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*From A Model of Christian Charity*¹

I

A Model Hereof

God Almighty in his most holy and wise providence, hath so disposed of the Condition of mankind, as in all times some must be rich, some poor, some high and eminent in power and dignity; others mean and in subjection.

1. Text as established by Samuel Eliot Morison, Old South Leaflet No. 207, Old South Meetinghouse, Boston, 1916. Spelling has been here normalized.

The Reason Hereof

First, to hold conformity with the rest of his works; being delighted to show forth the glory of his wisdom in the variety and difference of the Creatures; and the glory of his power, in ordering all these differences for the preservation and good of the whole; and the glory of his greatness, that as it is the glory of princes to have many officers, so this great King will have many Stewards, counting himself more honored in dispensing his gifts to man by man, than if he did it by his own immediate hands.

Secondly, that he might have the more occasion to manifest the work of his Spirit: first upon the wicked in moderating and restraining them, so that the rich and mighty should not eat up the poor, nor the poor and despised rise up against their superiors and shake off their yoke; secondly, in the regenerate, in exercising his graces in them, as in the great ones, their love, mercy, gentleness, temperance etc.; in the poor and inferior sort, their faith, patience, obedience etc.

Thirdly, that every man might have need of other, and from hence they might be all knit more nearly together in the Bonds of brotherly affection. From hence it appears plainly that no man is made more honorable than another or more wealthy etc., out of any particular and singular respect to himself, but for the glory of his Creator and the common good of the Creature, Man. Therefore God still reserves the property of these gifts to himself as [in] Ezek: 16. 17. He there calls wealth his gold and his silver. [In] Prov: 3. 9. he claims their service as his due, honor the Lord with thy riches etc. All men being thus (by divine providence) ranked into two sorts, rich and poor; under the first are comprehended all such as are able to live comfortably by their own means duly improved; and all others are poor according to the former distribution.

There are two rules whereby we are to walk one towards another: JUSTICE and MERCY. These are always distinguished in their Act and in their object, yet may they both concur in the same subject in each respect; as sometimes there may be an occasion of showing mercy to a rich man in some sudden danger of distress, and also doing of mere justice to a poor man in regard of some particular contract, etc.

There is likewise a double Law by which we are regulated in our conversation one towards another in both the former respects: the law of nature and the law of grace, or the moral law or the law of the gospel, to omit the rule of justice as not properly belonging to this purpose otherwise than it may fall into consideration in some particular Cases. By the first of these laws man as he was enabled so withal [is] commanded to love his neighbor as himself.² Upon this ground stands all the precepts of the moral law, which concerns our dealings with men. To apply this to the works of mercy, this law requires two things. First, that every man afford his help to another in every want or distress. Secondly, that he performed this out of the same affection which makes him careful of his own goods, according to that of our Savior. Matth: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you."³ This was practiced by Abraham and Lot in entertaining the Angels and the old man of Gibeah.⁴

The law of Grace or the Gospel hath some difference from the former, as in these respects. First the law of nature was given to man in the estate of innocency; this of the gospel in the estate of regeneracy.⁵ Secondly, the former propounds one man to

2. " * * * Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew xix: 19).

3. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew vii: 12).

4. Abraham found favor with the Lord through entertaining three angels (Genesis xviii). Subsequently,

Lot, Abraham's nephew, escaped the destruction of Sodom as a result of similar hospitality (Genesis xix: 1-25). The old man of Gibeah befriended a traveler in his city (Judges xix: 15-21).

5. The law of nature ended with Adam's fall. Christ brought to mankind the new law, expressed in the gospels.

another, as the same flesh and image of god; this as a brother in Christ also, and in the Communion of the same spirit and so teacheth us to put a difference between Christians and others. *Do good to all, especially to the household of faith*; upon this ground the Israelites were to put a difference between the brethren of such as were strangers though not of Canaanites. Thirdly, the Law of nature could give no rules for dealing with enemies, for all are to be considered as friends in the state of innocency, but the Gospel commands love to an enemy. Proof. If thine Enemy hunger, feed him; Love your Enemies, do good to them that hate you. Matth: 5. 44.

