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THE RELATION OF MOTIVES TO CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

HUGH HARTSHORNE, PH.D.*

In the fifth chapter of Matthew there is a defense of a religion of faith. In the second chapter of James there is a defense of a religion of works.† Jesus did not call it by any name, as did those who came after him. Neither was Jesus trying to belittle good acts. He was sick of seeing good acts turned out wholesale as the purchase price of personal advantage. How many passages bear out this insistence upon purity of heart: the whited sepulcher, the cup clean outside, but dirty on the inside, "out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, thefts, railings." A tree is known by its fruits, to be sure, but a thorn does not bear figs. A man is of more importance than what he does, though what he does is in part an indicator of what he is.

"He that seeketh his own life shall lose it, but he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you." It is not simply what a man does, that counts in a world that is made up of human beings. Being somebody, is more than doing something. The external, overt act is only part of the total spiritual fact that constitutes the unit of fellowship. How hollow is the friendship that is built up around conventional courtesies, rendered without personal regard, but because of the demands of "society." How futile is the charity of the rich proffered out of a full purse, from a passing sense of duty, without fellow feeling or in mere good nature. How often the machinery of organized relief crushes and maims the souls of those for whom it is manufacturing philanthropy.

After all, relief is a poor blessing, justified in part when it is an incident of friendship, but a ghastly caricature of the christian spirit when it is not likewise an incident in the christian demand for justice between men, for the sake of men—a demand which should find expression not in more charity machinery, but in such social and political changes as will make charity increasingly unnecessary.

What are motives? We frequently say "his motives were mixed." Or we ask, "what were his ulterior motives?" We imply that a person often has more than one reason for doing things. We are in the habit of classifying these reasons as "selfish" and "unselfish," or as "self-regarding" and "self-denying" or "other-regarding." What we mean is that there are two main inducements for any sort of action to which all motives can be reduced, *viz*; the thought of one's own advantage, and the thought of some one else's advantage.

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†Cf. Matt. 5:8, 22, 28. Jas. 1:27; 2:14-26.

Are our motives thus capable of being classified and reduced? Or is this attempt to pigeon-hole our motives artificial—an abstraction from real life?

In the chapter on Thinking, we decided that intelligent action was action undertaken in the light of foreseen *consequences*. It is these foreseen consequences that are the true *motives* of one's action. When we act without foreseeing or expecting consequences, we act without motive, or blindly, like a machine.

Motives as foreseen consequences. We are interested in many different kinds of consequences, some more clearly defined than others. Frequently we get interested in one consequence and forget about or do not foresee other consequences which follow from the same act. We get to thinking about how good it would feel to go in bathing some hot day, and we forget that a cold dip right after dinner is fraught with danger. Or we go in in the morning, when we feel hot, and then cannot go in in the afternoon with all the rest, because the doctor says once a day is enough. In each case, the immediate sensuous satisfaction was the consequence which was effective in getting us to act, in the first place, in spite of possible danger to health, and in the second place, in spite of the greater, but postponed, satisfaction of going in with the rest. Why was one consequence foreseen, rather than the other, or, if both were foreseen, why did we take one rather than the other? We know some people who would always consider the immediate satisfaction of the senses as of more consequence than health. Others would usually prefer the immediate pleasure to postponement for the sake of being sociable. What is the difference between these individuals and those who would postpone immediate satisfaction for the sake of health or sociability? And is the one type using higher motives than the other? If so, can we get the "higher" motives to operate instead of the "lower?"

Two things are involved: First, *foreseeing* other consequences than merely those that are obvious; second, preferring or *choosing* consequences of one sort rather than another. Can we train children to look for consequences and to prefer one sort rather than another? If we can, then we can train their motives, as well as their external behavior.

Let us begin by thinking of "consequences" as the results of activities or enterprises. Instead of classifying consequences as selfish and unselfish, let us forget all about *self*, and think of what that self is *doing*. Do children, as a matter of fact, stop to choose between acts which will bring pleasure to themselves rather than to others, or do they rather follow out certain lines of behavior in which they happen to be engaged, without regard to consequences to either self or others? They do not stop and say: "Go to now, I will get my soldiers out because that will bring me happiness." They say: "I will get my soldiers out for a great battle." If you try to force an answer other than this simple consequence, they will say: "Just because I want to."

