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# *Education in Systematic Beneficence*

By REV. FRANK W. PADEFORD.

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# Education in Systematic Beneficence

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This paper is based upon the principle that the interests of the Christian are identical with the interests of Christ. What is of utmost concern to him is likewise of the greatest concern to his disciple. That the heart of Christ is centered in the interests of the Kingdom of Heaven is evident from his words and work. The interests of that kingdom then are, or at least ought to be, first or all in the heart of his disciple. There can be no difference here, since only he that has the spirit of Christ is really his. Everything then that concerns the needs and extent of that kingdom is of first importance to the Christian.

A second principle follows upon this. Until every one of God's creatures shall have received the truth, it is the bounden duty of every member of Christ's kingdom, whether a church member or not, to give of his time and means for the extension of that kingdom among those who have received it not. Do we need to argue this point? Theoretically, no. Apparently, yes. No member of Christ's kingdom who has himself received the truth, has any right to withhold the light from those who are still in darkness. It is no more possible for a true member of that kingdom to withhold the bread of life from men than for Christ to have withheld it from his disciples. He had come to do his Father's will; his Father had sent him that he might bear witness to the truth; it was impossible for him to contravene that will, and withhold the truth. No man sent to complete that mission can contravene that will and retain the spirit of Christ. The cry that smote the heart of Jesus strikes our ears today. From all quarters of the globe, from pagan and civilized hearts alike, that same awful cry is going up in the same pitiful tones, "Show us the Father." Do you tell me that a man possessing the spirit of Christ can be deaf to that cry? If it were the duty of the Christ to show men the Father, what shall we say of the obligation of those, who through him have received the life, to bring that life to others? No one is exempt from this law. Not the widow? Not if she possess two mites. Not the man

involved in debt? His debt to his Lord is as sacred as that to his fellows. It was contracted first. No. So long as there is a single voice crying in the wilderness no disciple of Christ can be relieved from this duty.

A third principle grows out of these two. It is the duty of every Christian, not only to seek for the spread of the kingdom, but to do so as God has prospered him. This principle is not so readily assented to as the former, at least not in practice. But it is true to the word of God and the ethics of the kingdom. Very many give; very few give as God has prospered them. When a man has an income of \$1000 and gives \$5 for missions and \$25 for church expenses, do you tell me that he is giving as God has prospered him? That would not meet the requirements of the old days of laws and exactments. What is it to give as God has prospered us? No man can tell for his neighbor. But how are we to determine what we should give in order to meet the requirements of this principle? Figure out first what our expenses must be and then say that we have so much left for the Lord? Is that the method? No. First figure out how much we must use for the kingdom and then we shall know how much we have left to live on. This is the true method. One man may be giving as God has prospered him when he has given a tenth; another may have to give fifty or seventy-five per cent. in order to meet the requirements of this principle.

Now because these three great principles are not recognized and acknowledged by the members of the kingdom there is need of education in Systematic Beneficence and Systematic Benevolence. For unless there be Systematic Benevolence there can be no such thing as Systematic Beneficence. Well willing must go before well-doing. Christians must be brought to see that their interests are identical with the interests of Christ; that because this kingdom has great needs they, as members of the kingdom, are under obligation to meet these needs; that so long as these needs exist they must meet them as God has prospered them.

I had supposed that there could be no question, at least in the minds of those who understand the needs of the field, of the necessity of Systematic Beneficence. But what are we to believe when we are informed by a representative of one of our missionary societies that Systematic Beneficence is hindering the progress of one of the most important branches of our missionary work? I

cannot believe that our secretaries will stand behind any such statement as that. But what can we expect to accomplish in producing a better spirit and method of beneficence if those representing our work are making such statements? They are to be pardoned because of their greater interest, due to a wider knowledge of the needs of the fields, for thinking that a very large proportion of the funds collected should go into their treasury. But we cannot pardon them for making such statements when we are seeking in all possible ways to increase the interest of our churches in the work which they represent.

