

## A RESPONSE TO MARK MATTISON'S RESPONSE

It is with appreciation that I briefly respond to Mark Mattison's thoughtful reaction to a recent editorial. I will address briefly some of the issues raised, and ask our readers for further comment.

First, the issue of whether tradition or exegesis of the text ought to take authoritative precedence is still a huge area of discussion. It is this JOURNAL's position that the text is still the best available authority for our reference.

Whether or not the canonicity of the Scripture can be assigned to the fourth century is itself an issue for further debate. That the Scriptures had no authority within the church, or for that matter Judaism, until the fourth century is denied by most.

Criticism of the text is itself a highly complex study, far beyond the scope of this JOURNAL; nevertheless, our position remains that God was actively involved in bringing His words into men's minds and seeing to it that they were preserved for us in the life-giving Scriptures. That is not meant to lightly pass over the work of biblical criticism, but it is intended to make clear the position of this JOURNAL.

We unabashedly posit that God did and does preserve life through His Word. Precisely how He does it remains obscure, but faith that He does ensures that our attempt to deal honestly and forthrightly with the text is of primary importance in ascertaining how God calls us to believe and live.

Mark Mattison's second main point is that exegesis often is left as just an end in and of itself. To that our response is "Yes." Yes, in that we have a need to do more with the exegesis of the text, but to clarify in what way the truths discovered direct our ministries. One of the most difficult sermon topics I ever assigned in my teaching days was the topic, "The Oneness of God and Its Importance." It was wretchedly difficult for the student assigned to complete the message. His exegesis was solid, but its relevance to the rest of theology was most difficult.

Yet, if God is One as an objective reality, doesn't it require of us that we begin our theologizing with that truth? Should we not attempt to allow theology to inform our exegesis?

Our development of church polity, social justice ministries and other such issues is to spring from our exegesis of Scripture, presuming that God is using this way of informing His people of His intentions.

Mr. Mattison's criticism is honest and kind, and we of this JOURNAL's staff and readership would do well to respond to concerns he has raised in his "Response." There is an excitement in a living theology that calls us into our world.

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