Living Water: Reading Scripture in the Body of Christ With Benedict XVI

• **Adrian J. Walker** •

"As the Holy Spirit conforms us to the dying and rising of Jesus through the two-in-one event of the spiritual reading of Scripture/Eucharist, he remolds our intelligence after the pattern of the Lord's risen life."

Pope Benedict XVI describes *Jesus of Nazareth* as the fruit of his own "personal search 'for the face of the Lord'" (xxiii).[1] The pontiff's characteristically modest words formulate with admirable precision the trajectory of the book as a whole and of every chapter, indeed, every section, in it. Again and again, the pope skillfully guides the reader across the debris-strewn minefield of contemporary New Testament scholarship to the sure and solid ground where he can catch sight of what the Holy Father calls the "*Gestalt*" of Jesus. The

[1]Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth. From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration* (New York: Doubleday, 2007). The pagination of the American edition of the book is identical to that of the British version published by Bloomsbury. This essay, a version of which was presented at the 2008 Oxford conference "Scripture and Liturgy in the Theology of Benedict XVI," is gratefully dedicated to Guillermo Ruíz. I would like to thank Fr. Ricardo Aldana and Dr. Michael Cameron for their judicious and illuminating comments on earlier drafts. This essay was originally published in *Second Spring: International Journal of Faith & Culture* 12 (2010). Reprinted by kind permission of *Second Spring*.

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English rendering of this key word is "figure," which does not quite capture its rich medley of meaning.[2] Let me highlight just two aspects of this richness.

First, when Benedict refers to the Jesus of the New Testament as a "*Gestalt*," he is claiming that the Central Personage who meets us in the pages of the gospels is as it were always "in character." No matter from which angle you contemplate him, Benedict is saying, Jesus is always supremely *himself*. He is not just seamlessly self-consistent in every situation; he is also many-sided, inexhaustibly rich, and overflowingly full. To call the Jesus of the gospels a "*Gestalt*" is not just to say that he is completely coherent. It is also to say that this coherence of his is bathed in the light the evangelist John calls "glory" (Jn 1:14). Light and coherent form are the two inseparable dimensions of every *Gestalt*, but especially of the *Gestalt par excellence* that is Jesus of Nazareth.

We could think of the interplay of light and form as a unique freedom. Jesus, after all, is *himself*, not as the result of some interior struggle, but effortlessly, just by virtue of who he is. This does not mean that he can dispense with making decisions. He has to make decisions for the sake of his mission. The point is that the very position of having to make decisions is one he freely lets the Father send him into—for our sakes. Jesus acts out the drama of Gethsemane (which the pope describes on p. 341) in deadly earnest, but he does not need to struggle to say "Yes." It is we who do that—in order to become what we were meant to be. *He* lives through the drama of the Passion (and of his whole life) for our sakes and in our place.

In his glorious freedom, Jesus shows himself to us as a one-of-a-kind original—and that is why the pope describes him as a unique *Gestalt*. This *Gestalt* is indeed so startlingly novel that nothing about Jesus could be the product, say, of the primitive Christian community. On the contrary, it is more likely that the primitive Christian community is *his* product:

> Critical scholarship rightly asks the question: What happened during those twenty years after Jesus' Crucifixion? Where did this Christology come from? To say that it is the fruit of

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[2]On the meaning of *Gestalt* see David C. Schindler's article, "Reason in Mystery" in *Second Spring* 6 (2004): 23–33.

> anonymous collective[s] . . . whose authorship we seek to discover, does not actually explain anything. How could these unknown groups be so creative? How were they so persuasive and how did they manage to prevail? Isn't it more logical, even historically speaking, to assume that the greatness came at the beginning, and that the figure of Jesus really did explode all existing categories and could only be understood in the light of the mystery of God? (xxii–xxiii)

For Benedict, then, the Jesus who meets us in the pages of the gospels is not the product of the theological imagination of the primitive Christian community. He is not the product of anything less than himself. Indeed, his glorious freedom makes sense only if he is not a "product" at all; not *made*, but *begotten* of the very nature of God. The originality of Jesus' one-of-a-kind *Gestalt* has to lie in a unique identity as the only-begotten Son of God made man:

> The term "Son," along with its correlate "Father (Abba)," gives us a true glimpse into the inner being of Jesus—indeed, into the inner being of God himself. Jesus' prayer is the true origin of the term "the Son." It has no prehistory, just as the Son himself is "new," even though Moses and the Prophets prefigure him. (344f.)

