

COUNSEL TO NEW MISSIONARIES

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PREREQUISITES AND PRINCIPLES OF EVANGELIZATION

By the Rev. S. A. Moffett, D. D., of Korea

TO the missionary, of all persons, is given the position of greatest privilege, provided that his whole heart and life are given unreservedly to the preaching of the unsearchable riches of Christ. He cannot unduly magnify his office, for he is "*the glory of Christ.*" In so far as he appreciates the greatness and the honor of his calling, just so far will he appreciate also his own insufficiency, and thus be led, in all sincerity, to seek that sufficiency which is in Christ.

Twelve years on the mission field, in the midst of a work which wonderfully evidences the great power of the Gospel as the God-ordained means for the salvation of man, have impressed me with the profound importance of a few ideas which should dominate the missionary and determine the attitude of mind and the spirit most essential to him.

I shall ever be grateful to Dr. Herrick Johnson for the expression, "A vivid and abiding sense of the divine reality of the Gospel message," for therein he has clearly expressed what it is most important that the missionary should cultivate.

The man who has obtained from a reverent study of the Scriptures, as the Word of God, a deep impression of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, of

the awfulness of its punishment, the wrath of God, of the reality of repentance, and of God's promise of absolute remission of sin to the truly penitent, of the one and only way of salvation through faith in Christ; who has reached the profound conviction that God is able and willing to save all who come unto Him by Christ, and that this gospel only is the power of God unto salvation; and who combines with this a *vivid* and an *abiding* sense of the *reality* of these truths, has the first and chief requisite for usefulness as a missionary, a requisite without which, however energetic and gifted and studious he may be, he will fail to affect profoundly the people to whom he goes; that is, affect profoundly for their salvation.

One needs to cultivate and conserve this conviction, for upon this Satan makes his chief attack, knowing that in so far as he weakens this conviction, in so far he has blunted the most formidable weapon in the hands of the missionary in his warfare against sin and Satan's dominion over heathendom.

I am convinced that the greatest need to-day is unquestioning reliance upon the gospel itself, the Word of God in its principal teachings of Sin and Salvation; a belief that when God ordained that by the foolishness of preaching men were to be saved, He ordained that which He knew to be the best agency for the leading of men to Christ; a belief that the Spirit of God does and will honor the use of the Word of God alone, and that in so far as we trust in secondary agencies for reclaiming the heathen, in so far we have given up faith in the primary agency, and have prevented the Spirit of God from making use of that which God

ordained should be the means for the salvation of the world.

I believe that what has militated most against the evangelization of the world has been a lack of faith in the power of the gospel itself, a belief (not acknowledged, nor consciously held, but nevertheless real) that there must be something used as a bait to bring people under the power of the gospel, that secondary agencies which appeal to the natural man must be used as an attraction which will dispose favorably to a hearing of the gospel, and that *then* the gospel is to be presented.

There has been too often a relegating of the gospel (not avowedly, but practically) to the secondary place, an elimination to too large an extent of the very means and the only means which the Spirit of God has given us to believe that He will use to bring souls into reconciliation with God.

The missionary needs to cultivate, by thought and prayer and reading, this conviction as to the primary place of the gospel, making it a practical reality in his mental and spiritual life, and watching constantly against everything that may tend to weaken this conviction.

With such a conviction dominating one's life and deepening as the years go by, and with the determination to make it the one chief interest, the all-absorbing task of one's life to preach this gospel and to bring it into contact with the people, knowing for a certainty that it cannot fail to have its effect upon their hearts and lives, the missionary has before him a field of effort which promises a life of the very greatest satisfaction and happiness.

He will find, however, that coincident with this

life there will be required the maintenance of his own spiritual life, the deepening of his own spiritual convictions, and the resistance of most subtle, unexpected and unprovided-for temptations.

