



Dr. Chauncy's

S E R M O N

Preach'd before the Society

For encouraging Industry,

A N D

employing the Poor.

August 12. 1752.



**The Idle-Poor secluded from the Bread  
of Charity by the Christian Law.**

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**S E R M O N**

Preached in BOSTON, before the Society for

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Aug. 23. 1752.

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**By Charles Chauncy, D. D.**

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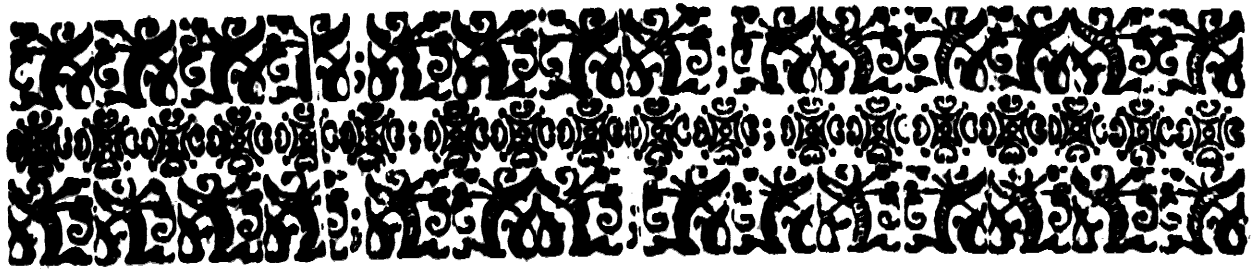
**Drowsiness shall clothe a Man with Rags : But the diligent Hand  
maketh rich.** SOLOMON.

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## The Idle-Poor secluded from the Bread of Charity by the Christian Law.

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2 Thessalon. 3. 10. ———— *This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.*

**T**HE Law of Love is, in a singular and distinguishing Manner, the Law of Christianity. *This is MY Commandment, says our Saviour, that ye love one another. And again, A NEW Commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another. And yet again, By THIS shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love one to another.* And by this were the first Christians distinguished from other Men, and known to be the Disciples of Jesus Christ. And they discovered their Benevolence, not in Word only, neither in Tongue, but in Deed and in Truth; never forgetting to do good and communicate, as they had Opportunity. They did not judge, they could ever do too much, in a Way of Charity, for the Relief of the poor and needy.

And no Inconvenience, one would think, could arise from the Liberalities in which they abounded. And yet, it was owing to this, in part at least, that among those who took upon them the Name of Christians, there were some who indulged to *Idleness*; either not working at all, or not with a becoming Diligence.

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Of this Character there seems to have been a considerable Number among the Christians at *Thessalonica*. The extraordinary Charities, common in that Day, might encourage those, who were before disposed to be idle, to neglect the Business of their proper Callings. The Hope of having their Wants supplied, by the Bounties of their Christian Friends and Neighbours, might insensibly slacken their Diligence, and betray them into an indolent inactive way of Life.

But, from whatever Cause it might arise, *Idleness* was the Fault too prevalent among the *Thessalonian* Christians. The Apostle *Paul* seems to be concerned about it; and is particular in his Care to do whatever might be proper to correct and amend it. And to this Purpose it was, that, among other Things, he spake the Words of my Text, *This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat*. In discoursing to which Words I shall endeavour the following Things.

I. I shall say what may be proper to ascertain the true Sense of the Command, *If any will not work, neither shall he eat*.

II. I shall mention a few Things, as the Time will allow, to justify the Wisdom and Reasonableness of the Command.

III. And, Finally, I shall apply what may be offered to the Occasion of our being now together.

I. I am to explain the Command in my Text, *If any will not work, neither shall he eat*.

Some perhaps may think, that it ought to be interpreted *universally*, as extending to *all*, the Rich, as well as the Poor; insomuch that they ought neither of them to eat, if they will not work. But such an Interpretation does not fall in with the Design of the Apostle in this Place. For he is here speaking, not of those who are able, without Labour, to maintain themselves; but of poor People, who, if they won't work, must have their Expectations of Relief from the Charities of others.

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Not but that it is a shameful Thing for any to eat the *Bread of Idleness*. If Persons possess ever so great an Abundance, this gives them no Licence to be lazy. They may indeed reasonably exempt themselves from the lower and more servile Parts of Business : But still they ought not to be idle. Indulged habitual Idleness is a Reproach to any Man, whether he be high or low, rich or poor. We were made for Business. Both our Souls and Bodies are so constituted, as that Exercise is a great and necessary Means to keep them in an healthful and vigorous State ; and without it we shall soon contract a strange Hebetude of Mind, as well as Inability of Body to all the Functions of Life. If the great and rich would but thoroughly realize this, it might happily tend to lessen their love of Ease, and put them upon Activity and Diligence in the Employment of their Time and Powers to some or other of the valuable Purposes of Life.

