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CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AND THE LIFE OF SERVICE

A STUDY OF  
SADHU SUNDAR SINGH AND FRANK LAUBACH

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A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION  
in  
The Biblical Seminary in New York

New York, N. Y.  
March, 1956

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	v
A. Subject	
1. The Subject Stated and Explained . . . . .	v
2. The Subject Justified . . . . .	v
3. The Subject Delimited . . . . .	vi
B. The Method of Procedure . . . . .	vi
C. The Sources of Data . . . . .	vii
I. SADHU SUNDAR SINGH	
A. Introduction . . . . .	1
B. Factors Affecting His Christian Experience . . . . .	1
1. His Conversion . . . . .	1
a. Background Factors . . . . .	1
1) Influence of Home and Family Position . . . . .	1
2) Influence of His Mother . . . . .	2
b. Conversion Experience . . . . .	3
1) Religious Background . . . . .	3
2) Experience With Christ . . . . .	4
c. Immediate Results . . . . .	4
2. Other Outstanding Events . . . . .	5
a. His Decision to be a Christian 'Holy Man' . . . . .	5
b. His Fast . . . . .	7
c. His World-Wide Preaching Tours . . . . .	8
3. His Mysticism . . . . .	8
C. Factors Affecting His Life of Service . . . . .	11
1. Geographical Areas of His Service . . . . .	11
a. Tibet . . . . .	11
b. India . . . . .	13
c. Global . . . . .	13
1) Preaching Tours . . . . .	13
2) Writings . . . . .	15
2. Basic Concepts Affecting His Service . . . . .	15
a. Persons of the Trinity . . . . .	15
b. Sin . . . . .	17
c. Salvation . . . . .	18
d. Life After Death . . . . .	19
e. Use of Scripture . . . . .	21

GIFT of Author

J5976

May 1956

Chapter	Page
f. Place of Prayer . . . . .	23
g. Reasons for Christian Service . . . . .	25
h. Purpose of Suffering . . . . .	27
i. Value and Place of Knowledge . . . . .	28
j. Role of Other Religions . . . . .	31
k. Other Practical Concepts . . . . .	32
1) Material Possessions . . . . .	32
2) Marriage . . . . .	32
3) Relations With Others . . . . .	33
3. Dominant Features of His Service . . . . .	33
a. His Teaching Methods . . . . .	33
b. His Unwillingness to Organize . . . . .	35
c. His 'Indian-izing' of Christianity . . . . .	36
d. His Personal Impact . . . . .	37
D. Summary . . . . .	38
II. FRANK CHARLES LAUBACH	
A. Introduction . . . . .	39
B. Factors Affecting His Christian Experience . . . . .	40
1. Background Factors . . . . .	40
a. Family . . . . .	40
b. Education . . . . .	41
2. Early Missionary Experiences . . . . .	41
a. Philippines . . . . .	41
b. Work Among the Moros . . . . .	41
3. Personal Religious Experiences . . . . .	44
a. Before 1930 . . . . .	44
b. After 1930 . . . . .	44
4. Resultant Experiences . . . . .	45
a. His Missionary Work . . . . .	45
b. His Mysticism . . . . .	46
C. Factors Affecting His Life of Service . . . . .	51
1. Geographical Areas of His Service . . . . .	51
a. Philippines . . . . .	51
b. Global . . . . .	52
2. Basic Concepts Affecting His Service . . . . .	52
a. Persons of the Trinity . . . . .	52
b. Sin . . . . .	54
c. Salvation . . . . .	55
d. Life After Death . . . . .	56
e. Use of Scripture . . . . .	57
f. Place of Prayer . . . . .	58
g. Reasons for Christian Service . . . . .	61
h. Purpose of Suffering . . . . .	64
i. Value of Other Religions . . . . .	66

Chapter	Page
3. Dominant Features of His Service . . . . .	68
a. His Willingness to Share His Experiences . . .	68
b. His Literacy Work . . . . .	69
1) His Concern . . . . .	69
2) His Unique Teaching Methods . . . . .	71
D. Summary . . . . .	72
III. THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AND SERVICE OF SADHU SUNDAR SINGH AND FRANK LAUBACH	
A. Introduction . . . . .	73
B. Factors Affecting Their Christian Experience and Service . . . . .	73
1. Background Factors . . . . .	74
2. Personal Experiences . . . . .	75
3. Geographical Differences . . . . .	76
4. Basic Concepts . . . . .	77
a. Persons of the Trinity . . . . .	77
b. Sin . . . . .	77
c. Salvation . . . . .	78
d. Life After Death . . . . .	78
e. Use of Scripture . . . . .	79
f. Place of Prayer . . . . .	80
g. Reasons for Service . . . . .	80
h. Purpose of Suffering . . . . .	81
i. Value of Other Religions . . . . .	82
C. Resultant Differences and Similarities in Their Lives of Service . . . . .	82
1. In Their Mysticism . . . . .	83
2. In Their Dominant Fields of Endeavor . . . . .	85
3. In Their Relationships with Other Organizations .	86
4. In Other Areas . . . . .	87
a. In Their Teaching Methods . . . . .	87
b. In Their Willingness to Share Their Experiences	88
D. Summary . . . . .	89
IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION . . . . .	90
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	92

INTRODUCTION

# CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AND THE LIFE OF SERVICE

## A STUDY OF

SADHU SUNDAR SINGH AND FRANK LAUBACH

### INTRODUCTION

In the early days of the Christian church the apostle James wrote: "Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith."<sup>1</sup> Christians throughout the centuries since then have also found that their faith and their works were inextricably related, although this relationship has not always been properly comprehended. In this century one of the dilemmas of the Christian church is to discover how best to relate Christian faith and Christian service. It is the aim of this study to delve into the lives and writings of two men who have served the Christian cause in the twentieth century to discover in what ways their Christian experience has affected their service to their Lord and hence to others also.

#### A. Subject

##### 1. The Subject Stated and Explained

As was indicated above this study will attempt to discover the factors in the Christian experience of each of the two men, Sadhu Sundar Singh and Frank Laubach, that have affected to any appreciable extent their concept of Christian service and their methods in promoting the cause of Jesus Christ. These factors will include not only their biographical backgrounds and conversion experiences but also their attitude toward and use of various "tools" of the Christian life such as prayer, the Scriptures, the Church, mysticism and other means.

##### 2. The Subject Justified

It is never wise for Christians to be "so heavenly minded they are of no earthly use," so it would seem obvious that it would

. . . . .

1. James 2:18b. All Bible references will be from the Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted or included as part of a quotation.

be well to study the lives of men who, even during their lifetime, have been hailed as those who have known exceptionally close fellowship with God and who have also made major contributions to the lives of their contemporaries. Sadhu Sundar Singh and Frank Laubach are such men. That these men have come from widely differing backgrounds and have sought to serve in rather different avenues only makes such a study more interesting and worthwhile.

### 3. The Subject Delimited

Since both Sadhu Sundar Singh and Frank Laubach have become known as "mystics", it would be well to note that it is not the purpose of this study either to define their mysticism or to delve into it to any depth. Only as their mystical experiences have had obvious bearing on either their Christian experience or their service, will such experiences be included in this study.

Neither is this study intended to be a detailed chronicling of the literacy methods for which Frank Laubach has become world famous. As with his mysticism, his literacy work will enter into this study only to the extent that it represents one phase of his life of service.

Even though both men have lived and worked among people of cultures which differ from the one with which we are most familiar, a study of these cultures is again not the dominant purpose of this study. Wherein the cultural aspects of the situation in which they have served have made vital differences in their work, these aspects will be noted and treated. This will be especially true in the case of Sadhu Sundar Singh, where those aspects of his Sikh and Hindu background which seem to have had considerable impact on either his Christian experience or his Christian service will, of course, be noted and treated as such.

#### B. The Method of Procedure

The purpose of this study is to analyze the lives of these two men to see what, if any, common elements are to be found in their Christian experience and to determine if possible how these



elements are related to their lives of service to Christ and their fellow men. In order to do this in the simplest possible manner, the life of each man will be treated separately. In these individual treatments an attempt will be made to ascertain and study those aspects of the Christian life which are common to both men and which appear to have had the most profound effect upon their service. The final chapter of this thesis will be devoted to a study of the similarities and differences to be found between the two men in their Christian experience and in their Christian service.

#### C. The Sources of Data

All the data for this study will be taken from published materials. Both men have written several books which will be consulted extensively for the author's own idea of his own Christian experience and service. However, only those books of Sadhu Sundar Singh's which have been translated into English will be studied. Also the three biographies of Sadhu Sundar Singh by Andrews, Parker and Streeter and Appasamy will serve as basic source materials for the study of his life. Unfortunately there are no comparable biographies of Frank Laubach, so that biographical materials for him will be taken largely from his own writings and from the sketches in periodicals appearing during the last quarter century.

CHAPTER I

SADHU SUNDAR SINGH

## CHAPTER I

### SADHU SUNDAR SINGH

#### A. Introduction

In this chapter an attempt will be made to review briefly the life of Sundar Singh (1889-1929?), the Christian Sadhu of India, from the standpoint of some of the factors which have affected his Christian experience and also some of those which have affected his Christian service. In the former category his conversion experience, including background information which bears upon it, and other "milestones" in his spiritual life will be considered. The second portion of this chapter will be concerned with the Sadhu's fields of service and with the basic concepts of various aspects of the Christian life which he held and which seem to have influenced his service for Christ. In this section notice will be given also to the outstanding features of Sundar Singh's rather unique Christian service. For obvious reasons, the treatment of these subjects is not intended to be exhaustive.

#### B. Factors Affecting His Christian Experience

##### 1. His Conversion

It is almost impossible to understand the life and teachings of Sadhu Sundar Singh without first having a knowledge of his conversion experience, including the factors in his background which influenced it, his dramatic confrontation by Christ, and the consequences of this new relationship with the Savior.

##### a. Background Factors

Sundar Singh was born on September 3, 1889, the youngest son of a wealthy North Indian family.<sup>1</sup> His father was Sirdar Sher Singh, a wealthy land-owner in Rampur, and the head of the entire family group, comprising his brothers and their families as well

. . . . .

1. B.H. Streeter and A.J. Appasamy, The Message of Sadhu Sundar Singh, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1927, p. 4.

as his own.<sup>1</sup> As a child Sundar knew luxury, and in later life he frequently contrasted the soft ease of this life and the spiritual discontentment he then knew with the hardships of his life as a Christian in which, however, he experienced great peace and joy.<sup>2</sup>

Without doubt the two people who most influenced the life of Sundar Singh were Jesus Christ and Sundar's own mother. C. F. Andrews, in writing of the latter, says:

The mother of Sundar Singh was in every respect a remarkable woman. She was noted among those of her own household for her deep religious devotion and her innate purity of character. Nature had endowed her with great gifts of tender refinement and homely wisdom. She was singularly broadminded in her outlook upon the religious life...

As might be expected it was his mother, who out of her own deeply devotional life, early and continuously impressed upon her youngest child the importance of the spiritual over the material.<sup>4</sup>

Years later her son said of her:

She early impressed on me the rule that my first duty on rising in the morning was that I should pray to God for spiritual food and blessing, and that only after that should I breakfast.<sup>5</sup>

Undoubtedly her death, when this son was just fourteen years old, only emphasized the influence of her training.

B. W. Streeter and A. J. Appasamy state:

His mother constantly held before him the life of a sadhu as the ideal to follow when he grew up, bidding him abandon the things of the world and strive to obtain that inner Peace, alone permanent and permanently satisfying, the quest for which has been immemorial in Indian religion.<sup>6</sup>

The Sadhu himself remarked that it was the Holy Ghost who had made him a Christian but that it was his mother who had made him a sadhu.<sup>7</sup>

. . . . .

1. C. F. Andrews, *Sadhu Sundar Singh: A Personal Memoir*, New York, Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1934, p. 23.
2. Streeter and Appasamy, loc. cit.
3. Andrews, op. cit., p. 24.
4. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 5.
5. *Sadhu Sundar Singh, With and Without Christ*, New York, Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1929, p. 106.
6. Streeter and Appasamy, loc. cit.
7. Ibid., p. 190.

b. Conversion Experience

After the death of his mother Sundar continued the religious quest on which she had started him at such an early age.

By the age of seven he knew by heart most of the Bhavagad Gita, by common consent the most sublime of the Hindu scriptures. By sixteen he had read the Granth of the Sikhs, the Muhammadan Quran, and a number of the Hindu Upanishads... But it was all in vain. His mother had taken him to priests and sadhus who might point out to him sacred texts which would show him the way; and for some time, under the direction of a Hindu sadhu, he practiced a form of Yoga--one of the methods, much esteemed among Hindus, of seeking identification with the Supreme Spirit, and the resultant peace and illumination, by concentration leading up to a state of trance--but with no avail. With the Bible he first became acquainted at the Presbyterian Mission School in his village, but it repelled him as being utterly subversive of the religion of his fathers and offensive to the proud traditions of his Sikh blood. He little thought that<sup>1</sup> from this unlikely source he would gain the Peace he sought.

As indicated by the above quotation, his parents were Sikhs by race but in their religious practices they seem to have been leaning towards Hinduism.<sup>2</sup> In one of his characteristic puns the Sadhu stated, "I was not a Sikh, but a seeker-after Truth."<sup>3</sup>

Sundar's quest for peace became more and more intense until his conversion to Christianity, which he dates as occurring on December 18, 1904, in his sixteenth year.<sup>4</sup> Previous to this date Sundar had been an active leader in anti-Christian acts, in fact just three days before this he had publicly torn and burned a copy of the Gospels in an attempt to destroy what he considered a false religion.<sup>5</sup> But neither such actions nor the faithful performance of the rituals of his own religion brought any peace and he seriously considered committing suicide.<sup>6</sup> Instead, he reports:

. . . . .

1. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., pp. 5-6
2. Ibid., p. 4.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 6.
5. Andrews, op. cit., pp. 43-44. Cf. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 6.
6. Ibid. (both books). For a vivid realization of the intensity of Sundar's spiritual search the reader will be helped by Cyril J. Davey, *The Yellow Robe*, London, S.C.M. Press, 1950.

Three days after I had burnt the Bible, I woke up about three o'clock in the morning, had my usual bath, and prayed, 'O God, if there is a God, wilt thou show me the right way or I will kill myself.' My intention was that, if I got no satisfaction, I would place my head upon the railway line when the 5 o'clock train passed by and kill myself. If I got no satisfaction in this life, I thought I would get it in the next. I was praying and praying but got no answer... At 4:30 A.M. I saw something of which I had no idea at all previously. In the room where I was praying I saw a great light. I thought the place was on fire. I looked round, but could find nothing... Then as I prayed and looked into the light, I saw the form of the Lord Jesus Christ whom I had been insulting a few days before. I felt that a vision like this could not come out of my own imagination. I heard a voice saying in Hindustani, 'How long will you persecute me? I have come to save you; you were praying to know the right way. Why do you not take it?' The thought then came to me, 'Jesus Christ is not dead but living and it must be He Himself.' So I fell at His feet and got this wonderful Peace which I could not get anywhere else... When I got up, the vision had all disappeared; but although the vision disappeared the Peace and Joy have remained with me ever since.<sup>1</sup>

In speaking of the visions which he later had, the Sadhu always clearly distinguished between them, as being things he heard and beheld with his spiritual faculties, and the vision of Christ at the time of his conversion when he saw Him with his bodily eyes and heard him "with these ears."<sup>2</sup>

c. Immediate Results

Mrs. Arthur Parker writes:

All he got by becoming a Christian was Christ; and this incomparable gift swamped everything else, so that since that time it has been an ecstasy of delight to him to suffer with and for his Master.<sup>3</sup>

This suffering began almost immediately after his conversion, for his family used every conceivable means of dissuading him from becoming a Christian: promises of wealth and prestige, reminders of

. . . . .

1. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., pp. 6-7
2. Ibid., pp. 8-9. Cf. Andrews: "What I saw...was no imagination of my own. Up to that moment, I hated Jesus and I did not worship Him. If I had been thinking of Buddha or Krishna, I might have imagined what I saw; for I was in the habit of worshipping them...No! It was no dream. When you have just had a cold bath, you don't dream!" Op. cit., p. 47.
3. Mrs. Arthur Parker, Sadhu Sundar Singh, New York, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1920, p. 8.

the shame he was bringing upon them, active persecution, and finally the command to leave his beloved family forever. "He left his home with food in which poison had been mingled. It was better that he should die than continue to disgrace the family."<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Other Outstanding Events

The plans of his family to destroy Sundar Singh's life were not allowed to come to fruition, however, and he went on to deeper and deeper experiences with his Lord which in turn left their mark on his Christian service. Although his Christian life was a constantly growing thing, there are definite milestones which can be clearly marked in retrospect, and which even the Sadhu tended to acknowledge as turning points in his spiritual experience.<sup>2</sup> These are his decision to become a Sadhu, his fast, and his world-wide preaching tours.

### a. His Decision to be a Christian 'Holy Man'

Having been disowned by his family, Sundar naturally turned to the Christian community and was enrolled in the Christian Boy's Boarding School in Ludhiana. However, he was so repulsed by the foreign atmosphere and culture there and the lack of spirituality among the other boys,<sup>3</sup> that in October 1905, only 33 days after his baptism in the Church of England,<sup>4</sup> he withdrew from the school and, in his own words, "began to go about as a Sadhu and preach the Gospel."<sup>5</sup>

As has been noted, the thought of being a Sadhu had long been in Sundar Singh's mind<sup>6</sup> and Parker states:

...he took this step in the firm belief that God had called him to this particular kind of life and work. Since that day he has never ceased to interpret the life of Him who had not where to

. . . . .

1. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 9.
2. Ibid., pp. 3, 22-23.
3. Singh, op. cit., pp. 120-121.
4. Parker, op. cit., p. 5. Cf. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 10.
5. Singh, op. cit., p. 121.
6. Ante, p. 2. Cf. Sadhu Sundar Singh, op. cit., p. 119.

lay His head to Indians who have been taught to revere a holy life of self-denial.<sup>1</sup>

The self-denial involved in this step is all the more admirable when it is realized that at that time the Christian church in the Punjab had a very low sense of what true Christian renunciation meant, so that his decision was a revolutionary one.<sup>2</sup>

To appreciate what Sundar Singh was attempting, it must be understood that a 'holy man' owns nothing but the saffron-colored robe which is the mark of his profession and that he devotes himself entirely to the religious life; therefore, in India such a person is treated with a great deal of veneration, sometimes almost bordering on superstition. As a Sadhu, Sundar Singh possessed nothing but his robe, blanket and a copy of the New Testament in Urdu. He lived on food that was given to him or on roots and leaves, accepted any hospitality when offered, otherwise slept in caves or under trees.<sup>3</sup>

In adopting the role of a sadhu, Sundar Singh was both opening the doors for presenting Christianity in a characteristically Hindu form and for the possibility of much personal persecution when it was discovered that he was preaching a "new" religion.<sup>4</sup> His biographers state:

...in general, Sundar's motives for adopting the sadhu life are clear. He has done this because it gives him complete freedom, it releases him from the distractions of earthly business, it enables him to practise the virtues so extolled in Indian books, of regarding in the same spirit fortune as well as misfortune; because, principally, it seems to him the best way to commend the Gospel to the multitudes of India, perhaps, too--though he never says this--because that life more than any other makes possible the literal imitation of the life of Jesus, and finally, because he has the unanalyzable but<sup>5</sup> imperative conviction that he has been called by God to do so.

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1. Parker, op. cit., pp. 5-6.
2. Andrews, op. cit., p. 70.
3. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., pp. 10-11.
4. Ibid., p. 11.
5. Ibid., p. 191.



b. His Fast

His early years as a Sadhu are said to have been "seven years of varied experience and inward growth."<sup>1</sup> It was during this time that he made his first trips into Tibet<sup>2</sup> and it was also during this time that he attended St. John's Divinity College at Lahore with the increasing conviction that "Religion is a matter, not of the head, but of the heart."<sup>3</sup> It was in this period also that he felt it necessary to cut his ties with the Church of England since otherwise he would be limited in his field of service.<sup>4</sup> These years of growth and decision can be said to have ended with what later became known as 'the Fast'.

