



# The Voice

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**THE VOICE**  
of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College

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**The Problem of Mobile Ministers**

A guest speaker at a missionary conference spoke with conviction when he said that more could be accomplished on the mission fields today if it were not for the fact that many are tied down too much to their homes and stations and do not get around to preach to the hungry multitudes.

A minister who had reached the age of retirement once said in private conversation that ministers should not become unduly attached to their parish. To buy a house seemed inadvisable because of the tendency to strike roots deep where one owned property. This action might make it difficult for him to leave when the church has already lost interest in retaining him.

Now, what degree of mobility must the minister possess? This is an important question for the minister as well as for the congregation. We sense a kind of restlessness among ministers. Many of them are on the move. Three, four, five years pass by and then they resign from their charges. Why is this so? Some want to continue their studies. Others feel led to accept another church. Many sincere church members are bewildered by this and have begun to ask some embarrassing questions to which we must pay attention.

Let us agree that the Head of the Church transfers His servants from place to place according to his pleasure and providence. However, to make Him responsible for every ministerial move would be going too far.

Many motives may affect the minister in his decision to transfer. For one, it represents an opportunity for promotion. For another, it is the response to a deep inward conviction of God's guidance. For others, again, it is an honest attempt to get away before the gathering of the storm. Many churches experience great difficulties at one time or another which involve the minister either directly or indirectly. Some ministers have a remarkable ability for sensing trouble well in advance and know when to submit their resignations. They would not be caught lingering one day longer than is desirable. When the storm breaks, they are gone and have already enjoyed the warm reception of the new congregation.

But others are not as fortunate and must stay to face the storm and often experience great difficulties and sustain certain losses. The difficulty in making this decision is increased by the fact that once a man has apparently lost face in one situation, others will hesitate to extend a call to him. To leave in time may then be the wise thing to do. Such early leaving may spare the minister and save the situation in a church.

However, there are other facts to be considered. The early departure may show up a weakness in the minister who fails to face reality and leaves the flock to cope with a difficult situation without proper leadership at a time when leadership is sorely needed. He may simply bequeath the problem to his successor.

There is definitely something to be said in favor of a longer term of service in a church. A congregation requires time to make adequate adjustments to a new pastor. Once the members have adjusted to the man who serves them well, they trust him not only as a preacher but as a family friend. He may be compared to the friendly family physician who knows almost all about the family history, their joys and sorrows, their fortunes and misfortunes, their financial position and their individual personality traits. He can even chat intelligently with them about their relatives. If the preacher is a studious man, he will not often complain about having to scrape the bottom of the barrel to feed his flock. He will bring to the table an abundance out of his treasury of the old and the new, with the new predominating. His messages will have both flavor and freshness and his audience will not weary of hearing him. Naturally, he will provide for wholesome variation by inviting guest speakers as the need and the occasion may demand. Beyond that, he will look well after the spiritual needs of the flock and keep them satisfied.

If, however, a frequent shifting of pastors becomes an apparent necessity through avoidable or unavoidable circumstances, through the restlessness of pastor or people or both, or even because of divine guidance, then some provision ought to be made to prevent these changes from causing confusion and instability. It is a well-known fact that incoming ministers often attempt to introduce some changes in the organization and functioning of the church. Usually, most of these are introduced during the first year. If the change is good and necessary, this may be the most suitable time to make it. But often the changes are introduced to suit the minister as much as the church. Frequently they are presented to the church for ratification before the members are fully convinced of their necessity. Now, if every minister who succeeds the other after a few short years of service should attempt this, the church would become confused and feel uncertain. It is by no means easy for a church composed of members of all age-groups, to adjust readily to a constant round of innovations.

Under these circumstances, we are led to ask whether it is advisable that pastors be given so much administrative responsibility. Would it not be better to place many of the administrative duties into the hands of a duly constituted body of church members with a constitutional provision for continuity of office? Such a body could guide the church with a certain degree of stability during the times of frequent pastoral changes which often include an interimship, and thus strengthen the confidence of the church in times of transition. Such a body could be very useful in curbing the passion for power of some ministers on the one hand, and ensure an attitude of responsibility of the church members on the other, and thus provide for both stability and responsibility.

I have come to the conclusion that under ordinary circumstances it is better for the pastor and for the church if the pastor does not preside at business meetings. For once, he ought not to assume the neutral position of a chairman when vital issues

affecting church life are debated on the floor. If he does, he may either fail to give adequate leadership or else run the risk of becoming a party-man faced with an opposing faction, which may finally advocate his removal from office or make it so difficult for him that he will resign as the only way out of a difficult situation.

A pastor who confines himself more to the spiritual ministry of feeding the flock and seeks to stay clear of all sorts of needless entanglements in the many activities of church life will soon discover that he derives a much greater satisfaction from his more restricted ministry. He will soon sense that he grows in an area where he can render a much needed and appreciated service. He will also find that he can last much longer in the midst of friends whose spiritual welfare he promotes by well-prepared messages of vital truth presented with power generated in the secret place of prayer. He will enjoy the prayerful support of a satisfied membership.

J. H. Quiring

## Ein ganzes Evangelium fuer das gegenwaertige Zeitalter

Ein sorgfältiges und eingehendes Studium der neutestamentlichen Evangeliumsverkündigung hinterläßt keinen Zweifel an der Tatsache, daß die Apostel in der frohen Botschaft die volle Erfüllung der alttestamentlichen Weissagungen in bezug des verheißenen Messias sahen. Das Evangelium von Christus war für sie die Gotteskraft, welche allen Menschen Rettung bringt — den Juden vornehmlich, und auch den Griechen (Röm. 1:16). Für die selbstgerechten Juden und die weltweisen Griechen hatte der Apostel Paulus ein und dieselbe Heilsbotschaft (vgl. 1. Kor. 1, 23). Die Apostel und die Urgemeinde stellten sich auch unter die volle Verantwortung des weltweiten Missionsauftrags, wie Christus ihnen denselben gegeben (Matth. 28, 18-20). Wir finden auch nicht, daß die Schreiber des Neuen Testaments die Gemeinde beruhigt haben mit der Aussicht der Erfüllung und Vollendung dieser Aufgabe in der Zukunft durch ein erlöstes Israel. Für die Urgemeinde war mit dem Kommen Jesu — mit seinem Tod und seiner Auferstehung — der volle Tag des Heils angebrochen. Mit großer Bestimmtheit ruft Paulus aus: "Sehet jetzt ist die angenehme Zeit, jetzt ist der Tag des Heils" (2. Kor. 6, 2). Ein volles Heil, ein ganzes Evangelium, für die gegenwärtige Zeit — mit all seinen herrlichen Vorrechten und mit all seinen großen Verantwortungen — charakterisiert die Evangeliumsverkündigung der Apostelzeit.

Es hat je und je theologische Richtungen gegeben, welche das Schwergewicht des göttlichen Heilsratschlusses in Christus auf ein zukünftiges Zeitalter verlegt haben. Anstatt in der Eschatologie

— welche Christi Wiederkunft zum Mittel- und Brennpunkt hat — nur die Vollendung des Reiches Gottes zu sehen, spricht man von der Errichtung eines Reiches, das auf andern Grundlagen aufgebaut werden soll als das Reich Gottes in der Gegenwart. Die mit solcher Auffassung verbundenen theologischen Verschiebungen im göttlichen Heilsprogramm haben oft gefährliche Auswirkungen gehabt im Leben und Dienst der Gemeinde Jesu Christi. Durch diese sogenannte „Aufschubs-Theorie“ (Postponement Theory) entbindet man sich von der persönlichen Verantwortung für das Ausleben der vollen Lehre Jesu, sowie für die Erfüllung des großen Missionsauftrags im gegenwärtigen Zeitalter.

Wir möchten in dieser kurzen Abhandlung einige dieser unberechtigten Verschiebungen andeuten, und auf die Gefahren hinweisen, die aus solcher Betonung entstehen.

