

Chapter 1. The Point of Departure and General Perspective of Universalism in the Old Testament

Gen 12:3: “Here it becomes clear *that the whole history of Israel is nothing but the continuation of God’s dealings with the nations, and that therefore the history of Israel is only to be understood from the unsolved problem of the relation of God to the nations.*” 19

Ps 87: “But as the city of God she is at the same time the native city of all nations. They come not only *to* this city, but they have their domicile, their citizenship, their birthright there.” 21

Rowley: “The purpose of the election is service, and when the service is withheld the election loses its meaning, and therefore fails.” 22

“...there is not service *through* election but rather election *because of* service. Therefore election is not primarily a privilege but a responsibility.” 23

“...in this chapter we are speaking only of the *universal* and not (yet) of the *missionary* character of the Old Testament. It is, however, of great significance, not only for a ‘theology of missions’, but also for a ‘theology of the Church’, constantly to call to mind this universal task of Israel in and for the world.” 28

Chapter 2. The Old Testament Message of Universalism as a Missionary Message

1. *Universalism and Mission*

“It occurs to me that the idea of this gradual ascent from polytheism via monotheism to universalism and the idea of mission can be maintained only if one assumes that the idea of mission can be gleaned from a process of growth in Israel’s religion. But it seems to me impossible to glean this from the Old Testament.” 30

“...I think that if one assumes that the idea of mission is a postulate of universalism, one is up against a very great difficulty in regard to mission.

“What is this difficulty? Simply this: that while the point of departure of the Old Testament is universalistic, *the idea of mission either occurs only sporadically or is missing altogether.* In this case we can call the Old Testament ‘missionary’ only if we abandon the distinction between universalism and mission.” 30

2. *The ‘Missionary High Points’ of the Old Testament*

A. Isaiah 40-55

Re Isa 42, 49 and Deutero-Isaiah, Martin-Archard: “The message of Deutero-Isaiah is not missionary in the ordinary sense of this word; his preaching does not issue in proselytism. The prophet does not invite Israel to range the world to call the heathen to repentance. The *raison d’être* of the chosen people is to exist; its presence gives testimony to the divinity of Yahweh, its life proclaims all that God is for it and for the world. The mission of Israel exists in reflecting the glory of God by accepting His gifts along with His judgments; by beholding the whole singular fortune of the chosen people, one discovers heaven and earth and their Maker...” 32

Martin-Achard: "The fortune of the world ultimately hangs upon the existence of Israel in the midst of the nations; living by Yahweh, the chosen people lives for mankind. *That* is the missionary perspective which becomes visible in the declarations of Deutero-Isaiah." 33

B. The Book of Jonah

"It cannot be denied that a real plea for mission to the heathen is lacking in the book of Jonah..." 34

C. Aggravation of the Problem

"...never in the whole period of the Old Testament was there any deliberate missionary activity... During the Old Testament period no one could arrive at mission as an *act* of going out for proclamation among the nations." 34

"...there is no thought of mission in the Old Testament in the centrifugal sense in which it comes to the fore in the New Testament." 35

3. *The Character of the Old Testament Expectation for the Future*

"The past is never *only* past; it is also a powerful witness for the active presence and power of Yahweh today, and therefore also a *promise* for Yahweh's future activity." 35

"Because the God of Israel has been the God of all nations in the past, so *also* is He in the present and will be in the future." 36

"... we have just as much right to say that Israel's future is defined by her past as that the appreciation of her past is defined by her expectation for the future." 36

"That which will bring the world of nations to Him is *not* Israel's calling them, *nor* her going out to them, but exclusively the visible manifestation of the deeds of God in and with Israel; only so will they recognize Yahweh as their God, i.e. confess that Israel's God is *their* God, the God of the whole earth, the *only* God." 37

"*The character of eschatology as expectation of what Yahweh will do really excludes the idea of mission in the narrower sense (Israel's going out to the nations).*" 37

4. *Mission as Eschatological Possibility*

Blauw believes that the statement found at Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6 *must* be regarded as missiological. He concludes "that there is in fact only one statement in the Old Testament (sc. Isa 42:6 = Isa 49:6) that expresses in so many words the idea of mission in the sense of 'going out to the nations.'" With respect to other universalistic passages cited from Deutero-Isaiah he sees another interpretation required: "simply that the nations shall *come* to salvation." 39-40

