



The Voice

of the

*Mennonite Brethren
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
EDITORIAL	
IS ONE SEMINARY THE ANSWER? — V. Adrian	1
ARTICLES	
ASPECTS OF THE THEOLOGY OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL (Part I of three parts) — H. Swartz	6
CHRIST AND THE ORDINARY THINGS OF LIFE — H. Loewen	12
SACRIFICE IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS — H. H. Voth	16
SERMON	
"LET MY PEOPLE GO" — Herb Giesbrecht	22
BOOK REVIEW	
'REVOLT AGAINST HEAVEN', by Kenneth Hamilton, reviewed by A. Dueck	29

Due to certain difficulties, this issue appears in this form, including both July-August and September-October material. We offer our apologies herewith.

EDITORIAL

IS ONE SEMINARY THE ANSWER?

It is easy to set up a Christian Educational system abstracted from the concrete realities of a Church situation or a denominational situation. If the only question were: Do we want one strong central Seminary. But the issue is not that simple. For the Canadian M.B. Church the primary question is — what kind of Christian institutions do we need to help us fulfill our mission in Canada and the world beyond? That question cannot be answered without a careful examination of what our present institutions are contributing to that mission and ministry of the Church. If our present institutions are inadequate then two alternatives are open: (1) Adjust the present pattern to fit the needs; this may mean altering or upgrading. (2) Phase out that institution or those institutions which are no longer adequate for our needs and create such an institution as will meet the demands of today and tomorrow. The mission and task of the Church requires a realism and boldness to get on with the task.

It would seem to me to be an act of irresponsibility to seek to answer the question of one Seminary or two, without attempting to maintain a continuity with our present Christian Educational system. Adding another institution to our existing institutions without a careful defining of the operating spheres of each of them in such a way as to present a strong united front, or so as to avoid unnecessary duplication, cannot honor the Church of Jesus Christ. What are some of the strengths of our present theological institutions?

(1) The Bible Institutes have been our strength.

The Bible Institutes have strong appeal for the junior and senior matriculation age group. That appeal must continue at the grass roots level in the provinces in order to challenge our youth to a few years of Bible-centred Christian training.

The fact that this year about 350 students are attending our Bible institutes is just cause for praise. Efforts to maintain a large enrollment must continue; parents and pastors must continue to encourage youth to seek a few years of Bible training, to learn to be Christians before launching out into the various walks of life.

Of paramount importance for the future of our Church is that youth in Bible Institutes be confronted with the call of God to Church related ministries. In the past a large number in the institutes have received their first inner tug by the Spirit of God, which led to ministries in foreign fields, in home pastorates, in home mission fields or to teaching ministries. Others have dedicated themselves to faithful service as Christian laymen, penetrating social structures for Christ. Those who felt the call to further theological training have been encouraged to proceed to College. The vision of the past, of the role of the Bible Schools, has been strongly related to such attempts for further theological studies.

(2) The Mennonite Brethren Bible College has been our strength.

The Mennonite Brethren Bible College has played a strategic role in its past 23 years in the training of our pastors, ministers, teachers and missionaries, besides hundreds of active Christian laymen. This fact is beyond dispute. Besides providing for the urgently needed ministries in Canada, it has liberally contributed to the needs of the U.S.A. pastorates and teaching institutions. Whether this training has always been adequate for our needs has to be examined. The fact, however, that its graduates have been eagerly sought up to this day (today the demand in our Churches exceeds our supply) indicates how necessary the institution is to our ongoing work in the kingdom. Of the graduates of MBBC of the last six years (1961-67) over 70 are today in active full-time Christian service.

In this ministry, the MBBC is fulfilling the mandate originally given to it and renewed in 1958 when the Seminary question was again raised. At that time the President, J. A. Toews reminded the Conference of the original purpose of the College and the need for further expansion: *"Das College soll die Gelegenheit bieten zur Vorbereitung für die hohe Berufung des christlichen Dienstes als Prediger, Lehrer, Missionare, Chorleiter, und als Arbeiter in anderen Feldern des Dienstes. Wenn dieses Ziel auch ferner angestrebt werden soll dann muß unser Programm eventuell erweitert werden wie vorhin angedeutet."* (Yearbook 1958 page 87). The decision made at that conference was as follows. Despite a decision to restrict broad expansion of the educational program in Canada and the United States at the General Conference, the Canadian educational system should expand as follows: *"Aber wir lassen das Ziel nicht aus dem Auge und planen jetzt schon für die Zukunft die theologische Erweiterung des Lehr-*

planes in unserem College, so das die Studenten mit Universitätsbildung den B.D. Kursus in Winnipeg M.B. Bibel College nehmen könnten." (Conference yearbook page 90) This summer, 1967, the Conference again endorsed the educational policy for the Bible College, that it was to strengthen its theological instruction in such a way that it might fulfill its primary task of training for church-related ministries to meet the needs of our Church at home and abroad. This is to say, that the Canadian Conference believes the future expansion of the M.B. Church in Canada requires an institution in Canada to train for the necessary Christian leaders and workers. With the increased growth in Home Mission interests in most provinces and an increased awareness of our responsibility to fellow-Canadians the need for Canadian-trained men and women will increase — let alone our foreign missionary needs. If the continuing vitality of our work abroad is to continue, the growth of the spiritual dynamic in our Canadian Churches must also increase.

This fact is recognized by other evangelical churches in Canada which are embarking on stronger Christian Educational Programs as, for example, the Alliance Church effort at a Seminary training program in Regina comparable to our College program in Winnipeg.

(3) Should any of our present institutions be closed to make way for other institutions?

Should our Bible Institutions be closed? We think not! Their role, as indicated above, has continuing validity. Their program could, in part, be stabilized by working out closer relationships with the M.B. Bible College. Steps in this direction have already been undertaken this fall through discussions with the faculties of each of these institutions. Broader sessions have been planned for the Council meetings in late December.

Should the Bible College program be altered? The Conference made a definite decision last summer that the Bible College program should be strengthened. While recognizing the Arts program as making an important contribution to student needs, the College should not become a Liberal Arts College. The training for Church-related ministries should be the primary task of the College. The needs of students in the secular universities should be solved by means other than establishing our own Arts College in Canada. This task needs urgent and serious investigation. The M.B. Bible College has in the past attracted students for the B.R.E. and the B.Th. program. This year we have about 25 enrolled in the B.Th. program. These programs will continue for a number of years to fulfill an important need; the movement for those interested in church-related ministries from the B.Th. to the B.D. will no doubt increase in the future.

The ability of the College program to attract older students

for a few years of serious and intense theological studies to prepare for Christian lay ministries as well as the above mentioned pastoral ministries is its great strength.

Our constituency is too small to sustain a Seminary program narrowly slanted to professional theological training. A combination of a good standard of theological training for future ministers and missionaries, etc., together with a good standard of theological training for those interested in a theological orientation for lay ministries, suggests a pattern which meets the needs of our denomination.

Should we not learn from the U.S.A. developments? The decisions to move to a pattern of Liberal Arts Colleges and a Seminary appears not to have met their church needs. It is the Bible institute — Bible College and Seminary pattern which can keep alive the grass-roots interest in theological training and the Christian ministries. Lets seek to improve this system for the sake of Christ and the Church. Let us develop it by a natural growing process rather than by constructing an institution which is not closely related to our present institutes.

(4) Should Canadians then forget about the idea of one Seminary with the U.S. brethren?

