

## SERMON XI.

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AFTER WHAT MANNER MUST WE GIVE ALMS, THAT THEY MAY BE  
ACCEPTABLE AND PLEASING UNTO GOD?

*Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.—1 Timothy vi. 17—19.*

THE sum of these words is, a direction for rich men how to make the best use of their riches. The ground or occasion of this direction is, to meet with an objection, which might be made against the discommodities and dangers of riches, noted before in verses 9, 10: "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." From hence some might infer, as the disciples did from the inseparable and inviolable bond of marriage, noted by our Saviour: "If," say they, "the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry." (Matt xix. 10.) So might some say, "If they that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare," &c., "then it is not good to be rich;" yea, such as are rich may say, "Let us give away, or cast away all that we have, rather than retain such vipers as riches seem to be."

To prevent such inconsequent inferences, the apostle giveth this direction, whereby he showeth that riches may be well used, and, being well used, be a means of helping on our eternal salvation. Learn hence not to condemn things good in themselves, because of the abuse of them. The Lord, in regard of the ordinary abuse of riches, styleth them "mammon of unrighteousness;" (Luke xvi. 9;) and yet adviseth not thereupon to cast them away, but to "make to ourselves friends thereof:" that is, so to use them as the good works done by them may, as friends before the Judge, give evidence of the truth of our faith and love, and show that we are of the sheep of Christ, for whom eternal life is purchased.

Having thus showed the occasion and dependence of these words upon the former, come we now to the logical resolution of them; where we may observe two parts:—

1. A *prohibition*.

2. An *injunction*.

A prohibition of hurtful vices. 'An injunction of needful virtues.

The vices are two:—(1.) *High-mindedness*. (2.) *Vain-confidence*. “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches.”

The virtues are likewise two:—(1.) *Confidence or faith in God*: “But trust in God,” which is urged by an argument taken from God’s bounty, in these words, “Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.” (2.) *Charity towards men*, expressed in several phrases; namely, “by doing good,” and by being “rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;” which duties are enforced by an argument taken from the benefit of performing them, which is, in brief, assurance of eternal life, implied in these words: “Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”

I shall briefly speak something to the several branches of the text, as they lie in order, and then come to the question or case of conscience given unto me to handle.

*Charge them that are rich in this world*—The expression of our apostle is here observable, in that he saith not, *Λεγε*, “Speak to them,” not, *Αγγελλε*, “Declare to them,” but, *Παραγγελλε*, “Charge, command them.” Well did the apostle know how forward, on the one side, rich men are to be high-minded, and to trust in their riches; and, on the other side, how backward they are to trust in God, and to show charity to the poor; and thereupon saw it requisite that a minister should take courage to himself, and not think it enough closely to intimate to rich men what vices they are addicted to, or what virtues they are bound unto; but, remembering the place wherein they stand, which is God’s, in the name of his most excellent Majesty, to require, charge, and command them to forbear the one, and endeavour after the other.

In the next place follow the parties to whom this charge is to be given, namely, to *the rich in this world*: “Charge them,” saith the apostle, “that are rich in this world,” that is, in this present world; noting our riches to be only for this world. For true is that proverb of the wise man, “Riches are not for ever;” (Prov. xxvii. 24;) they cannot be carried out of this world. “As naked we came into this world, so naked shall we go out of it.” (Job i. 21.) And therefore it must needs be a point of great wisdom, by that which is but for this present world, to store up a sure foundation for the time to come.

In the next place follow the vices here forbidden: the first is *high-mindedness*; whereunto rich men are very prone, in that their wealth is as wind; and though wind be but a vapour, yet it puffeth up exceedingly; as we see in a bladder blown up with wind. In like manner, riches, though they be but *mere vanity*, as the wise man expresseth it, (Eccles. i. 2,) yet are they apt to puff up men extremely, even to think of themselves above what is meet. Whereas, if rich men would but well weigh, that they came from, and must return to, the same mould that others do; “for dust they are, and to dust they must return;” (Gen. iii. 19;) yea, if they would consider, that they came from the same cursed stock that others do, and are by nature no better than the meanest; especially if they would consider, that outward riches cannot add the least dram of

real worth to the owners of them; but though they may be more honourable parts or members in the civil body of the state, yet in the mystical body of Christ they may be less honourable than the poor;—I say, if rich men did but seriously consider these things, they would not be so high-minded as they are.

The other vice here forbidden unto rich men, is, *vain-confidence*, or trusting in their riches; and this is very fitly joined to the former; for where our pride is, there will be our confidence. That rich men are apt to put too much trust and confidence in their riches, doth appear by the titles which they commonly give unto them, calling them “their goods,” as if they were the only good things; and “their substance,” as if all things else were shadows; and by the increase of them they say they are “made for ever,” and by the loss of them they say they are “utterly undone.” What do these expressions imply, but a trust and confidence in their riches? Whereupon saith the wise man, “The rich man’s wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit.” (Prov. xviii. 11.) It makes him think himself so safe and secure, that, like the judge mentioned by our Saviour, “he feareth not God, nor regardeth man.” (Luke xviii. 2.)

In the next place follow the virtues enjoined.

The first is *confidence*, or faith in God; which is directly opposed to trust in riches, so as rich men may have wherein to trust, though they trust not in riches. God is the God of the rich, as well as of the poor; and the one as well as the other are to put their whole trust in him.

And if we consider the property here given to God, namely, *living*, (“But trust in the LIVING GOD,”) we shall see good reason to trust in God rather than in riches. For our wealth may vanish away; but He ever liveth. Our wealth may prove our bane; but He is both the Giver and Preserver of life. Our trusting in God is here pressed by an argument taken from God’s bounty to us in these words: “Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy:” so that the Lord is not only a *living* but also a *giving* God, of whose gift you have not only your life, but also your riches; yea, all that you have is the gift of God, who giveth you not only all needful things, but also richly, and, as St. James saith, “liberally.” (James i. 5.) For God in his gifts showeth himself to be a God, and that two ways: 1. In the freeness, 2. In the greatness, of them. He “loadeth us with benefits,” saith the Psalmist. (Psalm lxxviii. 19.) This rich bounty of God is a further motive to draw you to trust in him.

Yea, the apostle addeth, that the Lord “giveth us all things richly to enjoy;” that is, not only for the present to spend, as being absolutely necessary; but also to lay up and reserve, so as it is not unlawful to lay up for after-times. The apostle presseth it on parents as a bounden duty, “to lay up for their children.” (2 Cor. xii. 14.)

Only let this lawful liberty be limited with these and such-like bounds:—

1. That we lay up nothing but what is justly gotten. To lay up riches of unrighteousness, is to kindle a fire that may destroy both our temporal and our spiritual estate.

2. That we be not so covetous of hoarding up, as to deny ourselves

what is needful for our use and comfort, or to deny the poor what is needful and necessary for them ; but that we willingly give out, as what is meet for ourselves, so what is necessary to the poor.

3. That, in our treasuring up, we aim not merely, wholly, and only at ourselves, but withal have an eye as to the charge which in particular God hath committed to us, so also to the church, commonwealth, and poor for the time to come.

4. That we exceed not measure in our treasure, no, though we aim at the fore-mentioned good ends.

So much for the clearing the first duty the apostle would have pressed upon rich men especially, which is to "trust in God."

The second is *charity towards men*, expressed in several phrases ; as, first, by "doing good : " "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they do good." So that true charity consisteth not only in compassionate affections, and kind speeches, but in good deeds, as *αγαθοεργειν*, the word in the original, implieth.

You rich men ought "to be rich in good works," as the apostle addeth. For God expecteth fruit answerable to the seed which he soweth. He giveth you plenty of seed ; therefore you must be plentiful in this kind of fruit.

The next branches,—“Ready to distribute, willing to communicate,”—set forth the manner of our charity ; the former implying a *wise distribution of our alms* ; for “to distribute” is not hand-over-head, without consideration, to give, but according to the need of them to whom we give : the latter implying a *willingness therein*. As *by distributing*, good is done to others ; so *by willingness* therein, much comfort is brought unto our own souls, and grace to the work ; and God doth best accept such, for “he loveth a cheerful,” willing, “giver.” (2 Cor. ix. 7.)

In the next place follow the reasons, to enforce the fore-named duties, taken from the benefit of performing them ; which is, in brief, *assurance of eternal life*, implied in these words : “Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.” The apostle here, for their better encouragement to lay out a portion of their estate on good works, telleth them that they are so far from losing what they so lay out, as in truth “they lay up thereby in store for themselves.”

Yea, they lay up “a good foundation ; ” that is, such a treasure as is like a foundation in the ground, that cannot be shaken nor overthrown. This treasure the apostle thus expresseth, in opposition to the fore-mentioned uncertainty of riches : so, as by a cheerful distribution of this world’s wealth, they do indeed but exchange uncertainties for certainties, and so no fear of losing by such bargains. Yea, they thereby obtain “eternal life.”

QUESTION. “Are then good works the cause of eternal life ? ”

ANSWER. Surely, no ; only they are the means and way of attaining thereto ; and in this sense is this phrase here used : “That they may lay hold on eternal life.”

Having thus showed you the *occasion* of the words, the *logical resolution* of them, their *sense and meaning*, I should now, according to my

accustomed method, come to such points of doctrine which the words do naturally afford unto us. But I must wave them, and fall upon that question or case of conscience which was given me to handle; namely,

**QUESTION.** *How, or after what manner, must we give alms, that they may be acceptable and pleasing unto God?*

In the resolving whereof, I shall endeavour to answer most of the cases of conscience about alms-giving.

**ANSWER 1.** It must be *with justice*, giving only of our own, whereunto we have a just right and title.—So much our Saviour implieth in that precept of his, where he saith, “Give alms of such things as you have;” (Luke xi. 41;) whereby is not meant, such things as a man hath by him, (for one may have another man’s things by him,) but such things as are his own, whereunto he hath a just title and undoubted right, whereof he is the lawful proprietor, hath the power of disposing those things; and those only he may lawfully and justly give away.

This caveat is very necessary for many reasons.

1. *Because otherwise we shall sever mercy from justice, which should always go hand in hand.*—God hath put them together, (Prov. xxi. 21; Dan. iv. 27,) and we must not put them asunder. Indeed, they are two links of one and the same chain, of which other virtues and graces are also other links. So many virtues, so many links. Now, if one link of a chain fall off, the whole chain is broken, and down falls that which is drawn or held up by it: so we that are held up out of the pit of destruction by the chains of graces, are in danger to fall into it, if one grace be violated, and severed from the rest.

2. *By giving that which is not our own, the excellency and glory of charity is lost.*—Of such charity it may be said, *Ichabod*; (1 Sam. iv. 21;) “Where is the glory?” The glory of charity consists in this,—that we are willing to part with our own, and therein to damnify ourselves, for the relief and succour of others.

3. *By giving that which is not our own, we do wrong, and thereby make ourselves liable to restitution.*—So as charity in such a case is a plain injury. It is a case wherein recompence of revenge may more be feared than recompence of reward expected.

**QUESTION.** “Who may be said to give that which is not their own?”

**ANSWER 1.** *They who filch, steal, or rob for this very end.*—As parents for children, or children for parents, or one friend for another. It is a sin for one to steal to satisfy his own hunger; (Prov. vi. 31;) much more is it sin to steal for another. Certainly it is a great wickedness to do injustice, that we may do acts of charity.

2. *Such as having raised up an estate, or got something by indirect and unjust means, as by lying, swearing, false weights, deceitful measures, and the like, think to make up all by giving part to the poor.*—For, as the Civilians say well: “The good use doth not justify the unjust getting of their goods.”\* And can any imagine that God will be pleased with those men’s charity who give relief out of that which they have wrongfully gotten? Restitution should rather be made to such as have been wronged. And if neither the parties wronged, nor their heirs, can be

\* *Bonus usus non justificat injustè quæsitâ.*

found, then what hath been wrongfully got ought to be given to the poor, as their heirs. An example whereof we have in *Zaccheus*, who, having wronged many by oppression, after his conversion offereth four-fold restitution unto all whom he had wronged; and because many could not be found, to whom he should make it, he offereth to bestow half of his goods to the relief of the poor. (Luke xix. 8.)

3. *Such as being under authority, and having no propriety\* in the things which they give, do, notwithstanding, give directly against, or simply without, the consent of those who have the true propriety, do not give of their own.*—Servants, children, and others. Indeed, servants and children may lawfully give out of that which is their own; but not out of that which is their masters' or parents', without their allowance.

