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Motives for Christian Work.

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Motives for Christian work may be divided into three classes. Some are *reprehensible*, originating in pride and selfishness, and having an eye to temporal benefits only. Others are associated with fear of present or future calamities, and a desire to get to heaven as an escape from misery. These may be labeled *inferior*. Then third are those that are *excellent*, noble, exalted, and are at once the strength and adornment of Christianity, such as Duty, Love and Faith. But though these motives may be easily classified, they usually exist mixed and jumbled together. Even the lower motives are among the last infirmities of the best men; and like the ghosts of their old dead selves their dark shadows often fall over the most generous benefactions. Indeed the Christian voyager is always at a loss to say how much of these terrestrial breezes go to fill his sails. Dr. Bonar, author of

"I heard the voice of Jesus say
Come unto me and rest," etc.,

must have been troubled about this when he dreamed that an angel came down and weighed his zeal, and marked it 100. But on being put into the crucible and analyzed the result showed selfishness 14, sectarianism 15, ambition 22, love to man 23, and love to God 26.

The motive is of great importance. It determines the real value of good works and gives beauty, consistency and endurance to Christian character. The reader will no doubt sympathize with Robert Browning.

"Not on the vulgar mass
Called 'work' must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
O'er which from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

"But all the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's
amount;

"Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped:
All I could never be,
All men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped."

We readily subscribe to the above as being worthy of its place in our belief. At the same time this doctrine is abused when it is made an apology for defective Christian living. Surely this is a serious blunder, and should be earnestly guarded against. It is true that mistakes may be made in attributing motives and that a man's actual life may sometimes but ill compare with his own ideals. But if we would have our motives respected we must see to it that our actions are respectable also; for when our actions are consistently wrong it will be difficult to make people believe that our motives are consistently right. If the man's motives, ideas, beliefs, be refined and elevated, it will be impossible for the life to be low, and if a man's robes continue to trail in the mire it is impossible that the motives, thoughts or ideals be high.

One of the grandest motives that can take possession of a soul is the sense of duty. Even when it becomes a passion, and its loud thunderings fill all the avenues of the soul, it is sublime. A man's true character, his being and becoming, lies very close to his readiness to respond to duty. If he will not respond to this he will not respond to anything. If you cannot appeal to him on this principle you can find no other. If this will not arouse him to that which is lawful and right he cannot be aroused at all.

I imagine I hear some one say, "Appeal to his

feelings and affections; try love." Yes, but that affection or feeling is of but little redeeming value which is not supported by the principle of moral obligation and necessity: by what is due, what I owe to self, to man, to God. The roots of Christian affections lie deep in this soil: "If God so loved we ought to love." "The love of Christ constraineth us because we should live to him who died for all." The scenes of Calvary do not precede, but follow, those of Gethsemane—the struggles and victories of duty.

The power of this motive is illustrated in the case of the soldier who was found petrified at his post, and by those who, when "straitly commanded" not to teach in the name of the Master, replied, "We cannot but speak." "We ought to obey God." Well has it been observed by Jas. A. Froude, the English writer, and literary executor of Thomas Carlyle "That which notably distinguishes a high order of man from a low order of man, that which constitutes both human goodness and greatness, is not the degree of intelligence with which men pursue their own advantage, but it is disregard of personal pleasure, indulgence, gain, present or remote, because some other line of conduct is more directly right."

Love is an excellent motive. It is not a fleeting thing, but "abiding" and "never failing." Not like the torrent that wastes itself in splash and roar, but like—

"The clear stream that through the meadow flows,
And all the long summer on its mission goes."

Nor like the lightning flash from out the midnight sky—

"But the sweet sunshine, whose unflinching ray,
From its calm throne of blue, lights every day."

