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Covenant" and a "Statement of Concern," which have caught the attention of many church leaders around the world. Indeed this partnership in radical discipleship has already begun, and only the Lord can tell what it may mean for the future of Christianity around the world, but especially in the United States.

The United States today is one of the most challenging mission fields on the globe. Not only does it have millions who find themselves outside the frontier of the gospel, but its own culture and society, its churches and their theologies have become inescapable missionary frontiers. Walbert Bühlmann is certainly right in stating, "We are not at the end of the missions but rather at the beginning of a new and extraordinary missionary era."[22] In this new era the clarion call comes particularly to the offspring of the former missionary era to go to the land whence came many of their missionary forebears and witness there to the liberating Word of God. For third world Christians the United States has become truly a "new Macedonia."

FOOTNOTES

1. Cf., e.g., Samuel Wilson, ed., *Mission Handbook*, 12th ed. (Monrovia, Calif.: MARC, 1980) pp. 20ff.; R. Pierce Beaver, ed., *American Missions in Bicentennial Perspective* (Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1977), passim.
2. That is, "the millions who are geographically near, but live on distant socio-cultural frontiers. To say, for example, the de-Christianized masses of the West have had ample opportunity to reasonably consider the option of the Christian faith is to oversimplify the complex reality of western society, with its fantastic input from the mass media, the socio-cultural roadblocks in the clusters of men and women that make up the western mosaic and the psychological distance which syncretistic religious tradition has brought about between them and the faith of the New Testament" (Orlando E. Costas, "Churches in Evangelistic Partnership," *The New Face of Evangelicalism*, ed. C. Rene Padilla (Downers Grove, Il.: InterVarsity Press, 1976), p. 149.
3. Eduardo Seda Bonilla, "Ethnic Studies and Cultural Pluralism," reprint from *The Rican*, n.d., p. 1.
4. Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 1037ff.; Harvey Cox, *Turning East: The Promise and Peril of the New Orientalism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977); Howard A. Wilson, *Invasion from the East* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978).
5. Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, p. 1079.
6. Wesley Michaelson, "De-Americanizing the Gospel," *The Future of the Missionary Enterprise*, no. 17: *Mission in America in World Context* (Rome: IDOC, 1976), p. 57.
7. James Wallis, "Evangelism: Toward New Styles of Life and Action," *Mission in America in World Context*, p. 67.
8. Rubem Alves, *A Theology of Human Hope* (Washington, D.C.: Corpus Books, 1969), pp. 21–22.
9. Cf. E. C. O. Ilogu, *Christian Ethics in an African Background* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), p. 178. For further discussion on the question of technology and the third world, see Rubem Alves, *Tomorrow's Child: Imagination, Creativity and the Rebirth of Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), passim; Rubem Alves, *O Enigma da Religão* (Petropolis: Editora Vozes, 1975), pp. 150–66; Rubem Alves, "Identity and Communication," *WACC Journal* 22, no. 4 (1975) passim; Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Kellner, *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), pp. 105ff; and Stephen C. Knapp, "Mission and Modernization: A Preliminary Critical Analysis of Contemporary Understanding of Mission from a 'Radical Evangelical' Perspective," *American Missions*, pp. 146–209.
10. Michaelson, "De-Americanizing the Gospel," p. 52.
11. James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p. 47.
12. Douglas W. Johnson and George Cornell, *Punctured Preconceptions* (New York: Friendship Press, 1972), pp. 24–25.
13. Martin Marty, *The Pro and Con Book of Religious America: A Bicentennial Argument* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1975), p. 84.
14. Ibid., p. 85.
15. Carl Braaten, "The Christian Mission and American Imperialism," *Religion and the Dilemmas of Nationhood*, ed. Sydney E. Ahlstrom (Minneapolis, Minn.: Lutheran Church in America, 1976), p. 72.
16. Ruben Lores, "Manifest Destiny and the Missionary Enterprise," *Study Encounter* 11, no. 1 (1975): 15.
17. Sergio Arce, Plutarco Bonilla, et al., "An Open Letter to North American Christians," reprinted by the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, October 1976 (mimeographed), p. 2.
18. Braaten, "Imperialism," p. 71.
19. Ibid., p. 72.
20. Ibid.
21. Michaelson, "De-Americanizing the Gospel," p. 57.
22. Walbert Bühlmann, *The Coming of the Third Church* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1978), p. 166.