4. *Such as being joined in partnership with another, and give alms out of the common stock without the consent of their partners, do not give that which is their own.*

5. *Such as are in extreme debt, and owe more than they are worth.*—We showed, that mercy and justice must go together; yea, justice must go before mercy, and be satisfied before mercy be showed. They who owe more than they are worth have nothing at all to give for alms; such join arrogancy to injustice, to make show of a great estate, and yet have none.

I shall close this with a word of advice to such as have a merciful and charitable disposition, above their outward condition and ability: that they use the best diligence they can, by all lawful and warrantable means, to get something to bestow upon charitable uses. Let poor labouring men take so much the more pains, that they may have somewhat to give; let servants spare out of their wages; let such as have no propriety in any thing, but are wholly maintained by them under whom they live, (as children, apprentices, and others,) do what they can to obtain something of their parents, or other governors, even for this very end, that they may have something to give. Let such as are in debt first pay their debts, and then give alms. Let such as have any way defrauded others first make restitution, and then relieve them that are in need. (Eph. iv. 28.) Finally, let such as live at the extent of their estate, and much more, such as live beyond their means, well weigh wherein they may cut off some of their expenses to bestow on the poor.

ANSWER II. Alms-giving must be *with freedom and cheerfulness*, and not grudgingly.—The phrase of "giving alms," frequently mentioned in scripture, implieth as much; for, to give, is freely to bestow. In the law this propriety of giving is plainly expressed, and by the contrary thus explained: "Thou shalt surely (freely) give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him." (Deut. xv. 10.) It is also implied under this phrase: "Thou shalt open thine hand wide." (Verse 11.) Alms must not be wrested and wrung out of a man's hand; but he must of himself "open his hand;" that is, freely give. The word "wide" addeth emphasis. And in the gospel we find it commanded by the apostle: "Every man according as he purposeth in his

\* This good old word occurs frequently in this sermon, and, as the reader will perceive, uniformly has the meaning of our modern words, *property*, or *proprietorship*.—EDIT.

heart, so let him give ; not grudgingly, or of necessity : for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. ix. 7.)

Many motives may be produced to induce us hereunto : as,

1. *The pattern of God our heavenly Father, and of his Son Jesus Christ, our Redeemer.*—All the good that the Father doeth, he doeth most freely : "Who hath first given unto him ?" The word which is used to set out that which God giveth, signifieth "a free gift ;" \* (Rom. v. 15, 16 ; ) and he is said to "love us freely," (Hosea xiv. 4,) to "justify us freely," (Rom. iii. 24,) and "freely to give us all things." (Rom. viii. 32.)

This reason of God's love,—“The Lord set his love upon you, because he loved you,” (Deut. vii. 7, 8,) doth clearly demonstrate the freeness of it.

The good also which the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Saviour, doeth for us, he doeth most freely upon his own love, without any desert of ours : in this respect it is said that he hath "loved us, and hath given himself for us." (Eph. v. 2, 25.) The conjunction of these two, "love," and "giving," plainly prove the freeness of the gift. But, further, he expressly saith, concerning the freeness of his gift : "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." (Rev. xxi. 6 ; xxii. 17.)

2. A second motive may be taken *from the nature of charity, which, unless it be free, is not true and sound.*—Thus much the apostle implieth under this phrase : "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." (1 Cor. xiii. 3.) By "charity" he meaneth a free giving of that which is given, merely out of love and pity to him unto whom he giveth.

3. *Free giving makes that which is given to man acceptable to God.*—“For God loveth a cheerful giver.” (2 Cor. ix. 7.) Yea, God hath more respect to this manner of giving, than to the greatness of the gift. “For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.” (2 Cor. viii. 12.)

4. *A free manner of giving makes the gift the more acceptable to him that is made partaker thereof.*—As the gift supplieth his want, so the manner of giving reviveth his spirit. The apostle rejoiceth in the Lord greatly upon that care which the Philippians showed to him in his necessity. (Phil. iv. 10.)

5. *A free and cheerful giving much redoundeth to the glory of God, in that others are stirred up to praise God for such gifts.*—David praised God's glorious name, when he saw his people offer willingly unto the Lord. (1 Chron. xxix. 13, 14.) And this in respect the apostle saith of such benevolence, that it is "abundant by many thanksgivings unto God." (2 Cor. ix. 2, 12.)

ANSWER III. *With simplicity and sincerity.*—According to that of the apostle : "He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity ;" (Rom. xii. 8 ; ) that is, with an honest, plain, and sincere heart, not aiming

\* To χάρισμα. *Id quod gratificando aliquis donat.* "That which any one freely bestows on another for the purpose of gratifying him."—EDIT.

therein at his own praise or applause, but at the glory of God, doing it in obedience to his command. This simplicity in giving, our Saviour hinteth unto us, where he saith: "When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth;" (Matt. vi. 3;) that is, let not the nearest that may be unto thee know what thou givest. The right hand is that hand wherewith we ordinarily give, yet the left hand is often assistant to it. Now, though there should be any so near unto thee, as to be helpful and assistant, or at hand, yet let them not know it; make known thy charity to none.

QUESTION. "May we not give alms if others be by?"

ANSWER. Yea, if need so require; as at public collections, or when in public we see one stand in need. But we may not do it with a mind to have it known; our mind must be free from all such conceit; and we must so do it, as if we were alone. "That alms is not unacceptable which is given and seen of men, but that which is given to be seen of men."\* So that the scope of our Saviour in the fore-mentioned place is, to take us off from all vain-glory in giving of our alms, that as much as in us lieth we should endeavour to hide and conceal our good works from the eye of the world.

ANSWER IV. Our alms must be given *with a compassionate heart, with bowels of affection*.—The Greek word for "alms" is derived from a word that signifies "mercy;"† which intimateth the disposition of the giver, how he should be a merciful man, whose bowels are moved at the misery of another, and thereupon contributes to his need with bowels of compassion.

In giving, we must not only open our hands, but our hearts also, in pity and compassion; we must "draw out our own souls," as the prophet speaketh, as well as our purses, "to the hungry and afflicted," (Isai. lviii. 10,) which is implied under several expressions of charity, used in scripture by the Holy Ghost; as, "He that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he." (Prov. xiv. 21.) And again: "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord." (Prov. xix. 17.) And saith the apostle St. Paul: "Put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies." (Col. iii. 12.) And saith the beloved disciple St. John: "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1 John iii. 17.) It is not sufficient to have an open, liberal hand, unless we have also an open and compassionate heart; for if the sacrifice of our alms-deeds be not mingled with the oil and incense of mercy and compassion, it will not be acceptable unto God, who will have mercy as well as sacrifice. In contributing, therefore, to the relief of the poor, let our inward affection go along with our outward action.‡

As helps hereunto,

1. *Be well informed in the benefit that compassion bringeth*.—And that not only to thy distressed brother, who is succoured, but also to thyself,

\* *Non est ingrata elemosyna quæ fit et videtur, sed quæ fit ut videatur.* † Ελεημοσύνη ἀβ ελεος, misericordia.

‡ *Benevolentia ex benevolentia manare debet. Affectus tuus nomen imponit operi tuo.*—AMBROSIUS *De Officiis*, 30. "Beneficence ought to flow from benevolence. The work in which thou art engaged receives its name and impress from the feeling by which thou art actuated."—EDIT.



to whom in this case a promise of mercy is made: "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy;" (Matt. v. 7;) mercy from other men, and mercy from God himself.

2. *Well weigh the common condition of all.*—How "all things come alike to all," as the wise man speaketh; (Eccles. ix. 2;) so as thou also art subject to the same distress whereunto others are brought; and therefore, as Aquinas saith, "we should have compassion on other men's misery, for the possibility of suffering the like:"\* which argument the apostle useth to the Hebrews; saying: "Remember them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body;" (Heb. xiii. 3;) that is, say some, "as being members of the same body;" but rather, as Beza and others interpret the place, "as being yourselves in the body of flesh and frailty, subject to the like miseries."† For so long as we dwell here in these houses of clay, and carry about us this earthly tabernacle, we are all subject to the like changes and chances; which made old learned Theodoret reach his helping-hand to those outcast Africans: "For when I saw," quoth he, "their pitiful estate, I began to lay to heart the doubtful turnings and inversions of human things, and to fear lest I myself might fall into the like evils."‡

ANSWER V. Our alms must be given *seasonably*.—For, as the wise man speaketh, "To every thing there is a season, and every thing is beautiful only in its time and season;" (Eccles. iii. 1, 11;) and therefore it will be our wisdom so to observe the needs and necessities of other men, that we do not let slip any season or opportunity of doing good. According to the exhortation of the apostle, "As we have opportunity, let us do good." (Gal. vi. 10.) The word in the original, *καιρος*, translated "opportunity," properly signifies a "seasonable time."

QUESTION. "Which are the most seasonable times of doing works of mercy?"

ANSWER. 1. *When accidentally thou meetest with any fit objects of mercy.*—Thou must not then pass them by, with the priest and Levite; but, with the good Samaritan, presently pour the oil and wine of thy charity into the wounds of thy brother, forthwith contributing somewhat to his relief. (Luke x. 30—34.) For, misery being the proper object of mercy, thou shouldest then extend thy mercy unto such as are in want and misery.

2. *When God by his providence hath any way blessed and increased thy stock and store:*—By prospering thy adventure at sea, or thy trading at home, or by some great legacy bequeathed thee by some of thy friends,—that is a seasonable time for thee to give out freely and liberally to the relief of the poor, in testimony of thy thankfulness unto God for his bounty towards thee. I know, it is usual with most men, upon the increase of their stock and store, to "sacrifice to their own nets," to ascribe their wealth to their own wit and policy, and to say in their hearts, their "power and the might of their hand hath gotten them this wealth." But mark what Moses saith in the next verse:

\* *Propter possibilitatem similia patiendi.*—THOMAS AQUINAS, *Sum. Theol.* pars ii. quæst. iii. art. 2. † *Ut qui sitis et ipsi iisdem calamitatibus obnoxii.*—BEZA in loc. ‡ THEODORETUS, Ep. 29.

“Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth.” (Deut. viii. 17, 18.) Seeing, therefore, what thou hast, thou hast received from God, whatsoever the means and instruments were of conveying it unto thee, is it not most just and equal, that in way of thankfulness thou shouldst set apart some portion thereof for the poor and needy?

3. *The Lord's day is another seasonable time of doing works of mercy.*—According to the apostle's rule and direction: “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.” (1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.) Where by “the first day of the week” is meant *the Lord's day*, on which the apostle enjoineeth the Corinthians to “lay up something in store;” implying thereby, that *that* is a very fit season, not only to do such works of mercy which are then offered unto us, but also to prepare for other times.

4. *Days of thanksgiving for some eminent mercy are another seasonable time of doing works of mercy.*—The remembering of the poor at such times is expressly commanded in scripture: “Thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow.” (Deut. xvi. 14.) Here “the stranger, the fatherless, the widow,” are commanded to rejoice on their days of feasting, which presupposeth the rich men's sending portions of their good cheer unto them; which was the practice of the people of God, as appeareth by that command of Nehemiah to the Jews on a day of thanksgiving: “Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared.” (Neh. viii. 10.) And their day of thanksgiving [on account of their deliverance] from Haman's conspiracy is called “a day of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.” (Esther ix. 22.) And what more seasonable time can there be for showing mercy to the poor, than when we are blessing God for his manifold mercies vouchsafed unto us?

5. *Days of fasting and prayer are another seasonable time of doing works of mercy.*—For how can we expect that God should show mercy unto us, in removing those judgments which we feel, or in preventing those which we fear, if we will not show mercy to our poor brethren, who stand in need of our relief? In the day of our fasting, therefore, let us at least give away to the poor so much as we save by our fast. For as St. Austin, in one of his sermons, saith: “Then are our fasts acceptable to God, if they who fast out of necessity, because they want meat, be relieved by us.”\* Let this, therefore, be always observed by us, that the poor have the gain of our fasting, and not our own purses.

ANSWER VI. Our alms must be given *readily and speedily*, without any needless delay.—According to the counsel of the wise man: “Withhold not good from them to whom it is due;” that is, withhold not any act of charity from those who stand in need of thy help. “Say not

\* *Tum grata sunt Deo nostra jejunia, si illi qui necessitate jejulant reficiantur a nobis.*  
—AUGUSTINI Sermones De Temporalibus, 64.

unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give thee, when thou hast it by thee." (Prov. iii. 27, 28.) "He that so delayeth his helping hand, is next door to him that denieth."\* "And, therefore, as any occasion offers itself unto us, let us speedily embrace the same, as knowing that a speedy giver is a double benefactor; and the swifter that a benefit cometh, the sweeter it tasteth. And contrariwise a benefit loseth its grace that sticketh to his fingers who is about to bestow it."† What, then, shall we think of *their* charity *who* put off all to their death-beds, never giving any thing considerable to the poor till they can keep it no longer? These, though by *their last Will and Testament* they give somewhat to the poor, yet questionless it is *against their wills*: for could they have kept it longer, they would not have parted with it.

