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DR. SAMUEL M. ZWEMER

*In Memoriam*¹

JOHN A. MACKAY

With the passing of Samuel M. Zwemer an ancient word has received fresh fulfillment. "A prince has fallen in Israel"—a missionary prince. One of the very greatest figures in the modern missionary movement has passed on.

I first saw and heard Samuel Zwemer when I was a theological student. The occasion was the Student Volunteer Convention of 1913 at Kansas City. Nine thousand men and women from the colleges and universities of the whole nation and of Canada were there. Three leaders stood out among the speakers; three men who became the heroes of a host of young people, as they became mine: John R. Mott, Robert E. Speer, Samuel M. Zwemer. Mott, the older statesman, is still with us. The last time I spoke in this church was to pay a memorial tribute to Robert E. Speer. We are met here this afternoon in the presence of the mortal remains of Samuel M. Zwemer to pay a tribute to his memory.

As I engaged in quiet meditation, in anticipation of the sad privilege of this hour, it seemed to me that Samuel M. Zwemer was four things in particular.

He was the *apostolic missionary to Moslems*. It was his distinction shortly after graduation from New Brunswick Theological Seminary, to become a missionary pioneer, and in the company of his friend, Cantine, to found a new mission in Arabia in 1890. For forty years thereafter, Samuel Zwemer was an apostolic figure in the Moslem world. By wayside khans, with traveling caravans, in the precincts of Moslem

mosques and institutions, he proclaimed Jesus Christ as the One who was "more than a prophet." He was the modern embodiment of that great missionary to Moslems of the Medieval period, the Spaniard, Raymund Lull. Lull was Zwemer's hero. The Spanish missionary had said, "I have one passion in life and it is He," meaning Jesus Christ. That too was Zwemer's motto. Jesus Christ was the life passion of the man from Michigan.

Soon after crossing the threshold of three-score years Zwemer had to return home from Egypt. In the tradition of Alexander Duff, and of many another great missionary, he became a teacher of missions to future ministers of the Christian Church. And so it came about that from his early sixties until his retirement in 1937, at seventy years of age, Samuel M. Zwemer was the *seminary professor of missions*. For a complete Biblical cycle of seven years the Apostle to the Moslem world made the missionary movement a thrilling reality on the campus of Princeton Theological Seminary. Its personalities and its episodes, its triumphs, problems and opportunities, stirred scores of ardent spirits. But the professor's interests were not limited to missions. His Chair also covered the History of Religions; and so it was that everything relating to Comparative Religion became his concern. During those years he got together a remarkable collection of ob-

¹ Words spoken at the funeral service in the First Presbyterian Church of New York City on Friday, April 4, 1952.

jects relating to the diverse religions of the world and to the history of the missionary movement. In the not distant future Princeton Seminary hopes to provide a worthy home for this collection which will be known as the Zwemer Museum.

Samuel Zwemer was also the *evangelical writer on religion*. The incomparable orator, with his great swinging arms, and the voice that could speak in thunder and in a wooing, brooding note, was a writer too. Nigh fifty volumes and a flow of innumerable articles, came from his tireless pen.

He was also the founder, and for thirty-seven years the editor, of *The Moslem World*, a journal designed to acquaint English-speaking people with Islamic lore and the problems of Moslem evangelization. As one scans the titles of those fifty tomes one word in particular arrests attention. It is the word "glory," unveiled splendor. We discover a trilogy whose center is the unveiled splendor of Jesus Christ. There is: *The Glory of the Cross, The Glory of the Manger, The Glory of the Empty Tomb*. True to the Lullian motto of his early missionary years, Zwemer, as a professor and as a writer, continued to make Jesus Christ central in his witness. Because Jesus Christ Himself, and not merely ideas about Him, was central in Zwemer's faith and life, he was tolerant in his attitudes toward other Christians who loved the same Lord, however much they might differ from him in many respects. He was also, for the same reason, widely ecumenical in his sympathies. He loved all who loved Christ and accounted them his brethren.

Zwemer was finally the *child-like, Christian personality*. He was, in the best sense and in the truest Christian

tradition, an everlasting child. In the simplicity of his ways, in the boyishness of his spirit, he ever lived in the beyond, in something that would take place tomorrow. In his years as an octogenarian one could find nothing in Zwemer's spirit which spelt the senility of perpetual reminiscence. There was rather the juvenility of perennial expectation. And so he was buoyant and could also be flamboyant. He was affectionate and inquisitive. He was a ceaseless and inimitable story teller. His letters were extraordinarily human. To the very last, a few hours before his death, he wrote to friends in whimsical mood. He was the everlasting child, child-like and Christ-like to the end, one whose spirit was also apostolic and alert, till suddenly and unexpectedly he passed onward to the other side.

Zwemer was twice married. The bride of his youth, the mother of his children, the companion of his years until his final retirement from active service, was Amy Wilkes. He found her as a missionary in the Moslem world when he arrived there. They loved romantically, and lived in happy, holy wedlock to the very year of his retirement, when his loved partner passed away. Four children, three girls and a boy, survive him in homes of their own, engaged in honored tasks in society and in the Church.

Samuel Zwemer in his retirement married Margaret Clarke. She was a true helpmeet to him in his later years. Their apartment on Fifth Avenue became a center of Christian fellowship which many will remember as in the great tradition of the Christian upper room. In 1950 the aged missionary, broken but still buoyant, lost the loved companion of his age. Once again he lived alone, or from time to time with

members of his family. Death took him in the Presbyterian Convalescent Home in Port Chester, New York, on the forenoon of Wednesday, April 2.

We are met here because a prince, a missionary prince, has fallen. But for him there, before the Throne, as for us here in this sanctuary, the missionary

cause of Jesus Christ, and of Samuel Zwemer, and of the Church Militant, goes marching on.

The next issue of the BULLETIN will contain Memorial Minutes on Dr. Zwemer by the Board of Trustees and the Faculty of the Seminary.

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MISSION LECTURES

ALEXANDER MCLEISH

Director of the World Dominion Movement

Miller Chapel

October 20-22

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| Monday, | 7:45 p.m. | The Objective of the World Mission of the Church. |
| Tuesday, | 7:45 p.m. | Basic principles and Methods in Discharging the Missionary Obligation of the Church. |
| Wednesday, | 7:45 p.m. | Present Day Tensions in the Missionary Enterprise of the Church with Special Reference to India. |