We believe not. While one Seminary in Canada would not necessarily serve needs of the U.S. Churches, one Seminary in the U.S.A. would not serve the Canadian needs adequately. The two theological institutions (Fresno and Winnipeg) should seek to work in closer co-operation. The faculties should meet together, not only for purposes of fellowship but for intense study of the ministry of the Church and of theological issues. Beyond that, there could be an exchange of students and faculty. There could be areas of emphasis in each of the institutions. Such closer working relationships would serve to remove any existing spirit of rivalry, mistrust or contention, and could contribute to brotherly harmony and co-operation in the great missionary enterprise of the Church of Jesus Christ.

There may come a time when Canadian and U.S.A. needs are such that a joint Seminary would best serve the Conferences. At the present time, however, one Seminary, if located in the U.S.A., would be too costly a sacrifice for the Canadian Conference. The whole movement of the Canadian Christian Educational program would be aborted. It would have serious repercussions all the way to the Bible Institute level.

(5) How are we to proceed towards greater harmony in seeking a solution to our Christian Educational program?

Not by the manoeuverings of small committees or a few men,

but by open, free, loving, brotherly exchange and discussion, until we see more clearly, together, the direction the Holy Spirit would want us to go.

The group-consensus approach, discussed at the Reedly Conference, should be able to give us some help. The more we seek to look at our needs from various perspectives, the more we discuss together, and seriously as a brotherhood seek to meet the needs for a dynamic Christian Church in each of our Conferences, the more shall we be able to work together in that loving, brotherly harmony which should characterize the Church of Jesus Christ. The Canadian Conference can best contribute to the needs in the United States by being a vital Christian Church concerned to fulfill its role and task in Canada as well in other areas abroad. Likewise the United States Conference can best help the Canadian Conference by itself being a vital dynamic Christian Church, seeking to stimulate the desire for theological training and the pastoral ministries on all levels including the grassroots level, and carrying out its Christian task and ministry in the United States.

Victor Adrian

ARTICLES

ASPECTS OF THE THEOLOGY OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL

(Part one of three parts)

I. INTRODUCTION

In a study with such a suggestive title one must become daring enough to discover a theological framework within the text, which need not be the only one, but is one which gives a unity to the whole while clarifying the central theme. It seems obvious that John wrote to a specific audience to whom he makes clear, "these (signs) are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (20:31). However, it is not quite so obvious that he was acquainted with the need to maintain a strict theological progression, and to construct as cohesive a symbolic structure as we often look for. That these things are present serves to underline that unique character of God's Word to meet the needs of every man in every age.

Many authors have dissected the prologue (1:1-18) of this Gospel to discover its meaning and to affirm its place as a part of the whole. It is B. F. Westcott in his classic commentary who states so succinctly that the prologue forms an introduction to the whole work, and that this can be established "by a careful analysis of the contents of the section, which present in a summary form the main truths that are illustrated by the records of the history" (I, p. 2) If this be so it would seem that the method to be followed would include, first, an analysis of the prologue to determine its main theological aspects, and then a critical study of the remainder of the Gospel to determine how these main theological aspects are illustrated and enlarged. Thus the use of specific concepts in given passages would serve not only to develop the context, but also to build the total theology.

II. HIS ONLY SON

The prologue to the Fourth Gospel consists of four brief paragraphs. The subject of the first three paragraphs is identified by the personal pronoun he, and only in the last verses of the fourth paragraph is the he revealed as Jesus Christ. It would appear that John is anxious to state specific facts about the person of Jesus Christ, without identifying Him, in order to involve his reader in the complexity and mystery of His person. Only when one is well entangled in the web does he reveal the name of Jesus Christ, and claim for Him the role of the revealer of God the Father. If one has come this far he cannot possibly stop until he has examined the signs which are to lead him to faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.

In the **first paragraph** the person of Jesus is veiled in the Logos concept. For anyone at all familiar with the Old Testament the opening words, "in the beginning," echo the creation account. When the Word is identified as being "with God" (pros ton theon) and then equated with "God", it is obvious that "all the revelatory work of God in Christ is to be traced back to the 'beginning' of all things, to the pre-existent divine work of Jesus.)¹ The following additional evidence is to be noted:

7:28,29 You know where I come from? . . . he who sent me is true . . . I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me. (cf. 8:26, 9:33, 16:27,30, 17:8.)

8:42 I proceeded and came forth from God; I came not of my own accord, but he sent me.

13:3 Jesus (knowing) . . . that he had come from God and was going to God.

The equation of the Word with God completes the development for the present. Later John will embark on the mystery of the incarnation when he asserts concerning this same Word that He "became flesh and dwelt among us" (1:14).

There are varied references in the Fourth Gospel which underline the deity of Christ. The man born blind not only believes, but also worships Jesus (9:38). Surely such worship belongs only to God. The Jews of Jerusalem attempted to stone Jesus "because you," they said, "being a man, make yourself God" (10:33). Finally, the confession of doubting Thomas bursts forth, "My Lord and my God" (20:28). There can be no doubt, He who is the Word, is God.

The role in creation of the Word, who is again located "in the beginning with God" (1:2), is stated in absolute terms in a statement containing both a negative and a positive aspect, "All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (1:3). Jesus complements this

initial role in creation in His earthly ministry with the sign of the feeding of the five thousand (6:11), with His claim of a witness concerning the works that He does in His Father's name (10:25), and with His appeal to believe Him "for the sake of the works themselves" (14:11). There is an inseparable relationship between creation and redemption.

However, John will not dwell long on the being of the Word. He moves almost immediately to the act of revelation. The Word is said to have life in Himself, and life as light, to bestow to men. Jesus, as the Son, makes the former very specific when he says, "As the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself" (5:26). It is then understandable that the source of life should bestow it to others, although, the manner and conditions of this bestowal are not clarified until later. The discourse of Jesus with Nicodemus further reveals "that whoever believes in him may have eternal life" (3:15), and John adds that this eternal life is possible as a result of the love of God in giving His only Son (3:16). The assertions of Jesus in 11:25, "I am . . . the life," and 10:10, "I came that they may have life . . . abundantly," add to the realization that all evidence points to the fact that from the large concept of the person of Jesus Christ we are to be led to a description of such basics as the place and manner of this revelation of God to man, and the required response of man to this revelation.

Further, concerning the person of Jesus Christ, we are told that His life was the light of men (1:14). Again we turn to the text of the Fourth Gospel to understand the full intent of such a truth. The Baptist, a man sent from God came for testimony, to bear witness to the light (1:6-8). Negatively, "Every one who does evil hates the light . . . lest his deeds should be exposed" (3:20), and positively, "He who does what is true comes to the light . . . his deeds have been wrought in God" (3:21). In connection with Jesus' pronouncement, "I am the light of the world," His followers are promised, "the light of life" (8:12). How meaningful this phrase must have been to the man born blind, both in a physical and a spiritual sense (9:5). And finally, we hear the same truth in a forceful summary which is directed to the individual who walks in darkness, "while you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light" (12:35,46).

If it is obvious that the light shines in the darkness, it is also clear that "the darkness has not overcome it" (1:5). Repeated references to attempts by the Jews to capture and kill Jesus (cf. 7:1, 32, 44, 8:20, 11:57), are conditioned by the announcement that "his hour had not yet come" (7:30, 8:20). Could it be that when that hour did come the darkness would overcome the light? This John does not say. We can only wait for the answer to this problem. Thus we conclude the first paragraph of the prologue.

