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ANNIVERSARY SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE

PARISH CHURCH, BRADFIELD, BERKS.,

JULY 4TH, 1856,

BY THE

REV. H. J. C. HARPER,

VICAR OF MORTIMER,

NOW LORD BISHOP OF CHRIST CHURCH, NEW ZEALAND.

LONDON:

JOHN AND CHARLES MOZLEY,

6, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1856.

*All money received by the sale of this Sermon will be sent to Bishop Harper  
for his College in New Zealand.*



TO THE  
REVEREND THOMAS STEVENS, M.A.,

RECTOR OF BRADFIELD,  
AND WARDEN OF ST. ANDREW'S COLLEGE, BRADFIELD,

AND TO ALL WHO WITH HIM  
ARE LABOURING TOGETHER IN BROTHERLY LOVE  
FOR THE GLORY OF GOD,  
AND THE EDIFICATION AND INCREASE OF  
CHRIST'S HOLY CHURCH,

THIS SERMON, PREACHED AT BRADFIELD CHURCH  
ON THE 4<sup>TH</sup> OF JULY, 1856,

IS GRATEFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY  
INSCRIBED

BY THEIR BROTHER IN CHRIST,

HENRY J. C. HARPER.





## SERMON.

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Hebrews, x. 24.

*“And let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works.”*

THE words of the Apostle, “Consider one another,” teach us that forgetfulness of self and care for others which lies at the root of all true Christian Charity. It would be useless to exhort us to “provoke one another to good works,” unless we had first been taught that lesson so hard to learn, namely, “not to look every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” We are to love one another with a love that “seeketh not its own,” and, like our Blessed Master, “not to please ourselves, but to please our neighbour, for his good.” And it is only through such a self-forgetting, self-denying spirit, combined with an earnest desire to promote the glory of God, that all really charitable works can be effectually carried out.

But the words of the Apostle imply something more than this; for when he bids us “consider one another,” it is evident that he would have us regard one another as connected with each other in a peculiar sense. To understand the full force of his exhortation, we must bear in mind what he has been speaking about in the verses immediately before the text. Those to whom he was writing were, in his estimation, a holy brotherhood, with whom God had made a new covenant of mercy. They had, with the Apostle, “boldness to enter into the Holiest of Holies by the Blood of Jesus,” having one and the same High Priest ministering in their behalf, and “having their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience” in that “one baptism” which is “for the remission of sin.”

The Apostle could not think of them, therefore, but as joint partakers of the mercies of Christ—as emphatically Brethren; and it is quite plain that if they were to carry out the spirit of his directions, they must learn to consider one another as such. They were not merely persons born in the same country, or living together in the same locality, or sharing in the same temporal interests, but bound to one another through Christ, “in one communion and fellowship,” having “fellowship with one another” because they had “fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.”

This union with each other was a spiritual one,

and had its root in Christ; they were members of the same Body, children of the same household, branches in the same vine, abiding in the same by the profession of the same faith, and deriving from the same source all their life and strength. And they were bound to remember this, to consider the claims to love and good-will which they had upon one another, to keep before their minds their spiritual relationship one to another, and to make that, as it were, the basis of their exertions for one another's welfare.

And what the Apostle teaches here is his teaching throughout; when, for instance, St. Paul would exhort the Romans to "be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love," to "give with simplicity," and to "show mercy with cheerfulness," he takes care to remind them first, that they are all, though many, "one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." And so again in the same Epistle, the chief argument which he uses, why they should deal tenderly with each, not offending the conscience of the weak, and bearing with their infirmities, is, that "none of them liveth to himself, and no man dieth unto himself; for whether they live, they live unto the Lord, or whether they die, they die unto the Lord; whether they live, therefore, or die, they are the Lord's." And in the whole chapter from which these words are taken, he will

not allow them to regard their fellow-Christians otherwise than as brethren, however full of infirmity, or weak in faith; and this because of their joint union with Christ. And he sums up his whole argument for love in these words: “Wherefore, *receive ye one another*, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.” So again, when the Apostle would exhort the Corinthians to strive after that most excellent gift of Charity, he first reminds them that they are “the Body of Christ, and members in particular,” and so intimate was their communion one with another, that “if one member suffered, all the members suffered with it; if one member were honoured, all the members rejoiced with it.”

