

# THEOLOGIES OF PRESENCE, DIALOGUE, AND PROCLAMATION

David Gitari

Dr. Gitari, Nairobi, Kenya,  
is General Secretary of the  
Bible Society of Kenya.

## 1. Presence

"Christian presence" is a post-World War II term popularized in the mid-60s by publication of a statement entitled "The Christian Community in the Academic World" published by the World Student Christian Federation. The term was originally made current by Roman Catholic priests who tried to find a new approach to evangelize France. The priests sought to engage themselves in the life of the people as workers in industry, etc. The term was later extended to include "involvement in the concrete structure of the society."

The advocates of "Christian presence" believe that this term expresses most satisfactorily the center of Christian faith and our response to it. It is the term which should replace the traditional terms such as mission, evangelism, and witness. Biblical foundations of the term have been formulated, and a theology of presence is in the making.

### a. Biblical roots of presence.

(i) *Shekinah* is a word used in the Old Testament to describe the Jewish "over-whelming sense" of the presence of God.

(ii) In *Exod. 3:1-14* Yahweh reveals his name as "I am who I am." "Yahweh" means precisely "He who is present" being present, "He will be seen and known for what he is in the situation as men become aware of his presence and act accordingly as Moses did while at work among the thorn bushes."

(iii) In *Psa. 139:7-12* we find that "man cannot run away from the presence of God."

(iv) In *John's Gospel*, Jesus Christ is the *Shekinah* who became flesh and dwelt among men in grace and truth. He is the "I am" who is also sent to fill men with his presence and send them out to preach the Gospel (20:19-23). The theologians of "Christian presence" find the support of their position in John's thinking. They see in this Gospel a close relationship between "presence" and "witness" or "mission." The incarnation is described by John as the becoming of flesh or as the "word becoming flesh and dwelling among us."

### b. Practice of Christian presence in evangelism.

(i) The application of Christian presence in evangelism is probably best expressed in the WSCF statement which says:

"We use the word 'Presence' to describe the adventure of being there in the name of Christ, often anonymously, listening before we speak, hoping that men will recognize Jesus for what he is and stay where they are, involved in their fierce fight against all that dehumanizes, ready to act against demonic powers, to identify

with the outcasts, merciless in ridiculing modern idols and new myths. When we say 'Presence' we say that we have to get in the midst of the things that frighten us. Once we are there, we are to witness fearlessly to Christ if the occasion is given; we may also have to be silent. Presence for us means 'engagement' in the concrete structures of our society.' It indicates a priority. First we have to be there before we can see our task clearly. In one sense of the word presence precedes witness. In another sense, the very presence is witness."

(ii) Closely associated with "Christian presence" is what Gilbert Rist calls "Theology of Silence." He defines silence as the proclamation of the Gospel "without religious vocabulary and without the use of conceptual apparatus which is customary in traditional theology." Rist goes so far as to assert that "the word of God which we must witness is not first of all a collection of Scriptural quotations, nor even of the sayings of Jesus (for this would be a return to fundamentalism); It is Jesus himself. This is why we must often refrain at first from mentioning the name of Jesus Christ . . . this is the silence which Jesus Christ commanded his disciples to keep on the subject of his Messiahship" (cf. Matt. 17:9; Mark 1:43). What is important, according to Rist, is to "preach Christ, without talking about him, to bring him to life for others without imprisoning him in our words."

(iii) Kenneth Cragg in his missionary approach to the Muslims represents a particular emphasis on Christian presence. His approach may be summarized as "unveiling the Presence of Christ." For Cragg, the missionary task is the unveiling of the hidden Christ who is already present in the religious man. This emphasis is derived from the Johannine interpretation of the relationship between Christ the Creator and Christ the Redeemer. Cragg tries to enter into the Muslim experience by being involved in a divine-human relationship. From within Islam he raises the question of what surrender to God really means. This question implies the quest for redemption. Using Islamic symbols, Cragg tries to reinterpret the Christocentric view of human surrender to God. In this way Cragg, who takes the Muslim faith seriously, tries to demonstrate that Christ is not a stumbling-block but a fulfiller of Islam. According to this interpretation of "Christian presence" the missionary is urged to try from within the framework of religious systems to relate the faith of religious man to Christ. The missionary should "unveil Christ who is already present in the religious experience of the man he is trying to reach." Cragg's approach has had a great appeal among many missionaries and scholars.

