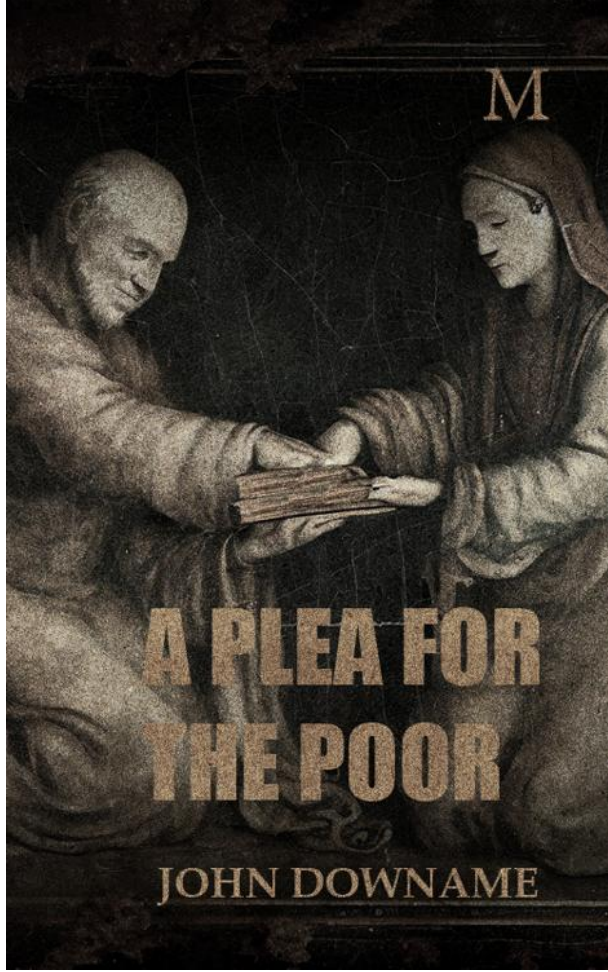




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**A PLEA FOR
THE POOR**

JOHN DOWNNAME



A Plea for the Poor

Or a treatise of beneficence and almes-deeds: teaching how these Christian duties are rightly to be performed, and persuading to the frequent doing of them.

Necessary for these times, wherein the works of mercy are so much neglected, or so indiscreetly practiced.

Published by JOHN DOWNAME Bachelor in Divinity.

HEBR. 13. 16.

To do good and communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices GOD is well pleased.

London Printed by Edward Griffin for Ralph Mabbe, and are to be sold at his shop in Paul's Church-yard at the sign of the Grey-hound.
1616.

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The Analysis of the Psalm.

He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor. his righteousness endureth forever, his horn shall be exalted with honor. - Psalm 112:9

CHAPTER. 1.

The resolution of the whole Psalm, the parts of the text, and the general doctrines which arise out of it.

Sect. 1. Analysis of the whole Psalm.

This Psalm is doctrinal; teaching us, that the godly and just man is blessed, and that whether we consider him simply in himself, which is handled from verse 1. to the tenth, or compare him with the wicked verse 10. In himself he is blessed: first, in respect of his inward graces exercised in outward duties, and secondly, in regard of many singular privileges, wherewith his graces and virtuous actions are richly rewarded, and these are intermingled throughout the whole Psalm. His inward graces here specified are diverse. First, the fear of God. Secondly, delight in his commandments, verse 1. Thirdly, graciousness. Fourthly, mercy and compassion. Fifthly, justice, verse 3. Sixthly, faith and affiance in God, verse. 7.

The outward actions, in which they are exercised, are showing favor, giving and lending to those that stand in need, moderation of his affairs with discretion, verse 5. and liberal employing of his riches to all good uses, especially to the relief of the poor, verse 9. The privileges wherewith God blesseth him, are also many; as first the prosperous condition of his posterity, verse 2. Secondly, the establishment of his outward estate, verse 3 and 9. Thirdly, ability and readiness to relieve others in the time of adversity, verse 4. Fourthly, permanency of prosperity, and perpetuity of fame, verse 6 and 9. Fifthly, security and safety in time of danger, verse 7 and 8. Secondly, the godly man is blessed, being compared with the wicked, seeing he is not only miserable in himself, but also in the sight of the righteous man's happiness, verse 10.

Sect 2. The manner of penning this Psalm.

And this is the resolution of this Psalm. The manner of penning of it is also to be considered, which is very exact & accurate. For every hemistich or half verse, beginneth in order with a letter of the Hebrew Alphabet; only the two last verses have three letters, after every pause or comma one, that so the whole Alphabet might be expressed. The which was done to these ends; first to help the memory, when as they referred every sentence to a letter of the alphabet, with which they were familiarly acquainted. Secondly, to note the excellency of the argument here handled, when as he was so curious and exact in the penning of it. Thirdly to teach us, that there is a laudable use of art and accurate labor in the service of God, if it be in a holy manner, grave, sober and tending to the use of edifying; especially if the occasion be more than ordinary, as was the composing of this Psalm; which (as the learned think) with some others were penned by David, that they might be sung at their public and solemn feasts, when as all the people were assembled together.

Sect. 3. The sum of the Psalm.

The sum of it is the blessedness of the godly man, because he is inwardly endowed with the riches of spiritual graces, and outwardly advanced in many excellent privileges, both presently in this life, and forever in the life to come. So that those words of the Apostle are an abridgement of it. 1. Tim. 4. 8. Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promises of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

The main scope at which the Psalmist aimeth, is to persuade all unto godliness, seeing it is the only way to attain unto blessedness.

Sect. 4. The parts of the text.

And so I come to the words themselves, which contain two things; first certain duties or properties of the godly and blessed man, springing from the inward graces of his goodness and mercifulness.

Secondly, the privileges wherewith God rewardeth them. The duties are two; the first general, which is beneficence, bounty and openhandedness to all, in all good actions and works of mercy, signified by those words, He hath dispersed. The second more special, namely his liberality towards the poor, in the next words, he hath given to the poor. The privileges are two; the first is the lasting benefit of his good works; his righteousness endureth forever. Secondly the establishment of his estate with honor, in the last words, his horn shall be exalted with honor.

Sect. 5. 1 General doctrine That blessedness consists as much in graces and virtuous actions, as in privileges and rewards.

But before we come to entreat of these parts particularly, we may generally observe that the holy Ghost showing the blessedness of a godly man, doth make it to consist as much in his graces and virtuous actions, as in his privileges and rewards. From whence we learn, that we are as happy in our graces and good works, as in the prerogatives and rewards which do accompany them. The which is manifest both by plain testimonies of Scriptures, and by evident reasons, grounded upon them. For the first, he is pronounced blessed in this Psalm, who feareth the Lord, and delighteth greatly in his commandments, verse. 1. and Psal. 119. 1. Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. 2. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. So our Savior pronounceth them blessed, who hear the word of God and keep it. Luk. 11. 28. and saith unto his Disciples, if ye know these things, happy are ye if you do them. Yea this virtue and obedience unto God's law make us blessed, not only in the time when they are rewarded with prosperity and worldly benefits, but even in our greatest afflictions and persecutions, according to that, Psalm. 94. 12. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law.

Sect 6. The reasons which prove the former point

The reasons also to prove this are clear and manifest. For first, virtue and goodness are so excellent in their own nature, that they bring always their reward with them. This appeareth in many places of this book of the Psalms, where the Prophet preferreth God's commandments and the keeping of them before gold and all manner of riches, as being much more profitable, and before the honey and the honey comb, as being much more sweet and pleasant. So the wise man commendeth wisdom, that is, the knowledge and practice of true godliness, before silver, gold, and precious stones. And Job telleth us that it cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious Onyx, or the Sapphire; the gold and the crystal cannot equal it, and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. And this even the heathen man discerned by the light of nature; O virtue (saith he) if we could behold thee with bodily eyes, with what admirable love wouldest thou inflame us. And another affirmeth, that in whom soever virtue is, there is nothing wanting unto his happiness.

Secondly, we are as happy in our graces and virtues, as in the benefits which accrue unto us by them, because they are the means through God's mercy and free promises of all rewards and privileges: in which respect the Apostle saith, that godliness is profitable for all things, as having the promises of this life, and of that which is to come. 1 Tim. 4. 8.

Thirdly, because they make us more to resemble God the chief blessedness, whose excellency consisteth in being, and doing good, and not in receiving any other benefit by it.

Lastly, grace and glory are inseparably joined together, whereof it is that the Apostle compriseth our sanctification under the name of our glorification, because it is the first part of it which assureth us of all the rest. Rom. 8. 30.

Sect. 7. The use of the former doctrine.

The consideration of which point serveth to show and condemn their folly and madness, who will embrace no virtue, nor do any good work gratis and without reward, but only when they are hired with benefits; no not justice itself without a bribe.

Secondly, it serveth for the comfort of all those who are endued with God's sanctifying graces and continually exercised in virtuous actions, seeing they are blessed whatsoever their estate in the world be, whether they abound in earthly benefits, and flourish in prosperity, or whether they want these, and contrariwise be in misery and affliction.

Finally, hereby we may try and examine, whether we are happy, or miserable; for if we be rich in grace and good works, then are we truly blessed though we be sick and weak in our bodies, distressed and penurious in our estates, and disgraced, and infamed in our name and reputation; but if in all these we have our hearts desire, and be destitute of the other, our estate is wretched; for where there is no grace, there neither is there any blessedness.

Sect. 8. Doctrine. That it is a property of a godly man to be beneficent.

The second general point to be observed is; that it is a property of a godly and blessed man, to be beneficent, ready to all good works, and liberal towards the poor. For so far forth are we godly, as we are imitators of the godly nature; but in nothing do we more resemble God, then when we imitate the goodness of his nature, and be bountiful and beneficial to all that need our help, which who so do, are blessed, and none but they. So Pro. 14. 21. He that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he. And thus they are blessed in the work itself, according to that Act. 20. 35. It is a more blessed thing to give, then to receive: and blessed also in their reward, as our savior telleth us. Math. 5. 7. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy, and

be also received into the place of blessedness, according to that Mat. 25. 34. Come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; whereas contrariwise the merciless are accursed; for they shall have judgment without mercy, that have shown no mercy, as it is I am. 2. 13. As we may also see it in the last sentence, in which the judge shall say unto those who have neglected these works of mercy; Depart from me ye cursed into the fire prepared for the devil and his Angels; for I was hungry, and ye fed me not, I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink, &c. Mat. 25. 41.

Sect. 9. The ungenerous are rightly called misers.

From whence we may gather a special and forcible argument to make us loath gripple covetousness, and to love liberality towards the poor and openhandedness. For even in the confluence of worldly wealth, ungenerous and sordidous men deserve the name of wretched misers, seeing none in truth are more desperately miserable: for they are not the masters, but the slaves of their goods which they possess, and have no power to enjoy them for their own comfort: Et quid est miserius misero non miserante se ipsum? What is more miserable than a miser that pitieth not himself? neither do they use them for the benefit of others. Nam qui sibi nequam, cui bonus? how can he be good to another, that is so evil to himself? yea as they are hurtful unto others in defrauding them of their right, or in spoiling them of that which they have, by wrong and oppression; so they are most pernicious to themselves; for they hoard up their riches to be a witness against them at the latter day, when as the rust of their silver and gold shall eat their flesh like fire; as it is I am. 5. 3. They deprive themselves of their present benefits, and are deprived by God of their future blessedness; they are in this life accursed of the poor, and in the life to come accursed of God. So also this may be an effectual [2] reason to persuade us, that we embrace beneficence and be liberal in alms deeds; seeing if we do so, we shall be blessed in our work, and also blessed in our wages: but otherwise though we make never so glorious a profession of religion, and give our lives in defense of it;

yet if we be destitute of charity, and barren in bearing the fruits of it, it will not profit us, as the Apostle teacheth us. 1. Cor. 13. 3. I am. 2. 14. 15.

CHAPTER 2.

Of Beneficence, the subject, object and properties of it.

Sect. 1. Exposition of the words.

And so I come from the general observations, to the particular duties. The first whereof is beneficence, or readiness to all good works unto all; in these words, He hath dispersed. For so I expound them, because he speaketh of alms deeds, in the next words, and it is not like that in these diverse phrases he intendeth the same thing.

Secondly, because the metaphor taken from them who sow their seed will well bear it, who scatter it all abroad in the field, and not in the lowest places only.

Thirdly, because the general doctrine of beneficence, and the particular of alms deeds are in other places joined together, as 1 Tim. 6. 18. That they do good and be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, and Heb. 13. 16. To do good, and communicate, forget not &c.

Sect 2. Beneficence what it is.

Now in speaking of this beneficence, I will first consider the duty itself, and secondly the properties of it, and how it is to be exercised. The duty of beneficence itself is with a bountiful heart and hand, to do good unto all, who in any kind whatsoever need our help, by our riches, labor, care, counsel, providence or howsoever. So that this

grace extendeth itself to all good works, as building Schools and Colleges, and maintaining the ministry and means of God's worship, erecting of Hospitals, and allowing yearly Pensions to Parishes, and corporations for the relief of their poor: or if we want ability for these things, comforting the distressed, counselling those that need counsel, helping the blind and lame, by being eyes and feet unto them.

Sect. 3. Beneficence commended unto all.

And these duties of beneficence are commanded unto all. Heb. 13. 16. and are numbered by the Apostle among the fruits of the spirit. Gal. 5. 12. and there joined with love and faith, to show that there is no true faith or love where beneficence and goodness is wanting: but especially they are charged upon rich men, because they have the privilege of ability above others, and better means to express their inward bounty in the outward act. And howsoever the poorer sort may have as large and liberal hearts as they, and consequently may be as acceptable in the sight of God, because he looketh principally, not to the gift, but to the mind of the giver; yet wanting riches they cannot show unto men the visible testimony of their bountiful hearts, nor produce their liberality into act, seeing they want the chief instrument of well doing, which are hence called goods, because by them we are enabled to do good. And indeed this is the right use of these rich talents which God hath lent unto us, that shall be so highly rewarded at the day of our great account; and the neglect hereof the hiding of those talents, which shall be at that day so severely punished.

Sect. 4. The object of our beneficence.

Now the object of this our beneficence is very large; for it must extend unto all men, according to that 1 Thes. 5. 15. But ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. Yea even

to our enemies, as the wise man teacheth us, Pro. 25. 21. If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink. And this our Savior requireth. Mat. 5. 44. Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, &c. the which is enforced with a strong reason, because herein we shall be like our heavenly father, verse. 45. which if we neglect, and limit our beneficence to our friends, we shall be no better than publicans and sinners. Luk. 6. 32. 33.

Sect 5. That our beneficence must chiefly extend to the faithful.

But though our beneficence must extend to all, yet chiefly to those who are of the household of faith. Gal. 6. 10. And though we be liberal in scattering the seed of our good works in all grounds which are ready to receive it; yet principally we must cast it into those, which being fertile and fruitful, will yield unto us the best increase. Now such are the faithful, who being the true members of Christ, he will acknowledge what is done unto them as done unto himself. Mat. 25. 33. which consideration moved David to extend his goodness and bounty to the Saints that are upon the earth, and to the excellent, as appeareth, Psal. 16. 3. And the Apostle Paul to commend the faith of the Ephesians, in the Lord Jesus, when as he saw it approved by their love towards all the Saints. Eph. 1. 15.

Sect. 6. The properties of beneficence. First, that it be liberal and bountiful.

The properties of this beneficence are diverse, and they are all implied in this metaphor of dispersing or scattering seed. As first in respect of the quantity, it must be liberal and bountiful, and we must dare multum multis, do much good unto many. For though a man be never so sparing in other things, yet he will not be ungenerous in sowing his seed, but will scatter and cast it from him in full handfuls, as much as is sufficient, and the ground will well bear; because he

knoweth that the fruitful harvest will return all again with large increase: and so the godly and blessed man though he be hard in idle expenses and superfluities, as in rioting, gaming, adorning the back and pampering the belly, yet he is bountiful in doing good, and scattereth the seeds of his beneficence with a liberal hand, because he knoweth that after the seedtime the harvest will follow, and then all will be returned with great advantage, which argument the Apostle useth to stir up the Corinthians to this liberal beneficence, because he that soweth bountifully, shall reap bountifully, and he that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly. 2 Cor. 9. 6. And this the wise man observed. Pro. 11. 24. There is (saith he) that scattereth, and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and cometh to poverty. 25. The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered again. In which regard one saith well, Non qui habet & seruat, sed qui impertit est diues, & impertitio, non autem possessio diuites facit. Not he that hath wealth and keepeth it, but he that bestoweth it is rich, neither is it the possession, but the laying out of riches, that makes men rich. For he that soweth and gathereth more, is he who giveth earthly things, and gathereth heavenly and eternal: but he who gathereth on earth, and bestoweth it not, he putteth his treasure into a broken bag. Hag. 1. 6.

Sect. 7. Bounty in our beneficence is required,

And this bounty in our beneficence God requireth. Deut. 15. 11. Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor and needy in thy land: especially of rich men, who must not only give a portion of their wealth to good uses; but also in some fit proportion to their means, for the Apostle would have rich men charged to be rich in good works, even as God hath given them all things richly to enjoy. 1. Tim. 6. 17. 18. which who so neglecteth, is not only a miser, but a fool, seeing he depriveth himself of the fruits of harvest, because he cannot find in his heart to sow his seed; yea loseth not only an earthly crop, but the rich harvest of heavenly happiness, because he will not forgo for the present momentary trifles and earthly vanities.

Sect 8. No bounty in worldlings to charitable uses.

And thus it appeareth that the beneficence of the godly man is bountiful. The contrary we may observe in wicked worldlings: for either they are misers and not liberal at all, or quite contrary in their bounty to the blessed man. For where God commandeth them to spend, namely in beneficence and works of mercy, there they spare, and their hands like Jereboam's are so dried and shrunk up in the sinews, that they cannot stretch them out to do good. Or if they do, it is to give some penny alms out of many thousands, upon some qualm of present pity, or to keep their conscience sleeping, that they may not accuse and torment them for their unmercifulness. But where God biddeth spare, there they spend like prodigals, as on dogs and harlots, in feasting and banqueting, in building and bravery, in gaming and reveling, and all other excess and riot. And whereas the godly man spareth from his superfluities, yea sometimes necessities, that he may have the more to spend in bounty and beneficence; he only spareth in the works of mercy, that he may have the more to spend upon his sinful vanities. But as the stingy that soweth not, shall not reap, so the prodigal worldling that soweth only to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, as it is, Gal. 6. 8.

Sect. 9. The second property is alacrity.

The second property is alacrity and cheerfulness; the which is also implied by the metaphor. For the husbandman casteth his seed into the ground, not only willingly, but also cheerfully and joyfully; not in respect of his present parting with his seed, but because he expecteth a fruitful harvest. And this the Lord requireth in all good works, according to that Eccles. 9. 10. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; and that of the Apostle. Tit. 3. 1. Put them in mind to be ready to every good work. And especially in our beneficence and works of mercy; because it is not so much the outward act of the hand, as the inward service of the heart wherein

he delighteth. So 2. Cor. 9. 7. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver, and Rom. 12. 8. the Apostle requireth, that he who showeth mercy, do it with cheerfulness. And this the Lord chiefly respecteth and rewardeth; for so it is said, Pro. 11. 25. The liberal soul shall be made fat; not the hand, but the soul and heart. An example whereof we have in David, who was accepted for his readiness to build the temple, though he never performed it in act, but only had a desire to build it. 2 Sam. 7. And in the particular case of giving alms, that 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. 8. 12.

Yea this even the heathen man discerned, and therefore defined a benefit, to be a loving and voluntary action, *tribuens gaudium, capiensque tribuendo*, yielding joy, and receiving in yielding it: and affirmeth that a benefit cannot be touched with the hand, but is seen with the mind: for there is great difference between the matter of a benefit, and the benefit itself: and therefore gold and silver is not the benefit, but the good will of the giver, for they may be lost, but the benefit still remaineth.

Sect 10. Cheerfulness in the countenance.

Now this cheerfulness showeth itself in our countenance, words and actions.

For the first, benefits are to be done with a cheerful look and smiling countenance, which addeth much to the grace of a good deed, when the eye of the giver telleth the receiver that the benefit bestowed is a token sent unto him from a loving heart: whereas contrariwise a sour look much blemisheth it, as though the hand had stolen it from the heart at unawares, and the eye were displeased when it discovereth the theft.

Sect. 11. Cheerfulness in words.

Secondly, the cheerfulness of the heart appeareth in our words, when as we speak comfortably to the party unto whom we do good. And surely then are these well suited together, *Quando adijcimus bona verba, bonis rebus*: when we join good words, with good deeds, which is to speak to his heart who receiveth the gift, and doubleth the sweetness of any benefit. Contrary whereunto are proud speeches, insolent and bitter expostulations, which turn a benefit into an injury, and sometime cause a man by a gift to purchase an enemy, *Nam injuri altius quam merita descendunt*, wrongs pierce deeper than gifts, and the memory taketh fast hold of them, when as it easily suffereth these to slip out. To this point the son of Sirach speaketh notably. cap. 18. verse 15. My son blemish not thy good deeds, neither use uncomfortable words when thou givest anything. 16. Shall not the dew assuage the heat? so is a word better than a gift. 17. is not a word better than a gift? but both are with a gracious man. 18. A fool will upbraid aid churlishly, and a gift of the envious consumeth the eyes.

Sect 12. Cheerfulness in the action. First, when a man giveth speedily.

Thirdly, it appeareth in the action, when a man doth good speedily and readily. For as one saith, *Beneficentia est virtus quae moram non patitur*. Beneficence is a virtue which disliketh all delays; and as Seneca telleth us, *Omnis benignitas properat*, all goodness is quick of hand and swift of foot, and hateth as well the paralytical shaking and staggering of those, who doubt whether to give or no, as the gouty lameness of such as after they are resolved to give, make but slow hast. For these delays show unwillingness. *Et qui moratur, neganti proximus est*, he that delayeth a benefit is the next door to him that denieth: even as on the other side, a quick hand is an evident sign of a free heart, for *proprium est libenter facientis, cito facere*, it is the

property of him that giveth willingly, to give it speedily. And as this graceth the gift in respect of the giver, so it doubleth the benefit to him that receiveth it. Nam bis dat qui cito dat, he giveth twice that giveth quickly, and the swifter that a benefit cometh the sweeter it tasteth. There must then be no stay in these actions of beneficence, but only that which is caused through the receivers shamefastness, for a benefit loseth his grace, when it sticketh to his fingers who is about to bestow it, as though it were not given but plucked from him. And so the receiver praiseth not his benefactors bounty, but his own importunity, because he doth not seem to have given, but to have held too weakly against his violence.

Sect 13. That we should prevent men's suites with our readiness.

It must then be the benefactors care to prevent with his readiness their suites who need his help; and like the Astrologer, he must divine at the wants of the poor before they lay them open, imitating the sun which giveth light, heat and vital influence without entreaty. He must be like the inhabitants of the land of Tema, who brought water to him who was thirsty, and prevented with their bread him that fled; yea he must labor to be like our heavenly father, who as the Psalmist speaketh, not only giveth us our hearts desire, and withholdeth not the request of our lips, but also preventeth us with his blessings of goodness, and often giveth before we ask. Psal. 21. 2. 3. And this also is of singular use in the bestowing of benefits, and maketh the gift much more acceptable. Nam illud beneficium iucundum, victurumque in animo scias, quod obuiam venit: that benefit is most delightful, and will longest live in the mind of the receiver, which stayeth not till he come to seek it, but cometh out to meet him in the middle way. For it is a torment and heavy burden to an ingenuous mind to crave, the which so presseth the heart, that oftentimes it maketh the blood to come into the face, which who so with his readiness preventeth doubleth the benefit. And if this be omitted, the gift loseth some part of his grace, because it is purchased with pain, and cometh not freely and without cost, Nam

non tulit gratis qui cum rogasset accepit, there is nothing dearer then that which is bought with the price of many prayers: and the benefactor also loseth some part of his thanks; for a benefit pierceth the heart like a dart; diversely in respect of the diverse manner of casting it, slightly if it be cast faintly, and deeply when as it cometh forcibly, and with a good will.

Sect. 14. We must at least willingly entertain the first motion.

But if this hath been omitted to prevent suits with our readiness, yet at least the cheerfulness of the heart must show itself in willing entertaining the first motion: and if our benefit have not sought him out before he sued, yet at least let him find it when he sueth. *Atque etiam dum rogat erogemus*, and let us give even whilst he asketh; or if necessary occasion causeth any stay, yet let us by all means not seem to doubt and deliberate whether we shall give or no; for, *proximus est neganti qui dubitavit, nullamque meretur gratiam*: he that doubteth deserveth small thanks, because he is next neighbor to him that denieth; *nam qui tarde dedit, diu noluit*, he that was slow in giving, was long unwilling. And this ready entertaining the first motion the wise man requireth. Pro. 3. 27. Withhold not good from thy neighbor when it is in thy power to do it; say not to him go and come again, and tomorrow I will give thee, when thou hast it by thee. For nothing is more tedious than to hang long in suspense, and we endure with more patience to have our hopes beheaded and quickly killed, then to be racked and tortured with long delays, according to that, Pro. 13. 12. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.

But especially we must avoid delays in giving after we have granted; for there is nothing more bitter then to be forced to make a new suite for that which hath already been obtained, and to find more difficulty in the delivery, then in the grant.

Sect. 15. The third property is constancy in doing good.

The third property of beneficence is constancy, and assiduity in doing good; the which is also implied by the metaphor; for the husbandman contenteth not himself to have sowed his seed in former years, but he continueth to sow it still to the end of his life: and though the crop be sometime so small, that the seed itself is scarce returned: yet he will not be discouraged, but will again cast it into the ground, in hope of better success. And thus must we also do in sowing the seeds of our beneficence, casting them daily into the grounds which we find fitted and prepared, and not thinking it enough to adorn ourselves with them, as with our best apparel, which we only put on, on high and festival days, we must make it to be our daily exercise; benefacta benefactis pertegentes (as one saith) making one good deed an introduction unto another, and never leaving to do good, so long as there is any power in our hands to do it. And unto this the Apostle exhorteth. 2. Thes. 3. 13. Brethren be not weary of well-doing, and 1. Thes. 5. 15. Ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men: wherein we shall imitate our heavenly father, and approve ourselves to be his children, who reneweth his mercies unto us every morning, and multiplieth his blessings upon us every day with a new supply, and so we shall be sure to receive a rich reward, for if we be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in these works of the Lord, we may be assured that our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord, as it is promised. 1. Cor. 15. 58.

Sect. 16 We must increase in doing good.

Yea our care must be, as to grow in grace, so to bring forth new fruits of good works, imitating herein the Church of Thiatira, whose last works excelled the first, Apoc. 2. 19. Seeing we cannot otherwise be sure to be constant in them; for they who go not forward but stand at a stay, will not long stay in their standing. And in this the

beneficence of a godly man differeth from that which is in worldlings, who do some good works of mercy by fits, but are not constant in well doing; and also from that which is in hypocrites who do some good deeds for praise or profit, but yet desist when their turn is served; the flame of their charity lasting no longer then the fuel doth wherewith it is nourished. But these have only a green blade of an outward profession, and never come to the bearing of ripe fruits; they run well for a time, but get not the garland, because they do not hold out to the end of the race. They are not true Christians, but only dead images of them, like unto that which Nebuchadnezzar saw in a dream, which had a head of gold, the middle parts of silver, his thighs of brass, his legs of iron and his feet part of iron and part of clay; for so the head and first beginnings of their works are golden and glorious, but the last and latter ends base and of no worth.

Sect. 17. The fourth property which is equality.

Now that we may thus constantly hold out in well doing unto the end, there is required in the last place, that equality and proportion be observed in discreet fitting of our works of mercy and beneficence unto our state and ability, that they may match, but not exceed it. For we have not a sea of sufficiency which cannot be drawn dry, no nor yet is our estate in itself a springing fountain, which is no sooner empty, but presently it filleth again: but it is like a pool or standing water, or (as it were) a small stream which is fed and supplied by the spring of God's bounty; and therefore we must not let it flow out faster than it cometh in, but still preserve the main stock (unless it be in cases of great necessity) and keep the pond in a convenient fullness, letting the overplus continually run over to good uses, for otherwise there will be an intermission in the stream of our bounty, till the emptiness be replenished, and too much at one time will cause necessarily too little at another.

Sect. 18. Good husbandry required that we may do good deeds.

But yet because the Scriptures require, that we should be bountiful and plentiful in good works, this should increase our care and diligence in preserving and increasing of our estates, by all lawful means, in acquisition and getting by our honest and painful labors in our callings, and by our frugal husbanding and thrifty spending of our goods, that so having greater plenty we may be the richer in good works. According to that Eph. 4. 28. Otherwise though we cannot justly be condemned of ungenerousness and uncharitableness, because we do but little good, seeing we cannot go beyond our tether, nor extend our good works beyond the reach of our ability; yet may we be condemned of sloth and negligence, or wasting and ill husbandry, whereof it is that we have no better ability.

CHAPTER 3.

Of Almes deeds, and first of the action of giving, and the properties of it.

Sect. 1. Of alms deeds and first of the action of giving.

And so I come from the general duty of beneficence, to the more special duty of alms deeds, expressed in these words, he hath given to the poor. In which consider two things; the action, and the object. Of which I will entreat, first severally, then jointly. The action is giving, which is a free and liberal contract, whereby the property and use of some good thing, is alienated from one and conferred upon another, out of the good will and bounty of the benefactor. And it hath two extremes, the one, in excess, lavish prodigality; and the other in defect, base stinginess. Between which extremes this

virtuous action holdeth the mean, being guided with true wisdom, judgment and discretion (as all other virtues are, according to that, Psal. 112. 5. A good man showeth favor and lendeth; he will guide his affairs with discretion.) And in respect of the quantity of the gift, it keepeth a good proportion, both in respect of his ability, who giveth, and his necessity, who receiveth. And hereof it is that these alms deeds are called righteousness in the Scriptures (as hereafter we shall see) to teach us, that they are to be done justly, according to the rule of equity; due respect being had both to our own state and means, and the necessities and wants of our poor brethren.

Sect. 2. Moderation in giving according to our ability.

In respect of the former, it is said that the godly and blessed man giveth to the poor, *Dat non profundit*, he giveth but not wasteth, he so giveth as that he may still give, and because it is a more blessed thing to give, then to receive and crave, he preserveth the stock and store house of his bounty, that by continual giving he may continue his greater blessedness. So the Apostle appointing a collection for the Saints, enjoineth everyone to lay up in store as God hath prospered him. Everyone therefore in his alms deeds, is to respect his own ability, and to give neither above nor under his means. The which a man observeth, when as he so giveth, as that he may be able to hold on in the same proportion, and that rather with increase then abatement. So the heathen man could say, *Dabo egentibus, sed ut ipse non egeam; succurro perituro, sed ut ipse non peream*. I will so give to the needy, as that I do not need myself; I will relieve those who are ready to perish, but yet so, as that I myself may not perish. How be it this rule holdeth only in ordinary, for the extreme necessity of the poor (as we shall see hereafter) and the general necessity of the Church, bring a non obstante, and dispense with it; as we may see in the Acts of the Apostles, where the Saints that had houses and lands, fold them, that they might thereby supply the great wants of the faithful living under grievous persecution, the necessity of the times

urging and requiring it. The which was not proper to those times, but should now also be put in practice, upon the like occasion.

Sect. 3. We must give according to our neighbors need.

Secondly, we are to order with wisdom the act of giving, in respect of the parties estate who is to receive our alms, bestowing more or less, as his wants require. For he that giveth more than sufficient, non dat sed di'at, he doth not properly out of charity give an alms, but out of bounty enricheth with benefits. And he that giveth less than their necessity requireth. Non pauperem sustentat, sed paupertatem, he cureth not the disease of poverty, but only giveth some present ease; and if he apply not fresh remedies, he hath but prolonged their pains, by making it more tolerable, which extremity would soon have ended and quite taken away.

And therefore as the godly and blessed man doth in his giving alms avoid that extreme of excess, so much more the contrary extreme of defect; and chooseth rather to offend on the safer side; because it is better the poor man should take a slight surfeit, through too much fullness, then to be pinched and famished for want of necessaries; and that the merciful man's alms should aspire to the title of bounty and beneficence, then to be abased with the name of nearness and ungenerous hardness.

Sect. 4. We must so give to one as that we do not neglect many.

Yet because great benefits can reach but to few, and alms deeds must extend to many, wisdom as much as may be avoideth both extremes, and so giveth to one, as that many others may not be neglected. And therefore the godly man maketh wisdom to deal the dole, because nothing is well done which is done without it. For as the heathen man saith, non est beneficiu nisi quod ration datur, quoniam ratio omnis honesti comes est. It is not a benefit which is not given with reason, because reason is the guide and companion of all honest and

virtuous actions. And in this regard alms deeds are fitly likened unto sowing of seed, wherein the rule is, *manuserendum non thylaco*, the seed is to be cast out of the hand, and not out of the whole sack, and strained through the fingers, that it may be scattered abroad and so go far, and not poured on heaps, which were *non serere* but *congerere*, not to sow but to surcharge the ground with superfluity in one place, and to cast nothing in another. And thus in giving alms, we must cast the seed of our beneficence with an even and indifferent hand, not upon one or two alone, but upon many, for it is the nature of goodness, as the schoolmen speak to be *diffusiva sui*, extending itself to the benefit of many. The which is also signified by that phrase of casting our bread upon the face of the waters, where he useth the plural number to intimate unto us, that the object of our bounty should be many, and not one or some few; and by the phrase of communicating, which the Apostle useth. 1. Tim. 6. 18. which implieth thus much that our alms deeds must be common unto many. And it is plainly expressed by the wise man. Eccles. 11. 2. Give a portion to seven, and also unto eight, where by a certain number an uncertain is signified, but yet thus much is required of us, that we confine not our liberality unto a few, but extend our goodness to a numerous company.

