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CONSCIENCE

IN

MISSIONS.

Conscience in Missions.

CENTENNIAL ADDRESS.

BY T. T. EATON, D.D., LL.D.

[Delivered at Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville
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1893.

CONSCIENCE IN MISSIONS.

ONE hundred years of mission work have passed, as you have heard till the hearing has become a weariness, since the "consecrated cobbler" went out to preach the gospel to the heathen, expecting great things from God and attempting great things for God. Carey put God first. He cared for the glory of God more than he cared for the whole human race. Giving God thus His rightful place, Carey gave his fellowmen their rightful place and longed, as a weaker man could not have done, for their salvation. Of the temporal ills, of the poverty, the suffering and the woes of the heathen, he thought little; it was their guilt toward God and the awful doom that awaited them which fired his great soul with zeal. But above and beyond all was the thought that God would be glorified by their salvation, and Christ would see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

Brethren, I have never been one, and God forbid I should be one, to disparage our Baptist fathers. It is a species of Pharisaism that thanks God for our superiority to the saints who have gone to glory, and which tells with complacency how much greater our achievements have been than theirs. We can rightly thank God for the grace given unto us, whereby we have been able to do what we have done, and we can confess not only our own short-comings but those of our fathers. When Daniel made his great confession in that beautiful prayer of his, he said: "We and our fathers have sinned." Only after we have confessed our own sins may we confess the sins of our fathers. It is a more wholesome exercise of mind and heart to consider the nobleness of the sainted dead and how we can most faithfully carry out the trust they have committed to us, under God.

Let us not harshly blame our fathers because no missionaries went from among them to the heathen. Looking over the world they saw no land unpolluted by the persecution of their brethren, no river

unstained by their martyrs' blood; they remembered that through the centuries it had required their utmost exertions to keep their own people supplied with preaching, as they trembled in the catacombs of Rome or lay hid in the forests among wild beasts, kinder than their fellowmen; when crossing the ocean to a land where freedom reigned in the boastful words of its people, they found to their sorrow no freedom for them. Those who claimed freedom for themselves drove Baptists, maimed, beaten, and bleeding, into the wilderness. Think you a government which imprisoned John Bunyan in Bedford jail, whipped Obadiah Holmes on Boston Common and incarcerated James Ireland in Culpeper, Va., would have allowed Baptists to organize to send the gospel to the heathen? Let us remember there was less than a century from the cessation of persecution, so that Baptist missionary organizations became possible, till Carey arose. When I think of all that Baptists have suffered, I do not wonder that when for the first time in 1700 years the woman in the wil-

derness found a resting place for her weary feet, and gathered her true hearted sons about her with none to molest or to make them afraid, she was content simply to rest "the world forgetting, by the world forgot."

Experience throws light upon the words of Scripture and brings out their beauty and their force. And experience in raising money for missionary work has shown the great force and fitness of Paul's words urging Timothy to be "a good soldier of Jesus Christ." For the appeal to the soldier is to duty. "England expects every man to do his duty" were words to nerve the arms of every Englishman going into the battle of Trafalgar. Duty is a cold, hard word—the sentimentalists sigh: why not appeal to the emotions? Well, stones are cold, hard things, but they make strong foundations for all edifices which men wish to endure. Men cannot found nor build important enterprises on such thistle-downs dancing before the wind as human emotions. Pathos is an admirable thing in its place; but the emotion it arouses

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cannot be a substitute for firm principle. Duty, the sense of responsibility to God, is the thing which abides. Whatever work must be done steadily, ceaselessly, while life continues, must be placed on this one foundation.

An appeal to the emotions will produce a larger immediate result than an appeal to the conscience. If a collection for missions is to be taken, and you can rouse the congregation to enthusiasm by eloquent descriptions of what Baptists have done, or if you can move them to tears by pathetic stories, you will receive more money than if you laid before them their duty to do all in their power to advance God's glory in the salvation of souls. And you will receive more praise for your great eloquence. But the next time you speak to that congregation, you must use more glowing descriptions and tell more harrowing stories in order to move them. And the time will come—it has come to many—when the most eloquent tributes and the most pathetic anecdotes will be a weariness. Whereas, if you make your plea in the first place to

the sense of duty to God, you will, indeed, not receive so much money; but the second appeal need not be so strong, provided it be along the same lines, and the result will be greater. And every time it will require less and less effort to bring men to their duty, and thus you will build up a structure of Christian character which will abide. For as the conscience thus is taught to act, the action becomes easier. Appeal to the emotions and your appeals must grow frantic, and at the same time you will get less and less result. But speak plainly and in a straightforward way to the conscience and your appeals can grow less while the results increase.

