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THE CONCEPT OF "TRUTH" IN THE GOSPEL  
ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Exegetical Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Divinity

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by

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June 1956

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

It is well known that the Christian religion offers an answer to the age-old question, "What is truth?" Perhaps it is not so well known that the answer which it gives does not have to be verbalized in such a way that "truth" seems to be nothing more than an organized assemblage of highly abstract "concepts." St. John managed to speak of the ultimate Truth of which Christianity speaks in such a manner that it is seen to be, as in fact it is, concrete, historical, and even personal, when he identified Truth with Jesus. Thus he also showed that this Truth is absolute, and not relative. Jesus is the Truth for all time, for all persons who know what Truth is.

The first goal of the writer in making this study has been to grow in an understanding of what it really means to identify the Truth in its most final sense with Jesus. For if He is recognized as the Truth, "truth" is seen to be far more than a philosophical premise or a satisfaction of intellectual curiosity. And the communication of the Truth which determines the Christian's life is seen to be quite different from a simply verbal or rational process, and much more than the results of man's own efforts to determine the nature of ultimate Reality. It is God's own Revelation of Himself to men in the Man Christ Jesus. To accept Jesus as the Truth

is to believe that God is the Truth, and that He has revealed Himself to man in Jesus as the Creator and Savior. The work of the Spirit of Truth is also recognized as being the task of creating a relationship between men and God, not just of "convincing" men that a proposition is "true."

This means also that the Truth of which St. John has written in this Gospel is quite different from the concepts of "truth" which are described by the major philosophic theories of truth. The correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic theories of truth have at least this much in common, that "truth" is defined by them in terms of what man can discover or reason out for himself. They define "truth" in terms of man's senses, man's logic, or man's practical needs. But according to St. John God must reveal Himself to man in Christ Jesus, or men can never know the ultimate Truth; for God is the Truth, and man can never know God except through the knowledge of Himself which He gives through Jesus and the Spirit of Truth.

This Truth is never simply academic or irrelevant to life; it is life for men. For it is only by coming to know God in Jesus that men receive eternal life. To know God as the Truth is to have salvation in its fullest sense. This name, "the Truth," as St. John applies it to Jesus, is one of several names which he uses to describe Jesus as the Savior. So this paper is also a partial study of the soteriological implications of this name as it is applied to Jesus.

This study involves some consideration of every use of ἡ ἀληθεία in this Gospel because in almost every instance of its use, it is probably a name for Jesus or God.

The study begins with a review of the uses of אֱלֹהִים in the Old Testament, and of ἀληθεία in Greek usage and in the non-Johannine writings of the New Testament. The opinions of various scholars regarding the basic meaning of ἀληθεία in the Gospel of John are then reviewed. The passages in the Gospel itself are grouped and studied in their contexts to discover what suggestions the use of the word in the Gospel might give to help determine its meaning. One chapter is devoted to a study of the use of ἀληθείς and ἀληθινός.

At least four studies could be very significant for a more intensive study of the meaning of ἀληθεία in this Gospel than has been made here. One would be a study of the preposition ἐν, especially where it speaks of a relationship of men to God or the Spirit or the Truth. Another would be a study of μαρτυρία, especially as a testimony to the Truth. Still another would be a study of the use of λόγος as a name for Jesus; for this paper has suggested that in some cases where ἀληθεία and λόγος are used in the same context, they are probably both names for Him. Finally, a more intensive study of the use of ἀληθεία in the epistles of St. John would be significant.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE MEANING OF "TRUTH" IN GREEK AND HEBREW USAGE

#### The Old Testament Concept of אמת

The Hebrew word for "truth" is אמת. To understand the extent to which the concept of truth in the Gospel of John may have been based on Hebrew thought, we need to study the use of אמת in the Old Testament.

It is used in a sense very like that of the English word "true" when it describes an event as having actually happened (Dt. 22:20) or a report as being true (I Kings 10:6; II Chron. 9:5). So it is used to say that a vision of Daniel actually happened and was unquestionably valid (Dan. 10:1); and in Genesis 24:48 Abraham's servant affirms by it that God had led him on "the right way" to find Rebekah for Isaac.<sup>1</sup>

But these passages do not clearly reflect the basic meaning of this word. So Ernst Percy warns that it would probably be a misunderstanding of the meaning of אמת to assume that it always means true "in an objective sense"

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<sup>1</sup>Gottfried Quell, "אמת," Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, herausgegeben von Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, 1933), I, 234. Hereafter Kittel's edition will be referred to as Theologisches Wörterbuch.

wherever it describes something besides a person.<sup>2</sup> The basic meaning of  $\text{קָנָן}$  is "Festsein"--to be fixed, immovable, constant. It quite generally signifies not only "das faktische Bestehen und Durchhalten," but also the "Charakter dessen, was bestehen soll, das Geltende, das Anerkannte und Anerkennung Fordernde." Accordingly, when it is used to speak of persons, it is translated as "Zuverlässigkeit," "Aufrichtigkeit," "Treue"--dependability, faithfulness, or truthfulness, in a moral sense (Ex. 18:21; Neh. 7:2; I Sam. 12:24).<sup>3</sup> So C. H. Dodd says that in Jeremiah 2:21  $\text{קָנָן}$  is to be translated as "trustworthy . . . a plant which can be trusted to produce fruit after its kind."<sup>4</sup>

An  $\text{אִישׁ קָנָן}$  is therefore a man of truthfulness ("Wahrhaftigkeit"), of dependable character. Thus  $\text{אִישׁ קָנָן}$  is very closely related to  $\text{אִישׁ אֱמֻנָה}$ , and is sometimes translated in the Septuagint by  $\text{πίστις}$ .<sup>5</sup> It is also translated by  $\text{δικαιοσύνη}$  and other similar words in some passages.<sup>6</sup> Ezekiel 18:8 speaks of "true justice" which the righteous man exercises "between man and man."

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<sup>2</sup>Ernst Percy, Untersuchungen Ueber den Ursprung der Johanneischen Theologie (Lund: Hakan Ohlssons Buchdruckerei, 1939), p. 106.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>4</sup>C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), p. 139.

<sup>5</sup>Quell, Theologisches Wörterbuch, p. 233.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 239.

According to Hosea 4:1, "faithfulness" had disappeared from the land with kindness and the knowledge of God. Psalm 15:2 says that he will dwell on the Lord's holy mountain "who walks blamelessly, and does what is right, and speaks truth from his heart."

But אמת is not a quality, as color or the Greek concept of "virtue."<sup>7</sup> It is rather a fulfillment of valid expectations. So whenever the Old Testament speaks of the "truth of God" we are to understand "dasz er erfüllt, was man von ihm als Gott, weil er Gott ist, erwartet, dasz er sich als mächtig, gütig, gerecht erweist."<sup>8</sup>

The saints of the Old Testament were to take great comfort and assurance from this faithfulness of God. So in Exodus 35:6 God tells Moses that He is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." Deuteronomy 7:9 describes Him as "the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love Him to a thousand generations." According to Psalm 146:6, "He keeps faith forever."

Also "the works of His hands" are "faithful and just" and "all His precepts are trustworthy" (Ps. 11:7). So His Word is true for man and a source of the recognition of truth (II Sam. 7:28; Neh. 9:13; Ps. 19:10; Ps. 119:160).

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<sup>7</sup>Friedrich Gogarten, "Die Christliche Wahrheit," in Festschrift Rudolph Bultmann (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1939), p. 84.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

Gottfried Quell tells us that  $\aleph \aleph \aleph$  often speaks of the sphere of right, of what corresponds to divine and human order, and so is to be regarded as a description of the correct norm for behavior ("Normalzustand"). In this sense it is near in sense to  $\aleph \aleph \aleph$ ,  $\aleph \aleph \aleph$ ,  $\aleph \aleph \aleph$ , and other similar words. "Singemasz darf  $\aleph \aleph \aleph$  dann ganz allgemein mit Wahrheit oder als Normbegriff auch mit Wahrhaftigkeit ubersetzt werden."<sup>9</sup>

Quell has also suggested that in Daniel 8:12, "truth was cast down to the ground,"  $\aleph \aleph \aleph$  stands for the absolute truth of the Judaic religion.<sup>10</sup> But Ernst Percy concludes that this view is incorrect. The Septuagint translates  $\aleph \aleph \aleph$  as  $\delta \iota \kappa \alpha \iota \sigma \acute{\upsilon} \nu \eta$  in this passage. The designation of the Christian message as the truth is therefore probably based on the Greek way of thinking and speaking, and not on any use of  $\aleph \aleph \aleph$ .<sup>11</sup>

Quell also suggests that when  $\aleph \aleph \aleph$  is used to describe the Word of God in the mouth of the prophets, it means "wirklich und unleugbar vorhanden und darum zugleich wirkungsmächtig."<sup>12</sup> So he translates from Jeremiah 23:28, "bei welchem mein Wort ist, redet mein Wort als  $\aleph \aleph \aleph$ ," and comments, "dh als Tatsache, die sich als solche durch

<sup>9</sup>Quell, Theologisches Wörterbuch, p. 235.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>11</sup>Percy, op. cit., pp. 110-112.

