

THE COSMOPOLITANISM OF JESUS AS RELATED TO KINGDOM IDEALS

REV. WILLIAM A. ELLIOTT
First Baptist Church, Ottawa, Kansas

In these days when Christianity is being severely tested by international relations, it is well to hold constantly before our minds the spirit of our Lord. The ethical significance of a supreme faith in him is beyond comparison. If he had been Chauvinistic, his religion would certainly be of little use in a world that is beginning to feel the kinship of human nature.

The cosmopolitanism of Jesus has been a challenge to the Christian church through the centuries. Jesus is the one and only cosmopolite that civilization has yet witnessed or that the centuries have looked upon. He was the one man in the world without a country. He was indeed homeless in that he belonged to no one country, time, or people. He was the world's man, the world's Savior. Born a Jew, yet we do not think of him as a Jew. He had none of the Jewish characteristics: none of the Jewish pride, none of the Jewish prejudice, none of the Jew's hate for other people. Jesus did not share the Jews' exclusiveness. He had no part of their sense of superiority and favoritism. He was as free from Jewish bias as a Greek. He was a universal character. He was the one universal man.

The Orient was his home, but he was not an Oriental. Artists have garbed him in oriental dress, and the Christ of art is a Palestinian Christ, yet our knowledge of him and our experience of him picture him in no such fashion. He rose above all the limitations of race and clime and customs, and looms today on the horizon of the centuries as the

one cosmopolitan spirit of all history—the Man Universal. Dr. Newell Dwight Hillis, in speaking of Jesus, says: "The sun above cannot be parceled out. Nobody's star, but everybody's; nobody's air, but everybody's; nobody's sky, but everybody's; and one greater possession was universal—the man Christ who globed in himself all the qualities of all the races." And says another: "For him there were no race prejudices, no party lines, no sectarian limits, no favored nation. There was nothing between his love and the world. His heart beat for the world, and, on Calvary, broke for the world." We need to think only of some of his great utterances to verify these statements. "I am the light of the world," he declared. What sweep and outreach and compass in the statement. He was not the light of a given people, of a certain locality, of a movement, of a cult, of a sect; but here is one who declares himself to be the light of the world. Again he says: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me." In speaking of human needs which he came to supply, he does not speak of them in terms of

the individual, but as racial needs. "I am the bread of life." "I am the water of life." "I am the Good Shepherd." Not alone the Shepherd of Israel, but the Shepherd of the race. He was the Word made flesh—the universal Word, uttered in the flesh, the universal language. Jesus was not bound by racial ties nor limited by national or continental boundaries; so also did he rise above ties of kinship. He recognized human relationships, to be sure. He was the son of Mary his mother, and as such he honored and obeyed her, but "in his knowledge of himself as Son of God he arose above kindred and country to embrace the world." His love and mercy are not hemispheric, but spheric. World-wide, universe-filling, is his love.

Deeper than the deepest ocean,
Wider than the widest sea;
Higher than the highest heaven,
And vaster than eternity.

The early disciples failed utterly to catch the sweep of his purposes in the world. They could not comprehend his thought for the race and failed utterly to share with him his world-vision. Do you recall that incident in connection with his ascension, when, about to depart, he drew his followers aside for a bit of counsel and advice? They, perceiving that some new course of action was about to be announced, asked him, saying: "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" With a mild rebuke and with infinite sadness in his voice, he replied: "It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own power. But ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and ye shall

be my witnesses unto the uttermost parts of the earth." They were thinking of local issues, he of world-problems. They thought of the Jews—of themselves; he thought of humanity. After the day of Pentecost it still remained difficult for his disciples to comprehend in any adequate fashion the thought of Christ for the world. Peter, the great preacher of Pentecost, was not yet freed from the thralldom of racial narrowness and national exclusiveness. It required a vision and a voice from heaven to compel him to go contrary to custom and long-established precedents.

So it was with the church at Jerusalem. When the scattered disciples had gone everywhere preaching the gospel, and when converts were being won from among the Gentiles, and the church at Antioch had been organized, you will recall that the news of the radical departure from Jewish practice came to the ears of the brethren in the mother-church, and they immediately dispatched their wisest and most trusted brethren to Antioch to look into the matter. They could not grasp the universal idea of Christianity. Not until Paul came to the leadership of the early Christian movement did there come any clear appreciation of the world-encompassing mission of Christianity. Paul seemed to perceive clearly the universal elements of the gospel, and under his leadership a world-movement was begun. He was the first Christian expansionist and imperialist. He saw in clearest outline that Christ was the Savior of the world and that Christianity was a world-power. He saw that the "gospel was the power of God

unto salvation to everyone" who would believe it.

