

Our Mission Bands

A Mission Band in every Church in our Convention in three years.

THE MISSIONARY EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

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How closely is the child's missionary education related to religious education? Is missionary education something to be added in order to promote an enterprise, or is it an essential part of religious training? Should our controlling purpose be the child's religious growth, or should it be the raising of money for a cause? Should missionary societies decide first how much and to what object they wish children to give, and then tell the children facts which will stir them to give, or should they first ask what kind of information concerning missions will yield the richest results in character building, and then study how they may direct the child's resulting natural desire for activity so that it will really count for good in this world of need?

Personally, I am ready to defend the proposition that missionary information should never be given to children with the primary object of raising money. I realize that it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a missionary society to forego the money aim in its dealing with children. For the sake of the Kingdom of God in which impossible things are done, however, I believe that the religious educational aim should control. My reasons are as follows:

1. If at the outset we decide how much and to what we think our children should give, then by the narrowness of our aim we limit the character and the amount of the instruction we may give the children. The material we choose may not contain the facts which would most interest them, or which would give them what would result in the greatest contribution to their spiritual growth. By the narrowness of our aim, we also lose the opportunity of putting missionary teaching directly into the curriculum of the Sunday School. It must forever remain as an extra to be introduced incidentally.

2. My second reason for believing that

the educational, rather than the money aim should control is that the financial resources of children are small. If money be the object of our work, the same amount of energy devoted to adults would yield far larger financial returns. We may not entirely disregard the contributions of the children, since in one denomination alone the Sunday Schools give yearly about one million dollars to missions, although a small proportion of those gifts come from children under twelve or fourteen, out of their own allowance or their own earnings. Much of the money given is handed over to the children from their parents. If we were to insist that all the money given by children under fourteen must come out of their allowances or earnings, the results would no doubt be comparatively small.

3. If our purpose is to promote the habit of giving, then our aim is educational, and the amount of money raised must be held as insignificant. We must concern ourselves primarily with the motives, the spirit that prompts the giving. So long as we bring pressure to bear upon teachers of Sunday School classes and upon leaders of Mission Bands to raise a given amount of money, there is almost certain to be a disregard of the methods by which the money is raised and a careless attitude toward the place from which the money comes.

If we really wish to develop the habit of generosity in children, the first acts of giving must not only be genuine, they must also be enjoyed. It is a psychological law that the first acts in the habit forming process must be accomplished with pleasure. The family horse runs faster when driven homeward than when driven away from home because the homeward journey is associated with the pleasure of rest, shelter and food.

There are parents who, having compelled their children to attend church when young, thinking that thus they would develop the habit of regular church attendance, are disappointed because