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# BULLETIN

THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS FELLOWSHIP

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1986

Vol. 9, No. 3 \$3.50

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So people who go into the ministry at mid-life may discover that the spouse didn't bargain for this change. They may have made an initial attempt to adjust; but, over the long haul, they may have a bigger struggle than anybody ever imagined. This puts stress on a marriage and on individual lifestyle.

Also, the mid-life person going into ministry may discover that he or she is very frustrated by not starting in the younger years when one was more flexible and had time to fail. I find that men and women in their late forties who are going into the ministry are a lot more impatient because they don't feel they have the time to make mistakes. They want everything to go right the first try. They want everyone to respond the best way the first time because they're counting the years they have left. When we were 27 or 28 and going into the ministry, we looked at life as virtually unending. So we had plenty of time to learn, to make our mistakes, and we kept saying, "Well, when I get older, I'll do it right." The older person entering the ministry doesn't have that attitude, and he fights impatience all the time. This can be a debilitating experience.

#### **TSFB: Any closing remarks?**

**GM:** There are three or four things that come to mind. One is that I hear very few seminary students say they love to lead people to personal faith in Jesus Christ. I worry about whether or not the seminarian today has a zeal for evangelism and for bringing people into the Kingdom. It seems to me that I see too many young people who are content to herd sheep but don't want to give birth to them. I feel as if evangelistic zeal is rapidly dropping out of the bottom of the evangelical world.

Second, I would like to say to seminarians, "Be willing to pay the price of the call of ministry." No ministry of great effectiveness is ever born in a life free from suffering. There are many times when God permits us to face situations of stress and pain which serve to build us. That pain may come not only in a physical or financial sense but also in opposition and criticism from people around us. I don't see many great spirits who haven't faced the press of pain.

Third, I'm worried that a lot of young pastors stop reading and stop studying. They do just enough acquisition of information each week to get a new sermon, but they're so busy

that they don't keep their minds fresh and raw. I would like to think that *TSF Bulletin* makes a contribution towards the mental and spiritual growth of young pastors and leaders.

I suspect that one finds it hard, unless he has a very inquiring mind, to keep reading theology throughout the ministry because the questions of ministry are more immediate. What do you do with this girl who wants an abortion? How do you solve the problem of a couple on the verge of a marital split? How do you help this fellow who has a drinking problem? How do you counsel this young couple with a sexual problem? How do you lead a guy to a personal faith in Christ? These are the more immediate questions with which we're wrestling, and theology serves as an underpinning to those things. For example, just about the time you're tempted to give in to the persuasive cries of a young woman who thinks she has an open-and-shut case for an abortion, you go back to the depth of theology and once again reread those notations on the sanctity of life and the sovereign and providential work of God in time and space. That creates order out of chaos, and where a more practical side of you would have given into the momentary persuasions on an issue like abortion, your theological persuasions overcome that temptation and cause you to stand firm in the advice that you give.

In a moment when it seems easy to surrender to temporary persuasions, whether it's materialism, hedonism or whatever, theology reminds you of the splendor and majesty and everlastingness of God. I can remember many times as a young pastor driving down Nestoral Drive in Boston, tempted to be intellectually intimidated by the great office buildings and the feeling that real power was there. Or, looking at the sculptures at MIT on the quadrangle, and saying, "Real brilliance is here." Then I would go back to theology and be reminded of the fact that our God has no beginning nor does he have an end; that the heavenly Father possesses all truth, all knowledge and all wisdom; that God has never been instructed or advised or counseled. So, through my continual reading and study of theology, my sights are recalibrated and my sense of what is truly important is remeasured. Then neither the office buildings nor the sculptures at MIT become intimidating.

## **The Resurrection of Jesus as Hermeneutical Criterion (Part I)**

**by Ray S. Anderson**

"Is Jesus not only the author of inspired Scripture, but, as the resurrected and living Lord of the church, also a contemporary reader and interpreter of Scripture?" I recently asked this question of a class of pastors in a Doctor of Ministry seminar, with dramatic results!

Some, who said they had not thought of that before, were carried away with possible implications for hermeneutical method. Others, apprehensive and troubled, suggested that this could be dangerous, for it would tend to undermine the place of Scripture as an objective revelation of God's truth for us, and as the "sole rule of faith and practice."

But if it is true that the living Lord Jesus is present in the hermeneutical task of reading and interpreting Scripture, what would this mean for the task of hermeneutics? In this article

I will probe that question further, and theoretically and practically explore its implications.

As a foray into the thicket of contemporary hermeneutics, this project is more of a probe than a pronouncement. It is meant to be a programmatic essay rather than a monograph. My purpose is to stimulate discussion and to elicit a response.

