

The Christian Mission

By

Everett L. Cattell



SHREWSBURY LECTURE

“Now was I come up in spirit through the flaming sword into the paradise of God.” GEORGE FOX

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THE SHREWSBURY LECTURES

Shrewsbury Meeting was already established in 1672, when George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, visited America. He says in his Journal, published by Cambridge University Press: “And soe wee came to Shrewsberry & on the first day of the weeke wee had a pretious meettinge... & friends & other people came farr to this Meettinge; & on ye 2d of the 7th month wee had a mens (& weomens) Meettinge, out of the most parts of ye new Country Jarsie, which will be of great service in keepinge ye Gospell order & Government of Christ Jesus...and there is a Monthly & A Generall Meettinge sett up and they are buildinge A Meettinge place in the midst of them.”

In preparation for the tercentenary, in 1972, of George Fox’s visit to America, an annual Shrewsbury Lecture is given on some basic aspect of Quakerism. A particular phase of the special emphasis which Quakerism gives to the Christian message is presented. The community and Monmouth County in particular are invited on this occasion, known as Old Shrewsbury Day, to join with Friends who “came farr to this Meettinge” to learn together from him who is the Light of the World.

Number 1 - **Jesus and Judaism** and **The Emphasis of Jesus** by Henry J. Cadbury, member of the committee who prepared the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

Number 2 - **The Religion of the Quaker Journalist**, as disclosed in the literature of spiritual autobiography, by Howard H. Brinton, Director Emeritus of Pendle Hill, an adult center for religious and social study.

Number 3 - **The Christian Mission**, the heart of evangelical faith and its relevance for those of other points of view, by Everett L. Cattell, President, World Evangelical Fellowship.

THE CHRISTIAN MISSION

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SHREWSBURY LECTURE

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PREFACE

Which will it be? A vague reliance on “the best that is in man”, trusting that if enough individuals join in a common search for this highest common denominator God will be found? Or, will it be a complete acceptance and surrender to the highest authority known? A submission which admits God’s pure light into our souls to lift us above our petty frustrations and lead us in the paths that are straight to the fulfillment of a life lived in His kingdom.

Everett Cattell puts the choice squarely to the individual, whether in the Society of Friends or elsewhere. He demonstrates the “chasmic”, and one might almost add “cosmic”, difference between the idea that man is the measure of all things and the knowledge that God still is. Which are we, little tin Christians or ambassadors of the one to whom “all authority in heaven and on earth” was given? Do we acknowledge Him who is creator, reconciler, judge, and king? Whenever we lose sight of the source from which we speak, “the message becomes entangled with human reasonings or doubts; or with too great effort to make it palatable , it loses its ring of authority.”

Our democratic tradition with its noble view of man has conditioned us to resist authority, but the self-surrender to a God who loves His creation is a higher type of authority which frees rather than constricts. It comes from a God who is continually seeking man and who allowed His own Son to be crushed in order that the forces of evil might be spent.

There can be no successful mission, Everett Cattell says, without the humiliation, the service, the self-giving and love which became the pattern for a new creation. But when we serve we must remember that “service is not a thing in itself, but we must serve because the love of Christ constrains us.”

EVERETT L. CATTELL

On his return from twenty years as Superintendent of the American Friends India Mission in 1957, Everett Cattell became General Superintendent of Ohio Yearly Meeting of the Friends Church (Damascus).

Ohio Yearly Meeting has 90 small churches and nearly 7,000 members. It follows the pastoral pattern, has been very open to Wesleyan influence, and can be characterized as conservative evangelical in theology.

It sponsors Malone College in Canton, Ohio, which “aims to prepare students for a life of Christian living and service in their homes, churches, communities and today’s world.” Everett Cattell has been president of Malone since 1960. The college has an ultramodern plant, built in 1957, a 42- acre campus, and 685 students.

Everett Cattell’s topic is one of those he knows best, and on which he can speak with authority. It will provide an insight into the heart of evangelical faith and its relevance for those of other points of view.