Men are tired of appeals to their emotions in behalf of missions. It is increasingly difficult to get them to listen. This was shown in an unmistakable way at the Centennial meeting held in Philadelphia in March. There are seventy Baptist churches in that city from which to draw a congregation. An admirable programme was prepared. We have no abler men nor finer speakers than those

who were announced to speak. Yet they spoke to mortifyingly small assemblies. The day for that sort of thing is passing away. Men care for facts rather than phrases, and in this they are not to blame. Missionary work was something of a experiment, but a good deal has been learned in a hundred years and the experimental stage is over.

It is the duty of Christians to support the preaching of the gospel in this and other lands. The duty is the same; the missionary stands on the same footing as the pastor. The arguments for supporting both are the same; and what is trifling in the one case is trifling in the other.

The ideal state of things is that every man should put into the church treasury every week one-tenth of his income for that week, and to do this as a matter of course, without any thought of his giving anything to any body or of his having done a praiseworthy thing, any more than if he paid a grocery bill. Let the church take these tithes and use them for God's work, paying its own expenses,

paying fitting amounts to mission boards, and to other objects of benevolence, making the division in the fear of God, after earnest prayer for divine guidance. This should be a simple matter of course; and over and above this, those whom God has blessed in basket and store, or who have had special blessings, should make free-will offerings in various ways. I do not believe there ever has been a time, or ever will be, when, if all the members of the churches thus paid their tithes into the treasury, it would not be as much as could be wisely used in supporting the preaching of the gospel at home and abroad. The gross income of the Evangelical church members in the United States is not less than \$6,000,000, 000 a year. One-tenth of this is \$600,000, 000. At an average salary of \$1,200 a year, and that is a large average, this amount would support 500,000 preachers of the gospel of Christ. This is more than five times as many as the Evangelical denominations of the land now have, the present number being 94,000, including all not in the active ministry. Allot-

ting 200,000 to this country for pastors and missionaries, we would be able to send abroad 300,000 more. That would give one missionary to every four thousand souls in Pagan, Papal and Mohamedan lands, whereas now, all Evangelical denominations taken together, we have but one missionary for every 167,000. How easy would the evangelization of the world become if only professing Christians had religion!

But the day has not yet come when the consciences of all church members are so enlightened that they will bring their tithes thus, as a matter of justice to God. Some give less, a very few give more, and many give nothing. But all can be taught to see that the support of the missionary is exactly as binding as the support of the pastor, and therefore should be provided for in the same straightforward business way. And the time will come—it is almost in sight now—when it will seem as much out of place to hold big meetings to urge churches to support the missionaries as it would seem now to hold such meetings

to urge the churches to support their pastors. The Baptists of Philadelphia—as grand a body of people as can be found on earth—showed that they have almost reached that time. Who would have expected them to attend that big meeting, had the object been to urge them to support their pastors?

The time will come when a missionary society in a church, however helpful now, will be as great an anomaly as a pastor-paying society. There will still be calls for missionaries to go; the baptisms, churches organized and progress made on the foreign fields will be reported as such things are now reported on the home field; but the money will be raised and the missionary literature circulated in a straightforward business way, without frantic appeals and without hysterics. There will be no more appeals then for supporting pastors, and the same solid methods will be used.

Time was when the support of pastors was left to uncertain, spasmodic action—such action as results from appeals to the feelings. When they paid their sub-

scriptions the members felt they were making presents to the pastor. They were influenced to give more or less according as the appeals represented the needs of the pastor and his family as more or less urgent. The emptiness of his larder, the shabbiness of his clothes, the destitution of his wife and children—all these things were urged. In a cowardly way the men often shirked their duty upon the shoulders of the willing, warm-hearted sisters, who did their best to eke out the pastor's meagre support. They gave donation parties, had fairs, suppers, tableaux, and in many ways sought to make outsiders do the neglected duty of the church members.