The Sadhu, at the age of twenty-three, felt impelled to attempt a fast of forty days and nights in imitation of his Master. For this he chose a shadowy place in the jungle and gathered forty stones, one of which he planned to throw away each day of the fast as a means of reckoning the time. However, he soon grew too weak to throw away the stones so there is no record of the length of his fast. Nevertheless, during the entire period he is said to have "felt in himself a remarkable enrichment of that sense of peace and happiness which has been his in a measure ever since he became a Christian."<sup>5</sup> This the Sadhu claimed was most important for it indicated to him that the things of the body and those of the spirit are not identical, for while the body grew weaker the spirit actually seemed to increase in strength.<sup>6</sup> His fast was concluded when two wood-cutters found him and carried him in his blanket back to Dehra Dun at a time when although he was fully conscious he was too weak to speak.<sup>7</sup> For the remainder of his life the Sadhu was inclined to date things as happening before or after the fast, although he never

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1. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 3
2. Ibid., p. 14.
3. Ibid., p. 16.
4. Ibid., p. 17.
5. Ibid., pp. 21-22.
6. Ibid., pp. 22-23.
7. Ibid., p. 22.

felt compelled to repeat it, nor did he encourage other Christians to undertake such an act.<sup>1</sup>

c. His World-Wide Preaching Tours

There is no doubt that Sundar Singh's ministry increased in scope following the spiritual experiences connected with the fast. At first this ministry was confined to India and Tibet, but starting with a preaching trip to South India in 1918 he commenced an era in his life which was to bring him world-wide fame and increasing spiritual maturity.<sup>2</sup> This world-wide ministry will be treated in greater detail in an ensuing portion of this chapter,<sup>3</sup> so it will be sufficient to note here that Andrews comments that his friends, after his visits to the West in 1920 and 1922 and his gaining of world-wide acclaim, were pleased to note that

...his love for Christ had grown still deeper than before, and his humility had become more profound than ever. He had also ceased to speak in public about what he had seen in ecstatic<sup>4</sup> visions, and confined himself to the simplest Gospel message.

3. His Mysticism

Without doubt the Sadhu's mystical experiences molded his life to a great extent, so that while it is not the purpose of this paper to discuss his mysticism in detail, it is necessary to note some of its characteristics in order to understand its influence. His biographers describe his experiences as in some ways like those of St. Francis, Mother Juliana, or St. Paul and yet in some ways they were unique.<sup>5</sup> The Sadhu himself felt that what he had experienced was the same thing of which Paul wrote about as being caught up to the third heaven<sup>6</sup> or which John meant when he said he was 'in the Spirit';<sup>7</sup> in fact Sundar Singh regretted in his later life that

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1. Ibid., p. 24.
2. Ibid., pp. 3, 33-34.
3. Post, p. 11.
4. Andrews, op. cit., p. 89.
5. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. vii.
6. II Corinthians 12:2. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit. p. 87.
7. Revelation 1:10. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., pp. 89-90.

he had not been as reticent as Paul about mentioning his experiences since so many misunderstood their nature.<sup>1</sup>

In his mysticism, as in all of his life, Jesus Christ was central. He once said, "Christ is not the supreme mystic; He is the Master of mystics, the Savior of mystics."<sup>2</sup> As Streeter and Appasamy have noted:

The Visions are of value, not because they are visions but because they are the Sadhu's visions; and that, not merely because the Sadhu has an intuitive genius for things religious and is a man of prayer, but because in thought, word and deed he has lived a consistent life which has developed in him a personality completely unified; and, lastly, not even because of this alone, but because they are the<sub>3</sub>visions of the Sadhu in deep conscious communion with his Lord.

Perhaps one of the most unusual things about the Sadhu's mystical experiences was the frequency with which he had his 'Ecstasies',<sup>4</sup> and unlike the yoga-type trances which he had known as a youth, these Ecstasies did not leave him weary, but rather both physically and spiritually refreshed.<sup>5</sup> So much so, in fact, that he has stated:

I believe...that a life of prayer and the inner peace which goes with the Christian life enable one to a large extent to resist disease as well as to endure hunger and hardship. I was surprised when I heard that some of the Mystics suffered considerably in their physical health.<sup>6</sup>

However, to Sadhu Sundar Singh the chief value of these experiences lay in the fellowship he had in "the heavenly sphere with Christ Jesus" and with angels and spirits.<sup>7</sup> From these times he gained new insights into portions of the Word which puzzled him<sup>8</sup> or revelations of spiritual truths which he felt superseded, at least

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1. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 87; Andrews, op. cit., p.121.
2. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 53.
3. Ibid., p. 113.
4. Ibid., p. 105.
5. Ibid., p. 30.
6. Ibid.
7. Sadhu Sundar Singh, Visions of the Spiritual World, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1927, p. XII.
8. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 102.

the traditions of the church, if not the written Scriptures.<sup>1</sup> Much of his teaching was based upon things which he claimed to have received during a period of Ecstasy,<sup>2</sup> but he readily admitted that others have come upon the same truths by other avenues,<sup>3</sup> and his biographers feel that he did not get specific guidance during his times of Ecstasy.<sup>4</sup>

One of the by-products of his mystical experience with Christ which had strong effects upon his service, was the deep sense of Peace (always capitalized) which resulted and which he stated he never lost except for a few brief intervals and which was always restored after a time of prayer.<sup>5</sup>

Wonderful as his experiences were he did not advocate them for all men, feeling that God had provided prayer and meditation for all and would lead beyond that if it were good for the individual.<sup>6</sup> Indeed the Sadhu warned that such experiences should not be sought by the Christian, for with the Roman Catholic mystics he felt that they could easily be counterfeited by Satan.<sup>7</sup> Neither did Sundar Singh treat his Ecstasies as ends in themselves. To him the way of the mystic was "not the via negativa of self-conscious renunciation but just a simple quiet life of Prayer and self-sacrificing Service."<sup>8</sup>

However, having had such experiences, as well as having come from a culture where the supernatural is readily accepted, it was not difficult for the Sadhu to believe in miracles.<sup>9</sup> In fact, he says that it is easy to believe in all miracles having once known the miracle of the new birth in Christ.<sup>10</sup> But more than that he believed in them because he found miracles in the Bible, in nature and in his own adventures in the service of Christ.<sup>11</sup>

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1. Ibid., p. 117.
2. Ibid., p. 87.
3. Ibid., p. 91.
4. Ibid., p. 116.
5. Ibid., pp. 65-66.
6. Ibid., p. 118.
7. Ibid., pp. 119-120.
8. Ibid., p. 67; cf. Sadhu Sundar Singh, *Meditations on Various Aspects of the Spiritual Life*, London, Macmillan and Company, Limited, 1926, p. 3.
9. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 160; Andrews, op. cit., pp. 115-119
10. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., pp. 160-161.
11. Ibid., pp. 162, 165.

### C. Factors Affecting His Life of Service

#### 1. Geographical Areas of His Service

Without a doubt it was Sundar Singh's own background which equipped him so perfectly for his unique ministry to the people of India and Tibet in the name of Jesus Christ. Likewise it was the culture of those two countries which enabled him to serve Christ effectively as a 'holy man.' Even in the West, part of the impact of his message came from the fact that it was the "old, old story" presented in a way which was unfamiliar and therefore stimulating to his European and American audiences. A brief study of his actual service first of all in India and Tibet and later on a global scale is essential to an understanding of the Christian effectiveness of Sundar Singh.

##### a. Tibet

In 1929 Sadhu Sundar Singh wrote:

Non-Christian seekers after truth, in order to find it, willingly suffer unbelievable hardships, and had all who claim to be Christian been anything like as true or whole-hearted in their efforts to spread the kingdom of the Living Christ, the whole world would long ago have become Christian. But we have to confess that in this the Christian Church has signally failed.<sup>1</sup>

But this failure of the Christian Church was not exemplified in the Sadhu's own life. One of his chroniclers writes:

...soon after he had received the open vision of his Lord, and was wholly converted to Christ's service, he surrendered his life to his Master to do with it what He desired. Then the command had come to him, with an irresistible compulsion of love, to go forward across the mountains into the Forbidden Land of Tibet in order to make known to the Tibetan people the unsearchable riches of Christ...

This call from Christ had reached his heart, with such constraining power that it absorbed his waking thoughts and was present with him even in his dreams. Through all the years that were to come, it never left him; and everything points to his having laid down his life at last in order to obey it.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Singh, With and Without Christ, pp. 121-122.
2. Andrews, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

The Sadhu's overwhelming concern for the people of Tibet stemmed from many reasons. One was the fact that there had been little or no Christian preaching done in that land; another was that he regarded the conversion of Tibet as the particular missionary responsibility of the Indian church; and undoubtedly a third was that the certainty of persecution and suffering for the sake of Christ appealed to his desire to share in the sufferings of Christ.<sup>1</sup> Sundar Singh once stated:

For my sake, Christ left heaven and endured the suffering of the Cross. If I for His sake, in order to save souls, have left India and have come to Tibet, that is no great matter. But if I did not go, that would be sad indeed: for it was surely my duty to go.<sup>2</sup>

A missionary to Tibet would need just such constraining, for the difficulties were many, including the obvious one of the physical hardships and dangers involved in travelling--always on foot and usually alone--over the rugged terrain of that land. Furthermore such a traveler must face the bitter climate,<sup>3</sup> and Sundar Singh even in Tibet had only his robe, blanket and Bible. But even more bitter than the weather was the fanatical and open hostility<sup>4</sup> to his preaching which the Sadhu faced and miraculously overcame. But in spite of these things which might have turned another back, from 1908 on it was the Sadhu's plan to spend the summer months in Tibet, going there just as soon as the passes opened in the spring, and then to preach in India during those months when itinerant preaching in Tibet was impossible.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., pp. 14-15.
2. Andrews, op. cit., pp. 85.
3. Ibid., pp. 9-10.
4. Parker, op. cit., p. 62. Streeter and Appasamy note that much of the Tibetan hostility toward a new religion stems from the fact that the religion of Tibet is a "debased form of Buddhism" and the priests, or Lamas, by reason of their religious position also hold all the positions of civil authority. Op. cit., p. 14.
5. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 15.

b. India

But while Sadhu Sundar Singh's heart carried the burden of Tibet's evangelization, he was not indifferent to the needs of his own country and labored there just as faithfully during the winter months. It has been said of him that "probably no single man has attracted so much attention and devotion in all the history of the Christian Church in India."<sup>1</sup> For years the Sadhu "wandered in company with his Lord over the length and breadth of India, with his Urdu New Testament in his hand, and with Christ in his heart, and a look of Christ upon his face."<sup>2</sup>

This reality of Christ was noticeable in the Sadhu's words: "India...has no need of missionaries to teach a Christ who is merely a great moral teacher and not also the Lord of life."<sup>3</sup> It was also remarkably present in his life. C. F. Andrews tells of the profound effect that the Sadhu's example had on the lives of the students in a certain Christian college in the Punjab.

No mode of living, half in comfort, half in self-denial, could have worked such a miracle. But Sundar Singh's life could stand the test. It was reckless in its self-spending. He had counted the cost. The Cross was<sup>4</sup> not preached only, but lived--and that made all the difference.

So by example as well as by word, Sundar Singh sought to bring the Christian church of India to realize the privilege and the responsibility that was hers to evangelize the teeming millions of her own land.<sup>5</sup>

c. Global

The reputation of this man and his ministry in Northern India and Tibet soon became known to the Christians in South India, and so it was that early in 1918 Sundar Singh was invited to minister in Madras. There thousands flocked to hear him, and similar crowds attended the other services of this first preaching tour in the

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1. Parker, op. cit., p. 106.
2. Ibid., p. 9.
3. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 52.
4. Andrews, op. cit., p. 82. Cf. Davey, op. cit., pp. 46-47.
5. Parker, op. cit., p. 101.

south of India and in Ceylon.<sup>1</sup> It was this journey that began turning the comparatively obscure ministry of the Christian Sadhu into a ministry that captured world-wide interest and was used of the Lord in Western nations as well as Eastern ones.

This first tour in the South was later followed by one to Burma, the Federated Malay States, China and Japan.<sup>2</sup> In 1920 he sailed to England returning by way of the United States and Australia.<sup>3</sup> Two years later he was able to accept invitations to preach in Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and England and also to fulfill his long-cherished dream of visiting the Holy Land.<sup>4</sup> In all these places, as well as in his native land, his life-attested preaching was much used of God. It was obvious to those who knew him best that he much disliked the bustle and noise of the big cities anywhere and especially in the West. But feeling as he did that since in this life only there is the opportunity to serve God, in a way that not even angels are privileged to do, he was not one to shrink from that which might be personally distasteful if thereby he might help others know Christ as Savior.<sup>5</sup> Parker writes of him that wherever he was

...his unwearied search for souls continued, and whether in the churches and conventions of Christians or amongst the non-Christian peoples the strain never relaxes. A missionary rightly said of him in Travancore, 'He must live very near to God to stand it,' and that is the true secret of his being able to continue. Never impatient, never too wearied to meet people who seek him, always gracious, and ready night or day for the tasks that fall to him, he is a living copy of his Master.

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1. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., pp. 3, 31-32.
2. Ibid., p. 34.
3. Ibid., pp. 33-34.
4. Sadhu Sundar Singh, Reality and Religion, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1924, pp. ix-x.
5. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., pp. 37-38. Dr. Appasamy in describing the house that Sundar's father insisted on buying for his son, notes that instead of buying the bungalow suggested by his father, the Sadhu bought a house with a magnificent view of the hills but which could only be reached by going through the filthy, busy section of town in which the scavenger class lived. He says, "I think the house is a symbol of the two worlds with which the Sadhu constantly tried to live in contact--the busy world of men, sometimes dirty and sordid, and the world of nature so beautiful and calm." Singh, Reality and Religion, p. xi.
6. Parker, op. cit., p. 70.



So while he may have preferred the silence of the Himalayas, he willingly labored around the world and those who met him became aware of the reality of Jesus Christ.

The story is told that once, when calling at a certain house, the door was opened by a little maid...He gave the name "Sadhu Sundar Singh." She rushed off to her mistress. "There's someone wants to see you, ma'am. I can't make anything of his name. But he looks as if it might be Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup>

But the global ministry of Sundar Singh was not limited to his personal visits, for in the closing years of his life he devoted more and more of the time to personal correspondence and literary work.<sup>2</sup> One of the men who lived near the Sadhu during these years wrote, "He felt that his articles for magazines in different countries and his books would reach a larger audience, and so he spent his time at that work."<sup>3</sup> That this was indeed just another means of presenting his Savior, is evident from the Sadhu's own statement in the preface of one of his books: "My aim in writing this book has been to show, by simple narrative, the Living Presence of Christ and His saving power in the lives of men."<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Basic Concepts Affecting His Service

"As a man thinketh, so is he"<sup>5</sup> was never truer than in the life of Sadhu Sundar Singh, for as this thinking was revealed in his writings, so also was it revealed by his life. Some of the concepts which gave to his ministry its dominant emphases will now be discussed in an arbitrary classification, although ultimately they are all intertwined with one another.

### a. Persons of the Trinity

"Our ideas of God now are imperfect. But by living constantly in His Presence, we shall attain to a real understanding

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1. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 35. Cf. Davey, op. cit., p. 88.
2. Andrews, op. cit., pp. 160-161.
3. Ibid., pp. 162-163.
4. Singh, With and Without Christ, p. viii. Cf. p. 60.
5. Proverbs 23:7. Free translation.

of His being."<sup>1</sup> Sadhu Sundar Singh wrote the above, practised it, and as a result found the God, who is a Spirit,<sup>2</sup> to be not only the infinite, but also the loving, Creator who was most fully revealed in Jesus Christ. Realizing this he taught:

God is infinite and we are finite. We cannot indeed fully understand the infinite God, but He has created in us a sense which enables us to enjoy Him. The ocean is vast and we cannot see all its immense expanse and know all about its great treasures. But with the mere tip of our tongue, we can feel at once that the ocean is salt.<sup>3</sup>

A man cannot respond with equal affection to all those who love him, as his capacity for love is limited; but God's capacity for love<sup>4</sup> is without limit and, therefore, is sufficient for all.<sup>4</sup>

Those who confound the Creator with His creation are sunk in ignorance.<sup>5</sup>

But it was the person of Christ that most attracted Sundar Singh,<sup>6</sup> and as Parker states:

The great theme of all Sundar Singh's preaching is Christ. The cross of Christ is the central figure to which he draws all men, for there he himself found peace, and so can speak with authority of the power of that cross to save others. The most frequent words on his lips are words taken from his own experience, "I can say with confidence that the cross will bear those who bear the cross, until that cross shall lift them into the presence of the Savior."<sup>7</sup>

Always the Sadhu insisted on three points, one that Jesus Christ was the eternal Son of God manifested in human form<sup>8</sup> and conversely that Christ was more than a good moral teacher or a perfect man who

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1. Singh, Reality and Religion, p. 28.
2. Sadhu Sundar Singh, The Search After Reality, London, Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1925, p. 65.
3. Singh, Reality and Religion, pp. 15-16.
4. Ibid., p. 24.
5. Ibid., p. 63.
6. Nathan Soderblom, "Christian Mysticism in an Indian Soul: Sundar Singh," International Review of Missions, April, 1922, p. 230.
7. Parker, op. cit., p. 83.
8. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., pp. 40, 52; Singh, With and Without Christ, p. 60.

had lived and died 1900 years ago.<sup>1</sup> The other thing upon which he insisted was that although "Christ is a Universal Savior"<sup>2</sup> he must be known personally. He even quotes Christ as saying:

Many there are in this world who know about Me, but do not know me; that is they have no personal relationship with Me, therefore they have no true apprehension of or faith in Me, and do not accept Me as their Savior and Lord.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless he recognized that:

...before ever I knew Him or believed on Him as my Savior, He, unknown to me, was working in my soul like medicine working in the eye. For the eye cannot see the medicine that is in it<sup>4</sup> which is clearing the sight, though it feels its presence.

While the Sadhu in the above quotations does not stress the person of the Holy Spirit, he was very conscious of His fellowship and recognizes the unity of the trinity in his prayer:

My Lord God...look in mercy upon me and so fill me with Thy Holy Spirit that my heart shall have no room for love of aught but Thee. I seek from Thee no other gift but Thyself, who are the Giver of life and all its blessings.<sup>5</sup>

b. Sin

The Sadhu gave a very interesting definition of sin, putting it parabolically into the mouth of Christ:

...light is something which has real existence, but darkness has not; it is only a state, the absence of light. Thus sin or evil is not a self-existent thing, but simply the absence or non-existence of good.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Singh, Reality and Religion, p. 76. For a discussion as to his views on the purpose of the incarnation see Singh, The Search After Reality, p. 66.
2. Singh, With and Without Christ, p. 68.
3. Sadhu Sundar Singh, At The Master's Feet, New York, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1922, p. 16.
4. Singh, With and Without Christ, p. 122.
5. Singh, At the Master's Feet, p. 13.
6. Ibid., p. 28. Cf. Singh, The Search After Reality, p. 15. For his reasoning as to why evil will finally come to an end, see Sadhu Sundar Singh, Meditations on Various Aspects of the Spiritual Life. London, Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1926, pp. 39-40.

He felt that pain and disease were the outward sign of sin, either one's own or that of one's family,<sup>1</sup> and that as

...pain in any organ of the body is a voice which gives the alarm of danger. Just so, pain and unrest of soul are the result of sin. Like the sense of touch in the body, conscience warns us of coming danger and destruction, and urges us to take steps necessary for salvation.<sup>2</sup>

Sundar Singh's own experience--"Sometimes I have tried to keep myself from sinning, but I could not overcome temptations. When I gave my heart to Jesus Christ it was quite possible."<sup>3</sup>--led him to understand both non-Christians and also the Word of God better.

As a dead man neither breathes nor feels the air in which he lies, so a man dead in sin neither feels God's presence about him nor breathes the breath of prayer.<sup>4</sup>

The saying 'whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not' used to perplex me, but now I understand it. Sin is generally the result of a desire to obtain pleasure. But the man who loves God has such deep unfailing springs of joy in himself that he is now drawn to any other kind of pleasure, and therefore does not sin; just as the man who owns a sovereign has no use for the defaced farthing.<sup>5</sup>

### c. Salvation

Sadhu Sundar Singh had a name for those who professed to be Christians but who, denying the divinity of Christ, had never had a real experience of Christ. He called them Christians-without-Christ<sup>6</sup> and steadily maintained the necessity of the cross of Christ. He puts these words in the mouth of Jesus:

My cross and atonement do the same for believers as the serpent of brass did for the Israelites, for whoever looked up to that with the eye of faith was saved (Num. xxi. 9, John iii. 14,15).

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1. Singh, At The Master's Feet, p. 33.
2. Singh, Reality and Religion, p. 46.
3. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 141.
4. Singh, With and Without Christ, p. 61.
5. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 130. Quotation from I John 5:18.
6. Singh, With and Without Christ, pp. 59-60.