With this world-view Paul began a movement whose program included the evangelization of all nations. This movement persisted for some time, but was finally checked by the controversial spirit that crept into the churches. As the churches multiplied and as the membership of the churches became more heterogeneous, problems increased in number and importance. Great theological questions sprang into being, and perplexing ecclesiastical problems confronted the churches. Christendom was plunged into controversy and debate and bitterest disputation. Councils were held, creeds were formulated, orthodoxy was defined and delivered once for all. Religious bigotry grew apace and jealousy and hate took the place of charity and brotherly love. For conquest was substituted controversy, and through the centuries down to our own times those controversies have been waged and the main business of the church of Jesus Christ has been forgotten, and the world-encompassing program of Jesus has not been carried out.

Perhaps this was inevitable. Perhaps it was necessary for the Christian church to halt in its onward march and forge out some of these great theological doctrines in order to settle some things once for all and clearly understand the import and importance of them. No one will question that good has come from those early "battles of the creeds," but every student of church history can only lament that so much of the thought and time and energy of Christianity should have been expended in the war-

fare of words while the great world-program of Jesus was lost sight of. It is my profound conviction that the policy of controversy has not carried us as far along in the work of kingdom-extension as conquest would have done. We are better grounded in the faith, perhaps, but our going has been pitifully slow and pathetically indifferent. We are more orthodox, but less invincible. We are sectarian in spirit and split in hopeless confusion, while otherwise we might have been united. The early churches had the faith and the religious experience and the passion for conquest and were divinely commissioned, and thus panoplied they went forth with mighty power and success; but they stopped to define, and their ecclesiastical definitions brought divisions. It is ever thus. We divide when we stop to define. Definition is important. Let us not decry it. But theological definition serves as a check to spiritual conquest. I am not berating the early church nor belittling the stalwart defenders of the faith in the long ago. I am endeavoring to trace the evolution of the Christian policy through the centuries. What I am saying is that the cosmopolitan spirit of Jesus, which the early church in the time of Paul began to realize, was lost in the controversial spirit of succeeding centuries. Not until the rise of the modern mission movement was there any serious attempt to recover this universal spirit so characteristic of early Christianity. The opposition of leading ministers and churches serves to show how thoroughly the universal element of Christianity had been forgotten and neglected. We have come a long way since that day

in our appreciation of the purpose of Christ raceward; but that we are far short of sharing with Jesus his world-outlook no one will doubt who is at all conversant with the Christian thought of the world today. We are provincial still. We think in terms of continents at best. Our patriotism is deemed exceedingly latitudinous if it takes in the North American continent. And if our cosmopolitan spirit should suddenly become as elastic as the Monroe Doctrine, we would become inflated with pride and begin to boast and brag of our breadth of vision and generosity of spirit.

I know nothing that argues so convincingly of the divine sonship of Jesus and his "other-world" origin as this spirit of the universal that characterizes all of his life and teaching. The greatest men of earth, after all these illuminating centuries, have not attained unto it. How can it be explained, how came it, that there was a man raised up out of the exclusiveness and narrowness and prejudice of his time and people, who preached a cosmopolitan gospel and carried with him into all of his acts and ministries the universal spirit? And why has not this Jewish race, or some other favored race, produced another like unto him during these twenty centuries? There is but one explanation: He was the sent One of God and shared God's thought for the world and God's bigness and broadness and benevolence.

My first deduction from this outstanding characteristic of Jesus is that *a provincial people cannot give adequate expression to the universal spirit of Christ and Christianity*. It has been aptly said

that Christianity has never yet been tried. The principles of the Sermon on the Mount have never been fully applied to society. The high morality of Christianity has never yet been fully incorporated in human life, save in the life of one man. The spirit of Jesus has never imbued any large group of men. The sweep and compass of truth have never yet been presented to the thought of men. The cosmopolitanism of Jesus has never yet been duplicated, and we may well question whether it has been clearly apprehended. We have no men who approach him in the bigness of his thought. We have had men of our own nation who have traveled far and have seen much of the world, and who have had their outlook upon life and their sympathies greatly enlarged; but they have returned with provincial ideas of internationalism and world-problems. They have drawn the color-line, or have made race distinctions, or have recognized continental boundaries where none should have existed. Hear our greatest men talk tariff. It is tariff for the United States, which, being interpreted, means tariff for *us*. How would it seem for the nations of the world, headed by their most gifted statesmen, deliberately to set about to frame laws for the benefit of all mankind irrespective of race or nation, color or previous condition of servitude? How would it seem to have a Democratic House and a Republican Senate undertake to devise a tariff policy that would work good to all the nations? I need only hint at such an impossible procedure to have you see how far short we are of the spirit of Jesus. Yet loud is our boast that we have world-relations,

