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WHAT IS BEING DONE TO PROMOTE THE PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL BROTHER- HOOD IN CHURCH SCHOOLS

A. J. W. MYERS, Ph.D.*

Universal Brotherhood rests from the theological point of view upon four foundation principles:

First, The Fatherhood of God. The conception of God as Father can alone create that attitude of mind and heart which makes universal brotherhood possible. As father He, like the best earthly parent, must love each of His children with the same tender affection and desire for each the highest good. The strong and the weak, the white and the dark, the wise and the ignorant share equally in his loving care, for He has made of one flesh all that dwell on the face of the earth.

But if God is national or tribal it is hard to transcend national and tribal boundaries. The God who is autocratic and unapproachable, a stern "Lord and Master" may be cruel, hold spite and demand vengeance. Kipling is right. The *fear* of a God like that on the part of children is naturally "the beginning of falsehood." Such a one may have His favorites. He may command to "hew Agag in pieces" or may even create one nation of super-men, of different clay, whose "divine mission" it might be to lord it over other nations and grind them down by military force. On such a foundation principle no brotherhood universal or otherwise, can ever be reared. But the idea of God as Father, an ethical God, makes universal brotherhood not only possible but, ultimately, inevitable.

Second, The Brotherhood of Man. This is the necessary complement of the former the two being the obverse and reverse of the same principle. The brotherhood of man does not mean that all are on the same dead level of equality. The young man or woman who is sharing the family burden is not on the same footing with the infant. Brotherhood does imply that the elder serve the child. So brotherhood of man leaves room for all differences among individuals and nations. But it makes the larger nation the guardian of smaller ones, renders exploiting impossible and impells the strong, the wise, the talented to be great through helpful service.

Third, The Will to Goodwill. The angel message still holds. Peace on earth is only possible among men of goodwill. Some persons and nations will to conquer, which breeds disaster; others.

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and the number both of individuals and nations is rapidly increasing, will to do well to others. Here lies one of the triumphs of the Kingdom. The glory of those who serve others wraps the world in golden light. Christian character, spending itself for others, above deceit, true to honor and the plighted word, seeking not its own, breeds mutual respect, confidence and goodwill.

Fourth, The Child in the Midst. It may at first seem strange to posit this as one of the foundation principles. But such it seems to me is what Jesus meant. The child is in a real sense the representative of God in the world. The child knows no national boundaries or class or caste distinctions. He is ready to trust and love the Father with all the love of his impulsive heart and to look upon others as brothers. Jesus designated the child the type member of the Kingdom. The childlike attitude characterizes the children of the Kingdom. Had a child been in the heart of Potsdam the world butchery could not have been willed on the world.

Besides, the hope of the future in world brotherhood is in the children. If it is ever to be attained it must be through developing in the child his natural, God-implanted readiness to love the Father and his brothers. Unless this positive attitude of love and goodwill is cultivated and made explicit in childhood before prejudices and sin warp the life, the foundations of brotherhood will not be laid in the solid rock.

Now the question is, What is being done in the Church schools to "well and truly lay" these four foundation principles of universal brotherhood? The simplest and clearest way will be to examine in turn what is being done in the several main forms in which the Church school carries on its work and expresses itself:

First, In Worship. Many of the passages of *Scripture* used in worship express in the most exalted and attractive form the idea of the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man and the beauty of brotherly love and goodwill. These great passages will ever stand as the foundation of inspiration. They fire the imagination, capture the intellect and direct the will. Generally some of these passages are memorized and all through life exert a continuous influence. And who that come under the influence of such Psalms as the twenty-third and one hundred and twenty-first, the inspiring idealism of the prophets pleading for worship and social righteousness, and the matchless works of the Christ can ever be the same again in his attitude to God and to his fellow men?