There were some, however, who instead of believing, thought of it as brass only and began to criticize...They all died. In these days too, those who cavil about the method of salvation which God has appointed will perish in the poison of their own sin.

And in another place he quotes a Hindu pundit as saying:

The Law makes no one good. It only distinguishes between good and bad, or between what we ought and what we ought not to do. No one has ever fulfilled or ever can fulfill the law, so all are without hope of salvation. It matters not whether the law was given through Moses, or through Rishis (Sages). Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John i.17). The law makes no one righteous, but emphasizes the need of righteousness, and this need is met in Christ.<sup>2</sup>

Salvation to Sundar Singh meant a new life in Jesus Christ; a life which overcame the limitations of both heredity and environment;<sup>3</sup> a life in which Christ indwells the individual until that person's life reveals the love of God.<sup>4</sup> For this to happen, the Sadhu maintained that it was not necessary for the individual to have made a public profession of Christ, and while he did not condone their lack of open commitment, he did uphold the very real service secret believers rendered to the cause of Christ in places where it was difficult for Christian preachers to go.<sup>5</sup>

#### d. Life After Death

To Sundar Singh death meant only the transfer of life from one form of existence to another.<sup>6</sup> Yet at the same time he consistently taught that the end of life on earth revealed man for

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1. Singh, At the Master's Feet, p. 34.
2. Singh, With and Without Christ, pp. 40-41. He further points out that the life of the rich young man makes it evident that the keeping of the law does not give the assurance of eternal life. Singh, At the Master's Feet, pp. 39-40.
3. Singh, Reality and Religion, pp. 21-22.
4. Ibid., pp. 24-25.
5. Singh, With and Without Christ, pp. 29-30.
6. Sadhu Sundar Singh, Visions of the Spiritual World, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1927, pp. 1-2. Cf. "...heaven begins in man's heart while he is in the world, yet it continues beyond this life in that state where there is neither suffering, nor pain, nor death, nor tears, but endless life and unbroken joy." Singh, Meditations on Various Aspects of the Spiritual Life, p. 70.

what he was:

The life of the believer and that of the unbeliever show great similarity in their beginning, but when their end comes, they are as diverse as the snake and the silkworm. The snake, however many times he casts his skin, remains a snake and nothing else, but the silkworm, when it casts off its unsightly cocoon, becomes a new creature...

As a result of his visions, the Sadhu was convinced that in the spiritual world there was an intermediate state which was the temporary dwelling-place for spirits after they have left the body at death. In this state they live on the plane for which their spiritual lives on earth have prepared them--"good spirits in the greater light, or evil spirits in the greater darkness"--and are further instructed by angels who are especially appointed to this task.<sup>2</sup> However, the Sadhu observed that those who had chosen evil in this life, tended to have the habit so ingrained that they chose darkness rather than light in the next world also.<sup>3</sup> This led him to the conclusion that God condemns no one to eternal punishment, but that men sentence themselves by their sin-perverted lives.<sup>4</sup> Streeter and Appasamy state that the Sadhu felt that most of those even who choose Hell will ultimately come to Heaven like the prodigal son, but that he also felt that men must not know of the possibility of their ultimate salvation lest they be tempted to miss the possession of heavenly peace and joy in this life.<sup>5</sup>

The Sadhu found assurance of the reality of life after death not only in the Scriptures and in his visions, but also in the fact that since we have the innate desire to live forever and

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1. Singh, At the Master's Feet, p. 76.
2. Singh, Visions of the Spiritual World, p. 19. Cf. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., pp. 91-92.
3. Singh, Visions of the Spiritual World, p. 38.
4. Ibid., pp. 36-37.
5. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., pp. 101-102, 124. Cf. also Singh, Meditations on Various Aspects of the Spiritual Life, pp. 57-59, for his reasoning as to why all men must ultimately be saved.

also have spiritual desires which cannot be fulfilled in this life, it must be the intention of God to fulfil them in the next life as we are in perfect fellowship with him.<sup>1</sup> It is no wonder, then, that Sundar Singh with his burning desire for full fellowship with God did not dread, but rather looked forward to his own time of departure from this life.<sup>2</sup>

e. Use of the Scripture

"The Bible, like a lump of sugar, is ~~sweet~~ to me at whatever point I taste it,"<sup>3</sup> the Sadhu maintained, but in actual practice he rarely used the Old Testament, and then usually only the Psalms.<sup>4</sup> Of the visions in Ezekiel he once said, "They are riddles. Sometimes you catch a glimpse of their meaning and sometimes not."<sup>5</sup>

It was the Gospels that he studied until he knew them by heart. In them he "saw God in the face of Jesus Christ."<sup>6</sup> His favorite book was the Gospel of John, especially the farewell chapters before the passion,<sup>7</sup> because it was so simple and because it was written by one who actually knew and loved Christ, and thus he felt it showed real insight.<sup>8</sup>

He carried with him all the time his Urdu New Testament, and one of the characteristic features of his life was his urgent desire to follow literally the example of Jesus Christ as it was set forth there. This, of course, explains his passionate longing to visit the Holy Land and walk where Jesus had walked and his rapt joy when at last in 1922 he was enabled to make such a pilgrimage.<sup>9</sup>

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1. Singh, Visions of the Spiritual World, pp. 19-20/ Cf. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 174.
2. Cf. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 63; Andrews, op. cit., pp. 113-114, 178-179.
3. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., pp. 153,154.
4. Ibid., p. 154.
5. Ibid.
6. Andrews, op. cit., p. 103.
7. Ibid., p. 139.
8. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 139.
9. Andrews, op. cit., pp. 102, 104-105, 113-114.

The Sadhu felt that just as the divine Son of God was revealed in human body, so too the word of God was written in the language of men so that there are both inspired and human elements in it.<sup>1</sup> And while he referred to the rash of Biblical criticism as "spiritual influenza" which he felt resulted in Christ's being regarded merely as a great moral teacher,<sup>2</sup> he did not hold to the theory of verbal inspiration.

The Holy Spirit is the true Author of the Scriptures, but I do not therefore say that every word, as it is written in the Hebrew or the Greek, is inspired...It is not the words, but the inward meaning that is inspired.<sup>3</sup>

For this reason he maintained that the Author must be consulted in regard to the meaning, rather than learned men who may, even unintentionally, misinterpret the Author's true meaning.<sup>4</sup>

The Sadhu was very thoroughly convinced of the power of the Scriptures.

Language difficulties and textual criticism have not hidden its truths nor hindered in the least its life-giving influence in my heart, because of these words--'They are spirit and they are life!!...People can see the Book and its readers, but its wonderful unseen power and force of attraction are only known by those who read it sincerely and prayerfully. Just as the magnet and needle can be seen, but the magnetic force which draws the needle to itself is hidden and unseen, so the unseen power of the Word of God draws sinners like me to the Saviour.<sup>5</sup>

To prove his point, Sundar Singh could relate several stories of cases where the reading of the New Testament resulted in conversions in places where no preaching ministry had been possible.<sup>6</sup> In addition he could cite his own experience:

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1. Singh, At the Master's Feet, p. 23.
2. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 156. Singh explains: "It does not follow, because a critic is a scholar, that his criticism is always scholarly." The Search After Reality, p. 76.
3. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 158.
4. Ibid. pp. 157-158.
5. Andrews, op. cit., pp. 112-113. Cf. Singh, The Search After Reality, pp. 75-84 for further treatment of his views of scripture and higher criticism.
6. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 156.



I used to read the Bible and I felt the power of the Word of God. Of course, I did not like it sometimes. I used to criticize it and I used to tear up the Bible and burn it in the fire ...Although I used to tear it up, I felt its power. Many others felt the power of the Word of God. They used to say, 'You must not read the Bible.' 'Why?' 'Because of its magic. You will become a Christian. Many who began by reading the Bible have become Christians. You must not read it.'<sup>1</sup>

It is no wonder then that the Sadhu was led to the firm conviction that "the purpose of the Gospels is merely to introduce us to Christ."<sup>2</sup>

f. Place of Prayer

"Men who do not hold converse with God in prayer are not worthy to be called men. They are like trained animals..."<sup>3</sup>, wrote Sundar Singh. To support this statement he offered many reasons. He felt that prayer is essential for spiritual discernment,<sup>4</sup> for withstanding temptation,<sup>5</sup> for properly evaluating material and spiritual blessing,<sup>6</sup> for knowing 'Reality',<sup>7</sup> for bearing fruit in the midst of barrenness,<sup>8</sup> and above all for preparing the heart of man for the blessing of knowing the presence of God within himself.<sup>9</sup> He felt that it was this change, not in God's plans, but in the heart of man that was the major purpose of prayer.<sup>10</sup>

The necessity for such a change in the heart of man, he illustrated by picturing the blind man on a cold day who could not read Braille because his fingers were numb, but when he had warmed them at the fire he could once again read. Just so the Sadhu claims do we need to get our numbed souls warmed by the fire of the Holy Spirit through prayer and meditation,<sup>11</sup> and he states boldly "spiritual things cannot be discerned without quiet and meditation..."<sup>12</sup>

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1. Ibid., pp. 159-160.
2. Ibid., p. 160.
3. Singh, Reality and Religion, p. 11.
4. Ibid.
5. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., pp. 78-79.
6. Singh, At the Master's Feet, pp. 42-43.
7. Singh, Reality and Religion, p. 8.
8. Ibid., pp. 10-11.
9. Singh, At the Master's Feet, pp. 46, 50; Singh, Reality and Religion, pp. 7-8.
10. Singh, Reality and Religion, p. 6.
11. Singh, With and Without Christ, p. 90.
12. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 38.

Quiet and meditation were marks of his own life. His biographers note that although he loved people and human joy he would leave the happiest group in order to be with his Lord.<sup>1</sup> His devotional life could not help but be affected by the life he lived. There were days when he was in the Himalayas when he could spend the entire time in quiet fellowship with the Lord, and there were occasionally other such days when he withdrew from human society.<sup>2</sup> At other times he had 'to be content' with two hours in the early morning, although he preferred to have three or four hours.<sup>3</sup> Usually he began by reading a chapter in the Bible rapidly, and then meditating on those verses which seemed richest to him. After this he spent fifteen minutes preparing himself for prayer, during which time the Holy Spirit brought to his mind topics for prayer.<sup>4</sup> The Sadhu prayed kneeling, sitting, or even sometimes walking, but mostly without words, feeling that the language of prayer is one without words.<sup>5</sup>

As far as 'types' of prayer are concerned it was obvious that the Sadhu placed great value on intercession. He kept a list of those for whom he prayed, and once remarked that he had prayed for a man for eight years before his prayer was answered.<sup>6</sup> He also counted heavily on the prayers of his friends on his own behalf and tried to make sure they were informed of his needs.<sup>7</sup> In regard to the place of petition in prayer, he said:

I used to ask for specific things. Now I ask for God. Supposing there is a tree full of fruits, you will have to go and buy or beg the fruits from the owner of the tree. Every day you would have to go for one or two fruits. But if you can make the tree your own property, then all the fruits will be your own. In the same way, if God is your own, then all things in heaven and on earth will be your own...<sup>8</sup>

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1. Andrews, op. cit., quoting T. E. Riddle, pp. 156-157.
2. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., pp. 69, 79.
3. Ibid., p. 79.
4. Ibid., pp. 79-80.
5. Ibid., p. 80.
6. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 76.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p. 74.

The Sadhu was very much aware of the fact that praying in the name of Christ meant much more than repeating that name, that it meant instead praying at the direction of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> He was also alert to the necessity of complete and unquestioning obedience, like that of the man with the withered hand,<sup>2</sup> if one desired spiritual blessing from God.<sup>3</sup>

g. Reasons for Christian Service

Sundar Singh was once asked whether, if he had a week to himself, he would spend the time in prayer or inactive service. He replied, "Can we drink only water or eat only food for a week? We require both food and drink."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, his biographers claim that "without self-sacrificing service prayer is, in the Sadhu's view, of small account."<sup>5</sup> There is also this written prayer of Sundar Singh's which expresses this same thought:

Dear Master, Thy varied blessings and gifts have filled my heart to overflowing with gratitude and praise. But the praise of my heart and tongue do not suffice me until I prove by my deed that my life is devoted to Thy service.<sup>6</sup>

What might almost seem like contradictory truths about Christian service are expressed by Sadhu Sundar Singh. The first of these is that it is the duty of those who are Christians to serve their Lord, even to the point of death.<sup>7</sup> This he lived up to himself: "Whenever he believed that he was called upon, under Divine guidance, to undertake anything, he endeavoured to perform it, in spite of any illness that might result from it to himself."<sup>8</sup> And this he urged on others also, exhorting them to immediate service, not holding back either for preparation or from a false sense of inability.<sup>9</sup>

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1. Singh, At the Master's Feet, pp. 53-54.
2. Matthew 12:10-13.
3. Singh, At the Master's Feet, p. 56.
4. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 69; Cf. Singh, With and Without Christ, p. 85.
5. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 85.
6. Singh, At the Master's Feet, p. 89; Singh, Meditations on Various Aspects of the Spiritual Life, p. 5.
7. Singh, At the Master's Feet, p. 59.
8. Andrews, op. cit., p. 169.
9. Singh, At the Master's Feet, p. 62.

At the same time he maintained that ~~whereas~~ "those who know only about Christ but do not know Him" may preach beautifully, it is only those who have known him who can bear effective witness.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore he claimed that "people who have received that peace and joy and happiness do not need to be told to go and tell others; they cannot keep quiet."<sup>2</sup> This truth was also born out in his own life, so that in spite of his natural inclination towards solitude, he was a missionary--the love of Christ constrained him,<sup>3</sup> and he could write:

It is characteristic of this new life that it constrains one to bring others to Christ, not by compulsion but from the desire to let others share in the joy of this wonderful experience. However sore one's trials may be, they are forgotten in the joy of that service.<sup>4</sup>

He was readily willing to admit that the life of service was not an easy one,<sup>5</sup> that he himself was sometimes tempted to become disheartened<sup>6</sup> and that it would be easier to die for Christ than to live for him since "dying takes only an hour or two, but to live for Christ means to die daily."<sup>7</sup> However, he also was aware that "during the few years of this life only I am given the privilege to serve man and Christ."<sup>8</sup> In the light of that privilege and his assurance, that if he faithfully preached and bore witness to the Savior, the rest would be taken care of by the Holy Spirit,<sup>9</sup> he was enabled to live a life of unselfish service.

The concept of unselfishness played a large part in his idea of service.

A selfish man thinks that he is working for his gain, but unconsciously he is doing great harm to himself...All sins arise from selfishness. That is why our Lord commanded us to deny self and to follow Him (Luke ix.23).<sup>10</sup>

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1. Singh, With and Without Christ, p. 89.
2. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 59.
3. Ibid., p. 40.
4. Singh, With and Without Christ, p. 125.
5. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 72.
6. Ibid., p. 169.
7. Ibid., p. 70.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., p. 169.
10. Singh, Reality and Religion, p. 68.

He also pointed out that whereas worldly progress usually means that one man gets ahead by defeating others, that spiritual progress is most often made as one man helps others around him, even though he may be unconscious of advancing any himself.<sup>1</sup> So that a man who is spiritually alive seeks the good of others and not their ill, and thus fulfills God's purpose for his own life.<sup>2</sup>

The greatness of any one does not depend upon his knowledge and position, nor by these alone can any one be great. A man is as great as he can be useful to others, and the usefulness of his life to others depends on his service to them. Hence, in so far as a man can serve others in love, just so far is he great. As the Lord said, "But whosoever will be great among you let him be your servant" (Matt. xx.26).<sup>3</sup>

#### h. Purpose of Suffering

Suffering as a correlative to service was no deterrent to the Sadhu.

Christ...calls us to bear the cross and to endure suffering and sorrow for the salvation of others. Many go away unwilling to bear the cross, as they like to have wealth, health and influence. They think that the cross is heavy. But He says: 'My yoke is easy and my burden is light.' When we carry it, we shall find that it is light. Moreover, when we lift the cross, we shall see below it throne and crown and glory. Here is the cross, but there is glory. So we must be prepared to spend our health, our strength, and, if need be, our lives, for the salvation of our countrymen.

To Sundar Singh there was a real privilege thus connected with being able to share in the sufferings of Christ, but he always warned against asceticism, seeking suffering for the sake of suffering, and not for the sake of Christ.<sup>5</sup>

As far as Sadhu Sundar Singh was concerned, suffering was never "a penalty, it is sometimes a medicine, always an opportunity."<sup>6</sup>

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1. Ibid., p. 36.
2. Singh, With and Without Christ, pp. 65, 77; Singh, Visions of the Spiritual World, p. 69; Singh, Meditations on Various Aspects of the Spiritual Life, p. 78.
3. Singh, Visions of the Spiritual World, p. 21.
4. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 171.
5. Ibid., pp. 29, 63.
6. Ibid., p. 126.

Sorrow and misfortune draw us near to God and fit us for His service. Many regard misfortune as nothing but punishment for sin. And yet suffering and the way we suffer is a splendid way of serving God, an effective way of glorifying Him.<sup>1</sup>

In various of his writings he states the purposes sought by God in allowing His loved ones to suffer. These include increased communion with God in prayer,<sup>2</sup> the production of the fruits of the Spirit,<sup>3</sup> an increase of gratitude and joy,<sup>4</sup> and ultimately the perfection of the Christian, "for it is God's will that he should reach perfection through sufferings."<sup>5</sup>

Sundar Singh proclaimed from his own experience that he knew joy and peace, however, not only as a result of suffering, but during suffering.<sup>6</sup> As a result he could give this testimony:

Though I have had to go through various kinds of suffering it has all been for me a means of great blessing, and with thankful heart I can truly say from my experience that every word is literally true in the promises of the Lord who said: "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and, in the world to come, eternal life" (Mark x.29-30). I have found not only a hundredfold, but a hundred times a hundredfold, and, if there are any to whom this promise is not fulfilled, it does not mean that the Lord's promise is not true; it means rather that there is something wrong in their lives, or that God has "provided some better thing" concerning them. (Heb. xi.39-40).<sup>7</sup>

i. Value and Place of Knowledge

Because of his experience with Christ, Sundar Singh could state:

Religion is a matter of the heart. If we give our hearts we can understand its truth. You can find it, not through the

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1. Ibid., p. 128.
2. Singh, At the Master's Feet, p. 71.
3. Ibid., p. 74.
4. Ibid., p. 71.
5. Singh, With and Without Christ, p. 92; Cf. Singh, Meditations on Various Aspects of the Spiritual Life, pp. 22-32, 76; Cf. Singh, Reality and Religion, p. 33, where he illustrates this by the struggles of the silkworm in the cocoon which are not really hindrances but designed to enable it to reach perfection.
6. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 60; Cf. Singh, With and Without Christ, pp. 94-95.
7. Singh, With and Without Christ, pp. 129-130.

intellect nor through the eyes, but only through depth of heart. Other lessons we have to learn from books; to know Jesus Christ does not require book knowledge, but you have to give your heart.<sup>1</sup>

To appreciate the underlying meaning of such a statement, the reader needs to realize that

...the doctrine of salvation by Knowledge is almost--not quite--as strongly entrenched in Hindu thought as the doctrine of salvation by works of the Law was in the Jewish system against which St. Paul reacted...<sup>2</sup>

So that in the same way that Paul was not opposed to good works, Sundar Singh was not opposed to knowledge, but he did object to its being given first place in men's minds.<sup>3</sup>

I met a Hindu Sannyasi who said, 'Jnana-marga'--that is, Knowledge--'is necessary for salvation.' I told him that in order to quench thirst it is necessary to have water, it is not necessary to know that it is composed of oxygen and hydrogen. Some Hindu Sannyasis are very learned men, but they have no peace.<sup>4</sup>

Because he knew learned men who, while specialists in their own fields, knew next to nothing about the spiritual life, he insisted that "the man of prayer is the only one whose opinion is worth having in regard to religion."<sup>5</sup>

The realization of God and spiritual knowledge do not depend on the knowledge of this world. Mere worldly knowledge of isms and ologies often silences the inner voice and in its place makes an artificial voice which misleads men, instead of directing them to the right way. Real spiritual knowledge comes only through prayer and meditation, because God then speaks to man in the secret chamber of the heart and there we hear His "still small voice."<sup>6</sup>

We can get worldly knowledge by tuition, but spiritual knowledge comes only by intuition enlightened by Him.<sup>7</sup>

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1. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 141.
  2. Ibid., p. 142.
  3. Ibid., p. 143. The Sadhu himself compared his reaction with that of Luther against the role of works in the Roman Catholic Church, p. 149.
  4. Ibid., p. 142.
  5. Ibid., pp. 144-145.
  6. Singh, With and Without Christ, p. 62.
  7. Ibid., p. 63.