Should his field of labor be in a treaty port or in a city where he is brought much into contact with the world of western life and institutions, he will find one set of temptations, while if in the interior, isolated from all contact with the western world, and thrown for companionship upon the resources of a small missionary community and the native Christians, he will meet with other temptations, less marked, but, perhaps, so much the more insidious.

If the former, the Master's prayer for us that though in the world we may be kept from the evil must be ever before us. One cannot be too particular in keeping out of touch with the evil of the world; in maintaining that sanctity of character which makes the things of the world something apart from his life, even though brought into contact with men of the world in many relations. Dr. Maltbie Babcock's reasons for not smoking give expression to a principle upon which many of the temptations to a conformity to the world can be met and conquered: "A man cannot afford as the ambassador of Christ to compromise his *influence* for that which is highest, holiest, best."

The natural, frank, sincerely courteous and polite attitude of one whose life has been lifted above an inner contact with the world, however much of association there may be necessarily in the daily life, is the attitude which will establish and maintain one's spiritual influence. The "Sky Pilot" was in closest sympathy and touch with his fellow-men,

but wholly untouched by the evil which surrounded him and engulfed them.

No man can maintain this attitude and exert a real spiritual influence under such circumstances unless he spends much time in communion with the Master in prayer and devotional reading, and he who must necessarily spend a part of his time in such contact with the world needs to spend a double portion of time in contact with the holiest and purest in order to counteract the unconscious deterioration in his own spiritual ideals.

Doubtless the missionary has a duty to his fellow-countrymen on mission fields, but a far greater and more important duty—the primary duty—which faces him is that of coming into contact with and living for the native people. His fellow-countrymen, however much in need of spiritual influence, have all heard the Gospel, and the missionary is there primarily that he may preach the Gospel to those who have not heard; and nothing ought to stand between him and the close contact with them, the sympathetic entrance into their inner life, their ways of thinking, their weaknesses, prejudices and preferences, their trials, sorrows and spiritual struggles.

We must cultivate a real love and sympathy, not an abstract interest, in the heathen as so many people to be converted, baptized and reported upon as so much in the way of mission assets, but a living, real, close, sympathetic touch with individuals with a view to the transforming of their lives through a personal faith in Christ. This is something which cannot be feigned; it must be real, for heathen are like children in that they know intuitively whether you love them. Such a real sympa-

thy and love must be the outgrowth of deep personal convictions of truth and of a personal life of faith and of fellowship with Christ.

Given this sympathy and love, recognized by the people, and one's influence can be tremendously exerted as an influence for righteousness. Plain, frank presentation of the truth of their awful condition in sin and of their personal responsibility will be met with deepest respect for the man, even though the message rouses anger and hatred against the plain truth spoken. Erring, sinning Christians may be most plainly and firmly dealt with, and they will love and respect you, even though they may deeply resent the admonition and discipline administered.

We need to cultivate a strong faith, a victorious, enthusiastic faith—a faith in the power of the Gospel itself to carry conviction to the heart of any man and to do for the heathen all that it has done and now does for us. We need to believe and act upon the belief that it can transform character, lead to true repentance and hatred of sin, give strength to resist temptation and overcome sin, uphold in a consistent Christian life, and comfort and sustain in the midst of persecution, trial, sorrow and loss.

In the face of prominent failures, in spite of disappointments, one needs to grasp with a firm faith the fact that the Spirit of God can and does show his own great power in the lives of others and that through the exercise of faith these people can and do reach the same heights of spiritual attainment and enter into the same appreciation of spiritual truth which we do. Alas! too many lose faith, expect little, grow almost discouraged. I am in re-

cept of a letter from a friend in another mission, who writes of "some whom long years of waiting have, rather, not discouraged, but disciplined to expect little." Against such a state of mind I would strive with incessant prayer. However long the period of waiting, I believe we should cultivate a faith which expects great things and knows that God will grant great things. Faith is the evidence of things not seen, and although the results may not have come, the Spirit-filled vision can see them, and with a buoyant enthusiasm can conquer all feelings of depression and discouragement. The heart is taken out of one's work; it becomes mere routine and drudgery if faith has been undermined.