In the **second paragraph** we are introduced to "a man sent from God whose name was John" (1:6). Of him it is stated that "he

came for testimony," that is, "to bear witness to the light," and this witness was given "that all might believe through him" (1:7-8). The first proclamation following the prologue states that "this is the testimony of John," however, only when Jesus appears among his hearers does John declare, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (1:29, 36). Here we have an answer. John says that Jesus is revealed to the world as the Lamb of God, and that as such He takes away the sin of the world. The removal of sin by the sacrifice of a lamb was a truth that every Jew understood. But what does this mean? The idea has been planted and is now left to grow and flower in the life of the person of Jesus Christ.

The **third paragraph** reiterates the two central ideas of the two preceding paragraphs, and adds two new corollary ideas of its own. In 1:4 we heard that "the true light enlightens every man" but, not that He "was coming into the world" (1:9). Perhaps this is an obvious truth, however, the fact of the incarnation is so inextricably bound to the realization that Jesus, as the Word with God in the beginning, comes into the world as the true light for every man, that John uses numerous occasions to emphasize this truth. And invariably these are tied to this truth and understanding of Jesus' mission and purpose in the world. The following are noteworthy:

- 3:17 God sent the Son into the world . . . that the world might be saved through him.
- 3:19 This is the judgment . . . light has come into the world.
- 6:33 The bread of God . . . comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.
- 9:39 For judgment (Jesus) came into this world.
- 10:36 The Father consecrated and sent into the world . . . the Son of God.
- 11:27 (Martha) said to (Jesus) . . . I believe you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world.
- 12:46 I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.
- 16:28 I came from the Father, and have come into the world.
- 18:37 Jesus answered . . . For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth.

Thus it is that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world to provide salvation for man, a true enlightening. When John quotes Jesus as saying, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (14:6), he has put into a few words an understanding of the person of Jesus Christ hinted at in the prologue and developed fully in the context of Jesus' life and ministry.

So too, in 1:3 we heard that "the world was made through him," but not that "the world knew him not" (1:10). Most easily understood the next qualifying verse referring to his own home and

people would mean the land of Judea and the Jews, however, in the larger context it would surely include the world and rational men. How could John claim this? What then did men know if not the Creator himself? The judgment we noted before in 3:19 comes because "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." To His disciples Jesus explained the hatred of the Jews against Him, "it hates me because I testify of it that its works are evil" (7:7). This same reception, Jesus asserts, is given to the Spirit of truth "because it neither sees him nor knows him" (14:17), and the righteous Father whom the world does not know (17:25). Having made the generalization John is prepared to look at the exceptions. What of those who having heard Him did receive Him?

The text of the prologue in answer to this question is clear and precise, "To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God" (1:12). Evidently the act of faith in the person of Jesus Christ, which is receiving Him, is accompanied by the working of God in the individual's life, with the result that he becomes a child of God. Thus we now have added to the topic of the place of this revelation of God to man, "the world" (kosmos), the required response of man, "to believe" (pistuo). The manner of this same revelation awaits a fuller definition in the last paragraph, although it is already clear that the Father gave His Son. While the finest definition and delineation in these sub-topics to the person of Jesus Christ come in response to the obvious question — What then of that gift of God to man; of those who do not respond in the world; of those who do respond in faith?

Thus we turn to the **last paragraph** of the prologue, having defined our total task, but not having completed our picture of the person of Jesus Christ using the prologue as the key to understand the text of the Fourth Gospel. Since John is writing this in retrospect he cannot escape a personal testimony to what the coming of the Word from God to the world means to all men. If there was any doubt before as to the manner of Christ's appearing among men, this is now dispelled with the unmistakably clear words, "The word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father" (1:14). As one meets the fact of the incarnate Word it almost seems vain to point to this verse, or that one, for it is surely true as Cullmann states, "He who was... 'in the flesh' is just the same one whose story the whole Gospel tells, the centre of the history of divine revelation and salvation."² From the time of His first recorded encounter with the Baptist, then with the seekers, the multitudes and the haters, until the placing of His broken and bleeding body in the tomb, there is seemingly no one who doubts the reality of His being in the flesh, although few realized the reality of His being the Word. It is Dodd who points to this phenomena as the "evangelists fundamental

Weltanschauung — a world in which phenomena, things and events, are a living and moving image of the eternal, and not a veil of illusion to hide it, a world in which the Word is made flesh."³

Of His dwelling among us, John in referring to the person of Jesus Christ reaches for three large concepts, grace, truth and glory. Truly the only Son from the Father could alone possess these in fulness. The passion narrative in its entirety is an expression of that grace as stated in 3:16, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son," enabling men, as they believe, to have eternal life. To the mocking question of Pilate, "What is truth" (18:38), the ringing claim of Christ to His disciples, "I am... the truth" (14:6), is an ample response. Finally, the divine glory itself, manifested formerly at Bethel (1:51) and Jerusalem (4:21), has now become visible in a man. This is the only Son, the Word with God, from God and of God.

To bring the prologue to its climax John now moves to the moment of revelation. First, he hints at our reception of grace upon grace, a result of the fullness of the Word, and then asserts that "the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (1:17). Let no one be mistaken, Jesus Christ is greater than Moses. When asked for a sign to prove this, Jesus asserts that "it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven... the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world" (6:32, 33), and then "I am the bread of life" (6:35). Whereas in Moses man came to know the will of God and his own shortcomings, in Jesus Christ we have the supreme revelation of God's love as He acts on behalf of man to enable man to come to a knowledge of the real as a child of God.

Almost as an anti-climax John adds the poignant truth, that he has stated before, but which now takes on a new shade of meaning, "No one has ever seen God; the only Son... he has made him known" (1:18). As Cullmann has written, here is a "basic Johannine thought — Jesus not only brings revelation, but in his person is revelation... the Gospel intends to show that the total human life of Jesus is the centre of the revelation of divine truth."⁴ Or, to paraphrase Dodd, we have here the knowledge of God contained in the Christian revelation, that is the person of Jesus Christ.⁵

H. Swartz.

FOOTNOTES:

1 Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press), 248.

2 *Ibid.*, 249.

3 Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: University Press, 1953), 143.

4 Cullmann, 259.

5 Dodd, 444.

CHRIST AND THE ORDINARY THINGS OF LIFE

(Luke 2:39, 40; 51, 52; 7:30-35; 11:37-42; Acts 10: 15)

Christ came to this world to suffer and to die. His earthly life culminated in the agonies and death of the cross, and through his death we have found redemption from our sins. This truth is central in the New Testament. The gospels take up more space with relating the passion of Christ than with his entire life and ministry. Yet once we have found grace and forgiveness through his death, we must also turn our attention to the life of Jesus on earth. For it is precisely in this, in imitating his life, that we become his followers, his disciples. We cannot imitate Christ in his redemptive death; that is, we cannot die for the salvation of anyone. But we can and must follow Christ in his life, for if we fail to strive to live as Jesus lived, we are not really Christians. As disciples of Jesus many of us fail right here. We claim to have been redeemed through his suffering and death, yet we so often refuse to follow in his steps. We accept Christ's great work for us, yet we often neglect the example of his life.

