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THE
BLESSEDNESS
OF THE
LIBERAL:

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE MIDDLE DUTCH CHURCH,

BEFORE THE

NEW-YORK MISSIONARY SOCIETY,

At their first Institution, November 1, 1796.



By ALEXANDER M'WHORTER, D. D.

Pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Newark.



They glorify God for your liberal distribution unto all men.

2 COR. ix. 13.



NEW-YORK:

Printed by T. and J. SWORDS, No. 99 Pearl-street.

—1796.—

*At a Meeting of the New-York Missionary
Society, on Wednesday, the 2d of November,
1796,*

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

THAT the thanks of this society be given
to the Rev. Dr. M^cWHORTER for his sermon
preached before them last evening, and that
he be requested to furnish a copy of it for
publication.

Extracted from the Minutes,

JOHN M. MASON, Sec^y.

5.12.65

From the Library of
Professor Samuel Miller
in Memory of
Judge Samuel Miller Breckinridge
Presented by
Samuel Miller Breckinridge Long
to the Library of
Princeton Theological Seminary

SCC
8542

- 1 Scott's Rights of God.
- 2 Miller's Fast Sermon. Yellow Pine.
- 3 Dwight on Goodrich.
- 4 Morse's Masonic Sermon.
- 5 W. Whorters' Missionary Sermon.
- 6 Rogers on Withered Spoon.
- 7 ^{Kirkland on Melrose.} Pearce at the Ordination of Melrose.
- 8 Cogood on Prophecies.
- 9 Lumbull's Ordination Sermon.
- 10 Emmons's Ordination Sermon.
- 11 Calvin on James.
- 12 Steven's Ordination Sermon.

THE
BLESSEDNESS, &c.

ISAIAH xxxii. 8.

The liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand.

THE religion revealed in the scriptures, is a most amiable and beautiful system. So perfect are its proportions; so sacred the connection between its truths, its graces, and its duties, that violence offered to the one, affects all the rest; mars its universal symmetry, and introduces deformity and confusion.

Those truths and duties which relate to the glorious JEHOVAH, stand as primary principles. Those which relate to ourselves and our neighbours, hold a secondary place; yet so strict and necessary is their alliance, that the whole is as really made void by an infringement on the latter as on the former.

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To religion, as exhibited in the Bible, religion, as transcribed into the human heart, bears an accurate resemblance. The work of the Spirit on the soul answers to his revelation in the word, as in water face answereth to face. Those doctrines and duties which immediately respect the Father, Son, and Spirit, and are of the first importance in Christianity, are also of the first moment with a genuine Christian. A due regard, and conscientious practice of all the social virtues, are connected with them, as consequences are connected with their premises, or effects with their causes.

Hence the excellence of true religion will appear, in some measure, in a truly religious character. Its different branches support and strengthen each other. Love and repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, insure love to our neighbour; while the latter does not, in the least, diminish respect to Jehovah, or an attention to the offices of devotion—Each have their proper station and influence.

As in the reception of divine grace the soul of man is renewed, so it is thereby open-
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ed and enlarged. Filled with a generous benevolence, he is disposed to proportion the effects of his love unto all, according to the divine will. With a cheerful hand will he scatter benefits; but his benevolence, directed by wisdom, as well as impelled by zeal, will select, for its principal efforts, those objects to which it can be most usefully applied: and surely, my brethren, if any occasion could boast a solid claim to your pious benefactions, it is the occasion on which I now address you. A society, instituted with the noblest design which mortals can execute or conceive; the design of sending God's salvation to our desolate frontiers, and the gloomy regions of Paganism, intreat your aid. From him who, by free and efficacious grace, hath been transformed in the renewing of his mind, they look for the exercise of that philanthropy which enters into the essence of the Christian character; and their application is strongly recommended by our persuasive text—“*The liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand.*”