Spasmodic giving, giving from mere impulse, giving without knowledge of the needs, giving only because forced to, this never can conserve the interests of the kingdom. Any giving which shall really meet these interests must be regular, constant, intelligent, willing, and conscientious. Such is Systematic Beneficence. This we need and must have.

Before going further let me inquire what is the main purpose which we are to seek in our beneficence? Is it to get by some method or other the greatest amount of money out of our churches in a certain length of time? Is this the main purpose of beneficence? I should judge so from some of the methods that are adopted and some of the motives that are presented. If this is the purpose let us have a popular lecture course and a series of entertainments, for if these are of the right nature they will net us a good round sum of money. I note that some churches have donkey parties and charades for increasing the missionary funds of the church. No, this is not our main purpose. I am not going to acknowledge that the money raised is the most important part of it, either. The main purpose, it seems to me, is so to raise the money that you will not only conserve the deepest interests of the kingdom abroad but also develop the highest interests of the kingdom at home. Any attractive method that may present itself, therefore, will not do. We are not to urge our people to give merely for the sake of getting the money. We are to urge it because we know that only as they give can they grow, and only as they scatter can they increase. Beneficence is of the highest importance to the church because of its relation to growth in grace. Men cannot become Christlike unless they have the missionary spirit, that is, the spirit of self-sacrifice.

This point must be borne in mind in the selection of a plan of

beneficence, for it must of necessity affect methods. It is true that the methods which we must adopt and the educational process which we pursue may not turn as much money into the missionary treasuries in the very near future as we desire, nor as much as we might secure if we pursued other methods. But we are building not for a day. We are building for years to come. The great thing now is to get our churches developed in the true missionary spirit, the Christ spirit, and to secure the establishment of the highest methods, and then the day will come when the money will pour in in large amounts and the cause shall triumph. We must beware of being impatient, and, because it is quicker, of building on the sand rather than on the rock.

It is not to the point to remark that the time is already at hand for greater activity. It certainly is, was long ago. But we are bearing the results of our inheritance. Shall we hand a cursed system down to our children as our fathers have to us, simply because we want a little larger offering this year? What we need is a larger view of the kingdom and the great world conquest. We must lay our plans deeply and wisely. There is a tremendous conflict ahead. Our children will know more about it than we. We are only on the skirmish line now. The heat of the battle is yet before us.

Now this does not mean that we are not to exert our utmost efforts to secure larger offerings. We must do it and do it at once. No one would accuse us of holding to any position like that, any lying back in the traces and waiting for a better time. I am only pleading that our utmost efforts shall be exerted, but that we shall be sure that they are in line with the truest methods for the sake of the largest development and the greatest success.

These considerations must of necessity affect our plans of education. In regard to the educational process of Systematic Beneficence permit me to make the following suggestions:—

1. Begin with the children. I have little faith that you can educate this present generation up to any proper standard of beneficence. You cannot teach an old dog new tricks. You cannot very often bring an old Christian to put his money into the hand of another when he has always hoarded it in his own hand. I am aware that nothing is too hard for the Lord. The Holy Spirit can come down and re-make even the pocketbook of a Christian of

many years, and for this reason prayer must form a very important part of this educational process. But if you train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it. Therefore, I say, begin with the children. Let the educational process begin in the kindergarten. It is no more sensible nor just to wait until a child becomes a Christian before you teach him to give than it is to wait in order to teach him to pray. Doing is as important as praying. The smallest child in the Sunday School ought to be trained to give to missions. It is for this reason that I believe in the Massachusetts Baptist Sunday School Chapel Fund. Where adopted it secures from nearly all the children the giving of at least two cents per month for direct missionary purposes. The Portland Street Sunday School is seeing good results from the use of this system, as well as from our regular offering system, where we secure from each member of the school a certain pledged offering each Sabbath. It is developing Systematic Beneficence among our children. If we can only hold them to it we shall have solved the problem in our church.

