

Approved and Disapproved Methods of Giving

A Paper Read Before the W. F. M. S. Convention at Osceola, Iowa, by Mrs. A. C. Voelker, Leon, Iowa.

The subject of giving is one of the vital problems confronting the Protestant churches. The solution of this problem rests with the Christians enrolled in the church of Christ today.

It is a logical fact that radical changes are more easily remedied than gradual changes which have become chronic in their results. The pendulum has slowly but surely swung far away from the days of our forefathers when church or the "Lord's obligations" were as religiously and faithfully discharged as the account of the grocer or butcher. Our great grandfathers considered it a privilege to help sustain the church and its needs as near to his heart as the caring for his own heart and home.

Should one of the old saints long since asleep be granted a brief furlough among his ancestral halls, his eyes would be no more astounded at seeing a passenger alrship almost lost to sight in the trackless blue above, than his ears would be to hear a decorous deacon get up after a good sermon and destroy the good thought and spirit left by the long and tiresome "coasting method" of raising the apportionments of the church as is all too often done in this our day.

The crisis is at hand. God's call to duty is heralded from every pulpit and should be heard and heeded by every loyal Christian in the pew until the question of giving is solved. All Christians are agreed that the church has a claim upon its followers. "Give to God that which is God's." The issue is here, how can we meet our obligations and feel that our methods are approved?

I am sure you will expect me to mention "tithing as the first and best of all 'approved methods.'" Although I am personally fully agreed with you I will not endeavor to say much on this subject as I am aware there are those among you who have given you their best thoughts after careful and well studied consideration of this subject. The little scope allowed me in this paper could add little to what has been said so I will give only three concise reasons why tithing is the method.

1st.—It is an established and recognized law, "The tit is the Lord's."
2nd.—It is the best known systematic method of equal distribution. The widow giving her mite shares equally with the millions of the philanthropist.

3rd.—If all church members were tithers we would have no need for such papers as these. "When the Lord comes into his own the storehouse will be blessed that there shall not be room enough to receive." But since only a small per cent of enrolled Christians are tithers these discussions can but aim at the goal.

The second approved method I would call "systematic giving." Whether you give a per cent or a fraction of your means or your increase let it be systematic. Because

1st.—Systematic giving would insure increased offering. We hear so many complaints, "It is just give, give, here a little, there a little, something all the time," but let the giver keep an exact account of his "here a little, there a little" I believe he would undoubtedly find that it is "in the end a little," also when compared with any other item of his various household or living expenses.

2nd.—Systematic giving insures a freer hand. If we have no mite box or "Lord's own" fund to draw from, the question will constantly come up, "Can I afford it this month, there are always so many expenses at this time of year" (which time always seems to be the season at hand). But if a regular fund is kept the question will not so often be, "Can I give?" but "How much can I give?" for this particular call.

3rd.—Systematic giving does, or should have, a reflex action on the home if it is carried out right. I believe parents and children alike should be partners in their "Lord's fund." The children of today will be the stewards of tomorrow and need this home training to meet this duty. Too often the head of the family gives to various calls without consulting any of his household, while if they were giving co-operatively and systematically each member of the family would share in the discussions and so learn to give and incidentally become interested in giving and in the needs of the church.

4th.—All giving whether systematic or at random should be "varied." When calling upon the members our committee too often hear the final, "I decided to give it all in a lump this year and I have given all I can afford." Sometimes this "lump" is all given to the pastor's salary some times to the general fund. Now if this giving were varied it would

1st.—Increase the offering. A ten dollar bill might look pretty big in a "lump" but would be rather minutely dissected if it had to meet the ten or eleven board requirements as well as the other membership obligations.

2nd.—Dividing our gifts and giving to the different causes would naturally stimulate interest in the various needs and an aroused interest is the first prime essential to increased giving. God says that those who honor him with their substance shall have his blessing. "Return unto me and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts."
Last, but most important of all approved methods, I consider "Giving in the right spirit." One of our beloved poets says, "Not what we give but what we share, for the gift without the giver is bare," and again "He who gives himself with his aims feeds thee; himself, his hungering neighbor and me," then again, "Better to me the poor man's crust, Better the blessings of the poor, though he turn me hungry from his door. That is no true aim which the hand can hold; he gives nothing but worthless gold who gives from a sense of duty."

An old man once was heard to say, "I have belonged to the church over twenty-five years and it has never cost me more than 25 cents a year." We can sing with all our tongues "Salvation is free" and quote emphatically "Tis heaven alone that is given away, 'tis only God who may be had for the asking." But we may shout "Salvation is free" until kingdom come, in the end we will get out of our religion just about as much as we put into it. "Earth gets its price for what earth gives us." As we are commanded to "Do with our might what our hands find to do" so let us also give with our hearts what our hands find to give, and remember "God loveth a cheerful giver."

I have tried to discuss some of the first essentials of "approved methods." We have considered tithing, systematic giving, varied giving and giving in the right spirit. I will not attempt to dwell at much length on "disapproved methods" as this phase of the question must needs be mere personal opinion. If we used all named approved methods we would have no need of resorting to other methods, but since this ideal state is yet only a desired end in view we must give some attention to the less desirable subject.