The original word here translated *liberal*, is frequently used in the sacred oracles, and
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always communicates great ideas. It is rendered Princes and Nobles in the 47th and 83d Psalms; because it becomes those who move in the higher grades of life to be of exalted minds. Sometimes it is rendered *free*, to express eminent generosity. When Hezekiah had sanctified the temple, and consecrated the people, he ordered them to bring sacrifices and thank-offerings into the house of the Lord. This they *all* did: but it is added, that some did more; “As many as were of a *free* heart brought in burnt-offerings.”* We likewise find this epithet applied by David to the Holy Spirit of God: “Uphold me with thy *free* Spirit.”† From these, and other applications of the term, we may rest assured, that when it describes a character, and to that character great and precious promises are made, it necessarily implies grace or holiness.

In discussing the general principles of the text, with a particular reference to the occasion of our assembling here this evening, permit me,

I. To explain the temper recommended;
and,

II. To

* 2 Chron. xxix. 31.

† Psalm li. 12.

II. To consider the blessings connected with it by divine promise.

I. I am to explain the temper recommended—It is *liberality*.

When man came first from the hand of his Creator, upright and holy, he possessed, in the highest degree, this liberal or benevolent principle: for he was made after the image of God, and formed for the greatest usefulness and felicity. But when he commenced rebellion against God, he lost it with the other features of the divine likeness, sunk down into himself, and is now, alas! under the government of selfish motives and selfish ends.

With man, in this degraded state, Jehovah could hold no communion, such as he cultivates with good and holy beings: but having formed a design of mercy, did not immediately give him over to eternal perdition, as he did the apostate angels. In consequence of his purpose of grace, his eternal Son was constituted a second Adam, to heal the breach that was made by the first, and recover that which was lost: wherefore it pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell;

dwell; the Holy Ghost was given him without measure, and he became the source of every blessing to his seed. Of his fulness he transfuses into them grace for grace, regenerating them by his almighty power, and reproducing in their souls that image of God which consists in knowledge, and righteousness, and true holiness; for they are created anew, in Christ Jesus, unto good works. Their inward corruption is subdued; delivered from the predominance of sordid and selfish principles, they both yield themselves servants unto God, and glow with *charity* to men. From the best of motives, to the best of ends, they become truly *liberal*. Of an elevated and benevolent disposition, they compassionate their fellow creatures. Unfeigned love moves them to deeds of kindness; and opportunities of indulging this divine temper afford them exquisite pleasure. They *devise liberal things*. Unlike the churl, who hoards up for himself alone, they employ a portion of what the benignity of God hath given them, for the promotion of his glory; for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom; for succouring the distressed; and communicating to the ignorant

ignorant and perishing a knowledge of the plan of life eternal.

But, further, the liberal man is described in the text, not only as one who cheerfully contributes, when desired, to works of mercy; but, as one who voluntarily seeks occasions of doing good. He *deviseth* liberal things. Strong sollicitation; arguments of interest or of reputation, are not necessary to touch his heart, or open his hand. Incomparably more effectual and uniform is the principle of his action. *Full of good fruits* is an essential characteristic of that wisdom, or religion, which cometh down from above; and the sum of which is, love to God, and love to man. “Whofo hath this world’s goods, and seeth
“his brother have need; and shutteth up his
“bowels of compassion from him, how dwell-
“eth the love of God in him!”

Such is the liberal spirit diffused from Jesus Christ; such the spirit imbibed by all who obey the gospel. A principle of true religion will operate in acts of tendernefs and beneficence to our fellow men. “The liberal deviseth liberal things.”

That these are the generous effects of saving truth, received in the love thereof, may be

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demonstrated

demonstrated by the most irresistible proof; to wit, that which arises from universal and incontestible fact.

Such was the disposition of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose example was a perfect pattern of every virtue. It was the business of his life to heal the diseases, console the sorrows, and relieve the wants, of all that applied to him. Though he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet he made himself of no reputation, condescended to the lowest offices of goodness, preached the gospel to the poor, and at last laid down his life in the most painful and ignominious manner to procure the happiness of men.