The children must be shown that giving is the natural thing for the Christian. It will be shown to be as much a part of worship to them as anything else. Therefore, I insist that some method must be adopted whereby the children shall be taught the great privilege and duty of giving for the spread of the gospel. If a better method can be devised than the one to which I have referred, let us have it at once, for nothing can be more important to education in beneficence than this work among the children.

To secure interest in this giving and thus make it educational it is necessary that the children become familiar with the facts of missionary history. For that reason missions must be studied by the children. There must be systematic instruction upon the subject. The Junior Christian Culture Courses are good as far as they go, but they do not begin to meet the need. Such study is too superficial. It must go deeper than they go, in order to accomplish the end. There must be study of missions in the Sunday School. It must be a study of modern missions, too. It will not do to reply that children are now instructed in missions because they study about the missionary journeys of Paul. Those are too far distant. To the young minds and to many that are older Paul's missions and modern missions are very distinctly different things. At least once

a quarter, I wish that it might be oftener, there should be a regular lesson on modern missions. This should take the place of the Bible lesson. For this there should be regular lessons prepared and issued with the quarterlies and bound up with the other lessons. Let such lessons take the place of the ordinarily profitless review lessons. They would then seem a real part of the work. I should suggest that they be arranged with slightly more regard to order and propriety than our present International lessons. We ought to compel our Publication Society to prepare these lessons for us. If you will teach these young hearts some of the inspiring things in the modern missionary history you will soon have a generation of givers. Let our Associational Commission see that something is done in this direction at once.

But we cannot confine our educational work to the children. The present generation needs the gospel as well as the age to come, and our church members of today need the sanctifying influence of beneficence as much as the members of tomorrow. It is never too late to mend, though we may not succeed in making them all over. But they must receive of our best efforts.

My second point is this:—

2. Base your educational work on the highest motive.

In the long run very little is ever gained from the presentation of secondary motives. Nothing but the highest motives conserve the highest ends. In nothing is this more true than in the work of the kingdom. If you wish to produce the truest piety and secure the largest offerings in the end, you cannot afford to appeal to people from anything but the very highest motive. By reason of the state of the human heart it may be possible to secure a larger collection for missions next Sunday by setting forth some secondary motive. But ten years from now your offerings will be no larger and the missionary spirit of your church will be far lower. Shall we stoop to urge our people to give more for missions because the Presbyterian denomination is doing better than we? Shall the minister say that because our missionary work has been prospered better than that of other churches, therefore we must give more and keep ahead? If God in his infinite mercy has prospered our work as he has not that of others, it ought to make us very humble and inspire us to nobler service, but this is not the true motive in missions. Shall the Sunday School superintendent declare that his school has

done better than any other and that it must not lose its record? Or shall we be urged to give for fear that some other denomination will get ahead of us? Are these true motives? Can we afford to present these as the motives for gifts to the work of the kingdom? I say, most emphatically, No. These motives may answer for driving people to give, but you can not educate them in true benevolence in that way. There is only one motive that we can afford to urge, that we have a right to urge, and that is the highest motive. Do you question what that is? The love of Jesus Christ and the love which that love merits in return. This is the great motive in missions. This is the only true motive.

This is a motive worthy of appeal. When men come to see and feel that love, realize that what they are and hope to be they owe entirely to the love of Christ, when they see and feel that, then their hearts will warm with love for the cause for which he gave his life. But not before. You can not secure real giving until you bring men into touch with that heart of love and their own hearts become inflamed with the same love. If you want money for missions make men feel that love of Christ. Lead them to see also that that love which they have felt was shed abroad for those now in the darkness as much as for those who have received the light. Make men see that Christ loves these less fortunate with the same love with which he loved them, and that he is as anxious for their salvation as for those who now know him. Get men to see that the love of Christ has made all men members of a great brotherhood and that any true love for Christ will manifest itself in love for those whom Christ loves. Present the needs of the fields? Of course you will, as strongly as God enables you, but impress upon men that those who need are those for whom Christ in his infinite love gave his life. When you can bring men to feel this they will put into that pierced hand all the money he needs for the spread of his kingdom.