And the same reason for considerate love is urged by the Apostle in the case of Onesimus. He was no longer, since he had become a Christian, to be treated by Philemon “as a servant, but as a brother beloved,” having a double claim on his master’s affection “both in the flesh and in the Lord.” And it is on similar grounds that the Ephesians are forbidden to lie to one another, because they were “members one of another.”

A lie on the part of a Christian is not only an offence against God, but hurtful to the interests of the community of which he forms a part, and which, as a Christian, he is never to lose sight of. And this truly practical truth may be equally

gathered from those Scriptures where a distinction is made between the love which we are bound to show to those who are Christians, and to those who are strangers to the covenant of promise.

God Himself is said to be "the Saviour of all men, but especially of them that believe;" His love to all is a love which "passeth all understanding," but still that love is limited, and by measure, in comparison with that with which He regards those whom He has accepted in His beloved Son. Hence the Apostle says, we are to "do good to all men, but especially unto them who are of the household of faith;" and he reminds us for our encouragement that "God is not unrighteous to forget our works and labour that proceedeth of love, which love we have showed, for His name's sake, who have ministered unto the Saints, and yet do minister."

Now it cannot be denied that this duty of considering one another was, in the case of the first Christians, one which the very circumstances of their position brought out into more practical light than with us. They stood apart from the rest of the world, not only in name, but as a body known of all men, and claiming to be a peculiar people. The very persecutions, too, to which they were exposed from time to time, served but to bind them the more closely to each other. They could not help feeling that they were a

class of persons forming a distinct community of themselves. Accordingly we read that all the believers "were together, and had all things common." And though the account of this applies in its fulness to the very earliest time of the Gospel, yet it is in a great measure descriptive of the condition of Christians so long as the Apostle lived and wrote. When the Apostle, therefore, told the Hebrew Christians to "consider one another," their thoughts would naturally turn to those with whom they were associated in blessing and in trial, and in the daily practice and duties of religion; and even as regards those who were not in their own immediate neighbourhood, there was a bond of union maintained by a continual interchange of Christian messages and gifts. All Christians, in fact, throughout the world, as they had but "one faith," and formed but "one body in Christ," were in continual communication one with another, not only as concerning giving and receiving counsel and advice, but in sending mutual relief; and so accustomed were they to keep before their minds their Christian brethren, though personally unknown, that it would seem as if it were one of the stated services of the Lord's Day for each person to lay by something in store, according to his ability, that he might be ready to administer to their necessities.

But though we live under different circum-

stances, yet the duty of considering one another as brethren in Christ still remains the same. We cannot, in fact, otherwise fully carry out the command, "Love one another." We must build our works on the right foundation; and "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ;" and we are building upon Christ when we "receive one another" as members of Himself, and when, because of this membership, we are "kindly affectioned one to another."

This is, in fact, that which distinguishes Christian love from mere human affection. We may love a person because of near relationship or neighbourhood, or because there may be in him some attractive qualities, or because, in our judgment, he may seem to us a true follower of Christ; but in all this, even in this latter case, there is something wanting; it is a lower degree of love than that pure, unselfish love, of which the Apostle is speaking when he says, "We know we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." It is one thing to love a person because there is in him something which attracts us to him—somewhat, as it were, to pay us for our interest in him—it is another to love him because he belongs to Christ. Such a love will lead us to feel kindly towards him, and seek his good, irrespectively of his personal claims on our regard. And let not this be thought a fanciful

distinction; it is not really so if we look to its effects on our daily life and conduct towards others. Take, for instance, the case of a child, one not of our own family, or connected with us by any tie of relationship or friendship—one, it may be, the child of comparative strangers, entrusted to our care for the purposes of education, or one to whom, among others, it has fallen to us in the course of duty to teach, to admonish, or to relieve; and the case is still stronger if he should be a child of no personal attractions of mind or body, repulsive in manner, and though young, not unacquainted with vice; one in whom the world takes little interest, an outcast from society, though from his infancy a member of Christ's Church.

