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**CONCERNING THE RELIEF OF THE POOR
OR
CONCERNING HUMAN NEED**

A LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE SENATE OF BRUGES

BY

JUAN-LUIS VIVÈS

JANUARY 6, 1526

TRANSLATED BY MARGARET M. SHERWOOD

From the original Latin, as found in Volume IV, pp. 420-494, of
the complete works of Vivès, edited by Gregory Majan,
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INTRODUCTION

JUAN-LUIS VIVÈS

TO THE COUNCILLORS AND THE SENATE OF BRUGES,

GREETING :

It is not meet, says Cicero, for the traveller and the stranger to be inquisitive in a foreign country. And he is right; for curiosity in regard to the affairs of others is always odious. But concern for their wellbeing and friendly counsel are not blameworthy. For the law of nature does not allow that anything human should be foreign to man, and the grace of Christ, like a fast glue, has cemented all men together. Besides, although it is the country of my adoption, yet I am in truth bound to this city by ties as strong as those which bind me to my native Valencia. Nor do I call it other than Fatherland, for I have dwelt here full fourteen years, and though my stay has not been uninterrupted, yet I am accustomed to return hither as to my own home. I like the equity of your government, the education and courteousness of your citizens, the unexampled tranquility among you, and your justice celebrated among the nations.

Furthermore, I married here. Nor do I wish to change my determination to spend in this city, and in no other, the remaining days of life which Christ in his mercy shall vouchsafe me. I consider myself a citizen of it, and toward its citizens I am of the same mind as toward brothers. Now the sufferings and

wants of a great number of them have impelled me to write how I think they can be relieved; which indeed I was asked to do, some time ago when I was in England, by the Lord Pratenses, your Burgomaster, who deliberates much and often, even as he ought, concerning the welfare of this city.

To you this work is inscribed, both because you are strongly inclined to beneficence and works of charity (as the great multitude of destitute bears witness, which surges hither as if to a source of aid ready prepared for the needy), and also because, since it is fundamental that there should be in every city a place in which alms are given and received, and that love should take root in mutual helpfulness and the fellowship of men be strengthened, it ought to be the duty of the public officials to take pains to see that men help one another, that no one is oppressed, no one wronged by an unjust condemnation, and that the strong come to the assistance of the weak, in order that the harmony of the united body of citizens may grow in love day by day and endure forever. And even as it is disgraceful for the head of the household in a luxurious home to allow any one to suffer hunger or go in nakedness or rags, so in a wealthy city it is not meet that the magistrates should suffer any of the citizens to be oppressed by hunger and want. May it please you to read this, or if not, at least to consider the matter itself most carefully, you who investigate with so much concern the lawsuit of a private citizen in which no more than a thousand florins is involved. May all prosperity and good fortune attend you and your city.

Bruges, 6 January, 1526.

SUMMARY OF BOOK I

[To economize space, the following brief argument of Book I is presented, instead of a full translation, since this part of the treatise, though interesting, is more familiar in substance, and not so distinctive a contribution, as the practical scheme of caring for the poor which is discussed in Book II.]

Vivès begins by reviewing human needs and discussing the relative value of different forms of help. "For there are some," he says, "who think that the only thing to be given or accepted that is at all in the nature of a benefaction, is money." He himself, however, considers moral excellence, character (*virtus*) of first importance; next intelligence, learning, and good sense; third health, "that the body may serve the mind"; and only at the end of the list, though he by no means despises them, does he place wealth and resources. Benefactions, therefore, he rates according as they contribute to these ends.

After this he shows that it is natural for man to bestow kindness, but that there are certain influences which tend to restrain our benefactions: the idea that we are not really going to help our beneficiaries; the fear that we may be injuring ourselves or doing an injustice to our children and relatives; the vices of pride, envy, extravagance, and ostentatious display—which even outlast life and find perpetuation in monuments of silver, gold, and marble.

Finally, by citations from the Scriptures and the Christian fathers, and to some extent also from the classic philosophers, though to them he attaches less authority, he expounds the duty of man to care for his less fortunate fellows, and the spirit in which charity should be given.

BOOK II

CHAPTER I

TO WHAT EXTENT THE RULER OF THE CITY SHOULD CARE FOR THE POOR

Thus far I have spoken of the duty of the individual; hereafter I shall discuss what befits the state and the ruler thereof, who is in it what the soul is in the body. For as the soul animates and quickens not one part or another, but the whole body, so the government may neglect nothing within the entire compass of the state. For those who care only for the rich and despise the poor, act just like a physician who should not think it of much importance to heal the hands or the feet because they are at a distance from the heart; but even as this would cause serious harm and suffering to the whole man, so also in the commonwealth the weaker may not be neglected without peril to the more powerful; for the former, driven by necessity, sometimes steal. The judge thinks it unworthy of cognizance—but that is a small matter—that the poor envy the rich and are incensed and indignant that they have abundance to lavish on jesters, dogs, harlots, asses, pack-horses, and elephants; that in truth they themselves have not the wherewithal to feed their little hungry children, while their fellow-citizens revel splendidly and insolently in the riches which have been wrung from them and others like them. It is almost incredible how many civil wars such voices have stirred up among all nations, wars in which the multitude, angry and burning with hatred, puts forth trial of its fury first of all upon the rich. No other reason did the Gracchi

allege, no other Lucius Catiline, for the civil discord which they fomented—not to mention uprisings in our own era and in our own country. Indeed, it will not be irrelevant to insert here a passage from the oration of Isocrates called the *Areopagiticus*, which deals with the customs of the Athenians. He says:

In a similar manner they behaved in their relations towards one another. For they were not only in accord upon public matters, but in regard to their private life they showed such consideration for one another as befits men of sense and members of one and the same fatherland. Far from the poorer citizens envying the richer, they were as anxious about the wealthy families as about their own, considering their prosperity to be a source of advantage to themselves; while those who were possessed of means not only did not look down upon those who were in a humbler position, but considering it disgraceful to themselves that the citizens should be in want, relieved their needs, handing over plots of land to some at a moderate rental, sending others out on business, and advancing capital to others for other occupations. For they were not afraid either of losing all, or with great difficulty recovering only a part of what had been lent, but felt as safe about the money put out as if it had been stored away at home.*

Thus Isocrates.

A common peril besets the citizens from contact with disease. How often do we observe that one man has brought into the community some great and dread sickness, from which many others perish—the plague, syphilis, and such like? What sort of situation is it that in every church, especially at the established high festivals, one is obliged to enter the sanctuary between two lines of sick, cancerous, ulcerous, and persons afflicted with other diseases which it would be inappropriate to speak of here,—and this the only entrance for boys, girls, old men, and delicate women?

* From the English translation by J. H. Freese.

Think you they are all so made of iron that they are not affected at such a sight, when they go in fasting, especially since ulcers of this nature are not only forced upon the eyes, but also assail the nostrils, the mouth, and are almost communicated to the hands and the body of those passing by? So shameless is the begging. I will not discuss the fact that some people mingle with the crowd who have come straight from the side of one dead from the plague.

