

A
SERMON,

PREACHED AUGUST 11, 1811,

FOR THE BENEFIT

OF THE

PORTSMOUTH FEMALE ASYLUM;

ALSO,

WITH SOME OMISSIONS,

FOR THE

ROXBURY CHARITABLE SOCIETY,

SEP. 18, 1811.

BY EDWARD D. GRIFFIN, D. D.

PASTOR OF PARK-STREET CHURCH, BOSTON.

PUBLISHED FOR BOTH SOCIETIES.

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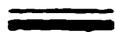
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SERMON.



HEB. xiii. 16.

BUT TO DO GOOD AND TO COMMUNICATE FORGET NOT ; FOR WITH
SUCH SACRIFICES GOD IS WELL PLEASED.

THERE are two classes of nominal christians, which stand at opposite extremes, but equally removed from the spirit of the gospel. The first place all religion in feeling and devotion, without beneficent action ; the second, in beneficent action, without that “love” which is “the fruit of the Spirit.” The latter accuse, indiscriminately, the friends of evangelical religion of confining their attention to *feelings*. Such men are let loose upon the church, perhaps to scourge christians for their neglect of the active virtues, and to chastise them to their duty.

In the context Christ is set forth as an altar, on which two sorts of sacrifices are to be offered ; “the

sacrifice of praise to God," including all the duties of *devotion* ; and the offering of *charitable actions*. Neither can be accepted alone ; but when they are united, " with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

A leading branch of beneficence is liberality, or a religious distribution of property ; a principal branch of liberality is charity or almsgiving. " To do good and to communicate," comprehends the three.

I shall arrange what I have to say on this subject under the following heads :

- I. Our motives must be evangelical.
- II. No true religion can exist without charity, liberality, and general beneficence.
- III. I shall inquire how far liberality ought to be carried.
- IV. Shall consider the duty of charity in particular.

I. Our motives must be evangelical. If you ask what it is to act from an evangelical motive, I answer, It is to act *from an affectionate regard to the authority of the true God, and from a believing and grateful respect to Christ.*

(1) From an affectionate regard to the authority of the true God. I say, an *affectionate* regard ; for

it must include a real delight in His will. To act from slavish fear, or selfish hope, even with an eye to His authority, is not enough. We must be moved by filial love. I say, the *true* God ; for to respect the authority of a *false* God, essentially unlike the true,—as a God all mercy without justice, or an idle spectator instead of the governor of the world,—is nothing better than idolatry.

But may I not do good from the dictates of nature, without regard to the divine will ? If I have charity to *man* it is real charity, though it has no reference to *God* ; as water in a bason, though separated from the fountain, is the same water still. I answer : True love to man cannot exist without the knowledge and love of God, and obedience to His will, which are the fruits of a new birth. “ *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments.*” “ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God ; and *every one* that loveth [his brethren,] is *born of God, and knoweth God.*” Where these spiritual effects are wanting, there are no right affections of *any kind*. Did right affections exist, what could possibly hinder them, under the guidance of revelation, from loving the true God, and regarding His authority ?

Unsanctified men love to act from their *own choice*, without a master ; but the real friends of the universe are glad to make *the will of God* their law ; because it is essential to publick happiness that His will, and not the feelings or impulses of creatures, should be the universal rule. Nothing short of this can constitute any man a loyal subject of His kingdom. Under *human* governments, in cases *to which the law does not extend*, men may indeed act from a regard to the publick good, *without respect to law*. Not so under a government where the law extends to *every* moral action. Had not God commanded us, whether we eat or drink, or *whatever* we do, to do *all* to His glory, we might, perhaps, have acted from instinct, or impulse, or independent reason, and been accepted. But since His authority, and I add, His presence and agency, are universal, not to respect Him in all our moral actions, is either wilful rebellion, or downright atheism. You allow that you ought to perform moral actions from a conviction that they are *right* : but to forget that what is right is *agreeable to the will of God*, is atheism : And to know that a thing is agreeable to the will of God, *by whatever means you know it*, creates the obligation of a divine command.

(2) To constitute an evangelical motive we must act from a believing and grateful respect to Christ. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do *all* in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." Thus Paul taught, and thus Paul practised. In all his epistles he associates Christ with every duty, and every hope. The "faith which worketh by love," is the grand principle of holiness. "Without faith it is impossible to please" God. All our religion, like the gospel, must be full of Christ. We must hourly watch the eye of our divine Master, and take our law from His lips ; for we are not our own, we are bought with a price.

But is there no direct love to *man* which is holy ? Yes, but it is only a part of the same affection of which I have been speaking ;—an affection so expansive that while it centers in God and the Redeemer, it extends to all rational and sensitive beings. *Other* love to man is not holy. Those natural affections which many mistake for true charity, are incapable of raising the heart to God, or carrying it forth even to all mankind. They are limited to a small circle ; and are very compatible, as daily experience proves, with enmity to God and the best interests of the world. They have not even a *tendency* to exterminate

pride, idolatry, or unbelief. Love to God and the Redeemer, including, as it obviously must, *a delight in the DOCTRINES, precepts, and provisions of the gospel*, is the grand test of genuine love to man.

Actions uninfluenced by this divine principle, however useful to men, are not acceptable to God. “Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, —and have not *charity*, [the “love” which “is the fulfilling of the law,”] it profiteth me nothing.” In modern language charity is *almsgiving*. In this sense I shall consent to use the term; but I announce, once for all, that I shall mean nothing less than that *almsgiving which is prompted by holy love*.