Now it is quite possible for those who have a high sense of duty, and strong benevolent feelings, to abound in acts of kindness towards such a child. They may be kind and gentle towards him, bear patiently with his perverseness, strive to do him good in body and mind, and train him in "the way that leadeth unto life." They may continue in such works of love with all perseverance. But how differently shall we look upon that child, and our duties towards him! With how much more zeal, and interest, and patience, shall we labour for his good if we have learnt to consider him as spiritually connected with ourselves—one to whom



all kindness, attention, and duty, is owing, not merely for our own sakes, and because we belong to Christ, but because he belongs to Christ, and that Christ hath said, "Whosoever receiveth such a little one in My name, receiveth Me."

It is the saying of a Heathen, and it is a wonderful saying in the mouth of such an one, that the greatest reverence is due to children; he might have added, the most earnest, self-denying love. And this becomes a plain and obvious duty on our part, whatever the child may be in himself, if only he be one of the flock of Christ, gathered by baptism within His fold.

And so again with respect to those who, though calling themselves Christians, are walking most unworthily of their name and calling. We are warned that there will be many such, and the slightest experience is sufficient to prove to us that iniquity abounds in the Church of Christ.

But what then? We have duties still towards the most careless and ungodly, duties which relate both to body and soul. We may not put them aside as those who have no claim upon us, and to whom we owe nothing. We are bound, as opportunity happens, to advise and reprove, to warn and to console, to give relief in poverty, to pray and intercede in their behalf; and these most necessary offices of Christian love cannot be fully and faithfully discharged unless we consider and

treat them as still belonging to Christ. It is the Apostle's express direction, that however disorderly a man may walk, even though we may be forced, because of his wickedness, to have no company with him, we are "not to count him as an enemy," but "admonish him as a brother."

It may require some faith to do so, as well as much Christian love; for it is hard to think that they have part in Christ whose lives are a daily dishonour to His name. It is hard to believe, when no traces of spiritual life can be discerned in their conduct, that they, in any sense, have union with Christ, and, through Christ, communion with us. And the Apostle seems to admit the difficulty of the case when he lays it down as a rule, that "they who are spiritual" are to "restore" those who are "overtaken by faults." It is as if he would reserve so difficult a duty to those who are eminent in faith and goodness, or, as we may understand his words, who have spiritual authority to rebuke and correct. But still the light in which we are to look upon the erring members of Christ's Church, and the duty of loving them and doing them what good we can, is a duty incumbent upon all. And we cannot fulfil the Christian law of love without we fully admit their spiritual relationship to Christ and to ourselves—that they belong, through Christ, to the same Christian brotherhood—that they, as such, have especial

claim on our meekness, and patience, and labours of love, if so be that God, peradventure, will yet “give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth,” that they may “recover themselves out of the snare of the devil who have been led captive by him at his will.”

And this, I need hardly say, is still more necessary if there be any sign of repentance, and the desire, however faint, to return to God’s service. Christ Himself would teach us that such an one is emphatically our brother. “This, thy brother,” He says, “who was dead, is alive again; who was lost, is found.” And He would rebuke that uncharitable spirit which, in remembrance of past sins, and recent return to duty, would speak of him as an outcast or alien, or as one who for the first time is brought to Christ, and not as one restored to a place which he once occupied in his Heavenly Father’s house, to be cared for as a brother under all circumstances, and to be welcomed on his return to God with all a brother’s love. And so again; if, in obedience to the Apostle’s words, we “consider one another,” we shall take a brotherly interest in the welfare of those who are far distant from us—those, especially, of our own countrymen who may be dwelling in our remote colonies and dependencies, and that not merely because they are our countrymen, of the same blood, and speaking

the same language, and brought up with us under those civil institutions which we prize so highly; but still more so because they are one with us in Christ, of the same spiritual community with ourselves, and so bound to us by ties which neither time nor distance can sever, ties which are not for this world alone, but which will draw us only the nearer to one another in the world beyond the grave.