These two questions may not be neglected by officials of the state: how diseases may be cured and how their spreading may be checked. Moreover, it is not the part of a wise government, solicitous for the public weal, to leave so large a part of the community not only useless, but actually harmful both to itself and to others. For when the general bounty has been exhausted, some, since they have not the means of subsistence, are driven to robbery in the city and on the high-roads; others stealthily commit burglary; the women who are of suitable age, casting aside modesty, are not able to keep their chastity, but put it on sale for a trifle, nor can they be persuaded to abandon this vicious practice; the old women straightway take to pandering, and sorcery as a furtherance to pandering; the little children of the poor are most viciously taught; the poor themselves with their children, cast down before the sanctuaries or wandering from place to place begging, do not participate in the sacraments and hear no sermons, and we know not according to what law or by what conventions they live, nor what are their religious beliefs. Verily the control of the church has relaxed to such a point that nothing is done gratuitously. They deprecate the name of sell-

ing, yet they force people to pay. Even the bishop of the parish does not consider that sheep so shorn belong to his fold and pasture.

Thus there is no one to see that these beggars confess, that they partake with others of the Lord's table. And since they never receive any instruction, they inevitably have very false standards and lead most irregular lives; and if it happens in some way that they rise to affluence, they are intolerable because of their mean and low training. Hence arise those vices I enumerated a short time ago, which are not to be imputed so much to them as, ordinarily, to the government, which does not better provide for the community. For they have no conception of the duty of a government who wish to limit it to the settling of disputes over money or to the punishment of criminals. On the contrary, it is much more important for the magistrates to devote their energy to the producing of good citizens than to the punishment and restraint of evil-doers. For how much less need would there be to punish, if these matters were rightly looked after beforehand! The Romans in ancient times made such provision for their citizens that no one needed to beg, and it was prohibited by the Twelve Tables. The Athenians took the same precaution. The Lord gave a special law to the people of Judea, harsh, no doubt, and severe to a tribe of such temper; yet in Deuteronomy he commands them to take careful measures that, as far as it shall be within their power, there may be no poor or destitute man among them, especially in that year of rest from labor, acceptable to the Lord, in which ever live those for whom the Lord Jesus was buried, with the law

and ceremonials and the old man, and has risen again in newness of life and of spirit. Surely it is a shame and disgrace to us Christians, to whom nothing has been more explicitly commanded than charity—and I am inclined to think that is the one injunction—that we meet everywhere in our cities so many poor men and beggars. Whithersoever you turn you encounter poverty and distress, and those who are compelled to hold out their hands for alms. Why is it not true that, just as everything in the state is restored which is subject to the ravages of time and fortune—such as walls, ditches, ramparts, streams, institutions, customs, and the laws themselves—so it would be suitable to aid in meeting that primary obligation of giving, which has suffered damage in various ways? Certain salutary measures have been devised by very eminent men who have sought to further the welfare of the state: taxes have been eased, public lands turned over to the poor to cultivate, certain surplus funds have been distributed by the state—things which we have seen even in our own time. But measures of this nature need special conditions, which rarely arise in these days. Recourse must therefore be had to other remedies, more suitable and of more lasting effect.

CHAPTER II

REGISTRATION OF THE POOR

Someone may ask me: How do you propose to relieve so great a multitude? If true charity dwelt in our hearts, if it were really a law unto us—though compulsion is not an element that concerns one who loves—it would make all things common, nor would

a man regard the distress of another otherwise than his own. As it is, no one extends his interest beyond his home, and sometimes not beyond his own chamber, nor even beyond himself, while many are not sufficiently faithful to parents and children and brothers and wife. Therefore, whenever human remedies must be employed, especially among those for whom the divine commands have too little weight, I propose the following plan.

Some of the poor live in those institutions commonly called hospitals (Greek *Ptōchotrophia*,—but I will use the more familiar term); others beg publicly; still others bear their hardships as best they can, each one in his own home. I call “hospitals” those places where the sick are fed and cared for, where a certain number of paupers is supported, where boys and girls are reared, where abandoned infants are nourished, where the insane are confined, and where the blind dwell. Let the governors of the state realize that all these institutions are a part of their responsibility.

Let no one seek to evade the stipulations of the founders; they shall remain inviolable. Verbal expressions should not be weighed in these matters, but justice, as in deeds of trust, and the intention, as in wills. And on this point there is no doubt it was their desire that the funds left by them should be distributed for the best possible objects and used in the worthiest place. They were not so much concerned by whom this should be done, or how, as that it should be done.

In the next place, there is nothing so free in the state that it is not subject to inquiry by those who administer the government; for it does not constitute

freedom, to yield no obedience to common magistrates; but rather an encouragement to savagery and opportunity for widespread licence in whatever direction a whim may lead. Nor can any one remove his property from the oversight and control of the state, unless he gives up his citizenship. Nor indeed can he free his own life, which is of more consequence and dearer to everyone than property, especially since everyone has acquired his property with the help of the state, as if it were a gift, and can keep and hold it only by the help of the state.

Therefore, let the Senators, by twos, with a secretary, visit each of these homes, and inspect it, and write a full account of its condition, of the number of its inmates and their names, likewise from what cause each one has come there. Let all these things be reported to the Councillors and the Senate in assembly.

Let those who suffer poverty at home be registered, both they and their children, by two Senators for each parish; their needs ascertained, in what manner they have lived hitherto, and by what ill chance they have fallen into poverty. It will be easy to learn from the neighbors what sort of men they are, how they live and what their habits are. Evidence about one poor person should not be taken from another, for he would not be free from jealousy. Let the Councillors and the Senate be informed of all these things. If any man suddenly fall into some ill fortune, let him notify the Senate through some Senator, and let his case be decided according to his condition and circumstances.

Then in regard to the beggars who wander about

with no fixed dwelling places: let those who are in health declare their name and the reason for their mendicancy in the presence of the Senate, in some open place or vacant lot, that their filth may not pollute the Senate chamber; let those who are sick do likewise in the presence of two or four Senators and a physician, that the eyes of the Senate may be spared. Let witnesses be sought by them to testify in regard to their manner of life.

Upon those whom they appoint to make these examinations and perform these duties, let the Senate confer the authority to coerce and exact obedience, even to the point of imprisonment, that the Senate may have knowledge of those who show themselves refractory.

CHAPTER III

BY WHAT MEANS THE NECESSITIES OF LIFE MAY BE
PROVIDED FOR ALL THESE DEPENDENTS

Before everything else this principle must be accepted, which the Lord imposed upon the human race as a punishment for its sin: that each man should eat bread that is the fruit of his own labor. When I say "eat" or "nourished" or "supported" I do not mean to imply food alone, but clothes, shelter, fuel, candles; in fine, everything which is involved in the sustenance of the body.