"...the thought of mission in the centripetal sense occurs with great frequency both in the prophets and in the Psalms. By this we understand the promise of *the coming of the nations as a response to God's acts in Israel.*" 40

It is Blauw's conviction "that the book of Jonah has to be classified among the universalistic and not among the missionary portions of the Old Testament." 41

5. Summary

"It is not human activity that stands in the foreground of the Old Testament but the divine acts for the redemption of Israel. These acts cannot be confined to Israel, for the existence and redemption of Israel has consequences for the nations." 42

Martin-Achard: "In conclusion, the Church cannot deny that God converts the nations, acting in the midst of His people, His intervening, and this alone, makes of Israel the light of the world. The Church evangelizes to the extent that her Lord inspires her; her existence, then, itself is her power. Mission has nothing to do with this or that political or commercial undertaking, as people have sometimes thought; it is completely dependent on the secret activity of God in the Church, it is the fruit of a life that is truly founded in God. First and foremost, the evangelization of the world is not a matter of words or of activity, but of presence: *the presence of the people of God in the midst of humanity, the presence of God among His people*. It is not without purpose that the Old Testament brings this to the recollection of the Church." 42-43

Chapter 3. The Old Testament Message of Universalism as a Messianic Message

1. Expectation of Salvation and Expectation of the Messiah

"...the Old Testament expectation for the future *is* always an expectation of salvation, but does not always bear the character of a Messianic expectation." 44

2. Messianic Figures

"I believe we can do justice to the Old Testament Messianic expectation only by paying attention to the prophetic as well as to the royal tradition." 45

"Although with good reason Israel can be called the Messianic nation, nevertheless I believe it is better to confine the term 'Messianic' to those individual figures which give expression in a special way to God's will and work in history." 45

"We must certainly state emphatically that any attempts to explain the idea of the Messiah as a borrowing from other nations, particularly from Babylon or Egypt, must be regarded as a failure." 45

Messianic expectation "bears the character of universalism well-nigh continually." 45

Blauw here cites Genesis 49:8ff which he thinks probably echoes Genesis 3:15. He adds Melchizedek (Gen 14; interpreted Messianically in Hebrews; see too Psalm 110). Also noted is Numbers 24:17; 2 Samuel 23:1-7 ("a righteous ruler" but not over Israel but "over men"). Isaiah 2:2-5 and Micah 4:1-4 are seen to be implicitly Messianic. Other Messianic texts cited are Amos 9:11; Hos 3:5; Isa 4:2; 9:1-6; Mic 5:1-5; Jer 23:5-8; 30:9; 33:14-18; Ezek 34:21-30; 37:24-28; Hag 2:7-9; Zech 6:9-15. 46

"it is...not without significance that the Messiah, although almost never called 'king', still receives the attributes of the general style of an Oriental court outside Israel, whereas this is almost never the case as regards Israel's kings themselves." 46-47

"The Messiah figure is a divine figure who will bring to expression the actual royal lordship of God in the future. Therefore the Messiah is not so much the *bringer* and author of salvation as He is its

representative. The Messiah is the visible manifestation of God Himself. In the light of this statement, all the Psalms which celebrate the future royal lordship of God belong to the category of Messianic Psalms... the universal lordship of God and the lordship of the Messiah are correlates: the latter is an expression of the former. *We are justified in concluding that the universal lordship of God, the eschatological expectation of salvation and the expectation of the Messiah belong together; they are, as it were, concentric circles: the Messiah is the centre of the Israelite as well as of the universal expectation of salvation.*" 47

Since it can be said that there is nothing Messianic as such in the Songs of the Servant of the Lord this makes "clear the fact that there is no possibility of connecting the tradition of royal Messianic expectation and the tradition of prophetic Messianic expectation." 47

Blauw, however, believes that the way the Servant of the Lord is addressed in these songs and the way he himself speaks "point unmistakably in the direction of a Messianic figure. One might rightly say that the Servant-of-the-Lord prophecies supplement and develop the Messianic idea in ways previously unheard of:

- (i) "...we find an expression of the absolute surrender to the *service* of Yahweh." 47 The whole emphasis is laid on his human character, underscored by his suffering and dying. 48
- (ii) A "*more-than-human* glory and authority" is intimated.
- (iii) "... all the emphasis falls on the establishment of the lordship of God. He *magnifies* the *unique* glory of God and becomes light and salvation for the world."
- (iv) Elsewhere the task of showing that Yahweh alone is God is Israel's task. Here it is the task of the Servant: "Through all the Old Testament historical and prophetic books we find a 'progressive reduction': from the many to the few, from the nation to the remnant, from the remnant to the one Servant." 48

