

*G. L.*

*from his friend*

*Mr. L.*

A

# S E R M O N,

PREACHED MARCH 13TH, 1808,

FOR THE BENEFIT

OF THE

SOCIETY INSTITUTED IN THE CITY OF NEW-YORK,

FOR THE RELIEF OF

POOR WIDOWS WITH SMALL CHILDREN.

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BY SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.

ONE OF THE PASTORS OF THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES  
IN THE SAID CITY.

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1808.

*New-York, 24th March, 1808.*

REVEREND SIR,

I AM directed to present to you the thanks of the "Society for the relief of poor Widows with small Children," for your pious and eloquent discourse, delivered on Sunday, the 13th instant ; and to request, that, as it so forcibly pointed out the duties of the Female Sex, and is calculated, from that circumstance, to be of general utility, you will favour the Society with a copy of it for publication.

I am, Sir, with respect,

Your obedient servant,

LUCY BIRD, *Sec'ry.*

Rev. Dr. MILLER.

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# A SERMON, &c.

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## ACTS IX.

*Ver.* 36. Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which, by interpretation, is called Dorcas : this woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did.

37 And it came to pass in those days that she was sick, and died : whom, when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.

38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them.

39 Then Peter arose, and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber ; and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them.

40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down and prayed ; and turning him to the body, said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes ; and when she saw Peter she sat up.

41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up ; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

**S**A**C**R**E**D history differs from profane, in a variety of important particulars. The latter is chiefly employed in exhibiting the struggles of ambition, the triumphs of power, and the glare of blood-stained honours : the former dwells more on the duties of private life, and especially on the meek, humble, and retiring graces of the Christian. The one presents a splendid, but not always faithful picture, which is calculated to indulge curiosity, and to flatter pride :

the other unfolds the heart ; displays its character in all the simplicity and correctness of truth ; and sets before us examples proper for the imitation of every age, and sex, and condition of mankind.

The portion of sacred history before us comprises, within a very small compass, much matter for reflection. It exhibits a character, and a train of circumstances, from which we may at all times learn a variety of important lessons ; but which are peculiarly applicable to the present occasion.

*There was residing at Joppa, a sea-port town on the Mediterranean, about thirty-four miles northwest from Jerusalem, a certain woman named Tabitha, which, by interpretation, is called Dorcas. The former of these names is a Syriac word, signifying a roe or fawn : the latter, a Greek word, of the same import. This woman was a disciple. That is, she had embraced the gospel, and lived under its power. Her religion did not consist merely in calling Christ, Lord, Lord. She testified the sincerity of her faith by a holy life and conversation. She was full of good works, and of alms-deeds which she did.*

But the most sincere and exemplary piety is no defence against the attacks of disease and death. All die, because all have sinned. *It came to pass,*

*therefore, in those days, that is, when the apostle Peter was preaching in Lydda, a neighbouring town, that Dorcas was taken sick and died.* Immediately after her death, the pious widows, and other disciples, who had attended her during her illness, having taken a decent and respectful care of the corpse, dispatched messengers to the Apostle, entreating him to come to them without delay. Whether they anticipated his raising their departed friend from the dead, or only expected him to attend the funeral, and to comfort them under their bereavement, we have scarcely ground even for conjecture. At any rate, in sending for the Apostle, they manifested at once, their attachment and respect for the deceased, and a taste for his evangelical instruction and conversation.

I know scarcely any thing in this world, more desirable, or more gratifying, than the friendship, the consolations, and the kind offices of the pious; and especially in the day of trial, and at the hour of death. At seasons of this kind, the gay and the worldly are apt to fly from us. But even if they give us their presence, what will it avail? Alas! *miserable comforters are they all!* What can they tell us of that Gospel which hath poured eternal day on “the night of the grave;” or of that *Blood which cleanseth from all sin?* What can they tell us of the *exceeding great and precious promises—of everlasting con-*

*solation—and of a good hope through grace ?* When my last hour is come, let pious friends surround my bed ! Let those who fear God, and have an interest at the throne of grace, direct my trembling aspirations to Jesus, the friend of sinners ! Let pious hands close my eyes ! And let *devout men carry me, like Stephen, to my burial !*