<sup>12</sup>Quell, Theologisches Wörterbuch, p. 234.

Wirkung ausweist, nicht als 'Traum.'<sup>13</sup> Also Nehemiah 9:13 is interpreted in this manner, "Gesetze, welche Wahrheit zur Geltung bringen und selbst Wahrheit sind."<sup>14</sup> This interpretation of these passages can of course be challenged. The translation of Jeremiah 23:28 in the Revised Standard Version, "let him who has my word speak my word faithfully," seems to be simpler and more probable than Quell's interpretation. So also in Nehemiah 9:13 "true laws" may mean only laws which are trustworthy and good as God is.

The word  $\aleph \text{ } \aleph \text{ } \aleph$ , then, may signify the truth of an event or a report, the faithfulness or dependability of God or man or a thing, a correct norm for human behavior. Its basic meaning is faithfulness or dependability, and it is most significant and meaningful when it is used to describe the faithfulness of God or His Word or work. It probably is not used to speak of the Judaic religion as the truth; and it would be hard to show that it means any more than "faithful" also when it is used to describe the Word of God given by the prophets.

Gerhard Kittel gives examples to show that the Rabbinic usage of the word  $\aleph \text{ } \aleph \text{ } \aleph$  did not differ from that of the Old Testament Scriptures.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 237.

<sup>15</sup>Gerhard Kittel, Theologisches Wörterbuch, pp. 237-38.

## The Greek Concept of ἀλήθεια

The noun ἀλήθεια is derived from the verb λανθάνω with the negating prefix ἀ. By its derivation, then, it refers first of all to that which is unhidden.<sup>16</sup>

In Homer, ἀλήθεια is the opposite of a lie. Also Attic Greek used it in this sense, as in the phrase εἰπεῖν τὴν ἀλήθειαν. But after Homer, it was also used to describe reality as the opposite of a mere appearance; so it could be used in the adverbial construction τῇ ἀληθείᾳ "in very truth." It could be used to describe a real war as distinct from an exercise or parade, or a true event as the realization of a dream or omen. It could even be personified or used as the name of a symbol of truth, a jewel worn by an Egyptian high-priest. It was used also to describe the truthfulness or sincerity of persons.<sup>17</sup>

The verb, ἀληθεύω, means first of all to speak the truth. But in the middle voice it may mean to be true, and in the passive voice it means to come true, to be fulfilled. This verb is also used to describe the act by which reasoners come to truth. The passive ὁ λόγος ἀληθεύεται means "the saying is in accord with

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<sup>16</sup>Kenneth S. Wuest, Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament for the English Reader (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1945), p. 86.

<sup>17</sup>Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, "ἀλήθεια," Greek-English Lexicon, revised by Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1953).

truth."<sup>18</sup>

The adjective, ἀληθής, refers to that which is true, real, opposite to the false or only apparent. It is used of persons to describe their truthfulness or honesty, or of oracles to say that they are true or unerring. It describes events as true or real, as coming to fulfillment, realizing themselves.<sup>19</sup>

The other adjective, ἀληθινός, is used to describe persons as truthful or trustworthy, and things as real or genuine. So Aristotle used it to describe real objects, as opposed to those which were only written about (τὰ γραμμένα). In astronomy, it describes the risings and settings which are real, as opposed to the ones which are only apparent (φαινόμενος). It is used also to show that a person has turned out to be a genuine man.<sup>20</sup>

Greek philosophy came to describe that which "really is" as ἀλήθεια, over against the "world phenomena." Words like "eternal" and "divine" referred to the "true" part of the dualistic cosmos, to which man must come to find σωτηρία. The ἀλήθεια described the eternal

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<sup>18</sup>Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, "ἀληθής," Greek-English Lexicon, revised by Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1953).

<sup>19</sup>Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, "ἀληθής," Greek-English Lexicon, revised by Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1953).

<sup>20</sup>Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, "ἀληθινός," Greek-English Lexicon, revised by Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1953).

substance (ουσία) and power (δύναμις). Finally, it became synonymous with all the attributes of the divine side of the cosmic dualism.<sup>21</sup>

### The Non-Johannine Use of ἀλήθεια in the New Testament

The New Testament uses ἀλήθεια as the Old Testament uses נֶאֱמָר, to describe truthfulness, faithfulness, uprightness on the part of God or men (Rom. 3:7; 15:8; II Cor. 7:14; I Cor. 5:8; Eph. 5:9). It is also used in the Greek sense, as the opposite of ψῦδος, both in a general sense (Eph. 4:25; Rom. 9:1) and in the sense of "the absolute truth" of the Christian message (Eph. 4:21; 1:13; Col. 1:5; II Tim. 2:15; James 1:18).<sup>22</sup> Possibly Romans 1:18 uses ἀλήθεια in the simple Greek sense, since it is so near to Romans 1:25, which is the outstanding example of this usage.<sup>23</sup>

The practical side of the Christian life, expressed in virtues as "righteousness" or "holiness" is also described as "the truth" in the New Testament (Rom. 1:18; 2:8; James 5:19; I Tim. 6:5; II Peter 2:2; II Thess. 2:10;

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<sup>21</sup>Rudolph Bultmann, Theologisches Wörterbuch, pp. 240-41.

<sup>22</sup>Walter Bauer, "ἀλήθεια," Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur (Vierte, völlig neu bearbeitete Auflage; Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1952).

<sup>23</sup>Bultmann, Theologisches Wörterbuch, p. 244.

I Peter 1:22).<sup>24</sup> According to Romans 2:8, "truth" is to be obeyed, and is the opposite of ἀδικία. In Ephesians 6:14, it is used as a parallel with δικαιοσύνη. In both of these passages the sense may be very near that of "truth" in John 3:21, which speaks of "doing the truth." So Bultmann says they speak of "Rechtschaffenheit."<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, the New Testament uses ἀληθής and ἀληθῶς to refer to that which is real or factual or dependable (Lk. 9:27; Matt. 14:33).<sup>26</sup> Bultmann gives "rechtschaffen" as the meaning of ἀληθής in Philippians 4:8; "aufrichtig," "ehrlich," for ἀληθῶς in Mark 12:14; and "wirklich" for ἀληθῶς in Mark 14:70.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Bauer, loc. cit.

<sup>25</sup>Bultmann, Theologisches Wörterbuch, p. 243.

<sup>26</sup>Walter Bauer, "ἀληθῶς," Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur (Vierte, völlig neu bearbeitete Auflage; Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1952).

<sup>27</sup>Bultmann, Theologisches Wörterbuch, pp. 248-49.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### A REVIEW OF SEVERAL SUGGESTED INTERPRETATIONS OF *ἀλήθεια* AS IT IS USED IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

#### Suggestions That *ἀλήθεια* is Closely Related to Hellenistic Platonic Thought

A considerable number of commentators on the Gospel according to St. John feels that *ἀλήθεια* expresses the Platonic concept of truth, and so receives its meaning primarily from Greek philosophy. So E. F. Scott writes:

The "truth" of anything is the spiritual reality of which it is the symbol. . . . It is assumed that over against the world of visible things there is a world of suprasensible realities, which has now for the first time been revealed in Christ.<sup>1</sup>

So, in his opinion, "light" is generally identical with "truth" in this Gospel, and "truth" is the equivalent of "abstract truth." When Jesus said "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," He meant to say that He is the Way to the knowledge of Truth, and therefore to Life; so it is highly important to "know" the Truth. However, Scott says, Hebrew thinking still forces John to think of God also as living and giving life of a spiritual kind to men.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>E. F. Scott, The Fourth Gospel, its Purpose and Theology (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), p. 253.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 254-57.

Walter Bauer argues that John represents two "worlds," both of which are referred to in John 3:12 with the words *ἐπίγεια* and *ἐπουράνια*. In this chapter of the Gospel, the wind on the earth is a creaturely picture of the Divine Spirit. Similarly, the Logos came from heaven to earth, and is a "true Light" on the earth (Jn. 1:9). But he is distinguished from the "unreeligen Abbilde" in that He is (having come from heaven) *ἀληθινός*, "also *πῶς* im eminenten, im urbildlichen Sinne, dazu alles, was sonst hell ist, leuchtet und strahlt, nur ein Gleichnis bildet." This is true also in John 4:23 and 15:1. In John 6:32, the Bread from heaven is called the *ἄριστος ἀληθινός*. (Cf. also Jn. 4:37; 7:28; 8:16; 17:3; 19:35.)<sup>3</sup>

Brooke Foss Westcott says *ἀληθινός* is that "in which is summed up all that is eternal and absolute in the changing phenomena of finite being."<sup>4</sup> So the "true Light" is the "archetypal Light" in comparison to which "all other lights are only partial rays or reflections." A "false light" is then "an imperfect, incomplete, transitory light."<sup>5</sup>

The term *ἀληθινός* describes that which is not only truly but also completely what it professes to be.

