to see that lordship could have added anything to what he already had. If we want to understand what the New Testament has to say about the lordship of Jesus, we must put our classical theology aside and seek to interpret it on its own terms. What it has to say is not difficult to understand. I will state here what is essential.

### **The beginning**

Lordship is a gift given to Jesus after his death. There is no ambiguity in the New Testament about this. Paul, for example, speaks of the Gospel of God

Rm 1:3 concerning his son, born of David's seed, according to the flesh,

<sup>4</sup> established as Son of God in power, according to the way of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus, Messiah, our Lord...

Acts says the same thing, through Peter's lips :

Acts 2:32 This Jesus, God has raised him up, and we are all witnesses. <sup>33</sup> he has thus been raised by the right hand of God, that is, he received from the Parent the Holy Spirit that was promised – and he has poured it out as you can see and hear. <sup>36</sup> That the entire house of Israel know beyond any doubt:

God has made both Lord and messiah this Jesus whom you crucified.

These texts speak both of the time and the nature of the gift. The lordship of Jesus was attributed to him after his death, and logically, after his resurrection. It consists of the fact that God gave the resurrected Jesus his own Spirit, spirit being an expression indicating the totality of God's powers of intervention in

history. For a time, then, the living God, having withdrawn, gave Jesus the power to intervene in history on his behalf. The New Testament does not say that Jesus is God since the resurrection, but that he exercises God's function. If we do not understand this, we do not understand the New Testament.

### **The titles**

In the two texts I just quoted, we saw the titles Son of God, Messiah and Lord. Acts attributes some others to Jesus: the Author of life (Acts 3:15), Ruler and Saviour (Acts 5:31), Judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:42). In our human organizations we naturally attribute titles to those who are in power or who have some kind of authority. The authors of the New Testament therefore gave Jesus, elevated to Lordship, the highest titles they knew. The most common and the most important are the three mentioned above, that is, Son of God, Messiah, and Lord. These are three royal titles which express the ultimate function of Jesus, not his being.

### **The function**

The text which most clearly expresses the function of Jesus' Lordship was composed by Paul. Unfortunately, it is only rarely read or commented in our churches.

<sup>1</sup> Cor. 15:22 All will come to life again by the messiah <sup>23</sup> but each according to his rank : first of all the messiah, then all those who belong to him, when he will come...

<sup>24</sup> Then it will be the end, when he will hand over the kingship to the God and Parent, after having destroyed every sovereignty, authority and power...

<sup>25</sup> Thus he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet, <sup>26</sup> the last enemy to be reduced to nothing is death.

<sup>28</sup> When finally all will have been put in its rank under his feet, then the son himself will put himself in his rank under the One who has put everything in their rank under him, so that God may be everything for everyone.

(OR)<sup>28</sup>. When finally, all has been subjected to the Son, he will then subject himself to the One who made all things subject to him, so that God may be all in all.

This text from Paul is one of the most important in the New Testament concerning the Lordship of Jesus. Jesus clearly holds royal power in virtue of which he "reigns". But the exercise of this power, implicitly received from his resurrection, will definitely come to an end. At the "end", his task having been accomplished, he will give back to God, his Parent, the power which is rightfully his, so that God will be God forever for everyone. And Jesus, from Lord that he was, will become a human again like everyone else. In his text, Paul does not give Jesus the title of Lord, but uses the two other titles, Messiah (v 22) and Son (v 28) also common in the New Testament.

Between the resurrection and the « end », Jesus is engaged in a life and death struggle against all sovereignty, authority or power. It is not that these realities are evil as such. But the fact is that all of them, no matter what they are, inevitably end up by putting human beings at their service, and that is

fatal. Jesus thus has the task of subjecting them to himself so as to hand over to God humanity free and alive, on whom death – the ultimate evil power – will have no more power.

## **The end**

At the beginning and at the end of his text, Paul uses an image taken from the military, that of a humanity « in ranks ». By doing this, he presents the fundamental role of the Church. In fact, at the end, humans are seen placed in three ranks. The first having been placed “in a rank” is Jesus himself, because of his resurrection. The second rank will be that of his followers, those who have belonged to him. This is how Paul represents all the believers, the Church. If the Church belongs to him, it is because it is the reality he used to fulfill his task of Lord. It is through it that he struggles against “all governance, and all authority and power.” It is because the Church will have helped him fulfill his task and will have dearly paid the price, that it will be raised from the dead in the second rank. Then, it will be everyone else’s turn. Paul has no intention of excluding anyone from the resurrection. Above these three ranks of human beings, Paul places the One who will be God forever and for everyone.