The holy Apostle on receiving the summons, entered immediately into the spirit of that pious friendship which had called him, and followed the messengers without delay. When he came to the dwelling which had been lately adorned with the piety and the active beneficence of *Dorcas*, he found her lifeless remains lying in *an upper chamber*, and surrounded with mourning widows. On his entering the apartment, they gathered about him, *weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them.* It is probable, from the tenour of the narrative, that these pious widows had been themselves the objects of her *alms-deeds* ; and that the *coats* and other *garments* with which they were then clothed, had been made by the hands, and bestowed by the bounty of their deceased benefactor. These they showed to the apostle, as testimonies of her benevolent character, and as causes for lamenting her departure. Simple, but touching and eloquent eulogium ! O how much more precious to the ingenuous mind, to

be embalmed in the memory of the virtuous and the wise, than to be commemorated by the sculptured marble, or the massy pyramid! How much better than all the blaze of heraldry, or “pomp of power,” to have it said concerning us, when we are gone—  
 “There lies one who fed me when I was hungry; who clothed me when I was naked; who enlightened my mind with heavenly knowledge, and pointed to me the path of life eternal.”

The Apostle, having witnessed these tears, and contemplated these memorials, requested the mourners to withdraw, that he might avoid all appearance of ostentation in the miracle which he was about to perform; and that he might with more perfect freedom pour out his soul in prayer. When they had retired, *he kneeled down and prayed; and, turning him to the body, said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes; and when she saw Peter she sat up. And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.*

Who can describe the surprise and joy of the attendants at seeing their amiable friend restored to life and usefulness? Above all, who can describe the mingled emotions of regret and pleasure, which must have filled the mind of *Dorcas*, to find herself brought back to a world which she had

supposed herself to have for ever quitted ; and again united to companions whom she had expected never to see more until they should join her in the paradise of God?—I dare not attempt the task. Leaving, therefore, this topic of meditation, which, however deeply interesting, cannot subserve any important practical purpose,—

I hasten to employ the example of this excellent woman as the basis of some very brief and general remarks ON THE APPROPRIATE DUTY AND ORNAMENT OF THE FEMALE SEX.

And here I shall not stop to inquire, whether the native character of the female mind is, in all respects, precisely the same with that of the other sex. Whatever opinion may be formed on this subject, I take for granted, we shall all agree, that Women ought not to be considered as destined to the same employments with Men ; and, of course, that there is a species of education, and a sphere of action, which more particularly belong to them. There was a time, indeed, when a very different doctrine had many advocates, and appeared to be growing popular:—viz. that in conducting education, and in selecting employments, all distinctions of sex ought to be forgotten and confounded ; and that females are as well fitted to fill the academic Chair, to shine in the Senate, to adorn the Bench of justice, and



even to lead the train of War, as the more hardy sex. This delusion, however, is now generally discarded. It begins to be perceived, that the God of nature has raised everlasting barriers against such wild and mischievous speculations ; and that to urge them, is to renounce reason, to contradict experience, to trample on the divine authority, and to degrade the usefulness, the honour, and the real enjoyments of the female sex.

But an error of an *opposite* kind has gained a lamentable currency in the world. This is, that the station of females is so humble, and their sphere of duty so extremely limited, that they neither *can*, nor *ought* to aspire to extensive usefulness. This is the mistake of indolence, or of false humility ; and is as plainly contradicted by reason, by scripture, and by experience, as the extreme before mentioned. While females are shut out by the express authority of God from some offices, and by the common sense of mankind from others ; there is yet open to them an immense field for the most dignified activity, in which they may glorify God, render essential service to society, and gain everlasting honour to themselves.