Unless already spoiled by unwise teaching, the child is not intent on seeking his own happiness, but on following out certain interests, whithersoever they may lead him. What is the important thing to him? Neither his own nor any one else's happiness,—but the *enterprise*; and consequences are foreseen and chosen or set aside because of their relation to this enterprise. Such motives are pure in the best sense.

But this purity of motive is usually destroyed. We adults come along, and by our punishments and rewards we get the poor little duffers thinking not about things to do, and bigger and smaller enterprises, but about their own happiness or unhappiness, or their own pleasure or pain, and then, when we have distorted their motives by forcing them prudently to consider what effect a deed has upon their pleasure, we try to correct the fault by persuading them that pleasure is to be found not by seeking it for oneself, but by seeking it for others, and so we substitute a "higher" self-regard, which deliberately chooses to serve because, by serving, one can attain temporary or eternal bliss.

This procedure is neither natural, nor necessary for the achievement of social-mindedness. It deliberately makes for the type of anti-social or individualistic mindedness that causes trouble in adolescence, when the boy or girl "wakes up" to find that he has been a selfish animal, and in the throes of a conversion experience tries to undo in five minutes the bad effects of fifteen years of misguided teaching. It is a good deal to expect.

What is the alternative? In general, it is this: *Keep his attention upon enterprises, rather than upon "motives;" or upon social consequences rather than upon his own states of mind; and engage him in activities that will call into exercise his own potentialities and which will lead into the great human enterprises that are themselves the end to be achieved by men. Teach the children to seek first the Kingdom, and to find their satisfaction, not in the "added things," but in the life of the Kingdom itself.*

The growth of motives. With very young children, the motives for activity lie naturally within the activity itself. They do not see beyond their play anything that is being accomplished by it. The mother does, however. She sees the relation of this play to the winning of necessary muscular co-ordinations and habits of self-control. The child sees only the game. It has no "consequences" for him. It just is. But gradually his plays grow more complex. He takes his nest of blocks *apart* and later puts the blocks *together*. Then he puts them on top of one another in constantly more varied ways, seeking constantly more distant ends. Even these units, such as "playing blocks," "playing dolls," get taken up into larger enterprises—he builds a house for his dolls with his blocks, and does things, therefore, with his blocks that the blocks alone would not have suggested to him. He sees both blocks and dolls as part of a larger whole—building a doll's

house. This new synthesis later combines with other interests, and he will perhaps set up housekeeping with his dolls, developing all sorts of new activities which grow right out of the old, and which now constitute the motive for the lesser and contributory activities, such as handling the blocks.

In a similar way, the child begins as a member of a social unit, the family. Little by little, as he participates in the family's life and becomes conscious of it, we want him to feel that this immediate activity is just part of a bigger enterprise, which includes the first. So with his day school and his church school, and his clubs and his unorganized relationships. The bigger enterprise gradually absorbs them all and constitutes the *motive* for them all. This all-inclusive social enterprise is the Christian Cause, the Kingdom or Commonwealth or Democracy of God. It is this that the teacher sees from the beginning. To help the child participate in, and fit himself more perfectly for, this last and biggest thing is the teacher's aim. As soon as the pupil reaches the point where he sees what he does as a part of this world movement, his aim and the teacher's are the same. Each class session becomes then a co-operative effort to contribute something to this enterprise or to achieve some bit of skill or information which is needed for larger and more effective work elsewhere.

Developing motives through activity. Instead of trying to persuade our pupils to be generous, unselfish, thoughtful and the like, let us see how we can engage them in the right sort of action, utilizing at each step the appeal to the instincts which are by nature socially directed, and making this appeal not by preaching but by presenting actual situations requiring social adjustment and by directing attention to the consequences that appeal to these same instincts. Any particular kind of situation after a while develops a selected response, or habit. This in time becomes modified by attention to consequences until a specific skill results. When this particular kind of response is formulated and accepted as the desired response for other like situations, it becomes an ideal. When supported by definite social sanctions, this ideal becomes "duty."

The basic, enduring motives are always instinctive, but are in need of modification. We can depend in the long run upon the parental instinct to get a particular habit or interest started. But we cannot depend on the instinct to guide us in emergencies. Uninformed mothering does not cure disease, though those who study how to cure disease may be prompted to do so because of the instinct to care for those in trouble. We depend on the desire for approval and the annoyance of disapproval to get acts going which otherwise we cannot start. But as a permanent motive this is unsatisfactory as it stands. Whose approval is to be sought? Discrimination among approvers must be taught. The desire to do what others are doing is a strong tendency in young children and often must be called into play in getting them started doing things which will later develop inherent

motives. The child takes part in family prayers at first just because the rest do. Professor Coe gives a charming instance: A child who had learned to count up to eight joined with the family when they repeated the Lord's Prayer by counting, "One, two, three, etc." up to eight, repeating the performance till the prayer was ended. She was prompted to do this by her desire to be "in the game," but this desire alone could not provide her with the necessary *forms* of co-operation. These have to be learned.

