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I. LITERARY.

MAJOR JAMES MORTON*

Was a native of Prince Edward County, Virginia, where he spent the greater part of his very long life. He died at the age of ninety-two, at High Hill in Cumberland County, the family seat of his son, Dr. William S. Morton. He was one of a family of eighteen children—twelve sons and six daughters.

*The following sketch of Major James Morton, of Willington, was written by my Father during his later years, while he lived with me in Jonesborough, N. C. (I being at that time pastor of Buffalo and Euphonia churches in Moore county, N. C.), about 1880, and published in the *Central Presbyterian* in two or three numbers. I had so often when a student in the Seminary heard "Aunt Rice" (Mrs. Anne S. Rice, widow of Rev. Dr. John Holt Rice) and Mrs. Warey with whom I boarded (a lady of singular simplicity and sincerity of character and of pure and lovely piety) speak of their Father, Major Morton. And when during those last sweet and precious years of my Father's life, he spoke of the old hero, of Dr. Rice, of John Randolph of Roanoke, of William B. Giles, of Dr. Alexander, and his Father Rev. Drury Lacy (him of the "silver fist and silver voice"), of Dr. Moses Hoge, of Benjamin F. Stanton, and the evangelist Rev. Asabel Nettleton, and others, I begged him that he would commit some of these reminiscences to paper. This is the only one that he prepared, and I have copied it carefully from his manuscript, spelling and all. So many who read it in the *Central* more than ten years ago have asked me to furnish it again to the press, where it might appear in some form more likely to be preserved, that I send it to the UNION SEMINARY MAGAZINE. Major Morton's connection with the Hill, and with Rev. Dr. Rice, the founder of the Seminary, and his deep personal interest in the Seminary and daily prayer for it, make it eminently appropriate.

W. S. L.

SYSTEMATIC GIVING.

There are few questions in practical religion of greater moment than the consecration of the money power of christendom to the evangelization of the world.

It is also true that a pastor has done much toward bringing his congregation to a higher spiritual life, when he has led them to a liberal and scriptural exercise of the grace of giving.

It is the purpose of this article to expound the Biblical *method* of exercising this grace. It is assumed that all admit the duty and privilege of worshipping God with their substance; the way of doing so remains an open question. Anything worth doing at all, is worth doing methodically; yet it is a fact that this important Christian grace is frequently permitted to manage itself in the most hap-hazard manner. Some have methods, to be sure; but such methods!

Dr. A. T. Pierson has classified the ways of giving as follows:

1. The *Careless way*, giving to every cause without enquiring into its merits.
2. The *Impulsive way*; giving as pity and sensibility prompt.
3. The *Lazy way*; offering to earn money by fairs, festivals, &c.
4. The *Self-denying way*; saving the cost of luxuries and devoting it to charity.
5. The *Systematic way*; devoting a definite portion of our gains to religion.
6. The *Equal way*; giving to religion as much as we spend on ourselves.
7. The *Heroic way*; limiting our own expenditures to a certain sum and giving God all the rest.

Which is the Scriptural way? Evidently the first three must be ruled out, for the Bible knows nothing about the careless, or impulsive, or lazy way of giving. On reflection it will be found that all the rest may really be classified under No. 5; for the self-denying, the equal, and the heroic, are only splendid applications of the systematic way of giving.

Will the reader turn now to his Bible and study systematic giving in the light of I. Cor. xvi:2.

"Upon the first day of the week, let each one of you lay by

him in store, as he may prosper." That verse gives us, in a single line, the divine idea of Christian beneficence. A careful analysis will develop five distinct features.

1. "Let EACH one of you." None are exempt. It matters not how poor a man may be, God has included him in this plan of giving; and expects him to contribute. In this connection, it is precious to remember: "If the readiness is there, it is accepted according as a man hath, not according as he hath not." (II. Cor. viii:12.) The Lord knows the state of the purse, and likewise the desires of the heart; and sometimes, as in the case of a certain poor widow, a willing heart can make a mite measure more than a mint.

2. "Let each one of you LAY BY HIM IN STORE."

A certain definite part of one's income is to be taken at the very time it comes in, and laid aside "in store," on deposit, in keeping, to be used as the Lord's cause may demand, and at the time when that cause shall call.

3. "Upon the FIRST day of the week."