THE CHRISTIAN MISSION

In this post-Christian era one can no longer assume that he speaks to a Christian audience in America any more than in India. When one realizes that one's audience includes both Christians and non-Christians, it requires an exegesis for Christians which will sharpen their sense of mission for them, and clarify both the rationale and the method of that mission. Explaining the Christian mission becomes a two-fold task. At the same time, this same exposition of Christian mission must communicate with non-Christians who bristle at the very mention of the subject, showing antagonisms which range from feelings of disinterest - based on a conviction that mission is irrelevant - to emotions of hostility - based on opposition to the basic premises of the Christian mission.

This is a difficult task but a challenging one. Let us hope that the sharpening of concepts may be shared from a spirit of dogmatism and that the declaration of the faith may be as irenic as Christ himself.

The post-Christian mind is terribly confused and confusing, and presents many facets and forms. Behind all the appearances, however, is a least common denominator which probably should be called humanism. I am aware that humanism can be variously defined and that some of its connotations are good. But I use it in this lecture as essentially the idea that man is the measure of all things. There is a chasmic difference between this and the assumptions of the Christian gospel where God is the measure of all things. In humanism, we start with a premise from within ourselves, and work out. When we meet opposition, we can always retreat within ourselves. The Christian gospel always starts by confronting us with a decision about a "given fact", that there is a God, and that he serves as the premise from which all else begins. If the decision is difficult, we again can retreat within ourselves, or we can start running from God. It is like the rabbit who faces the hunter. One hunches in the shadow of a bush and hopes to be passed over unnoticed, while another takes off in erratic flight.

If this sharpening of the issue seems an oversimplification, I can only reply that the gospel is very, very simple and that the complexity of our post-Christian humanism instead of being profound may merely be confusing. It is my conviction that our day calls for precisely this simple, direct statement of the gospel.

The difficulty in our communication today is that we cannot satisfy that human desire for a common premise between Christian and non-Christian which would enable us to share a dialogue. This is because we are not on common ground. Nor am I in a position today, classroom fashion, to state the two viewpoints and let you choose between them. This would be to misunderstand the nature of the Christian gospel. My task is to state that gospel as clearly as possible. If in the doing of it, I seem to be urging it as a live option, I shall not be chagrined but feel that I have succeeded. For I speak not from the stance of neutral objectivity but from that of a disciple of Christ.

Another way of sharpening the distinction between humanism and the gospel, is to differentiate between man's seeking - and God's revelation. This further points up the difficulty in our effort to communicate. We cannot start to talk about the gospel by sharing items in our common search. For such searching is confined to what is within human nature, until it receives the given revelation of the God who is searching for us. Then man breaks out of himself as God invades him. So I am obliged to start my statement with God's revelation, regardless of the products of our searching.

1. The Authority of the Gospel

The Bible starts with God and explains why man's fellowship with God in mystic immediacy has been warped and dulled. As God calls out a people and reveals himself in the great saving acts of deliverance in the "passover", at the Red Sea crossing, and at Sinai, he works through Moses, who, as God's special envoy, cries in God's name: "Let my people go!" Here is the idea of mission, of embassy, of an ambassador - sent with an authoritative message which becomes part of the warp and woof of scripture. Christ's "great commission"¹ merely makes explicit what is implicit in the whole structure of the Bible.

The concept of the chosen people of God seems often betrayed by the moral failure and idolatrous practices of Israel, until, under the clarion call of a series of envoys from God known as the prophets, a remnant is called out of the ocean of wickedness to be an island of holiness unto God. This great controversy between God and sinners is the compelling theme of the Old Testament and it is no accident that its closing - the book of the prophet Malachi - should dramatize this controversy in a climactic dialogue where charge and countercharge illustrate the real point of all scripture.

The main thrust of the ministry of Jesus was to declare the coming of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is not a democracy. Democracy is a relativism. The Kingdom of God is an absolute. Jesus called men to repentance because the Kingdom was at hand. Repentance is the confession of a rebel. Loyal subjects do not need to repent. Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. "Sin" has no real meaning unless it is seen as an attitude or as conduct which betrays the fact of rebellion.

Joseph said to the seductive wife of Potiphar (Gen. 39: 8-9)², "Lo, having me, my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my hand...nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife; how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" This is where Judaism differs from most other ethnic faiths. Not many, but a few of them, would recognize that to have yielded to this temptation would have been for Joseph to sin against Potiphar - but the deeper insight here is that we can never offend against a neighbor without involving our relation with God. The word "sin" is mis-

¹ Matt. 28: 18-20, which contains the command to make all men His disciples.