We often have occasion, from the sacred desk, to exhibit in contrast, the representations of scripture, and the sentiments of a depraved world. This

contrast seldom appears in a stronger light than it does on the subject of which we are now speaking. In the codes of modern infidelity and licentiousness, as well as among uncivilized nations, woman is exhibited as the mere servile instrument of convenience or pleasure. In the volume of Revelation she is represented as the equal, the companion, and the help-meet of man. In the language of worldly taste, a fine woman, is one who is distinguished for her personal charms, and polite accomplishments. In the language of Scripture, she is the enlightened and virtuous mistress of a family, and the useful member of society. The woman who is formed on the principles of the world, finds no enjoyment but in the circles of affluence, gayety, and fashion. The woman who is formed on the principles of the Bible, *goeth about doing good: she visiteth the fatherless and the widows in their affliction: she stretcheth forth her hands to the poor, yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.* The one dresses with elegance, and shines in the dance: the other *opens her mouth with wisdom; in her tongue is the law of kindness; and her most valued adorning is not gold, or pearls, or costly array; but good works, and the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.* The hours of the one are divided between routs, and assemblies, and visiting, and theatres, and cards: the other *looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the*

*bread of idleness.* “ The business of the one is pleasure ; the pleasure of the other is business. The one is admired abroad ; the other is beloved and honoured at home.” *Her children rise up and call her blessed ; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain ; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.*

From these representations of sacred writ, and from many others of similar import, it is manifest, that the ornament and the duty of the female sex, are as appropriate as they are important : and that they pertain especially to the relations which they bear as wives,—as mothers,—as domestic companions, and—as members of society. On each of these relations, an extensive field of inquiry opens to our view ; but it is only possible to take a very rapid glance at each, in the order in which they have been mentioned.

I. How interesting and important are the duties devolved on females as WIVES ! On their temper and deportment, more than those of any other individuals, it depends, whether their husbands be happy or miserable ; whether the households over which they preside be well ordered and regular, or neglected and wretched ; whether the property of their partners be wisely and economically applied, or carelessly and ignobly squandered ; in a word,

whether peace, affection, order, and plenty, reign in their dwellings, or waste, confusion, discord, and alienation disgrace them. Females have been often honoured with the title of *angels*. If it be ever proper to apply such an appellation to a daughter of a fallen race, there is surely no mortal to whom it so properly applies, as a prudent, virtuous, and amiable wife, the counsellor and friend of her husband ; who makes it her daily study to lighten his cares, to sooth his sorrows, and to augment his joys ; who, like a guardian angel, watches over his interests, warns him against dangers, comforts him under trials ; and by her pious, assiduous, and attractive deportment, constantly endeavours to render him more virtuous, more useful, more honoured, and more happy. The blessings which such a woman is capable of conferring on her partner, and through him, on society, are more numerous and diversified than a volume would be sufficient to display. In how many instances have we known wives of this character become the means of winning their unbelieving husbands to the obedience of the faith ! When this is the case, who can estimate the greatness of the blessing ? Like the light of day, it pours its benign influence upon each member of the favoured domestic circle ; and ever permanent in its effects, reaches through eternal ages.

II. No less numerous and weighty are the duties devolved on females as MOTHERS. Children, during the first years of their lives, are necessarily committed almost entirely to the care of mothers. And the impressions which are then made on their tender minds, generally decide their character and destiny, not only for this life, but also for that which is to come. In that soft and plastic season, when the temper, the principles, and the habits are formed ; when the heart is deeply impressed ; when the conscience is tender ; when the whole character is ductile ; when almost every thing but the regeneration of the heart may be said to be within the power of a parent to bestow ; and when even the attainment of this greatest of all gifts has a closer connexion with parental faithfulness than is generally imagined—This is, emphatically, the period of the maternal empire. Her's is the delightful, the all-important task, to watch over the infant years of her offspring ; to guard them from the thousand dangers to which they are exposed ; to form a sound mind in a sound body ; to whisper in their listening ears, the sentiments of virtue and piety ; and to prepare them for living to God, to their country, and to themselves.

On this ground, I have no scruple in avowing my conviction, that, in the whole business of education, THE MOTHER IS THE MORE IMPORT-

**ANT PARENT.** It may, perhaps, without extravagance, be said, that to the female sex pre-eminently belongs the mighty task, so far as it depends on human agency, of forming the heads and hearts of the great mass of mankind. To them it belongs to render their families the nurseries either of heaven or of hell. Their enlightened fidelity or their criminal negligence, will, under God, decide the character of those future citizens, on whose virtues the whole interests of the commonwealth will depend; of those legislators on whose wisdom the character of our laws must rest; of those magistrates, with whose learning and correct principles the whole fabric of public justice must stand or fall; and of those ministers of the gospel, on whose orthodoxy and piety the salvation of millions, speaking after the manner of men, may be suspended. It is thus that maternal faithfulness or negligence goes to the root of social happiness. It is thus that mothers may be the means of transmitting blessings or calamities, of incalculable extent, to distant generations.