But the *Rich*, as I said, are not the Persons the Apostle has here to do with, but the *Poor* ; whose Circumstances in the World are such as that, *if they won't work*, they have nothing to depend on but the *Charities* of their Friends and Neighbours. And it is with respect to this kind of Persons, in special, that the Apostle has commanded, *if any will not work, neither should he eat*.

And the *Manner* in which he has worded the Command is observable, and clearly ascertains its true Meaning. *If any WILL not work*. Those that *will not work*, not those that *cannot*, are the Persons here pointed out. Such among the Poor as are *willing* to work, but can't get Employment, are not the Persons secluded from the Bread of Charity. Neither are they restrained from eating of this Bread, who would be willing to work, but are incapable of Labour, by Reason of Sicknefs, or Lameness, or the Decays of an infirm old Age.

As for disabled Persons, it was never the Design of the Apostle to command, that, *if any would not work, neither should they eat* ! No ; tho' their Incapacity for Labour was brought upon them by their own Follies and Vices. It is very unhappy indeed when this is the Case, as, God knows, it too often is. And such Persons have infinite Reason to  
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look back upon their past mad and sinful Conduct with Grief and Shame: But yet, if they are really unable to do any Thing, in a way of Labour, towards their own Support, they are by no means to be neglected. They are, in common, with other disabled Persons, the proper Objects of Charity, the Poor of this World, concerning whom it is the Will of God, that they should be pitied and help'd. And the Rich should look upon themselves obliged to shew Compassion towards them. If any should see a Brother or Sister, of this Character, naked, and destitute of daily Food, they should not only say to them, depart in Peace, be ye warmed and filled, but give them those Things which are needful to the Body; suiting their Charities to their particular Wants and Circumstances.

But we are under no such Obligations with respect to the other Sort of poor People, those who *can* work, but *won't*; who may have Work to do, and have Activity of Body to do it, but no Will to employ themselves in Labour. Concerning these Poor, it is the Command of an inspired Apostle, that they shall not eat, i. e. shall not be maintained at the Charge of others; shall not live upon the Charities of their Christian Friends and Brethren.

Some, perhaps, may think this a very unreasonable Command. Doubtless, it will be complained of as hard and severe by the indolent and lazy among the Poor. But it is really one of the most equitable Commands; a Command founded on so much Reason and Justice, yea, and Goodness too, that not a Word can fairly be objected against it. And this leads me, as was proposed,

II. In the second Place, to say what may be thought sufficient to justify this Command of the Apostle, and point out its Reasonableness, Equity and Goodness. And the following Things may be briefly offered to this Purpose.

I. The established Laws of Nature are such as render it impossible, that Mankind should be supported, if they are generally lazy. Our Bodies are so made as constantly to require Food and Raiment: Nor can these Necessaries be supplied but by Labour. The Conveniencies and Comforts of Life are more numerous, and require still greater  
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Care and Pains. The Almighty, it is true, if he had seen fit, could have maintained the humane Race, without the Concurrence of any Endeavours of their own, by making Nature so rich and fruitful, in every respect, as to have rendered Art useless, and Industry superfluous. But he has ordered Matters otherwise; and, no doubt, for wise and good Reasons. Our Food does not spring out of the Earth without Culture; neither does our Raiment naturally grow on us, as it does on the inferiour Creatures. The *Birds of the Air sow not*; neither do the *Lillies of the Field toil or spin*: But we are obliged to do both. The established Order of Nature is such, as that, if we don't, we must unavoidably suffer, if not perish, for want of Food to eat, and Raiment to put on.

Now if Labour is thus necessary for the Support of Life, it is contrary to all Reason, that those should eat the Bread of Charity who won't work, while yet they have Ability therefor. What Right have the lazy and indolent, who are both healthy and strong, to live on the Fruits of other Men's Labour? Wherein lies the Fitness of this? If without Labour the World can't subsist, for any to sit idle, depending upon a Supply from other Men's Industry, is certainly incongruous to an high Degree. Why should some Men labour and toil to get Bread for those who are as able to work as they are, but chuse rather to spend their Time in doing nothing? The Supposition is absurd. It is not fair; it favours neither of Reason nor Justice, that the diligent and laborious should, by their Bounties, relieve the Wants of those, who are poor and needy, not thro' Incapacity for Bodily Exertions, but because they are sluggish and idle.