### c. Critique of the theology of presence

(i) The word "presence" is rather passive and static. Christian evangelism cannot satisfactorily be expressed by this term. The Hebrew word "*Shekinah*" which is translated "presence" in English, and the

Greek word "Parousia" (that which is present and is to come) have a more dynamic sense than the English word "presence." God's great word of self-revelation in Exod. 2:13-14 is not a static word. Its Hebrew dynamism was diluted by the Septuagint translators, for God reveals his name not merely as "I am" but as the active God who "shall be what I shall be" or "I shall continue to be what I shall continue to be." God reveals himself as the living God, the active, creative saving God whose presence is always dynamic.

The advocates of "Christian presence" realize the shortcomings of this word and attempt to explain it in terms of "being present does not mean we are merely there." Similarly lengthy definitions are made so as to make the theology of presence sound plausible. "The witness of silence," we are told, "is not one of mutism. We must still speak, but we must not become punch-drunk with words . . . True silence is in speaking." This is merely playing with words.

(ii) John Arthur criticizes "Christian presence" for being "so sure of the righteousness of its social goals but so reticent about any explicit witness to Jesus Christ as Savior of the world." The Christian presence theologians criticize words such as evangelism, witness, and mission because "they suggest certainty of faith and purpose. . . ." Arthur remarks that "if the Christian student of today is supposed to be unsure about his faith and purpose, then he is quite unlike other revolutionaries with whom he is to join to fight against dehumanization and demonic powers."

(iii) Statements about "Christian presence" seem to lack confidence about witness to Christ. We are urged to be present with a hope that "man will recognize Jesus for what he is and we will witness if occasion is given and we will be there in the name of Christ but often anonymously." Whereas the rest of the revolutionaries (be they Marxists, Nazis, hippies, etc.) do not hesitate to be identified with their heroes, the Christian is told not to start by proclaiming the name of Jesus, nor declare that he knows him, lest he sound empirical about his knowledge; but rather "to be present anonymously, for presence precedes witness and in another sense the very presence is witness." The Christian is often advised to be silent, and refrain from mentioning the name of Christ, and to preach Christ without talking about him. Theologians of Christian presence would find it difficult to say with Paul, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel: for it is the power of God for salvation to every-one who has faith. . . ." (Rom. 1:16).

(iv) The practice of Christian presence in evangelism has its value if it is not taken to be an end in itself. As a preliminary towards proclamation it is valuable. It calls the evangelist to remember that he is not necessarily preaching in a vacuum. Cragg's approach of unveiling "the presence of Christ" is not entirely unbiblical. It reminds us of Paul's encounter with the religious Athenians and his effort to "proclaim the God who made the world and everything in it, whom they had

hitherto considered as 'the unknown God.'" The Christian message was viewed by Paul as a fulfiller of the Athenians' religious longings. He unveils the God who remains unknown in man's effort to understand him. Cragg's practice of Christian presence is different from the theology of silence. Indeed it is unfortunate that he should call his approach "Christian presence." He chooses to live amid Muslims in order to understand their faith, and using Islamic symbols he courageously proclaims the redeeming power of Jesus Christ.

## 2. Dialogue

Dialogue is a non-biblical term which has become a key concept in contemporary missionary thought and is regarded as the basis of all ecumenism. It has been defined as "any honest confrontation between adherents of different religions where the participants meet and challenge each other testifying to the depths of their own experiences to what stands forth as being of ultimate concern." Since the 1938 Tambaram controversy centered around Hendrik Kraemer's epoch-making volume *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, dialogue has been brought to the forefront of missionary discussions. Among its chief advocates are Asian Christian thinkers such as Dr. P.D. Devandan and Dr. D.T. Niles who were driven into this concept as a reaction against Kraemer's evangelistic approach and his Barthian emphasis upon revelation from God. In Eastern Europe, J.L. Hromadka's spear-headed dialogue with Marxists; in the West, Bonhoeffer indirectly paved the way for Christian dialogue with secular man.