I shall desire such seriously to consider these six things:—

1. *That if all rich men should do thus, the poor would soon be starved for want of bread.*

2. *That this practice of theirs is against the express command of God, who requireth us to do good, and to communicate out of our store, while we have time and opportunity.* (Gal. vi. 10; Matt. v. 16.)

3. *That they have no assurance of the continuance of their wealth.*—For as the wise man speaketh, "Riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven;" (Prov. xxiii. 5;) they have eagles' wings to fly from us.‡ And how many are there who have outlived a fair estate! If God in his displeasure blasts a man's substance, it vanisheth away in a moment.

4. *Though their riches should continue with them, even to their deaths; yet they have no assurance that God will give them grace to be liberal at their deaths, who had never the goodness to be charitable in their life-time.*

5. *That they have no assurance that God will accept of their death-bed charity.*—What St. Austin speaketh of death-bed *repentance*, that "it is seldom true and hearty," the same may I say of death-bed *charity*,—It is seldom true and hearty, but for the most part rotten and hypocritical, proceeding from ill grounds, as vain-glory, conceit of merit, and the like.

6. *That they have no assurance of the true performance of their will, that the poor shall be the better for what is thereby given them.*—For how many executors have proved most unfaithful to their trusts, whereby many charitable gifts have been clean perverted! And if friends be so unfaithful to us in our life-time, how can we but question their fidelity after our deaths? O, therefore, that all, whom the Lord hath blessed with an estate, would in their life-time become their own administrators; making, as one saith, "their own hands their executors, and their own eyes their overseers!" For, questionless, that charity which is exercised in a man's life-time is the best, and most acceptable unto God.

ANSWER VII. Our alms must be *bountiful and liberal*, giving out

\* *Qui sic moratur, neganti proximus est.*—SENECA *De Beneficiis*, lib. ii. cap. 5.

† *Beneficia non sunt procrastinanda, sed tempestive danda, ut magis prodesse possint. Bis dat, qui cito dat. Ingratum est beneficium quod diu inter manus dantis hasit.*—SENECA *De Beneficiis*. ‡ *Alas aquilinas.*

proportionably to what the Lord hath given unto us.—This is implied in that command of God to his people : “Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in the land ;” (Deut. xv. 11 ;) that is, thou shalt give unto him bountifully and liberally. And our apostle here in the text would have rich men charged “to be rich in good works, even as God hath given them all things richly to enjoy ;” (1 Tim. vi. 17, 18 ;) “for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.” (Luke xii. 48.) And therefore the same apostle adviseth the Corinthians to give “as God had prospered them :” (1 Cor. xvi. 2 :) to whom God hath given little of this world’s goods, of them he requireth but little ; but to whom he hath given much, of them he requireth much. Rich men, therefore, must not only give a portion of their wealth to the relief of others, but also in some fit proportion to their estate.

QUESTION. If any shall ask, “What is that portion or proportion of estate which rich men ought to set apart for charitable uses ?”

ANSWER. It is a hard matter to determine the quantity and proportion of men’s charity, the scripture being silent herein, leaving this to the discretion and ingenuity of the prudent Christian. As the apostle speaketh, “every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give,” &c. (2 Cor. ix. 7.) A certain quantity is not set him : that is left to the free purpose of his own heart.

But yet, though the scripture giveth us no direct *precept* in this particular, it holdeth forth many *precedents* for our imitation : as that of Jacob, who, in testimony of his thankfulness unto God for what he should bestow upon him, vowed the tenth part thereof unto God for pious and charitable uses : “And Jacob vowed a vow unto God, saying, Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.” (Gen. xxviii. 20—22.) Of Cornelius it is recorded, that he “gave much alms.” (Acts x. 2.) And the Macedonians are highly commended for their great bounty and large contributions. (2 Cor. viii. 3.) These examples are left upon record for our imitation. For, as the apostle speaketh, “whatsoever things were written afore-time were written for our learning, and for our admonition.” (Rom. xv. 4 ; 1 Cor. x. 11.) So that though the *quantity* of our alms, how much we should give, is not expressly set down ; yet this we find both commanded and commended, by precepts and precedents, in the scripture, that we give *liberally* and *bountifully* in some fit proportion to our estates ; that if we be rich in this world’s goods, we should then be rich in good works ; “sowing liberally, that so we may reap liberally.” (2 Cor. ix. 6.)

Now, that our alms may be liberal, it must be fitted to two things ; namely :—

1. *The necessity of the receiver.*
  2. *The ability of the giver.*
1. *That in giving we should have respect to the need and necessity of our brother.*—The law is clear which saith, “If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren, thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth.” (Deut. xv. 7, 8.)

2. *That we should likewise have respect to our own ability.*—The apostle St. Peter is as clear, where he saith, “If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth;” (1 Peter iv. 11;) that is, let every one give with respect to his own estate and ability. Notwithstanding, in cases of urgent necessity and great extremity, we are to strain ourselves even above our ability.

Here it may not be impertinent to answer another question: (for I resolve to contrive all I have to deliver upon this subject into this plain and easy method :) and that is this:—

QUESTION. “How many ways may rich men exercise their charity?”

ANSWER. 1. *By laying out a portion of their estate in such a way as directly tends to the worship of God, the advancement of religion, the salvation of men’s souls.*—Which I may not unfitly term, “a spiritual charity.”

And this may also be done several ways. As,

(1.) *By contributing towards the planting and propagating the gospel where it hath not been.*—A work set on foot by divers in New-England, but chiefly carried on by the charity of well-disposed people here in Old-England.

(2.) *By setting up and maintaining of lectures.*—The preaching of the word being the ordinary means appointed by God for the bringing of sinners to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, “whom to know is life eternal.” (Rom. i. 16.)

(3.) *By adding to the maintenance of such settled preachers whose pains are great, and means small,* through the covetousness of impropiators, who engross to themselves what doth more properly belong to the minister.

(4.) *By maintaining of poor scholars at the university, in reference to the work of the ministry.*—That so there may be a continual supply of learned, godly, and orthodox ministers, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

(5.) *By bestowing of Bibles on poor children.*—Whereby, through the care of their parents, they may be acquainted with the knowledge of “the holy scriptures, which are able to make them wise unto salvation.” (2 Tim. iii. 15.) Memorable is the famous gift of Sir John Fenner, who by his last will gave six pounds *per annum* to several out-parishes in London, for the buying of Bibles, to be distributed among poor children. From my own experience I can say, that this gift hath occasioned many poor people to teach their children to read, that so they might be capable of those Bibles, which are to be given only to such as can in some measure read.

(6.) *By erecting of country-schools, and endowing them with some competent maintenance, for teaching of poor men’s children, who have not wherewithal to pay for their schooling.*—Which will be a special means not only to further their civil, but likewise their spiritual, education; for thereby they will be made more capable of divine instruction. Experience teacheth us how ineffectual the most powerful ministry is upon an ignorant and unlearned congregation. Questionless, therefore, the erecting of country-schools is a work of charity, more noble in itself, more

226 SERMON XI. AFTER WHAT MANNER MUST WE GIVE ALMS, acceptable unto God, and more beneficial to the kingdom, than the building of alms-houses, which are too often filled with swarms of idle drones.\* But though this spiritual charity is unquestionless the more excellent, as tending to a more excellent object, namely, the souls of our neighbours, yet the bodies of our neighbours must be cared for as well as their souls: our charity, therefore, must also extend to them, and in this kind it may be practised and expressed.

2. *By a free and liberal giving to the relief of those who are in want.*—Of which I have already largely spoken.

3. *By a ready lending to such as, being in a calling, want stock, or other means to help themselves in their trades.*—This duty of lending we find expressly commanded both in the law and in the gospel. IN THE LAW; as in the place before quoted: “Thou shalt open thine hand wide to thy poor brother, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth,” &c. (Deut. xv. 7, 8.) IN THE GOSPEL; “Lend,” saith our Saviour, “hoping for nothing again;” (Luke vi. 35.) that is, lend not only to such from whom you may hope, by reason of their ability, to receive your own again; but also to such as by reason of their poverty may perhaps never be able to repay you. The Psalmist maketh this a note of a righteous and a good man, that “he is ever merciful and lendeth;” (Psalm xxxvii. 26;) that he “sheweth favour, and lendeth;” (Psalm cxii. 5;) where we see it is set down as the property of such a man, that he is ready to lend to the poor, to such as stand in need of his help; and that freely, without hope of gain.

This duty belongeth especially to rich men, because the occasions of him that would borrow usually require more than meaner persons can well spare: they can better give a penny than lend a pound; though in many cases the lending our brother a considerable sum together would be more beneficial to him than it may be to give him half as much. There is therefore a noble and very generous act of charity to be exercised this way; and it is peculiar to rich men, who have it by them wherewithal to do it.

4. Rich men may and ought to express their charity, *by forgiving a debt, in case the borrower be not able to repay it.*

There be many who, by the help of that which is lent them, God blessing their pains in the employments thereof, are able to repay what is lent. If there were not hope thereof, men would rather give than lend to such.

But there are others who, notwithstanding their care and pains in their calling, thrive not; or, by some accident, suffer such loss and damage, as they are not able to repay what they have borrowed. In such cases creditors are bound to forgive, at least to forbear, their debtors. This is the intendment of that charge, “Lend, hoping for nothing again.” (Luke vi. 35.) To take this phrase simply, is to alter the nature of lending, and to turn it into giving. Herein lieth the difference betwixt *lending*, and *giving*: *lending* is on condition to have again that which is lent, or

\* *Docere simpliciter est melius quam pascere.*—AQUINAS, *Summ. Secunda Pars*, art. ii. “The mere act of communicating instruction to children’s minds is better than that of feeding their bodies.”—EDIT.

at least the worth of it some other way; *giving* is free, without any such condition. That advice of Christ, to "lend, hoping for nothing again," hath respect to the mind of the lender, that he should not have his mind wholly and only upon the repaying of what he lendeth, but on the need of his brother. He is not simply to lend, because he is persuaded he shall lose nothing, but have his own again; he is to lend, because he doeth therein great kindness to his brother, who stands in much need thereof.

The Greek word properly signifieth "to despair;"\* and so it may here be taken: as if he had said, "When your brother hath need to borrow, lend, though his case be such that you even despair of receiving it again, though you run some hazard of losing the principal."

If, therefore, it so fall out that the debtor be not able to repay what he borrowed, forgive it him. He lends, "hoping for nothing again," who is willing to forgive, in case the necessity of the borrower require it. This was it which Nehemiah enjoined the rich Jews. (Neh. v. 11.) Excellently doth our Lord press this duty in the parable of the two creditors; where we have a commendable pattern of a certain king, that in such a case forgave a great debt; and of the sore revenge he executed on one of his servants, because he did not in like manner forgive his fellow-servant. (Matt. xviii. 23—35.)

In the Old Testament it is commended to us under the phrase of "restoring the pledge." (Ezek. xviii. 7; xxxiii. 15.) A pledge was a pawn left by a debtor with his creditor, for assurance to repay the debt. (Gen. xxxviii. 17, 18.) Restoring the pledge when the debt was not paid, was an evidence of remitting the debt.

5. *By hospitality*, which consisteth not so much in a loving entertainment of kindred, friends, and neighbours, as of strangers; as the word in the Greek importeth.†

This is that hospitality which is both commanded and commended to us in the holy scripture.

*It is commanded* in those known precepts of the apostle St. Paul: "Be given to hospitality;" (Rom. xii. 13;) and, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers." (Heb. xiii. 2.) Which is as much as to say, "Forget not hospitality, which is an entertaining of strangers." And the apostle St. Peter commands the faithful to whom he writes, to "use hospitality without grudging," or repining. (1 Peter iv. 9.)