Sect 5. We must give alms cheerfully.

Again whereas alms deeds have here the title of giving given unto them, and a gift is a free and liberal action: we hence gather, that they are to be done willingly and cheerfully, and not grudgingly and repiningly. The which the Lord forbidderh and condemneth. Deut. 15. 10. Thou shalt surely give unto thy poor brother, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto 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. For as in all other duties, so in this, the Lord more requireth the inward service of the heart then the outward service of the hand, according to that, 2. Cor. 9. 7. Every man as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly or

of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver. An example of which cheerfulness we have in the faithful of the Church of Corinth, who were so forward in ministering to the poor Saints, that the Apostle professeth it needless to remember them of it. 2. Cor. 9. 1. Yea an almes deed is a gift not only unto men, but even to God himself (as he esteemeth it) from whom we have received what we give and all good things besides; and hereof it is called a sacrifice; yea such a sacrifice wherein he chiefly delighteth, Heb. 13. 16. Now all Christian sacrifices are freewill oblations, which are to be offered with joy and cheerfulness; and if they be soured with the leaven of grudging and murmuring, they are made odious unto God.

Sect. 6. Cheerfulness in countenance.

Now this alacrity of heart, discovereth itself in the countenance, words, and actions. For first a willing mind causeth a cheerful countenance; the which is necessary in these actions of liberality, wherein it is not fit to have *manum apertam & vultum clausum*, an open hand and a close and cloudy look, which though it should not proceed from any averseness and unwillingness in the heart, yet it serveth for no good use, but like a scarecrow affrighteth the poor, so as they cannot with any boldness or confidence come to ask relief, nor feed securely upon those seeds of beneficence which are cast unto them. And this the son of Sirach requireth in these actions of liberality. Cap. 35. 9. In all thy gifts (saith he) show a cheerful countenance, which that we may do, let us remember that the liberal look hath the promise of blessedness, as well as the liberal action, according to that, Pro. 22. 9. He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed, for he giveth of his bread to the poor. But this hope of blessedness many rich worldlings make void unto themselves, who either like evil nurses are so hard of milk, that it cannot be drawn from them without pain and irksomeness, the which they express by their sour looks and writhed and wrinkled foreheads; or else cover the poor's nakedness and relieve their wants, as Noah's sons (with a better mind) did cover the nakedness of their father, with their faces

turned another way. For as some, browbeat the poor with proud, sour, and severe looks; so there are others as bad as they, who turn away their eyes and faces from them, as though they were such an eyesore as might not be endured, nor be looked upon without grief and vexation. And this they do, because they fear to be infected with the contagion of the poor man's misery, so much as in a sympathy and fellow feeling of his calamity; and therefore as men that come near unto them who are infected with the plague or leprosy, so do they shun them; or (if they stand in their way) turn their faces from them; and out of a desperate resolution to give them nothing, they will not so much as look upon their miseries, least their conscious eyes should check their churlish hearts, and put them in mind of their barbarous inhumanity. But let such be assured that as they turn away their eyes from the poor in the day of their misery, so the Lord will turn away his face from them in the day of their calamity; and as they have stopped their ears at the cry of the poor, so they themselves shall cry, and God will not hear them, as it is. Pro. 21. 13.

Sect. 7. Cheerfulness in our words and speeches.

Secondly, the alacrity in the heart appeareth in the mildness and sweetness of our speeches, which the Apostle would have ever conjoined with our alms deeds; whereof it is that he calleth them εὐλογία. 2. Cor. 9. 5. to note unto us, that as these good works and good words are comprehended under the same name, so in the action they should never be severed. And surely these cheerful and kind words are very necessary to be joined with those works of mercy; for poverty and want dejecteth the mind, and the discovery of it affecteth the heart of those that sue and crave, not only with shame, but also with fear and jealousy, least they be thought of their benefactors to be too bold and troublesome; in which respects there is great need, that they should not only speak to their suites, but to their hearts, and by kind and loving language apply unto them such cordials of comfort, as may preserve them from fainting in their fears. And this the son of Sirach requireth, chap. 4. v. 8. Let it not

grieve thee to bow down thine ear to the poor, and give him a friendly answer with meekness. Contrary whereunto is the practice of those, who join with their alms proud expostulations, harsh words, and upbraiding speeches: feeding the poor, as they feed their untaught dogs which they would have at command, for when they offer them meat, they do withal so snipe and rebuke them, that they dare scarcely take it, but are ready to let it fall out of their hands and mouths, for fear of beating. Of which kind of men one speaketh fitly. There are some (saith he) that when their poor brethren crave necessaries of them, before they will give anything, do cast out against them, contumelious words: and performing these offices of piety at length indeed, do first spoil the grace of their bounty with opprobrious terms; wherein they seem not freely to do a work of mercy, but to make satisfaction for the injuries which they have offered, when they give an alms after such contumelies. Others there are that chide the poor for coming so often, and craving again after they have once or twice relieved them. But of these I may (with Chrysostom) demand. Do they not therefore want meat, because thou hast before times relieved them? why then doest thou not bind thine own belly to the same conditions? why doest thou not say to thy stomach when it craveth meat, thou wast filled yesterday and the day before, and why doest thou now again desire more? Yea contrariwise thou almost burstest thine own belly in filling it beyond measure, but turnest away thy face from the poor craving a little to satisfy his hunger, because he asketh again of thee; on whom thou oughtest the rather for this cause take pity, because he is pinched with no small necessity, which forceth him so often to come unto thee. And secondly we might demand of them, why by the same reason they sue often unto God for new benefits, seeing they have already received many from him, saving that it is to be feared they trouble him not much with many suites and prayers, and that what they have, they receive it rather out of his mere bounty, then their own earnest suite and importunity; for otherwise the experience of their own wants, and God's infinite mercy in relieving and supplying them, would move them to think of the necessity of the poor, and make them more compassionate in helping and succoring them. Let

us not therefore stain our good actions with evil words, neither after we have given let us upbraid, wherein we shall but discover our folly; for a fool (as the son of Sirach telleth us) when he giveth a gift will upbraid churlishly, and the gift of the envious consumeth the eyes.

Sect. 8. Cheerfulness appeareth by ready giving.

Thirdly, this cheerfulness showeth itself in the manner of the action; when it is performed readily and speedily. For a gift or alms deed should not be drawn from the giver by the importunity of the receiver, but rather the importunity should be on his part that giveth, in pressing the benevolence upon him with undeniable earnestness, when as he discerneth in him any modest bashfulness or backwardness in receiving of it. An example whereof we have in the Church of Corinth, of whom the Apostle testifieth, that in communicating to the necessity of the Saints, They were to their power, and beyond their power willing of themselves, praying them with much entreaty that they would receive their gifts.

Sect. 9. In giving speedily.

And with this readiness must be joined speediness in giving; and taking our intelligence of our neighbors wants from the report of others, or else reading them in their pale visage, heavy countenance or poor habit, we must let our alms prevent their suite, and give them relief before they crave it. For (as one saith) *Haec est perfecta misericordia, &c.* this is the perfection of mercy, that we prevent the suites of the needy, and relieve the hungry before they ask; and that mercy is imperfect (and it self needeth mercy) which is extorted with importunate prayers. And as it is maimed in itself, so not so acceptable to the poor, for *ingratum est beneficium quod diu inter manus dantis haesit.* That benefit is unwelcome and scarce worthy thanks which hath long stuck to the hands of the giver. And therefore herein let us labor to be perfect as our heavenly father is perfect, who

oftentimes supplieth our wants before we crave, and conferreth upon us many benefits, which in particular we never desired.

Sect 10. Reasons which may move us to give speedily.

And this speediness in relieving the poor is implied by that name *διακονία* which the Apostle giveth unto alms deeds, signifying such a ministration, as is performed with speed and diligence, being derived from a word which signifieth to hasten and make speed, and is expressly required by the Wiseman in the doing of these works of mercy. Pro. 3. 27. Say not to thy neighbor go and come again, and tomorrow I will give thee, when thou hast it by thee. Unto which speedy and present dispatch in giving alms we may be moved by these reasons. First, because in respect of our neighbor, an alms is most seasonable in the time of want, and the gift doubled by his desire that receiveth it. Again, what knowest thou if tomorrow he will need thy gift, the Lord otherwise providing for him? and so thou shalt loose a fit opportunity of doing good, because thou diddest refuse it when it was offered; which will turn thee to more damage and hurt, then to neglect the sowing of thy seed in time most seasonable. Furthermore it may be that through these delays thy alms will come too late, like a good gale of wind after shipwreck, when his health is lost for want of relief, or state ruined for want of seasonable help, and so thy late and untimely alms will do him little good. For it fareth with men in their strength and state, as with a leak in a ship, or a breach of waters, which may be easily stopped and stayed at the first appearing, but if be let alone, will within a while grow remediless. Finally, how canst thou tell whether the next time he cometh, thou shalt be able to relieve his wants, seeing for thine unthankfulness and mis-employment of God's talents he may take thy goods and means of doing good from thee, and make thee to need the help of others, or thee from thy goods, and so thou shalt have no power to dispose them? And this reason the wise man giveth to move us unto speedy and present giving. Pro. 3. 27. Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine

hand to do it: and the Apostle enjoineth us, when we have opportunity, to do good unto all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith. Gal. 6. 10.

CHAPTER 4.

That the poor should be the object of our bounty.

Sect. 1. That the poor should be the object of our liberality.

And thus much of the action: the object of our liberality is the poor: whence we learn that though there are many ways, whereby men express much bounty and liberality in spending their riches, yet this only doth approve a man to be godly and blessed, when as he giveth freely to the poor and needy. And this our Savior showeth. Luk. 14. 12. When thou makest a dinner or supper, call not thy friends nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen and rich neighbors; least they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind; and thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee, for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. So that if we would be blessed in our bounty, the poor must be the object of it. For they are the ground in which the seed of beneficence must be sown if ever we mean to reap a harvest of happiness. They are the bankers to whom we must deliver God's talents, if we would have them increase in our masters estimate, and so receive the gracious reward of our faithful service. Finally, these are God's factors, unto whom if we deliver our goods, the Lord himself will acknowledge the debt, and will surely pay us with great advantage.

Sect. 2. That the liberality of the worldlings will not profit thē.

And therefore they, the streams of whose bounty do run another way, may well impair by their expenses their present means, but they cannot thereby increase their future hopes, they may perhaps among men have the praise of their munificence & liberality, but they shall not by God be approved for their cost, nor when they give up their account be blessed in their bounty. For example, many are profusely liberal in feasting and banqueting, who because the poor are not their guests, but their kindred and rich friends, they have their reward in this world, when they feast them again, and their reckoning to make in the life to come, for defrauding their poor fellow servants, and wasting their masters wealth in excess and riot. Many are liberal in sending to their betters and equals rich presents; but how far off shall they find themselves from being blessed in their liberality, when in the day of their account it shall be laid to their charge, that they have given more in one new-years-gift, to get the favor of some flattering courtier or false friend, then in their whole lives they have given to the poor, that thereby they might be assured of the favor of God? Many are bountiful in giving large bribes, either to pervert justice and judgment, or to advance their unworthy selves to some worldly preferments; but as the end of their giving is to corrupt, so their gift shall be corruption in the end, even a canker in their flesh, and rottenness in their bones; and as these give not, but rather put out their monies unto usury, making it serve as a small bait to catch a greater pray, so the end of their preferment shall be their ruin, and their false glory in this world, shall bring them true shame and a fearful downfall in the world to come. Finally, there are many who spend largely on stately buildings, sumptuous furniture, and gorgeous garments, giving more for one suite of apparel, for a jewel made precious only by such wantons estimate, for one piece of rich hangings, or a picture to adorn their walls, then ever they have bestowed in their whole lives in relieving the poor members of Jesus Christ. But there is no blessedness in this bounty, because it is spent on the world, which is most ungrateful and will never requite it. Yea how accursed shall they find it at the day of judgment, when they shall hear that fearful sentence of death and condemnation, because they have prodigally wasted God's talents in such excess and riot,

and have neglected to relieve Christ in his poor and distressed members?

Sect. 3. That common vagrants and idle persons are not those poor who should be relieved.

So that it is not enough to be bountiful, unless we chouse the poor as the object of our beneficence; and not all that are poor, neither is every [impoverished] of the canting commonwealth, a fit altar whereon we may offer the sacrifice of our alms deeds, but such as are so through necessity and not of choice. For there are many sturdy beggars, and vagrant rogues, the blemish of our government, and a burden to the common wealth, who have nothing in propriety, but their licentious life and lawless condition; no known father or mother, wife or children, but a promiscuous generation, who are all of kin, and yet know no kindred, no house or home, no law but their sensual lust, or some wicked orders of their own making, fit to maintain them in their in ordinate courses; men without religion, Church, baptism, faith or God in the world, who like idle drones, feed upon the common spoil, and live by the sweat of other men's brows: which kind of poor are not to be maintained in their wicked courses, for according to the Apostles rule, they that will not labor, must not eat; but rather the law is duly and with severity to be executed, which though it seem sharp, yet for the present it is full of mercy to the honest poor, who might be more liberally relieved, if these idle devourers did not eat up their portion; and would above all be merciful to those miscreants, if by wholesome severity they might be reclaimed from their wicked lives, seeing hereby they should be pulled out of the jaws of the devil, and preserved from falling into fearful condemnation. To which purpose Augustine saith; It is better to love with severity, then to deceive under show of lenity; and to withhold bread from the hungry, if being sure of his victuals, he neglect justice, then by giving unto him, to make him rest securely in his unrighteousness.

Sect. 4. What poor are chiefly to be relieved.

Or if through their inordinate living, and the just hand of God lying upon them, they are brought into extremity and misery, so that something is to be done, if not homini yet humanitati, to the common nature of mankind, and not to the particular person; it must not be in bountiful fullness to encourage him in his unchristian courses, but only to relieve his present necessity. But the poor upon whom the godly and blessed man doth exercise his beneficence, is the honest laborer and the poor householder, who either through the greatness of their charge, or badness of their trade, crosses, losses, sickness, suretyship, or other casualties being brought behind hand, are not able in the sweat of their face to earn their bread; or the blind and maimed, the aged and decrepit, the weak widows or young orphans, which are either past their labor, or not come unto it. The which is signified, by that phrase of speech which the holy Ghost useth. Levite. 25. 35. If thy brother be waxen poor, and his hand faileth, or trembleth and shaketh, then thou shalt relieve him: by which is meant the weak, sick and impotent, who are unable to get their own living. And amongst these (if our bounty cannot extend to all) we must choose out those who are in greatest necessity; and especially such as are most honest and religious; for as we must do good unto all: so principally unto those who are of the household of faith.

Sect. 5. That we must avoid negligence in giving

By all which it plainly appeareth, that it is not enough, that we be liberal and open handed; but it is further required that we make choice of such as God in his word hath commended unto us; relieving those poor who have his gracious passport to show, and esteeming them as vagrants that come without it. In which our choice two extremes are to be avoided. The one is negligence and carelessness, whereby men give they care not to whom; showing therein their

prodigality and contempt of their money, rather than their charity towards the poor, or their love unto God. But this we must carefully avoid, and no less study the husbanding of the poor's stock (that those being passed by, who have no need, there may be sufficient for thē who are truly poor, as the Apostle speaketh. 1. Tim. 5. 16.) then the well managing of our own estate; for (as one saith) *pars sacrilegi est, res pauperum dare non pauperibus*, it is a kind of sacrilege, to give the poor's portion, to those who are not poor. And even the heathen man could tell us, that a wise and virtuous man will not give, but when he is moved by a right and probable reason, because a gift ill given is to be reckoned among our least honest losses. And therefore he will have his bosom easy, but not open; out of which many things go out by direction of wisdom, but nothing falleth to the ground at unawares. For what husbandman is so free in sowing his seed, who casteth it indifferently into all grounds, fallow and manured; yea upon the high way and hard rocks, where it is sure to be lost and come to naught? and why then should we show less care, about this seed which is more precious, and consequently the loss greater, & the inconsiderate losing more faulty and blame worthy? For *Turpissimum genus perdendi est inconsulta donatio*, unadvised giving is the worst kind of losing, and much worse to him who bestoweth a gift ill, than it were to the other not to receive it; for it is another's fault if we do not receive, but it is ours if we make not good choice of those unto whom we give.

Sect. 6. That we must not be over scrupulous in making choice.

The other extreme is too much care & scrupulosity, when men of almsgivers will be judges, or justices of peace, and are so busy in examining the poor about their estate and desert, that they can find no leisure to open their purse or relieve their wants. With which practice the Apostle meeteth. 2. Thes. 3. 13. for having given charge that the idle should not be relieved, he addeth in the next words, but ye brethren be not weary of well doing. As though he should say; let not the disorder and inordinate courses of some, make you desist

from doing the works of mercy, and to pick a quarrel against alms deeds, because of the unworthiness of those who are to receive them. And therefore let us take heed, that we do not use this practice as a veil to hide our stinginess and hardheartedness, because we can meet with none worthy to have them. And to this end let us remember that we do not out of justice and equity, give rewards to them that have deserved them, but an alms and free gift out of mercy and pity, to relieve the poor whom we see in necessity; and that if we take convenient care, though the alms be lost in respect of the party who hath received them; yet not unto us in respect of the fruit of our beneficence. For we have given it in love unto God and in obedience to his commandment, and he will be our paymaster in rewarding our charity, according to that gracious promise of our Savior. Math. 10. 41. He that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward; who also professeth, that what is done to the poor for his sake, is done unto himself. There is no husbandman that will wholly refrain his sowing of seed, because there are many grounds unfit to receive it, but this maketh him more careful to choose such as are fruitful and fertile; and more painful in tilling, dunging, and manuring those that are barren, that they may be made fruitful; and much less must we take such discouragements in sowing the seeds of our beneficence, but hold the same course in making them better by our benefits; and that the rather because we are assured that though the ground where we sow our alms deeds do prove barren, yet God himself will return unto us a fruitful harvest.

Sect. 7. That we must give alms constantly.

And thus much for the object of our alms: the time of performing this duty is daily, continually, and constantly, as our ability will bear, and the necessity of the poor shall require, according to that. Eccles. 11. 6. In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening hold not thine hand. And this assiduity in the action is implied in the object. For whereas he saith, that the godly man giveth to the poor, he implieth thus

much, that he continueth giving, so long as they continue in their poverty; and that there is no end of his bounty, till he seeth an end of their wants. Neither doth he upbraid the poor man with remembrance of former benefits when he reneweth his suites, as though it were too great boldness in him to crave often, and superfluous for himself to give often to the same person: but remembering that his heavenly father reneweth his mercies unto him every morning, and harkneth graciously to his suites so often as he wanteth and craveth; he imitateth his unwearied goodness, & giveth often to the same poor man, according to his own ability and the others necessity, if he see that his wants are not caused through his idleness and negligence, but through the hand of God lying heavy upon him. Or if God hath provided otherwise, for those whom we have formerly relieved, this must not put an end to our charity and alms deeds, seeing the godly man giveth to the poor, that is, so long as there are any poor, so long he giveth, his liberality not being appropriated unto any persons, but extending itself to the same estate and condition of poverty, when as he findeth it in new subjects. And therefore as the fountain sending forth it streams, first filleth one empty hole as it runneth, and then goeth into another, and never ceaseth till it hath filled all: so the fountain of the righteous man's bounty never ceaseth to communicate the streams of his beneficence, but after he hath supplied the wants of one and many, he still seeketh after more, and never thinketh himself so rich in good works and alms deeds, that now he may give over and spend upon the stock, blessing himself in his former bounty; but still he continueth his spiritual trade and never fainteth, until the great paymaster have given him an everlasting reward. And because God hath so ordained that there shall always be poor (according to the saying of our Savior, the poor you shall always have with you) for the exercise of their faith and patience, and of rich men's bounty and obedience, that so both being approved, both may also be richly rewarded; therefore he resolveth to be constant in his beneficence, and that in obedience to God who hath commanded it, according to that Deut. 15. 11. 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 thy needy in the land. The which perseverance in well doing, hath the promise of reward appropriated unto it. Gal. 6. 9. Let us not (saith the Apostle) be weary of well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. And therefore as we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially to them that are of the household of faith.

CHAPTER 5.

What alms deeds are, and of the true causes from which they arise.

Sect. 1. That men are grown cold in these works of mercy.

We have entreated according to our order propounded, of the action and object of alms deeds severally; & now it followeth that we join them together, he hath given to the poor. In which words he showeth, that it is a virtue or property of a godly and righteous man to be liberal in alms deeds, and in those special works of mercy and beneficence whereby the poor and needy are comforted and relieved. The which duty in this frozen age of the world is much neglected, by reason that self-love and covetousness do so abound, and men are grown so cold and careless in the performance of these charitable actions, that their hearts seem frozen, unto such an icy, if not flinty hardness, that the deep sighs and scalding tears of the distressed poor cannot thaw or supple them; and their hands stiff and benumbed, being forsaken of the kindly heat of charity and devotion, that they cannot stretch them out to perform these Christian duties: yea this utter neglect or slack performance of the works of mercy, is to be observed (and even with tears of blood to be lamented) not only among carnal worldlings, who in respect of other things have no show or semblance of any goodness in them, but even among

professors of religion (by reason that covetousness, pride and self-love do so reign and rule in the hearts of the most) that this Christian duty which is so often commended unto us in the Scriptures, and magnified so much in the writings of antiquity, is grown almost so out of use, that now if ever it needeth urging.

Sect. 2. What alms deeds are.

In which regard I will the more largely insist upon it. And first I will speak of the duty itself, and then of the reasons which may enforce it. The duty itself is alms deeds, or giving to the poor; which is a good work, or work of mercy, whereby a Christian out of faith, obedience, charity and compassion, communicateth and giveth something necessary for the sustentation of life unto the poor for their relief, and the supplying of their wants, to God's glory and their mutual good. By which description it appeareth, that howsoever any man may give gifts, yet only the Christian and godly man can rightly perform this duty of alms deeds. For it is a good work, and there is none do good, but those that are good, neither is it possible, that there should be good fruit, unless it spring from a good tree. It is a sacrifice unto God, which none can offer but those that serve him, yea a Christian sacrifice, which not any can offer in an acceptable manner, unless they themselves in Christ be first accepted.

Sect. 3. The true causes of alms deeds from which they arise. 1. Faith.

But this will more plainly appear by that which followeth in the description, which showeth the true fountain out of which alms deeds flow, as faith, obedience, charity, mercy; all which being proper to the godly Christian, it followeth that these works of mercy be also peculiar unto him. First then our alms are to arise from a lively faith, which formalizeth all the Christians actions, and putteth the main difference between their works and the same works done by worldlings. For first we are assured that God is good unto us, before

we can show any goodness towards our brethren; that he hath given us all we have, before we will part with anything for his sake; that he will give us all things which will make us happy and glorious, before we will part with those things wherein men place their worldly happiness. So that those gifts which are given to the poor by infidels, carnal worldlings, and men professing Christianity, but yet continuing grossly ignorant of the main principles of religion, and in the state of infidelity, are not such Christian alms as are acceptable unto God, or as will assure us that we are godly and blessed: for to do a work in faith and approved in the sight of God, is not only to be truly persuaded and assured, that the thing we do is warranted by God's word and allowed by him; but that we also in Christ are accepted of him, which faith being wanting it is impossible that our best actions should please God, because they are but sin, as the Apostle telleth us. Heb. 11. 6. Rom. 14. 23.

Sect. 4. The second cause is obedience unto God.

Secondly, the godly man's alms is given in obedience to God, because he hath commanded it. In which regard he putteth no difference between friend or enemy, nor respecteth his own praise or profit, to be thereby swayed in doing these works of mercy; but always hath God before his eyes, and chiefly intendeth in his alms to do him service. And therefore such alms as are given, without any respect to God's commandment, out of mere humanity, and natural pity, or for worldly ends, as profit and vain-glory, are no badges of Christianity, nor any infallible properties of a blessed man.

Sect. 5. The third cause is charity. First, the love of God.

Thirdly, the Christians alms arise from true charity and unfeigned love; and are therefore called by the Apostle *χάρις*, that is a gift given out of mere good will. The which is so necessary to the doing of alms, that they are of no worth, if they be done without it. For so the

Apostle saith, 1. Cor. 13. 3. Though I feed the poor with all my goods, and have no charity, it profiteth me nothing. Now this charity from whence alms deeds spring is twofold. The first is the love of God, for when we are persuaded, that God dearly loveth us, and as a pledge hereof hath given unto us his dear Son to the death for our redemption, and with him all good things, respecting this life or the life to come; then from the fire of this divine love towards us, flameth or rather sparkleth our love towards him again, the which we manifest by loving our neighbors for his sake, and approve both our love and thankfulness to be hearty and sincere, by giving unto them somewhat out of that store wherewith God hath enriched us, in obedience to his commandment; and that we may glorify his name by having the light of our godly conversation shining before men. Which duties of love and Christian charity who so neglect, they show that they are destitute of the true love of God, as the Apostle affirmeth, 1. John. 3. 17. Who so hath this worlds good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? Even as on the other side, they are barren of alms deeds though they give never so much to the poor, whose liberality springeth not from the fountain of God's love.

Sect. 6. How our alms arise from the love of God in respect of the order.

Now the order to be observed in this Christian beneficence is, upon consideration of this infinite love of God towards us in giving us his dear son, to have our hearts so inflamed with love & enlarged with thankfulness, that we be ready to give ourselves unto God, & to dedicate & consecrate our souls, bodies, goods, all that we have to his service for the advancement of his glory; and consequently to give liberally to the relief of the poor, because we know that it is acceptable unto him. And this the Apostle observed in the Macedonians, who being to extend their Christian bounty to the relieving of the poor Saints, first gave themselves unto the Lord, and then their alms to the afflicted Saints. 2. Cor. 8. 5.

Sect. 7. From our love to our brethren.

And as our alms must principally arise from our love towards God; so also in the next place from our love towards our neighbors, in which regard they are rightly called a benevolence, because they proceed from mere love and free good will. The which our love must not only spring from hence, that they are of the same flesh, but also because they are brethren of the same father, and members of the same body, whereof Christ Jesus is the head. Not so much because they are of the same country, as because they are of the same Church and communion of Saints, and of the same religion, faith and baptism.

Sect. 8. The fourth cause is mercy & compassion.

Lastly, the blessed man's bounty in the outward action of the hand, must spring from the inward mercy and compassion of his heart; so that it is not enough to relieve the necessities of the poor, but like a member of the same body, he must do it with a sense & feeling of their misery and penury, as though he suffered together with them. And this duty is implied by those phrases, which the Scriptures use in exhorting to these works of mercy. As Esa. 58. 10. If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul. So that it is not enough to draw out our purse and relieve them, unless we draw out our souls also by pitying them. And 1. John. 3. 17. Who so hath these worlds goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, &c. So that it is not sufficient to have an open liberal hand, unless also we have an open and compassionate heart. And in other places this is expressly required, as Hos. 6. 6. I will have mercy and not sacrifice. And therefore 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. Thus the Apostle also requireth us to remember them that are in bonds as bound with them, and them that suffer adversity, as being ourselves

also of the same body. Heb. 13. 3. An example whereof we have in Job, who was not only bountiful in relieving the poor, but was also in his soul grieved for them, and wept for him that was troubled. Job 30. 15.

Sect 9. The Hebrew name implieth that mercy and alms deeds must go together.

Chesedh. And this is signified by the names which in the Scriptures are given to alms deeds. For whereas the Hebrews have two names to express them by; the one is $\tau\omicron\eta$ which signifieth also mercy, or those tender affections in parents, which the Grecians call $\zeta\omicron\rho\gamma\alpha\iota$. Implying thus much; that the inward infection of the heart is to be joined with the outward act of the hand. So likewise the Greek word $\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\eta\mu\omicron\sigma\upsilon\eta$ derived from $\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ signifying mercy, is indifferently translated mercy or alms deeds, to note unto us, that as they are joined in the word, so they must not be disjoined in the work.

Sect 10. That they only are blessed who join with their alms deeds mercy and compassion.

Which if we do, we shall assuredly be those blessed men which the Psalmist describeth and not otherwise; for the blessed man of whom he speaketh, not only disperseth and giveth to the poor, but is also gracious and full of compassion. verse 5. So not simply he that giveth, but he that giveth out of mercy and compassion, lendeth unto the Lord. Pro. 19. 17. And he alone is blessed according to that. Pro. 14. 21. He that hath mercy on the poor happy is he. And therefore if we would attain unto blessedness, we must have in giving our alms, not only a liberal hand, but a merciful and pitiful heart, imitating our Savior, God blessed forever, who as he exceeded all in bounty, (for though he were rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we by his poverty might be made rich, as it is. 2. Cor. 8. 9.) So also in pity & compassion. For we have not a high Priest who cannot be touched

with the feeling of our infirmities, but was contented in our flesh to suffer many miseries, that by his own experience, he might the rather extend unto us his mercy and pity, when as he seeth us plunged into the like afflictions, as we may see Heb. 2. 17. 18. and 4. 15. 16. The experience whereof we have in many places of the New Testament, for when he gave sight to the blind, healed the sick and fed the hungry, it is said that he was affected with compassion, and even earned in his bowels in the sight and sense of their miseries and afflictions, as appeareth. Math. 14. 14. 15. 32. 20. 34. and in many other the like places.

Sect 11. That alms deeds are only rightly done by those who are merciful.

And surely then alone these works of mercy are rightly and thoroughly performed, when as the outward work proceedeth from the inward habit. Then do we communicate to the necessities of the poor, liberally, freely, lovingly, and cheerfully, when by our pity and compassion we make their case our own, and so not only suffer with them in their wants, but also be cheered and refreshed in their fullness. Then do we touch these sores of poverty with the softest hand, when as ourselves have a feeling of them. Then (like good Physicians) we take most care in curing their diseases of want and penury, when we ourselves are affected, and through compassion afflicted with their griefs and pains. And then our heat of brotherly love will be much the warmer and kindlier, when it is redoubled with some reflection from ourselves, and hath the flame of self-love to reenforce and strengthen it.

Sect. 12. Pity without alms deeds unprofitable.

But as we are to take heed of bare alms without mercy, so much more of naked mercy without alms; which is that false vizard and counterfeit of mercy wherewith hypocrites disguise themselves, of

whom the Apostle James speaketh. Chap. 2. 15. If a brother or sister (saith he) be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto him, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding you give them not those things which are needful for the body, what doth it profit? For if we have in our hearts the inward habit of mercy and compassion, it will surely exercise itself not only by the tongue in fair words, but also by the hands in charitable works, the which also the Apostle requireth. 1. John. 3. 18. Let us not love in word, neither in tongue only, but in deed and in truth. And this is implied by the other name צדקה which the Hebrews use to signify alms deeds and works of mercy; whereby is also signified justice, which is such a grace or virtue, as resteth not only in the affection of the heart, but proceedeth to the act and work. So that by both these names together the nature of alms deeds is fully expressed; the one signifying the inward habit of mercy and compassion seated in the heart, the other the outward exercise of it by the hand: whereby we are taught, that in these works of mercy, we must join the affection with the action, and the action with the affection, the one being the fountain, the other the stream; the one the root, the other the fruit, that floweth and springeth from it.

CHAPTER 6.

That we ought to visit the poor, that we may the better perform these works of mercy.

Sect. 1. That we ought to visit the poor.

Now that this compassion may the more affect our hearts, and both exercise and manifest itself in the works of mercy, it is fit, that not only we take notice of the miseries and wants of the poor by the ear

and report of others, but also that we often visit them, and so be eye-witnesses of their calamities. For this the Apostle James maketh a note and badge of that religion which is pure and undefiled before God, not only to relieve the poor, but to visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions. I am. 1. 27. And our Savior numbereth it among those works of mercy, which at the day of judgment he will reward with everlasting blessedness. Mat. 25. 36. and the neglect thereof among those sins which shall be punished with everlasting damnation. verse 43. So that if no more could be said to incite us to this duty, this alone were sufficient.

Sect. 2. Reasons which may move us to visit the poor. 1. Reason

But yet consider further the use and benefit of it, which is so great and manifold, that alms deeds cannot conveniently be done without it. For first by visiting the poor we shall be the better able to make good choice, and to discover who are truly poor from those who are counterfeit; as also who are religious, honest, and painful in their callings, from those who are profane wicked, and idle drones.

Sect. 3. 2. Reason

Secondly, hereby we shall the better know how to fit our alms to their necessities, both in respect of the proportion, and also the special kinds of their wants? and so when we not only give good, but fit things unto them, the benefit hereby is much increased. If therefore the husband man for the well sowing of his seed, which will bring but a corruptible crop, doth not hand over head cast it into the ground, but carefully observeth the seed, the soil, the season, and all other circumstances; why should the Christian seeds man carelessly cast his seed he knoweth not where, which if it be well sown and in fit grounds will return unto him a fruitful harvest of eternal happiness; seeing he is not blessed who negligently giveth, but he that guideth his affairs with discretion? Psal. 112. 5. Not he simply that giveth

alms, but he who bestoweth them with good advice, according to that. Psal. 41. 1. Blessed is he that considereth the poor, the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble.

