

# "POVERTY AND RICHES"

from

## *Plain Sermons* *On Subjects* *Practical and Prophetic*

by Alexander McCaul

*“The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich;  
he bringeth low, and lifteth up.”*  
*1 Samuel 2:7*

THE great effect of faith is to bring God and man together; and in every thing to rise above all second causes and all intermediate agents, to the first Great Cause of all: to trace every thing to the act of his power, or the determination of his will. It is true that many things happen every day, which, being plainly opposed to his attributes, cannot be ascribed to his decree, but happen only by his permission. Thus, when men lie and cheat, and fill the world with sin and misery, we cannot believe that any act of the Divine will or power compels them to the commission of such crimes. But still if we believe at all in the existence of a Divine Being, we must believe that He is cognisant of all that passes in the world, and that He has the power to control, prevent, and change all events. To suppose that the Divine Being would create the world—especially that he would create a race of rational beings capable of misery and happiness, and yet leave them without any further mark of his paternal care to the blind operation of the laws of nature, or the wild control of a perverse or fallible understanding, is to ascribe to God such a lack of love and compassion as would be a dishonour even to fallen human nature. To imagine, that, having arranged the actions and laws of second causes, he now cannot interfere, to stay, suspend, or alter their effects, is to rob him of his omnipotence, and in fact to assert that the world is ruled by an irresistible fate. The Bible, however, tells us explicitly that God is neither an unconcerned nor an inactive spectator of passing events, but that his providence watches over all; that he rules among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of earth; that the great and the small are equally objects of his care; that the numbereth the hairs of our heads as well as the hosts of heaven; and that, without his will, not even a sparrow can fall to the ground. The Bible teaches us that the rise and fall of empires is regulated by his wisdom and in conformity to the principles of his justice; and at the same time assures the most humble individual of the human race of his protecting care, by declaring also that the vicissitudes of human life, and all the gradations of rank and station, poverty and wealth, are the appointments of his wisdom. Thus the text says, “The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich; he bringeth low and he lifteth up.” And this is the doctrine to which, by God’s help, I would now direct your attention; considering,

I. THE ORIGIN. And,

II. THE DIVINE PURPOSE IN ORDAINING THAT DISPARITY OF CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH PREVAILS IN THE WORLD.

It is obvious to all that in the position and circumstances of the children of men, a very great disparity prevails. Not only is there a wide difference as to the artificial distinctions of rank, but as to the more substantial realities of hunger and “fulness of bread.” Some know not how to obtain a morsel of food by day, and have not where to lay their head at night; whilst of others it may be said, as the Prophet

said of old, "They lie on beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches: they eat the lambs out of the flock and the calves out of the midst of the stall; they drink wine out of bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments." The fact is hid from none, but the reason of the disparity is not so easily perceived. The unthinking and the idle ascribe it to chance, and say therefore of the rich that they are fortunate, and of the poor that they are unlucky. The hard-hearted and the proud regard it as the necessary consequence of prudence on the one hand, or lavish thoughtlessness on the other; and hence by them wealth is looked upon as a virtue worthy of all respect, and poverty as a crime to be visited with punishment and disgrace. Discontented and envious rapacity represents it as the offspring of injustice and oppression, teaches the poor to regard the rich as their enemies, and prepares to effect a change by open violence. The text dispels this mystery, and makes known to us that this great and obvious disparity is the result neither of good fortune nor ill fortune, virtue nor vice, justice nor injustice, but of the Divine pleasure. "The Lord," it says, "maketh poor and maketh rich: he bringeth low and lifteth up." In some cases this is self-evident. Some men are born to wealth. They inherit, as Moses said of Israel, houses full of all good things which they have not filled, vineyards and olive-trees which they have not planted: others, on the contrary, are from the very hour of their birth involved in all the evils of poverty and destitution, and born perhaps with some corporeal defect or inherent malady, which condemns them to inevitable beggary. Here it is almost impossible not to recognise the hand of God: here it must be admitted that neither their own imprudence nor the injustice of others has had any thing to do with the matter. If there be any such thing as a superintending Providence, surely it must be acknowledged in the determination of the physical capabilities or defects which men bring with them into the world; as God aid to Moses, "Who maketh the dumb or deaf, or the seeing or the blind? Have not I the Lord." The formation of man is effected only by an exertion of God's power, the qualities with which he is endowed must be the effect of his choice.