No good plan can be unmindful of dates, much less that under consideration; and we find that the "first-day"—the Lord's day—is the divinely appointed time for this "laying by in store". It seems also to be the scriptural time for making the gift, and a two-fold advantage is thus derived. First—a gift is made; second—we attend church to make it.

4. "Let each one of you lay by him in store AS."

That recognizes some standard. A proportionate part of the income is to be devoted. Some rule is to be applied in determining the amount of our gifts.

5. "As he may PROSPER."

That reveals the standard, discloses the rule. It is found to be the manifested favor of God. It is a standard of grace, rather than of mathematics. God requires no man to give beyond his ability. If He blesses us, our gifts are to increase with that blessing; if he afflicts us, our gifts are to be tempered with the adversity.

Scriptural systematic giving means, then:—*Each one, laying by in store, a certain amount, at a certain time, according to a divinely manifested standard.* Since this method is biblical, it is perfect, and in practical application will be found to have every advantage in its favor.

It is the easiest way to give; for it distributes the amount of one's offerings through each day's income, and thereby makes

the sum total of burden easier to bear. The back can easily carry, by many trips the load whose single lift would have crushed it. It is harder to pay for what has already been used, than for what is still to be enjoyed. For much the same reason it is harder to make the income of today provide for the charities of yesterday's income, than to make it provide for its own.

It is the most respectful way. True and hearty hospitality busies itself with preparations, and he who leaves to the last moment and to the uncertain and accidental happenings of the occasion, the providing of comfort, and entertainment, thereby declares that he holds his guests in light esteem. Many a christian, from sheer carelessness, finds himself in a predicament similar to that described in Kote's Hamilton's pungent allegory of "Thanksgiving Ann,"—"I thought I'd give ye what I happened to have when de time come, and I didn't happen to have much of nuffin."

Men forget that simple respect demands that we make some sort of preparation to take care of those great causes of the church which come to us in the stead of Christ's own person.

It is also the cheerful way to give. God loves a cheerful giver, and He has told us the secret of cheerful giving in that verse which says, "Let each man do according as he HATH PURPOSED in his heart; not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver." (II. Cor. ix-7.)

"Purposing" is the inspiration of cheerful giving. By a deliberate choice, a cause has been espoused, and when the time comes to contribute, one is not plunged into the depths of gloom over the vision of a depleted purse, but can give and actually retain his spirits—a tremendous gain for many. Indeed under such conditions, giving becomes a joy and gladness. The purposed wish of the heart has been realized in the application of a provided gift.

On the other hand, it may be gravely questioned if giving which is not cheerful, can be classed as Christian giving at all. In the words of another:

"If you give a hundred dollars because your neighbor has given the same, and you are too proud to seem behind him, you have given nothing; you have simply *bought* your own respectability. Again, if you give a hundred dollars to have your name appear in the published list of generous donors, you have given nothing; you have *paid* so much for popular

applause. Again, if you give simply to get rid of an unfortunate beggar, you have given nothing; you have simply bought off a nuisance.

Systematic giving is the business-like way. Religion loses none of its sacredness from being managed on sanctified business principles. Business men, if prudent, provide for future emergencies. Why should not the Christian contributor? Let us be systematic, and our benefactions would not be diminished by rainy Sundays; great causes would not depend for their very life upon the happy manner of their presentation; and the evangelization of the world would not swing, pendulum-like, between the barren extremities of an empty purse on the one hand, and a generous impulse on the other.

Still another advantage of systematic giving is that *it puts the matter entirely in God's hand.*

A definite and proportionate part of our income goes to the Lord. If the income increases, our gifts increase, and *vice versa*. The whole matter hinges around the clause, "as he may prosper." Prosperity is largely dependent upon God, who knows full well the needs of His work. When the need is greater He provides larger gifts by increasing the prosperity of the proportionate giver. Thus the regulating of one's gifts is placed under divine control. This method offers a working-place for the hand of God's providence, and it is the only method by which the Lord, without violating the freedom of the giver, can exercise a direct, positive, rational, and satisfactory supervision in determining the measure of the contributions of His people.

The systematic is the prosperous way of giving. God's blessing attaches to it. This is just the point in that famous passage: "Bring ye the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of Heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." (Mal. iii:10.) The experience of all who have given in the scriptural spirit and way, to the great causes of Christ's church through all the years, is but the illustration of the truth so tersely and emphatically stated by the prophet.

