Current Contributions to Christian Preaching

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Recommended Citation

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Preaching works with words. God can work on the human heart in other ways. He is able to raise up children to Abraham out of stones (Matt. 3:9). He can speak in the innermost heart without benefit of vocabulary. But when we speak of preaching, we talk about talk. We claim to see God in action by means of human language addressed by human speakers to human beings.

Skeptics both inside and outside the Christian church have tended to question the fitness of human speech as a language for divine truth. St. Paul was forced to discuss the issue with a congregation which had begun to look down on the preaching which it had heard from him, and thus to fall into factions. He makes use of this disdain in order to stress that preaching derives its power not from skill and eloquence but from the purpose of God.

> For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1 Cor. 1:21 AV) [2]

But this still affirms that God is fulfilling His purpose through the proclaiming of words — words that convey a most specific message indeed, but still words.

Current accents related to preaching seem to imperil the whole enterprise of preaching at first sight, yet the serious preacher will find himself challenged by them to fulfill his calling in a better way. We propose to discuss some of these challenges, or contributions, as they should be called, in three sections. The first part deals with current trends in linguistic analysis. The second section treats the new focus of hermeneutics and the interpretation of the Bible. This section is directly related to the third, the significance of the church at work in making the proclamation of the Bible and of the Gospel. The latter sections, however, require a survey of the studies in the use of language as a vehicle of religious truth.[3]

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[1] This is the first in a series of three articles. They were originally delivered to the Third Annual Institute on Church and Society, June 7 to 9, 1965. The institute is sponsored by Concordia Senior College, Fort Wayne, Indiana. The other articles will appear in future issues.

[2] RSV: "the folly of what we preach"; NEB: "by the folly of the Gospel." Underlying the new translations is the assumption that *kerygma*

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describes content rather than the activity of proclaiming the content (thus C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* 2d ed. [New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951]). The context here and elsewhere appears, however, to stress the activity of proclaiming the content, for St. Paul stresses not simply the unbelievableness of the message, but his own manner of preaching it.

[3] A useful survey of the entire field is Jules Laurence Moreau, *Language and Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961). Pitched more precisely to preachers is Theodore O. Wedel, *The Gospel in a Strange New World* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963). A readable book from the stance of the philosopher of language is Ian T. Ramsey, *Religious Language* (London: SCM Press, 1957). Delight-

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I. LANGUAGE AS VEHICLE FOR VERIFIABLE FACT

The Christian preacher who like myself was trained in the 1920s moved to his task with one major question: Is what I am saying true? He felt that his question was answered if he said true things. He sought to guarantee the truth of his affirmations by approximating, as well as he could, the facts set forth in the Sacred Scriptures, and by interpretations that accorded with his special tradition within the Christian church. Behind this question, "Is what I am saying true?" however, lay an assumption: that the listener was to be moved to accept the preaching as true; that all that could be done to create that acceptance and assent was to speak the truth.

Nothing in this essay should be construed as taking away from the importance of this question: Is what I am saying true? or from the procedure of affirming truth on the basis of the Sacred Scriptures. Current studies in the theory and analysis of language, however, ask questions like this: How does language convey thought? What does it do in addition to conveying thought? How can human language be capable of conveying not merely "discernment" of superhuman things, but of producing "commitment"? [4]

The 20th century has produced a philosophical point of view, called "logical empiricism," most of whose followers hold that only such propositions can be stated in language as are verifiable.[5] In its initial stages this point of view assumed that religious statements or propositions involving an unseen power or life were logically "nonsense," and therefore not necessarily untrue, but literally unspeakable, because unthinkable. As the analysis of language progressed, it sought to explore the mechanisms of language by which the God who is believed in by people, and the people who do the believing, can be affirmed and discerned.

At first sight the preacher may dismiss the concerns of logical analysis with the feeling that it is the victim of the scientific age, that it grants the existence of only that which can be measured in the test tube or with the ammeter, that it is simply unbelief in action. This, however, is not the primary problem. Linguistic analysis is helping also the preacher to examine propositions which claim assent. The linguistic scientist says that the proposition "God is Love" or "God redeems" is in a different realm of discourse from the statement "the newborn child does not speak" or "ten times ten equals one hundred." The latter statements are verifiable by examination and experience; they can be used in "evidence," that is, that which can be seen. But when the preacher says, "God is Love," many in his audience may not understand his words to begin with, and many would be ready to say that they have evidence to the contrary; the propositions do not produce acceptance. Preachers themselves admit this readily.