II. No true religion can exist without charity, liberality, and general beneficence.

None can exist without *general beneficence*. The sole end of our existence is to glorify God by enjoying and communicating happiness. The only use of religion is to fit us to answer this end. All religion consists in escaping from the dominion of self-love, and in seeking the common good. The great law is this: “Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.” “As we have opportunity let us do good unto

all men.” Love, the vital principle of all religion, is active. If not active, it is dead. In the animal world nothing lives without action ; without action nothing lives in the moral world. The only excellence of religion, the only excellence of the divine perfections, consists in their *tendency to diffuse happiness*. This is the loveliness of love itself. Were love as far removed from this tendency as malice, it would be malice and not love. Religion unbeneficent, is as spurious as beneficence unprompted by a religious principle.

There is no true religion without *liberality* and *eharity*. But in this place it is proper to ascertain what appropriations of property come under these denominations. Not what you are obliged by law to contribute to maintain civil government ; but what you give without constraint. Not what you pay to support the gospel ; for this you receive an equivalent service. Say not that you bear your part of the publick burden in this way. You may as well plead that you educate your children, that you purchase bibles for your families, that you pay your daily labourers, that you discharge your debts. Not what you lay out in hospitality, with an expectation of returns ; but what you give “hoping for nothing

again." Not what you lavish in feasts and presents on the rich. This God will not reckon as given to Him. On the contrary He says with a frown, "He that giveth to the rich shall surely come to want." "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends,—nor thy rich neighbours, lest they bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee ; but—call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed." *Such* liberality is accounted of in heaven ; also what you give for the endowment of useful institutions, for the education of pious youth for the service of the church, for the support of missionaries among the heathen, for the encouragement of religious magazines, for the distribution of bibles and tracts, for the relief of sufferers by fire or shipwreck, for the support of the poor ; also your hospitality to the houseless stranger, and what you bestow to raise modest, desponding worth to hope and enterprise.

Such liberality is essential to true religion. Love that will make no *sacrifices*, is of no value. "If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled,—what doth it profit?" *Self-denial* is the essence and measure of true virtue. Pi-

ous liberality, which partakes most largely of this ingredient, is, therefore, the strongest expression of a religious spirit. It takes the lead of all the christian virtues. It is their head, without which the body is but a carcase. In all its parts and members virtue must be complete, or it is the offering of the lame and the blind : but its *head* can least be spared. Obedience, though imperfect, must be universal. “ Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” You have conscience to pay your debts ; you do well ; do not even publicans the same ? You have virtue to love your rich neighbours ; you do well ; do not even publicans the same ? If you cannot part with your property to promote the happiness of the world,—if you cannot pity the poor, or pitying will not relieve them, your religion is vain. “ Whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up the bowels of his compassion from him, *how dwelleth the love of God in him ?*” “ Pure religion and undefiled.—*is this*, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.” This wanting, you may have faith, you may have zeal and experiences, you may make long and many prayers ; but you have not *the religion of Christ*. You know Him who has said, “ I will have

mercy, and not sacrifice.” The religion which Christ came to inculcate was that which appeared in the good Samaritan, rather than in the showy but barren devotions of the priest and levite. That parable was intended to put down a race of men, who, while they boasted of their zeal and devotions, had no active charity. Its object was to prove them hypocrites by the damning testimony of this single fact. No one doubts that our Saviour meant to hold up the priest and levite as hypocrites. Then certainly he intended so to construct the story as to furnish *proof* against them. But the only proof exhibited was their neglect of a suffering brother. This parable, then, is an eternal testimony, that all the feelings, zeal, and devotion in the world cannot raise a man above the character of a hypocrite, while he neglects the sufferings of his brethren. A member of the church, a minister of the sanctuary, with nothing apparent against him but this contractedness of soul, is further from divine favour than a heathenish but humane Samaritan. No command in the bible is more common, or more urgent, than that “to communicate.” And do you expect salvation without obeying this? You may as well hope to be saved in the habitual transgression of any other command. The sacrifice of property to

God, in token of *homage*, in acknowledgment that we hold all things under Him, is one of the appointed forms of *worship*. Not a more essential part of worship, is prayer. The portion which belongs to God as our liege lord, must be paid into His treasury, of which, in part, the poor are keepers. To use that part ourselves is robbery, is sacrilege. “Will a man rob God?” Can that man hope for salvation?

From this duty not even the poor are exempted, except that class who themselves *subsist by charity*. These are permitted to plead, “Silver and gold have I none:” but they must add, “Such as I have, give I.” Let them contribute their personal services, their pious conversation, prayers, and example. All can do something, and all have something to do, for the happiness of the world. It is a common tax on *rational existence*. But the least talent to *earn property*, and the privilege of *possessing a little*, are also taxed. The voluntary payment of this tax is the poor man’s homage to God. Giving to the Lord, *with those who have any thing that they can call their own*, is as essential to salvation as any other part of *worship*. Do you say that others can *better afford* to give? You may as well say that others can better afford to do *your* part of prayer, and attend publick

worship in your stead. You may as well think of being *holy* by proxy, and being *saved* by proxy. Do you plead that you have nothing *to spare*? You may as well plead that you have no *time* to do that for which *all* time was given you. Do you tell me that you are now obliged to do without many conveniences? Will you who are tenants plead this against paying your rent to your landlords? If it is so, God has limited your conveniences, and you must submit: but of your little you still must give a part. You must learn to place your happiness less in the comforts of the world, and more in doing good. You must learn to live less by calculation, and more by faith. “Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” After all, does your rebellious heart resolve that you will not be kept so low, but will use what you have yourselves? Then, as the Lord liveth, you have no part in Him.

Where did you learn that the poor are exempted? Under the *old* dispensation had they this immunity? No, they were required, equally with the rich, to offer their tithes, oblations, and sacrifices. And on whom does the *New* Testament impose the obligation? On

all who possess “this world’s good,” be it more or less. “To communicate forget not.” Think you there were none but *rich* christians in Judea to receive this command? Or does the command itself except the poor? You find no limitation in the scriptures, except only in regard to the *amount*. “If there be first a willing mind it is accepted, according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.” Does worldly wisdom still pronounce it imprudent for the poor to give? I appeal to a higher tribunal. What was the judgment of Christ when the *poor widow* cast into the treasury her “two mites, —even all her living?” Did He reproach her with imprudence? No, He commended her, and left her fame to be echoed in the praises of all generations. What then do you who have but two mites, give to God? Nothing? Then you are nothing.