It is unfortunate that this text is so little known by the Jesus’ followers, for it speaks of the core of the Christian faith. In fact, it allows for the interpretation of this other text from Paul which I quoted at the beginning.

Romans 10:9 If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord  
and if you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead,  
you will be saved

Paul does not call for a simple proclamation of a creed (belief system). He speaks to people who live all kinds of deaths because they have taken it upon themselves to live like Jesus and to participate in the struggle of their Lord against all the powers that lead humans to death. Since their life indicates that they allow Jesus to have Lordship over them, they have the right to hope to share in his resurrection. They belong to those who, at the end, will resurrect in the second rank.

## **3. The Way**

The New Testament texts, no matter how diverse they are, are nonetheless coherent. In the third part of my conference, its conclusion, I will present a few major guidelines for reflection drawn from what I have presented so far and which I leave for your discernment.

1. Faith is a fundamental reality present at the core of our personalities, experienced in the form of an oriented momentum. It makes us confident and hopeful beings. Faith is a dimension of ourselves; human beings urged to live according to a certain direction, with the conviction that if we orient our lives in that direction, we will become authentic human beings. To discover if I am a believer or not, I need not ask myself in what words I believe; I simply have to observe the way I live and take the test of Jesus’ life.(living like Jesus).

2. The basic content of Christian faith lies indeed in Jesus’ life. It is manifested through the conviction that I can become the authentic human being I aspire to be only if I seek to reproduce Jesus’ guidelines. I therefore speak my faith when I am engaged on the way shown by Jesus. When the New Testament

speaks of Jesus, it sees him as a floodlight which lights the path of Life. It is the path, the Way which we must observe, not the floodlight. And to look at the Way is to hear the call to mission.

3. Faith is inevitably lived in a complex ensemble of systems entirely like the one which led Jesus to the cross: that is the main obstacle faith encounters. That is the great scandal, the stone which makes us stumble, the obstacle which has to be overcome. The New Testament is written to encourage Jesus' followers to follow him on the Way, first of all by removing the systems from their minds so as to trust only the Voice which speaks to their heart as they follow Jesus, a Voice which can be heard only with sisters and brothers all around us, to whom it also speaks.

4. The content of faith is not the final judgement pronounced by "the Human" (Q, John); it is not even the resurrection and the Lordship of Jesus (Paul, Mk, Mt, Lk, Acts). These categories are not given to us so that we might adhere to them intellectually, but so that they might contribute to our overcoming our reluctance in making a commitment to follow the Way of Jesus. Walking in Jesus' footsteps, says Q, is the only way of passing through the judgment of the Human and entering God's regime. Walking in Jesus' footsteps, Saint Paul tells us, is the only way you can live forever. Faith is not in resurrection or in lordship, but in the trust we place in committing ourselves to the Way mapped out by Jesus.

5. The statements on the resurrection and the lordship of Jesus are not intended to open a window on the Beyond or to enlighten our future destiny, or to alleviate our anguish as we face death. These words do not have the Beyond in mind; they target only the pathway of our life. We know nothing about the Beyond, but everything about the Way. We know nothing about God, but everything about the judgement he makes on the political, economic, financial, social, familial or religious system which surrounds us. Animated by the Spirit of his Parent, Jesus is engaged in a life and death combat against it, while this system is engaged in a life and death combat against whoever opposes it.

6. In a mysterious fashion, the gift of faith is given in an altogether unpredictable manner. It is recognized in our companions along the Way mapped out by Jesus. To be two or three walking in the same direction as Jesus, is enough. And without having expected it, the Church is there, very small, without a mandate, without any justification, for an hour, for six months or for a whole lifetime. But always in a state of discernment, so as to remain adapted to the struggles of the Lord, and especially, so as not to become a system which struggles against him...

I thank you for having allowed the teacher that I am to address the missionaries and prophets that you are. I have attempted to present an important point on the lineage of those who before us, have listened to and heard the Voice which from all time, is addressed to humans. I can only leave all of this to your discernment.

### **My wish for you**

to meet the Parent in the little ones to whom he reveals himself

to find the road on which Jesus wants to see you journey with them.

and, attuned to the powerful Spirit who energizes you, to succeed in removing the system from your minds and in moving forward freely on the Way of life with the brothers and sisters you will discover there.

As invited by Paul, may you succeed in imitating him as well as the Lord Jesus, by listening to the Voice which speaks to you,

<sup>1Th 1:6</sup> amid much suffering, indeed, but also with the joy that comes from the Holy Spirit  
so that the Church may come, as a means of a joy-filled humanity on a healthy planet.

Holy Cross Mission Congress  
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Unrevised Translation