



D R. F R A N K L A U B A C H A N D S E M A N T O G R A P H Y

A L e t t e r t o

Dr. Frank Laubach
Councillor of the Committee
on World Literacy and Christian Literature
at present in Sydney, Australia

Sydney 15th July
1951

Dear Dr. Laubach,

I have read much about you and your work, and I often wondered whether Providence will make it possible that we shall meet. You have brought literacy and the word of God to millions of ignorant natives and I seem to have fulfilled the prophecy of Leibnitz, the philosopher (1679 A.C.) and in some way of Zephaniah, the prophet (640 B.C.).

Alas, the idea of an international language like Esperanto, has failed miserably. The peoples of this planet stick to their many and varied mother-tongues, even in the United States of America, even in Australia. The mother-tongue is irresistible and the people in the steaming asphalt jungle of Trinidad or New York go on babbling like their mother babbled to them, from the cradle to the grave. The teaching of foreign languages in school have proved a failure too.

You have therefore done the right thing and taught the peoples literacy in their native language. But your work faces 3 dilemmas:

(1) No matter how good and correct your phonetic symbols are adjusted to the native pronunciation, 20 years hence, pronunciation would have shifted and the phonetic symbols would not be correct any more.

(2) Teaching two different villages two different scripts with two different primers, would and does divide them even more, even if the phonetic symbols are the same. We have seen how nationalism has been fostered even in Great Britain by the teaching of Welsh, Irish and Scottish Gaelic.

(3) For this dilemma I shall cite Mr. A.W. Stuart, who wrote an article about you in yesterday's Sydney Morning Herald "He Teaches Nobodies to Read". He closes with these words:

"Indeed if those concerned with democracy and personal worth do not supply good books, other agencies will teach this rising tide of literates... either we can teach illiterates to read and give them no books, or we leave subversive and destructive organisations to supply the reading material."

And this is the root of the trouble. All our languages give us no possibility to spot those words which are vague, ambiguous, misleading and fallacious. And these words are used by the demagogues and propagandists of totalitarian doctrines. Already they have brought the War of Words into every family, every nation, and we see a rift opening up between the persons and the peoples.

Leibnitz the philosopher speculated therefore about an international language, very simple and understandable even to illiterate peasants, and which should also contain a simple Semantics and Logic. Zephaniah, the prophet, prophesied the coming of a "pure language".

Such an unambiguous and at the same time international language is today a matter of life and death, and indeed the solution has been found

in a field, where mutual understanding is a matter of life and death: on the highways of the world. There thousands of motorists and pedestrians are dying every day, and more casualties are inflicted than in the wars. And there, warning signs written in the native tongues are taken down and replaced by symbols in a new geometrical writing. CURVE is replaced by and this tells immediately in all languages of the world the real situation. This geometrical writing is more meaningful (semantics) than any phonetic writing, and I have therefore called it SEMANTOGRAPHY.

In 7 years of work I have worked out such meaningful symbols to cover the whole range of language, not only for inter-lingual communication in Science, Industry, Commerce, Communication, but even for religious thought. One of the first pioneers in this field was John Wilkins, Bishop of Chester, and like him, I have translated the Lord's Prayer, and some verses of the Bible. Semantography is at the simplest level a picture writing, and therefore could be easily grasped even by primitive natives.

Now, a new tool is given into your hand to use it. One Primer can now be used for all the People, for the whole World. Tribes which speak different languages can now communicate with each other, and even read the same book. This is not a mere idea. I have shown in 3 large volumes the practical application for most human activities, and I enclose Leaflet No. 1 and Leaflet No. 7 to give you an idea how my pictographs look like.

Great Men, and great Agencies have acknowledged the practicability and the advantages of my work, and I am writing to you, believing that it will intensely interest you. I hope you will find half an hour for a discussion and demonstration. Unfortunately I have to work for a living and therefore cannot leave my work at day-time. I hope you will send me a telegram, where I can meet you in the evening.

I have duplicated this letter for various reasons. Firstly, for sending it to you through 3 different channels, so that I shall be sure, at least one letter will reach you in time. Secondly, to hand over copies to other missionaries working in the same field, and thirdly, for the libraries. Some great libraries, have realised that a new, world-embracing idea takes shape and have therefore requested me to send any item, concerning the growth of this idea. I believe, that my approach to you is an historic event in this "Story of Semantography", and therefore I shall send a copy of this letter to those libraries. They have my books too.

According to the philosophy of Semantography, words spoken or written are symbols only for the realities. And only these realities count. We are neighbours working in the same field of bringing literacy to people. The words "Love thy neighbour" are mere words. What counts are the real Actions in which these words are "translated". What are you going to do with this letter? Ignore it? Write to me a few well-meant phrases and close the correspondence? Or are you going to take an interest in this new idea, which can bring UNIVERSAL LITERACY in a way, which has not been foreseen by the men who coined the words UNIVERSAL LITERACY. You may have leaflets and pamphlets, you may acquire the books, you may enter into a fruitful correspondence. You may interest the Missionaries and the Agencies concerned. You can do very much. As for me, I am 54 years of age, and I want to get out of the "picture writing". I believe I have fulfilled my destiny of being an infinitesimal link in the great divine purpose and design which we observe in the circling of the stars and electrons, in the co-operation of the cells and communities: the creation of higher order out of lower order.

Awaiting your interested and spirited response, I am

Encl. Leaflet No. 1 and No. 7

Yours Sincerely

C. K. Bliss
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