But it is not enough to give, now and then, in a paroxysm of passion; you must do it *habitually*, as you pray, and transact business, and practise the other moral virtues. The promises of the gospel, as well as its threatenings, are made, not to particular acts, but to *general characters*,—characters formed by nothing less than *habitual conduct*. The man who prays only when he is sick, or in peril, is not, in the

eye of scripture, devout. And the man who only gives once or twice a year, as passion or caprice dictates, has no claim to the character or rewards of the liberal. Your liberality must be as habitual as love, and as systematick as a well regulated conscience. As far as possible it should be reduced to a permanent system, extending through every month in the year, and through every year of your lives. It would promote such regularity to devote, as some have done, a fixed proportion of your income to God. And here I cannot but remark, that benevolent *societies*, because they do the work of charity upon settled principles, have the first claim to our aid. The irregular impulse of *private* charity may conduct us to the impudent solicitations of the street-beggar, or the whining impertinence of the besotted vagrant, while it overlooks retired and modest want. A society formed upon system, which inquires, and deliberates, and feels a responsibility to the publick for every act, is the best depositary of our gifts.

It is matter of deep lamentation that this duty is so shamefully neglected. Multitudes, who were it not for this neglect would be esteemed christians, manifestly have souls too contracted for God to inhabit. They seem never to have awaked from the

dream that they can be saved without this essential part of religion. While they would shudder at the thought of breaking the laws which God has enacted against theft and murder, they scarcely suspect that they are living in contempt of precepts equally binding. This is one of the crying sins of our land, and one of the greatest blots upon our churches. How many professors of religion, especially among the labouring classes of society, from whom it is impossible to extort a few farthings to feed the poor, to support a religious magazine, or to send missionaries to the heathen. And yet they dream that they are christians ! Where such a spirit prevails among the churches, it is as deplorable a mark of the declension of religion, as the neglect of family worship, or the prevalence of false doctrines. The enemies of the gospel have the boldness openly to say, that if they were in distress they would sooner apply to the men of the world than the church. O “ tell it not in Gath !” It is high time for the church to arise, and wipe off this foul aspersion. “ Take up the stumbling block out of the way of my people.” If such is the character of the church, it is no longer the church of Christ. But it is a libel ; a libel doubtless ; though it must be confessed with tears and

blushes, that too much occasion has been given for this humiliating charge.

At length the christian world, after the slumber of ages, begin to come to their senses. More wealth, it is probable, has been consecrated to God within the last twenty years, than was ever given in an equal period before. But still very many who call themselves christians, are in a deep sleep in regard to this duty. Would God I could be the means of awaking a few ! I confess that the neglect appears to me so extensive, and so fatal, that in entering upon this sermon I have felt less anxious about the success of a single collection, than to dispel a destructive delusion, and to stimulate you to a permanent duty.

III. How far should our liberality be carried ? The lay tribes of Israel were bound, by particular or general laws, to give not less than four tenths, perhaps I may say, one half, of their yearly income. About three tenths went indeed to support civil government and publick worship ; but at least one tenth, it may be fairly calculated, was given to the poor.* And yet the calls upon their charity were by

* (1) There was the offering of the *first fruits* for the use of the priests. Besides the publick offerings at the Passover and Pentecost, in behalf of the whole nation, (Lev. xxiii. 10—20.) each person, when

no means as great as upon ours. Few among them were indigent.† Separated as they were from other

he came up to the feast of Pentecost, brought an offering of the fruits of the earth, as in the judgment of his own conscience he was able. (Exod. xxii. 29. and xxiii. 13. and xxxiv. 22. Num. xv. 19—21. and xviii. 12, 13. and xxviii. 26. Deut. xxvi. 1—11. Neh. x. 35, 37.) All the firstlings of men and beasts, that is, whatever opened the womb, were, on the 8th day after their birth, devoted to God. The firstlings of men, and of beasts improper for sacrifice, were redeemed by money or a lamb. (Exod. xiii. 12—16. and xxii. 29, 30. and xxxiv. 19, 20. Lev. xxii. 27. and xxvii. 26, 27. Num. iii. 12, 13. and xviii. 15—18. Neh. x. 36.)

(2) Of what remained of the increase of the fruits of the earth and of the flocks, they gave a tithe, that is, a tenth, to the Levites; (Lev. xxvii. 30—33. Num. xviii. 21, 24, 30. 2 Chron. xxxi. 6—19. Neh. x. 37, 39.) who, in their turn, gave a tenth to the priests. (Num. xviii. 26—32. 2 Chron. xxxi. 10. Neh. x. 38, 39.) This whole tithe was holy, and might not be eaten by the common people. (Lev. xxii. 10—16. and xxvii. 30, 32. Num. xviii. 21—32.)

(3) A tenth of what remained of the increase of the fruits of the earth, together with the *second births* of all clean beasts, which may be estimated a tenth, were consumed in *charity feasts*, shared with the levites, at Jerusalem, for two years,—and the third year, (unless a third tithe was raised that year for a distinct feast,) eaten *at home*, with the levite, the stranger, the widow, and the fatherless. (Deut. xii. 6, 7, 17—19. and xiv. 22—29. and xv. 19, 20. and xxvi. 12—15.)

(4) They offered many expensive sacrifices; some fixed by law, and others voluntary. At all seasons they brought oblations or gifts of various sorts, as they were able, to the ministers of the sanctuary. At the three great feasts, in particular, they were not allowed to “appear before the Lord empty.” (Deut. xvi. 16, 17.)