Sect 4. 3. Reason.

Thirdly, if we would thus sometime visit the poor at their houses, they would not so often have occasion to visit us at ours, nor be forced to straggle abroad to beg necessaries; the which the Lord forbiddeth. Deut. 15. 4. and those who have no house nor home because they will live without a calling, like idle drones, upon the common spoil, would be easily discovered and discouraged, when as having neither home where to be visited, nor neighbor to visit them, they should find little relief, unless they earn it with the sweat of their brows.

The sight of the poor's miseries is a notable means to move compassion.

Fourthly, it would be a notable means to make us more compassionate, when as we should see their small provision, hungry fare, thin clothes, and hard lodging: the children crying for hunger, and the parents out crying them because they have no food to give them; some lying in straw for want of beds, others drinking water instead of drink, and a third sort near starved with hunger for want of bread, or escaping that, quaking and shivering with cold for lack of fire. Which miseries of the poor if they move a Christian heart to hear of them, how much more would it stir them up to compassion if they saw them, for things seen more feelingly affect us, then those which we conceive by report of others. And this is one cause why the wise man saith, that it is better to go into the house of mourning, then into the house of feasting, because it will work upon our affections, and make us lay the afflictions of others to heart, partaking with them in their sorrows by a sympathy and fellow feeling: and this compassion working upon our hearts, will not let our hands be idle, but will enlarge their bounty and make them more

readily and liberally to contribute towards the relief of the poor's necessities.

Sect. 5. That if we visit the poor we may join spiritual & corporal alms together.

Fifthly, if we visit the poor, we may do them double and treble good by joining spiritual and corporal alms both together, instructing the ignorant, reprehending the faulty, admonishing them who err through infirmity, counselling them that want counsel, and especially refreshing their hearts with sweet consolations in these their wants and afflictions; to which purpose we ourselves have been comforted by God in our crosses, according to that. 2. Cor. 1. 4. Blessed be God, who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. The which means of their spiritual good will at these times be most effectual, when as by our alms we testify our love; and then shall our good words find most easy entrance into their hearts, when as our good works have prepared the way.

Sect. 6. That by visiting the poor we may learn to be thankful.

But this duty is so much out of use among the rich & wealthy, through the pride, niceness, and uncharitableness of these times, that there will haply seem to be in it some absurdity, unless it be pressed with stronger arguments then those which arise from neighborly love. And therefore if their benefit will not move us to put it in practice, yet at least let love of our selves prevail. For by seeing the wants and miseries of our brethren, we in our own particular may receive much good. For we shall have hereby just occasion offered of bursting forth into God's praises, who hath dealt so bountifully with us, giving us not only plenty of his blessings for our own use which others want, but also making us helpful unto our

brethren. For those who abound will never be so thankful unto God for his benefits as they ought, unless they have learned their worth out of the experience of their own and others wants.

Sect. 7. That by visiting the poor we may learn temperance & sobriety.

Again, by looking upon these sad spectacles of misery and penury, we may learn temperance and sobriety in the use of God's blessings, and not to abuse them unto superfluity and excess, seeing many as good as ourselves in God's true estimate do want necessaries; but to husband them in a frugal manner, that out of our abundance we may more liberally communicate to our neighbors wants: least abusing God's gifts he take away, and bind us to temperance by the iron chain of extreme necessity, when we would not be held by the gentle bond of virtue and obedience. Finally, we have by these fights just occasion given to prepare ourselves against the day of affliction, penury and distress, when as we see them who are clothed with the same flesh subject to them, between whom and us there is no difference, but that which hath been made by God's free grace and undeserved mercy.

Sect 8. That when we visit the poor we visit Christ in them.

And therefore let not pride of greatness deprive our souls of so much goodness; but when comparing the highness of our estate with the lowness of this Christian duty, we are made loath to endure it, let us remember that Christ hath done the like for us; and we in token of our love and thankfulness, do it again to our Savior Christ. For being in the bosom of the father in all glory and happiness, this light from on high visited us, and abasing himself unto the low degree of a servant, he hath by giving his precious blood as the price of our redemption, not only visited but redeemed us his people, according to Zachariahs song. Luk. 1. 68. 78. Yea he came among us, and not

only saw, but also took upon him our infirmities, and participated with us in our afflictions the more to enlarge his mercy and compassion, when he was touched with the feeling of our griefs, as it is Heb. 2. 17. 4. 15. Now what doth he require for this unspeakable love and kind visitation, but love for love, and that we visit him as he hath visited us, not in his own person, for he is glorious in the highest heavens, and our goodness extendeth not unto him; but in his poor Saints and brethren who are the members of his body; unto whom whatsoever we do, he accounteth as done unto himself. Math. 25. 40. And therefore though we be never so rich and honorable, let us not disdain to visit the poor seeing in them we visit Christ, who abased himself much more for our sakes, visiting us when we were loathsomely defiled in our blood, and not only sick but stark dead, and like Lazarus in the grave stinking in the putrefaction of our sins, the vassals of Satan, the children of wrath, and very firebrands of hell. So that there is no poor so base and loathsome as we were; nor no worldly potentate so rich and glorious as our Savior Christ, who was God, equal to his father. And therefore seeing he thus abased himself for our sakes, let us for his, a little stoop and humble ourselves to perform all good offices to his poorest Saints; otherwise let us be assured that if we be ashamed of him who hath advanced us, he will be ashamed of us; if we scorn and disdain him in his poorest members, he will disdain and contemn us at the day of his appearing.

CHAPTER 7.

Of the right ends of giving alms.

Sect. 1. The principal end is God's glory.

And thus have we seen the fountain from which our alms should spring; let us consider also in a word the main ends where to they tend, which are the glory of God, our own and our neighbors good. The principal end at which we must aim is God's glory; which as it is to be the chief motive of all Christian duties, according to that, Matth. 5. 16. Let your light so shine before men, that they seeing your good works, may glorify your father which is in heaven: so especially of these works of mercy. Which motive the Apostle useth to stir the Corinthians unto a liberal contribution, not only that hereby the wants of the Saints might be supplied, but chiefly that God might be glorified by this bountiful distribution. For as the Lord and master of the family is much honored, in his wise and gracious government, when as the steward obeying his commandment, giveth everyone of his fellow-servants his allowance and portion in due season; so is our great Lord glorified in the Church, when as the richer sort yielding subjection unto the Gospel of Christ, do like faithful stewards, thus employ God's wealth & riches committed unto their dispeniation, to the relief of those in the family that stand in need.

Sect. 2. The subordinate ends of giving alms.

The subordinate ends at which we must aim, are the good of our brethren, who are refreshed with our alms, the adorning of our profession with these fruits of piety, the edification of others by our good example, the stopping of the mouths of our adversaries, when as they see our love towards God manifested in our love towards our brethren, and have nothing to speak against our Christian conversation: Finally our own present good, in respect both of temporal and spiritual benefits, and the furthering and assuring of our eternal salvation.

Sect. 3. That if our ends be evil, the action is unprofitable.

But if contrariwise the fountain of our alms be pride and self-love, and our end be, like the hypocrites, to be seen of men, we have our reward, as our Savior teacheth us. Matth. 6. 2. Or if with the proud Pharisee we give alms, that we may glory and boast ourselves in them, even unto God himself: or with Popish Justiciaries, do them with an opinion of merit, or to satisfy God's justice for our sins (for so they teach, that they satisfy for sin by those three principal works, alms-deeds, prayer, and fasting) then in our alms deeds, we shall sacrifice unto God swine's flesh, and the head of a dog, or (which is more abominable unto him) our works defiled with hellish pride and horrible blasphemy against his free grace, and the all sufficiency of Christ's merits and satisfaction, by whose poverty alone we are made rich. As it is 2. Cor. 8. 9.

CHAPTER 8.

Of the subject matter of alms: where is shown that we ought to give unto the poor only that which is our own; and what it should be both in respect of quantity and quality.

Sect. 1. That we must give that only which is our own.

And so I come from the causes moving us to give our alms, to speak of the work itself, where we will consider the subject matter about which it is exercised, the persons to whom it belongeth, the right manner how they are to be bestowed, the time when we are bound to do them, the properties of Christian alms, wherein they differ from the alms of hypocrites and worldlings, and lastly, the diverse sorts and kinds of them. In respect of the first, we must give only that which is our own, by just and lawful means derived unto us: as by inheritance, free gift or honest getting, by our own painful labors and endeavors. For alms-deeds are liberal gifts, whereby we alienate the property of the thing given from ourselves, and not from other men, to the relief of those who stand in need. And to be liberal of that which is not our own, but of right belongeth unto others, is to take goods from the right owners, to whom God hath given them, and to bestow them on others at our own pleasure, which is (as we say in the proverb) to cut a large shive out of another man's loaf, to rob Peter, that we may pay Paul, and in truth no better than plain theft in the sight of God. Now in our Christian sacrifice of alms-deeds, we must take heed we offer not unto God strange fire nor stolen oblations; for if the hire of a harlot, or price of a dog, might not be consecrated unto God, because they were an abomination unto him, then neither may we offer that which we have gotten by stealth and robbery, fraud and deceit, oppression and cruelty, which are no less abominable and odious. Isaiah 61. 8. And therefore justice and mercy must be matched together, according to that Micah. 6. 8. deal justly and love mercy, and as mercy must lay out that which is given to the

poor, so justice must first bring it in. The which is signified by those phrases which the Scriptures use in enjoining unto us this duty of giving alms; as, Cast thy bread upon the face of the waters. And honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruit of all thine increase. And deal thy bread to the hungry. implying that it must be our own and not other men's. And the Apostle requireth everyone to lay by him in store for this use, as God hath prospered him; so that nothing must be given to God for the benefit of the poor, but that which he hath first given unto us, in blessing our honest endeavors with fruitful success. So as we may say with David, 1. Chron. 29. 14. All things come of thee, and of thine own we have given thee.

Sect. 2. Ill-gotten goods must not be given, but restored to the owners.

Whereby it appeareth that men cannot lawfully give alms out of those goods which they have gotten by theft and rapine, bribery and extortion, simony and usury, dicing and unlawful gaming. For as the Civilians say well. *Bonus vsus non iustificat injust quaesita*. The good use doth not justify the unjust getting of their goods. Because such goods are not their own but other men's, which they are bound in conscience to restore to their true owners; unless it be in this case, that they cannot possibly make restitution, because those whom they have wronged are dead or unknown unto them; and then it being unlawful to keep these goods themselves, it is the best course to give them unto God, the chief Lord of all, when the next and proper owner cannot be found; even as by our Law stolen goods found in the ground of an inferior Tenant, belongs to the chief Land-Lord, when the party appeareth not whose they are, or else to the King, when the thief is taken with his theft about him. An example whereof we have in Zacchaeus, who having by his office gotten much unjustly, after his conversion, offereth fourfold 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. Where by the way we may observe that this heathenish

Publican was in his worst estate to be justified before many among us, making profession of Christian Religion, who if they should make a four-fold, yea, single restitution of their ill-gotten goods, could not make the poor much beholding for that half which should remain, seeing all would be too little to make satisfaction.

Sect. 3. That it is unlawful to give other men's goods proved.

But if we know the parties whom we have wronged in ill getting of our goods, we must restore them unto them again. For God much preferreth this just obedience before an unjust & wicked sacrifice: yea, whereas that is pleasing and acceptable, this his soul hateth, because in his word he hath forbidden it. According to that Prov. 15. 8. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord. And God himself professeth, I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering. Esa. 61. 8. So the son of Sirach. Eccli. 34. 18. He that sacrificeth of a thing wrongfully gotten, his offering is ridiculous, and the gifts of unjust men are not accepted. For he who retaineth ill-gotten goods, and restoreth them not to the right owners, liveth in his sin without repentance, and as it followeth in the next words; The most high is not pleased with the offerings of the wicked, neither is he pacified for sin by the multitude of sacrifices.

Sect. 4. Alms out of goods gotten by oppression unlawful.

But as all sacrifices and alms-deeds are unlawful, which are offered and given out of ill-gotten goods; so some above others are most abominable; as first when as men give alms out of those goods which are gotten by oppressing the poor, and that whether they wring from some poor by cruelty, deceit or violence, and give unto others; for as one saith, What kind of gift is that which one receiveth with joy, and another loseth with tears? or pull from the same poor by pounds at one time, and give unto them by pence at another. As is the practice of those cruel, yet vainglorious Land-lords, who rack their poor

Tenants the whole year, and in the twelve days only keep open house, and feast them with some small part of that which is their own. But he that bringeth unto God such an alms, or offering of the goods of the poor, doth as one that killeth the son before the eyes of his father, as it is Eccli. 34. 20.

Sect. 5. Alms given out of the spoils of the Church unlawful.

But much more abominable are their alms, who spoil the Church by simony and sacrilege, & taking into their possession the portion of Levi, which is consecrated unto God, think to please the Lord, & as it were, satisfy for their sin, by giving some small alms to the poor, or keeping good hospitality of the spoils of the Church. And that not only for the time past, but with a resolution to continue still in their sin, paying these pittances to the poor, as the price or penalty of their sacrilegious wickedness: but unto these may be well fitted the saying of the holy Ghost. Prov. 21. 27. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination: How much more when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?

Sect 6. Alms given By Non-residents unlawful.

But above all, the alms of our unconscionable Non-residents are most odious unto God; who multiply one living upon another, and starve the souls of the people, that they may pamper and feed their own belly. All which impiety is gilded over with this pretense, that they must have wherewith to keep good hospitality, and to give unto the poor; and what is this but to come twice or thrice a year to their charge to fleece the sheep, and prey upon the flock, and then for a day or two put them into a fat pasture, for the feeding or rather feasting of their bodies? which must be a full recompense for the not feeding of their souls the whole year after.

Sect. 7. Divers cases wherein it is unlawful to give.

Secondly, whereas alms are only to be given out of our own goods, and not that which belongeth unto others: hence we learn that it is not lawful for one partner to give alms out of the common stock without the consent of the other, unless he put it on his own account.

Thirdly, it is not lawful for him who is indebted more than he is well able to pay, to give alms, seeing he giveth not his own, but that which belongeth to other men.

Fourthly, It is not lawful for a man to give that which he hath borrowed from another man, or that which is left in pawn with him, when the thing is to be restored in the same particular, and is not spent in the use, as houses, lands, horses, plate, jewels, and such like; but if restitution be only required in the same kind, as in things which are spent in the use, where the property is alienated with the use, as namely meat, money, corn, &c. it is lawful to give out of that which is borrowed, when the giver purposeth to make satisfaction by restoring the like to the true owner.

Sect. 8. That all the former cases are to be understood with some exception.

All which cases are to be understood with this exception, if the poor be but in ordinary want, and not in extreme necessity; as when he is in danger to be famished or starved, or in extreme and imminent peril, to perish for want of relief, or to be utterly ruined and overthrown in his whole estate; in which cases nothing is to be accounted proper, but all becomes commune through this urgent and unresistible necessity. Yet so as that he who giveth must purpose to the uttermost of his power to make satisfaction to the owner, for those goods which he hath thus bestowed; seeing though it may seem to be a work of mercy to give relief in such extremities, yet not of

justice, if we give that which belongeth to other men, without any purpose of making restitution.

Sect 9. That a certain quantity is not determined.

The second point to be considered in the matter of our alms, is the quantity or measure of them; the which is not particularly determined in the Scriptures, because there are so many circumstances which alter the case that no certain rule could be given; but it is left to the discretion of the prudent Christian, to give according to the occasion offered, more or less, as he thinketh good. And therefore the Apostle exhorting the Corinthians to abound in this grace, addeth that he speaketh not this by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others. 2. Cor. 8. 7. 8. and afterwards. 2. Cor. 9. 7. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver. And this the nature of the work requireth; for giving is a free and liberal action, and therefore is to be done freely and willingly, and consequently cannot be done by all in the like proportion because their hearts are not alike enlarged with love and bounty.

Sect. 10. That we must give liberally.

But yet this in the general is required, that we give our alms not with a straight and stingy hand, but bountifully and largely; the which is implied by the metaphor of scattering or sowing seed, fitted by the Apostle to this action of giving alms, 2. Cor. 9. 6. which is usually done with a bountiful and full hand; as also by that phrase of opening the hand wide to the poor and needy, Deut. 15. 11. & of stretching and reaching out to the poor, which phrase Solomon useth to express the bounty of the virtuous woman. Pr. 31. 20. And in regard hereof the act of giving alms is by the Apostle termed by the name of bounty, & opposed to covetousness, as being contrary unto it. 2. Cor. 9. 5. And plainly expressed, where the Apostle persuadeth to this bounty by

annexing that gracious promise. 2. Cor. 9. 6. He that soweth bountifully, shall reap bountifully; and maketh it to be an especial grace of the spirit to abound in these works of mercy. v. 8. and an undoubted sign of the sincerity of our love. 2. Cor. 8. 8.

Sect. 11. That in giving we must have respect to our own ability.

But yet herein respect must be had (as before I have in part shown) to our ability, keeping (as the wise man counseleth us) our cisterns and wells full, that ourselves may drink of them and letting the overplus (as it were at the waste) run abroad to others in the streets. Pro. 5. 16. 17. And this also the son of Sirach adviseth, according to thine ability stretch out thine hand and give. chap. 14. 13. and give unto the most high according as he hath enriched thee, and as thou hast gotten, give with a cheerful eye. chap. 35. 10. An example of which Christian discretion we have in the faithful. Act. 11. 29. Then the Disciples every man according to his ability determined to send relief unto the brethren. And this the Apostle meaneth where he requireth such an equality, as that some should not be too much eased, and some too much burdened; but that they should indifferently out of their abundance supply the wants of others, 2. Cor. 8. 13. 14.

Sect. 12. That in case of extreme necessity we must strain ourselves above our ability.

Notwithstanding in cases of urgent necessity and great extremity, men are to strain themselves, and to rack their estates above the reach of their ability, to preserve their brethren from being tortured in their persons upon the rack of necessity: for which the Apostle magnifieth the Christian bounty of the Macedonians, who even above their ability contributed and communicated to the relief of the poor Saints. And this our Savior requireth, Luk. 12. 33. Sell that you have and give alms. And John the Baptist. Luk. 3. 11. He that hath two

coats, let him impart unto him that hath none, and he that hath meat let him do likewise. Whereby is meant that he who hath more than is sufficient for the sustentation of life, must communicate it unto those who are in extreme necessity, and in imminent danger to perish; as we see it practiced by the faithful in the time of persecution. Acts 2. 45. where they that had possessions and goods, sold them, and parted them to all, as every man had need, otherwise unless it be in these cases of extremity, it is lawful to possess not only those things which are necessary to nature, but also to a man's state and person. For we read that Paul had a spare cloak at Troas. 2. Tim. 4. 13. And that our Savior himself had two coats in his greatest persecution. John. 19. 23.

Sect. 13. Of the quality of our alms.

And so much for the quantity. The third thing propounded in the matter of our alms is the quality of them; in which respect it is required, that we give to the poor things wholesome, cleanly, convenient and comfortable for the sustentation of their lives; avoiding therein two extremes, first of those who give unto them such base and sluttish food as they would scarce offer unto their dogs. And to this end we must remember, that we do not relieve contemptible creatures, of another kind inferior to ourselves, but those that are of the same flesh, children of the same father, yea members of the same body and partakers in hope of the same precious promises. And which is more that in them we lend unto the Lord, who justly scorneth our base refuse; yea relieve Jesus Christ himself; and will we give unto him swill and swine's meat, who hath given himself unto us, and vouchsafeth to nourish our souls and bodies with his most precious body and blood? The other extreme is to give unto the poor superfluous, dainties; for it is required that they be fed with necessary food, & not pampered wantonly with superfluities; & our Savior when he miraculously fed the poor and hungry people that followed him, by his sole word, did not provide for them delicates (though he might as easily have done it as the

other) but multiplied their barley loaves and fishes. Neither in truth can men thus feed some in excess, but in the meantime others must want necessaries, nor do the poor regard dainties (unless it be in their sickness and weakness) but only desire necessaries, seeing hunger doth make all food savory, and every meal a delightful banquet. So Augustine saith, *utantur divites superfluis, dent pauperibus necessaria*, Let the rich enjoy their superfluities, and let them relieve the poor with necessaries: let them use those things which are bought at high rates, and give the poor such as are good cheap. And another saith, Communicate unto them thy riches who feed on course fare and brown bread, and not on quail and pheasants, and who take care to kill hunger, and not to increase luxuriousness. And again, give to the poor and not the rich, give to sustain necessity and not to increase wealth.

CHAPTER 9.

Of the persons who ought to give alms.

Sect. 1. That the rich are bound chiefly to give

The second general point to be considered are the persons who are to be exercised in this work of alms, and that both in respect of giving and receiving. Concerning the former we must consider of the persons to whom the duty of giving appertaineth, which admitteth a double consideration; first of estate, who are bound to give; secondly of right, who may lawfully perform this duty. For the first, all of any estate and degree whatsoever are bound to give when they meet with poorer than themselves, at sometimes, and in some cases, but principally this duty belongeth unto rich men; for whereas the Scriptures have divided all men into two sorts; the rich, whom God

hath endued with possessions and worldly blessings: and the poor who are scanted of them; God requireth that those who abound should minister unto the relief of those that want. So Luk. 16. 9. Make unto you friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness. and 1. Tim. 6. 17. 18. 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. Thus the Apostle would have the Corinthians out of their abundance to supply the wants of the faithful that were in poverty. 2. Cor. 8. 14. And the Apostle John saith, that who so hath this worlds good, and seeth his brother hath need, and shutteth up the bowels of his compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

Sect. 2. That none are exempted from this duty.

But for as much as men are rich or poor, not only simply, but in relation unto others; a man is to be esteemed rich not only when he aboundeth with worldly wealth, but also when he is compared with one who is much poorer; and accordingly is to communicate of that which he hath to the relief of those who are in greater necessity. As for example, he who is of a mean and poor estate, must give alms when he meeteth with those that are in greater need; and even those who are in great need, must communicate such as they have unto them, who are in extreme necessity, & in danger presently to perish, unless they have some help from others. Thus he that hath but a mere competency to supply the necessity of nature and estate, is to give something out of it to relieve those who want necessaries belonging to nature, and those who have only sufficient for nature, are bound to give unto them who are in great and present extremity; unless the like necessity be imminent to themselves. For the rule of justice and charity requiring that we should love our neighbors as ourselves, and do unto them as we would have them to do unto us; doth in the equity thereof require, that we prefer the life of our brethren before our estate, and that we should endure small wants,

to preserve them from suffering those which are great and dangerous.

Sect. 3. The former point proved by testimonies.

So that not only they who abound in riches, but even those also who are of mean estate are bound to perform this Christian duty. The which will more manifestly appear, if we consider both the precepts and examples of holy Scriptures. The Baptist requireth that those who have two coats part with one, and that they who have meat do likewise: that is, if he meet with those who are in extreme necessity, these things being not necessary to the preserving of his own life and estate. And our Savior commandeth us to give alms of such things as we have, be they more or less, better or worse. Luk. 11. 41. And if we have nothing to spare out of superfluity, we must as (we have heard) sell that we have and give alms, in cases of great necessity: and if we have nothing to sell, we must work with our own hands, that we may have to give unto him that needeth. Eph. 4. 28.

Sect. 4. Secondly, by examples.

An example hereof we have in the poor widow, which was so much commended by our Savior Christ, for casting into the treasury her two mites which was all her substance. Mark. 12. 43. In the Macedonians who being themselves but poor, gave even above their ability, to the relief of those who were poorer. 2. Cor. 8. 2. In the Apostles who wanting silver and gold, gave such as they had to the poor cripple; restoring him by miracle to the use of his limbs, that so by his labor he might get his own living. Act. 3. 6. And in our Savior Christ himself, who though he were so poor, that he lived upon that which others out of their love and duty ministered unto him, as appeareth. Luk. 8. 3. yet he himself gave alms to those who were in greater want, as we may gather. John. 12. 6. 8. To which purpose one saith, that the commandment of mercy is common unto all offices

and ages, neither is the Publican or soldier, the husbandman or citizen, the rich or poor excepted, but all are to be admonished that they be ready to give unto him that needeth.

Sect. 5. That our small means should move us to give

And therefore let none excuse their neglect of this religious duty, because their means are small: but rather let this move them the more carefully to exercise it, as being in respect of them an act, not only of charity, but also of Christian policy: seeing this is the means whereby being poor they may become richer, for there is that scattereth, and is the more increased; and there is that spareth more than is meet, and cometh to poverty. Pro. 11. 24. And our Savior promiseth that if we give, it shall be given to us again, good measure, pressed down and shaken together, and running over. Luk. 6. 38. Now no man will in seed time excuse himself for not sowing his seed, because he hath but a small quantity to spare, above that which he is to spend for his sustenance that year; but this maketh him the rather to cast it into the ground, that being multiplied he may have also enough the year following. There is none refuse to trade because their stock is small, but so much the more diligently they do it, that it may be increased: and therefore seeing giving alms is our Christian sowing and trading, let not our small means make us neglect it, but to practice it with more cheerfulness, and so much the rather because we shall not only reap an earthly crop, but have also an heavenly harvest, which will never fail us.

Sect. 6. That the alms of the poor are as acceptable as of the rich. Deut. 15. 11.

Neither let any man say that this only belongeth unto those who have much to give; but as for their alms they are so small by reason of the meanness of their estate, that they have no hope they will be respected; for the Lord commandeth not give much, but to open the

hand wide, whether it be great or little, and he measureth the deed by the will; and the outward act by the habit & internal virtue; he looketh not so much, *Quid datur*, as *ex quo*; not to the greatness of the gift, but to the quantity of the store out of which it is given, and the largeness of the heart, which out of a little can spare somewhat. And therefore the affection of the giver maketh the alms precious and estimable, or vile and contemptible in God's sight, in which respect no man's gift (as one saith) is accounted small, who giveth it out a great and liberal mind, seeing our piety is not to be measured by our outward wealth, but by the inward riches which lieth hid in the heart. It is true indeed that rich men give greater gifts, and mean men less in respect of the matter or thing given, but there is no difference in the fruit of the work, where there is no want in the affection of the workers; for as another saith, it is the heart and mind of the giver which maketh him rich or poor, and doth set the price upon all these spiritual wares: and in God's sight the hand is never empty of a gift, if the treasury of the heart be full of good will and bounty. An example whereof we have in the poor widow who casting into the treasury two mites, was adjudged by our Savior to have given the greatest gift, because she had the largest and most liberal heart, which made her to give (not like others out of their superfluity, but) even out of her penury, all she had; as also because the rich giving out of their superfluity, rely upon their own abundance as sufficient to bear them out in their bounty; whereas they who being poor, and yet give out of their penury, do in their alms deeds by a lively faith and affiance depend wholly upon God's promises. Now what greater encouragement can there be unto them that have little, to give somewhat of their small store to those that stand in need, seeing their work is as much esteemed and shall be as richly rewarded, as those who give much out of their greater store? If a poor man had a gracious promise from his Prince, that if he would lay out a few pence at his appointment, he should have a reward equal with his greatest nobles, who have in the same respect disbursed sums of great value, how readily would he part with his small pittance for the assuring of such rich hopes? or if a merchant out of his love and bounty, should offer a precious jewel to sale, setting his price, not

according to the inestimable value of the thing sold, but according to the proportion of their ability who come to buy it, so that they who will give somewhat out of little, shall as soon have it, as those who will give much out of their rich estates, how would poor men crowd to come to such a bargain, and with their speed prevent the wealthy in running to such a market? but here is the like case, yea so much better as heavenly jewels and rewards exceed those which are earthly, and things permanent and everlasting, excel in worth those which are mutable and but of momentary continuance.

CHAPTER 10.

Of the persons who may lawfully give alms.

Sect. 1. That none may give but such as are owners of the things given.

And thus we have spoken of the persons who are bound to give: now we are to speak of them who may lawfully perform this duty. Neither may all give alms that will, but they who are qualified and fitted for it; unto which is required that those who give, have right unto the things thus bestowed: so as they may give their own, & not that which belongeth unto others: as also that they be left by the positive laws of men grounded upon Christian equity, to their liberty that they may dispose of that which is their own, and of right belongeth unto them, having age judgment and discretion, to perform this duty in some good manner.

Sect 2. That it is unlawful for servants to give their masters goods.

In the former respect it is unlawful for servants to give alms of their masters goods, unless he hath given them license and liberty, if not for every particular, yet at least by general allowance. And yet are not servants hands so bound from doing these works of mercy, but that they may lawfully give out of that which is their own; as either that which they have lawfully gotten by their service, or that which they can spare out of some allowance for their diet or apparel, which their governors are willing to make unto them. Otherwise it is unlawful for servants to give alms, unless it be in cases of extreme necessity, in the absence of their governors, they having a purpose to make it known unto them; upon the assurance which they have of their liking and approbation, or to restore unto them what they have given, if they find that they mislike of it.

Sect. 3. That it is unlawful for children to give without consent of parents.

So also it is unlawful for children under the government of their parents or tutors, and remaining still in the family to give alms without the consent of their parents or governors, either plainly expressed by their words, or at least intimated by the continual custom of the family, unless by their labor they earn their own living, and are allowed by their parents to dispose of their own getting's. Otherwise if they be for themselves out of the family, or out of the family and under government, but yet allowed by their governors some stipend for their maintenance, they may lawfully give some alms out of their allowance, so that it be ordered with judgment and discretion; or if they have no certain stipend, yet may they give somewhat which out of frugality and parsimony they have spared even from their own ordinary, especially if they be truly persuaded that their parents coming to the knowledge of it would allow and approve of such disbursements.

Sect 4. That it is unlawful for those that want discretion to give alms.

In regard of the latter, those who are not of sufficient age and discretion, though they have right to the goods they give, yet are restrained from bestowing of them by the equity of law, because they want judgment to bestow them well. In which respect it is unlawful for children under age and under guardians, or for fools, mad men, and impotent persons to give alms, because for want of discretion they may waste their estate, or bestow their gifts upon unfit and unworthy persons.

CHAPTER 11.

Whether it be lawful for the wife to give alms without consent of her husband.

Sect. 1. Certain cases in which it is lawful for the wife to give alms.

But now in the last place it may be demanded, whether it be lawful for wives to give alms, and to perform such other works of mercy without the consent of their husbands; for that they may give them with their consent, either plainly expressed or secretly and implicitly intimated; there is no man maketh any question. And it is agreed on by the most that she may give alms in diverse cases, as first if the husband be a fool or mad man, and not able to manage his estate.

Secondly, when he is far absent, so as his consent cannot be asked or obtained; especially being persuaded that if her husband were present, he would approve and like of her doings.

Thirdly, when as he hath committed the administration of his household expenses to the discretion of his wife.

Fourthly, when having a certain allowance made unto her by her husband, she spareth somewhat out of it, being less liberal to herself, that she may have the more to bestow in virtuous actions.

Fifthly, when she or her friends for her, have before marriage, over and above her dowry reserved something to be at her disposing.

Sixthly, when she getteth some wealth by her own proper labor, she may dispose of it to these good uses, if at least the laws of the country be not against it.

Seventhly, if the alms which she giveth be but of small value, as bread, drink, cast apparel, and such like.

Eighthly, if the husband be exceeding covetous, so that having much he will part with nothing; or (as I may add) if he be so wicked and irreligious, that though he spend much vainly, yet he will not be drawn to do any work of mercy; or if he be content that some alms be given, yet he cannot endure that any should be given unto those that fear God, in respect of the hatred which he beareth unto them.

Lastly, when it is the received custom of the country that wives should give alms to the relief of the poor.

Sect. 2. Some think it unlawful for the wife to give alms.

But howsoever almost all in the five first of these cases or cautions do well agree, yet about the four last there is much question. For some taking it that the propriety of the goods is wholly in the husband; do condemn it as no better than theft in the wife, if she take upon her to give less or more by way of alms, without the consent of her husband either expressed or secretly implied. But this is a hard saying, and if it were true, I might (with better reason) say with the Disciples, in another matter; If the case be so between man and wife, then it were good for woman not to marry.

And therefore it shall not be amiss a little further to examine it, that as on the one side wives may not be let loose to licentious liberty, and unlawful liberality; so on the other side they may not have their consciences unjustly ensnared and entangled, nor be restrained of their right; for he that restraineth of lawful liberty, openeth a gap to lawless licentiousness.

Sect. 3. That she must endeavor to persuade her husband to join with her

First then we thus far agree with those who oppose us in the rest; that as God hath made them yoke-fellows, so she must endeavor by all means to work and persuade her husband in all Christian duties to draw together, that joining in the work they may not be separated in the reward. And to this purpose she is to use towards him all duty, respect, and reverence, all loving and sweet behavior, that gaining her husbands heart, she may move him by loving her, to love all goodness which she embraceth and practiseth, for her sake: and also to show such care and faithfulness in preserving and increasing his estate by good housewifery and painful endeavors, that like the virtuous woman in the Proverbs, the heart of her husband may safely trust in her, Pro. 31. 11.

Sect. 4. The state of the question.

But what if notwithstanding all this, her husband being a right Nabal, that is, both a churl and fool, will neither himself do any works of mercy, nor give consent that she shall do them? what if he neglect alms deeds, either through covetousness and excessive love of his goods, or wicked maliciousness and hatred of good deeds? may not the virtuous wife in this case do those good works which he neglecteth or abhorreth? some say no, but (saving their better judgments) I hold she may, so that she carefully observe these cautious. First that she give with wisdom and discretion, observing

the things of which we have formerly spoken; but especially her care must be that her gifts exceed not their own ability, and so impair and impoverish their estate; the which if it be unknown unto her, she must give but sparingly, and things of small value; neither must she under show of giving alms undo her husband, seeing it is said of the virtuous woman, that she will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. Now where this wisdom and discretion is wanting, there the wife may not take upon her this duty, which is better not done, then done foolishly and without discretion.