I write with a sense of conviction that hermeneutics belongs high on the agenda of the contemporary theological task, particularly for those of us who hold the Scriptures to be the inspired and infallible Word of God. Whatever we mean by hermeneutics, the task is unavoidable. As F. D. E. Schleiermacher once said, "Every child arrives at the meaning of a word only through hermeneutics."<sup>1</sup>

But seriously, the responsibility to interpret faithfully and accurately the Word of God as given in Holy Scripture is more than child's play. It is a task that demands both rigor of method and the wonder of a child. Interpreting Scripture is always

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akin to standing where Moses stood on the holy ground in the presence of the burning bush, where his first meaningful act was to remove his shoes.

As a theologian, I assume that my task is a hermeneutical one. I agree with David Tracy when he says that "systematic theologies are principally hermeneutical in character," and that it is "imperative for each theologian to render explicit her/his general method of interpretation."<sup>2</sup> My own commitment to the theological task as a hermeneutical one is represented by what one might call a "praxis hermeneutic." This follows closely the direction suggested by Peter Stuhlmacher in his "hermeneutics of consent." We are concerned to find a method of interpretation of Scripture which seeks conformity to the biblical text, while at the same time seeks authenticity with regard to the "praxis of faith." However, as Willard Swartley rightly cautions,

The incorporation of understanding (interpretation) into our lives through meditation, through worship, and through living accordingly functions as an empirical, validating criterion. But while this validates the claim to understanding, the incarnation of interpretation in life and praxis of itself does not validate the *rightness* of the interpretation. For this reason the call to praxis—living it out—must be put into critical and creative tension with the other aspects of the validating process.<sup>3</sup>

I have argued elsewhere that "Christopraxis," as the act of God in Christ, is one way of understanding how the authority

areas exhaustively, but only enough to demonstrate how, in each case, the resurrection served as a criterion.

### The Resurrection as a Criterion for Apostleship

With regard to apostolic authority, the critical issue centered on historical continuity, coupled with witness to the resurrection. At first it seemed simple. The criteria for selecting a replacement for Judas included the necessity of having shared in the pre-resurrection witness to Jesus of Nazareth, as well as having witnessed his resurrection from the dead and his ascension (Acts 1:22). The early apostolic preaching centered on the announcement of the resurrection as an interpretation of the life and death of Jesus as both providential and salvific (Acts 2:32).

It was not so simple in the case of Saul of Tarsus. Not only was he not a witness to Jesus of Nazareth prior to his crucifixion and resurrection, but he was in active opposition to the testimony of the early Christians that Jesus had been raised. Yet Saul, now presenting himself as Paul the Apostle, made the claim to apostolic authority based solely on his encounter with the risen Jesus (Acts 9:1-9; 1 Cor. 9:1). In his argument to the church at Galatia, against those who impugned his credentials as an apostle, he stated that he was an apostle "not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead" (Gal. 1:1). Paul argued that he had not received his gospel from man, but "through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:12).

Against those who appear to have questioned Paul's ap-

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*. . . Hermeneutics belong high on the agenda of the contemporary theological task, particularly for those of us who hold the Scriptures to be the inspired and infallible Word of God.*

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and the presence of truth can be located in the creative tension between the Word of God written as inspired and the Word of God living as inspiring. This act of God in Christ may now be understood as the present working of the risen Lord in the Church by the Holy Spirit. Understood in this way, Christopraxis as a criterion for biblical interpretation seems preferable to the concept of the "praxis of faith."<sup>4</sup>

### The Resurrection of Jesus as Hermeneutical Criterion

This brings us directly to the thesis of this essay: *the resurrection of Jesus to be the living Lord of the church constitutes a continuing hermeneutical criterion for the church's understanding of itself as under the authority of Scripture.* It is the risen Lord himself who is the criterion, not the event or idea of resurrection. For this essay, the expression "resurrection of Jesus" is to be taken as meaning "the resurrected Jesus."

First, we will explore the way in which the resurrection of Jesus served as a hermeneutical criterion for apostolic authority, the experience of salvation, and the "rule of faith." I will argue that the resurrection as hermeneutical criterion was not totally replaced by other criteria, following the inspiration of the New Testament documents and the reception of the canon by the church. Rather, the resurrection of Jesus continues to function as a criterion within the process of interpreting Scripture as a "rule of faith." I will then conclude this article by suggesting several areas where the resurrected Jesus as hermeneutical criterion may be helpful.

I will select three areas to demonstrate how the criterion was applied—the question of what constituted genuine apostolic authority, the question of what constituted legitimate grounds for saving relation to God, and the question of what constituted a new understanding of what it meant to live by the will of Christ as a "rule of faith." I will not treat these

ostolic authority on the grounds that he was not a follower of Jesus from the baptism of John to the ascension (Acts 1:21-22), Paul counters with the claim that it is the living Jesus who constitutes the source of apostolic authority. If having been among the followers of Jesus prior to his crucifixion is an indispensable criterion for apostolic authority, Paul has no case. But Paul could well have argued: How can one's history of following Jesus prior to his resurrection become a criterion when the chief apostle himself has died? The crucifixion put an end to the history of human actions as a criterion. The risen Lord, who is also the incarnate Word, is the new criterion. And, as Paul makes quite clear, the resurrected Jesus has appeared to him as well as to the others (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8). Paul does not deny that the disciples, who were commissioned by Jesus to follow him, also have grounds to be apostles through the new commission of the resurrected Jesus; but he refuses to allow historical precedent to be the determining criterion.