² All Biblical quotations are from the Revised Standard Version.

used when it is applied only to our relations with men. There we can talk of righteousness and unrighteousness. But sin is the word which involves the overtone of our relation to God in connection with any act of unrighteousness to men.

Ethnic faiths like Hinduism and Buddhism have no sense of sin in the Judeo-Christian sense. This is true because they make no real distinction between God and man. Swami Vivekanando used to say that Hinduism “recognizes no sin, it only recognizes error; and the greatest error... is to say that you are weak, that you are a sinner..., whosoever thinks that he is weak, is wrong, whosoever thinks that he is impure is wrong, and is throwing a bad thought into the world.” (Althalye: Quintessence of Yoga Philosophy p. 155) “Silly fools tell you that you are sinners and you sit down in a corner and weep. It is foolishness, wickedness, downright rascality to say that you are sinners. You are all God... Awake from this hypnotism of weakness. None is really weak. The soul is infinite, omnipresent, omnipotent. Stand up! Assert yourselves, proclaim the God within you!” (Ibid, p. 163)

Here the battle is joined. Hinduism recognizes no need for reconciliation - instead it talks of renunciation! It feels no need for salvation - it talks rather of self-realization!

The New Testament writers expound at length on the significance of Christ’s death and do it with many different figures of speech. But nowhere do they leave us in any doubt that it is part of God’s plan to reconcile man to Himself.

The risen Christ commissions His disciples as ambassadors and introduces the whole idea of mission with a sentence more sweeping and more laden with meaning than almost any other sentence in the Bible: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” (Matt. 28: 18)

There are many otherwise faithful missionaries who never caught the sweep of this affirmation because the King James version limited their view by reading “power” where it should have read “authority.” Hence this sentence has tacked on to the great commission as a sort of handle for encouragement, an assurance that in the midst of our difficult task we have the help of one who is much stronger than we.

This is to miss almost the whole point. This is to take the most pivotal affirmation of the whole Bible - and to get nothing more out of it than a sort of personal crutch.

All that the Bible has to say about Christ being creator, sustainer, savior, teacher, judge, lord, and king are ideas implicit in this affirmation.

It is because of this absolute authority that it could be said that in him “we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God. ...all things were created through him and for him... in him all things hold together... that in everything he might be preeminent.” (Col 1: 14-18) Also this absolute authority is the reason why the final consummation is pictured with all lesser and relative authorities casting “their crowns before the throne, singing, ‘Worthy

art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou didst create all things, and by thy will they existed and were created.” (Rev 4: 10-11)

Here there are no qualifying adjectives nor expressions of probability. The affirmation is of absolute truth, given and not arrived at by reason, and confronting us with the necessity of making some response.

When we hear the affirmation of Christ’s absolute authority, what is our first hand, “free-association” reaction to it? The reason why we have to ask this question is because there is no other universally acceptable premise or process of logic which will enable all of us to start analyzing this affirmation in a completely objective fashion. For more quickly than we can assume the scholar’s neutral stance, we have already registered a subjective bias in the form of a favorable impression or a resentment. Most of us start with resentment. With some it is violent, like Saul of Tarsus who tried to keep anybody from accepting it, and with others it is more like the wistful rich young ruler who “went away sorrowful.”

It is simply illustrated by the African Christian who wanted to put his epileptic wife away. The church committee of overseers invited him to a prayer conference. He said that his heart did not tell him to go to the prayer conference. To a missionary he said, “I don’t want to go away from God, I just want to send my wife away.” He was not against God - he was merely for himself!

This negative reaction is of utmost significance. Why do we resent Christ’s authority?

The sharp edge of this question is dulled by a variety of sophistications which have taken on stereotyped forms, such as religions, philosophies, psychologies, and ways of life. They all have in common, regardless of their intellectual astuteness, an effort to soften and to rationalize the rejection of Christ’s authority in ways which make us feel big and important and self-sufficient. Even the flagellations of the ascetic, and the humility pose of the mystic, may still cover a very self-centered pride of “spiritual” achievement which puts one well in advance of his fellow seekers.