### I. Eine unberechtigte Verschiebung der Herrschaft Jesu.

Der Herr Jesus begann seine öffentliche Lehrtätigkeit mit der feierlichen Ankündigung: „Die Zeit ist erfüllet, und das Reich Gottes ist herbeigekommen. Tut Buße und glaubt an das Evangelium“ (Mark. 1, 15). Durch seinen ganzen Lehr- und Retterdienst bleibt dieses die zentrale Botschaft Jesu. Der Eingang in dieses Reich Gottes (oder in diese „Herrschaft Gottes“) ist und bleibt immer dieselbe: „Es sei denn, daß jemand von neuem geboren werde, so kann er das Reich Gottes nicht sehen ... so kann er nicht in das Reich Gottes kommen“ (Joh. 3, 3, 5). Durch seine Vollmacht, in besonderer Weise auch über die bösen Geister, gab er seinen Zeitgenossen den Beweis, daß das Reich Gottes zu ihnen gekommen sei, und zwar in der Person des Messias: „So ich aber die Teufel durch den Geist Gottes austreibe, so ist ja das Reich Gottes zu euch gekommen“ (Matth. 12, 28).

Die Schlußfolgerung daß der Unglaube und der Ungehorsam der Juden den Herrn Jesus veranlaßten seinen ursprünglichen Plan zu ändern und die Errichtung seines Reiches auf ein zukünftiges Zeitalter zu verschieben, kann man wohl kaum aus der Lehre Jesu und der Apostel ziehen. Wohl spricht der Herr Jesus von der Vollendung seiner Herrschaft und dem Offenbarwerden seines Reiches in der Ölbergsrede (Matth. 24), aber diese Vollendung steht in enger Verbindung mit seiner Mission in Niedrigkeit und ist im vollen Einklang mit derselben. Der Apostel Johannes spricht gleichfalls von der Vollendung des Gottesreiches, wenn er ausruft: „Halleluja! denn der allmächtige Gott hat das Reich eingenommen“ (Offbr. 19, 6).

Durch sein Kommen auf diese Welt — durch seine Lehre, seine Taten, sein Leiden und Sterben, seine Auferstehung und Himmelfahrt — erfüllte Christus den Zweck seiner göttlichen Sendung. Er kam das Verlorene zu suchen und selig zu machen (Luk. 19, 10); er kam, nicht um sich dienen zu lassen, sondern um zu dienen und sein Leben zu lassen zur Erlösung für viele (Mark. 10, 45). Durch Tod und Auferstehung hat Christus die Basis — die einzige Basis — geschaffen für die Errichtung seines Reiches, ob gegen-

wärtig oder zukünftig. Paulus lehrt: „Denn dazu ist Christus gestorben und auferstanden und wieder lebendig geworden, daß er über Tote und Lebendige Herr sei“ (Roem. 14, 9). Paulus sieht das Reich Gottes nicht nur in seiner zukünftigen Erscheinungsform, sondern in der Gegenwart, in der Herrschaft Jesu im Leben der Gläubigen (vgl. Röm. 14, 17). In seinem Buch, **Weltreich und Gottesreich in Prophetie und Erfüllung**, betont Fritz Hubmer die Bedeutung dieser Perspektive: „Die unverrückbare Mitte aller Erscheinungsformen des Reiches Gottes ist der Sohn Gottes — Jesus Christus. Von ihm geht die Verwirklichung des Reiches Gottes aus, auf ihn geht sie zu“ (S. 17).

Wir dürfen daher die Herrschaft Jesu nicht auf die Zukunft verschieben oder darauf beschränken. Alle Lebensgebiete des Gotteskindes, des Reichsbürgers, müssen dieser Herrschaft unterordnet werden. Wir dürfen diese Herrschaft auch nicht nur auf das „innere Leben“ der Gläubigen beziehen, und das äußere Leben von Staat oder Gesellschaft bestimmen lassen. Ob der Herr Jesus auch uns den Vorwurf machen muß: „Was heißt ihr mich aber Herr, Herr, und tut nicht was ich euch sage?“ (Luk. 6, 46). Enge verbunden mit dieser Verschiebung der Herrschaft Jesu ist

### II. Eine unberechtigte Verschiebung der Ethik Jesu.

Die scharfe und unbiblische Trennung von Gemeinde Gottes und Reich Gottes, von Heilspredigt und Reichspredigt, von seiten mancher evangelischer Theologen hat sich negativ ausgewirkt für die christliche Ethik. Dr. C. I. Scofield, zum Beispiel, lehrt daß die Bergpredigt in erster Linie ihre buchstäbliche Anwendung findet auf das zukünftige Friedensreich. Nach Scofield ist es die Konstitution für den neuen Gottesstaat der Endzeit. In diesem Sinne muß man die Bergpredigt auch als „reines Gesetz“ verstehen, das nur indirekt auf den Christen der Gegenwart anzuwenden ist. (Siehe Scofield Bibel, Anmerkungen zur Bergpredigt). Hier haben wir eine tragische Verschiebung in der Lehre Jesu für das Leben seiner Jünger! Man entbindet sich von der gegenwärtigen Verantwortung und von den Kosten der Jüngerschaft indem man die ethischen Belehrungen und Forderungen Jesu als zukünftiges Reichsgesetz bezeichnet.

Im Missionsbefehl, der von derselben theologischen Schule wenigstens zum Teil angenommen wird als geltend für dieses Zeitalter der Gnade, sagt der Herr Jesus: „...und lehret sie halten alles, was ich euch befohlen habe“ (Matth. 28, 20). Man kann und darf den Weg des Kreuzes nicht trennen vom Werk des Kreuzes. In seinem Buch, **Die Kosten der Jüngerschaft**, weist Dietrich Bonhoeffer daraufhin, daß eine Gnade ohne Jüngerschaft eine „billige Gnade“ ist (S. 38). Leider begnügen sich viele Bekenner Christi mit dem Segen einer „innern Heilserfahrung“ und verschieben die Nachfolge und das Ausleben der Lehre Jesu auf eine zukünftige Zeitperiode. Solche Verschiebung der Forderungen Jesu auf das Tausendjährige Reich bietet auch einen leichten theologischen Ausweg, wenn man sich mit dem Problem der Wehr-

losigkeit und mit der Friedenslehre auseinandersetzen soll. Das zukünftige Reich wird als ein Friedensreich geschildert; Christus wird als der Friedenskönig in diesem Reiche herrschen. Heute, jedoch, ist es des Christen Pflicht, sich an den Kriegen der Weltreiche zu beteiligen!

Wenn das Reich Jesu Christi (nach der Lehre der Schrift) in der Vollendung ein Friedensreich sein soll — und das glauben wir — dann kann es heute nichts weniger sein. Der Herr Jesus ist heute unser Friede (Eph. 2, 14); sein Reich ist heute ein Reich des Friedens (Röm. 14, 17); wir sollen heute Friedenskinder und Friedensstifter sein (Matth. 5, 9). Es ist wohl kaum zu erweisen, wie viel Unheil für das Reich Gottes entstanden ist durch solch eine unschriftmäßige Verschiebung in der christlichen Ethik. Viele Christen haben als Folge die Herrschaft Jesu von manchen Lebensgebieten ausgeschaltet und eine Doppel-Ethik aufgebaut — eine für den Erdenbürger, die ander für den Himmelsbürger.

Die Aufschubtheorie hat auch weittragende Folgen für die Mission der Gemeinde.