Christ was divine and yet so truly human. The greatest teacher instructed the highest truths to many people; but he also lived a very practical life with other men. As a young boy he discussed theology in the temple; but he also worked with his hands in Nazareth and was obedient to his parents. He preached in the synagogue and communed with his heavenly Father; but he also enjoyed a wedding party and a banquet in Simon's house. As a theologian and preacher he expounded the deepest problems of life in the Sermon on the Mount; but he also took time to love, to chat, and to play with little children. He associated with learned scribes and doctors of the law; but he also befriended the common people, the sinners and the outcasts. He prepared men and women for the ministry and missions; but he also lived with them, sharing their joys and sorrows. With enthusiasm did Jesus talk about the glorious mansions in heaven; but he also had an eye for the beauty and little things of this earth. Jesus showed that God's grace, glory and beauty can blossom in the midst of common life. He demonstrated that his message was applicable to all human experiences and activities. In short, Jesus revealed that no circumstances need be humdrum. The Christian can always find a heavenly light in all circumstances and areas of life.

In some detail we wish to see how this was true for Jesus, and in what way this can become true for us.

First, although it is true that Jesus was the "Man of Sorrow", particularly in his suffering toward the end of his life, it is equally true that he was a man of joy. Jesus, no doubt, was attractive as a person. He was drawn to other human beings, and other people were drawn to him. We read that he was in favour not only with God, but also with men. It was said of him that "the common people heard him gladly." This implies that these men and women felt that he understood them, was interested in them, and spoke a language that went to their hearts. Jesus could fascinate men and make them lay aside everything else and follow him, like Matthew the taxcollector, for example. It was not a somber personality that won the affection of others, but one that was friendly and cheerful. When his enemies wanted to slander him, they exaggerated his zest for life. They said that he was a glutton, drunkard, and friend of the tax gatherers and sinners. We know that this accusation was not true; Jesus did all things in moderation and with thanksgiving. From their narrow view and conventional religion the Pharisees could not understand how a great religious teacher could live such an abundant life as he did.

Many people since that time have made the mistake of these theologians of old. They have supposed that there must be a great gap between Christianity and the ordinary life. They have treated Christianity as if it had nothing to do with everyday matters, such as business, farming, teaching, playing, entertaining. Worst of all, some people have forgotten to be human with other human beings; they have neglected to keep human contacts warm and lovely. Some people have a formal piety and are very legalistic about small things, but they are poison to live with, like Mr. Murdston in **David Copperfield**. It has been said with truth that our pets must feel that we are Christians. How much more must people know and feel that Christ is living in us: our children, our neighbors, our students — all people who know us. We must give ourselves to people as Jesus gave himself greatly to those he loved. People liked being with him. Except for the few leaders who rejected and hated him, he was liked by men. As disciples of Christ we too must be friendly, warm and attractive. Unless we can attract men and women to ourselves first, we shall never win them for Jesus Christ. The truth of the gospel which can make men free comes to them through people who can understand and love others.

Secondly, Jesus saw God's beauty and grace all around him. The objects that Jesus looked at were the same objects that other people saw. But for Jesus these ordinary things became transformed and took on new meaning. Like other people, Jesus saw the flowers growing in the fields; but for him they were not just simple flowers passed by by most men — they reminded him of God's beauty and care for his own. He saw the nesting birds,

and these creatures drew Christ's attention to God's love for them and those who sought to follow him. He noticed the sheep and shepherds coming home in the evening, and from this sight Jesus drew the picture of the Great Shepherd and his sheep. He stopped to listen to children playing in the streets, and he took them up in his arms and loved them. Their simple trust and faith Jesus liked to see in his disciples as well. All these were common things and experiences; but for Jesus nothing was common. He saw God's wonder, goodness and grace all around him.

Should we as his children be different? Should we call common the things which God has made, purified and hallowed? Take note, for example, of the beauty and wonder in a mother's care for her children. We take this for granted; it is so common. Yet it is perhaps the loveliest thing on earth. There is beauty in the rough hand and tired face of a labourer or farmer who work for the glory of God. There is another kind of beauty in a scholar's pursuit of truth. There is even beauty in an honest business transaction. Have you ever thought of that? There is beauty in great music, literature and art. There is an immense beauty in Christian theology, in family devotions, in prayer. There is beauty of the highest order all around us. All we need is an eye for this beauty, and we must never forget that all good, useful, practical and beautiful things reflect the glory, goodness and love of God. Once we appreciate this truth, our life will become that much more enjoyable and meaningful.

Thirdly, Jesus always found and saw the best in people. He had a marvelous way of seeing great possibilities in ordinary men and women. He could see powers in people which no one else had ever surmised. Jesus could, for example, see that a little group of uneducated men had in them the energies to turn the world up-side-down. And with his power they did it too. He saw that in Mary Magdalene were the makings of a saint. After Jesus had transformed her life, she put with her fearless devotion and love many men to shame.

Jesus never looked just at the surface as most people do. He looked deep into a person's soul. After Jesus had touched her heart, the woman of Samaria said to her villagers: "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did." That is the way Jesus made her feel. But this was not all. He did make people feel that he understood them perfectly well, but he also made them feel that he understood what they ought to be and, more important, what they could be through his grace. When he stood by them, they felt that anything was possible.

This is how we as Christians must strive to be. We must try to bring out the best in our brethren, sisters, and in our fellow-men. Expect noble, Christian behaviour from the members of our churches, and they will soon begin to act nobly. Believe in

people, trust them, and they will bring out and express the very best in them with God's help. On the other hand, tell a person long enough that he is a dog, and he will soon begin to bark. Tell your teen-age boy that you expect him to be a Christian gentleman, and he will most likely begin to act like one. This, of course, will not happen overnight. Have patience, pray, show him that you are interested in him, and be a Christian gentleman yourself, and you shall see the wonder that a positive life can evoke. You see, people's lives are contagious. Smile and be genuinely friendly, and people who see you will be friendly in return. But if you are bitter, disillusioned and skeptical about life, you will spread this attitude wherever you go.

Fourthly, Jesus showed that God can be found in every plain act of faithfulness which waits to be performed. Jesus found and experienced God everywhere; he discovered him in all areas of life no matter how humble and common these appeared to be. He experienced God, of course, in the synagogue worship service. He found him in communion with his Father in prayer. Jesus experienced God as he subjected himself to his earthly parents and worked for a living in the carpenter's shop. He enjoyed God's presence in his relationship with people and friends. Think, for example, of the lovely picture of Jesus being in the house of Mary and Martha, an ordinary human experience turned into heavenly bliss. Jesus also experienced God's protecting hand when some people sought to harm him in Nazareth. Jesus, in short, experienced everytime the miracle of his Father's presence and care.

You too can experience and find God in all circumstances of life. You can find your God in the thoroughness with which you seek to do your work. You will experience God as you chat with your neighbor over a cup of coffee, telling him of what God means to you from day to day. You will experience God's nearness as you lie ill at home or in hospital. You will feel his favour upon you as you seek to apply your Christian principles to your business deals. You will find God as you take out time for your children and other people. In our day we find so little time to cultivate meaningful associations and friendships. You will experience a loving Father on your next holiday trip, or as you read a good book in your easy chair, and you will certainly find God in courtship and marriage. God is everywhere and in all good things, circumstances and relationships.

Some people never find God because they look for him in spectacular, emotional or imaginary things and areas of life. Accept as from his loving hand, and as a gift, the life, place and station that God has placed you in; endeavor honestly and sincerely to live for him; realize that life is beautiful and worth living — and you will experience the miracle of his presence, goodness and love from day to day.