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<sup>3</sup>Walter Bauer, Evangelium des Johannes, bearbeitet von H. J. Holtzmann, in Hand-Commentar zum Neuen Testament (3 neubearbeitete Auflage; Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr, 1908), IV, 55.

<sup>4</sup>Brooke Foss Westcott, The Gospel according to St. John (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1954), II, 170.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., I, 13.

Thus it is used in connexion with those material objects under which Christ represents Himself. . . . the popular sense of the word "ideal"--fulfilling the complete conception--comes near" to this usage.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, J. H. Bernard insists that it is significant that St. John uses ἀληθινός instead of ἀληθής to describe the "true Light." The opposite of ἀληθινός is not necessarily false, but is "imperfect, shadowy, or unsubstantial"; so Christ is not the "true and only Light," but He is rather "the perfect Light" in comparison to which all other lights seem dim. This distinction between ἀληθινός and ἀληθής cannot be maintained in John 19:35, as 21:24 shows; but the meaning of "genuine" or "ideal" is to be pressed for ἀληθινός in 4:23, 6:32, 17:3, 8:16, and 15:1. This meaning occurs also in Luke 16:11, the only place where ἀληθινός is used in the synoptists.<sup>7</sup>

H. A. W. Meyer was obviously thinking of Plato's teaching when he reported that the φῶς ἀληθινός was "the true, genuine, archetypal Light, which corresponds to the idea--the idea of the light realized."<sup>8</sup> He felt that ἀληθής is not the same as ἀληθινός, but it "denotes the opposite of that which is merely apparent or so

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>7</sup>J. H. Bernard, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John, edited by A. H. McNeile, in the International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), I, 11.

<sup>8</sup>H. A. W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of John, in the Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (2nd edition; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1881-3), I, 79.

called, and therefore expresses the actual fact," as in I John 2:27 and Acts 12:9.<sup>9</sup>

C. H. Dodd indicates that the influence of Platonism on St. John's thinking may have been less direct than many writers seem to assume that it was:

I do not suggest that the Evangelist had direct acquaintance with the Platonic doctrine of Ideas; but there is ample evidence that in thoughtful religious circles at the time, and circles with which Johannine thought has demonstrable affinities, that doctrine had entered into the texture of thought. In any religious philosophy the conception of a *κόσμος* *ἄφ' ἑαυτῶν* in some form or other was assumed--the conception of a world of invisible realities of which the visible world is a copy.<sup>10</sup>

So when St. John speaks of the "true" Light or Bread or Vine, "a Platonist would readily understand him to be speaking of the eternal 'ideas' in contrast to their phenomenal representatives."<sup>11</sup>

One of the most unusual theories postulating a relationship between Platonic thought and Johannine thought is that set forth by Rudolph Bultmann. According to his theory, St. John's use of *ἰδέσθαι* is based on its usage in Hellenistic Gnostic Dualism. But St. John's thought differs from that of Gnostic Dualism in that *ἰδέσθαι* and *ἰδέσθαι* refer to "mythological form," not to cosmological form. So they are to be understood "nicht als Substanzen,

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 298.

<sup>10</sup>C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), pp. 139-40.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

sondern als echte Möglichkeiten menschlichen Daseins."<sup>12</sup> Following Bultmann's theory, Friedrich Gogarten explains that the Johannine concept of *ἀλήθεια* is derived from Hellenistic Dualism, with the important difference that the Johannine Dualism was anthropological, not cosmological. The world of God is the *ἀληθεία*; the world of men who have fallen from God is the *ψεύδος*.<sup>13</sup> So Bultmann adds that the conflict between the Divine Reality and the power which is against God is summed up in John 8:44, "He is a murderer from the beginning." Here it is stated indirectly that the *ἀληθεία* gives life, while everything else spreads death.<sup>14</sup>

All of the several pairs of concepts in the writings of St. John, then--light and darkness, truth and falsehood, freedom and bondage, life and death--are said to come from Gnostic dualism, but to receive their specific Johannine meaning when they are related to God as Creator. "The basic meaning of 'truth' in John is God's reality, which, since God is the Creator, is the only true reality."

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<sup>12</sup>Rudolph Bultmann, "*ἀλήθεια*," Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, herausgegeben von Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart; Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, 1933), I, 234. Hereafter Kittel's edition will be referred to as Theologisches Wörterbuch.

<sup>13</sup>Friedrich Gogarten, "Die Christliche Wahrheit," in Festschrift Rudolph Bultmann (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1949), p. 88.

<sup>14</sup>Bultmann, Theologisches Wörterbuch, p. 246.

So it is knowledge of His reality, not of that-which-is-in-general, which frees from sin. The freedom which comes from the knowledge of the truth is then more than a freedom from errors which are passed on by tradition and convention. The Spirit leads to this truth; and Jesus is the Truth.<sup>15</sup>

Jesus revealed this truth. When he spoke *Wahrheit*, this had the formal sense of speaking the truth, as the only correct belief; but at the same time it meant that he was bringing the Revelation ("Offenbarung") of God in words, as we see in John 5:33, 8:40, 45, 18:37.

Der Empfang der *Wahrheit* ist also weder durch rationale oder mysteriöse Belehrung, noch durch psychische Vorbereitung und Übung bedingt, sondern vollzieht sich im gehorsamen Glauben.

The Revelation of Truth is not a complex of "sentences" or concepts, nor is the the result of cosmological or soteriological speculation. It cannot be separated from the Person of Jesus and the events which happened in His history. So He says in John 14:6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."<sup>16</sup>

In fact, it is impossible to know this truth, or God's reality, except through Jesus as the "Offenbarer":

Wer dem Offenbarer nicht glaubt, leugnet Gott, auch wenn er etwa theoretisch das "Dasein" Gottes anerkennt.

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<sup>15</sup>Rudolph Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, translated by Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), II, 17-18.

<sup>16</sup>Bultmann, Theologisches Wörterbuch, pp. 246-47.

Denn Gott ist nicht als theoretisch konstatierbare Wesen, sondern nur als *Λόγος* für die Welt und den Menschen da.<sup>17</sup>

This meaning of *ἀληθεία* is also expressed by *ἀληθινός*. So, since *ἀληθεία* means "göttliche Wirklichkeit" and not just "Wirklichkeit," the *ὁὖς ἀληθινός* is "das göttliche Licht."<sup>18</sup>

#### Theories Advanced Asserting a Close Relationship Between St. John's Use of *ἀληθεία* and Palestinian Thought

Not every commentator feels that St. John looks to Hellenistic Platonic philosophy for the origins of the meaning of words like *ἀληθεία*. Hugo Odeberg, for example, is ready to relate St. John's thought to Gnostic philosophy, or Mandaëism, but he insists that this philosophy itself is not originally Hellenistic, but Palestinian, in origin. He finds that early Jewish mysticism, while it uses the language and general phraseology of Rabbinical Judaism, nevertheless shows "a strangely close correspondence" to "a certain strata of the Mandaean literature." This correspondence "was not restricted to similarity of ideas but included identity of technical terms and expressions."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Rudolph Buttmann, Das Evangelium des Johannes, in Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament 12 Auflage; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1952), p. 118.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>19</sup>Hugo Odeberg, The Fourth Gospel (Uppsala Och Stockholm; Almqvist & Wiksell's Boktryckeri-A.-B., 1929), p. 5.

Similarly, he reports that the Fourth Gospel uses "passages, sentence and words revealing a terminology all but identical with the Rabbinic, " but

on the other hand the import of the Jn-ine utterances thus expressed in the "Rabbinic" terminology puts us in touch with a sphere of conceptions and ideas wholly removed from Rabbinic ones.<sup>20</sup>

In the body of his work he draws a parallel between this early Jewish mysticism and the Fourth Gospel. In effect, he says that the Gospel of John is closely related to Jewish mysticism, which often sides with Mandaeism as against Rabbinism. Indeed, Mandaeism itself may have had, and, according to Odeberg, probably did have, a Palestinian or near-Palestinian origin.<sup>21</sup>

There are few passages in Odeberg's commentary which deal directly with the idea of "truth" in the Fourth Gospel. But those which do speak of it show, as one might well expect from what has just been said, that it is closely related to mystical thought. So he writes:

The worship in spirit and truth is founded upon the idea: God is spirit. With this the nature of God has been identified with the nature of the true, the spiritual essence of man. This is a cardinal conception of all mystic thought, perhaps nowhere expressed so simply and clearly as in Jn. 4. The idea can be traced in some form or other in Rabbinic Jewish mystical dicta, in Mandaean literature, in Hermetism, in Gnosticism.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 172.