It is equally true that to foresee consequences and to let foreseen consequences get in their work on our instincts and acquired habits and interests takes time. In emergencies we have frequently to fall back on the habits already acquired as giving form to responses appropriate to similar situations, or upon the sense of duty that bolsters up parental instinct as against the instinct of self-defense, and calls into play the skill, if we have it, necessary for rescuing the child, assuming leadership of the crowd, or merely maintaining silence and a "cool head" long enough to analyze the situation, if there is time to do so.

Résumé. These then are the sources of action: Instincts, pushing up within us, providing us with tendencies to behavior and with promptings or readinesses to types of behavior; acquired interests, based on instincts and representing the combination of various instincts and capacities developed in specific channels, and constituting acquired tendencies and promptings or readinesses to particular forms of behavior; ideals, including "duty," being formulations of desired behavior, and bringing to bear the pressure of a real or ideal society upon the conduct of the moment.

And these tendencies, general and specific, are called into play both by the immediate stimulus and by the imagined consequences of imagined action.

What do we desire, then? Simply gradual enlistment in the great human enterprises and interests—in family, school, church, industry and state; in art, science, literature, religion and organized life; in the pursuit and the practice of world-wide democracy in education, in industry, in art and in politics, and in the relief of distress. This means development to the full of special capacities or interests, as well as co-operation with others in practical affairs. And all this co-operation and this development of capacity is *for the sake of the common good*. This is the consequence to which we wish to make constant appeal and this consequence must be associated with the sense of duty, with the constructive social instincts, with all our skills and all our information. If we succeed in establishing this motive, we shall have relieved ourselves of the dilemma of having to start individualistic motives and then to change them into social motives, for the very same enterprises in which the child of six is engaged in are those also in which the adolescents and adults are engaged in, and all are working from the same motive—foresight of the common good. There

will be no whited sepulchers with dead men's bones within, or half-washed cups, for the christian enterprise shall have grown up *within the children* and shall have been espoused for its own sake, and not for selfish advantage.

It is exceedingly important, therefore, that we begin at the very beginning to utilize instincts that are naturally directed toward co-operation with others, to form ideals that look toward types of co-operative behavior, to establish habits of friendship, and justice, and co-operative deliberation upon the results of different ways of acting, with a view to choosing the behavior that promotes best the common good.

Typical Problems. How little attention we ordinarily give to the provision of motives for action is well illustrated by the two following problems:

1. How shall we teach our pupils the practice of prayer?
2. How shall we secure homework?

1. *What motives are there for the ten-year-olds to pray*, at night or morning, say? What desirable consequences of praying are evident to these children? What have they prayed for or about? What has been the effect? Are they aware of any effect? Do they "pray" for gifts? Do they receive them?

What ideals concerning prayer have been cultivated in them? Do they feel any obligation to pray? Is any social pressure exerted to lead them to pray?

What instincts are there to lead to prayer, and what is the stimulus that starts the activity? Desire for approval?—Who approves? Imitation?—Who else prays? Desire to co-operate?—With whom? The parental instinct?—Have they been taught to pray for others? Fear?—It may be.

They are not in the habit of praying. We cannot depend on that to keep the praying activity going. What then shall we do?

Suppose we supply all these deficiencies, beginning with ourselves. We can ourselves pray if for no other reason than to let them know some one prays. We can get the whole class to try it. We can enlist the feeling of wanting to do what all the rest do. We can discuss what prayer means and what its consequences are. We might even sometimes add a sense of obligation by starting the equivalent of the Y. M. C. A. "morning watch" pledge and so appealing to the sense of honor to get the promised task done, which might be of use to get the activity going. We can provide an immediate stimulus in the way of a printed prayer or list of topics to be placed in the bed-room mirror. Added motive is afforded if these topics are worked out by the class, and are of a nature to stimulate such tendencies as the parental interest in others; the desire for approval—God's approval; the desire to co-operate—to share in God's work; the tendency to criticise and idealize—leading to repentance, aspiration and resolution.

