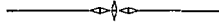


continuance, must depend greatly upon the sagacity and temper of her rulers. If a *modus vivendi* can be found, it will be through the instrumentality of men who can bring to the consideration of deep subjects the noble temper, the firm faith, and the manly and inspiring eloquence of Dean Church.

G. D. BOYLE.



ART. V.—SYSTEMATIC ALMSGIVING.

ALMSGIVING to be efficacious, that is, to benefit both the giver and the recipient, must be systematic. Spasmodic, indiscriminating charity is no credit to the donor, and probably harms those on whom it is bestowed. Charity to be real must involve some self-denial that the element of sacrifice be not wanting and some consideration that the alms be wisely bestowed. Charity born of the emotions, put in force by a sudden impulse, is merely the indulgence of a kindly feeling, not the fulfilment of a sacred duty. I would be the last to check charity in any form: Treasurers of charitable institutions cannot afford to refuse help given from any motive; but there might be more frequent and definite teaching and exhortation on the duty of almsgiving than there is, as a rule, within the pale of the Established Church. There is frequent begging for this object or that, but that is not teaching; there is sometimes scolding because the congregation refuses to respond to appeals, but that is not teaching—I mean teaching in the abstract, exhortation and persuasion, a plain setting forth of the primary duty proving our love to Christ by some self-denial for His cause, some measure of obedience to His command, “Love one another.” We members of an endowed Church do not feel the necessity as others do of contributing daily to maintain our Church, and so, in many cases, almsgiving is dissociated from the Church itself, and has degenerated into a formal contribution of the smallest coins at hand to collections too infrequently made. This is not always so; there are churches in our communion whose almsgiving bears comparison with the most generous of congregations on a voluntary footing, but it is so too often and it ought not so to be. Congregations will probably resent teaching on this point more than on any other, but still the plain enunciation of the duty should not be neglected. No duty is more clearly laid down with more definite instructions in the New Testament than this. Let every one (not the rich only, but every one), on the first day of the week (*i.e.*, systematically) lay by him in store (*i.e.*, deliberately and thoughtfully), as God hath

prospered him (*i.e.*, in some definite proportion to his income). If he has much, he is to give plenteously; if he has little, he must exercise more care to retain still some part of that slender income to fulfil the command. The duty of giving is so fully enforced in the series of exhortations read while the offertory is being collected that little can be added thereto, but every sentence is pregnant with ideas that are totally ignored by large sections of our congregations. People may be chanting these sentences with all their voice, rejoicing in the beautiful harmony, and all the time their hands go on fumbling for the threepenny piece which will hide itself between the two half-crowns, as if ashamed to be brought forth as the paltry excuse for an offering to the Most High by one of His creatures highly favoured perhaps in this world's goods. Never expect great things of the man who fumbles long in his pocket—he is not feeling for the biggest coin there, that is easily found; he is searching for the smallest, that he may not pass the bag by in the sight of the congregation, and yet obviate the possibility of his ever feeling the loss of what he has contributed in the sight of God. If but a fraction of our congregations felt as David felt when he refused to offer unto the Lord his God of that which cost him nothing, the offertories of our churches would be on a very different scale.

A good deal of this is, I believe, the result of the want of a few words periodically from the pulpit on the subject, exhorting the members of the church to lay by, as God hath prospered them, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually, a certain part of their income to be given in alms, to divide that into two parts, one part to be subscribed through secular channels, and part through the offertory, and then to persuade and encourage them to make this latter part a greater portion of their alms than is usually the case. Even good people, liberal people, do not seem to contemplate the possibility of giving any large sum through the offertory. I am sure that many excellent people who fulfil the Apostolic precepts on charity to the letter still disregard the offertory as the most fitting channel of all for their gifts, put aside no part of their alms specially to be offered in church; and while they may send munificent contributions direct to a charity, content themselves with some merely nominal contribution, it may be, to the same institution when the opportunity occurs of consecrating the gift, as it were, anew by passing it through the channel of the offertory—offering it to God in His house for His poor. I do not mean that this is done of any unworthy motive; the practice cannot be entirely reversed. In the parish of Lower Beeding we make a parish fund for several objects to which offertories in church are also devoted, and the parish sub-

scription list is not without its use; such is human nature that the contribution of one calls forth the contribution of another, the amount subscribed by one determines the amount subscribed by another, and so on. There is need for both the open subscription and the secret offering in church; no hard and fast line can be laid down; men must do as they are disposed in their heart; but my contention is that there might be less difference between the two modes of giving.

