

**THE INFLUENCE OF BIBLE
SOCIETIES ON
THE TEMPORAL
NECESSITIES OF THE POOR**

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The Influence of Bible Societies on the Temporal Necessities of the Poor by Thomas Chalmers

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THOMAS CHALMERS

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OF
BIBLE SOCIETIES,
ON THE
TEMPORAL NECESSITIES
OF
THE POOR.

BY THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.
ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF GLASGOW.

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ARGUMENT.

1. *The Objection stated.*—2. *The Radical Answer to it.*—3. *But the Objection is not true in point of fact.*—4. *A former act of charity does not exempt from the obligation of a new act, if it can be afforded.*—5. *Estimate of the encroachment made by the Bible Society upon the funds of the country.*—6. *A Subscriber to the Bible Society does not give less to the Poor on that account.*—7. *Evidence for the truth of this assertion.*—8. *And explanation of its principle.* (1.) *The ability for other acts of charity nearly as entire as before.*—9. (2.) *And the disposition greater.*—10. *Poverty is better kept under by a preventive, than by a positive treatment.*—11. *Exemplified in Scotland.*—12. *The Bible Society has a strong preventive operation.*—13. *And therefore promotes the secular interests of the Poor.*—14. *The argument carried down to the case of Penny Societies.*—15. *Difficulty in the exposition of the argument.*—16. *The effects of a charitable endowment in a Parish pernicious to the Poor.*—17. *By inducing a dependence upon it.*—18. *And stripping them of their industrious habits.*—19. *The effects of a Bible Association are in an opposite direction to those of a charitable endowment.*—20. *And it stands completely free of all the objections to which a tax is liable.*—21. *A Bible Association gives dignity to the Poor.*—22. *And a delicate reluctance to pauperism.*—23. *The shame of pauperism is the best defence against*

it.—24. How a Bible Association augments this feeling.—25. By dignifying the Poor.—26. And adding to the Influence of Bible Principles.—27. Exemplified in the humblest situation.—28. The progress of these Associations in the country.—29. Compared with other Associations for the relief of temporal necessities.—30. The more salutary influence of Bible Associations.—31. And how they counteract the pernicious influence of other charities.—32. It is best to confide the secular relief of the Poor to individual benevolence.—33. And a Bible Association both augments and enlightens this principle.

ON THE
INFLUENCE
OF
BIBLE SOCIETIES, &c.

1. **WITHOUT** entering into the positive claims of the Bible Society upon the generosity of the public, I shall endeavour to do away an objection which meets us at the very outset of every attempt to raise a subscription, or to found an institution in its favour. The secular necessities of the poor are brought into competition with it, and every shilling given to the Bible Society is represented as an encroachment upon that fund which was before allocated to the relief of poverty.

2. Admitting the fact stated in the objection to be true, we have an answer in readiness for it. If the Bible Society accomplish its professed object, which is, to make those who were before ignorant of the Bible better acquainted with it, then the advantage given more than atones for the loss sus-

tained. We stand upon the high ground, that eternity is longer than time, and the unfading enjoyments of the one a boon more valuable than the perishable enjoyments of the other. Money is sometimes expended, for the idle purpose of amusing the poor by the gratuitous exhibition of a spectacle or show. It is a far wiser distribution of the money, when it is transferred from this object to the higher and more useful objects of feeding those among them who are hungry, clothing those among them who are naked, and paying for medicine, or attendance, to those among them, who are sick. We make bold to say, that if money for the purpose could be got from no other quarter, it would be a wiser distribution still to withdraw it from the objects last mentioned, to the supreme object of paying for the knowledge of religion to those among them who are ignorant; and, at the hazard of being execrated by many, we do not hesitate to affirm, that it is better for the poor to be worse fed and worse clothed, than that they should be left ignorant of those Scriptures, which are able to make them wise unto salvation through the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

3. But the statement contained in the objection is not true. It seems to go upon the supposition, that the fund for relieving the temporal wants of the poor is the only fund which exists in the country; and that when any new object of benevolence

is started, there is no other fund to which we can repair for the requisite expenses. But there are other funds in the country. There is a prodigious fund for the maintenance of Government, nor do we wish that fund to be encroached upon by a single farthing. There is a fund, out of which the people of the land are provided in the necessaries of life; and before we incur the odium of trenching upon necessaries, let us first inquire, if there be no other fund in existence. Go then to all who are elevated above the class of mere labourers, and you will find in their possession a fund, out of which they are provided with what are commonly called the superfluities of life. We do not dispute their right to these superfluities, nor do we deny the quantity of pleasure which lies in the enjoyment of them. We only state the existence of such a fund, and that by a trifling act of self-denial, on the part of those who possess it, we could obtain all that we are pleading for. It is a little hard that the competition should be struck betwixt the fund of the Bible Society and the fund for relieving the temporal wants of the poor, while the far larger and more transferable fund for superfluities is left out of consideration entirely, and suffered to remain an untouched and unimpaired quantity. In this way, the odium of hostility to the poor is fastened upon those who are labouring for their most substantial interests, while a set of men who ne-