### III. Eine unberechtigte Verschiebung des Missionsauftrags Jesu.

Wenn man im Zeitalter der Gnade und der Gemeinde nur eine Parenthese in dem göttlichen Heilsprogramm sieht, dann liegt der Gedanke nahe, den Missionsauftrag Jesu, der mit der Errichtung des Reiches Gottes verbunden ist, auf eine zukünftige Zeitperiode zu verlegen. Nach dieser Auffassung ist der Zweck der gegenwärtigen Evangelisation der Gemeinde nur das Herausrufen Einzelner; die Massenevangelisation der Nationen wird noch einmal durch eine bekehrtes Israel ausgeführt werden. Verschiedene biblische Begriffe und Schriftstellen werden als Beweismaterial für diese Auffassung gebraucht. Es wird, zum Beispiel, hingewiesen auf den Unterschied zwischen dem "Evangelium von Christo" (Röm. 1, 16), und dem "Evangelium vom Reich" (Matth. 24, 14). Letzteres, so wird behauptet, ist das Evangelium des zukünftigen Reiches; ersteres, das Evangelium für unser Zeitalter. Man übersieht, jedoch, daß Paulus vom "Reich Gottes" predigte, und daß dieser Begriff sich bei ihm deckt mit der Heilsbotschaft (vgl. Apg. 28, 23. 30). Die Erklärung, daß wir in Matth. 28, 18-20 einen "Reichbefehl" haben, der sich unterscheidet vom "Missionsbefehl" in Apg. 1, 8, ist auch nicht haltbar auf Grund der Exegese dieser Schriftstellen. Wir haben wohl verschiedene Formulierungen des Missionsauftrags, aber nur einen Befehl, der allen Nachfolgern Christi gilt, und für dessen Ausführung die ganze Gemeinde von heute verantwortlich ist. Die Stelle in Apostelgeschichte 15, 14-17 wird von Dr. Scofield als Begründung für diese Teilung des Missionsauftrags als stärkster Beweis angeführt. Jakobus braucht das Zitat aus Amos 9, 11-12, jedoch, gerade zur Bestätigung der Heidenmission in der Gegenwart (zur Rechtfertigung der Mission des Apostels Petrus im Hause des Kornelius) und nicht als Grundlage für eine Theorie, welche die Heidenmission als Folge der Wiederherstellung Israels sieht.

## The New Missionary Role

A most drastic change in missionary strategy has been in the role the missionary is required to play. The change in this area has been so drastic that those acquainted with the traditional responsibilities of a missionary have begun to wonder whether the missionary has become obsolete. Missionaries themselves have been frustrated not knowing just what their assignment is. What am I being sent to the field for, if I am no longer to bear the heavy duty of administrative leadership?" they ask. Supporting constituencies have asked: Just what are our missionaries doing on the field. And so the missionary has had difficulty in explaining to himself and to others the involved and significant, but less conspicuous role, he is now called upon to play. It shall be our aim to help to clarify our thinking in this respect.

### I. The New Mission Field

The change in the missionary role is not necessarily from a wrong to a right approach. It is not only attributable to a new enlightenment of the present generation and to better trained personnel. Some of the most modern strategies would never have worked a generation ago just as some of the old can no longer be employed today. Why? Because the church is facing a changed missionary field. The people being served are so different. Changes in the missionary role have simply been in keeping with Paul's principle, to become a Jew to the Jews and a Greek to the Greeks that by all means he might save some. So, changes in the field, call for changes of the missionary role. Not that the old was entirely wrong and the new right; but it is the question of pragmatic value. What method will work? What the are some of the changes of our missionary fields.

1. The universal consciousness of nationalism must be taken into account. Local pride in ethnic uniqueness is but of recent origin. Civilized countries have always been inclined to idolize patriotism while backward countries, overwhelmed by an inferiority complex, did not dare to demand world recognition as a sovereign power. Colonialism met with little opposition. In such a state of depression the missionary came as a good Samaritan to the man that had fallen among thieves. The underprivileged

Wir rühmen uns einer vollen und vollendeten Erlösung durch Christum. Dieses volle Heil verpflichtet uns zur vollen Verantwortung — zur Anerkennung der vollen Herrschaft Jesu, zum Ausleben der ganzen Lehre Jesu, und zur gehorsamen Erfüllung des großen Missionsauftrags Jesu. Der Herr helfe uns, ein ganzes Evangelium für die gegenwärtige Zeit zu lehren, zu predigen, und auszuleben.

soon appreciated deeply the altruistic spirit in which the missionary came to serve and gladly did the needy accept the alms offered them as the lame who sat at the beautiful gate of the magnificent missionary residence on the field. Nationalism has changed this attitude on the part of the native. He now has a different scale of values. Only that which can be related to the prestige and status of his own culture is acceptable. Although he may still be in need of alms, he no longer will accept them as such. He is no longer the begger in his own eyes, but a respected member of human society whose cultural values may be different but not inferior. The national resents being the beneficiary of missionary benevolence. Except for some smaller primitive tribes this is the changed psychological attitude that greets a missionary when he steps on to foreign soil. This is a far cry from the former admiration and acknowledged superiority ascribed to the foreign agent of the gospel when he arrived.

2. Local autonomy is a natural outgrowth of nationalism. Many mission fields come from a background where organizational control of society was weak. Tribal and other relatively small groups were more in the grip of traditional norms and mystic forces. These were often personified in witch doctors and hereditary succession of chiefs who ruled arbitrarily. Sociologically we would speak here more of primary and secondary groups. In the first instance we have in mind smaller unorganized groups who major in face to face relationships. They operate without a written constitution nor a clearly defined authoritarian structure. Such groups can never be too large nor rise to national magnitude or significance. The secondary groups again major in organization with clearly defined status structure and role requirements for each position. Only in this way can order be retained in a larger social framework and a mighty national power be developed. Colonial patterns emphasized organizational strength on the part of foreign powers to control the smaller primary social units of the aboriginals. In many instances missions came in to teach, train, and lead the unorganized tribal groups into a new life with orderly procedure in accordance with a church structure suggested by the Scriptures. Churches sprang up and needed leadership. Elders had to be ordained in every church and patterns of action were taught and organizations came into being. These called for church officers for which no traditional personnel was available. Nationals were taught and trained to meet this need. Responsibilities had to be clearly defined and a power structure projected. Education became imperative and constitutional procedures were followed. National leaders who could take up responsibilities in the field of economics and politics were also at a premium, and the training of these in western countries became of vital interest to colonial powers. Such trained leaders returned to give organizational structure to their own people and to unite them into larger and even national units which soon demanded independence. Foreigners were made to yield administrative posts to nationals and become the undesirable alies. This did not leave the national church

unaffected. The upsurge of national monopoly of the administration of the church in the mission field came naturally and in many instances caught missionaries and mission boards by surprise. It called for re-orientation.

3. The invasion of new cultures has also radically changed the mission field. The overloaded economic market of the west has long looked for expansion. Mass production has outrun consumption at home. Population explosion abroad held out promising opportunities. Increase of mechanization required the education of nationals so that they would be able to use western tools. Construction of roads and airfields, plus introduction of modern media of communications, such as newspapers and radios, brought a new way of life to the national. The elimination of illiteracy became a necessity. Secular powers motivated by economic, political and other motives took over responsibilities hitherto carried by the missionary. Governments built school systems, and medical centres. All of this resulted not only in a higher standard of living, but also produced more and more available national leadership. The missionary came to have less and less survival value for the national. At one time the missionary was needed for physical reasons on the mission field. Not so today. He must find his role, or close shop and go home.

## II. New Missionary Opportunity

The above may sound pessimistic. Has the night come, when no man can work? Not yet! The Lord has set before the missionary force with little strength an open door and no man can shut it. But we have to look for it in the light of present conditions rather than in the traditional frame of reference.

1. The new opportunity within the informal organization. Sociology claims that every formal organization co-exists with an informal one. This is not only theoretical but actual. Suppose we take a church or even a conference in which the organizational structure is complete and every office is filled. But outside the church's officialdom there is a member who distinguishes himself over a period of time by exemplary piety, spiritual insight, and unusual talent. However, he does not feel called to accept any position within the church for circumstantial or personal reasons. He wins the admiration and confidence of the people by what he is and what he does. Thus within the formal organization another organization is coming into being, namely an informal one. What are the contrasting characteristics of the two?

