Opinion on Sutton's Charity (1618?)

Francis Bacon

Transcript

British Library, Additional MS 22591, ff. 265v–267r

265v

A discourse to king James touching Sucto[n]s hospitall

Maye it please your Ma[jes]ty

I finde A possitiue precept of the Old Lawe/ That there shal bee noe Sacrifice w[i]th out Salt, The Morall whereof besides [th]e Ceremonye, maye be, that God is not pleased w[i]th the Bodye of A good intention, except it be seasoned w[i]th that Spirrituall wisedome and Iudgment, as it be not easilye Subiect to be corrupted and perverted, For Salt in the Scripture is A Figure bothe of Wisdome and learning. This Cometh into my Mynde vpo[n] this Act of Mr Sutton, w[hi]ch seemeth to mee as A Sacrifice w[i]th out salt, being the Matterialls of A good intencion, but not powdered w[i]th anye suche Ordinances and Sustituc[i]ons as maye p[re]serue the same from turning Corrupt, or at least fro[m] becoming vnsaverye and of little vse, For though the Choice of the Feoffees be of the best, yet neither can they allwayes liue, and the verye Nature of the worke it selfe, in the Vast & vnfitt p[ro]porc[i]ons thereof, being apt to provoce an Imploym[en]t It is noe diligence of theirs (except there be A digression fro[m] that Modell) that can excuse it from runinge some waye, That guifts of like condic[i]on haue heretofore donne, For to designe the Charterhouse, A building fitt for Princes habitac[i]on for an hospitall, is all one, as if one should giue in Almes A Riche imbrodered cloake to A Bagger, And certainlye A man maye see (*tanquam quæ oculis cernunter*) that if such an Edifice w[i]th Sixe thousand poundes revenue; be erected into one Hospital, it will in A small tyme degenerate and made A p[re]ferrm[en]t of some greate p[er]son to be m[aste]r, and he to take all the sweete, and the Poore to be stinted, and take but the Cru[m]mes as it cometh to passe in divers Hospitalls of this Realme, w[hi]ch haue but the names of Hospitalls, and are but wealthy Benefices in respecte of the Maist[e]rshipp, but the poore w[hi]ch is the *Propter quid*, little releeved. And the like hath bine [th]e Fortune of much of the Almes of the Roman Religion in their great Foundacons, w[hi]ch being begunn in Vaine glorye and ostentac[i]on, haue had theire Iudgement vpon them to end in Corrupc[i]on and abuse This Meditac[i]on hath made mee p[re]sume, to writt theis few Lynes to yo[u]r Ma[jes]tye, being noe better then good wishes, w[hi]ch yo[u]r ma[jes]tyes great wisedome, maye make something or Nothing of

Wherein I desire to be thus vnderstood. That if the Fou[n]dac[i]on (such as it is) be p[er]fecte and good in Lawe, then I am to well acqainted w[i]th yo[u]r Ma[jes]tys disposicion to advise any Course of power or p[ro]fit, [tha]t is not grou[n]ded vpo[n] A right, Naye further, if the defects be such as A Courte of Equitie maye remedye & cure, then I wish that as St Peters shawdowe did cure deseases, Soe the very shadowe of A good Intentio[n] maye cure defects of that nature

But if there be A right, and Birthright planted in the heire and not remediable by the Courte of Equitie, And that right be submitted to yo[u]r ma[jes]tye, whereby it is both in yo[u]r Power, & grace what to doe, Then I doe wishe that the ende and Chaos of a good deede, were directed rather to solide merritt and durable Charitie, then to A Blaze of Glorye, that

will but crackle a litle in talke, and quickelye extinguish, And this maye be done observinge the Species of Mr Suttons intent, though varyinge in diuidue For it appeares that he had A Notion A triple good An Hospitall and A schoole and maintayning of A preacher w[hi]ch Individualls resorte to these three generall heads, releefe of Poore, Advancem[en]t of Learning, and p[ro]pogation of Religio[n] Nowe then if I shall sett forthe before yo[u]r ma[jes]tye in every of these three kindes, w[ha]t it is most wanting in the kingdome, and what is like to bee most fruitfull & effectuall vse of suche A