For the Apostle Paul, there is discontinuity at the level of a claim for apostolic authority "from below," so to speak, as a historical precedent or criterion. But there is continuity "from above," because the resurrected Jesus is the same Jesus who lived, taught, died and was raised by the power of God. Paul did not reinterpret apostleship in terms of his own experience. This is not a "praxis of faith" as hermeneutical criterion. Rather, it was Jesus himself who became the criterion for Paul. Thus he did not argue that his claim to apostleship was the *only* valid claim, but that his apostleship was constituted by the *only paradigm* for apostleship—that which is based on encounter with the risen Jesus as its criterion. It is the living Christ present and at work through the power of the Spirit who constitutes the criterion. This is, if you please, Christopraxis. It was the power of God in the resurrected Christ which seized Paul and constituted for him the criterion for inter-

preting the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth as the "gospel."

### **The Resurrection as a Criterion for Salvation**

A second crucial issue for the early Christian community was that of the legitimate grounds for salvation as relation to God. For the Jews, circumcision had been established as a sign of the "everlasting covenant" between Abraham and God (Gen. 17:7, 10-14). It seems quite clear that this was meant to serve as a decisive and normative "hermeneutical criterion." Paul argued, to the consternation of the Jewish Christians, that circumcision was no longer necessary as a sign of salvation and covenant relation. Paul could have argued that the Gentiles were excused from circumcision because they were not true descendants of Abraham. But on the contrary, he argued that the Gentiles were descendants of Abraham through their relation to Jesus Christ, who was the true "seed" of Abraham (Gal. 3:23-29), and yet not required to be circumcised! The Gentiles do not constitute the criterion; the crucified and risen

the practice of faith in personal, social and civic life? If Jesus is the "end of the law," can there be any criteria left by which to determine a "rule of faith"?

Again, the criterion for Paul was the resurrected Christ as an experienced presence. As the new criterion, the living Lord does not displace the Old Testament nor the apostolic witness as criteria, but he establishes the hermeneutical criterion for these witnesses.

Here too, however, this new criterion of the resurrection of Jesus as an experienced presence represents both a discontinuity as well as a continuity with respect to the ethical demands of the Kingdom of God. "The kingdom of God is not food and drink," wrote Paul to the Roman church, "but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (14:17). This reminds us of Jesus' teaching that it was not what entered a person that constituted uncleanness, but what came out of a person (Mark 7:14-23).

In this regard it is interesting that this teaching of Jesus

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*... No confusion must blur the sharp line between revelation which has taken the form of the inspired writings of Holy Scripture, and the interpretation which depends upon that revelation for its infallible source and norm.*

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Christ is the criterion for both Jew and Gentile.

As in the case of apostolic credentials, the issue of continuity with a historical criterion again appeared to be at stake. But, as the early Christian community came to see, Jesus was the "end of the law" for those who have faith in the resurrected one (Rom. 10:4). Jesus was circumcised in the flesh as a sign of the everlasting covenant (Luke 2:21). Yet his circumcision did not save him. The circumcised man died on the cross. This calls into question the validity of circumcision as a continuing criterion and covenant sign. Yet, in being raised from the dead, this same Jesus was regenerated in the flesh. Thus, his regenerated flesh as the new humanity became the criterion of covenant relation, a point that even the Old Testament prophets anticipated (Ezekiel 36:26-27; Jer. 31:31-34). It is in this sense that one can say that the cross is the "end of circumcision" as a criterion (Gal. 5:6; 6:15; 1 Cor. 7:17-19).

If this can be said about the attempt to continue circumcision as a necessary criterion for salvation, would not the same apply to every attempt to circumvent Jesus' death and resurrection by imposing a criterion which is lodged in a natural or even a religious law? If Jesus the Jew died, does not Jewishness as a racial criterion for understanding election to salvation also have to surrender its exclusive claim as a criterion of covenant, and give way to the criterion of the resurrected Christ in whom there is "neither Jew nor Gentile"? If Jesus the male died, does not the male prerogative as a sexist criterion also surrender its exclusive claim for role status and authority in the Kingdom of God to the new criterion of the resurrected Christ, in whom there is "neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:28)? Or, to put it another way, can the work of the resurrected Jesus in the church, by the power of his Spirit, be set aside in favor of another criterion or principle which has not also been "crucified with him"? Hardly. Paul's hermeneutical criterion at this critical point seems clear enough.