Love is the great lesson of the gospel. The lesson of the feeding of the 5,000, where the disciples are made to think and care for others. Love is an aid to duty. It supplements duty. Like oil in the machinery it makes the task of duty easy. It beautifies the work and the worker. It enlarges the soul. I know of a little girl that learned to love and prayed, "God bless papa and mamma." Her soul grew larger and she prayed, "God bless papa and mamma and the ministers." And still her soul enlarged and she was heard to pray, "God bless papa and mamma, God bless the ministers, and God bless everybody." As Coleridge puts it in the *Ancient Mariner*:

"Farewell, farewell, but this I tell
To thee, thou wedding-guest,
He prayeth well who loveth well,
Both man, and bird, and beast:

"He prayeth best who loveth best
All things, both great and small;
For the dear God, who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."

Love is wonderfully inventive. It is never at a loss how to proceed. The reason why so many people do not know how to do this and that is, that though they have so many chances they never learn the lesson of love.

"Over the mountains, and under the waves,
Over the fountains, and under the graves;
Under the floods which are deepest,
Which Neptune obey,
Over rocks which are steepest,
Love will find out the way."

FAITH always is an excellent and essential equipment for Christian work. Faith in God and man and human destiny. Herein consists the sublime optimism of the gospel. Faith in God and faith in man. These are identical and inseparable. Both find their support in supreme goodness and omnipotence. Faith in God will be perplexed and put to the proof. Faith in man is certainly much more difficult and attended with severer experiences. But though it be sorely tried, and sometimes made to retreat from the world with a disappointed and

bleeding heart, it must be resolutely cherished and exercised. You can always find a Jonathan to put against a Saul, or a Desdemona to put against Emilea. But if you should be deceived nine times out of ten you are richer, by a great deal, than if you had escaped both the deceiving and believing. When you lose a friend you lose much; when you lose faith you lose all. I read somewhere of three pilgrims who met on the highway and fell into recounting their misfortunes and losses.

"But when their tales were done
There spake among them one,
A stranger seeming to all sorrow free;
Sad losses have ye met,
But mine is heavier yet,
For a believing heart has gone from me.

"Alas! those pilgrims said,
For the living and the dead,
For fortune's cruelty, and love's sure cross,
For the wrecks of land and sea,—
But howe'er it came to thee,
Thine, stranger, is life's last and heavier loss."

The loss of faith is the loss of true manhood and womanhood. It leads to the abandonment of right and honorable dealing for policy and cunning craftiness, underhanded treachery and murder. It has furnished history with its Pharaohs and Herods, its cruel Charleses and Philips, its bloody Mary, of England, and its infamous Catharine de Medici, of France.

Faith asserts that what ought to be done can be done. Anything short of this is a form of infidelity. Faith asserts "that there is one divine event to which the whole creation moves," that—

"Through the ages
One increasing purpose runs;
And the thoughts of men are widened
With the process of the suns."

It scorns the idea "that the Lord hath forsaken the earth." It asserts that "God is in his holy temple," and that the righteous are safe. That—

"God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world."

And that though right be on the scaffold and wrong be on the throne

"Yet that scaffold aways the future;
For behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God, amid the shadows,
Keeping watch upon his own."

It asserts that—

"So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
So near is God to man,
When duty whispers low 'Thou must,'
The youth replies 'I can.'"

And—

"Were this not so
The pillared firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble."

These principles, love, duty, faith, have been the motives in all great achievements in the past, and they enter into all that is of an upward tendency in the present, or that makes for the future welfare of mankind. Blending like the colors of light, co-operating like the organs of the body, and linked in a holy triple alliance, they form a three-fold cord that is not quickly broken. Thus supplementing and supporting each other, they are the secret springs of every true Christian life.

—The Dominion Parliament was opened by His Excellency, Lord Minto, on Thursday last, with the customary ceremonies. It is expected that the session will be a long one. Little business, beyond the discussion of the speech will, it is said, be undertaken before Easter. Six new members of the House were introduced—all supporters of the government. Two new members of the Senate also took their seats. Mr. Carmichael, of Pictou, N. S., and Mr. Yeo, of P. E. Island.