The same temper likewise influenced the holy apostles: from their whole history it is evident, that the good of mankind was the object of their unwearied exertions; and that, in this labour of love, they did not refuse to spend and be spent.

Of such leaders, the primitive Christians were not unworthy followers. It is recorded, to their honour, by the Holy Ghost, "*Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own.*"* And in strict conformity

* Acts iv. 31.

conformity with this we are assured, by an eminent historian, “ That the bounty of the primitive times was almost incredible.”*

And, indeed, a similar conduct hath, in all ages, been the distinction of those who have given the fullest evidence that they were the subjects of divine grace. One of the strongest features in the character of the early Christians, and of those who, in later times, have come nearest their illustrious piety, is their activity in spreading the gospel of the kingdom. In this, no sacrifices were too costly, no labours too oppressive, no dangers too terrifying, for their liberal and resolute souls. Lavish not only of their wealth, but of their ease, their comforts, their lives; they counted themselves amply rewarded in the triumphs of the cross; and, O my beloved brethren! how necessary for us is a portion of their spirit to discharge the duties to which the providence of God loudly calls us! What multitudes of our brethren in our scattered frontiers, and among our Pagan neighbours, have *need*—not a *need* of your food and raiment, but a *need* infinitely more important—a *need*
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* Dr. CAVE, in his *Primitive Christianity*.

of that soul-saving gospel which you enjoy. Let your bowels of compassion be opened unto them; send them this momentous blessing; and, “ Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”*

From explaining the temper of the liberal man I proceed,

II. To consider the blessings connected with it. By liberal things *shall be stand*.

By favours received from the liberal hand of God, both of a spiritual and temporal kind, he shall be supported and established; he shall be happy in the peace and approbation of his own mind; the providence of God will render his name as precious ointment; and the grace of God will abundantly satisfy his soul both here and hereafter.

In attempting a brief detail of these truths, which the promise in the text implies, I begin with remarking, that the gratification arising from the exercise of Christian liberality is the most refined and lasting. We are commanded to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, “ it is more blessed to give than to receive.”† The pleasure of
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* 1 John iii. 18.

† Acts xx. 35.

the giver transcends that of the receiver. To promote some public utility, or to enlarge the kingdom of the glorious Immanuel, are sources of purer delight than benefactions to ourselves, or the increase of worldly stores.

The truly liberal finds no small complacency in imitating the most illustrious personages that have appeared in the world. It was *Job*, a man who feared God and eschewed evil, that said, "If I have withheld the poor from their desire," the poor in temporal and spiritual things, "then let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone."* Time would fail me should I mention *Moses*, *David*, the prophets and the apostles, in whom this virtue conspicuously shone. Jesus Christ, the pattern of all excellence, came down from heaven to illuminate our *poor* and guilty world, and to enrich it with the glories and blessings of an happy immortality. "He who was rich became poor, that *we*, through his poverty, might be rich."† Nay, one attribute of Jehovah himself is, "That he is good, and doeth good."

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* Job xxxi. 16, 22.

† Cor. viii. 9.

To the resemblance of the great and good, the man whose temper we are considering, adds the pleasure of being held in estimation by those around him. The favourable opinion of others, procured by virtuous deeds, is a desirable acquisition. All who know the liberal man, bless him, and pay him a tribute of undisssembled praise. Yea, there is something in his character not only amiable in itself, but amazing in its operation; turning aside the shafts of envy, and extorting respect even from the worst of men. Thus the sacred oracles affirm, “He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour.”*

Who can describe the blessedness accruing from the conscientious discharge of our duty? In keeping the commandments of God there is a great reward. “He that hath mercy on the poor,” O remember the *poor* Heathen, the *poor* who are destitute of the blessings of the gospel! “happy is he.”† “The merciful man doth good to his own soul.”‡ He hath the promise, “That the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble; will preserve and keep

* Psalm xi. 27.