When we are born anew and become the children of God, the Spirit of God, without the help of any language, teaches and reveals spiritual truth to us.<sup>1</sup>

For himself he insisted that he gave more weight to those things which were revealed to him in his 'Ecstasies' than to church tradition, and cites the examples of John Wesley and General Booth as others who did the same thing. However, he warned that this is only wise for mystics.<sup>2</sup> So as Andrews put it:

He had a great reverence for the intellect of man, and did not dispute its valid judgments. At the same time he fully believed that there were laws of the spiritual world which had yet to be fully explored.<sup>3</sup>

He explained that as a scientist who dissects a bird to find out what makes life, discovers that life has mysteriously gone, so will those who try to understand the reality of the peace and bliss of the Christian by intellectual means only meet with failure.<sup>4</sup> But those who love and know God will have such knowledge and will also know His will for them.<sup>5</sup>

The Sadhu often claimed that he read only two books, the Bible and the Book of Nature. He did however frequently dip into the writings of other mystics, and in the later years of his life he became more interested in modern science, especially psychology.<sup>6</sup> However, it was obvious that many of the illustrations and parables of which his teaching was so largely composed, did come from his reading the Book of Nature.<sup>7</sup>

The Sadhu loves Nature not so much because he feels God in Nature, but because God made Nature and Nature is to him an open book speaking in parables about the things of God. He loves beauty, especially the snow-clad beauty of the Himalayas, but

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1. Ibid., pp. 90-91; Cf. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 60, where the Sadhu states that the peace of God not only "passeth all understanding but (also) enlighteneth all understanding."
2. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 117.
3. Andrews, op. cit., p. 149.
4. Singh, With and Without Christ, pp. 145-146.
5. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 116.
6. Ibid., p. 16; Cf. Andrews, op. cit., pp. 147-148.
7. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 151.



it is less for the sake of the beauty itself than because in those eternal solitudes it is easier to hold communion with God and to read the great truths, which<sup>1</sup> are written, as he says, all over Nature in capital letters.

j. Role of Other Religions

Perhaps because he so readily saw the hand of God in all things, Sundar Singh held firmly to the belief that "truth is one; but different men may attain it by different paths."<sup>2</sup> With this as his basic premise he declared that his own early training as a Sikh had been essentially good and not evil and that it only needed the "transforming touch of Christ to complete it..."<sup>3</sup> So also he could say "Christianity is the fulfillment of Hinduism. Hinduism has been digging channels. Christ is the water to flow through these channels."<sup>4</sup> Or again:

Every one is breathing air. So every one, Christian as well as non-Christian, is breathing the Holy Spirit, though they do not call it by that name. The Holy Spirit is not the private property of some special people.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, lest he be thought to advocate other religions, he makes this distinction between all others and Christianity.<sup>6</sup>

Other religions say: Do all the good deeds you can, and you will at last become good. Christianity says: Be good, and then you can do good--it will come naturally from a good heart. The change of heart must come first.<sup>7</sup>

This was the thing he found most wrong with Buddhism, that Buddha taught nothing about God, but only presented a moral code.<sup>8</sup> But a moral code alone is not sufficient.

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid., p. 91; Cf. Singh, *The Search After Reality*, p. 22.
3. Andrews, *op. cit.*, p. 191.
4. Streeter and Appasamy, *op. cit.*, p. 181; Cf. pp. 182-183.
5. Ibid., pp. 181-182.
6. For a fuller treatment of Singh's comparisons of Christianity with Hinduism, Buddhism and Muhammadanism see his book, *The Search After Reality*.
7. Streeter and Appasamy, p. 172.
8. Ibid.

You will hardly find men who do not worship God or some Power. If atheistic thinkers or scientists, filled with the materialistic outlook, do not worship God, they often tend to worship great men and heroes or some ideal which they have exalted into a Power. Buddha did not teach anything about God. The result was, his followers began to worship him. In China the people began to worship ancestors, as they were not taught to worship God. Even illiterate people are found worshipping some Power or some spirit. In short, men cannot but worship. This desire for worship, from which man cannot get away, has been created in him by the Creator, so that, led by this desire, he may have communion with his Creator or enjoy eternal fellowship with Him.<sup>1</sup>

k. Other Practical Concepts

In analyzing the Sadhu's life for those things which have affected his actions it would be impossible to omit his attitude towards materialism. This attitude can be expressed in his own words: "Neither matter nor any other thing is bad in itself, but the consequence of its misuse is evil."<sup>2</sup> He himself never carried any money, even when travelling in the West, saying, "I don't like to put my trust in my pocket but in God."<sup>3</sup> Or again:

If instead of seeking God, we set our hearts on getting His created things, and try to gain material things instead of Him, then we have indeed forsaken the Creator of all things.<sup>4</sup>

A second concept, one which he seems to have shared with St. Paul, is that for him marriage might cause him to tend to please his wife rather than Christ. The Sadhu, however, was always at ease with women, corresponded with several, and did not in any way discourage others from marriage or place an especially high value on celibacy.<sup>5</sup>

These, as well as all of the above attitudes, can be best explained by his statement:

Now I have no desire for wealth, position and honor. Nor do I desire even Heaven. But I need Him who has made my heart Heaven.<sup>6</sup> His infinite love has expelled the love of all other things.

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1. Singh, Reality and Religion, p. 48.
2. Singh, With and Without Christ, p. 68.
3. Streeter and Appasamy, pp, 34, 192.
4. Ibid., pp. 192-193.
5. Ibid., pp. 194-196.
6. Ibid., p. 42.

But concerned as he was with the things of the Spirit, Sundar Singh was nevertheless alert to the necessity for living in the world and could exhort others:

As Christians we must cooperate with our fellow-citizens so that Christ may permeate every walk of life. We cannot bring others to our universal Savior by being separate from our neighbors.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. Dominant Features of His Service

#### a. His Teaching Methods

Those who heard the Sadhu preach, wrote:

...the manner of his teaching, even more than its substance, has a peculiar freshness for a Western hearer, with its picturesque abundance of illustration and parable, often quaint but always apt, its unstudied spontaneity, its gleams of kindly humor.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed it was the Sadhu's use of illustration which was probably the most distinctive thing about his method of teaching and one wonders if this were not another way in which he attempted to be like his Lord. He did not use the parables to buttress arguments or to illustrate truths, but rather used them to present the truth, and that without further comment.<sup>3</sup> Nor did he hesitate to repeat an illustration he had previously used elsewhere. "We do not... refuse to give bread to hungry people because we have already given bread to others."<sup>4</sup>

Streeter and Appasamy explain that the Sadhu's manner of speaking on the platform was much the same as his conversational style, but that he was much more at ease when he could teach informally, in the style of an Indian Guru with his pupils, than when he had to use the Western lecture method.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Sadhu Sundar Singh, "Christ and India," *The Missionary Review of the World*, March, 1923, p. 178.
2. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. viii.
3. Ibid., p. 43; Andrews, op. cit., p. 120.
4. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. ix.
5. Ibid., p. 166.

Parker writes:

Sadhu Sundar Singh is a good preacher; he loses no time in figures of speech, wastes no words on fine phrases. He is direct, clear, concise. Needless to say, he is in dead earnest, and leaves no single hearer in doubt as to the object he has in view...He never appears without a message straight from God, and his clear voice carries that message to the remotest limits of his audience, however large that audience may be. A tense and strained attention witnesses to the power with which he speaks.<sup>1</sup>

Or again:

Neither argument nor philosophy, but the inspiration which comes from the simple yet powerful testimony to the power of God to redeem from sin,<sup>2</sup> is his method of drawing non-Christians to the feet of Christ.

Two of the factors which enabled the Sadhu to preach powerfully were his selflessness in preaching and the fact that he always got his message straight from God Himself. In one of his own books the Sadhu tells of a day when he was ill but had such a wonderful time of meditation and prayer that he was constrained to drag himself to a nearby village to tell those who lived there about Christ. While he was unable to speak very well, they were much impressed by the importance of the message since he'd come to tell them when he was so sick.<sup>3</sup> This same selflessness put 'feet' on his concepts of suffering and service and enabled him to preach Christ by speech and life.

But undoubtedly the basis for his powerful preaching was his insistence upon a long period of prayer and meditation before any address.<sup>4</sup>

I don't sit down and write out my sermons. As I pray, I get texts, subjects and illustrations. Preachers ought to get their message from God. If they get it from books instead, they do not preach their own gospel; they preach the gospel of others. They sit on other people's eggs and hatch them and think they are their own.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Parker, op. cit., pp. 118-119.
2. Ibid., p. 121.
3. Singh, With and Without Christ, pp. 140-141.
4. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 167.
5. Ibid.

b. His Unwillingness to Organize

A couple of years after he became a Christian, Sundar Singh met a wealthy American, S. E. Stokes, who had renounced all his possessions and was endeavoring to start a brotherhood for missionary work on the pattern of the early Franciscans. Sundar Singh worked closely with this group for several years, but never became a member because he felt that it was not wise to attempt to copy the pattern set by others.<sup>1</sup> But it was not just his dislike for copying others, the Sadhu was not enthusiastic about brotherhoods of any kind, feeling that most groups of this type tend to deteriorate after the death of their founder and that religious organizations of any kind tend to depend too much on men and not enough on God.<sup>2</sup> Hence he never encouraged in any way the founding of an order of Christian Sadhus,<sup>3</sup> nor did he seek to gain any disciples but rather encouraged those who would have followed him first to wait earnestly upon God for His leading for their lives and then to follow that explicitly.<sup>4</sup> Neither did he have any desire to found a school for he felt that those who would like to preach ought to travel around in a group of four or five with a professor to get some practical experience in presenting the Christian message.<sup>5</sup>

Although he himself kept free from alliances with any type of church organization,<sup>6</sup> he was not opposed to it for others.<sup>7</sup>

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1. Ibid., pp. 12-13. Contrast C. F. Andrews, "Is Sadhu Sundar Singh Still Living?", Christian Century, November 11, 1931, p. 1423: "Stokes and Sundar Singh together formed this brotherhood."
2. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 14.
3. Ibid., p. 13.
4. Ibid., p. 196.
5. Ibid., pp. 168, 196.
6. Cf. H. W. Nissanka, "Sadhu Sundar Singh As I Saw Him," Missionary Review of the World, December, 1931, p. 916: "Denominationalism is quarrelism."
7. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 18.

But by the same token he did not insist upon it for all, especially for those who, like himself, were repulsed by its cold formalism<sup>1</sup> or who could seemingly serve better when not formally related to it.<sup>2</sup>

His insistence on individuality and on dependence upon God's organization rather than man's, while highly admirable in one sense nevertheless had its disadvantage too, in that while he carried a deep concern for individuals, he did not have that same concern for an entire Christian community.

He has borne the cross in many ways but he has never had to agonize or fight lest some beloved community should relapse to legalism, collapse in schism, or apostatize from the primitive simplicity of the rule. And, perhaps, just for this reason, there are subtle ways in which his vision has in some directions not penetrated quite so deep as that of Paul or Francis.<sup>3</sup>

c. His 'Indian-izing' of Christianity

Baron von Hugel in writing about the Sādhu states:

...both St. Paul and St. Augustine were proud of being respectively Jew and Roman, and were anxious to remain as Jewish and Roman as deep Christianity allowed. So also the Sadhu is most rightly proud of being an Indian, and is anxious to remain as Indian as deep Christianity allows.<sup>4</sup>

Sundar Singh illustrated this desire to clothe Christianity in Indian form in his adoption of the Sadhu robe and role in his own life. Likewise he taught it by one of his most famous illustrations:

There was a Brahman of high caste hurrying to the railway station. Overcome by the great heat, he fell down on the platform. The Anglo-Indian station-master was anxious to help him. He brought him some water in a white cup, but he would not take the water, He was so thirsty, but he said, 'I cannot drink that water. I would prefer to die.' 'We are not asking you to eat this cup,' they said to him. 'I will not break my caste,' he said, 'I am willing to die.' But when water was brought to him in his own brass vessel, he drank it eagerly. When it was brought to him in his own way he did not object. It is the same with the Water of Life.<sup>5</sup> Indians do need the Water of Life, but not in the European cup.

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1. Singh, With and Without Christ, p. 44.
  2. Ibid., pp. 29-30.
  3. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. 14.
  4. Ibid., p. 177.
  5. Ibid., p. 178.

Because of his firm convictions along this line, the Sadhu foresaw the necessity that missionaries serve primarily to train the Indian Christians for positions of ever increasing responsibility.<sup>1</sup> Moreover he could picture an Indian church that did not belong to any one denomination, but that was distinctly Indian "constituted according to Indian methods and ideals."<sup>2</sup> The Sadhu felt that such a church could well adopt some of the following Eastern customs:

The people should sit down on the floor in church. They should take off their shoes instead of their turbans. Indian music should be sung. Long, informal addresses should take the place of sermons.

d. His personal Impact

As with every great man, much of the value of Sundar Singh's service lay not so much in what he did or what he said as in what he was. An English nurse who worked in India wrote home that the "whole force of his preaching...seems to rest in the one strong conviction of Christ's love, which is the burden of his message. He is one who knows; one who sees Christ face to face."<sup>4</sup> Much the same idea is expressed by Streeter and Appasamy who describe him thus:

...the deep tranquility of the countenance lighted up by loving kindness, and with a vivacity of expression, and occasionally of gesture, which somehow seems not to conflict with, but to express, the Peace of God within.<sup>5</sup>

Nichol Macnichol wrote of him: "Sadhu Sundar Singh passed through India like a magnet attracting souls wherever he went."<sup>6</sup> Indeed his biographers have paid him the highest of all compliments: "Coming from the presence of Sundar Singh, men forget themselves, they forget him--but they think of Christ."<sup>7</sup>

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1. Ibid., p. 179.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 181.
4. Andrews, op. cit., p. 186.
5. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. viii.
6. Nichol Macnichol, "Indian Christianity and Some Notable Indian Christians," International Review of Missions, 1920, p. 227.
7. Streeter and Appasamy, op. cit., p. xiii.

D. Summary

It is evident from the above material that Sadhu Sundar Singh was a most unique and remarkable person. There can be no doubt that much of his uniqueness stemmed from the cultural factors with which he was surrounded. This is true not only in the case of his mode of service but also in his Christian experience.

This chapter reveals that his home, especially the influences of his Sikh inheritance and the devotional life of his mother, had much effect on his conversion as well as on his continuing Christian development. And without a doubt Sundar Singh's conversion experience was itself startlingly unique in its inception and powerful in its effects both in his own life and in the lives of others.

Furthermore it has been pointed out in these pages that Sundar Singh's ministry as a Christian Sadhu, with its literal imitation of the life of Jesus Christ in combination with the customary appearance and method of teaching of an Indian 'holy man' could not but make an impact that was unusual--not only in his own country but around the world.

However, it has also been made evident that this impact was based on more than the unusual. It derived rather from the fact that his life substantiated to a rare degree his Christian teaching. There is no doubt but that his life as well as his teaching gave expression to his views about the Bible, prayer, suffering, knowledge, the value of other religions, of material possessions, of marriage and of cooperation with others.

Certain features in the life and work of Sundar Singh have emerged as dominant factors. These include his mystical experiences, or Ecstasies, and the value he placed on them, his use of parable and illustration to convey the truth he wished to teach, his careful avoidance of personal entanglement in any organization, and his eager desire to make Christianity Indian in its appeal to the Indians. But above and beyond all this lies the impact of his personal devotion to his Lord which so completely fulfilled his own definition of a Christian: "A Christian...is a man who has fallen in love with Christ."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Davey, op. cit., p. 70.



CHAPTER II

FRANK CHARLES LAUBACH

## CHAPTER II

### FRANK CHARLES LAUBACH

#### A. Introduction

Within recent years American readers have found a steady stream of books and magazine articles by or about Frank C. Laubach. Frequently these materials contain descriptions like this one from the New Yorker:

Dr. Laubach is a bold, unassuming, warmhearted, shortlegged, rock-jawed, godly man. There is nothing in either his appearance or his manner...to proclaim that he is one of the most influential private citizens alive. His figure is compact and by no means stately; his gait, though brisk, is a trifle laborious, with a perceptible roll, like that of a tanker in a light ground swell; his dress is neat and conservative, and no more elegant than befits a Christian missionary; he speaks in a rather high-pitched voice and has a tendency to dwell on sibilants; and his favorite word for starting a sentence is 'indeed.' His physical stamina and his technical skill as a teacher are great, but probably neither of them has been as much of an asset to him as his spiritual initiative, which is prodigious. All his adult life, he has had an ungovernable urge to take on hard cases.<sup>1</sup>

Or as his biographer, Marjorie Medary, put it:

Frank Laubach is now well past sixty, white-haired and somewhat bald, still lean of build; he works too hard and moves too fast to gather any extra flesh. His face has mellowed, as all kind faces do. The eyes twinkle sometimes, but often there is in them the look of the seer and the prophet. Indeed, Frank Laubach is known, among an inner circle of friends, as a mystic of mystics.<sup>2</sup>

Such a man invites much study. However, this chapter will be devoted to a consideration of certain of the factors which apparently have had special influence upon his Christian experience and service. Although Frank Charles Laubach (1884- ) is perhaps best known as "the Father of the Adult Literacy Movement,"<sup>3</sup> this chapter will not attempt to deal with his literacy work other than as it is

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1. R. Rice, "Profiles; The Thousand Silver Threads," New Yorker, Vol. XXVII, February 16, 1952, pp. 104 +.
2. Marjorie Medary, Each One Teach One, New York, Longmans, Green, 1954, p. 123.
3. Frank C. Laubach, India Shall Be Literate, Jubbulpore, C. P., India, Mission Press, 1940, p. vii.

vitaly connected with his Christian service. Neither will it be the purpose here to study Laubach's mysticism except as it relates to his Christian experience. The early part of the chapter will be devoted to a brief discussion of those biographical factors and personal religious experiences which seem to have contributed to his overall Christian experience and thinking. The greater portion of the chapter will be given to a discussion of the geographical and conceptual factors which have resulted in Laubach's unique service to our present world.

### B. Factors Affecting His Christian Experience

#### 1. Background Factors

Laubach, who at "sixty-seven had become the world's foremost literacy expert,"<sup>1</sup> was born at Benton, Pennsylvania, September 2, 1884. His dentist father, Dr. John Brittain Laubach, had married a schoolteacher<sup>2</sup> and Frank also taught school for a while<sup>3</sup> after being graduated from the State Normal School at Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania in 1901.<sup>4</sup> While he was teaching he decided to study for the ministry and received his B.A. degree from Princeton in 1909.<sup>5</sup> Two years later he had earned his M.A. degree from Columbia University after having worked a year at "a Presbyterian...(neighborhood house) situated in an especially pugnacious Irish-Italian neighborhood on New York's lower East Side."<sup>6</sup>

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1. Medary, op. cit., p. 194. The writer found a more complete biographical picture in the second chapter of this book than in any of the other materials consulted.
2. Ibid., p. 7.
3. Rice, op. cit., p. 40.
4. Ibid., p. 38.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid. Laubach's Master's thesis on "The Social Value of the New York Saloon" considerably upset his father, who was a temperance advocate.

In 1913 he was graduated from Union Theological Seminary and worked with the New York Charity Organization Society as a specialist in the problems of the male vagrant. As a result of his work here he received his Ph. D. in sociology from Columbia University in 1915.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Early Missionary Experiences

Meanwhile, during his seminary days, Laubach had married a fellow Bentonite, a school-teacher, Effa Seely.<sup>2</sup>

It had been letters from Effa's cousin that had first aroused Laubach's interest in Mindanao in the Philippines and started him on his missionary career in that area.<sup>3</sup>

Their letters home made it clear that Mindanao, besides having beautiful scenery and a colorful history, abounds in hard cases, chief among them the Moslem tribes of Moros. Dr. Laubach derives a good deal of inspiration from lakes and mountains and sunsets and he has always had a notable wanderlust, but it was the hard cases that clinched his decision. All his activities between 1905 and 1915...he considered steps leading toward Mindanao.<sup>4</sup>

Enoch Bell, in writing of the Laubachs' decision to serve the Lord in Mindanao, states:

It was a decision that led them into terrible hardships in bad climates, into heart-rending separations, into the tragic loss of their two sons through lack of hospital facilities, into great loneliness from a sense of being forgotten at times in their pioneer work, into overwhelming adverse conditions because of the superstition and moral inertia of the people for whom they labored, and yet withal into the joys and satisfactions of a life lived together for God and the underprivileged that has shown results in transformed minds and society.<sup>5</sup>

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1. "Frank C. Laubach, Apostle to the Illiterates," New York, Committee on World Literacy and Christian Literature, Foreign Missions Conference of North America, n.d., p. 1. In 1950 Laubach was granted the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters by the College of Wooster.
2. Ibid.
3. Rice, op. cit., p. 43.
4. Ibid. Cf. Mabel H. Erdman, Editor, Answering Distant Calls, New York, Association Press, 1942, p. 18.
5. Erdman, loc. cit.