*It is commended* to us in the practice of God's people: as of Abraham; of whom it is recorded, that he sat at his tent-door, looking and waiting, as it were, for strangers to entertain them; and so soon as he saw three men, whom he took for such, he ran to invite them: (Gen. xviii. 1—3:) and of Lot, that as he sat in the gate of Sodom, he saw two whom he

\* *Απελπίζοντες*—*Ελπίζω*, sperare; *απελπίζω*, desperare. † *Φιλοξενία*, compounded of *φιλεω* et *ξενους*. *Hospitalitas est species liberalitatis quæ peregrinos, et hospites, ac præsertim propter verâ doctrinæ professionem exsultantes, verâ benevolentia, et aliquibus officiis hospitalitatis prosequimur.*—URSINI *Catechismus*, quest. iii. "Hospitality is one kind of liberality; namely, liberality and bountifulness toward travellers and strangers, especially toward those that are exiles for the profession of the gospel, entertaining them with all duties of hospitality and Christian charity."—PARRY'S Translation, 1645. *Φιλοξενία* ἐστὶ *φιλοτεχνία* περὶ *χρησῶν* ξένων.—CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS. "Hospitality is a loving art, skillfully exercised in behalf of strangers."—EDIT.

conceived to be strangers ; them he exceedingly pressed to turn into his house, where he made them a feast : (Gen. xix. 3 :) and of the Shunammite woman and her husband, who showed themselves hospitable to the prophet Elisha, “ as oft as he passed by ” their house. (2 Kings iv. 8.) We have Job’s testimony of himself : “ The stranger,” said he, “ did not lodge in the street ; but I opened my doors to the traveller : ” (Job xxxi. 32 :) which words set out Job’s great hospitality, who kept open house for all passengers. In those days there was no common inn for the entertainment of strangers ; and therefore they must have lain out of doors, if some good men had not entertained them.

Having such and so many precedents of hospitality, let us strive to follow them, labouring to write after their copy ; knowing assuredly that our labour of love and cost therein shall not be in vain. For I may truly say, it is a fruitful and gainful course of liberality ; never did any lose by it. Some hereby have entertained angels, as the apostle speaketh : “ Be not forgetful to entertain strangers : for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” (Heb. xiii. 2.) In setting down this recompence, the apostle hath an especial respect unto two instances ; one of Abraham, and the other of Lot. (Gen. xviii. 2 ; xix. 1.)

Angels came to both these, in the appearance of men, whom they knew not ; which showeth God’s high account of this duty, in that once and again he sent angels, to such as were ready to entertain strangers.

Yea, we may entertain Christ himself ; and, indeed, in every entertainment of a poor godly stranger, Christ himself is entertained. And therefore, in the great day of judgment, we read that Christ puts-in this good work by name : “ I was a stranger, and ye took me in ; ” (Matt. xxv. 35 ;) Jesus Christ is a stranger in his members.

In sacred scriptures we find several others rewarded for their hospitality : as, Rebekah, for her courtesy to Abraham’s servant, a mere stranger to her, was rewarded with precious gifts and a good husband. (Gen. xxiv. 22, 67.)—The Shunammite’s hospitality to the prophet was recompensed with giving her a son, and restoring him to life. (2 Kings iv.)—The widow of Zarephath’s hospitality to the prophet Elijah, in receiving him into her house in a great famine, was rewarded with preserving and increasing her meal and oil ; for it is expressly said, that her “ barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail,” until the Lord sent plenty of food. (1 Kings xvii. 16.)—Gaius’s hospitality towards St. Paul, in receiving him into his house, was recompensed with an honourable testimony, which both St. Paul and St. John gave of him. (Rom. xvi. 23 ; 3 John 5, 6.)

**OBJECTION.** Some may object and say, “ Instead of a godly man, I may haply entertain some dissembling hypocrite, and so lose both my gift and reward.”

**ANSWER.** 1. Our charity ought to hope the best of every one, of whom we have no evident proof or presumption to the contrary. (1 Cor. xiii. 7.)

2. If we receive a distressed minister in the name of a minister of Christ, or a private distressed Christian in the name of a righteous man, supposing him to belong to Christ ; let him be what he will, we shall



neither lose gift nor reward: Christ hath undertaken the payment thereof.

6. Rich men may and ought in some cases to express their charity, even by *selling what they have, for the relief of others*: according to that of our Saviour, "Sell that ye have, and give alms." (Luke xii. 33.)

QUESTION. "In what cases must rich men sell their estates, or any part of them, for the relief of others?"

ANSWER. 1. When they are extraordinarily called thereunto: as he that asked Christ what he should do to inherit eternal life: Christ said unto him, "Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor." (Mark x. 17, 21.) That which the apostles did in leaving their callings to follow Christ, was equivalent to selling their possessions. (Matt. xix. 27.)

2. When they have defrauded and oppressed others, and are rebuked for that sin, or otherwise brought to repentance for the same, they ought to testify the truth of their repentance by a full restitution, though it be by parting with their possessions. Thus did the Jews, after their captivity, restore to their poor brethren, whom they had oppressed with usury, their lands and their houses, &c. (Neh. v. 11, 12.) The instance of Zaccheus tendeth also to this purpose, who promised to give the half of his goods to the poor. (Luke xix. 8.)

3. When there are such a multitude of indigent persons in the church, as the superfluity of such as are rich is not sufficient to relieve them. In this case, Christians in the primitive church that "were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need." (Acts iv. 34, 35.)

These particular cases, being all of them somewhat extraordinary, do not patronize the Platonical and Familistical conceit of community of goods. Which fond mistake of theirs, these arguments, amongst others, may sufficiently confute, and evince propriety in land and possessions to be lawful now in the times of the gospel.

1. In those very times wherein Christians, for use, had all things common, St. Peter expressly saith to Ananias, concerning the lands which he sold, "Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?" (Acts v. 4.) Hereby it is manifest, that men then had a propriety in goods and lands.

2. The duties prescribed to rich men in the words of my text, "to do good, to be ready to distribute, and willing to communicate," prove as much.

3. The many admonitions to pay debts, to give tribute, and perform other like duties of justice, do imply a propriety of goods.

4. Exhortations also to lend, and to sell, prove as much. (Luke vi. 35; xi. 41.) For men may not lend nor sell that wherein they have not a propriety.

5. Inhibitions against stealing, and against all kind of injustice, presuppose a propriety. (Eph. iv. 28; 1 Thess. iv. 6.)

Thus have I done with the *seventh* property, requisite to the right manner of giving alms, which is bounty and liberality: whereon I have somewhat the longer insisted, because it is the principal thing intended

in my text,—That “they which are rich in this world’s goods, be rich in good works.” I shall add but one more.

ANSWER VIII. Our alms must be given *prudently, with discretion*, according to every one’s need. It is said of the merciful man, “A good man showeth favour, and lendeth : he will guide his affairs with discretion.” (Psalm cxii. 5.) And truly there is a great deal of discretion to be used, in the ordering of our charity ; by putting a difference between poor and poor ; for, as one saith, “Unadvised giving is the worst kind of losing.”\*

Prudence in almsgiving is commended to us by our Saviour, in this word, *distribute* : *Διαδος πτωχοις*, “Distribute unto the poor.” (Luke xviii. 22.) For “to distribute,” is with discretion to give to sundry persons several portions, according to their need. When mention is made of a prudent, discreet relieving [of] the poor, it is thus expressed : “Distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.” (Acts iv. 35.)

For the better performing this due discretion in our charity, let these rules following be observed :—

1. *They are before others to be relieved, over whom we have an especial charge.*—As they who are of our household, of our own house and family, as wife, children, and servants. For, as the apostle speaketh, “If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” (1 Tim. v. 8.)

2. *In our charity we ought to have a special respect unto our poor kindred.*—For of those is the fore-mentioned place (1 Tim. v. 8) to be understood ; where the word in the Greek, *των οικειων*, translated “house,” is rendered *kindred* in the margin of your Bibles. For the scope of the apostle is to free the church from unnecessary charges, and to that end doth impose the care of providing for poor kindred upon such of their relations as were able. (1 Tim. v. 16.)

3. *They are to be relieved who are of the congregation or parish whereof we are members.*—Especially they who dwell near unto us, in regard that we may best know their wants. (Deut. xv. 7, 8.)

4. *They whom we have just cause to believe that they are of the household of faith.* (Gal. vi. 10.)—For we may judge them to be true in their words ; and believe that their wants are such as they declare them to be. Now, amongst the godly, such are especially to be relieved, and to be preferred in our charity, who are imprisoned, or otherwise suffer, for Christ and the gospel’s sake. For Christ in a special manner is relieved in the persons of such as himself will acknowledge at the day of judgment, when he will pronounce that blessed sentence of absolution to such merciful men : “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world : for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in ; naked, and ye clothed me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me,” &c. (Matt. xxv. 34—36.)

5. *They whom we discern to stand in need of present succour.*—Though they be mere strangers, whom we never saw or knew before.

\* *Turpissimum genus perdendi est inconsulta donatio.*

Hereof we have a worthy pattern set before us in the good Samaritan. (Luke x. 33, &c.)

6. *They who are in prison, or sick, or any other ways restrained from making their wants known unto others.* (Matt. xxv. 36.)

7. *They of whose piety, poverty, and necessity, credible testimony is brought unto us, though we see them not ourselves.*—Thus many of the Christian Gentiles sent relief to the churches at Jerusalem upon the apostle's making known their wants. (Rom. xv. 25, 26 ; Acts xxiv. 17.)

In these and other like cases we ought to extend our charity, according to the necessity of those whom we relieve, and our own ability ; and not think it enough to give a few scraps of bread and meat, or some halfpennies or pence, to common beggars at our doors, or in the streets. This kind of alms savoureth more of vain outward ostentation, than of true inward compassion ; and it more beseems proud Pharisees, than humble Christians. A charitable Christian ordinarily giveth more to one whose distressed case he knows, or is credibly made known unto him, than these Pharisees do to many beggars at many times.

QUESTION. But you will say, “ Do ye, then, utterly condemn all giving to common beggars, as unlawful ? ”

ANSWER. For answer to this question, we must distinguish of common beggars. Some are strong and lusty, able to work ; and yet are so lazy, that they will not work, but would live by the sweat of other men's brows. Others, again, are weak and impotent, unable to work through age, sickness, lameness, blindness, or the like.

These latter are fit objects of charity, and therefore ought to be relieved. But the former sort of beggars (namely, the strong and lusty, who are able to work, but will not through laziness) are no fit objects of charity, and therefore it is no work of charity to relieve such ; for,

1. *Their trade of life is no warrantable calling.*—It is a *disorderly walking*, which is expressly taxed by the apostle ; for, saith he, “ When we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all.” (2 Thess. iii. 10, 11.) It cannot be said of those, “ As the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk : ” or, “ Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.” (1 Cor. vii. 17, 20.) God hath called none to such a trade.

2. *They are as drones in a hive of bees.*—They live of the labours of others, but bring in nothing to the stock, as all the other bees do. They are as barren trees, which receive sap from the earth, but yield no fruit ; “ unprofitable burdens of the earth,”\* whose sad doom ye may read, Luke xiii. 7.

3. *Many of them are of no particular church, nor of any civil society ; but out of all government in church and state.*—In this and the former respect they may justly be styled “ children of Belial,” without yoke. (Deut. xiii. 13.)

4. *They withhold, and in a manner rob the state wherein they dwell of their labour and pains.*—The state or kingdom is as a body ; all that dwell therein are as so many members. Now, nature teacheth every

\* *Telluris inutile pondus.*

member to do somewhat for the benefit of the whole. These, doing nothing thereto, sin against the light of nature.

5. *They who are truly poor shall by this means be neglected and scanted*: whilst these lazy drones devour that which of right belongeth unto them.

6. *They are a great scandal and shame to the government of the nation wherein they are.*—For their course of life implieth that no good provision is made for the poor; nor order taken to set such as are able to work, and to relieve such as are impotent. Now, it is a great sin to be a shame to one's own country.

7. *Their kind of life is sensual and brutish.*—For as brutes they spend all their days in seeking food for their bodies.

From hence it followeth that they who relieve such make themselves accessory to the fore-mentioned sins.\*

There are some allegations made for relieving such; but they are undue allegations, and may easily be answered. The chiefest of them is this:—

1. Christ commandeth to “give to every man that asketh of thee.” (Luke vi. 30.)

ANSWER. To this I answer, that the precept is to be taken in reference to a false position of the Pharisees; which was this,—that their countrymen and friends only were their neighbours, whom by the law they were bound to love. That this was their opinion, is evident by this their gloss on the law: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy;” (Matt. v. 43;) and by the parable which Christ produceth to demonstrate to the lawyer *who was his neighbour*. (Luke x. 29, &c.) In opposition to that false doctrine, Christ commands to “give,” not to friends only, but “to every man.” So as the scope of that precept is, to take away respect of persons in alms-giving; that we should not restrain this duty of charity to countrymen, kindred, and friends; but extend it also to strangers, enemies, and to every one, that, being in need, craves it of us.