Yet the brethren and sisters of that day were not avaricious above what is seen to-day, nor were they lacking in piety. The trouble was that the appeals were made to their feelings rather than to their conscience; and taught thus to give from impulse they would not give unless their emotions were stirred. More and more they were told it was right to support their pastor, and wrong to neg-

lect it. It was a duty they owed to God, to the pastor, and to themselves. Thus the appeals came to be made to their sense of duty, and they quit the haphazard way of paying their pastors. They ceased also to believe that what they paid was a gift to the preacher. They saw it was a debt, first to God and then to the under-shepherd God had set over them. Justice required that the pastor be supported, not according to his necessities, but according to the ability of the church. Thus paying the pastor's salary was put upon a manly business footing. The result is known to all. The pastors are not yet paid as they should be in all churches, but they are far better paid and with far less friction than a generation ago. And the salaries are much more easily raised, though they are larger; and what is also a great thing, the preachers know what they can depend upon. A little which is sure, can be made to do more than a larger amount which is uncertain.

We need that our people shall wake up to the truth that mission giving is a reg-

ular duty, which must go on till the end, and must be conducted in a manly, business way. There will always be abundant occasion for fervid appeals and for impulsive action, in addition to the regular systematic giving, in order to meet emergencies which arise in the providence of God, from floods, drouths, financial stringency, pestilence and such things as church building and as this Centennial of Missions.

A plan whose merits have commended it to many churches, is to distribute mission subscription cards among the members, calling upon each one to mark the amount he will give weekly to missions, leaving, of course, the right for the contributor to designate his offering, if he so desires. It is insisted that each member shall return this card with some amount named. He may write one cent, but he must write *something* and sign his name. These cards are given in charge of a mission committee who inform the Boards how much may be expected during the year from that church. Were this method generally adopted, the Boards would

know what they could depend on and could lay out their work accordingly, and nothing would be heard of mission debts or of interest paid for borrowed money.

Will any one say there is no enthusiasm about such a plan as this? Enthusiasm is a good thing for emergencies, but it is a poor wheel horse for steady pulling. Such a plan gives little opportunity for flaming speeches and high-sounding eloquence, and if that be the object in view this plan will be rejected; but if the object be to get mission work done in the fear of the Lord and with an eye single to His glory, something along this line must be done. Many current devices for raising money must go to the limbo where donation parties have gone, and as few tears will be shed over them. The time for playing at missions and orating about raising money for missions is past. We need action rather than eloquence. The time to put mission work on the solid ground of Christian conscience, under God, has come. It is a good rule to do nothing and say nothing in raising mis-

sionary money which would be incongruous in raising the pastor's salary.

Many things will come to pass when the sentimental era of missions ends and the conscientious era begins. Once put the missionaries on the same footing as the pastors, and inevitable changes will result. Churches do not support physicians among their own members, and no more missionary physicians would be appointed. The churches will confine their support to those who preach the gospel abroad, as they do at home. Pious physicians, pious teachers, pious mechanics will go to heathen lands and support themselves there, as foreigners come and support themselves here. Only those who preach the gospel shall live of the gospel. Wicked men go from this country to Africa and China and exhibit to the natives examples of American ungodliness; and why may not Christian laymen go in like manner, and show the natives examples of American piety?

All over the land Christians are waking up to the fact that the era of sentiment has passed and the era of duty has

come, in mission work. Our brethren in Ohio have been considering how they can work in a business-like way, depending, under God, upon the consciences of the church members. The STANDARD of Chicago, well said: "Yet we are impressed with this fact—that missionary management is becoming more and more a matter of skillful business guidance and impulsion, and less and less one of occasion for eloquent argument and appeal. Is it not, now, really the fact that what is needed is just that same conviction of a thing to do and a way to do it which we act upon in conducting the affairs of a church, and supporting its pastor? Churches need no eloquent urgency in sermon or address in this regard. Why should they need it in that which has come to be just as much a matter of course in practical Christianity as the calling of a pastor or the paying of his salary?

"It is very true that in any such change as we here hint at a very essential thing will be that the churches take in hand the cause of foreign missions as

a thing to be done, quite as much as the support of a pastor, or sustaining the appointments of a church from week to week. But why should not that very thing be now attainable? Do we not rather cultivate the impression among our churches that this matter of missions is something exceptional; that it lies outside of what belongs to us as church-members, a something to be brought home to us in some exceptional way, and our interest in it to be measured by the eloquence or tact of the person who tries to interest us in its behalf? Are we not proceeding too much upon the idea that the old-time method of rousing missionary interest is still the necessary one; and do we not undervalue the readiness of brethren in our churches to meet us when we come to them with the proposition that they take hold of missions as they take hold of everything else? Do not pastors themselves often undervalue the readiness of their brethren to put these matters of missionary support fairly alongside whatever else they feel bound to do, and attend to it at the fit

times, just as they attend upon worship or pay the salary?"