Sect. 5. Secondly, she must give with meekness and reverence towards her husband.

Secondly, she must perform this duty with all meekness and humility of spirit, with all reverence and due respect unto her husbands authority, with acknowledgement of her subjection in all things lawful, that hereby she may win him by her Christian carriage and conversation to a liking and allowance of her good works, yea also (if it be possible) to the practice and imitation of them, according to that, 1. Pet. 3. 1. Ye wives be in subjection to your own husbands, that if they obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives: to which purpose he further persuadeth them to adorn themselves with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God, of great price.

Sect. 6. Thirdly, she must not give her husband any cause of offense.

Thirdly, she must in the manner of doing these good works carefully avoid the giving unto her husband any just cause of offense; and not presume to use any pride or arrogancy, stomach and sturdiness, insolent and contemptuous behavior, whereby she shall more disgrace her good deeds, then they can grace her. For the Apostle will in no case permit the woman to usurp authority over the man, 1. Tim. 2. 10. unto which fault they are most subject when they see their

husbands defects, and know that truth and right is on their side; whereby oftentimes it cometh to pass, that they spoil a good cause by ill handling; and are more blame-worthy in their manner of doing good, then their husbands are for neglecting the good itself. But of this all Christian women must take heed, seeing by such behavior they do not only disgrace themselves and their profession, but also for want of due obedience to their husbands, do cause the word of God (which they take into their mouths to defend their courses) to be blasphemed, as it is Tit. 2. 5. whereas on the other side, if they perform these Christian duties with all due reverence towards him whom God hath set over them, it will appear that they do them with a good conscience and in obedience to God; and that the fear of their husbands would restrain them, if it were not over-mastered with a greater fear, even the sincere and true fear of almighty God.

Sect. 7. Fourthly, she must not disgrace her husband by publishing his faults.

Lastly, she must take heed, that by reporting her own good deeds, and her husbands backwardness she do not disgrace him; but she must hide and cover his faults from all, saving those who may help to better him, and pray unto God for his amendment; for a good wife will not lay the foundation of her own credit in the ruins of her husbands honor, but knowing that it is no small disgrace to the most proper and beautiful body, to have a deformed and misshapen head, she will hide it under the veil of secrecy, or adorn and beautify it with the most favorable report that sincerity and truth can give unto it; knowing that a virtuous woman is a crown to her husband, but she that maketh him ashamed is rottenness in his bones, as it is Pro. 12. 4. Wherein Abigail (though otherwise a virtuous woman) failed, excusing her husband by discovering his folly.

Sect. 8. That it is lawful for the wife to give alms these cautions being observed. Main grounds laid for the determining of the question.

Which cautions being observed I think it lawful for the wife to give alms, and perform all other works of mercy, as well as the husband; the which because it is controverted, I will endeavor to prove. And for the better clearing of this point, two things are to be permitted and examined, which being thoroughly known will give sufficient light for the determining of this question; the first is the authority, superiority, and dominion of the husband over the wife, with all things else which they possess; the second is the communion between them both in respect of goods and persons, the which are not to be severed in the consideration of either of them; for the husband is so to exercise his authority, as that he do not neglect the communion which is between him and his wife, and the wife is so to enjoy her communion, as that she do not forget the authority of her husband.

Sect. 9. Of the superiority and authority of the husband over the wife.

Concerning the former, it is to be acknowledged that the husband hath superiority and authority over his wife to rule and govern her as her head, and that she as his inferior is to subject herself to his rule and government; and it cannot be denied but that also he hath chief dominion over all their goods, and power to rule and manage the main estate. So the Apostle saith, that as the head of every man is Christ, so the head of woman is the man. 1. Cor. 11. 3. In regard whereof she is in many places of Scripture enjoined to be subject unto her husband in all things; and the reason hereof is given, because in the creation the man was not of the woman, but the woman of the man, neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man. 1. Cor. 11. 8. 9. and besides, the man was not first deceived, but the woman, and so was first in the transgression, as it is 1. Tim. 2. 14. and therefore it was a part of her punishment, that her will should be to be subject to her husband, and that he should rule over her. Gen. 3. 16. In regard of which superiority it is not lawful for the wife to take upon her the managing of her husbands main estate, or to dispose at her pleasure of great and

weighty matters, because this is a royalty which belongeth to her superior and head, who is the chief ruler and king in the little commonwealth of the family: howsoever even in these things a wise and good husband will not neglect the advice of his discreet wife, as being his most faithful counselor, and created of God purposely to this end that she might be his helper.

Sect. 10. That the husbands government must be in the Lord.

But withal we must hold that the husbands government and the wives subjection must be in the Lord, and as unto the Lord. For in this respect hath the husband authority over the wife, as bearing in himself the image of God; and she is to yield obedience unto him, as unto God in him, in all things which are honest, lawful or indifferent. But if he commandeth what God forbiddeth, or forbiddeth what God commandeth, he is not to be obeyed. As if he shall forbid his wife to sanctify the Sabbath, to pray, hear the word, or to perform the works of mercy which God enjoineth, because herein he beareth not the image of God, commanding as he commandeth, but the image of the devil opposing against God, and crossing that which he requireth. Again, the Lord is our supreme sovereign, and the husband but subordinate unto him as his deputy or lieutenant, and therefore whilst he holdeth his subordination unto God's government, the wife is to hold hers to him, because so in obeying him, she obeyeth God, but if he leave his subordination and rebel against his sovereign, she is not to join with him in this rebellion, but leaving her subordination unto him, as he hath left his unto God, she is to disobey him, that she may yield obedience to the chief commander.

Sect. 11. Of the communion between man and wife.

The second point to be considered is the communion which is between man and wife through the bond of marriage, which extendeth both unto their persons and goods: the communion of

persons is so near and indissolvable, that they are no more two, but one flesh, in which regard they have no more propriety in themselves, nor absolute power of deposing their own bodies, but either in other; according to that, 1. Cor. 7. 4. The wife hath not power over her own body, but the husband, and likewise also the husband, hath not power over his own body; but the wife. So also there is such communion in their goods, that there is no absolute propriety in either of them, but it resteth in them both; neither have these words mine and thine any place between them, seeing they are but one flesh, and one body, whereof the husband is the head. And howsoever married persons, speaking of that which they possess unto others, may say that this is mine to note propriety, yet when they have relation to one another, they imply this community, by saying these goods are ours; So Jacob's wives speaking of their goods, say that all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that is ours, though no part of it came by their dowry, but through the blessing of God upon their husbands labors, only it was theirs through the communion of marriage. And this communion both of persons and goods is signified, yea plainly expressed in our form of marriage, both by the words and actions there used; the communion of persons by joining of hands, and by those words, with my body I thee worship, by which he professeth that he doth her honor in vouchsafing unto her the communion of his body, for it is the honor of a woman to have an head and husband; the communion of goods, by giving unto her a ring, and (as it was the practice heretofore) money or gold with it, as an earnest of all the rest, and by those plain words, with all my worldly goods I thee endow.

Sect. 12. How far the communion in goods extendeth.

Yea will some say but this communion extendeth unto use only. I answer it is true, for what can be more required than use, where there is no propriety, but that which is in them both? yea but (say they) the propriety is in the husband, and for the common use which the wife hath in her husbands goods, it only extendeth to her meat,

drink, apparel, and such necessaries as are fit for the maintenance of her person. The former hath some color, because the husband hath right to alienate and sell house and land, yea to give all away if he please without the wife's consent, unless it be her jointer or dowry. I answer that they may do all this wisely and discretely for their own good and of their wives and children, by that authority and superiority which they have over their wives and goods, though they have no propriety in them more then they, because the action best proceedeth from the predominant cause and chief agent; but if it be to the wives hurt and prejudice, they abuse their authority, and sin against their spouse by infringing the communion; and as he who with riot, wastefulness, excess and ill husbandry consumeth and mispendeth his estate, is a thief to himself, so also to his wife in that he robbeth her of her right which by virtue of the communion of marriage belongeth to her. And therefore we read that when Ananias (though he were but an hypocrite) sold his possession to relieve the necessity of the Church, yet he did not do it without his wives consent, but they joined both together in the sale, according to the custom of those times, Act. 5. 1. Now if any will say that the husband hath more absolute right among us to dispose of all his goods and possessions at his own pleasure: to this I answer, that he hath it not by the law of God, but by the positive laws of men, and I dispute not what a man may do, in foro judiciali, in the courts of men, but what he is bound to do in foro conscientia, in the court of conscience.

Sect. 13. Another objection answered.

Secondly, the propriety of the husband hath some show of reason seeing he hath power by will to dispose of his goods at his own pleasure. I answer that though he may make such a will in his life, yet it is not to take effect till after his death, when the band of marriage is dissolved, and the communion between them ceaseth. Neither is it then lawful to give away all from his wife, but he is bound to leave unto her a good part and share, and a part also unto his children, the which general rule of equity, is by our law wisely and equally

determined to be a third part to either of them, another third only being left to his disposing: wherein they are like unto partners who whilst they continue together have equal right to the whole estate, but take everyone his share when their partnership being dissolved they go from one another.

Sect 14. That the wife hath communion in goods to all good uses

To the other part of the objection which restraineth the use only unto the meat, drink, apparel and such other corporal necessities. I answer, that it beseemeth not a Christian; for have they power by virtue of this communion to dispose of their goods for all uses, saving doing good? may they employ them at their pleasure for the good of their bodies, and may no part be allowed unto them to dispose of for the good of their souls? may they have enough to pamper their bellies and adorn their backs, and to bestow upon all uses, which pride, pleasure and vanity will call necessary, and shall they have no power to lay up treasures in heaven, nor to send some small part of their wealth by the hands of the poor to those eternal mansions, if their husbands do not give allowance, who care not to have any store laid up in that country, because they mean never to travail thither? Let divines then be ashamed of making such a limitation and restraint, which so much tendeth to God's dishonor in the neglect of charitable and Christian duties.

Sect. 15. The conclusion of the former point.

Let this then be the conclusion of this point, that the chief authority over the person of the wife and their common estate is in the husband, and that the wife hath also communion with him in all he hath both in respect of propriety and use taking it in the largest signification for all employments which may bring good either to her soul or body; the which both of them are bound to further in one another by all good means, it being the most excellent and common

duty of marriage to advance their mutual good. And therefore the good woman of whom we read. 2. King. 4. 10. joineth both these together, and maketh suite unto her husband in behalf of the Prophet, to acknowledge his superior authority; but yet attributeth a part of the action to be done unto herself, seeing it was to be performed by those goods, in which she had communion with him; and this is the cause why she saith not, I will make him a chamber, to infringe her husbands authority, nor do you make him a chamber, to impair her own right, but, let us I pray thee make him a chamber. Neither let any man here say, that this maketh against me, because she would not do it of herself without her husbands consent; seeing no man ever dreamed that the wife should take upon her so to do, if she can possibly by any good means obtain her husbands allowance.

Sect. 16. The first reason. That all good works are enjoined unto the wife as well as unto the husband.

And thus having untied the hardest knots in this controversy, and removed the main blocks which did lie in the way; the reasons which may further be produced for the clearing of this point will find a fair and easy entrance. And first, all good actions and works of mercy are charged as well upon the wife as the husband, and where any commandment requiring them is propounded, it extendeth as well to the woman as the man: as namely relieving the poor, feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, clothing the naked, & such like, and therefore the wife is no less bound to do them than the husband, and liable to the same punishment if she do neglect them. yea not only these good works are generally commanded to all mankind but especially to this sex, as appeareth. 1. Tim. 2. 10. where the Apostle forbiddeth women braided hair, gold, pearl and costly array, and requireth that instead of them they should (as becometh women professing godliness) adorn themselves with good works. Now if any say that they must do works of mercy out of that which is their own, and not out of their husbands goods, to this I have answered, that by the virtue of the communion of marriage, they have to all good

purposes the lawful use of that which is in their possession. And if they affirm that she is inferior to her husband and therefore must not do any of these works without his consent: I answer, that as she is inferior to her husband, so both he and she to the supreme sovereign, and therefore though she is to show subjection and yield obedience to her husband in all things lawful and indifferent, yet not where God commandeth the contrary, seeing here the Apostles rule taketh place, that it is better to obey God then man. For he is the chief Lord of all, and the husband but a steward and inferior officer under him, to dispose of his goods as he commandeth, and to give unto his fellow-servants their portion which belongeth unto them: now if he neglect this duty and convert all to his own use like a miser, or misspend his masters goods in excess and riot, the wife who is joined in commission with him as an inferior officer is not to join with him in these courses and so make herself partaker of his sin and punishment, but to employ that which is under her hand in her masters service, and to perform those good duties to her fellow-servants which he neglecteth.

Sect. 17. An objection answered.

Yea but the husband hath such authority over his wife, that though, in the time of the law she should make a vow unto God, to consecrate anything unto his service, it was in his power to disannul and make it void. To which I answer that vows were either of things absolutely commanded, or of things indifferent, either in their own nature, or in respect of circumstances; the former vows are nothing else, but the renewing of the general vow which we made unto God in baptism, as the Jews in the sacrament of circumcision, and such no power of man can make void and disannul. But these are improperly called vows, being nothing else but duties which we are absolutely bound to perform, & are not at all left at our choice. But the other sort of vows which are of things indifferent, at the pleasure of the wife, may be made void by the authority of the husband; and of these that place in the law is to be understood. For example if the wife vow unto God,

that she will bestow some part of her goods in doing works of mercy, the Husbands authority cannot make it void, because God himself hath required it; but if she vow that she will give such and so great a sum to these uses, the husband by his authority may disannul it, when as it is more than his estate will well bear, or that it is otherwise unfit in respect of other circumstances, being wisely and religiously considered.

Sect. 18. That works of mercy are commended in the wife as well as in the husband.

The second reason is that alms-deeds and the works of mercy are no less commended in the Scriptures in the wife then in the husband; for as it is here made a sign or property of a blessed man, that he disperseth and giveth to the poor; so elsewhere of a virtuous and good woman. As Pro. 31. 20. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor, yea she reacheth out her hand to the needy, by which phrases of stretching and reaching out the hand is signified, not only that she giveth somewhat, but liberally, and to the uttermost of her ability. And not without good cause is it made a note of a gracious wife, because alms deeds are ordinarily done out of household store and provision, the administration and disposing whereof doth more properly and immediately belong to the woman then to the man, as we may see by the current of that whole chapter. So the Apostle would have the younger women to marry, bear children, and guide the house, 1. Tim. 5. 14. The which when the Husband alloweth, he giveth honor to his wife; as the Apostle requireth 1. Pet. 3. 7. and contrariwise disgraceth her when he turneth her out of this her office & viceregency. For as the man is the principal getter of the estate, and the bringer of it in, so the wise administration of it for the good of the husband and family, belongeth unto the woman; not only by special commission from him for every action and employment, but as she is a Wife by virtue of her calling, place and office; if at least she be not limited and restrained for her misgovernment and want of discretion in abusing and misspending their estate, by the superior

authority of her husband. And as in the common-wealth, the King, though he hath supreme authority over all, yet doth not take upon him to administer all the affairs of the kingdom, but hath under him many inferior officers, who by virtue of their place and office manage great and weighty affairs without any special commission for particular actions; and although he hath ever in his hand a superior power over them, to call them to account, and to turn them out of their offices, when they mis-behave themselves, and abuse his name and authority; yet so long as they hold their place and office, they may justly execute the affairs and duties that belong unto it: so is it also in the little common-wealth of the house and family; for when the husband hath chosen a wife, the administration of household affairs belongeth unto her by virtue of her place and calling, unless she be suspended from this power and liberty, for her unjust and indiscreet abusing of it; and for the husband to intermeddle more than necessity requireth with her domestical business, is as if a King would be Chancellor, Treasurer, Chief Justice and all himself, though he had officers appointed to all these places, which were but to overburden himself and abase his Royal condition, and also to wrong those who are deputed to these offices, by distrusting causelessly their fidelity and sufficiency.

Sect. 19. Because the wife is appointed by God to be an helper in all good things.

Thirdly, God the first Instituter of marriage, gave the wife unto the husband, to be, not his servant, but his helper, counselor and comforter. The which duties she is bound to perform, not only in respect of temporal affairs, but also of those things which appertain to godliness and everlasting happiness; and therefore if he neglect religious and charitable duties, she is not only bound to move and persuade him unto them, but also, if he still neglect them, to do them herself for him, lest the sin and punishment lie not only upon him, but also upon her and the whole family. For if Zeppora, performing a duty which belonged unto her husband, and not unto her, averted

God's judgments from him, the inflicting whereof was begun for his neglect; how much more may a good and virtuous wife do the like, when her husband neglecteth these common duties which belong indifferently to them both?

Sect. 20. That the wife should be in a worse condition than a servant if she might not give alms.

Fourthly, if a wife had no liberty to do these alms-deeds and works of mercy without special commission from her husband, then were she in as bad an estate as the basest servant, seeing they also may give alms and do these works when they have leave from their masters. Yea in truth the wives servitude should be far worse than of the meanest servant; for it is the most grievous bondage, to be bound from doing good, and restrained from expressing our good will by our works and actions; now the poorest servants may according to their small estate, give alms and do good, out of that which is their own and earned by their painful labors; and so though they give little, yet giving according to their ability, they may (like the poor widow that cast in her mites) be rich in good works, and richly rewarded in the life to come; whereas the wife though she have never so much under her hand, yet may give nothing of it, nor have any liberty without license, to express the bounty of her heart in the outward action; or if she do (according to their conceit) she doth not therein a work of mercy, but sinneth, stealeth, and thereby maketh her-self liable to God's wrath and punishment. Neither will it help them to say that her estate is better, because having more interest in her husbands love she may obtain his consent, and so give more liberally than a servant, seeing this doth not make her bondage less in its own nature, but only lighter through her husbands love, neither is her chain taken from her, but whereas before she was (as is were) bound with it to a post, now she walketh about with it in her husbands hand.

Sect. 21. That the last sentence shall be pronounced to wives as well as husbands.

Fifthly, I would fain know if the sentence of everlasting happiness will not equally and alike be pronounced at the latter day to the wives as well as to the husbands, for their alike doing these works of mercy; but according to their opinion the Judge should not say to many wives, I was hungry and ye fed me, I was thirst and you gave me drink; but you would have done these things if your husbands would have suffered you, but yet neglected me in my members though I was in great extremity, because you had not their consent.

Sect. 22. Grounded on examples, as 1. of Abigail, 1 Sam. 25.

Sixthly, the power of the wife to give alms appeareth clearly by the examples of holy women in the scriptures; as of Abigail who (not only without the knowledge, but contrary to the mind of her husband Nabal, plainly expressed by his absolute refusal) gave a great present to David, and his followers for their relief. Unto which it is answered, that Abigail's example is no rule for other women; for then by the same reason it should be lawful to call their husbands fools as she did. But to this I reply, that we must distinguish between the infirmities shown in the action, and the action itself; the infirmities and imperfections no man alloweth, but for the action itself it was good, and she pronounced by holy David blessed for it; yea he blesseth God as being the chief author who stirred her up to the doing of this charitable action, v 32. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath sent thee to meet me this day. Secondly, it is said that Abigail was a wise and virtuous woman, and therefore might the better do it. And who giveth liberty unto any other but unto those only, who are able to perform these actions virtuously and with some discretion? Thirdly, it is objected that Nabal was a churl and a fool, and therefore it was lawful for his wife who was wiser than he to dispose of some part of his great estate. To which I reply that I give

no authority to wives to give against their husbands will, unless they be such Nabals and wicked churls, who by no persuasions will be drawn to the doing of any good. Yea but he must be not only a churl, but also a fool such as Nabal was. To which I answer, that who so doth well consider Nabals answer to David's messengers, and compareth it with David's present estate, who with his company lived, in the sight of carnal men, like fugitives and out-laws; he will find more wickedness in it, then want of worldly wit. Wickedness I say, because he did not (like his wife) believe God's promises made to David concerning his establishment in the kingdom, when as he saw him in this afflicted estate. Secondly, because therein he showeth his churlishness & averseness to any good, & particularly to relieve the distressed servants of God, though he had abundance in his hands to bestow superfluously in riotous feasting those he favored. Thirdly, that he was more wicked then witless, it appeareth by his servants words to Abigail, v. 17. who said that he was such a wicked person or son of Belial that no man durst speak to him, whereas folly in the master worketh rather contempt than fear in the hearts of servants; and also, by Abigail her words to David, who joining his wickedness with his folly, showeth that his folly chiefly consisted in his wickedness, & though he might have worldly wit, yet he was destitute of true spiritual wisdom, which chiefly consisteth in godliness and in the fear of the Lord. Neither do we leave liberty to wives to perform these works of mercy without the allowance of their husbands, unless they be such fools, that is, such carnal worldlings as will neither themselves do good, nor by their good wills suffer others; for though these be not fools and mad-men, because they have the use of reason, yet are they foolish and mad in respect of Christianity, seeing their reason is quite opposite and contrary to religion.

Sect. 23.

Another example hereof we have in those godly women commended by S. Luke, namely Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, Susanna, and many others, who of their substance ministered unto

our Savior Christ. For whereas some answer that it is likely that they did it with the allowance of their husbands, this conceit hath little ground; for it is not probable that a man so highly in favor with Herod, would show such love to our Savior, whom his master contemned or rather hated. And secondly, if this good work had been done by the consent of their husbands, it is likely that the Evangelist would have ascribed the action to them as the chief agents, and not to their wives only, giving them alone the praise of this charitable bounty.

Sect. 24. Last reason taken from the custom of the Country.

The last reason to prove the lawfulness of these charitable works and alms-deeds done by wife and religious wives, is the custom of our country, which ordinarily authorizeth them to do these works, if their power be not justly restrained by their husbands for their abusing of it. In regard whereof there is no reason that any should ensnare and trouble the consciences of any virtuous wives by persuading them that these works of mercy are not done lawfully by them, unless they have special commission from their husbands; seeing this Christian custom sufficiently authorizeth them, if they have no lawful restraint by their superior authority.

Sect. 25. Their objection answered who say that this liberty granted to wives is dangerous.

Yea but though this doctrine be true, yet it is dangerous to be published, seeing many indiscreet women will abuse it, to the undoing of their husbands and the ruining of their estates. To which I answer that it is but a carnal conceit to dream, that any evil can come by the discovery of a religious truth, or though there should, yet fiat justitia & ruat coelum, let truth and right be maintained though the inconveniences which follow it be never so great. What if some abuse their swords, must therefore all men be disarmed of

their weapons? What though some abuse their power and authority, must therefore all be disabled deposed from their government? what if the Gospel itself which in its own nature is the savor of life unto life, becometh to some through their corruption the savor of death unto death, must therefore the mouths of God's Ministers be stopped, and the preaching of the Gospel be interdicted? and what though Christian liberty and right being known unto wives, some abuse it through their impiety and indiscretion, let the sin be upon their heads who abuse the truth of God, but let not for this those which are discreet and virtuous be kept ignorant of their duty, and have their consciences ensnared and burdened with that which is not sinful, but in bare conceit, yea in truth with that which is honest, charitable and commendable; seeing when they know their Christian liberty, they will so much the more conscionably and carefully, circumspectly and discreetly use it, and not rashly rush beyond their bounds. And as for others what great danger is there, lest by indiscreet giving they should hurt and ruin their husbands estates; seeing they have always a superior authority in their hand to restrain their excessive and unlawful liberality? or if any at all, yet how far less is the peril by teaching their liberty in the use of their goods for the doing of the works of mercy, then for their diet and apparel? seeing whereas one man receiveth hurt in his estate by his wives too much bounty toward the poor, and such like works of mercy, many hundreds are impoverished by their too much daintiness and curiosity in furnishing their table, and their excessive costliness and bravery of apparel. Howsoever it is, yet I am sure no foolish wives can justly bear themselves out by anything before spoken in their indiscreet lavishness: nor that any husbands who are virtuous and religious, wise and loving to their spouses, have any just cause of complaining, seeing such will go with them in all good actions, yea also, before them in the light, of an holy & Christian example and in that regard their wives may not go without them, but take their counsel in all works of Christian charity. Neither in truth have any the least color to take exceptions, but uncharitable worldlings and churlish Nabal's, to whose wives alone this liberty is given of doing works of mercy without their allowance, because their hearts are so

wicked and wretched, that they will not be persuaded to join with them in these charitable actions.

CHAPTER 12.

Of the persons unto whom alms are to be given: and in what order one is to be preferred before another.

Sect. 1. That alms are to be given only to the poor and needy.

And thus we have shown who are to give alms. In the next place we are to consider to whom they are to be given; the which hath in part been touched when I spoke of the object of our liberality; and now is more fully to be handled. First then, howsoever we owe love unto all men, and in this love we may, yea, ought to do them all good: yea, howsoever we may give gifts and rewards to whom we will, either to show our love, or to encourage men in their well deserving; yet alms deeds are to be extended only to the poor and needy, for therefore are they called Eleemosynae, because they are to be exercised towards those whose penurious and miserable estate requireth & deserveth mercy & compassion. So the Lord requireth Deu. 15. 11. Thou shalt open thine hand wide to thy poor, & to thy needy of thy land. Whereby thus much is signified, that we should give not only unto those who are generally and absolutely poor, but also to them who though they have a good estate, yet for the present, by some sudden accident do want and stand in need of our relief; as when a man otherwise of good means, is forced to ask an alms, being brought into present necessity, through persecution, shipwreck, fire, robbery, and such like unlooked for and unexpected accidents.

Sect. 2. [This proved from Scripture.]

And therefore the Scriptures enjoining this duty, express the person, who ought to be relieved rather by the name of needy, then by the name of poor. So the 1. John. 3. 17. Who so hath this worlds goods, and seeth his brother hath need; and Ephes. 4. 28. the Apostle enjoineth men to labor that they may have to give to him that needeth. And 2. Cor. 8. 14. he would have an intercourse between Christians in doing these works of mercy with equality, according to present occasions, that those who now relieve may be relieved, and that those who are now relieved may relieve if God make a change in their estates. That now at this time (saith he) your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want, that there may be equality. To which purpose also John the Baptist requireth him that hath two coats to impart unto him that hath none, and him that hath meat to do likewise.

Sect. 3. The diverse kinds of poor.

Now these poor and needy are sometimes distinguished into many kinds, so our Savior nameth six, Matth. 25. 35. the hungry, thirsty, stranger or [shelterless,] the naked, sick and poor prisoner. And out of the Prophet Isaiah, we may add the oppressed and exiled. Esa. 58. 6. 7. Especially those who suffer these miseries for their constant confession of the truth. To which out of other places we may adjoin those who are indebted above their means, the lame, blind and maimed, the aged and decrepit, the poor widow and distressed orphans; And unto these we may add all others, who being in any such like distress do need our help and comfort.

Sect. 4. Of the order which we ought to observe in our giving alms, and first we are to respect men according to their need and misery.

But because men's liberality being stinted within the limits of their estates, cannot extend unto all poor, it will not be amiss to consider who, in bestowing our alms are to be preferred before other, and to

have the privilege and place above the rest. And first we are to know that principally respect is to be had to the state and condition of the parties, without any difference of persons, strangers or acquaintance, enemies or friends. For those who are in extreme necessity, and thereby likely to perish, are first to be relieved, though they be our enemies, before our kindred and friends, though otherwise in great want; and so likewise those who are in great need; before those whose wants are common and ordinary. But if our state be so small, that we are not able to relieve all that crave our help, being in the same degree of poverty, then we may prefer our kindred and friends, and especially those who are godly and virtuous. Wherein also we are to have no small respect to those who by God's providence are first cast upon us, seeing thereby, being first offered unto us, they are after a sort by God himself preferred before others. And this our Savior signifieth in the Parable of the Samaritan, Luc. 10. 33. who finding, as he journeyed, the wounded man, took compassion on him, and relieved him.

Sect. 5. The Church and Commonwealth are to be respected in the first place.

But if there be an equality of estate, and the want and necessity be alike, then is there to be an orderly proceeding of our alms, in respect of persons, and those to be first relieved to whom we are most bound. As first the whole Church and common-wealth is to be preferred before a man's own person, and if there be such a necessity, we are rather to perish ourselves, then to suffer them to perish, for it is better for one member to be cut off, then that the whole body should be destroyed: and this made the Disciples in the Primitive Church to sell all they had for the relief of the common necessity. And in this respect the King and such public persons, in whose safety the welfare of the Church and Common-wealth consisteth, are also to be preferred before ourselves, so that if we and they be in equal extremity, we must neglect our own persons for their good and preservation.

Sect. 6. In the second place we must regard ourselves, & then our wives.

In the next place our care must extend to provide necessaries for the relieving of our own wants, for charity and mercy begin at home, and to whom can he be pitiful and compassionate, that is cruel to his own bowels? and then unto our second selves, our wives; for whereas the school-men in cases of extreme necessity, would have our parents preferred before our wives, I take it to be erroneous and unjust; for in the institution of marriage, man is to leave father and mother and to adhere to his wife, so that they are no more two, but one flesh. And the Apostle saith, that a man ought to love his wife as himself, and therefore better than his parents. For where as they except that the Apostle saith, a man must love his wife as his own body, and that because we ought to love our neighbors better than our bodies, and our parents best of all our neighbors, and therefore also better than our wives: it is most frivolous, for by the same reason a man should love his other neighbors also better than his wife (which I confess to be the popish charity) but the Apostle by an usual Synecdoche there putteth the body for the whole man, as he plainly explicateth himself, verse. 33. where he saith, that every man must love his wife even as himself, and therefore the reason grounded on this place standeth strong.

Sect 7. Next unto our wives, parents are to be relieved.

Next unto the wife, and even before our children, parents are to be relieved in their necessity; for though in the order of charity a man loveth his own children better then father or mother, in which regard we usually say, that love descendeth rather than ascendeth; and though, as some add, the child is nearer unto a man then his parents, because he is of his own substance (howsoever herein for my part I see no difference, unless it be on the parents side, for why am I not bound in nearer bonds of nature unto them from whom I had my

substance and being, then unto those who have from me their substance and being?) yet seeing alms deeds and relief in their nature are benefits and retribution, which do chiefly respect debt and duty, and seeing we owe more debt and duty unto parents, in respect of our being, birth and breeding then unto our children, therefore in cases of extremity we are to prefer in ministering relief, our father or mother before them, when we are so straitened in our means that we have not sufficient to give unto both. And this is a part of that honor which children owe unto parents, the which our savior so highly esteemeth that he far preferreth the relieving of our Parents before freewill offerings and oblations which we give and dedicate to God's service. And therefore condemneth the Scribes and Pharisees who excused children for neglecting this duty in relieving their old, impotent and decayed parents, under color of bringing these gifts into the treasury, which should have been bestowed on their maintenance. Mar. 7. 11. 12.

Sect. 8. Next unto our Parents, our children are to be cared for.

After parents our next care ought to be for our children, of which I shall need to say little because nature itself doth teach so much, and unto them I adjoin the whole family who are under the charge of the Governors, and therefore to be provided for by them as well, in their place & kind, as those that come out of their own loins. And though a man's kindred and friends may be nearer to him then many under his roof, both in respect of blood and also loving affection; yet when he hath by admitting them into his family taken charge of them, he is to provide for them before the other. According to that 1. Tim. 5. 8. 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.

Sect. 9. Next unto our children, charge and family, we must relieve our spiritual kindred.

So that all these are in their order to be relieved before all others by the express commandment of almighty God, even before those who are virtuous and religious, being not so near unto us in these bonds of nature. But next as (I take it) our spiritual kindred is to take place, and in our works of mercy to be preferred before those who are only a kin unto us in the flesh. I say only, because if our kindred in the flesh be also virtuous & religious, they are to be preferred before the other; yea though they have not attained unto that measure and degree of grace and godliness, so that it be in them in substance and truth, and not only in a general, bare, and unfruitful profession; as it is in many amongst us, who though they are content to be called by the name of Christians, yet are in truth devoted worldlings, who professing Christ with their mouths deny him in their lives and works. For the faithful are children of the same father, members of the same body whereof Christ is the head, and coheirs of the same glorious kingdom, where they shall reign together in all happiness for evermore; and therefore being mutually conjoined in so many bonds of love, they are to respect one another more than those, who being only a kin unto them in the flesh, are enemies to their profession, yea even to themselves, for being worldlings they love only their own, and not those whom Christ hath chosen out of the world; yea enemies to God's grace and strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, vassals of Satan, and in the state of perdition. And for this also we have our warrant out of the Scriptures; for as we are bound to do good unto all, so especially to those who are of the household of faith. Gal. 6. 10. As our mercy must extend to all, so principally to our brethren who stand in need, 1. John. 3. 17. As we must communicate unto all that want, so it is required chiefly that we distribute unto the necessity of the Saints. Rom. 12. 13. And these alms above others have the special promises of reward. So Math. 10. 41. He that receiveth a Prophet in the name of a Prophet, shall have a Prophets reward, and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a Disciple, shall in no wise lose their reward. And Math. 25. 40. He entereth the faithful into the

possession of his kingdom, because in doing the works of mercy to his brethren, they had done it to himself. And therefore David did extend his goodness chiefly to the Saints and excellent. Psal. 16. 3. And our Savior himself professeth those to be his brethren, sisters and mother, who did the will of his Father which is in heaven. Math 12. 50.