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fully written but penetrating is Richard Luecke's *New Meanings for New Beings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), which ranges over the entire area and links it with the Sunday worship of the Christian church.

[4] Ramsey, pp. 18 ff., develops the principle that religious communication produces simultaneously discernment and commitment, if it is successful; commitment without discernment is bigotry, discernment without commitment is hypocrisy.

[5] Cf. summary in Moreau, pp. 51 ff.

I see several possible reactions to this statement that religious affirmations do not produce acceptance or assent. One says: "But I'm after faith, and faith is much more than assent." Another: "But many people accept this statement; perhaps many are in this room. Therefore I shall make the statement with every indication of belief, and create the impression that my vigorous affirmation of this truth is producing and supporting this belief." That reaction involves some half-truths, to which we shall return in the third section. Another reaction, however, is apt to be: "Right, religious affirmations do not produce acceptance. I'm not really after acceptance anyway; religion is in the business of actions rather than faith; great doubters can be great doers." Here our difficulty lies both in the meaning of "faith" and in the nature of the religious affirmation. "When I say, 'God is Love,' I am really saying that the best way of living is to love; I'm not asking you to believe in an unseen God, but to share a visible way of life which everybody knows is best." [6] Another reaction to the realization that the affirmation about God does not produce assent is somehow to validate the existence of God by apologetic means. The expanding universe tempts to such expedients, until we realize that often the men who are most aware of the significance of space or nuclear science are the least ready to accept a definition of God.

The Christian preacher is indeed engaged in the calling of producing faith,

and of doing so by language. The seeming sluggishness of the linguistic analyst to follow his lead should help the preacher realize, however, that the faith which is his objective is not mere assent indeed; and that the power for affirming, creating, and nurturing that faith is indeed not his own, but that of the Spirit of God functioning in mankind because of God's atoning act in Jesus Christ.

> Among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him," God has revealed to us through the Spirit. . . . No one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit. (1 Cor. 2:6-13 RSV; quoting Is. 64:4)

This makes the Christian's affirmations indeed verifiable, but only by the Spirit of God.

II. LANGUAGE AS THE LANGUAGE OF FAITH

We said that as linguistic analysis moved beyond logical positivism it undertook to explore the structures of language by which faith can be properly affirmed. One mode of procedure was to assume that the lan-

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[6] Cf. William A. Christian, *Meaning and Truth in Religion* (Princeton: Princeton Press, 1964), pp. 136 ff., with the sensible critique that a story or a policy does not in itself produce behavior.

guage of logic is rational, prosaic; the language of faith is intuitive, poetic. Many a preacher imagines that he is employing poetic speech for the sake of reinforcing the logical and prosaic evidence or demands with which he is operating. This area of examination would assert that everything that he is saying is of the nature of poetry. Obviously more is implied by this term than "emotionally conditioned" or "exciting" or "soothing." Here we are confronting the fact that as soon as we attempt to interpret the inner life of the human being, and the unseen, only partly disclosed operations of God, words fail us; we put them together in new ways, we grope for analogies and pictures, we connote through exaggerations and paradoxes. That our emotions are used or aroused in such communication does not mean that the subject is an emotional one or that no thinking is to be done, but simply that we are here dealing with more of the human being than the mind by which he hears and verifies a fact.

At once, however, another whole dimension enters the scene when we discuss the language of faith. Ramsey describes the point at which a situation "comes alive" or "the ice breaks." [7] That point is almost always one where the involvement of the speaker as a person registers on the mind of the listener as a person. Both are involved, not just in the interchange of fact, or even in the affirmation and acceptance of a truth; but they are acting and reacting, as human beings, in ways that will extend far beyond this moment of conversation. Every preacher remembers somewhat wistfully certain occasions at which he seemed

to be in immediate touch with his hearers; an electric tension hung over the audience, he himself was hardly conscious that time was elapsing, the people sighed in unison and clung to his words. "Why can't it happen oftener?" he says to himself, and looks at possibly quite irrelevant factors to account for it — the size of the audience or the pitch of his voice or the ingredients of ushering and forms of worship prior to the sermon.