In another passage, he comments on the statement of Jesus, "you are in truth my disciples" (Jn. 8:31-32):

i. e., not connected with me in the Jewish, external, manner of connexion between teacher and disciple but in the internal manner. i. e. as spiritual beings sharing J's life and very existence. ~~It is~~ might be treated as equivalent to "in the spiritual world," "spiritually." "And you will know the truth--i. e., the spiritual reality--and the spiritual reality will make you free."<sup>23</sup>

In connection with the idea of relating St. John's thought to Palestinian thought and culture, we might refer to the effort to relate also the idea of the Logos to Palestinian thought. In this connection, W. F. Howard tells us:

whereas at one time it was usual to trace the leading ideas of the Prologue to Greek philosophy, it is now more commonly recognized that we do not need to go beyond Judaism for the idea of the Logos.<sup>24</sup>

One author who has marshalled much of the evidence for a Jewish origin of the idea of the Logos is Rendall Harris, in The Origin of the Prologue to St. John's Gospel, 1917.<sup>25</sup>

Still another factor which draws attention to the fact that the Gospel as a whole, and so all of its concepts, may be primarily Palestinian in its origin is that stated by Howard:

Nothing has ever really discounted the weighty evidence of the Gospel itself that the writer understood the

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid, p. 296.

<sup>24</sup>Wilbert Francis Howard, The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism and Interpretation, revised by C. K. Barrett (London: The Epworth Press, 1955), p. 11.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 41

topography, the manners and customs, the religious ideas and expectations of Palestine in our Lord's own time.<sup>26</sup>

But probably more significant than any of these arguments for the Palestinian origin of the Gospel and its contents are those evidences which are being produced by what Howard calls "careful linguistic inquiry."

Here, too, the weight of the evidence seems to show that, though the writer of this Gospel wrote with simple ease in a style of the Greek Koine that bears many resemblances to modern vernacular Greek, there are yet many idioms which suggest that he thought in Aramaic, and fell quite readily into those vernacular idioms which are most closely parallel to the Aramaic usage.<sup>27</sup>

C. F. Burney, in The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel, 1922, even proposed on the basis of his linguistic studies that this Gospel was written in Aramaic. Howard feels that Burney probably went too far in this assertion, but he agrees, "That the Fourth Evangelist thought in Aramaic as his mother tongue may be regarded as established."<sup>28</sup>

A very important authority in this type of study is Adolph Schlatter, whose work has attempted "to show from second-century rabbinic commentaries on the Old Testament how the phraseology of the Fourth Gospel can be illustrated as thoroughly Jewish."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 41

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

We might well expect, then, that there should be a number of scholars who dispute also the idea that *ἀληθινός* or *ἀληθινός* refer to the "true, or ideal, world" of the Platonic philosophers.

One such scholar is Fr. Büchsel, according to Heckel, who writes:

Den platonisierenden Auslegern ihren Stils hält Büchsel mit Recht entgegen, dass *alethinos* nicht urbildlich heisst. Die wahrhaftigen Anbeter sind nicht "die urbildlichen Anbeter", so wenig wie der wahrhaftige Zeuge der urbildliche Zeuge est. "Ebenso unhaltbar ist die Vertauschung mit himmlisch." Fr. Buchsel, Der Begriff der Wahrheit, S. 39.<sup>30</sup>

Ernst Percy is also quite explicit and telling in stating his opposition to the idea that St. John was thinking of Platonism when he spoke of "truth":

Das einzige, was dem johanneischen und dem Gnostischen Wahrheitsbegriff gemeinsam ist, ist dies, dass es sich in beiden Fällen um eine Offenbarung handelt. Das Entscheidende ist dabei aber, was geoffenbart wird und wie die Offenbarung gegeben wird.<sup>31</sup>

According to this, then the difference between the use of *ἀληθινός* in the Fourth Gospel and in the rest of the New Testament has nothing to do with Greek philosophy or with Palestinian mysticism. Instead, the difference lies in this, that St. John stresses the character of truth as truth. Truth is not only "the objective truth"

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<sup>30</sup>Bischof D. Heckel, Wahrheit im Johannesevangelium und Bei Luther (Helsinki: Kommissionsverlag Akateeminen Kirjakauppa, 1944), p. 221.

<sup>31</sup>Ernst Percy, Untersuchungen Ueber den Ursprung der Johanneischen Theologie (Lund: Hakan Ohlssons Buchdruckerei, 1939), p. 118.

or the Christian message, "sondern in ihrem Charakter als Wahrheit appelliert sie gerade an das Gewissen des Menschen, bzw. stösst sie die Menschen ab."<sup>32</sup>

R. H. Strachan states that in this Gospel the classical Greek conception of  $\alpha\lambda\theta\eta\lambda\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\alpha$  as ultimate reality is fused with the Hebrew idea of  $\pi\iota\pi\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau$ , and he maintains that "in all the occurrences of the word in the Johannine writings, however, the Hebrew idea is the governing one."<sup>33</sup> The study of the use of  $\alpha\lambda\theta\eta\lambda\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\alpha$  in the Gospel which is summarized in the next chapter of this paper indicates that Strachan's view is probably very correct.

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>33</sup>R. H. Strachan, The Fourth Gospel, its Significance and Environment (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1941), p. 142.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE BRINGER OF TRUTH

The phrase "full of grace and truth" in John 1:14 is probably meant to describe the glory ( $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$ ) of the Logos become flesh. Grammatically, it is also possible that the phrase modifies  $\acute{o}$   $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  or even  $\mu\omicron\nu\omicron\gamma\epsilon\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ . But it is probably best to regard  $\pi\lambda\eta\rho\acute{\eta}\varsigma$  as an accusative adjective modifying  $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha\nu$ , so that the phrase "full of grace and truth" describes the glory of the Logos.<sup>1</sup>

This means that  $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$  is the key word in this sentence, and that we are told three things about it: it is the glory of the Logos become flesh; it is the glory which the only Son has received from the Father; it is full of grace and truth. Thus there is a close connection between the glory which Jesus manifested to His disciples (Jn. 2:11) and the glory of God, for He received His glory from the Father.

It is significant that this glory is described as being "full of grace and truth"; for this is very nearly the same way the glory of God is described which He manifested to the children of Israel by delivering them from Egypt and leading them in the wilderness. The Old

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<sup>1</sup>A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1932), V, 14.

Testament praises God as being  $\pi\theta\lambda\acute{\iota}\tau\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$   $\tau\omicron\upsilon\pi\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$ , "full of mercy and faithfulness." The Septuagint translates the noun terms of this phrase with  $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$   $\kappa\alpha\iota$   $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\theta\acute{\iota}\nu\eta\tau\alpha$ , but  $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$  is very near in sense to  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$ , and is in fact the Old Testament word which is the basis of  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$  in the New Testament.

So Hoskyns writes that "grace and truth" define the glory of God, which responds with an act of mercy to the disobedience of the people of God and to their oppression by the Gentiles; but Christian "grace" is substituted for "mercy," and "truth" has become far more than "steadfastness."<sup>2</sup> Barrett also tells us that  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$   $\kappa\alpha\iota$   $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\theta\acute{\iota}\nu\eta\tau\alpha$  recall  $\pi\theta\lambda\acute{\iota}\tau\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$   $\tau\omicron\upsilon\pi\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$ , God's loyalty and faithfulness to His covenant and His covenant people.<sup>3</sup>

Thus we are led to expect that the first meaning of  $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\theta\acute{\iota}\nu\eta\tau\alpha$  in this Gospel must convey the idea of God's faithfulness. To say that the Logos or His glory is full of  $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\theta\acute{\iota}\nu\eta\tau\alpha$  is to say that He is full of the same faithfulness which was characteristic of God or His glory in the Old Testament. To say that "grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (Jn. 1:17) is to say that these characteristics of God which the Old Testament described as "mercy and faithfulness" were present in Jesus Christ

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<sup>2</sup>Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel, edited by Francis Noel Davey (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1947), pp. 150-51.

<sup>3</sup>C. K. Barrett, The Gospel according to St. John (London: S. P. C. K., 1955), p. 139.

and came into history in His Person. The action by which God saves His people came in Him.

But, as Hoskyns has remarked, this "truth" has become more than simply God's "steadfastness." Our task here is to discover in just what sense it is more.

