

What does it mean to ask about the *point* of an assertion?

It means to ask at least three questions:

(1) What is the *question* to which the assertion is intended to give an answer?

(2) Who is the *subject* of the assertion?

(3) Under what conditions would the assertion be *true*? (What would have to be the case about the subject of the assertion in order for the assertion to be true? And how, if at all, could one determine whether or not these conditions are fulfilled?)

Perhaps another thought worth pursuing is that asking about the point of something is asking what difference it makes, or would make. “What’s the point?!”—“What difference does it make?!” “Who cares?!” “So what?!”

In any event, one is still asking only about the *meaning* of an assertion, not about its truth, when one asks under what conditions it is or would be true, and how, if at all, one could determine whether or not these conditions are fulfilled (cf. Wittgenstein, as quoted by P. Sherry. See also R. Trigg on the difference between two ways of asking about the point of something).

The more I think about it, the more I wonder whether I won’t come around to a position very like John Knox’s, according to which all theology, including christology, explicates the being or identity of the church. In fact, I suspect I ought to work through especially those works of Knox that try to establish a way of being related to the past that transcends objectifying recollection. And doesn’t this perhaps have very much to do with the Whiteheadian distinction between perception in the pure mode of presentational immediacy, or in the mixed mode of symbolic reference, on the one hand, and perception in the pure mode of causal efficacy, on the other (this distinction being the counterpart, clearly, of the distinction between empirical history and existential history, *Historie* and *Geschichte*, external and internal history)?

The church is the community of faith and witness that exists always and only as the response to a prior historical event, an event that it responds to as the real presence of God Godself, offering God's love as the sole ultimate ground of the being and meaning of our lives. This event it at once remembers, experiences still, and interprets as Jesus the Christ.

Analogously, the U.S.A. is the community that exists always and only as the nation brought forth upon this continent by our forefathers, dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal, and so forth.

What reason, if any, is there to delimit the polemic implied by my own answer to the second question, as to the subject of the christological assertion, to the revisionary alternative of the historical Jesus? Why shouldn't it also be directed against Bultmann's alternative of the (Christ-)kerygmatic Jesus as well as the more classical alternatives of the Jesus of scripture or of the New Testament or of the dogmatic definitions of the post-apostolic church?

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