FOUNDATIONS

(Doing theology on the basics of classical faith)

"Real Presence" Hermeneutics:
Reflections on Wainwright, Thielicke, and Torrance

by Ray S. Anderson

"The fundamental motivation of Christian exegesis and hermeneutics should be doxological," suggests Geoffrey Wainwright in his monumental new work in systematic theology, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life* (p. 176). This important book raises provocative questions which ought to demand the serious attention of evangelical interpreters of the Scripture. As has already been pointed out in a review published earlier in this journal (*TSF Bulletin*, May/June, 1982), Wainwright ranges widely over the terrain of historical, ecumenical, and contemporary theology to argue his main thesis: the worshipping community, through its life of obedient hearing of the Word, incorporates a "hermeneutical continuum" (p. 175) in its witness to and praise of God. Through this hermeneutical continuum the teaching of the church (doctrine) and the living out of the Christian faith (ethics) re-enact the power and authority of the original Word in a new and living way.

Wainwright is not the first to suggest that theology should be grounded first of all in doxology. If that were the single note he plays upon his instrument, there would be little in his book to warrant our attention. To accuse him of substituting doxology for theology would be misleading and unfair. What has attracted me in this book is his underlying refrain concerning the presence of God himself in the context of reading, preaching, and hearing Scripture, and concerning the presence of Christ in the liturgical life of the church. Consequently, I do not read Wainwright as suggesting that the experience of God in worship is a substitute for the revelation of God through his Word. Rather, he points us to the "real presence" of Christ as an exegetical and hermeneutical assumption.

Wainwright cites Augustine, who once said, "So let us listen to the Gospel as though the Lord himself were present" (p. 179), a twelfth-century abbot who made the same appeal, and the words of the Second Vatican Council: "He is present in his word, since it is he himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in church" (p. 181). Not to leave out classical Protestantism, he points out the "real presence" indicated by the language of the Second Helvetic Confession of 1566: "*Praedicatio verbi divini est verbum divinum*" (The preaching of the divine word is the divine word) (p. 511).

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For Wainwright, the implications of this "real presence" in the liturgical use of Scripture are basically three-fold, so far as I can see. First, he suggests that there is a resulting edification of the church in its doxological life (p. 176); second, there is an ethical result, a growing conformity to Christ in his self-giving love (p. 106); and third, there is a process of doctrinal development as the confession of faith assumes creedal form (pp. 190ff). Thus, a desirable theological pluralism can become a reality just to the extent that creedal confessions are no longer viewed absolutely, but are related to the singularity and absolute character of the presence of God in the liturgical events of preaching, the sacraments, and the hymns of faith and praise of God.

What I find missing in Wainwright are criteria for hermeneutics that can draw out the implications of the real presence of Christ in the reading of Scriptures. My own sense of lack, no doubt, is caused by my questioning whether edification, spiritual conformity to Christ, and the creedal status of hymns constitutes the substance of what is meant by hermeneutics. What I suspect is at stake here is the contrast between revelation as "truth" and revelation as "presence."

Carl F. H. Henry, in his four-volume argument for the validity of divine revelation as exclusively propositional, states flatly: "The emphasis on divine presence, unless related to an explicitly rational revelational content, can therefore lead to conflicting interpretations of the religious reality" (Henry, III, p. 459). Making an absolute distinction between truth as an ontological reality and truth as an epistemological reality, Henry decisively opts for the latter. As a result, the divine Word of God is revealed truth only to the extent that it is identical with divine Logos. Furthermore, to insure absolute objectivity in revelation, Henry argues that revelation as truth is also a sheer mental apprehension of the Word of God, where the human mind (logos) is in a univocal (not analogical) relation with the divine mind (Logos) (III, p. 364). Viewed in this way, it is clear that doxology has no place in the hermeneutical process.

There is little doubt that Henry is reacting against the so-called "consciousness theology" which became the distinguishing mark of nineteenth-century German liberalism. Schleiermacher (1768–1834) in particular, building upon the earlier work of Lessing (1729–81), who argued that revelation cannot be historically mediated, posited an inherent religious apprehension of the divine in the human self. This intuitive movement takes place on a continuum of consciousness which has its end in a "feeling of absolute dependence" upon God. Thus, revelation is not "objectifiable" precisely because it is not an object of thought but, rather, a subjective event of religious experience. Later, W. Herrmann (1846–1922), the celebrated Marburg theologian and a teacher of the early Karl Barth (1886–1968), gave a more explicitly christological content to this subjective experience of revelation. Revelation, argued Herrmann, is a "secret of the soul," by which one perceives the "inner life of Jesus" which is hidden in his "outer life." While appreciating the christological content which this gave revelation, Barth rejected the latent "kernel and husk" assumption (Semler, 1725–91) in the thought of his former teacher. Barth argued that the divine Word comes to expression through an indissoluble, but inexplicable, union of form and content. The Scripture becomes revelation, wrote Barth, because the divine Word comes to the human word in the sheer objectivity of divine presence over and against the human subject, both as a center of rational thought as well as a center of self-consciousness (Barth 1/1 pp. 95, 175–76).