But even in the case of those who have not remained in the circumstances in which they were born, we may often perceive the power of a controlling Providence. It is true that there are general laws of cause and effect, with regard to riches and poverty, as well as most other things; and these laws are pressed upon our attention in the word of God. Thus Solomon says, "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich." (Prov. x. 4.) And again, "Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty: open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread." (Prov. xx. 13). And again he says, "He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich." (Prov. xxi. 17). But that same book tells us that these laws are liable to many exceptions. "I returned," says this same Solomon, "and saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding." (Eccles. ix. 11.) "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." Without health the most diligent can do nothing; and over sickness and health man has no control. "Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God," said Moses to Israel, "for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth." But even where health, and strength, and prudence, and diligence are all combined, without the Lord's blessing they are utterly powerless. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of carefulness." A thousand circumstances, over which man has no power, may defeat all human prudence, and annihilate the labours of the most unremitting industry. Continued failure of the harvest may reduce a whole nation even to servitude, as it did the Egyptians in the time of Joseph. Hostile invasion may destroy great riches in a single day, as in the case of Job. How many thousand families upon the Continent were by the last war deprived of their all, and sent away empty, to hire themselves out for bread for the refreshing of the soul. Hail, fire, storm, and earthquake, are all God's messengers, whom man cannot stay nor turn aside from the work of sudden and total destruction. And how often does death deprive a family of their stay and support, and in a moment change abundance into poverty. In all these cases it is the Lord that maketh poor.

Many similar cases there are where the Lord, by a happy conjunction of circumstances, makes rich; or where, in spite of all adverse circumstances, he confers great wealth. Thus when the famine drove Abraham into Egypt, his adversity was made the basis of his wealth. When Isaac, under similar circumstances, took refuge in Gerar, his flocks and his herds increased: "he sowed in the land, and received in the same year an hundred-fold: and the Lord blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great." And when Jacob was oppressed and defrauded by his father-in-law, and kept in a cruel servitude, he nevertheless grew rich. Wonderful is the account which Jacob himself gives when speaking to Laban's daughters. "Ye know," says he, "that with all my power I have served your father. And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times: but God suffered him not to hurt me. If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ring-straked shall be thy hire; then bare all the cattle ring-straked. Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me." (Gen. xxxi. 6-9.) Neither foresight nor diligence could have frustrated Laban's wicked designs, much less have turned them into sources of wealth. It was the Lord, and the Lord alone, who made Jacob rich. And thus it is when men prosper. It is the Lord who gives wisdom to conceive, and strength to execute, the various plans for the acquisition of wealth. He it is also that removes the various impediments, and makes all things work together for the accomplishment of the desired end.

II. Thus we have established the fact that the Lord is the author of all that disparity which we behold in the fortunes of men. We naturally ask, however, why is it that God thus reduces some to all the privations and temptations of poverty and want; whilst upon others he confers a superfluity of wealth; not only more than sufficient for their necessities, but more than luxury and profusion know how to consume? We may be sure that it is for some wise and gracious purposes that the distinction is made; and, so far as these purposes are revealed in the written Word, it is not only our privilege but our duty to inquire. It is evident that the Lord's purpose is not to make worldly prosperity or adversity a test whereby to judge of men's piety. The wicked often prosper in this world, whilst the servants of the Lord are poor and needy. It is also no unrare occurrence to find wickedness and poverty combined—great riches and great piety in the possession of one and the same person. Job's friends thought that misfortune was a proof of impiety, and therefore condemned him unjustly; but God himself afterwards reproved them for their folly. That it cannot be the Divine purpose to feed the pride and vanity of some, or to depress and degrade others of the human race, is equally certain. Riches, as we shall see presently, if viewed aright, have nothing in them to exalt the possessor, but much to humble and weigh him down; and poverty, far from degrading, is intended to ennoble and purify.

