



SEVEN STANZAS FOR EASTER

By John Updike

Make no mistake: if He rose at all
it was as His body;
if the cells' dissolution did not reverse, the molecules
reknit, the amino acids rekindle,
the Church will fall.

It was not as the flowers,
each soft Spring recurrent;
it was not as His Spirit in the mouths and fuddled
eyes of the eleven apostles;
it was as His flesh: ours.

The same hinged thumbs and toes,
the same valved heart
that—pierced—died, withered, paused, and then
regathered out of enduring Might
new strength to enclose.

Let us not mock God with metaphor,
analogy, sidestepping transcendence;
making of the event a parable, a sign painted in the
faded credulity of earlier ages:
let us walk through the door.

The stone is rolled back, not papier-mache,
not a stone in a story,
but the vast rock of materiality that in the slow
grinding of time will eclipse for each of us
the wide light of day.

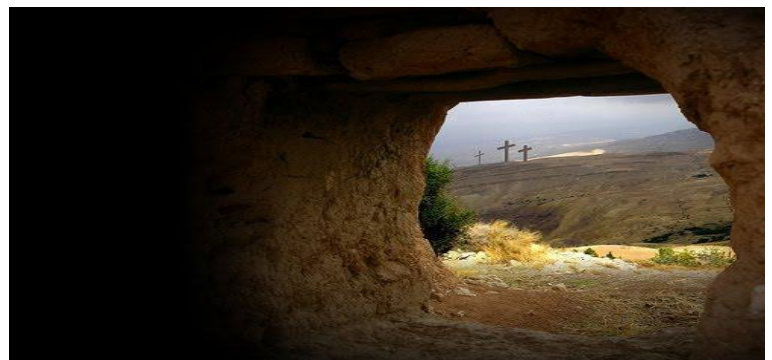
And if we will have an angel at the tomb,
make it a real angel,
weighty with Max Planck's quanta, vivid with hair,
opaque in the dawn light, robed in real linen
spun on a definite loom.

Let us not seek to make it less monstrous,
for our own convenience, our own sense of beauty,
lest, awakened in one unthinkable hour, we are
embarrassed by the miracle,
and crushed by remonstrance.

From "Telephone Poles and Other Poems" (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961).

One young man (Jared Wilson) liked this poem and commented in agreement: "My death will not be symbolic. It will be real. Therefore a symbolic resurrection is no hope for me. I look forward to those rekindled amino acids." What from the poem resonates with you? Why seven stanzas? Do you believe it is possible to "mock God with metaphor"?

John Updike, the poet and writer, hit me hard with "mock God with metaphor, analogy." My work in the mainline church exposed me to no small number of influential folk chanting the mantra: Beware the literal interpretation of the Bible—because this is (their worst word imaginable, a modern anathema) "fundamentalism." Yet many of my colleagues were no less firm and closed than any fundamentalist they opposed. They were simply fundamentalist in a different way, but fundamentalist to be sure. I call them "figurative fundamentalists" literally, that is, what is fundamental to their faith is walling God out such that He is not capable of doing something concrete; He is relegated to the ideal, ephemeral, inexpressible world for which humans vaguely grope. It is a general, nameless sort of deity which yeast-like rises for our noblest causes. And who would deny what this idea gets right, that God is mystery and Holy and truly beyond us. But to hold this up as the "good news" and the "essence of Christianity" means missing His very concrete drawing near to us by becoming flesh as the God-man Jesus Christ. God's desire to get close to us through the incarnation—taking on flesh and dwelling among us—is the big thing, yes, the central thing in His dealings with us, and it is neither casual nor capricious but concrete and costly. The Lord God went to a great deal of trouble to get through to us on our own level, and to relegate it to mere metaphor is an insult of the first order. Our Father, Hallowed be Your Name and Blessed be Your continuing work through the Risen Jesus, literally. LH



C.S. Lewis on Death, Jesus' Resurrection & Nature

"We follow One who stood and wept at the grave of Lazarus--not surely, because He was grieved that Mary and Martha wept, and sorrowed for their lack of faith ... but because death, the punishment of sin, is even more horrible in His eyes than ours. The nature which He had created as God, the nature which He had assumed as Man, lay there before Him in its ignominy; a foul smell, food for worms. Though He was to revive it a moment later, He wept at the shame Of all men, we hope most of death, yet nothing will reconcile us to--well, its *unnaturalness*. We know that we were not made for it; we know how it crept into our destiny as an intruder; and we know Who has defeated it. Because Our Lord is risen we know that on one level it is an enemy already disarmed, but because we know that the natural level also is God's creation we cannot cease to fight against the death which mars it, as against all other blemishes upon it, against pain and poverty, barbarism and ignorance. Because we love something more than this world we love even this world better than those who know no other." (Lewis, 1948)