### **The Resurrection as a Criterion for the Rule of Faith**

If there was a third critical issue in the New Testament church, surely it was the question of what constituted a valid interpretation of the will of God for the community of believers. What constitutes appropriate behavior, life style, and

seemed to have no real effect as a criterion until after his resurrection and appearance to Peter, and after a personal vision in which the Lord spoke to him in preparation for his visit to the Gentile centurion Cornelius (Acts 10:9-16). Also instructive is the mention of the fact that Peter was still uncertain as to what the vision meant until there was a knock at the door with the invitation from Cornelius to come and preach to him.

This is a fine example of Christopraxis as a hermeneutical criterion. There was the remembered teaching of Jesus; there was the mystical vision in which the Lord spoke to him; but the interpretation actually came when Peter went to the house of Cornelius and preached the gospel of Jesus to him. Only then, when the Spirit of Jesus came upon the Gentile gathering with convincing power and effect, did Peter grasp the full implications of the command of the Lord, and he baptized them in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 10:44-48). This event was a "preparing of the way of the Lord" to the Gentiles, an incredibly radical and difficult hermeneutical decision—but this is how Christopraxis becomes a hermeneutical criterion.

One cannot forbid a work of the risen Christ through the Holy Spirit for the sake of a law or principle which itself points to this work. The interpretation of the law comes through its fulfillment; but Christ himself is the fulfillment of the law, not another principle or law. The law always was meant to point to the grace of Yahweh as the sole criterion for salvation. It was the *use* of the law as a criterion that wrongly led the Jews to reject the new criterion of the living Lord. Thus, the cultic law, even though it was enshrined in the sacred writings as the very word of God, gave way to the new criterion of the living Word through whom the kingdom of God is present in power.

Freedom from the law is not the new ethical criterion, but rather "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" which sets us free from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2). To live according to the flesh is to live by the old criterion which is to reject the Spirit of the resurrected Lord as the new criterion. To live according to the flesh is not only to surrender to licentiousness, but to seek to achieve righteousness by conformity to a criterion lodged in the flesh. Only a wrong in-

terpretation of the Old Testament law could see the regulation of the "flesh" as being the criterion for righteousness. Now that the criterion *himself* is present, Paul argues in his letter to the Galatians that the regulations "written in the book of the law" have their true interpretation, which is "freedom from the works of the law" (Gal. 3:10,13). Paul argues that the law of God is not against the promise of God. But when that promise is present in the form of Christ, these regulations no longer have their "custodial" function (Gal. 3:23-29).

Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection put an end to these old regulations and established a new basis and a new criterion for the ethics of the kingdom of God in the experienced presence of the resurrected one (Rom. 8:3-11).

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*The resurrection as hermeneutical criterion points forward to the coming Christ as well as backward to the historical Christ.*

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Of course, Christians still live in this world with its roles, structures and relationships, even though they have been "raised with Christ" (Col. 3:1). But these existing relationships are not to be the place for Christopraxis—"Christ's practice," if you please. Thus, Paul's epistles are pastoral in tone, and generally include a "domestic code," or *Haustafel*, in which existing cultural and domestic relationships are to be brought within the sphere of Christ that he may be revealed (see Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18-4:1).

In these situations and social structures, there is a "command of Christ," too. Often the command is expressed in such a way that the person who receives it is expected to glory Christ through an existing order, even though that order has already "come to an end" in the death and resurrection of Christ. Thus, Paul can say as a direct consequence of the command, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3:16): "Wives, be subject to your husbands, . . . Children, obey your parents in everything, . . . Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, . . . Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly" (3:18-4:1). The criterion in each of these cases is not a "chain of command" which functions as a legalistic principle, but rather the "command of the risen Lord" which functions as a spirit of peace and freedom.

There is, then, a "pastoral hermeneutic" which Paul applies in dealing with the practical matters of determining the rule of faith. In deciding issues for the churches, Paul based his rulings on the claim that he has the "command of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37). "I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you," wrote Paul (1 Cor. 11:23). In certain cases, he appears to distinguish between having a direct teaching of Jesus to impart and a word which he himself speaks which is meant to have the same effect. "To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord . . . To the rest I say, not the Lord . . ." (1 Cor. 7:10,12). He concludes by embracing both what he feels has been a direct teaching by Jesus (concerning the marriage vows) and a teaching which Jesus has communicated through Paul's pastoral words (concerning living with an unbelieving spouse) by saying, "I think that I have the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 7:40). In this case we have the interesting situation of a teaching by Jesus while on earth prior to his crucifixion and resurrection placed alongside of a teaching of Jesus which comes through his presence in the life of the Apostle Paul.