### a. Need for dialogue.

(i) *Christians in a pluralistic society.* Dialogue is said to be necessary because Christians everywhere are living in a pluralistic society. It is urgent because all men are under common pressures in search for justice and peace, and are faced with the challenge to live together as human beings. Dialogue is full of opportunity because "Christians can now, as never before, discover the meaning of the Lordship of and the implications for the mission of the church in a truly universal context of common living and common urgency."

(ii) *To save the church from itself.* It has been asserted that "dialogue" with men of other faiths is necessary for renewal of the church. Speaking of the church in India, Frank Whaling says that "dialogue with Hinduism will save the church from itself and its chronic inward lookingness." True dialogue, says Whaling, "would help restore the confidence of the church in India and put her in touch with the real situation rather than one of her own imagining." John Mbiti also asserts that African traditional religiosity can become an enrichment for Christianity in Africa. In a moving statement he says:

"Romanism, Canterburyism and Athenism in Africa are on temporary visas, Christianity is on a permanent term as a Mwananchi (i.e., Swahili for "citizen") in Africa, and it must be enriched from within and not from outside. For too long we have sung borrowed hymns from Europe and America. Now we are beginning to realize that these imported hymns have nearly become theologically all extinct.

The more we continue to sing them, the nearer we draw to extinguishing the freshness of the Christian faith in Africa. We must allow our rich heritage to make a contribution to Christianity."

(iii) *Dialogue will benefit the universal Christian Church.* Christians committed to dialogical approach are convinced that this method of encounter with men of other faiths will be of value to the whole church. For too long the dynamism of the Gospel has been imprisoned in the passive Hellenistic thought forms. The Eastern contributions were virtually swamped by the Greek, Roman, and medieval European elements. Hence the theology of the church has been cradled, nurtured, and formulated within Western Europe. The Western missionary took what he considered to be the legitimate way of expressing the Gospel and church structure as he knew it, and applied this to other countries where it was not necessarily relevant. Following the principles of dialogue, the church can learn a new dynamic way of expressing the Gospel which could release her from the imprisonment of outmoded Greek and medieval thought forms. "By dialogue with Hinduism," says Whaling, "Christians can come to a deeper understanding of their own Gospel and its nature. Not only will this be of value to Christian theology, it will also give insights to the whole world Church." As Radhakrishnan, former president of India has put it, "Perhaps Christianity which arose out of an Eastern background and early in its career got wedded to Graeco-Roman culture may find her rebirth today in the heritage of India." Pursuing a similar theme, John Mbiti makes these provocative remarks:

"We who have been educated in Europe and America sometimes reach a point of despair for Christianity in those continents, when we see what little impact it has on the morals and life of people there; we almost despair when we recall that in spite of Christianity in Germany, some thirty years ago six million Jews were massacred in the most abominable ways; we almost despair when we see that in spite of Christianity in America, such a big nation was engaged in a senseless war with Vietnam, and Negroes are treated as second-class citizens. We almost despair when we see that the apartheid policy in South Africa is backed up and given blessing by at least one brand of Christianity from Europe. What shall we do? Are we to inherit a largely bankrupt Christianity from the West, and cherish it in our bosoms without adding anything valuable to it? I believe that some enrichment can come to Christianity from our African background. We can add nothing to the Gospel, for this is an eternal gift of God; but Christianity is always a beggar seeking food and drink, cover and shelter from the cultures and times it encounters in its never ending journeys and wanderings."

#### b. Principles of dialogue.

(i) *Genuine openness.* The key guiding principle of true dialogue is genuine openness on both sides. The 1970 W.C.C. Zurich Consultation on "Dialogue between Men of Living Faiths" asserts that "the Christian is free to bear witness to what is most important in his own existence." This openness repudiates "not mission as such, but merely certain one-way patterns of mission in which those who spoke and acted

in the name of Christ have failed to listen to and learn from those to whom they were sent, about the latter's approach to and apprehension of reality . . . By opening ourselves to other men we may be enabled better to understand what God is saying to us in Christ."