2. The *positive Will of God* has appointed *Labour* the *Means* in order to a Livelihood in the World. To this Purpose are those Words of the Almighty, which, tho' originally directed to *Adam*, are yet obligatory upon all his Posterity, *Gen. 3. 19. In the Sweat of thy Face thou shalt eat Bread, 'till thou return to the Ground.* As this Appointment of Heaven was published after the *Fall of Man*, and as a Punishment for Sin, it should seem as tho' humane Labour had but an ignoble Original. And so it

had, it considered as to *Kind* and *Degree*: But as to the *Thing it self*, it was as truly the Requirement of God from Man in his *innocent*, as in his *lapsed* State. Even *Adam* in *Paradise* was not so wholly provided with every Thing by the sole Bounty of Nature, but that it was necessary he should be employed in Labour. We therefore read, not only that he had Work to do in his innocent State, but what it was, namely, *to dress and keep the Garden of Eden*, Gen. 2. 15. If therefore Sin had not entered into the World, Men would not have lived without Labour; tho' it would have been of a *nobler* Kind, and in a *less* Degree. In these respects, Sin has made a difference. We must now sweat and toil: Nature calls for this Sort of Labour, and will not furnish us, upon any lower Terms, with such of her good Things as we stand in need of: And it is the *express Will of God*, that, in this Way, we should earn our Bread. Laborious Diligence is the *Means* by which he has *ordained* we should supply ourselves with Food, and other Necessaries of Life.

If any therefore indulge to Idleness, who have Ability for Labour, they virtually set aside *the Method* God has been pleased to direct to, and enjoin, in order to their being supported in Life. And is it reasonable they should be maintained in any other? Is it fit, if Men won't work, when they can, that a different Way, from what the Wisdom of God has instituted, should be taken for their Supply with Bread? And yet, by supporting the needy in Idleness, we constructively oppose the *Appointment* of God, and substitute a Method for their Maintenance of our own devising. And is this reasonable? Can it be justified? Ought Persons to be maintained in plain Contempt of the Constitution of God?

I am sensible, it has sometimes been pleaded, that, however it might be in former Days, the Cares of Religion now, in a great Measure, supersede the Affairs of the World; insomuch that if Men neglect their temporal Business, provided they do it that they may have Time to attend on the Spiritual Concerns of their Souls and another World, they ought to be considered and helped; and that it is a *Christian Duty* to support such pious Persons upon the Bread of Charity.



A specious Pretence this for Idleness, in contempt of the Government of God; but a very poor one; as being founded on intirely wrong Notions of the *Christian* Religion, which requires its Professors, not only to mind the Things of another World, but the Affairs of this also, And it is particularly observable, Christianity is so far from allowing Men to be slothful in the Business of their proper Callings, that it has reinforced the *Law of Labour* given to *Adam*, and in him to all Mankind, by adopting it into its Scheme of Morals. Says *Paul*, the Apostle of *Jesus Christ*, addressing himself to the *Thessalonians*, and in them to all Christians, *We command and exhort, by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with Quietness they work, and eat their own Bread;* as we read in the 12th v. of my Context. Very observable is the Manner, in which these Words are delivered, *We command, and exhort, by our Lord Jesus Christ.* He does not satisfy himself with *exhorting* only; but he *commands*. And he does it *by our Lord Jesus Christ*, i. e. by his Authority, as commissioned, and empowered by him. So that, whosoever, in this Article, *despiseth, despiseth not Man, but God;* for here the Contempt does finally terminate, as our Saviour himself has taught us, in *Luke 10. 16, He that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.*

Industrious Labour is therefore the Law of *Christianity*. Instead of altering this Method appointed by God, from the Beginning, for the Support of Life, the Gospel has confirmed it. So that Idleness is a Reflection upon the governing Wisdom and Authority of God under the *Christian*, as well as former Dispensations. And to support Man in Sloth, tho' they should disguise their Guilt under the Cover of the most pious Pretences, is a virtual setting up our own Wisdom in opposition to the Wisdom of God, and subverting the Method he has established, both in the nature of Things, and by *positive Revelation*, for the supply of Mankind with the Necessaries and Conveniences of Life.

3. The Command, in my Text, is founded on the *publick Good*. For there cannot be a flourishing People, without Labour. It is by Improvement in Arts and Trades, that they must grow in Wealth, and Power, and become

possessed of the various Emoluments tending to the Benefit and Pleasure of Life; and these Arts take their Rise from, and are carried on by, the Industry of particular Persons. And this is so evident, that while some Nations have increased in Riches, and Grandeur, and Power, by being industrious, tho' great Obstacles, and discouraging Difficulties have stood in the Way; others, thro' Sloth and Indolence, have been kept low, and sunk in Oblivion, tho' under great *natural Advantages* to have got into flourishing Circumstances: Or, it may be, they have become a Prey to other more active and enterprising Nations, who knew how to make a better Use of their Advantages. And the Truth is, the *natural Advantages* a People are favoured with, whether for Husbandry, Navigation, Fishery, Manufactures, or any other Source of Wealth, will be, in a great Measure, lost, and, as it were, thrown away upon them, without Labour and Industry, in making a wise and good Use of them.