John 1:16 says that "we have all received from His fullness, *καὶ χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος.*" Here it seems that the one word *χάριν* is intended to cover what *χάρις* *καὶ ἀλήθεια* together signify in verses fourteen and seventeen. For verse seventeen begins an explanation of the statement made in verse sixteen and uses both words. We have received from His fullness "for . . . grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." Bultmann explains that *χάρις* *καὶ ἀλήθεια* form a hendiadys; *χάρις* has the sense of "schenkende Gnade" or of "gnädiges Geschenk"--the grace which gives, or the gift which is motivated by grace. The *ἀλήθεια* is included in the *χάρις* as the "göttliches Geschenk"; so *ἀλήθεια* is the gift which men receive from Jesus as the "Offenbarer," the Revealer.<sup>4</sup>

This does not say that *χάρις* and *ἀλήθεια* are synonymous. It only says that, whatever *ἀλήθεια* is, it is a gift motivated by God's grace. Verse eighteen, which continues the explanation of verse sixteen, comes closest

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<sup>4</sup>Rudolph Bultmann, Das Evangelium des Johannes, in Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (12 Auflage; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1952), pp. 49-50.

to telling us just what this gracious gift of truth is besides being the faithfulness of God which verse fourteen suggested. Here we read that "No one has ever seen God; the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known." This is the verse which must determine the final meaning of *ἀληθεία* in John 1:14,17.

Here the commentators go their several ways in trying to define just what the Logos did when He revealed God to men. Barrett says that in John 1:17 and probably also in verse fourteen, *ἀληθεία*

means the Christian revelation brought by and revealed in Jesus . . . . This revelation arises out of the faithfulness of God to his own character, and to his promises, of which it is the fulfillment.<sup>5</sup>

Percy says that in John 1:14, 17, *ἀληθεία* means "die volle Gottesoffenbarung"--the complete revelation of God. This he regards as being something more than the Christian message.<sup>6</sup>

Neither of these statements really says what the revelation is, except that it was brought in Jesus. Bauer tries to define this revelation and the *ἀληθεία* by limiting its meaning to the correct knowledge of God. So he says *ἀληθεία*

bedeutet nicht subjektive Wahrhaftigkeit, sondern objektive Wahrheit, adäquate Gotteserkenntnis, eine

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<sup>5</sup>Barrett, op. cit., p. 139.

<sup>6</sup>Ernst Percy, Untersuchungen Ueber den Ursprung der Johanneischen Theologie (Lund: Hakan Ohlssons Buchdruckerei, 1939), p. 119.

Weltanschauung, die gegenüber irreführendem Schein daran festhält, dass nur, was von Gott stammt, zu ihm gehört, in ihm zurückkehrt, wesenhafte Existenz hat, also auch die Menschen aus der unteren Welt in die obere zurückkehren müssen, und nicht dem Tode zu verfallen.<sup>7</sup>

Bultmann is consistent in defining *ἀληθεία* throughout this Gospel as the Reality of God; but to understand just what this means, one must understand the way in which he draws a rather unique parallel between the thought and language of John and that of the Neoplatonists. He comments on John 4:23:

die *ἀληθεία* ist die in Jesus offenbare Wirklichkeit Gottes, das "Wort" Gottes, durch das die Glaubenden "geheiligt", d.h. aus der weltlichen Existenz entnommen und in die eschatologische Existenz versetzt sind.<sup>8</sup>

Whatever else one might have to say in favor of Bultmann's interpretation of John's Gospel or against it, it must be granted that he preserves one emphasis that is very pronounced in this Gospel, that the gift of *ἀληθεία* is the gift of salvation and life. This is important for any real understanding of the use of this word in the Prologue.

Hoskyns directs our attention to the miracles and teaching of Jesus, and especially to His crucifixion, to find the meaning of "grace and truth," saying that

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<sup>7</sup>Walter Bauer, Evangelium des Johannes, bearbeitet von H. J. Holtzmann, in Hand-Commentar zum Neuen Testament (3 neubearbeitete Auflage; Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr, 1908), IV, 46.

<sup>8</sup>Bultmann, op. cit., p. 140.

these words sum up the whole content of the subsequent narrative.<sup>9</sup> This may seem to be an evasion of the question as to what truth means here, but actually it is probably the best way to answer this question. For it is precisely through the teachings and the miracles and the crucifixion of Jesus that He made the Father known--and makes Him known. So John has written this record of the words and works and death of Jesus just so that all who read it might come to know the Truth which came through Him; and it would be useless to try to define ἀλήθεια as it is used in this Gospel apart from the work and the Person of Jesus.

The Revelation of God which is the Truth is not a complex of propositions or concepts; nor is it the result of cosmological or soteriological speculation. It cannot be separated from Jesus and His history.<sup>10</sup> Nor can it be separated from the gift of salvation in Him. In John 14:6-9, Jesus calls Himself "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" and explains:

No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known me, you would have known My Father also; henceforth you know Him and have seen Him. . . . He who has seen me has seen the Father. . . . Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me?

<sup>9</sup>Hoskyns, op. cit., pp. 150-51.

<sup>10</sup>Rudolph Bultmann, "ἀλήθεια," in Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, herausgegeben von Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, 1933), p. 247.

He is the One through Whom alone men can come to know God; and to know God and Jesus, Whom God has sent, is to have eternal life (Jn. 17:3).

But this does not just say that Jesus brought the Truth about God to men. It says that He is the Truth. As Heckel states it, "Jesus ist nicht bloss Organ der Offenbarung, 'Offenbarungsträger,' sondern er ist selbst der Inhalt der Offenbarung."<sup>11</sup> He is the Word of God, God's own Revelation of Himself. He is the "book" which men must read and know to know the Truth.

It is probably not going too far to say that John has made this identification of Jesus and the Truth already in the Prologue. He is remarkably consistent in His use of words, and he chooses his words carefully. So in verse seventeen of the Prologue, we learn that the Law was given (ἐδόθη) through Moses, but the grace and the truth came into being (ἐγένετο) through Jesus Christ. The word which is used here is the same word which is used to say in the opening verses of the Gospel that all things came into being through the Logos, and that nothing which was created came into being without Him. Without Jesus there is no grace and truth; there might have been a Law without Moses. Hoskyns writes:

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<sup>11</sup>D. Heckel, Wahrheit im Johannesevangelium und bei Luther (Helsinki: Kommissionsverlag Akateeminen Kirjakauppa, 1944), p. 28.

The Law was a gift separable from the agent by whom it was given. Grace and truth, however, came not only by but in Jesus Christ, who is the truth embodied.<sup>12</sup>

And John must have been thinking of the gift of salvation for men when he wrote of grace and truth in the Prologue. For this is the New Testament counterpart of the "mercy and faithfulness" of God in the Old Testament; it is God manifesting His eternal glory, His saving action toward men in the Person of the Logos. It is the revelation of the Father, and those who know Him in Jesus have eternal life. There is even the contrast between the Law and the gift of grace and truth. Schlatter makes much of this contrast:

Dem Gebot, das dem Menschen zeigt, wie er Gott gehorche und das ihm zugeteilte Werk vollbringe, tritt die gebende und vergebende Güte gegenüber und diese heilt die Not, die dadurch entsteht, dass das Gesetz den Menschen zwar zum frommen Handeln bewegt, aber seinen natürlichen Zustand nicht ändert. Daher entsteht durch das Gesetz nicht die Wahrheit, sondern das zwiespältige Wesen, bei dem der Mensch seine inwendige Gottlosigkeit und Eigensucht durch sein gottesdienstliches Verhalten verdeckt. Dadurch aber, dass durch Jesus die Gnade die das Leben des Menschen bestimmende Macht wird, endet die Notwendigkeit des religiösen Scheins, und die Wahrheit kommt zustande. Damit hat Joh. τὸ ἀσυνάτου τοῦ νόμου, Rom. 8,3, ebenso definiert, wie es Paulus tat.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Hoskyns, op. cit., p. 152.

<sup>13</sup>D. A. Schlatter, Der Evangelist Johannes, wie er spricht, denkt, und glaubt (Stuttgart: Calwer Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1930), p. 33.

Luther also finds this meaning (which becomes most clear in John 3:21) already in the Prologue. Heckel has this selection from one of Luther's sermons:

aber durch Christus ist etwas mehr geschehen. Der kommt und füllt den ledigen Beutel und die leere Hand und bringt, was das Gesetz lehrt und von uns erfordert. Er bringt Gnade und Wahrheit. Durch Christus ist uns gebracht, dass ich nun erfülle das Gesetz und halte das erste, zweite und dritte Gebot, und erlange also ein Vertrauen und Glauben an Gott, dass er mein Vater ist, und fange an, seinen Namen zu preisen mit fröhlichem Herzen und heilige seinen Namen. (W. A. 46, 661)<sup>14</sup>

Thus the gift of ἀλήθεια which is motivated by grace is also the gift of grace in its deepest theological sense. For it is the gift of God's own Son; it is the gift of eternal life in Him, which the Law cannot bring. So Heckel writes:

Auch wenn später das Wort Gnade nicht genannt wird, so ist doch die Sache immer gegenwärtig. Denn nur in der Gnade haben wir Wahrheit.<sup>15</sup>

So we learn from I John 1:9 that "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just (πίστος καὶ δίκαιος) to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This is the "grace and truth" which was the glory of the Logos, which existed in Him, which is the Revelation of God, which is Jesus Himself.