(ii) *A common basis.* To be able to engage in a meaningful dialogue, a common basis is desirable. Without this, dialogue is impossible. Such a basis might be found in the assumption that God is already present and is at work in the lives of religious men.

(iii) *Understanding the other person.* True dialogue cannot be a one-way traffic. It is give and take. Dialogue requires a transparent willingness to listen to what the other is saying, and to recognize whatever truth is in it. Genuine dialogue is "mutually transforming." It therefore involves "the risk of one partner being changed by the other." This implies that there should be willingness to change. Unless there is this willingness, there is no point in engaging in dialogue.

(iv) *Personal encounter.* Whereas "Christian presence" can fulfill its aim without personal encounter, dialogue cannot be impersonal.

(v) *Commitment to one's own faith.* In genuine dialogue there is need for commitment of all parties involved to their own faith.

#### c. Theology of dialogue.

(i) Though "dialogue" is not a biblical word, dialogical approach is not without its biblical equivalent. The meeting of Jesus Christ with Nicodemus in John 3:1-22 has been cited by Dr. G.W. Peters in his paper on contemporary practices of evangelism as "the biblical pattern of dialogue in personal evangelism." Theologians of dialogical approach would, however, not consider this passage as a good guide to genuine dialogue.

Though Nicodemus comes to Jesus with an open mind, he is more of an inquirer who wants to learn as much as possible about Jesus. He is therefore content to ask questions and humbly wait for answers. A genuine dialogue, we are told, is a two-way traffic where the partners engage in a discussion on equal terms and from the position of commitment to their respective faiths. In this instance Nicodemus has little to offer in the dialogue, and indeed does not wish to proceed along those lines.

In a dialogical approach there should be willingness to listen to the other person. This is important in evangelism, but in this instance Jesus does not wait for Nicodemus to finish framing the first question, and answers a question Nicodemus does not ask. He even uses a vocabulary foreign to Nicodemus, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." In a genuine dialogical approach, words like "truly, truly" and "we speak what we know" and "unless one is born anew," etc., cannot be accommodated as they would arouse bitter confrontation and make dialogue fruitless.

Finally, though personal meeting with Nicodemus begins as a promising dialogue, it quickly becomes a monologue of a cut-and-dried proclamation. Nicodemus is even challenged to make a decision: "He who does not believe in him is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God" (John 3:18).

(ii) In the Synoptic Gospels there are many examples of people,

especially Pharisees, scribes and other groups, who initiate a dialogue with Jesus. Often such dialogues do not develop into what dialogical theologians regard as "give and take." Jesus seems to seize the opportunity to proclaim the Good News in parables or to give specific teaching. A lawyer who wants a dialogue on the legal definition of who a neighbor is is told the story of the Good Samaritan and it ends with a command: "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:25-37). The rich young man who wants a dialogue on what good deed to do so as to have eternal life is told to sell everything he has (Matt. 19:16-22). Jesus even refuses to engage in a dialogue where the other partner is not a sincere seeker of the truth (e.g., Luke 23:10).

(iii) In the Acts of the Apostles, we have examples of dialogue between Sanhedrin on one hand and John and Peter on the other (Acts 4); the members of the synagogue of freed men dispute with Stephen (Acts 6); Philip has dialogue with the Ethiopian (Acts 7); Paul argues with Epicurean and Stoic philosophers (Acts 17), and there are many instances of his dialogues with Jews. All these encounters of apostles with men of living faiths and ideologies begin as dialogues but always end as proclamation of "Jesus and the resurrection" and invitation to salvation through belief in the name of Jesus and repentance. The great error some of the dialogical theologians make is to assume that dialogue is the only legitimate way of Christian witness to men of living faiths and ideologies. Such a conclusion is unbiblical. The kind of dialogue we are asked to engage in is such that proclamation of Jesus and resurrection, repentance, and acceptance of his Lordship is kept at bay. Whereas the apostles welcomed dialogue, they did not hesitate to proclaim, with no uncertain voice, the whole kerygma.

