

The last word

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And all manner of thing shall be well

We are all, I suspect, familiar with the famous expression from Julian of Norwich, now an axiom in our language. "In the end all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well." To which Oscar Wilde is reported to have added: "And if it isn't well, then it's still not the end."

Few words better express what we celebrate in the Resurrection of Jesus. Belief in the Resurrection, belief that God raised Jesus from the dead, constitutes the very ground of our Christian faith. Everything else we believe in as Christians is grounded on that truth and, as St Paul says, if that isn't true, if Jesus wasn't raised from the dead, we are the most deluded of all people.

But if God did raise Jesus, and we believe that he did, then not only can the rest of Jesus's message be trusted, but we can also then live with the ultimate consolation that the end of our story has already been written and it is a happy, ecstatic ending. We will, in the end, live happily ever after. Life is indeed a fairy tale.

How does the Resurrection of Jesus guarantee that? Here's how Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, that wonderful scientist and mystic from the previous generation, answered that.

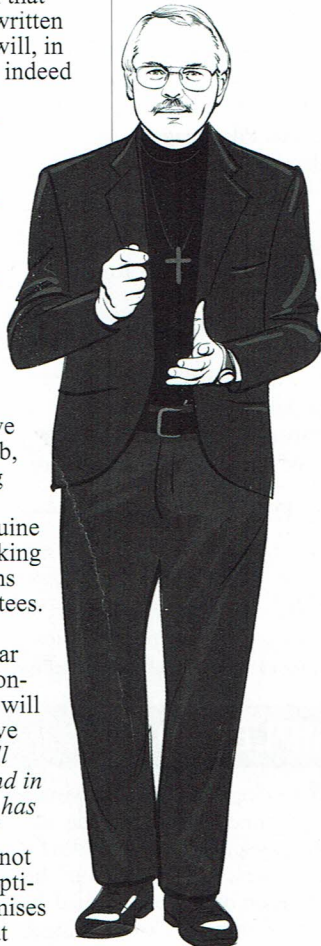
Once, having just made a presentation within which he outlined a vision of how the cosmos and all of life will come together in one final harmony inside the Cosmic Christ at the end of time, he was challenged by a sceptic to this effect: "That's a lot of wishful thinking and optimism. But suppose we blow up the world with a nuclear bomb, what happens to your wishful thinking then?"

Teilhard's answer distinguishes genuine Christian hope both from wishful thinking and natural optimism, even as it affirms what the Resurrection of Jesus guarantees. He responded in words to this effect: "If we blow up the world with a nuclear bomb, well, that would be a two million-year setback. But what I'm proposing will happen, not because I wish it so or have empirical evidence to warrant it. *It will happen because Christ promised it, and in the Resurrection God showed that He has the power to deliver on that promise.*"

What we believe in as Christians is not based on wishful thinking or natural optimism; it's based on the word and promises of Jesus and the trustworthiness of that



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word and those promises is guaranteed by the Resurrection of Jesus. When we believe this, we can live without undue anxiety about anything, confident that the end of our story is already written and that it's a happy ending.

If we believe that God raised Jesus from the dead, if we believe in the Resurrection, then, in essence, *we believe that the world is already saved*. We don't have to save the world; we only have to live in face of the fact that we believe it has already been saved. And if we live with that belief we can risk everything, risk our very lives, knowing that our ending of our story has already been written and that it's a happy one, no matter how dire things might look at present.

We see a wonderful example of this kind of belief in Archbishop Desmond Tutu, one of the key figures in opposing and eventually ending apartheid in South Africa. Amid the struggle to bring down apartheid, facing every kind of threat, he remained steadfast and even joyful in the face of threats and overwhelming odds. What anchored him in his steadiness and joy? Belief in the Resurrection of Jesus.

Occasionally on a Sunday morning when he was preaching, soldiers would come into the church and line up along the aisles with their weapons in hand, hoping to intimidate him. Tutu, for his part, would smile at them and say: "I am glad you've come to join the winning side! We've already won!"

In saying this, he wasn't talking about the battle over apartheid which, at that point, was still far from won. He was talking about the Resurrection of Jesus, the definitive triumph of goodness over evil, which assures that, in the end, goodness will eventually triumph over evil, love over division, justice over injustice, and life over death.

Knowing that, we can live life in confidence and hope. It will end well, not because we wish it so or because things are looking that way for us. It will end well because Jesus promised it would and in the Resurrection God backs up that promise.

Hence there's nothing to fear, nothing – not defeat, not threat, not loss, not sickness, not even death. The Resurrection of Jesus assures us that in the end all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well; and if it isn't well ... well, then it's still not the end.

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