It would be a mistake to conclude from passages like this that the pope simply assumes Nicene orthodoxy about the full divinity of Jesus and then proceeds to deduce scholarly conclusions from it. The Holy Father argues not only "from above," but also "from below." Jesus is a unique *Gestalt*, and divine Sonship (in the sense of Nicaea) is the only really plausible way to account for this uniqueness. Jesus' one-of-a-kind humanity itself is the great Historical Fact that by its intrinsic evidential power compels our recognition that he is the Son of God.

The pope, then, is no less keen than historical-critical scholars to do justice to the "*factum historicum* (historical fact)" (xiv) of Jesus. Benedict's "Jesus is no myth. He is a man of flesh and blood and he stands as a fully real part of history" (271f.). If anything, Benedict proves to be even *more* sensitive to historical factuality than the critical scholars. This is because, unlike them, he refuses with the utmost clarity any attempt to explain the one-of-a-kind originality of Jesus by anything less than Jesus himself. Such an attempt, the pope claims, would be implausible precisely on historical grounds,

since it would fail to do justice to the glorious freedom that radiated from him and that so impressed all who met him:

> I have tried to the best of my ability to incorporate [the results of historical-critical scholarship], and yet I wanted to try to portray the Jesus of the Gospels as the real, "historical" Jesus in the strict sense of the word. I am convinced, and I hope the reader will be, too, that this figure is much more logical and, historically speaking, much more intelligible than the reconstructions we have been presented with in the last decades. I believe that this Jesus—the Jesus of the Gospels—is a historically plausible and convincing figure [*Gestalt*]. (xxif.)

Jesus' one-of-a-kind humanity, his gloriously free originality, is no fluke, no random accident, for Benedict. Rather, it is the canonical pattern and paradigm of what it means to be human—and so of what it means to be a human being acting in (and acted on by) history. To understand man in history, Benedict is telling us, what you need is not the social sciences, but an ability to contemplate the communion of Jesus with the Father. As *Gaudium et spes* teaches, it is "Christ, the last Adam," who, "in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself and lays open to him his most high calling." (That is to say, not that human nature cannot be known at all apart from Jesus, but that it is only fully revealed through him.)

1. "Canonical exegesis"

For Benedict, the original *Gestalt* of Jesus is the key to "all things," not just man. It is the "canon," the rule or measure of the meaning and being of the Bible. To be sure, the trajectory of the biblical story is

> not linear, and it is often dramatic, but when you watch it unfold in light of Jesus Christ, you can see it moving in a single overall direction; you can see that the Old and New Testaments belong together. This Christological hermeneutic, which sees Jesus Christ as the key to the whole and learns from him how to understand the Bible as a unity, presupposes a prior act of faith . . . . But this act of faith is based upon reason—historical reason—and so makes it possible to see the internal unity of Scripture. (xix)

Benedict himself would be the first to admit that "the way [he looks] at the figure of Jesus goes . . . *beyond* purely historical-critical exegesis" (xxiii; emphasis added). The pope seeks a more comprehensive form of exegesis that can account for all that might be true in the methods and results of historical-critical scholarship (and can explain better *why* it is true). Benedict calls this new type of theological hermeneutic "canonical exegesis," and he connects its more comprehensive rationality with its goal of reading "the individual texts of the Bible in the context of the whole" (ibid.):

> The aim of this [canonical] exegesis is to read individual texts within the totality of the one Scripture, which then sheds new light on all the individual texts. Paragraph 12 of the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on Divine Revelation had already clearly understood this as a fundamental principle of theological exegesis: If you want to understand the Scripture in the Spirit in which it is written, you have to attend to the content and to the unity of Scripture as a whole. The Council goes on to stress the need for taking account of the living tradition of the whole Church and of the analogy of faith (the intrinsic correspondences within the faith). (xviii)

By "canonical exegesis," then, the pope means an approach that receives Scripture as an organic whole and that acknowledges this wholeness as the first principle of its own rationality. Scripture possesses this wholeness for the pope insofar as it coalesces into unity around Christ. We can illustrate this by reference to a brief sub-chapter of *Jesus of Nazareth* entitled "living water," a mere ten pages (238–48), in which the pope traces the image—and reality—of "living water" along the arc stretching from the cosmos to Israel to Christ.