This law of the Gospel propounds likewise a difference of seasons and occasions. There is a time when a Christian must sell all and give to the poor, as they did in the Apostles' times.⁶ There is a time also when a Christian (though they give not all yet) must give beyond their ability, as they of Macedonia, Cor: 2, 8. Likewise community of perils calls for extraordinary liberality, and so doth community in some special service for the Church. Lastly, when there is no other means whereby our Christian brother may be relieved in his distress, we must help him beyond our ability, rather than tempt God in putting him upon help by miraculous or extraordinary means. * * *

Having already set forth the practice of mercy according to the rule of god's law, it will be useful to lay open the grounds of it also, being the other part of the Commandment, and that is the affection from which this exercise of mercy must arise. The Apostle tells us that this love is the fulfilling of the law, not that it is enough to love our brother and so no further; but in regard of the excellency of his parts giving any motion to the other as the Soul to the body and the power it hath to set all the faculties on work in the outward exercise of this duty. As when we bid one make the clock strike, he doth not lay hand on the hammer, which is the immediate instrument of the sound, but sets on work the first mover or main wheel, knowing that will certainly produce the sound which he intends. So the way to draw men to works of mercy, is not by force of Argument from the goodness or necessity of the work; for though this course may enforce a rational mind to some present Act of mercy, as is frequent in experience, yet it cannot work such a habit in a soul, as shall make it prompt upon all occasions to produce the same effect, but by framing these affections of love in the heart which will as natively bring forth the other, as any cause doth produce effect.

The definition which the Scripture gives us of love is this: "Love is the bond of perfection." First, it is a bond or ligament. Secondly, it makes the work perfect. There is no body but consists of parts and that which knits these parts together, gives the body its perfection, because it makes each part so contiguous to others as thereby they do mutually participate with each other, both in strength and infirmity, in pleasure and pain. To instance in the most perfect of all bodies: Christ and his church make one body. The several parts of this body, considered apart before they were united, were as disproportionate and as much disordering as so many contrary qualities or elements, but when Christ comes and by his spirit and love knits all these parts to himself and each to other, it is become the most perfect and best proportioned body in the world. Eph: 4. 16: "Christ, by whom all the body being knit together by every joint for the furniture thereof, according to the effectual power which is in the measure of every perfection of parts," "a glorious body without spot or wrinkle," the ligaments hereof being Christ, or his love, for Christ is love (I John 4. 8). So this definition is right: "Love is the bond of perfection."

From hence we may frame these conclusions. I. First of all, true Christians are of one body in Christ, I Cor. 12. 12, 27: "Ye are the body of Christ and members of their part."

6. " * * * Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven" (Luke xviii: 22).

Secondly, the ligaments of this body which knit together are love. Thirdly, no body can be perfect which wants its proper ligament. Fourthly, all the parts of this body being thus united are made so contiguous in a special relation as they must needs partake of each other's strength and infirmity; joy and sorrow, weal and woe. I Cor: 12. 26: "If one member suffers, all suffer with it, if one be in honor, all rejoice with it." Fifthly, this sensibleness and sympathy of each other's conditions will necessarily infuse into each part a native desire and endeavor to strengthen, defend, preserve and comfort the other.

To insist a little on this Conclusion being the product of all the former, the truth hereof will appear both by precept and pattern. I John 3. 10: "Ye ought to lay down your lives for the brethren." Gal. 6. 2: "bear ye one another's burthens and so fulfill the law of Christ." For patterns we have that first of our Savior who out of his good will in obedience to his father, becoming a part of his body, and being knit with it in the bond of love, found such a native sensibleness of our infirmities and sorrows as he willingly yielded himself to death to ease the infirmities of the rest of his body, and so held their sorrows. From the like sympathy of parts did the Apostles and many thousands of the Saints lay down their lives for Christ. Again, the like we may see in the members of this body among themselves. Rom. 9. Paul could have been contented to have been separated from Christ, that the Jews might not be cut off from the body. It is very observable what he professeth of his affectionate partaking with every member: "who is weak" saith he "and I am not weak? who is offended and I burn not;"⁷ and again, 2 Cor: 7. 13. "therefore we are comforted because ye were comforted." Of Epaphroditus he speaketh, Phil: 2. 30. that he regarded not his own life to do him service. So Phebe⁸ and others are called the servants of the church. Now it is apparent that they served not for wages, or by constraint, but out of love. The like we shall find in the histories of the church in all ages, the sweet sympathy of affections which was in the members of this body one towards another, their cheerfulness in serving and suffering together, how liberal they were without repining, harborers without grudging and helpful without reproaching; and all from hence, because they had fervent love amongst them, which only make the practice of mercy constant and easy.

