

## The Church and the Poor.

### A SERIES OF HISTORICAL SKETCHES.

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#### IV.

##### THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES.

###### I. *The Conditions.*

THE great Empire founded by Charlemagne did not long outlive him. After the death of his son, Louis the Pious, in A.D. 840, it rapidly fell to pieces; and by the Treaty of Verdun, in A.D. 843, was made that division of Western Europe which in essence still exists to-day.<sup>1</sup> With the fall of the Empire of Charlemagne, there also came to an end what we may term the unity of the Church's social work; in fact, since the days of Charlemagne, the Church as a whole has issued no binding decrees upon the relief of the poor.<sup>2</sup> From that time onwards we cannot speak of this part of the Church's task in general terms. Henceforward, to a certain extent, the way in which she did her charitable work varied in different countries. Yet amid these differences there were in each age certain common features, at any rate down to the time of the Reformation. These common features were due to certain prevailing ideas which permeated the doctrinal and social teaching of the whole Western Church in each particular period.

These facts must govern the treatment of our subject in the present article, in which I propose first, to deal very briefly with the general condition of the ninth and tenth centuries; and secondly, to try to explain the ideas of charity which then inspired and ruled the method of dispensing it.

Speaking generally, the ninth and tenth centuries are among the very darkest periods of the Church's history. This is

<sup>1</sup> Church, "Middle Ages," p. 148 *et seq.* and p. 156 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> Ratzinger, "Geschichte der Kirchlichen Armenpflege," p. 236.

especially true of France and Italy, and, if to a somewhat less extent, it is also true of Germany; it is certainly less true of England.<sup>1</sup> During this period were repeated, in many ways, the experiences which followed the break-up of the Western Empire some 300 years before. In both ages we see authority passing out of the hands of a central government into the hands of a multitude of small chieftains, whose time was chiefly spent in quarrelling with each other, and one of whose objects seems to have been to oppress those over whom they ruled. Feudalism<sup>2</sup> grew rapidly in the State, and something extremely like it flourished in the Church; for there were feudal bishops as well as feudal barons, and the conduct of the bishops seems frequently to have been even worse than that of the barons.<sup>3</sup> The care of the poor was forgotten; cleric and noble vied with one another in sucking the life-blood from their wretched dependents.<sup>4</sup> Yet even in this age there were lights in the darkness. "Side by side with the proud and cruel warrior who, without mercy, devastated the fields of the unhappy peasants, and heartlessly squeezed the last penny from his tenants, stood here a monk, there a priest, who burned with indignation and threatened with an everlasting curse when his prayers for pity were of no avail. If there were many bishops who used the great possessions of the Church only to gratify their own lusts, there were still many men who pitied the poor, espoused their cause, and bestowed all they had upon their relief."<sup>5</sup>

In a speech to the bishops assembled at a council near Soissons in A.D. 909, the archbishop of Rheims drew a terribly dark picture of the conditions then existing in France: "All respect for Divine and human law has vanished . . . every man does as he will; the strong oppress the weak; men have become like the fishes in the sea which devour each other. . . . Lawlessness chokes every kind of growth. . . . Everywhere we see oppression of the poor and robbery of the Church. Con-

<sup>1</sup> We must remember the work of Alfred, also of Dunstan.

<sup>2</sup> Upon the effects of feudalism see Ratzinger, p. 236 *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup> Milman, "Latin Christianity," vol. iii., p. 176 *et seq.*

<sup>4</sup> Ratzinger, p. 237.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

sequently the tears of the widows and the sobs of the orphans constantly rise up to heaven."<sup>1</sup> For this state of things the archbishop told the assembled bishops that they were themselves largely to blame.

In Germany, during this period, the same conditions to some extent prevailed, though, as a whole, the Church there never sank to so low a level as it did in France. While it suffered from the evils of feudalism, it still retained the influences bequeathed to it by men like Boniface and Alcuin. The bishops, many of whom had been trained in the schools founded by these great leaders, strove to maintain the regulations which Charlemagne had established for the protection and relief of the poor.<sup>2</sup>

At a council held at Mainz in A.D. 847 it was decreed that the tithe, which every Christian should pay to his parish church, must be divided into four parts, of which one part must be devoted to the relief of the poor. To the bishop was committed the task of the oversight of the administration of relief throughout his diocese; upon him was the responsibility of a firm control laid. Laymen who were guilty of usurpation of the Church's property were to be excommunicated. Also the king was petitioned to interpose against the oppression of poor freemen, and to defend the churches and their possessions as his own property. At a Parliament held at Mainz in A.D. 851 these decrees of the council were promulgated as laws of the realm.<sup>3</sup>

During this period Germany had to face serious troubles upon her borders; the Magyars on the one side, and the Northmen on another side, not only devastated the country, but also burnt the churches and destroyed the monasteries.<sup>4</sup>

In the tenth century, under the firm rule of the Saxon Kings, the true founders of the German Empire,<sup>5</sup> we find a greatly

<sup>1</sup> Ratzinger, pp. 241, 242.