This shows us two things: first, there is continuity with the historical Jesus in determining the rule of faith for the post-resurrection Christian community; second, there is also equal authority claimed for the pastoral ruling made by Paul out of the experienced presence of the risen Christ. The fact that Paul's pastoral rule has the authority of Christ himself informs

us that the presence and authority of the resurrected Jesus served as a hermeneutical criterion for the early church. That is, Jesus himself continues to instruct Christians as to the will of God in practical matters of the life of faith. Jesus has not simply left us a set of teachings. He has done that. But in addition, he continues to teach. Discerning this teaching is itself a hermeneutical task, not merely an exercise in historical memory.

Through sound principles of literary and historical criticism, one can examine more accurately the *syntactical* or structural relation and meaning of words in the inspired texts. But if there is also a *semantical* or referential relation between the words of Scripture and the living Lord of the church, is this

relation not a proper area of hermeneutical concern?<sup>25</sup> And if so, is it not the living and present Lord who upholds that referential relation for the sake of the inspired word accomplishing its purpose? And if this is so, then Christopraxis will continue to lead us into his Word, and Jesus' prayer will be completed: "Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

### **The Eschatological Nature of a Hermeneutical Criterion**

One further comment needs to be made before we leave this issue. Because faith as experience of the risen Christ is not the criterion, but the resurrected Lord himself, there is an eschatological tension in the pastoral hermeneutic of Paul. Christopraxis as a hermeneutical criterion never surrenders the inherent infallibility and authority of the living Word as the resurrected, ascended, and present Lord to a human experience, teaching, regulation, or tradition. Paul is quite explicit about this regarding his own teaching:

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. I do not even judge myself. I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then every man will receive his commendation from God. (1 Cor. 4:1-5)

According to this caution from Paul, there is a hermeneutical criterion which is anchored in the eschatological event of the final parousia of Christ. This does not evacuate the present Word of God of its authority, for "the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor. 3:17). On this basis, Paul equates the word which he teaches and writes with the Word of the Lord himself (1 Cor. 14:37). Yet, even as the inspired words of Moses and the prophets are interpreted by the hermeneutical criterion of the incarnate Word, and even as the human and historical life of Jesus is interpreted by the hermeneutical criterion of the resurrected Jesus, so the words taught by the Spirit and inspired by the Spirit will be interpreted in the end by the hermeneutical criterion of the risen and coming Jesus Christ. Does this diminish the authority of the apostolic and inspired scripture? Paul does not think so.

However, it does mean that the resurrection as hermeneutical criterion points forward to the coming Christ as well as backward to the historical Christ. In this present age, meanwhile, there is a tension between the ever-present demands of the former criteria and the already-present criterion of the resurrected Lord. The Word of the Lord came through cultural, social, and religious forms which persisted in spite of the radical new criterion of the resurrected humanity of Christ.

Where these forms were not a direct threat to the existence of the freedom of the Lord to form a new humanity, they were permitted to exist by the pastoral hermeneutic of the apostle. "Were you a slave when called?" asked Paul. "Never mind. But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity" (1 Cor. 7:21). Thus, Onesimus is sent back to Philemon not only as a Christian, but also as a fugitive slave. Paul leaves it to Philemon to apply the hermeneutical criterion of the resurrection in this situation (cf. Philemon 8-10). From this we can infer that Paul's letter to Philemon, which is the inspired Word of God, has authority not merely by virtue of what it said but in its effect to produce a modification of the behavior and life of Philemon (the interpreter).<sup>6</sup> Paul did not "liberate" Onesimus by command of the divine Word. Rather, he sought the liberation of Philemon from his old ways of thinking as a slave owner, so he could be free to receive Onesimus as a full Christian partner and brother. In the same way, the authority of Scripture is evidenced by its effect in producing the intention and purpose of Christ in the liberation of men and women to become full partners in every aspect of the life and work of God's kingdom.

There ought to be general agreement as to the essential thrust of the argument thus far. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the hermeneutical criterion for determining the content of the apostolic gospel, for establishing the ground for salvation as relation to God, and for giving direction to the church in living out the life of Christ in this present age. The resurrected Jesus has usually been seen as the decisive criterion which marked the emergence of the early Christian church as a distinct community of faith in which both Jew and Gentile found unity in Christ. Our purpose has not been to develop a new criterion but to demonstrate the resurrection of Jesus as the criterion. Before we continue, it might be helpful to list the steps we have taken in demonstrating this criterion as a foundation upon which we can build our case:

- 1) To say that Jesus died and was raised up by the power of God is to say that the law, tradition, nature, culture, and history must give way to the new criterion of his presence as Lord in the world;
- 2) To say that Jesus is Lord is to bring the old order, which is passing away, under the sphere of the healing and liberating power of the command of God;
- 3) To say that "the Lord commands" in the context of a pastoral ruling on Christian faith and practice is to unite the teaching of Christ with the presence of Christ for the purpose of modifying the direction of Christian behavior toward maturity in Christ, whatever one's situation is at the beginning;
- 4) To say that one is obedient to Christ and moving toward maturity in him is to interpret Christ's teaching and will through faith and practice which looks toward commendation at his coming;
- 5) To say that Scripture is the Word of God is to bind the interpreters of Scripture to Jesus Christ as the living Lord, who is the infallible One;
- 6) To say that the resurrected Jesus is the hermeneutical criterion for understanding the Word of God is to give Holy Scripture the unique status of being the Word of