**III. EVERY DOMESTIC RELATION** which females sustain, may be considered as opening to them an appropriate and important sphere of duty. Great and permanent usefulness in domestic life is by no means confined to wives and mothers. The female who sustains neither of these honourable and interesting relations, may yet be eminently useful.

How much may every *Daughter*, by uniformly dutiful and affectionate conduct towards her parents, promote the happiness of the whole household to which she belongs ; and by her example contribute to the improvement of all around her ! How much solid good may every *Sister* daily accomplish, by diligently employing her talents, in assisting to educate her younger brothers and sisters, in promoting the regularity, order, and comfort of the family of which she is a member, and in recommending at once, by her whole deportment, the wisdom of economy, the sweetness of benevolence, and the purity of holiness ! Nay, how much may every female *servant* contribute to the advantage of the family in which her lot is cast ! It was a *little maid* in the house of *Naaman*, the Syrian, that directed her master to the prophet of the Lord, by whom his leprosy was healed, and by whose ministry he became a convert to the true religion. And were the history of many families laid open to our view, how often should we see the pious language and holy example of some inferior domestic made a blessing to more than one of those whom she served !

Every female, then, who, in whatever capacity, makes a part of any domestic establishment, whether she preside as its head, or serve as its humblest menial, has it in her power to do good, to an extent

which it is the prerogative of Omniscience alone to estimate. She has means and opportunities of usefulness peculiar to her sex and station. Means and opportunities which, if faithfully improved, cannot fail, according to the Divine promise, to produce a rich result of blessing. The tongue of eloquence indeed may never pronounce her eulogium, nor the pen of history record her deeds. But in the "heraldry of heaven," in which to be *good* is better than to be *great*, and to be *useful* than to *shine*, she may hold a place more illustrious and honourable than many of those who have wielded the sceptre of empire, and filled the world with the thunder of their fame.

IV. Females have set before them a wide and appropriate field of useful activity, AS MEMBERS OF SOCIETY. Let no woman imagine that she has nothing to do beyond the sphere of her own household. In every walk, and in every hour of life, she may be contributing something to the purity, the order, and the happiness of the community to which she belongs. The influence of the female character in forming public taste, and public manners, is incalculable. It has been felt and acknowledged in all ages. Of this influence, every woman, whatever be her talents or her station, possesses a share; and by her whole deportment is conferring either a benefit or an injury on society. It is in the power



of women, by constantly exhibiting the dignity of virtue, and the attractions of piety, to repress the impertinence, to polish the roughness, and to frown out of sight, and, in many instances, out of existence, the vices of the other sex. It is in the power of women, by example and by precept, to regulate at pleasure the decorums of dress, the purity of manners, and all the habits, of the younger and more inexperienced part of their own sex. In short, it is in the power of women, to an extent of which few of them seem to be aware, to discountenance and banish those pernicious customs which, from time to time, display their hydra form in society, and to exercise a most efficient guardianship over public taste and virtue. No false sentiments can have much prevalence against which *they* resolutely set their faces. No corrupt practices can be general or popular which *they* are willing to expel from society.

“ Human happiness,” says a modern writer, “ is on the whole, much less affected by great, but unfrequent events, whether of prosperity or of adversity, of benefit or of injury, than by small but perpetually recurring incidents of good or evil. The manner in which the influence of the female character is felt, belongs to the latter description. It is not like the periodical inundation of a river, which once in a year, overspreads a desert with transient

plenty. It is like the dew of heaven, which descends at all seasons, returns after short intervals, and permanently nourishes every herb of the field\*.”

To the female sex also properly appertains a large portion of those offices of *charity*, to which we are constantly called. To feed the hungry, and clothe the naked; to *weep with them that weep*; to soften the bed of sickness, and to wipe away the tears of sorrow, are duties incumbent upon us all. But they belong, more particularly to the tender sex. They are best acquainted with domestic wants. They are the best judges of domestic character. They have more sympathy, more tenderness, more leisure, and more patience than men; and, on a variety of accounts, are more capable of performing these duties with ease to themselves, and with advantage to the objects of their charity.