The *Athenians* were so sensible of this, that *Idleness*, in that State, subjected the guilty Person, whoever he was, to a Prosecution at Law, as an Injury to the Commonwealth: And they made Inquiry of each Man and Woman, *quâ Arte se Alerent?* By what Trade they supported themselves? And so long ago as the Days of *Pharaoh*, it was taken for granted that a Man could not be without *some Occupation*, or other. Hence that Question of his to *Joseph's Brethren*, upon their coming into *Egypt*, Gen. 47. 3. *What is your Occupation?*

The Law, in my Text, is therefore connected with the *publick Good*; as it tends to encourage Industry, by restraining us from Distributions to the lazy and slothful. And it is indeed a great Hurt to a *Community*, when private Persons dispense their Charities to such, among the poor, as keep themselves so by an Indulgence to Idleness, while yet they are able to work. For the *Public* loses the whole Benefit of the Labour of those, who are thus supported in Idleness; and not only so, but is liable to suffer all the Inconveniencies which are to be looked for, in Consequence of their indulging to Sloth, and doing nothing.

And it is observable, the *Apostle* had it particularly in  
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his View to guard against these *public Inconveniencies*, when he gave the Command in my Text. Hence he adds, in the Words that immediately follow, giving the Reason, at least one Reason of the Command, *For we have heard, that there are some among you which walk disorderly, working not at all; but are Busy-bodies.*

You observe, these Persons who did not work, and were the Occasion of the Command in the Text, were *disorderly*. And this, in a Sense, is always the Case. Whenever Persons are *idle*, they are *disorderly*: For an idle Life is, in the whole of it, a *Disorder*. It subverts the Order God has establish'd for the Support of Mankind, and would introduce another Method of Livelihood than *that*; infinite Wisdom has contrived and appointed.

Nor is this the only Sense in which idle Persons are *disorderly*. They are too often *Tempters to others to neglect their Business*. Having none of their own, and being inclined to none, they endeavour to find, or, if they can't do that, to make Persons as idle as themselves, to the great Detriment of the Public, and, many Times, the intire Ruin of their Companions in Sloth. And who are so much noted for the moral Disorders of *Lying* and *Stealing*; as those who have settled into an Habit of Laziness? Their Laziness reduces them to Straits and Difficulties; and these, as the readiest and easiest Way to supply their Wants, put them upon deceiving the kind and charitable by artfully invented Falshoods, or else upon secretly robbing them of their Money, or their Goods. And who more given to *Tipling* than the Persons who have accustomed themselves to Idleness? The Drones in a Place are commonly the People who doze away their Time and Senses over their Cups. There are indeed no *Disorders*, but the idle are liable to them; and their Danger lies in their Idleness. Were they diligently employed in Business of one Kind or another, their Thoughts and Time would be properly taken up; but having settled into a Temper inclining them to sit idle and do nothing, they lie open to every Temptation, and are in danger of being betrayed into moral Disorders of every Kind.

And these idle Persons were not only disorderly, but  
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*Busy-bodies.* We hear there are some who wo. not at all, but are *Busy-bodies*. This may seem an Inconsistency; but it is most commonly the Truth of the Case. None more ready to *busy* themselves in other Men's Matters, than those who neglect all Business of their own. Not minding their own Affairs, they have Leisure, and generally Inclination, to intrude into other Men's. Hence that Character of some, in the Apostolic Times, *They learn to be idle; wandering about from House to House; and not only idle, but Talkers also, and Busy-bodies, speaking Things which they ought not.* 1 Tim. 5. 13. And none indeed are, usually, more free with their Tongues than *idle Persons*; none wander more about from House to House; none are more ready to meddle in Things which don't belong to them; acting in the Sphere of others, tho' they won't in their own. And I need not say that this intermeddling in other Men's Concerns, greatly tends to *public Hurt*;—for it kindles Contention, creates Feuds and Animosities; and is indeed a main Source of that Variance and Strife, which disturb the Peace of Society.

And is it any Wonder, when *Idleness* is connected with such Damage to the *Public*, which might be as much benefitted by *Industry*, that we should be restrained from supporting those who won't work, thro' Slothfulness of Disposition? It is certainly a most reasonable Restraint: And the Command that lays it, is so far from being hard and unjust, that it kindly and equitably consults the *public Good*. And it is an Honour to the Christian Religion, that it can boast of this, and a great many other Commands, which, the more critically they are examined, the more wise and equitable they appear to be.