The next consideration is how this love comes to be wrought. Adam in his first estate⁹ was a perfect model of mankind in all their generations, and in him this love was perfected in regard of the habit. But Adam rent himself from his Creator, rent all his posterity also one from another; whence it comes that every man is born with this principle in him, to love and seek himself only, and thus a man continueth till Christ comes and takes possession of the soul and infuseth another principle, love to God and our brother. And this latter having continual supply from Christ, as the head and root by which he is united, gets the predomining in the soul, so by little and little expels the former. I John 4. 7. "love cometh of God and every one that loveth is born of God," so that this love is the fruit of the new birth, and none can have it but the new Creature. Now when this quality is thus formed in the souls of men, it works like the Spirit upon the dry bones. Ezek. 37: "bone came to bone." It gathers together the scattered bones, or perfect old man Adam, and knits them into one body again in Christ, whereby a man is become again a living soul.

The third consideration is concerning the exercise of this love which is twofold, inward or outward. The outward hath been handled in the former preface of this discourse. For unfolding the other we must take in our way that maxim of philosophy *Simile simili gaudet*, or like will to like; for as it is things which are turned with disaffection

7. II Corinthians xi: 29.

8. Romans xvi: 1-2.

9. Before the fall.

to each other, the ground of it is from a dissimilitude arising from the contrary or different nature of the things themselves; for the ground of love is an apprehension of some resemblance in things loved to that which affects it. This is the cause why the Lord loves the creature, so far as it hath any of his Image in it; he loves his elect because they are like himself, he beholds them in his beloved son. So a mother loves her child, because she thoroughly conceives a resemblance of herself in it. Thus it is between the members of Christ. Each discerns, by the work of the Spirit, his own Image and resemblance in another, and therefore cannot but love him as he loves himself. Now when the soul, which is of a sociable nature, finds any thing like to itself, it is like Adam when Eve was brought to him. She must have it one with herself. This is flesh of my flesh (saith the soul) and bone of my bone. She conceives a great delight in it, therefore she desires nearness and familiarity with it. She hath a great propensity to do it good and receives such content in it, as fearing the miscarriage of her beloved, she bestows it in the inmost closet of her heart. She will not endure that it shall want any good which she can give it. If by occasion she be withdrawn from the company of it, she is still looking towards the place where she left her beloved. If she heard it groan, she is with it presently. If she find it sad and disconsolate, she sighs and moans with it. She hath no such joy as to see her beloved merry and thriving. If she see it wronged, she cannot hear it without passion. She sets no bounds to her affections, nor hath any thought of reward. She finds recompence enough in the exercise of her love towards it. We may see this Acted to life in Jonathan and David.¹ Jonathan a valiant man endued with the spirit of Christ, so soon as he discovers the same spirit in David had presently his heart knit to him by this lineament of love, so that it is said he loved him as his own soul. He takes so great pleasure in him, that he strips himself to adorn his beloved. His father's kingdom was not so precious to him as his beloved David. David shall have it with all his heart, himself desires no more but that he may be near to him to rejoice in his good. He chooseth to converse with him in the wilderness even to the hazard of his own life, rather than with the great Courtiers in his father's Palace. When he sees danger towards him, he spares neither rare pains nor peril to direct it. When Injury was offered his beloved David, he would not bear it, though from his own father; and when they must part for a season only; they thought their hearts would have broke for sorrow, had not their affections found vent by abundance of tears. Other instances might be brought to show the nature of this affection, as of Ruth and Naomi,² and many others; but this truth is cleared enough.