and that we are committed to the doctrine of the "brotherhood of man." We stoutly maintain our faith in "brotherhood"; but we see to it that we choose our brothers and that the logic of the doctrine does not lead us into uncongenial and inconvenient relationships. We accept the statement of the great apostle that "God has made of one blood all the nations of the earth," but we do not care publicly to recognize the kinship which that fact would imply. We do not bank much on "blood" anyway. Color is so much more important than blood. If the color is white, "we be brethren," but if it shades off into brown or yellow—not to say black—then we are only distantly related. We are related only through marriage, don't you know. We are afraid to follow the logic of our belief in the brotherhood of all men—not of the white man, nor of the red man, nor of the yellow man, but of all men. Such an attitude toward the world of men and the races of men can never reflect the universal character of Christianity or embody the spirit of Jesus. You cannot squeeze a continent into a county—although the county happens to be in Texas. No more can we give full expression to a world-religion by community ideas. Our efforts may be expended chiefly on community needs and community problems; but our eyes must be upon world-horizons. Our hands may minister to the wants of those about us, but behind those ministering hands of ours must be hearts that take in the whole wide world. It requires a universal gospel, universally proclaimed, to give full expression to the love of God and

the purposes of God as he has revealed them in the person of Jesus Christ his Son.

The second inference I draw from the cosmopolitan spirit of Jesus is that *all missionary endeavor is conditioned on the appreciation of the universal element of Christianity*. In the universal spirit of Christ is to be found the fundamental missionary appeal. God's love and Christ's redemptive work are for all. God's beneficence extends to all. He purposes that all men should come into the knowledge of himself and his saving truth. He wills that none should perish. His plan of redemption contemplates the whole human race. The Jew had no such conception of God and his love for the race. "They were the people and wisdom would die with them." There is strong suggestion that it was Jewish exclusiveness that sent Jonah in flight when commanded of Jehovah to go to Nineveh. Nineveh was a heathen city, and, because heathen, it could not be that Jehovah's love and mercy could be extended to it. Rather than go beyond the confines of national exclusiveness and racial pride, Jonah fled to Tarshish and there took to the sea to get away from the duty imposed upon him. The last chapter of the book is the story of an attempt on Jehovah's part to shame Jonah out of his littleness and narrowness. To one who reads the Book of Jonah aright the whole program of Christian missions may there be found. Many permit the whale to blind their eyes to the revelation of the universality of love which God makes in the book. Not until Christian men and churches come to see, as Jonah came to see, that God loves the world, and that his redemption is race-wide, can

there be any effective and far-reaching movement for the evangelization of the world. Our whole missionary propaganda is based upon this great truth. Not the Great Commission, but John 3:16 is the utterance that gives impulse to all movements for the evangelization of men. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his Son." Let a church believe this—let a group of men believe it—and the inevitable result will be that they will be impelled and irresistibly compelled to declare this good news to the wide world, to every tribe and nation. It was to make this truth known that Jesus came from high heaven. God loved the world, and Christ emptied himself of his glory and took upon himself our humanity that he might utter this fact to men in terms of the flesh. God thought love toward a sinful race, and Jesus became the Word that uttered that thought to men. God loved the world, and the apostles went forth to make it known to others. God loved the whole human race, and William Carey and the Judsons and a great army of men and women since their day have gone forth to make that love universally known. We go and keep going, because back of our going is the eternal, universal, world-encompassing love of Jehovah with his heart "still swollen with love unsaid." This is the master-motive of missions and the supreme dynamic for world-conquest.

My conviction is that there is coming to the churches everywhere an increasing realization and appreciation of this truth, producing a greatly enlarged circle of sympathy and service. This larger spirit sometimes takes the form

of impatience with the existing methods of church activities. It frequently breaks with the church altogether. It declares, in its zeal, that organized Christianity misrepresents the spirit of its Founder because of its narrowness and selfishness. It goes forth without the church and without the sanction of the church to carry out what it believes to be the purpose of Christ. Sometimes this enlarging and ever-broadening spirit expresses itself in organizations apart from the church, which, it thinks, with their greater freedom can better serve the interests of the Kingdom. The many Christian associations and movements, but indirectly associated with the church, are sometimes cited as an expression of this growing cosmopolitan spirit. Some even declare that the decrease in the number of candidates for the ministry is attributable to this new spirit. They say that men are coming to see that Christianity is something more than a system of truth to be declared by word of mouth and proclaimed from pulpits; that it is something to be inducted into business and society; something to infuse into our industrial relations, and therefore the need is not so much for more ministers as it is for Christian men and women who will carry the principles of the gospel into every relationship of life. The new movement is an attempt to permit the religion of Jesus to filter through and out of and beyond the confines of the meeting-house and the local interests of the Christian group. I am not careful to affirm or deny these statements. My thought is concerning the enlarging outlook that is coming to Christian men everywhere. Our churches, instead of

