

Commentary — From the Margins

Hinder Not the Children

Now they were bringing even infants to him [Jesus] that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to him, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” (Luke 18:15-17)

Knowing no other Christianity than that of the Roman Church, throughout the Medieval period Western Europeans accommodated the abuses and hubris of priests and bishops, but the Renaissance saw the rise of humanism—and this rise elevated the importance of the individual and individualism, thus raising men to a height from which they could see God for themselves. No longer were disciples necessarily blind. The 16th-Century saw Martin Luther post his 95 theses (ca 1517 CE), but it was Zurich’s Ulrich Zwingli who persuaded civil authorities to strip pictures, statues, and relics from churches (1524 CE). By then, he had for two years proclaimed that Scripture alone, not the Catholic hierarchy and its traditions, was the sole source of salvation. And with Zwingli were men who would go farther than Zwingli in restoring the faith of the early church: some of these men, George Blaurock, Conrad Grebel, and Felix Manz, in particular, sought more meaningful reform, what they called “Believers’ baptism,” the practice of baptizing after the disciple could make the conscious choice to become a “Christian.”

For the Reform movement, the idea that Scripture alone—*Scriptura sola*—contained everything necessary for belief in God and salvation pushed disciples away from typological exegesis or metaphorical readings of Scripture even though Jesus said that He had spoken about the Father only in figurative language (John 16:25) ... words are symbols that represent referents, with the connection between an uttered or inscribed word having no true permanence but existing as an ephemeral application of tradition: a word “means” what it does because that is what a community of readers says it means. The things of this world are the referents for the words used in everyday communication, and when speaking to other human beings, the words used are ones that the listener [auditor] will have heard before if communication is to occur. Otherwise an interpreter is needed. But God the Father is not of this world so for Jesus to have revealed God and the things of God to those who heard Him speak, He would necessarily have spoken in metaphors; for His words, as symbols for referents in this world, would have been used for heavenly referents, thereby establishing a

metaphorical relationship between the usually assigned referent for the symbol and a “thing” in heaven.

What might easily be confused as doublespeak in the sentence above is the problem inherent with using any human language to discuss heavenly things; for truly doublespeak of a different sort is being employed even when using the word, *God*, which would seem to be an earthly symbol for a single heavenly referent. And comprehending this *doublespeak of a different sort* was hindered by the Reformation’s application of *Scriptura sola*. Now, nearly five centuries later, this comprehension is still being hindered by spiritual immaturity in those few disciples who have undertaken a journey of faith of sufficient distance to cleanse hearts.

In the 16th-Century CE, many disciples left Catholicism to begin journeys out of Babylon, which wasn’t the Roman Church’s time in France, but the commingling of secular and ecclesiastical authority and power that begin with the Council of Nicea (ca 325 CE), where the Roman Emperor Constantine determined what sound doctrine would be ... Jesus said His kingdom was not of this world or from this world (John 18:36); it was among men when He was among men. And it will not return until Christ Jesus returns to rule over the single kingdom of this world in the same way that the present prince of this world rules through being the prince of the power of the air (Eph 2:3). As King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus will not rule as human kings rule. He will not live as human kings live. And the territory over which He will reign is the mental typography of all living things.

Zwingli and those who supported him began journeys of faith which would have led them to heavenly Jerusalem if they would have completed their treks from Babylon to the plains of Moab where they chose life or death, with those choosing life then continuing on to enter into God’s rest, which the writer of Hebrews equates with Sabbath observance (Heb 3:16-4:11; Ps 95:10-11; Num chap 14). Andreas Fischer was one of the few 16th-Century disciples that actually entered into God’s rest. Most stopped somewhere in what could be pictured as western Iraq. But because all started journeys of faith, they cleansed hearts and came under judgment. Christ will disclose upon His return what their judgments will be.

In the long trek from Babylon to Jerusalem, a milemarker denotes when a disciple leaves Babylon ... a generation ago and perhaps even now, travelers up the Alaska Highway would stop and have their photos taken at the Mile One sign in Cache Creek, British Columbia, then again by the roadsign noting when they entered Alaska (most of these travelers did not continue on to Fairbanks where the Alaska Highway officially ends, but turned south at Tok Junction). A substantial turnoff was placed beside the *Welcome to Alaska* sign to accommodate the number of people stopping. And similar roadsigns mentally exist to designate where disciples leave Babylon and enter into Moab, the transition landscape, and where disciples leave Moab and enter into spiritual Judea, with this latter sign being Sabbath observance.