All these together, which, (except the part which the poor had in the charity feasts the third year,) went to support civil government and publick worship, amounted, at least, to *three tenths* of all their income.

(5) After all this the *poor* were to be provided for. No interest was allowed to be taken for monies or goods lent to an indigent He.

† Deut. xv. 4.

nations, they had no opportunity to extend relief to sufferers abroad ; nor were they required, in that age, to send missions to the Gentiles.

brew. (Exod. xxii. 25. Lev. xxv. 35—38.) If he had sold himself for debt, he had *a right* to be free after serving six years ; (Exod. xxi. 2—6. Deut. xv. 12—18. Jer. xxxiv. 14.) and was *obliged* to go out, whatever time he had served, in the jubilee, which occurred once in fifty years. (Lev. xxv. 10, 40, 41, 50,—55.) Every seventh year, whatever had been loaned to a poor Hebrew, and not repaid, was released. (Deut. xv. 1—4.) Every fiftieth year, all lands, together with houses in un-walled villages, and houses, wherever situated, of the Levites, which had been sold for debt, were restored. (Lev. xxv. 10, 13—16, 23—34.) Every seventh, and every fiftieth year, the ground was left untilled ; and whatever grew spontaneously was shared by the poor as well as the rich. (Exod. xxiii. 9—11. Lev. xxv. 2—7, 11, 12, 20—22.) Twice in a century two such years, it is apparent, would fall together. This was ordered to try their faith in Him who had promised to provide for them while they provided for the poor. (Lev. xxv. 20—22.) They were also commanded to leave the corners and gleanings of their harvest fields, and the gleanings of their vintage, at once to supply the wants, and encourage the industry, of the poor. (Lev. xix. 10. and xxiii. 22.)

After all this they were put upon *voluntary charity*, under the stimulus of pressing laws. “If thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him ; yea though he be a stranger or a sojourner, that he may be with thee.—Thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand, from thy poor brother ; but thou shalt open thy hand *wide* unto him. Thou shalt *surely* give him ; and thy heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him ; because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land : therefore I *command* thee, saying, Thou shalt open thy hand *wide* unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in the land.”

Now, (to say nothing of their *hospitality*,) if you put these things together ; especially if you consider the sacrifice of all the profits of their fields *eight years in fifty* ; which, excepting their own support in those years, was a loss of sixteen per cent. of the fruits of the earth, or nearly *one sixth* ; you will perceive that *the whole* is moderately estimated at *another tenth* of their income.

This is the only instance in which God has required of any nation a definite proportion of their income : and even here He left much to generosity, directed only by general laws. With such a spectacle held up before the christian church, He put the gospel into their hands, and rested in this appeal to their conscience. It was the best way to test the temper of the christian world. Had He by definite laws forced men into the habit of giving a certain proportion of their income, *that* would have been no better proof of generous sensibility than the payment of any tax or debt. Had He been more explicit our *heads*, and not our *hearts*, would have directed us. But He has left it very much to our *disposition*, and means Himself to be the judge whether we give enough. He has left the subject involved in doubt, that we may be daily driven to Him for direction. Indeed no general rule would have answered ; for our charity must bear some proportion to the existing necessities of the world, especially of that part which comes most under our eye.

But though I cannot state proportions, I can show you texts which require you to consecrate *all* your possessions to Christ, to be used for Him as occasion may demand. I can show you texts

which require you to relieve the indigent, without any other limitation than their necessities and your ability. I can show you texts which require you to do to others as you would have others do to you. And with these before you, I can leave it to your conscience to decide how much you owe to Him who gave you all,—to Him who gave His life for you,—and how much you would give were every selfish passion extinct.

One thing is apparent : the liberal must do more than their proportion because others do less. They must deny themselves many things, which in so well furnished a world they might afford to enjoy, were all willing to do their part. While a great proportion of the wealth of the earth is in the hands of men whose hearts are not made of flesh, and the wants of the world are cast upon a few, shall those few live in luxury, and leave their poor brethren to perish, and public institutions to fall ? Do you tell me that these sumptuary laws would dismantle the world of its ornaments, and suppress the useful arts, and turn half of mankind out of employment to live by plunder and rapine ? I mean not to raise a Vandal crusade against the arts and ornaments of society. There will be people enough to guard the refinements of

luxury and art, when we have turned the attention of all we can to the immediate wants, and more solid interests of mankind. While thousands are destitute of bread, and nations are posting on to judgment unprepared, our aid, our tenderest cares, are more wanted here.*

* The author will defend the arts and ornaments of life. Were all men employed in tillage, pasturage, and coarse manufactures, carried only far enough to supply the necessities of nature, they would, much of the time, be without employment, and exposed to all the dangers incident to idleness : for to a person of any reflection it must be apparent, that it cannot require the constant labour of all mankind to provide what is necessary to support life. In a state of society a little removed from barbarism, but not far enough to admit luxuries and their tributary arts, the task of providing the necessaries of life will naturally devolve on a part, and leave the rest worse than unemployed. This was exemplified in Europe during the dark ages. Only a part of the common people being able to find useful employment, multitudes betook themselves to arms, attached themselves to some petty or powerful leader, and lived by war or rapine. An unprincipled banditti, by this means, infested every kingdom of Europe. This evil was gradually cured by improving and extending the mechanical arts. These, while they contributed to convenience and elegance, furnished useful employment to hundreds of thousands who had been active only in doing mischief. They gave employment as well to the merchant as the mechanick ; and by extending commerce, diffused industry through all classes of society. Suppress the arts of the nineteenth century, and all things will return to the barbarism and violence of the twelfth. If then we must have mechanicks, we must use their manufactures. There will soon be no watchmakers if no man will wear a watch. I have another thing to say. Let those who proscribe every thing which belongs to the class of luxuries, tell me why those luxuries were created ? For what end were *gold* and *precious stones* produced, if they may not be used ? For what end was *silk* created if all must wear sackcloth ? Let others inveigh against luxuries ; I only ask that they may be purified from *idolatry*, and excess, and never interfere

If I cannot tell you how much to give, I can, at least, lay down certain *principles* which may assist your judgment. One is, that every selfish passion should be swallowed up in love to God and man. We must hold ourselves ready, at the command of God, to resign all our property, not only willingly, but *with joy* ; as a dutiful child would *gladly* resign a toy to gratify a father, and feel richer in a parent's gratification than in a thousand trifles. Regarding our neighbour as ourselves, we must be as willing to give as to withhold, wishing only God to decide which.