In the first place, this disparity was ordained for the purposes of God's moral government of the world: as a reward or as a chastisement, a means of grace or of destruction: like the Gospel, "a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death." Great riches may be a great blessing, as the case of Abraham, and those other saints whom we have mentioned: and of Job, when the time of his trial was past. They confer great influence in this world, and furnish abundantly the means of honouring God and doing good to men. Yea, they may, if rightly used, be the means even of increasing the everlasting happiness and glory of their possessor. The poor, however large his heart, can actually do but little to promote the service of the Lord, and the knowledge of his salvation. The man of great wealth has it in his power, not only to cast a gift into the treasury of the temple, but himself to build temples to the Lord where they are wanted; to furnish provision for the Lord's ministers; to equip armies of missionaries; to gladden the hearts of the poor saints. It is true that our Lord said of the poor widow, that she had given more than the many rich men who offered their contributions at Jerusalem. But that was because they cast in of their abundance an insignificant gift, bearing no proportion to their substance: she in her penury had cast in her whole living. But what is there to prevent rich men from doing the same, and from obtaining a far higher testimony and a more glorious reward in proportion to that higher degree of self-denial that is necessary for the making this great sacrifice? "If thou wilt be perfect," said our Lord to the rich young man, "go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and

thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me.”

The Papists have abused this doctrine, by persuading men that they could purchase heaven, and bribe God’s justice to be blind to their guilt: but that is no reason why Protestants should relinquish the scriptural truth. It is perfectly certain that the only way of salvation for sinners is through grace, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; but it is equally certain that God will give to every man according to his deeds: that there shall be various degrees of glory, and that the degree obtained will be exactly in proportion to the use which we make of the talent or talents committed to our care. Now wealth is one of the talents which God entrusts to the sons of men: great riches an accumulation of talents, which may, therefore, by God’s blessing and the right use, materially increase the happiness and glory of their possessor. The whole Bible is full of this doctrine. “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord,” said Solomon: “and look, what he layeth out it shall be paid him again.” Our Lord teaches expressly that it is possible to lay up treasures in heaven, when he says, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven;” and as expressly tells us how this is to be done, when he says, “Sell that ye have, and give alms: provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not; where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.” (Luke xii. 33.) Similar is the doctrine of St. Paul, when he tells Timothy to charge the rich in this world “that they do good; that they be rich in good works: ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.” (1 Tim. vi. 17, 18.) Riches may, therefore, be an abundant blessing for time and eternity, enabling men to do much good here, and to increase their happiness hereafter.

But, brethren, they may also come as a temptation, a curse, and an instrument to increase wrath and damnation: yea, as a judgment from God, the last and worst sign of utter and final reprobation. When men set their hearts upon wealth, and make gold their god, and harden themselves against all the warnings of his word and providence, he at last gives them the desire of their own hearts. These are the men of whom the Psalmist says, that “they have their portion in this life.” (Ps. xvii. 14.) And concerning whom he says elsewhere, “Be not afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lived, he blessed his soul: (and men will praise thee when thou doest good unto thyself: His soul shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see the light.” (Ps. xlix. 16.) Such persons are said to be set “in slippery places, and to be cast down into destruction in a moment.” Their riches become instruments, if not for the indulgence of their lusts, at least of self-gratification, pride, and vanity; and therefore the word of God generally represents the state of the rich as one rather to be avoided than coveted, and riches as a blessing only in their distribution for the honour of God and the good of man, but a curse when retained for the purpose of sordid accumulation or selfish indulgence; and, at all events, as a clog and hindrance in running the race that is set before us. Some of the most awful sayings found in Scripture are those addressed to the rich. Thus our Lord says, “Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep.” And again he says, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” (Matt. xix. 24.) “They that will be rich,” says St. Paul, “fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.” (1 Tim. vi. 9.) Riches, therefore, were ordained as one of the means of trying and developing the characters of men: to furnish them, on the one hand, with the opportunity of glorifying God, and adding to their own future felicity; or, on the other, to hasten on their own destruction, and increase their damnation; and similar is the use which the Supreme Disposer of all human events makes of poverty.