Significantly, the pope does not start with the New Testament, but with pagan man's feeling for the symbolic nature of water, a feeling that seems to have many echoes in the Bible. Much of modern biblical scholarship regards such apparent resonances of pagan religiosity in the Bible as incompatible with the Church's traditional faith in the divine authorship of the Scriptures, as if they were in the end nothing but pastiches of universal mythical motifs. Benedict, by contrast, draws a very different conclusion. For the Holy Father, in fact, biblical religion is the purifying fulfillment of what we could call man's innate, God-given "religious sense," which finds expression everywhere in the world in diverse rites and

creeds. In the pope's mind, most of these expressions contain at least some faint glimmer of truth. And it is this glimmer that the cleansing fire of biblical revelation engulfs (without annihilating) within a new and more intense incandescence of divine action.

Put another way, the pope embraces a version of J. R. R. Tolkien's and C. S. Lewis' idea that Christianity is the one "true myth" that fulfills man's natural religiosity. Clearly, the possibility of such an innate religious sense presupposes that the cosmos itself reveals the divine, and that the being of the cosmos is inherently symbolic of God, having therefore a sacramental quality. True, biblical religion puts an abrupt end to all pantheistic confusion between God and the universe he has created. Nevertheless, it does not strip the world of its nature as a symbol that reveals the divine, but rather enables this innate symbolism to stand forth in its full splendor for the first time. Consider the following magnificent passage (bearing in mind that what the pope says in it about bread applies equally well to water):

> Earthly bread can become the bearer of Christ's presence because it contains in itself the mystery of the passion, because it unites in itself death and resurrection. This is why the world's religions used bread as the basis for myths of death and resurrection. In this connection, Cardinal Schönborn reminds us of the conversion of the great British writer C. S. Lewis. Lewis, having read a twelve-volume work about these myths, came to the conclusion that this Jesus who took bread in his hands and said, "This is my body," was just "another corn divinity, a corn king who lays down his life for the life of the world." One day, however, he overheard a firm atheist remarking to a colleague that the evidence for the historicity of the Gospels was actually surprisingly good. The atheist then paused thoughtfully and said: "About the dying God. Rum thing. It almost looks as if it really happened once." (271)

Poetic fantasy does not make water (or bread) symbolic of the divine. Rather, it unfolds the innate symbolic nature that constitutes it from the creation of the world. As we have just seen, this unfolding begins already in extra-biblical mythology and religion, which, with Tolkien, we can trace back to mythopoeic "sub-creation" on the part of man who, even though fallen, still retains his Adamic privilege of naming his fellow creatures. The Old Testament, of course, marks a decisive turning point. Now the Holy Spirit takes full possession of man's innate and God-given sub-

creative power, heals it, and enables it to express with unswerving faithfulness God's saving deeds.

Benedict's reflections on living water appropriately reach their apex in a brief consideration of Jn 7:38: "As the Scripture has said: 'Out of his body shall flow rivers of living water'" (245). In this context, the pope examines two traditional interpretations of the passage. The "Alexandrian" tradition holds that the words "out of his body" refer to the *believer's* body. Although Benedict states that grammar supports this tradition, he himself thinks that the second tradition of interpretation, which he says stems from "Asia Minor," is more accurate theologically. This tradition, the pontiff writes, "punctuates the text differently: 'He who thirsts, let him come to me, and let him who believes in me drink it. As the Scripture says: out of his body rivers will flow.' 'His body' is now applied to Christ: He is the source, the living rock, from which the new water comes" (245f.). The body of Christ, dead and risen, is "the source of life for all ages" (247), because it is through his body that he communicates to us the living water of the Holy Spirit.

2. The Spirit and the Body

It is important to recall once more Benedict's consistent stress that the Christ of the gospels is not just a literary character, but a historical one as well. "[W]ithout Jesus' bodiliness," the pope warns, "the word loses its power. Christianity becomes mere doctrine, mere moralism, an intellectual affair, but it lacks any flesh and blood" (243). It is not just the figure of Christ portrayed in the gospels, then, but the real bodily Jesus who is the focal point of the Bible and the cosmos. His body is the goal towards which the Holy Spirit's action tends from the beginning of God's plan—a beginning stretching back to the time when the Spirit brooded over the face of the deep. By the same token, the "spiritual"—an adjective belonging properly to the *Holy* Spirit—has nothing to do with the watering-down of Jesus' bodily existence or of his bloody death. On the contrary, as Benedict reminds us, "John later goes back to the motif of blood and water in his First Letter and there gives it a new twist: 'This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. . . . There are three

witnesses, the Spirit, the water and the blood; and these three are one' (1 Jn 5:6–8)" (243).