—Harry Loewen

SACRIFICE IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

Among the words which recur rather frequently in the epistle to Hebrews is the word **sacrifice**. Altogether, the word in its singular and plural forms, occurs seventeen times. Many other terms related to sacrifice appear again and again, namely, altar, blood, priest, sanctuary, offering. The reader of this epistle soon notices that the author speaks of two classes of sacrifice, one which belongs to the past and seems to have been of very limited value and one which belongs to the present and has an infinite and eternal value. The former are the sacrifices which may be referred to as Old Testament or Old Covenant sacrifices while the latter are the sacrifices of the New Covenant or New Testament sacrifices. It shall be my purpose to deal primarily with New Testament sacrifices as presented in the epistle to the Hebrews. These sacrifices have a particular relevance for the Christian in all times, and may therefore, in this sense, be called Christian sacrifices.

But before we consider the New Testament sacrifices, we should briefly consider what the Epistle has to say about the sacrifices of the Old Testament. In what relation do they stand to those of the New Covenant? Why are they mentioned here? Certainly the writer did not wish to give his readers a detailed or comprehensive description of the Old Testament cultus. His references to it are far too sketchy and vague to fulfill such a purpose. E. F. Scott sees the relation between the two in this light:

*"His mind is filled with the conviction that in Christ we have obtained a perfect access to God and he turns to the ancient ritual in order to discover hints and anticipations of what has now been realized. In the levitical system, for its own sake, he has no interest. Those aspects of it alone have any significance for him which appear in some way to illustrate the Christian idea."*¹

And again: *Sacrifice as performed in the tabernacle was the adumbration of a true and final sacrifice. The levitical priesthood was the prelude to a priesthood of a higher order, in which its aim would at last be realized.*²

Both Scott and Manson³ see the Old Testament sacrifices not as deceptive or misleading but rather as imperfect and incomplete. They are not contradicted by the heavenly counterparts, but rather fulfilled and consummated by them. The inadequacy of the cultus was not due to its being a sacrificial system. It was due

to the sacrificial system being imperfect. It is obvious that the author attempts to show the superiority of the New Testament priesthood, its sacrifice, its covenant to those contained in the Old Covenant. The Old is related to the New as the shadow is related to the substance. The Aaronic priesthood is but the type of the priesthood "after the order of Melchizedec." The levitical priesthood could but secure for him who partook therefrom, outer, ceremonial purity, leaving the inward moral being untouched. All these ordinances, having been fulfilled in the provisions of the "better sacrifice" of the New Covenant, are now set aside and have no **active** significance for the New Testament worshipper.

NEW TESTAMENT SACRIFICES

When we now turn to the New Testament sacrifices our first problem then concerns the identity of him whose sacrifice and offering on the one hand abrogated an imperfect and ineffective ritual, and on the other was the means of instituting the new Covenant. E. F. Scott holds that the writer's view of the identity of Christ begins with the Messianic concept of the apocalyptic hopes of Judaism. The Messiah is in some way of angelic nature although he is much higher than the angels. But Scott goes on to point out that the writer of the epistle goes beyond this concept and presents a view which, in essence, is very close to the Alexandrian view of the "Logos". He cites certain quotations from Philo which are strikingly similar to ideas expressed in Hebrews. Christ is pre-existent, was with the Father in the creation of the world, "he reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature." And yet Scott feels that the writer always keeps God, the Father and Christ, the Son, distinct.

While it is true that we do not have here a carefully worked out theological statement concerning the unity of Father and Son after the manner of the ecumenical creeds, one cannot help feeling from an unbiased reading of the Epistle that the writer conceives of and presents Christ as the true Son of God, "through whom also he created the world" and of whom God says, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever". To the writer of Hebrews, Jesus Christ was God. If in certain quotations there is an indication of a definite subordination of the Son, and if there are other statements which seem to indicate a distinction between the Father and the Son, we will inevitably notice that these terms are made necessary by the very nature of the redemptive work of God in Jesus Christ. They have reference, not to the essence of the Father and the Son, but rather to their respective office or function in the act of redemption.

The author, however, possibly more than any other New Testament writer, also stresses the complete humanity of Christ. Passages such as the following will serve to illustrate this: "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise

partook of the same nature..." (2:14), "Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect..." (2:17), "In the days of his flesh Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with hard cries and tears..." (5:7), "For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah..." (7:14), "But a body hast thou prepared for me..." (10:5). He also uses the name "Jesus", the name of his humanity, ten times as compared with the full name "Jesus Christ" which only occurs four times.

To the writer, therefore, the One to be sacrificed, is He who is at the same time Son of God and partaker of flesh and blood.

But it is just in this fact that the possibility of his becoming the perfect sacrifice in behalf of humanity lies. It was his body and his blood which he offered through "the eternal spirit." It was because he was "made like unto his brethren in every respect" that this sacrifice became really significant for us. The victim must represent fully the offerer's self; he must be spiritually the equivalent of the sacrificer.⁴ The animal sacrifices of the Old Testament were inadequate in this respect particularly. Because animal life was of a lower order it was not an adequate representative of the sacrificer. The Incarnation made the atonement possible.

But even the Incarnation would not have been possible (we speak as men,) in spite of the omnipotence and the omniscience of God, if the Son had not been willing to be that sacrifice. The Father, (again, speaking humanly) would never have forced his Son to go the way of the cross. If force had been used the sacrifice would not have been robbed of its efficacy and power. Other N.T. writers stress the love of the Father and the Son as the impelling motive behind the willingness of the Son to become for man, the sacrifice to end all sacrifices for sin. The writer is strangely silent as to the motive of the Son, but he is very explicit in stating the fact that the Son was willing, "to do thy will, O God". When such willingness is combined with the omnipotence of God, a perfect sacrifice becomes a reality.

A SACRIFICE FOR ATONEMENT

We have already pointed out that the approach to God was barred for man by sin. This barrier, Christ's sacrifice is to take away and therefore it is right to say that it is vitally concerned with the sin question. We agree with Vincent Taylor when he says, "That the vicarious deed of Christ is an act of sacrifice for sinful man is the fundamental note in the teaching of the Epistle."⁵

The following references from the Epistle will illustrate this statement:

- 1: 3 — made purification for sins.
- 2:17 — to make expiation for the sins of the people.
- 9:14 — cleanse your conscience from dead works.
- 9:26 — to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.
- 9:28 — having once been offered to bear the sins of many.
- 10:10 — we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ.
- 10:12 — When he had offered one sacrifice for sin
- 10:14 — for by one offering he has perfected forever them that are sanctified.

Further references such as 9:11, 10:19-23, 12:24, 13:11, and 13:20, while not as explicit as the above quoted passages, have nevertheless, the same trend of thought.

The question then arises as to how this sacrifice deals with the sin question and how it opens the way to God? Men have read various meanings out of (or perhaps into) the words of the epistle. The answers they give range from the claim that by this sacrifice an angry God is propitiated to the assertion that there is in it a mere moral example.

Taylor, quoting C. H. Dodd and others, finds in the whole epistle nothing that suggests that an angry God is propitiated by this sacrifice, but rather contends that the term "Hilaskethai" is used in the sense of expiation, that is, that sins are covered by the offering of Christ.⁶ Neither is there in this epistle any suggestion of compensation. The author, so Taylor asserts, does not attempt to formulate a systematic doctrine as to how this offering of Christ makes atonement for sin.