<sup>2</sup> "Es war ein hohes Glück für Deutschland, dass in seinem Episcopate der Geist eines Bonifatius, eines Alcuin noch lange fortwirkte" (Ratzinger, p. 250).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251.

<sup>4</sup> Church, "Middle Ages," p. 184.

<sup>5</sup> Church, *ibid.*, p. 195 *et seq.* "Mit den sächsischen Kaisern beginnt die Blüthezeit der deutschen Kirche" (Ratzinger, p. 252).

improved condition of the Church. At this time many of the bishops were men not only of great influence in affairs of State, but also men of real piety, who cared to the utmost of their ability for the poor, saw to their needs, and frequently fed them at their table and maintained them in their own houses. What the bishops did in the large towns they directed the clergy to do in their various parishes. From their income, derived from tithes and oblations, they must support the poor and those unable to work; they must supply the needs of widows and orphans; they must also provide food and shelter for wayfarers. Though the proportion of the income of the Church to be devoted to the poor is not stated, it was probably that ordered by Charlemagne.<sup>1</sup> A survey of this period gives the impression that the bestowal of charity was becoming more and more a matter of personal feeling—indeed, of personal piety—and that, consequently, it was in practice less and less governed by any general regulations.<sup>2</sup> This was almost inevitable, as we shall find when we come to consider the ideas upon which the bestowal of charity in this age—in fact, throughout the Middle Ages—was based.

In order to understand how the poor were relieved in England during this same period we must take a brief retrospect. One of the well-known questions which Augustine addressed to Gregory the Great had reference to the distribution of the Church's revenues.<sup>3</sup> Gregory's reply was that the best scheme for distribution is that recommended by the Roman See—a fourfold partition between the bishop, the clergy, the poor, and the repair of the church.<sup>4</sup> There is not sufficient evidence to show how far this method of distribution was carried out in practice in England; but there is evidence to show that certain differences did exist between the customs of Rome and

<sup>1</sup> Ratzinger, p. 253.

<sup>2</sup> Uhlhorn, "Die Christliche Liebesthätigkeit, im Mittelalter," p. 65; "Es gehört zu den Eigentümlichkeiten des Mittelalters, dass eine geordnete Armenpflege überhaupt nicht kennt."

<sup>3</sup> Bright, "Early English Church History," p. 56.

<sup>4</sup> Greg. M. Epp., xii. 31.

those of the old British Church in reference to the relief of the poor. This was one among several matters upon which Archbishop Theodore had to legislate. He appears to have removed the distribution from the bishops to the parochial clergy<sup>1</sup>—in fact, to have arranged relief in England (as it was in France) upon the parochial system.<sup>2</sup> Later we find that in England practically the principles of Charlemagne were more or less closely followed. The so-called *excerptiones* of Archbishop Egbert are clearly a compilation from French capitularies and from the decrees of French Councils.<sup>3</sup> The English system probably owed much to scholars like Alcuin (the friend and adviser of Charlemagne), who were perfectly familiar with Continental methods. What seems quite clear is that in the ninth and tenth centuries (with one important exception) the system of poor relief associated with the name of Charlemagne was that which was generally in force in our own country. The exception to which I refer is that in England a *third*, and not, as in France, a fourth, of the tithe was devoted to the relief of the poor.<sup>4</sup> In the *Liber legum Ecclesiasticarum* there is an instruction to the priest—namely, that in his leisure-time he shall do some useful work, in order that from the proceeds of this he may be able to help the needy.

In England, as in France, the duty of relieving the poor was not confined to the clergy. By the *Constitutio* of King Athelstan the nobles are enjoined to care for the poor, and especially shall each of these make himself responsible for the maintenance of one poor person, and shall also annually redeem one slave. If they failed to perform these duties they shall pay a fine, which shall be devoted to relief.<sup>5</sup>

In England there existed far into the Middle Ages a very considerable amount of slavery, or, at any rate, conditions which

<sup>1</sup> Ratzinger, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 266.

<sup>4</sup> "Canones Ælfrici," 960, c. 24: "Sancti patres constituerunt ut homines tradant decimas suas ecclesiæ Dei et sacerdos veniat et distribuât in tres partes: unam ad reparationem ecclesiæ, secundam egenis, tertiam autem Dei ministris, qui ecclesiæ illius curam gerunt."

<sup>5</sup> Ratzinger, p. 267 (where the passage from the *Constitutio regis Æthelstani* is given at length).

can hardly be distinguished from slavery. Lingard considers that prior to the Norman Conquest "not less than two-thirds of the population existed in a state of slavery . . . the most numerous of these lived on the land of their lord . . . and their respective services were allotted according to the will of their proprietor. . . . Their persons, families, and goods were at his disposal . . . either by gift or sale."<sup>1</sup> For these the householder was held responsible. In the case of men without an owner, and who were unable to provide for themselves, it was enacted by the laws of King Athelstan that "he must reside with some householder, without whose surety he would not be regarded as a member of the community nor be entitled to its protection."<sup>2</sup>