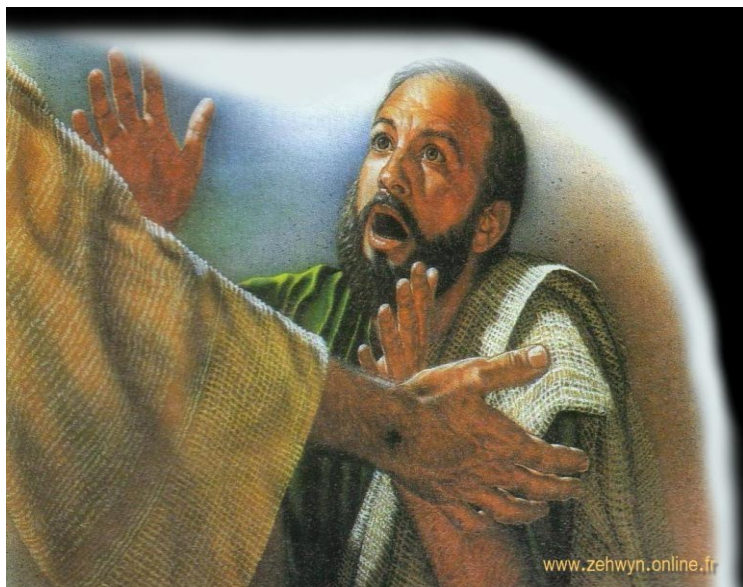
Two statements stand out for me in this quote that was written for medical missionaries while C.S. Lewis was back in Ireland. One is: "Of all men, we hope most of death, yet nothing will reconcile us to--well, its *unnaturalness*." A Christian can see death now as a "part of life," yet still devote a career to medical science fighting it. That is not a contradiction, but rather the deep logic of working out the salvation of the Crucified God and Risen Jesus.

The second statement from Lewis is particularly apt in view of the recent celebration of Earth Day. He concluded his essay in this way: "*Because we love something more than this world we love even this world better than those who know no other.*" This is profoundly true of several Christians in my experience, and in history. Who is not familiar with over 500 years of art showing Francis of Assisi singing "Brother Sun, Sister Moon" while birds gather round about? All such Francis-like lovers of nature who love nature's Creator raise the question: *Is it really necessary to turn nature into a god in order to appreciate it?*

I know some moderns who do literally worship nature. One of them calls me "tree boy", affirming my longtime work with and appreciation of trees. Yet my friend knows I do not worship trees, even though my appreciation of them far exceeds his in spite of his honoring them as somehow divine. By only worshipping the Creator and not the created, I know both, and honor nature better because I honor its Creator more.

Part of being human is being made in the image of God, which on one hand, sets us apart and above created nature. But on the other hand, the mandate of being in God's image is that I properly care for the world He has made. The creative dominion given humans (from Genesis 1:28: "be fruitful and multiply and have dominion") means--not domination and exploitation—but rather something like creative guardianship. Perhaps a better word is "stewardship." From the beginning we have been given a work and privilege of "appreciative stewardship" for a world the Lord chose, not to throw away, but to redeem, starting with the bodily Resurrection of Jesus. We look forward to a New Heaven and New Earth—not the cessation of the earth but rather its renewal and transformation, its resurrection as it were. LH

"It is not enough that we hear the Word with our outward ear, but we must let it penetrate to our heart" *Philipp Jakob Spener, Lutheran minister, 1675.*



What apostle is this to whom Jesus showed his hands and side? He eventually went to India where he was executed for preaching.

PRAYERS AND PRAISES

- Our brothers/sisters in Africa: Jac Agak, Charles Ngoje, Jacob Randiek, and your orphan(s)
- Lisa Grimenstein in her time of Pregnancy and the health of the baby
- Mike Choley in loss of his mother
- Cheyenne's father for healing from cancer
- Esther Mae's heart surgery this Wednesday at St. Thomas
- Remember folks from AL, MS, and East TN with losses in tornadoes
- Lord help us weep with those who weep (& rejoice with those rejoicing)
- Lord's grace on several in job transition
- Lord may Your Holy Spirit bless our ministry & mission
- Bless Lord and Thank You Lord for many in hands-on ministry:
 1. Tommy's Next Right Step; Gil & Liz administering orphan work;
 2. Jim's writing; Frank's Prison Outreach; Azad to Muslims;
 3. Karen and Ann in counseling; Graceworks Administration;
 4. Elders in Shepherding and Prayer; Teachers & Worship Team;
 5. Jim in maintenance; cooks on Wednesday night; Website & Recording
- Lord's wisdom for the elders at FH
- Lord mercy & help for leaders national, state and local
- Praise our Lord for Victory in Jesus
- Lord bless our loved ones to return home from afar
- Lord teach us gratitude
- Teach us to Think and Walk in the Light of your Resurrection

CLASSES AND WORSHIP SCHEDULE @ FOREST HOME:

Classes begin at 9 am. Worship begins at 10 am.

Grades and ages break down as follow:

- Pre-K – Kindergarten
- 1st grade – 4th grade
- 5th grade and up

2011 Calendar

- EACH MON+THURS 5:30-5:50PM @ the church Intercessory prayer for anyone
- EACH TUES 6:30 am @ the church, Men's Ministry
- EACH WED 5:00 pm @ the church, Women's Bible Study

DATE	NURSERY (Infants-2 yrs old) During sermon only	LORD'S SUPPER PREPARATION		WEDNESDAY NIGHT DINNER	
May 1	Leah Hickerson	May	Pat Gill	May 4	Pizza
May 8	Kacy Pantall	June	Farmer	May 11	Sarah/Kathleen
May 15	Kathleen Stewart	July	Dawn Costello	May 18	Lisa/Liz
May 22	Anita Christy	August	Garner	May 25	Linda/Lois
May 29	Ocie Grist	Sept	Lois McAlister	June 1	Ocie/Shannon
June 5	Barbara Jenkins	Contact Jim Grimenstein if you'll miss a week, or find you're a sub. 615-268-5882 Jakgrim@comcast.net		June 8	Pat/Karen
June 12	Lynne Daniel			June 15	Pizza
June 19	Mandy Austin			June 22	Sarah/Kathleen
June 26	Karen Costello			June 29	Liz/Dawn
July 3	D'Ann McAlister			July 6	Linda/Lois