Prayer almost inevitably cultivates these principles. In prayer as at no other time we see things "under the eternal"—in their

universal relations. Unworthy and harsh thoughts against others are forced out. One cannot pray while nursing ill feeling or holding a grudge. Christian prayer presupposes that God is Father and by its very nature teaches the heart that all are brothers. It expands the consciousness to include all in the world in principle.

Besides, prayer almost invariably has specific intercession for others in all parts of the world. For others the same blessings are asked as for ourselves, and in this way, if in no other way, all in the school, from the tiniest child, are led to think of God as father and to have goodwill to others without distinction of race or color.

Hymns leave a deep impression—especially, perhaps, on children—because the thought is reinforced by the rhythm, music and action. Some of the hymns sung in the schools contain the highest teaching on these points: "Jesus loves me," "The King of love my Shepherd is," "All people that on earth do dwell," and a few great missionary hymns. These songs learned in the Sunday school are potent influences in bringing about universal fellowship with God and our fellows.

Giving should be an act of worship. In so far as it is the result of an inner motive to meet some human need it is an expression of brotherhood that is universal in its implications.

In addition to these elements in worship, a more intangible, yet perhaps quite as powerful an influence, which is referred to as "atmosphere," or spirit, exists. Seldom does this "atmosphere," even where the worship is poorly done, fail to convey a sense of these principles and of the presence of the Christ who embodies them.

It must be admitted that the worship in the church schools is not making the contribution it could easily make. Some of the reasons are the lack of consecrated intelligence in planning and conducting worship and its consequent aimlessness in many instances; the selection of Scripture passages simply because they are in the Bible or are the lesson passages, without thought as to their suitability for worship, or as to whether they give the idea of God and man that Jesus revealed; the selection of hymns at random without proper thought as to their content, even though they teach in some cases "pity" for "the heathen" instead of brotherhood and give inadequate or distorted views of God and of service; the habitual use of prayers constructed on the spur of the moment, without proper attention to form, content or suitability for the expression of the aspirations of the group; the absence of a definite aim to cultivate brotherhood; and a failure to grasp the eternal significance and value of training pupils in Christian worship.

And yet where would thousands of our people get any training in worship if not in the Sunday school? One who leads even one little child or a boy or girl or other person to think of God as Father and to seek the good of others is doing more for universal brotherhood than he can easily realize.

Second, In Study. Here the same foundation principles are bound to recur. Love to God and the service of others is the main emphasis of many lessons studied as it is in the lives of many of the characters studied. The life of Jesus has always a foremost place in every church school. He is the incarnation of the highest brotherhood. This quality, it is true, is sometimes quite lost through a too absorbing interest in theology. The Bible is also rich in hero studies and many of these live out before us the fine qualities of service to God and their fellows and like real characters in life, influence the pupils to a similar way or living.

The study of biography and of the life and customs of other peoples weaves strong bonds of brotherhood. Every child who has heard the story of the little Dutch boy who saved the dykes is predisposed to look up to and honor any Dutch child whom he may meet. So the splendid stories of generosity and heroism on the part of children and of others in China, Korea, Armenia, Africa, and the ends of the earth stimulate love and respect that knows no national bounds. The same is true of the study of lives as Garibaldi, Lincoln, Pitt, King Albert, Knox, Wesley, Booth, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Florence Nightingale. And every nation has numbers of great characters; and the history of any country, rightly interpreted, reveals at times nobility that challenges admiration. The church schools give a large place to stories and incidents of this kind and these are building bridges of goodwill between separated peoples.

The same is true when pupils enter into the life of others through playing their games, seeing their costumes, becoming familiar with their homes, furnishings in pageants, customs through music and art. In this way they come to appreciate what other people produce and contribute to the good of the world.

These studies in themselves are broadening and destroy provincialism. But this effect is heightened mightily because the study is always from the point of view of finding the best in the others (not to prove one's own national superiority as is too often the case in ordinary history studies) and in seeking to do them some service. It is evident that Home and Foreign Missions, i. e., Social Service and Nation study are rich and fertile fields. The study in the Church school, then, tends directly to make goodwill grow and flourish.