Blauw briefly considers each of the Servant Songs in turn. He observes:

"In all the songs where there is reference to the world of nations, we do not find the Servant going out to the world of nations, so much as his being recompensed by the world of nations. In other words, the nations are the reward of the Messianic Servant, and the guarantee that his work will not be in vain. *All the emphasis falls on the fact that the world of nations is a gift to the Messianic Servant; there is no reference here to the world of nations as a 'mission territory' of the Servant.*" 49

With respect to this portrayal of the Servant, "if we wish to speak of the idea of mission, we must understand 'missionary' exclusively in the sense of the centripetal activity of the nations; they will come to Israel in order to put themselves under the rule of Yahweh." See also Zech 8:23. 50

Regarding Daniel 7:1-4 Blauw states the fact "that it is to the Son of Man, in whom we see an apocalyptic indication of the Messiah, that the dominion is *given* after it has been taken away from the four beasts." "Here also the Messianic dominion over the nations is a *gift* for which neither the Messiah himself nor the nations have asked." 50

Blauw locates the following Messianic features in Daniel 7:

- (i) "The Messiah represents the Kingdom, the Royal Dominion of God; the Messiah is, as it were, the visible appearance of God Himself.
- (ii) He also bears human features.
- (iii) By virtue of divine intervention he is granted kingship – it is not earned.

- (iv) “The Messianic dominion is a human, righteous dominion in contrast to that of the subhuman powers which have been conquered.” 51

3. *Messiah-Missionary?*

“...it has become clear that we are not being entirely fair to the distinctive nuances of the Old Testament witness if we seek bases for a theology of mission (as a ‘going out to the nations’) in the figure of the Messiah.” 51

The Messianic message of the Old Testament underscores the following:

- a) God’s promised salvation to Israel is a *universal* salvation. 52
- b) Throughout the whole course of the Old Testament this was never received by Israel but only expected.
- c) This eschatological salvation is connected with the coming of the Messiah.
- d) “...this universal-eschatological-Messianic salvation is not a consequence of preaching or of witness, but is a *gift* which is granted by God Himself *to* and via the Messiah.” 52

“...there is no concern in the Old Testament for any human activity for the cultivation or acquisition of salvation.” 52

“...the question of the universal and missionary character of the Old Testament, has been clearly answered by Israel itself at a later stage of its history. Long before the missionary movement as an act of witness of the Christian Church started, Israel itself was engaged in missionary work. To be sure, we cannot overlook the fact that the missionary activity of Israel was of a different type from that of the Christian Church some centuries later; but we must not make the mistake of regarding the whole missionary activity of Israel as fanatic, nationalistic propaganda.” 54

Chapter 4. The Inter-Testamental Period

1. *Diaspora and Proselytism*

It was during this period that missionary activity among the Jews began. “...this is underestimated rather than overestimated with regard to its extent and intensity as well as to its significance for the missionary attitude and activity of the Christian Church for the first few centuries of its existence.” 55

Derwacter: “The rapid development of Christianity into a Gentile religion seems inexplicable without a large proselyte constituency.” 56

Bamberger identifies various elements that help explain why the Jewish missionary propaganda was “chiefly, though not exclusively, a diaspora phenomenon”:

- i) “The decay of the Jewish nation led to greater emphasis being laid on the idea that the Jewish group was chiefly a religious entity.”
- ii) “The conquest of monotheism in Israel transformed Judaism into a purely universalistic religion.”
- iii) “The extension of the diaspora strengthened Jewish self-confidence among the colonists in new places.”
- iv) An impetus for apologetic and then missionary initiatives occasioned by contact with other ways of thinking, especially Hellenistic.

