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### **Motives?**

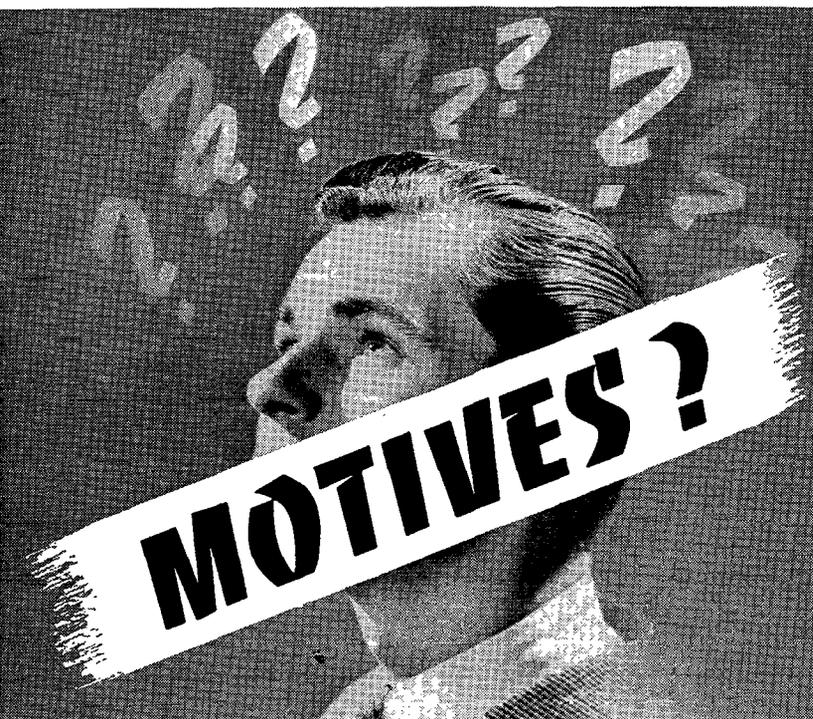
Otto H. Christensen

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OTTO H. CHRISTENSEN

Professor of Religion  
and Biblical Languages  
Andrews University

**L**ET us study the important topic of motivation: first, we need to carefully examine our own motives, for they mold our character; second, we should remember our motives are open to God and we will be judged by them; third, we should ask what is a true motive, and how can we obtain or acquire it?

The two men who followed Jesus after His baptism were asked by Him: "What seek ye?"

What seek ye? A profession or Jesus? This is a very pertinent question for you, who desire to enter the ministry, to consider. What is your inner heart purpose and motivation? Further, after you are in the ministry how will you inspire your churches to activity? Will it be by competition? Some material gain or honor? Or to glorify self by building up a good record? These are real questions you should settle before entering the sacred work. We do not need commercial salesmen competing for recognition. We need ambassadors for Christ proclaiming a message of salvation to a sin-sick world. We need men who follow the example of Christ who "glo-

rified not himself to be made an high priest" (Heb. 5:5), who prayed, "Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee" (John 17:1). Self and glorification of self in one form or another are the greatest hindrances to true success. And remember, true success is not measured by outward appearance or figures in the union paper or the *Review and Herald*. It is not what man thinks, but what is recorded in the record books of heaven that counts.

Our inner motives are sometimes unrecognized by ourselves. Man's "heart is deceitful above all things . . . : who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9). We may think we know our motives, only to discover that our heart has deceived us. Ananias and Sapphira thought they knew theirs until covetousness caught up with them. "Amid the cares of active life it is sometimes difficult to discern our own motives, but progress is made daily either for good or evil."<sup>1</sup> If we cannot know our own heart, then surely we must not judge someone else's. Therefore, Paul says, "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come" (1 Cor. 4:5). God has not committed to us the task of judging character and motives, but He has bidden us to examine our own.

<sup>1</sup> A chapel talk given to the students of Andrews University.

In the world there are two principles contending for supremacy. These can be traced through the records of history and prophecy. This controversy between the two enters into every phase of human experience. We are to see how in every act of life we ourselves reveal "the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives," and by this we decide upon which side of the controversy we will be found.<sup>2</sup> Our motives then decide upon whose side we are, because our motives have their source in one or the other.

As ministers in preparation, we need to be sure what our motives are. Therefore, we need to examine and question them carefully. We are told that, "Self-knowledge will save many from falling into grievous temptations, and prevent many an inglorious defeat. In order to become acquainted with ourselves, it is essential that we faithfully investigate the motives and principles of our conduct, comparing our actions with the standard of duty revealed in God's word."<sup>3</sup> "We need carefully to search our hearts and study our motives. Selfishness may prompt the desire to do what appears to be an unselfish and praiseworthy act."<sup>4</sup> How important it is to become familiar with our own daily conduct and the motives prompting what we do. We are counseled to review our acts daily. "Many acts which pass for good works, even deeds of benevolence, will, when closely investigated, be found to be prompted by wrong motives. . . . The Searcher of hearts inspects motives, and often the deeds which are highly applauded by men are recorded by Him as springing from selfish motives and base hypocrisy."<sup>5</sup> Perhaps in no profession is the door of access to this so easy as in the ministry. It is the motive that gives character to our acts and stamps them with shame or high moral worth. Note this striking statement: "Every action derives its quality from the motive which prompts it, and if the motives are not high, and pure, and unselfish, the mind and character will never become well-balanced."<sup>6</sup>