Finally, in addition to being the easiest, the most respectful, the only cheerful, the business-like, the divinely regulated, and the prosperous plan, systematic giving has the superla-

tive advantage of being sanctioned by the universal custom of scripture.

The very earliest giving mentioned in scriptures seems to have been of this kind.—“Firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof.” (Gen. iv:4.) The masterly tithing system of the old Jews was unquestionably systematic and proportionate; and, as an institution, there is strong evidence going to show that it was co-ordinate with the Sabbath ante-dating Abram’s famous gift to Priest-King Melchizedek.

When the Christian church passed through its transition period, during the life-time of the Apostles, and began to exercise the grace of giving, what was more natural than that believers should follow the system or plan of giving which they had already learned and practiced under the Old Testament economy? Indeed, does not he who fails to read under the light of the Jewish tithing system, likewise fail to catch the true spirit of New Testament beneficence as expounded in the eighth and ninth chapters of second Corinthians, and particularly in I. Cor. xvi:2.—“Upon the first day of the week, let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper”? There is no contention here for the arithmetic of the Jewish tithe. It is not the amount, but the principle which, it is maintained, passed over from the Jewish and endured in the Christian church.

True there are instances, like that of Barnabas, when the early Christians gave much, if not all of their possessions; and had all things in common. But it would be difficult to prove that such conduct was an inspired example for future times. Was it not rather an excrescence of the grace of giving, the result of impulse and not of indoctrination, and doomed, in the very nature of things to be evanescent?

In view of all these things, it is not surprising that the *objections* to systematic giving are based on extra-Biblical grounds. Some of these objections will now be noticed.

1. It is urged that the system is *impracticable*; it being oftentimes difficult for the giver to ascertain the exact amount of his income. When this difficulty obtains, the man can only estimate his income, and give on the basis of that estimate, until a balance can be struck.

However, one should know, with approximate exactness at least, the amount of his income. Just here arises one of the great evils of the day; living on probabilities, running in debt

on expectations, and plunged into financial embarrassment because those expectations fail to materialize. Few things can be more helpful in determining the amount of one's income, than the practical application of systematic giving. It inculcates sound business principles. It made the Jews a nation of the finest financiers in the world.

2. Another objection is, that this system falls *unequally* upon the rich and the poor. The same objection can be made against the Jewish tithe-system. The inequalities between rich and poor may not have been so great in B. C. 500 as in A. D. 1892, but the world has always had its Dives and its Lazarus.

3. One other cavil remains to be noted. It is claimed that the circumstances of life vary so much, that it is easier at times to give more than the proportionate part and harder at times to give less. But this is only one of the artful strokes of Satan on the heart strings of a covetous nature. It is always hard for a covetous man to give, and never difficult for him to construe any set of circumstances as adverse to liberality.

A practical question suggests itself in the application of systematic giving. What proportion of the income shall be devoted specifically to God's cause,—one tenth, or one eighth, or one fifth, or one half? Since the Gospel makes love to Christ the supreme motive of Christian life, this question must be left to the individual conscience to determine. The Jewish ratio was certainly a tenth, probably more, for there were temple-tithes, poor-tithes, and Levitical tithes; to say nothing of free-will offerings. If the mathematics of the Jewish tithe is still in force, it must be as the *minimum* standard of Christian beneficence. The Jewish church had no world-wide mission work. They had only to support themselves. Today the obligation on the Christian church is larger than for self-support. The Gospel must be sent into all the earth, and it would seem that there should be a corresponding increase in the benefactions of the Christian over those of the ancient Jew.

But whatever the proportion, whether the gift be large or small, let it be systematic; each one, laying by him in store, a certain amount, at a certain time, according to a divinely manifested standard.

If this article had not already transcended the proper length, it might be shown that the system of raising church revenues by pew-rent is entirely out of harmony with the spirit and

practice of the plan that has been set forth in this paper.

On the other hand, the envelope system, in vogue in many of our churches, and rapidly growing in favor wherever tried, harmonizes entirely with systematic giving, not only cultivating the grace of Christian liberality, but fostering spirituality, increasing the sum total of contributions, and enabling a church to meet its financial obligations more easily than by the old plan of "renting out the pews."

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