William Milligan, again, claims that the terms "death" and "blood" are not interchangeable terms, neither in the Old Testament sacrifices nor in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Death is connected with the penalty of sin and with its pardon while blood is associated with the union of life with God. "With the fellowship with the Father with all its blessed consequences". Death secures the forgiveness of sins but the blood is connected with more than the forgiveness of sins. He sees in the blood a sanctification and consecration, not an outward one, but an inward one.⁷

While the author is silent concerning the exact way in which the sin problem is solved by the sacrifice of Christ, he is very emphatic in asserting that it is solved, once for all by this perfect sacrifice and that henceforth there is no further need for sacrifice. A perfect sacrifice must be perfect in all the elements that make it up. Its agents, the sacrificer, the victim and the priest must be fitted, each to carry out his part; inwardly in heart with the right intention, in the right degree and also in outward qualifications duly authorized to fulfill his office.

When we apply this standard to the sacrifice of Christ as he is presented in Hebrews, we find that he meets these requirements. The Sacrificer, victim and priest are united in will and purpose, to effect the redemption of mankind. This offering reveals here no mere historical contingency, but expresses the very nature of the eternal mind.⁸ The perfection, the fulness of all sacrifice is in the utter, completely moral and personal self devotion of Jesus to death for our sins.⁹ Calvary, was the culminating expression of that spirit of surrender and obedience which marked his whole life here on earth.¹⁰

There are two other aspects of his sacrifice that point to its perfection. The one deals with its moral perfection. To mediate an outward, ceremonial purity, the sacrifices of the law had to be without blemish. But because these sacrifices were of an amoral character, they were powerless to deal with moral issues. Jesus was free from any moral or spiritual fault, and is therefore able to mediate a moral purity which is man's urgent need. The other aspect of perfection is its eternal efficacy. Because the Old Testament sacrifices were creatures living within time, their efficacy, whatever it was, was of a transitory nature and they had to be repeated, year after year. But in this sacrifice, the Son, who upholds "the universe by his word of power" (1:3), and whose entry into the world of time was but an interlude in his eternal existence, is the offering, and therefore, its efficacy is eternal. Because eternity was in the act time cannot impare or devalue its significance.¹¹

Although we have had occasion to speak of the significance of the sacrifice of Christ for man, we shall here make some summarizing remarks on the subject. Manson says:

*"If the death of Jesus was for our sins, then in the light of all that Jesus was and is, the atoning virtue and redemption which are in it cannot be limited to ritual guilt and ignorance but extends as far as the conscience... blood of Christ brings the worshipper to the living God... makes permanent provision for access of the elect to God."*¹²

The writer to the Hebrews, so Manson continues, presents the believer as accepting so firmly as a real and absolute fact of faith, the teaching that the redeemer took upon himself the believers guilt that there comes to him a clearance of conscience and a sense of atonement with God, such as remained unachieved under the first covenant. The death of Christ had, as touching the conscience, made the worshipper perfect. Narborough feels that this is equivalent to making perfect worship possible.¹³

Taylor¹⁴ lists the following benefits as achieved for man by Christ's sacrifice: (1) Purification of sin (1:3), (2) conscience

cleansed from dead works, (3) man been sanctified and perfected (10:10,14), (4) a new and living way has been opened to man, (5) A new covenant has been established, by which God's laws are enscribed in mind and heart and forgiveness and fellowship are assured. It is a work of Christ which annuls sin, cleanses the heart and opens the way to God.

H. H. Voth

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1. Scott, E.F., *Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 74
 2. *Ibid*, p. 125
 3. Manson, T.W., *Epistle to the Hebrews*.
 4. Gayford, *Sacrifice and Priesthood*, p. 127
 5. Vincent Taylor, *The Atonement In New Testament Teaching*, p. 175
 6. Taylor, *Op. Cit.*, p. 181
 7. Milligan., *The Resurrection of Our Lord*
 8. Manson, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 135.
 9. *Ibid*. p. 135
 10. Gayford, *Op. Cit.* p. 133ff.
 11. Manson, *Op. Cit.*, p. 135
 12. Manson, *Op. Cit.*, p. 135
 13. Narborough, *Clarendon Bible*, p. 38
 14. Taylor, *Op. Cit.*, p. 179

A SERMON

“LET MY PEOPLE GO!”

A Study of Exodus 3:1-12

The early portions of the **Book of Exodus** are concerned with a great deliverance — the deliverance of the people of Israel in, and from Egypt. It was a great liberation which the people of Israel never forgot, which they fixed in their memory and in their history forever. It was an event so remarkable and so meaningful that orthodox Jews even yet cherish its memory and give expression to some aspects of its meaning by commemorating the Passover feast.

Joseph had predicted such a deliverance before he died (Gen. 50:24), but the true scope and significance of it were not guessed at until after it transpired. And the New Testament writers saw in that deliverance even a faint foreshadowing of the deliverance which Jesus Christ brought to His people — indeed, to all people who would share in it by faith.

It is an exciting and richly suggestive story — as exciting as any in secular history involving the movement or migration of a group of people — but even more instructive for the Christian reader. For while it recounts what **man** did with plausible detail, it also suggests what **God** did by working in and through the deeds of men and the circumstances of life. We sense, as we read the account of this historian (probably Moses himself), that he understood something about the emotions and motives of people, but that he also perceived the working and ways of God. He hints frequently at the direct and indirect ways in which God intervened or influenced man in the course of both larger and lesser happen-

ings and events. This historian was observant but also spiritually perceptive, and was able to attribute to man what man does and to attribute to God what God does — a broad and wholesome balance and perspective in a historian!

But we return to the writer's theme in the earlier half of the **Book of Exodus**, the deliverance of the people of Israel. “Let my people go” — that is a recurring statement in the record! And how God was involved in that liberation interested the writer as much as how men of various kinds were involved in it! And we want to concentrate upon God's role in the deliverance and in the events which brought about that deliverance.

God wanted to see His people go. He had intended such a deliverance and departure from the outset, long before oppression afflicted the people of Israel. But He had intended a deliverance that would be something more than an unhappy removal or migration without moral and spiritual benefits to the people. God might have influenced persons and events in such a way as to have brought about an exodus from Egypt before severe persecution set in. But God waited and permitted Israel to stay some four centuries, to experience security first and suffering next, and then, in His own good time and after His own manner, God worked among men to bring the remarkable deliverance of Israel about. And in consequence of this “delay” the deliverance brought distinct spiritual benefits to the people and great glory to God's own name!

We see, because the writer has given us clues and suggestions repeatedly, that God worked among various people to prepare for such a deliverance. He worked among the Hebrews themselves, for one thing.

A. PREPARATION OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD (Hebrews):

We remember how once circumstances — poverty and famine — had compelled the sons of Jacob to migrate to Egypt, and how the joy of Joseph had blessed them and the favour of God had rested upon them. It had then been God's will for the Hebrews to abide in Egypt, and they had prospered and grown steadily in the land of Goshen. But the increase of this people eventually disturbed the Egyptians. They feared the increasing strength and influence of a people so manifestly blessed by their God!

And their own fear drove the Egyptians to look for ways of restricting that strength and influence. Indeed, they sought to enslave the Hebrews, to make them a subject people, so as to break their spirit and suppress all creative impulse of this peculiar people. A subject and suffering people, though religious, can never threaten their masters. The Egyptians reasoned; “Let them have

their religion and their God, but without liberty and economic and cultural independence, they can never hurt Egypt.”