Sect 10. Next unto our spiritual kindred we must respect our benefactors.

In the next place unto these we are to respect our benefactors, unto whom we ourselves have been beholding; for it standeth with the rule of justice, equity and thankfulness, that we should requite their kindness, and do good unto them in the time of their need, who have been beneficial unto us in relieving our wants. And this argument the Apostle useth to persuade the Corinthians to contribute unto the necessity of the poor Saints. 2. Cor. 8. 14. That now (saith he) at this time, your abundance may be a supply to their wants, that their abundance also may be a supply for your wants, that there may be an equality. In which regard our benefactors are to be preferred before our kindred in the flesh; because though we be tied unto these in a nearer bond of alliance & blood, yet we are more straightly bound to the other in the bond of justice & common equity. according to that Pro. 18. 24. A man that hath friends must show himself friendly, and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

Sect. 11. Next unto our benefactors we must extend our bounty to our kindred in the flesh.

Next unto our benefactors we must extend our bounty to our kindred, who are not only of the same flesh with us in respect of nature and common parents, but in regard of near alliance and consanguinity being lately and immediately sprung from the same Progenitors. And this bond of natural affection tied even churlish

Laban himself in all kindness and love to his kinsman Jacob, till it was broken by his worldliness and the violent strength of his greedy covetousness. Gen. 29. 13. 14. From whence we learn that they are more churlish than Laban, who having abundance will not acknowledge their poor kindred, nor Minister anything to their necessities.

Sect. 12. Next unto our kindred we must relieve common friends and neighbors.

In the next place unto these we are bound to relieve before others, our common friends and nearest neighbors, who dwell in the same place & parish, for besides the bond of neighborhood, we are in this regard also to prefer them before others, because through God's providence they are first offered to our view, and have the opportunity of discovering unto us their wants and miseries. To which purpose one saith; whenas thou canst not do good unto all, thy care must principally extend to those, who by place, time and other opportunities, are, as it were by a certain lot, more straightly and nearly joined unto thee. And the rather because being near at hand they are as occasion serveth ready, to perform unto us mutually according to their poor power all good offices and Christian duties, according to that Pro. 27. 20. better is a neighbor that is near, then a brother far of.

Sect. 13. Next unto our neighbors we must respect our Countrymen, and then strangers.

Next unto our near neighbors we are to relieve the inhabitants of the same City, Shire, and Country, before those who are of other nations; according to that Deut. 15. 7. If there be among you a poor man, of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother. And verse. 11. Thou shalt open thine

hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor and thy needy in thy land, &c. But yet we are not so only to respect them, as that we are to neglect poor Christians of other Countries, but they also are in the next place to be relieved, according to that Levite. 25. 35. If thy brother be waxen poor and fallen in decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him, yea though he be a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with thee. And this is a part of that good hospitality which the Apostle exhorteth unto, Rom: 12. 3. and commendeth unto us in the example of Abraham and Lot. Heb. 13 2. Be not forgetful (saith he) to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained Angels unawares. And this is a part of that fast which God requireth, that we bring the poor which are exiled, or cast out, into our houses; especially when as they suffer banishment for the profession of the Gospel; for then in receiving them we receive Christ, and perform one of those works of mercy, which shall be so richly rewarded at the last day, Matth. 25. 35. I was a stranger and you took me in. In which regard they are to be relieved with the chief of our spiritual kindred, and to have the next place to our own children and family, reserved for them. And this duty is commended in Gaius who charitably entertained the brethren who were strangers, and the neglect hereof condemned in proud Diotrefes, who received not the brethren himself, and also forbad those that would. John. Epist. 3. 5. 10.

Sect. 14. We must suffer our bounty to extend to our enemies.

Yea so full of mercy and Christian charity ought we to be, that our good deeds, as occasion serveth, must not only extend unto our friends, neighbors and strangers, but even unto our enemies; according to that Rom. 12. 20, If thine enemy hunger feed him, if he thirst give him drink. An example whereof we have in the good Prophet Elisha, who would not suffer the Aramites to be smitten with the sword, but contrariwise caused them to be relieved in their necessity, whereby he so won their love, that they came no more to invade the land of Israel.

Sect. 15. A caution for the better understanding of the former rules.

And thus we have shown in what order we are to proceed in doing these works of mercy, preferring our wives next unto ourselves before all whatsoever, our Parents before our children, and these with the rest of our family before all others; our spiritual kindred and benefactors before them who are only of our kindred in the flesh; our kindred before common friends and neighbors, and these before strangers, and strangers also before enemies; so that if our liberality cannot through the straightness of our estates extend to all sorts, then must we stretch it as far as we can, according to this order. Which is to be understood if they be in other things alike, that is, like in want and poverty, and like in piety and honesty; for otherwise we must (as hath been shown) relieve those who are our enemies being in extreme necessity, even before our own children being but in ordinary want; and those who are religious & virtuous being further off, before those who being vicious and graceless are nearer unto us. And so when we are linked unto any in many of these bonds, we are to prefer them before any of those to whom we are but bound in someone particular, if they be not our Parents or under our own charge & government; as a godly kinsman, before one who is as religious but nothing a kin unto us; or a kin unto us, but not so virtuous and religious; a kinsman, neighbor and benefactor, before either a kinsman, or neighbor, or a benefactor singly and alone.

CHAPTER 13.

Of the manner how, and time when, alms are best and most seasonably bestowed.

Sect. 1. How we ought to give our alms both publicly and privately.

And so I come from the persons, who are both to give and receive alms, to speak of the manner how they may most conveniently be distributed. And this is either more public and common; or more private and particular. In regard of the former the best course which we can take in giving our alms, is to follow the laws and custom of our country; as among us to put what we can spare into the poor's box, or to deliver it to the Collectors for the poor, to be distributed, as out of the common purse, according to their discretion who are chosen to this office. And for our private alms which we give with our own hands, we are to deliver them to such poor, as by our own inquiry we have found out to be honest and needy; or else to such others as God by a more immediate providence doth unexpectedly and extraordinarily offer and present unto us for the exercise of our charity.

Sect. 2. What is to be thought of giving our alms at our doors to common beggars.

As for the giving of our alms at our doors to common beggars, though I do not utterly condemn this manner of giving, whilst sufficient order is not taken, and accordingly duly executed by the Magistrate, for the reformation of this disorder; especially when the whole stream of men's charity doth not run this way, but some small rivulet, or as it were some little pipe or quill; and when this is given to those who are in apparent misery, as the aged and decrepit, the lame, sick and blind, for the relief of their present necessity; yet can I in no wise approve it, if after this manner only we exercise our mercy and charity giving without difference to all that come to the door, as unto loose and idle persons, who are strong and able to labor, & common beggars and vagabonds, who live by the sweat of other men's brows. And my reasons are, because they who are truly poor shall by these means be neglected, whilst these lazy drones devour that which of right belongeth unto them. Secondly, those who are

bold, impudent, and most importunate, will oftentimes speed better than those who are modest and shamefast. Thirdly, our alms shall by this means be distributed without equality, some having all and some nothing; and without discretion, because being given thus at random, they cannot be fitted to the quantity or quality of their wants. Fourthly, this kind of giving, nourisheth and increaseth the number of vagrants and inordinate persons, encouraging and heartening them to continue in their idle, lewd, and wicked courses, without any fear of God or subjection unto men. Fifthly, the allowance of this custom crosseth God's ordinance, who would not have a common beggar in Israel, and proclaimeth to the world both the mis-government of Magistrates who do not reform this disorder, and the hard-heartedness of private men, who through their want of mercy, bounty, and compassion, thrust their neighbors into these base and inordinate courses. And lastly, those excellent laws, which have lately been made among us, for the reforming this abuse, are disobeyed and transgressed; and so the Christian Magistrate justly offended, whom we are bound to obey in all things lawful or indifferent, and much more requiring such things as are godly and commendable, as tending to God's glory, the prosperous estate of the Church and common-wealth, and the great good of all particular persons.

Sect. 3. Alms given by will to be esteemed according to the quality of the persons who give them.

And this shall suffice to have spoken of the manner. The next point to be considered is the time when these alms-deeds are to be performed; And that is in the whole course of our lives, when we have ability, and find fit opportunity of doing these works of mercy. But of this I have already spoken, and therefore I will here only show, what I think concerning those alms-deeds and works of mercy, which are not done in our life time, but by our last will and testament, appointed to be done after the death of the benefactor. The which actions of liberality are to be esteemed and censured, according to

the quality and condition of the persons by whom they are performed; for either out of love and obedience towards God, and Christian charity and compassion towards men, they are done by such as have according to their ability been exercised in these pious and charitable works in their whole life, after their sound conversion unto God; or out of self-love, vain-glory or servile fear, they are performed by such as have utterly neglected these works of mercy in their life time, & now would make some satisfaction for this neglect after their departure. For the former we are to judge that it is a good conclusion of a like good premises, and a manifest sign of their love towards God and their neighbors, when as they are not content to do these works of mercy in their life time, but also take care that they may be continued even after their death; and not only relieve the poor members of Christ whilst they lived with them, but also bequeath unto them legacies after their departure, and account them among their children and heirs, by leaving unto them a portion with them, and a part in their inheritance in lieu of thankfulness towards their Savior, who hath made them coheirs with himself in his heavenly kingdom. Neither is there just exceptions to be taken, if these works of mercy done by them after death, do exceed in number and quantity those which they have done in their life time, seeing herein they deal no otherwise with the poor, then with their own children and dearest friends, upon whom they bestow more by Will than ever before they had from them. And it is just, that men should keep the largest portion of their goods while they live for their own maintenance, giving to the poor what they may conveniently spare from this use; and very charitable if they design a great part of their estate to religious and pious uses, when as themselves shall have no further use of it.

Sect. 4. What is to be thought of those that wholly defer giving alms till their death.

But concerning the other, who have utterly neglected the works of mercy in the whole course of their lives, and think it sufficient if they

appoint somewhat for these uses after their death; there is not the like judgment. In Christian policy they are not absolutely to be condemned, least hereby they should take occasion to neglect the works of mercy living and dying; no nor yet in Christian charity, seeing these may be the after-fruits of their late repentance. Besides, these good works are assuredly good unto the receivers; and in respect of the givers thus much may be said, that they do much better than those who do neglect them altogether, taking no care that any good should be done either in their lives or after death. And though now they can keep their goods no longer, yet being to part with them of necessity, it is good that they make choice freely to bestow them on these good uses; wherein they are much to be preferred before those who bestow them upon such uses, as are either evil, superfluous, superstitious, or mere worldly and carnal. Neither may they justly be taxed for doing these good works now, but their long delay is to be blamed, and because they would not be persuaded to do them sooner.

Sect. 5. Giving in our lifetime is much more commendable and acceptable.

Which fault that we may avoid, let us consider that it is much better and more commendable, to give liberally to these good uses in our lifetime, making our own hands our executors, and our eyes our over-seers, than to leave our goods to these uses to be disposed of at the discretion of others. According to that Eccli: 18. 22. Let nothing hinder thee to pay thy vow in due time, and defer not until death to be justified. When thou hast enough remember the time of hunger, and when thou art rich think upon poverty and need. Secondly, it is much more acceptable to God, as being a more infallible sign of a stronger faith and more firm affiance in him. For if in our lifetime we give our goods to the poor because God requireth it, we thereby evidently declare that we rest upon God's providence and promises for our provision, seeing we dis-furnish ourselves of a good part of our means, even whilst we have occasion to use them. Whereas if we

keep all to ourselves till the hour of death, we may be well suspected of diffidence and want of faith, which is the cause why we do not trust so much in God, as in our own provision and store which we have about us. So also it is an evidence of greater love and obedience, if at God's commandment, and for his sake we can willingly part with our goods, when they are still in our power, and might be converted to our own use; than if we bestow them to such uses, when as death approaching we can keep them no longer. For it is a small matter to give unto God that, which though we would never so fain we cannot carry with us, and it is next to neglecting, to do so late. For what great thing is it, if we be persuaded to put off our clothes, when as we are ready to go to bed, to give away the relics of our meat in the Inn, when we are ready to take horse, and to set forward our journey into another country? Yea what thanks is it, if we then give away our apparel, when we have so long worn it, that it will hang on our backs no longer, and then part with our meat, when whether we will or no, it shall be taken from us; especially when it is done in this hope, that our rotten rags shall be changed into robes of immortality, and our perishing meat shall be supplied with the bread of life? To which purpose an ancient Father saith; Alas poor wretch, wilt thou then be liberal and kind unto men, when as thou canst no longer live among them? shall I then only say that thou art loving to thy brethren, when as I shall see thee a dead carcass? Thou art no doubt worthy great praise of thy liberality, and great honor and grace is due unto thee, when lying in thy grave, and being turned unto dust, thou shalt appear munificent and bountiful.

Sect. 6. Giving in our lifetime most seasonable and best fitted to occasions.

Thirdly, It is required not only that we give, but also that we give seasonably, and that is when we see our neighbors wants, and have power and ability to help and relieve them; for as in sowing our seed, we do not think it enough if at sometimes we be ready to cast it into the ground, but we have also special respect to the season and seed-

time; so is it in sowing the seeds our alms deeds, which if we sow not before death, it is, as if we should defer the sowing of our seed, till the very time when we should reap our harvest. Now are we sailing towards to the Holy Land, and these works of mercy, like a good gale of wind, drive us forward unto the wished haven; now are we to dispatch our spiritual market, wherein God offereth unto us for temporary trifles everlasting treasures; now is the time of our Christian warfare, wherein we are to fight against the devil, the world, and our own carnal and covetous lusts, and then we overcome the world and ourselves, when we are wholly taken up with the works of mercy; and can part with our earthly goods, in love towards God, and compassion towards our neighbors. But if we defer them till after death, and will give nothing to the poor till all must be taken from us; it is like a fair gale of wind after ship wreck, as if we should set out our wares when the market is done, & make great brags of our valor, when the fight is finished and we put to flight. Besides, the works of mercy are best done when they are fitted to the occasions and wants of those unto whom they are performed; and not to give unto them when their necessity requireth, but when we can best spare our goods, is as if the steward should give food to the family, not at meal-times, or when they are most hungry, but when as himself hath nothing else to do; or when he can keep the food in his storehouse no longer, because thieves have digged through the wall, and are now ready with violence to take it away from him.

Sect 7. No certainty of doing good by legacies.

Fourthly, It is much better that we do our selves the works of mercy in our life time, than to leave them to be done by others after our deaths (not only because the seed-time being much more seasonable, we may assuredly expect a much more fruitful harvest, but also) because if we do not take the time present, and relieve our poor brethren whilst it is in the power of our hands to do it, we can have no certainty that they will ever be done by us at all. For either we may be stripped of all our goods before our death, and so have

nothing to bequeath to these uses, or death may take us suddenly away, and give us no time to dispose of our goods; or our sickness may be of such a nature, that it will deprive us of the use of our memory and understanding; or else if all things be left in good order by our Will, yet may this our last Testament be concealed and suppressed, or defeated & made void upon some nice point in law, or unjust testimony of some false witnesses, or not be performed according to our purpose and project, through the dishonesty and corruption of our executors. For the avoiding of all which dangers, let us take the Wiseman's counsel, Pro. 3. 27. With-hold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thy hand to do it: and the Apostles exhortation, Gal: 6. 10. whilst we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men. And let us remember that death will not be long in coming, and that the covenant of the grave is not shown unto us, and so do good before we die, and according to our ability stretch out our hands to give unto him. Let us not defraud ourselves of the good day, nor let the part of a good desire overpass us; because we shall leave our travels unto another, and our labors to be divided by lot. as the son of Sirach persuadeth. Chap. 14. 12. 13. 14. 15.

Sect 8. Giving alms in our lifetime most suitable & comely for a Christian.

Fifthly, it is most comely and suitable that a charitable life should go before a charitable death, and it well beseemeth a Christian so to live continually as he meaneth to die. For who can expect a pleasant epilogue, after a direful tragedy? or that he should be pitiful, compassionate and liberal in the end, who in all his former course hath been cruel, hard-hearted and ungenerous? or that God will honor him with a close of bounty and blessedness, who hath all his whole life dishonored God & wronged his poor Saints with his extreme miserableness and grippleness? or how shall a man take his words spoken in extremity of sickness, I give and bequeath pounds and hundreds to these and these good uses, who would not in his whole life part with a few pence to relieve the poor's necessity and

preserve them from starving? who seeing such dissonance and disagreement between his present words and former practice, would not think that he raved and talked idly, rather than out of a settled judgment and good deliberation? Again, it better suiteth with the nature of these good works to be done by ourselves in our lifetime, then to be left unto the discretion of other to be done by them after our death; in which respect our Savior calleth our good works by the name of lights, to imply unto us, that we must see them go before us, and not suffer them by others to be held behind our backs.

Sect. 9. Alms deeds to be suspected when they are only done after death

Lastly, howsoever, we are to judge charitably of such actions, when we see them done, because we discern only the outward work, but cannot search the heart and secret thoughts; yet when as we see all on a sudden cruelty turned into mercy, and miserly hardness into profuse bounty; the hands wide opened towards the approach of death for the relief of the poor, which have been close shut in the whole life; and the works of mercy practiced, which always before have been utterly neglected; there is great cause of jealousy and doubting, that these actions proceed not from those right and religious causes which set the true Christian a work to do the like things, but rather from sinister, worldly and carnal respects, which have overruled and ruled them in the whole course of their lives. Not from the love of God, Christian obedience, charity and mercy towards the poor; for if these graces had residence in their hearts, they would have produced the like effects in their health and strength; but rather from self-love, which is always accompanied with carnal fear and vain glory; whereby they are made willing to employ their goods to these pious and charitable uses, when as they see they can keep them no longer, either to eternize their names in this world by these long lasting monuments, or to escape the better before God's judgment seat, where now they must give up the account of their stewardship, and to be freed from that fearful

condemnation in the world to come. From which jealousy and suspicion there is no means to be freed, unless these works of mercy thus performed do apparently proceed from serious and sound repentance, and a lively faith in Christ; which are seldom granted to any in their death-bed, who have neglected and contemned them, through the whole course of their lives.

CHAPTER 14.

Of the properties of the Christians alms: wherein they differ from those which are done by worldlings; And of the diverse sorts and kinds of them.

Sect. 1. That there are many & great differences between the alms of Christians and of worldlings. And first in the causes moving them.

The next point which I propounded in this duty of alms deeds was their properties, whereby the pious and charitable alms of Christians, which are the undoubted signs of a godly and blessed man, may be discerned, from those counterfeit alms which are done by hypocrites and worldlings; the which are great and manifold. For first they differ in the causes and fountains from which they arise and spring; For the alms of Christians are the fruits of a lively and justifying faith, and are done out of unfeigned love and obedience towards God: and therefore is a Christian merciful unto others, because he is assured of God's mercy to himself; therefore doth he give small things to men, because he hath received great things from God; and for this cause is he liberal to those that need his help, not because they have deserved it, but because God hath commanded it. So also his alms spring from Christian charity, mercy and compassion towards the poor, because he is a member of Christ, and of the

household of faith, or at least a creature of God and of the same flesh. But the worldlings alms arise frō self-love, whereby in his alms he aimeth at some temporary and earthly good to be derived by them unto himself, out of pride and vain-glory, that he may be praised and magnified amongst men, or may merit a far greater reward at the hands of God, or out of servile fear of God's judgments in this life or the life to come, which by this means he would avert and turn away from him; and therefore not proceeding from true charity they profit nothing. 1. Corinth. 13. 3.

Secondly, the Christian showeth mercy, being inclined thereunto by the motion of God's spirit, and the inward fountain of goodness, which is thereby wrought in him, which make him when he wanteth occasions of doing good, to inquire and seek after them: but the worldlings mercy is the mere work of nature, and is moved and excited only by the presence of some miserable object, which stirreth up in him the natural passion of pity for the present: but no sooner is the object removed out of sight, but his mercy and compassion presently ceaseth.

Sect. 2. That they differ in their ends.

Thirdly, they differ in their ends; for the main end at which the Christian aimeth in his alms, is, that God by them may be glorified; and the subordinate ends are the good of his neighbors, the adorning of his profession with these works of mercy, the edification of others by his Christian example, his own present good in the assurance of God's favor, and his future glory in the life to come. But the hypocrite aimeth chiefly at his own glory and good, either for the obtaining of some worldly benefits, or the avoiding of some temporal or everlasting punishment; or finally, that he may satisfy God's justice for his sins, make him beholding unto him, and merit at his hands everlasting happiness.

Sect. 3. That they differ in the matter. And first, in respect of propriety.

Fourthly, they differ in the matter of their alms, first in respect of propriety; for the Christian is liberal in giving out of his own store wherewith God hath blessed him, and which he hath gotten by his honest labors in his lawful calling: but the worldling giveth out of that which is other men's, and having raked much together by oppression, extortion, deceit, usury, simony and such like unlawful means, he is content to give out of it some penny-alms, to make some satisfaction for his sins, and to stop the cry of his conscience, that he may more securely sleep in his wicked courses, and so more quietly go into hell.

Fifthly, in respect of the quantity; for the Christian giveth liberally not only out of his abundance but out of his mediocrity & mean estate, and spareth something willingly out of his own necessaries, if the extreme necessity of the poor require it. But the worldling giveth with a stingy heart and hand, and will hardly give unto the poor the least part of his superfluities, and that not before his own turn be served in furnishing himself with all worldly vanities, whereby he may be delighted in the fruition of all sinful pleasures.

Thirdly, in respect of quality; for the Christian giveth unto the poor things profitable and wholesome, but the worldling his basest refuse, things sluttish and filthy which he would not give to the vilest creatures by which he hath any delight or benefit.

Sect. 4. They differ in the object and extent.

Fifthly, they differ in the object or extent, for the Christians mercy extendeth to all that stand in need, even to Infidels because they are God's creatures; to their enemies, because they look not to their deserts but to God's commandment; but especially it is exercised in

relieving poor Christians, because they are the children of God and members of Christ. And though they be ready to do good unto all, yet chiefly to those who are of the household of faith: though their goodness like their heavenly Fathers reacheth to the good and bad, yet especially it extendeth to God's Saints and to the excellent; and because it cannot extend to God himself, by reason of his all-sufficiency. Therefore to show their love towards him, they exercise it towards his sons and servants, who are above all others most dear unto him. But the worldling's mercy reacheth only unto those who have someways deserved it at his hands, or who (as they imagine) may deserve it, or to his kindred, friends or such as are some way linked unto him in the bonds of nature, going no further herein then Publicans and Hypocrites, whose mercy Christ rejecteth, as being of no worth in the sight of God. Matthew 5. 46. 47.

Sect. 5. They differ in their manner of giving, 1. in respect of simplicity

Sixthly, they differ in their mind and manner of giving; For 1. the Christian giveth with a plain, simple and honest heart according to that Rom. 12. 8. He that giveth let him do it with simplicity. Not intending by his alms his own praise and profit, or yet to please men, but only to obey and please God; which our Savior expresseth to be such a simple kind of giving, wherein the left hand knoweth not what the right hand doth. Whereby is meant that he doth not make show of his alms unto those who are next unto him. No nor often presenteth them to the view of his own conscience; least his mind should be too much exalted in the remembrance of them. Not that it is unlawful to give alms before others, for elsewhere he commandeth us, that our light of a godly life should shine before men, that they seeing our good works may glorify our father which is in heaven; but his meaning is, that we should not do them to this end to be seen of men, that so we may have the praise ourselves, and rob God of his glory. For our Savior like a good Physician feeling our pulse, easily discerned how apt we are to be swelled with the dropsy of Hypocrisy

and to be puffed up with the wind of vain glory, which caused him so carefully to press us strictly to the avoiding of the least occasions which might corrupt us with so subtle and dangerous a vice. But the worldling in his works of mercy hunteth after some advantage, or at least for the glory of the world and praise of men, before whom he doth his alms-deeds that he may be seen of them. So one saith, that there are some which give unto the poor a little that they may receive much, and under the pretense of giving alms, do seek to enrich themselves, which rather is to be called hunting, birding, and fishing then alms giving; for so birds and fishes are caught when by the small bait they are allured to swallow the sharp hook. But this hope of retribution (as saith another) should be far from them who do these works of mercy; for if profit be expected it is not humanity, but putting out of a benefit to usury. Neither is it an act of mercy but of self-love, which maketh them give to the poor, that out of their liberality they may raise advantage unto themselves, by binding them unto perpetual vassalage with the bonds of their benefits, and making them to earn it double at their hands by their painful labor. But this is to give meat to the poor as they give provender to their horses, not out of any humanity and love unto them, but out of self-love, that they may hereby be strengthened and encouraged to do them better service; or as the Husbandman giveth food to his sheep, feeding them only to this end, that he afterwards may be fed of them.

Sect. 6. In respect of humility.

Secondly, the Christian doth these works of mercy with great humility, remembering that whatsoever he giveth to the poor for God's sake, he hath first received it from God with all other blessings which he enjoyeth; In which respect when he doth the most, he acknowledgeth that he doth far less than his duty, and that with much infirmity and weakness; and therefore in this regard he humbly confesseth that his alms are sufficiently rewarded if they be graciously pardoned; the which, as it maketh him to carry himself humbly before God, so also meekly and gently towards the poor. But

the worldling when he doth these works of mercy, is puffed up with pride, thinking that thereby he satisfieth for his sins, meriteth heaven, and maketh God beholding unto him forsooth, by giving him a feather of his own fowl, and an handful of corn of his own harvest. And as he is proud towards God, so arrogant, superstitious and insolent towards his poor neighbor, the which he showeth in his lofty and overtopping looks, his insulting speeches, and severe examinations; which so leaveneth and soureth his gifts, that oftentimes they are more distasteful to the receiver, then wrongs and injuries, if at least they be sweetened with outward complements and shows of humanity.

Sect. 7. In respect of cheerful giving.

Thirdly, The Christian is willing and cheerful in doing these works of mercy, because he knoweth that his heavenly Father doth love a cheerful giver, and looketh more to the heart of him that giveth, then to the quantity of his gift, and that it is not enough for us to do good, and to be rich in good works, unless we be also ready to distribute and willing to communicate, as it is 1. Tim. 6. 18. Besides his outward works of mercy proceed from an inward habit, and therefore it is no more painful or grievous unto him to do them, then for the eye to see or the ear to hear; yea rather they are the delight of his soul, and his meat and drink to do the will of his Father. And this cheerfulness of his heart he showeth (as hath been said) in the pleasantness of his countenance, in his sweet and comfortable words, and in the action itself, by his ready and speedy giving. For his works of mercy are not drawn out of him through the importunity of suitors, but are kindly sent out of his heart, and (like waters out of the spring) do readily flow from the inward fountain of his bounty & benignity. Neither is he apt to make delays, because they so afflict oftentimes the heart of the poor suitor, that he preferreth a quick denial before a slow grant; but he gladly layeth hold upon the occasion when it is first offered; and doubleth the gift by his speedy giving. But the worldling doth his works of mercy grudgingly and churlishly, & dum manu dat, vultu

negat, whilst his hand giveth, his look denieth: and proudly insulteth over the poor in their miseries, by his rough speeches, bitter taunts, and harsh expostulations, turning his bread that he giveth into stones and gravel; so that he doth not so much comfort the poor man by his gifts, as he doth vex and afflict his soul with his manner of giving; causing him in his heart to prefer a courteous refusal, before a grant that is so sour and churlish. And as he giveth harshly, so hardly and slowly, putting off and even tiring the poor Suter with many delays and denials. And when he giveth, it is rather because he is impatient of importunity, like the unrighteous judge spoken of in the Gospel, then pitiful and compassionate in the sight of the poor man's misery. Sed non contulit beneficium qui sic dedit, sed extorsit qui accepit, he bestoweth not a benefit who so giveth, but he extorteth a gift who so receiveth it.

Sect. 8. They differ in time.

Lastly, they differ in time, for the Christian exerciseth himself in the works of mercy in the whole course of his life, and giveth his goods to the poor whilst he might enjoy them himself: But the worldling is only liberal at the approach of death, and then alone he is content to employ them to these uses, when as he seeth he can keep them no longer. And that not out of any love towards God or his neighbors, but out of fear of approaching judgment, and that dreadful account which he must presently make before a just and terrible judge; or out of self-love either that he may gain the vain glory of the world, or that he may satisfy for his sins, and so escape eternal condemnation. In which respect he giveth to the poor, and casteth his bread upon the face of the waters, as the Merchant casts his goods into the sea in the time of a storm, to preserve the ship from sinking, and himself from drowning. For were he not in danger to make shipwreck of his soul, and of sinking into the gulf of hell, and condemnation, he would be no more liberal at his death, then he hath always been in the whole course of his life.

Sect. 9. The conclusion.

And thus have I shown the great and manifold differences between the alms and works of mercy, which are done by true Christians, and those which are performed by worldlings and hypocrites. Now what remaineth but to persuade all those who fear God, and have any care of their own souls, that they content not themselves with that false counterfeit, and shadow of mercy, but that they labor after that which is true and substantial. For as our Savior said of the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, so may I say in this case: Except your mercy exceed the mercy of worldlings and hypocrites, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of heaven.

Sect. 10. Of forgiving debts.

The last thing to be considered is the diverse kinds of alms, the which are principally 3. giving, forgiving, and free-lending; For not only do we relieve the poor when we give unto them, but also when we ease them of the burden of debt wherewith they are oppressed. To which duty we are bound, when we see our neighbor decayed in his estate, and not able to pay what he hath borrowed; for when by the hand of God he is cast down, we are not with the weight of our hand to keep him down, but by the lightning of his load, we must help him to rise again: which mercy, if we ordinarily show to a brute beast, when we see him lying under his burden, how much more should we exercise it towards those who are of the same flesh, children of the same father, and members of the same body? And this is commanded Exod. 22. 26. If thou at all take thy neighbors raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by then the Sun goeth down. 27. For that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? And it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear him, for I am gracious. The which duty good Nehemiah caused the princes of the people to put in practice, as we may see, Nehem. chap. 5. 11. Restore I pray you to them, even this day, their lands,

their vineyards, their olive-yards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, and of the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them. The which our Savior also requireth, when as he biddeth us to lend, looking for nothing again, in case our brother be not able to pay. And this is a part of that fast which God so much esteemeth. Isaiah 58. 6. Is not this (saith he) the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness, and to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? And in this regard every year should be the Christians Jubilee, wherein all debts are to be remitted to the poor, who have not wherewith to make payment, which if we perform not, but cruelly catch our brethren by their throats, and cast them into prison, to take our penny-worths (as they say) on their bones, and to make dice of them; then surely, we may justly expect that our Lord and Master, to whom we owe so much, will take the same course with us, exacting his debt to the uttermost farthing, and when we are unable to pay, casting us into the prison of outer darkness, where is nothing but weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Sect. 11. Of free lending

Finally, we relieve the poor by free lending. For as when their necessity is general, and their poverty so great, that their estate in itself is irrecoverable, we must give freely without expecting any return; so when it only pincheth them for the time present, and they are brought, in respect of their estate, but upon their knees, so that if we afford them our helping hand, they will be able in the strength of their own state to rise of themselves, and by having the only use of our goods for a while, will sufficiently repair their ruins, we are then bound to lend unto them. According to that Deut. 15. 8. Thou shalt open thine hand wide to thy poor brother, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need in that which he wanteth. So our savior Christ commandeth us, to give unto him that asketh, and from him that would borrow of us that we do not turn away. Math. 5. 42. The which must not be done with a usurious intent and expectation of

advantage, but so liberally and freely, that we can be content, when we lend, to lose the principal, if the necessity of our poor brother so requireth. Luk. 6. 35. which if we do, then shall we hereby have assurance, that we are those blessed men whom the Psalmist here describeth; for as it is verse 5. A good man showeth favor and lendeth; and though the poor fail us we shall find the Lord, who is their surety, to be a sure pay-master, who will return unto us for our earthly things heavenly, and for these that are contemptible and momentary, such treasures as are most excellent and eternal.

CHAPTER 15.

That Alms deeds are an act of righteousness: so that they be not left arbitrary, but we in conscience are bound to do them.

Sect. 1. Of the meaning of the word righteousness.

And thus having shown what alms deeds are, and how this duty is to be performed; it now followeth, that I come to speak of the second part of the text, wherein are contained many effectual and strong arguments, to move every Christian to the diligent and frequent doing of them. His righteousness endureth forever, his horn shall be exalted with honor. In which words there are expressed two main reasons to persuade us to this duty, the first is the lasting benefit of their works of mercy unto themselves; the other the establishment of their estate with honor and glory before God, men and the holy Angels, in this life and the life to come. The which principal arguments are like the root and body of a goodly tree, from which spring many boughs and branches, or like the prime ancestors of the stock and kindred, from whom do issue a numerous posterity. Which that we may the more plainly conceive, let us briefly examine the

meaning of the words. And first, by righteousness, we are to understand, not generally all righteousness which consisteth in our whole conformity to the Law, nor that whole part of Legal righteousness which consisteth in obedience to the second table; but certain special fruits of this righteousness, in the works of mercy toward the poor, by a Synecdoche of the general for the special: or, if you will, alms deeds themselves, which (as I have shown) are by the Hebrews called by the name of righteousness, and sometime by the name of mercy, to show unto us, that it is such a grace which resteth not only in an internal habit or bare affection of the heart and mind, but also exerciseth itself in the outward act of relieving those whose penurious estates we pity and commiserate. And this is a work not only of mercy, but of justice, the which is such a virtue as giveth unto everyone τὰ καθήκοντα, those things which are due unto them; that is, to our superiors reverence and obedience, to our equals love and friendship with all good offices and fruits of them; and to the poor and needy comfort and relief. And hereof it is, that the vulgar translation thus readeth that place of Matthew. chap. 6. 1. Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them. And so the old interpreter hath rendered it, righteousness, because righteousness in the Hebrew phrase signifieth beneficence and alms deeds; even as contrariwise the 70. Interpreters have rendered the Hebrew word Tsedakah signifying righteousness, ἐλεημοσύνη, alms-deeds. Yea the Apostle himself doth best of all determine this point, for alleging this verse of the Psalm, to incite the Corinthians to beneficence and alms-deeds, he doth retain the name of righteousness, to signify these works of mercy. His righteousness remaineth forever; what righteousness? surely that which he had named in the words immediately going before, consisting in beneficence and giving to the poor. And as the Psalmist here speaketh of the dispersing and sowing of the works of beneficence and alms-deeds; so the Wiseman signifieth the self-same duty by the phrase of sowing the seed of righteousness, Pro. 11. 18. To him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward.

