

*Like the apostle Thomas, the British journalist overcame his skepticism about Jesus.*

When the risen Jesus appeared to his disciples, the apostle Thomas missed the meetup. The Eastertide story of what happened next rattled one of the 20th century's great Christian apologists.

The Gospel of John says that Thomas questioned the news of the Resurrection. "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe," he said.

A week later, "Doubting Thomas" finally saw Jesus. He responded with awe: "My Lord and my God!" Jesus delivered his famous reply: "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Malcolm Muggeridge worried about how he would have reacted to the astonishing claims of Jesus and his followers. "Had I lived in the time of Jesus, I fear I should have been among the scoffers, and missed the glory of those who heard him and saw him and believed," he wrote in *Jesus: The Man Who Lives*, a book that has just come out in a 50th-anniversary edition.

Muggeridge was one of the top journalists of his time. A British newspaperman who became an influential television broadcaster, he was a natural skeptic. This trait served him well in the Soviet Union, where the Manchester Guardian sent him in the fall of 1932. Like many young socialists, the 29-year-old Muggeridge was drawn to the supposed warmth of collectivism. In the cold of winter, however, he heard rumors of deprivation. During Lent in 1933, he defied a travel ban on journalists, sneaked aboard a train and searched for the truth in Ukraine.

As Easter loomed, Muggeridge observed the horror of the Holodomor, a famine imposed by Stalin through state-run farming and the seizure of harvests. He witnessed starving peasants, empty villages and "hard-faced" soldiers. Years later, in his autobiography, he called it "a nightmare memory."

Then came the wonder. On a Sunday morning in Kyiv, acting on an impulse, Muggeridge entered a church. "It was packed tight, but I managed to squeeze myself against a pillar," he wrote. The devotion of the people amazed him. "Never before or since have I participated in such worship; the sense conveyed of turning to God in great affliction was overpowering . . . I felt closer to God than than I ever had before, or am likely to again."

Yet he remained an agnostic. His doubts about God were too strong. His commitment to the truth, however, was powerful. He became one of only two reporters to expose Stalin's famine. The other was Gareth Jones, whose tale was dramatized in the 2019 movie "Mr. Jones." They were media rebels at a time when Walter Duranty of the New York Times won a Pulitzer Prize for his dispatches on the brilliance of the communist experiment.

In the decades that followed, Muggeridge made a living through his clear and clever writing. In the 1950s, he took up television and became a celebrity. He also grew more conservative. His agnosticism weakened. His moment of conversion came in 1967, while filming a BBC program on the Holy Land. It happened in Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity.

As at the church in Kyiv, the faith of others stirred him. "Seeing a party of Christian pilgrims at one of these shrines, their faces bright with faith, their voices as they sang so evidently and joyously aware of their Saviour's nearness, I understood that for them the shrine was authentic," he wrote. "I, too, became aware that there really had been a man, Jesus, who was also God." His faith was still a work in progress. It "remained rather abstract, a useful counterpoint to his attacks on secular liberalism," wrote his definitive biographer Gregory Wolfe.

Then Muggeridge met Mother Teresa. He had not heard of the woman from Calcutta before she visited London in 1968. His producer arranged for him to interview her on camera. The response from viewers was so positive that he followed up by flying to India, where Christian tradition says the apostle Thomas spent his final days in evangelization and martyrdom. Muggeridge traveled there to film "Something Beautiful for God," the BBC documentary that made Mother Teresa a household name. Through his efforts, she inspired millions. She also inspired Muggeridge. He became Catholic in 1982. He died in 1990 at 87.

In his last years, Muggeridge wrote about his deepening faith, culminating in the 1975 publication of *Jesus: The Man Who Lives*. The frontispiece of the original edition is a photo from a Spanish abbey of what may be a touchstone image for Muggeridge: doubting Thomas touching the wound of Christ in a stone bas-relief.

The Resurrection "seems to me indubitably true," wrote Muggeridge at the book's end. "Either Jesus never was or he still is. As a typical product of these confused times, with a skeptical mind and a sensual disposition, diffidently and unworthily, but with the utmost sincerity, I assert that he still is."

The doubter had become a believer.