† Prov. xiv. 21.

‡ Prov. xi. 17.

keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth.”* He also receives the blessings of the destitute. The blessing of those who are ready to perish comes upon him. “He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.”†

The scriptures abound with ample promises to the liberal, of the good things of this life; and as far as these can be considered a blessing, he surely enjoys it. Therefore, one way to increase in worldly things is to be bountiful and charitable. I do not mean profuse and prodigal. There is a wide difference between them. Oftentimes the prodigal and extravagant do least in acts of beneficence. All their profusion is for the gratification of their own lusts. Hence, they have no ground to hope for a blessing. But the benevolent man has numerous promises in the word of God. “The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered himself also.”‡ “Give, says our Lord, and it shall be given unto you.”§ My dear brethren, let us water
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* Psalm xli. 1, 2.

† Psalm cii. 17.

‡ Prov. xi. 27.

§ Luke vi. 38.

the parched parts of our country, and the barren wilderness, with the dews and showers of celestial grace: let us pour the living waters of the gospel upon those who enjoy them not. “There is, saith Solomon, that scattereth and yet increaseth.”* God bleffeth the munificent hand, which scatters in works of piety and charity; it shall be returned into his estate, by invisible means; many fold; as corn increaseth to the husbandman by being scattered or sown. “Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with all the fruits of thy increase; 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.”‡ But, there would be no end in retailing the promises made to the liberal. Let us be wise, stedfast, persevering, and abounding in this duty according to our ability, and as we may have opportunity.

But, what far, very far exceeds all that I have mentioned, is the acceptableness of Christian liberality to the eternal God. Our
greatest

* Prov. xi. 24.

† Prov. iii. 9, 10.

‡ Ecc. xi. 1.

greatest care should be to please our heavenly Father; for his favour is life, and his loving kindness is better than life. And it is the happiness of the charitable, that he is *pleasing to God*. “To do good, and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”* Behold how the apostle Paul extols the beneficence of the Philippian Christians who administered to his support, while he was propagating the gospel among the Macedonian and Theffalonian Pagans. His strong and emphatic language, intended, no doubt, for the encouragement of all Christians who engage in the same dignified work, deserves our notice. I have “received,” says he, “of *Epaphroditus*, the things which were sent from you; an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God.”†

A sure testimony, not only that his deeds are, in themselves, acceptable to heaven, but that he is interested in the divine favour, is a part of that blessedness which belongs to the man of evangelic liberality; and it is infinitely preferable to the accumulated riches and honours

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* Heb. xiii. 16.

† Phil. iv. 18.

nours of this world. To love our brethren of the household of faith, and of the family of mankind, is represented as a certain evidence of real Christianity. And this love doth not consist in mere profession, but *in deed and in truth*, in unaffected sincerity of heart, and in solid acts of righteousness and mercy.

Lastly, The crowning blessing of him whose character we have been contemplating, is, *Great will be his reward in heaven.* Our glorious Redeemer assures us, that the smallest acts of beneficence, flowing from a right spirit, shall not pass unnoticed in the great day of retribution. If he who gives a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, shall not in any wise lose his reward, how immense shall be the reward of those who send the everlasting gospel to those parts of the earth where gloomy Ignorance, and wild Superstition hold an uncontrouled dominion? How unspeakable the profit and honour of thus *contributing* according to the will of God, and making to ourselves friends of the *mammon* of unrighteousness, that when riches cannot redeem us from the grave, we may be received to everlasting habitations! Here is a noble way

way for Christians to lay up in store a good foundation against time to come. *Here* we are sure of acquiring more than an *hundred fold*. *This* will be bartering sublunary and fading things for heavenly and durable riches. *This* is laying up treasure above, where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. Of such high distinction is *liberality* among the Christian graces and virtues, that Christ honours it with peculiar marks of approbation. Hear how he addresses those who exercise it:—
 “Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.”* The eternal Judge doth not bring forward, as the reasons of his adjudication, any personal attentions paid to himself, but charitable attentions to the members of his body; that is, to his disciples. The persons by whom these are duly performed,
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* Matt. xxv. 34, 35, 36.

are the righteous and happy, who shall go away into eternal life.