Take an income of £1,000 per annum, if the owner reads his Bible he will set apart £100 to be devoted to good works. Out of this £100, would it be too much to take one quarter of the amount to be offered in God's house? But I think that is not often done. It would enable him to give one half-sovereign every Sunday in the year, and I remember a great church in London where, if 10s. had always been found for every thousand a year represented there, the offertories would have been ten times as big as they were, liberal even as they were always considered to be. I know I am treading on dangerous ground. One may impute every vice to an Englishman but that of niggardliness, and, indeed, as a nation, I believe we are more free from that vice than any other. If we sin by insufficient contributions in church it is more from want of thought than anything else. Again, I appeal to our teachers to put this lesson more frequently before us, more difficult perhaps to set than to receive. It will require wisdom and care in the setting, it will require not only earnestness and faithfulness, but it will require knowledge of the world and tact to avoid offence when the preacher touches thus the most sensitive part of an Englishman—his pocket. It is a matter, indeed, where an ounce of tact is worth a ton of genius, where the teacher must seek the wisdom of the serpent in the art of putting things. It can only be done by a simple plainness in the statement of the abstract duty and a great deal of tact in the personal application. Above all things remember the motto, admirably illustrative of Sussex character, a motto which clergymen should never forget in preparing their sermons for Sussex congregations, the plain declaration of the Sussex peasant, "I won't be druv."¹

What the preacher is able to do will, however, be of little avail unless parents do their duty. Few children are born misers; let their natural generosity be developed and directed. Let a child learn to appreciate the value of money, the sooner the better. Money may be the root of all evil, but it may also be made the source of much good. As soon as a child can discriminate between a shilling and a sixpence let them have

¹ This paper was read at a gathering of clergy and laity in Sussex.

some periodical allowance, however small, and let them start with the idea that of this allowance a part is to be given in charity, another part in little presents to friends, and the last part for themselves. Train up a child in the way he should go. A child thus trained will never look upon money as merely the means of self-indulgence, and will never forget how to apportion an income in later life.

Something also depends on the arrangements made for offertories and collections in church. This is surely a point where it is wise to consult the congregation to persuade them to take an interest in the arrangement and the choice of objects to which offertories should be given. It will be as impossible in this, as in everything else, to please everybody; but the clergyman will find it to the benefit of the offertories made if he had succeeded in pleasing the majority of the congregation in giving them some voice in the selection of objects, so that their offerings should go to support causes with which their feelings are in harmony. This is, of course, much easier in large churches where the weekly offering is the rule than in small village churches, where it is impossible, or at all events inexpedient; but the policy can be carried out as far as it will be in all. The arrangement of offertories should be systematic. The old fourfold division of offertories (1) the Maintenance of the Church, (2) the Clergy, (3) the Bishop, (4) and the Poor, needs amplification now; but I am sure it is well that certain objects should have their fixed and known turn in the cycle of offertories for the year. In our small village church the first Sunday of each month is devoted to several church expenses, one Sunday in three months is devoted to the Schools of the Parish; then the Poor, Foreign Missions, Home Missions, the Chichester Diocesan Association, and Hospitals have their appointed time. Our Harvest Thanksgiving always goes to the Sussex County Hospital, and on that day no one passes the bag by.

The dislike to the old-fashioned "charity sermon" seems to have produced a reaction which has gone perhaps too far. Frequently the object of the offertory is just announced, and no further reference is made to it from the pulpit. I do not mean that it would be wise or right for a clergyman to devote a monthly sermon to dilating on the better heating and lighting of his church, but when the more occasional subjects come round, if there is an offertory for Foreign Missions, or for the supply of some spiritual need at home, surely it is an opportunity lost if the argument and exhortation of the sermon is upon some totally different subject. The Church of England may be recovering some of her lost life, her members may be carrying out more faithfully their duties in this

respect, but there are few congregations who do not require information and teaching about the work of the various agencies for good, and a little exhortation on the subject thereto will cause many to add something to the amount which they would have given without thought, and, therefore, without profit, if their interest were not awakened by the preacher. An offertory on Foreign Missions is announced, a sermon is preached upon some point of Church doctrine; if the congregation is interested by the sermon, they may have forgotten what the offertory is for by the time the sermon is ended, and if the congregation is not interested in the sermon it is still more certain that other thoughts will have driven the object of the offertory out of their minds. Perhaps I am putting too much on the clergy, but may I say that the congregation are not likely to take a strong interest in the object for which their alms are asked unless their parson takes a lively interest in it himself. It might be well, having determined to support a particular society, to keep to some particular branch of that society's work, and to circulate at the time of the offertory in its behalf some information as to that particular branch, and so induce the congregation to identify themselves with, and take a particular interest in, that particular branch of work. If it be possible let the agent who is carrying out the work for which support is given, even if it be only once, visit the parish and stir up an interest in the work. Then it is the part of the clergyman at home to prevent his being forgotten, but year by year to obtain some personal news of him and so lead his congregation to feel that they are supporting, not a society in London, the very vastness of whose work makes it difficult for many to feel any personal interest in it, but a real live man whom they have seen and heard, and whose single work they can follow and understand and sympathize with, and consequently deny themselves somewhat to support. People will more readily give to a person whom they have seen in the flesh than to the best of ideas, even though they be backed by the best of arguments, and flanked by the most irresistible statistics.