In order to get to Mindanao it became necessary for Laubach to join the Congregational church since that was the only denomination working on Mindanao at that time.<sup>1</sup> Consequently he was ordained a Congregational minister in 1914.<sup>2</sup> The ease with which he took this step was an indication of his non-sectarian religious views for he had been raised a Methodist and educated as a Presbyterian.<sup>3</sup>

The Laubachs landed at Davao, southeastern Mindanao, the American Board's only station on the island, in January, 1915.<sup>4</sup> The next summer they moved to Cagayan, on the northern coast, and it was here that their only surviving child, Robert, was born.<sup>5</sup> During the next seven years, Laubach "gave himself unstintedly and with great effectiveness" to the building of evangelical churches in the northern part of Mindanao.<sup>6</sup> During this time he also developed "the broader contacts with the culture and leadership of the Islands which has always characterized him."<sup>7</sup> Because of his work, not only churches but also schools, dormitories, and a hospital were established in this area. Projects were begun which "resulted in industries for backward peoples, efficient health service, introduction of better seed and improved methods of agriculture, and even in self-government under law."<sup>8</sup>

In 1922 he went to Manila, where he helped establish the Union Theological Seminary, becoming one of its first teachers.<sup>9</sup>

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1. Rice, op. cit., p. 43.
2. "Frank C. Laubach, Apostle to the Illiterates," loc. cit.
3. Rice, op. cit., p. 43. In recent years he has also become a member of the Wider Quaker Fellowship.
4. Erdman, op. cit., p. 18.
5. Rice, op. cit., p. 43.
6. Frank C. Laubach, Letters By A Modern Mystic, New York, Student Volunteer Movement, 1937, p. 5.
7. Ibid.
8. Erdman, op. cit., pp. 19-20.
9. Laubach, Letters By A Modern Mystic, p. 5.

He was particularly interested in this work because his "experience at Cagayan drove home...the pressing need of developing a trained Filipino leadership for the growing church in Mindanao...!"<sup>1</sup> While in Manila, he also worked to establish a Union Church "composed largely of students of different religious traditions and connections --Catholic, Protestant, Mohammedan, and nothing...!"<sup>2</sup>

It was not until 1929 that Laubach was finally permitted to go to Lanao and begin working among the Moro tribes that had first attracted him to Mindanao. For when he first arrived on Mindanao, American troops were still necessary to maintain law and order and "both the government and the evangelical authorities felt that sending a missionary there would be a rapid and unceremonious way of augmenting the ranks of the blessed."<sup>3</sup> Later Laubach wrote concerning the fact that even in 1929 the officials were still dubious "about any religious work being attempted, and permitted me to begin my work on the understanding that it would be educational and social, not controversial. I was a missionary of Christ, with my lips practically sealed."<sup>4</sup>

For reasons of health and education, Mrs. Laubach and Robert had to remain at the mission station on another island.<sup>5</sup> It was one of the most trying periods of Laubach's life.

He lived in a little cottage beside the camp that Pershing had built twenty-five years before, taking his meals at the officers' club with the superintendent of schools, the principal of the high school and the captain of the Philippine constabulary. "All nice fellows," he wrote. "We are all lonesome men. They drown their loneliness in whiskey, and I drown mine in religion."<sup>6</sup>

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1. Erdman, op. cit., p. 19.
2. Ibid., p. 20.
3. Rice, op. cit., p. 43.
4. Frank C. Laubach, "My Experience With the Moslems," *Missionary Review of the World*, Vol. LX, Oct. 1937, p. 485.
5. Laubach, *Letters By A Modern Mystic*, p. 6.
6. Erdman, op. cit., p. 21. Cf. Frank C. Laubach, *The Silent Billion Speak*, New York, The Friendship Press, 1943.

### 3. Personal Religious Experiences

During this trying period Laubach experienced what might be termed a conversion experience. At least it resulted in that complete change of thinking which tends to accompany such an experience. He himself writes of it:

Before 1930 I held what many people call "the university man's religion." I believed that Jesus was probably the best man who had ever lived. But that beautiful memory of Jesus lacked power. I was a failure in my spiritual life.

Then I had a personal experience of Christ...which left me sure that he not only lives, but lives in my heart. When he entered my heart, he brought to me a tender compassion for the multitudes which has been the driving power of my life ever since. The living Christ put it there.<sup>1</sup>

The experience to which he here refers occurred during that first lonely month in Lanao.

One evening I was sitting on Signal Hill...Tip had his nose up under my arm trying to lick the tears off my cheeks. My lips began to move and it seemed to me that God was speaking.

"My child," my lips said, "you have failed because you do not really love these Moros. You feel superior to them because you are white. If you can forget you are an American and think only how I love them, they will respond."

I answered back to the sunset, "God, I don't know whether you spoke to me through my lips, but if you did, it was the truth. I hate myself. My plans have all gone to pieces. Drive me out of myself and come and take possession of me and think thy thoughts in my mind."

In that terrible, wonderful hour on Signal Hill I became color-blind...My lips spoke again to me:

"If you want the Moros to be fair to your religion, be fair to theirs. Study their Koran with them."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Frank C. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, Westwood, New Jersey, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1954, p. 23. Cf. Frank C. Laubach, You Are My Friends, New York, Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1942, p. 16.
2. Laubach, The Silent Billion Speak, pp. 20-21.

#### 4. Resultant Experiences

When a man says, "I write with deep conviction...because I have believed in Jesus both ways"<sup>1</sup> it is reasonable to assume that the results of such an experience will have far-reaching effects. Without a doubt, Laubach's Signal Hill experience has been a determining factor in at least two areas of his life: in his missionary service and in his mysticism.

##### a. His Missionary Service

Laubach went directly from his meeting with God on the hilltop to some of the Mohammedan priests in the village, telling them that he wanted to study their Koran. Naturally they were delighted, and the very next day began work with their new pupil.<sup>2</sup>

It was not long, however, until Laubach realized that he needed a better knowledge of the Moro language. In the process of studying the Maranaw language, which had never been committed to writing, he devised a phonetic alphabet for it and so, almost unconsciously, began the literacy work for which he is now world famous.<sup>3</sup>

In 1930 he founded the Maranaw Folk Schools and, "as a part of his mission of interpreting Christianity among the half million Moslems under the American flag, began to reduce their language to a simple form of writing and to teach adults to read."<sup>4</sup> He himself describes it this way:

...everybody we taught became a friend. When we first went to Lanao we did not feel it safe to venture out of the village without soldiers. But within a year the whole province became friendly. The Moros...began to come to our religious services. When young Moros joined our church there was no open opposition even from priests. Where direct preaching had failed for 15 years to win friends, our literacy campaign paved the way for the Christian message.

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1. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, loc. cit.
2. Laubach, The Silent Billion Speak, p. 21.
3. Ibid., pp. 22-23. Chapter two of this book gives a fascinating account of the start of the literacy work.
4. Frank C. Laubach, Teaching the World to Read, New York, Friendship Press, 1947, p. ii.
5. Charles Tudor Leber, Editor, World Faith in Action, New York, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1951, p. 291.



It is no wonder that Frank Laubach felt so sure that he had experienced God's guidance during that hour on Signal Hill<sup>1</sup> for, as a result of that hour, there came an increasing Moslem attendance at the Christian services and decreasing anti-Christian sentiment until the Moros were even calling the new church building in Lanao their "Christian Mosque".<sup>2</sup> Nor is it any wonder that having acted in obedience to it, Laubach has become increasingly sure of the reality of such guidance. Therefore he emphasizes the privilege every man has to cooperate with God in attaining His purpose for the world<sup>3</sup> through listening to God and hastening to obey Him.<sup>4</sup>

b. His Mysticism

If there is any one distinctive feature of Laubach's mysticism it is this continual listening to God and conversing with Him which is obviously a direct outgrowth of the Signal Hill experience.

The most important discovery a human being ever makes is that God can speak to him. When one makes this discovery it reorganizes his entire life. If he can hear God he can tap the source of all truth and all wisdom...All of us need to<sup>5</sup> develop the spiritual ear that will enable us to hear God's voice.

At the same time Laubach is careful to point out that when God speaks it is not always in words:

...His vocabulary is quite large. He uses sights, sounds, smells, tastes, thoughts, beauty, sorrow, friends, indeed, every incident in life to speak to those who are able to understand his language.<sup>6</sup>

Anything which calls us from wrongdoing, which fires us with his purpose, enkindles loves, or whispers peace into the troubled heart, is the voice of Christ--anything with a message for the soul.<sup>7</sup>

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1. Medary, op. cit., pp. 54-55.
2. Erdman, op. cit., p. 24.
3. Ibid., p. 123.
4. Erdman, op. cit., p. 22.
5. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, p. 142.
6. Ibid.
7. Laubach, You Are My Friends, p. 44.

Sometimes the message from God comes as he experienced it on Signal Hill-in a two way conversation, wherein he says aloud what he believes the Master would reply if He were to speak audibly.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes he has allowed the Lord to speak through the use of his fingers on the keyboard of the typewriter.<sup>2</sup> But he hastens to point out that God also speaks in silence. "Sometimes you want to talk to your son, and sometimes you want to hold him tight in silence. God is that way with us, he wants to hold still with us in silence."<sup>3</sup> This silent communion is the result of intimate fellowship with Jesus and makes it possible to know "the joy of his constant companionship and help, whether we are surrounded by other people or are quite alone."<sup>4</sup>

Such fellowship did not come to Frank Laubach without effort on his part. Early in 1930 he wrote his father: "Can we do His will all the time? Can we think His thoughts all the time?... I choose to make the rest of my life an experiment in answering this question."<sup>5</sup> A few months later he was able to write:

Oh, this thing of keeping in constant touch with God, of making Him the object of my thought and the companion of my conversations, is the most amazing thing I ever ran across. It is working. I cannot do it even half of a day--not yet, but I believe I shall be doing it some day for the entire day. It is a matter of acquiring a new habit of thought. Now I like God's presence so much that when for a half hour or so He slips out of my mind--as He does many times a day--I feel as though I had deserted Him, and as though I had lost something very precious in my life.

And fifteen years later he wrote:

If we have had a lifetime habit of thinking with Christ left out we shall find the old habit stubborn. It is as difficult to learn the new way to think as it is to learn to typewrite or to play the piano or to learn a new language...We must not underestimate the time required to become proficient...It can't be

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1. Ibid., p. 45.
2. Laubach, Letters By A Modern Mystic, p. 29.
3. Ibid., p. 47.
4. Laubach, You Are My Friends, p. 47.
5. Laubach, Letters By A Modern Mystic, p. 18.
6. Ibid., p. 23.

done well in a day. It can't be learned perfectly in a year. But it can become nearly perfect in ten years. Meanwhile, the progress from day to day is so thrilling, and the satisfactions so wonderful, that every day is a joy.<sup>1</sup>

As was intimated in the above, Laubach considers such fellowship the result of diligent effort.

This constant communion is like any other habit, it must be learned. And being the most important and highest of all habits, it may take the longest to learn but as months and years pass it does get easier, one feels that God is closer and finally that God is so close that He no longer is exterior to but indwelling one and this is the Way God wants it to be.<sup>2</sup>

It is, of course, this inner experience of God that makes possible the silent, continual communion Laubach has found. But having struggled to know it, he freely passes on to his readers suggestions as to how they too may experience it. Constantly he reiterates that thinking is "a process of talking to your inner self. Instead of talking to yourself, talk to the Invisible Christ."<sup>3</sup> That he may be constantly reminded to talk to the Lord, Laubach has found it helpful to keep pictures of Christ with him wherever he goes,<sup>4</sup> to keep an empty chair near him and imagine that the 'unseen Master' is sitting in it,<sup>5</sup> to read the newspaper to the Lord,<sup>6</sup> to "always walk on the right side of the sidewalk so that Jesus can walk unseen on our left side...(and) talk to Him about the people who are passing."<sup>7</sup>

We have a right to use any aid that proves useful. One such aid is to think of Christ as in a definite location. To be sure, He is a spirit, everywhere at once--and therefore anywhere we realize Him to be...many of us do see Him in our dreams, Others, like St. Paul, like to feel Him within the breast; many, like St.

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1. Frank C. Laubach, *Prayer: The Mightiest Force in the World*, New York, Fleming H. Revell, 1946, pp. 77-78. Cf. Medary, op. cit., pp. 124-125.
2. Laubach, *Channels of Spiritual Power*, pp. 96-97.
3. Laubach, *Prayer*, p. 76. Cf. Laubach, *Letters By A Modern Mystic*, p. 17.
4. Frank C. Laubach, *The Game With Minutes*, St. Paul, Minnesota, The Macalester Park Publishing Company, n.d., p. 11. Cf. *Friends*, p. 47. Cf. Laubach, *Prayer*, p. 75.
5. Laubach, *The Game With Minutes*, p. 11.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Laubach, *You Are My Friends*, p. 48.

Patrick, feel Him around us, above, below, before, behind, as though we walked in His kindly halo.<sup>1</sup>

Laubach finds that it is the reality of the living Christ that makes such fellowship possible. In speaking of the resurrection appearances of Jesus as recorded in the Bible he says:

All these appearances as well as disappearances of the risen Christ, throw great light upon His nature. They reveal that He is likely to be present, at any moment and in any place and under any circumstances, even though incognito...We never know where we are<sup>2</sup> going to meet Him. What we do know is that He is always near.

His own experience he relates as follows:

November 1st, 1941, I was in Cleveland, Ohio, reclining on a couch at about ten o'clock in the forenoon, selecting my favorite pictures of Jesus for this book. Suddenly I felt and saw Him, not with my physical senses, but with the eyes of the soul. He came toward the couch and laid His hand on my shoulder. In a few moments He vanished, and I laughed aloud in sheer ecstasy. I was sure now that He had appeared to others for He was there with me! Suddenly I understood the prophets, Paul, Joan of Arc, Julia Yapsutco, Sadhu Sundar Singh. For a fleeting moment my blindness was taken away. I think He did it so that I could<sup>3</sup> tell the world with utter conviction: "He is risen! He is here!"<sup>3</sup>

This Cleveland experience appears to have been unique in Laubach's life, but this does not imply that his other, less unusual experiences were of little value to him. Rather he says:

The rewards (of constant communion) are beyond description. In the first place, perpetual prayer produces an immense change in the way we think. We learn to ask God to think His thoughts in us. This attempt to share His thoughts will mean that we will also share His work. Instead of telling<sup>4</sup> God what we want from Him, we ask Him what He wants us to do.

That Laubach found increased joy and skill in work thus directed by God, he asserts repeatedly.

The sense of being led by an unseen hand which takes mine while another hand reaches ahead and prepares the way, grows upon me daily. I do not need to strain at all to find opportunity. It piles in upon me as the waves roll over the beach and yet there is time to do something about each opportunity.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Laubach, *The Game With Minutes*, pp. 9-10.
2. Laubach, *You Are My Friends*, p. 25.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 26. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
4. Laubach, *Channels of Spiritual Power*, p. 97.
5. Laubach, *Letters By A Modern Mystic*, p. 13. Cf. p. 12, Cf. Laubach, *The Silent Billion Speak*, pp. 40, 147.

However, even this increased effectiveness in his work did not please him as much as his increased knowledge of God which was also a result of this continual communion.<sup>1</sup> As one makes new discoveries about his friends by being with them, so one discovers the "individuality" of God if one entertains Him continuously.<sup>2</sup>

Knowing God better and better is an achievement of friendship ... There are, therefore, three questions which we may ask: "Do you believe in God?" That is not getting very far. "The devils believe and tremble." Second, "Are you acquainted with God?" We are acquainted with people with whom we have had some business dealings. Third, "Is God your friend?" or putting this another way, "Do you love God?"

It is this third stage that is really vital. How is it to be achieved? Precisely as any friendship is achieved. By doing things together. The depth and intensity of the friendship will depend upon the variety and extent of the things we do and enjoy together.<sup>3</sup>

But above and beyond this, Laubach has found this communion so satisfying that it is worth the price Christ set for such friendship with Himself:

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command." Nothing could be clearer or more final. Surrender, absolute, eager and continuous, is His price.<sup>4</sup>

In one place he asserts that the difference between living and existing is the difference between life lived in intimate fellowship with Jesus and life lived without Him.<sup>5</sup> Laubach recognizes that mysticism inevitably seems to call forth criticism from others, but he maintains that one could hardly be a believer in Jesus Christ without also believing in mysticism.<sup>6</sup>

If our religious premises are correct at all then this oneness with God is the most normal condition one can have. It is what made Christ, Christ. It is what St. Augustine meant when he said, 'Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our souls are restless until they find their rest in Thee.'<sup>7</sup>

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1. Laubach, You Are My Friends, p. 154.
2. Laubach, Letters By A Modern Mystic, p. 24.
3. Ibid., p. 46.
4. Laubach, You Are My Friends, p. 56.
5. Ibid., p. 152.
6. Laubach, Letters By A Modern Mystic, p. 30.
7. Ibid., p. 28.

### C. Factors Affecting His Life of Service

#### 1. Geographical Areas of His Service

Laubach's experience on Signal Hill was undoubtedly the turning point of his whole life. Primarily, of course, it was a religious experience, but this religious experience has provided both the motive and the power for his Christian service.

Almost certainly the Signal Hill experience was affected both directly and indirectly by his situation as a missionary among the Mohammedan tribespeople of the Philippine Islands. As has been suggested earlier<sup>1</sup> it was his sense of failure in working among them that made him open to the working of God in his own heart.<sup>2</sup>

In a letter to his father, written during the early days of his work in Lanao, he mentions another way in which the Moro community influenced the course of his thinking.

Living in the atmosphere of Islam is proving...a tremendous spiritual stimulus...Islam stresses the will of God. It is supreme...Submission is the first and last duty of man.

That is exactly what I have been needing in my Christian life. Although I have been a minister and a missionary for fifteen years, I have not lived the entire day of every day in minute by minute effort to follow the will of God...But this year I have started out trying to live all my waking moments in conscious listening to the inner voice, asking without ceasing, "What, Father do you desire said? What, Father, do you desire done this minute?"<sup>3</sup>

Through listening and obeying, Laubach has been led to ever larger fields of endeavor and these too have had their effect on his service. His early books were concerned with the people of the Philippines,<sup>4</sup> his more recent books are concerned with world needs; his first twenty years as a missionary were spent in one country, his last twenty years have been spent working for varying periods of time in more than seventy-five different countries;<sup>5</sup>

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1. Ante, p. 6.
2. Laubach, *The Silent Billion Speak*, p. 20.
3. Laubach, *Letters By A Modern Mystic*, pp. 9-10.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.
5. Medary, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

his early literacy concern was merely for the people of Lanao, his current concern is for all illiterates wherever they are.

As a result of this broadened scope of concern Laubach has been since the mid-thirties consultant and special representative of the World Literacy and Christian Literature Committee of the Division of Foreign Missions of the National Council of Churches. In 1946 he was appointed to assist the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) prepare recommendations for a world plan of fundamental education.<sup>1</sup>

Yet as Rice points out:

Though the dissemination of literacy has become Dr. Laubach's primary occupation, he does not regard it as his true lifework. As far as he is concerned, evangelism is his vocation...<sup>2</sup>

Or as Laubach himself states:

One feels such a responsibility to God and to the world that one trembles. It is every Christian's responsibility...to open the door which God is swinging open for us to evangelize the whole non-Christian world. When the city of Ephesus welcomed Paul, he wrote: "A wide door for effectual work has been opened for me, and there are many adversaries." One city! One wide door! I speak now of a door as big as half the world, which has just swung open for us; and there are indeed many adversaries.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Basic Concepts Affecting His Service

In all probability missionary concern of any kind, let alone that of a world-wide scope, would never have been Laubach's apart from certain concepts which are basic in his thinking and have thus formed the framework for his actions.

### a. The Persons of the Trinity

The theology of Frank Laubach is an intensely personal one, entirely non-deistic in its concepts.

