

## Quest

You may have heard of Albert Schweitzer. If so, you doubtless associate his name with his remarkable humanitarian work. This is not, however, the sole focus of Albert Schweitzer's life : theologians usually think of him in terms of his involvement with the « Quest for the Historical Jesus ». In other words, he was among those who tried to « demythologize » the Gospels, unwrapping the pious packaging to reveal the actual words and actions of the flesh-and-blood Jesus. (Back in the twentieth century, such scholars produced two-colored Gospel books in which the supposed « actual » words of Jesus were in red ; perhaps you have seen a copy or two around.)

I think of this kind of quest as we approach the sad commemoration of the passion, death, and burial of Jesus, followed upon by the eruption of joy which accompanies our celebration of His Resurrection. Wasn't the movie « The Passion of the Christ », complete with dialogue in Aramaic – the language spoken by Jesus - an example of this kind of literalism ? I am reminded of a book I read while yet in grade school, A Doctor at Calvary by Pierre Barbet, which focused on the technical and gorey details of crucifixion. I was, at that time when horror movies were all the rage, less distressed by the blood-and-guts than I was scandalized to learn that certain details were probably different from the usual depictions : the Cross was probably « T-shaped », and the nails were doubtless in Jesus' wrists rather than in His hands. (I have since gotten over my shock ; thank you for sharing my joy!) Then there's the online article which, just last month, speculated as to how much energy, produced at the moment of Resurrection, was required to produce the imprint on the Shroud of Turin. Being very bad with numbers, I am lucky indeed that my faith does not depend on this kind of information, what with the astronomical numbers and all !

As I reflect upon the Passion and Resurrection narratives, I find the account of many people who likewise went looking for the physical Jesus. When Joseph of Arimathea went looking for Jesus, he found a dead body on the cross. When the Myrrh-bearing women went to the tomb looking for Jesus, they found the stone rolled away, with the tomb open and empty ; as if that wasn't enough to scare them half out of their wits, they were then confronted by a fierce creature in white who, not unlike a white-clad Dominican, told them to proclaim Jesus risen – which, of course, the women were too frightened to do. When Peter and John went to the tomb looking for Jesus, all they found were discarded burial cloths.

Needless to say, their quest would have ended up fruitless had there not in fact been another quest going on at the same time : the Resurrected Christ went looking for those whom the Crucifixion had left in shock. He went looking for Mary Magdalene, finding her distraught and weeping in front of the empty tomb ; His words and the comfort of His presence turned her tears to joy. Neither locked doors nor sturdy walls - and not even the doubt of Thomas - were a barrier as He went looking for the Apostles. He went looking for the disciples on the road to Emmaus, revealing Himself in His words and in « the breaking of the bread ».

In the post-Resurrection days which constitute our lives, in our world where the Crucifixion of Jesus is replayed every day in the headlines, we might well take a lesson from this

## Quest

dual quest. It is perhaps easier to search for Jesus than to let ourselves be sought. In the first instance, we take control, deciding where He is to be sought and what appearance He is expected to take ; in the latter case, we give up control, allowing the Resurrected Christ to come to us how and when He chooses. The invitation offered to us is the same one offered to the mystified disciples on the road to Emmaus, an invitation to life and to glory revealed in the Eucharistic meal : « "Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends. Those who are victorious will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne. Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what He is saying to the churches. (Revelation 3 : 20-22 New Living Translation) »

fr. Jim Karepin, op