If any shall object that it is not possible that love should be bred or upheld without hope of requital, it is granted; but that is not our cause; for this love is always under reward. It never gives, but it always receives with advantage; first, in regard that among the members of the same body, love and affection are reciprocal in a most equal and sweet kind of Commerce. Secondly, in regard of the pleasure and content that the exercise of love carries with it, as we may see in the natural body. The mouth is at all the pains to receive and mince the food which serves for the nourishment of all the other parts of the body, yet it hath no cause to complain; for first the other parts send back by several passages a due proportion of the same nourishment, in a better form for the strengthening and comforting the mouth. Secondly, the labor of the mouth is accompanied with such pleasure and content as far exceeds the pains it takes. So is it in all the labor of love among Christians. The party loving, reaps love again, as was showed

1. I Samuel xix, xx.

2. Ruth i: 14–18.

before, which the soul covets more than all the wealth in the world. Thirdly, nothing yields more pleasure and content to the soul than when it finds that which it may love fervently, for to love and live beloved is the soul's paradise, both here and in heaven. In the State of Wedlock there be many comforts to bear out the troubles of that Condition; but let such as have tried the most, say if there be any sweetness in that Condition comparable to the exercise of mutual love.

From former Considerations arise these Conclusions.

First, this love among Christians is a real thing, not Imaginary.

Secondly, this love is as absolutely necessary to the being of the body of Christ, as the sinews and other ligaments of a natural body are to the being of that body.

Thirdly, this love is a divine, spiritual nature, free, active, strong, courageous, permanent; undervaluing all things beneath its proper object; and of all the graces, this makes us nearer to resemble the virtues of our heavenly father.

Fourthly, it rests in the love and welfare of its beloved. For the full and certain knowledge of these truths concerning the nature, use, and excellency of this grace, that which the holy ghost hath left recorded, I Cor. 13, may give full satisfaction, which is needful for every true member of this lovely body of the Lord Jesus, to work upon their hearts by prayer, meditation, continual exercise at least of the special [influence] of this grace, till Christ be formed in them and they in him, all in each other, knit together by this bond of love.

II

It rests now to make some application of this discourse by the present design, which gave the occasion of writing of it. Herein are four things to be propounded: first the persons, secondly the work, thirdly the end, fourthly the means.

First, for the persons. We are a Company professing our selves fellow members of Christ, in which respect only though we were absent from each other many miles, and had our employments as far distant, yet we ought to account ourselves knit together by this bond of love, and live in the exercise of it, if we would have comfort of our being in Christ. This was notorious in the practice of the Christians in former times; as is testified of the Waldenses,³ from the mouth of one of the adversaries *Æneas Sylvius* "mutuo [ament] penè antequam norunt," they use to love any of their own religion even before they were acquainted with them.

Secondly, for the work we have in hand. It is by a mutual consent, through a special overvaluing providence and a more than an ordinary approbation of the Churches of Christ, to seek out a place of Cohabitation and Consortship under a due form of Government both civil and ecclesiastical. In such cases as this, the care of the public must over-
sway all private respects, by which, not only conscience, but mere civil policy, doth bind us. For it is a true rule that particular Estates cannot subsist in the ruin of the public.

Thirdly, the end is to improve our lives to do more service to the Lord; the comfort and increase of the body of Christ whereof we are members; that ourselves and posterity may be the better preserved from the Common corruptions of this evil world, to serve the Lord and work out our Salvation under the power and purity of his holy ordinances.

Fourthly, for the means whereby this must be effected. They are twofold, a Conformity with the work and end we aim at. These we see are extraordinary, therefore we must not content ourselves with usual ordinary means. Whatsoever we did or ought to have done

3. Protestant sect of twelfth-century origin. Aeneas Sylvius is the Latin form of Enea Silvio de' Piccolomini, Pope Pius II (1458–1464), as head of the Catholic church "one of the adversaries" of the Waldenses.

when we lived in England, the same must we do, and more also, where we go. That which the most in their Churches maintain as a truth in profession only, we must bring into familiar and constant practice, as in this duty of love. We must love brotherly without dissimulation; we must love one another with a pure heart fervently. We must bear one another's burthens. We must not look only on our own things, but also on the things of our brethren, neither must we think that the lord will bear with such failings at our hands as he doth from those among whom we have lived; and that for Three Reasons.