Many thinkers try to find the manner of language in which this point of personal involvement of faith is reached. Obviously sometimes language that expresses a summons from God to His people and from person to person is of this quality.[8] That it draws attention to itself as standing in a dimension outside the logical and commonplace is important. Sometimes it employs sacred stories and discourses with elements of confession or imperative.[9]

At once a series of caveats rise to the surface. Much religious language and therefore preaching is couched in pictorial terms, for the hearer has to have the opportunity to think of himself or of God in terms disengaged from the dimensions of his own body or the horizon of his world. Yet the preacher can talk himself

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[7] Ramsey, p. 19 and passim.

[8] Important is the volume, *Die Sprache und das Wort* (Hamburg: Furche, 1961) which Hans-Rudolf Müller-Schwefe has written as prolegomena to another on homiletics. At this point he lists Martin Buber (*Ich und Du*, [Leipzig: 1923], Insel-Verlag, pp. 64—69).

[9] John A. Hutchison, *Language and Faith* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963); for this point note pp. 228—236, with a useful discussion of the term "myth." I do not find the distinction between "religious" and "theological" statements wholly useful. Another, more difficult but helpful, volume is Frederick Ferré, *Language, Logic and God* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961).

right out of the brain of his listener by an excess of analogy and illustration; he can sound as though he were dodging the task of facing the human situation or the judgment of God. Preaching does more than prove, and this has given many a preacher a good conscience about using analogies because he doesn't claim to be proving anything anyway. But neither has he been affirming or communicating. The old rule of thumb applies: Employ no illustration without first affirming what is being illustrated.

As the preacher employs his sacred story, or repeats his sacred imperative and exhortation, what is his purpose? Is he doing more than enabling the hearer to spend time under religious auspices? Is he asking for more than that the hearer make the sacrifice to God of being present and of paying attention? P. T. Forsyth, still the most prophetic voice to preachers in the English language, calls to reality in preaching and the avoidance of the trivial:

> Nowhere has mediocrity its chance as it has in religion. Nowhere has the gossipy side of life such scope. Nowhere has quackery of every kind such a field and such a harvest. . . . The weak things are not only considered, they take command. They claim to give the law. They make a majority. . . . Churches and preachers are choked with a crowd of paltry things kept in place by no sure authority, and dignified by no governing power. Both ministers and churches have as much of a struggle to get time for spiritual culture as if it were none of their business. . . . You have bustle all the week and baldness all the Sunday. You have energy everywhere except in the Spirit. . . . We are more anxious to cover ground than to secure it, to evangelize the world than to convert it. It is faithless impatience, of

the youngest, thinnest kind. A bustling institution may cover spiritual destitution, just as Christian work may be taken up as a narcotic to spiritual doubt and emptiness. The minister's study becomes more of an office than an oratory. . . . The minister may talk the silliest platitudes without resentment, but he may not smoke a cigar in some places without causing an explosion. And religion becomes an ambulance, not a pioneer.[10]

Another warning to be issued to the preacher as he sees himself working with modes of communication that are more than factual is that he not become preoccupied with the aesthetic or the liturgical in his preaching, to the loss of the preaching itself. He is indeed working with materials that have inherent beauty. He is indeed advancing a message that demands the worship of the hearer and is itself an act of worship in the very proclamation. But he has lost if the hearer has time to reflect on the preacher's word or voice as being beautiful or worshipful. For then the hearer is a watcher of a process rather than the target of it, a spectator rather than a player of a role in the conflict.