But in the providence of God, such affliction served to do one thing which Egypt had not reckoned with — to awaken and increase a yearning for deliverance at the hand of God!

At first, of course, the desire of the Israelites for deliverance may have been a purely selfish one. It usually is, apart from God's continued discipline and direction! But God used that desire as a beginning and purified it. Israel had fared well in Goshen: “Thus Israel dwelt in the land of Goshen, and they gained possessions in it, and were fruitful, and multiplied exceedingly”. (Gen. 47:27). Undoubtedly they had hoped to establish a place for themselves in Egypt that none could take from them. This is the usual purpose and pattern that immigrant people pursue!

Having enjoyed security and steady growth for four centuries, they may have forgotten the prophecy of Joseph and the pilgrim character of their forefathers. Their first reaction to the oppression by Egyptians must have been one of disappointment, frustration, and resentment. They complained, and cried out for help! And their cry was heard of God. That may imply that they directed it to God, but perhaps it was still a selfish cry.

We do know that they were not at first ready to be delivered through the leadership of Moses. They may have been prejudiced against one so pampered and privileged by the Egyptian court. But that was not the end of their cry for help. When a more spiritually mature Moses appeared and convinced them of the fact that God had visited them, they believed and bowed in worship (4:31). There is no doubt, here, that their desire for deliverance was now linked to the presence and power of God. They looked to HIM now and awaited HIS intervention — and that was something more than complaint and selfish outcry!

This was the attitude that God desired, the response that He was able to produce within His people, but only as time and circumstances cooperated to create a sense of desperation and despair in them. God works but He cannot work effectively apart from the deeper response of man, and this requires time and often suffering. And only now could God, through the instruction of Moses and Aaron, focus their attention sharply upon His deeper purpose in the promised deliverance. God desired so very much more for His people than merely physical deliverance. Merely physical liberation might have been accomplished by God speedily and without these preparations! But this deliverance was to mean an inward and spiritual deliverance for them, and that was a different matter.

“Let MY PEOPLE GO” — yes, but before Egypt can let them go, or will let them go, the Hebrews must let go, and look to God!

Israel learned to let go, and to let God act (1) when it listened to the words of Moses and Aaron whom God had so dramatically encountered, (2) when it prayed for the success of their repeated appeals to Pharaoh, (3) when it witnessed the disastrous plagues that served to judge the gods of Egypt, (4) when it saw the effectiveness of Moses' prayers as he prayed for the removal of each plague (in turn), (5) when it received the instructions of Moses and Aaron about preparing for the PASSOVER, (6) when it witnessed the defeat of Pharaoh and his court, in the end, by the word and authority of Moses. All of these experiences served to detach Israel inwardly from the bondage of Egyptian life and society, and to deepen and purify their desire for deliverance. They served to make Israel feel more like “pilgrims and strangers” again, who must move on with the help of God!

We, too, are God's people. We were allowed to immigrate to this country and to establish ourselves here. We have enjoyed the favour of the people and government of Canada. We feel relatively secure and steeled, and we are attempting to make a place for ourselves in the economic, political, and cultural world of Canada. And there is no doubt that it was God's way for us as a people to come to Canada.

But we have become so secure and settled, and so eager to adjust and accommodate ourselves to the society of which we are a part, that we have, in some instances or respects, become enslaved to this society — bound to its wishes and aspirations and ideals, slaves to its pursuit of fine and fashionable living, to its pursuit after profit, to its pursuit of cultural enrichment, to its pursuit of pleasurable pastimes, to its pursuit of comfort and ease, political power, or academic excellence. We have entered the “house of bondage” slowly, gradually, almost imperceptibly. And we do sense this bondage at times but often prefer to forget the pain of such an awareness.

But deep within ourselves, though we are bound, we yearn to be free. We long to see “God's people go”. I do not know precisely how God will prepare us for that deliverance which may be necessary. He may take different ways with individuals, but these ways will involve God's patient and gracious preparation of our hearts. “LET MY PEOPLE GO” — are we willing to be released? God is ready to deliver us from all moral and spiritual bondage!

B. PREPARATION OF LEADERS (SERVANTS) OF ISRAEL:

But God was at work in the lives of certain servants who were to become the leaders in the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. He was preparing them for the liberation of Israel, in order that this liberation would benefit all and magnify His name.

MOSES was a gifted person whose career would amaze many in the years to come! He was a strong-willed person with passionate desires for great and noble action. He became a privileged person who received a broad education and training at Pharaoh's court, an education much beyond that of his parents and of his own people. He might have become proud and arrogant, quite indifferent to the experiences of his suffering people. In any case, the Hebrews who witnessed his first approaches were resentful enough: "Who made you a prince and a judge over us?" They interpreted his actions promptly as those of a proud and overbearing aristocrat!

But MOSES, though he erred and faltered along the way, permitted God to prepare him for the deliverance of God's people. Hebrews 11:24-28 tells us that by an act of faith Moses renounced Egypt and chose to suffer affliction with the people of God. But that act of faith, we may be sure, was part of an extended preparation within the heart of MOSES, a preparation that began with the faith of devout parents who told him the story of God's promises to His people (the prophecy of Joseph), who reminded him of his preservation as a babe at the edge of the River Nile. Already then a desire and a dream must have taken shape in Moses' young life — a dream of the deliverance of God's people. And that dream and that desire stayed with him even during an extended education within a non-Hebraic and heathen context. That desire to see God's people go, and that faith in the possibility of such a deliverance, were increased by his later visits to the Hebrews, and his observation of their sufferings.

And while his faith then was marred by personal impulse and possibly pride, and was frustrated by personal failure, it was again deepened and purified in the land of Midian. We sense his loneliness and his longing for his people in the naming of his first-born: GERSHOM, which means "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land." Moses never felt quite at home in Midian, though he experienced God in new and wondrous ways here. The dream and desire were still with him, but they were now linked more securely to God's purpose for Israel. But he also learned to feel what it is like to be away from home, to feel as God does when His people wander from Him and must be brought home again. And Moses learned to abide God's time and to appreciate God's manner of deliverance. He was being prepared inwardly.

And when the specific call came beside the burning bush, Moses was a much less confident and courageous man, and yet, for all that, a better qualified leader. Beneath the timidity and hesitance were a deeper humility and a deeper dependence upon God Himself. The modesty of so well-educated and trained a man seems remarkable but it was real! Moses had been liberated, more fully, from that independence and impulsiveness of spirit that often frustrate the SPIRIT of GOD in His working among men.

The revelation of God to Moses and Aaron, as they were being prepared, was a wonderful one. It revealed God to them:

(1) as the God who is the same forever (3:14) "God said to Moses, 'I am who I am', and say this to the people of Israel, I AM has sent me to you."

(2) as the God who keeps the promises once made to the fathers (3:15) "The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has sent me to you; this is My name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations."

(3) as the God who controls all of life (4:11) "Then the Lord said to him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?'"

With such an experience of God they were being prepared to lead in the deliverance of God's people. And God supplied also a concrete plan, but not until an inward preparation and spiritual authority had been received by Moses and Aaron.

What we need for our day is young people who are being prepared for the liberation of God's people — young men and women who want to see "God's people go". Young men and women who have been captivated by a dream and a desire, and who have faith in the wonder-working power of our God, young people who do not let education and career and circumstances take them further away from the purpose of God for His people but who permit all things to contribute to a finer and fuller preparation for leadership in the deliverance of God's people.