Here is surely enough to excite all the ambition, and to employ all the talents of a reasonable mind. What though females cannot stand in the sacred Desk, nor sit on the Bench of justice? What though they cannot be employed in framing laws, nor in conducting diplomatic missions, nor in organizing or governing nations? They can contribute more by their virtues and their influence to bind society together, than all the laws that legislators

\* Gisborne. *Duties of the Female Sex*. p. 8.

ever formed. They are called to duties which are not only worthy of the most exalted powers ; but which have this pre-eminent advantage, that, while they are immediately calculated to meliorate the hearts of those who perform them, they also tend to refine and elevate the human character in general, and to render earth more like the paradise of God.

The foregoing hints, if they do not satisfactorily elucidate the subject to which they relate, will at least suffice to show its importance ; and to prepare the way for some remarks more immediately practical and applicable to the occasion. To these permit me now to request your attention.

1. Let me apply this subject, by inferring from what has been said, the UNSPEAKABLE IMPORTANCE OF FEMALE EDUCATION. If the female character be so important, then the formation of that character must be equally so. If education in general lie at the foundation of individual, domestic, and national happiness, this is especially the case with female education. It is a concern in which the highest interests of mankind are at stake. It involves the vital principle of social welfare. And according as it is attended to or neglected ; according as it is wisely or erroneously pursued, will public and private happiness be nourished or poisoned at its root. Upon the education of woman

it depends, under God, whether she shall be the most useful, or the most mischievous of mortals ; whether she shall be the most invaluable blessing of human society, or “ the most dreadful scourge of Almighty visitation.”—Solemn thought ! How deeply ought the subject to engage the attention, to interest the heart, to excite the prayers, and to animate the diligence of every parent !

We are, perhaps, wiser than our fathers, in having learned to appreciate more justly than they did, the talents of women, and in devising plans of education better fitted to develope and improve these talents. But I am afraid we fall below our venerable predecessors, in cultivating the moral and religious character of females, and in fitting them for some of the more useful and important duties of their sex. When we learn generally to correct this error ; when we teach our daughters properly to estimate their true dignity, and diligently to pursue their real happiness ; when we persuade them to reflect, that education consists, not in the acquisition of dazzling and meretricious arts ; but in preparing themselves to be respectable and useful as wives, mothers, members of society, and christians—then, and not till then, may we hope to see the moral character of society raised, and the real importance of the female sex more justly estimated, and more duly honoured.

2. Allow me to apply this subject by RECOMMENDING THE CHARACTER WHICH HAS BEEN DRAWN TO THE STUDIOUS IMITATION OF THE FEMALE PART OF MY AUDIENCE, AND ESPECIALLY OF THE YOUNGER CLASS. Contracted in its extent, and feeble in its outline, as is the sketch which I have attempted to exhibit, believe me, it is worthy of your attention. It is a character which involves the highest honour, and which embraces its own reward. In recommending it to your imitation, therefore, I am pleading the cause of your own elevation and happiness, as well as the cause of God, and the cause of mankind.

My young female friends ! it ought to be your ambition to possess and to evince a sound understanding, and a respectable portion of literary knowledge. All that has been said, serves to show that the cultivation of female intellect is as important, and as necessary, as the intellectual culture of the other sex. But it ought to be *more especially* your ambition, to cultivate your *hearts*. The *Heart*—I repeat it—the *Heart*, sanctified by religion, warmed and softened by benevolence, and taught to throb in affectionate response to every sigh of suffering, and every claim of humanity,—this is the grand ornament of Woman—this is the strong hold of Woman. To be so many *Tabithas*, adorning the doctrine of God, your Saviour, and diffusing happi-

ness among all around you, would be infinitely more to your honour as well as your comfort, even in the present life, than to stand in the list of those masculine females, who, while they gain a proud civil pre-eminence, really disgrace their sex.