Having got systematic offertories, well-assorted offertories with their objects introduced and maintained before the congregation with zeal, wisdom, and tact, what will it all produce? Will the congregation do their part? They will not do it except now and then, unless they can be drawn, as I have said, to do it from the highest motives, as one of the most necessary and important parts of practical religion. People seem so afraid of giving through the offertory. They seem to think that they will demoralize everyone else if they were to give largely in church. For congregational purposes, *i.e.*,

parish funds, etc., it is right that everyone should do his or her share, and if £50 a year is required for a certain purpose I would not advocate anyone contributing so largely as to give others the excuse of withholding theirs altogether; but there are plenty of opportunities when offerings are asked for larger purposes, when there would be no such fear, when, on the contrary, the knowledge of a visible increase in the congregational contribution to such or such an object would rather stimulate than depress the offering of the many. A half-crown or a shilling, or even the oft-condemned threepenny-bit, may represent the right amount in proportion to the donor's means to be contributed on ordinary occasions; but when offerings are asked for something greater, more important, more urgent, more necessitous, surely then the half-crown might be made a sovereign, or at all events half-a-sovereign; the shilling blossom into half-a-crown, and the threepenny become a shilling. People are ruined pecuniarily and otherwise every day, but I have never yet heard of a person who had been ruined for over-estimating the amount he might give in charity. You may say, but I can't afford the half-sovereign, the half-crown, or the shilling; but "can't afford" is a comparative term. Giving half-a-sovereign instead of half-a-crown may, indeed, mean going without something which the seven and sixpence otherwise might have obtained for our enjoyment or use. We should have no business to give it if it meant stinting our children of necessaries or of what is expedient for their welfare, but short of that, if the additional seven and sixpence offered to that good work only meant seven and sixpence worth of personal self-denial, it would be seven and sixpence very well spent.

In the offertory also the gift is given in secret, therefore it secures another essential of almsgiving, that the alms should be offered in all sincerity, not for the praise of men but of God; or rather let me say, not for the praise of God, but for the love of God. A rebuke was once aptly given and reparation exacted from an old lady, whom a very shrewd man, Mr. Spurgeon, suspected of the "devil's pet sin, the pride that apes humility." The lady called on him, and with much fervour and expressions of devotion for the cause, asked him to accept £50 as a "widow's mite." He took it, but reminded her that her gift was yet incomplete, saying, "Excuse me, madam, the poor widow gave two mites," and she had before leaving to make out a cheque for her second mite.

I may perhaps be accused that throughout this paper I have not yet defined what systematic almsgiving is. To give alms on a system is, I take it, having ascertained what your income

has been for the past year, to lay aside a certain proportion of that for distribution in alms during the year ensuing—so much to be subscribed to various good works, so much to be offered in church, so much to be given to mission work at home, so much abroad, so much for spiritual work, so much for the relief of poverty and bodily suffering—make out your list of objects which you consider most suitable and maintain your contributions to these as far as possible year by year. One can't contribute to everything, and it is better to give a few objects material and constant support than to flit about from one to another, or to fitter away what it may be in your power to give by splitting it up into infinitesimal portions. And for special appeals, unforeseen contingencies, you may, of course, leave a little margin for these; but if possible let the margin be on the other side, let your contributions to these extra matters represent some special effort, some additional sacrifice. I do not think it will be a permanent loss, remembering that "he that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord," and we have the assurance that that loan will be repaid. But, indeed, I know that rules cannot be laid down in this matter, everyone must judge himself and take account of the talents God has entrusted to him, remembering that one day he will be judged by Another and give account of his stewardship to One who knoweth the heart of man.

W. EGERTON HUBBARD.

ART. VI.—ASSISTED EDUCATION.

AFTER a prolonged period of expectancy, the proposals of the Government for the compulsory abolition of school-fees in public elementary schools have at length been placed before the House of Commons and the country; and a period of a fortnight is deemed sufficient for the consideration of proposals which wholly reverse the educational policy of the past half-century. It is difficult to understand the reasons for this prolonged silence, or for the precipitate decision by which it is to be followed. From the financial point of view, the limits of the Government proposals have been determined from the first by the proportions of the surplus of the receipts over the expenditure as disclosed by the Budget of the year. That surplus amounted to a sum of £2,000,000. It was obvious, therefore, that if the whole surplus were applied to the purpose of a Government grant in lieu of the existing school-fees, the grant could not exceed an average of 10s. per child in average attendance. There was, therefore, no necessity for any attempt