This illustrates the simple fact that the Bible meets us existentially. It never hunts for common premises with which to share with sinful man the adventure of reasoning up to God. This is precisely because, as Barth has so clearly shown, the end result of such reasoning is not God, but a mental construct which is an idol. So the Bible confronts us, not with a reason, but with a demand: “You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy.” (Lev 19:2) “The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all might.” (Deut 6: 4-5)

Furthermore, the Bible explains to us this built-in resistance to Christ’s authority. It is described as a perversion spread universally among mankind because of disobedience to God. It consists of an attitude of enmity or rebellion which makes us uncomfortable in Christ’s presence and resentful of God’s interference in our lives except when it furthers our own ends. So the

over-riding fact of the world situation is a tension between God and man - a tension which ought to be marked with the freedom and well being of obedience and fellowship, a beautiful harmony, but one which actually has become a tension of rebellion where the war is sometimes cold and sometimes hot.

The center of Christian missions is this tension between God and man. Nowhere has it been better expressed than by that greatest of all missionaries the Apostle Paul who says: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." (2 Cor 5: 19-20) Nowhere else has the rationale of our work as missionaries been more succinctly stated.

An ambassador is known for two things - the finesse of his diplomacy, and the depth of his comprehension of his government's purpose. The question of finesse will be dealt with later. Our concern here is with the missionary's comprehension of purpose. His finesse of approach is important, but it is far more basic, and far more necessary, that the ambassador really know what he is about and why. And there are those who get so enamored of the technique of approach that their own motivation becomes fuzzy. We shall hereafter be much concerned with the problem of adequate communication, of proper approach, and the acts of a loving God to break the prejudice and resistance of rebellious men. We shall also be concerned with the terrific scope of the missionary enterprise as a whole Gospel is applied to the whole man. But it is not safe to look at these until we are completely clear about what lies at the center.

The Christian ambassador has three things crystal clear in his thinking: (1) his King has absolute authority; (2) he is sent, not to favorable allies, but to a kingdom in rebellion - the most difficult of all diplomatic missions; and (3) his message is an authoritative demand to repent and be reconciled.

To these propositions he is dedicated with an eternal and unswerving faithfulness, measured by the depth of his love and loyalty for his King. He does not let the blandishments of those to whom he goes blur the sharpness of the issue he must draw. But on the other hand, he does not allow the wonder and magnanimity of the Calvary act to sentimentalize the urgency of his call for men to repent. The primary motivation of the task of the Christian missionary is his awesome sense of the authority of Christ which has so utterly captured his own love and loyalty.

This is the explanation of Peter and the apostles before their rulers. Whether there is a more acceptable approach than the ones they made is merely a matter of opinion. Paul stirred riots everywhere he went! Suppose that when we come to the discussion of communication we are able to convince ourselves that much of this opposition experienced by the apostles was really unnecessary and could have been avoided by a more wholesome or wiser approach. Nevertheless, we must be eternally grateful to these apostles for at least making the issue crystal clear that all Christian mission must center in the effort to reconcile rebellious men to the God of absolute authority! There may be lesser tasks which need doing. It may be important to deliver men from

ignorance and disease and exploitation and a host of evils, but all of this becomes relevant only when subordinated to reconciliation as priority number one.

The motivation of missions is the total authority of Christ.

The objective of missions is the reconciliation of rebels to God.

The message of the missionary is the kerygma or proclamation of God's love as evidenced in what he did through Christ to make reconciliation possible.

The message is carried by a messenger best conceived of in terms of an official ambassador.

Everything about Christian mission is authoritative. It begins with an authoritative Christ - creator, reconciler, judge, and king. Its objective is authoritatively set by him who has all authority. The message is authoritative because it did not originate with the messenger, but came from the hand of God. The messenger has only the authority which is delegated to him by the One who now dwells in him.

Wherever the message becomes entangled with human reasonings or doubts or with too great effort to make it palatable, it loses its ring of authority. A ponderous but unhappy volume could be written on the history of Christian missions which have been made ineffective by blunting the authority of the message.