Sect. 2. That alms deeds are absolutely required, proved by many testimonies.

Now whereas alms-deeds are called by the name of righteousness, from hence we may gather a strong argument to persuade every Christian to the doing of them. For they are not only works of mercy, but also fruits of righteousness, and therefore are not left as things arbitrary and indifferent at our own choice, to do or leave them undone, as we think good; but are absolutely required and straightly enjoined in the law of God, which is the rule of righteousness, and with great earnestness pressed and urged in the Gospel, as the fruits of our faith, and testimonies of our love towards God and our neighbors. The which will more plainly appear, if we consider, both some testimonies of scriptures, & some effectual reasons grounded upon them. So Deut. 15. 11. 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. and Esa. 58. 7. The Lord telleth us, that the fast which he requireth and chooseth, is to deal our bread to the hungry, and to bring the poor that are cast out into our houses; when we see the naked that we cover them, and that we hide not ourselves from our own flesh. And these are the fruits of the just man, who shall live in his righteousness, if he hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment. Ezech. 18. 7. Thus in the New Testament John the Baptist giveth charge, that he who hath two coats, should impart to him that hath none, and that he who hath meat should do likewise, Lu: 3. 11. that is, that if we have anything to spare from our own necessary use, we must be ready to relieve the poor with it, whom we see to be in extreme or great necessity. So our Savior Christ himself Math: 5. 42. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn thou not away. and Luk. 11. 41. Give alms of such things as you have. Yea this duty is charged upon us with such strictness, that if we have not anything to bestow, we must by our labors get somewhat to give unto our poor brethren, whereby they may be relieved in their necessity▪ and if we have no

superfluity, we are charged (if their wants be extreme) to sell our goods and possessions, that we may have to give unto them. Luc. 12. 33. as we see it also practiced in the primitive Church. Act. 4. 34.

Sect. 3. That our riches are not our own but God's talents committed unto us as his stewards.

All which testimonies clearly prove that we are bound by God's commandment to give alms; and therefore it is not left at our own choice, but to be performed, not only as an act of mercy, but also of righteousness, as it may more plainly appear by these reasons. First, because our riches are not absolutely our own but God's talents, which he hath committed unto us not to mis-spend them in the satisfying of our worldly and carnal lusts, but to employ them to the best advantage, for the honor of our master and the good of our fellow-servants. Now God is honored when as we bestow the wealth which he hath committed unto us according to his appointment and commandment; and when as by them (as much as in us lieth) we advance the means of his worship and service, whereof one principal part is the relieving of the poor, for these as the Apostle telleth us, are such Christian sacrifices, wherewith he is well pleased. And finally, when as by our Christian carriage in this behalf, we manifest his wisdom, goodness, love and providence in the government of his Church, which is his house and family. For it is the honor of a good Master, when by his care and providence the house is so well governed, that every officer performeth his duty in his place, and all in the family have food convenient with all other necessaries belonging to them. To which purpose our great Lord and Master hath preferred some to be his stewards, unto whom he hath committed his goods, not that they should appropriate them to their own use, but that they should wisely, justly, and charitably, dispense and dispose of them for the good of all the household; and howsoever by virtue of their high place and office they may take unto themselves (as it were) a double portion, and that which is sufficient not only for nature, but for the due maintenance of their person; and not for necessity alone,

but also for their honest delight (unless it be that this their allowance be necessarily to be shortened to supply the extreme necessity of others who need their help) yet their Lord and Master requireth of them, that they communicate so much of their goods as they can well spare from these uses, to relieve and sustain others of their fellow-servants, who want such things as are needful for their relief and maintenance; which who so neglect, and either riotously spending and wasting, or ungenerously and miser-like keeping and hoarding up these goods, do suffer the poor to starve for want of necessaries, they do herein exceedingly dishonor God, when those who are without see the servants of his family perish for want of food; and they overthrow (as much as in them lieth) his providence, whilst they withdraw that provision which he hath allotted to the maintenance of his household from these uses and convert them to their own.

Sect. 4. That they who will not relieve the poor are guilty of theft sacrilege and murder.

Finally, they grievously offend his divine majesty by committing those three fearful & heinous sins of theft, sacrilege and murder. For they play the thieves, who having received much riches from God to this end, that they should communicate them for the relief of others, do appropriate thē to their own use. For as the steward of a Nobleman's house receiving great sums yearly of his Lord to this end, that he should disburse and lay it out for the keeping of his house and maintenance of his family; should therewith buy and purchase lands for himself, or prodigally mis-spend them in banqueting and belly-cheer, gaming and reveling, gorgeous apparel or sumptuous furniture, and in the meantime suffer his fellow-servants to starve and perish for want of food and apparel: or as the Kings Almner should thus misspend the money and treasure entrusted unto him for the use of the poor, they would be counted no better than thieves amongst men: so if they who being placed in these offices by God do misspend his rich talents after the same manner, they shall one day be arraigned as notorious thieves before his judgment seat, and

receive the sentence of condemnation, for robbing both their master and their fellow-servants. Yea they commit not only theft but also sacrilege; for that which we are commanded to give unto the poor is consecrated to God's service, and is in some sort a part of that portion which belongeth unto him, whereof it is that alms-deeds are called by the name of sacrifices which were alone to be offered unto God; and therefore seeing the Lord hath allotted this part of his portion for the use of the poor, it is not only theft against them, but sacrilege against God himself to rob and spoil them of it. Finally, if detaining from the poor that due relief which belongeth unto them, they suffer them to perish in their wants, they do stand guilty before God, not only of theft and sacrilege, but also of the sin of murder, because they deprive them of the means whereby their lives might have been preserved, according to that, Eccli: 34. 21. The bread of the needy is their life, he that defraudeth him thereof is a man of blood. For whereas in the sixth commandment God forbiddeth murder, he forbiddeth also the neglect of the means whereby the life of our neighbor might be preserved and sustained. In which regard Ambrose doubteth not to say, *Si non pauisti, occidisti*. Thou hast killed the poor, if thou hast not fed them. And again; This is to kill a man, when we deny unto him the means of preserving his life. For he is alike the cause of the falling of a staff who pulleth away his hand which held it up, and he who taketh and casteth it down: and he is the cause why the fire goeth out, that with-draweth the fuel which should nourish it, as well as he who casteth water upon it. And therefore (as he inferreth) take heed that thou doest not include in thy bags the health and safety of thy neighbor, and as it were bury in the grave, the life of the poor.

Sect. 5. That God hath allotted all we can spare to the poor as their portion.

Secondly, it is not only an act of mercy but also of justice to give alms to the poor, because the Lord, who is the chief owner of our goods, having appointed all that we can spare to their use, it is not our own,

but their portion allotted unto them; which they have as good right unto as we have to the rest, because it is ratified unto them by the same authority. For if we have right to the main estate because God in his bounty hath given it unto us, then they have right also to the overplus which we may well spare by virtue of the same donation. Only here is the difference that God hath given unto us our riches immediately himself, but unto the poor mediately by us, whom he hath enjoined to perform unto them these duties of mercy and Christian charity. In which regard as it is theft in us to rob them of that portion which God hath allotted unto them, so it is theft in the poor to take it from the rich without their consent, seeing they have the right of disposing them from God; even as it is theft in the inferior servants, if when the steward neglecteth his duty in feeding and providing for them, they take upon them to be their own carvers; for as it is the will of the Master that he should feed them, so also that they should be fed by him, and not forcibly take it from him by fraud or violence. To this purpose one saith, it is the bread of the hungry which moldeth in thy binge or cupboard; it is the coat of the naked which hangeth useless in thy chamber or wardrobe, they are the shoes of him that goeth barefoot, which lie rotting by thee; It is the silver of the needy which rusteth in thy chests, and so many thou dost injure, as thou canst, and dost not relieve in their wants and miseries. And another saith, that it is alike faulty and blameworthy to take from the right owners, & to deny necessaries to the poor when we have abundance. And therefore know that thou spoilest so many of their goods, as thou deniest relief unto, when thou art able to give it. In which regard the Apostle James speaketh thus unto rich men who neglect this duty, I am. 5. 1. Go to now ye rich men, weep and howl, for your miseries that shall come upon you. 2. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments mouth-eaten: your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire; you have heaped treasure together for the last days. And the wise man speaking of alms, maketh it a matter of duty and not of mere benevolence, Pro. 3. 27. withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. And this is implied by the name *διακονια* that the

Apostle useth to signify alms, and διακονησαντες to signify those that give them, which do not import a mere gift out of free choice, but a ministration and service, which we are required to do unto those of the same family, who need our help, at the appointment of our great Lord and Master.

Sect 6. Their objection answered, who say their goods are their own; so that they need not to give except they list.

So that here is met with one special objection of worldly men, whereby they excuse their not giving of alms when they are pressed unto them; namely that their goods are their own & therefore they are not tied to employ them in such uses, but have free liberty to dispose them at their pleasure; seeing they are not absolutely their own, but the Lord, who is chief owner of them, hath only entrusted these talents unto them as his servants & stewards, not giving them full authority to dispose them at their pleasure, but hath limited them to those uses which he hath appointed and determined; of which this is one of the chief that they give some chief portion of them to the relief of the poor. According to that of the Apostle. 1. Pet. 4. 10. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. And so our Savior having exhorted us to make us friends of the unrighteous Mammon, addeth, And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? plainly intimating that the riches which we possess are not our own but God's, and only entrusted unto our disposing as stewards of his family. As stewards (I say) to dispense and lay them out, and not as treasurers to lay them up, and hoard them in our chests; or if as treasurers, yet not to reserve them for our own use, but for the service of our sovereign and the good of our fellow servants. And this was typically signified by the gathering of Manna, which though the Lord rained it down from heaven, and could as easily have doubled the quantity tenfold, if so it had pleased him, yet he would not allow that those who had gathered much should keep and hoard up their

superfluity, but enjoined them to communicate of their greater store to them who had gathered less. The which the Apostle applieth to the giving of alms out of our abundance to those that want, 2. Cor. 8. 14. That now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance might be a supply for your want, that there be equality, as it is written, He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack. Neither are we to think that God hath caused this inequality of estate amongst men, because he respecteth the rich and neglecteth the poor; & would have them pampered with all superfluities and delicious dainties, and the other starved with want and penury; but hereby he would exercise the diverse graces which he hath given to his Church and people; as namely the charity, liberality and fidelity of the rich in dispensing of his talents, and the faith, affiance and patience of the poor; that being approved both might be crowned at the day of Christ's appearing, according to that of Basil; why (saith he) doest thou abound with riches, and he want necessaries? surely that thou mightest receive the reward of thy faithful dispensation, and he also after many conflicts and victories might have the reward and crown of his patience. And also he would hereby give occasion unto human societies of linking themselves more nearly and firmly together by natural offices of giving and receiving, laboring and rewarding.

Sect. 7. That as stewards we shall be called to an account.

But if this argument of their right and our possession, as stewards, & not as absolute Lord's, will not persuade us to communicate to their necessities; yet let this consideration prevail with us, that a day will come, when as like stewards, we shall be called to a reckoning; and be forced whether we will or no to give an account before God, his Saints and blessed Angels, how we have carried ourselves in our stewardship, and increased our Lord's talents. According to that of our Savior, Luc. 16. 2. Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayst be no longer steward. And if we have increased and doubled them, by delivering them to these bankers, the poor members of

Jesus Christ; then shall we hear that comfortable sentence pronounced by our Lord, Well done thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Matth. 25. 21. But if contrariwise we neglect those charitable uses which our Lord hath enjoined us, and neglecting the poor, do spend our masters goods in excess and riot; if then in stead of feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, we bring in account, so much spent in dainty fair and gorgeous apparel, so much in stately buildings and costly furniture, so much in rich jewels and needless vanities, so much laid out on hounds, horses and harlots, so much consumed in gaming and reveling, in plays and interludes, so much spent in needless suites of law, in giving bribes, and entertaining rich friends, and in a word, so much prodigally wasted in the pleasures of sin and voluptuous delights, or so much miser-like hoarded up and hid in a napkin: then shall we hear that fearful sentence which will make our hearts to ache, and our joints to tremble. Thou wicked & slothful servant, thou knowest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed; thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with advantage. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath two talents. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Sect. 8. That the communion between us and the poor, should move us to relieve them.

The third reason to move us to give alms as being an act of righteousness, and Christian equity may be taken from that communion which is between the poor and us, with our head Christ; for this is equal and just, that they who are united together in the nearest communion of persons should also communicate in the use of their goods, for their mutual relief and comfort; whereof it is that alms deeds are called *κοινωνία*, that is, such gifts as arise out of communion, by a metonymy of the cause inducing, for the effect

which is produced by it. But the nearest communion that can be imagined is between Christians, one with another, and all of them with their head Jesus Christ. For besides the civil communion between all men, whereby they are all of one flesh (which the Prophet Isaiah thinketh a sufficient argument to move us to do these works of mercy in relieving the poor) the offspring and generation of God, as the Apostle speaketh, the sons of the same Adam and Noah, and so brethren one with another, and of the same country and common wealth, yea, it may be of the same city and corporation; there are many spiritual respects, and more divine relations, which make a more near communion between Christians one with another. For we are elected to the same eternal happiness; and who would not love and relieve those who have communion in the same decree of life and blessedness? we are God's work-man-ship, who are not only created in Adam, according to his glorious image, but re-created and restored unto this divine image lost by Adam, in the second Adam Jesus Christ? & who would not cherish those who have such spiritual resemblance and likeness with God and one another? For if (as one saith) Idolalaters so much reverence the insensible image of their Idol-gods, that they willingly bestow upon them the most precious things they have, of which notwithstanding they have no use, and cannot so much as give thanks unto them for all the oblations which they have received: how much more just and equal is it to respect and cherish the living images of Almighty God, that thou mayest be thought worthy to find him whoever liveth, especially, seeing they can use what they have received, and give unto thee thanks, and God also in whose sight thou doest these good deeds will approve them, and pay unto thee the wages of thy piety? we are redeemed in our souls and bodies with the same precious blood of Jesus Christ, and therefore why should we make question of giving a poor alms for the preservation of their bodies, seeing our Savior hath given such an inestimable price for their redemption? we are partakers of the same calling, whereby we are called out of the world, and gathered into the Church and Communion of Saints, yea, of Jesus Christ our Lord; out of darkness into his marvelous light, that we may inherit the blessing of eternal glory, and out of a desperate condition, to be partakers of

the same precious promises. And by virtue of this calling, we serve one & the same God, be of one Church and Family, and have one Religion, one Faith, one Baptism; and why then should we think it much to communicate unto the poor, earthly trifles, for whom God hath provided heavenly happiness? why should we not do for those who are of the same family with us, and grudge to give unto God's servants such things as we would be ashamed to deny unto the meanest of our own? why should they not have fellowship with us in our houses at our own table, who have communion with us in God's house, and are invited guests to his table, as well as ourselves? we are brethren of the same father, and co-heirs of the same heavenly kingdom; and therefore let us take care of those who are so near of kin unto us, and not cast them off, as though we had nothing to do with them; for it is the voice of Cain to say, Am I my brothers keeper? and seeing God hath thought them worthy to reign with us in heaven, let not us think them unworthy to live with us on the earth; if he vouchsafe to give them with us a glorious and everlasting kingdom, let not us look upon their present vile and contemptible condition, unless it be to pity and relieve them, seeing they shall be advanced with us, if not before us; nor refuse to make them partakers with us of these earthly and contemptible trifles, which are small in worth, and momentary in continuance. For this the Apostle James condemneth for such a heinous sin as shall procure judgment without mercy. I am. 2. 5. Hearken my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom, which he hath promised to thē that love him? but ye have despised the poor. And what followeth? He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shown no mercy. And this Austin noteth, as most unseemly and unequal, that among men professing Christianity, and under the government of the same Lord, some should be pampered and drunken with excess, and others should be tormented and perish with hunger. We are all the servants of one, and redeemed with one price, all having alike ingress and egress into, and out of the world; and if we do well, we shall all come to the same blessedness. And why then doth not the poor now eat with thee, who shall hereafter reign with thee? why doest thou not permit him to put

on thine old and cast clothing, who is to receive with thee the robe of immortality? why is he not thought worthy to eat thy bread, whom God hath thought worthy to receive the Sacrament of Baptism? and why deemest thou him unworthy to eat the relics of thy meat, whom God hath invited to feast with the blessed Saints and Angels? Finally, we are the same spouse, of the same heavenly Bridegroom, and members of the same mystical body, the head whereof is Jesus Christ; and therefore if the limbs of Satan will not (being combined one to another in an hellish friendship) deny to do these small tristles one for another; much less let us who are knit together in this spiritual and holy union; seeing if we do good to our fellow-members, the benefit must needs redound unto ourselves, who are of the same body, even as the hand giving nourishment to the mouth, and the mouth preparing it for the stomach, do in nourishing it provide nourishment for themselves?

Sect. 9. That our communion with our head Christ should move us to relieve the poor.

The second bond which bindeth us to this duty, is the communion which the poor, together with us, have with our head Christ; which is so near and indissolvable, that our Savior esteemeth that as done unto himself, which is done unto them; even as the head acknowledgeth the benefit done unto it which the meanest member of the body immediately receiveth. Yea in truth that is much more acceptable which we do for his poor members, than if we should do it to his own person, as being a sign of greater love; for it is but an ordinary kindness to confer benefits upon our dearest friends, but to extend our bounty to the poorest and meanest that belong unto them is a sign of much greater love. For if for their sakes only we do good unto these, how much more would we be ready to do it unto themselves if they had occasion to crave our help? And as in this regard he much esteemeth this Christian bounty, so also he will richly reward it at the day of judgment; for then these merciful men who have relieved the poor for Christ's sake, shall with ravishing joy hear that

sentence, Come ye blessed of my Father; because the works of mercy which they have done to the poor, Christ will acknowledge as done unto him-self. Now what can be a more forcible reason to make our hearts relent though they be never so stony, and our bowels to earn with pity and compassion towards the poor, though they were of brass and iron, than to consider that our dear Lord and Savior in them doth crave relief? For who is so more than brutishly ungrateful, that can turn him away empty-handed, who being infinitely rich in all glory and happiness, was content for our sakes to become poor, that by his poverty he might communicate unto us his heavenly riches? Who would not give Christ lodging, yea even (if need should require) the use of his own bed, if he remember that he was content so far to abase himself for our sakes, as to make a stable his chamber, and a manger his lodging? Who could deny to clothe him being naked, who hath clothed our nakedness and covered our filthiness with the precious robe of his righteousness, in which we stand accepted before God and receive the blessing of eternal happiness? Who would not spare food out of his own belly to relieve poor Christ, who hath given unto us his blessed body to be our meat, and his precious blood to be our drink, whereby our souls and bodies are nourished unto everlasting life? Who would not leave all pleasure and profit to go and visit him in his sickness and imprisonment, that came to visit and redeem us with the inestimable price of himself, when we were enthralled in the miserable bondage of sin, Satan, hell and condemnation? and to set us free in that glorious liberty of the sons of God, was content to be himself apprehended like a malefactor, imprisoned, arraigned, accused, blasphemed, and railed at, buffeted, spit upon, whipped, crowned with thorns, condemned to death, and crucified between two thieves? Neither let us excuse our hardness of heart in denying relief to the poor, by saying, that though we reject them, yet we would if Christ were in their place show all love unto him, seeing this is but to cover our rocky obdurateness, with the filthy veil of impious infidelity. For Christ in his word hath plainly told us, that what we do to his brethren and poor members, he doth esteem as done unto himself; and therefore if thou still refuse to relieve the poor, either confess thy infidelity which will not

let thee believe him; or thy hardness of heart which will not suffer thee to relieve and comfort him.

Sect. 10. What we give to the poor is given to God himself.

Lastly, it is a just and righteous action to give unto the poor, seeing in giving unto them, we give unto God himself; for as the Wiseman speaketh, He that hath pity on the poor, lendeth unto the Lord, Pro. 19. 17. Now what can be more equal and just than to give a little unto him, who hath given all unto us? especially seeing he hath granted unto us the use only of that we possess, reserving still the chief propriety unto himself? and to spare something unto the poor out of our abundance at his request, who hath not spared to give unto us his only begotten and dearly beloved Son, that by a shameful death he might free us from everlasting death & condemnation, and purchase for us eternal happiness? yea in truth, what madness is it to deny, being requested, to give at his appointment, some small portion of our goods, who by his own right and authority may take all? and what senseless folly were it to turn away our face from him when he asketh in the behalf of the poor some earthly and momentary trifles, from whom we expect as his free gift heavenly happiness and everlasting glory? Christ (saith Augustine) thus speaketh unto thee. Give me something of that which I have given unto thee. I ask but mine own, and wilt thou not give it? Give and I will restore; thou hast found me a free giver, and now make me to become thy debtor.

CHAPTER 16.

That in the works of mercy we resemble God, please him, and make our calling and election sure.

Sect. 1. That we resemble God in these works of mercy.

And so I come from the reason included in the name of righteousness, here given to alms, to those main arguments whereby the Psalmist enforceth this duty which are plainly expressed in the text. The first whereof is the lasting benefit wherewith these works of mercy shall be rewarded, in these words; his righteousness endureth forever. Where two things are to be considered; first the benefit or privilege promised to the merciful man, the which is the fruit and profit of his beneficence. And the second is the time how long this benefit and fruit of his good deeds shall last, that is not only in this life, but also in the life to come; for his righteousness, or the fruit of his mercy towards the poor, endureth forever. The benefits which accompany these works of mercy are inestimable and innumerable; for first the inward habit of goodness and mercy in our hearts, exercised in the outward actions of liberality and bounty by our hands, doth make us to resemble God himself, and that in such an attribute as he delighteth in above others to style himself withal. For howsoever he is infinite in glory, greatness, justice, power, and all perfections, yet most usually in the Scriptures he is called a God of mercy and compassion. And hereby principally he made himself known unto Moses desiring to see him. Exod: 34. 6. The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression and sin &c. So in the Scriptures, though his works be described to be most excellent, incomprehensible & past finding out; yet his mercies are said to be above them all. And therefore seeing mercy and goodness do make us above all other graces to resemble God, and then the creature attaineth to greatest perfection and blessedness, when he is likest and cometh nearest unto the excellency of his Creator; And seeing we profess ourselves to be children of our gracious and glorious God, and we can no way grace ourselves so much, as by resembling our heavenly father in those

Attributes wherein he most shineth and excelleth, and nothing maketh us more like him than mercy and compassion; let us hearken unto our Saviors exhortation, and be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful. Luk. 6. 36.

Sect 2. That the works of mercy please God and make us accepted of him.

Secondly, nothing maketh us more pleasing and acceptable unto God then this inward goodness outwardly exercised in the works of mercy and compassion. And this must needs follow upon the other; for the more like we are unto God, the more he liketh us; and the nearer we approach unto him in his perfections, the better he loveth and approveth us; it being the nature of love to arise from likeness between them that love and those that are beloved. And therefore God being infinitely gracious and merciful, best liketh those who shine brightest in his own beauty, and best loveth those children, which most resembling their heavenly Father, do approve themselves to be legitimate. And this appeareth by the Scriptures, where God so highly prizeth and esteemeth mercy, and the works wherein it is exercised towards the poor, that he preferreth them before the outward act of religious duties. Hos. 6. 6. I desired mercy and not sacrifice. This is the oblation which he chiefly requireth, wherewithal (saith the Hypocrite) shall I come before God, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first borne for my transgressions, and the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? No none of all these saith the Prophet, but if thou wouldest be accepted of God, I will tell thee what he requireth of thee; to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God. Mich. 6. 6. 8. This he esteemeth the most acceptable sacrifice. To do good and communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Heb. 13. 16. This is the fast that he delighteth in, to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out into thy

house; when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh. Esa. 58. 6. 7. This is pure religion and undefiled before God, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted of the world. I am. 1. 27. Finally these alms deeds and works of mercy are not only an odor of a sweet smell, & a sacrifice acceptable & well-pleasing unto God, as the Apostle speaketh. Phil. 4. 18. but also such an oblation, as if we offer unto God with a lively faith, the use of God's creatures shall become clean unto us, according to that of our Savior, Luc. 11. 41. Give alms of such things as you have, and behold all things are clean unto you. Not that alms satisfy for our former sins as the Papists infer out of this place, and so make all things clean unto us; but only hereby thus much is signified, that if we give alms out of a lively faith all things are clean without Jewish and Pharisaical washings, invented by them for the purifying of God's creatures, of which the text specially speaketh.

Sect. 3. That by these works of mercy we make our calling & election sure.

Thirdly, by these works of mercy we make our calling and election sure, for if we do these things, that is, add to our knowledge, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity, and so abounding in these graces, be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall never fall. 2. Pet. 1. 7. 8. 10. and this the Apostle Paul maketh an infallible note of our election. Col. 3. 12. Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy and kindness &c. And as these works of mercy are undoubted marks of our election, so also of all the inferior means whereby it is effected; as first of saving knowledge and spiritual wisdom; for the wisdom that is from above is full of mercy and good fruits. I am. 3. 17. Secondly, of unfeigned repentance and our sound conversion, whereof it is that Daniel counseleth Nebuchadnezzar to approve his repentance and conversion unto God by these special fruits. Wherefore (saith he) O King let my counsel be accepted unto

thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Dan. 4. 27. The which Zachaeus practiced, for no sooner was he converted unto God, but to testify his unfeigned repentance, he giveth half of his goods unto the poor. Thirdly, they are infallible signs of a lively faith, whereby we may approve it unto men, because they are those good fruits which spring from it, according to that I am. 2. 18. Shew me thy faith by thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Which fruits if our faith bear not, it is dead, and not a living body, but a carcass that breatheth not. verse. 26. For if we be truly assured of God's love towards us, we will undoubtedly love him again; and if we love him unfeignedly, we will also love our neighbors for his sake, and be ready to show all duties of love to all those that need our help. So also they are in this regard signs of a lively faith, seeing thereby we apprehend God's promises, & so are encouraged to do these works of mercy for his sake; for no man easily parteth with his worldly goods to these uses, unless by faith he be assured that he shall have in leu of them heavenly and everlasting treasures. Fourthly, they are undoubted signs of our love towards God, when as we so love the poor for his sake, as that we be content to spare somewhat even from our own backs and bellies, that we may the more liberally communicate unto their necessities. And as our alms are a sign of our love to God, so the quantity of our alms (respect being had to the proportion of our state) is a sign of the quantity of our love; for he loveth but little, that having much, giveth but little, and contrariwise his heart is inflamed with fervent love, who hath it enlarged with bounty towards his poor brethren; the extension of our love towards them, being the true touchstone of the intention of our love towards God. And as a great tree, with many and large branches are an undoubted sign of a root proportionable in greatness; and a small shrub above the ground, plainly proveth that the root also is small which is under it; so is it with our love and alms-deeds which spring from it; for if we be bountiful in alms, we are plentiful in love, if we be slack in giving, we are cold in loving; but if we be utterly defective in bringing forth these excellent fruits, then it is a manifest sign that this grace of God's love is not rooted in us. For if any man have these

worlds goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? And as they are manifest signs of our love towards God, so also of our love towards our neighbors, when as we carry ourselves in all Christian bounty towards them, as unto children of the same father, and members of the same body, suffering with them in their wants, through compassion and fellow-feeling, and rejoicing with them in their fullness and prosperity. And as they are plain demonstrations of our faith and love, so also direct proofs of their sincerity and truth, and that they are not hypocritical and counterfeit. In which regard the Apostle Paul bringeth the Corinthians to this touchstone of alms deeds, to prove the sincerity of their love. 2. Cor. 8. 8. And again verse 24. Shew ye to them, and before the Churches the proof of your love. And the Apostle James also plainly affirmeth, that it is but an unprofitable and hypocritical love, to make show of kindness and compassion in word, and to perform nothing in deed. I am. 2. 15. Fifthly, these alms deeds are notable signs whereby we may be comfortably assured of the remission of our sins. For though they be not causes of pardon, by satisfying God's justice (as the Papists absurdly teach) yet are they testimonies unto us, that they are pardoned; for our mercy towards the poor ariseth from the assurance which we first have of God's mercy towards us; & as our giving much to Christ's poor members for his sake, doth show that we love much (for if we do this to the feet, how much more would we do it to our head himself?) so our loving much is an infallible sign that many sins are forgiven us, as our Savior speaketh to the woman, Luk. 7. 27. Lastly, by these alms deeds and works of mercy, we may be assured that we are godly and blessed men, sound Christians, and true citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem; for here in this Psalm it is made a note and property of a blessed & good man (not as the world speaks, to have goods in possession, for Dives in the Parable was such a good man, and yet afterwards cast into hell) but to do good by giving to the poor, & relieving the poor members of Jesus Christ, according to that Prov. 14. 21. He that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he. And without the doing of these works of mercy, we can have no assurance, that we are now good men, and subjects of the kingdom of

grace, or shall hereafter be citizens of heaven. For how can there be any goodness in us, and we not exercise it in doing good unto others? how are we subjects of God's Kingdom, if we will not yield him obedience in one of his chief commandments? how are we strangers here, and citizens of the new Jerusalem, if we mind only worldly wealth, and have our hearts fast nailed to the earth? how can we be the servants of Christ, and continue still vassals unto the earthly Mammon, not parting with the least part of it, to approve our love unto him? Finally, how hath Christ our heart, if it still remain fastened to riches? or how is heaven our country, when as we will send none of our wealth thither before us?

Sect. 4. That by these works of mercy we are assured of our interest unto God's promises.

The fourth main argument, to persuade us with cheerfulness, to the exercising these works of mercy, is because hereby we may be assured of our right and title unto God's most gracious promises, the which are either general or more special. Generally, God maketh this promise, that if we cast our bread upon the face of the waters, we shall after many days find it. Eccles. 11. 1. and in this text, that if we give to the poor, our righteousness, that is, the fruit and benefit of these works of mercy, shall remain forever. So our Savior promiseth that our heavenly father seeing our alms deeds, which we do in secret, will reward us openly, Matth. 6. 4. And lest any should be discouraged from performing these duties, because he is able to give but little: our Savior assureth us, that, Whosoever giveth but a cup of cold water unto a Disciple, in the name of a Disciple, he shall in no wise lose his reward. Matth. 10. 42. For this reward is not grounded upon the excellency and merit of the work, but upon God's righteousness and truth in fulfilling his promises, according ding to that Heb. 6. 10. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shown towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the Saints, and do minister. Whereby he implieth it, that it is no more possible, that those, who in love and obedience

have exercised themselves in these works of mercy should lose their reward, then that God himself should lose his righteousness. And these with such like are the general promises, in which are comprehended all particular blessings and benefits, respecting this life or the life to come. Besides which there are many special promises, which may encourage us to exercise ourselves daily in these works of mercy. As first, that whatsoever we give in this kind, it shall not be lost, but we shall surely have it restored unto us again. For though there appeareth no more possibility of having those goods returned unto us, then of receiving the bread which we cast into the sea, yet being thus cast upon the face of the waters, they are not cast away: for the Holy Ghost assureth us, that after many days, even when they seem to be so long lost, that they are quite forgotten, then we shall find them: for so the faithful are put in mind, by our Savior Christ, of their works of mercy, when they seem utterly to have forgotten them, as appeareth by their question, When saw we thee an hungry, and fed thee, or thirsty and gave thee drink? &c. So our Savior assureth us, that if we give, it shall be given unto us again. Luk. 6. 38. And the Wiseman telleth us, That he who hath pity on the poor, lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given, he will repay him again. Prov. 19. 17. Neither in truth can it be otherwise: for if mercy & bounty be in God, as in an inexhaustible and ever-springing fountain; and in us, as in a little stream that floweth from it, how is it possible that our small and shallow rivulet of mercy should flow to our neighbors, and that the ever living spring of God's mercy and goodness should be dry unto us? or how should the stream flow, and the fountain and well-head be dried up? yea, let us assure our selves, that we can no faster, in a wise and discreet manner, empty ourselves of these waters of God's blessings, for the satisfying & quenching of the poor man's thirst and relieving of his wants, but we shall again be replenished from the fountain of all goodness; and if like kind nurses we let these dear children of God suck the breasts of our bounty for their comfort and nourishment, that which is thus spent will again be restored; whereas if we churlishly refuse to impart and communicate this milk of God's blessings, it is the readiest way to have it quite dried up.

Sect. 5. Their objection answered, who think their riches lost which are given to the poor.