If, then, the approving voice of our fellow men; if the testimony of a good conscience; if to emulate the greatest and best of mortals; if to imitate the beneficence of God himself; to resemble the Holy Jesus; to enjoy, here, his exceeding great and precious promises, and to sit down with him, hereafter, on his throne of glory, constitute the highest felicity of which we are capable, the man whom renewing grace hath formed to liberal affections, and liberal deeds, shall be super-eminently blessed.

Having explained the character described in our text, and enumerated some of the blessings attached to it, I feel a singular satisfaction in remarking, before I close my discourse, that you have a precious opportunity of displaying the one, as preparative to the enjoyment of the other.

I have already hinted, that a society of the most beneficent nature, has just been erected in this city. Designing, under God, the ETERNAL SALVATION of multitudes of our fellow men, it contemplates evangelical missions

sions to the destitute parts of our country, and to the Heathen tribes on our borders.

The wilderness on our frontier is settling with astonishing rapidity. Many of these settlements are thin, scattered, and poor. One object of this society, therefore, is, to support gospel missionaries among them, in order to keep up some sense of religion, and an orderly worship of God, until they can be collected into regular congregations, and enabled of themselves to maintain the ministry of the word and ordinances of Christ.

Every Christian must see and feel the importance of such a measure. To preserve the gospel among our new settlers will not only be of the highest consequence to them and their children, but will tend to make them peaceable, comfortable, and happy members of the national community. Therefore, our civil, as well as religious interests, should engage us to liberality in the promotion of an object of such magnitude.

The other capital object of the society, I mean the introduction of the gospel among the poor, benighted Indians, should lie equally near our hearts. If we have tasted that the

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Lord is gracious, do we not cordially wish that they also may be brought to the hopes of life and immortality? Their souls are as precious and valuable as ours. Let us vigorously exert ourselves to diffuse among them the knowledge of the blessed Jesus. Let our ardent prayers ascend to the God of heaven, that he would crown this, and every similar attempt, with abundant success; and while we pray, let us *devise liberal things*, and expand our hearts, and pour forth our treasures, for so glorious and God-like a purpose.

Should the Lord render us instrumental in evangelizing the *Indian* nations, we shall thereby humanize and civilize them; from savages, we shall turn them into men; from bloody enemies, into friends and brothers; and, what is infinitely more, they will be introduced to the friendship of God, and to the inheritance of eternal life.

Contemplate, for a moment, what the zealous Christians in *Europe* are doing amidst the horrors of war, and the din of arms. They are propagating the gospel in *Africa*, the *islands* of the *South Seas*, and even in the *East-Indies*.* Their great souls are sending Christianity

* See the Appendix.

tianity round the globe; their intention is to plant it in every land; and that the Son of God shall have the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. The Christians in *Denmark, Moravia, Scotland, and England*, seem all moving in this glorious work, and lavishing their *thousands*, and *ten thousands*, for its accomplishment.

Wherefore, let us emulate their noble example in our acts of Christian liberality for the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom. We are blessed with peace; we sit every one under his *vine*, and under his *fig-tree*; we have abundant opportunities of doing good; and, as munificent heaven is loading us with its benefits, let us evince our gratitude, by sending the soul-saving gospel to our Heathen neighbours. They sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and see no light.

If we enter into the spirit of this newly-formed society, who knoweth but, as the fruit of our cheerful and pious efforts, the wilderness shall blossom as the rose, the day spring from on high visit the savage abodes, and the blessing of many who are ready to perish descend upon us.

W. H. H.

Whose land do we inhabit? In *whose* country are we growing in riches and prosperity? What compensation to the *natives* can equal the gospel of Jesus Christ? Let us then, in the name of God, and with a charitable frame of spirit, send them this glorious gospel, which will make them rich to eternal life.