Enthusiastic faith should be cultivated. Enthusiasm may be more natural to some natures than to others, but it is an element which adds to one's influence for good and to one's power in communicating faith and zeal. How a *real* faith can fail of enthusiasm is a mystery to me. There is far more of unbelief in our minds than we are often aware of, and this unconscious or unrecognized unbelief will often explain the failure to receive a blessing. "He *could not* do many mighty works there because of their *unbelief*."

God delights to honor faith. He cannot work mightily in the presence of unbelief. Our own lack of faith shuts out the power of God.

I would urge also concentration of effort upon the one great object of the missionary's life, viz.: the evangelization of the people. Here the temptations are innumerable, but recognizing one's limitations and knowing that he cannot be a specialist in many departments, if he is to give himself primarily to the evangelization of the people, he must

be willing to cut himself off from many attractive lines of study in order that he may acquire the language well, may give thorough study to the Bible, and may have time for contact with and life among the people.

The temptations to turn aside from the one great commission to "preach the Word" are constant and plausible. Education, literature, language, science, history and philanthropy all present their claims, and unless they are determinedly recognized as secondary or as side issues and kept in their proper place, they will supersede the primary work in the amount of time and effort that they monopolize and will relegate that which is first to the second place. Even the education of men with a view to the ministry, an essential part of the evangelistic work, may become merely educational instead of evangelistic—education rather than evangelization becoming the end.

Often the side issue is taken up as a recreation thoroughly legitimate and profitable, but these side issues are always what appeal to the natural man and before one knows it his zeal for the preaching of the gospel has become cooled, his chief work loses its attraction, and his main interest is being absorbed in the side issue, while the spiritual work, the soul and soul contact with the heathen, becomes a sort of drudgery or mere professional work. What we need is to have our life interest, our all-absorbing passion the work of soul-saving, of soul-developing. When one's best efforts go into some secondary line of work his power for evangelization has been surrendered. There are a few of course whose time must be given to literary work in the translation of the Scriptures, preparation of Christian lit-

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erature and text-books, and to the educational and medical work as factors in the great work of evangelization, but this is the call of but few.

The temptations to separate one's self from the first and most essential work of the direct evangelization of a people are so constant, so plausible, so insidious, that it will require the most positive convictions, the most exalted idea of the magnitude of the office, the most careful cultivation of a determination not to be turned aside, if one does not find himself yielding to these temptations and settling down to a life of routine work apart from the people, to a contact with very few, to a life supposedly of more far-reaching influence, relegating the direct evangelistic work to a secondary place and leaving it to be carried on only by the native preachers and helpers.

The time will come when the native church will be able to cope with the problem of evangelization; but with the great mass of heathen in China, India, Korea, Japan, Africa and elsewhere, who have not yet even heard of the gospel, the missionary must himself preach the gospel and establish the church as his first work, in the belief that the gospel itself is the primary need of the heathen world. Then will the church thus established be imbued with the same belief and become a great evangelizing agency.

In order to do this certain distinctions must be clearly made and kept constantly in mind. *One must clearly see that reformation is not redemption.* Salvation from sin, not mere moral reformation, is the essence of the gospel message. Again, *Civilization is not Christianity.* Western ideas, customs and inventions are not an essential part of

Christianity. In fact, many Oriental ideas and customs conform much more nearly to the scriptural ideas than do some of the peculiar notions and customs of the Western world, and the introduction of much that is considered a part of Western Civilization is a hindrance rather than a help to spiritual life. We are not commissioned to introduce Western Civilization, but Scriptural Christianity.

Another vital distinction to be made is that *Education is not Regeneration*. We are not called upon to provide a secular education for heathen, but we are commissioned to preach the gospel to the heathen and to establish the Church of Jesus Christ. We might educate the heathen for centuries and yet fail to establish the church, but we cannot establish the church without seeing Christian education for its own people a natural and necessary outgrowth.