When, therefore, I see a young female devoting her supreme attention to external accomplishments; absorbed in the love of ornament, and of admiration; habitually venturing, in obedience to fashion, to the *very verge of decorum*; never satisfied but when either preparing for the splendour of a public appearance, or discussing the merits of a past exhibition—I say within myself—The hand of some infatuated parent, or of some incompetent or unfaithful guardian is here. What perversion of talents! What misapplication of exertions! What waste of time! What pains to treasure up sorrow and tears for after life! How much more attractive would be that fair form, were it employed in works of charity, and more frequently seen bending over the couch of poverty and suffering! How much more beautiful would be that lovely face, were it habitually beaming with benevolence and piety! And how unspeakably more happy, and more respectable its possessor, if the cultivation of her heart, and the employment of her time, on evangelical principles, were the great object of her care!

3. This subject may with propriety be employed to ENCOURAGE AND ANIMATE THOSE WHO ARE ENGAGED IN FEMALE CHARITABLE ASSOCIATIONS. These Associations are an honour to their founders and members—an honour to our city—an honour to our holy religion—an honour to all who contribute to their support :—and I will add, that the period which gave them birth, cannot fail of being viewed hereafter, as a grand æra in the history of the female sex, and of mankind. When females are thus associated, and thus employed, they are pre-eminently acting in character. They are moving in a sphere which is peculiarly their own. Their exertions are calculated not merely to relieve present distress, but to improve the condition of society, to cultivate their own hearts, and to confer blessings on generations yet unborn. Were the tendency and the benefits of such associations properly estimated, surely every female would be ambitious to become a member of them ; and every inhabitant of our city would consider it, at once, as his privilege and his obligation, to be the friend and the patron of their labours.

Members of such associations ! *be not weary in well doing.* Your task is arduous ; but it is still more delightful, and shall *in no wise lose its reward*—a reward more rich, and more glorious than a conqueror's crown. How exquisite the pleasure which

is attendant on a course of benevolent exertions, and on witnessing their fruits in the production of human happiness, you have already known, and I trust, shall more fully know. “ What is there in all the pageantry of state, in all the gratifications of sense, in all the delirious joys of giddy dissipation, once to be compared with this ? O pleasures, cheaply purchased, placidly enjoyed ; ever rising, ever new ; never languid, never remorseful, why are you pursued so seldom, and attained by so few ? ” \*

4. Suffer me, finally, to SOLICIT THE AID OF THIS ASSEMBLY IN BEHALF OF ONE OF THE FEMALE CHARITABLE ASSOCIATIONS OF OUR CITY. The association for which I plead, is the “ Society for the relief of poor Widows with small Children.” This society commenced its operations about ten years ago ; and has been since going on with an enlightened zeal, and a persevering diligence, worthy of its conductors, and of the noble cause to which it is devoted. Every successive year has served more fully to disclose the usefulness of the institution, and to give its services a higher value in the public estimation. The benevolent females who compose it, *have visited the fatherless and the widows in their affliction.* Like *Dorcas*, they have prepared *coats and garments*, and bestowed them on the objects of their charity. They have fed the hungry, as well

\* Hunter's *Occasional Sermons*, II. p. 140.



as clothed the naked. They have opened schools for the reception of such of the poor children as are destitute of other means of instruction ; and, in all respects, have exerted themselves, without ceasing, and without weariness, in relieving the wants, and improving the condition of that class of the needy which falls within the design of their institution. They have now under their care, *one hundred and ninety-four Widows, and five hundred and sixty-five Children.* What a catalogue to excite the sympathy, and to draw forth the liberality of a Christian assembly !

The active funds of the Society have scarcely ever been at a lower ebb than they are at the present moment. I need not remind you that the state of public affairs since the commencement of the present season, has rendered almost all objects of charity more helpless, and, of course, more entirely dependent than at ordinary times. In addition to this circumstance, I am requested to state, that there has been more sickness among the widows and children under the care of this society, than in former seasons. From both these circumstances it has happened, that the drafts on the treasury have been unusually large ; while, at the same time, the occasional donations have been, from various causes, fewer and smaller than in most preceding years. The unappropriated monies in the Treasurer's

hands, are reduced to so small a sum, that, if it were not for reliance on the Widow's God, the Society might justly be discouraged. Their chief human dependence, for a number of months to come, is on the collection of this evening.