The formal emphasizes status or position, while the informal majors in personality. The formal stresses authority and prestige which is more related to the office than the office holder; the informal underscores influence and esteem which is more related to a person and to good role playing. For instance, a president of a company may have prestige because of his position; but if he plays his role slovenly he may have less esteem than the janitor who does an excellent job. In one case you may have far-reaching

authority but in the other instance you have tremendous influence. Supposing an officer who has played his role well may have to resign because of health or age and a new man steps in. The new man may have prestige, and authority, but the old retiring man has esteem and influence. If now these two work together it becomes an irresistible force. If the two should cease to harmonize then the formal organization becomes weak and can do very little. A young graduate from a school may move into a position of a formal organization, but unless he will be careful to secure the support of the informal he will not go too far.

How does this fit into the missionary concern? It is entirely in keeping with the words of Christ: "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." (Matthew 20:25-28).

Instead of position, he brings personality into play. Instead of wielding authority, he radiates influence. Instead of enjoying prestige, he earns esteem. Instead of ruling, he serves. Instead of driving, he leads. Jesus refused to be made king, but when he had gone alone to pray the disciples find him saying, "All men seek thee."

This is exactly the role Paul played. He says: "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more" (I Cor. 9:19). As far as we know He served not as an official of any local congregation but as a minister of the word.

2. The new opportunity of concentrating on the major missionary responsibility. In the mission field one can so easily major in minors. The apostles recognized this danger. In the days when the disciples were multiplied the apostles could so easily be sidetracked with duties of secondary importance. But they recognized the need of delegation minors to others, and said: "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:3-4). The major missionary role becomes unmistakably clear: "to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." These are functions that warrant their uninterrupted attention. Had the apostles not been insistent on this at this point the missionary outreach could so easily have been halted because they could have become so preoccupied with administrative responsibilities. Today one cannot but be concerned when so many missionaries are overburdened with organizational responsibilities.

First and foremost a missionary should be a man of prayer. It will not suffice to let those at home do the praying and those on the field only work. The ministry of prayer must be major part of the missionary role itself.

The ministry of the Word is the second imperative in the

missionary's role. No administrative pressure must be permitted to replace this responsibility. With the spread of civilization there are but few fields in which national talent cannot be found to be "appointed over this business."

3. The new missionary role is actually a return to the biblical pattern. This has already been indicated, by citing the example of Jesus and Paul. A further study will show that such was not singular or peculiar to them. James, the half-brother of Jesus, seems to have been rather stationary and involved in the organizational leadership in Jerusalem. All other apostles had a much wider ministry. Not only was Paul known throughout Asia Minor but according to Rev. 2:3, the Lord could use John to write to the seven churches in Asia Minor. Tradition may localize his ministry but the Scripture stresses his influence over a much wider scope. Nothing is mentioned of positions he held in any of the organizational structures of congregations.

Peter, the reputed first pope of Rome, does not give us any reason, in his epistles, to substantiate this Catholic tradition. He mentions Babylon in passing, but to what city he referred to by such designation is uncertain. The term is obscure. Even if we suppose it to be Rome, he mentions nothing of organizational involvement. He much rather indicates the wide range of influence and esteem by addressing himself "to the strangers scattered through Pontus, Galatia, Cappodocia, Asia, and Bithynia." Just where he was and what he did we are not told but that his ministry was spread over a wide area, is clearly recognized. Peter indicates the need of local organizations by giving specific instructions to those who held such posts (I Peter 5:1-4). But he speaks of these offices as belonging to local nationals not in any way as referring to himself.

Returning to Paul once more we find no instance where Paul involved himself locally in the organization of a church; he rather helped to organize and charge local brethren with such duties. He ordained others as elders in every church (Acts 14:23). He asked Titus to do likewise (Titus 1:5) In Corinth Paul even thanked God that he had not baptized but a few (I Cor. 1:14-17). Notice how in the just cited passage he detaches his role from local administration: "For Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel. . ." He instructed others how to conduct the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11:23-34) and how to exercise church discipline (I Cor. 5:1-13) but he himself remained an apostle at large.

Of the other apostles and their work we know less. The little information that comes to us is in keeping with the above. It is this biblical role which is now being pressed upon our missionaries. The organizational responsibilities are becoming less and less but the challenge to give themselves "continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word," is greater and more urgent than ever before. Many of our missionaries have come to see this and are applying themselves accordingly. However, the constituency needs to see this also and must not expect the reports from fields to picture our missionaries as mighty officials of ever-growing and



expanding organizations. The constituency must rejoice to have as their representatives people in the field of tremendous influence and esteem because of prayer and the ministry of the word.

How does this relate itself to Institutional Missions? In this article we have spoken more about missionary involvement in national church organizations, not institutional missions. The latter, although, in decline as a whole, may still be justified in certain areas where cultural progress is lagging or a unique approach is required, such as in a Mohammedan field. But even in such cases, once a church is come into being, the administration thereof belongs into the hands of nationals. It may result in temporary inefficiency and retard progress for a time, but in the long run Biblical methods are still the most productive.

J. J. Toews

## Modes of Revelation in the Old Testament

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews begins his epistle thus: In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets... These "many and varied ways" can, generally speaking, be grouped in four classes 1) the external manifestations, 2) the internal suggestions, 3) the mechanical mode, 4) the concursive operation. These classifications are not absolute; some revelations actually employ more than one mode, while certain revelations may not fit completely under any one of the modes mentioned. Bearing this reservation in mind, we shall briefly consider how each of the modes mentioned has become channels of revelation for mankind.

I. The most startling example of the first mode is, of course, the theophany. In this God appears in visible human form, as in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:9-10), or to Abraham under the oaks of Mamre (Gen. 18:1 f). There are other instances in which God speaks to man, but man instead of seeing a personal form, sees some other phenomena which seems to veil God from his vision. Such examples we find in the account of Moses before the burning bush (Ex. 3:3, 6) or again when God speaks to Job out of the whirlwind (Job 39:1). The most dramatic and large scale phenomena of this kind we find described in Exodus 19:9 — 20:22 (cf. Deut. 4:1023). All the children of Israel were assembled to hear the words spoken from Heaven, while the presence of Yahweh was manifested to them in a sight which made them tremble in awe before him. Through the Sinai assembly, the whole people became witnesses to the divine revelation and at the same time were pledged to observe all the laws which God afterwards gave to them through Moses. This accounts for the prominence given in the Scriptures (Neh. 9:14), and in the liturgy, (**Tamid**, v. 1 and the New Year's **musaf** "**Shaforat**"), to the Sinai revelation. Judah ha Levi is therefore in full accord with the spirit of Judaism

when he declares the Sinai revelation to be the greatest historical fact upon which the Jewish faith, as far as it is in truth revealed, rests. This is also the rabbinic view.

There are a large number of instances recorded in which God spoke to man where there is no indication that there was at the same time a manifestation visible to the outward eye. God spoke to Cain (Gen. 4:9-15), to Noah (Gen. 6:13), to Abraham (Gen. 12:1). Often these manifestations were for the purpose of giving personal directives, a promise (Gen. 12:1), a warning (Gen. 20:3), or a reprimand (Job 40), but more often, as was the case with the later prophets, a revelation, which was to be passed on to others, both individuals and nations in Israel or also among the gentiles. Among those who received such revelations, Moses stands out as the peer, according to the Pentateuch. In Numbers 12:6-8 this superiority is affirmed, because whereas God spoke to other prophets in visions, he spoke to Moses, "mouth to mouth." While this sets Moses apart from the other prophets in a certain sense, it does not, as we shall see later, make his revelation to be of a higher order than that of some humbler prophet.

II. The second general mode of revelation is that of internal suggestion. This is the typical form of receiving revelation according to Numbers 12:6. It would be difficult to distinguish between a "**dream**" and a "**vision**" as these terms are used in the Old Testament. We will therefore consider them interchangeable terms. Many of these instances are recounted in the Scriptures, and these are frequently introduced with words such as these, "And God came to... by night." or "the Lord appeared to... in a dream by night."