And there is more reason for this, because in many instances, as compared with ourselves and those about us, they have less of those advantages which we possess, and which we profess to believe necessary for our salvation. Even if we take the most favourable case, if we look to those of our colonists who are religiously disposed, men and women of prayer, who would as soon think of going without their daily bread as of neglecting their private prayers, and daily searching the Scriptures, how many of them are scattered, of necessity, over the face of the country, and cannot, as we do here, assemble themselves together to partake of the ordinances of Christ's Church! It must needs be that they suffer loss, for though the grace of God be not limited to His ordinances, Christ has ordained that we should depend on one another as much for comfort and support in our spiritual life as in our daily life. He has gathered us together into one body, and it is needful to the edifying of each member of the body, as well as of the body itself,

that nourishment should be ministered through mutual intercourse, and ordained means, partaken of together; which are, as it were, the bands and joints by which we are connected alike with Christ and with each other, and “increase with the increase of God.” Hence He has appointed the sacraments of His Church, and ministers to minister the same, and has bidden us to assemble together, if only by two or three; and no individual can supply to himself the place of these aids; and if the appointed labourers be few, and the harvest to be gathered large and scattered, if the assembling together be much neglected, many, of necessity, must be scantily provided for, and so must suffer loss.

And it is still more sad if we look to the condition of the irreligious colonist, who has gone forth from this country with little fear of God and love for His Church, and with little inclination to use whatever means he has for his soul’s good. And how many thousands there are of this description we cannot be ignorant. They left their homes here to escape the burden of poverty, and if willing to labour, “working with their own hands the thing that is good,” they have found in their adopted country an abundance of all the necessaries of life; they have enough, and to spare, of all those good things which God has bestowed alike on the evil and the good. But the Giver of all

this is wholly unregarded, and His gifts too often perverted, to the injury of soul and body. And they hear no warning voice to remind them of Him, and their duties towards Him. They have nothing to remind them of holy things which they had here, and which, little as they were disposed to profit by them, were still a restraint upon them; and hence, in too many a sad instance, they sink lower and lower in ungodliness and sin, and live and die, to all intents and purposes, "without God in the world."

And yet these are those for whom Christ died; nay, more, they are those whom, in His Providence, He has added to His Church. It was no chance thing that they were born in a Christian land, of Christian parents, and brought by them to holy baptism. And whether they were so brought from mere custom, or in true faith and fear, still their baptism and admission thereby into Christ's Church was an event ordered for them by the care of Him, without whose providence not a sparrow falleth to the ground; and there was an end and purpose in all that was so ordered. It was "no vain thing that happened" unto them; it was the beginning of their life in Christ; and as "God's gift and calling are without repentance," they cannot divest themselves of the consequences then entailed upon them. They may have cut themselves off from their home and country, but they

cannot so far have severed their connection with Christ's Church as to be otherwise than those who were once partakers of mercy; and their judgment hereafter must be accordingly. And it is not right in us, who know of their condition, to leave them thus destitute. We should not be so indifferent if they were our relatives after the flesh, our own sons and daughters, or our brothers and sisters; and surely the love of Christ will constrain us to consider these our brethren in Christ, and provoke us to godly exertions in their behalf. It will unquestionably be so if we have anything of the love of Christ, and are likeminded with Him. Christ's love for His Church is not limited to localities, or to the ninety and nine which may be safe within His fold. His death upon the cross is sufficient for the salvation of all the members of it, and His love extends to all, though some may be wandering from it. Let us learn then, brethren, to "love one another, as Christ hath loved us;" to care for one another, as He careth for us; and we shall not be bounded in our exertions in behalf of any. Wherever there is one who has by baptism "put on Christ," whether he be one living near at hand, or at a distance from us, a faithful or unworthy member of His Body, in him we shall recognize a brother in Christ, and to him will our Christian sympathies extend.

And I need hardly remind you that the Society

for which your alms will be collected this day, though instituted, in the first place, for the maintenance of true religion among the members of Christ's Church, is equally active, as occasion offers, to "add to the Church," from the heathen world, "such as should be saved." Its first care is necessarily for those who already belong to Christ, those who are "of the household of faith," that they may not forfeit their spiritual blessings, of which, by the grace of God, they have been put in possession. In the welfare of these, and such as these, she takes, as is her bounden duty, the deepest interest. She desires to bring to Christ all for whom Christ died—and He died for the sins of the whole world—but she will not, in her desire to extend to the Heathen the blessing of the Gospel, suffer those of her own body to become as Heathen, with the awful responsibilities of a Christian upon them. This would be indeed to "take the children's bread and to cast it to the dogs." And St. Paul himself, though the Apostle of the Gentiles, has not failed to teach us that our first duty is to "provide for those of our own household;" and when their faith is increased, to preach also beyond them to their heathen neighbours. We may not neglect either those within, or those without the Church. But those within have the strongest claim upon us. Indeed, how can we hope to bring others to the obedience of the faith



while those who already possess the faith, and who perhaps are living among them, have yet to learn and practise the first duties of their religion! And of this we may be certain, that if, for Christ's sake, we consider and treat as brethren those who bear the name of Christ, our hearts, of necessity, will be enlarged abundantly to do good unto all other men, however yet "aliens from the covenant of promise."