Another principle is, that overgrown wealth, so far from being desirable, is rather to be dreaded. What can it do ? Can it bring happiness ? “ The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much ; but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.” Can it secure the soul ? “ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of

with the claims of *charity*. When they interfere with the claims of charity in our own case, must be determined by circumstances ; such as the existing wealth or poverty of the world, the proportion of aid given by the generality of mankind to *industry* and *want* respectively, and the calls made more immediately upon *our* compassion. Because the dissipated do more than their proportion to encourage the mechanick, and less to relieve the needy, the religious must retrench luxuries and communicate, more than otherwise would be necessary or proper.

God ?” Can it benefit the world ? It would be far better for the world if all were liberal and none were very rich. Can it bless your children ? It has been remarked by judicious observers of mankind, that they who *inherit* large estates are seldom the most prosperous or happy, and often die poor. A better inheritance for your children would be found in your charity and prayers. “I have been young,” said one, “and now am old ; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” What then can superfluous wealth do ? Nothing but gratify and cherish the evil passions, which offend God and ruin the soul. Surely, then, it is not a privilege to be rich. It is a condition full of perplexity and danger, and worthy only to be an object of dread.

Another principle is, that christians must not *desire* property merely for its own sake, nor for the honour or power which it brings ; nor, on *any* account, covet *exorbitant* wealth. “They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.” This is that “love of money” which “is the root of all evil.” This is that

covetousness which good men are said to hate ;* which under the name of idolatry is ranked among the grossest crimes ;† which is declared to be a proper ground of excommunication from the church,‡ and an insuperable bar to the kingdom of heaven.¶ We read of “ the covetous *whom the Lord abhorreth ;*”§ but we no where read of covetous *christians*. Many *other* sins are ascribed to them, but covetousness never.

After all it is desirable, unless pressing calls of charity prevent, that the merchant should retain as much as he can *well employ* for a stock in trade, that the farmer and mechanick should retain enough to carry on their business *to advantage* ; as by this means they can gain faster for every useful purpose. This would in general be a sufficient inheritance for their children, and is what I will venture to pronounce *enough*. With a man who has reached this point it becomes, then, a solemn question, *what, after supporting his family, he shall do with the surplus of his income*. Shall he hoard it to swell his already abundant wealth ? Or shall he dedicate it to God ? This question will presently be tried at the bar of Christ. The practical decision which it now receives is attended with awful responsibility. Let men of immense fortunes, who give much and fill the

* Exod. xviii. 21. Prov. xxviii. 16. † Eph. v. 5. Col. iii. 5.

‡ 1 Cor. v. 10, 11. || Eph. v. 5. 1 Cor. vi. 10. § P's. x. 3

churches with their well earned praise, *but give only a small part of their income*, examine this question. Are they certain that they have a right to *increase* their property, while humanity and the cause of Christ suffer for want of their superfluous wealth?

Another principle is, that by industry and frugality we must enlarge our means of doing good. Every man, unless otherwise usefully employed, should “labour, working with his hands,—that he may have to give to him that needeth.” “These hands,” said Paul, “have ministered unto my necessities, *and to them that were with me*. I have showed you,” continued he,—“how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak.” This ought to be the grand spring of industry. We should till the ground, and spread the sail, and open our shops, not to hoard, but to earn something for Christ. Our eye ought to be single, and the glory of God should be the end in view. If we acquire *for the sake of possessing*, we serve mammon but not God. It is impossible to have at the same time *two* ultimate ends.

We must also *save* for Christ, as they who know that in the accounts of heaven they are charged with every squandered shilling. On every cent which goes through our hands we must inscribe, *Holiness to the Lord*. What an awful account for prostituted wealth will christian nations have to render!

There is enough squandered in dissipation to supply the wants of the world, and to leave not a sufferer for bread or the means of grace. The tender christian has in his best hours such a sense of the unspeakable value of pagan souls, and of the distresses of houseless orphans and unprotected mothers, that it would be a violence to his feelings to make any sacrifice to his own artificial wants. And when he has collected his little savings, he has more pleasure in presenting them to God for the use of His indigent creatures and His church, than the luxurious ever felt.

If mankind, submitting to *these principles*, would earnestly unite in the great work of charity, what might not be done? A few men might be found, who without injuring their families might provide for the support and education of all the indigent in America to the end of the world. In other countries the same. Arise and send abroad the invitation among the nations to come to this luxury of the soul! Tell the rich what they may enjoy! Let the Howards and Thorntons, of blessed memory, live again in their successors!