It is significant that dreams and vision are not restricted to the Israelites alone, but that gentiles may also have these manifestations, by which God makes known hidden things. Most notable instances are the dreams of Pharaoh (Gen. 41 f.), Nebuchadnezzar's vision (Daniel 2:7 f.), Balaam's vision in the night (Num. 22:9, 20). However, in the first two instances an interpreter from among the chosen race was needed to determine the significance of the dream. But in every instance, whether in Israel or beyond its confines, the dreams or rather their content, were regarded as having their origins with God, and they are so presented in the Old Testament.

But because this mode is of such a subjective nature, it was open to perversion and corruption. This is exactly what happened; Israel had its share of false prophets who claimed to have had revelations from God. The distinction between the false and the true, objectively, was that while the latter received their message from God, the former prophesied "the deceit of their own hearts." The problem of discerning the true from the false is dealt with in a number of Old Testament passages, e.g. Deut. 13, Deut. 18 and Jer. 29.

Often, instead of coming by way of dreams or visions, this inner revelation was inspired by some natural phenomenon or action of man. The prophet may see some natural object or action



of man, and while he sees it, a revelation is given to him. There may be those who say that this is not, strictly speaking, a revelation; the prophet suddenly perceives an analogy or some similarity between what he is seeing and some spiritual problem that lies heavily in his consciousness. The Old Testament prophets, however, were not in any doubt as to the source of their message. Take the instance of Jeremiah's visit to the potter's house (Jer. 18). Jeremiah, at the Lord's command, goes down to the potter's house and watches the potter at work. Suddenly the "Word of the Lord" comes to him with an impact that leaves no doubt in his mind that it is indeed divine revelation. The message he receives and which he is to proclaim goes much beyond any analogous elements that he may have observed in the experiences of the potter (cf. v. 7-11).

The ministry of Jeremiah was especially rich in this type of revelatory experience. Examples are: the blooming almond tree, 1:11; the boiling pot, 1:13; the basket of figs, 24:1; the yoke of wood, ch. 27; and the potter's flask broken in the valley of Hinnom. The prophet Amos saw the basket of summer fruit, 8:1; and also the man standing at the wall with a plumb line, 7:7, as well as the vision of locusts, 7:1-3. These sights or visions were the occasion, rather than the origin of their message.

III. In contrast to the already mentioned modes, the mechanical mode receives relatively little consideration in the Old Testament. This, however, is not to say that it may not have played a rather prominent part in the popular religion of Israel. But we must distinguish between the popular religion which took over many practices and beliefs, current in the world in which Israel lived, and the religion as set forth in the Old Testament or endorsed by its writers. And yet some means of revelation by mechanical means are indicated.

Joseph is said to have had a cup by means of which he divined, (Gen. 44:5). The lot was used to disclose the treachery of Achish, (1 Sam. 14:40-42), to assign territory to the Hebrew tribes, (Num. 26:55, also 33:54), to determine policy (Esther 9:24) and to indicate who was responsible for the predicament of the ship and its crew in ch. 1 of the book of Jonah. The last two instances did not occur in an Israelite situation, and yet in the manner they are recorded, there is implied the belief that they were authentic means of revelation.

How the lot was cast is not disclosed, but at certain times Urim and Thummim are used to reveal the hidden. The exact significance of these two terms cannot be established beyond doubt, but a number of scholars, such as H. P. Smith, Robinson, Oesterley and Rowley, agree that possibly they were two flat stones. One side of each stone was called Urim, the other side of each stone, Thummim. This view helps to account for the plural form of the two names. If the two lots were cast and they landed with different sides upward, then there was no answer; if they landed with both Urim up, the answer was negative and if with Thummim up,

then the answer was positive. An interesting account of the use of these two lots is found in 1 Samuel 14:40-42 (Urim probably meant guilty, Thummim meant innocent).

The Scriptures contain serious warnings against the practice of magic and witchcraft in Israel. "It is an abomination unto the Lord" Deut. 18:10. Saul sought to exterminate the practice out of Israel and ended up by consulting the witch of Endor (1 Sam. 28:7 f). The prophets, particularly Isaiah (Isa. 8:19 f) and Ezekiel (13:17-23, 21:21) warned against its evils, urging the people rather to search out the one, true God. However, the influence of Egypt and Babylon, the two great centres of soothsaying and divination, seem to have exerted such an influence on Israel that we find traces of this influence even in the formal worship of Yahweh as it was carried on in Israel.

IV. The last named mode, the concursive operation is that form of revelation which is "illustrated in an inspired psalm or epistle or history in which no human activity — not even the control of the will — superseded, but the Holy Spirit works in, with and through them all in such a manner as to communicate to the product, qualities distinctly superhuman." This mode then, broadly speaking, refers to the revelation contained in the written word. It is obvious that this mode often overlaps with those already mentioned. And yet probably the greater part of the Old Testament, was not the result of one of the earlier mentioned modes of revelation; at least, it is not stated, that the revelation came in any of those ways. And even those portions of the Law, the Psalms and the Prophets, which were received by the writers through a vision or some other means already mentioned, when they were written down and were later read by other generations, they formed for these people, a source of revelation. Thus we find that the reform instituted by Josiah, was motivated by the finding of the Book of the Law in the Temple, (2 Kings 22:8). Ezra read from the Book of the Law, and was minded "to teach in Israel statutes and judgments" (Ezra 7:10). Nehemiah read from "the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had given unto Israel" (Neh. 8:1) and it was a revelation to the people concerning their true state.

Briefly we have sketched the modes which Yahweh used to speak to his people, records of which have been preserved in the Old Testament. There was great flexibility and variety, and nothing stereotyped and mechanical in His disclosures. And yet in spite of this variety, and in spite of the fact that we might consider some modes of revelation to be much more reliable than others, i.e. much less subjective and prone to perversion, there is no indication in the Old Testament, that one mode yielded truth on a higher level or of higher order than the other mode. The essential character of the revelation, no matter what its mode, is that it has its origin outside of the prophetic will and had its origin in God. The quality of the revelation is not derived from its recipient, nor from its mode, but rather from its divine Giver.

H. Voth

## A SERMON

### Das Glaubensbekenntnis im Vaterunser

Matthäus 6, 9

Das Vaterunser scheint einer besonderen Erklärung nicht zu bedürfen. Seit Jahrhunderten lebt es in der Christenheit, von allen verstanden und von vielen gebetet. Aber gerade dieses kurze, leicht faßbare Gebet hat von den ersten Anfängen der Christenheit immer wieder neue Erklärungen gefunden. Wohl das reifste und schönste Werk des berühmten alexandrischen Theologen, Origenes, ist seine Erklärung des Vaterunsers. Seiner Erklärung folgte die griechischsprechende Christenheit (z.B. Cyril, Chrysostomus, u.a.m.). Für die afrikanische Kirche legen Tertullian und Zyprian das Vaterunser aus. Und, an der Wende des 4. und 5. Jahrhunderts, als das lateinische Christentum des westlichen Europas Gestalt gewann, erklärte Augustinus das Vaterunser für das lateinische Abendland, und von seiner Erklärung lebte das Mittelalter.

Mit der Reformation werden die Erklärungen dieses Gebets wieder in Angriff genommen, und bis auf den heutigen Tag sind immer wieder neue Seiten an demselben entdeckt worden. Damit ist auch schon das Wunder der göttlichen Offenbarung angedeutet: sie ist verständlich, und verlangt immer neues Verständnis; sie ist dem betenden Herzen faßbar, und zugleich dem denkenden Geist unerschöpflich.