Thus it will become an important co-operative enterprise with con-

sequences for the common good; and incidentally the habit will be started.

2. *As for homework*, how many teachers do you suppose actually take time to get the pupils interested in the next lesson? What reason do they have for studying it at all? Simply desire to please the teacher, or fear of his disapproval? Whatever motive the pupils have, evidently it is not a powerful one, for the amount of homework accomplished even in the best schools is depressingly meagre.

The peculiar difficulties of Sunday-school work at once suggest themselves: There is usually only one session a week, and a week is a long time to carry over an interest in a course of study; the work is voluntary; there is a strong tradition belittling the importance of the school work and making it a sign of mental weakness to study the lesson; and finally, sad to say, there is the accumulated effect of bad methods of teaching and lesson-making, which make the study of the lesson an uninteresting or even disagreeable drudgery.

To apply some of the principles discussed in the preceding pages, we must find, first, a sort of homework that will really contribute something to the classwork. And second, we must see to it that the pupils understand the relation between homework and classwork. That is, the homework must be, in the minds of the pupils, an essential part of a co-operative enterprise in which they are already interested, and each pupil must feel that his homework makes a necessary contribution to this enterprise.

This is a counsel of perfection. It is this state of affairs that we desire to attain to. Meanwhile, we must use, frequently, motives that are on a lower plane. It may be, for example, that one pupil will not do anything for the sake of the classwork, unless some special interest of his, such as an interest in drawing, can be called into play. If this pupil can be asked to make a map or a note-book cover for class use, he will do so because he likes to draw. And then if he can be made to feel the importance of his map or cover for the classwork and can receive the satisfaction of the class's approval, the first step will have been taken toward developing a truly co-operative motive.

Let us caution ourselves at this point not to confuse the motive which leads one to do something *for the sake of the social approval* of the group with the motive which leads one to do something *for the sake of the group or the work which the group is engaged in*. We may use social approval wisely in order to strengthen the desire to work for the sake of the cause, but we need to be on our guard against the danger that the social approval itself will be the sole object for which the child works. The child that is habitually compelled to "show off" for the benefit of admiring callers is in the way of becoming a sycophant, ever playing to the galleries, with no mind of his own, blown about by every wind of doctrine, intent only on applause and unhappy without it.

This is not the place to go into details of method. A suggestion

or two, however, may serve to illustrate the psychological laws involved.

1. In order to stimulate interest in the class enterprise, describe to the class the plan of having a "class book," containing a record of what the class does. The minutes of the sessions, photographs, a class attendance chart, records of special events, the budget and treasurer's report, and anything else of common interest is put into this loose-leaf note book which is displayed at the school exhibit at the end of the year. This gives concrete, tangible evidence that a piece of homework, such as an essay on some problem arising in class, is a real contribution to the class enterprise.

2. In order to assure the maintenance of interest from week to week, care should be taken to seize upon problems that arise in a class session which can be made the starting point for the following session. The problem may be entirely within the subject matter, as, e.g., What was there about Harriet Beecher Stowe's ancestry or early training or environment that would account for her ability to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin*? Such problems can be led up to as the concluding feature of a lesson, and then it can be pointed out carefully how the next lesson can be used to find the answer to the problem. Practical problems can be handled in the same way. The class may reach a clear-cut conclusion as to how to treat people who do wrong because of ignorance or under the pressure of starvation. "But you were just asking what to do about those who, in spite of all their advantages and from the motive of sheer greed, commit terrible crimes? Well the next lesson takes up this problem. Notice the title. And the references, you see, are to just such cases, and to the various ways in which such criminals have been treated. And you will see on page so and so how you can hunt out the christian way of dealing with this problem"—etc. etc.

3. Make provision for the employment of special interests or talent, by letting pupils choose which parts of the lesson they will prepare or which problems they will take; or by assigning such problems or work as you know will appeal to the individual pupil.

4. Teach the pupils how to study. Assist them in getting a place to keep their work, and in arranging their schedules so as to allow time for the study of the lesson or for hunting out something in connection with the lesson. Use a variety of methods—let the homework be flexible. Occasionally mail reminders of the work or make special requests for special work during the week. Be sure that any work to be done is *understood* and *written down*. Get the parents interested in the problems discussed by the class. Grade the homework carefully according to the age and abilities of the pupils; keep it difficult but not so difficult as to discourage all effort.