We are met together this day to commemorate the re-building of this House of God, and to thank Him for His blessing on His work in this place. For every work which is for God's glory and the good of His people, is from above; it is His gift, the fruit of His making "to will and to do;" and it is He who "giveth the increase." There may be "differences of administration" in different parts of His Church, and "diversities of operations," but "it is the same Lord who worketh all in all;" and as there is no gift of His, no manifestation of His Spirit's power, but is vouchsafed for the general profit of all, so, if any member be honoured, and be enabled to do a work for God, as has been done in this place, it is for our sake, wherever our lot may be cast in the Church, however distant we may be from the actual sphere of operation, and as such we must receive it, and thank God for it, that so the "abundant grace" bestowed upon some, and

administered by them, "with a ready mind," for the good of many, may, "through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God." And it is for this purpose that we have not forsaken the assembling of ourselves together, but have come here this day, as brethren in Christ, to testify alike to the reality of our fellowship one with another, and with one heart and one voice to thank God for His unspeakable gift.

But our thankfulness cannot be expressed fully in words; for the more deeply we feel how much we owe to God, the more we are bound to prove our gratitude, by "provoking one another to love and good works." And we shall be glad to show that we "love, not in word only, but in deed and in truth," by doing what we can to supply the spiritual wants of our brethren, remembering that "if any brother have need," (and what need so great as that of the want of the means of grace and the knowledge of the truth?) "and we shut our bowels of compassion from him," we are not only destitute of love to him, but also of the love of God. And it is by mutual exertion in behalf of one another, by almsgiving, by exhortation, and by prayer and intercession, that we realize and maintain our fellowship with each other. If we act towards one another as Christian brethren, if we communicate with one another as brethren, we shall soon learn to love heartily as brethren; and

by prayer especially do we “comfort ourselves together, and edify one another.” It is not only the most effectual way of expressing our love, but it is in itself the bond and instrument of spiritual union; for it is the means whereby we hold communion with God, and, through Him, the closest communion with each other. Hence it is said of the highest act of Christian worship, when we have access to God through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Communion of His Body and Blood, that “we, being many, are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread.” It is because we are made one with Christ that we are also in a mysterious manner made one with each other. And this is true in its measure of every act of prayer, whether private or public, especially whenever, in obedience to the teaching of Christ, we are really brethren in prayer, that is, not thinking of ourselves alone, but considering one another.

We may be separated from each other, it may not be possible for us to meet together before the same altar, but as surely as Christ is present with us when we pray, and especially in the Holy Communion of His Body and Blood, so surely does His presence with us bring together all that are in Him, and give life and permanence to their communion with each other. We meet Christ in prayer, we meet Him in the services of His Church, we meet Him at His table, we meet Him

in acts of kindness one toward another, and though oceans may roll between us, and we see not one another's faces in the flesh, we are then and there present with each other in spirit and love, and so are permitted to enjoy an earnest and a foretaste of that more perfect union when God shall have "gathered together in one all the children of God who are scattered abroad," and we meet to part no more in His presence in Heaven.

“Who loves the Lord aright,  
 No soul of man can worthless find ;  
 All will be precious in His sight,  
 Since Christ on all hath shined ;  
 But chiefly Christian souls ; for they,  
 Though worn and soiled with sinful clay.  
 Are yet, to eyes that see them true,  
 All glistening with baptismal dew.  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 No distance breaks the tie of blood ;  
 Brothers are brothers evermore ;  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 Their mutual share in Jesus' blood  
 An everlasting bond imparts  
 Of holiest brotherhood.  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 Then draw we nearer day by day,  
 Each to his brethren, all to God ;  
 Let the world take us as she may,  
 We must not change our road.”

*Christian Year, 2nd Sunday after Trinity.*