Aus frühster Zeit haben wir Beweise, daß die Gläubigen sich dieses Gebet zu eigen gemacht haben und es zu beten pflegten — wohl nicht immer in gleicher Form, aber schon Matthäus und Lukas bieten es uns nicht in derselben Form dar. In dem alten Werk, die Apostellehre (**Didache**) werden die Gläubigen aufgefordert dieses Gebet drei mal den Tag zu beten. Auch wurde das Gebet früh zu einem Stück des christlichen Gottesdienstes. Und da wo man es nicht im Gottesdienst zu beten pflegte, da wurden doch die Gebete der Gotteskinder von diesem Mustergebet geformt.

Es gibt übrigens auch solche, die uns dieses Gebet abstreiten wollen, weil es so allgemein und so gedankenlos gebetet wird. Aber sie übersehen, daß dieses Gebet Bitten ausdrückt, welche nur ein wahrer Jünger Jesu beten kann. Auch muß man nicht übersehen, daß in diesen kurzen Bitten alles eingeschlossen wird was wir vor Gott aussprechen können.

Doch ist dieses Gebet nicht nur ein Mustergebet, sondern es ist auch ein Glaubensbekenntnis. Der afrikanische Kirchenvater, Tertullian, erklärte schon am Ende des zweiten Jahrhunderts, daß dieses Gebet eine Zusammenfassung, eine Summie, ein Brevarium, des ganzen Evangeliums wäre. Von diesem Gesichtspunkt wollten wir das Gebet in dieser Predigt beschauen. Es soll hier nicht auf die Bitten des Vaterunsers eingegangen werden, sondern wir wollen uns im Vorhof dieses Heiligtums aufhalten; beim Eingang wol-

len wir stehen bleiben, und wollen uns mit der Anrede des Vaterunsers vertraut machen.

Die Anrede des Vaterunsers ist ein Glaubensbekenntnis eines rechten Jüngers Jesu, und wir stellen das Thema: **Das Glaubensbekenntnis im Vaterunser.**

Frägen wir uns, was wir in dieser Anrede bekennen, so dürften wir antworten: Wir bekennen, daß wir einen festen Glaubensgrund haben.

#### I. Der feste Glaubensgrund.

Wer Gott mit Vater anreden kann, hat einen festen Glaubensgrund. Er bekennt damit, daß Gott an ihn gedacht hat; daß sich ihm in Christus zugewandt hat; daß er ihm helfen will; daß er ihm die Schuld erlassen; daß er ihn aufgenommen hat in seine Familie. Er bekennt damit, daß die große Kluft zwischen einem heiligen Gott und dem sündigen Menschen überbrückt worden ist; daß die Wand die ihn von Gott trennte niedergerissen worden ist; daß er nun freien Zutritt zum Thron der Gnade hat.

Der Name Vater wird Gott auch in anderen Religionen gegeben, aber freilich in einem ganz anderen Sinn. Auch in Israel nannte man Gott Vater, wenn auch nicht oft. Israel war ja sein Sohn. Als Schöpfer und Bundesgott war Gott seinem Volk ein Vater. Aber der Name Vater, im Heidentum, nahm dem Anbeter die Furcht nicht weg; auch wenn Israel ihren Gott als Vater anrief, fehlte es an der Wärme die es im Munde der Jünger Jesu hat.

Wir sind nicht ohne Vater: sind also nicht verwaist, verloren, ohne Heimat, ohne Erbteil. Welch eine Fülle an Gedanken schließt uns doch das Wort Vater auf. So kostbar war dem Urchristentum, welches auf aramaischen Boden aufwuchs, das Wort Vater, daß die Bezeichnung **Abba** in die griechischsprechende Christenheit übergeführt wurde, auch wenn man **Abba** übersetzen mußte, mit **Pater**.

Wie ganz anders war es in der heidnischen Welt, wo man sich vor den Göttern fürchtete, denn die Götter waren der Menschheit feindlich gesonnen. Eine der bekanntesten Göttersagen aus alter Zeit erzählt wie der Gott Prometheus es einmal wagte dem Menschen zu helfen, indem er ihm die Gabe des Feuers schenkte, damit er sich wärmen könnte. Als der Obergott Zeus dieses erfuhr legte er Prometheus in Ketten und quälte ihn. Götter sollten über der Not des Menschen erhaben sein, sollten dieses nicht spüren, sollten dem Menschen nicht helfen.

Wie ganz anders unser Gott! Er ist unser Vater. Ein unerschütterlich fester Glaubensgrund.

Wir bekennen aber auch mit dieser Anrede, daß unser Glaube einen reichen Inhalt hat.

#### II. Der reiche Glaubensinhalt.

In dieser Anrede drücken wir das kindliche Vertrauen zu unserem Vater aus, und dieses kindliche Vertrauen macht unseren Glaubensinhalt so reich.

### A. Kindliches Vertrauen.

Lebendiger Glaube ohne kindliches Vertrauen ist undenkbar. Wer Gott Vater nennt, sagt damit, daß er ihm Leib und Seele anvertraut hat; daß sein Leben in Gottes Hand liegt; daß Gottes Vaterauge über ihn wacht; daß die göttliche Vaterhand ihn leitet und schützt; daß wir im Vaterhause einen Platz haben.

Zur Zeit der Apostel war man allgemein der Meinung, daß unsere Welt, ja das ganze Universum, vom Schicksal regiert wurde. Man beschäftigte sich viel mit der Astrologie, weil man sich vor den Sterngeistern fürchtete, die das Leben des Menschen bestimmten. Man suchte nach allerhand Zaubermittel um die bösen Mächte zu zähmen. Man verehrte die Göttin Tyche (das Glück). Aber bei all diesem Suchen nach Geborgenheit, konnte man sich doch nicht von der geheimen Furcht befreien, daß es überirdische Mächte gab, welche den Menschen in ihrer Gewalt hielten, gegen die man sich nicht wehren konnte.

Ist es heute viel anders? Es gibt Menschen die fürchten sich zu leben; und andere fürchten sich zu sterben, und wünschten so gerne es gäbe ein Zaubermittel gegen den Tod. Da wo man Gott nicht als Vater kennt, und wo man versucht ohne Gott fertig zu werden, werden Menschen von der Furcht verfolgt, daß ihnen das Glück, welches sie glauben gefunden zu haben, doch eines Tages aus den Händen gleiten wird.

Wie ganz anders wenn man "unser Vater" sagen kann; das tiefe Bewußtsein hat, daß hinter den Rätseln des Lebens ein liebender, weiser Vater steht. Auch wenn wir seine Wege nicht immer verstehen können, so können wir ihm doch vertrauen. C. S. Lewis, der durch seine Schriften weitbekannt ist, konstatiert, daß als er Atheist wurde, er keine Schwierigkeiten mit dem Leid und dem Elend, der Ungerechtigkeit und den Grausamkeiten dieser Welt hatte. Was könnte man erwarten in einer Welt, die von keinem liebenden und allmächtigen Gott weiß? Aber als er sich zu Gott bekehrte, dann konnte er es nicht verstehen, warum in dieser Welt so viel Elend war. Wie war es möglich in einer Welt, die von einem allmächtigen und liebenden Vater regiert wurde, so viel Leid zu finden? Aber, wenn er auch nicht immer Antworten fand, so konnte er doch vertrauen. Kindliches Vertrauen gehört zu dem Reichtum unseres Glaubens. Und dieses Vertrauen schafft eine kindliche Zufriedenheit.

### B. Kindliche Zufriedenheit.

Zufrieden zu sein mit Gottes Wegen ist eine heilige Kunst. Wenn der Weg auf Dornen geht; wenn unsere Bitten scheinbar unerhört bleiben; wenn wir ein schweres Leid zu tragen haben — uns an seiner Gnade genügen zu lassen!

Diese Zufriedenheit mit Gottes Wegen schließt — soll ich's wagen zu sagen — eine gewisse Zufriedenheit mit uns selbst ein. Nicht, daß wir je zufrieden sein können, oder dürfen, mit unseren Mängeln und Fehlern, aber mit uns selbst. Es gibt Menschen, die können sich selbst nicht leiden, nicht annehmen. Sie möchten so

sein wie andere, und verlieren dadurch den Selbstrespekt. Sie sehen sich nicht als Schöpfung des himmlischen Vaters. Der Theologe Mark Rutherford soll einmal gesagt haben, daß noch eine Seligpreisung den andern hinzugefügt werden sollte, nämlich: "Selig sind die, welche uns von unserer Selbstverachtung heilen." Das ist eine große Mission, Menschen die Selbstachtung wiederzugeben.