Thus we may say that ἀλήθεια has two sides to it. When it is used to describe the glory of God or of the Logos, it is an "attribute" of God, His faithfulness.

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<sup>14</sup>Heckel, op. cit., p. 155.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 34.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE WORD OF TRUTH

#### Truth as a Verbal Communication to Men

Only two passages in this Gospel definitely speak of a message which has been verbally communicated to men as "the Truth." These passages are John 8:31-47 and John 16:7.

In John 8:31-47, we are told that those who believed in Jesus would come to know the Truth if they continued in His Word, and His Word is clearly the teaching which He has given them concerning Himself. He says also that He had told them the truth which He had heard from God (Jn. 8:40); and this truth is identified with "the words of God" (Jn. 8:46-47).

In John 16:7, Jesus tells His disciples, "I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away . . . ." It is probable that even here He is not simply emphasizing that what He was saying was true, and not false. What He was saying was more than just "true"; it was the Truth because He was here in the act of making God known to the disciples as He spoke of the coming of the Holy Spirit to them. The usual Johannine form of emphasizing the veracity of a statement is ἀμὲν ἀμὲν λέγω which occurs some twenty-five times in this Gospel.

### The Word of Truth Identified with Jesus

In fact it is hard to show, even on the basis of the passage in John 8:31-47, that the word *ἀλήθεια* ever means simply "the Gospel" in John as it does in other writings of the New Testament; although it is often interpreted in this way, especially in John 17:17. For John, Jesus is the Word of God; and He is the Truth. No disciple ever speaks the Truth in this Gospel; the disciples are witnesses to the Truth. Their testimony (*μαρτυρία*) may be described as being "true" (*ἀληθής*), but not as being *ἡ ἀλήθεια*. So John does not consider his record of the Gospel as being "the Truth," but as being his testimony to the Truth (Jn. 5:33; 21:24). This is true also in the Epistles of John. Even I John 2:21 speaks of "knowing" the Truth, not of "writing" it.

In the verses just preceding John 5:33, Jesus has spoken of His own testimony to Himself and of the fact that there is another who testifies of Him. Then He tells the Jews that they sent to John and he bore witness to the Truth, and continues with a very emphatic "but I [*ἐγὼ δὲ*] do not receive the testimony from a man," and claims God as His Witness. John's witness is not first of all, then, to the truthfulness of the message of Jesus, but to the Person of Jesus. Jesus' words are true because He is the Truth.

Although the passage in John 8:31-47 indicates most clearly that the Truth is something which Jesus had heard from God and spoken to men, it still identifies the Truth with the Son of God. So Jesus says in John 8:33 that the Truth would make the believers free; and in John 8:36 He says "If the Son shall make you free . . . ." He is speaking here of the freedom from sin which comes to men through Himself, not through any kind of "truth" which is distinct from Him (I Jn. 1:7; 2:1-2). Those who believe in Him and remain in His Word ( *λογος* ) come to know Him and to receive the freedom from sin by faith in Him. John 15:7 is parallel to this: "If you abide in me, and my words [*τὰ ῥήματα μου*] abide in you, ask whatever you will . . . ." The verses preceding this one are also significant:

I am the Vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in me, and I in him, he is cast forth as a branch and withers . . . (Jn. 15:5-6).

To remain in the Word of Jesus is to remain in Him, and to come to know Him as the Truth.

This would suggest that in John 17:17-19, and also in I John 1:8-10, the Word of God ( *λογος* ) and the Truth are Jesus. Thus Jesus is praying in John 17 that the Father will keep all who believe in Him from the evil in the world by keeping them in Him; and He says that He is keeping Himself apart from all evil that in Him they might be kept apart (John 17:19). Verses eleven and twelve

may be parallel to this, as Jesus prays to the Father there that He may "Keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one." In I John 1:8-10, the *ἡ ἀλήθεια* and the *λόγος αὐτοῦ* are to be in those who confess their sins; this can hardly mean anything less than Jesus Himself.

#### The Relation of the Believers to the Word of Truth

Even Jesus' words to Pilate (Jn. 18:37) give some indication that the *ἀλήθεια* must be something more than just a verbal message. If John's testimony is not just to a verbal message, but to Jesus, Jesus' witness is not just to the truth that He is a King. It is finally to Himself; but, more than this, it is to God. The statement to Pilate that "everyone who is of the Truth hears my voice" is parallel to the statement to the Jews that "He who is of God hears the words of God" (Jn. 8:47). Those who hear the words which Jesus received from God and spoke to men are vitally joined to God in Jesus.

So the Jews were told that they would not listen to the words of God because they were of the devil, and not "of God." The devil is a liar, and those who are of the devil are liars because they will have nothing to do with the words of God or with the Truth of God. Thus the devil is completely separated from God--not just from a message. God is the Truth, and those who reject Jesus are rejecting

Him. "Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ" (I Jn. 2:22)? The people are "of the devil" and not "of God" and they show this by rejecting the words of Jesus, and thus by rejecting God at the same time: "Because I tell you the truth, you do not believe me" (Jn. 8:45).

This is death for them. So the devil is called a "killer of men from the beginning" because he has been leading men away from God from the beginning. This death comes finally because they remained separate from Jesus:

If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you (Jn. 15:5-7).

Those who heard the words of Jesus, believed in Him, and remained in His Word came to know the Truth; so Jesus prays:

I have given them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them and know in truth <sup>[κἀληθεως]</sup> that I came from thee; and they have believed that thou didst send me (Jn. 17:8).

The words of Jesus are of tremendous importance, then. For it is through them that men come to know Him, and it is through this knowledge and faith in Him that they are to be freed from sin and death. But the freedom from sin, the state of being set apart from the world, the condition of being "of God" and not "of the devil"--these come only to those who hear and believe the words of Jesus and are thus brought into a vital relationship with Him. The disciples

are set apart from the world in Him; without Him they can do nothing; He is the Truth in which they stand. Those who know Him as the Christ are "of God" and "of the Truth." To be "of the Truth" is to be in the relationship with God in Christ which is eternal life.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE DOER OF THE TRUTH

One of the Johannine uses of ἀλάθειαν most difficult to interpret is that which we find in John 3:21. This passage speaks of those who "do the truth" (τοῦτων τὴν ἀλάθειαν). In other passages where ποιεῖν appears, the object of the verb is the result of the action which it describes (Jn. 5:27,29; 8:39; 10:37; I Jn. 2:29; 3:7). But the idea of "doing truth," even in this sense, is somewhat puzzling to at least most readers of this Gospel.

The Old Testament use of יָדָה שְׂדֵיקָה, to "do righteousness" or "act righteously," probably explains the origin of the phrase and gives a hint as to its meaning. But the question still remains: just what would this "righteousness" be if ἀλάθειαν here means what it appears to mean in the rest of this Gospel: So the commentators try to define τοῦτων τὴν ἀλάθειαν in terms of the meaning which they assign to ἀλάθειαν in general in John's Gospel.

Schlatter translates the phrase as "die Wahrheit machen," and interprets this as meaning "so handeln, dass Wahrheit entsteht im Gegensatz zur Verstellung und zum Schein . . . ."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>D. A. Schlatter, Der Evangelist Johannes, wie er spricht, denkt, und glaubt (Stuttgart: Calwer Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1930), p. 101.

Bauer makes the phrase speak of

die Harmonie des Handelns in seinem ganzen Umfange mit dem Gottesbewusstsein. "Wahrheit tun" heisst demnach: sich praktisch verhalten zu der Wahrheit, und zwar nicht bloss in diesem der jenem Falle, sondern so, dass die Wahrheit die bestimmende Macht des sittlichen Verhaltens wird.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, Percy would make it refer to a "Norm oder Gegenstand des Handelns," and says, "'Die Wahrheit tun' kann somit nichts anderes bedeuten als in seinem Handeln ganz mit der Wahrheit in Einverständnis zu stehen."<sup>3</sup>

Bultmann feels that the ἀληθεία is God's Reality, so that to "do the truth" would not mean "act righteously" but to engage in "ein echtes Handeln . . . das Bestand hat, und in diesem Sinn als ἐν δεύ̄ gesehenes bezeichnet wird."<sup>4</sup>

Hoskyns probably offers the best interpretation. He says that John makes a "theological distinction" here between works which are regarded as being complete in themselves, leaving no room for the righteousness of God, and those which are just the opposite--although they may be visibly identical. So he comments:

Those who regard their behavior as complete dare not come to the light lest their actions be discovered (A.V. mg. The Greek verb means first expose or lay

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<sup>2</sup>Walter Bauer, Evangelium des Johannes, bearbeitet von H. J. Holtzmann, in Hand-Commentar zum Neuen Testament (3 neubearbeitete Auflage; Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr, 1908), IV, 92.