The Apostle Paul is not alone in setting forth the concept of the ambassador as the best illustration of the sent-ones. It is basic in the New Testament. Jesus beautifully expressed the thought thus: "I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:49) The word "clothed" (KJ has "endued") is the technical word in Greek for the investiture of an ambassador. It is the gift of special garments, regalia, and credentials which are the badge of his office and the glory of his position. It is the bestowal of an intrinsic dignity. He now stands in the stead of his sovereign. He dare not misrepresent him. He dare not falter or fail. He has authority because he represents authority. He is now an accredited ambassador of his King.

Luke enlarges upon this theme as he opens the Acts of the Apostles and repeats the call to wait in Jerusalem until the investiture is complete and then describes at length how it happened at Pentecost.

John gives us a pathetic look at Christians without this, banded together, enjoying fellowship with each other behind locked doors and windows, fearful, powerless, ineffective, and useless. Then came Jesus in their midst and commissioned them: (John 20: 21-22) "As the Father sent me, even so I send you..., Receive the Holy Spirit." John saw it clearly. The heart of his embassy was to be like Jesus and to be filled, invested, and clothed with his Spirit.

There are still too many missionaries who are fearful, powerless, and ineffective just because they have not been possessed with a divine credential. They have not felt the weight of authority under which they labor. They have not been filled with the Holy Spirit.

“Now ... to the only God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and for ever. Amen.” (Jude 25)

2. The Incarnation Pattern for Mission

With the crux of the Christian ambassador's message and task quite clear we may proceed to study the manner of approach and the communication of the message. Although the ambassador knows that Jesus Christ is the Judge of all the earth and that truth would allow him, like Jonah, to announce impending destruction for the rebellious, this is not his commission. Rather the message he has been charged to deliver is that “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, ... not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved...” (John 3: 16,17)

The more clearly the ambassador sees the issue of Christ's authority, man's rebellion, and the need for reconciliation, the more he is concerned to communicate in such a fashion as to melt the hardness of heart of his hearers. And the instrument for this is love! Jonah's reaction was a very human and a very selfish one. He saw clearly the justice of God's law and proclaimed its retribution with gusto. His personal identification was not with God or with God's holiness but with a sadistic joy in seeing his enemies perish. When God accepted their penitence in reconciliation, Jonah felt a loss of personal vindication. This is the precise opposite of the concern of the true Christian missionary who has seen the meaning of the Cross and been himself reconciled to God.

For persons to try to be missionaries or, to put it another way, to be ministers of reconciliation, when they have not themselves been reconciled to God is more than folly - it is sheer tragedy. There are two evils which may come from it. One is vindictiveness, as illustrated by Jonah. The other is the sentimentality of humanistic reconciliation. This is to find common elements in our humanity, which are often dignified by the phrase “that of God in every man.” We can draw these into such sharp focus that the lack of depth of field sends the surrounding elements of clash and difference into a blurred and fuzzy halo! Sometimes this is called art. But it is the art of not seeing clearly. It assumes that not seeing clearly is the same thing as reconciliation. Those who hold such views are often very optimistic souls, sometimes professional do-gooders who heal the world's ill superficially and slightly, but who need eyes to see as God sees.

One needs first of all to see his own resentment of Christ's authority. He needs to penetrate through his protective shell of decency, of intellectualism, of morality, of service to others, of religious experience. Then he can look deep into the heart of his soul and face frankly those areas of conflict where Christ does not rule and where his authority is resented, perhaps silently, perhaps politely, but nevertheless really resented. If we look at this steadily we must do one of two things: either we confess and repent and surrender and accept his reconciliation or we harden our hearts and rationalize our rejection of Christ. This rationalization may consist of doubting his

deity or his authority of questioning the cosmic significance of his cross. But we do not change him - we merely fool ourselves!

The alternatives are but two: we accept or reject him. If we accept and are reconciled, we are then automatically inducted into the ambassadorial service - we are his missionaries - sent with the message of reconciliation to others.

This is not a means by which the whole earth is to be saved or that all men everywhere will become believers. It is a means by which the issue is precipitated and the decision demanded. The result in any group, large or small, is both acceptance and rejection. Some do one. Some do the other.

The Gospel of John especially pictures this constant struggle as multitudes seek rest in Christ and many others grow bitter in their opposition. Again and again division is precipitated amongst the people. Even Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, ... and he who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." (Matt 10: 34-37) He will go through storm and trouble to find one lost sheep, but he separates the sheep from the goats.