Let no one among the poor, therefore, be idle, provided of course he is fit for work by his age and the condition of his health. The Apostle Paul writes to the Thessalonians: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, If any will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear of some that walk

among you disorderly, that work not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." And the Psalmist promises a twofold felicity, in this life and in the next, to him who has eaten out of the labor of his own hands. Wherefore it must not be permitted that anyone live idle in the state, in which, as in a well-ordered home, everyone ought to have a task. It is an ancient maxim: "By doing nothing men learn to do evil."

Health and age must be taken into consideration; but in order that you may not be imposed upon by a pretense of sickness or infirmity—which not infrequently happens—let the opinion of physicians be sought, and let impostors be punished. Of the able-bodied vagrants the foreign-born should be returned to their native country—which indeed is provided for in the imperial law—with travelling money, for it would be inhuman to send a destitute man on a journey without any money, and would be nothing less than commanding him to rob. But if they are from villages or towns afflicted with war, then the teaching of Paul must be borne in mind, that among those who have been baptized in the blood of Christ there is neither Greek nor Barbarian nor Gaul nor Flamand, but a new creature; and they must be treated even as if they were native-born.

Should the native poor be asked whether they have learned a trade? Yes; and those who have not, if they are of suitable age, should be taught the one to which they say they are most strongly inclined, provided it is feasible. If it is not feasible, let them be

taught some similar trade; for example, let him who cannot sew garments sew what they call *caligas* (soldiers' boots). But if this trade is too difficult, or he is too slow in learning, let an easier one be assigned to him, all the way down to those which anyone can learn thoroughly in a few days: such as digging, drawing water, bearing loads, pushing a wheel-barrow, attending on magistrates, running errands, bearing letters or packets, driving horses.

/ Even those who have dissipated their fortunes in riotous living—by gambling, harlots, extravagance, and gluttony—must be relieved, for no one must die of hunger. But to them more irksome tasks should be assigned and smaller rations, that they may be an example to others, and may repent of their former life and may not relapse easily into the same vices, being restrained both by lack of food and by the severity of their tasks. They must not die of hunger, but they must feel its pangs. //...

There are plenty of workshops in which they may find employment. The wool weavers of Armentium, nay, almost all craftsmen, complain of the scarcity of workmen, and the silk weavers of Bruges would hire almost any boys for turning certain little wheels, to each of whom they would pay a *stuferus* daily, more or less, besides board. And they cannot find boys to do this, because their parents assert that the children bring home more from begging.

In the name of the state let a certain number of those who cannot find any work by themselves be assigned to each artisan. If anyone has progressed far enough in his trade let him open a workshop. Both to these and to those to whom the magistrates

have assigned apprentices let contracts be given for making the numerous things which the state uses for public purposes: such as pictures, statues, tapestries, sewers, ditches, buildings, and the things which the hospitals need. // As the funds (of the hospitals) were originally given for the poor, let them be spent among the poor. I would give like counsel to bishops, colleges, and abbots, but we will write to them at another time and I hope they will sometime do this of their own accord, even if I do not urge them.

As to those who have not yet been provided for with respect to either a patron or a home,—let them be maintained from alms temporarily in some place, but let them not idle meanwhile nor learn slothfulness through inactivity. In homes of this nature let breakfast or supper be given to healthy vagabonds, and also as much travelling money as shall be sufficient to take them to the next city which lies on their way.

In the hospitals, let the able-bodied who stick there like drones, living by the sweat of others, depart and be put to work, unless because of some right, such as the *jus gentilitium*,* it is lawful for them to remain there: for example, those to whom this privilege has been bequeathed by the bounty of ancestors or who have made over their own property to the institution. In that case they should be compelled to work in the hospitals, that the fruit of their labor may be common to all. If anyone who is well and strong ask that he be allowed to remain because of his love for the home and for his old companions, grant him that favor only on the same condition. Let no one be attracted by

* The privileges one enjoys because of his connection with a family or a gens: e.g., *sacerdotia gentilitia*—privilege of the clergy.

reason of the money which was contributed in times past for these purposes.

For there are those who from servants have become masters, and there are women living delicately in splendor and luxury who were originally admitted to perform works of piety, but who now, having thrust out the poor or keeping them grudgingly, are become haughty mistresses. Let this office be taken away from them, that they grow not fat from the substance of the emaciated poor. Let them perform that duty which they came thither to do. Let them be intent upon relieving the weak, like those widows of the early church whom the Apostles praise so highly. In the time they have left let them read, spin, weave; let them occupy themselves with some good and honest work—which Jerome enjoins upon even the richest and noblest matrons.

Nor would I allow the blind either to sit idle or to wander around in idleness. There are a great many things at which they may employ themselves. Some are suited to letters; let them study, for in some of them we see an aptitude for learning by no means to be despised. Others are suited to the art of music; let them sing, pluck the lute, blow the flute. Let others turn wheels and work the treadmills; tread the wine-presses; blow the bellows in the smithies. We know the blind can make little boxes and chests, fruit baskets, and cages. Let the blind women spin and wind yarn. Let them not be willing to sit idle and seek to avoid work; it is easy enough to find employment for them. Laziness and a love of ease are the reasons for their pretending they can not do anything, not feebleness of body.

The infirm and old, too, should have light tasks furnished to them, suited to their age and strength. No one is so feeble that he completely lacks strength for doing anything. So it will be brought about that the thoughts and evil affections of the mind which arise in the idle will be kept away from those who are employed and busy with work. Then, when all such bloodsuckers have been eliminated, let the resources of each hospital be examined, taking into account expenses and annual revenues and the money on hand. Let the treasure chambers and superfluous ornaments be removed; they are playthings for children or misers and of no profit to good Christians.

Then send to each one of them as many of the sick poor as it shall seem proper to send, taking care that the food shall not be so scanty that their hunger is only half satisfied. This is one of the essentials in the care of those who are sick either in body or mind, for invalids often grow worse from lack of food. But there should be no luxuriousness, by which they might easily fall into bad habits.

And this reminds me of the insane. Since there is nothing in the world more excellent than man, nor in man than his mind, particular attention should be given to the welfare of the mind; and it should be reckoned the highest of services, if we either restore the minds of others to sanity or keep them sane and rational. Therefore, when a man of unsettled mind is brought to a hospital, first of all it must be determined whether his insanity is congenital or has resulted from some misfortune; whether there is hope of his recovery or not. One ought to feel compassion for so great a disaster to the health of the human

mind, and it is of the utmost importance that the treatment be such that the insanity is not nourished and increased, as may result from mocking, exciting, and irritating madmen, approving and applauding the foolish things which they say or do, inciting them to act more ridiculously, applying fomentations as it were to their stupidity and silliness. What could be more inhuman than to drive a man insane just for the sake of laughing at him and amusing oneself at such a misfortune?

Remedies suited to the individual patient should be used. Some need medical care and attention to their mode of life; others need mild and friendly treatment, that like wild animals they may gradually grow gentle; others, instruction. There will be some who will require force and chains, but these must be so used that the patients are not made more violent by them. Above all, as far as possible tranquillity must be introduced into their minds, for it is through this that reason and sanity return.