When we speak of the preacher's purpose, we need again to remember that the language of faith concerns not merely discernment, recognition of fact, and assent to principle, but commitment. Commitment is not devoid of discernment, although plenty of folk are asked to have faith in a time of trouble without a very clear directive in whom or what. But the

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[10] P. T. Forsyth, *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* (London: Independent Press, 1907, 6th impression, 1960), pp. 116 f. This great work has been reissued by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., in paperback.

commitment of faith is more than knowing. It is interesting to note that Martin Luther gives his best definition of faith not when discussing the Creed, but when discussing the First Commandment:

> What does it mean to have a god? or, what is God? Answer: A god means that from which we are to expect all good and to which we are to take refuge in all distress, so that to have a God is nothing else than to trust and believe Him from the [whole] heart. . . . If your faith and trust be right, then is your god also true; and on the other hand, if your trust be false and wrong, then you have not the true God; for these two belong together, faith and God. That now, I say, upon which you set your heart and put your trust is properly your god. (Large Catechism, Trigl. Concordia, p. 581; in Theodore G. Tappert, ed. *The Book of Concord* [Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959], p. 365)

Ramsey asserts that religious commitment partakes both of the "mathematical" and the "quasi-personal," but especially the latter. Evidence and argument pertain to it not logically, but as an "odd" function, to evoke the "insight" and the "discernment" from which the commitment follows as a response.[11]

Contemporary analysis of language begins, at one end of the spectrum, with propositions about facts and situations that are verifiable, that is, that can occur again and to all people; and it pursues the use of language into situations where men may be seeing what not everybody sees, and be in relation to God, whom no man has ever seen. This end of the spectrum is inhabited by the philosopher Martin Heidegger,

who asks man to inquire: Who am I? In reversal of the process of the Western world of abstraction, he seeks to have man ask this question with reference to the ground of his existence to which he is attached. Contemporary man tends to forget his being; he faces the poverty of his existence. In this reflection upon his own being he now finds himself and speaks; he not merely does speaking, he is speech. It is the poet (Heidegger leaned heavily on Christian Friedrich Hebbel, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Johann Christian Hölderlin) who gives word to being. "Existence is the mouth of being; in existence being expresses itself and arrives at understanding."[12] Heidegger's method throws the emphasis simultaneously on the possibility of language being capable of expressing existence, and the necessity of reflecting on the language that is the "mouth of being," of having the help of the poet and the seer.

At this point we may remark: driven to its logical conclusion, it would seem to silence the preacher, who stands between the thinker and the seer and tries to reach a hearer through language. This much Heidegger holds before the preacher: the need and the possibility of having the listener reflect upon the nature of his own existence. The preacher can say it more directly than Heidegger: it is existence on a ground of being, it is nothing when severed from the ground of being, it is authentic existence when structured upon that ground of being which is God. And the preacher had better himself, in silence, turn his eye inward upon the foundation

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11 Ramsey, p. 37.

12 For useful summaries of Heidegger's thought cf. Moreau, pp. 66—73; and Müller-Schwefe, pp. 70—79.

·upon which he stands, and see to it that ·his existence is not a fiction and a sham, ·otherwise his words will be, not the language of existence, but the counterfeit of ·nothingness.

> The focus of the whole answer is still the Cross, where the holy love of the Eternal spared not His own Son in face of the ghastly realism of guilt. We can *trust* love only as it is holy.[13]

· The New Testament, as we have seen, ·asserts that there are direct statements to ·be made in the language of faith; but it is faith which recognizes their meaning. Faith in God embraces an unseen God out of and in spite of hard realities of life and experience. It is the unbelievable abil·ity to trust in God. St. Paul says that it is of the essence of true faith that it is on the lips as well as in the heart (Rom. 10:9, ·10); and our Lord makes "witness before ·men" the heart of discipleship (Matt. 10: 32) and the program of the church's min·istry to the world (Luke 24:44-48). For ·the Christian and particularly the Christian ·preacher, therefore, the question is not in ·first place: "How can my language speak ·about God?" but "How can God use my language so that people may receive and grow in their faith in God?"

III. LANGUAGE AS THE NURTURE OF FAITH

· Thus we have arrived at a unique insight ·into the use of language, at the end of the ·spectrum opposite to logical positivism: ·the function of language that not merely ·expresses faith or the objects of faith, but ·that evokes faith and that nurtures faith. ·We here view language as an instrument

not simply for describing commitment, as enlarging upon discernment, but as producing and developing commitment. Are there contributions to the preaching to faith which contemporary science both of language and theology can make?

Because we are Christian preachers, we are concerned specifically with Christian language. Contemporary study has directed itself largely to two areas of the Christian message. The one concerns its mode and level, appropriate to the objective of faith and the content of its message as concerning what eye has not seen nor ear heard. The other, frankly theological, operates with an ancient component of Hebrew thought found basic to the New Testament message, the concept of the Word of God.