Wer nun Gott Vater nennt, der bekennt damit, daß er ihn geschaffen hat wie er ist; daß er ihn ausgerüstet hat fürs Leben; daß er ihm wert ist; daß er zur Familie Gottes gehört; daß er einen Platz und eine Aufgabe im Leben hat.

### C. Kindlicher Gehorsam.

Wer Gott Vater nennt, der darf zufrieden sein, darf ihm vertrauen, aber muß auch gehorchen. Mit diesem Glaubensbekenntnis, welches im Unser-Vater ausgedrückt wird, bekennen wir uns auch zu den Geboten und Befehlen des Vaters. Aber seine Gebote sind nicht schwer, weil sie ja von einem liebenden Vater kommen, der unser höchstes Glück sucht, und der uns den Willen stiehlt um seine Gebote auszuführen.

Im Judentum stritt man sich darüber, ob Israel auch noch dann ein Sohn Gottes bliebe, wenn es ungehorsam war und von Gott abirrte. Einige sagten so, andere anders. Aber solche Fragen zeugen von einem Mißverständnis des Vater-Sohn Bildes. Das Bild gibt auf diese Frage keine Antwort. Es spricht nur von der Wärme des Verhältnisses zwischen Gott und seinen Kindern, und von dem Gehorsam der Kinder gegen den Vater.

Ein drittes bekennen wir im Vaterunser. Wir bekennen uns zu allen Glaubensgenossen.

### III. Die werten Glaubensgenossen.

Das "unser" im Vaterunser schließt alle Jünger Jesu ein. Damit ist nun nicht gesagt, daß jeder Mensch, der die Augen zum Himmel aufschlägt, in diesem "unser" eingeschlossen ist. Ich hörte einmal eine Predigt über das Thema: Warum ich das Vaterunser nicht bete. Der Prediger wollte behaupten, es sei das Gebet der Modernisten und Universalisten. Aber Jesus lehrte uns, seine Jünger, so zu beten. Dieses "unser" schließt also viele ein, aber auch viel aus.

Eingeschlossen in diesem "unser" sind alle die, welche am Anfang der Bergpredigt selig gepriesen wurden: die Armen, Gebeugten, Barmherzigen, Friedfertigen. Wer in das Vaterunser einstimmt, der soll wissen, daß eine große Gottesfamilie mitbetet. Im frühen Christentum verbot man den Katechumenen das Vaterunser zu beten, denn das sollten nur getaufte Gläubigen beten, die vollständig Glieder in der Gottesfamilie waren. Weil die Katechumenen nicht zum Abendmahl Zutritt hatten, wurde das Vaterunser ein Abendmahlgebet.

Mit diesem Vaterunser bekennen wir unsere Liebe zu den Schwarzen und Weißen, den Hohen und Niedrigen, den Reichen und Armen, den Gebildeten und Ungebildeten. Die ganze Familie

Gottes, zerstreut in der weiten Welt, hat im Vaterunser einen Sammelplatz, und ruft den zum Vater an, der ohne Ansehen der Person richten wird. "Unser Vater" ist die Bruderhand, die wir allen denen entgegenstrecken, die Gott in Christus Vater nennen. Und man ehrt den Vater im Himmel, wenn man gegen seine Kinder freundlich ist. Wo man den anderen bemißtraut und verachtet, soll man so nicht beten, aber wo man sich gegenseitig respektiert und anerkennt darf man "unser Vater" sagen.

#### IV. Die göttliche Glaubensschau.

Mit dem Unser-Vater werden wir in den trauten Kreis der Gottesfamilie hineingepflanzt, aber mit dem Nachsatz "in dem Himmel" werden wir daran erinnert, daß unser Vater der ewig heilige Gott ist. Dadurch ist es uns verwehrt Gott zu einem "Papa" zu machen. Alle plumpe und falsche Vertraulichkeit ist verboten. Er ist und bleibt der "ganz Andere".

In Israel lehrte man, daß Gott im Himmel wohne, aber daß er sich auch an heilige Stätten gebunden hatte, z.B. Sinai (Elias ging dort hin um ihn noch einmal zu hören), Zion, u.a.m. Die Samariter stritten sich mit den Juden über den Wohnplatz Gottes; sie meinten Gott wohne zu Garizim. Jesus belehrte die Samariter darüber, daß Gott an keinen Platz gebunden war, sondern da wo man ihn anbetete, ließ er sich finden.

Das ist für uns auch ein großer Trost, daß Gott an keinen Platz gebunden ist, sondern weil er in dem Himmel ist, offenbart er sich jedem aufrichtigen Anbeter, wacht über sein Leben, sieht all seine Wege. "Man kann ihn immer haben, wenn man ihn haben will."

"In dem Himmel" sagt mir auch, daß die Familie Gottes nicht auf Erden, sondern in der oberen Welt ihre Wurzeln hat. Wir haben Abraham zum Vater, sagten die Juden. Ein anderer mag heute sagen: Ich habe Martin Luther; ich habe Menno Simonis zum Vater. Sie mögen große Bedeutung für die Geschichte einer Gemeinschaft gehabt haben, aber wer sich auf solche irdischen Väter beruft ohne den Vater im Himmel zu kennen, geht verloren.

Dieses Bekenntnis, daß unser Vater im Himmel ist, ist zugleich ein Bekenntnis der Hoffnung. Es erinnert uns daran, daß wir noch nicht zu Hause sind. Es ist noch nicht erschienen was wir sein werden. Noch sind wir in der Fremde, in Not, Kampf und Streit. Auf den Segen des Sonntags folgt die Sorge des Montags. Hier wechselt noch das weiße Festkleid mit dem schwarzen Trauergewand. Aber eines Tages kehren wir aus der Fremde heim. "In meines Vaters Hause sind viele Wohnungen." "Ich will wiederkommen und euch zu mir nehmen, auf daß ihr seid, wo ich bin." Dahin bringe Gott uns alle! Amen! D. Ewert

"It is better that one should... continue in the love than that, puffed up through knowledge... he should fall away from that love which is the life of man; and that he should search after no other knowledge except Jesus Christ... than that by subtle questions and hairsplitting expressions, he should fall into impiety." Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 2, 26, 1.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### Through Christ Alone

**Why Christianity of all Religions?** by Hendrik Kraemer (London: Lutterworth Press, 1963, 125 pages).

**Christianity Among the Religions of the World**, by Arnold Toynbee (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956, 112 pages).

Arnold Toynbee and Hendrik Kraemer are world-renowned for their writings; the former for his massive studies of civilizations and the field of history, the latter for his studies in world religions and world cultures. Both men address themselves to the contemporary situation. Both seek to explore the proper relation of Christianity to the other religions of the world. Toynbee is concerned with Nationalism and Communism in the world as the expression of man's self-centered worship — adversaries which he believes must be countered by a 'standing together' of the higher religions of the world. He sees many similarities in the various religions (Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam). Kraemer is more concerned with the modern confrontation of Christianity with the religions of the world, not only abroad, but also at home. He attempts to find an absolute, as a criterion, by which to judge all religions. Essentially, Kraemer maintains a discontinuity between the revelation in Jesus Christ and the other religions.

Toynbee contends that there is a common ground for all religions; this common ground is to be found in man's self-centered nature. The rise of the various religions is, according to Toynbee the response to the challenge presented by the problem of sin. Although religions have different approaches, all seek to bring man into harmony with God, or with an absolute reality.