If the hospitals cannot accommodate all the incapacitated poor, a home should be built, or several—as many as are found necessary. There let them be confined. Let a physician be hired, and a pharmacist, and men and women attendants. You will thus effect that which is done by nature and by those who build ships: you will have gathered the filth into one place so that it may not harm the rest of the body. In the same way, let those who are afflicted with a loathsome or contagious disease sleep and eat their food apart, that loathing may not creep over the rest, nor infection, so that there will never be an end of disease.

When anyone recovers he should be treated in the

same manner as the rest of the able-bodied beneficiaries. Let him be sent out to work, unless out of compassion he prefer to serve others in the hospital with his skill.

For the poor who dwell in their own home let work be procured from the public officials or the hospitals; nor will it be lacking among the private citizens. And if they find that what they earn by working does not suffice for their needs, let as much be added to their earnings as shall seem to be sufficient.

Let the investigators make their examination into the needs of the poor humanely and kindly. Let nothing be given if the judgment is unfavorable. Intimidation should not be used unless they deem it necessary in dealing with persons who are refractory and who disparage the government.

Let this law be inviolable: "If anyone have requested or exerted his favor and influence to obtain money for someone under a pretense of need, let him not obtain it; nay rather, there shall be a penalty such as the Senate shall deem proper." Only it should be allowable to call attention to anyone who is in need. The overseers of charities, or those whom the Senate shall appoint, should find out all the rest and give alms in proportion to the need. This to guard against the danger that at some time in the future wealthy men, sparing their own wealth, should demand that money which belongs to the destitute be expended for their own servants, domestics, relatives and friends; and that favor should begin to shut out the needy, as we have seen happen in the hospitals.

CHAPTER IV

PROVISION FOR CHILDREN

For abandoned children there should be a hospital where they may be reared. Let those whose mothers are known, be brought up by them until the sixth year; thereafter let them be transferred to a public school, where they may learn letters and morals, and where they shall be maintained.

This school should as far as possible be in charge of men who are possessed of a solid and broad education, that they may pour out their culture into it, for nothing has greater danger for the sons of the poor than a cheap and low and sordid education. In order to secure schoolmasters of this character the magistrates should spare no expense. At relatively small cost they will thus perform a great service to the state over which they preside.

Let the pupils learn to live frugally, but neatly and cleanly, and to be content with little. Let them be kept from all forms of dissipation. Let them not grow accustomed to luxury and gluttony; nor become slaves of the belly, so that, when they miss something which has been freely supplied, they cast aside shame and commence begging, as we have seen some do the very moment that mustard, or some such trifle, was wanting.

Let them be taught not only to read and write, but above all the duty of a Christian and right ideas about things.

In like manner would I speak of a school for girls, in which they may be taught the first rudiments of letters, and if one of them is apt at letters and in-

clined thereto, let her be permitted to advance somewhat farther, provided everything has in view the development of her character. Let the girls be taught correct doctrines and piety; and in addition, to spin, sew, weave, embroider, to cook skillfully, and to manage a house; also modesty, frugality, gentleness, good manners, and above all to keep their chastity, convinced that this is the especial virtue of women.

Furthermore, let any of the boys who are especially apt at letters be kept in school, to be teachers of the others, and later on candidates for the priesthood. Let the rest learn the trades to which their inclination shall direct them.

CHAPTER V

THE CENSORS AND THE CENSORSHIP

Let two censors be appointed every year out of the Senate, eminent men and of tried integrity, to inquire into the life and morals of the poor—boys, youths, and old men. Of the boys, what they are doing, what progress they are making, what sort of lives they lead, what talents they possess, what promise they show, and if any do wrong, who is to blame. Let everything be set right.

In regard to the youths and the old men, let the censors inquire whether they are living according to the regulations adopted for them. Let them inquire also most carefully concerning the old women, who are master hands at pandering and sorcery; and about all these persons, whether they lead a frugal and sober life. Those who frequent gaming places, and wine and beer taverns, should be censured. If no sort of reproof has any effect, they must be punished.

There should be a system of punishments, determined separately for each state by its wisest and most eminent citizens; for the same things are not adapted to all places and times, and some men are affected by some things, others by others.

The fraud of idle and lazy men must be guarded against, that they may not deceive.

I would suggest also that the same censors inquire about the youth and the sons of the wealthy. It would be most profitable to the state if they should compel them to render an account to the magistrates, as if to fathers, of the manner in which their time is spent, what pursuits and what employments they follow. This would be a greater charity than to spend many thousands of florins for the poor. In ancient times this was provided for by the office of Censor among the Romans, and among the Athenians by the court of the Areopagus. But old customs broke down, and it was revived by the Emperor Justinian in summarizing the duties of the Quaestor, among which was included the injunction to inquire in regard to all persons—both of the church and secular, of whatever rank and fortune—who they were, whence they came, and for what reason they were come. The same law allowed no one to live in idleness.

CHAPTER VI

CONCERNING THE FUNDS WHICH ARE REQUIRED FOR THESE EXPENDITURES

This sounds very fine, someone will say, but where are we to get funds for all these things? For my part, so far am I from thinking that funds will be wanting that I believe with absolute certainty that

they will so abound that not only the daily necessities of life can be met, but also the extraordinary needs, of the sort which frequently befall people everywhere, in every clime.

Long ago, as we know, when the blood of Christ was still glowing, all the people cast their wealth at the feet of the Apostles, to be distributed by them to everyone according to his needs. Later the Apostles cast off this responsibility as not befitting them; and in truth it was more suitable for them to address congregations and to preach the Gospel than to spend their time in soliciting and distributing money; so this office was given to the deacons. Nor did they retain it long, so great was their zeal for teaching and spreading the love and knowledge of God, that they might hasten on through blessed death to everlasting bliss. And so from the funds that were collected persons who were strangers to Christianity supplied the individual needs of the poor. But as the number of Christians increased, and many people not of very virtuous character were received into the church, the business began to be managed dishonestly by some of them. The bishops and priests then, out of love for the poor, again took responsibility for the funds collected for charity; for at that time there was nothing that men did not entrust to the bishops, who were men of tried and recognized integrity and fidelity—a fact which is mentioned by John Chrysostom. But after the first ardor for the blood of Christ had cooled, and the Spirit of the Lord was communicated to fewer, the Church began to emulate the world and to vie with it in pomp, pride and luxury. Jerome complains that already the governors of the provinces

dined more sumptuously in the monastery than in the palace. This extravagance required a large amount of money. And so the bishops and priests diverted to their own purposes what in reality belonged to the poor. Would that the Spirit of God might enter their hearts and recall to their minds whence they have these things, by whom they have been given, and for what purpose! Would that they might remember that they are become powerful out of the substance of the weak!