4. The Command we are considering is admirably adapted to promote *private* as well as *public Good*. For industrious Labour is the Way for *Individuals*, as well as *Communities*, to thrive and flourish. Men, it is true, may come to the possession of Wealth by Inheritance. But Wealth, even in this Case, was originally the Purchase of Labour; and it is only in this Way, that it can be improved to Advantage. Idleness naturally tends to *Waste*, and will, in Time, reduce the greatest Estate to nothing.

thing. But however it be as to Men of Substance, those, who have their Fortunes to make, must certainly take Pains. They may as well expect to be learned without Study, as to be rich without Diligence. If a Man's Circumstances are low, he can rise and prosper in no other Way, but that of Industry. To this Purpose are those Proverbs of Solomon, Ch. 10. v. 4. *He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack Hand: But the Hand of the diligent maketh rich.* And in the 12th Ch. v. 24. *The Hand of the diligent shall bear Rule: But the slothful shall be under Tribute.* And so necessary an expedient is Diligence in order to Wealth, that if Men are idle, they will unavoidably be poor. Hence that Observation of the wise Man, *Prov. 23. 21. Drowsiness shall clothe a Man with Rags.* And again, Ch. 24. 30. 31. 34. *I went by the Field of the slothful, and by the Vineyard of the Man void of Understanding: And lo, it was all grown over with Thorns, and Nettles had covered the Face thereof, and the Stone-wall thereof was broken down.*—*So shall thy Poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy Want as an armed Man.* And it is observable, one of the Arguments the Apostle Paul uses, to enforce the Duty of Labour, upon the slothful among the *Thessalonians*, is its Tendency to supply their Wants, so as that they should have no lack of outward good Things. *1. Thess. 4. 10, 12. We beseech you, Brethren, to do your own Business, and to work with your own Hands—that ye may have lack of nothing.* Industrious Labour is, you see, in the Apostle's Opinion, an effectual Expedient to prevent Want. If Persons are idle, they may expect to be needy: Whereas, if they do their own Business, and work with their own Hands, they will have lack of nothing; nothing for their Supply either with Necessaries or Conveniencies.

It is therefore for every Man's private Interest, that the Apostle has commanded, *if any will not work, neither shall he eat.* And indeed charitable Donations, supplying the needy without Labour, instead of being a Kindness, is a real and great Disservice to them; as it tends to settle them in Idleness. For if idle People find, that they can be supported by the Charities of others, instead of employing themselves in Labour, they will indulge to Sloth, till it

it becomes their habitual permanent Temper; than which there is not a more certain Prefage of their Ruin. For Idleness naturally and powerfully tends to keep Men in Poverty, or to reduce them to it. If they are low in the World, it will unavoidably keep them so: and if they possess Estates, it will soon waste them away, or sink them into nothing. Nor is this the only bad Effect of Idleness. It has a strange Influence to enfeeble the Powers both of Mind and Body, and render Men useless to themselves as well as others. Besides all which, it is the great Inlet to all manner of Wickedness, and tends to corrupt Men's Morals, and make them Scourges to themselves, as well as Plagues to Society. It is therefore a real and great Hurt, not only to the *Publick*, but to *private Persons*, individually considered, to support them in Sloth; and the Command, in my Text, restraining us herefrom, is therefore an Instance, not of Severity, but of Love and Kindness to them.

I have now said what may be thought sufficient to justify the *Apostle's* Command, by shewing that it is so far from being arbitrary and unreasonable, that it is connected, in the Nature of Things, with the Good of Mankind, considered both *individually*, and as coalescing in *Society*, and carries in it all the Marks of Fairness, Equity, and Goodness.

III. It remains now, in the last Place, that I make some suitable *Application* of what has been discoursed.

And, was it upon another Occasion, I should bespeak the poor, those among them especially who are idle, in the Language of the *Apostle*, in the Verse but one following my Text, *exhorting and commanding them by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own Bread*:—But considering the Design of our being together at this Time, with the Character of the Persons here convened, it may be more proper to confine my Discourse to the *rich*; who are as truly concerned in the great *Gospel Command* we have been illustrating, as the poor.

You are hereby, my Brethren, restrained as to the Distribution of your Charity; not being allowed to dispense it  
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promiscuously, but obliged to take due Care to find out suitable Objects; distinguishing properly between those needy People who are *able*, and those who are *unable*, to employ themselves in Labour.

You can scarce be too liberal in your Charities to those, who, in the Providence of God, are reduced to Straits, not thro' Slothfulness, but real Incapacity for Work. The Christian Law, requiring Charity, was made with a special View to this Kind of needy People: and you may, under no Pretence, shut up the Bowels of your Compassion against the Cry of their Wants. Charity is the Way, the infinitely benevolent God has ordained for the supply of their Necessities. And you should be ready, in this Way, to minister to their Relief, according to your Ability, and as you have Opportunity. But it is superfluous to urge you upon this Head; for, as touching charitable Ministrations to the *truly necessitous*, we may even boast of this Town. The good Lord reward into their Bosom, an hundred fold, all the Kindnesses they have shewn to the distressed, especially in the late Day of general Calamity.