You may rest assured, that whatsoever you give to God, by giving it to this association, for extending the kingdom of his Son, shall be frugally and faithfully expended.

Accessions to the society's funds, arising from contributions, donations, subscriptions, or otherwise, together with their disbursements, shall, every year, be duly published, that every one may see the uses to which his charity is applied. Their progress and success will also be published, that each benefactor may have the pleasure of beholding the fruits of his liberality in doing good to the souls of men.

Now, my dearly beloved brethren, to multiply arguments, or motives, to open your hearts in Christian tenderness, or your hands in Christian aid of so glorious a design, would be pressing your tried generosity, and, perhaps,

haps, wounding the sensibility of some who are more ready to give than to receive.

The many charitable institutions which call upon the citizens of *New-York* for their yearly, monthly, and daily bounty, demonstrate that they are not disposed to be weary in well-doing, and ought to seal the silent pause on the lips of the speaker—I therefore cease, praying that the blessing of JEHOVAH, FATHER, SON, and HOLY SPIRIT, may rest upon you and your children, and upon all the free-hearted and liberal throughout all generations. Amen and amen.

A P P E N D I X.

THE reader of the foregoing sermon will, no doubt, be gratified with a brief relation of those events which preceded and occasioned the establishment of the society at whose request it was delivered.

Different denominations of Christians in Great-Britain have lately discovered a more than ordinary solicitude to extend, to infidel nations, the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. An harmony, unparalleled, perhaps, in the modern history of the church, reigns among those who, in every denomination, love the unadulterated gospel. By a communication of sentiment, not less rapid than universal, they appear to have entertained, nearly at once, the same wishes, and the same views. Coincidence in principle and design, speedily produced a coincidence of measures; and associations were immediately formed in various parts of the island, for vigorously executing what they had so nobly conceived. Besides the society recently instituted among the particular Baptists, and limited to their own religious connections, other societies, on a more extensive

five plan, have been erected in London, Glatgow, Edinburgh, Paisley, and New-Castle.

The Baptists have already sent out missionaries to INDIA and AFRICA: what the success of the latter has been, we have not heard; but every Christian will rejoice that, by the latest accounts from India, the prospect is most flattering. That some solid conversions to the faith of JESUS have taken place there is no reason to doubt; and from the anxiety which multitudes of the natives shew to hear the gospel, these appear like the early first fruits of fields that are ripe already to harvest.

A chief ground on which it was supposed and predicted that the societies would fail, was the difficulty of obtaining missionaries. But when the Lord begins a work, he will never want instruments. It was in this faith that the societies proceeded; and they have not been disappointed. Numbers, whose hearts the Lord had touched, offered themselves for this self-denying and dangerous service: and on the 28th of July last, twenty-nine missionaries, under the direction of the society in London, were solemnly set apart for a mission to the South-Seas, and shortly after embarked for the delightful island of Otaheité.

The London society, though not a year old, had already received donations, &c. to the amount of nearly £. 12,000 sterling, or 53,332 dollars. They
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have purchased a ship, and we hear that the captain, his officers, and the chief of his crew, are men of piety—A rare assemblage of seamen!

It was impossible, on receiving intelligence like this, that Christians here should not feel their hearts warmed, and their emulation excited. Although their means are scanty in proportion to those of their brethren over the ocean, they could not help asking themselves, and one another, What can *we* do in the same glorious enterprize? They saw the spiritual desolations of our frontier, and the forlorn condition of our savages. They could not help wishing to send them relief. They felt themselves constrained to attempt their salvation; and accordingly a number, both of the clergy and laity, after serious conference, came to the resolution of instituting a Missionary Society in the city of New-York, and of endeavouring to obtain the concurrence of Christians throughout the continent. Themselves and their attempt they commit to him whose strength is made perfect in weakness. —Their Address and Constitution follow.

New-York, November 18, 1796.