It is the duty of the bishops not only to teach, to console, to correct, as far as concerns the souls of men, but also to heal their bodies (which they would do if their faith in Christ were as great as they wish the faith of others to be, for their own advantage; but this a common failing—we all severely demand in another the very virtue which we ourselves lack) to aid the poor out of their own substance, even though it be exceedingly small; in short, after the example of Paul, to be perfect in charity, that they may be all things to all men, not despising the lowly, but rather putting themselves on the same level with them, to help them, and, according to the word of Christ, deferring not to the lofty—for their edification. Bishops and abbots and other functionaries of the church might, if they wished, relieve a very large portion of the existing poverty out of their large incomes. If they do not wish so to do, Christ will avenge it.

Tumult and civil discord must be avoided always; because this is a greater evil than the misappropriation of the funds of the poor. No wealth, however vast, ought to be so highly prized by Christians that they take up arms on account of it. Above all, regard

must be had for the public peace—as Christ taught, and also Paul, following his Master. Nor ought the poor to desire that there should be any disorder in the state, whereby they may profit, since it is fitting that they should be dead to the world, devoting themselves day and night to meditations upon the end of this life's journey to that haven and fatherland where they may hear: “Lazarus suffered ills in his lifetime; now, therefore, he is comforted and refreshed.”

Let the annual revenues of the hospitals be reckoned together, and I have no doubt that, when work has been assigned to those who are able to do it, not only will the income be sufficient for those who live in the hospitals, but there will also be enough to share with those who dwell without. For I am told the wealth of the hospitals in any town you can name is so great that if it be properly managed there will be abundance for supplying all the needs of the citizens, both ordinary wants and unforeseen and extraordinary.

Let the wealthy hospitals share their superfluous funds with the poorer. But if the poorer hospitals are not in need of help, then let the surplus be given to those who suffer in secret. And let Christian charity not only diffuse itself thus throughout the whole state, making it as it were one harmonious household, with common interests, each member friendly to all the rest; but let it also go forth and embrace the whole Christian world, and let it be as we read it was among the Apostles: “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. . . .

For neither was there among them any that lacked." Accordingly, when there are none in their own city who need help, let the wealthy hospitals and the rich men send their contributions to neighboring places, and even to distant ones, where there are greater needs. This is in truth what Christians ought to do.

Let two superintendents, respected and God-fearing men, be appointed by vote of the Senate for each hospital. Let them render to the Senate yearly an account of their administration. If their performance is satisfactory let them continue in office; if not, let new ones be appointed.

Furthermore, many a man when he dies leaves something to the poor, in proportion to his means. He should be encouraged to stipulate that money for the poor be deducted from the pomp of his funeral. Such a funeral would be more acceptable to God and not inglorious to men; for those about to depart this life ought to have no concern for glory or praise, except from God. And at the funeral meat is given out and bread distributed, with money also or other things, by ticket. This indeed should be at the discretion of those who have charge of the estate of the deceased, both on the occasion of the funeral and at the anniversary.

In the next place, if money is left to the church, let the overseers of the poor learn in what manner it is being distributed, that it may not be given to those who have little need of it.

If all these things are not sufficient, let little boxes be placed in the three or four principal churches of the town, those in which the attendance is largest.

In these boxes everyone may deposit as much as his conscience prompts. There will be no one who would not rather place ten stuferi there than give two minutae to wandering beggars. The boxes should not be set out every seven days, except when the need demands it.

Two honest and trustworthy men should have charge of these boxes, men chosen by the Senate, not so much for wealth as for minds free from greed and meanness, which is the consideration of highest importance in filling offices of this nature.

And the policy should not be to collect as much as possible, but generally as much as shall suffice from one Sunday to the next, or a little more, lest the collectors grow accustomed to handling large sums of money and the same thing happen to them as has happened to some of those who have charge of hospitals. What takes place in this land I know not, nor do I seek to know, for I am intent on my studies—but in Spain, I have heard it said, there are many elder sons who have enriched their own houses mightily from the wealth of the hospitals, feeding themselves and their families instead of the poor, keeping their own homes full of their relatives, so that the hospitals are perforce emptied of the poor. These things are the result of facility of access to so much ready money.

Wherefore, henceforth let no investments be purchased for the poor, as this furnishes a pretext to the directors of the hospitals to keep back the money given them, and thus, while the money is being collected for investment and while it is being kept until it is proper to buy, the pauper wastes away from hunger and want and dies.

But if there is a large sum of money in the hands of those who have charge of public charities, let it be drawn upon, as I said a little while ago, and sent to needier localities. For a great amount of money increases desire for it to such an extent that those who handle it are more loath to give something from it than they would be from a small sum. Let then the necessary amount be kept in the possession of the Senate, consecrated by oath and laid under bans and curses, that it may not be turned to any other use. And let it be spent at the first opportunity, that it may not become customary to keep any of it long concealed. For there will never be a lack of persons who need, even as our Lord prophesied: "The poor ye have always with you."

Care should be taken that the priests, under cover of their divine office and the mass, do not turn the money into their own pockets. They are well enough provided for; they do not need any more.

If at any time the voluntary contributions should not suffice, let the wealthy men be approached and asked to aid the poor whom God has thus committed to their care; that they (i. e. the trustees of the funds) may at least borrow what is needed. And if they so desire, let the loan afterwards be returned to them in good faith, when alms are more plentiful.

Besides this, let the state itself deduct something from public expenses; such as those for stated feasts, gifts to strangers, entertainment of foreign ambassadors, largesse, annual games, and processions: all of which contribute to licentiousness and pride and ambition. I doubt not that the Prince would be just as well pleased, or even a little better, if he were wel-

comed with less display, provided he knew for what good purposes that money was being spent which used to be poured forth at his coming. And if he did not take it in good part he would indeed be childish and foolishly conceited, or silly. However, if the state does not want to do this, let it at all events loan what it may later on recover at a season more propitious for almsgiving. // 502a

Almsgiving should be entirely voluntary, even as Paul has said: "Each man . . . according as he hath purposed in his heart; not grudgingly, or of necessity." For no one ought to be forced to do good; otherwise this word (*benefacere*) perishes. All these things will no doubt pour forth abundantly. Yet in so holy a business human strength must not be spent but reliance must be placed solely on Divine aid. The blessing of God will be laid upon righteous undertakings, increasing for the rich the sources of their charity; and for the poor, the alms modestly asked, gratefully received, and prudently dispensed. The Lord provides for all: "His is the earth and the fulness thereof." He creates all things abundantly for our use, asking in return only a ready and genuine good-will and love in gratitude for blessings so immeasurable.

By how many examples has it been shown to men that, when a holy work has been undertaken by a certain group, with some anxiety and even despair on their part lest the funds provided for it should not be sufficient, as the work progressed it has been so blessed that even those who have charge of it are forced to wonder by what hidden ways the additional resources have been forthcoming! You will remember one

experiment, illustrative of many, in your own school for poor boys, which you founded ten years ago with this condition, that not more than eighteen boys should be maintained there. You feared that you would not have money enough to maintain this institution. Now a hundred boys, more or less, are supported there, and the funds are grown so large that there is enough left to help even more, and when extra boys arrive, there is something for them to eat. Surely it is by the universal bounty of God that they are maintained, are fed, live and grow, and not by riches, nor their own strength, nor by human counsels. Wherefore, in pious undertakings it is sacrilegious to consider how much you can do; consider rather how much faith you have in Him to whom all things are possible.