We need young people who see clearly, not only the failings and shortcomings of our church (people of God) but who see just as clearly how God has led them in personal life and has sought to prepare them, step by step, for the deliverance of a people.

C. PREPARATION OF EGYPT AND ITS RULERS (SOCIETY)

for the deliverance of God's people: The rulers of Egypt were influenced and finally compelled to let God's people go. They did not accept the God of Israel in faith; they did not become God's subjects and God's children in the end. Indeed, they were destroyed by the hand of God in judgment. And yet, in a sense, they were prepared by God for the deliverance of Israel.

RAMSES II (if we may assume that he was Egypt's Pharaoh at the time) was an arrogant and cruel king; he was certainly not prepared to let God's people go, for they constituted a source of economic profit for Egypt, and his heart delighted in the suppression of a sturdy people. He delighted in the enslavement of this peculiar people, in the hold which he (and his society) had upon

this people that had threatened Egypt with its growing strength. And he was not greatly impressed by the religion of Israel and by the appeals of Moses and Aaron until the power of God moved mightily among that people and compelled the release of the Hebrews. Pharaoh never did yield his heart to God in the sense that he accepted Him as his LORD, but he did come to say to Moses one day: "Rise up, go forth from among my people, both you and the people of Israel, and go and serve the Lord, as you have said. Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone . . ." (12:31-32). His hold upon the people of God, outwardly and inwardly, was broken, and the deliverance of God's people could be accomplished. A truth for all time is suggested here: the deliverance of God's people from bondage to any society or culture in which it lives is possible when the hold of that society is broken, and that hold is broken when that society perceives that God is at work, that God is a vital and overwhelming force among the people of God. All the resistance and affliction and suppression by such a society cannot keep a people enslaved where God is at work, preparing both people and leaders for a spiritual deliverance. Society may rage and may resist, may insist on keeping us, God's people, bound to its ideals and its aspirations, but it cannot prevail upon nor against us.

We think of ONE who, in the fulness of time, delivered His people from the bondage of Satan and sin, who indeed delivers all from the "house of bondage" who would be set free. This one is JESUS CHRIST. He was prepared of God to set God's people, and all people, truly free. He broke the hold of Satan, the king of earth's kingdoms, and he breaks the hold of sin. Therefore, Satan and sin cannot hold man captive forever. The power of God at work in CHRIST, and in His Holy Spirit, can compel the Prince of this world to let His people go. "He breaks the power of reigning sin, He sets the prisoner free; His blood can make the sinful clean, His blood availed for me."

GOD desires our deliverance from whatever binds us, as a people or as individuals. "LET MY PEOPLE GO" — this is still God's challenge and God's purpose! And to realize this purpose, He prepares His people and His servants (leaders) morally and spiritually. But He also controls and compels the unbelieving world to let His people go. May God liberate us, too, and grant us the "glorious deliverance of the sons of God."

Herb Giesbrecht.

BOOK REVIEW

REVOLT AGAINST HEAVEN:

An Inquiry Into Anti-Supernaturalism

by Kenneth Hamilton, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1965. Pp. 1193.

Until recently there has been a general lack of awareness in our churches concerning trends in modern theological thinking. However this is gradually beginning to change and we are becoming increasingly exposed to varieties of thinking in religion, philosophy, and related disciplines. This has come about largely as a result of a rapid influx into the universities. While we ought not to discourage this trend we must at the same time be prepared to face the new challenges which such a situation presents. In part this means that we must be more aware of the best that is written pertaining to topics of vital significance for the Christian.

Kenneth Hamilton, who is Professor of Systematic Theology at United College (University of Winnipeg) in Winnipeg, has written a number of books which deserve careful reading. In this particular volume he examines the anti-supernaturalism of much of contemporary

theology and seeks to place it in its true historical perspective. The attempt to demythologize the gospel (Bultmann), and to present it in a form more acceptable to modern man (Robinson), which is done under the guise of a missionary motive, is really nothing less than selling out the gospel, according to Hamilton. The common assumption of these and other anti-supernaturalistic theologians seems to be that we have finally come to a world-view which needs relatively little unlearning and which therefore can determine what we admit and what we exclude from our Christian preaching and teaching.

The man who was probably most responsible for popularizing modern anti-supernaturalism was Bishop Robinson. Hamilton, however, has little difficulty in exposing the basic inconsistencies of this honest-to-God theology. Robinson is accused of repudiating supernaturalism with a sweeping gesture while at the same

time attempting to keep everything that goes with the supernaturalistic outlook (p. 35).

In the second and third Parts Hamilton attempts to look at the latest developments of liberal-apologetic theology in the context of their historical development. Under the general heading of "The Earthbound God" he deals first with the theologians who have a metaphysical mystical approach and then with those who have a moral-pragmatic approach. Of the former he states that "the reinterpretation of transcendence which substitutes a metaphysical transcendence for transcendence viewed in a biblical perspective is a dubious gain for theology" (p. 52). Or again he says of the metaphysician's God whose reality is always deduced from the nature of the world that he "deserves to be called **an available God**; for, like Aladdin's genie, he appears immediately whenever we rub the dialectical lamp" (p. 53). While there are varieties of approaches used by theologians who belong to this category, Hamilton shows that they all require a theology of immanence as a foundation rather than a theology of revelation received by faith. He points to three major assumptions which neo-liberals share with Schleiermacher and which show their theologies to be largely republications of his: "(1) the starting point of theology in human self-consciousness, (2) the basis of Christology in human nature, and (3) the understanding of history as a progressive revelation of the structure of the universe" (pp. 96ff).

In discussing the theologians who take the moral-pragmatic approach, Hamilton again finds that they have a God of their own making. He

traces modern ideas back to Kant and finds that there is a correspondence between duty in Kant's teaching and the Idea of the Good in Plato's. While the metaphysical presuppositions of these theologians are not always as obvious they too subscribe to views of reality which must be characterized as theologies of immanence.

The final Part of the book is entitled, "A Voice Affirming Heaven" and this is devoted largely to a discussion of Bonhoeffer's "religionless Christianity." The obvious reason for this is that many of the modern apostles of "meaningful Christianity" appeal to Bonhoeffer and have apparently been inspired by him. Terms such as "world come of age" and "religionless Christianity" have become very popular and have been used to support rather radical ideas in theology. Hamilton believes that the appeals to Bonhoeffer are based on a completely false interpretation and that Bonhoeffer meant almost the exact opposite of what the anti-supernaturalistic theologians are saying. For Bonhoeffer the Christian faith was God-given; the supernatural was its heart; God was not a being deduced from the numinous fringe of our experience.

Hamilton has focused on what may well be one of the main threats to Christianity today. With a discerning mind he shows that there are really only two basic approaches to theology, and in the words of Bonhoeffer quoted on the title page maintains that, "From God to reality, not from reality to God, goes the path of theology." This perhaps is the reason why theology and philosophy can never be fully wedded. Hamilton's book also shows the inherent danger of any Christian apo-

legetic theology which in its defence of a transcendent God really falls prey to its own enemies by insisting on a particular speculative framework into which to "place" God. Hamilton's defence of transcendence is less assailable. By the very nature of the case, however, the book is more helpful in showing the weakness of anti-supernaturalism than it

is in constructing a valid supernaturalism. The first article of the apostolic creed, belief in God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth must remain as much an article of faith for the Christian as is the second, belief in Jesus Christ, for it is only through Christ that we can know the Father.

Abe Dueck