God without making the authority of Scripture dependent upon literary, historical or confessional criteria alone. 7) To say that the responsibility of the contemporary church is to exercise this pastoral hermeneutic in the power of the Holy Spirit is to recognize Christopraxis as the sign of "preparing the way of the Lord" in every sphere of domestic, social, political and religious life; this is to say, "For freedom Christ has set us free . . ." (Gal. 5:1).

### The Living Lord: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Criterion

We now have come to the critical task in the development of the thesis: *The resurrected Jesus as the living Lord is a continuing hermeneutical criterion for interpreting the Word of God.*

Once Holy Scripture is written and the canon closed, is it still possible to say that Jesus Christ as risen Lord is the hermeneutical criterion for interpretation of Scripture?

Or, to put it another way, having the living Lord in the church through the Holy Spirit, does the church today stand in the same hermeneutical relation to the New Testament Scriptures as did the New Testament church with respect to the Old Testament Scriptures?

I would answer no, for two reasons. First, the coming into being of the church following Pentecost was an absolutely unique event. In a sense, one could say that the emergence of the church was a divinely inspired interpretation of the Old Testament Scripture with respect to God's redemptive purpose. The first church did not so much interpret the Old Testament using the resurrected Jesus as hermeneutical criterion as it was the result of this interpretation through the "acts of the Spirit" and the faithful work and witness of the apostles. Second, the apostolic foundation for the church is itself unique and no other foundation can one lay but that which is built upon the cornerstone, Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:10-15).

At the outset, it must be clearly stated that we are not talking about adding to the canon of Scripture, or suggesting a new canon, but merely interpreting rightly the canonical Scriptures, given the assumption that interpretation is a two-edged sword. One edge is the truth of *God's Holy Word* which is "living and active . . . piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). The other edge is the truth of *Christ's Holy Work* by which he is active to do God's will in setting captives free and breaking down barriers which divide, preparing in his church, his body, a people who are and will be his brothers and sisters. "Examine yourselves," wrote the Apostle Paul, ". . . do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test! . . . For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth" (2 Cor. 13:5,8).

Can we say that Jesus is not only the living Word who inspires the New Testament and thus insures its trustworthiness, but that he is also present in the contemporary reading and interpretation of the New Testament?

Can we affirm that the living, glorified Jesus Christ, even now preparing to come out of glory to this world and for his church, to consummate all things, is the already-present Lord who upholds his Word in Scripture as true, and directs its purpose to his own creative ends? And, can we affirm that the very words of Scripture, inspired as they are, continue to speak to us out of the very being of the One who is present with us? Can we dare to say with Ricoeur, though with a different point of reference, "I believe that being can still speak to me"??

I think we can and we must. For if we cannot, we will find ourselves in the position of the Grand Inquisitor in Dostoy-



evsky's classic story, who, surprised to confront Jesus himself in the roundup of heretics to be condemned, refused to allow him to contribute to what had been written. "The old man has told him He hasn't the right to add anything to what He has said of old," said Ivan, in telling the story.<sup>8</sup>

Certainly there are dangers here! We are well aware of the final words of warning in the New Testament about taking away from or adding to the inspired prophecy (Rev. 22:18-19). But it must also not be forgotten that the very next words contain the promise, "Surely I am coming soon" (22:20).

Let it be clearly understood that no confusion must blur the sharp line between revelation which has taken the form of the inspired writings of Holy Scripture, and interpretation which depends upon that revelation for its infallible source and norm.

solved into the impersonal abstractness of revelation as the objectification of truth, with our own logic (logos) as the hermeneutical criterion.

Because the criterion of the living Lord in the church is not a different criterion from the same Lord who inspired the apostolic teaching, and not different from the same Lord who taught his disciples while on earth, this hermeneutical criterion does not stand in contradiction to, or in opposition to, Scripture itself. There is a tension, but it is the creative and redemptive tension between the "now" and the "not yet." It is the tension between the new humanity and new order, which is always and already present through the Holy Spirit, and the old order, in which we have received the command of God but which must give way to the new.

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The first century horizon, which is the occasion for the Scripture text in the New Testament, cannot be fused with our contemporary horizon to make revelation dependent on our self understanding (such as R. Bultmann tended to do). This would confuse hermeneutics with revealed truth itself. Nor should we attempt to push our contemporary horizon back into the first century, for we cannot do this. We can only create an abstraction of this first horizon which, if used as the sole criterion for revealed truth, makes out of divine Logos an impersonal and abstract logos as a criterion for the truth of God himself (such as C. Henry tends to do).