So that here are answered two objections of worldly men, which are notable impediments to hinder them from doing these works of mercy. The first is that their riches bestowed on these good uses are unto themselves utterly lost; which argueth such carnal diffidence, that it utterly mis-beseemeth those who take upon them the profession of Christianity. For seeing we have so many gracious and infallible promises from God himself, that if we give to others, we shall receive from him; if we let the streams of our liberality water the dry and thirsty lands into which he would have them run, they shall again be replenished from the all-sufficient fountain of his bounty, why should we restrain and with-hold our alms from the poor in the time of need? or why should we give unto them with a strait and stingy hand? why should we hazard the drying up of our breasts, which are only replenished from God with his blessings, by refusing to communicate them to the use of his children, and not let the poor draw them which is the only means to preserve their fullness and plenty? why should we assuredly lose our riches for fear of losing them; and not rather seem to lose them, that we may in truth find them? according to that, Eccli: 29. 10. Lose thy money for thy brother and thy friend, and let it not rust under a stone to be lost. For in truth these earthly things are lost with keeping, and kept with bestowing. For they and we cannot continue long together, seeing either they will leave us in our life-time, or we shall leave them at the hour of death. For then all that we possess shall be left behind us, and that only shall be our own which we have sent before us. In which respect our riches are fitly compared unto seed, which can no otherwise be truly kept, then when we seem utterly to lose it. For if we keep it in our grangers, it will either be spent in the use, or in time must, corrupt, and perish; but if we cast it into the ground, where it seemeth to rot and to be lost, it is the only way to preserve and keep it from losing and perishing. And therefore let us not, by giving to the poor, fear the loss of our riches, seeing it is the best and safest course

to preserve them for our use; whereas otherwise they cannot be without peril of miscarrying. But let this consideration move us to give more freely and liberally, imitating herein wise Travelers, who being in a strange and dangerous country, will not carry their riches and treasures about them, because they then be in danger by thieves and enemies to be spoiled of them, hazarding also there with the loss of their lives, but deliver them rather to the Agents and Factors of sufficient Merchants dwelling in their own country, that so taking from them bills of exchange, they may receive them at their coming home; so let not us carry about us all our wealth and riches whilst we travail in our worldly pilgrimage, where we are still in peril to be robbed by thieves and enemies; and though we escape many dangers, yet are sure at last to be spoiled, when death our mortal enemy shall set upon us. But let us put a good part of our goods (even as much as we can well spare from our own use for the well finishing of our journey) into the hands of the poor, whom God hath appointed as his agents and factors, and so it shall most surely be repaid, when having finished our pilgrimage, we shall safely arrive at our heavenly home; and though whilst we are traveling we have it not in sight but seem for the time to be dispossessed of it; yet in the end we shall find that it was not lost, but sent before us, and that it only remaineth for our use and benefit, when death hath spoiled us of all the rest. And this is the right course to make us friends of the unrighteous Mammon, unto which our Savior persuadeth us, Luc. 16. 9. This is to play the wise stewards, that when by death we are thrust out of our stewardship, we having discreetly laid out our masters goods may be joyfully received into those everlasting habitations.

Sect. 6.

The other objection is, that if we be so liberal in giving to the poor, we shall hereby consume our estate, and so our selves be brought into penury. To which I answer, that we must in this regard order our affairs with Christian discretion, and deliver so much to be sent before us, as that we ourselves do not want necessaries for our

honest occasions and the well finishing of our journey, which being observed there is no cause why we should fear poverty by relieving the poor. The wise husbandman doth not cast all his seed into the ground, but reserveth so much at least as will be sufficient to maintain his family; and so we must sow not all we have, but all which we can spare, that through our indiscretion we want not food before the time of harvest. And this is all I desire (saith the covetous miser) but seeing my goods are subject to many casualties, and I may have many extraordinary occasions which may bring me into want, I will not part with much, because I will be sure to leave sufficient for myself. Yea but how will thy hoarding up of riches preserve thee from these perils, and not rather through God's just judgment expose thee unto them, because thou disobeyest his commandment, through diffidence and distrust in his providence and resting upon thine own provision? Or how canst thou tell when thou hast sufficient to maintain thee and thy charge? seeing if God do but blow upon thy wealth, all, as well as a part, will vanish away and give thee no warning when it departeth? In which regard how much better were it to use things present, and to commend ourselves and our estates without carking and caring unto God who careth for us, and is all-sufficient to supply all our wants, having so many faithful promises that he will provide for us and repay us what in obedience to his commandment we lay out, on these charitable uses. And this argument the Apostle useth, to persuade the Corinthians to give liberally to the use of the poor, 2 Cor: 9. 8. Because God (saith he) is able to make all grace abound towards you, that you always having all sufficiency in all things may abound to every good work. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower, doth minister bread for your food, and multiplieth your seed sown, and increaseth the fruits of your righteousness. Whereby is signified, that he who enableth us to give unto the poor, is as able to provide things necessary and comfortable for our use in this life present, and so to bless our seeds of beneficence, which we have sown by his direction and appointment, as that we may reap a fruitful harvest in the life to come. And as he is able so we shall find him willing; neither are we to imagine that if we be careful in feeding Christ, that he will be careless

in feeding us; that he will deny us meat who hath given us his precious blood; that he will suffer us to want earthly trifles, who hath provided for us heavenly riches. Let such more than heathenish diffidence be far from us who profess ourselves to be of the household of faith, and if we will be thought worthy the name of Christians, let us not so much distrust the promises of Christ. As therefore no husbandman refuseth to sow his seed in due season for fear of want, but lest he should want will therefore sow it; so let not fear of poverty make us poor in these works of mercy, but let us sow our alms-deeds with a plentiful hand in assured hope of fruitful increase. For by whose providence and provision do we live and are we maintained? Is it our own, and not rather God's, whose power ruleth over all, and whose eye never sleepeth? Is it not he who giveth us all things to enjoy; and preserveth the things given, when they are exposed to innumerable perils? Is it not he (as Hannah speaketh) that maketh poor and maketh rich, that bringeth low and lifteth up, and raising the poor from the dust and dunghill, doth set them among Princes, and maketh them to inherit the throne of glory? Do we enjoy all things through God's blessing, and can we think to keep our riches by disobeying his commandment? Are the goods we possess our own absolutely, and not God's talents which he hath entrusted unto us, as his stewards, to be disposed according to his appointment, and do we think to be continued in our office of administration, when like thieves we convert them wholly to our own use; and not rather by employing and disposing them, as he hath commanded us, to the glory of our Lord and Master, and good of our fellow-servants?

CHAPTER 17.

That what we give to the poor we shall receive again with great increase.

Sect. 1. That God will repay us with great increase.

By that which hath been said, it appeareth, that by giving alms we shall be no losers, seeing God will repay what is thus laid out. Now let this consideration further induce us to the performance of this duty, that we shall not only receive our own again, but with great increase, according to that Luk. 6. 38. Give and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over shall men give into your bosom. And the Wiseman telleth us, that if we will thus honor the Lord with our substance, our barns shall be filled with plenty, and our presses shall burst out with new wine. Pro. 3. 9. 10. And if we thus scatter the seeds of our beneficence, they shall be the more increased; whereas if contrariwise we with-hold more than is meet, it is the ready way to bring us to poverty, as it is, Pro: 11. 24. And hereof it is that almsgiving is compared to sowing of seed: so in my Text the Psalmist saith, that the blessed man hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; and the Apostle saith, that he which soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully; to note unto us, that there is no loss in giving to the poor, but great gain and advantage, even a fruitful harvest, yielding 30, 40 or an 100 fold increase. In which regard it may be truly said, that *Eleemosyna non est diuitiarum dispendium, sed ditescendi potius compendiū, quaestus que omnium vberimus*. Giving alms, is not the way to waste our wealth, but the Art of thriving, and the most compendious course to come unto riches. The which consideration should make us bountiful in doing these works of mercy, seeing we have much more benefit by the alms we give, than our poor brethren who do receive them. For they are the ground into which these seeds are cast, and we the husbandmen who disperse and scatter them; now as seed is chiefly for his benefit who soweth it, and not for the benefit of the ground into which it is cast; so the poor have but the present use and possession of this seed of alms-deeds, but the benefit of the happy and heavenly harvest belongeth to those good

husbandmen, who sow in these grounds the feeds of their beneficence. Let us not then grudge to give alms to the poor when we have fit occasion, but rather do them with joy, and thankfulness unto God, who hath given us fit opportunity of sowing our seed, that so we may reap a fruitful harvest. For what husbandman would not readily and cheerfully hearken to one who should offer unto him fertile and fruitful land, ready prepared and manured, to sow his seed in, with a faithful promise that he should reap the whole crop for his own use and benefit? But thus God dealeth with us when he giveth us opportunity of relieving the poor: yea in truth much better & more liberally. For though a man should freely receive of another, land to sow his seed in, yet he were not sure of a fruitful harvest, for many accidents happen, which cut off the hopes of the most skillful husband-man, as frosts and mildews, worms and locusts, tares and weeds, too much wet, or too much drought, may destroy the corn, though the seed were never so good; or when it is ready for the sickle, the enemy may come and reap it: but if we sow these seeds of our beneficence, believing God's promises and hoping for an happy harvest, we shall never fail of our expectation, because God who is infinite in power and truth, having promised a fruitful crop, no outward accident is able to hinder it. And although our Alms deeds seem (like the seed sown) to perish and rot, yet believing what we see not, we shall assuredly see what we believe, and find such a fruitful increase in our heavenly harvest; as we shall conclude, that much greater benefit redounded to us who gave, then unto the poor who were the receivers of our alms.

Sect. 2. Alms deeds compared to lending upon usury.

In the same respect, alms giving is in the Scripture compared to lending; yea, to such a loan, whereby we have not only the principal restored, but with great increase. For whereas if we lend our money unto men, we shall have but ten in the hundred, if for God's sake we lend unto the poor, we shall have a hundred for ten, yea, an hundred for one, and eternal life to boot. Neither need we to doubt of the

payment, for though the poor be never so unable, yet they have an all-sufficient surety, even GOD himself, who hath undertaken in this bountiful manner to repay whatsoever is thus laid out. The which should make us cheerful in doing works of mercy, seeing we ourselves are sure of the largest gain, for not the taker, but the putter out to usury hath the greatest profit. And not to give readily upon this consideration, is to proclaim, either that we do not believe God's promises, nor give that credit unto him on his word, which we would give to a Turk or Infidel dwelling among us; or that we do not esteem the payment of his spiritual grace or heavenly glory for currant money, or of equal value to these transitory trifles which we impart unto the poor. For if a man of any credit should promise for the laying out of an hundred pound, that we should have a yearly annuity of so much for term of life, how eagerly would we catch at such an offer, though the quick approach of death might make us losers by the bargain? But God promiseth, that if we will lay out our money on these uses, we shall have an hundred for one, & for these earthly trifles, heavenly and everlasting treasures; and who then would not willingly listen to such a motion, if he believeth him that maketh it, or valueth the bargain that is offered unto him? when Alchemists promise great sums of gold for the disbursing of a little money, though they never fail to deceive those that believe them, yet they find many, who, to the utter ruin of their estates, will give credit unto them, being deluded with these golden hopes; and therefore let it be a shame unto all, which professing Christianity, will not trust God, who is truth itself, and cannot deceive us, promising better and more durable riches, even heavenly and everlasting treasures, unto those who for his sake are liberal to the poor, seeing hereby they discover gross hypocrisy, in professing faith when as they are wholly possessed of infidelity, and heathenish diffidence, seeing they are ready to trust a cozening impostor, rather than the only true God; and carnal worldliness, which maketh them to esteem more a little bread, a few scraps of meat, or cast apparel, then the bread of life, the heavenly Manna and food of Angels, and those rich robes of glory and blessedness which shall never be worn out.

Sect. 3. That love of our money should move us to part with it to charitable uses.

There is nothing that hindereth a man more from doing these works of mercy, then excessive love of money and riches, which maketh them so loath to part with them; whereas in truth if they loved them wisely, nothing should make them more ready to bestow them upon these uses. For even worldly men that are wise in their generation, the more that they love their money, the seldomer they let it lie by them where it increaseth not, and is subject to many casualties, but the more ready they are to put it out, either upon usury, if they can find a sufficient debtor, or upon some good bargain which will return it again with great increase. O why then should not we who profess ourselves spiritually minded imitate this wisdom in our own kind: seeing if we will lay out our coin on these charitable uses, the gain is inestimable, and our pay-master all-sufficient and infallible in his promises? For what greater gain can be imagined then to change earth for heaven, transitory trifles for eternal treasures, the bread of men for the bread of Angels, rotten rags for glorious robes; and a little drink, yea, a cup of cold water, if the well or river be our best cellar for the water of life, which will infinitely delight and satisfy us, without glutting or satiety? why should we think the poor so much beholding unto us for our scraps and superfluous relics, and not rather ourselves beholding unto them, seeing they are the occasions of such inestimable gain, for such trifling disbursements? Be mindful (saith one) ô man, not only of that which thou givest, but also of him who receiveth. For the poor may say unto thee: consider, ô man, that I in receiving always give no less unto thee, then thou in bestowing them givest unto me. For if there were not some to receive thy alms, thou couldest not give earth and receive heaven. Do not look upon me, but upon him that made both thee and me; and because thou hast heard me, ask of him what thou wilt, and he will hear thee. Give therefore thanks unto him, who hath given thee means by such a small price to procure a thing so precious. Give earthly things and thou shalt receive heavenly, give temporal things and thou shalt

receive eternal. Let therefore no man say that he giveth to the poor, when as it may more truly be said, that he giveth unto himself rather than unto them.

Sect. 4. That God is the surest paymaster.

And as the gain is inestimable, so the payment most assured; for we have God's word and hand-writing for it, who never failed of his promise; for as he is true of his word, so he is all-sufficient to perform. *Nihil promittit & non reddit: fidelis ill factus est debitor, esto tu auarus exactor.* He payeth whatsoever he promiseth; he is a true debtor, be thou a covetous exactor. Fear not to be a usurer, so thou lendest unto God; put out to him thy money, and expect great increase: for thou hast God for thy debtor, and his payment (like himself) is infinite. Give to him who hath given all to thee, for thou canst never exceed him in bounty, though thou shouldst give him all thou hast and thyself to boot; neither can thy liberality bring any loss, seeing the more thou givest the more thou shalt receive. Doest thou love thy money, and wouldest thou have it increased. Deliver it not into the hands of men, who (as Austin saith) will rejoice when they borrow, and mourn when they repay it; Entreat that they may receive, and calumniate when they should restore; who may be bankrupt and cannot, or deceitful and will not pay: Or who will put thee off with many delays, and trouble thee with expecting, as they have formerly troubled thee with their importunity in borrowing. But if thou be a wise usurer, choose God himself for thy debtor, who is the surest pay-master. Give me of mine own (saith Christ) and of a creditor make me to become thy debtor; and I will repay thee eternal treasures for transitory trifles. But understand this soberly. For we cannot (as the Papists dream) make God our debtor by the merit of our works, but by his own free and gracious promise. According to that of Austin; He is made a debtor, not by receiving something from us, but because it hath pleased him to promise something to us. For we after one manner say unto man, thou owest me that which I have given thee, and after another, thou owest me because thou hast

promised me: when as thou sayest, thou owest me, because I have given thee, the benefit hath proceeded from thee, though it were lent and not given. But when thou sayest, thou owest me, because thou hast promised, thou requirest that which thou hast not given. For his goodness that hath promised, will move him to give, lest his fidelity should degenerate into maliciousness, &c.

Sect. 5. That it is the end of riches to be employed on good uses, and not locked up.

Again, the love of our money should not hinder us from doing the works of mercy, but rather make us more diligent in them; for he that loveth anything wisely, desireth above all, that it may attain to his right and chief end, as being the best which his love can wish unto it: now the end of our money and riches, is not that they should lie rusting and rotting by us without use, but that they should be communicated to the glory of God and the good of our neighbors; and therefore seeing the more we love our wealth, the better we wish unto it, and nothing is better for it then to attain to these ends, they love it not at all, or at least after a foolish manner, who by imprisoning their riches, and so frustrating their chief end, do hinder them from attaining unto their perfection.

Sect 6. That by giving our riches to the poor, we long enjoy them.

Finally, if we wisely love our wealth, let it be our chief care, that we may long enjoy it: the which we cannot do by keeping it on the earth, for though we keep it under lock and key, bolt and bar, continual watch and ward, it may be lost whilst we live; but if not so, yet when death cometh (and for ought we know it may come today before tomorrow) it will spoil us of all, and turn us naked out of the world, as we came naked into it. But the only means to have the fruit and benefit of our riches forever, is to send them before us into our heavenly country, where we shall have our everlasting habitation,

and the best means of transporting them thither, is to deliver them unto the poor, who like trusty porters will carry them for us, for if we carry them ourselves, they will, like heavy burdens, hinder our journey, and like the camels bunch, keep us from entering into the straight gate; whereas if the poor whom God hath appointed for this service carry them for us, we shall avoid the trouble, and escape this danger. The which should be a forcible argument to move us with a bountiful hand to give unto the poor, seeing whatsoever is so given is sent before us, and whatsoever is hoarded up in our chests is lost and left behind us. And what folly is this, there to leave thy wealth whence thou art departing, and not to send it before thee whether thou art going? to leave and loose thy riches in thy Inn and the place of thy pilgrimage, and not to transport it into thine own Country and mansion-house where thou art ever to reside? And therefore seeing the only way to keep our goods forever, is to part with them for a time, and the means to preserve them for everlasting use, is to disperse & scatter them amongst the poor members of Jesus Christ; and contrariwise the keeping them too carefully on earth, is the direct way to lose them in heaven; let us give that which we can no otherwise keep, that we may receive that which we can never loose, and if we think that heaven is our home let us send our wealth thither before us, that we may the more cheerfully travel after it. For he who is eternally to dwell in those heavenly mansions, doth in this life send his heart thither to take possession: which that we may do let us lay up our treasures there, that so our hearts may be there also. Whereas contrariwise he whose only care is to hoard up riches upon the earth, doth plainly show that this world is his native home and Country, and that he hath no right or interest in the heavenly Canaan.

Sect. 7. That our inestimable gain countervaieth our temporary forbearance.

A second impediment, which hindereth men from doing these works of mercy is, because they look at this great return of gain, as being

many years and ages after to be received; for though they like these heavenly treasures, which the Lord promiseth to those, who by giving to the poor do lend unto him; and cannot but confess that God is the best and surest Paymaster, yet they are discouraged from thus laying out their money, because he seemeth to take long days of payment, and hath appointed the place of receipt in another world, whereas they, both for place and time are wholly for the present, and in truth, desire to be paid in their own coin, that is, in transitory and momentary riches which are subject to their senses. But to these I answer, that if they live only by sense and not by faith, they have indeed little cause to exchange their earthly possessions for heavenly treasures, seeing they can have no true hope of coming into that place of happiness, or of enjoying those divine riches which are prepared only for the faithful; and therefore let such keep their money till it perish with them. But let those, who being true Christians, can with the eye of faith pierce the heavens and there behold things invisible, continually exercise themselves, in these works of mercy, notwithstanding this discouragement; seeing they know not how soon the Lord will call them to account, and make all reckonings straight which are between them. For howsoever they may conceive hope of prolonging their lives to a hundred years, yet it may be, it will not last another month or day, and so their payment shall be as speedy and quick, as great and inestimable. But say that the line of their life should outreach the length of their longest hopes, yet have they good cause to lay out their wealth on this spiritual and heavenly bargain. First, because if they will wait and expect with patience, they have such a sure Pay-master who will not fail to accomplish all his promises. According to that Gal. 6. 9. Let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. And though our bread seemeth to be cast on the face of the waters, and so even cast away, yet we shall surely find it after many days, as it is Eccles. 11. 1. Secondly, the inestimable worth of the heavenly reward which also will be everlasting, when we do enjoy it, may sufficiently encourage us to lay out our riches on such infinite hopes, though the full payment be a while delayed. Even the most greedy Usurer will lend his money for longer time, according to the

greatness of the interest and increase which he expecteth. The husbandman though never so covetous is content to spare his seed wheat for a longer time, then his summer corn, & to expect the harvest almost the whole year with as much patience and comfort, as he doth a few months for the other grain, because he knoweth that when it cometh it will be of much better value. And we see by experience that our Merchants as willingly venter their wealth into the furthest parts of the East Indies, as into the next adjoining Countries, because their greater gain will sufficiently recompense their forbearance and reward their patience. And yet the Usurer meeting with bankrupts may with his hoped gain lose his principal; the husbandman after much cost and pains, may by unseasonable weather and many casualties, lose both the gain of harvest, and also a great part of the seed which he hath sowed; and the Merchant if he loseth not his goods together with the expectation of his gain, yet he getteth and recovereth them after long time and innumerable dangers. O why then should we not choose rather to put out our money to such a debtor, as promising inestimable gain for the time of our forbearance, is also most true of his promise and all-sufficient to perform? why should we not patiently expect the coming up and ripening of the seeds of our beneficence, seeing we are sure of such a rich crop and heavenly harvest? and why should we not like wise Merchants venter our goods into the holy land, seeing though the return be slow, yet in the end it will bring the best and surest gain?

CHAPTER 18.

Of certain special benefits both corporal and spiritual promised to those who give liberally to the relief of poor.

Sect. 1. That he who relieveth the poor shall be blessed in his posterity.

And thus have I shown, that if by giving to the poor we lend unto the Lord, we shall receive full restitution with great advantage. Now we will consider wherein this restitution is to be made, and in what things it principally consisteth; namely, in all blessings and benefits both temporal and eternal. The temporal benefits respect either our posterity, or ourselves; for if we bountifully relieve the poor, the reward of our charity shall not only extend unto us, but also to our of-spring and progeny; according to that in the second verse of this Psalm: His seed shall be mighty upon earth, the generation of the upright shall be blessed. So the Lord promiseth, Esa. 58. 10. 12. that if we will draw out our soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; the Lord will not only satisfy our souls in drought and make fat our bones, but that those also that come of us shall prosper unto many generations. Now what better inheritance can we leave to our children than the blessing of God, which like an ever-springing fountain will nourish and comfort them in the time of drought, when as our own provision which we have left unto them may fail, and when the heat of affliction riseth, will like standing waters be dried up?

Sect. 2. That God rewardeth our alms deeds with corporal and earthly blessings.

The temporal benefits which respect our own persons are either corporal or spiritual. For the Lord, to encourage us in these works of mercy, doth repay and reward us, not only with the true treasures of his spiritual graces; but stooping to our infirmity, he payeth us with our own money also, even with the coin of worldly blessings which is so current among us. According to that Pro. 3. 9. 10. Honor the Lord with thy substance, so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. And because by this liberal giving, men doubt lest they themselves should come unto poverty; he

assureth us, that he who giveth to the poor shall not lack, Pro: 28. 27. So that if we sow the seed of our beneficence it will return unto us a double harvest; the crop of temporal benefits in this life, and of everlasting blessedness in the life to come. Yea but thou seest not this increase in thy worldly estate by giving alms. And if thou believest no more than thou seest, why dost thou take upon thee the name of a Christian, who liveth by faith rather than by sense? For by how many secret passages can God convey unto thee the reward of thy alms deeds, though he writeth no superscription upon them, to certify thee for what it is sent? it is sufficient that thou hast it, and that thou knowest that he sent it, as for the reasons which moved him to give these benefits unto thee, he will acquaint thee with them more particularly, when as he shall call thee to make up thy reckoning. Thou growest in thy stature from a child unto a man, and thou seest not thy growing, though thou perceivest that thou art grown; neither knowest thou the particular time and means, when, or whereby thou camest to this height. And thou knowest and acknowledgest that thou art nourished by thy meat, though thou seest not the secret passages whereby it is carried from the stomach to the several parts, nor canst tell at what time or by what food thou hast been chiefly nourished. Why then hast thou not the like faith and much stronger in spiritual, which thou hast in respect of natural things, seeing they are much more secret and insensible? and when thou hast God's promise of reward, and seest it performed by his blessings multiplied in thy bosom, why doest thou doubt or call them into question; or ascribe them to thyself or other helps, seeing whatsoever are the means, they are of God's sending? Finally, if thou sayest that thou seest no possibility of increasing thy wealth by giving away a great part of it unto the poor: I answer, and what more reason hast thou by the collection of sense, that thy seed which thou sowest should be multiplied, which thou castest away and lettest rot in the earth, unless thou hadst learned it by experience? And is not God's word a much more infallible teacher & surer ground for thy faith to rest upon, especially when thou art not without experience of the like increase springing from the sowing of the seeds of thy beneficence? To conclude this point, if thou doubttest of these promises of God

made unto those who relieve the poor, because thou seest not how or when they are performed; why doest thou believe the remission of thy sins, salvation by Christ, and everlasting life, when as thou seest none of these, nor hast any other ground but God's promise, even as thou hast for the reward of thy alms deeds? and therefore if thou doubttest of the one, thou doubttest of the other; and were not the profession of thy faith concerning those spiritual things good cheap, but should cost thee as dear as the giving of alms; thou wouldest doubtless discover and proclaim thy infidelity there as well as here, and plainly show that it was in mere formality and hypocrisy.

Sect 3. That God will be merciful to those that show mercy.

The promises also of spiritual blessings are many and diverse. In which respect Chrysostom compareth alms-deeds unto good corn sown in a fertile soil, which every year bringeth forth fruit in due season: saving that herein they differ, namely whereas, this fruit in the richest ground cometh but once a year, the spiritual fruit of alms-deeds springeth every day, as confidence in God, assurance of the remission of sins, a good conscience, spiritual gladness, joyful hope, and other good things which God hath prepared for those that love him. But among these innumerable spiritual blessings we will observe some few. As first, they who are merciful to the poor, shall find mercy at the hands of God; according to that Math. 5. 7. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Now what an excellent thing is this, to have the treasures of God's mercy in our own keeping, and to have the key in our hand, by which we may go in to & enjoy them our own pleasure; for if we be merciful to the poor, and impart unto them some of our small store, the Lord will be merciful to us, and communicate unto us abundance of pity and compassion, out of the infinite treasures of his love and goodness.

Sect. 4. That if we hear the cry of the poor, God will hear us. Esa. 58. 7.

Secondly, if we hear & regard the cry of the poor, begging of us such things as are necessary, the Lord will hear our cry when we call upon him for a supply of our wants; according to that Esa. 58. 7. If thou deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the poor that are cast out into thy house &c. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, here I am. An example whereof we have in Cornelius, who with his fasting and prayers joining alms deeds, had this comfortable message from God, that his prayers and alms deeds were come up for a memorial before him. Yea in truth, these works of mercy will speak loud for us in God's ears, when we hold our peace; and the loins of the poor shall bless us, when they and we are sleeping in our beds. But contrariwise, if we will not hear the suites of the poor, neither will the Lord give us audience when we sue unto him, according to that. Pro: 21. 13. who so stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, and shall not be heard.

Sect. 5. That if we pity the poor God will pity us in our afflictions.

Thirdly, if we pity the poor in their miseries, and with our helping hand free them from their distress, the Lord likewise will take compassion on us in the time of our afflictions, and when it is most seasonable will deliver us from them: according to that, Ps. 41. 1. Blessed is he that considereth the poor, the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble. 2. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth, and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. 3. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing; thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness. So Eccli. 29. 12. Shut up alms in thy storehouses; and it shall deliver thee from all affliction. 13. It shall fight for thee against thine enemies, better than a mighty shield and strong spear. And the Lord promiseth that if we draw out our souls to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall our light rise in obscurity, and our darkness be as noon day; Es. 58. 10. whereby is meant, that the light of comfort by a gracious deliverance shall shine unto us in the night of

afflictions; or such a measure of inward joy, as is able to make the afflictions themselves, even whilst they last, sweet and comfortable; according to that, Psalm. 30. 5. weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

Fourthly, by our bounty towards the poor we have the benefit of their prayers unto God, the which are very available for the obtaining of all good things for us; the which argument the Apostle useth to incite the Corinthians to a liberal contribution, 2. Cor. 9. 14. As also by the same means we give them occasion of praising and glorifying God, whilst by the experiment of this ministration they see our professed subjection to the Gospel of Christ, as the Apostle speaketh in the same place. verse. 13.

Sect. 6. That alms deeds further our salvation.

Finally, by these works of mercy we are furthered notably in the way to salvation, the which our Savior implieth, when as he persuadeth us to make us friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness that when we fail they may receive us into everlasting habitations. Luk. 16. 9. For in these earthly riches which are of small value the Lord trieth our fidelity and obedience, and if in the trial we be found faulty, these talents are taken from us, and we cast into the prison of outer darkness; but if by our honest, faithful and charitable disposing of them we are approved, the Lord will commend us for good stewards, and commit to our keeping those heavenly riches and everlasting treasures. According to that which followeth in the next words, he that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much: If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous Mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? and if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? So the Apostle would have rich men charged to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, that they might lay up store for themselves, a good foundation against the time

to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. 1. Tim. 6. 18. 19. Yea in truth by exercising ourselves in these works of mercy, everlasting happiness is begun in this life; not only, as thereby we have an entrance into it by assurance of faith; but also have the earnest and fruits of this happiness and blessedness. In both which regards they are in the Scriptures pronounced blessed, who taking compassion on the poor do liberally relieve them. As Pro. 14. 21. He that hath mercy on the poor happy is he. And Pro. 22. 9. He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed, for he giveth of his bread to the poor. And thus are they blessed of God, according to that. Deut. 15. 10. Thou shalt surely give to thy poor brother and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because for this thing the Lord thy God, shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand to; which blessing in these temporal things is unto the faithful an earnest and pledge of their everlasting blessedness. And our Savior pronounceth them, blessed who are merciful, because they shall obtain mercy, Math. 5. 7. and telleth us, that if instead of our kindred and rich friends, we will invite the poor to be our guests, we shall be blessed. Luk. 14. 14. And thus also they are blessed of men; as we see in the example of Job, who saith, that because he delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him, the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him. Job. 29. 12. 13. And in this regard, because our alms deeds are the means of deriving unto us so many blessings, they themselves have the name of a blessing given unto them by the Apostle, 2. Cor. 9. 5.

Sect. 7. That the greatest benefit of our alms redoundeth to ourselves.
Acts 20. 35

By all which it appeareth, that it is much better to give then to receive, as it is Acts 20. 35. Because the poor receive only things transitory, and but of small value, but they that give, things spiritual, inestimable and heavenly. In which regard it may be truly said, that as he who is merciful is good unto others, so he is best of all to himself; for whereas he only relieveth their bodies, he feedeth and

refresheth his own soul; according to that Prov. 11. 17. The merciful man doth good to his own soul. And ver. 25. The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself. Whereof it is that God is said to have bestowed, and the Churches of Macedonia to have received grace, when in their affliction and poverty they abounded unto the riches of their liberality, and even above their power contributed to the necessity of the poor Saints. 2. Cor. 8. 1. 2. And therefore let us also labor to abound in this grace, as the Apostle exhorteth. verse. 7. because there is no loss in this spiritual traffic, but the more we lay out, the greater will be our gain, the more liberally we give, the more bountifully we shall receive.

Sect. 8. That fearful threatening's are denounced against the unmerciful.

But if all these arguments, taken from our own good, will not persuade us to be bountiful in doing these works of mercy, yet let those threatening's of evils and commination's of God's judgments, somewhat rouse us up to the performance of these Christian duties. For the Lord so abhorreth the neglect of them, that he reckoneth it among those heinous sins of Sodom, which moved him in his fearful wrath to destroy them with fire and brimstone from heaven. Ezech. 16. 49. And that we may not fall into it, threateneth against all who live in it, most grievous punishments. As first, that he will turn away his ears from hearing their prayers. Prov. 21. 13. Who so stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he shall also cry himself, and shall not be heard. That as they sow nothing in the seed-time of this life, so they shall reap nothing in the harvest of happiness. 2. Cor. 9. 6. that as they have sown only to the flesh, so of the flesh they shall reap nothing but corruption. Gal. 6. 8. that they shall lie open to the curse of the poor: according to that. Prov. 28. 27. He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack, but he that hideth his eyes, shall have many a curse. The which curses of the poor he will hear and ratify, according to the saying of the son of Sirach. chap. 6. 5. Turn not away thine eye from the needy, and give him no occasion to curse thee. 6. For if he

curse thee in the bitterness of his soul, his prayer shall be heard of him that made him. Finally, the Lord threateneth unto them judgment without mercy who have shown no mercy. I am. 2. 13. To which purpose one saith, Thou hast not been merciful, and thou shalt not find mercy, thou hast not opened thy gates to the poor, and thou shalt be shut out of the gates of heaven; thou hast not given bread, and thou shalt not receive the bread of life. And again: The fruits which thou shalt reap, will be like the seed which thou hast sown. Thou hast sown bitterness and thou shalt reap bitterness; thou hast sown cruelty, and thou shalt reap cruelty. Thou hast shunned mercy, and mercy shall shun thee; thou hast hated the poor, and he in like manner shall hate thee, who being rich was content for our sake to become poor. The which denunciation of judgments shall accordingly be executed at the latter day, when unmerciful men shall be banished out of God's Kingdom, not only for hurting the poor, but for not helping them: nor for taking away their bread, drink and clothes, but for not giving these things unto them. An example whereof our Savior propoundeth in the parable of the rich glutton, who having received from God the large portion of a child, grudged to spare out of his plenty and superfluity the portion of a dog, even the scraps which fell under his table. And therefore his punishment was answerable, for he who denied his crumbs, to satisfy poor Lazarus his hunger, was himself denied a drop of cold water to quench his own heat and thirst.