Wainwright, Thielicke and Torrance point toward a hermeneutic which takes quite seriously the presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit in the theological, liturgical and ethical life of the church.

The question which Barth poses for us is this: given the indissoluble union in Jesus Christ between the human and divine (*homoousion*), what is the relation between Christ and truth in contemporary revelation? Both seventeenth-century orthodoxy and twentieth-century conservative rational orthodoxy, as espoused by Carl Henry, tend to separate the personal being of Christ from the truth of Christ for the sake of an objective, propositional revelation. Nineteenth-century liberalism placed greater emphasis on religious experience and what one might call a univocal relation between self-consciousness and divine revelation. This latter movement resulted in what might be termed an "empathetic hermeneutic," which stressed a psychological and ontological solidarity with the source of revelation, as in Schleiermacher and Herrmann.

Helmut Thielicke, in his own recently-completed three-volume work, *The Evangelical Faith*, suggests that both of the above alternatives can be called "Cartesian theology." This is so, Thielicke argues, because both conservative rationalism and liberalism assume a starting point located within the human self as either a thinking self or an experiencing self (Thielicke, vol. 1, pp. 38ff). As a result, revelation is "appropriated" to categories of self-understanding, whether they be rational, existential, or ethical. A non-Cartesian theology," Thielicke responds, is one which moves in the opposite direction. It begins with the ontic reality of the Holy Spirit, present in the event of reading and hearing the Scriptures, as the presence of Christ himself. The thinking and experiencing self is then appropriated *to* the objective Word by the Holy Spirit (pp. 129ff). The "sacramental presence" of Christ, argues Thielicke, is not determined by faith as religious experience, nor is it separated from the truth of God's saving act in Jesus Christ within history. Christ does not simply relate us to meaning (logos), he *is* the Logos. Truth is incarnate in him and identical with him as personal being (p. 205). It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring those who read and hear the Scripture as the Word of God "into the truth," which means correspondence to the divine self-knowledge which takes place objectively in the inner relations between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in the very being of God himself.

If, then, there is a "real presence" of Christ in the reading (and hearing) of Scripture as the divine Word, as both Wainwright and Thielicke have suggested, what are the epistemological and hermeneutical implications of this "presence"? Is it possible to have an objective and "true" revelation, a concern of Carl Henry, if God reveals himself as personally present in our own subjective apprehension of the Word of God? What will revelation as the "truth of God" mean for doctrine, faith, and ethics if this direction be taken?

In terms of our knowledge of divine revelation, it certainly means that we, with T. F. Torrance, must take seriously the epistemological relevance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not a psychological "empathy" with the source of revelation, either in the inner life of the authors of Scripture, or in the inner life of Jesus himself (Herrmann). Rather, the Holy Spirit is the presence of the transcendent God in his unity and differentiation. In the presence of the Spirit, the Son and the Father are present (John 14: 15–17, 23). The presence of the Spirit opens up the human self to a fully rational and spiritual correspondence to the self-knowledge of God, anchored on the human side through the indissoluble relation of divine and human in Jesus Christ (*homoousion*). Real presence, therefore, means "real" knowledge of God as opposed to that which is merely speculative, abstract, and therefore "unreal." Propositions, as logical forms of thought, are not thereby excluded from theological statements. For that knowledge which God reveals through Word and Spirit, indissolubly united with his own being, also entails true knowledge as against that which is false. "Let God be true though every man be false," says the Apostle Paul (Romans 3:4). "By their very nature," says T. F. Torrance,

> theological statements involve propositional relations with God and propositional relations between human subjects.... They take place, so to speak, within historical conversation between God and His people, as through the Spirit God's Word continues to be uttered, and in the Communion of the Spirit conjoint hearing and understanding take place; they emerge out of the Church's obedient acknowledgement from age to age of the divine Self-revelation in Jesus Christ and are progressively deepened and clarified through the Church's worship and dialogue and repentant rethinking within the whole communion of saints. (Torrance, p. 190)

Much the same emphasis can be found in Otto Weber's recently translated *Foundations of Dogmatics*, Vol. 1. Revelation, says Weber, is an event which breaks through the rationally objectivized selfhood of man/woman in order to create a new structure of rationality in corres-

pondence to the Logos as divine being (Weber, pp. 35ff). The text of Scripture, suggests Weber, can only be meaningfully understood within a specific set of relationships. The Scripture says "something," but also says this "something" for someone (p. 314).