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1. Leber, op. cit., p. 329.
2. Rice, op. cit., p. 40.
3. Leber, op. cit., p. 290. Cf. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, p. 51.

...the vast majority of us will give our affection to a person only, an ideal person whom we can love with all our hearts, and to whom we can surrender...Only Christ is high enough, perfect enough, divine enough to save us and to save our world...Most of us find that codes of ethics, or beautiful mottoes, or firm resolves have little more power to hold us than though we clung to a cloud. In this respect St. Paul was one of us. He tried to obey the Jewish law, but it did not have enough holding power to keep him from falling...But when Paul surrendered his heart to Jesus Christ he found what has been called the "expulsive power of a great affection."<sup>1</sup>

Laubach has found that his knowledge of Jesus Christ has vitally changed his view of God, the Father.

Someone may ask, "Where can I find God?" Our answer is the answer Jesus gave:... "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." I used to deny this. "Surely," I thought, "multitudes of non-Christians know God." Yes, they know God but not "the Father of Jesus Christ," not this Father with the intense fire of love coursing<sup>2</sup> hotter than the sun. This Father is found only through Jesus.

The person of Christ not only transforms us and our conception of other human beings, but it transforms our idea of God. Through Jesus we see a very intimate and understandable and approachable and magnetic God. If God is as charming as Jesus, then we can "love Him with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our might." We can love Him with everything we are and have, because we find Jesus so irresistibly loving.<sup>3</sup>

Of Christ, Laubach has further written that He is "at once the most tender and the most exacting, the most gentle and the most relentless being who ever walked the earth,"<sup>4</sup> and that it is and has been His habit from eternity to create and transform, to make imperfection perfect.<sup>5</sup>

God is, and always was, a Spirit, "the Holy Spirit." As a Spirit He came upon Mary and she conceived. When Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan He saw the Holy Spirit come upon Him as a dove. Christ was God and man, His soul divine, His

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1. Laubach, You Are My Friends, p. 2. Cf. pp. 10, 37.
2. Ibid., p. 37.
3. Ibid., p. 36.
4. Ibid., p. 59.
5. Ibid., p. 28.



body human...Then on the day of Pentecost...Christ returned as pure Spirit so that he might live in them and in us, and in "as many as would receive Him." So Paul could say: "Christ liveth in me." Now, as Holy Spirit, He occupied their bodies, and occupies our bodies just as He had occupied His own body under the name "Jesus."<sup>1</sup>

He gave up the bliss of heaven in order to show us how to give up the pleasures of earth. He suffered on the cross in order to show us how to suffer on our crosses.<sup>2</sup> Laubach's main emphasis concerning Christ, however, is that He lived seeking constantly only to do the Father's will.<sup>3</sup>

Certain statements that Laubach has made concerning the Godhead could indicate thinking that had not been too carefully done. No doubt the heretical nature of such statements as the ones which follow are due primarily to an overstressing of a certain thought, without proper regard for its theological implications.

In regards to the resurrection, he has written:

...humanity wants to believe that God is good, and the crucifixion portrays God forsaking the finest example of loyalty we can find...That cross alone is horrible. The God who would allow the drama to stop there would be a monster of the dead. "My God, why...?"

So we cannot believe in a good God unless we have Easter. It is a difficult story to believe...But it is only the difficulty of believing the unprecedented. On the other hand to doubt is far more difficult. I must either rule out the whole story of the life of Jesus or else rule out any intelligence or heart from the universe. And if I do that my troubles are far more than intellectual--they become moral.

b. Sin

Concerning sin Laubach has written very little, tending as he does to stress the more positive aspects of the Christian faith. Nevertheless there is no glossing over of man's innate sinfulness, despite the fact that this is not stressed in his writings.

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1. Laubach, You Are My Friends, p. 167.
2. Ibid., p. 63.
3. Ibid., pp. 59-60. Cf. Laubach, Prayer, pp. 78-79.
4. Laubach, Letters By A Modern Mystic, pp. 41-42.

The incredible meanness of human nature is more apparent if one travels much in crowded trains or busses, or goes into crowded restaurants...Selfishness has a hundred faces, and it is the father of all sins. It is the deepest rooted sin, and the hardest for one to admit, and the hardest for him to eradicate. Removing it is a major operation.<sup>1</sup>

Or again:

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss the blockages of saints, but at the end of it<sup>2</sup> we find that there are no saints. All of us alike are sinners.

c. Salvation

Laubach's concept of salvation at first glance appears somewhat confused. In one place he sounds as if he felt salvation was the work of God.

All our efforts to help people without giving them Christ are like putting salve on sores only to find more sores tomorrow. The disease must be taken out of the blood, or it is not really cured.<sup>3</sup>

Yet in another place he writes as if salvation were dependent on man's efforts:

This world has a deep soul-disease, and nothing short of a drastic change in<sup>4</sup> our human nature will save us...We must rise to a new level...

But the thing he stresses is that it is basically man's decision for or against God that brings him salvation: "...you are a son of God if you obey the Father perfectly, as Jesus did."<sup>5</sup>

Or again:

The whole Bible plays around the word 'if,' and the doubtful element is what men will at last do...God's will is clear--man's will hangs in the balance, and man's decision in this generation decides this generation's fate...God's laws are immutable. Obey and live, or disobey and be ground to powder.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, p. 63.
2. Ibid., p. 81.
3. Laubach, You Are My Friends, p. 83.
4. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, p. 14.
5. Laubach, Prayer, p. 81.
6. Ibid., p. 90.

So that even when he states that salvation stems from God alone he also includes the necessity for man doing his part, especially in the realm of obedience and submission.

We are still in the heat of a crucial battle between the way of Jesus and the way of greed...Nobody but God can cleanse our blood stream, and even God can remove it only if He has full gangway...if we refuse to yield to God, His only recourse is to sweep us off the earth and start over.

So this is not a time for confidence, nor is it a time for despair; it is the time to turn to God. It is the time for humility, penitence, desperate resolve, rectitude, obedience to the will of God--all-out sincerity!

In several places, Laubach has stressed that being 'born again' is essentially the death of the old self with Christ becoming central instead. "His demands are so terrific, so mind-stretching, that to become a real Christian means a funeral."<sup>2</sup> But this death is to be but the beginning of a steady, constant inflow of Christ's spirit "until at last the old self has all been washed out and the loveliness of Christ has taken the place of the man we used to be" in just the same way that mineral salts replace wood fiber in the making of petrified wood.<sup>3</sup> Such a change in the heart of a person is the result of unconditional surrender to God.<sup>4</sup>

#### d. Life after Death

Laubach's concept of the eternality of the human soul has profoundly affected his service toward the soul on this earth, for as he writes: "...the soul of man is eternal. We shall meet him again. We will be reverent, therefore, if we meet him now."<sup>5</sup> But the effect on his attitude toward the future life is not only in connection with the persons served but also in terms of the work itself:

I suppose that this eternal life will not be the same for all

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1. Laubach, Prayer, p. 13.
2. Frank C. Laubach, The Christianity the World Needs, Missionary Review of the World, Vol. XIX, March 1936, p. 122.
3. Laubach, You Are My Friends, pp. 68-69.
4. Ibid., p. 51.
5. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, p. 26.

of us. I don't believe that all this grooming and enduring hardships, this being buffeted about, is getting me ready to wear a white robe and to play a harp. If God intended us to play a harp through eternity I would rather spend my life here taking music lessons. Perhaps God is preparing music lovers for that. We can infer what He is going to do with us in eternity from the training that we get here. I think He plans for many of us to continue in the conquests of seeming difficulties, in cosmic achievements of creation.<sup>1</sup>

With this view of the present world as a training ground for eternity, Laubach also holds that "...Jesus is what we are to become."<sup>2</sup>

Yet eternity is not as far off as that might seem to imply, for to Laubach it is just as close as the presence of Christ. Death therefore has lost its sting for since departed loved ones are with Christ and since He is always present, so are they.<sup>3</sup>

e. Use of Scripture

It is apparent that Laubach finds much inspiration and help in the Scriptures. He says in one place that "the Gospel of John is to me the most precious book in the world" because it shows the deep family ties in the household of God,<sup>4</sup> and he finds in the Bible all the spiritual knowledge which is necessary for our world.<sup>5</sup> He seems to accept the Scriptures in their entirety now, although he states:

When I was in the "know-it-all" stage common to heedless youth I discredited the first chapter of Genesis as a figment of the imagination. But science does not know as much now as it did at the beginning of the twentieth century. Today both the astronomer and the physicist have come back to the first chapter of Genesis, and they admit that it is the best description of creation that has ever been written.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, pp. 30-31.
2. Ibid., p. 31. Cf. Laubach, Letters of A Modern Mystic, pp. 36-37; Laubach, Channels for Spiritual Power, pp. 28-29.
3. Laubach, The Game With Minutes, p 18.
4. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, p. 45.
5. Ibid., p. 123.
6. Ibid., p. 26-27.

He is careful to point out that the only way a true picture of Christ is obtained is to read the Gospel accounts repeatedly.<sup>1</sup> He suggests that after the accounts have been read and re-read many times, that for added freshness and interest it may be well to use "fresh translations",<sup>2</sup> to read it as an autobiography changing the word 'Jesus' to 'I'; or to read it realizing the presence of Christ and changing 'Jesus' and 'He' to 'you' and so speak to Him.<sup>3</sup> He also suggests the value of scheduling an hour a day during which a circle of two or more people read the Gospels together.<sup>4</sup>

f. Place of prayer.

One of the things Laubach most readily admits is the difficulty of making time for daily devotions. He says this is perhaps our greatest cross, that we must take time from many perfectly good activities in order to have sufficient time with Christ.<sup>5</sup> Because he feels the supreme worth of such a period, Laubach suggests that it be given priority in the day's schedule and placed at a time when "neither distractions nor interruptions will break the spell of our fellowship with Him."<sup>6</sup> In order to achieve this it may be necessary to tell friends that one has an important engagement at that hour, or to use the late hours of the night or the early hours of the morning while the rest of the household are in bed.<sup>7</sup>

There are men and women who often forego sleep in order to spend their hours at night in a delightful communion with Jesus. The two or three such hours are so lovely that they are anticipated all day.

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1. Laubach, Prayer, p. 74. Cf. Laubach, You Are My Friends, p. 5.
2. Laubach, Prayer, p. 74.
3. Laubach, You Are My Friends, p. 5.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 65. Cf. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, p. 93.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p. 47.

Undoubtedly he is right in concluding that "one measure of our love for Christ is the length of time we find it delightful to be alone with Him."<sup>1</sup>

Laubach is able to produce suggestions for how to use the hours with Christ: private and group prayer, writing out messages which God gives, reading devotional books, singing or playing prayer hymns. But he is quick to point out that no method is satisfactory unless it produces close contact with God, and any method is suitable if it achieves such fellowship.<sup>2</sup>

Someone once asked Frank Laubach if he thought it was necessary to pray. His answer was:

No, prayer is not necessary; it is a privilege. Beauty is not necessary if you prefer ugliness...Refusal to pray is a form of insanity, and it means that the spirit is committing suicide.<sup>3</sup>

It seems obvious from his writings that he himself has found prayer indispensable for service<sup>4</sup> and exceedingly practical. He recommends it as preparation for interviews,<sup>5</sup> for composing letters,<sup>6</sup> for improving sleepless hours,<sup>7</sup> for obtaining guidance,<sup>8</sup> for making members of any group alive to the working of the Spirit,<sup>9</sup> for setting a church on fire spiritually,<sup>10</sup> for giving a speaker real inspiration from God,<sup>11</sup> and as the only effectual instrument in

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1. Ibid., p. 66.
2. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, pp. 94-95. Cf. Laubach, Prayer, p. 66.
3. Medary, op. cit., p. 124.
4. Laubach, Prayer, p. 64.
5. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, p. 127.
6. Ibid.
7. Laubach, Prayer, p. 64.
8. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, pp. 75-76. Cf. experiences recorded in Laubach, The Silent Billion Speak, p. 124, 142-143, 147.
9. Laubach, The Game With Minutes, p. 11.
10. Laubach, Prayer, pp. 31-32, 37-38. Cf. Laubach, You Are My Friends, pp. 98-99; Frank C. Laubach, Working With The Holy Spirit, International Journal of Religious Education, Vol. XXI, No. 4, December 1944, p. 3.
11. Laubach, Working With The Holy Spirit, p. 3. Cf. Laubach, Prayer, p. 34.

bringing about world peace.<sup>1</sup> In this latter connection he strongly encourages individual intercession for the world leaders who must make the big decisions, such intercession being a most vital contribution to world peace since "it is infinitely better for world leaders to listen to God than for them to listen to us."<sup>2</sup>

As is intimated in the above, Laubach finds that he does get answers to his prayers and he points out:

Jesus said, "He that is willing to do His will shall know." The first condition of knowing is being willing to hear the truth. Many of us are afraid of what God will answer, and so we dismiss that still, small Voice because we do not want what we fear we will hear.<sup>3</sup>

Again he reminds his readers that answers take time:

I want to testify that in my life at least I can never accuse God of not answering my prayer, but it took time! If you have a wet shirt, and put it out in the sun to be dried and it isn't dried in two minutes, you know better than to be angry because it is not dry. It takes more time than that. And so does prayer.<sup>4</sup>

Laubach is continually encouraging intercessory prayer for two reasons. One of these is that he feels that too much praying is being done selfishly--he figures that nine-tenths of the pulpit prayers are for "us in this church"<sup>5</sup> and that individuals have the same tendency.<sup>6</sup> Yet "the highest form of communion is not asking God for things for ourselves, but letting Him flow down through us, out over the world--in endless benediction."<sup>7</sup> Secondly, such prayers serve to release God's unlimited power so that intercession has amazing repercussions.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore he encourages group intercession because this releases proportionately more power.<sup>9</sup>

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1. Laubach, Prayer, pp. 11, 14, 69, 92, 15.
2. Ibid., p. 16.
3. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, p. 39.
4. Ibid., p. 38.
5. Ibid., p. 104.
6. Laubach, Prayer, pp. 20-21.
7. Ibid., p. 24.
8. Ibid., p. 11. Cf. Laubach, Working With The Holy Spirit, p. 3.
9. Laubach, Working With The Holy Spirit, p. 3. Cf. Laubach, Prayer, pp. 35-36.

Perhaps the best publicized of Laubach's suggestions for prayer is his advocating of 'flash' prayers, prayers offered on the spot for the one who is seen, or thought of, or whose name is mentioned. These prayers are very brief, often no more than the mention of the person's name and that of Jesus in the same breath.<sup>1</sup> Such praying can be done anytime and in any place, and it seems to have resulted from his desire not just to have set times for prayer but to "practice the presence of God" continually.<sup>2</sup> These flash prayers have led him to think of prayer as a kind of instantaneous telegraphy,<sup>3</sup> a concept which is further enhanced by his believing in mental telepathy.<sup>4</sup> Since he feels minds are open only to positive thoughts, he urges "do not pray against what (people) are doing; pray for what they ought to be doing."<sup>5</sup>

g. Reasons for Christian Service

For Frank Laubach there are many excellent reasons for Christian service not the least of which is that if Christ is to be able to reach men He must do it through the hands, voices, eyes and smiles of men who have given their bodies to Him.<sup>6</sup> He does not have a limited concept of service but rather says: "...we help God, first, by understanding Jesus Christ, and we help Him, second, by praying and listening. The third way in which we help God is by helping others, asking nothing in return."<sup>7</sup>

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1. Laubach, Prayer, p. 64.
2. Ibid, pp. 19-20. Cf. Laubach, Letters By A Modern Mystic, p. 23.
3. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, p. 118. Cf. Laubach, Prayer, pp. 44-45.
4. Laubach, Prayer, p. 41. Cf. Laubach, Letters By A Modern Mystic, p. 12; Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, p. 115.
5. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, p. 119.
6. Laubach, You Are My Friends, p. 83.
7. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, p. 170. In regard to the idea of prayer as service cf. Laubach, Prayer, pp. 68-69.



His writings reveal that Laubach is convinced that there can be no continuing fullness of Christian experience unless there is a continuous giving forth to others of the blessings received from God.<sup>1</sup> This, of course, involves allowing God to choose those among whom one will minister, and then loving them with His love.<sup>2</sup>

The acid test of Christlikeness is what we do when we encounter unattractive or repulsive people. The natural man allows himself to be moved by winsome personalities; he is neutral or even antagonistic toward those who are without charm or appeal. For example, tattered clothes and wretched homes, illiteracy or the habitual use of incorrect English, lack of manners, disagreeable voice, overtalkativeness, shyness, sadness, conceit, grumbling, silly attempts at humor, ugly faces, blindness in one or in both eyes, skin diseases, disfiguring scars on the face, selfishness, an unsavory reputation, the use of profane or disgusting language, the color of a different race, the profession of a different religion...As the spirit of Jesus permeates us, we shall be enabled to conquer one antipathy after another until at last nothing can separate us from anybody.<sup>3</sup>

The standard for loving service like this is revealed by the service of Jesus Christ himself. Laubach points out that the Lord spent every minute of the day helping somebody and that He constantly was asking God whom He might help next.<sup>4</sup> When one serves in that same spirit men are not only attracted to Christ<sup>5</sup> but the doer knows the blessing of intimate fellowship with Christ.<sup>6</sup> In fact Laubach states that he feels that rendering such service is the best way to find God.<sup>7</sup>

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1. Laubach, Prayer, p. 25. Cf. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, pp. 67, 71-72, 133.
2. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, pp. 17, 21.
3. Laubach, You Are My Friends, p. 78; p. 32. Cf. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, p. 73.
4. Laubach, You Are My Friends, p. 8, Cf. pp. 29, 75, Cf. Laubach, Letters By A Modern Mystic, p. 41 and Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, pp. 26, 77, 159.
5. Frank C. Laubach, Africa Newsletter No. 8, Vol. IV, New York Committee on World Literacy and Christian Literature, p. 3. Cf. Frank C. Laubach, Help A Billion Blind to See!, The Christian Century, Vol. LVIII, No. 47, Nov. 19, 1941, p. 1436. Cf. Laubach The Silent Billion Speak, pp. 5-6.
6. Laubach, You Are My Friends, p. 91.
7. Laubach, Letters By A Modern Mystic, p. 46.

Moreover such service fulfills God's plan for the life of the servant as well as the served one.

All of us came into the world to do some particular thing. We shall do that thing if we allow him to tell us what it is. If we miss his plan, our life will be a failure in his eyes, but we shall not miss it if we listen constantly, for he knows how to reveal it.<sup>1</sup>

One reason it is so difficult to say yes is that God's voice upsets our own previous intentions. You and I struggle between two things, both of which are right--the right which we had planned to do and the right which it seems to us God is telling us to do now. We plan a morning in which to do very important work, and a stranger interrupts us. He needs help; and need is the voice of God. But you and I are tempted to get rid of him as quickly as possible, so that we can carry out our plans.<sup>2</sup>

Feeling thus, Laubach concludes: "When duty and desire are synchronized, that is freedom, and any other kind (of freedom) is nonsense."<sup>3</sup> Or again: "Working with God, all things are possible. Working without God, nothing will come out right."<sup>4</sup>

It is clear from his writings, that to Frank Laubach service is the climax of his fellowship with Christ.<sup>5</sup> Having heard the heart cries of the illiterates to God,<sup>6</sup> and having discovered in Christ the answer to all of man's needs,<sup>7</sup> he is impelled to bring that answer to them. And in doing so he finds himself obedient to the command of Christ<sup>8</sup> and thus in even closer fellowship with him.<sup>9</sup>

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1. Laubach, You Are My Friends, p. 149; cf. pp. 80, 150.
2. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, p. 75. Cf. Laubach, The Christianity the World Needs, p. 125.
3. Laubach, You Are My Friends, p. 138.
4. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, p. 167.
5. Laubach, Letters By A Modern Mystic, p. 17.
6. Medary, op. cit., p. 94.
7. Laubach, Letters By A Modern Mystic, p. 24.
8. Laubach, Wake Up or Blow Up, p. 157. Cf. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, p. 51.
9. Ante, p. 24.

Because the need for such service is so great, he is willing to work with those who do not know Jesus Christ in the same way he does, even though they do not have the compassion that only Christ can give.<sup>1</sup> But in doing so, Laubach is ever aware that while the Church should lead in providing technological service for the entire world,<sup>2</sup>

technicians will not bless the world unless they are strong in Christian love and ideals. The world needs Christ more than it needs skills. It will not accept Christ unless we offer it help with these other things...The really greatest thing we can export to the world is our best Christ-filled men and women, with the technical skills to help materially and spiritually...God is calling us. It is we who must lead<sup>3</sup> the world. Not rule it--serve it! And so lead it to Christ.