As to the poor themselves who are not in actual distress, let them learn not to make much provision for the distant future, for this increases their sense of security and diminishes their reliance on God. Let them not rely on human assistance but on Christ alone, who has exhorted us to relinquish all care for our sustenance to Him and His Father, who feeds and clothes those creatures that neither sow nor reap nor weave nor spin. Let the poor lead as it were an angelic life, given up to praying, first for themselves, and after that for the welfare of those by whom they have been aided, that the Lord Jesus may deem them worthy to receive recompense an hundredfold in everlasting blessings.

CHAPTER VII

CONCERNING THOSE WHO SUFFER FROM SOME SUDDEN
OR SECRET MISFORTUNE

Now relief must be given not only to the poor who are without the ordinary necessities of life, but also to those upon whom some sudden misfortune has fallen, such as captivity in war, imprisonment for debt, fire, shipwreck, floods, disease; in fine, any of those innumerable accidents which may bring disaster to respectable homes. To these unfortunate persons may be added young girls whom poverty very often drives to prostitution. For it is not tolerable that in any state—I will not say in any Christian country, but in any nation where men live after the manner of men,—that when some of the citizens so abandon themselves to extravagance as to squander thousands of gold pieces on a sepulchre or a palace or a useless edifice or a banquet or a public office, for lack of fifty or a hundred florins the chastity of a virgin or the health and life of an honest man should be in danger, or a man should be forced to desert his wife and little children. Then, too, captives must be ransomed, which has been mentioned also by the ancient philosophers as one of the noblest forms of charity: e. g., by Aristotle, Cicero, and others. First consideration must be given to those who suffer a cruel servitude among enemies, like the Christians who are in the power of the Hungarians; who are in daily peril of renouncing the faith. Likewise the traders and those who have fallen unarmed into the hands of the enemy; for those who are armed, since they are the cause of all the ills of the others, deserve the least pity.

Of those in prison the first to consider are those who have fallen into poverty and bankruptcy through misfortune rather than through their own fault, and next those who have been kept in custody a long time.

A man who has been dragged down from easy circumstances into misery through no fault of his own must be greatly pitied, whether because he represents the common lot and stands as it were as an example of the experiences of other men, or because he suffers the more acutely who keeps a lingering sense of former happiness.

Men of good education should not have to wait until they make known their needs. They should be hunted out and assisted secretly. It is recorded that Arcesilaus (many others also have done likewise) placed a large sum of gold under the pillow of a sleeping friend, who was both poor and sick, and who concealed both facts from a feeling of shame, in order that, on awaking, he might find relief without any injury to his sensibilities. For in administering charity to a man who has been tenderly reared, care must be taken not to wound his pride, which is apt to be of more importance to him than the relief, however acceptable and however useful that may be.

The same men to whom we have assigned the oversight of the parishes shall also investigate concealed wants of this nature and report them to the Senate and to the wealthy men, at the same time withholding the names of the sufferers and the amount of relief given. On the other hand, it is better if even these poor would accept charity openly, that they may know whom they have to thank, and that there may be no suspicion on either side, as for instance, that those

through whom it is given have embezzled some of the money,—unless the rank of the destitute man be so high that he ought not to be exposed to such risk of disgrace.

“ But,” someone will object, “ if men of this class must be helped, too, will there ever be any end of giving? ” What more blessed situation can be imagined than that there should be no bound to charity? You have spoken a horrible thing. I thought you were about to lament that there may at some future time be none to whom you may show compassion. You ought indeed to wish, for the sake of others, that there may be no one who stands in need of the wealth of others; but for your own sake, that you may never lack the opportunity for so great profit to yourself, securing eternal blessings in exchange for things perishable and subject to varying fortunes.

It seems to me, as matters stand, that these suggestions of ours ought to be carried out. Perhaps it may not be expedient at all times and in all places to do everything we have prescribed. Wise men in every country will recognize this and will consult the best interests of their respective states. The aim I have outlined, however, the intention and goal, will, I believe, be expedient and necessary always and in all places. But if it shall not be expedient for all these things to be done at once, because an established custom perchance opposes the innovation, it will be possible by using ingenuity to introduce the more moderate reforms first, and after that gradually those which will be considered more radical.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCERNING THOSE WHO WILL CONDEMN THESE NEW
PROPOSALS

Albeit virtue is most beautiful for herself and most desirable, nevertheless she has not a few enemies, who are deeply offended by her bearing and by her integrity, and also because she attacks their vicious habits and their dissipated life fiercely and without compromise. Thus the world has always fought and will fight always with the law of Christ, whose shining glory the shades of sin and the weak eyes of sinners cannot withstand nor endure. So, in the matter under discussion, although—as anyone, provided he be not an unfair critic, will judge—everything has in view the supplying of the wants of men and the relief of the destitute, nevertheless even though the motive is so altruistic there will be no lack of persons to misinterpret and object.

For certain men, when they hear that the idea is nothing else than that the poor should be eliminated, suppose that they are being banished (in person) and cry out against the inhumanity of thus evicting the wretched; as if forsooth we would drive them out, or do anything to make them more miserable. This is not our purpose, which is rather to deliver them from their struggle with poverty and perpetual misfortune; to treat them like human beings who are worthy of compassion.

There are some would-be theologians, who cite the passage from the Gospel, with no thought for the connection in which it was spoken, in which Christ our Lord prophesied: “The poor always ye will have

with you.” What of that? Did He not also prophecy that there would be sins? And Paul, that there would be heresies? Shall we, therefore, not help the poor, nor avoid sins, nor resist heresies, lest these be found to have spoken falsely? God forbid! Christ did not prophecy that the poor would be always with us because this was His desire, nor that sins would be committed because He liked them. For He recommends nothing to us more explicitly than the relief of the poor, and He condemns him by whom offense cometh. But He knew our stupidity, through which we sink into poverty; and our malice, through which we do not straightway raise up the fallen man but allow him to lie and waste away. It is for this reason that He declares we shall always have paupers. The same thing may be said of the prophecy in regard to sins. And Paul spoke with the same intention about heresies, which he knew would arise because of the corrupt nature of men, defiled as it is with many vices. Yet He wished them to be resisted when they arose, as he said to Titus: “That the Bishop may be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers.” Therefore, in these sayings Christ does not command us to act in this way, but He sees that we are bound to do so. In the same way these proposals of ours will not eliminate poverty but will relieve it; will not prevent a man from becoming a pauper but will prevent him from remaining long in that condition, by promptly stretching forth a hand to help him to his feet.