As the pope stresses on p. 242, when the soldier pierces Jesus' side, *both* water *and* blood flow out of it at once. In other words, without Jesus' bloody death in the flesh we do not get the living water of the Holy Spirit. Benedict does not forget, of course, that Jesus' passage through death to Resurrection also transforms his bodily existence. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit who (together with the Father and the Son) transforms Jesus' bodiliness does not thereby attenuate his full-blooded corporeal reality. Jesus' transfiguration into a "life-giving spirit" by the power of the *Spiritus Creator* does not make him any less physical than he was before. On the contrary, it establishes his bodily existence once and for all as the eternal meaning and pattern of the physical world.

From the very beginning of the divine economy, the Spirit's action aims at Jesus' Incarnation. Indeed, at the highpoint of this economy, the Spirit himself (co-)creates Jesus' body and then (co-) resurrects it from the tomb on the Third Day. Yet this is only half the story. The Risen One's glorified body is not just the supreme masterpiece of the Holy Spirit, but is also the medium through which he communicates this same Creator Spirit to mankind (Acts 2:32–41). And this is the foundation of "canonical exegesis" itself, which fixes its gaze upon Christ, dead and risen, as the focal point around which Scripture has both its being and its intelligibility. The practitioner of canonical exegesis has to rely on the Holy Spirit to lead him, through the letter of the Scriptures, to an encounter with Christ, dead and risen. And he draws his understanding of the Bible precisely from the Holy Spirit, whom he receives through an encounter with the risen Lord through the pages of Holy Writ.

3. Training in sonship

So what exactly happens when we read the Scriptures spiritually, in the sense of "in the Spirit"? A good way to begin answering this question is by recalling that Scripture displays a coherent overall *Gestalt* or pattern. The "totality of the one Scripture," as the pope calls it, is not merely the mass of details contained in the Bible, but precisely the *Gestalt*-like pattern that expresses itself in, and constitutes, all such details. This pattern, in

and through its details, is meant to illumine and transform our lives—as if every word of the Bible were written *for us* personally. In fact, that is just the point: when we are molded according to the scriptural pattern, we discover and receive our true identity: not as mere individuals, isolated from each other, but as theological persons, bearers of a mission within the divine plan to recapitulate all things in Christ.

To read the Scripture spiritually is to let the Spirit mold us (and our understanding of the text) according to the pattern that gives Scripture as a whole its shape. But let us not forget that this biblical pattern is the *Gestalt* of Christ *as Son*. To read Scripture spiritually, then, is to receive Holy Writ as an icon displaying the features of the Incarnate Son—and to receive the impress of those features by the working of the Holy Spirit: "All of us, mirroring the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Lord who is [such by the] Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18). To read Scripture spiritually is to share in the life of heaven by letting the pattern of sonship Jesus lives out before our eyes in the gospels penetrate and transform the whole substance of our day-to-day existence in every detail. This is why Paul remarks that "all Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for . . . the training that is to righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16). The Greek word I have rendered as "training" is "*paideia*," at the root of which stands the word "*pais*," which means "child." What Paul is saying, then, is that to read the Scriptures as "inspired by God"—to read them spiritually—is to be "trained" in sonship by the Father through his Spirit.

This training demands repentance, asceticism, and the struggle to acquire virtue, but we are not just being taught and converted. At the same time, we are being *generated* as sons in the Son according to the pattern of Christ. To read Scripture spiritually, then, is to know with our whole being what it means for the Father to "conceiv[e] us by the word of truth" in the Holy Spirit "so that we might be a certain first-fruits of his creatures" (Jas 1:18). The Spirit gives us Christ, Christ gives us the Spirit, and both give us Christ's Father as ours by adoption.

The "school" in which we learn to "obey from the heart the pattern of doctrine into which we were handed over" (Rom 6:17) is the "living tradition of the whole Church" (xviii). The living tradition is *itself* the unique act of receiving the biblical pattern, an

act in which our individual reading of Scripture is called to participate. Furthermore, the liturgy is the comprehensive matrix of this "traditioning." Scott Hahn has written beautifully on what he calls the "liturgical actualization" of the Bible in his *Letter and Spirit: From Written Text to Living Word in the Liturgy* (2005). This notion helps us understand the liturgy's role as the privileged school of the spiritual reading of Scripture.