#### h. Purpose of Suffering

In Laubach's mind there is not the slightest bit of doubt but that suffering serves several valuable purposes. One of these is connected with his view that this life serves as a testing ground for eternity:

This was why Paul could rejoice in the persecutions through which he went: 1) because they were a part of his education for eternity and 2) because Christ had gone through it ahead of him and understood it all.<sup>4</sup>

Or again:

Life is God's grindstone and His sandpaper; it smooths the rough diamonds of our souls. For we are diamonds in the rough. We complain when the polishing hurts. We want God to let us alone, but He loves us too much for that. He keeps on shaping and polishing us for some very high purpose.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, p. 22.
2. Laubach, Wake Up or Blow Up, pp. 143-144.
3. Medary, op. cit., p. 155.
4. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, p. 29.
5. Ibid., p. 67.

As intimated above a second value in suffering is that it results in intimate fellowship with the Christ who is present and who gives joy in the midst of tribulation.

Jesus does not answer why we have evil and why we suffer. At the most excruciating moment on the cross he, too, cries, "My God, why...?" But he did for us what was most important; he showed us how to rise above evil, and trouble, and to transform them into character...Tribulation without Christ is hell...Tribulation with Christ turns torture into heaven...with him by our side, the heart is taut with purpose, there is a strange joy in sharing suffering with him; the vision is clear, there is perfect confidence and often turbulent ecstasy. Immense avalanches of joy...come rushing down over the soul under persecution.<sup>1</sup>

But Laubach maintains that even more important than the joy is the love which suffering produces, and that without suffering it is impossible to understand the love of Christ.<sup>2</sup> To him it is a foregone conclusion that:

a close follower of Christ suffers acutely for trivial sins which a hardened sinner would not even realize were wrong. This type of suffering is not misfortune. It is the price we pay for attaining high levels of friendship with Christ.<sup>3</sup>

Yet this is not the misfortune that it might seem.

Jesus never promised to save us from tribulations. Indeed he warned that we should have them just as he had them. "With persecutions," promised Jesus to those who follow him. That sounds like an anticlimax...But this was not what Jesus meant. In his opinion persecutions were not on the debit side but were among the chief assets. The climax of his beatitudes was: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Laubach, You Are My Friends, p. 101.
2. Ibid., pp. 102, 115.
3. Ibid., pp. 102.
4. Ibid., p. 100.

Moreover suffering works as a blessing in that it often serves to bring back a soul to God<sup>1</sup> and also in that frequently it is during the times of greatest tribulation that there is the greatest spiritual growth.<sup>2</sup>

Concerning physical pain and disease, Laubach feels that "any disease of the body may be a physical eruption revealing to all men a secret spiritual disease which others cannot see."<sup>3</sup> "When the disease of the soul goes the body disease goes, just as pain disappears when a wound is healed."<sup>4</sup> He is sure that it is God's desire to cure all illness and that He will do so if there is "full faith and full surrender."<sup>5</sup> Yet at the same time he admits this dilemma:

About disease and pain two classes of earnest Christians hold apparently contradictory views. One class believes that God uses sickness and suffering to make us more Christlike. I know many of this group, and they are saints. They have been made "perfect through suffering." The second class believes that God never desires sickness nor pain...and they, too, are saints... So I am compelled to believe both classes of saints, although they seem to contradict one another.<sup>6</sup>

i. Value of Other Religions

Laubach says that the greatest temptation of a Christian is to be critical of those who do not share his views<sup>7</sup> and that in dealing with those of other religions the need is to do all that is possible to narrow rather than to widen the gap between.<sup>8</sup> Yet Laubach does not want the gap narrowed by a syncretistic act.

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1. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, p. 67. Cf. Laubach, You Are My Friends, pp. 105-106.
2. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, p. 30.
3. Laubach, You Are My Friends, p. 109.
4. Ibid., p. 111.
5. Ibid., p. 124.
6. Laubach, You Are My Friends, p. 105.
7. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, p. 73.
8. Frank C. Laubach, A Christian Approach to the Moros, The Missionary Review of the World, Vol. LXII, January 1939, pp. 33-34.

Edward Barrett advocates a "Crusade of all faiths." He points out that the Golden Rule is to be found in all the six major religions. This is a happy discovery. But all rules and laws, including the Golden Rule, have one defect: they lack vitality. They are not alive...All religions accept Jesus as a man who once lived and gave us the Golden Rule. But a dead Jesus is not enough. The power of Jesus lies in His presence here now as risen Lord.<sup>1</sup>

Laubach soon learned in his dealings with the Moros that they loved Christ, considering Him as their own, and that their hatred was for the Christians,<sup>2</sup> whose actions had not coincided with His teachings. Because of this Laubach dealt with them on the basis of their mutual understandings,<sup>3</sup> the fact that neither Moslems nor Christians were living up to the standards of their faith,<sup>4</sup> and that there were things that Christians could learn from the Mohammedans.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless he affirms that in spite of these facts, "Moslems are in tragic need of a vital contact with the Christ they hold in high esteem, but about whom they know so little."<sup>6</sup>

Laubach maintains that what the world needs is Christianity as Christ had it, and that the mark of this Christianity is to be found in His love which was "so hot and so far-reaching and so self-denying."<sup>7</sup> The difference between Christianity and Buddhism comes out in the following discussion:

Buddhism is such a gentle and kindly religion that it is not as easy here as in Africa to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity over their native religion. Buddhists strive

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1. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, pp. 22-23.
2. Laubach, The Silent Billion Speak, p. 40.
3. Laubach, A Christian Approach to the Moros, p. 33.
4. Ibid., pp. 32-33.
5. This includes frequent prayer periods and a desire to know and submit to the will of God. Laubach, My Experience With the Moslems, p. 488.
6. Ibid.
7. Laubach, The Christianity The World Needs, p. 122.

for spiritual perfection as Christians do. But there is one great difference: A Christlike person is burning with zeal to help other people, as Jesus did every moment of his life. The perfect Buddhist, on the other hand, is concerned with achieving perfection within himself; and he exceeds the requirements of his religion when he makes great effort to help others.<sup>1</sup>

The other difference between Buddhism and Christianity which he stresses is its perspective.

Buddhism asks us to kill all desire. But Jesus does not ask us to desire nothing. He asked us to take the long view and to find our highest self-realization in eternity. "Great is your reward in heaven." Christ does not ask<sub>2</sub> us to be selfless. He asks us to be big and take a long view.

### 3. Dominant Features of His Service

Because of the areas in which he has worked and because of his religious concepts, Frank Laubach's Christian service has some distinct features. These include his openness in sharing his own spiritual trials that others may benefit thereby and his contributions to world literacy.

#### a. His Willingness to Share His Experiences

As Alden H. Clark states in the foreword of one of Laubach's own books:

It is very characteristic of Dr. Laubach that in these letters he gives us only the barest glimpses of himself and his work... What is of supreme importance to him and what he wants in all modesty to share with others is his own inner religious experience.<sup>3</sup>

Because Laubach feels that people should share with one another in order to further spiritual growth for all, he is willing to open his own heart to his family and friends and to his readers. In his writing he combines comments about his own spiritual struggles and victories along with the accounts of his activities.<sup>4</sup> Thus

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1. Medary, op. cit., p. 146.
2. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, p. 26. Cf. Laubach, Letters By A Modern Mystic, p. 37.
3. Laubach, Letters By A Modern Mystic, p. 5.
4. Medary, op. cit., pp. 123-124.

he follows the idea set forth in the Koran: "One hour spent talking about God is better than seventy years spent in prayers alone."<sup>1</sup>

But even as he shares these experiences with others he is much aware of the reluctance on the part of the average American to do so lest he be considered either as a "goody or a hypocrite."<sup>2</sup> Even so he is not discouraged, for he is sure that the only way to prove Christ is to try experiments with Him and that "the only laboratory you have for experiments of the spirit is your own soul."<sup>3</sup> By his own example he endeavors to encourage others to know the thrill of such 'experiments' with Christ.

b. His Literacy Work

That Laubach has found literacy work a vital part of his Christian service is an undisputed fact. His own reasoning reads like this:

I speak from my own experience when I insist that it is not enough to think of literacy as a by-product of missions. Spreading literacy lies at the heart of missions and if you doubt it I can give you five reasons why it is true. First, this enterprise is necessary in order to open the eyes of three-fifths of the human race to read the Bible. Second, it is a necessary means of winning the cooperation and gratitude of all governments in illiterate areas. Third, spreading literacy is at the heart of missions because these illiterates are the poor, the broken-hearted, the bruised, the imprisoned whom Jesus said he came to set free...The fourth reason...is that teaching illiterates is proving to be a wonderful way to bring people to Christ...And the fifth and final point proving the centrality of the literacy problem to missions is to be found in the fact that even if illiterates do become Christians, the church which contains them is in trouble until it has taught them to read.<sup>4</sup>

In connection with this latter point, Laubach points out the post-reformation era showed how necessary reading was in the developments of strong Christians.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Laubach, You Are My Friends, p. 15.
4. Frank C. Laubach, Help A Billion Blind to See!, The Christian Century, Vol. LVIII, November 19, 1941, pp. 1435-1436.
5. Laubach, The Silent Billion Speak, pp. 6-7, 193.



The remarkable rate at which those who have never known how to read now are becoming literate seems to Laubach to be "not only exciting news. It is the most stupendous, the most arresting, and it may be the most ominous fact on this planet. Nothing can stop it now."<sup>1</sup> Because this is so, he feels the church is faced with a tremendous responsibility. The masses want education and their governments want to please them.<sup>2</sup> But knowledge alone will only enable evil men to do more harm, and since it is only God who can change an evil man to a good one it is essential that along with learning to read each person also come to know Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup>

Probably because the governments are so eager to provide literacy education for their people, they have been most receptive to the literacy program of the Christian missionaries. For one thing they have become aware that a successful literacy campaign needs not only correct methods but the Christian spirit which provides impetus for continued efforts.<sup>4</sup> Laubach says:

Not one government has thus far prevented us from teaching illiterates in their homes and telling of Christ while we teach. Governments sometime forbid our teaching religion<sup>5</sup> in schools, but not at home in our "one-by-one" teaching.

This 'each one teach one' method for which Laubach is now famous came as the result of a serious financial shortage during the depression days of the early 1930's.<sup>6</sup> Because they could no longer afford to pay literacy teachers, the idea of having each student teach another person in a never-ending continuum was devised. This makeshift method has developed into a most effective teaching device since the pupil-turned-teacher learns a great deal while teaching his own pupil. Furthermore Laubach points out:

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1. Ibid., pp. 2-3.
2. Leber, op. cit., p. 295.
3. Ibid., pp. 288-289, 300.
4. Laubach, Help A Billion Blind To See!, p. 1435. Cf. Leber, op. cit., p. 200, Laubach, The Silent Billion Speak, p. 75.
5. Leber, op. cit., p. 294.
6. Laubach, The Silent Billion Speak, pp. 48-50.

Our "each one teach one" ideal is the central truth in the social teachings of Christ: love thy neighbor as thyself, and do unto others as you would have others do unto you.<sup>1</sup>

But this is not the only method used in Laubach's literacy campaigns. Primary in his thinking is the necessity for the teacher to exhibit the love of Christ to the pupil. In discussing the program for indigenous churches to use in their own literacy campaigns<sup>2</sup> Laubach states:

We also show each church member how to love and praise his students, and so win their gratitude. We say, "Never an unpleasant or discouraging moment! Never complain, or frown; never say 'no,' never ask a question the student can't answer. Look pleased and overwhelmed with admiration. Love your students and silently pray for him." It sounds like a Dale Carnegie course in salesmanship--and it works!

At the end of the lesson tell him that the Christians are teaching because Jesus wants to help other people. We have prepared a series of short stories about the kindness of Jesus, to be told during each lesson. If the teacher is a sincere Christian, the student will soon learn to love his Christ. It is as easy for a Christlike teacher to make the student love Christ as it is to make him literate.<sup>3</sup>

Another Laubach maxim is never to hold a hungry pupil back.<sup>4</sup> Each pupil is allowed to advance as speedily as he wishes.

As soon as the new literate can pronounce simple words in Christian literacy campaigns he is given the second reader, The Story of Jesus, which increases reading speed while telling the Gospel stories. His next readers are graded Scripture portions, arranged in easy, medium and advanced states. His graduation present and "permanent reader", a few months later, is a copy<sup>5</sup> of the New Testament which he may read in his own language.

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1. Ibid., p. 189.
2. The church provides lesson materials and demonstration lessons . One trained person can supervise a whole congregational project and these projects can be repeated several times a year. Leber, op. cit., pp. 296-298.
3. Laubach, Wake Up or Blow Up, pp. 89-90.
4. Medary, op. cit., p. 165.
5. Leber, op. cit., p. 288.

D. Summary

Frank Laubach's background may be considered as rather typically American. His educational and social service training as a young man served to give him very adequate intellectual preparation for his work as a missionary in the Philippine Islands. His missionary career can be separated into two distinct parts by his experience with God on Signal Hill in 1930, an experience which changed his whole orientation both in regard to his personal relationship with God and in his attitude, and hence his methods, as a missionary. It was noted that in his own relationship with the Lord he has developed a sort of modern day mysticism centering in the overpowering fact of the reality of the presence of the ever-living Christ.

His basic interest in the missions program was work among the Moros of the Philippine Islands, but, because of the literacy program which he first developed in working with them, his vision has broadened until he is now a missionary to all the illiterates of the world.

It has been shown that his Christian service has been motivated by his deep personal love for God as he has been revealed in Jesus. With Christ's words in his mind, and His example as a pattern, Laubach has set about to minister to the needy in the same spirit of love and continual prayer. His writings stress the importance of intense personal devotion to the Lord at any price. While he is willing to work with any persons or organizations, he is adamant in his belief that only Christianity with its concept of the personal God-man relationship has the answer to the needs of this world.

Because he is so convinced of this fact, he has been willing to share with others his own spiritual struggles and understandings and to spend arduous years in combatting illiteracy all around the world so that others may also know and love Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AND SERVICE  
OF SADHU SUNDAR SINGH AND FRANK LAUBACH

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A. Introduction

The preceding chapters have set forth the experiences of Sadhu Sundar Singh and of Frank Laubach in regard to their family backgrounds, their personal religious experiences, the locale of their fields of service and some of the concepts which they have held and which have influenced their Christian service. Each of the previous chapters has also contained a brief section indicating some of the features which have emerged as dominant elements in their service to the Lord and to their fellow men.

It will be the purpose of this chapter to consider, first of all, how these various physical, spiritual, geographical and conceptual factors have affected the Christian experience and service of Singh and Laubach. Each of these factors will be considered separately and the attempt will be made to compare the two men in regard to the effect these factors have on their lives.

The second portion of this chapter will be devoted to a discussion of the resultant differences and similarities of their experience and service. The first area of study here will consider their mysticism; the second will discuss their dominant fields of service. Notice will be taken of their relationships with other organizations and of certain other less outstanding factors.

B. Factors Affecting Their Christian Experience and Service

It is never fair to discuss the work and teachings of any man without first being aware of those factors which have seemingly served to make him what he is. These factors are necessarily of both the tangible, physical realm of life and of the intangible realm of the intellectual and spiritual. In the ensuing discussion both groups of factors will be considered in their effect on these two great Christian leaders.

## 1. Background Factors

One of the most obvious and striking differences between Sadhu Sundar Singh and Frank Laubach is the dissimilarity of their backgrounds. Singh was an Indian, a Sikh, and the youngest son of a wealthy and influential family. Laubach on the other hand was reared in a small town in Pennsylvania and is from a middle-class American family.<sup>1</sup>

Singh's family, especially his mother whose religious devotion was as intense as his own, had a very strong influence on his thinking and upon his Christian experience. In Laubach's case no special mention is made of his parents' influence on him. It is noted that he followed in his mother's footsteps as a teacher, but there does not seem to have been any special encouragement or discouragement from his family in regard to his decision to become a missionary. Singh, on the other hand, faced all types of familial deterrents both in regard to his continued religious search and most especially in regard to his decision to be a Christian.<sup>2</sup>

In the matter of formal education there is again a wide discrepancy between the two men. Singh's early reading skill<sup>3</sup> denotes some type of educational training at a very early age but this was devoted almost entirely to religious subjects. As a youth he spent a year in a mission school and some months in a government school in a desire to improve his rather neglected secular education.<sup>4</sup> After becoming a Christian he was enrolled in a Christian boys' boarding school but stayed only briefly. Later he spent one year at St. John's Divinity College in Lahore, but this experience led him to the conclusion that knowledge and education were not as important as religious devotion,<sup>5</sup> which was very likely a reaction against the importance attached to knowledge in the Hindu religion.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Ante, pp. 1-2 (S), 40, (L).
2. Ante, pp. 4-5 (S), 40-41 (L).
3. Ante, p. 3.
4. Andrews, op. cit., p. 43.
5. Streeter and Appasamy, pp. 15-16.
6. Ante, p. 31.

On the other hand, Laubach spent ten years acquiring university and seminary training after his graduation from normal school, and prior to his service as a Christian missionary.<sup>1</sup>

On another point too, Singh and Laubach differ in that the latter was married during his seminary days, whereas Singh felt he was called to a life of celibacy even though he did not necessarily advocate this for others.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Personal Religious Experiences

Sundar Singh was brought up to be deeply religious. His early adolescence was spent in an intense search for God and his conversion experience occurred, seemingly instantaneously when he was sixteen years old. Undoubtedly his assumption of the Sadhu role was the result of his own early admiration for 'holy men' and his compelling desire to be one himself.<sup>3</sup>

In rather marked contrast to this was Frank Laubach's experience and preparation. He did not decide to become a missionary until after he was teaching school and there seems not to have been any particular religious significance to that decision. He seems rather to have been impelled by a desire to work in the hardest places he could, and missionary service among the Moros fit that plan. It was not until after fifteen years of missionary service and a particularly difficult period among these Moslem peoples that he discovered, at forty-six years of age, that Jesus Christ was a living Lord who could truly empower him for service.<sup>4</sup>

It is interesting to note that both men experienced momentous and supernatural manifestations of God at the time of their conversion. To young Singh it came in the form of an actual appearance of Christ very similar to Paul's experience on the Damascus road. For Laubach it was hearing God speak to him through his own lips at the sunset hour in Lanao.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Ante, pp. 40-41 (L).
2. Ante, p. 32 (S), p. 41 (L).
3. Ante, pp. 2-6 (S).
4. Ante, pp. 40-44 (L).
5. Ante, pp. 3-4 (S), p. 44 (L).

### 3. Geographical and Ethnical Differences

Although both Sundar Singh and Frank Laubach have worked in India and around the world, there is a basic difference in their ministries which may be in part attributable to the localities in which their primary efforts were expended.

Undoubtedly Singh's effectiveness as a solitary, wandering 'holy man' was due to the area in which he worked, for he worked in a cultural milieu in which such men were not only accepted but honored and in a country abounding with small villages in which a visitor could quickly gather a crowd of listeners. From his earliest days as a Christian he had a strong sense of his responsibility to preach Christ to his own people, choosing as his first place of ministry his own village.<sup>1</sup>

The Sadhu's repeated missionary journeys into the forbidden, and forbidding, land of Tibet were also a direct outgrowth of this sense of responsibility, for he felt strongly that the evangelization of Tibet was the job of Indian Christians. It was only after many years of patient ministry in these two areas--northern India and Tibet --that Singh felt impelled to go first to the southern part of his own country and later into other eastern nations and finally on speaking tours to Europe and America. In the closing years of his brief life he became aware of the effectiveness of a written ministry and thus even while his physical strength was failing from the results of his early arduous life, his global ministry was continued and extended by his writing.<sup>2</sup>

Laubach's first Christian service was intended for the Mohammedan tribespeople of the Philippine Islands. While it was nearly fifteen years before he was actually able to serve among them, he did spend the majority of that time in that area. Because there had been little previous mission program there, his efforts were directed not only to evangelism but also to the practical and social necessities of improving the living conditions of the indigenous population. It was only after his successful efforts showed that

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1. Parker, op. cit., p. 33.
2. Ante, pp. 8-13 (S).



in making the Moros of Lanao literate that Laubach's ministry grew in scope as he was called first to one area and then to another for help in literacy work.<sup>1</sup>

One thing that has served to make Laubach's work in countries throughout the world more extensive than Singh's has been the improvement in transportation in the last two decades and the growing tide of nationalism throughout the world. Both of these have provided strong impetus for literacy campaigns.