The sign that disciples have left Babylon is non-participation in the governance of this world, the spiritual kingdom of Babylon, ruled by its prince (Isa 14:3-4). ... Zwingli would not leave Babylon. So when his more radical

supporters began to preach the concept of a *Believers' baptism* that would have churches be voluntary assemblies of Believers gathered with others of like mind, with conversion coming not by the sword, but by the Spirit, Zwingli attacked his former supporters with vehemence; for practice of rebaptism implied that those baptized as infants were not “genuine” Christians, meaning that heavenly Jerusalem had been uninhabited by disciples since shortly after the Apostle Peter died in the 1st-Century; meaning that the Church as the body of Christ was as dead as Jesus' physical body had been for three days and three nights.

Zwingli's vigorous resistance to the “rebaptizers,” the Anabaptists, apparently came from him understanding the implications of their teachings. And the argument Zwingli used against the men who had formerly supported him was that Jesus said not to hinder the infants, the little children from coming to Him. Zwingli contended that their teaching that infant baptism was invalid hindered little children from coming to Christ; hence, their teaching against infant baptism was itself invalid. And none of the early Anabaptists effectively refuted Zwingli, partially because of their spiritual immaturity which left them unable to distinguish between spiritual symbol and referent, the same obstacle that Zwingli himself faced but never overcame.

Jesus taught in parables: “All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: ‘I will open my mouth in parables; / I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world’” (Matt 13:34-35).

A parable is a short allegory, a kind of a metaphorical conceit in which the *symbol* (say, the king in the parable of the wedding feast) represents a *referent* outside the parable. Jesus spoke only in figurative language (again John 16:25); He spoke in parables, and through parables, He uttered what had been hidden in the beginning for the end. Israel never knew what God was doing in the beginning or would do in the end (Eccl 3:11). Israel never knew Christ, who came to His own, but was rejected by them (John 1:11); for He is the beginning and the end (Rev 22:13), and knowledge of Him was hidden in the “literalness” of Scripture, the text created by Moses, the Prophets, David, Solomon, and in the historical narrative of the kings, which contains details of wars and intrigues that have served to conceal what Jesus came to reveal.

- All of Scripture is an extended metaphoric conceit, an epic or Homeric simile, a metaphor containing details about the symbol that are not necessary for the metaphor's purpose.
- The details contained within a Homeric simile can but do not have to function as secondary metaphors—when these details function as tiered metaphors, discovery of one of these secondary metaphors tends to obscure the Homeric simile from the perception of the one discovering the secondary metaphor. Thus, details that function as metaphors hide the Homeric simile.
- What has been hidden from the foundation of the world is the spiritual realm, which cannot be directly ascertained. Only through revelation and the interplay of shadows can anything be known of this supra-dimensional realm.

- The Apostle Paul wrote that the invisible attributes of God have been clearly perceived in the things that have been made (Rom 1:20).
- Christ Jesus is the one who has made all things (John 1:3; 1 Co 8:6; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2; Heb 3:3)—the invisible attributes of God are clearly perceived in Christ Jesus (John 14:8-11), who revealed the hidden things of God in parables.
- Jesus is now both man and symbol for the referent that is God, but He is also the referent for the symbol that was the first Adam (Rom 5:14; 1 Co 15:45). So Jesus is both referent and symbol. He is the bridge between the physical world and the supra-dimensional spiritual realm.

A symbol is *something that someone intends to stand for something other than itself*, an intentionally vague definition that encompasses the relationship between symbol and referent in figurative language usage. When the first Adam was constructed from red mud, God intended that Adam represent or serve as the symbol for the *Logos* entering His creation as His only Son, for Jesus was sacrificed from the foundation of the world. Jesus was to be the bridge, the way, by which humankind could enter heaven; therefore, Jesus was also the type, the symbol, for how men could cross dimensions. Thus, Jesus was the referent for the first Adam, but those things that He did, collectively, form the symbol for a different referent: the actions of disciples who, when born of Spirit, will enter into God's rest.

Child psychologists have demonstrated that nine-month-old human infants cannot distinguish between a representation of an object and the object, even to trying to suckle a high quality photograph of a mother's breast; yet the primary characteristic of human beings is their ability to use symbols, with language usage being the foremost use of symbols. Baby gorillas and chimpanzees behave in the same way as human infants do at nine months when encountering photographic symbols. Even at two and a half years of age, most human infants cannot conceptualize a symbol representing its referent, but by age three, connecting a symbol to its referent is almost embarrassingly easy for the child. These six months (between 30 and 36 months) see a physical maturation of mental processes that cause a permanent separation between the great apes and human beings.

The invisible things of God are revealed by the things that are—the physical maturation of a child both in size and in mental maturity reveal the spiritual maturation of an infant son of God, born as a new creature into a tent of flesh. And as a human infant cannot distinguish between symbol and referent, and cannot connect symbol with referent until nearly three years old, a new born son of God likewise cannot distinguish between symbol and referent, nor connect symbol to referent until a degree of maturity is reached that is comparable with a three year old human infant. ... It is not possible for a disciple, newly born of Spirit to take meaning from Jesus' parables. Even at a spiritual age that is equivalent to a human infant of nine months, the disciple still cannot comprehend that physically circumcised Israel is the symbol that reveals the acts and activities of spiritually circumcised Israel in the heavenly realm. Only when this child of God reaches a spiritual age that is equivalent to a human child of

three years can the disciple comprehend that in the historical account of the natural nation of Israel the disciple can see how the Church looks to God. And even greater maturity is required before the disciple can appreciate the significance of Christ as both referent and symbol.

