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A TREE OF GOD'S OWN PLANTING

Some readers may ask, why we formed a new Institution for the spread of the Gospel, and why we did not unite with some of the religious societies, already in existence, seeing that there are several Missionary—Bible—Tract—and School Societies. I give, therefore, our reasons, in order to show, that nothing but the desire to maintain a good conscience led us to act as we have done. For as, by the grace of God, we acknowledged the word of God as the only rule of action for the disciples of the Lord Jesus, we found, in comparing the then existing p 108 religious Societies with the word of God, that they departed so far from it, that we could not be united with them, and yet maintain a good conscience.

March 5. This evening, at a public meeting, brother Craik and I stated the principles on which we intend to carry on the institution which we propose to establish for the spread of the Gospel at home and abroad. There was nothing outwardly influential, either in the number of people present, or in our speeches. May the Lord graciously be pleased to grant his blessing upon the institution, which will be called "The Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad."

March 7. To-day we have only one shilling left. Many times also in Bristol our purse has been either empty or nearly so, though we have not been brought quite so low as it regards provisions, as was sometimes the case at Teignmouth. This evening, when we came home from our work, we found a brother, our tailor, waiting for us, who brought a new suit of clothes both for brother Craik and me, which a brother, whose name was not to be mentioned, had ordered for us.

Müller, George. A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings with George Müller. Vol. 1. London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1860. Print.

Since this chapter is largely a recap of Müller’s life up to this point (with the exception of a few brief episodes at the end of the chapter) it would be beneficial to take a closer look at the principles and objects of the Scriptural Knowledge Institute that Pierson mentions in this chapter and includes in Appendix D.

I. THE PRINCIPLES OF THE INSTITUTION

1. We consider every believer bound, in one way or other, to help the cause of Christ, and we have Scriptural warrant for expecting the Lord’s blessing upon our work of faith and labour of love: and although, according to Matt. 13:24–43, 2 Tim. 3:1–13, and many other passages, the world will not be converted before the coming of our Lord Jesus, still, while he tarries, all Scriptural means ought to be employed for the ingathering of the elect of God.

In this first principle, Müller states that it is every believer’s duty to “*help the cause of Christ.*” What does this phrase mean? What Scriptural basis is there for this statement?

Müller also notes that he has “*Scriptural warrant*” for the assertion that we ought to expect the Lord’s blessing upon our work and labour of love.” What passages do you think he has in mind?

2. The Lord helping us, we do not mean to seek the patronage of the world; i. e., we never intend to ask unconverted persons of rank or wealth to countenance this Institution, because this, we consider, would be dishonourable to the Lord. In the name of our God we set up our banners, Ps. 20:5; he alone shall be our Patron, and if he helps us we shall prosper, and if he is not on our side, we shall not succeed.

Do you agree with this second principle? Is it Biblical? Why or why not?

3. We do not mean to ask unbelievers for money (2 Cor. 6:14–18); though we do not feel ourselves warranted to refuse their contributions, if they of their own accord should offer them. Acts 28:2–10.

Why does Müller not object to receiving money from unbelievers who give spontaneously while he does object to soliciting their donations?

4. *We reject altogether the help of unbelievers in managing or carrying on the affairs of the Institution. 2 Cor. 6:14–18.*

Is this a principle that Christian organizations tend to follow? Why or why not?

5. *We intend never to enlarge the field of labour by contracting debts (Rom. 13:8), and afterwards appealing to the Church of Christ for help, because this we consider to be opposed both to the letter and the spirit of the New Testament; but in secret prayer, God helping us, we shall carry the wants of the Institution to the Lord, and act according to the means that God shall give.*

Is this a principle that Christian organizations tend to follow? Why or why not?

What arguments might believer's offer for the contracting of debt?

6. *We do not mean to reckon the success of the Institution by the amount of money given, or the number of Bibles distributed, &c., but by the Lord's blessing upon the work (Zech. 4:6); and we expect this, in the proportion in which he shall help us to wait upon him in prayer.*

Is this a principle that characterizes most Christian ministries today? Why or why not?

How does the last half of this principle exemplify both Müller's commitment to the sovereignty of God and

the necessity of human action and responsibility?

7. While we would avoid aiming after needless singularity, we desire to go on simply according to Scripture, without compromising the truth; at the same time thankfully receiving any instruction which experienced Believers, after prayer, upon Scriptural ground, may have to give us concerning the Institution.

Which Mark of a Healthy Church Member does this principle exemplify?

II. THE OBJECTS OF THE INSTITUTION ARE

1. To assist Day-Schools, Sunday-Schools, and Adult-Schools, in which instruction is given upon Scriptural principles, and, as far as the Lord may give the means, and supply us with suitable teachers, and in other respects make our path plain, to establish Schools of this kind. With this we also combine the putting of poor children to such Day-Schools.

Müller and Craik were critical of other missionary organizations because they were not governed by Biblical principles. What Biblical principles do you think led them to seek to assist or establish schools?

Why do you think this is the first object listed?

a. By Day-Schools upon Scriptural principles, we understand Day-Schools in which the teachers are godly persons,—in which the way of salvation is scripturally pointed out,—and in which no instruction is given opposed to the principles of the gospel.

Why would it be important for Müller that all of the teachers be godly persons and not teach anything that opposed the gospel? How does that compare to the view of many today concerning education?

b. Sunday-Schools, in which all the teachers are believers, and in which the Holy Scriptures alone are the foundation of instruction,—are such only as the Institution assists with the supply of Bibles, Testaments, &c.; for we consider it unscriptural, that any persons, who do not profess to know the Lord themselves, should be allowed to give religious instruction.

This object seems self-evident, only Christians should give religious instruction. What about Müller's past would confirm this and explain why he felt so strongly about this point?

c. The Institution does not assist any Adult-School with the supply of Bibles, Testaments, Spelling Books, &c., except the teachers are believers.

Why would Müller not even provide Bibles and other material to Adult-Schools whose teachers were not believers?

2. To circulate the Holy Scriptures.

We sell Bibles and Testaments to poor persons at a reduced price. But while we, in general, think it better that the Scriptures should be sold, and not given altogether gratis, still, in cases of extreme poverty, we think it right to give, without payment, a cheap edition.

Why might Müller feel, as a general rule, that the Scriptures be sold instead of given away for free?

3. *The third object of this Institution is, to aid Missionary efforts.*

We desire to assist those Missionaries whose proceedings appear to be most according to the Scriptures.

Why do you think the last object listed for the Scriptural Knowledge Institute is the support of missionary efforts? Why does it not appear higher on the list?

At the time of the creation of the Scriptural Knowledge Institute, Müller did not have an abundance of money, in fact, the opposite was quite true. Yet, this did not stop he and Mr. Craik from embarking on this endeavor. What can we learn from their example in this?

NEXT LESSON:

THE GROWTH OF GOD'S OWN PLANT

October 28. This afternoon brother Craik and I took tea with seven brethren and sisters, whom the Lord has brought to a knowledge of himself through our instrumentality, within the last two years; all but one belonging to the same family. We heard there a most affecting account of a poor little orphan boy, who for some time attended one of our schools, and who seems there, as far as we can judge, to have been brought to a real concern about his soul, through what I said concerning the torments of hell, and who some time ago was taken to the poor-house some miles out of Bristol. He has expressed great sorrow that he can no longer attend our school and ministry. May this, if it be the Lord's will, lead me to do something also for the supply of the temporal wants of poor children, the pressure of which has occasioned this poor boy to be taken away from our school!

Müller, George. A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings with George Müller. Vol. 1. London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1860. Print.