(iv) The most disturbing thing about dialogical approach as advocated by some theologians is its presuppositions and uncertainty. The Christian is encouraged to enter boldly into dialogue with full openness because of his belief "in the power of the Holy Spirit to lead men into all truth." The Holy Spirit is at work in the Christian Church and outside it. The cosmic Christ is not the Christ of the church, but of the whole world. These presuppositions are "the basis of the quality of dialogue." Granted that the Holy Spirit cannot be confined within the church, it is difficult to assume that he has led all religions and ideologies into all truth. If this were so, then there is no point in our trying to witness to them. "All the truth" (John 16:13) does not mean that the church will be guided into the truth about all subjects. By inserting the definite article, "all the truth" is to be taken to mean the specific truth about the Person of Jesus and all the significance about what he said and did (R. V. G. Tasker). A genuine dialogue "is an attempt on the part of the Christian to find out what is true in the faith of other men, and assimilate such truth in proclamation of the cosmic Christ." This methodology despite its merits veers towards universalism and syncretism. It has potent dangers of "superficial consensus of finding the greatest common factor."

Though one of the basic principles of dialogue is that each person must understand and be committed to his own position, he must nevertheless be willing to change. Hence there is no guarantee of the outcome

of the dialogue. It could degenerate into "sophistic intellectualism and dilution of all convictions for the sake of false harmony," as the Zurich aide-memoire admits. If it is the Christian who has to change, then dialogical approach is not the answer to the Great Commission.

(v) Despite its demerits, discussion about dialogical approach has many useful insights for evangelical Christians including missionaries. In the past there has been a tendency by some white missionaries to approach men of other faiths with blunt arrogance and insensitivity and total lack of humility and understanding. Dialogical approach discourages such attitudes and calls us not to assume that other religions are but "a rotten heap of superstitions, taboos and magic." It is a challenge to us to be more loving in our approach to others and to be willing to take seriously the cultural, historical, and religious circumstances of the other person.

(vi) There is much to be said about the value of a dialogue in enriching Christianity. This must not be taken to mean "dialogue" will add anything to the Gospel of Jesus. But the way an African will choose to express Christianity within his cultural set-up will benefit not only the church in Africa but the universal Church. The white missionaries have imported into the church in Africa certain church institutions, characteristics, and mannerisms which are not necessarily Christian and which have tended to imprison the liberty of the Gospel in out-moded medieval thought forms. The Anglican church in Africa inherited a prayer book written four centuries ago in England, and we still follow its archaic liturgy and sing the Te Deum and Jubilate Deo in ancient dull tunes which have no parallel in our musical inspirations. We will preach wearing clerical collars and thick black cassocks even when the temperature is 110 degrees Fahrenheit. This is imprisoning the beauty of Christianity in the traditional dull English expression best fitted to the English snowy winter about which we know nothing. This could be the reason why the African Independent Churches are growing faster than historic churches. They have liberated Christianity from the dull Gothic cathedrals where it has been confined and are now expressing its riches as they trot chanting Christian hymns in African tunes along the city and village streets and the Gospel is often preached in the open-air — the traditional places of assembly. Where dialogue with men of other faiths brings such enrichment to Christian expression, it should be welcomed.

### 3. Proclamation

Proclamation or preaching may be defined as "the unmistakable communication of the Word of God to men by men under assignment from God" (*Baker's Dictionary of Theology*). It is "an open and public proclamation of God's redemptive activity in and through Jesus Christ" (*New English Dictionary*).

a. *Biblical terms.* In the New Testament, thirty different terms are used to describe the preaching of John the Baptist, Jesus and the apostles. We may single out three of the most important terms.

(i) *Kerysso*, "to be a herald, to proclaim," is used sixty-one times in the New Testament.