becoming stagnated and obsolete, are coming into their own in these days in which we live. They are catching the vision of the wider world as never before and are feeling an ever-deepening sense of obligation to this wider world. We are following the gleam of this great truth of which we have been speaking—the universal purpose of Jesus. Our church activities are broadening and lengthening, and as a result our work is heightening. We have not realized the dream of the Master in sending us forth, but we find ourselves today in the process of attaining unto it. The new awakening is upon us, and there is being slowly created a world-consciousness which is a prophecy of better days in the future. We have been a long time attaining unto a national consciousness—some indeed have not yet attained it; but everywhere there is a growing inclination to lift our eyes and look upon the world-fields. As never before we are striving to “climb to those turrets where the eye sees the world as one vast plain, and one boundless sweep of sky.” These enlarging horizons are lifting us out of our narrowness and exclusiveness, and out of our provincialism, and giving us glimpses of regions beyond. The arts and inventions, this great European war with all of its devastation, the new methods of traffic in air and under water, are all conspiring to compel us to think larger thoughts than aforesaid. Modern progress is carrying us along, whether we will or no, to larger things. We can no longer be little and local and selfish in our sympathies and service.

Our Protestant churches are becoming inoculated. They are enlarging their programs. They are multiplying their

activities. They are pushing back the confines of their parishes and widening the fields of operation. I have been studying programs of recent religious conventions. The themes discussed are most varied. A decade ago such themes were unheard of in many religious bodies. Missions, Stewardship, evangelism, Sunday school, Christian education, temperance—these are not unusual. But to hear discussed such subjects as social service, white-slave traffic, industrial reform, child labor, tenement housing, Belgian sufferers, Christian diplomacy, and internationalism is quite a new thing under the sun. These do not exhaust the list, for there are subjects pertaining to widows' pensions, pensions for aged ministers, interdenominationalism, comity, federation, Christian union, after the war, what?

Let no man say that the church is asleep on its job or that it is unresponsive to the quickening spirit of modern times. These discussions mark a new day in the work of the extension and establishment of the Kingdom of God. Never again will the churches of Christ be content with the doing of small things. Never again shall we be satisfied to preach merely an individual gospel, and a Christianity that exhausts its program in community affairs. Henceforth the gospel must go to the individual, and through the individual touch earth's remotest bounds. No amount of theological disputation, creedal adjustment, ecclesiastical juggling, denominational quibbling, will stay the churches from the prosecution of their divine mission.

I conclude with an appeal for men and women with the cosmopolitan spirit—men and women with wideness

of vision and outlook. No longer are we measuring men by *avoidupois*. Big men are not necessarily big in bulk. Great men are not men with swollen fortunes and occupying exalted positions. Many small men are rattling around in large places. He is great who has a great vision of things and looks out upon a great world. Outlook and horizon are essential to bigness. You cannot grow big men in a cow lot. You cannot grow cosmopolitan spirits by studying county maps. Great characters cannot be produced by interests that are purely local and selfish. One must have breadth and compass and upreach and outreach if one would be great of heart or strong of soul. It is not where we go, or how far we travel, that broadens us. It is the open mind, the expansive heart, the uplifting eyes, the retreating sky line, that makes us kin to Christ and gives us that spirit of the universal that characterized his life and spirit. The great need today is the need of men of this spirit—men who have caught the world-spirit and who can think in terms of continents. We need men who have come to a world-consciousness, big men, sun-crowned men,

Men with Empires in their bosoms,
Men with eras in their brains.

Small men cannot solve great problems, such as confront the world today. Little men cannot lead out in great enterprise. And what we need in politics, in social service, in education, in the work of the church in every department are men of vision and grasp of mind and a patriotism that is as universal as the race. The bane of the nation today is the men in politics who cannot see beyond the "pork-barrel"

and the wants of their own constituents. And who will deny that the church of Christ has not suffered much by the littleness and narrowness and short-sightedness of its leaders. The "sorrows of the wider world" seem never to have beaten in upon their hearts. The local church is occupied with the problem of maintaining itself and keeping up the appointments of the sanctuary and paying the pastor's salary and the pittance to the sexton, and paying for light and heat. These matters mark the outer limits of many a church's concern and indicate the largest boundaries of its generosity. These endeavors exhaust the program of not a few institutions calling themselves churches. Such conceptions and such leadership will never compass the world's needs, nor can they ever accomplish the mission of the church in this world as Jesus outlined it twenty centuries ago.

We must begin to grow bigger men. Our sons and daughters must begin to study world-maps. They must be taught to think in terms of continents and hemispheres. They must have a patriotism that is race-inclusive, horizons that are limited only by human need and Christian opportunity. If there is one utterance of Jesus that we need to ponder longer than another in these days it is this: "Lift up your eyes and look upon the fields"—the world-fields. The upward look and the outward reach are what every church needs. We must elevate our eyes if we would energize our hands. We must clearly see before we greatly serve. We must see the vision splendid and hear the Macedonian cry before we take ship for the farther shore.