- v) “The success of the Maccabean rebellion made for increased self-confidence within Palestine of a religious kind.” 56

Harnack estimated that when Christ was born there were around 4-4.5 million Jews in the Roman Mediterranean area alone, constituting about 7% of the total population of that area. 56-57

“It is not true that Christianity has not only adopted Judaic missionary activity but has also replaced it.” 57

“In my opinion it is wrong and rather too tendentious to explain Jesus’ well-known words in Matt. 23:15, as meaning that their success must have been slight.” 57

Dalbert identifies factors that added to the appeal of Judaism:

- i) Antisemitism and martyrdoms led to its growth.
- ii) Its moral strength surpassing all pagan religions.
- iii) Monotheistic tendencies in the Hellenistic world (old town and state cults had become mere formalities).
- iv) A readiness to accept spiritual values from the Orient, with Judaism’s monotheism and ethical strength giving it an edge.
- v) “The shift from Palestine legalism to the spirituality of diaspora Judaism.” 58

The Septuagint “became – mainly through St. Paul – the great mission book of the young Christian Church, but long before that it was the Jews’ mission book *par excellence*.” 58 This was not just a translation but an exegesis and transformation of the OT. 58

2. *Septuagint and Proselytism*

“...the fact that a diaspora had taken place had a great influence on the translation of the Hebrew text.” 59 Blauw sees this exemplified in the translation of Isaiah 55:5 which lacks a missionary tendency in the Hebrew.

The LXX also opened the Oriental world to the Occident by not speaking the literary language of Hellenism but popular *koine*. 59

3. *Israelitic Wisdom and Proselytism*

Blauw reflects on Proverbs 1-9 and the personification of Wisdom.

“...the salvation of the world lies in the wisdom that was already present when the world began.” 62

“And if Prov. 1-9 came into being in the post-exile period, then it is certainly also thanks to this wisdom literature that Israel became more and more aware of its missionary calling.” 62

Chapter 5. The New Testament Message of Universalism in Relation to that of the Old Testament

1. *Introduction*

“It...seems to me of essential importance for the construction of a theology of mission that both the unity and the diversity of the Old and New Testaments be kept in mind, because the diversity can be

understood *rightly* only from the unity, and the unity receives its *full* significance *from* the diversity.” 66

The commission to proclamation to the nations, centrifugal mission, is totally new in the NT, quite lacking in the OT. This is not to be viewed as a victory over or as a contrast to the OT witness. But nor should it be seen as but a *form*, or a mode, of the centripetal task. 66

2. *Jesus, Israel, and the Nations*

Jesus avoided a mission to the Gentiles and the Gospels clearly state that he “consciously wished to confine his activity to Israel.” Mt 15:24; cf. Mk 12:1ff; Mt 10:6; Mt 8:12; Lk 12:32. 67

In the Gospels, as in the OT, the Gentiles (the nations) are ignorant of God, worldly and act contrary to God. 67

Although Jesus did heal and preach outside Israel “in neither case was there any concern for a labour of mission among the Gentiles by Jesus Himself.” See Mt 15:21-28; Mt 8:5-13. 68

This was not due to any nationalism or particularism on Jesus’ part. 68

“...salvation for the Gentiles was expected at the time of the end, when God’s Kingdom would be fully revealed in Israel.” 68

“...the frequently used concept of the Kingdom of God, or of Heaven, always includes the world of nations.” 71

“The question arises, why has Jesus separated His task for Israel so strictly from His expectation for the nations? Answer:

- 1) Salvation must first be offered to Israel before the Gentiles can be received into the people of God. So Mt 10:5-6: “the Kingdom of God *is* at hand, but its eschatological revelation has not yet come.” 71
- 2) “The Kingdom of God can dawn only after the blood of the true Passover Lamb has been shed” (Isa 53:11; Mk 10:45; 14:24).

3. *The Kingdom, the Apostles, and the Church*

“The theme and contents of the Gospel are the proclamation of the Kingdom of God as a fulfilment of the Old Testament promises. Its actualization begins in the preaching of Jesus.” 72 “He not only *proclaims*, but He *is* in His person the Kingdom which is at hand.” 72

“Jesus opposes the *expectations of a narrowly Israelite sort* (coloured in part by nationalism) by opening out *prospects of universalism*.” 73

“...while the gospel is the fulfilment of the expectation of salvation, that fulfilment still bears a tentative character, and becomes in itself the source of a new expectation.” 73

The Parable of the Sower: “*This assumes time and space to grown and ripen to the harvest.*” 74

“God’s eschatological activity in Christ opens out a most surprising perspective, the surprising thing being now the *fact* of the coming of the nations, but *how* they come, and the *condition* for their coming.” 76