All of this is to emphasize the fact that we are not, as ambassadors, out to seek for a little truce in which we try to negotiate with sweet reasonableness. Nor are we out to propound a philosophy which will subtly lead us all to mental agreement.

Many have supposed that all religions should receive equal respect: that the ways to God are various and equally valid; and that seeking is what draws us together, while the claim to have found is what divides. To some it has seemed a reconciling experience for Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and others to worship together. Usually this is done "on the basis of silence" which becomes a cloak for utter ambiguity. It is only a particular kind of Hindu, Muslim, Christian or Buddhist who can do this. It is those who have abandoned distinctive loyalty to their own faith, have agreed upon humanism as their new common religion, and have further agreed to give up the hope of finding and to make an ultimate of seeking.

In the Christian view, and it is unique amongst the ethnic faiths, the seeking is done by God instead of man. Man is confronted with a decision. This is utterly different from seeking. Sometimes seeking in itself becomes a source of pride which causes men to make the wrong decision. It is costly to confess the emptiness of seeking and to accept reconciliation as a gift.

The cross is where God acted to reconcile us to himself. What he did is too big for me to explain. Whole libraries have been written to draw out the significance of this great saving act but I suspect that no one has ever seen it more clearly than Barabbas who saw Christ die on the cross that had been made for him. Christ died in our stead. This is the simple fact. Whatever else we may say about his death must not blur this central insight.

You have often seen a boy throwing a rubber ball against a wall having fun as it bounces back to him. But have you ever seen him have fun throwing his ball against a blanket hung on a line in the back yard? The reason is simple. The hard wall resists the force of the ball's motion and sends it back. The blanket does not resist - rather it absorbs the thrust and the ball drops with its force spent. This is a very crude illustration, but something like that happened on the cross. The forces of evil united to crush Jesus. He did not resist those forces and thus send them reverberating back again through the world. Rather he let them crush him and their force was spent. Here is the heart of reconciliation.

There is a sense in which the sovereignty of God is as overpowering as would be a diesel-powered freight train with which we tried to dispute the tight of way in a Volkswagon. But God is not a mechanical thing. Nor is he blind force. He is a person. He is love. He suffers. He gave his best for our redemption. And the cross is the instrument of reconciliation. This is the gospel. The very, very good news!

Now as Christ dying on the cross became the unique agent and instrument of reconciliation between God and man so we, bearing our cross, following the same pattern in a limited way, stand between sinful men and Christ. We must bring men to Christ in order that he may reconcile them to God by his unique sacrifice. But the instrument for us as for him is the same - a cross.

Thus the incarnation becomes the pattern for all Christian mission and it naturally centers in the cross. There can be no successful mission without a cross - humiliation, service, self-giving and love - a sort of vicariousness.

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.” The first step in missionary humiliation is the abandonment of the intellectual pride of discussing comparative philosophies. The word must be embodied.

Jesus took upon himself “the form of a servant” when he “was born in the likeness of men” and this is our pattern of mission. Things like the transformation of life, forgiveness, love and acceptance are not easily taught. They must be embodied and demonstrated in life. When Mahatma Ghandi objected to the conversion of outcastes to Christianity because they were more ignorant than cows, I asked my friend the late Padre Chakrovarty what he thought of this. His reply was classic. Anyone, he said, regardless of how illiterate, unlearned, ignorant or stupid he might be, could still understand three things. First he can understand a changed or transformed life when he sees it. Secondly he can understand love when he meets it. And thirdly, he can always understand whether he is accepted or not. Thank God, his revelation was not reserved for the learned nor does it require philosophic understanding. For this revelation is not confined to the traffic of the mind and of words. “The Word became flesh” and we have seen.

I would be the first to encourage a knowledge of the culture of those to whom we minister. And all new missionaries should have ample training at this point. But the solution of the problem of communication does not lie basically in an ever refined understanding of, let us say, Hinduism - rather it consists of a fuller embodiment of Jesus Christ in the missionary.