Benefice

266r

Benefice, and least like to be perverted

That (I thinke) should be noe ill scope of my Labo[u]r, how meanly soever p[er]formed For out of varietie repr[e]sented elecc[i]on maye bee best grounded. Concerning the releefe of the Poore I hold some number of Hospitalls w[i]th Competent Endowem[en]tes will doe farre more good then one Hospitall of an exhorbitant greatnes, For thoughe [th]e one Course wilbe more seene, yet the other wilbe more felt for if yo[u]r ma[jes]tye erect manye, besydes observing the ordinarye *Maxime Bonum quo Comunius eo melius*; Choise maye be made of tho ~~{*gap: illegible*}~~ Townes and places where there is most neede, and soe [th]e remedye maye be distributed, as the desease is dispersed, Againe gre[a]tnes of releefe accumelate in one place doth rather invite A swarme and surcharge of poore, then releeve those [tha]t are naturally bredd in that place, like to ill tempered Medicines [tha]t draw more humor to the p[ar]te, then they evacuate from it, But cheifely I relye vpon the Reason, that I touched in the begin[n]ing That in these great Hospitalls, the Revenue will drawe [th]e vse & not the vse [th]e Reuen^{u}es And soe though the masse of their wealth they will swiftly tu[m]ble downe to A misimploym[en]t And if the man saye, that in the twoe Hospitalls of London, there is A pr[e]sident of greatnes, co[n]cerning w[i]th good imploym[en]t, let him consider that those Hospitalls haue a manual governo[r]s That they are vnder the Superior care, and pollicye of ~~a~~ such A state, as the Cittie of London, and cheiffelye [tha]t [the]ir reueneus consist, not vpon certentyes, but casualties, and free guiftes, w[hi]ch quickly would be w[i]thheld, if they appeared once to be perverted, Soe [tha]t it keepeth them in A continuall good behauiour, and awe to ymploye them right, none of w[hi]ch points doe match w[i]th [th]e p[re]sent Case

The next consierac[i]on maye be, whether this intended Hospitall as it hath A more ample Endowem[en]t then oth[e]r Hospitalls should not likewise worke vpo[n] A better Subiect then other poore ones, And [tha]t it should be converted to the releefe of mamed Soldiers, decayed Marchants, and householders Aged, and destutate Churchman, and the like, whose condit[i]on, being of A better sorte, then loose people & beggars, deserveth both A more liberall Stipend and allowance & some p[ro]per place of releefe, not intermingled or coupled w[i]th the basest sorte of Poore, w[hi]ch proiect thoughe spacious, yet in my Iudgment, will not au[n]swere the disignem[en]t in the Event in thos our tymes For certainlye few men in any vocacion, w[hi]ch have bine some body and beare A mynde some w[ha]t according to the Conscience & rem[m]ebra[n]ce of that they haue bene will ever descend to that Condic[i]on, as to p[ro]fesse to liue vpon Almes, and to become a Corporac[i]on of declared Beggars, but rather will chuse to liue obscurelye, and as it were to hide them selves w[i]th some private Freinds, Soe that the End will bee of suche an Instituc[i]on, that it will make the place a receptacle of the worst, idlest and most dissolute p[er]sons of everye p[ro]fession,

and become A Cell of Loyterers, and Crost serving men & dru[n]kerds w[i]th scandall rather then Fruite to Com[m]o[n] wealthe, And of this kind I can finde but one Example w[i]th vs, w[hi]ch is the Almes knights of Windsore, w[hi]ch p[ar]ticuler would giue small encouragem[en]t to follow that pe[e]sident

Therefore the best effecte of Hospitalls, is to make [th]e Kingdome of it were possible, Capable of that Lawe, That there be no Begg[e]rs in Israell For it is that kinde of people, that is A burthen, an Eye sore, a Scandall and A seed of perrill, and tumult in A State But cheiflye it were to be wished, that such A Benefice are towards the Releefe, were soe bestowed, as not onlye mere and naked poore should be sustained but allsoe that the honest person w[hi]ch hath heard meanes to liue, vpon whom the poore are nowe charged, should be in some Sorte Eased; For that were A worke generallie acceptable to the kingdome, if the publique hand of Almes might spare idle Landes of Taxe. And therefore of all other ymploym[en]tes of this kind I commend most houses of releefe and Correction w[hi]ch are mixte Hospitalls, where the impotent person is releeved/ & [th]e sturdy Beggar buckled to worke/ and the vnable p[er]son allsoe nott

mainetayned

266v

mainetayned to be idle, w[hi]ch is ever ioyned w[i]th dronkenesse & impuritie, but is sorted w[i]th such worke as he cann manage and p[er]forme And where the vse are not distinguished, as in oth[e]r Hospitalls where of some are for aged and impotentes, some for Children, and some for Correction of Vagabonds, but are generall & promiscuous, that maye take of Poore of everye sorte fro[m][th]e Cou[n]try breeds them, And thus the Poore themselves shall finde [th]e p[ro]uision and other good people the Sweetnes of [th]e abatem[en]t of the Taxe

And nowe if it be obiected, that houses of Correction in all places have not done the good expected (as it cannot be denyed, but in most places they haue done muche good) It must be reme[m]bred that there is greate difference between that w[hi]ch is donne by the distracted goverm[en]t of Iustices of Peace/ and that w[hi]ch maye be done by A setled ordinance subiect raguler visitec[i]on as this may be And besydes the want hath bene Comonlye in houses of correctio[n] of A Competent and certain meanes for the materialls of the labour, w[hi]ch in this Case maye be likewise supplyed/

Concerning the Advance[m]ent of learning. I doe subscribe to the opynion of one of the wisest and gravest men of our kingdome, That for Grammer Schooles, there are allreadye to many And therefore noe p[ro]vidence to add where there is excesse, For the Number of Schooles, w[i]thin yo[u]r highnes Realme doth cause A want, and Doth cause likewise an overthflowe, both of the[m] inconvenient, and one of them dau[n]gerous, For by meanes thereof they finde want in the Cou[n]trye and Townes, both of Servants for husbandrye, and apprentices, and for trade, and one the other syde there being more schollers breed then the State can p[re]ferre & imploye, And the Actiue parte of that liffe not bearing a p[ro]porc[i]on to the pr[e]paratiue, it must needs fall, that manye p[er]sons will bee breed vnfitt for other vocations, and vnprofitable for that in w[hi]ch they are brought vpp, w[hi]ch fills the Realme full of indigent, idle and wanton persons, w[hi]ch are but *materia cerum nouarum*.