Extreme poverty is attended not only with its own privations, but its peculiar temptations. If not sanctified, it leads as surely to ruin, as an abundance of wealth. Poverty brings want, and want, when lawful means fail, tempts men to seek for relief in forbidden paths; and therefore Solomon says, “Give

me neither poverty nor riches: feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of God in vain." (Prov. xxx. 8.) Poverty may lead to dishonesty, dishonesty false swearing: either sin in itself sufficient to destroy the soul.

It does not therefore, as the poor are often inclined to believe, necessarily commend them to the favour of God, much less make an atonement for their sins; or, because it causes suffering and privation here, insure eternal happiness hereafter. "The wicked shall be turned into hell," whether they be poor or rich; and "upon them that know not God and obey not the Gospel, the Lord Jesus will take vengeance," whatever may have been their condition in this life. It is therefore a vain hope, which some entertain, that poverty is in itself a sort of qualification for heaven. Poverty is often sent as a fatherly chastisement to wean men from the world; and by the privations which it inflicts, and the contempt and reproach which it entails amongst ungodly men, to subdue the rebellious spirit, and lead men to God, or to teach God's people obedience; as it is said of the Son of God himself, that "he learned obedience by the things which he suffered." But by the perversity of the human heart it often has the opposite effect, and instead of humbling and softening, hardens, irritates, and leads to open rebellion against God: as the Prophet Isaiah says, "It shall come to pass when they are hungry they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God." (Isa. viii. 21.) Thus it was with the people of Israel, and thus it is, too, often amongst ourselves, that the most hardened in impenitence are found among the poor. And yet it is not poverty, but the depravity of the human heart, that is to be blamed.

This trial is always sent in mercy; and in the word of God the poor are always spoken of with more tenderness, and have many more promises than the rich. The law of Moses represents God as the avenger of the poor. "Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee." (Dent. xxiv.) And so David says, "Lord, who is like unto thee, which delivereth the poor from him that is too strong for him; yea, the poor and needy from him that spoileth him." (Ps. xxxv. 10.) But the promises are not merely for this life, nor of temporal help. All spiritual blessings are also promised: of them it is said, Ps. lxxviii. 10, "Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor:" and again, "The Lord heareth the poor:" and again, "He shall save the children of the needy." The tone of the New Testament is the same. In the song of the Virgin it is said, "He filleth the hungry with good things: and the rich he hath sent empty away." The Lord Jesus Christ, lifting up his eyes on the poor people who had followed him, and become his disciples, said, "Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God." St. James asks: "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" Yea, the eternal Son of God himself has for ever consecrated the estate of poverty, by choosing to be born, to live, and die a poor man, and from that class to choose all his immediate friends and followers.

We might be certain, therefore, even if we could not see it, that the disparity in the affairs of men, was instituted for some purpose of grace and mercy, and not in order to pamper pride, or wound a broken spirit.

But besides the purposes already alluded to, there is another object of the greatest importance, which could only be attained by this distinction; and that is, the cultivation of the most lovely of all the Christian graces. The merciful Creator desired to bind together all the individuals of the fallen human race with a band of love, to lead them to imitate the mercies of the Saviour, and to make them conformable to his image, by having on one side love and tender compassion, and on the other meekness and humble gratitude. The disparity between poverty and riches is the ordained instrument for the attainment of this great end. Without a wide difference in the states of men this would be hardly possible. The most striking feature in the love of the Lord Jesus Christ to us miserable sinners, was that it proceeded from self-denying condescension. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," says the