It is a true instinct which has led Quakers to the development of a tremendous service program. This grew out of Christ's revelation of the love of God. But service is not a thing in itself. It can easily become professional on the one hand, or futile and irrelevant on the other, when divorced from its true roots. We serve because the love of Christ constrains us! But when we go on serving in a magnificent program long after we have lost our certainty about Jesus Christ and substitute humanistic for Christian motivation we are courting disillusionment and futility.

Similarly we hold a peace testimony, because, patterning our life after the Christ, who on the cross let the evil of the world crush him to rob it of its force, we cannot resort to arms. Loyalty to Christ makes it impossible for us. But there are many other pacifists in the world who proceed on secular motives which make very good sense - but mankind simply does not act sensibly. The issues of life are settled, not by good judgment but by the deeply emotional springs of the heart. A heart not fully reconciled with God will not act upon mere good judgment in the hour of crisis. At such a time the inner conflicts become externalized and strife is accepted in some areas as expedient. George Fox indicated that we do not fight because the "occasion" of war has been removed from our hearts.

From the incarnation we also learn that the Word having become flesh "dwelt among us." This settles the question of withdrawal from the world. Periodically in the history of the church, the pendulum has swung toward the monastic ideal, whether celibates in an institutionalized holiness, or Quakers building new colonies peopled only by their own kind, or evangelicals staying out of politics, and avoiding public life, all for the purpose of keeping uncontaminated by the world.

Jesus ate with sinners, dealt with sinful women without scandal, made no effort in the daytime to escape the crowds, even touched lepers, and went everywhere doing good. The religion of withdrawal is not for Christ's ambassadors. Withdrawn Christians have lost their sense of mission - indeed, one wonders whether they are still Christian! Jesus lived dangerously. So must we. Our contact with people must be such as to naturalize us in their presence. God spoke once through angels and the shepherds were frightened almost to death. But Jesus was born. He spoke their language. Those of us who have labored overseas and spent years trying to merge our foreignness, lose our accent, and identify ourselves with a new culture, know how desperately difficult this is, and therefore, thank God for Jesus Christ, who never had to have his water boiled, nor wear a monstrous topee to spare his head from the sun, or live in a big bungalow with thick walls to break the heat. He completely belonged. And to all his followers comes the same challenge of identification.

A specific area of identification is language. There are multitudes of evangelicals today who are still speaking what Eugene Nida calls "protestant Latin" rather than take the trouble to restate theological truth in fresh and understandable terms. One never learns a language until he spends weeks of time listening and questioning those whose tongue he wants to speak. This is as true of American pagans as it is of Zulus. Our protestant churches have ceased communicating with pagans here for two opposite reasons. Some in their concern for holiness have shut themselves away from pagans and speak only the language which people in the church understand amongst

themselves. They have long ago stopped communicating with pagans. Others in their concern to communicate have become so like the pagan world that they have lost their sense of distinctive message. They speak the language of pagans all right, but are saying nothing more or different than the pagans are saying. They are not ambassadors. They are mere commoners!

Jesus in a wonderful way solved this problem of being in the world and yet not of the world. It is caught up in the phrase “full of grace and truth.” Some one has facetiously, but nonetheless pointedly, expressed this by saying: Some folk are so gracious they forget to be truthful while others are so truthful they forget to be gracious. Jesus held these in perfect balance and so must his ambassadors. To this end he said: “I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one.” (John 17:15)

To summarize what we have said thus far about the ambassador’s approach, we may say that the pattern is implicit in the incarnation, and this involves several principles:

1. The objective of all his diplomacy will be to bring new subjects under the suzerainty of his king, through reconciliation.

2. The cross will be the instrument of his work in a dual sense. First it is the objective center of his message of God’s reconciling love. Secondly it is subjectively the pattern for his own approach. It is the motivation for his whole program of service to men. He too must be a “suffering servant.”

3. To serve he must be where need is found, right in the thick of the fruits of man’s rebellion. No monastery for him! Also he must be a person of profound understanding’ and this can not come without a real knowledge of the language of the people whom he wishes to serve.

4. Finally, just because he knows so well the central ill of man and works so tirelessly to heal to the depths of the rebellious spirit, he is also aware of the awful fruitages of that rebellion in the whole range of man’s life. He then can never rest content until that reconciliation has been worked out from the center to the whole periphery of life. All must be brought under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

I shall close with a slight amplification of this fourth principle.