<sup>3</sup>Ernst Percy, Untersuchungen Ueber den Ursprung der Johanneischen Theologie (Lund: Hakan Ohlssons Buchdruckerei, 1939), p. 119.

<sup>4</sup>Rudolph Bultmann, Das Evangelium des Johannes, in Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (12 Auflage; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1952), p. 114.

bare then, as in Matt xviii.15, reprove and convict); those on the other hand, whose actions have been wrought in God, that is to say, in such a manner as to require the action of God for their completion, apprehend the meaning of the mission of Jesus.

But even this does not make it clear that Jesus is here calling for faith in Himself, or faith that in Him we have eternal life. The Light which has come into the world, to which they come who do the truth, is the Son of God whom God sent into the world "that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." So Jesus says in verse eighteen: "He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God." After He has said this, He speaks of doing the truth and coming to the Light to show the works which are done in God.

But faith in Jesus as the Savior always involves a confession of sin and of trust in Him for forgiveness. I John 3:32, the best commentary of all on John 3:21, makes this abundantly clear. Here we find that if one says he has no sin, he is walking in darkness. But if he confesses his sin, he is walking in the light; and this is equated with "doing the truth." The Revised Standard translation "live according to the truth" is good here if this is taken to mean to live according to the truth that in Jesus we have forgiveness. For His Blood cleanses us from all sin if we

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<sup>5</sup>Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel, edited by Francis Noel Davey (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1947), p. 219-20.

"walk in the light" and "confess our sin." It is not sin itself that condemns man; if this were so, no man could be saved. That which condemns is the lie, the rejection of the Truth, the refusal to believe in the Son of God and to accept the forgiveness which God offers in Him. "God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God" (Jn. 3:17-18).

Jesus is not teaching that man is saved by keeping a Law in John 3:32, when He talks about doing the truth. He is simply speaking of the fact that those whose works are done "in God" come to Him--and it is the man who lives by faith in Him who "does the truth" because he is vitally related to God in Jesus.

This does not mean that all the Christian does because He knows the Truth is to confess his sins, as though this had no effect on his life. In fact, John feels that this faith in Jesus will help his Christian readers to overcome sin: "My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin. But if any one does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father . . ." (I Jn. 2:1-2).

It seems that also Luther was well aware of the fact that the first work which the Christian does "in God" is to confess his sins and come to Christ in faith. Heckel

gives this excerpt from one of Luther's sermons on John 3:21:

Die, welche rechtschaffen leben und sich keiner Tat schuldig wissen, die bekennen ihr Tun und lassen's Jedermann sehen. Gott selbst, ja die lieben Engel Gottes und die ganze Welt dürfen seine Richter sein . . . . Denn er scheut das Licht nicht, er spricht: Ich hab' gesündigt. Dies Bekenntnis schadet ihm nichts sondern ist ein Werk der Wahrheit. (W.A. 47, 130)<sup>6</sup>

Heckel expresses this same idea:

Das Rechtschaffene tun, heisst auch frei und offen seine Sünde bekennen ohne Rücksicht darauf, was die Leute sagen, hervortreten und sich an das Licht wagen.<sup>7</sup>

In a word, then, to "do the truth" is to live by faith in Christ, or by faith in the good news that in Him we have forgiveness, with all that this involves for the Christian. The meaning of the Truth is never detached from Jesus and the faithfulness of God in this Gospel. The confession of sin, faith, and the new life of the Christian are done "in God," in a vital relationship with Him in Jesus. So the Christian comes to Christ, who is his Light, even though he must confess his sin--but in doing so, he shows that he is acting "in God," and God is acting in Him.

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<sup>6</sup>D. Heckel, Wahrheit im Johannesevangelium und Bei Luther (Helsinki: Kommissionsverlag Akateeminen Kirjakauppa, 1944), p. 159-60.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

#### Prayer "in Spirit and Truth"

There are essentially two ways of approaching the interpretation of the phrase "in spirit and truth" (ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ) in John 4:23-24. One way of interpreting this passage says that the "spirit" is that of man, and "truth" describes the fact that the prayer is not only from the "spirit" of man, but is also genuine or sincere. So Zahn says that ἐν ἀληθείᾳ does not mean "in objective truth," but "in subjective truth," in "Wahrhaftigkeit," "Aufrichtigkeit," "Treue."<sup>1</sup> This would make ἀληθεία mean the same as ΠΠ in the Old Testament. So Schlatter refers to Psalm 145:18, which says that "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him . . . in truth [ ΠΠ ] ." He also calls attention to I John 3:18 and II John 3.<sup>2</sup>

Bauer's interpretation is similar to this, since he says that true prayer is described here in terms of its "formal" and its "material" side. The formal, or spiritual,

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<sup>1</sup>Theodor Zahn, Das Evangelium des Johannes, in Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, Ausgelegt von Theodor Zahn (Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Nachf., 1908), p. 243.

<sup>2</sup>D. A. Schlatter, Der Evangelist Johannes, wie er spricht, denkt, und glaubt (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1930), p. 126.

side, is to show itself in "Verlauf von rein geistigen Aktionen." The material side shows itself in the fact that the one who is praying has "truth" or "adäquate Gotteserkenntnis."<sup>3</sup>

Another approach to the interpretation of this phrase seems to be more in harmony with the meanings which are assigned to "Spirit" and "Truth" in the rest of this Gospel. Elsewhere in this Gospel "Spirit" means the Spirit of God, except in John 11:33 and John 13:21, which speak of Jesus' being "moved" or "troubled" in His spirit. "Truth" is usually Jesus or God Himself; and the phrase "in truth" probably never means simply "truly" in this Gospel. In John 4:24, Jesus says "God is Truth"; this is probably meant to explain what it means to pray "in Spirit"--that is, in a vital relationship with God. The phrase "in Truth" would then be parallel to this and mean the same thing. Prayer "in Spirit and truth" would then be prayer "in God," an example of the kind of deeds which are to be done "in God" according to John 3:21. This relationship to God is the same that is probably referred to by John 17:17-19, which speaks of being set apart from the world "in Truth" or in Christ or God. In each of these cases, then, the preposition *ἐν* would express the kind of relationship which exists between the true believers and Jesus or God.

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<sup>3</sup>Walter Bauer, Evangelium des Johannes, bearbeitet von H. J. Holtzmann, in Hand-Commentar zum Neuen Testament 3 neubearbeitete Auflage; Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr, 1908), IV, 105.

I John 3:18 urges all believers: "Let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth." Here, too, "in Truth" may mean "in God." We are urged to love by virtue of the fact that we believe in Him, that we are "in Him," that He is "in us." Also II John 3 probably uses the phrase "in Truth" in this sense: "Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love." God's love comes to us in Christ, so that it is quite possible that "in Truth" here means "in Christ" or even "in God."

#### The "Spirit of Truth"

John 14:16-17 records Jesus' promise to the disciples: "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth." John 15:26 repeats the promise that the Spirit of Truth would come from the Father to the disciples, and adds that "he will bear witness to me." John 16:13-15 promises: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. . . . He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

There is no doubt as to just what this Spirit was to do for the disciples. He was to teach them and cause them to remember "all things" which Jesus had told them (14:26). He was to be a Witness to Jesus (15:26). He was to lead them "into all truth," and to glorify Jesus by taking what had been given to Him by the Father and giving it to the disciples (16:13-15).

Because this is His work, the Name "the Spirit of Truth" is often taken to mean that He is the Spirit of the truth about God, or about Jesus. So "all truth" into which He was to lead the disciples would be a full knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus, or His Word.

But there is more here than this. "Truth" is often used in the Gospel as a Name for God or for Jesus. The "Spirit of Truth" is the Spirit of God who was to continue to bring to the disciples the same words which Jesus had been bringing to them, and so lead them to "all Truth," to God Himself.

Prayer "in Spirit" is prayer "in Truth"; it is a deed which is done "in God." The Spirit is also the Truth, for He, too, is God, sent by the Father to lead men to Him. The Father, the Son, the Spirit are God, and they are all the Truth. God is "all Truth."