Church schools are not more fruitful in this aspect of their study for the following among other reasons: lessons are sometimes not well chosen and fail to meet the needs and inspire the enthusiasm of the pupils; brotherhood is, in some cases, not definitely taught; when taught it is too abstract, and does not lead to volition; and because of that fallacy, so common in all teaching, that *words* always represent and convey *experiences*. Abstract, "academic" teaching unconnected with every day life of the student is one of the banes of Sunday school work. But on the other hand in all Sunday school teaching the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man and goodwill are taken for granted, like the sureness of one's welcome in his father's home, and this "taking for granted" creates a strong disposition towards world fellowship which is a big asset in building up the Kingdom.

Third, In Service. Nothing helps us into sympathetic, brotherly touch with others quite so much as "doing for" them, sharing life with them and working shoulder to shoulder in some serious endeavor. This is exemplified in the family, the camping party, the team especially during the time of big matches, the battalion that has been through a hard campaign, comrades in some big undertaking in politics, or moral or religious endeavor. Church schools are beginning to see the significance of this more than ever and an increasing number are putting it into practice. Pupils in a large number of classes are undertaking some real work to help others whose needs they know. It is invariably found that this sharing life with others and working for them, breeds warm friendship, and gives the class itself new vigor and a new grip.

The definite aim in many schools is to "socialize" the pupil, to lead him to treat others in the class in the spirit of the best family life, and to extend this consciousness in ever widening circles. The children who help dress a doll for little ones in Africa, the boys and girls who make scrapbooks for sick children, or take part in a "manger" service or "white Christmas" gifts, or older persons who sacrifice their time or money for the Red Cross or missions are most effectively grasping the meaning of brotherhood.

In an increasing number of schools the giving of money is a real education in universal goodwill. That is, *motives* are developed. The human need is presented in such a way that it is seen and felt; the impulse to help leaps forth; and the pupils are directed into appropriate activity that appeals to them, to meet the need. Wherever this method is followed the amount of time and personal pleasure pupils will voluntarily give up for the sake of others is

astonishing. Giving and doing is no longer a form or a duty but the expression of the life. The result is not simply the amount of the gift or service, but *lives*, lives enriched and ennobled by a Christ motive. When this educational ideal in giving and other service comes into its own the Sunday schools will wield a greater influence for brotherhood and find for themselves new life.

The Church school is also doing a good deal in cultivating co-operation instead of competition. When the spirit of competition is used to spur one against another for some material prize and when the gain of one means the defeat of the others it finds its full fruitage in cut-throat competition in business and politics. That is its just and logical reward. But in many schools competition is against a standard, and often that standard is one's own record. In this work the success of one does not imply the failure of others, and the fullest co-operation is brought into play. Besides it is infinitely better training, though not so interesting or easy, to correct one's own mistakes and improve on one's own standard, than to correct the mistakes and standards of another! Anything that makes for hearty co-operation in a good cause is strengthening the foundations of universal brotherhood.

But some may say "Children cannot think in terms of the world." They can think in terms of *their own* world. The trouble is we do not always provide stimulus and situation to develop their religious experience to keep step with their rapidly enlarging world. The child and youth are eager. We fail to take full advantage of the flood tide of their expanding consciousness in other things; so our religious world remains small and becomes stale to them. But the number of classes and schools now actually undertaking some service to meet community or world needs is rapidly increasing and is one of the significant signs of the times in relation to our study. Every such action, besides building up those who take part in it, brings about a return flow of good feeling which goes to swell the ever increasing tide of universal brotherhood.

Fourth, In Fellowship. Here I refer particularly to the international mind and purpose developed by a common work, participated in by so many countries; by a common literature, and by world meetings for consultation and inspiration. For more than forty years an ever widening community of interest and goodwill has been nurtured. At first it found its bond in uniformity and now in a more vital unity. In addition the Sunday school unions of various kinds have been fruitful in the same way.