In the liturgical action in both East and West we move from the Old Testament promises to their New Testament fulfillment, culminating in the sacramental re-presentation of the sacrifice of Calvary as Jesus lifts us up through the Spirit into the Heavenly Sanctuary (the High Priest who appears before the Father in his own blood). Sandwiched between Word and Sacrament is the homily, which partakes of the character of both, and so testifies to their inner unity. This mediating role of preaching, which unites exposition and mystagogy in a single event, underscores in turn the distinctiveness of the "method" by which the liturgy teaches us to read Scripture spiritually. The didactic element is itself embedded in, and gets its form from, sacramental participation in the very realities the Scripture is about. Partaking of the body and blood of Christ is both the summit and the source of our understanding of the scriptural pattern and of our instruction in how to decode it. In fact, Eucharist and Scripture are two sides of the same coin. Scripture is itself a sort of "verbal sacrament" of the risen Lord. Its inexhaustible interconnections (a source of never-ending delight for the Fathers) convey something of the indestructible integrity of the Spirit-life that fills Christ's glorified body beyond the reach of death or decay.

Thus what *Dei Verbum* calls "reading Scripture by the same Spirit by whom it was written" is much more than private Bible reading with a little help from above. It is the Holy Spirit's act of drawing us up, *through the liturgical interplay of Eucharist and Scripture*, into the Event that is Christ. Jesus and the Spirit, Eucharist and Scripture, inspiration and spiritual reading, are indissolubly united, and the liturgy is the Church's reception of this unity as the form and substance of its own life. Hence the two-in-one invitation of the Spirit and the Bride: "And the Spirit and the Bride say 'Come.' And he who hears, let him say 'Come.' Let him who thirsts come, let him who wills receive water of life gratis" (Rev 22:17).

4. The spiritual reading of Scripture

None of this rules out Bible-reading at home or scriptural exegesis in the classroom. It just means that both are correct and beneficial only to the extent that they emerge from, remain within, and return to the one and only reading of Scripture that we receive in the liturgy. That said, there still remains one last point.

I have argued that spiritual reading is the only interpretative "method" fully adequate to the inspired character of the Bible. One of the reasons for this is that the sacred authors themselves wrote spiritual reading into the very fabric of the biblical texts themselves. As Benedict explains on pp. 243f. apropos of John's gospel, the evangelist composes his narrative within the Church's Spirit-led "remembrance" of Jesus' life in light of his Resurrection. What the pope means by "remembrance" is essentially a synonym for "spiritual reading." The drift of the argument is thus clear: the spiritual reading ("remembrance") of Jesus' life in light of his rising from death is constitutive of John's human *authorship* of his gospel before it is constitutive of our human *readership* of it. Before it is something that happens *to* an already existing Scripture, spiritual reading is something that happens *in* Scripture itself as it is being written.

> As such, the Gospel is a "remembering," which means that it remains faithful to what really happened and is not a "Jesus poem," not a violation of the historical events. Rather, it truly shows us who Jesus was, and thereby it shows us someone who not only was, but is . . . . It shows us the real Jesus, and we can confidently make use of it as a source of information about him. (235)

John's gospel, the pope is saying, embodies the evangelist's Spirit-led remembrance of Jesus' earthly life in light of the Resurrection. Something similar obviously holds for the synoptics as well: all four gospels are a "pneumatic" remembrance of the details of Jesus' earthly life in light of his rising from the dead. Bolstered by hints scattered throughout *Jesus of Nazareth* (as well as by Scott Hahn's argument in *Letter and Spirit*), we can go even further: before this sort of spiritual reading found its way into the gospels, it first occurred in and as the Church's liturgy (see the story of the road to Emmaus at the end of Luke's gospel, which connects

Jesus' christological explanation of the Old Testament Scriptures and "the breaking of the bread"). Spiritual reading in a liturgical context is not just the Church's *response* to the Scripture; it is also the Church's *participation* in the Spirit's act of producing Scripture in the first place. This participation is bound up with the person of Mary, who, as Luke tells, was present both at the conception of Jesus and at the birth-day of his Church on Pentecost. "Keeping all these words" (Lk 2:18) in her Immaculate Heart, Mary embodies and guarantees the remembrance or spiritual reading whereby the Church shares (as a free, rational, and perfectly obedient and objective instrument) in the Holy Spirit's work of inspiring Scripture.