So everywhere the Truth is much more than the words about God; it is the Word of God; it is the Spirit of God; it is God Himself, acting to lead men from death into life in Himself. Salvation came in Jesus, Who is the Truth; and the Spirit Who is the Truth leads men to Him and to the Father through Him.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE TRUE GOD

#### The Use of

The Gospel according to St. John uses both *ἀληθής* and *ἀληθινός* to describe God as being "true." John 3:33 and John 8:26 describe Him as being *ἀληθής*; in John 7:28 and 17:3 He is described as *ἀληθινός*. The uses of these adjectives in other passages help to explain what they might mean when they are applied to God.

The original meaning of *ἀληθής* is "truthful." So Wuest says that *ὁ θεὸς ἀληθής ἔστιν* in John 3:33 means "He is the truth-speaking and truth-loving God," and "God is the alethes in that He cannot lie."<sup>1</sup>

There is good reason for believing that this is the meaning of *ἀληθής* in these verses. The thought in John 3:33 is that the one who receives the testimony of Jesus as being true is acknowledging that God is truthful, for Jesus spoke the words of God, since God sent Him. And the simplest interpretation of John 8:26 is that Jesus is claiming to be speaking the truth, since He is speaking to the world what

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth S. Wuest, Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament for the English Reader (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1945), p. 87.

He has heard from God, Who is truthful. So Bultmann comments on John 3:33 that "Im Zshg kann ἀληθής hier nur wie 8:26 'wahrhaftig' bedeuten; opp. ψεύδης 8,44.45."<sup>2</sup> There are also several verses which use ἀληθής to say that the testimony of someone is true, evidently in this sense of being the opposite of a lie (Jn. 5:31-32; 8:13-17; 21:24; 3 Jn. 12; Titus 1:13).

### The Use of ἀληθινός

The usual Greek meaning of ἀληθινός is "real" or "genuine." Hoskyns feels that this is the meaning of this adjective in John 1:9, of which he says "the Word of God is the true--real as opposed to counterfeit--light that enlightens all men."<sup>3</sup>

Commentators who believe that John was influenced by Platonic thought like to refer to the passages which use ἀληθινός, especially to the ones which speak of the "true Light," true Bread," or "true Vine." So Dodd argues:

In view of this we may say that when the evangelist speaks of αἶψτος ἀληθινός he means that spiritual or eternal reality which is symbolized by bread, and when he speaks of ἀρπιδος ἀληθινός he means the

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<sup>2</sup>Rudolph Bultmann, Das Evangelium des Johannes, in Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament 12 Auflage; Göttingen; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1952), p. 116.

<sup>3</sup>Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel, edited by Francis Noel Davey (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1947), p. 145.

reality which is symbolized by the vine. Similarly he uses the term  $\phi\omega\varsigma \alpha\lambda\alpha\delta\iota\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\nu$ .<sup>4</sup>

But if the Septuagint can speak of an  $\alpha\mu\pi\tau\epsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma \alpha\lambda\alpha\delta\iota\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\nu$  in Jeremiah 2:21 and mean, because  $\alpha\lambda\alpha\delta\iota\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\nu$  here translates the word  $\text{פִּיִּץ}$ , "a plant which can be trusted to produce fruit after its kind,"<sup>5</sup> then  $\alpha\mu\pi\tau\epsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma \alpha\lambda\alpha\delta\iota\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\nu$  in John 15:1 may very well mean the same thing. So Schlatter refers to this passage in the Septuagint and comments:

$\alpha\lambda\alpha\delta\iota\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\nu$  ist der Weinstock dann, wenn er wirklich Frucht trägt. Darum ist nicht Israel der wirkliche Weinstock; denn es trägt nicht Frucht für Gott. Der Gedanke ist derselbe wie im Bild vom Weinberg, dessen Frucht Gott vorenthalten wird, Mat. 21,33.<sup>6</sup>

In this sense, the "true Light" would be that which can be trusted to give light to men such as no mere man can give; the "true Bread" is that Bread which comes down from heaven, and so can be trusted to give life to those who receive it; and the "true worshippers" are those who can be depended upon to pray "in Spirit and in Truth." Thus the phrase "which enlightens every man" in John 1:9 may be intended to explain the "true Light" by emphasizing that it was  $\alpha\lambda\alpha\delta\iota\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\nu$ , or "dependable."

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<sup>4</sup>C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), p. 139.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>D. A. Schlatter, Der Evangelist Johannes, wie er spricht, denkt, und glaubt (Stuttgart: Calwer Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1930), p. 304.

In John 8:16, Jesus says that His judgment (*κρίσις*) is "true" (*ἀληθινῆς*). Bultmann calls attention to Isaiah 59:4 and Daniel 3:27 in the Septuagint, and says that "'Wahr' ist im diesem Falle so viel wie 'Gerecht', und so entspricht das *ἀληθινῆς* 8,16 dem *δικαία* 7,24."<sup>7</sup> Other passages which use *ἀληθινός* in this sense may be found in Revelation 16:7; 19:2.9; 21:5; 22:6.

In John 4:37 (*ὁ λόγος ἐστὶν ἀληθινός*) and John 19:35 (*ἀληθινὴ αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία, ἀληθινός*) probably means the same as *ἀληθής* when it describes the *μαρτυρία* of someone as "true," although this is probably not the meaning of *οἱ λόγοι ἀληθινοί* in Revelation 19:9; 21:5; 22:6.

This adjective is used in two important passages to describe God as being "true" (Jn. 17:3 and I Jn. 5:20). In both of these passages, it is possible that the word may mean simply "real" or "genuine"--"the only God who is really God." This would place Him in contrast to the unreal idols, against whom John warns the Christians to guard themselves (I Jn. 5:21).

Undoubtedly, John is insisting here that God is the only One Who really exists as God, but there is probably more here than this. He probably intends to point especially to the fact that God is faithful, that He can be depended upon to act as God and save His people, while the idols cannot. This would reflect the meaning of *ΠΝΣ* more than that of the Greek

<sup>7</sup>Bultmann, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

ἀληθινός . The reading  $\pi \eta \nu \eta \tau \tau \pi$  17 in Exodus 34:6 is translated by the Septuagint with πολυείκτος καὶ ἀληθινός . Similarly, in Isaiah 65:16, the Septuagint translates  $\gamma \eta \nu \eta \tau \tau \pi$  with τὸν Ἰσὸν τὸν ἀληθινόν .<sup>8</sup> The Revelation to John shows this meaning of ἀληθινός in several verses, where it is used with ἄγιος , πιστός , or δίκαιος to describe God or His ways (Rev. 3:7.14; 6:10; 15:3; 16:7; 19:2.11; 21:5; 22:6).

John 1:14-18 indicates that the revelation of God in Jesus is a revelation of His grace and faithfulness, His saving action in Jesus, and not simply of His real existence. And even Bultmann, who often uses the word "Wirklichkeit" to express the meaning of ἀληθινός emphasizes that this is a Reality which is to save men by bringing them the Revelation of God in Jesus--so that his concept of "Divine Reality" often seems to be very nearly correct in spite of his attempt to keep Platonic thought in this Gospel.

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<sup>8</sup>Schlatter, op. cit., p. 319.

## CHAPTER NINE

### CONCLUSION

It seems that in only two instances can *ἀληθῆς* be anything less than a name for Jesus or God in this Gospel (Jn. 8:40; 16:7). Once Jesus calls Himself "the Truth." Other passages indicate that to be "of the Truth" is the same as to be "of God." The phrase "in Truth" probably means the same as "in God." Jesus came to bear witness to Himself and to God. And the name "the Spirit of Truth" probably designates the Spirit as the Spirit of God and as Truth Himself.

As a name for Jesus, *ἀληθῆς* is significant because it designates Him as Savior. "The Truth" is God's faithfulness, His living up to His Name as God, for His people. It is His gracious Gift of His Son, that men might come to know Him in His Son, and that they might have eternal life in Him. So the context in which Jesus calls Himself "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" indicates that all three of these names are intended to show that He is the Savior. So it is "the Truth" or the Son which makes men free from sin. To be "of the Truth" is to be "of God" and be saved in Him. The disciples are "sanctified in the Truth," kept apart from the evil world in Christ and in God.

But men come to know the Truth when they hear the words of Jesus and continue in His Word. So Jesus also speaks

of "telling the Truth," for His words are a revelation of God, even as He is Himself a Revelation of God as His Word to men.

The noun ἀλήθεια reflects the Greek concept of "truth" in this respect, that it speaks of an absolute or ultimate Truth. God is all Truth, and there is no higher Truth than God. But at the same time, ἀλήθεια in John's Gospel is a name for Jesus as Savior, so that it speaks also of God's faithfulness in Jesus. He is called "faithful" because He is always showing grace to His people. So ἀλήθεια reflects the meaning of *אֱמֻנָה* in this respect.

The adjectives, ἀληθής and ἀληθινός, probably reflect the Hebrew idea of faithfulness more than the classic Greek idea of reality. But the idea of "reality" is also present in passages which describe God as ἀληθινός.

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