2. A second allegation is, “that many beggars may perish, if they be not relieved.”

ANSWER. In case of necessity they may and must be relieved, either at doors, in streets, or other like places, where their necessity is manifested. “Necessity,” as we speak, “hath no law.” It dispenses with ordinary rules. Instance that which Christ produced concerning David: “He entered into the house of God, and did eat the shew-bread, which was not lawful.” (Matt. xii. 4.)

I have done with the question allotted to me. Give me leave to add a few words, for the more profitable pressing this most necessary, but much-neglected, duty of charity. I shall dispatch my intendment herein,

\* *Qui largiuntur indignis ea quæ dignis conferri debebant, tria committunt absurda: 1. Nam et ipsi jacturam faciunt. 2. Et in bonos contumeliosi sunt. 3. Et malos roborant materiâ vitiorum suppeditâ.* “Three great absurdities are committed by those who bestow on the undeserving what ought to have been conferred only on the worthy: 1. They suffer the loss of their own property. 2. They both injure and reproach good people. 3. And they strengthen bad men, by supplying materials for pampering their vices.”—EDIT.

I. By showing you by what MEANS you may obtain this grace.

II. Giving you some MOTIVES to quicken you up to a conscionable performance of the works of it.

I. The MEANS are these :—

1. *Meditation.* Seriously meditate,

(1.) Of the *necessity* of it ; which ariseth from the Lord's express charge and command, unto which we are bound to yield obedience. It is often commanded, both in the Old and New Testament. That I may not be tedious, I shall give you but two or three proofs : Deut. xv. 11 ; a place I often mentioned for the excellency and exceeding pertinency of it to this purpose. Saith the Lord to his people there : "The poor shall never cease out of the land : therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in thy land ;" that is, thou shalt give unto him freely and bountifully. And saith our Saviour in the New Testament : "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." (Matt. v. 42.) And saith the apostle : "To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased ;" (Heb. xiii. 16 ;) in which words he presseth the duty with a forcible motive ; for who would not do that which is well-pleasing unto God, who is bountiful in rewarding the least good we do upon his command ?

This duty of alms-giving being so expressly commanded in scripture, it is not in our power to omit or neglect the same ; neither can any creature give us a dispensation against the Creator's command. A prophet sty leth omission of that which God enjoineth to be done, yea, though that omission were but in part, and that upon a fair pretence, "rebellion, which is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness, which is as iniquity and idolatry." (1 Sam. xv. 23.) Against him who failed in performing the charge enjoined him, though he were a king, this doom is denounced : "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king." (Verse 26.) In like manner may God reject such as neglect this duty of charity, when he calls them to it, from being kings, and reigning in heaven. We have a manifest instance thereof, Matt. xxv. 41—43.

Now, the giving of alms being a duty so expressly commanded in the holy scriptures, it cannot therefore be accounted a matter merely arbitrary, left to a man's own will, to give or not to give. But it is a bounden duty, which they that in any competent measure can do, must not omit : which consideration cannot but be a strong incitation unto us to make conscience of this duty of alms-giving, as occasion is offered, and not to overslip opportunities that by the Divine Providence are offered unto us. Should we neglect that which our Lord hath expressly commanded ? that whereunto, by virtue of that command, we are bound ? that whereof we are to give an account ? Let us, upon the Lord's commands, do what in this kind we can ; and when we have done what we can, say, "We are unprofitable servants : we have done that which was our duty to do." (Luke xvii. 10.)

(2.) Of the *equity* of this duty of alms-giving. It is a most equal thing, that he who hath wherewithal should give to him that hath not.

The equity ariseth both from the Divine Providence, and also from the instability of man's state and condition.

(i.) God for this end gives more to some than to others, that they who have more abundance should give, out of their abundance, to them who are in want. This was typically signified by the gathering of manna; [of] which, though it were rained down from heaven, yet the Lord would not allow that they who had gathered much, even more than was needful for themselves and their household, should hoard up their superfluity, but enjoined them to communicate of their abundance to such as had not enough. The which the apostle applieth to the giving of alms, out of our abundance, to those who want; which he styleth "equality." (2 Cor. viii. 14.)

(ii.) Man's state is so variable, as he who now hath may quickly want, and in want desire to be succoured by such as have. It is thereupon most equal, that they who would be succoured in their need should be willing to succour the need of others. This equity doth Christ himself press: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them;" and as a ground to enforce this the further, he addeth: "For this is the Law and the Prophets:" (Matt. vii. 12:) hereby implying, that this doctrine is contained in the Law and the Prophets. But that is not all: these words, "This is the Law and the Prophets," intend that the sum of the Law and the Prophets consisteth therein; and the main scope of them tendeth thereunto; namely, so far as they contain the duties of man to man. So evident is the equity hereof, even by the light of nature, as the very Heathen, who wanted the light of God's word, discerned it. Well, therefore, might the apostle enforce this duty of charity upon this ground: thus, "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them;" (Heb. xiii. 3;) that is, "Be helpful to others which cannot help themselves, as you would have others afford succour unto you, if you were succourless."

(3.) *Meditate of the manifold singular benefits which do follow and accompany a conscionable performance of this duty.*—For thereby we discharge our duty to God, who requireth it at our hands; and, as a consequent thereof, we shall glorify God; for it tends much to his praise and glory when, in such works as himself hath commanded, his children testify their obedience and thankfulness: and therefore saith our Saviour, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." (John xv. 8.)

And by our charity, as we shall grace and adorn our holy profession, so we shall stop the mouths of wicked men from speaking any evil of us or of our profession; for how are men apt to speak of us, and of our profession, according to the fruits we bring forth, and the good works which we do!

And as we shall thereby comfort and make glad the hearts of the poor and distressed, so we shall refresh our own souls, in that our works of charity will evidence our fruits to be sound and saving, lively and effectual; for as Rachel said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die;" [Gen. xxx. 1;] in like manner saith faith to the soul of a Christian, "'Give me children,' let me bring forth good works, 'else I die,' and have no life in me;" according to that of the apostle James, "Faith

without works is dead :” (James ii. 26 :) it is not a living but a dead faith, that manifests not its life by working.

2. As meditation, so *prayer*, is a special means on our part to be performed for attaining unto this grace of charity. I say, earnest and fervent prayer unto God for the same ; for as he is the Fountain and Author of every good gift, so he hath sanctified prayer, as the means of obtaining every good gift from him.

Be earnest, therefore, with God in prayer, that he would be pleased to give thee as a compassionate heart towards the needs and necessities of the poor members of Jesus Christ ; so an open hand, that thou mayest freely and liberally contribute unto them, according to their necessity, and thy ability. Beg of God that, as he hath blessed thee with some competent estate, so he would add this mercy,—to give thee an heart to give out proportionably to what he hath given thee ; and that in testimony of thy love and thankfulness unto him. But, alas ! how few are there who in their prayers unto God are mindful of this grace of charity ! How few are there who ever begged of God that he would be pleased to implant this noble grace of charity in their hearts ! If, upon examination, thou findest thyself to have been faulty therein, go, take up a new resolution to be earnest with God in prayer for this grace especially, and never to give over till thou find it in some measure wrought in thy soul, till thou find thyself, upon all good occasions, “ready to distribute, and willing to communicate,” to the needs and necessities of thy poor brethren.

3. *Diligence in our callings* is another means on our part to be performed, for the practising of charity. He that would be charitable to the poor in their needs and necessities, must be diligent and industrious in his calling, so that he may have wherewithal to express his charity : for men’s diligence in their callings is usually crowned with a blessing ; according to that of the wise man : “The hand of the diligent maketh rich.” And again : “The soul of the diligent shall be made fat ;” (Prov. x. 4 ; xiii. 4 ;) that is, shall be enriched with outward blessings : and the Greeks say that “plentifulness follows painfulness ;” and that “all things are made servants to care and industry.”\* And therefore the apostle Paul prescribeth diligence and industry in a lawful calling as a means of charity : “Let him that stole steal no more : but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” (Eph. iv. 28.) This is one end we should propound to ourselves, in the works of our callings ; namely, that, through God’s blessing on our pains and endeavours, we may have not only sufficient for our own livelihood, and of them that belong unto us, but also somewhat for the relief of others. Solomon, describing the virtuous woman, saith, in the first place, that “she seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands ;” and then, “that she stretcheth out her hand to the poor ; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.” (Prov. xxxi. 13, 20.)

4. *Be careful to prevent all superfluities in your expenses.*—As dili-

\* Πονη φλουτος οκηδει της επιμελειας δουλα παντα γινεται.—STOBÆUS. “Riches are always found in company with labour ; and every thing becomes subservient to attentive carefulness.”—EDIT.

gence in your callings, so frugality in your spending, is a special means for the practice of charity. "Frugality," says Justin, "is the mother of virtue."\* I am sure it is the foundation and supporter of charity: for, let a man's estate be never so great, yet, if there be not frugality used in the management thereof, there will be but little found for works of charity. And, on the other side, though a man's estate be but mean and low in the world; yet, if there be frugality used in the management of it, there will be ever somewhat for charitable uses. As, therefore, thou desirest to be charitable, be careful to prevent all unnecessary expenses; I mean, let not thy apparel be too costly; for how can it be expected that they should be charitable, ready to distribute to the necessities of others, who lay out the greatest part of their estates upon their backs? Neither let thy feastings be too frequent, nor too chargeable; which is noted for one of the sins of the old world, who "were given to eating," as the word in the original, *τρῶγοντες*, properly signifieth. (Matt. xxiv. 38.) Neither let thy recreations be too expensive, in playing more for money than for refreshment. O that such of you who spend so much time and money on your recreations (as if God had sent you into the world, and given you the good things of the world, for no other end than to follow your pleasures) would consider what a fearful reckoning you are to make at the day of judgment, not only of your precious time lavishly mis-spent, but also of your estate wickedly lost or wasted; when in thy account there shall be found so much wasted in gaming and pleasures, and so little given to the poor!

5. *Set apart something out of thine incomes and receipts, as a sacred stock, for charitable uses.*—For, (1.) Hereby thou wilt be fitted and prepared with matter for such uses, having always somewhat by thee to give upon any good occasion. (2.) By this means thou wilt more readily and willingly, more freely and liberally, contribute to the needs and necessities of others, having a stock by thee for that very end and purpose. All men naturally are hard-hearted, and close-handed; † and thereupon are very hardly persuaded to part with any thing considerable for charitable uses. But this consecrating beforehand a part of thine estate for the use of the poor, will cause thy charity to flow out more freely and bountifully.

Now a sacred stock for the poor may be raised two ways:—

(1.) *By setting apart something every Lord's day, out of thy comings-in the week before, according as God hath prospered thee.*—Which practice we find prescribed unto us by the direction of the Holy Ghost, and warranted unto us by apostolical authority: for, saith the apostle Paul to the Corinthians, "Now, concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week," which is the Lord's day, "let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him;" (1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2;)

\* *Genetrix virtutum frugalitas.*—JUSTINUS, lib. xx. cap. 4. † *Ad opes honoresque expectandos, ad cumulandas divitias, furiosa est nostra libido, infinita cupiditas.*—CALVINI *Institutiones*, lib. 31. "Most outrageous is our natural desire, and infinite our cupidity, for the acquisition of property, influence, and honour, and for the accumulation of riches."—**EDIT.**



that is, according to the ability wherewith God hath blessed him, let him set apart something for the relief of the poor, especially the poor saints.

This rule I would commend to such who live upon their daily labour. But for those merchants, citizens, and tradesmen, who sell much of their wares upon trust, and know not certainly at the week's end what they have gained, I would advise such, when they have cast up their accounts at the year's end, to set apart something of their comings-in that year, according as God hath prospered them, for charitable uses; as they expect God's blessing upon their trading the year following.\*

(2.) *By consecrating unto God a certain portion of thy yearly incomes and revenues for charitable uses.*—What this portion should be, I dare not determine, the scriptures being silent therein; only in the general we are commanded to give out proportionably to what God hath given unto us, that they who are rich in this world's goods be rich in good works. But this I can say, that the most that I have heard or read of, who have taken this course to consecrate unto God a certain portion of their estate to charitable uses, have followed the example of Jacob, in giving a tenth part unto God. (Gen. xxviii. 22.) And as God did exceedingly bless Jacob after his vow, so likewise hath he blessed divers others after their vow unto God.