Similar words have come from many quarters. It is time and more than time for systematic, thorough-going work, leaving to special occasions and needs the arousing of special enthusiasm.

Let us then begin this new century of missions learning wisdom from experience and resolved to follow more closely than ever the command of God and the example of the great first Baptist missionary. He was the greatest man the human race has ever produced; he was infallibly inspired in his words and guided in his movements by the Holy Spirit. Let us keep close to the example thus set us—everything must be made according to the pattern shown on the mount. Other things may seem to us expedient—new brooms have a reputation for sweeping clean—but no created being can tell what is expedient, particularly in matters of religion. The fate of those who have tried what they regarded expedient, instead of what God commanded, is a warning to us. Nadab and Abihu, Uzzah

and the rest should not be forgotten. In a certain narrow but true sense they died that we might live, or rather their deaths are recorded that we may live. No man can tell what is expedient; but any man who sincerely desires it, may know what is right and well pleasing to God. And to please God is the highest aim of His children. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" was the voice from Heaven to our Elder Brother; it is written of Enoch, "he had this testimony that he pleased God," and the great, all absorbing purpose of Paul was "to please God." We must not grow impatient because the results of doing God's way seem small and meagre. Results are God's business while obedience is ours. We may be sure we will accomplish no real good trying any other plan but God's. We should study the past century of missions in the light of Scripture to see how God works, that we may be workers together with Him. When He would arouse His children to give the

gospel to the heathen, God converted a run away scapegrace in the African slave trade, and sent John Newton home a saved man. Newton preached a sermon God blessed to the conversion of William Carey. Newton preached again and Claudius Buchanan was converted. Buchanan wrote the *Star in the East*, and reading it fired Adoniram Judson with zeal for souls, and thus two continents have been filled with missionary fervor. Truly God's ways are not as our ways, neither are our ways His ways.

The motive is the important thing in giving, as in all else; and here comes a danger in raising money for missions. Those interested fix their eyes on the amount needed, as they think, just as the apostles worried over the amount of bread needed to feed the five thousand. One dollar given from love is more powerful in the kingdom of God than millions given from wrong motives. The greatest gift of history was the two mites given by the poor widow. Let us

set out upon this new century then resolved by the Spirit's help to follow Paul's methods, trusting in Paul's God. Let us labor to bring the churches up to the point, where every member will put every week one-tenth of his gross income into the treasury, to be divided out by the church among the different departments of the great work of saving the world, while the free-will offerings will provide for all emergencies. That this glad day may come, we must resolutely begin now to put the missionary giving upon the solid basis of duty to God. When that day comes, thought and time needed for the salvation of souls will not be consumed on finances.

Brethren, we have brought the tables of the money changers into the temples as truly though not so guiltily as did the high priests of old. This talk of money, money, money, in our churches and in our associations and conventions is a repetition of the old filling of the courts of the temple. We say it is necessary—

so did the money changers and the sellers of sheep and doves—but the indignant Lord of the Temple made short work of the necessity. Because we fail to give the Lord a tenth as a matter of course, all this talk about money takes up the time of our gatherings. Yet the challenge of God stands: “Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house and prove me herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” This means spiritual blessings, the conversion of sinners and the growth in grace of our own souls. When we grieve over our own backslidings and the hardness of men’s hearts; when the tides of vice and worldliness seem to sweep everything before them, let us remember this challenge of the Almighty to His people. Every man is to bring his own tithe, he is not to keep his tithe and try to make the Philistines furnish the amount.

There is this difference between the pastor's salary and the missionary money. The pastor's salary remains nearly the same, while the mission fund needs to go on increasing. Therefore the subscriptions to missions should grow every year, with the growth of our people in numbers and in grace.

This then is the conclusion of the whole matter. Put God first. Make the appeals to men's consciences. Follow Paul's plan both for giving and working, put the missionaries and the pastors upon the same footing; and bring the church members to give a tenth of their incomes as a matter of justice to God and not as a charity to man. All this cannot be done at once; the world cannot be saved by passing resolutions; but what ever is right can be done; but it can be done only by faithfully following this way without turning aside to try other devices because they seem expedient. Let us keep this end steadily in view and the second century of modern missions will

see such a blessing poured from the opened windows of Heaven as it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive, and the vision of the prophet will be fulfilled.

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