The great movements at the present day afford uncommon opportunity for this noble work. Never was so wide a field opened. The numerous institutions lately established in Europe and America to

improve the social and moral state of man, surpass all former experience. The opening recently made in Asia for introducing the gospel among numerous and most populous nations, has roused to ardour the hopes of the christian world, and produced one universal throbb of desire to unfurl the standard of the cross upon the Indus, the Ganges, and the Yamour. Christians of every denomination are praying for Zion, and pouring their wealth into the treasury of the Lord. “The time is—come—that the Lord’s house should be built.” Let all who wish to be enrolled either in heaven or earth as citizens of Zion, seize the great opportunity and come up to the help of the Lord.” It is too late for the niggardly hand of parsimony to be closed. Wo to the wretch who in such a day,—a day when the attritions of benevolence have worn off the rust of ages, suffers his gold and silver to canker in his chest. *The rust of them shall be a witness against him, and shall eat his flesh like fire.*

After all, the essential interests of mankind are at this moment greatly suffering for want of that superfluous wealth which lies useless and accursed upon its owners’ hands. And has it come to this!—that He who made the world and redeemed it, cannot, of all the wealth He owns, have enough to keep His own church from suffering? It is too much!

IV. Let us consider the duty of charity in particular.

It is the appointment of heaven that “the poor shall never cease out of the land.” “The poor always ye have with you.” Let not miserly reluctance, eager for excuses, impute poverty as a fault, and charge it to the account of indolence or mismanagement. Were it even so, we are bound to imitate our heavenly Father, who “maketh His sun to rise on the evil and—the good, and sendeth rain on the just and—unjust.” But diligence, skill, and virtue itself, cannot always elude the miseries of want. “The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor yet bread to the wise, nor—riches to men of understanding ;—but time and chance happeneth to them all.” “*The Lord* maketh poor, and maketh rich ;—for by strength shall no man prevail.” Why then has God appointed some to be poor ? He could have given industry and success to all. He could have kept fathers alive, and suffered no helpless orphans to be thrown upon the world. But where then would have been the *exercise* and *test* of charity ? The poor are left as Christ’s *receivers* to collect tribute for Him. It is for *Himself*, in the persons of the poor, that He asks you to give. And why does He

ask ? Not because He has need. He could supply the poor by a shower of manna, and keep their raiment from waxing old : but *in mercy to you* He does it not. He is willing to give you an opportunity to *evince your love to Him*.

How far, then, ought a christian community to provide for the poor ? Not indeed so far as to make them rich ; but so far as to supply the sick with medicine and attendance ; to furnish all with the necessaries of life, and with the means both of grace and education ; to cherish helpless orphans ; and, in some instances, to give to desponding merit the means of industry, and the activity of hope. Much has indeed been done by the provision of law, but much remains for private charity to do. Many pine and sigh in secret who cannot consent to enrol themselves on the public list of paupers, and who will not beg. You must not wait, then, for misery to plead at your door, nor for the solicitation of more charitable neighbours. You must go forth yourselves to search for distress where it has commonly the most need and the most merit, in the damp cellar, in the confined garret, where the aking head has only cobwebs for its curtains, and a heap of straw for its pillow. If you leave wretchedness to languish and die alone within a few

yards of your door, the plea of *ignorance* will be no excuse. “The righteous *considereth*, [by diligent attention,] the cause of the poor ; but the wicked *regardeth not to know it.*” “The cause which I knew not,” says Job, “I searched out.”

Do you apprehend that so much done for the poor will encourage idleness ? This is indeed a danger to be guarded against. That charity is doubly charitable, which while it relieves, gives *employment* to the poor. On this account I know not how to speak in terms sufficiently respectful of those *female asylums* which, to the honour of our nation, are established in different parts of the United States. In this place, too, I would ask whether the wealthy may not find ample scope for benevolent enterprise in establishing *work-houses*, under regulations to prevent the moral pestilence naturally generated by large bodies of men crowded together ? But after doing your best to guard against idleness, give confidently and leave the event with Christ. Be not afraid to obey His commands lest others should abuse your goodness.

Shall I now set some of the *motives* to charity more distinctly before you ? Listen to *the command of Christ*. “Give alms of such things as ye have.” “Charge them that are rich in this world—that they

be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.” Were you to stand in the presence of Christ to-day, and hear these laws issuing from His lips, and then be told that His religion was every where revived, would you not expect to go forth and see the whole community in motion, scattering their gifts among the poor ?

Charity in various ways glorifies God. “ For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God ; while by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them and unto all men ; and by their prayer for you which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.” Such was the language employed to stimulate the generosity of the Corinthian church. To a man of a generous spirit it seems strange that an apostle, bearing the authority of God, had occasion to use so much address to excite christians to charity ; that he needed to do more than simply to state the divine will. This fact proves that the Holy Ghost sees that even christians are hardly persuaded to perform the whole of this duty. So many selfish pleas are in the way, that they

are much more likely to stop short than go too far. Apprized of this danger, every christian ought to set himself against the propensity of his nature, and be sure if he errs to err on the side of liberality, a virtue so precious in the eyes of God. For the honour of Christ this ought to be a charitable world. At least the *church*, which is understood to possess His spirit, and to be placed on earth to reflect His image, —the church, which is subject to His laws if all religion is not a name, ought certainly to be a charitable community.

Another reason may be drawn from the *wants and distresses of the poor*. “If there be—any bowels and mercies,” you will not suffer the orphan to perish, nor the heart-broken widow to despond and die. Behold that interesting sufferer languishing on his bed of straw in yonder cabin. He once saw better days : but misfortune reduced him to want, and disease has palsied the arm which earned food for his family. Under the pains of approaching death he hears his children cry for bread, and he has nothing to give them but his tears ; he sees the sorrows of their mother, and has no consolation to offer her but that tomorrow she will be a widow.

How heavenly is the charity that, like an angel of mercy, stanches the wounds of a bleeding heart !