We may be able to hide motives from men, but we can never hide them from God. They are as clear as the light of the sun to Him. "All our works are passing in review before God. All our actions and the motives which prompted them are to be open for the inspection of angels and of God."<sup>7</sup> Over and over we are told both in

Scripture and in the Spirit of Prophecy writings that God will weigh our motives in the judgment. How important is it then that motives be right. "It is not the results we attain, but the motives from which we act, that weigh with God. He prizes goodness and faithfulness above all else."<sup>8</sup> I wonder whether we fully realize this as we should. Paul knew he must answer for the motive and spirit of his words and deeds. God is not deceived by acts of piety. "Our acts, our words, even our most secret motives, all have their weight in deciding our destiny for weal or woe. Though they may be forgotten by us, they will bear their testimony to justify or to condemn."<sup>9</sup>

Even as teachers we may have selfish motives. Some are naturally interested in one field while others are interested in another. But why do we promote the discipline in which we are trained? Is it to glorify God and give our students a proper balance and perspective of life, or do we have selfish motives? In *Counsels to Parents and Teachers* we are admonished,

No one branch of study should receive special attention to the neglect of others equally important. Some teachers devote much time to a favorite branch, drilling students upon every point, and praising them for their progress, while in other essential studies these students may be deficient. Such instructors are doing their pupils a great wrong. They are depriving them of that harmonious development of the mental powers which they should have, as well as of knowledge which they sorely need. In these matters, teachers are too often controlled by ambitions and selfish motives.<sup>10</sup>

Do we as teachers, because of this, sometimes make assignments so heavy that if our students were to fulfill them they would not have time for their other classes? If so, we are unfair both to them and to the other teachers. It is so easy to bypass our own motives in our enthusiasm for our field. But we must ever remember that God is balanced, and this, we are told, is because of His unselfish love. This unselfish love will also make our motives right and us balanced in all that we do. Think of Daniel and his pure motives with all his talent. His determination was ever to honor the Lord, and the Lord gave him true success.

What is a true motive? Do we as workers make the honor or prestige of our district or conference or institution our motive, and then justify it on the basis that it is not selfish? We say, it is not for personal reasons, but for the glory of the church. How insidious can motives become? Let us

truly and sincerely examine our hearts to see what is our true motive. In gaining an earthly reward we may lose our real reward. In Matthew 6:1, 2 we are told not to do our alms before men to be seen of men; otherwise we have no reward in heaven. To those who do their works to be seen and glorified by men (and this is one of the greatest temptations in the ministry), Jesus said, "They have their reward." The word used there is *μισθός*. The papyri and ostraca discovered in Egypt show that this verb was customary in connection with receipts. It showed that what was due had been paid in full. The debt was paid off and receipted. So, Jesus indicated, nothing more was due the hypocrites who had successfully paraded their virtues and received the homage of the crowd. What a pathetic picture if a minister has had ulterior selfish motives, and he has gained the front page or high commendation to find a receipt from God, "Paid in full." They have no further reward in heaven. What a low price for which to sell out! Is that what we want? I fear this motive is altogether too prevalent. We must understand the importance of right motives if we would have the approval of Heaven.

"When Christ abides in the soul, the thought of reward is not uppermost. This is not the motive that actuates our service. It is true that in a subordinate sense we should have respect to the recompense of reward. God desires us to appreciate His promised blessings. . . . Love to God and to our fellow men should be our motive." <sup>21</sup> Paul said, "For the love of Christ constraineth us."

A few years ago I received a scholarship from New York University to attend a six-week workshop in Israel. While waiting for the plane at the airport in Rome, I fell into conversation with an Indian who had spent some time in Italy studying diesel engines. Our conversation was broken off when the plane was ready for boarding. After lunch on the plane he came over to my seat and asked whether we might continue our conversation. It developed into a religious discussion. He was a Hindu, but I shall never forget his religious philosophy. As our conversation turned to the subject of heaven and hell, he expressed himself very firmly that he did not believe in either and Christianity was weak in that we had to have a heaven as a reward or a hell to shun in order to do right. His belief was that we

should do right for right's sake. Even though I could not go along on the no-heaven-or-hell idea, I said to myself, "Thou art not far from the kingdom." What is our motive for doing right? Is it selfish, to save ourselves from hell, or to obtain a reward in heaven? I believe we should analyze our motives for what we do, and see whether they are heaven born. Selfishness is from below; selflessness is from above. Why do we do good?