What we are suggesting here—if we wish to continue to speak of the hermeneutical task in this way—is that the two horizons are not resolved into a single, contemporary meaning, nor into a principle of abstract reason. As the criterion for both the original and contemporary meaning of the text, the Lord himself sustains these two points in a creative and positive tension. In this way, the horizon of the original occasion of the text and the horizon of the contemporary interpreter are not really fused at all, but remain quite distinct. Paul is permitted to say what he said as the command of the Lord in his pastoral hermeneutic, without forcing the text to be read in a way which is quite alien to the original context.

When we take seriously the fact that the resurrection of Jesus Christ continues to be the criterion for our hermeneutical task, we do not fuse the present horizon of our experience to the text as an abstract law, nor do we fuse the text to our present horizon as a relativization of revelation to culture. Rather, we submit our present horizon of experience as well as the horizon of the text to the Lord himself, who is the living and coming One, before whom all of our understanding and actions must be judged. Only in this way can obedience to Scripture uphold both the truth and the purpose of Scripture.<sup>9</sup>

And to those who protest that the reality of the living Lord cannot be objectively discerned and known in the context of our own subjective experience, we must in turn protest that this is a denial of the sheer objective reality of the being of the risen Lord who presents himself to us both as an object of knowledge and as experience through the Holy Spirit's encounter of us. To be sure, this objective reality of Christ does not dissolve into our experience as the criterion of truth, for Christ has bound himself to Scripture and to its propositional form of revelation. But neither is the living Lord dis-

Jesus as a hermeneutical criterion, there appear to be areas within the New Testament where this tension between the "now" and the "not yet" is more pronounced than in other areas. These areas are noted by the fact that a particular text or passage can be used to support a practice or teaching which appears to be quite different from a teaching derived from another set of texts, using in both cases sound principles of historical and grammatical exegesis.

Where a New Testament teaching appears unanimous and consistent in every pastoral situation, we are not suggesting that the presence of the living Lord in the church can be understood in such a way that this "single voice" can be silenced or "made to sing a different tune." But where apostolic teaching and practice is clearly governed by the readiness or openness of the situation to experience full freedom in Christ, the hermeneutical criterion of the resurrected Christ as a continuing presence in the church is, in my judgment, indispensable. For it is here that the tension between the "now" and the "not yet" is most evident. This is not to suggest that we have here a kind of "God of the exegetical gaps"! All exegesis of Scripture must finally be accountable to the resurrected, always present, and already coming Lord. For the purpose of this discussion, we are focusing on those areas which are most clearly in this eschatological tension, and which require unusual sensitivity to the hermeneutical criterion we are advocating.

It is not difficult to find instances within the New Testament Scriptures where such a hermeneutical criterion is especially relevant. For example, consider the matter of the Christian's relation and responsibility to the state. In certain situations we are encouraged to "obey God rather than man." In other situations, we are reminded that we are to be subject to the governing authorities—as instituted by God himself (Rom. 13:1-7)! Or consider the issue of the Scriptures' teaching on divorce and remarriage when viewed in the context of a personal failure and confession of sin in this area. Does the living Lord offer grace and forgiveness when it is sought on the basis of the promise and teaching of Scripture?

One contemporary issue for the church is the proper role of women in positions of pastoral leadership and service. Are Christian women who testify to God's calling to receive ordination and serve as pastors of the church in disobedience to the teaching of Scripture, or are they in obedience to the



Spirit of the resurrected Christ at work in the church? This issue is surely one which requires a patient and careful hermeneutical approach which honors the Word of God and which makes manifest the will and power of Christ in his church in our present situation. Part II of this two-part article will take up the issue of sexual parity in pastoral ministry as a case in which the resurrection of Jesus might serve as a hermeneutical criterion.

*Part II will appear in the March/April issue.*

<sup>1</sup> H. Kimmerle, ed., *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts*, translated by J. Duke and J. Forstman (Scholars Press, 1977), p. 52. For a discussion of contemporary issues in hermeneutics see: Anthony C. Thistleton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980). The theme of the "two horizons" has been set forth by Hans-Georg Gadamer in *Truth and Method*, trans. by Garrett Borden and John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1975). One might mention also Paul Ricoeur's "hermeneutics of suspicion" (*Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. by Denis Savage; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970, p. 32); or Peter Stuhlmacher's "hermeneutics of consent" (*Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Towards a Hermeneutic of Consent*, trans. by Roy A. Harrisville; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977); or Geoffrey Wainwright's suggestion that hermeneutics be considered as doxology (*Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980, pp. 175ff.); or David Tracy's "paradigmatic hermeneutic" following Mircea Eliade's contention that "only the paradigmatic is the real" (*The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*, New

York: The Crossroads Publishing Company, 1981, pp. 193ff.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Analogical Imagination*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>3</sup> Willard M. Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1983), p. 223.