Give me the honour to be the almoner of Christ, and I will count the laurels of a Cæsar weeds. Give me the luxury to light up a gleam of hope in the eye of despair, and on my hand pressed to the sufferer's heart to feel the tear of gratitude and joy, and I ask not the triumphs of conquest nor the glory of empire ; I spurn the riot of dissipation ; poor are the pleasures of selfishness and pride ; *this* is the bliss of *charity*, the bliss of *heaven*. “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” It is more blessed to give than to do any thing else in the power of our hands. *Opportunity* is a privilege. Wealth, which furnishes the means, is chiefly valuable for this reason. As much to be dreaded as that perilous acquisition is, yet when I see merit depressed with want, and infancy suffering for bread, I mourn that I am poor. Give me the *Indies* then ! I would employ the whole,

To deeds of charity, more than to any acts of justice, or even duties of devotion, are the promises of the gospel made. “The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.” “With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful.” “He that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.” “Is not this the fast that I have chosen,—to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor

that are cast out into thy house?—Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall spring forth speedily.” “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” Do you value the rewards of *man*? “Give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall *men* give into your bosom.” Do you value *earthly* blessings? “Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble:—he shall be blessed upon the earth, and thou wilt not deliver him into the will of his enemies: the Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing.” “Honour the Lord with thy substance;—so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.” “Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days.” “He that hath pity on the poor lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given will He pay him again.” “He that giveth to the poor shall not lack.” “There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.” Do you value *spiritual* blessings? “God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye, always having all-sufficiency in all things, may abound

to every good work." Do you value *eternal* rewards? These are also promised. "Come, ye blessed of my Father;—for I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink." "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations." "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth,—but—treasures in heaven." "SELL that ye have and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens." "Let us, therefore," says Bishop Taylor, "convey our riches here, through the hands of the poor, in bills of exchange, into the eternity of glory, where such money is current." Indeed, my hearers, when we come to lie on a dying bed, of all our treasures *that* only will remain our own which we shall have given to the Lord.

On the contrary the most dreadful threats are denounced against the neglect of this duty, as being an incontestable proof of irreligion. "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself but shall not be heard." "For he shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy." "Depart from me, ye cursed;—for I was a

hungered, and ye gave me no meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink.”

Nothing short of this divine charity can make you what the people of God in every age have been. Would you possess the religion of Job ? “ I delivered,” says he, “ the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy.—I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor, and the cause which I knew not I searched out.” Would you possess the religion of *Zaccheus* ? “ *Zaccheus* stood and said,—Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.” Nor did Christ rebuke him for injustice to his family. Would you possess the religion of *Dorcas* ? She “ was full of good works and alms-deeds,” and employed herself in making “ coats and garments” for the poor. Would you possess the religion of *Cornelius* ? He “ gave much alms ;” and his alms came up “ for a memorial before God.” Would you possess the religion of *Paul* ? He first abandoned all his possessions and prospects, and then by the labour of his hands ministered to them that were with him. Would you possess the religion of the *primitive*

churches ? They of Jerusalem threw their possessions into a common stock for the benefit of the poor. The other churches made weekly collections for the same object, the liberality of which may be estimated by the commendation bestowed on them of Macedonia. "In a great trial of affliction," says Paul, "the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty, abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves ; praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints." Would you possess the religion of the *apostles* ? What did they do ? The cries of a dying world extinguished the cries of nature ; they crucified their passions on the cross of their bleeding Lord ; they left their possessions by His tomb, and with "the loss of all things" passed through the world to search for perishing Gentiles. Would you possess the *christian religion* ? What has it done ? It has done more to meliorate society than all other causes united. Not an asylum, nor an almshouse, nor an infirmary, nor any institution for the relief of the wretched, was ever known in the heathen world, not even in Greece or Rome, so famed for their learning, wealth, and

publick spirit. But christianity has filled the world with these benevolent establishments. Hospitals, poor-houses, dispensaries, charity schools, with many species of “humane” and “charitable societies,” under the auspices of this religion have every where appeared ;—to say nothing of “missionary societies,” “bible,” and “tract societies,” and various other institutions for the diffusion of christian knowledge. These illustrious monuments of love proclaim to the world, *Such is christianity ! and such are they who are christians !*

Would you resemble the blessed Redeemer ? When our first parents, lost to themselves and to us, left us helpless orphans in a miserable world, He mercifully took us up and provided an asylum for us. *Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich.* His birth, His life, His death, were exhibitions of amazing charity. His miracles were all beneficent. They healed the sick, they fed the hungry, they soothed and tranquillized the wretched. Such is Christ : and have you no desire to resemble the Saviour of the world ? “Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ ;” for “if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of His.”

Would you resemble your heavenly Father ?
 “ God is love.” All the motions of nature above, beneath, around, within us, are only the universal action of his charity,—action as extensive as creation, as constant as time, as endless as eternity. He “ giveth to all men liberally.” He is the guardian of the poor, the father of the fatherless, and the widow’s God. With this glory he inwraps Himself as with a garment. It is His favourite badge. His very heart is laid open while He says in His law, *Oppress not that helpless orphan ; I stand forth its protector, I will avenge its wrongs.* Shall I add the greatest miracle of all ? “ God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son !” Such is God ; and would you not resemble *Perfection* itself ? “ Be ye—merciful as your Father—is merciful ;” for unless “ partakers of the divine nature,” you are none of His.

And now, my brethren, if your consciences reproach you with past neglects, you have this evening an opportunity to pay up some part of your arrears. You may never have another. You may suddenly be called to judgment and your accounts inspected as they shall be left to night. I say not this

for the value of your *gifts*, but for the value of your *souls*. *These children* will be provided for,—but what will become of *you* ?

The *Asylum* in whose behalf I am called to speak, was instituted to relieve female orphans, who by the death of a father, and the decease or indigence of a mother, are cast helpless upon the world ; to rescue them from want, ignorance, idleness, and ruin ; to give them a useful and religious education ; and at a proper age to place them in christian families to be trained to habits of industry and economy.