Such spiritual reading is actually the only way to secure a fully accurate view of "what really happened." Benedict would be the first to admit, of course, that the gospel writers do not just claim to offer an eye-witness account of the facts of Jesus' life before Easter, but that they also embed these facts in a pattern culminating in Jesus' death and Resurrection. That is the point. This blending of fact and pattern is exactly the *Gestalt* we would expect the gospels to exhibit if the evangelists really were, or really had access to, genuine eye-witnesses of Jesus both before and after Easter. For, in that case, the pattern the evangelists present would not be an embellishment of the facts, but would be the order in which the facts actually happened in the first place. How else could they transmit this knowledge to us? The Gospel pattern would not block our view of the facts; it would *be* the facts. Indeed, given that the pattern culminates in what purports to be the very turning-point of history—the Resurrection—it would constitute the very standard of "historical factuality" *tout court*.

If the Resurrection and the communication of the Holy Spirit are inseparable, it is important to note that the Resurrection transformed the pre-Easter Jesus in a *surprising* way; the extent of this surprise becomes clear in the accounts that emphasize the first eye-witnesses' initial inability to recognize him on Easter morning. It was the Holy Spirit who enabled the disciples to perceive this confirmation-in-surprise. Indeed, this is why the disciples' encounter with the Risen Lord included a spiritual re-reading of his earthly life in light of his risen glory[3]—this re-reading was in turn the human

[3]What the disciples needed to be brought to understand was not only that he had

tool of the Spirit's inspiration of the gospels. This re-reading did not blur their recollection of "what really happened" in Jesus' earthly life, just as the Resurrection did not attenuate the bodiliness of the pre-Easter Jesus, but elevated its very historical particularity to the "canon" of cosmos and history. For "Holy Spirit" is not the name of some subjective religious experience, but of a living divine hypostasis: the Witness who guarantees that the "historical Jesus" was *always* the "Christ of faith," even though the Resurrection was needed to seal this identity from the beginning.

The (liturgical) act of reading Jesus' earthly life spiritually in light of the Resurrection (and of the Old Testament and of all of creation in light of both) is, we have been saying, woven into the very fabric of the gospels (and of the whole of the New Testament). This puts a new spin on the preposition in the phrase "the spiritual reading *of* Scripture." It is not just that we, the Bible's readers, are called to practice a spiritual reading of the Sacred Scriptures. These Scriptures *themselves* are a spiritual reading. And because they are, they contain the only fully adequate "scientific" assessment of the facts about the "historical Jesus." To the same extent that Scripture is spiritual *reading*, it is also spiritual *science* that embodies the inspiring Spirit's normative *scientia* concerning Jesus:

> But when he comes, the Spirit of Truth, he will guide you into all truth, for he will not speak from himself, but what he will hear he will speak . . . . He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and announce it to you. All that the Father has is mine, which is why I said that he takes from what is mine and announces it to you. (Jn 16:13–15)

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conquered death, but that the death he had conquered was theirs—by first dying it for them. They grasped that he had descended to the point where they (and all men) are made—and unmade—in sheer passivity and, from that lowest and most helpless point, had remade them. Jesus had become (in the Holy Spirit) their very *life*, and this life was a light in whose radiance they now began to revisit the details of their Lord's earthly existence. The Paschal Mystery, the disciples now realized, was the God-destined fulfillment of Jesus' earthly life, indeed, of the Old Testament and of all of creation. By the same logic, the Paschal Mystery also inaugurated "these last days"; Jesus had finally taken full and sovereign possession over the time left before his glorious return to judge the living and the dead. He and he alone could say, "I am the first and the last and the Living One, and I was dead, and behold I am living unto the ages of ages and I hold the keys of death and of Hades" (Rev 1:17–18).

This suggests a concluding thought. If Jesus himself is the "canon" that measures the being and intelligibility of all things, then the spiritual science of Scripture that revolves around him cannot be just one science among many. It has to be the science of sciences, the "canon" of science itself. As the Holy Spirit conforms us to the dying and rising of Jesus through the two-in-one event of the spiritual reading of Scripture/Eucharist, he remolds our intelligence after the pattern of the Lord's risen life. This life is in turn the true "life of the mind," which reveals our intellect for the first time in all its native splendor—redeemed as "logical worship" (Rom 12:1) of the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit of Truth. □

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