An eminent divine of this city, † now with God, in his funeral sermon at the burial of a merchant, speaking of his charity, saith, that at his first effectual call, among other things he then resolved upon, this was one, to set apart every year a tenth of his gain for the relief of the poor; and that God from that time forward abundantly advanced his estate. ‡ And, withal, he adds a passage very remarkable, and therefore I shall give it you in his own words: "True it is that for some space of time, some three or four years after that his resolution of setting a tenth apart for such purposes, he thrived not, he found no increase, nor came forward in the world, as formerly he had done; yet was he not thereby discouraged; nor did he forbear to be bountiful, as opportunity was offered, and the necessity of poor people required it. But he gave still with cheerfulness and comfort, out of love to God; conceiving that God, in wisdom and goodness, prospered him not, *thereby to try his sincerity to Him, and his charity to others*; yea, and that he himself might thereby have experience of his love unto God, his faith, patience, and constancy." But then he adds: "From that time forward, God abundantly advanced his estate; so that he found experimentally all those gracious promises of God true, of his blessing of him that 'disperseth and dispenseth to the poor,' (Psalm cxii. 9,) and of the repayment of that with interest that is so lent to the Lord. (Prov. xix. 17.)"

Another eminent divine, § in his funeral sermon at the burial of the Lord Harrington, speaking of his charity, declared, that in his life-time he gave the tenth part of his yearly revenue to the poor.

And from mine own experience I can tell you of one yet living, who,

\* This paragraph was added by the author after the publication of the first edition.—  
 EDIT. † Mr. Thomas Gataker, in his funeral sermon at the burial of Mr. John Parker, merchant and citizen of London. ‡ The remainder of this paragraph is to be found only in the first edition.—EDIT. § Mr. Stock.

finding little coming-in by his trade, resolved upon two things : (i.) To be more careful in sanctifying the Lord's day. (ii.) To set apart the tenth of his increase for charitable uses. Whereupon he gained so much in a few years, that he gave over his calling, and ever since liveth upon his rents.

Many like instances I could give you of some that are dead, and others yet living, who have devoted, some a tenth, and others a fifth, part of their whole estate to pious and charitable uses. \*Which I do not propound as a general rule to all good Christians ; for, some there are who have no more than is necessary for the comfortable support of themselves and families, from whom less is required for the relief of others. But I question whether such whom the Lord hath blessed with a plentiful estate, so that their necessary expenses are, or might be, far less than their incomes, can be accounted "rich in good works," unless they give at least a tenth part of their whole yearly income to charitable uses. I say of their "whole yearly income," without first deducting any part thereof for diet, clothes, or other necessary expenses ; for the tenth of the remainder will be a very inconsiderable proportion for a rich man to devote to charity, and far short of that which the scripture seems to call for. It is recorded of the Jews, that very many amongst the richer sort, who are devout in their religion, do usually give away a tenth part of their estate to charitable uses. And is it not very unbecoming Christians who are rich in this world's goods to fall short of the Jews herein ?

II. Having thus done with the MEANS on our part to be performed for attaining unto this grace of charity, come we now to the MOTIVES, to quicken us up to a conscionable performance of the works of it. I shall touch only upon these four :—

1. The *excellency* of the duty.
2. The *piety* which it containeth in it.
3. The *profit* which ariseth from it.
4. The *damage* which follows upon the neglect thereof.

1. The first motive or inducement to charity may be taken from *the excellency thereof*.—I suppose that all will grant that the greatest excellency that a creature can attain unto, is to be like his Creator. That excellency wherein man was at first created, is thus set out : "God created man in his own image ;" that is, "in his own likeness." (Gen. i. 26, 27.) And that excellency wherewith we shall be glorified in heaven is set out by our likeness to Christ ; for it is said, our bodies shall then "be fashioned like unto his glorious body," (Phil. iii. 21,) yea, in the whole man : "when he shall appear, we shall be like him." (1 John iii. 2.)

Now, while we live on earth, there is nothing wherein we can show ourselves more like unto God than in showing mercy, and in succouring such as stand in need. When God sets himself to proclaim his name, he most insisteth upon his mercifulness and goodness. (Exod. xxxiv. 6.) Christ himself doth press this motive to enforce this duty ; thus : "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." (Luke vi. 36.)

\* The remaining sentences in this paragraph do not occur in the first edition.—EDIT.

The excellency of charity doth herein further appear, that Christ hath set the poor in his own room; insomuch as they who relieve the poor do therein relieve Christ himself. So much doth Christ acknowledge, where he saith to such as succoured the poor, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matt. xxv. 40.) Is it not an excellent thing to relieve Christ? They, then, that relieve the poor do an excellent work. As it is a great aggravation of persecuting the true professors of the faith, because therein they persecute Christ himself, (as is implied under this divine voice that affrighted Saul, while he was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Acts ix. 4,) so it is a great commendation of true charity, that Christ himself is relieved thereby.

2. Another motive is the *piety, which in and by performing this duty of alms-giving is manifested*.—Piety, I say, to God: for "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction." (James i. 27.) Here he puts two particulars, for all kinds of charity; and by this phrase, "pure religion before God is this," he intends four things:—

- (1.) That it is but a mere show of religion that is without charity.
- (2.) That true religion will make men charitable.
- (3.) That charity will prove men to be truly religious.

(4.) That works of charity are as acceptable to God as duties of religion. For God accounts charity "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing unto him." (Phil. iv. 18.) The poor and needy are to God as the altars of burnt-offerings and incense were under the law. Those things which were laid on them, and offered up, were given to the Lord, and as a gift accepted by him. Even so are alms given to the poor; the poor are the altar, alms the sacrifice. Now, who would not dispose of that which he hath, as God may account it given to him, and answerably accept it? On this very ground doth the apostle incite the Hebrews to this duty, in this manner: "To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." (Heb. xiii. 16.) Thus we see how works of charity are not only useful and profitable to man, but also acceptable and well-pleasing to God; which consideration addeth much life to the duty here pressed.

3. A third motive is, *the manifold profit wherewith it is rewarded*.—Profit and advantage is the motive which, for the most part, spurs men on to labour and take pains; to rise early, and sit up late; to venture goods, life, and all they have. Witness the pains, travels, and watchings, and adventures of labourers, workmen, tradesmen, farmers, merchants, mariners, &c. :\* yet that profit which they aim at is but earthly and temporary, and their hope of attaining it uncertain. Surely, works of charity give an assured hope of a far greater and better profit than earth can afford.

\* *Omnes expetimus utilitatem, ad eamque rapimur, nec facere aliter ullo modo possumus.*  
—CICERO *De Officiis*, lib. iii. "All of us are engaged in the search of that which we consider to be useful; and in the pursuit of it we are impelled forward, and incapable of acting in any other manner than as we really do."—EDIT.

*In general* it is promised, that if we cast our bread upon the waters, we shall find it after many days; [Eccles. xi. 1.] that is, if we give alms to the poor, where all we do may seem to be cast away, as if it were thrown into the sea; yet, in due time, will it return to us with advantage.\* And lest any should be discouraged from doing works of charity, our Saviour assureth us, that "whosoever shall give a cup of cold water only," (which is one of the least acts of charity we can perform,) "shall in no wise lose his reward." (Matt. x. 42.)

If, *in special*, it be demanded, What profit is there of charity? I answer, as the apostle did of circumcision, "Much every way." (Rom. iii. 2.) Yea, I may say of charity, as the apostle doth of piety: it "is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Tim. iv. 8.)

*In this life* is promised,

(1.) *Sufficiency*: "He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack;" (Prov. xxviii. 27;) that is, he shall be secured from want and penury. God will not suffer him to be brought to penury, who hath been charitable to the poor.

(2.) Not only sufficiency, but likewise *abundance*: for, saith the wise man, "Honour the Lord with thy substance," by giving freely and cheerfully to charitable and pious uses: "so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine;" (Prov. iii. 9, 10;) which is an hyperbolical expression, implying plenty and abundance.

(3.) *Good success in what he enterpriseth*.—According to that of Moses, "Thou shalt surely give him, because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto." (Deut. xv. 10.)

(4.) *Deliverance out of trouble*: for, saith the Psalmist, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble." (Psalm xli. 1.)

(5.) *Protection against enemies*: as it followeth in the next verse: "Thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies." (Verse 2.)

(6.) *Succour in sickness*; as the prophet goes on: "The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing;" (verse 3;) that is, the Lord will comfort and support him in his sickness, and at length restore his strength again. "Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness;" that is, thou wilt give him ease and rest, as they do to sick men that make their beds.

(7.) To pass by other particulars, *blessedness*, which compriseth under it all manner of commodities, is promised to the charitable person. (Prov. xxii. 9.) And in Psalm xli. 2, it is said, "He shall be blessed upon the earth;" yea, and "at the resurrection of the just." (Luke xiv. 14.)

(8.) *This promise is extended to his posterity*; for "his seed shall be blessed." (Psalm xxxvii. 26.)

\* *Fecundus est ager pauperum; cito reddit donantibus fructum.*—AUGUSTINUS, *Sermo De Divite*. "The field of the poor is a fertile soil: its returns of fruit, to those who are benefactors to it, are abundant."—EDIT.

These and other like promises of temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings, being made by the Lord God of truth, may with much confidence be rested upon: for God's words are deeds; his promises, performances.

*In the life to come*, merciful men shall "inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world." (Matt. xxv. 34.)

There are, among others, two metaphors often used by the Holy Ghost, in setting out alms-giving, which do much amplify the commodity thence arising: one is taken from *lending*; the other from *sowing*.

(1.) Alms-giving is set forth in scripture by *lending*; yea, to such a lending whereby we have not only the principal restored, but with great increase. And whereas such as put forth their money unto men can expect but six in the hundred; if we, in obedience to the command of God, shall freely part with our money to the use of the poor, for their relief, we shall receive an hundred for six, yea, an hundred for one, and eternal life to boot. (Mark x. 30.) And we need not to doubt of the payment; for though the poor be never so unable, yet we have an all-sufficient Surety, even God himself, who hath undertaken to pay whatsoever is thus put forth; according to that of the wise man: "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again." (Prov. xix. 17.) Where you have God's counterbond to save you harmless, in which he both acknowledgeth the debt, and promiseth payment. And what better security can any man desire than a bond under God's own hand? The consideration whereof should, methinks, make us willing to embrace any opportunity of putting out our money to this great advantage.

(2.) As for the other metaphor of *sowing*, it is in scripture applied to alms-giving, under this phrase, "He hath dispersed." (Psalm cxii. 9.) As the husbandman disperseth his seed which he soweth in the earth, so doth the almsgiver his alms; therefore this is added by way of exposition: "He hath given to the poor." The apostle also applieth unto alms-giving this proverbial speech: "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." (2 Cor. ix. 6.) Now, what is it that ordinarily bringeth forth a greater increase than sowing seed in fertile ground? It is said of Isaac, that he "sowed in the land, and received in the same year an hundredfold." (Gen. xxvi. 12.) And Christ saith, that "good ground" beareth fruit, some "an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold." (Matt. xiii. 8.) Now, alms-giving is one of those things that shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

If, therefore, profit and advantage may be a motive to stir us up unto any thing, surely it should be a motive to incite us unto liberality in alms-giving, to be bountiful in contributing to the relief of the poor.

For it is a most certain truth, that "giving to the poor is the surest and safest way of getting." For though husbandmen may sometimes lose the benefit of their seed sown, through mildews, or unseasonable weather; and such as put their money to use may come short of their principal; yet he who with an honest and sincere heart giveth to the poor, shall in no wise lose his reward. For, as the wise man speaketh,

“there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth;” (Prov. xi. 24;) intimating unto us, that this scattering is the best way of increasing. And, indeed, so it is; for hath not our Saviour promised, that if we “give, it shall be given unto us; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together?” (Luke vi. 38.) Here God gives us, as it were, a bill of his hand, and enters into bond, and becomes surety with the poor, that what we give shall be repaid with advantage. This is a paradox to worldly men, *that giving should be the surest and safest way of getting and increasing*; yet nothing [is] more clearly laid down in the scripture, and found to be true by the experience of God’s people.

4. The fourth motive and inducement is *the damage which may ensue upon the neglect of almsgiving*.—Though it argue a kind of servile disposition to be moved with fear of loss or pain,\* to a duty; yet of that disposition are many; and in that respect this may be added as an inducement to the duty.