“There is thus good reason to speak of a ‘dethronement’ of eschatology in the message of the New Testament, because the ‘last things’ which have been enacted in Christ are at the same time the ‘first things’ of a new age and of a new world.” 76

“It is not eschatology itself, but a *wrongly understood* eschatology, which contains the danger.” 77

“Apostle” does not mean “missionary” or “one sent.” It is derived from the juridical not theological world, meaning “to be fully entrusted with the responsibility or representation of another.” 77

“Although the twelve apostles do not represent the New Testament apostolate *exclusively*, the concept of ‘apostle’ is certainly defined by them, by the twelve chosen by Jesus.” 78

The apostles are (1) proxies of the Messiah (in his name proclaiming and demonstrating the salvation of the time of the end – by healing the sick, etc.); (2) first-fruits and representatives of the Messianic people of the time of the end; and (3) witnesses of the Messiah’s resurrection to the uttermost parts of the earth, who carry on the work of Christ in the world (Jn 17:18; 20:21). 78

Consequently, the role of the apostles teaches us: “*The progression of Heilsgeschichte which is here found continues, in that the ‘last of the days’ does not mean the end of the days, but a great turning of the days towards a new future.*” 79

“Nowhere in the New Testament is the Church made the equivalent of the Kingdom of God, but neither is the one set anywhere in opposition to the other.” 79 “She is not herself the Kingdom, but she is its manifestation and its form. The Church herself is a sign of the new future which has broken in for the world... the Church is the ‘holy, catholic, apostolic Church’ only when she receives the eschatological expectation of the fullness of the Kingdom.” 79

While the “not yet” of the OT remains there is a very real sense in which the Church, “*as the form and anticipation of the Kingdom of God*”, substitutes for the OT’s ‘not yet’, that she is the ‘already’. The movement of OT and NT is ‘not yet’ – ‘already’ – ‘not yet.’ 80

The Church does not merely anticipate but symbolise the hopes for the Kingdom in the fullness of the nations. “*Mission* comes into view when this hope for the world takes the form of *acts* of proclamation on behalf of Christ.” 80

Chapter 6. The Missionary Message of the New Testament in Contrast with the Old Testament

1. Presuppositions

The conditions and presuppositions which have led to this missionary commission:

- 1) First stage of the history of the world: life and peace granted to man after and even in his disobedience; scattering of the nations as a judgment which opens the way for a restoration of fellowship between God and the world of nations via the election of Abraham. 81
- 2) New phase: ‘one for many.’ Abraham the individual from Ur; Israel, the individual among the nations. 81 For Israel to forget her distinction from the nations is to commit treason not only against the covenant of God “but also against those nations for whose sake she has been set apart.” 82 But God will attain his goal: “World history is a history around Israel, just as Israel’s history is a history around the works of God... the revelation of the salvation of God means both the redemption of Israel and the liberation of the nations.” 82

- 3) Third stage: coming of Jesus Christ. In Jesus the *ultimate* intention of God with Israel and with the world is made manifest. This is the time of eschatological fulfilment, but at the early stage. 82
- 4) Fourth stage: a new beginning existing “in the fact that the nations may now see and experience what Israel had been allowed to see and experience in the covenant with God. *The manifestation of the great acts of God to the nations determines the character of history after Christ’s death and resurrection.*” 82-83

2. *The Great Turning-Point*

“...both the synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John culminate in the pronouncement of the resurrection and the call to mission emerging from it.” Most clearly, Matthew 28:18-20. 83

This passage regards Daniel 7:13-14 as fulfilled (O. Michel). “...the service of the nations is a portion of the enthronement of the Son of Man.” 83

“The proclamation of the Gospel is... the proclamation of the Lordship of Christ among the nations.” 84 “Mission is the summons of the Lordship of Christ.” 84

“...it cannot be denied that here, *and here for the first time*, the commission is given to go out among the nations.” 86

From all the Gospel accounts “it is clear that the resurrection, as the crowning of Christ’s work, is *the* first and great presupposition and condition for the proclamation of the gospel among the nations.” 88-89

“Jerusalem *remains* the centre of Israel too, but with this difference, that the point of departure is no longer the Temple but rather the congregation at Jerusalem.” 91

“Jesus Christ Himself takes over the place of Jerusalem. He is the central point around whom the nations will gather. To this they must be summoned and invited.” 92

Paul has two perspectives:

- 1) Christians, not Jews are the congregation of God – the important thing is Israel according to the Spirit, not the flesh (Galatians)
- 2) Israel is the only people of God and Gentile Christians are taken into this one people as proselytes (Romans) 93

3. *Paul’s Apostleship*

Galatians 2:9 “is to be understood geographically, not ethnographically and not exclusively.” 95

From Ephesians 2:11-3:21: “...the mission among the Gentiles cannot possibly be seen as a continuation of the Judaic making of proselytes during the diaspora.” 97

“In a theological sense Paul did...what to Jewish ears was incredible; the line of descent runs from Abraham via Christ to the world of the Gentiles and Abraham himself has become the prototype of the Gentile Christian!” 98

“The strangeness, the abnormal nature of Paul’s calling to the apostleship correspond to the strangeness, the abnormal nature of his preaching as preaching *among the Gentiles.*” 99

Paul's apostleship, even more than that of the 12 apostles, is "a sign of the *fulfilment of the times*, of God's eschatological acting." 100

Chapter 7. Towards a Theology of Mission

1. *Mission and World History*

Discussion regarding the place of mission in world history:

Proclamation of the gospel among the nations possible only by the voluntary sacrifice of Christ on the cross (a sign of God's pity *and* of Israel's obstinacy); the resurrection (through which Jesus received the dominion of the world); the gift of the Holy Spirit (enabling apostles and community to witness). 104-105

"Mission...is not only the *consequence* of Christ's dominion of the world, but it is also the *actualization* of it. The proclamation of the gospel is the *form* of the Kingdom of God." 105

"...the proclamation is not dependent on world history but rather world history is dependent on proclamation because and in so far as this is the manifestation of Christ's dominion over the world." 105

"But it is important not to accentuate the reality of Christ's dominion at the expense of the *tentativeness* and *hiddenness* of this dominion." 106

In Roman Catholic and High Church thinking the dominion of Christ and the Kingdom of God are understood as realized in the Church, with the Church replacing the Kingdom almost wholly. This robs Christ's dominion of both its hiddenness and its tentativeness. The same applies to the "social gospel" idea and idealistic, social-ethical narrowing of the Kingdom. It belongs to the area of illusions to think in terms of a gradual actualization of the Kingdom or a Christianisation of the world. 106

Oscar Cullmann in particular has influenced the view that the proclamation of the gospel is much more a sign of the end than a sign of fulfilment. 106 Based on Mark 13:10 and Matthew 24:14, where "mission is named among divine signs along with woes such as wars, famine, etc." Cullmann: "It is not true that the coming of the Kingdom depends upon the *result* of this preaching; rather upon the *fact* of this preaching." 106

"Matt. 24:14 does not speak of the 'must' of proclamation but simply of the future actuality of proclamation." 107 Similarly, Acts 1:8 – future, not imperative, this is now the 'must' of Mark 13:10 is to be understood: "an indication of a *heilsgeschichtlich* necessity rather than of a commandment laid upon man." 107

Blauw reflects on an increasing uncertainty as to whether missionary work is justified. 107

Blauw considers emphases, promoted by Barth and others, that see the eschatological nature of the Church and its character as a community that ever exists for the world. The more the total responsibility of the church is emphasised the less easy is it to treat a foreign obligation as a unique element of call and separation. 108-109

2. *Current Questions*

Walter Freytag: “Without mission, history is nothing but human history whose progress consists at best in the intensifying of its catastrophe. But if we know of the coming Kingdom, we cannot rejoice in the promise without proclaiming it. The Lord is near.” 109

However, even in this quotation the word ‘mission’ needs to be detached from too narrow a conception of it. If mission is made too broad then as Stephen Neill says, “If everything is mission, nothing is mission.” 109 But a ‘theology of mission’ is not a ‘theology of missionary societies’, a theological justification of what they have done in the past and what they are trying to do in the present. 109

Blauw asks whether ‘foreign missions’ are a theological necessity or a historical contingency? 110

The expression “the last of days” occurs much more often in the Bible than “the last” or “the uttermost parts of the earth.” 110

Blauw sees “the ends of the earth” as a synonym of “the whole world” and “all nations.” The phrase “the uttermost parts of the earth” has encouraged the idea of “far-away places” and the view that missions are only missions if it’s a matter of countries ‘overseas’, e.g. Asia and Africa. 111 Obviously “ends of the earth” must be purged of a ‘Western’ perspective, since on this misunderstanding of the phrase what are the ‘ends of the earth’ to say a church in Asia or Africa? 112