True knowledge of God is revealed knowledge. There should be no debate over that within evangelical theology. Jesus Christ is both the form and content of that revelation of God, with an indissoluble but inexplicable union of form and content expressed through his incarnation. Here is where the debate emerges. If content (Logos) is bound to form (historical existence) in such a way that the relation remains both indissoluble and inexplicable, then revelation must include a contemporary experience of the person of Christ in order for there to be true knowledge of God. Liberal theology tended to separate form and content for the sake of an immediate experience of the Logos as divine revelation. Rational orthodoxy tends to separate Logos from personal being, and then to equate the truth of form (historical inerrancy) with the truth of revelation as propositional statement. In this article we have seen that three contemporary theologians, a Wesleyan (Wainwright), a Lutheran (Thielicke) and a Calvinist (Torrance), all tend to agree that revelation of God entails what I have called the "real presence" of Christ in the reading and understanding of Scripture. While each takes a somewhat different emphasis, all point in the direction of a hermeneutic which takes quite seriously the presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit in the theological, liturgical, and ethical life of the church.

What these theologians must contend with, given the assumption that the real presence of Christ inheres in the form of revelation itself, is the implication of this assumption exegetically and hermeneutically. It is not enough for Wainwright to say, "The fundamental motivation of Christian exegesis and hermeneutics should be doxological." For while no one would wish to deny that the motivation for seeking the truth of divine revelation is to give God the glory and to praise him in worship, the authority upon which saving faith rests is not dependent upon the motivation of the one who hears the Word of God, but upon the truth of God revealed in that Word.

Nor is it enough for Thielicke to say that "truth in person" cannot be argued, but only "told" in narrative form (III, p. 363). For hermeneutics involves not only the responsibility to "tell the truth," but to understand the truth of divine revelation in such a way that Christian doctrine, Christian proclamation, and Christian ethics meaningfully interpret the truth and will of God at all times and in all places.

Nor can Torrance be permitted to stop short with his assertion that the Holy Spirit is the "presence of the transcendent Being of God," opening us up to the eternal truth of the divine Word as witnessed to in Holy Scripture (p. 175). For the purpose of divine revelation is not only that we, through Jesus Christ, are brought "into the truth," but also that the truth should "be in us" in thought, word and deed. For to be in the truth in a biblical sense is faithfully to be deciding for the truth in concrete situations.

Let me put it this way. If hermeneutics involves ascertaining the meaning of the Word of God as written Scripture, does the hermeneutical function of the living, personal Word of God (Jesus Christ in his mode of being present through Holy Spirit), include, among other elements, the syntactical structure of the inspired words? If the answer is yes, as I assume it must be for these theologians, then does not the concept of the authority of Scripture as divine revelation mean something quite different from that which a more rationalist orthodoxy has meant by it? And if the authority of the Word of God is now interpreted to mean a responsibility to order one's thought, behavior and practice in accordance with the present and coming Lord Jesus Christ, will not hermeneutics need criteria to make that decision for the truth which goes beyond (but does not forsake) grammatico-historical exegesis?

Is doxology such a criterion? If, as Wainwright suggests, doxology is understood as a liturgical expression of a living community of faith, then it might be thought of as a "hermeneutical continuum" (p. 175). This is an attractive alternative to a hermeneutic which excludes by definition the presence of the one who said, "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6).

Evangelical theology, which has as one of its distinctives the resurrection of Christ and the continuing presence of Christ in a personal relationship of faith and experience, should think very carefully before ruling out the real presence of Christ from the hermeneutical task. And if such theologians as Wainwright, Thielicke and Torrance are pointing the way toward the development of criteria by which the authority of Christ as his own interpreter of Scripture may be understood, this would seem to set before us an agenda for continued dialogue. If the Apostle Paul, who did not hesitate to speak with the authority of Christ himself, refused to rule out as a hermeneutical criterion the eschatological reality of the "real presence" of Christ (I Cor. 4:5), we who believe in that second coming as more than an abstract truth might well pay heed to his admonition.

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