The damage that may arise upon the neglect of charity, when it ought to be showed, is, in the kind thereof, as large as the fore-mentioned benefits of performing the duty, in the kind of it. For, neglect of the duty doth not only cause a forfeiture of all the fore-mentioned benefits arising from the performance thereof, but also pulleth upon the neglecter’s head many evils. Where the wise man saith, “The merciful man doeth good to his own soul,” he addeth, “But he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh.” (Prov. xi. 17.) Soul and flesh are the two essential parts of a man; both the one and the other are synecdochically put for the whole man; even for the person. By a “cruel” man is meant an unmerciful or hard-hearted man; for he is opposed to a merciful man. The meaning, then, of this proverb is this: “As a merciful man doeth good, not only to his poor brother, to whom he showeth mercy, but also to himself; so a hard-hearted man doth not only grieve his distressed neighbour in affording him no succour, but also brings much damage to himself.” For he “that withholdeth more than is meet, cometh to poverty.” (Verse 24.) “Withholding” is there opposed to “scattering,” which word hath reference to casting or sowing seed on the earth, to bring forth a crop; and thereby is meant alms-giving. On the contrary, “withholding more than is meet,” implies a denial of alms, when there is just cause to give. Justice and equity require this duty, as we have before showed; so as that phrase doth much aggravate this kind of unmercifulness; and, as a just punishment thereof, that which covetous men, by refusing to give, seek to prevent, shall fall upon them, even poverty.

And if in any distress they shall be forced to seek help of others, even they shall be neglected as they neglected others. The wise man testifieth as much in these words: “Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.” (Prov. xxi. 13.) Not only other men, but also God himself, will refuse to hear his cry. Dives, who refused to relieve Lazarus, could not obtain any to afford him a drop of water to cool his tongue, when he was tormented in

\* All the editions, except the first, have misprinted this word *gain*, to the manifest injury of the author’s argument, as is apparent through the whole of the fourth motive.—EDIT.

hell-flames. (Luke xvi. 24.) It is expressly said, that "he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy." (James ii. 13.) For God deals with men according to their dealing with others. (Matt. xviii. 33.)

Finally: As blessings are promised to merciful men, so *curses are denounced against unmerciful men.* (Prov. xxviii. 27.) As under "blessings" all manner of good things are comprised, so under "curses" all manner of evils. Unmerciful men shall have the curses of men, and "people shall curse them." (Prov. xi. 26.) And at the great day of judgment, they shall be pronounced *curse*d by the Great Judge. For "then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, YE CURSED, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink," &c. (Matt. xxv. 41, &c.)\*

Having thus done with the MOTIVES, I shall close this discourse with answering some OBJECTIONS, which keep back many from a conscionable discharge of this duty.

OBJECTIONS.

OBJECTION 1. Some object their great charge, having a wife and many children to provide for; and are ready to say with the apostle, that "parents ought to lay up for their children." (2 Cor. xii. 14.) And, "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (1 Tim. v. 8.) How, then, can we be liberal to the poor?

ANSWER. 1. I deny not but parents ought to provide for their children, so far as they may with a good conscience. But know, that the same apostle who commands you to *lay up* for your children doth likewise command you to *lay out* a considerable part of your estate for the succour and relief of others: as Gal. vi. 10: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." And, Heb. xiii. 16: "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." If, therefore, you would approve yourselves sincere Christians, you must bear an equal and impartial respect to all and every the commands of the Lord, making conscience of one duty as well as of another.

2. The greater thy love, the stronger thine affections are to thy children, the more liberal and bountiful shouldst thou be to the poor saints and servants of Jesus Christ, that thereby thou mayest entail God's blessing upon the persons and estate of thy children. I am sure thou wilt grant that, without God's blessing, all [that] thou shalt bequeath unto thy children will little avail them; and what better course canst thou take to procure God's blessing upon that part of thy estate which thou shalt leave them, than freely to communicate some part thereof to pious and charitable uses? For, as the Psalmist expresseth it, "the seed of the merciful

\* In the first edition the conclusion of the sermon was at the end of this paragraph. But, in the subsequent impressions, the benevolent author, who was favoured by Heaven both with the *ability* and the *heart* to practise his own precepts, enlarged it with nine additional pages of most important matter, which the reader will peruse greatly to his own pleasure and profit.—EDIT.

244 SERMON XI. AFTER WHAT MANNER MUST WE GIVE ALMS, shall be blessed." (Psalm xxxvii. 26.) Whereby is implied, that thy mercy and liberality to the poor will entail God's blessing upon thy children.

Very solicitous many are to entail their lands and houses on their posterity, that they may continue in the same family; but I know no surer way than in their life-time to communicate a considerable part of their estate to the poor: and thus, "by taking somewhat from your children's portion for the relief of the poor, you may exceedingly advance their estate."\* Hath God blessed thee with children: in Christian discretion, then, thou shouldest be charitable, that thereby thou mayest procure God's blessing, both on thyself and posterity; for thy sparing and withholding from the poor, to make thy children rich, may prove the subversion and ruin of thine house and children.

3. Though thou oughtest to lay up some competent portions for thy children, yet ought not that to be a pretence against laying out a portion of thine estate here on the poor. For know, that the poor have a right unto part of thine estate, as well as thy children, though not unto so great a part. In which respect the Spirit of God calleth that part of the rich man's stock which he can well spare, the poor man's "due," unto whom of right it doth belong; for, saith he, "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it." (Prov. iii. 27.) Whereupon said an ancient father, "It is the bread of the hungry which moulders in thy cupboard; it is the garment of the naked which hangs useless in thy chamber; it is the gold of the poor which lieth rusting in thy chest."† So that thy relieving the poor is not only an act of mercy, left to thy choice to do or not to do, but also of justice, to the performance whereof thou standest bound. And, therefore, what St. Paul saith of himself concerning the preaching of the gospel, "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Cor. ix. 16;) the like should all rich men especially say of themselves: "Necessity is laid upon us to give out a part of our estate for the relief of the poor saints and servants of Jesus Christ; and woe be unto us, if we do it not!"

4. It is a great mistake in parents, that, because it is their duty to make some provision for their children, therefore they are bound to lay up all that possibly they can scrape together for their use, without giving any considerable part towards the relief of the poor; for thereby they manifestly declare, that they prefer their children's temporal good before their own spiritual and eternal good, and hazard the salvation of their own souls for the advancement of their children's estate. O how little comfort will it be to you in hell-torments, to think that you have lost heavenly joys, for the gaining of some earthly enjoyments for your children! If, therefore, you have little or no charity for others, yet have some for your own souls, by a liberal contribution to the poor saints and servants of Jesus Christ, and that according to your own ability and their necessity.

OBJEC. II. Some object their poor and mean estate, pretending they

\* *Forsitan heredi præstabis quicquid misericordiæ causâ de ejus portione detraheris.*— AUGUSTINUS *De Tempore*, sermo 76. † *Est panis famelici quem tu tences, nudi unica quam tu in conclavi conservas, &c.*— BASIL.



have not wherewithal to supply the wants, and relieve the necessities, of others.

**ANSWER. 1.** Though thou pleadest poverty, to excuse thy not giving towards the supply of the needy and necessitous, yet it is to be feared, that thy plea is not real, but feigned, a mere pretence; because thou canst find money enough to buy rich and costly apparel for thyself, wife, and children; money enough to pamper thy belly, and to feast thy rich neighbours, friends, and acquaintance; money enough for the gratifying thy sinful lusts and pleasures; when thou canst find little or nothing for the clothing the naked backs of the poor members of Jesus Christ, nothing for the filling of their empty bellies, nothing for their comfort and support. O how sad will thy reckoning be at the great day of judgment, when thou shalt hear: "So much spent in clothes, so much in costly diet, so much in satisfying thy carnal lusts and pleasures, and so little in relieving the poor saints and servants of Jesus Christ!"

2. Though thy plea be real, that thou art in truth in a low and mean estate, yet oughtest thou to give something when thou meetest with those who are poorer than thyself, especially if they be in great necessity. The apostle exhorteth poor men, even such as work for their living, so to labour that they may have not only to maintain themselves and family, but also to relieve the necessities of others: "Let him labour," saith the apostle, "working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." (Eph. iv. 28.) The deep poverty of the Macedonians, we read, kept them not from contributing to the poor saints at Jerusalem, who were poorer than themselves. (2 Cor. viii. 2, 3.)

Who could plead greater poverty than the poor widow in the gospel, who having but two mites, cast them both into the treasury? of whom our Saviour giveth this testimony, that she cast more into the treasury than the rich; "for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." (Mark xii. 43, 44.) A halfpenny or farthing of that little which a poor man giveth, is more, in Christ's reckoning, than a whole mass of money out of a rich man's treasure. Say not, therefore, "I am poor, and have but little;" thinking thereby to excuse thy not giving; for thou canst not be poorer than that poor widow: but of a little give a little, and it will be accepted; "for if there be a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." (2 Cor. viii. 12.) God looketh not so much to the greatness of the gift, as to the quantity of the store out of which it is given, and the largeness of the affections wherewith it is given.

**OBJEC. III.** Some are ready to object and say they live in dangerous times, and know not what troubles may befall them; and therefore it will be wisdom to keep what they have.

**ANSWER.** The more dangerous the times are, the more reason thou hast to give out of thy store towards the relief of others; for,

1. Thou knowest not how long thou mayest enjoy thy life or estate: "Whatsoever," therefore, "thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might;" (Eccles. ix. 10;) that is, whatsoever ability or opportunity thou hast of doing good, do it, as with all diligence, so speedily. And,

saith the wise man, "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight;" as if he had said, "Let thy liberality be large and bountiful, not limiting it to few, but distributing it to many." Mark his reason in the next words: "For thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth;" (Eccles. xi. 2;) that is, what troublesome times may be. I have read of an husbandman, who, hearing of the approach of an army, and fearing thereby the loss of all his corn, caused as much as possibly he could to be carried into the city, and committed the custody thereof to a friend of his. In like manner let the apprehensions of dangerous times prevail with thee, to deliver some considerable part of thy estate unto the poor members of Christ, whereby it will be best preserved from loss and spoils.

2. Thy liberality to the poor will be a notable means to free thine heart from those anxious and distrustful fears of evil times which do usually possess the hearts of unmerciful men; as the Psalmist seemeth to imply: "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." The reason whereof he rendereth: "He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor;" (Psalm cxii. 7, 9;) therefore "he shall not be afraid of evil tidings." And, indeed, such have least ground of fear; for, (1.) God hath promised to deliver such from the evil to come: as, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble." (Psalm xli. 1.) (2.) God hath promised, that, though they should fall into troublesome times, yet they shall find abundance of sweet peace and comfort in their own souls; for, saith the Lord, "If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul;" (that is, if thou shalt afford unto him that which may supply his necessity, and satisfy his hunger;) "then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day." (Isai. lviii. 10.) Where "light" signifieth peace and comfort, as "darkness" signifieth affliction. So that the prophet's meaning is, that merciful men shall have peace and comfort in the most troublesome and uncomfortable times; which, if it were seriously considered, would be a great encouragement to us to abound in works of mercy.

OBJEC. IV. Some object and say, "If I be so full in giving, I may want myself before I die."

ANSWER. 1. Doth the husbandman forbear to sow his seed for fear of want? Nay, rather doth he not with a plentiful hand sow his seed, that he may prevent want? being confident that by sowing his seed, he shall in due time reap it again with such increase, that thereby he shall be enabled to sustain himself and family. So that this objection is a groundless fear, arising from a distrustful heart, contrary to that of the wise man: "He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack;" (Prov. xxviii. 27;) namely, any thing which God seeth to be good and needful for him. Nay, by not giving, thou art likeliest to come to want; for, saith the Spirit of God, "There is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." (Prov. xi. 24.) So that keeping back and hoarding up is the readiest way to want and penury; whereas, giving to the poor, according to that God hath given unto us, is the best means to prevent penury.