(ii) *Kerygma*, "the thing preached, or proclamation," occurs eight times in the New Testament. Six of the occurrences refer specifically to the apostolic proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

(iii) *Euangelizomai*, "to publish good news," is used over fifty times. The good news to be published almost always refers to "the Son of God as proclaimed in the Gospel." While *kerysso* tells us something about the activity of preaching, *euangelizomai* emphasizes the quality of the message itself. "Proclamation" is not without precedent in the Old Testament. The Hebrew prophets were the forerunners of the apostolic herald. They proclaimed the message of God under divine impulse. The Hebrew word *nagad* is used to describe prophetic proclamation of judgment and future hope of salvation, while *qara* refers to their cry against the iniquities of the people and the leaders. The Septuagint uses *kerysso* more than thirty times, both in the secular sense of official proclamation on behalf of the king and in the religious sense of prophetic utterance. Jonah is told to "preach" (Septuagint *Kerysso*) and Noah is designated a preacher (*keryx*) of righteousness.

#### b. Content of the proclamation.

(i) In the Synoptic Gospels the content of the message is the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. Jesus is portrayed as the one who came "heralding the Kingdom of God." With the coming of Jesus, "God's eternal sovereignty was now invading the realm of the evil powers and winning the decisive victory." This is the basic content of Jesus' *kerygma*.

(ii) In the rest of the New Testament, the content of *Kerygma* is "Christ." The apostolic message is a declaration of the "redemptive-historical facts of Christ's life, death, resurrection, glorification, and coming again, coupled with a call to repentance and faith. This is expressed variously as proclamation of "Christ Crucified" (I Cor. 1:23); "Christ Raised" (I Cor. 15:12); "Christ Jesus the Lord" (II Cor. 4:5). The change of emphasis from "the kingdom" as the *kerygma* to "Christ" is simply because the apostles were convinced that Jesus was the Kingdom. To enter the Kingdom one has to make a decision concerning that Kingdom.

C. H. Dodd has made a great contribution to New Testament scholarship in his discussion and crystallization of the primitive *kerygma*. In his research the content of the apostolic message emerges as "a proclamation of the death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus that led to an evaluation of his person as both Lord and Christ, confronted man with the necessity of repentance, and promised the forgiveness of sins" (R. H. Mounce). Rudolf Bultmann, however, regards much of the proclamation of the apostles as "myth." This has led him to work out an existentialist *kerygma* which differs markedly from the apostolic preaching and the historic Christian faith. In the words of Alan Richardson, Bultmann's *kerygma* "is in fact, 'another gospel,' not the historic Gospel of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Richardson warns that much confusion is caused by investing

New Testament words with new philosophical meaning.

#### c. Features of the proclamation.

(i) *Divine impulse*. The Old Testament prophets were prompted to proclaim by irresistible divine impulse — nothing could silence them from declaring their message. Jesus does not allow anything to delay or interfere with his preaching program because the purpose of his coming was to preach (Mark 1:38). Peter and John are compelled to tell the Sanhedrin, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20), and Paul declares that he is under obligation to preach the Gospel, "How terrible it would be for me if I do not preach the Gospel" (I Cor. 9:16 TEV). He urges Timothy to preach the message "to insist upon telling it whether the time is right or not" (II Tim. 4).

(ii) *Open statement of the truth*. Unlike "Christian presence," apostolic proclamation is open declaration of the content of *kerygma*. Paul refused to practice cunning or tamper with God's Word, but rather he sought to "commend himself" to every man's conscience by the open statement of the truth (II Cor. 4:2). He does not want the message to be obscured with eloquent wisdom and lofty words (I Cor. 1:17, 2:1-4).

(iii) *Persuasion and patience*. Despite a deep sense of divine compulsion and urgency, apostolic proclamation was not done simply on the basis of "take it or leave it." Although Timothy is to be "urgent in season and out of season," he is also to be "unfailing in patience." Our Lord was ready for an extensive and penetrating dialogue with a Samaritan woman; Paul is his missionary outreach claims to have become "all things to all men that by all means he might win some." In our proclamation, urgency and patience must go together. John Stott's word of advice should be heeded, "We must never resort to the use of human pressure techniques, or attempt to contrive a 'decision.' Our responsibility is to be faithful in preaching the word; the results of the proclamation are the responsibility of the Holy Spirit and we can afford to wait patiently for him to work. . . . However solemn our commission and urgent our message, there can be no possible justification for a brusque and impatient manner."