The honour of this godlike undertaking belongs exclusively to that sex whose distinguishing ornament is charity ; whose loveliness, far from consisting in personal charms and gaudy show, appears chiefly in the ministrations of angelick benevolence ; whose career of glory is not the tented field nor the noisy senate, but the chambers of sickness and the abodes of want. When I behold the appropriate excellence of the female character thus displayed,—when I see a company of matrons, like guardian angels, hovering over the poor, I exult that I was born of woman,—I forget the first transgression, and remember only through whom we received the Saviour of the world.

In their hands let the work remain. Men have little time or inclination for such employments. The tender sensibilities of the other sex, their acquaintance with the interior state of the families around them, the easy access which they can every where find, their knowledge and superior judgment in relation to household cares and wants, their leisure, their patience, all fit them preeminently for this enviable office.

A considerable number of orphans are already housed in this asylum. Many more would be admitted did the funds allow. The only bounds likely to be set to this charity are the limits of the funds. It is a good stock, in which the wealthy may invest property to a large amount and receive securities drawn in heaven.

Most men are unable or unwilling to search out proper objects of charity. You here find a society ready to take this burden off your hands. So far from conferring an obligation by depositing your offerings with them, you have reason to thank them for consenting to the labour of distribution.

I confidently call upon the friends of God and man to give this institution their countenance and aid.

By moulding into useful members those who might otherwise prove pests of society, it is calculated as well to promote the happiness of the community, as to increase the blessedness of the heavenly world. The amount of human happiness in both worlds which this society is likely to produce, exceeds all calculation.

It may depend on this evening whether the infant daughter of some man who has faithfully served his country, shall grow up a scourge to the world and sink into eternal death, or be nursed into an ornament of society and an heir of glory. Should your present contribution rescue one from ruin who is destined to be a future wife and mother, to train children for glory, who in their turn shall transmit their piety to others, and so on from generation to generation, this single collection may be the means of immortal happiness to thousands. Should it rescue one who is to be a mother in Israel, and the head of some future female asylum, you will nurse orphans when you sleep in your graves.

The objects for whom I plead are calculated to move the tenderest compassion. They are poor *orphans*, who once had a father as many of you now have. They are *female* orphans,—the most helpless of creatures, and the most interesting of objects ;—

female orphans thrown out upon a vale of tears, friendless, penniless, in the midst of snares, without protection and without a guide. To lose affectionate parents is hard, even where wealth and friends remain ; but to be cast orphans on the world without a friend and without a farthing,—if human hearts are not moved at this, human hearts are rocks. Yonder is a child who lately lay in the lap of love, and received upon her cheeks the tears of parental compassion. The parents who loved and pitied her are now no more. She is an outcast in the streets, hungry and forsaken, and knows not whither to go. Terrified at the approach of night she sits down by the way side to weep. The alms which you give this evening will open an asylum for her, and snatch an interesting babe from death.

Are there *fathers* here ? *I* too know the yearnings of a father over infant daughters. These orphans were dear to fathers now no more,—to fathers who would have pitied their present sufferings if foreseen, as you would pity your children could you foresee them left to the mercy of strangers. Look upon your offspring, lay your hands on your hearts, and then do to others as you would have others do to you. Are there *mothers* here ? You know the heart of female

children, perhaps of female orphans. You know the value of female education and protection. You have often wept over your daughters when you have thought of leaving them without a mother's care. What then would be your feelings did you know that they were to be left fatherless, motherless, penniless, in the midst of temptation, to the mercy of an unfeeling world? Would you not wish a thousand blessings on the hand that should snatch them from want and ruin, or the asylum that should open its bosom to embrace them? These children once had parents who loved them, who hoped to bring them up and raise them to comfort and affluence. Some of them had seen better days; but a blight withered their fields, a fire consumed their dwellings, a tempest sunk their ships, disease preyed upon their vitals, they languished, they died, and now they sleep under the clods of the valley and their children want. You too may be impoverished, you too may die and leave those children which now hang upon your knees and sport around you,—you may leave them as destitute and pitiable as those for whom I plead. What say your rising hearts? Would it not then be kind for some one to take your little helpless daughters from the streets and become a parent to them? Would

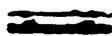
not your sleep be sweeter in the grave for knowing that they were lodged in *this very asylum*? Your own children may yet be soothed and comforted by the alms you now bestow.

The dear little orphans are anxiously waiting the event of this evening. Their eyes are lifted to you. Their prayers are raised to God that He would incline you to pity. Their trembling hearts are watching the result. Dash not their hopes to the ground. Fill not those eyes again with tears which have scarcely ceased to flow over a father's grave.

And should you another day meet in heaven the children whom your charity has saved,—when they shall approach you on the hills of salvation, and laying their blessing on your head say, *This is the blessing of them who were ready to perish*—, what, O christian, will be your emotions then?

But why do I urge? Can it be needful to press *them* to deeds of mercy who need so much mercy themselves?—who are now in the house of God to implore mercy? I cease then,—and pray the Father of mercies to accept your offerings and give you an eternal reward. AMEN.

APPENDIX.



PORTSMOUTH FEMALE ASYLUM.

THIS institution was founded May 1804, for the benefit of Female Orphans. Since its commencement eighteen children have been received, eight of whom when ten years old were placed in reputable families, and most of them bid fair to become useful members of society. Ten now remain in the Asylum. The number will be increased as the funds may permit. The annual subscription is inadequate to support even this small number ; but Providence by occasionally raising up benefactors has enabled the Managers to add one orphan to the number every year.

A legacy of five hundred dollars by Mr. Jonathan Goddard, late of Portsmouth, was received in March 1811. A donation of one hundred dollars and another of fifty dollars have also been received from a lady in Boston. The funds at present consist of two shares in the Newhampshire Union Bank, valued at two hundred and forty dollars each, and one hundred and twenty dollars on interest.

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