Poets and dramatists lead the way to discover a mode of language that helps the reader and listener break the bonds of finitude and time that hold him. Thus T. S. Eliot:

> Time present and time past
> Are both perhaps present in time future,
> And time future contained in time past.
> If all time is eternally present
> All time is irredeemable.[14]

Language becomes a demand for search, for penetration beyond the surface to insight into the height and depth. This is more than the psychological observation that the basic language of faith is the picture.[15]

Here the explorer of contemporary language points to "myth" or the oblique and

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[13] Forsyth, p. 127.

[14] From T. S. Eliot, "Four Quartets," 1951; in Hüller-Schwefe, p. 116.

[15] Otto Händler, *Die Predigt* (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann Verlag, 1960), develops the importance of the pictorial and unconscious, together with meditation, on a basis of Jungian psychology.

multidimensional operation of language as giving not merely a biography of questing man, but as taking him into the drama of rescue. The serious author is concerned simultaneously with the expression of chaos and frustration in human existence, and with the transformation and rescue to which man may aspire.[16] Language thus becomes not simply depiction of reality or reflection on being, but it is this being. This theory of language is obviously congenial to the place which the Christian message undertakes to fill: not simply the depiction of events in time past, not simply a drama in which man may wish to find a part and to imagine possessing freedom, but the actual process of being freed. Two not altogether comfortable ingredients suggest themselves to the preacher: his message must be about the hearer, must take him in; and it must cause him, along with the preacher, to face, head-on, his own inner self and find in the very process of language an operation to freedom.

From these observations of contemporary language in general it is hardly a full step to the discussion of "the word," *logos*, a contemporary accent in Christian theology which is as old as the Hebrew Scriptures.[17]

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[16] Cf. the valuable section in Müller-Schwefe, pp. 117—126.

[17] Triggered simultaneously by Biblical studies and the Luther renaissance, the concept of the Word in language gains a new significance in the thought of Martin Buber and Karl Barth, the latter's particularly in *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, I, 1, 4th ed. (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1944). In its relation to preaching the Swedish Luther study is apparent in Gustav Wingren, *Die Predigt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1955, trans. *The Living Word* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press], 1960). The present writer's "A Concordance Study of the Concept 'Word of God'" in *Concordia Theological Monthly*

Basically the "Word of God" is God Himself as He acts; in the multitude of anthropomorphisms in which His actions are portrayed in the Old Testament — walking, baring the arm, bending down and lifting up — speaking is frequent. He speaks in the thawing wind (Ps. 147:18), in creation and all His works (Ps. 33:6). Most signally and comprehensively He speaks in His one Word, His Son (John 1:1-14; Heb. 1:1-4), and Jesus Himself identifies His own word and work. (John 14:10)[18]

What are the contributions of this accent, old but newly discovered, for preaching? Special facets will be uncovered in the section on the Biblical interpretation that accompanies the new concerns with language. At this point we may indicate several components.

The Word of God is the action of God. It climaxes in Jesus Christ. It is an action of glory, i.e., of display of the inscrutable God now revealing His eternal intention, His recovery of alienated man (Col. 1: 12-24; 2 Cor. 5:18-21). In this process of

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XXII [March 1951]), 170—185; and *Preaching for the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), pp. 1—52, set out the contrast between the theological and the psychological assumptions in "Word of God." Dietrich Ritschl, *Theology of Proclamation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), gives a post-Barthian review of preaching as conveying thrust and not merely information. Instructive is the contrast between the books of Ronald Sleeth, *Persuasive Preaching* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), and *Proclaiming the Word* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964). Highly colored is the critique of a static orthodoxism in contrast to living word in Joseph Sittler, *The Doctrine of the Word* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1948).