We need to recognize also that we are not sent to apologize for Christ or for Christianity. We are to proclaim Him and it. We can rest upon the self-evidencing power of the Bible, upon the teaching of nature and conscience as to the existence of God and the fact of sin. We need not argue these points, but preach what God has revealed, believing that the Spirit of God, not our arguments, will convict of sin and lead to faith in Christ. God, the inspiration of the Scriptures, sin, and man's need of salvation, are facts to be proclaimed, not propositions to be proved. Let us accept Dr. Chalmers' statement and act upon it: "We firmly believe that there is no one position in theology which can be more strongly and more philosophically sustained than the self-evidencing power of the Bible."

There is need on the mission field of men who will not compromise with sin—men who will set up the

scriptural standard which God has set up and will not deviate one whit from that standard in their requirements. Whatever may be the peculiar conditions in heathendom, we have no authority for letting down the divine standard on moral questions, on the marriage relation, on drunkenness, on the Sabbath. Lenient and loving as we may be in dealing with Christians who have fallen into sin and come short of the requirements of God's law, yet in the discipline of those who sin, the failure to set up the one standard and to brand as sin anything short of that standard, is to undermine the whole foundation of Christian morality and Christian character, and to build a church on no spiritual foundations, weak, and powerless as a moral or spiritual force. Better for a Gideon's band of men thoroughly determined to strive for the highest and holiest attainments along these lines than a whole host of nominal Christians, satisfied to come short, taught that they may with impunity come short of the divine standard—men who have committed spiritual suicide by a deliberate giving up of the law of God as the standard of Christian living. "Never couple faith in the atonement of Christ with a feeling of security in the violation of a single commandment," is an exhortation given by Dr. Chalmers, which we need to reflect upon.

A missionary should be willing to make great personal sacrifice for the work's sake. The life of sacrifice only *begins* with the renunciation of the home land and the sharing of the lives of loved ones at home when all the ties formed from childhood up to the time of departure for the field are broken. Hard as that one supreme act of sacrifice may seem, it is vastly easier than to lead a life of daily sacri-

fice, of daily self-renunciation, of daily self-effacement for the work's sake; and yet perhaps no one attitude of mind will do more towards making one a telling factor in the work and a helpful, useful, lovable member of a mission station.

The relation to one's fellow missionaries is one of the most delicate and yet most pertinent questions which meets one on the mission field—a question of daily and hourly importance. One's fellow-workers are not of one's own choosing. The exigencies of the work and the conditions of the field, not his own personal preferences, determine who are to be his co-laborers, where he is to labor, what is to be his work and what the relation of that work to the work of others. In such circumstances a man needs all the consecration, self-control, high resolve and generous unselfishness which the fullest baptism of the spirit of God may enable him to secure. Jealousy, envy, personal ambition, self-seeking, love of ease, laziness, the desire for applause, the determination to have his own way, presumably, of course, in the belief that it is the right way, malice, evil speaking, selfishness, are sins which are not absent from the mission field, and one may be surprised to find how many of these ignoble traits of character will be found lurking in his own heart and asserting themselves with surprising power, unless they are recognized and checked and striven against in prayer.

There should be the cultivation of an appreciation of the work of others, of an interest in another's work, of a willingness to allow others to receive credit for their own and perhaps for your work, without fretting or growing impatient under a sense of injustice, of a willingness to yield one's