I appeal to you, my brethren, whether these simple facts do not present a strong claim on every benevolent mind, and again irresistibly call for the exercise of your accustomed liberality. Are there not some in this assembly, who know the bitterness of a *widow's* heart, even in the midst of plenty? and will they not feel for widows, who have the pressure of poverty added to the most severe of all bereavements? Are there not *Wives*, happy in the objects of their affection? and will they not ask how they shall testify their gratitude that they are not bereaved, and made as forlorn as others? Are there not *Husbands*, daily rejoicing in the comforts of domestic life? and will they have no compassion for the disconsolate widow and her helpless offspring? Are there not *young persons*, whose parents are mercifully spared to them? and will they not make a thank-offering to Him, to whose mercy it is owing that they were not early made orphans? Are there not *Christians*, who feel *the love of Christ constraining them*? and can they refuse to lend a little to that gracious Benefactor, who, *though he was rich, yet for their sake became poor, that they through his poverty might be made rich*?

Are any of you ready to ask, How much shall we give? Let me furnish you with materials for answering the question yourselves. How much are you indebted to the hand of Divine bounty? How much do you owe to Him who gave himself for you, and, with himself, freely offers you all things? How much would you, in like circumstances, desire to have bestowed upon yourselves? How much will you wish that you had given, in that day, when the great God, our Saviour, shall declare, that he considers, whatever, from pure motives, is bestowed upon one of the least of his beloved people, as bestowed upon himself? Ask yourselves these questions, as in the presence of God, and let the answers dictate the amount of your liberality.

If by our contributions this evening, we had only the hope of rescuing from ignorance and want, a single fatherless child, and of causing the heart of a single widow to *sing for joy*, we might well exult in the prospect. But we have a richer and more elevating hope. The prospect of relieving hundreds at once, is set before us; which, while it excites, cannot fail to reward our munificence. Nor is it merely present relief which we contemplate. It is that relief which has for its object the soul as well as the body, and eternity as well as time. How animating the thought, by no means improbable,

that the charities of this evening may produce effects which shall extend from parents to children, which shall influence the character of children's children, and rejoice the hearts of the redeemed in the great day of the Lord! "Wearied with the din of politics, and the noise of folly, here let our souls rest and expatiate, as in their own proper element." In times of public embarrassment, such as the present, we may, and ought to lop off something from what we have usually expended on our tables, on dress, on gay furniture, and on fashionable amusements. But if we love the Saviour, if we love our fellow men, if we love our own souls, let us lop off nothing from our accustomed charity, but rather add to its amount. FOR, OF ALL OUR PROPERTY, THAT ALONE, WHICH, FROM EVANGELICAL MOTIVES, WE DEVOTE TO OBJECTS OF PIETY AND BENEVOLENCE, CAN BE SAID TO BE LAID UP IN STORE FOR OURSELVES.

Brethren! *the time is short, and the fashion of this world passeth away.* Like *Dorcas*, we all must soon sicken and die. Are we habitually anticipating the solemnities of that hour? Are we daily directing our pursuits, employing our property, and framing our lives, agreeably to this anticipation? Do we resemble the excellent Woman, on whose example we have been meditating, in our character and hopes, as well as in our mortality? We

cannot resemble her, unless we are *disciples* indeed. We may *give all our goods to feed the poor, and our bodies to be burned*, and yet be nothing more than a *sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal*. But those deeds of charity which spring from a living faith in a living Redeemer; those works of obedience which are performed from a principle of love for his name;—these are *the good works, and the alms-deeds*, which shed a lustre around the bed of death, and upon which, in a dying hour, we may look back with holy satisfaction, with heavenly joy:—not as the ground of our confidence; not as the price of pardon; not as our title to everlasting life:—no; the righteousness of *Him, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God*, is the only foundation of a sinner's hope:—but as means by which a Divine Saviour has enabled us to glorify the riches of his grace; as the fruits of his blessed Spirit; as evidences of a vital union to his body; and as pledges of admission to the glories of his presence.

May that God, who has declared himself the *Father of the fatherless, and the Judge of the widow, in his holy habitation*, fill us all with the spirit and the consolations of his children, enable us to imitate his holy benevolence, and prepare us, in due time, for his heavenly kingdom! And to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, be all the praise, both now and ever! Amen!