I wish we might bring it to pass that there should be no poor in this city. I should not fear that Christ would be thought to have spoken falsely. There would

remain plenty who would be poor in other respects. It is not only those without money who are poor; but whoever lacks strength of body or health or capacity or judgment, as we explained at the beginning of this work. Moreover, he must also be called poor, even in money, to whom either in a hospital or in his cottage delicate food is brought, which has not been obtained by his own industry and labor, but through the kindness of another. Tell me, which act more inhumanely, those who leave the poor to rot in their filth, squalor, vice, crime, shamelessness, immodesty, ignorance, madness, misfortune, and misery? Or those who devise a way by which they may rescue them from that life and bring them into a more social and cleaner and wiser mode of living, with a clear gain to the state of so many men who were formerly useless? And thus we do even like the medical profession, which cannot eradicate diseases completely from among men, but which bends every effort to cure them. Would that the law of Christ were more deeply rooted in our minds and hearts, and that it might be more efficacious than medical knowledge! Then it might come to pass that there would be no paupers among us, as there were none in the early church, according to the account of Luke in the Acts of the Apostles,—nor any sins nor heresies!

But because our sins will encumber us and men will profess the name of Christians not so much in their hearts and by the actions of their lives as by their mouths; therefore, never will paupers, offenses, and heresies be lacking.

Then furthermore, there will perchance be some men, as there are apt to be in public bodies, who, in or-

der that they may be considered wise and may acquire great influence by reason of that reputation, approve nothing except what they have themselves proposed. Surely these men have an erroneous idea not only of men but also of God, if they believe, and wish others to believe, that God has been impotent in all His other acts of creation, but has poured out upon them all the mental power of ingenuity and judgment and wisdom; as Job said in mockery: "Are you then the only men, and shall wisdom die with you?" I would not deny that there are some men who have such initiative and skill and keenness of judgment, that in thinking and in deliberating they strike out more ideas than the rest of mankind. But to think on that account that what has been conceived by oneself is best is indeed the part of an arrogant man, and moreover of one without experience, as Terence says, of one "who judgeth nothing rightly done but that which he doeth himself."

There are two classes of men especially whom I expect to find hostile to our plans: first, the very ones whom this philanthropy is chiefly intended to benefit; and, second, those who will be ousted from the management of the funds.

For there are some who have grown so accustomed to their squalor and filth and misery that they take it most ill when they are raised out of it, captivated as they are by a certain sweetness of inertia and idleness until they think activity, labor, industry, and frugality more painful than death. Oh, hard is the task of doing good among these, since their depravity translates kindness into injury! What more odious than to receive charity haughtily, as if you have been offended,

and to interpret it as an insult? This offence is very like that of the Jews, who persecuted with death the Author of life, because He showed them kindness, helped them, brought them health, salvation, and light; and who showered insults upon Him in return for His most lavish charity toward all men who would accept it. And as they, immersed in pride, arrogance, ambition, avarice, thought it an affront to be freed from these exacting masters; so these others, buried in squalor, filth, shame, idleness, crime, think they are being dragged into slavery if their condition is improved. We will emulate the true Christ, who was not turned aside from doing good by the ingratitude of those who received His bounty.

Nor must we take into consideration what a man would like to have, but what it is good for him to have; not what pleases him, but what is expedient for him. He will recognize the kindness when a better frame of mind returns to him. Then he will say: "The Senate of Bruges saved me even against my will." But should you indulge him and fall in with his desires, if ever even for a moment he recover his sight and reason, he will without doubt say: "The Senate ruined me by loving-kindness." For this is the complaint which every son who is indulged too freely makes of his father. The poor man so indulged will hate those by whom he has been helped to his destruction. That it may not be thus, let us treat them as experienced physicians treat delirious patients, or wise fathers their young children; let us seek their true good, however much they fight and cry out against it. In fine, it is the duty of the ruler of the state not to

be disturbed by what one or another or certain few think about the laws and the administration, provided he has consulted the common benefit of the body of the entire state. For laws are of benefit even to the evil-doers themselves—correcting them or checking them in their evil-doing.

But indeed, as to those who have been used to handle the poor funds,—they will be annoyed that this office should be taken from them. The high-sounding words which they look for, to exaggerate the enormity of the proposal, are always something like this: Things that have been established by the sanction of so many years must not be touched; it is dangerous to introduce new customs; the stipulations of the founders must not be interfered with; everything is on the brink of ruin.

To these we will reply, first: Why may we not hope that good customs will weaken the evil which has been brought about by vicious customs? They will not dare get deeper into that argument. Then we will ask which is better, what we are attempting to introduce, or what they wish to retain? Furthermore, if nothing ought to be changed, why have they themselves gradually altered the first regulations established by the founders of the institutions to such a degree that those now in force are in actual conflict with the original ones? Let the records be unrolled, let the memory of old men be questioned: it will be discovered how much the present method of administration differs from that which prevailed when the institution was new, while the founder was still alive or had only recently died. Here we have them at the crucial point. We do not wish the original plan to

be changed. We will not permit the intention of the founder to be violated, for in every will this is the first, nay, the only thing, to be considered. The original plan may be discovered from the records and from the memory of many citizens. And as for the intention of the founders, who does not understand that these men left their money and endowments, not that the rich might be glutted, but that the poor might be supported, to pray for the souls of their deceased benefactors that they might be washed clean of the sins of earth and received by God into those celestial dwellings?

Now, if our opponents raise too much opposition they will certainly stand convicted of looking out for their own affairs and their own interests instead of those of the poor. Since we undertake the responsibility for the poor, and yet they oppose it, what is it, anyway, that they have in view? If it is their own affairs, they stand convicted of avarice and make it clear that they have managed things for their own advantage and not for the poor. And this avarice is not only ignoble but absolutely pernicious and detestable. For since it is a crime to steal anything from a wealthy man, how much more nefarious is it to take anything away from a poor man! It is money which is stolen from the rich man; from the poor man, life.

If, however, it is the poor for whom they are concerned, let them know that the Senate wishes that the poor be aided more generously than they are now aided. Is it any concern of theirs by whom this is done, provided only it is done, and done as well as possible? Just as confidence has already of old been

placed in the well-known fidelity of the Senate. "That Christ may be preached," said Paul. "In what manner, I care not, provided only that Christ is preached." But they wish to have charge of the work themselves. If they have respect to God, they will joyfully acquiesce; but if to men, their ambition has been found out. Moreover, will they dare to complain because you do not offer yourselves as ministers of their ambition and avarice? As a matter of fact, if you keep silence, are you not abetting them? I will pass over the other things which might be said on this point, if their administration during a long period of years were examined. I will not enter into this bog; I will not stir up this mire. But in truth they will have no small glory, if they do not oppose these measures, if they do not clutch the money entrusted to them and deposited in their keeping, but instead advance the interests of the poor, and devote themselves to promoting the harmony of the state, and prove themselves so much the friends of the public honor that they consider it their own personal possession.