The little children that Jesus said not to hinder coming to Him are foremost disciples that are sons of God, with most of these sons of God being in spiritual maturity of an age that is the equivalent of a human infant younger than three years old. The infants and small children He addressed—remember, He spoke only in figurative language to His disciples at this time—were symbols for the disciples themselves, the referents and representatives of disciples ever since. Thus, the first disciples were (as Jesus was) both referents and symbols, with, say, what Philip asks Jesus in John chapter 14 being detail not necessary for the Homeric simile that has the things being made revealing (as symbols for) the divine nature and attributes of God. Yes, what Philip asks and how Jesus answers his question are important pieces of information that affirm the hypostatic union suggested in the visible revealing the divine, but the Homeric simile is not dependent upon this information. The Homeric simile exists because it is the structure necessary for the visible to reveal the invisible. It is not dependent upon any information contained within the symbolic narrative about the things that have been made. It existed before Jesus uttered His first parable; however, it is through analysis of the parables that the Homeric simile can be seen.

Zwingli and those who aided him in breaking away from the Roman Church began journeys of faith when they left Catholicism, and it was these journeys that cleansed their hearts so that they could be spiritually circumcised, which occurs when an infant son of God is the equivalent in age to a human infant of eight days. So Zwingli was still a newly born babe absolutely unable to connect symbol with referent when the schism developed between himself and those who pursued a *Believers' baptism*. None of the men involved were mature enough in faith to see past *Scriptura sola*. They would have attempted to suckle a photograph of a teat if their spiritual ages had been reflected in their physical mentality.

Moving forward four hundred years, the status of the movement begun by the Radical Reformers (ca 1527 CE) had reached another of its low points when Herbert W. Armstrong came among the Oregon Conference of the Church of God, Seventh Day. He was, at best, a novice when he began to teach what he was quickly learning as he undertook a journey of faith which cleansed his heart so that it could be spiritually circumcised. He possessed no spiritual maturity when he began to teach. His understanding of Scripture in 1927 could only be like that of Zwingli, Blaurock, Grebel, and Manz in 1522-27 although Armstrong benefited in actual possession of greater knowledge by living four centuries later—from the work of others, he proved to himself that the Sabbath was to be kept. Nevertheless, he had spiritual maturity equivalent to a human infant's mentality of less than ten months when he began preaching on the radio.

Because Armstrong began preaching when so young spiritually, his spiritual maturity was greatly retarded—he was never able to see how the symbol related to the referent. He spiritually remained to the end like the physical child who pats a book to see what the book is. And those disciples who continue to follow his

teachings are still spiritual infants, who have been hindered in coming to Christ by their teachers.

In ancient Israel, an infant was circumcised on the 8th day of life, but could not perform priestly duties until age thirty. The years in-between represented the time required to obtain mental maturity. The infant Hebrew child would have distinguished between symbol and referent by three, leaving twenty-seven more years of maturing before God thought this person was old enough to serve as a priest ... how many *Christian pastors* come to the ministry when they are still physical youths, with many/most of them never undertaking any journey of faith but rather following in the traditions of the household in which they were born? Nearly all? Yes, nearly all. Very few pastors come to ministry after being disciples growing in grace and knowledge for long periods.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Therefore an overseer [bishop — *episkopos*] must be above reproach ... [h]e must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Tim 3:2, 6). Zwingli, Blaurock, Grebel, Manz, and Armstrong were all, when they began their ministries, recent converts. Christ will reveal at His return whether they became puffed up with conceit and fell into condemnation. But what can be now said is that none of them had the spiritual maturity necessary to connect the symbol—all of Scripture—to its referent, the Kingdom of Heaven. Oh, they talked about the Kingdom of Heaven, or the Kingdom of God, but they talked without ever understanding that this kingdom would reign over the mental typography of living things [the mindsets and natures], not over the physical bodies of living things.

Paul wrote, “And you [saints at Corinth] show that you are a letter [epistle] from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts” (2 Co 3:3) ... the lives of disciples are epistles in the heavenly Book of Life, the referent for the symbol that is the Bible in which the lives of Israel’s kings are recorded with ink. The Homeric simile that has been at work since the beginning has Scripture being the symbol for the referent works, the Book of Life. Only at the end of this age have a few disciples obtained sufficient spiritual maturity to connect the symbol with its referent—and this lack of spiritual maturity is a terrible indictment of Israel’s teachers for the past 482+ years, a number that is perhaps significant.

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