Because there are formal similarities in religions, Toynbee would purge Christianity of its traditional belief, that it is unique (p. 95). To hold to the view that the revelation in Christ and the Bible is God's revelation to all men, and that other so-called revelations are products of the human mind, is severely condemned by Toynbee, as the sin of pride and self-centeredness; it is unchristian; it is anti-Christian. Toynbee reasons that it is most unlikely that God would not have given his revelation "in different forms, with different facets, and to different degrees, according to the difference in the nature of the individual souls and the nature of the local traditions of civilizations" (p. 90). Somehow, the Christian ought to be able to hold to his own convictions about the truthfulness of Christian revelation, and also recognize that other revelations are true and right, coming from God, and presenting some facet of God's truth. This is Toynbee's plea for toler-

ance; to be otherwise is the height of narrow-mindedness and provincialism.

The trouble with Toynbee is that he seeks to define Christian faith in terms of his own philosophy, not in terms of biblical revelation. By an unscientific approach to Scriptures, he makes Christianity to be that which it is not. If the Bible is the true revelation of God, and Toynbee would want to agree to this, then we must accept its teaching of the exclusiveness of salvation through Christ. Nothing is so patent in Scripture as that there is no other name whereby man must be saved than Jesus Christ; he is alone the truth, the way and the life; no man can come to the Father but through him.

It is illogical to speak of the Koran or the Upanishads as presenting facets of Divine revelation when they obviously are contradictory to the Bible. Formal similarities in different religions ought not to be construed in terms of material identity. One could hardly identify the God of Scriptures with the Brahman of Hinduism, or the concept of Moksha and Nirvana with the Christian concept of salvation and union with God, or the Buddhist Bodhisattva concept of self-sacrifice with the self-sacrificial agape-love of our heavenly Father. The Bible does not present Christianity as a religion of a particular people or civilization; to the contrary, it maintains that Christ came to die for the sins of the world. Christ appeals to all men; sin is the rejection of Christ and his Lordship.

Kraemer has some very excellent observations to make about the essence of various religions. With perception and skill he analyses the positions of men who would tone down the uniqueness of Christianity. Unreservedly Kraemer maintains the biblical truth that Christ is **the** way and **the** truth and **the** life. At the center of Christian faith is God's grace in his Son. Christian faith centers on the Son, so as to bring man into a vital redemptive relationship with him. In contrast to the Christian concept of grace, he analyses other religions as attempts at "self-redemption, self-justification and self-sanctification" (p. 94).

Recognizing the merit of Kraemer's emphasis, one must disagree with the formulation of Kraemer's criterion by which he seeks to judge all religions. He wants to set "the religions including Christianity, in the light of the Person of Jesus Christ, who is **the** Revelation of God and alone has the authority to criticize..." (p. 15). This is the absolute criterion — the Revelation of God in Christ. All religions and their Scriptures are to be subjected to it. One finds it difficult to set forth Christ as criterion without joining to Christ his words — the Scriptures — by which he reveals God, himself and the way of salvation. Although one is sympathetic to the emphasis that the essence of Christianity is the vital relationship with Christ, God has spoken through him through the Word; the Word is also God's infallible revelation to man. Apart from it we could not know Christ, nor enter into a proper relationship with him.

Victor Adrian

## "Do You Understand What You Are Reading?"

### Interpreting the Bible

by A Berkeley Michelsen

(Wm. Eerdmans, 1963), 425 pp.

There has been a revival of interest in the Bible among theologians. This may sound peculiar but nevertheless it is true. Liberalism attacked the Bible and reduced its authority to a history of religious experience. Man's feeling or reason were enthroned. The Second World War brought much disappointment to those who held utopian ideas concerning man's goodness and man's ability to find his own way through life. Serious men longed for an authority which would give stability to anxious hearts in times of trouble. Out of this search has come renewed interest in the Bible.

In order to interpret the Bible it becomes necessary to agree on some guide which, if followed by all, will make for agreement in exegesis and interpretation. Hermeneutics is the science that teaches us the principles, laws, and methods of interpretation. It attempts to set forth the "ground rules" by which those engaged in exegesis can judge themselves and others.

The old classics in the field of hermeneutics were written by Terry and Farrar. However, both texts are now out of print and not readily accessible to the average reader. Both fail to deal with some of the modern approaches to Scripture. Many readers interested in the field of biblical interpretation will welcome a new text in the field of hermeneutics.

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sity in the field of New Testament studies.

The author begins his discussion with an analysis of Bultmann's "closed continuum" approach to history. For Bultmann history is limited to cause and effect relationships in a time-space framework. The possibility of God breaking through into these relationships is automatically ruled out by an empirical definition of what is possible. This would immediately necessitate a new approach to history and to revelation. "Bultmann has a universe with a lid on it."

Michelsen suggests the concept of a "controlled continuum." This asserts the freedom of God to act in history and it makes possible a revelation of God in history.

The chapter on "Crucial Issues" attempts to clarify exegesis and exposition. Exegesis discovers the meaning of the expression or passage in the past. Exposition drives home that meaning to our present society. The two are inseparable, they belong together. Michelsen discusses the concepts of *Geschichte* and *Historie*. For someone not familiar with modern neo-orthodox views on Scripture this discussion of Barth and Bultmann would prove very helpful. The author touches upon the concept of myth in interpretation of Scripture.

The chapter on language is disappointing. It constitutes a review of both Hebrew and Greek grammars. It is too technical for the reader who is not acquainted with the original languages and it is superfluous for the one who understands the basic structure and grammar of biblical languages. The reader cannot but experience frustration in some parts of this chapter and elsewhere. The author just hasn't mastered the "art of plain talk."

The reviewer feels that the most helpful part of the book is the section on special hermeneutics. Here the author discusses such aspects as figurative language, the language and content of prophecy, the language depicting creation and consummation, and the characteristics of poetry.

In discussing literal and symbolical language the author defines literal as "that meaning which refers to the usual or customary sense conveyed by words or expression." By figurative the writer has in mind "the representation of one concept in terms of another because the nature of the two things compared allows such an analogy to be drawn." Many figures of speech are discussed which are not to be found in some of the previously published volumes on the subject. There are places, however, where the writer has lost himself in plain English grammar deviating, it would seem to this reviewer, from the original purpose of the book.

The Scriptures contain many enigmatic sayings. Interpreters throughout the ages have attempted to solve them by the use of one scheme or another. Names were deciphered by giving letters a numerical value and proving that the total had some significance, such as 666. The author remains cautious and sane in the treatment of passages which so readily whet the appetite of speculative minds. He says: "Apparently this religious riddle is meant to be ambiguous. The activities, power, and influence of the antichrist are far more important than this numerical clue in his name."

The section on typology is very helpful. The author accepts typology as a necessary aspect of progressive revelation and makes it part of a biblical philosophy of history. If God is working out a pattern in and through history then it would be perfectly logical that certain events

would prefigure other events yet to come. However, the type must actually be in the same stream of truth as the antitype, the truth prefigured. It is not permissible to take any truth or event which has some thing in common with another truth or event and say that one is the type of the other. The author brings several examples to hear on the explanation and these are well chosen and speak for themselves.

The section on prophecy is more of an explanation of prophecy and offers limited help for the student who would find some guide to the interpretation of prophetic literature. It is to be appreciated that a responsible exegete would want to exercise caution in this area which has been the seedbed for so much "wild" and unproductive exegesis. However, one can also be too cautious and thus the work loses in value. The concept of fulfillment by equivalency (p. 296) deserves to be considered by all serious students of prophetic literature.

A section not commonly found in books treating interpretation is the chapter on the language of creation and climax. In this day of myths and fables the student of Scripture could well afford a thorough study of this chapter.

The book concludes with a section on the use of the Bible for devotional exercises and the approach of the exegete to the Scriptures.

The reviewer feels that the book has value for those who have some training in this area of biblical research. It is doubtful whether the work could serve as a textbook in undergraduate courses. The writer has succeeded in maintaining such a technical level in his discussions that only the initiated can benefit from it. Perhaps this was his intent in the first place.

F. C. Peters