#### 4. Basic Concepts

##### a. Persons of the Trinity

Both Singh and Laubach seem to be primarily attracted to the person of Jesus Christ, though in subtly different ways. Both are insistent that He is the divine-human Son of God and both find God most fully revealed in and by Him. For Laubach this revelation of God by Christ seems to consist primarily in the actions and attitude of Jesus toward the Father and toward mankind. Thus Jesus Christ not only reveals God as a loving Father but also sets the pattern for Christian worship and service. For Singh this is also true but to a lesser degree, his primary focus being the fact that God was in Christ revealing Himself to the world and reconciling the world to Himself and thus the person of Christ deserves the deepest devotion possible. Probably because of this Singh seems much more insistent than Laubach about the absolute necessity for a personal experience of salvation through Christ. Both men speak only infrequently of the Holy Spirit, although their writings indicate clearly that they recognize Him as the third person of the trinity.<sup>2</sup>

##### b. Sin

Singh seems to have worked out a clearer conception of what sin is than has Laubach. Both are aware of an innate tendency

1. Ante, pp. 42-43, 51, 52. (L).

2. Ante, pp. 15-17 (S), pp. 52-54 (L).

toward sin in themselves, of a lack of ability to refrain from sinning, and both have found that yieldedness to Jesus Christ has made possible victory over sin.<sup>1</sup> For Laubach sin is primarily selfishness and disobedience, for Singh it is more a philosophical concept--the absence of good--but its outworkings are the same.

Both men are inclined to believe, Laubach a bit more hesitantly than Singh, that pain and disease are outward manifestations of inner sin.<sup>2</sup>

c. Salvation

Laubach and Singh are in agreement that salvation is essentially a new life in Christ--a life in which the Spirit so fully indwells the believer that his life reveals the love of God. Although both maintain this and both seem to indicate that this is achieved by faith in God, this aspect of faith is much more strongly stressed by Singh. Laubach on the other hand tends to stress man's role in deciding to be obedient and submissive to God, which in casual reading lends itself to the impression that he conceives of salvation as a result of man's effort. More careful investigation, however, seems to reveal an awareness that the 'disease' of sin can only be permanently cured by God Himself.<sup>3</sup>

d. Life After Death

Again in his conception of life after death, Singh has worked out a more complete statement of his beliefs. This, of course, was due partly to what he claimed was revealed to him during his Ecstasies. He thought of the after world as consisting of a number of planes of blessedness, the spirit of the individual going immediately upon death to that plane for which his life on earth had fitted him. This provided a chance for repentance but,

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1. Laubach, Channels of Spiritual Power, pp. 36-37.
2. Ante, pp. 17-18 (S), pp. 54-55 (L).
3. Ante, pp. 18-19 (S), pp. 55-56 (L).

since man is a creature of habit, he tended to choose then as in life and hence continued toward or away from God as he had done on this earth. With this view God condemns no one to eternal punishment, the man whose fate this is having chosen it himself in preference to fellowship with God. For Singh life beyond the grave was still life, only with the bliss of perfect fellowship with God.

Laubach is not nearly as exact or sure of the state after death. With Singh he would agree that Christians will be in more perfect fellowship with God, and with Singh he has found rich evidences of that spiritual fellowship here in this life, but his concept of that fellowship is mainly in terms of service to be done for God and hence he feels that this world is a training ground for eternity.<sup>1</sup>

e. Use of Scriptures

It is very interesting to note that both of these men have concentrated their Bible study and reading in the Gospel accounts and that both have studied and read these repeatedly until they almost know them by heart. It is also interesting that both have selected the Gospel of John as their favorite book, the Sadhu because it was written by one who loved Jesus with much spiritual insight and Frank Laubach because it shows the intense love that exists in the family of God.

It may be typical of the two men that Laubach tends to stress in his writings practical means for Bible study and reading while Singh relates many interesting incidents in regard to the power that the written Word may have in the lives of men.

While Laubach did not originally accept all of Scripture, he seems to have come to a more orthodox view. Singh also accepts the entire Bible as the inspired word of God, even though he does not accept the theory of its verbal inspiration.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Ante, pp. 19-21 (S), pp. 56-57 (L).
2. Ante, pp. 21-23 (S), pp. 57-58 (L).

f. Place of Prayer

One of the major emphases of both Laubach and Singh is the absolute necessity for much time alone with God. This is not conceived of as a burden but as a deep delight, as more desirable than any other activity no matter how pleasant or needful that activity might be.

Both men have laid much stress on the value of prayer, finding it exceedingly powerful. For Singh prayer seemed primarily beneficial in the effects it had on his own soul, although he cited other types of benefits also, but for Laubach the value seems to be along the more practical lines of help in Christian service. Both Singh and Laubach advocate intercessory prayer especially, because they found it most helpful and strengthening to have others pray for them, and because they are sure of God's answers to such prayers on the behalf of others.

Laubach's concept of prayer has seemingly been much influenced by his belief in mental telepathy and consequently some of his statements seem to consider God as only a sort of power supply for man's efforts at prayer telepathy. His thinking follows this formula:

My friend is closed toward God but open toward me.  
By prayer for him I open toward him and God.  
Then God speaks to him through me.  
My friend feels a desire for God and opens toward Him.<sup>1</sup>

Because of this attitude, Laubach feels that all intercessory prayers should be of a positive nature, so that the person mentioned will be in a receptive attitude. Likewise, Laubach's stress on 'flash' prayers seems to stem from this concept.<sup>2</sup>

g. Reasons for Service

In considering the motivations for service which these

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1. Laubach, Prayer, p. 45.
2. Ante, pp. 23-25 (S), pp. 58-61 (L).

two men had, points of identical reasoning can be found. Both maintained that there is no genuine love of God that is not borne out by a life of devoted service for His sake. Both found in their experience with God the necessary power to instigate and maintain such service. Both recognized that such service must be unselfish and self-sacrificial, and that Christian service therefore fulfilled God's plan for that person's life.

Service was a duty, the Sadhu maintained, and thus he urged it on all Christians. But his stress lay on the privilege Christians had to serve both God and man on this earth. Therefore, considering the brevity of life, service ought to be performed eagerly.

Laubach has further reasons for service, including the fact that Christian service attracts non-Christians to Christ; that such service provides intimate fellowship with Christ, in fact the ultimate in fellowship; that one who knows that the answer to the needs of the world lies in Jesus Christ is compelled to tell this 'good news' to the world; and that the standard for such service was set by Jesus Christ Himself.<sup>1</sup>

#### h. Purpose of Suffering

Both men are remarkably alike in their views regarding suffering, for both consider it a blessing rather than a penalty. Both believe that the results of suffering are most worthwhile, mentioning that suffering often tends to draw men closer to Christ, that it is a means of reaching perfection, and that it serves to produce love like that of Christ. Both testify to the fact that they have known joy and peace not just as the result of suffering, but in the midst of tribulation because of the fellowship of Jesus Christ. Laubach finds encouragement in the fact that Jesus Himself suffered and Singh repeatedly states that it is one of the high privileges of the Christian to be permitted to share Christ's suffering.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Ante, pp. 25-27 (S), pp. 61-64(L).
2. Ante, pp. 27-28 (S), pp. 64-66(L).

i. Value of Other Religions

Although both men are rather clear in their statements in regard to the superiority of Christianity to other religions, they tend to differ a bit in their reasoning. Because of the area in which he lived and worked Singh was most concerned with Hinduism and Buddhism and in them, as well as in other religions, he found truth but truth that was incomplete and that needed the revelation of Jesus Christ. His big concern was that these other religions set up moral codes, but did not have any provision for the heart cleansing which is prerequisite for such a life. Laubach stresses this point also.

On the other hand Laubach is primarily concerned with Mohammedanism even though he also discusses Buddhism and other native religions. His emphasis with the Moslems is in the area of mutual belief and of mutual need for the help of God. Sometimes his efforts in this direction have almost seemed to admit Mohammedanism to the same rank as Christianity, but the effect has been the winning of large numbers of the Moros to Jesus Christ without arousing opposition.<sup>1</sup> As far as Buddhism is concerned, Laubach points out two major discrepancies between the Buddhist and the Christian attitude. One of these is that a devout Buddhist is primarily concerned with his own spiritual welfare, while a Christian is concerned about the spiritual progress of others as well. The other is that Buddhism asks its disciples to kill all desire in the present life; Christianity asks its followers to turn their desires from the things of this world to those of the spiritual world.<sup>2</sup>

C. Resultant Differences and Similarities

Because of the various factors which entered the lives of Sundar Singh and Frank Laubach, factors stemming from the

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1. Erdman, op. cit., p. 24. Cf. Laubach, *The Silent Billion Speak*, pp. 61-62.
2. Ante, pp. 31-32 (S), pp. 66-68 (L).

circumstances of their location and those which are the products of their own thinking, their Christian lives and ministries have both similar and dissimilar features. Since both men have been hailed for both their mysticism and their Christian service these two aspects will be discussed below as well as other less popularized factors.

#### 1. In Their Mysticism

It is interesting to note that both men have willingly called themselves 'mystics' and that both have compared their experiences with that of St. Paul and others who have also been classed as mystics. Laubach even compares his experiences with those of the Sadhu.<sup>1</sup>

Both of them likewise hold the view that mysticism and the miraculous are inherent in the Christian religion since the basis for fellowship with God ultimately lies in the realm of the supernatural.<sup>2</sup> For both men the sense of heightened communion, which seems to have constituted their mystical experience of God, came as the result of prayer.

But there are rather striking differences in their mystical experiences with Christ and it is interesting to note that their mysticism has continued along the lines of the pattern set by their individual conversion experiences. For Singh, who saw and heard the risen Christ and was thus brought into a sudden acceptance of the Christian faith, there continued to be appearances of and discussions with Jesus Christ, although it must be noted that he always clearly distinguished between the actual appearance of Christ at the time of his conversion and the visions he had later. For Laubach, whose conversion experience was a result of an intense longing for deeper communion with God which eventuated in his

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1. Ante, p. 8 (S), p. 46 (L).
2. Ante, p. 10 (S), p. 50 (L).

allowing God to speak to him through his own tongue, continuing contacts with God have been in this and similar means of communion, although he does report one vision of Jesus Christ which he experienced in a hotel room in Cleveland.<sup>1</sup>

In considering the differences which seem to be of relevance in their mystical experience, the most outstanding thing is this difference in the medium of communion mentioned above. The Sadhu's seems always to have consisted of what he called Ecstasies and what his biographers refer to as visions. During an ecstatic period the Sadhu was not aware of his physical surroundings or of the passage of time, even though the state of ecstasy sometimes lasted several hours.<sup>2</sup> He maintained that there was a vast difference between this Ecstasy and the Yoga-type trance which he experienced in his younger days since Ecstasy always left him feeling refreshed and invigorated.

Unlike most others who have also experienced visions, the Sadhu's visions came frequently, almost daily, although he never was aware ahead of time when he would have an Ecstasy.<sup>3</sup> Aside from the information which he gained during such times concerning spiritual things, to the Sadhu the major result of Ecstasy seemed to be a deepening of the sense of Peace which had first come to him when he recognized Jesus and accepted Him as Savior and Lord. Yet despite his own deep joy in Ecstasy, he did not encourage others to seek such ecstatic experiences, feeling that God had set prayer and meditation as the experience for all and would give more if it were right in His sight.<sup>4</sup>

Laubach on the other hand urges for all Christians continual communion with God in prayer even during the working hours of the day or while engaged in reading the paper or holding a conversation. Such communion differs from the Sadhu's in that it

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1. Ante, p. 49 (L).
  2. Streeter & Appasamy, op. cit., pp. 104-105.
  3. Ibid.
  4. Ante, pp. 9-10 (S).



means that the person is very much alert to surrounding conditions and that it is an act of the will involving conscious effort in order to make it habitual. The results are twofold: an intimate fellowship with God which increases in joy and understanding as the years go by and an impetus for loving, self-sacrificing service to mankind which nothing else can supply.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. In Their Dominant Fields of Endeavor

In addition to being mystics, both Sundar Singh and Frank Laubach considered themselves Christian missionaries. But their conception of missionary service does not seem to have been identical. Sundar Singh felt the call to serve his own people, starting in his native 'Jerusalem' and also serving faithfully in nearby Tibet. Frank Laubach was uninterested in remaining in his native country and chose to go to 'the uttermost part of the earth.' In later years Singh did recognize the call to service for his Lord in the broader field of the world and Laubach has returned to his own country<sup>2</sup> to urge church people to 'wake up' and live as Christ has urged and in His power.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to this difference in their attitude about the field for missionary endeavor, there is also a difference between the two men in their understanding about how missionary work could most effectively be done in order to promote the cause of Christ. Sundar Singh adopted the role of a Sadhu shortly after his conversion, feeling that only by the simple, self-sacrificing life of a wandering preacher would his fellow Indians be won to the Savior of all men. So strong was this feeling that he refused to be connected with any type of organization or to serve as the head of a school where others could be trained to do that kind of work. Yet Laubach has spent much of his time in educational and

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1. Ante, pp. 46-50 (L).
2. Ante, pp. 42-43 (L).
3. Laubach, Wake Up or Blow Up, pp. 156-157.

social work, in cooperation with all types of organizations, in order to win those among whom he labored to Jesus Christ. Primarily, of course, his major efforts in the past decades have been channeled into work with adult illiterates so that he has become world famous as a literacy expert.<sup>1</sup>

Both men have achieved world-wide fame, but for Laubach it has been in connection with the work he has done while for Singh it was as a result of the life he lived.

### 3. In Their Relationships with Other Organizations

As was mentioned above there is a wide difference between the attitude of Singh and Laubach regarding their connection with other individuals and groups. Singh very carefully held himself aloof from any kind of entanglement--marital, ecclesiastical or financial even though he did not set this as a pattern for others. While he was yet a young Christian he severed his relationship with the established church and set out to serve Christ independently. Although he frequently cooperated with various Christian groups, he never allowed himself to be absorbed by any of them nor to be related to them for protracted periods of time.<sup>2</sup>

Laubach, on the other hand, has always worked within the realm of the established church. His own denominational affiliations have changed more than once on the basis of expediency. This ecumenical attitude is also illustrated by his chairmanship of the literacy committee of the National Council of Churches. But he has not limited himself to Christian affiliations, being equally willing to cooperate with governments, private organizations, or the United Nations if by such cooperation he can gain openings for his literacy campaigns and hence for evangelization. Concerning utilizing secular opportunities he has written:

The officials know we are Christian missionaries; I am working with Christian churchmen and missionaries all week and on Sunday. I have never been warned to soft-pedal my religion and I

1. Ante, pp. 5-6 (S), pp. 41-43, 69-71 (L).
2. Ante, pp. 35-36 (S).

never do. These governments do not fear Christianity;...  
UNESCO calls literacy its number one educational project.  
God moves in His mysterious way.

#### 4. In Other Areas

Besides these three outstanding elements of the Christian experience and service of these two men, there are two other aspects of their contribution to the Christian church which should be mentioned. The first of these lies in the area of their service and is concerned with their teaching methods. The other is related more closely to their Christian experience and is concerned with their willingness to share their own most sacred experiences with others that they too might benefit thereby.

##### a. In Their Teaching Methods

Both the Sadhu and the literacy expert can be considered as teachers, but their methods of teaching are about as different as their roles. The Sadhu did his teaching as a part of his preaching, and its primary characteristic was his use of illustration after the fashion of the Master Teacher. His illustrations therefore were not designed as adjuncts to the lesson, but were the lesson itself and were not accompanied by explanatory remarks. Although Singh was an effective public lecturer and preacher, he much preferred the informal teaching style of an Indian teacher with his pupils gathered around him. He maintained that those who wished to learn to preach ought to travel in groups of four or five with their teacher listening to him and securing practical experience at the same time.<sup>2</sup>

Laubach's teaching methods have resulted from the necessity for actual instruction in the fundamentals of reading plus his desire that such instruction be done in the spirit of Christian love. The details of procedure are beyond the scope of this paper, but his insistence on preserving the happiness of the pupil and

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1. Leber, op. cit., p. 295. Cf. ante, pp. 42-43, 45-46, 52, 70 (L).
2. Ante, pp. 33-34 (S).

thus establishing a favorable entry for Christian teaching seems to be a rather unique pedagogical procedure. Also unique, at least on such a broad scale, is his 'each one teach one' system which not only instructs more and more people but also serves to strengthen the learning of the one doing the teaching.<sup>1</sup>

b. In Their Willingness to Share Their Experiences

Each of these men has bared his soul to his hearers and readers that they may share with him the realization of the joy to be found in close communion with the Lord. The Sadhu spoke of his Ecstasies both in private and in public, although as he discovered more and more people becoming interested in them rather than in the Lord revealed by them, he spoke less freely in public about his visions. He told his friends that much of the time he gave information in public addresses without mentioning its source simply because of the misunderstandings that frequently arose, and at one time he expressed himself as wishing he had been as reticent about his experiences as was St. Paul. His writings however, as well as his biographies, contain a good many references to information he felt he had gained through his Ecstasies.<sup>2</sup>

Laubach has also found that he has opened the way for misunderstanding, yet he has been willing to continue to share these deep things with others because he claims that unless he does give some measure of his blessing to others he is unable to receive any more and thus loses a measure of the goodness God wishes to bestow. Having found the 'laboratory' of his own soul a place of marvellous experiments with God, he cannot refrain from encouraging others to try such experiments also.

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1. Ante, pp. 70-71 (L).
2. Ante, pp. 4, 8, (S), Cf. Streeter & Appasamy, op. cit., pp. 86ff.
3. Ante, pp. 67-68 (L).

D. Summary

This chapter has compared the factors which have affected the Christian experience and service of Sadhu Sundar Singh and Frank Laubach. Special attention was given to the background, personal and geographical factors which have entered their lives and to a comparison of their concepts of the persons of the trinity, sin, salvation, eternal life, the place of the Bible and of prayer, reasons for Christian service, the purpose of suffering and the values of other religions in relation to Christianity. The second portion of the chapter dealt with the resultant differences and similarities in their mysticism, their primary fields of endeavor, their relationships with other organizations, their teaching methods and the sharing of their own deep experiences with others.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It has been the purpose of this study to attempt to discover the factors in their Christian experience which have affected in any observable fashion the Christian service of Sadhu Sundar Singh and Frank Charles Laubach. In order to facilitate such a study each of the first two chapters was devoted to discovering the circumstances in the life of each man, his own personal religious experience as he has reported it, the concepts he had concerning certain theological and practical matters which seemed to bear on his Christian thinking and therefore on his service, and the elements of his service which have merged as dominant. The first chapter was devoted to Sundar Singh and the second to Frank Laubach.

In the third chapter a comparison of the two men was made on the basis of the same areas and elements discussed for each one. In this chapter there was also an attempt to discover the resultant differences and similarities between the two in their mysticism, their primary fields of endeavor, their relationships with other organizations and in two other areas.

As a result it has been discovered that their backgrounds in family status, nationality, education, and marital status are very different. Likewise their fields of service have also been basically different both in their geographical locale and also in the type of missionary activity done.

In their personal Christian experience the two men had rather different conversions. Singh's conversion occurring when he was a lad of sixteen and Laubach's seemingly coming in his forty-sixth year. Singh maintains he was actually confronted by the living Christ; Laubach heard God speaking to him through his own lips. Both experiences occurred following a time of intense search for God.

The mystical experience of God in the life of each man has tended to follow the pattern set by his conversion encounter. The Sadhu experienced frequent Ecstasies in which he saw and heard the Lord with the eyes and ears of the soul and conversed with him in spiritual language. Laubach's experiences, on the other hand, have come as the result of a continual communion with God in prayer, either audible or unspoken.

Yet it seems evident that each man has found in his personal experience of God through Christ that for which he was so desperately seeking. For Singh this was Peace (which he always capitalized) as he had never known it prior to his conversion and which deepened as the years went by. For Laubach it has been an increased sense of fellowship with God which has likewise become more precious and more intimate with the passing years.

It is equally certain that both Sundar Singh and Frank Laubach also found the basic impetus for their lives of selfless service in their personal love for the Lord. Thinking of his Master, Singh felt impelled by both duty and love to serve Him and hence to minister to those around him in this world. Laubach also discovered that only the living Christ within his heart could give the drive and the sustaining power for true Christian service.

Thus it would seem safe to conclude that although there is a wide dissimilarity in the outward features of life and though there may be quite different experiences with Jesus Christ, it was true for these two men, and may therefore be so for all men, that satisfaction of soul and impetus for the true spirit of service to mankind stem basically from the personal relationship to God through Jesus Christ.



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