One is impressed with the good will and dedication evident in the members of the Peace Corps. One stands in awe of the impressive record of service rendered by the workers of the American Friends Service Committee. That the motivation for such labor can be traced back to Jesus Christ is easy to do regardless of whether present personnel acknowledge this debt or not. In any case one is thankful that it is being done and it will bear rich fruitage as is already evident. To raise a word of criticism will, I hope, in no sense militate against this gratitude. To be honest, however, one must warn against what the ancient prophet saw: “They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace’ when there is no peace.” (Jer 8:11) The amelioration of this or that fruitage of man’s rebellion without going to the heart of the matter and working for

reconciliation with God is apt to produce ephemeral results with disillusionment in the long run. Service programs which do not recognize that all men need Jesus Christ, and which are content to be neutral on the religious issue, are likely to end in ultimate futility because they do not heal deeply enough. In practical terms let me say that if I manage a hospital (as I have done) and see that top flight American surgery is provided and the finest of the most recent miracle drugs made available (as I have done) and yet know that the patients have a much deeper need for which in Jesus Christ I have the answer, and I fail or refuse to make him available, I am guilty of something nearly criminal.

On the other hand, merely counting converts can be superficial as well. To get a man to declare his faith in Jesus Christ and add him to the happy statistics one writes home to the Missionary Board is in itself a very unworthy end. Ours is a "whole gospel for a whole man" as has so often been said in recent years. We are not satisfied to end with inner heart reconciliation essential as it is to begin there. We are never finished with our task until that day of final consummation arrives of which it is written: "There shall no more be anything accursed..." (Rev 22:3)

So long as there remains a single rebel against God on earth the ambassador has an unceasing task to perform. He will ever be seeking some fresh avenue of self-giving sacrifice and service through which he may achieve both a deeper sense of identification with the cross of his Master through identification with the sinner and also a means of breaking down or melting the stubborn resistance of the sinner. But with the surrender of the rebel, be he brash or sophisticated, the task has only begun.

So long as there remains an untaught child, or an adult illiterate, so long as there remains a diseased body, a crippled frame, or blinded eyes, so long as there remains an area of provincialism or prejudice, of uncleansed subconscious mind, or of morbid mental state, so long as men regard race or color or national heritage in terms of inferiority or superiority, so long as grinding poverty and insensitive wealth coexist, so long as lust and covetousness are free to exploit men, so long as nations take up arms against each other, and so long as any other unChristlike thing exists in this good earth, the Christian mission is unfinished.

The Lord is saying: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (Isa 6:8) May we also hear him say: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven," in order that we may also reply:

"Here am I! Send me."

THE FLAMING SWORD

The Flaming Sword, the symbol of the Shrewsbury Lectures which appears for the first time on Everett Cattell's lecture is an attempt to represent a figure widely used by Early Friends. Among the items which George Fox mentions in his Last Will and Testament (1688) were three seals -- important items then for lending authenticity and securing the privacy of letters and documents. That part of Fox's will reads: "my Seale G:F and the Flaming Sword to Neath:Meade." Thus far, no impression of it has turned up, although illustrations of the other two seals are available.

The figure of the sword or the Lord is used as a symbol of God's judgment throughout the Old Testament, but in Eph 6:17 the figure changes and becomes "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." The Early Friends centered their attention on Gen 3:24 where God placed at the east of the garden of Eden, "the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life."

Fox wrote in a Journal entry for 1648: "Now was I come up in spirit through the flaming sword into the paradise of God. All things were new, and all the creation gave another smell unto me than before, beyond what words can utter. I knew nothing but pureness, and innocency, and righteousness, being renewed up into the image of God by Christ Jesus, so that I say I was come up to the state of Adam which he was in before he fell."

William Oewsoury dealt with the same theme in his final sermon at Gracechurch Street Meeting in 1688, saying in part:

"As you are all driven and forced out of paradise, and the flaming sword and the cherubims are set to keep the way of the tree of life, so you must return into the favor of God again by the light of Jesus Christ. As the first Adam was made a living soul, so the second Adam is a quickening spirit. This know for certain, no man or woman can be quickened and raised up into the life of the second Adam until the life of the first Adam be taken away."

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