2. Thou needest not fear want by giving; for thereby thou wilt both secure thy stock, and increase thy store.

(1.) What thou givest to the poor, with an honest and sincere heart, will secure the rest of thy estate. For, as in a state politic, the leiger-ambassadors that are sent abroad to lie in foreign kingdoms,\* secure our peaceable state at home ; in like manner, that which thou dispersest and sendest abroad to the poor doth secure the rest at home. "So that in truth our earthly goods are lost by keeping, and kept by giving away." †

(2.) That which thou givest away to the poor will increase thy store. For, "Give," saith our Saviour, "and it shall be given unto you ; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over. (Luke vi. 38.) By which variety of expressions our Saviour declareth, that charitable men shall not only receive back again from God what they give to the poor, but abundantly more ; which the wise man implieth, where he saith : "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth ;" (Prov. xi. 24 ; ) intimating that the more we scatter the seeds of our beneficence, the greater our increase will be. And, as it followeth in the next verse, "The liberal soul shall be made fat ;" (that is, he that is bountiful towards others shall be enriched himself ; ) "and he that watereth" (namely, others with his store) "shall be watered also himself ;" that is, shall be abundantly watered with the blessing of God, that he may have wherewith to do more good. Whereupon saith the apostle Paul, "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly ; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully : " (2 Cor. ix. 6 : ) thereby hinting unto us the great gain and increase that we shall receive by a free and liberal contribution to the poor saints and servants of Jesus Christ ; which Job acknowledged, when he said, "The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me ;" (Job xxix. 13 ; ) that is, I had their prayers, and the Lord blessed me extraordinarily for relieving them.

Some question there is about the lawfulness of putting out money to use. But this is out of question, that to put out a considerable part of thine estate to charitable uses, is, as a lawful, so the most gainful, usury in the world ; ‡ for thereby thou shalt receive, instead of six in the hundred, an hundred for six. If, therefore, thou wilt be wisely covetous, fall upon the practice of this Christian usury ; knowing that the more thou shalt adventure therein, the greater will be thy gain, and the more bountifully thou shalt receive.

OBJEC. v. Some object, that what they give unto the poor is utterly lost.

ANSWER. 1. This is directly contrary to what the Spirit of God saith : "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord ; and that which he hath given will he pay him again." (Prov. xix. 17.) If that

\* The ingenious writer of this sermon had in his mind's eye the subjoined "pleasant definition of an ambassador," given by Sir Henry Wotton, while at Venice: *Legatus est vir bonus peregrè missus ad mentiendum reipublicæ causâ.* Walton, his biographer, adds : "Which Sir Henry Wotton would have been content should have been thus Englished: *An ambassador is an honest man, sent to lie abroad for the good of his country.*"—EDIT.  
 † *Terrena seroando amittimus, largiendo servamus.*—ISIODORUS. ‡ *Eleemosyna non est divitiarum dispendium, sed discedendi potius compendium, quæstusque omnium uberri-mus.* "Almsgiving is not a wasteful expending of wealth ; on the contrary, it is a compendious mode of acquiring riches, and, beyond all other methods of employing capital, yields the most profitable returns."—EDIT.

which thou givest to the poor be repaid thee again, how can it be said to be lost? Indeed, the poor, unto whom thou givest, are unable to repay thee; yet, having such an all-sufficient Surety as God himself, who hath undertaken the repayment, thou needest not doubt thereof.

2. It is a great mistake in men, to think that what they give away to charitable uses is utterly lost: for, in truth, a covetous, scraping, and sordid hoarding-up [of] our wealth, is the only way of losing it. But, as I have formerly showed, a cheerful distributing [of] part thereof to the poor is the surest way of securing our stock, and increasing our store. I never yet met with the man who could say, that he was a loser in his estate by what he gave away to charitable uses. And this I can affirm, that very many have, and are still ready to acknowledge, that as the widow's oil increased by pouring out, so that their store hath multiplied and increased by giving away to good uses.

3. What thou givest to the poor is not lost, but sent to heaven before thee. It is reported of Cyrus, that he should say, that "by doing good he hoarded up riches for himself." But sure I am, that by communicating part of thy goods to the poor saints and servants of God, thou layest up treasure for thyself in heaven. (Matt. vi. 20.)

This is the very argument wherewith the apostle, in the words of the text, enforceth this duty of liberality to the poor; for, saith he, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate:" mark his reason in the next words: "laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come;" where the apostle intimateth, that, by laying out on the poor, we do in truth lay up in store for ourselves. Look, therefore, how much thou layest out here on good uses: by a bill of exchange, as it were, thou shalt receive as much, yea, much more, in the kingdom of heaven: to which agreeth that of St. Austin: "Whatsoever we give to the poor, we send before us; and we shall find that in heaven which we give here on earth."\*

I have met with a notable story to this purpose, which I shall the rather relate, because I have known some so affected upon the hearing thereof, as that they have taken up present resolutions to communicate more liberally to the necessities of the poor than ever they did in their lives before. The story is this:—

"Synesius, a good bishop of Cyrene, laboured much and a long time with one Evagrius, a heathen philosopher, to convert him to the Christian faith; but all in vain; the philosopher still objecting that the Christian religion taught many strange and improbable things; among others, that 'he that hath pity on the poor, lendeth to the Lord;' and 'he that giveth to the poor and needy, shall have treasure in heaven, and shall receive an hundred-fold from Christ, together with eternal life:' 'things,' said he, 'to be derided rather than believed.' The good bishop, notwithstanding, ceased not to travel with him, assuring him, by many arguments, that these things were true; and at last prevailed, so that the philosopher and all his children were baptized. A while after, he cometh to Synesius, and bringeth with him three hundred pounds of

\* *Quod pauperi damus ante nos pramittimus, &c.*—AUGUSTINUS.

gold for the poor, bids him take it, but would have a bill under his hand, that Christ should repay it him in another world. Synesius took the money for the poor, and gave him such a bill under his hand as he desired. Afterwards, the philosopher, being near his death, commanded his sons, that when they buried him, they should put Synesius's bill into his hand in the grave; which they did. The third day after he was buried, the philosopher seemed to appear to Synesius in the night, and said to him, 'Come to my sepulchre where I lie, and take thy bill; for I have received the debt, and am satisfied; which for thy assurance, I have subscribed it with mine own hand.' The bishop, not well knowing the meaning hereof, sent to his sons, who told him all; whereupon, taking them and the chief men of the city with him, he went to the grave, and found the paper in the hand of the corpse thus subscribed: *Ego, Evagrius, philosophus, tibi sanctissimo domino Synesio episcopo, salutem: Accepi debitum in his literis manu tua conscriptum, satisfactumque mihi est; et nullum contra te habeo jus propter aurum quod dedi tibi, et per te Christo Deo et Salvatore nostro;* that is, 'I, Evagrius the philosopher, to the most holy sir, bishop Synesius, greeting: I have received the debt which in this paper is written with thy hand, and I am satisfied, and I have no action against thee, for the gold which I gave thee, and by thee to Christ, our God and Saviour.'

This story, I say, I was willing to relate at large, not only because it passeth in antiquity for a great, though strange, truth, but also because, as I said, I have known it reported to some, with such good effect and success, as I hope and heartily wish it may have upon thy spirit.

4. Thy works of charity to the poor saints and servants of Jesus Christ, will hereafter be rewarded with everlasting glory and happiness in heaven. So much our Saviour expresseth, by declaring, that the kingdom of heaven was, from the foundation of the world, prepared for the merciful, who had showed themselves bountiful to the poor members of Jesus Christ, by clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, &c. (Matt. xxv. 34, 35.) And, saith our Saviour: "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward." (Matt. x. 41.) As by receiving a righteous man, "in the name of a righteous man," is to show kindness to him for his righteousness' sake; so by "receiving a prophet in the name of a prophet," is not only receiving of his message and ministry, but also a receiving of his person, by showing kindness unto him, either in entertaining of him, or contributing to his needs and necessities, and that as he is a minister of the gospel. And by the "prophet's and righteous man's reward," which such shall receive as relieve them, is meant that surpassing and excellent weight of glory in heaven, which cannot be expressed by the tongue of men or angels. Not that their works of charity do merit that glorious reward, but in regard of the promise of God made to all those who in faith apply themselves to the practice of good works.

OBJEC. VI. "Many there are who make a great profession of religion, but manifest little power thereof in their lives; being as backward to any good work, and as barren therein as any whosoever."

ANSWER. I must confess there is more truth in this objection than in any I have yet met withal. For I cannot but acknowledge, there are too many whose leaves of profession are very broad, but their fruits of charity and liberality are very small; who are a shame to religion, a reproach to Christianity, and a scandal to profession.

But this may be taken for an answer: That whereas many who make a profession of religion are barren in good works, questionless they are no sincere Christians, no true converts, but mere outside professors. For most certain it is, that "the elect of God put on bowels of mercies," as the apostle Paul speaketh. (Col. iii. 12.) Therefore, whosoever he be that, having this world's good, doth make a profession of religion, and yet shutteth up his bowels of compassion from his poor brother, and will not communicate towards his necessities, let his profession be never so specious and glorious in the eyes of men, yet certainly he is but a rotten professor and dissembling hypocrite in the sight of God; for, saith the apostle St. James: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction:" (James i. 27 :) implying that works of charity are clear evidences of the truth of our religion, and of the sincerity of our profession. If you look into the scripture, you shall scarce read of a man truly godly, but he was charitable; nay, according to his eminence in godliness, he was eminent in works of charity. To instance in some few:—

Abraham, the father of the faithful, as he was eminent in godliness, so was he eminent in hospitality, which is one of the noblest works of charity. For we read how Abraham stood at his tent-door, and no sooner saw strangers passing by, but called them in, and gave them entertainment. (Gen. xviii. 1, 2.)

As there was none like Job, in his days, for piety and godliness, of whom God himself giveth this testimony, that "there was none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God, and eschewed evil;" (Job i. 8;) so neither was there any like Job for liberality. Note what he saith of himself: "The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me;" that is, I had many good prayers, and well-wishes from them, whom I had relieved in their low and perishing condition; "and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy;" that is, "By my bounty and liberality to her in her necessity, I gave her great cause of hearty joy." (Job xxix. 13.) And afterwards Job declareth how he had not, according to the manner of covetous and churlish persons, eaten his meat alone, without giving part thereof to the hungry orphans. Neither had he seen any perish for want of clothing. (Job xxxi. 17, 19.) Under which expressions is implied, his readiness to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, with other like acts of charity.

It is recorded, to the perpetual praise and commendation of good Obadiah, that, in the time of famine and persecution, he not only hid the prophets of God by fifty in a cave, from the cruelty of Jezebel, but that also, in that extreme dearth, [he] there sustained them with food, and supplied their necessities. (1 Kings xviii. 4.)

We read of Cornelius, who, as he was a godly and devout man, so he was very charitable; for the Spirit of God giveth this testimony of him,

that he was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the poor;" he was not only charitable, but did abound in works of charity, giving much alms to the poor. (Acts x. 2.)

We likewise read of Gaius, who is recorded to be a godly, wealthy citizen of Corinth, that he did usually in his house entertain, not only the apostle Paul, but also all Christians resorting to that city. (Rom. xvi. 23.)

The apostle Paul, who was an holy, zealous Christian, was likewise charitable; for in his Epistle to Timothy, reckoning up some of his graces, as his faith, patience, long-suffering, &c., he mentions charity. (2 Tim. iii. 10.)

Yea, we read of Zaccheus, that though, before his conversion, he was a most covetous extortioner; yet, after his conversion, he gave the half of his goods to the poor; for, said he, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor." (Luke xix. 8.)

But the most remarkable is the charity of the primitive Christians, who, being converted by the ministry of the apostles, and having embraced the Christian faith, it is said, that "as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need." (Acts iv. 34, 35.)

Thus you see it hath ever been the property of a sincere Christian and true believer to be charitable. And certainly, whosoever, by a true and lively faith, are ingrafted into Jesus Christ, cannot but be fruitful branches, bringing forth the fruits of mercy and compassion, of charity and liberality, towards their poor brethren.

I shall conclude, therefore, with a passage of a reverend divine, now with God: \*—

"If the world hath locked up thine heart, and congealed the bowels of thy compassion towards the poor; let the blaze of thine outward profession shine never so fair; manage the heartless representation of external holiness never so demurely; keep the times and tasks of daily duties with never so great austerity; nay, though thou be able to amaze weaker Christians with some affected strains and artificial fervency in prayer; for all this, if the holy heat of brotherly love doth not warm thine heart, and upon occasion work affectionately and effectually; I dare say, thou art rotten at the heart-root; there is no true love of God in thee, no grace, no hope of salvation.

"Let that terrible and flaming place against all covetous Pharisees, 'Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?' (1 John iii. 17;)—let it, I say, dissolve thy frozen-heartedness this way, and enlarge the bowels of pity towards thy poor brethren of Christ Jesus; or else never look hereafter to look him in the face with comfort, or to find mercy at that day."

\* MR. ROBERT BOLTON; in his "Directions for a comfortable Walking with God," p. 262.