But tho' you can't be too generous in your Charities to the poor, yet, as I said, you must take Care to distinguish between them. For as to them who *can*, but *won't*, work; who have Ability for Labour, but no Disposition, you are restrained from supporting them in *Idleness*. The Command in my Text is plainly a *Statute of Heaven*, tying up your Hands from Charitable Distributions to the slothful poor. And, so far as appears to me, it would be an evident Breach of the Law of the Gospel, as well as of Nature, to bestow upon those the *Bread of Charity*, who might earn and eat their *own Bread*, if they did not shamefully idle away their Time.

This, if I mistake not, is both a seasonable and important Truth; and if it were duly attended to, there would not be so much misplaced Charity, as that certainly is, which is given to *meer Drones*. Many such there have been among us; and perhaps it may be too much owing to the undistinguish'd Kindness and Compassion of the Benevolent, that they have so increased upon us, to the great Detriment of the *Public*; which is intirely deprived of the Labour of:



great Numbers, who, instead of living upon the Charity of others, might eat *their own Bread*. It is to be hoped, there will be a better Care taken upon this Head for the Time to come; and the rather, as there is now a Way wherein the charitably inclined may be assisting even to the *slothful* among the poor. They may be thus helpful to them by their Donations to strengthen the *Society*, not long since formed, *for encouraging Industry, and employing the Poor*.

My Text evidently countenances the formation of such a Society; the Design whereof is one and the same with that of the Apostle *Paul*, who delivered the Command contained in it, *viz.* the putting poor People, who are able, upon maintaining themselves by their own Labour and Industry, conformable to the Constitution of Nature, and the Appointment of God from the beginning of the World.

And in what more proper Way can we shew Kindness to the poor of this Sort, than by contributing to such a generous Design of setting them to Work, that with quietness they may Labour, and, as the Fruit thereof, eat their own Bread. We shall herein concur with the infinitely good God himself, who does not give Men Food and Raiment, and other Necessaries immediately from Heaven, but by adding his Blessing to their laborious Industry.

As this *Society* has not subsisted for any long Time, it cannot reasonably be supposed, they should have accomplished any great Things: And yet, more a great deal has been effected, than Strangers to the Execution of their Scheme may be ready to imagine. According to the Information I have received, some thousands of Yards of good *Linen Cloth* have been already fitted for Market; a Specimen whereof, you have there before your Eyes. And it is easy to determine, that, in order to this, Employ must have been given to a very considerable Number of Labourers, in raising Flax, in preparing it for the Wheel, in spinning it into Thread, and then in weaving it into Cloth. Some hundreds of Women and Children have, by this Means, been kept at Work, whereby they have done a great deal towards supplying themselves with Bread, to the easing the Town of its Burthen in providing for the poor. And, as one good Effect of the setting up this

*Linen*



*Linen Manufacture*, it may with Truth be said, there is now to be found, in the Town, many a virtuous married Woman, and young Maiden (some Instances whereof are there presented to your View) who may be characterized in the Words of Solomon, *She seeketh Flax, and worketh willingly with her Hands. She layeth her Hands to the Spindle, and her Hands hold the Distaff. She maketh fine Linen, and selleth it to the Merchant.*

Perhaps, scarce any Design of this Nature has afforded a more hopeful Prospect in its Beginning, notwithstanding its Interruption, for a considerable Time, by the late general Prevalence of the *Small-Pox*; and, if duly encouraged, and vigorously prosecuted, there is good Reason to think, it will soon become extensive in its Usefulness; finding Employ for great Numbers, especially among the Female Poor, both Women and Children, and by this Means enabling them to assist in the support of the Families to which they belong, to the great Advantage of the Community. It is indeed a Scheme, so far as I am able to judge, well calculated to promote Industry, and, its Companion, Frugality; than which nothing will more powerfully tend to deliver us from that Poverty to which we are reduced by our Idleness and Extravagance. And every one concerned for the Good of his Country must be sensible, it is high Time to lend an helping Hand towards the bringing into Effect every wise Projection to raise us out of the low Condition we are in, and make us a flourishing People.

It will, perhaps, be urged by some, that the setting up the *Linen Manufacture* is *too great* an Undertaking for so poor and small a People, and an *unwise* one, at this Time, when the Price of Labour runs so high. But as poor and small as we are, we need Linen of most Sorts, and can't do without it. And if, notwithstanding the high Price of Labour, we can make it ourselves so as that it shall turn out cheaper than if we imported it from abroad, as it is now known by Experience that we can, it is certainly a Point of Wisdom to do so: And the rather, as those may be employed, to good Purpose, in this Branch of Business (Children in particular) who have hitherto

been suffered in a great Measure, to spend their Time too much in Idleness. And it ought farther to be considered, there is no *Manufacture* our Soil and Climate are better fitted to encourage the setting up, and endeavouring to cultivate and bring to Perfection, than the *Linen*. And, as this is not the *Staple Manufacture* of *Great Britain*, we have Reason to hope they will strengthen us in it. To be sure, it looks as tho' it would be for their Interest to do so, as, in Time, if it should extend it self thro' this Province, and the neighbouring Colonies, and be brought to any considerable Degree of Perfection, it might, in a good Measure, supply them with what they are now obliged to pay their Money for to other Nations.