When men come to feel the power of this motive and give accordingly they will gladly bring their offering unto the Lord. The church will not be turned into a dentist's office when the collection for missions is taken. Gladly and with praise men will bring of their first fruits unto the Lord. Let us sing the Doxology hereafter when we have had the privilege of completing our worship by making our offerings unto the Lord. Giving that is not cheerful is not for the glory of God. One great reason that our beneficence is on such a

low plane today is that we have largely neglected this great motive and used appeals which we thought would bring in larger immediate results, but we are suffering today from the presentation of those motives.

Brethren, when you appeal to men for the work of the kingdom, appeal to them from the love of Christ, that wonderful love whose height and depth men have never fathomed, that love which passeth all understanding.

In the third place we should distinctly set before our people:—

3. The intimate and dependent relation of beneficence to growth in grace. A study of the New Testament regarding this particular point will astonish you by reason of the number of references you will find to it. We are given many directions for the attainment of this end, but none is more clearly emphasized than this. Which is the more important, prayer or beneficence? I should not undertake to say. But this I know: if prayer be not followed by beneficence the prayer has not been true; there has been no prayer.

The gospel does not consist alone of "come ye." There is another part equally as important. It is "go ye." This last command was made most sacred by the circumstances of its utterance. The church has spent the larger part of nineteen hundred years discussing the meaning and philosophy of this first command. But we have given very little time or thought to the second. Men selfishly listen to the word "come ye," but selfishness is supposed to disappear when we obey that call. But a lingering selfishness often prevents our hearing the second at all. Christ utters the call that he may give the command, and no one has really obeyed the call who cannot hear and does not obey the command. A man cannot be Christlike until he has the missionary spirit, which is the spirit of Christ. It is useless for a man to hope to become truly Christlike who is unwilling to put the needs of others above his own. There is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth only to poverty of spirit and life.

Any pastor who neglects the use of this means to the development of his church life will certainly fail. He may preach all he wants, but if he does not teach his people to practise he fails utterly. What right have we to limit the instruction when we are commanded "to teach the disciples to observe *all* things" which Christ has commanded. We may not all agree in some of the methods of

some of our organizations, but we are not giving to organizations. We are giving to the spread of Christ's gospel. What right have we to stultify the growth of our people, merely because some methods of distribution do not suit us? The pastor who does this is neglecting his people's development and failing of his mission. Some ministers in our churches are saying that they cannot present missions earnestly to their people because their churches are not raising enough to pay their salaries. I do not wonder that those churches are starving their ministers. A minister who is selfish enough to take such a position as this deserves to starve. He is starving his people. It is only reciprocity.

As a fourth suggestion regarding Education in Systematic Giving:—

4. There must be more thorough instruction regarding the conditions and needs. Members of our churches are woefully ignorant of the conditions of our missionary work. They are much better acquainted with the work of Otis and his soldiers than with the work of the soldiers of the Cross. Before we secure adequate giving we must change these conditions. Men are not expected to turn their money into a hole in the ground or what is no more real to them than that. To secure intelligent, conscientious giving, we must see that our members are thoroughly acquainted with the needs of the fields. The information in our papers is very scanty, and many of our families never see a Baptist paper. Many of them are much better acquainted with the *Christian Herald* than they are with the *Watchman* or the *Missionary Magazine*. The burden of this instruction must necessarily rest with the pastor and officers of the church. They must keep the people informed constantly on missionary activity. I cannot believe that if the members of our churches really knew the exact conditions they would allow our work to suffer as they do. How many of our members yet know of the great loss to our work in Burmah by the recent death of Mr. Price? Or how many know that this morning, before this conference opened there sailed from Boston a band of eighteen consecrated men and women who are looking to their Baptist brethren for support and help, as they go to represent them in the darkness of the world? How many of them know of the heroic departure of our beloved Dr. Bunker, scarcely able to live a few years in this country, going back to India today to his last work and to his cer-

tain near death, because a lone tribe away up in India has sent and begged him to come and bring them the gospel? When you bring such facts as these to your people's hearts times will change.