CHAPTER IX

NOTHING OUGHT TO STAND IN THE WAY OF CARRYING OUT THESE PROPOSALS

Many eloquent words have been spoken by pagans on every sort of virtue, and many deeds of weight and dignity have they done. Yet never have they borne themselves so firmly, so bravely, so worthily, as when loyalty to their country and love of their fellow-citizens was so implanted in their hearts that they endured misrepresentations, unjust accusations, curses, and insults with undisturbed and resolute minds and

were not turned a hair's breadth on that account from their determination to help their country,—even when the very ones who would be most helped censured and condemned their actions.

Conspicuous among this number are Miltiades, Themistocles, Scipio, and above all Epaminandos the Theban, and Quintus Fabius Maximus of Rome, who, when he perceived that Hannibal could be crushed not by force but by delay, protracted the war by delaying action, knowing that this was the only hope of victory. Many idle and craftily quarrelsome men complained of his action, saying that he was doing it by agreement with Hannibal or from ambition, that he might be longer in power, in the chief office of the state, or from cowardice, or from fear that they would try to deprive him of his power. As a matter of fact, Minucius, Master of Horse, was made equal to the Dictator by popular vote, a thing which had never been heard of before. The old man, undaunted by the calumny and folly of his fellow-citizens, persevered in his undertaking and brought deliverance to his country, which Hannibal undoubtedly would have conquered if the strategy of Quintus Fabius had not thwarted him. The result proved how great a mind that hero possessed, what sagacity he had, what love for his country and his fellow-countrymen, so that these little verses about him have been universally popular, ancient and crude though they are, yet eloquent and enthusiastic in their praise:

"Unus homo nobis cunctando restituit rem,
Nam non ponebat rumores ante salutem:
Ergo magisque magisque viri nunc gloria claret."

Others of a like temper performed noble deeds, even

though they regarded not God and for them the sun of Christianity had not arisen, and they were merely acting as they had been taught or seeking fame and glory for their country. How much greater and nobler ought our actions to be, who have beheld the one Christ and who despise, yea, disdain and scorn human power; for whom that most glorious sun has dawned; who have been reared in the true faith; to whom charity has been commended and commanded, with a heavy penalty if we neglect the command and a great reward if we execute it, a reward which will be the greater in proportion to the suffering we endure for the grace of God.

Therefore, this plan must not merely be approved, but it must be adopted and carried out, for it is not enough to have good intentions, unless you also put your hands to the work when occasion offers. It is not fitting that those who are urged and spurred on by divine commands should be held back by human obstacles, especially since benefits will follow both to the state and to the individual, both material and spiritual.

CHAPTER X

THE MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL ADVANTAGES WHICH WILL
RESULT FROM THESE MEASURES

Great is the glory of the state in which no beggar is seen. For a great multitude of paupers argues malice and heartlessness in the citizens and neglect of the public weal by the magistrates.

Fewer thefts, acts of violence, robberies, murders, capital offences, will be committed; less frequent will be pandering and sorcery. Seeing that poverty

will be alleviated, which drives men first into vices and bad habits, and then encourages and provokes such crimes as these.

Greater peace. Where everyone is provided for.

Greater concord. When the poor shall not envy the rich, but shall esteem them as benefactors, and when the rich shall not turn away from the poor in suspicion, but shall esteem them as the object of their bounty and of the charity which is their due. For nature demands that we bestow love also upon those to whom we give alms. Thus love begets love.

It will be safer and more healthful and pleasanter to attend the churches and to dwell in the city. Since the hideousness of ulcers and diseases will not be inflicted everywhere on the sight, a spectacle revolting to nature and even to the most humane and compassionate mind.

Nor will those of small means be forced by importunity to give alms; and if a man feels inclined to give, he will not be deterred either by the great multitude of beggars nor by fear of giving to some one unworthy.

An enormous gain to the state. There will be just so many citizens made more virtuous, more law-abiding, more useful to the country, and they will all hold that state dearer in which, or by means of which, they are maintained. Nor will they participate in revolutions or seditions, when so many women have been rescued from shame, so many girls from danger, so many old women from evil-doing. Boys and girls will be taught letters, religion, temperance, self-support; things which form the basis of a good and honest and pious life. Finally, all of them will regain judgment,

sensibility, piety. They will live among men like citizens, disciplined, observant of human laws; they will keep their hands pure from acts of violence; they will serve God truly and honestly; they will be men; they will be what they are called, Christians. What else is this, I ask, than to have restored many thousands of men to themselves and to have won them for Christ? For indeed that is heaven's gain, that the souls of many shall be freed from their superstition.

There are some who know that they ought to discharge the duties of charity, yet do not perform what has been commanded, now because they are repelled by the unworthiness of the applicants, now because their good intention is embarrassed by the great number and they are drawn in opposite directions, as it were, uncertain where first or most effectively to bestow their money, since they see so many oppressed by want that in a sort of despair they succor no one, feeling that whatever they give will be too little, as if you should sprinkle a little drop of water here and there on a great fire. But if our plan is adopted, those who have means will give more readily and more bountifully, rejoicing because things are so carefully and so scrupulously managed that they may be sure their contributions will be well placed, so that they will help men, and execute the commands of Christ and win His abundant favor. Nor is there any doubt that from other cities also, which have not in like fashion made the affairs of the poor their concern, many wealthy men will send contributions hither, where they know the funds are wisely spent and aid given to those most in need. Add to this, that God will protect as His own a people so

charitable, and will make it truly blessed. Hear what sort of nation can properly be called blessed, according to the testimony of no ordinary man but of a Prophet:

Rescue me out of the hand of strange children; whose mouth hath spoken vanity; and their right hand is the right hand of iniquity:

Whose sons are as new plants in their youth:

Their daughters decked out, adorned round about after the similitude of a temple:

Their storehouses full, flowing out of this into that.

Their sheep fruitful in young, abounding in their goings forth:

Their oxen fat.

There is no breach of wall, nor passage, nor crying out in their streets.

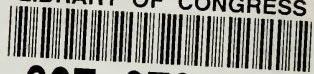
They have called the people happy, that hath these things; but happy is that people whose God is the Lord.¹

Nor will temporal blessings be lacking, according as it is written of the widow who gave food to Elias. Thus, too, the Psalmist sings of that state in which the Lord dwells: "Blessing I will bless her widow: I will satisfy her poor with bread."²

And in another place he says, speaking to the same state: "Who hath placed peace in thy borders: and filleth thee with the fat of corn."³

Verily, an increase of mutual love surpasses all things; and will be brought about by dispensing charity on all sides, joyfully and simply and openly, without suspicion of unworthiness; and hereafter we shall obtain that celestial reward, which we have shown is prepared for alms springing out of charity.

¹ Latin Vulgate translation. Revised Version: Ps. 144, 11-15.
² Ps. 132, 15. ³ Ps. 147, 14.



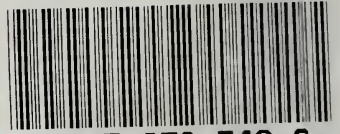
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