A good layman was once asked what he thought of church socials, teas, suppers, bazaars and other similar methods so commonly resorted to in these days to raise funds for various church purposes. He unhesitatingly replied "I believe I can say advisedly as far as the financial side is concerned they are penny wise and pound foolish. It takes my wife a day to prepare for the event, a day to assist at the serving and a third day to help clean up. Then she spends a dollar for what she gives and I pay another dollar to buy it back." Possibly this statement sounds a bit radical but we must agree there is some truth in his point of view. I believe the old-fashioned church supper had much to commend it when the matrons and young ladies took their handwork and spent the afternoon in discussing the church, its people and its needs from a helpful interest. The men of the household came in to supper and enjoyed the social evening spent with neighbors and friends. Does the church social of today fill this same mission or has it degenerated into a mere cafe nature. Busy men and women come in, eat, then rush away again much the same as they do in the common eating house. No time and little opportunity to become acquainted with the stranger. In the end the work has fallen on the usual few who, tired and discouraged, discuss the question whether it is really worth while until the time comes for the next supper.

I am afraid if the heathen who can't understand the great love of his American neighbor who sends him food and clothing for the body, preachers and teachers for the soul, could know how many good sisters had frozen their fingers over the ice cream and steamed their faces over the coffee pot, his idea of this wondrous love would have some questions of doubt in it.
Will I be treading on dangerous ground if I mention our good, hard working Woman's Guild under this heading? Indeed I am an enthusiastic Guild worker myself and believe that as long as present conditions exist the Aid Societies answer a great need, but I sincerely hope the day will dawn when their good efforts can fill a nobler purpose and have a higher aim than only raising money for local needs. What a great power for good our societies could be if the afternoons now spent in discussing the welfare of the church, the new members, the strangers, the sick and the needy, thus making the church a helpful social center for its members. Church suppers and socials could then be made splendid fellowship gatherings that would soon make pastor and people feel the benefits of this warmer, friendlier atmosphere.

Why is it almost a universal fact that the church that has an exceptionally strong aid society is usually correspondingly weak in the missionary work? Up to a recent date a church in this district with an enrollment of over 250 members had nearly one-half that number on the Guild roll and only eight members in their missionary society. The wife of one of our pastors some time ago invited a new church member to join the missionary society. An enthusiastic aid worker overheard her and immediately chimed in, "Oh, don't coax her into your missionary society, you know as long as we have this new work on our hands we need all the money and all the members for that."

I know personally of a church where they had a splendid missionary society and all the departments of the church work showed a good, live spirit. A new pastor coming in concluded that the church needed general repairing, redecorating, etc. He advised the missionary society to disband and organize an aid society until the local needs were accomplished. This happened over five years ago, the advice of the pastor was reluctantly followed, the work was done as planned. The pastor has long since gone to another charge, but they have never been able to reorganize the missionary society, although the need of more spiritual help is sadly felt. Who can count the irreparable harm done to this once active little church, who will say that it is not suffering retribution for depriving the Lord of his own? Would it not be just as rational to sell the church furnace to buy a pipe organ, as to disband the society that is the essential heating plant for much of the spiritual fire of the church to organize an aid society?
All too long we have been Martha making such work and worry over a cause which, if it were sys-



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tematically and more earnestly planned and prayed over, would allow us much time to sit, like Mary, at the feet of the Master learning of him the simple lessons of the simple life and hearing the good words, "Ye have chosen the better part." In this service promoting, both spiritual and temporal interests, it pays in the highest and best sense of the word, pays in spiritual blessings, pays in temporal prosperity, pays in peace of mind when our duty to the Lord is done. In Proverbs we read, "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." Luke tells us, "Give and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." "With the same method ye mete withal it shall be meted to you again."

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Council Proceedings.

Leon, Iowa, April 6, 1911. Council met in regular session with Mayor Harvey presiding and councilmen Varga, Akes, Cash, Ogilvie and Gardner present.

The following claims were allowed:
H. Bradford, oil.....\$ 1.50
Ed Pace, work on sewer..... 5.20
Ward Potts, work on sewer..... 3.80
A. E. Mullin, work on sewer..... 13.00
Charles Norton, work on sewer..... 6.80
Henry Farnes, work on sewer..... 2.00
Orr Pace, work on sewer..... 2.80
P. Williams, work on sewer..... 7.60
J. Martin, work on sewer..... 9.30
M. Marshall, work on sewer..... 6.90
W. L. Miller dinner for tramp Leon Cement and Brick Co., slugs..... 2.85
Gardner & Van Nostrand, hauling..... 25
J. L. Mitchell, street commissioner and killing dog..... 30.90
J. L. Mitchell, marshal's salary..... 37.13
Lewis Elwell, supplies..... 1.45
S. Varga, salary as councilman..... 34.00
Win Cash, salary as councilman..... 40.00
C. M. Akes, salary as councilman..... 22.00
M. Gardner, salary as councilman..... 39.00
Geo. Ogilvie, salary as councilman..... 40.00
Jas. F. Harvey, mayor's quarterly salary..... 62.50
S. G. Mitchell, clerk's quarterly salary..... 18.75
Frank Stanley, night watch M. A. Gammill, treasurer..... 32.13
Leon Electric Co., lights and water..... 137.98
R. Pease, hauling fire engine..... 2.00
W. R. Clark, hauling fire engine..... 2.00
Crane & Co., casing..... 105.00
J. E. Andrew, feeding prisoners..... 11.25
Clerk was ordered to advertise for bids for cement, concrete mixture and sand.
On motion prices to be paid by city for street work the coming season was fixed at 35 cents per hour for man and team and 17½ cents per hour for single hand.

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