Apostle, "that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." (2 Cor. viii. 9.) The most striking feature in his meekness, that he condescended to exist upon charity, as we are told by St. Luke, viii. 3, "that Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, ministered unto him of their substance." To produce any thing like resemblance to these features of the Lord's character, a wide disparity in the relative positions of men was absolutely necessary. Some were made rich, that, by voluntarily becoming poor for the sake of their distressed brethren, they might imitate the self-denying love of him who, for our sake, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant: and some were made poor that they might learn, like their Master, in all meekness and humble gratitude to receive the charities of their richer neighbours. Thus the disparity on the one hand gives room for the exercise of self-denial, compassion, condescension, and on the other for humility and gratitude; and serves as a heavenly bond to bind the different classes of mankind together. Universal abundance, and absence of all want, would in the present state of the world only increase that spirit of selfishness and proud independence which is the very root of all our sin and misery. The disparity compels men to remember that they are dependent creatures: some to seek aid, and others to give it; and thus to practise that heavenly love which devised the plan, and executed the mighty work of redemption for the relief of fallen man. The rich are taught to love the poor by seeing their necessities, and the poor to love the rich because they administer that relief which their circumstances require; and thus, in spite of the perversity of our nature, and the malice of the devil, the frame-work of human society is held together; and, as long as the rich employ their wealth for the main purpose for which it is given, and as long as the poor preserve themselves from the diabolical spirit of malignant ingratitude, can never be endangered.

The truths which we have just been considering involve important duties; and to these I would now direct your attention. The divinely ordained disparity divides men into two classes, upon each of whom it imposes certain duties. In the first place, it teaches all to bow to the decree and ordinance of God; it shews them the impossibility of a change, and the undesirableness of it, even were it possible. Well-meaning enthusiasts sometimes think that it is possible to raise all men above the reach of want, and to make abundance universal. Wicked and designing men endeavour to persuade those whom the providence of God hath placed amongst the poor in this world, that their lot is the result of injustice, and that human wisdom or human force could easily change the state of things, put an end to this hated disparity, and fill every house with plenty. The doctrine contained in the text shews the utter falsehood of all these doctrines, and the hopeless impossibility of our ever doing away with the distinction between rich and poor. It is "the Lord that maketh poor and maketh rich;" it is God's unalterable decree written in his most holy word, based upon his love and wisdom, and enforced by the laws of nature, that the poor shall never cease out of the land; and all the wit and power of the whole human race, if they could be brought to unite for the purpose, cannot reverse it. It is not with the deficiency of human laws, nor with the wealth of the higher classes, but with the omnipotence of "God, that they have to contend; and never will they be able to produce, even for a single day, an equality of circumstance, or an abrogation of the distinction between high and low, rich and poor.

To effect this they must, in the first place, be able to produce an equality of intellect and genius. No man must either be more stupid or more clever than his brother; for this inequality of intellect it is that in part produces the disparity: the skilful will always command a higher rate of remuneration. In the next place, they must be able to abolish sickness, bodily infirmity, and decrepitude, and to establish an equality and a perpetuity of health and strength; they must be able to withhold the winds from their violence: to prohibit to the fire its power of destruction; to command the earth to give its increase: yea, they must forbid death himself to make any more widows and orphans: for until they can do this, the distinction between poverty and riches must still continue, and God's decree and purpose remain unchangeable. Seeing then that the disparity is the irreversible ordinance of God, intended for the temporal and everlasting welfare of the whole human race, it is the duty of the poor to submit with patience, and even thankfulness; to avoid all murmuring against their Creator, and all envy of their

more affluent brethren; to remember that God it is who makes poor and makes rich, and that he does so, not according to the dictates of a blind caprice, but the everlasting principles of love, and wisdom, and justice; that riches are sometimes sent as a curse to hasten on the destruction of the reprobate, but that poverty is in every case intended as a means of grace, and a sign of fatherly correction, and has many and precious promises both in the Old Testament and the New, which should make them content and happy: as the Apostle says, "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." If riches were good for them, their coffers would, they may depend upon it, overflow. They are withheld only because they might interfere with their everlasting welfare. If they be poor in this world, let them endeavour to be rich in faith: and let them remember, that if they only choose to receive them, the true riches, the unsearchable riches of Christ, may be theirs for time and eternity. Their privations are only temporary; a few hours will land them in that world where the hard-hearted rich man discovered that his riches were of no use except to condemn him; and where Lazarus found that his poverty, and all its concomitants of contempt and misery, were the richest blessings that God himself had had to bestow upon him in time.

