

of distinguishing what is genuinely trans-cultural and what was relative to his provincial setting alone. Christians try not to confuse their relative, man-made cultural habits with Absolute Truth.

In attempts at cross-cultural understanding, it is equally important that Christians do not give up absolutes by confusing them with relativities. "The only reason for being a Christian," said Stephen Neill, "is the overpowering conviction that the Christian faith is true." And Alec Vidler has well said of Christianity, "Either it is true for all men, whether they know it or not; or it is true for no one, not even for those people who are under the illusion that it is true."<sup>30</sup> Having quoted these men in *The Validity of the Christian Mission*, Elton Trueblood adds,

The defender of the Christian Mission has no need to claim that all is lovely in the West: in like manner, he need not try to maintain that all is satisfactory in the Church, for whether at home or on the mission field, the Church is always inadequate. There is a real difference between Christianity and Western culture. The claim that missions are mere door-openers for colonialism and imperialism loses much of its persuasiveness when we observe the degree to which the Church in missionary lands has been among the most active opponents of imperialism. It is the conscious strategy of the Mission, in a great many different countries, not to impose the culture of the areas from which the workers happen to come, but to develop local churches which are, insofar as possible, indigenous to their own cultures.<sup>31</sup>

"In the long run, the best reason for dedication to the spread of the faith of Christ" according to Elton Trueblood, "is the conviction that this faith conforms to reality as does no other alternative of which we are aware."<sup>32</sup> The unpopularity of such a conclusion in an age of supposed tolerance and religious pluralism does not make Christianity false. While seeking to be tender with persons, we must face resolutely all questions of truth and falsity, insofar as we are able to confront them. Whereas there should be hardly any limits to our tolerance of people, Stephen Neill has said, "The moment we raise the question of truth, we are faced by the painful issue of the intolerance of truth."<sup>33</sup> The message of Christianity is not the product of Western speculation. It is held to be objectively true, congruent with what has actually occurred, with reality.

Returning to the point at which we began, there is good reason to believe that there are three sides to every story -- your side, my side and the facts. The facts owe their existence and meaning to the Creator who is omniscient. Hence we may change the motto to read, Every story has three sides -- your side, my side and God's. Our assertions are true insofar as they conform to God's mind. His mind is revealed in general revelation to all men and in special revelation to the inspired biblical writers. By their providential preparation and the miracle of their inspiration, these holy men teach what God wanted taught. Whether affirming what is invariably true or what is true of a once-for-all event, their affirmations convey God's mind. Divine absolutes are then received by common or special grace, not by autonomous human ability. So all truth is God's truth, whether on your side or my side, or wherever it may be found.