"The desire to honor God should be to us the most powerful of all motives. It should lead us to make every exertion to improve the privileges and opportunities provided for us, that we may understand how to use wisely the Lord's goods." <sup>22</sup> So "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." After quoting this, the prophetic gift says, "Here is a principle which lies at the foundation of every act, thought, and motive; the consecration of the entire being, both physical and mental, to the control of the Spirit of God." <sup>23</sup>

When our motives of action are based on a deep heart love for the Master, it will naturally demand a life of self-respect. Respect for God correlates a respect for oneself, made in the image of God. We must live with ourselves, as well as with God. William King, in his book *Motives for Christian Living*, in regard to self-respect as a Christian motive, says,

A life with due regard for oneself must be so lived as to achieve our own self-respect. To yield to some temptation may never be known to men. But *you* will know it and *you* have to live with yourself. You would walk among men with a guilty secret, with a black spot in your memory. You would receive the praise of men when you knew that you were entitled only to their condemnation. You would cringe under your own accusation as a hypocrite. It is the tragic defeat of life when you do not win your own self-respect. You cannot gain this self-respect unless you are loyal to your own intuitive conviction of what is right. Jesus recognized this inherent consciousness when He said, "Judge not ye yourselves what is right." <sup>24</sup>

A true motive comes as a result and not as a purpose. I see my sins; I weep in anguish. God forgives in mercy. I rejoice and now I joyfully serve Him; not for reward, honor, position, competition, or prestige. This is the only true motive and the only kind that will bring true success and reward in heaven. How much we need workers with that kind of motive! Then the Holy Spirit can, and will, work, and there

will be one hundred conversions where now there is one. How we need to bury self that Christ may be seen. It is customary for our young men preparing for the ministry to speak at various churches in the surrounding area on Sabbath. Some years ago evidently one young man had made a rather unnecessary display of himself as a preacher. The kind and godly local elder wanted to help the young man. So the next Sabbath he had printed a motto and fastened it to the pulpit. When the young man got up to preach he looked down and there he read the sobering words, "We would see Jesus." Perhaps some of us older ministers would not be harmed if such a motto were always on our pulpit. God needs men who can forget self and stand as a pillar for the right.

Self is the reason we have so much compromising of standards. Motives are wrong. Self wants to protect itself, and so we rationalize our compromising. May God give us men who will stand for right and truth though the heavens fall. We are in a compromising age, and the pressure of ecumenism is upon us in various ways. When we yield and follow along with this ecumenical wind and pressure of conformity we need seriously to ask ourselves, What is my motive?

Now what can we do to have right motives? This is the important question. First of all, the heart must be changed. I tremble as I read, "There are few really consecrated men among us, few who have fought and conquered in the battle with self. Real conversion is a decided change of feelings and motives; it is a virtual taking leave of worldly connections, a hastening from their spiritual atmosphere, a withdrawing from the controlling power of their thoughts, opinions, and influences."<sup>15</sup>

We are told that the Holy Spirit renews the motives. Then if we would have right motives we must have the Holy Spirit in our lives. We must have a real sense of sin and a complete surrender to Christ so that His grace and truth will reign in our hearts. This alone can purify our motives and control our outward actions in harmony therewith. This is the remedy and this alone. Apart from this, as ministers you will revert to the law of human selfishness, which will degrade your motives for personal gain. But to serve from motives purified by the Holy Spirit, this is the righteousness of Christ. "The religion of Christ

is something more than talk. The righteousness of Christ consists in right actions and good works from pure, unselfish motives. Outside righteousness, while the inward adorning is wanting, will be of no avail."<sup>16</sup>

Love to God is to control every motive. This will raise us above the corrupting self-exalting influences of the world. In writing about John's effort to lead the believers to understand their privilege, Ellen G. White says, "And as this love was allowed full sway, and became the motive power in the life, their trust and confidence in God and His dealing with them would be complete."<sup>17</sup> Notice the words "full sway." Then we will be complete in our dealing with God. When shall we obtain this experience? What is it Satan doesn't want Seventh-day Adventists to know? "Satan does not want anyone to see the necessity of an entire surrender to God."<sup>18</sup> When we have thoroughly examined our motives and when our motives are right, when they are unselfish, when all we do is not to glorify self but to glorify God, then we shall have true success, and our reward will be great in the kingdom of heaven. Otherwise, we will have had our reward, and will have been paid in full by the honor and glory that man may selfishly give us. Choose not the husks, but rather "when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. . . . But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly" (Matt. 6:3-6, 17, 18).

#### REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 420.
- <sup>2</sup> See *Education*, p. 190.
- <sup>3</sup> *Gospel Workers*, p. 276.
- <sup>4</sup> *Welfare Ministry*, p. 234.
- <sup>5</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 512.
- <sup>6</sup> *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 171.
- <sup>7</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 63.
- <sup>8</sup> *Gospel Workers*, p. 267.
- <sup>9</sup> *The Great Controversy*, pp. 486, 487.
- <sup>10</sup> *Counsels to Parents and Teachers*, p. 232.
- <sup>11</sup> *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 398, 399.
- <sup>12</sup> *Messages to Young People*, pp. 149, 150.
- <sup>13</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 84.
- <sup>14</sup> King, *Motives for Christian Living*, p. 125.
- <sup>15</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 82. (*Italics supplied.*)
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 528.
- <sup>17</sup> *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 552. (*Italics supplied.*)
- <sup>18</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 92.