Therefore in this poynt I wish Mr Suttons intention were exhibited A degree, that, that w[hi]ch he ment for teachers of Children, yo[u]r ma[jes]tye would make for teachers of men,

wherein it hathe bine my au[n]tient opinion and observation, that in [th]e Vniversities of this Realme, w[hi]ch I take to be both of the best polliced, and of the best endowed vniversitye of Europe, there is nothing more wanting towards the florishing state of learning, then the honorable and plentifull Sallaryes of readers in Arts & p[ro]fessions/ In w[hi]ch pointe as yo[u]r Ma[jes]t[ies] bountye all readye hath made a begin[n]ing, soe this occasion is offered of God to make A p[ro]ceedinge, Surelye Readers in the Chaire, are as Parents in Sciences, and deserve to enioye A Condic[i]on not inferior to the Children [tha]t imbrace the practicall parte, els one man will sit noe longer in [th]e chayre then till he can walke to A better p[re]ferrm[en]t, and it will come to passe as Virgile said, *vt patru[m] invalidi referant irenia nati* For if the principall readers though the meanes of their entertaynem[en]t, be but men of superficiall learning, and that they shall take their Place, but in passage, it will make the Masse of Sciences want the Cheiffe and sollide diminsion w[hi]ch is depth, and to become but pettye and Compendious habitts of practise, Therefore I could wishe that in both the Vniu[er]sityes the Lectarers, aswell of the three p[ro]ffessions, divinitie, Lawe, and Phisicke as of the three heades of Science Philosoplye, Arts of Speeche, and the Mathematiques were raised in theire Penc[i]ons vnto 100 £ p[er] anu[m] A Peece; w[hi]ch though it be not neere soe greate as they are in some other places, where the greatnes doth whistle for the ablest men out of forraine p[ar]ts to supplye the Chayre, yet it maye be a porc[i]on to content A worthie and able man, if he be likewise co[n]te[m]platiue in Nature, as those spirritts are that are fittest for Lectures

Thus maye learning in yo[u]r kingdome be advanced to A further hight, Learning I saye w[hi]ch vnder yo[u]r ma[jes]ty the most learned of kings, maye claime some degree ~~{*gap: illegible*}~~ of Elevac[i]on

Con

267r

Concerning p[ro]pogac[i]on of Religion I shall in fewe wordes sett before yo[u]r Ma[jes]ty three p[ro]positions, none of them devises of myne owne / otherwise then as I ever approved them / Twoe of w[hi]ch haue bene in agitac[i]on of speech / and the third Acted

The First A Colledg of Controversies whereby we shall not still p[ro]ceed single / but shall as it were double our fyles, w[hi]ch certainelye wilbe found in the Encou[n]ter

The Second A receipt (for I like not the word Seminarye, in respect of the vaine vowes and implicit obedience and other thinges tending to the p[er]turbac[i]on of States, and involved in that forme) of Converts to the reformed religion, either of youthe or otherwise, For I doubt but there in Spaine Italye, and in other Cou[n]tryes of the Papists, manye whose hearts are touched w[i]th A sence of those Corruptions and an acknowledgem[en]t of a bett[e]r waye, w[hi]ch grace is manye Tymes smothered and Choaked through A worldlye considerac[i]on of necessitie / men not knowing where to have Favo[u]r or refuge. This I hold A worke of great pyetie and A worke of greate Consequence, that wee allsoe maye be wise in our generac[i]on / and that the watchfull, and silent night maye be vsed aswell for sowing good seed as of Tares

The Third is, the Imitac[i]on of A Memorable & religious Acte of Queene Elizabeth / whoe finding A Part in La[n]casheire to be extreamlye Backward in Religion & the Benefices swallowed vpp in Impropriac[i]ons did by decree in [th]e dutchey erect Foure Stypends of 100 £ p[er] ann[um] A peece / for Preachers well chose to helpe the hartyest w[hi]ch haue

done A greate deale of good in the p[ar]ts where they haue laboured / Neither doe there w[an]t other Corners in the Realme [tha]t would require for A Tyme the like extraordynarie helpes

Thus haue I deliverd breifflye vnto yo[u]r Ma[jes]ty my opynio[n] touching the imploym[en]t of this Charitye, whoe by that Masse of wealthe, that was in the owner litle better then A stacke or heape of Mucke / maye be spread over the kingdome to manye fruitfull purposes / yo[u]r Ma[jes]tye planting and wateringe and God givinge the Encrease /

Finis

Other manuscript witnesses

- British Library, Harley MS 830, ff. 53r–60v
- Beinecke Library, Osborn b50, ff. 17r–30v
- UCL, Ogden MS 7/45, ff. 3r–5r

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