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# Not All Christians Believe in the Resurrection of Christ?

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“I have friends who I am quite sure are Christians who do not believe in the bodily resurrection,” says the Right Reverend N. T. Wright, Bishop of Durham. This is a truly dangerous and unbiblical assertion, made all the more shocking when it is offered by someone of N. T. Wright’s caliber.

The comments came in the course of an interview with *The Australian* published April 13, 2006. More:

*“Marcus Borg really does not believe Jesus Christ was bodily raised from the dead. But I know Marcus well: he loves Jesus and believes in him passionately. The philosophical and cultural world he has lived in has made it very, very difficult for him to believe in the bodily resurrection.*

*“I actually think that’s a major problem and it affects most of whatever else he does, and I think that it means he has all sorts of flaws as a teacher, but I don’t want to say he isn’t a Christian.*

*“I do think, however, that churches that lose their grip on the bodily resurrection are in deep trouble and that for healthy Christian life individually and corporately, belief in the bodily resurrection is foundational.”*

But belief in the bodily resurrection is not merely *foundational*, according to Scripture, it is *essential*. As Paul argues in Romans 10:9, the Gospel comes down to this: “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord *and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved*” [emphasis mine]. Beyond this, Paul’s logic in 1 Corinthians 15 demonstrates the reverse — if Christ is not raised then we are still dead in our trespasses and sins.

N. T. Wright’s comments about Marcus Borg are particularly revealing. Borg, of course, denies much more than the resurrection of Christ. Yet, leaving all that aside for the moment, we must ask just what Bishop Wright has in mind when he says that Borg “loves Jesus and believes in him passionately?” This Jesus whom Borg is claimed to love and passionately believe in is not the resurrected Jesus Christ of the Scriptures. Thus, Borg loves and passionately believes in a crucified and dead Jesus. How then can Bishop Wright even entertain the notion that he is a genuine Christian?

Anglicanism is, by its very definition, an attempt at a *via media*, a middle way. But, there is no middle way between the denial of the resurrection and its affirmation. One way leads to eternal life, the other to everlasting death.

One of Bishop Wright’s predecessors at the see of Durham, David Jenkins, once denied the resurrection outright [see my [commentary](#) published Friday]. Gladly, Bishop Wright does affirm the bodily resurrection of Christ. Indeed, he has published one of the most significant treatises on the resurrection of our times. Nevertheless, if he is genuinely to defend the resurrection of Christ against its denial, and if he is to affirm the faith as handed down by the Apostles, he must defend the resurrection of Jesus Christ as *essential*, and not merely as *foundational*.