It will not do to preach an annual or semi-annual sermon on missions. This is not sufficient. The missionary concert, frequent missionary addresses, visits from missionaries and workers, all these must be in constant use. The pastor should use his earnest efforts to secure a large subscription to the missionary papers and magazines. The missionary preludes are very helpful in this direction. Three or four minutes given each Sunday morning to the presentation of some important bit of news concerning missionary work cannot be better spent. This constant presentation will keep people interested. In some way people must become posted, and when they see the needs we shall receive the money. Nothing can be more important than this constant instruction.

A fifth point:—

5. Choose the best possible plan.

“The good is the enemy of the best,” as the sage has said. There are several good plans if you do not insist on putting too much into the word good. For each church there is only one best plan. What may be best in Haverhill may not be best in Lowell. I do not advocate frequent change or trial. But the officers of every church should carefully consider conditions and plans and adopt the best one for the situation. A good one will not do. It is opposed to your best interests.

The plan of securing subscriptions for missions at the beginning of the year, the total amounts to be distributed according to an agreed proportion and the offerings to be brought in each Sunday, has worked admirably in the Portland Street Church. It secures regular giving and tends to increase conscientious giving, for each one has to decide how much he can afford to give.

For some churches the plan of dividing the year into periods, each period devoted to one particular object and presented at the proper time, may be better. I should insist, however, that that plan is not good unless the offerings are brought in every week. I believe in the constant attention to the matter.

My sixth and last point is this:—

6. Allow nothing to break the continuity.

There is nothing so injurious to the educational process as interruption. The time has come when we must insist upon this. When once the special objects for which our offerings for a certain period are decided upon, no special appeals should be allowed to come concerning other objects. It only hinders our work to allow appeals from independent objects to come before us. Attention is diverted. We may permit men representing other missionary objects once in a while to present their work before the people, but seldom, if ever, allow them to take an offering. It cannot but hinder our own work. It is not that we are not interested in other objects, but we have a great end to attain and we cannot permit anything to detract our attention and interest from it. We should have missionaries and other workers come and present the conditions and needs of different fields, but in no case allow them to ask for a collection. They have performed their mission when they have set the work before us.

For these very reasons it may be best to adopt the periodic plan for beneficence and then we can give one period to miscellaneous objects.

Moreover, our own regular missionary organizations should not be permitted to set apart special days and make special appeals for their own work. None complain more than they at these indiscriminate requests from outsiders. They should take their own advice and not hinder the development of our own work in our churches. They may present the special needs if they wish; they should do so. But they have no right to ask for special offerings. The denomination must rise against this injurious custom. I can understand why they are so anxious for more money. Would to God that we were all as anxious as they. But the church must not plan for the day alone, not for one organization alone. I say most emphatically, this thing must cease if we are to have any development in our benevolence. The burden of putting the stop to it rests upon the individual churches. We must take a firmer stand.

An officer of one of our missionary societies goes to one of our churches which has not given a cent for the sending of the gospel to our Lord's brethren for years. After his address they pass the hat and give him a small collection. Shall he take it? No! a thousand times No! I'd throw it to the floor. They shall not purchase peace to their souls in any such manner as this

when thousands of their fellowmen are crying in the agony of their hearts, "Show us the Father."

Brethren, we must insist that neither from outsiders nor from our own organizations shall interruptions come to hinder our work of educating people in this greatest of Christian graces.

I make these six suggestions, not as covering the whole ground, but as indicating what I believe to be some important considerations in the educational process of Systematic Beneficence. Others may be equally as important. These to me seem indispensable.