Others, it may be, may fear, if this *Manufacture* should be encouraged, and succeed, that it might hurt them in their Trade abroad, by lessening the Demand for, or lowering the Price of, the *Linen* they import for Sale. But such are evidently too much under the government of a selfish Spirit to be regarded in this Matter. And indeed, if their Fears are justly grounded, there cannot be a stronger Argument, so far as we consult the public Weal, to set forward the present Scheme with the utmost Vigour; as the professed Intention of it is, the *Good of the Community*, and not the *private Interest* of any individual Person whatsoever.

There may be still others, who may think much of the Expence that must attend the effectual carrying this Design into Execution, and imagine it better it should drop than be supported at any considerable Charge. But what Projection of this Nature was ever formed, but upon the Supposition of Charge in executing it to Purpose, in the Beginning? The only proper Question is, Whether this is a likely Scheme, under proper Cultivation, to counter-balance, with Advantage, the Expence necessary in order to its taking Effect? And there does not seem to be much Room for Debate upon the Point, thus stated. The *Linen Manufacture* has proved a noble Source of Wealth to other People. And why may not we reap the like Benefit from it? Our natural Advantages to carry it on are well adapted to the Purpose. We are in these Respects, exceeded

ceeded by no People on the Earth. And if it be not our own Fault, we may soon find our Account in the Prosecution of this Branch of Business. It will certainly, if not neglected, or discouraged, save a great deal of that, which is now exported, either in Money, or other Things, to purchase the Linen that is necessarily consumed in the Country; besides which, it will employ a great many needy idle People, who instead of being supported by *private Charities*, or *public Taxes* levied for that Purpose, may be fed and clothed with the Fruit of their own Labour; by Means whereof, instead of continuing burthensome, they will become useful and valuable, Members of the Community. And these Advantages alone, if there were no other, are sufficient to justify the present Undertaking, as a very wise and good one.

Upon the whole, it is not easy to conceive, but that every Lover of his Country should wish *God-Speed* to this disinterested Scheme for its Welfare: Nor is it doubted, but that many will assist, by their Donations, towards its being vigorously carried more and more into Effect. It is indeed a difficult Day. We are in a low impoverish'd Condition. But this is a Consideration powerfully suited, not to shut, but to open wide, both the Hearts and Hands of those who have Ability to help forward the present Design; as it was at first projected, and then entered upon, directly with a View to relieve us under our Poverty, by opening a new Source of Industry, well adapted to better our Circumstances, and that can't well fail of doing so, if properly encouraged, and wisely improved.

It is to be hoped therefore, the Gentlemen, to whom it is principally owing, that we have a *Linen Manufacture* now set up, and so far under Improvement, as to exhibit sensible Proof of its being a *capable Fund* of rich Advantage to the Public, will continue their Subscription, till it has got more Strength, and is better able to support it self. The same Benevolence of Spirit, which at first prompted you to encourage so useful a Design, will powerfully urge you to go on doing so, that it may, at length, get so well establish'd, as to be in no Danger of coming to nothing. *Be not weary of well doing; for ye shall reap if ye faint not.*

The

The Society here present gratefully acknowledge the Help they received the last Year, in this Place, not only from the Subscribers, but other well disposed Persons ; who will now also have an Opportunity, if they please, to contribute towards the farther carrying on of their good Design. And this I can heartily, and would earnestly, recommend to every one professing a Love to his Country, in proportion to his Circumstances. You cannot, my Brethren, be too liberal in your Donations upon this Occasion. For what you give for the encouragement of Industry, and the Relief of the poor, as the Effect of their own Labour, you may depend is well-placed Charity. Even God himself exercises his Benevolence towards Men conformably to the great Law of Industry. And can you have a better Pattern ? It is indisputably kinder and wiser to bestow your Money to encourage and enable poor People, according to the Law of their Nature, and the Law of God, to feed and clothe themselves by their own Labour and Industry, than to support them in Idleness and Uselessness. And this is the Method of Charity you are now invited to. And if only a Part of that Charity might be put into the Hands of this Society, which has been formerly lost and thrown away, by being bestowed on *Drones*, who are Burdens, without Profit, to the Community ; it would enable them to go upon this Design with Spirit, and to prosecute it with such Vigour, as that it would probably soon gain Strength, so as to convince us all by Experience, that a noble Source of Riches was thereby laid open, within ourselves, sufficient to raise us out of our present Poverty, and make us a happy and flourishing People. The good God prosper this, and all other Schemes that may be projected for so desirable an End.

Amen, and Amen.