“...the missionary commission is from the very beginning an ecumenical commission, a commission which concerns the whole inhabited world. Thus the criterion is simply: that one must have heard of Christ in order to be able to believe in Him. Thus He must be preached everywhere, and to that end the messengers of the gospel must be sent (Rom. 10:11-15).” 112

“...it is not right to speak of historical contingency. History is anything but contingent.” 113

“It is my conviction that the Church has been manifested more clearly in the much-defamed groups of ‘friends of mission’ than in the ‘official Church’, which at best accepted a benevolently neutral attitude toward mission (at least on the European continent – but was it really so much better in the Anglo-Saxon lands?).” 113

“Missions in the last three centuries have been a theological necessity, because the proclamation of the gospel is always so. Therefore it was *not* a historical contingency but rather a *heilsgeschichtlich* progression of the word and work of God on earth.” 115

Walter Freytag: “The congregation which waits for the Lord cannot keep its nature if it lets itself be inclosed within the space of one people and does not participate in work and prayer in the proclamation among all nations.” 115

“Christ’s dominion over the world presses to a proclamation across *all* boundaries, because there are *no* boundaries for those who confess Christ as the Lord of the world and as the Hope of the world.” 118

3. Church and Mission

Blauw speaks of the last few decades having “led to the rediscovery of the Church as a community of the Kingdom, as a witnessing and serving community in and for the world. Outside the existing missionary movement, the conviction that the Church is a missionary Church or it is no Church is accepted by the great majority.” 120

To speak of a separate ‘theology of mission’, in addition to a theology of the Old and New Testament, can be maintained, “*only* if one misunderstands the Church as well as mission.” 120

“The unity between Church and mission, the unity, that is, between mission as a service of the Church and the Church as sent into the world, does not mean that there is no longer room for a basic reflection regarding the *conditions* and *manner* and *extent* of the service of the Church to the world.” 121

“When we see the unity of ‘Church and mission’ in Biblical light, then I think the misunderstanding that there are two stages, first the stage of mission, and after that the stage of the Church, will disappear.” 121

“There is no other Church than the Church *sent* into the world, and there is no other mission than that of the Church of Christ.” 121

“Many Churches are characterized by ‘nothing is mission’ rather than by ‘everything is mission.’” 122

When the essential nature of the Church is seen to be that of “a community sent forth into the world” then “missionary work is not just one of its activities, but the *criterion for all its activities.*” 122

“Christ’s Church is in *this* world as a sign of and a summons to the *world to come*, a phenomenon which is so impossible that it is always in danger of losing its own nature.” 123

“Let us not forget that the great prime mover of the preaching of the gospel does not come from outside (the ‘need of the world’) and not from within either (the ‘religious impulse’) but from above, as a divine coercion – ‘woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!’ (1 Cor. 9:16), as a matter of life and death, not for the world, but for the Church itself – ‘And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you’ (1 Cor. 9:23).” 126

4. *Epilogue: The Miracle of the Community*

“In a somewhat more detailed exegesis of the well-known passage 1 Pet. 2:9-10, we will, then, illustrate the purpose of the argument in the previous paragraph, viz. that a ‘theology of mission’ cannot be other than a ‘theology of the Church’ as the people of God called *out* of the world, placed *in* the world, and sent *to* the world.” 126

Blauw proceeds to examine the language of 1 Peter 2:9-10 tracing it back to its OT roots. He understands ‘priesthood’ to involve serving God by serving the world. “This royal freedom of the priestly service exists for the sake of witness in the world; yes, the life of the community as a royal priesthood is already a witness in itself. The proclamation of the marvellous deeds of God occurs not only by word and deed; it already takes place in the existence of the community.” 130

“The proclamation of the gospel in the world can, may, and must never be anything else than the speaking of the deeds of *God.*” 133

“So long as there are in this world men in darkness, without God and without mercy, so long will the task of mission of the Christian Church endure. But she can complete this only when she remains powerfully conscious that she herself shared in the same darkness and alienation, and that out of this she is called to proclaim to others the marvellous deeds of the God of light, fellowship, and mercy. There is no other ‘theology of mission’, no other oracle, than this.” 136