#### Conclusion

Christian presence, dialogue, or proclamation? Understood in their biblical context, each of these terms may have a place in evangelism. There can be no hard and fast rules about methods of evangelism other than being faithful to the Scriptures. Some of the "Christian presence" and dialogical theologians, however, have taken these terms as the only legitimate way of witnessing the Gospel to men of other faiths and ideologies. And yet the exposition of the theology of these terms lacks the urgency, the dynamism of the apostolic proclamation, and the certainty of the Good News and the judgment of the Gospel. Apostolic proclamation must be the basis of all true Christian evange-

lism at all times. We are sent to proclaim Jesus Christ and the resurrection. We must be present to be able to proclaim, and the kind of life we live in the midst of men of other faiths should be a witness to the world. Our presence cannot, however, be the static silence advocated by some. Many times our proclamation will be dialogical, but not a mere intellectual exchange of words and ideas. In the course of the dialogue, the Christian will not hesitate to proclaim "Christ and him crucified," for we are not ashamed of the Gospel. Our proclamation nevertheless is not to be conducted with the arrogance and insensitivity that disregard the cultural and religious background of the other person.

In certain situations, proclamation being a personal way of communicating the Gospel must involve a struggle to achieve understanding and to establish a human relationship. Such was the struggle of Paul to become, "All things to all men, that I might by all means win some" (I Cor. 9:22). Having preached the Gospel, we must let people express its riches from their own cultural background. Evangelical theologians should as a matter of urgency and through inspiration of Lausanne 1974 work out a positive biblical theology of "Christian Presence, Dialogue and Proclamation."

In true biblical evangelism no wedge should be drawn between these terms. The apostolic approach was by and large "dialogical-proclamation." The challenge is for Christian men everywhere to proclaim the whole Gospel faithfully with urgency and patience from Jerusalem to the teeming cities of the world and unto the utmost villages of the earth. "Let the earth hear his voice."

## EVANGELISM IN BIBLICAL HISTORY AND CONTEMPORARY LIFE

*Chul-Ha Han*

*Dr. Han, Seoul, Korea, is a Professor at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary.*

*Old Testament history as the history of Good News*

"Evangelism attempts to bring all men into living, active fellowship with God through Jesus Christ as divine Savior and through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, and to gather them into the fellowship of the church. It endeavors also to lead them to express their Christian discipleship in every area of human life, that the Kingdom of God may be realized" (Dawson C. Bryan, "Evangelism" in *Twentieth Century Encyclopedia*). In short, evangelism is the act of bringing the good news which God has given through Jesus Christ to all mankind so that the Kingdom of God may be realized. Although in Old Testament times Jesus Christ did not yet appear in the flesh as he did in the New Testament, yet the good news of God was never lacking. The Old Testament good news was given in the form of "promise" and "hope."

Old Testament history is the history of the life of Israel. It has many aspects and must not be simplified. But from the New Testament viewpoint the essential point of that history certainly should be interpreted as a history of good news. Not only the God-chosen people, but also mankind in general was never lacking the good news. To fallen mankind, which deserves only punishment of God, God was always gracious to grant the good news, especially in the form of promise and prophecy. Thus God has prepared the gospel history ever clearer as time progressed.

The calling of Abraham can be considered as the beginning of the good news in the Old Testament, though we can find many examples of good news of God already before the time of Abraham. To Abraham the promise of the blessing of all mankind was given. The blessing of all mankind was indeed good news, even more because it was from God himself. To fallen mankind God granted this good news in the form of promise. God did not stop with this one announcement of good news but was working throughout Old Testament history. God was, of course, the God of justice and judgment. Therefore the history of fallen humanity as well as the history of Israel, can be seen more in terms of divine judgment. Constant misery, wars, captivity, and famine were the characteristic of human history. This human misery can be interpreted in many ways. But at the last analysis the interpretation of human suffering in terms of human responsibility before God is most appropriate to give us hope and courage to face it in the future.

The purpose of the history was not in punishment as such. The true end is seen in the good news which developed gradually. This fact becomes more and more apparent as time progressed. Through Moses the promise of a "good land" is confirmed. Moses is always related to "law." But the positive purpose of law was the blessing of God. Es-