**F I N I S.**

The Reasons for forming the Society,  
to whom the preceding Sermon  
was preached, as originally pub-  
lished by themselves.

*WHEREAS* it is found by Experience, that this Province is not adapted for raising Sheep, by reason of our long and tedious Winters; and therefore the Inhabitants have been and must forever continue to be under a Necessity of importing large Quantities of Woollen Goods from our Mother Country, Great Britain, which with Pewter, Brass, and other Commodities bro't from thence, that we cannot subsist without, nor produce ourselves, will require all we can procure for Exportation to make Returns: And inasmuch as considerable Sums are yearly exported to purchase Linens, that are not the Produce or Manufacture of Great Britain, but imported there from Germany, Holland, &c. and which this Province is very capable to Produce and Manufacture; and, if done, would be much for the Benefit of our Mother Country, as well as our selves, as it would enable us to apply our Exports to pay for Woollen and other Goods their Produce, and employ our own Women and Children, who are now in a great measure idle: — For these Reasons, a Number of Gentlemen have formed themselves into a voluntary Society, by the Name and Title of, *The Society for encouraging Industry and employing the Poor.* — And we do hereby invite all well-disposed charitable Persons to join in promoting the good Ends above-mentioned.

THE many Advantages arising from a well regulated Society of this Sort, as they are exceeding apparent, so it is presum'd the Design will meet with a chearful Reception, and extensive Encouragement. — In the present State of this Province, we are not perhaps in a Condition greatly to enlarge our Exports, it becomes necessary therefore, that by all prudent Methods we contrive as much as possible to lessen our Import. This will be considerably effected, by promoting a *Linen Manufacture*; for which it is computed that £. 50,000 Sterling are annually sent to *Europe*, when at the same Time it may be carried on to such Advantage, as that Linen of all Sorts may be made cheaper among ourselves, as is now found by Experience.— Besides, the Husbandman will from hence receive Encouragement for raising of Flax, to which the Lands in this Province are known to be well adapted, and so a new Source of Riches laid open to that useful and necessary Body of Men, extracted in the most natural and unenvied Way, as being the Product of our own Soil: Hereby also sundry Tradesmen and Handicrafts will receive further Employment; such as the Makers of Looms, Spinning Wheels, Heckles, Reels, and the like; but the most immediate Advantage is that, which will arise from the Employment of the Poor, at present a great Burthen to this Community, by the heavy Taxes levy'd for their Support. Many Thousands of these may be employ'd in this single Manufacture, and taught not only to support themselves, but to become useful and valuable Members of the Community. By this Means the Price of Labour, so much and justly complained of, will gradually be lessen'd, as more Hands will be industriously

diligently employ'd ; the Poor will be decently cloath'd, and fed with the Fruits of their own Diligence ; the publick Taxes abated, and in general a Spirit of Frugality, Industry and Virtue will probably take place among us.

This Town has remarkably signalized its self, for its Charity and Compassion to the Poor ; who for some Years past have been an encreasing Burthen, and yet the Supplies that are annually furnish'd, are very far from being an adequate Relief to their Necessities ; and what is worse, there is no Prospect of diminishing this Burthen in the present Way of distributing our Charity ; on the contrary, it must be expected to increase by the continual Addition of new Objects, from which nothing but their Death will be likely to release us, while a new Succession of them will daily present themselves in the Room of those, who are at rest from their Miseries : Every Man of Sense must see, and every Lover of his Country will deplore the Calamities that must arise from increasing Poverty, Idleness and Vice ; but every Christian will feel the Miseries of such a State, almost as if they were his own, and be uneasy till some Method be entered upon, for providing an effectual Remedy against them.——Temporary Methods of Relief are very commendable, till something better can be established ; but these are of the Nature of Palliatives only ; it must be a lasting and permanent Scheme, that may be expected to reach the Root of this Malady : The Linen Manufacture, when thoroughly understood, will appear to be such a Scheme, and under proper Cultivation will, it is apprehended, enlarge it self into a noble Design, so as not only to yield present Relief to great

Numbers of poor People, but by gradually extending it self to all Parts of the Province, seems to promise a perpetual Establishment ; and if it be enter'd upon with a proper Spirit, and vigorously supported in the Beginning, it will soon add a new Branch of Riches to the Province, will cloath the naked, find Bread for the hungry, and Employment for the idle.

**I**N hopes of accomplishing the good Ends above-mentioned, and depending upon the Blessing of Almighty GOD, to give Success to the Undertaking, we the Subscribers do promise to pay unto

hereby appointed Treasurer to us the Subscribers, within one Month from the Date of these Presents, the Sums annexed to our respective Names, for promoting and carrying on a Linen Manufacture, and such other Manufactures, as the Society shall hereafter think proper to encourage. We likewise promise to pay quarterly the Sums subscribed by us, as they shall become due, until we shall give Notice to the Society of our Desire to be excused.