[18] A useful summary of current European literature on the concept of the Word in religion and in the Old and New Testament is Müller-Schwefe, pp. 140—246.

unfolding and disclosing His saving action, God enlists men, His men; in fact, the crucial act of the sacrificial atonement of Jesus Christ is the commissioning of men to bring this Word of God into subsequent generations (John 17:14-23). When God's man now proclaims this unfolding action in Jesus Christ, he is speaking the Word and the power of God (1 Thess. 2:13; Rom. 1:16, 17). To the bystander this process of speaking words about a crucified Jewish teacher merits skepticism and disgust; but in the plan of God, God's man is sure, this speaking is God at work in precisely the right way to achieve God's saving objective. (1 Cor. 1:17-31)

The Word of God is God in action to give faith. Faith itself, faith in God as the rescuing and accepting God, is inextricably coupled with speaking; faith speaks to faith. God's Word does not in the first place put a condition on man to react; it comes to man to quicken and stir to faith and to the profession of faith. God begins the chain reaction which is composed not merely of words beating on eardrums, but of the constructing of the entire situation in which men hear and believe on Him whom God sent to rescue and give life (Rom. 10:6-21). The Word of God is what it is not just when it is outwardly successful, when it produces the statistics of conversion — although even they are useful because they betoken an enlarging and amplifying of the thrust of the Word of God (e. g., Acts 12:24; 19:20). But the Word of God is always God in action, even if the end result is a judgment of rejection. (Rom. 10:21; 2 Cor. 2:14-17)

What happens under this preaching of faith is indeed "assent," agreement with facts which otherwise might be unbelievable; but their being believed as true is only a pale beginning to the totality of the faith which the proclaiming of the Word of God achieves. For faith clings to God, counts on God as Father, trusts in the Unseen One, leaps into a life otherwise unknown and unimaginable, the life in Christ.

This means that the preaching of the Word is not merely converting, but nurturing. The word of preaching — and this goes on person-to-person, in the cure of souls and counseling and religious education and group work and the hundred and one situations of Christian witness and pastorate as well as in the address from the pulpit — confronts the attacks of antilife and nonlife that contemporary believers face on every turn. It seeks to sustain and to give new insight into the inner presence of God also in those who have it. Every preacher shares the objectives which St. Paul had for his people:

> For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of His glory He may grant you to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Eph. 3:14-19)

Contemporary preaching has been under the sign of a dichotomy between *kerygma*, the proclamation of the redeeming love of Jesus Christ, and *didache*, instruction. Most

notably set forth by C. H. Dodd,[19] the principle has gained ground that the *kerygma* is God's powerful Word to convert the unbeliever; *didache* is the instruction in Christian living to be extended to the believer. Dodd finds the latter operating largely in psychological terms:

> His precepts stir the imagination, arouse the conscience, challenge thought, and give an impetus to the will, issuing in action . . . The precepts . . . must become, through reflection and through effort, increasingly a part of our total outlook upon life, of the total bias of our minds. Then they will find expression in action appropriate to the changing situations in which we find ourselves.[20]

But the New Testament does not so split the terms. *Didache* defines the activity of teaching rather than an ethical content of what is taught (whether to the heathen, e. g., Acts 17:19, or to Christians; note Matt. 28:19, 20). This means that the preacher can with a will direct the proclamation of God's liberating action in Christ with joyous thrust to his brother Christian as he speeds him on the way of Christian duty and witness, as well as to

the individual who needs the first gift of faith.

For the preacher the entire current study of language, whether in its linguistic, philosophical, or theological dimension, converges on the fact that he had better not attempt simply to hypnotize his hearers from the pulpit into acceptance or complacency. The life of the Christian congregation is under attack in our time for not being really life at all. But the opening chapters of the Revelation of St. John say this in terms equally scathing. What is the antidote? Certainly, in all the modes previously suggested, a preaching that moves the listener to reflect upon himself, his place with himself, his personhood, his posture before the living God; to face frankly the eroding and the alienating powers of life around him; to reach out to the friend who is addressing him, in the midst of the worshiping family and church which surrounds him, for the Word of life, the linking with a plan which God had before there ever was a world and which He made to come true in Jesus Christ, whom He gave to be Lord and Savior.[21]

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[19] See, for example, his *Gospel and Law* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951). This writer expresses his position in "Kerygma and Didache in Religious Education" in *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XXXII (1961), 197 to 208.

[20] *Gospel and Law*, p. 77.

[21] A useful illustration of Christian preaching directed to the hearer's consciousness of his predicament before God, in terms of contemporary accents, is *The Thickness of Glory* by John Killinger (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964).