First, in regard of the more near bond of marriage between him and us, wherein he hath taken us to be his after a most strict and peculiar manner, which will make him the more Jealous of our love and obedience. So he tells the people of Israel, you only have I known of all the families of the Earth, therefore will I punish you for your Transgressions. Secondly, because the Lord will be sanctified in them that come near him. We know that there were many that corrupted the service of the Lord, some setting up Altars before his own, others offering both strange fire and strange Sacrifices also; yet there came no fire from heaven or other sudden judgment upon them, as did upon Nadab and Abihu,⁴ who yet we may think did not sin presumptuously. Thirdly, when God gives a special commission he looks to have it strictly observed in every Article. When he gave Saul a Commission to destroy Amalek, He indented with him upon certain Articles, and because he failed in one of the least, and that upon a fair pretense, it lost him the kingdom which should have been his reward if he had observed his Commission.⁵

Thus stands the cause between God and us. We are entered into Covenant with him for this work. We have taken out a Commission, the Lord hath given us leave to draw our own Articles. We have professed to enterprise these Actions, upon these and those ends, we have hereupon besought him of favor and blessing. Now if the Lord shall please to hear us, and bring us in peace to the place we desire, then hath he ratified this Covenant and sealed our Commission, [and] will expect a strict performance of the Articles contained in it; but if we shall neglect the observation of these Articles which are the ends we have propounded, and, dissembling with our God, shall fall to embrace this present world and prosecute our carnal intentions, seeking great things for ourselves and our posterity, the Lord will surely break out in wrath against us; be revenged of such a perjured people and make us know the price of the breach of such a covenant.

Now the only way to avoid this shipwreck, and to provide for our posterity, is to follow the counsel of Micah, to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with our God.⁶ For this end, we must be knit together in this work as one man. We must entertain each other in brotherly Affection, we must be willing to abridge ourselves of our superfluities, for the supply of other's necessities. We must uphold a familiar Commerce together in all meekness, gentleness, patience and liberality. We must delight in each other, make other's conditions our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes our Commission and Community in the work, our Community as members of the same body. So shall we keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. The Lord will be our God, and delight to dwell among Us as his own people, and will command a blessing upon us in all our ways, so that we shall see much more of his wisdom, power, goodness and truth, than formerly we have been acquainted with. We shall find that the God of Israel is among us, when ten of us

4. Nadab and Abihu offered incense "and strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. / And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (Leviticus x: 1-2).

5. Saul destroyed the Amalekites, but spared their sheep and oxen, though commanded to kill those as well (1 Samuel xv: 1-35).

6. Micah vi: 8.

shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies; when he shall make us a praise and glory that men shall say of succeeding plantations, “the Lord make it like that of NEW ENGLAND.” For we must Consider that we shall be as a City upon a hill.⁷ The eyes of all people are upon Us, so that if we shall deal falsely with our god in this work we have undertaken, and so cause him to withdraw his present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world. We shall open the mouths of enemies to speak evil of the ways of God, and all professors for God’s sake. We shall shame the faces of many of God’s worthy servants, and cause their prayers to be turned into Curses upon us till we be consumed out of the good land whither we are a going.

And to shut up this discourse with that exhortation of Moses, that faithfull servant of the Lord, in his last farewell to Israel, Deut. 30.⁸ Beloved, there is now set before us life and good, Death and evil, in that we are Commanded this day to love the Lord our God, and to love one another, to walk in his ways and to keep his Commandments and his Ordinance and his laws, and the articles of our Covenant with him, that we may live and be multiplied, and that the Lord our God may bless us in the land whither we go to possess it. But if our hearts shall turn away, so that we will not obey, but shall be seduced, and worship other Gods, our pleasures and profits, and serve them; it is propounded unto us this day, we shall surely perish out of the good Land whither we pass over this vast sea to possess it.

Therefore let us choose life,
that we and our seed
may live by obeying His
voice and cleaving to Him,
for He is our life and
our prosperity.