CHAPTER 19.

That they who are liberal in giving alms, shall be rewarded with permanent and eternal blessings.

Sect. 1. That our alms deeds shall be rewarded with permanent blessings.

And thus much have we spoken of the manifold blessings & benefits which are promised to those who exercise themselves in the works of mercy; now we are to speak of the durable continuance of them, expressed in those words; endureth forever. The first word signifying, that the fruits of our alms deeds are lasting, for they fly not from us, but endure; the other, that they are everlasting, for they stay with us, not only a long time, but they endure forever. Concerning the former, the benefit of our alms deeds is very great, for whereas our riches are in their own nature most flitting, mutable and inconstant, they being every day ready to leave us, or we them; by giving of alms they are preserved for our use: whereas like an Eagle they are still ready to fly away from us, as the wise man speaketh, Prov. 23. 5. by this means their wings are clipped, so as they cannot take their flight nor depart from us. In which respect that conceit should not hinder us from giving alms which hindereth many, namely, that their riches so bestowed are merely lost; yea, rather nothing more should persuade us to be bountiful in giving, seeing it is the only means to preserve them from losing; for if we keep them, they will fly away from us, but if we give them, they will continue with us. If we imprison them within stone-walls never so surely under lock and key, bolts and iron bars, they will make an escape; but if we commit them to the custody of the poor, they will become lasting treasures and durable riches which will long continue with us. So that if we would make choice of a treasury for our wealth which cannot be violated, of a lock that cannot be picked, and of an iron barred chest that cannot be broken open; let the poor keep it in their bellies, which of all other places is most safe and secure. For this is Christ's treasury, which none can burst into, and what is put into it, is in his custody, and therefore safe enough, because he is the strong man whom none can turn out of possession, nor pluck anything from him with violence, which he holdeth in his hand. In which regard it may be truly said, that as the merciful man is of all others most rich, so also most provident in keeping his goods the

safest & securest, through his providence from fear of losing them; for what he giveth, he placeth in a sure treasury, out of which there is nothing lost. He that keepeth his money reserveth it to many casualties, as fire, thieves, oppression of the mighty, invasion, of enemies, by which how many have been suddenly spoiled of all they have: & if we follow the same practice, who can privilege us from the same dangers? with which if we be overtaken, how will we befool ourselves, that we did not give some part to the poor, which might have been preserved out of the gunshot of all peril? because what is thus bestowed is in God's keeping and reserved in the treasury of heaven for our use. Now as one saith, though the enemy hath invaded the house, he could never have invaded heaven; though he hath killed thy servants that watched thy wealth, he could not have killed God the chief keeper and preserver. And this argument the Wiseman useth to persuade us unto these works of mercy with a bountiful hand, Eccl. 11. 1. 2. Cast thy bread upon the face of the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven and also unto eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall befall upon the earth. So our Savior Math. 6. 19. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. 20. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal. and Luk. 12. 33. Sell that ye have and give alms, provide yourselves bags which wax not old, & treasures in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. What foolish covetousness (saith one) is this which maketh men hide their money here among thieves? for if thou lovest money truly, lay them up where they may be safe, and open to no violence. For that which thou now doest, showeth not thy love to thy wealth, but the mischiefs of thy servitude, and that thou but hereby seekest thine own continual vexation and grief. If any man would show thee a safe place for thy treasures, though it were in the wilderness, thou wouldest hearken unto him; but now not man but God showeth thee a place of safety, not in the wilderness but in heaven, and thou regardest it not, but though thou shouldest hide them ten thousand times in the earth, thou couldest

never be freed from care. For howsoever perhaps thou shouldest not lose them, yet thou shouldest never be without the fear of losing them. But if thou givest thy riches to the poor, thou shalt be free from these fears and cares. And which is more, thou shalt not only safely hide thy gold, but thou shalt hereby sow it, and receive plentiful increase which (herein better than other seed) shall endure forever.

Sect. 2. That by giving alms we lay up treasures in our own country.

But let us consider where this place of safety is, in which we are counseled to lay up our treasures; namely not in a strange kingdom whither we shall not come ourselves, or being come thither shall make but small stay; but in heaven, our own native country, the place of our inheritance, among our kindred and chief friends, and of our perpetual abode and everlasting habitation; for they that feed Christ being hungry, and clothe him being naked in his poor members, shall inherit the heavenly kingdom which God hath prepared for them from the foundation of the world, Math. 25. 34. they that deal their bread to the hungry and cover the naked, shall have their righteousness to go before them, & the glory of the Lord shall be their rearward. Esa: 58. 8. They that sell and give to the poor, for their transitory riches, shall have a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, Luk. 12. 33. Now what an excellent change is this, to have heavenly things for earthly, & treasures in our own country, where we shall enjoy them forever, for parting with uncertain riches in the place of our pilgrimage, which we are ready every day to leave behind us; to forgo things which we cannot keep, and obtain such as we cannot lose? But this exchange merciful men do make; for when they give their goods to the poor, they do not lose them, but only commit them unto them, as unto porters, to be carried and transported for their use into those heavenly and everlasting habitations: whereas if they should hoard them up and keep them unto themselves, they would be cumbersome burdens, which would hinder their journey thither, and yet when they have done what they can, death at length, if not some other casualty in the meantime, will strip them naked of

all, to go out as they came into the world, and let them carry nothing with them, but the sin and guilt which they have committed in compassing of them. What madness therefore is it to leave our wealth there, from whence we are every day departing, and not to send it before us whither we are going? to leave and lose it in a strange kingdom, when as we might safely send it before us into our own country? especially considering (as one saith) that he who placeth his treasures on earth, hath nothing to expect and hope for in heaven: for why should he look up into heaven, who hath laid up nothing there? whatsoever thou dost for thy soul, that is truly thine, but what thou leavest behind thee that thou lovest.

Sect. 3. That the reward of our alms-deeds and the punishment of their neglect shall be everlasting.

And thus we see the place where our riches will endure and remain for us; now the time of their continuance, and of our enjoining them in heaven is forever; in which respect we may truly say of alms-deeds, that they are that meat which will not mold, the drink that soureth not, the garment that will not wear out, and the treasure which is not subject either to rust or stealing; And this eternity of reward is promised in many places of Scripture to those who exercise themselves in these works of mercy. So Luk. 16. 9. Make to yourselves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness, that when you fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations. And the Apostle would have those who are rich in the world to be rich also in good works, ready to distribute, and 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. Tim. 6. 19. yea so doth the reward of everlasting happiness through God's free grace and goodness belong to these works of mercy, that the doing or neglecting them is accompanied with eternal blessedness or endless misery; for the sentence of absolution or condemnation shall be pronounced, either for or against us, accordingly as we have performed or omitted them. To those who have fed the hungry,

clothed the naked, visited the sick &c. come ye blessed of my Father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; and contrariwise to those who have not done these duties; Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels. The consideration whereof should be a sufficient motive to stir us up to the doing of these good works, though there were no other reason; for if we either love heaven or fear hell, if we would be everlastingly rewarded or would not be everlastingly punished and tormented; if we desire with unspeakable confidence and joy to appear before our sweet Savior and to our inestimable comfort hear that blessed sentence; or would not be astonished and perplexed with that horror and guilt, which shall make us to cry out to the hills and rocks to fall down and cover us from the presence of our terrible judge; let us spare something from our superfluities, yea if need require, even from our necessities, that we may relieve and cherish the poor distressed members of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 20.

That God will make the estate of the merciful prosperous and flourishing.

Sect. 1. That by giving alms our estate is confirmed and increased.

And so I come from the first main argument expressed in the text, to the second contained in the last words: his horn shall be exalted; with honor. In which words the holy Ghost promiseth to them who are liberal and diligent in doing the works of mercy, a most prosperous and flourishing estate in this world and in the world to come. For first by exalting of their horn is signified the confirmation, strengthening and increasing of their prosperous estate, the

metaphor being borrowed from those beasts whose chief strength, both for offense and defense, is principally in their horns. And thus it is said Psal. 18. 2. The Lord is my rock and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my strength in whom I will trust, my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. By all which borrowed speeches the same thing is signified, namely that the Lord was his chief strength by whom he had safety and defense maugre the malice of all his enemies. So Psal. 75. 10. All the horns of the wicked will I cut off, but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted. By which is meant that he would disable and destroy the one, and advance and confirm the prosperity of the other. And thus the Apostle expoundeth these words; for persuading the Corinthians to be bountiful in doing these works of mercy, he taketh away a secret objection which might hinder them in their liberality, namely that hereby they should impoverish their estates, and bring themselves to want: assuring them that there was no cause to fear this, for God (saith he) is able to make all grace abound towards you, that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work, as it is written, he hath dispersed abroad, he hath given to the poor, his righteousness remaineth forever. And instead, of those words, his horn shall be exalted with honor; he addeth: Now he that ministereth seed to the sower, doth minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness. Whereby the same thing is signified, to wit, that God will increase their plenty and confirm their estate, so that the sowing of the seeds of their beneficence, shall bring them no more loss, then the sowing of corn doth to the Husbandman, which is the only means of continuing his store and abundance. And thus also the Lord by the Prophet Isaiah promiseth to those that draw out their soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, that he will guide them continually, satisfy their soul in drought and make fat their bones; and that they shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not. Esa. 58. 10. 11. So Pro. 11. 24. There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. 25. The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself. And

Pro. 28. 27. He that giveth to the poor shall not lack. The which consideration should effectually move all to be bountiful in doing these works of mercy, seeing they do not weaken, but much strengthen our estate; and are so far off from being the causes of our want and poverty, that they are the only means of our plenty and abundance.

Sect. 2. That the merciful shall be filled with joy.

Secondly, by exalting their horn, is meant that their hearts shall be replenished with joy, and delight; for it is the manner of horned beasts to express their inward joy by lifting up and tossing their heads and horns. And surely it is no small pleasure which a Christian taketh in performing these works of mercy; For first these virtuous actions in themselves do even for the present fill their hearts with joy who rightly perform them, in which regard the heathen man defineth a benefit to be an action proceeding from goodwill, yielding joy to him that receiveth it, and receiving it whilst it yieldeth it. But much more do they fill our hearts with joy, as they are evident signs to assure us that we are endued with God's saving graces, and as they do, being fruits of a lively faith, ascertain us of our future rewards, and the fruition of God's presence, where there is fullness of joy for evermore.

Sect. 3. That the merciful shall attain to a prosperous estate with honor.

Lastly it is said, that his horn shall be exalted with honor, or glory; whereby is meant, that merciful men shall have a fair passage to the compassing of their riches and enjoining of their pleasures; and whereas worldlings whilst they advance and confirm their estates, and obtain their pleasures by unlawful means, are commonly branded with the marks of their sin, & exposed to dishonor and reproach both before God and men; they achieving these things by

sowing the seeds of their bounty, which God blesseth with this fruitful increase, become honorable and of high esteem, not only amongst men, but also in the sight of God himself. Yea in truth the duty of alms-giving itself is exceeding honorable; for if it be a great honor amongst men to be the Kings steward, and to have the power of disposing his goods for the use of all his family, or to be his Almner to distribute his alms unto the poor, how much more honorable is it, to bear these offices under the most high and mighty Monarch of heaven and earth? And as it is very honorable in itself, so also it bringeth much honor with it. For he that relieveth the poor honoreth God, according to that Pro. 14. 31. He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his maker, but he that honoreth him, hath mercy on the poor, and who so honor God, those will he honor, as it is 1. Sam. 1. 30. those that draw out their souls to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul, their light shall rise in obscurity, and their darkness shall be as the noon day. as it is. Esa. 58. 10. They shall be glorious in the sight of men whilst they live, for their virtuous actions, and be had in an honorable remembrance amongst them after their death; yea and (which is the perfection of all their happiness) they shall not only be honorable in earth, but be made glorious in the fruition of God and everlasting blessedness in the kingdom of heaven.

CHAPTER 21.

Certain objections and excuses answered and taken away, whereby men are hindered from doing the works of mercy.

Sect. 1. Their objection answered, who excuse their not giving alms by their poverty.

And thus have I propounded many and weighty reasons, whereby we may be induced to exercise ourselves in the works of mercy, and to be bountiful in relieving the poor members of Jesus Christ. Now it only remaineth that we answer some objections, which we have not met with in the former discourse, and which, like blocks in the way, hinder men from entering into, or going forward in this Christian course. And of these some respect the giver, and some the poor who are the receivers. Concerning the former; some will give no alms, pretending that they are poor themselves, and have nothing for them when they crave relief. And surely many of them speak more truly than they are aware, for though they abound with earthly riches, yet are they bare and beggarly in respect of the chief riches and spiritual treasures; though they are rich in goods, yet they are poor in grace, poor in love towards God and their neighbors, poor in faith and in obedience, and poor in pity, mercy and compassion towards their brethren, which maketh them so ungenerous and close-handed, that they will part with nothing for their relief. But herein commonly they think themselves rich enough, and contrariwise they pretend that they are poor in worldly wealth, wherein they have not only sufficiency, but also superfluity & abundance. For these who have nothing for the poor which crave relief, have plenty & too much to bestow upon idle, unprofitable and wicked uses. They have not for the poor a few scraps to preserve them from perishing with hunger, but they have enough for themselves to pamper their bellies, and with the rich glutton to fare delicately every day. They have enough to entertain their rich friends with superfluous pomp and plenty; and they who will not leave them to their own appetite, but press them with their importunity to eat still more, when already they have eaten enough and too much, will not allow some small pittance to the poor to keep them from famishing. They who make no spare of their most costly wines, but swallow them down themselves with great excess; and provoke, yea even compel others to drink of them unto drunkenness, will not give a little small drink to the poor members of Jesus Christ to quench their thirst. They have not for the poor some out-worn and cast apparel to cover their nakedness, and keep their bodies from the injuries of the wind and weather; but they have

enough not only for their own use, but also for pride and ostentation; their chests full thrust of rich clothing, and their wardrobes thoroughly furnished with gorgeous garments, which serve for little other use, than to keep those from sloth and idleness, that keep them from molding and moth-eating; and whereas they have no course clothes to cover naked Christ, they have costly ornaments for their walls of Arras and Tapestry. Finally, they have not a few pence to spare for the relieving of those who are in extreme necessity; but they have many shillings and pounds to spend wastefully and riotously, upon dicing & gaming, vain sights, obscene stage plays, and upon all other sinful pleasures and worldly delights which their carnal appetite any way desireth. But what a fearful account have these men to make in the day of judgment, when as they shall make their reckoning unto God, Item so much spent in excess and superfluity, and so little in performing the works of mercy; so much laid out upon worldly vanities and sinful pleasures, and so little for good uses, and especially for relieving Christ in his poor members.

Sect. 2. That we ought to give something to the poor, even out of our mean estates.

But say thou hast but a mediocrity of estate, and doest not attain unto such plenty or superfluity; but hast only a competency and sufficiency for thyself, yet out of this thou must spare somewhat to relieve those who are in extreme necessity; and if thou hast so little money in thy purse, that it will only serve thine own turn, thou art enjoined to sell somewhat which thou mayest best spare, as either corn, land, or useless household stuff, that thou mayest raise a stock, out of which thou mayest relieve the poor. For if carnal wicked men will make sale of such things, rather than they will want that which is sufficient for the satisfying of their sinful lusts, how much more should we do it for the better performance of these Christian duties? If they care not to waste their estates in the service of the Devil, let us not spare such disbursements as will further us in the service of God, seeing he is such a liberal master as will reward our kindness and

never suffer us to lose by our bounty? Finally, though it were granted that thou hadst nothing to sell, yet God commandeth thee rather than that thou shouldest neglect these works of mercy, to labor with thy hands, that thou mayest have to give unto him that needeth; and therefore excuse not thy neglect of this duty, by saying that thou hast nothing for them, unless thou hast nothing to waste upon thy superfluous vanities, nothing which thou canst spare from thy necessary use, and sell for these charitable employments; yea unless thou art not only poor in estate, but impotent and unable by thy honest labors to earn thy living, and hast both an empty purse and also shaking hands and weak knees, and in a word art thyself such a one as needeth by others to be helped and relieved.

Sect. 3. Their objection answered, who put off this duty to those who are richer.

Yea but there are many richer, and therefore this duty of giving alms lieth rather upon them than upon thee, who art but poor and of small means in comparison of them, and if they neglect to give, much more mayest thou (as thou supposest) and yet be excused before God. I answer first, that none are excepted, but everyone is to give according to his ability; wherein if thou failest, their neglect will not excuse thee, for their example is no president, but everyone must bear their own sin. Secondly, if having little, thou art content in obedience to God, to part with somewhat, thou performest a duty the more acceptable to God, and in the day of Christ's appearing, thou shalt be so much the more richly rewarded; and for the present, thy work shall be so much the more commendable: as we see in the example of the poor widow and the Macedonians, who are so much commended for parting with somewhat out of their small store. Thirdly, if thou wilt not live by precepts but by examples, why doest thou propound them for thy pattern, who are carnal and covetous, and not rather the example of our Savior Christ, and the holy men of God, whose bounty even out of their poverty, is for this very purpose recorded in the Scriptures? Lastly, thou must consider, if thou art

poor, that alms deeds are a notable means to make thee richer, as being a spiritual kind of husbandry and merchandize, wherein if we labor and trade, we shall thereby have our wealth increased. Now no man in his right wits having small store of corn will omit to sow it, because others neglect the seasonable seed-time who have greater plenty; no wise merchant will refuse to trade and lay out his money upon a good bargain, because those who have greater stocks will not employ them, but so much the rather they will sow and trade, that their store & stock may be increased; and why then should we be less wise in spiritual things, seeing we may be assured, that we shall receive a greater and better increase?

Sect. 4. An objection answered, grounded upon the poor's unthankfulness.

Thirdly, it is objected that the poor are nowadays so unthankful, that all is lost which is bestowed upon them; for though we give them never so largely, they will not afford us so much as a good report; if we need their help they are to seek, and they will not take any pains for us, to watch with us when we are sick, or to work for us, when we need their labor. I answer, that if in giving thy alms thou aimest at these ends, thou art rightly served; for they did not spring out of the fountain of charity, but self-love and worldly respects, and were done for thine own praise or profit, and not because God requireth these duties at thy hands; the which is not to do works of mercy, but to put out thy money to usury for thine own advantage. Secondly, I may say of alms, as the heathen man of benefits, that if we be so curious in avoiding the giving of our alms to those who are ungrateful, we shall give none at all, and so these good deeds will perish in our own hands for want of doing them, for fear lest they should perish in the hands of others. According to that Eccles. 11. 4. He that observeth the wind shall not sow, and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. And elsewhere; What great thing were it to do good unto many, if none should deceive us? but it is true virtue to give when we hope not for any recompense, no not so much as thanks. So that though all

hope were cut off to find a thankful man, I had rather receive nothing than not give, because he is more faulty who giveth not, than he who having received a good turn is unthankful. And again: Is he ungrateful? he hath therein not injured me, but himself. I have done my duty when I gave. Nor will I for this give more slowly, but with greater diligence: for what I have cast away upon this man, I shall find among others, Yea, I will give unto the same man again, and (like a good husband-man) I will overcome the barrenness of the soil, with my care and painful tillage; neither is it any great matter to give and lose, but to lose and give. And yet Christian beneficence goeth further, requiring that we should give, not only to those who are ungrateful and do us no good, but also to such as are enemies and do us hurt: according to that Rom. 12. 20. If thine enemy hunger feed him, if he thirst give him drink, because by this means, we shall overcome evil with good, our greatest enemy being no more able to bear malice when we load him with benefits, than his head is able to bear fiery coals that are cast upon it. But say we should not overcome them with our kindness, yet it shall be a noble work, and worth our labor, to overcome ourselves; say, that he offendeth through his ungratefulness, let him bear his sin, and let us do our duty; for it is too much charity towards another man, to commit a certain sin, in not giving; because we guess that he will sin in his receiving; and to prevent the fault of another, by committing a greater in our own person. Finally, let us remember, that what we give unto the poor, we lend unto the Lord, and therefore though they fail never so much, yet having such an all-sufficient surety we are sure of good payment, yea, the less we receive from them, the better it will be for us, if we be not discouraged with their unthankfulness; for then God being our paymaster, he will pay us like himself, not only with transitory things for transitory, but also with such blessings as are spiritual, heavenly, infinite and everlasting.

Sect. 5. Their objection answered, who say that the poor are wicked.

Fourthly, it is objected that the poor nowadays are so wicked and evil that they deserve no relief, and what is given unto them, is but cast away, seeing it doth but maintain them in their ungodly courses. To which I answer, that this should not discourage us from giving, but make us more diligent in seeking out those who are worthy to be relieved. The husband-man doth not refuse altogether to sow his seed, because there are some grounds so barren, that they will bear nothing but weeds and thistles; but this maketh him careful either to look out more fruitful soil, which will return fruitful increase, or with his good husbandry to make that which in itself is bad, to become better; neither doth he expect that all he soweth should prosper and increase his harvest, seeing some falleth by the wayside, and is trodden under foot, some is devoured by the fowls which prey upon it, and some falleth among the stones, or is so choked with weeds and thorns, that it thriveth not. And so the wise merchant giveth not over trading, because some of the goods which he adventureth, is lost by shipwreck, pirates, banquerouts and other casualties, but is so much the more diligent in his employments, and sendeth out his goods into many places, that his gains at one time, may countervail and exceed his losses at another: And so the miscarrying of some part of our alms, should not discourage us in sowing the seeds of our beneficence, nor make us give over our spiritual merchandize, but cause us rather to exercise ourselves in these Christian duties with more diligence, that the well-bestowing of alms at one time, may make amends for that which at another time is cast away and perisheth; according to that Eccles. 11. 6. In the evening sow thy seed, and in the morning withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good. And our Savior would not have us to be too scrupulous, but would have us to give unto everyone that asketh of us, namely, when as we see that they are in great necessity. For to be over-jealous and suspicious without apparent reason, is to proclaim that we are utterly destitute of Christian charity; for the Apostle telleth us, that love thinketh no evil, it believeth all things, it hopeth all things. 1. Cor. 13. 5. 7. Yea, but experience teacheth that the most that crave are unworthy to receive our alms, for they are so wicked in

themselves, so irreligious and destitute of the true fear of God, and towards us so deceitful, coloring their estates with lies, and using so many fraudulent devices to blind our eyes, and to stir us up to pity, when as there is no true cause, that those that give are commonly cozened by them, and do no good in the exercise of their bounty. To which I answer, that this should not weaken our hands, in doing these works of mercy, but increase our care and diligence, in making better choice. It is but too true which is objected, but yet if by this we be utterly discouraged from giving alms, we shall sin no less in not giving, then they shall do in their unworthy receiving. For as they commit a kind of sacrilege in diverting our bounty from those who are truly poor, unto themselves, so we if we keep in our hands the goods of the poor unbestowed under the color of these pretenses, our keeping of them is no less sacrilegious then their receiving them. Again, though it cannot be denied, but that the poor grievously sin, in drawing alms from us by many notorious lies and subtle devices; yet it is a question whether we be not as faulty, in putting them to these shifts, through our uncharitableness and hardness of heart, which manacleth so our hands that we will not stretch them out to do these works of mercy, unless our pity and compassion be excited and awakened out of their deep lethargy, by these extraordinary inventions. So Chrysostom saith, that the poor man's dissembling proclaimeth the inhumanity of the rich. For when by begging, and crouching, and speaking words to move piety, and looking heavily, and weeping bitterly he cannot in the whole day get necessary food; he is put to devise artificial shifts, which do not so much disgrace him, as those who drive him to these extremities. And therefore he is worthy pity, whose necessity inventeth these arts; and we innumerable punishments, who bring the poor by our obdurateness into this necessity. For if ordinary means would move us, he would not wrong us, or himself by using those which are extraordinary.

Sect. 6. Reasons why we should not be over scrupulous.

Let not therefore the poor's unworthiness hinder our bounty, but taking reasonable care to bestow our alms as well as we can, let us continually exercise ourselves in these works of mercy. And to this purpose let us consider, that if we be over-curious in choosing, we shall neglect our duty and not give at all; according to that, Eccles: 11. 4. He that observeth the wind shall not sow, and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. Be not (saith one) over careful and curious, in examining those to whom thou shouldest give; as whether he be a believer or an infidel, just or unjust; for if thou hangest thus in suspense, thou wilt let the seasonable seed-time pass, and so find nothing to reap in the time of harvest. Secondly, let us set before us the example of our heavenly father, who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust, that so we may approve ourselves to be his children. And let us not (as the Apostle exhorteth) be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with goodness: for it is a notable means to make them like and embrace our profession, and follow our holy conversation, when as tasting of our bounty, they love our persons for the good they receive of us. Thirdly, let us remember, that it is much better to give unto many that are unworthy our alms, than that one who is worthy should be neglected in his necessity; for it is their fault if they be unworthy, but ours if being worthy we do not relieve them. To which purpose one saith; Be not over diligent in examining, who is worthy the alms thou givest and who is unworthy, seeing it is better to give to the unworthy for the love of the worthy, than to hazard it, that he who is worthy should be defrauded of his due, for the suspicion of his unworthiness. 4th let us consider that mercy looketh not after merit but after misery and extreme necessity; and, chiefly intendeth to relieve their poverty, and not to examine their righteousness. It is one thing (saith Chrysostom) to be a Judge, and another to be a giver of alms: and therefore they are called alms, because we also give them to those that are unworthy. And again; Only the want and penury of the poor man maketh him fit to receive an alms &c. Neither do we give to the manners but to the man, nor do we take compassion on him for his virtue, but for his misery. Fifthly, let us know that if God should take the same course with us as we do with

the poor, and examine our merits and deserts before he would bestow his gifts upon us, we should never have our requests granted, but hopelessly perish in our wants and miseries. Sixthly, let us forbear these over strict examinations of the poor that crave our help, seeing we shall not so much comfort and refresh them by our gifts, as vex and torment them by our harsh manner of giving. To which purpose Chrysostom demandeth: Why doest thou (saith he) afflict the distressed and wretched soul? he flieth unto thee as unto a safe harbor, and why then doest thou raise against him these waves and billows, and tосsest him with a greater tempest than that of his poverty? why doest thou condemn him to the suffering of further misery? would he thinkest thou have come unto thee, if he had expected such hard measure? or if he looked for such entertainment, and yet would come, his case is to be pitied so much the more, because he was thrust into thy presence by mere necessity. Finally, consider that though the poor be unworthy to whom thou givest, yet God is worthy for whose sake thou givest; and if thou givest in obedience to his commandment, though it be cast away in respect of the party who receiveth thy alms, yet not unto thee who bestowest them; and though in respect of their unthankfulness and wickedness thou mayest justly complain with the Prophet, in another case, that all that thou hast done for them is in vain; yet thou mayest also surely conclude with him, that thy judgment is with the Lord, and thy works with thy God, who will in no case suffer it to go unrewarded.

Sect. 7. Their objection answered, who refuse to give, because they have many children.

The last objection which worldlings make against the exercise of the works of mercy is, that they have a great charge and many children, and therefore they must not give away their goods to strangers, for the Apostle teacheth us, that Parents must lay up for their children, and that he who neglecteth this duty, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an Infidel. Unto whom I might answer with Basel, Ne

transferant culpam in insontes, let them not lay the blame upon those who are innocent; for they who are miserable having wife and children, would not be liberal if they were without them. Again, was not the Gospel written as well to the married as unmarried, to Parents, as well as those who have no children? and are not therefore both alike to yield obedience, and equally bound to perform these works of mercy? Did they desire of God children to this end, that they might plead by them a privilege to neglect his commandments? or may they not justly fear if they thus abuse the blessing of posterity, that God will lessen their number, lighten them of this charge, and so take away their excuse, by depriving them of their chiefest comfort? the which should be just with God thus to punish them, seeing they make idols of them, loving them better than they do God that gave them. But thy children are dear unto thee and must be provided for. And good reason; yet let thy God be dearer, and let them not make thee to neglect him, who gave thee to thyself, and them unto thee, and hath provided all that thou enjoyest, both for thee and them. Provide for them competency and sufficiency, but deny not unto God of thy abundance and superfluity. Christ (saith Austin) asketh, yet doth not receive, and thou scandalizest thy profession of piety with words of cruelty, saying, what shall I reserve for my children? I oppose Christ unto thee, and thou re-objectest thy children unto me. But this no doubt is great justice, that thy son should be left enough to maintain his riotous expenses, and that thy God should want necessaries? For hast thou not read, hast thou not observed, when ye have not done it to one of these little ones, ye have not done it unto me? hast thou not read? hast thou not feared? Behold who it is that wanteth and asketh, and doest thou begin to number thy children? Number them and spare not, but among them reckon thy Lord as one of the number. If thou hast one, let him be the second; if two, the third; if three, the fourth &c. For thou knowest what thy God is who hath given thee whatsoever thou hast, and will richly recompense what thou returnest unto him: but thou knowest not what thy children will prove, perhaps ungrateful, and will not remember thee for thy bounty; it may be wasters and prodigals, who will wickedly and riotously spend, what thou hast as wickedly gotten

and reserved. Yea it may be that the wealth which thou leavest them will be the cause, at least the occasion of their everlasting ruin, whereas thereby they are furthered in the fruition of their sinful pleasures, and enabled with more freedom to run on and perish in their ungracious and wicked courses.

Sect. 8. We show our love towards our children when we are bountiful towards the poor.

Yea but thy love and care over thy children is so great, that nothing can make thee to neglect it. Be it so. Yet love them wisely, and take care to provide so for them, as that their estate may be sure and durable. Now whether is this better effected by thine own provision, or by the leaving them to the good blessing of God in a moderate estate, and to the wise and gracious guidance of his special providence? This question is easily determined, for though thou providest must abundantly for them, their state is subject to such innumerable casualties, that out of the highest flow of plenty, they may easily be brought to as great an ebb of want and penury. They may be oppressed by those who are more mighty, or defrauded by those that are more crafty; the Princes just displeasure, or their own faultiness, may turn them out of all, or in this cunning age, wherein there are none more skillful to build strongly, then others are to undermine and supplant, there may some crack or flaw be found in their title, and so for want of words or letters to carry it, thy children may be deprived of the benefit of thy care and providence. But if God take the care & charge over them, he is such a faithful Tutor and powerful Guardian and Protector, that none shall be able to wrest their portion and patrimony out of his hands. Now what is the means whereby thou mayest make thy children God's wards and pupils, how mayest thou procure for them his blessings, and assure them of the gracious protection of his all-ruling providence? surely not by greedy covetousness and immoderate care in hoarding up for them excessive wealth, nor by neglecting the works of mercy and the relieving of the poor, that thou mayest leave to thy children abundant

riches. For how is it likely that he will bless unto them thine estate which is gotten and raked together by unjust keeping that, which he hath enjoined thee to bestow, and by the utter neglect and contempt of his commandment? or that God will regard and feed thy children who hast neglected his and suffered them to pine and perish for want of relief? But the only means to obtain God's blessing upon thyself and thy posterity, is to obey his commandments, to trust him upon his word, and to give liberally unto the poor. For the righteous man who is merciful and lendeth, not only himself, but his seed also is blessed. Psal. 37. 26. He doth not say that his children shall live in a rich and pompous estate, for so they may do, and yet with the rich glutton be everlastingly condemned; yea this worldly wealth may be the means of furthering and increasing their fearful condemnation; but that they shall have God's blessing upon that which they enjoy, which whether it be less or more, will make it sufficient, and so sanctify it to their use, that it shall be unto them a pledge of God's love, and a pawn and earnest penny of their eternal salvation. In which regard we may truly say, that there is no loss to our posterity through our performance of these works of mercy, but rather great gain and advantage, and that (as Augustine saith) we perform for the good and advancement of our children, whatsoever we wisely detract from their portion, for the doing of these works of mercy. And therefore let not our children hinder us from relieving the poor, but rather let us in Christian discretion do it more freely, that so we may bring God's blessing upon our posterity, and move him with his gracious providence to protect and watch over them; and the greater care we have of their benefit and welfare, so much the rather let us commend them unto God, who will take care of them when our care shall cease and do them no good

Sect 9. No reason why we should neglect the poor to leave our children rich.

Finally though we are assured, that the goods which we spare from the relief of the poor and leave to our children, should prosper with

them, and make them great on the earth, yet were there no reason why for this we should neglect these works of mercy? for why shouldest thou love thy children better than thine own person, and in providing for them neglect thyself? yea why shouldest thou prefer their wealth before thine own soul, & their flourishing estate in the world, which is but momentary & mutable, before the fruition of those joys which are infinite and everlasting? what will it profit thee when thou appearest before thy judge to allege, that thou hast played the good husband, and provided liberally for thine own children, when he shall lay it to thy charge, that to do thus, thou hast neglected and starved his? what comfort will it be unto thee, if for getting some trifles for thy posterity on earth, thou hast lost heaven, or to remember that thy children ruffle it out in worldly wealth and superfluous abundance, when thou shalt be stripped of all, and want a drop of cold water to cool thy scorching heat? And therefore provide for thy children with a good conscience, and so as that thou neglect not the poor members of Christ: that God may bless thy provision unto them in this life; and provide for thee and for them, if they walk in thy ways, eternal mansions and an inheritance immortal, undefiled, and that passeth not away, in the kingdom of heaven. The which he vouchsafe us who hath bought it for us, Jesus Christ the righteous; To whom with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all praise and glory, power & dominion, both now and for evermore.

AMEN.

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