<sup>4</sup> See my essay, "Christopraxis: Competence as a Criterion for Preparation for Ministry," *TSF Bulletin*, January/February 1984. Paul D. Hanson suggests something quite similar when he says, "... in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, a new breakthrough occurred in God's activity which in its uniqueness still serves as the master paradigm in the Christian's understanding of Dynamic Transcendence." *The Diversity of Scripture: A Theological Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), pp. 66-67.

<sup>5</sup> T.F. Torrance likes to say, "No syntactics contains its own semantics." *Reality and Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 116. "It is in the semantic relation between the human word and the divine Word that the basic clues to understanding will be found, for the higher level of God's Word comprehends the operation of the human word at the lower level and forms its meaningful reference to itself" (*Ibid.*, p. 117).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Scott Bartych, who says, "The authority of a New Testament text dealing with human behavior lies first of all in the direction in which any aspect of first century behavior is being modified by the text in question (i.e., from wherever Christ encountered the new behavior toward maturity in Christ)." "Jesus, Power, and Gender Roles," *TSF Bulletin*, January/February 1984, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Emerson Buchanan, trans., *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), p. 352.

<sup>8</sup> F. Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (New York: Random House, Modern Library Paperback, 1950), p. 297.

<sup>9</sup> See the helpful suggestion by Geoffrey Bromiley, to the effect that God is not identical with the Bible, though God teaches what the Bible teaches. *God and Marriage* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), preface. In this same connection, T.F. Torrance helpfully comments: "In order to think out the relation of the Church in history to Christ we must put both these together—mediate horizontal relation through history to the historical Jesus Christ, and immediate vertical relation through the Spirit to the risen and ascended Jesus Christ. It is the former that supplies the material content, while it is the latter that supplies the immediacy of actual encounter." *Space, Time, and Resurrection* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 147.

# Love As a Moral Norm: The Ethical Thought of E. J. Carnell

by Kenneth W. M. Wozniak

Edward John Carnell was Professor of Ethics and Philosophy of Religion in the 1950s and '60s at Fuller Theological Seminary. From 1954 to 1959 he served as the Seminary's president. He was an evangelical; yet, unlike many of his evangelical contemporaries, he had an ever-present interest in the process by which we make decisions in the realm of what he called the "imperative essence," that is, the realm which comprehends what we *ought* to be. His interest was based upon his conviction that moral decision cannot be shunned without deteriorating character. That interest was matured through his Ph.D. and Th.D. studies at Boston and Harvard Universities. His own moral theory was most fully developed in his 1957 book, *Christian Commitment: An Apologetic* (Macmillan).

It has been nearly thirty years since Carnell finished his ethical theory, but it is at least as applicable today as when it first appeared. It continues to offer to the serious believer both a framework for self-understanding and a basis for forming ethical convictions and commitments.

Central to Carnell's moral thought was the concept of love, the basic moral norm which serves to guide the individual. However, prior to his adoption of love as the primary moral norm, Carnell entertained two other candidates: justice and consideration. He quickly rejected justice, for he realized that when a person receives justice he or she is treated as a member of *humanity*, that is, as one who is just like billions of others. The implementation of justice neglects the person's individuality and uniqueness; thus, while justice may be a practical tool in the effort to establish and maintain a workable social order, it certainly does not define the primary moral norm in its pristine form. That form, he surmised, must include more than justice; it must also include consideration.

Consideration, for Carnell, meant to take into account the feelings and particular point of view of another. To treat another with consideration is to treat the person as more than just a member of the human race; it is to treat him or her as a *unique* person. Individual desires, talents, likes, and personality traits influence the treatment someone receives.

Although, for Carnell, consideration more accurately characterized the moral decisions of an upright person than did justice, it was not long until he realized the shortcoming of consideration as a candidate for what he termed the "law of life." Consideration only takes into account the elements of an individual's dignity which he or she reveals. "But," asked Carnell, "what about the scores of mysteries that lie unrevealed? A moral acceptance of our person must include an acceptance of these mysteries" (*C.C.*, p. 205). It must include not only the elements of dignity which are possessed by a person by virtue of the fact that he or she participates in humanity, and the elements of dignity which display his or her uniqueness as an *individual*, but it must also include all hidden aspects of his or her person. Only the norm which provided for an acceptance of the entire person could be affirmed as the law of life, and thus, as the primary moral norm. Justice and consideration, to Carnell, appeared to be consequences of the law of life, but not the law itself. No action had moral value unless it was done in the right spirit. That "right spirit," he concluded, must be the law of life.

Near the beginning of the development of his moral system, Carnell succinctly stated his goal:

We are attempting to discover the content of the imperative essence, in order that we might clarify the moral and spiritual environment. A clarification of this environment, in turn, will clarify our relation to God. (*C.C.*, p. 56)

It was only after having developed his entire system that he was willing to assert that he had discovered the pith and

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