own wishes and preferences and that, too, in a gracious spirit, of a willingness to submit to have one's own convictions of what is right and best overruled, and of an ability to sacrifice one's personal feelings, prejudices, views, plans and ambitions and to subordinate them to the good of the work as a whole. By all means possible one should strive for the spirit of harmony in station and mission and native church. The determination of one man to carry out his own plans at all hazards may develop such a lack of harmony as to shut out the blessing of the Spirit of God. One should be willing to make very great personal sacrifices in order to maintain harmony, peace, and good will, for where such a spirit prevails the Spirit of God can grant His blessing upon the work. I know not in how many mission stations missionary quarrels have prevented a blessing, but certain it is that if differences of views and differences in convictions as to what is best are not held in the spirit of brotherly love and mutual concession, but lead to malice and envy and evil speaking, the Spirit of God is grieved and that station cannot expect a blessing upon its work. Mutual co-operation in the spirit of self-effacement in the interest of one harmoniously developing work is the spirit which will call forth a blessing and give the very greatest joy in the midst of work.

In view of the character of the work to be done I would not in the least discountenance the very best and most ample preparation in the study of the language, the history and literature of the people and the study of comparative religions in order that one may intelligently meet the conditions, but I feel that there is need for caution along this line, lest the missionary find the very advice given to him a

temptation and a hindrance to most effective work. Far more important than the study of comparative religions or the religious thought and life of the people is a deep and thorough study of the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that one's mind and life become saturated with its spiritual ideas. When one's study of heathen religions and philosophy becomes so absorbing that he knows more of them than he does of his Bible, so that he places more stress upon the ethical teachings common to both than upon the spiritual teachings peculiar to the Scriptures; when he is more concerned to show that other religions have parts in harmony with Scripture than he is to show that Christianity meets that which is lacking in them, then his power and usefulness as a missionary of the gospel of Jesus Christ are at an end.

When I read of all that a missionary is advised to study and master in preparation for his work it seems to me that the presumption is that every missionary is an intellectual giant whose whole time is to be given to study, and that he is to be always preparing for work, instead of working.

While constant study and constant efforts towards better equipment for service should be the rule, one cannot always be laying foundations only, always looking towards work to be done in the future. Activity in work is itself a preparation for better work. The preaching of the gospel, the establishment of the Church of Christ, must be held as taking precedence of everything else, and whatever sacrifice is necessary for the accomplishment of this object should be freely made. The statement so often made that health is the first consideration expresses a sentiment which to my mind is totally

at variance with the right attitude. Nothing is of first consideration but the one thing, the getting of the gospel to the people, and *if* to accomplish this the sacrifice of health is necessary, let health be sacrificed—yea, life itself—but come what may, preach the gospel, and see to it that the great commission is obeyed. Of course, it is worse than folly, it is *sin*, to sacrifice health or life when that is unnecessary, but personal comfort, ease, luxury, health and even life itself must be held subordinate to the accomplishment of one's chief object.

Above all things, however, the missionary's own spiritual life is the most important consideration as a factor in evangelization. As Dr. Dale, writing of the evangelist, says: "What tells most is neither his earnestness nor his perfect certainty of the truth of the Christian gospel, but the fact apparent to those who listen that his certainty rests on his own direct and personal knowledge of the eternal relations of which he is speaking."

If to us the spiritual blessings of reconciliation with God, our fellowship with Jesus Christ, and the assurance of eternal life are our chief joy and privilege and we daily experience their power in our own lives, then we can go forth to present in all faith these spiritual privileges and blessings as the supreme gift of the gospel unto a people whose despair can be exchanged for hope, whose darkness can give way to the light, whose fear and misery and degradation in sin and iniquity can be displaced by love and joy, peace and righteousness.

These privileges and blessings which we value most and which satisfy man's spiritual nature, not the incidental temporal advantages of Christianity which appeal to the natural man, should be kept

constantly in the forefront as that upon which our appeals are based in urging the acceptance of the gospel. A church thus established will be a powerful spiritual factor in a nation and the people themselves will value these spiritual blessings as their chief joy and privilege. They will be ready to make any sacrifice in order to secure and retain what has become of supreme interest to them.

The Spirit of God delights to honor such appeals, and we may confidently expect Him to work the regeneration of the people to whom we thus present the gospel in reliance upon His power alone.