The duties resulting from the text are not, however, confined to the poor. The rich have also theirs; and that I may not be misunderstood, amongst the rich I include all those who have more than they want for the necessities of themselves and their families. Every man who can lay up a treasure upon earth, be that treasure much or little, is a rich man. Their first duty is to understand well the purposes for which riches are conferred, and for which the difference between rich and poor was ordained. They have to remember that wealth may be either a blessing or a curse; sent in mercy or in wrath; and to inquire, earnestly and anxiously, for which of the two it has been sent to them. If it be the result of successful fraud, or other forbidden means; or if it be the idol which they have served early and late, and to which they have devoted all the energies of youth, and the wisdom of manhood, inquiry is unnecessary. It is certain beyond all doubt that God has given them riches in his wrath, and to such persons St. James says, "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were with fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days." (St. James v. 1.)

But even where it has been lawfully acquired by the blessing of a gracious providence, it may by abuse be turned into a curse. Here, then, it is necessary to inquire whether it is employed for the purposes for which it was given; whether it is perverted to the gratification of pride, or vanity, or sensuality; or conscientiously applied to the honour of God and the good of man. There is much of self-deceit in the world; but in nothing do men deceive themselves more grossly than in judging of their liberality. Nothing more common than for persons to squander upon houses and equipages, upon luxury and ornament, the overwhelming proportion of what God has given them, and to leave the merest pittance for the service of God, or the relief of the needy; and yet to think that they have done all that Christ requires of them. Multitudes there are who flatter themselves that they do not belong to an ungodly world, but are true members of Christ's mystical body; and who, nevertheless, in the whole course of their lives, never practised the least self-denial, either in their persons or their houses, that they might have the more to bestow upon their poorer brethren, or to glorify God. Their contributions to charity are mere trifles, which they do not miss. Their offerings to fashion, to pomp, or to the opinion of the world, more than would furnish food and raiment to many poor families.

The Lord Jesus Christ requires self-denial in all his disciples: and they who live in the continual gratification of all those propensities which the world does not absolutely condemn, have reason to doubt whether they employ this world's goods, as the New Testament requires. Christ's liberality and love are to be the standard for all his followers. "This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you." (John xv. 12.) If God have given you much, he requires much. The greater his

bounty to you, the more does he expect that you will be merciful to your fellow-sinners. Do not mistake me, however; he does not accept thoughtless profusion, or the mere giving of money, as the obedience which he requires. Let the Lord Jesus Christ be your example, not only in the measure, but in the mode of your liberality. He sought the good of men in two ways—by relieving their temporal wants, by administering to their spiritual necessities. This was the plan of Him who knew what was in the heart of man: and let this be yours.

Some persons are afraid to combine temporal relief with spiritual instruction, lest they should make hypocrites. He who knew what is in man had no such fear. The Lord Jesus Christ, through the whole course of his ministry, attended to the temporal as well as the spiritual necessities of the people to whom he was sent. When men followed him, because “they did eat of the loaves and were filled,” he reproved them for their worldliness, but did not discontinue the practice of mercy. He knew that the most efficient means to make way for the Gospel, is to let men have practical proof of its power. In our plans of benevolence then let us follow His Divine example. Let us remember that mere religious instruction united with apparent disregard for the earthly concerns of the poor, and mere alms-giving devoid of all care for their eternal interests, are equally false representations of Christianity. The love of Christ embraced the human body, soul, and spirit; and such let ours be also.