The Church in England, as on the Continent, had during this age its periods of light and darkness,<sup>3</sup> of spiritual influence and of the absence of this. At one time it so did its work as to deserve respect; at another time it sunk into a condition of worldliness. But, at any rate after the reformation of Dunstan, it probably never sank so low as it did elsewhere. Ratzinger asserts that alone did the English Church maintain throughout the Middle Ages the duty of relieving the poor, and it alone held not only in theory, but in practice, that a portion of its wealth should be devoted to this purpose. The possessions of the Church in England during the Middle Ages, including the tithes, never became the prey of a rapacious nobility.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. *The Doctrine of Charity.*

We must now turn to a subject which demands very careful consideration—namely, What were the principles, ideas, or beliefs which underlay and which inspired the charitable work of the period we have been considering, and which, at any rate

<sup>1</sup> Lingard, "History of England," vol. i., pp. 347, 353.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholls, "History of the Poor Law," vol. i., p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> "Die Englische Kirche erlebte ihre Blüthezeit in der zweiten Hälfte der 9 Jahrhunderts. . . . Schrecklich ist die Schilderung, welche König Edgar von der Vewilderung des Clerus entwirft" (Ratzinger, p. 268).

<sup>4</sup> P. 269.

to some extent, persisted until the Reformation? That an immense change had taken place in the principles which governed the charitable work of the Church is clear to every careful student of the subject. This change is to-day attributed to the influence of "syncretism,"<sup>1</sup> by which is meant the absorption into Christianity of elements more or less alien to its original principles or conduct. The principal sources of this influence, at any rate so far as the charitable work of the Church is concerned, were two: first, that of Judaism, which was the earlier influence; secondly, that of ideas and practices generally current in the Græco-Roman world. These ideas and practices the converts from the old religions (who were often very imperfect converts) brought over with them into the Church's system.

When we speak of the influence of Judaism we must not think only of the teaching of the Old Testament; we must be careful to include Jewish ideas current at the time of Christ<sup>2</sup> and during the age preceding this; also, we must remember the ideas at work among the Jews in the period following that of the New Testament. I must not dwell upon the teaching of the Old Testament on the relief of the poor. Even a brief outline of this would require a chapter to itself. But I must insist upon the fact that this side of Jewish life was very strongly developed in later Judaism; actually it has continued to be a marked feature of Judaism down to the present time.<sup>3</sup> We can trace this development in the later books of the Old Testament, and especially in the Apocrypha. The word *ἐλεημοσύνη* in the Greek version of the Old Testament, which originally was used of the practice of works of mercy, had by the time that the books of Sirach and Tobit were written come to be a quite specific description of deeds of compassion to the

<sup>1</sup> On this subject see the Epilogue to Book II. of Harnack's "Mission and Expansion of Christianity," Eng. Trans., vol. i., p. 312 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> In a recent lecture Professor Moffatt states that what he terms "attention to the hinterland of rabbinic tradition" probably forms the most fruitful field for further elucidation of the New Testament at the present time.

<sup>3</sup> *E.g.*, the Jewish Board of Guardians in London.

poor.<sup>1</sup> By the second or third century B.C. almsgiving had come to be an acknowledged observance of the religious life, and stood in the same category with prayer and fasting.<sup>2</sup> It is regarded as a means of making atonement for sin,<sup>3</sup> and the merit of it as an unailing possession. In the Talmud the same teaching is even more accentuated; "righteousness" becomes a recognized name for almsgiving, and by almsgiving a man may be accounted righteous in the sight of God. From all this it will be seen that the tendency is to think especially of the effect of almsgiving upon the *giver* of the alms; the effect upon the recipient is secondary. This tendency proceeded so far as to lead the Jews to speak of the poor as the means of the rich man's salvation. The words of our Lord in St. Matt. vi. 2-4, while they may be said to accept the current value of almsgiving as a religious practice or duty, give no countenance to the Jewish doctrine that it effects any remission of sins, that in the ordinary acceptance of the word it has any "propitiatory" power. What our Lord does insist upon is purity of motive, indifference to human praise, and the need of self-forgetfulness. This last requisite is entirely inimical to the idea of propitiation, which is essentially and to a high degree "self-regarding." How strongly and how early the Jewish idea of the propitiatory value of almsgiving entered the Church may be seen from these

<sup>1</sup> See article on "Almsgiving," in Hastings' "Bib. Dict." (by Professor Stanton), vol. i., pp. 68 *et seq.*; also Hatch's "Essays in Biblical Greek," p. 49 *et seq.*—*i.e.*, on *δικαιοσύνη* and *ἐλεημοσύνη*). A curiously far-fetched interpretation is that of Ps. xvii. 15, where the Rabbis interpreted **אֲנִי בְצַדֵּק אֲהִיָּה כְנִיף** by "I shall behold Thy face by almsgiving."

<sup>2</sup> Tobit xii. 8: *ἀγαθὸν προσευχῆ μετὰ νηστείας καὶ ἐλεημοσύνης καὶ δικαιοσύνης.*

<sup>3</sup> Sirach iii. 30:

"Water will quench a flaming fire,  
And almsgiving will make atonement for sin"

(*ἐλεημοσύνη ἐξιλιάσεται ἁμαρτίας.* The Hebrew here has **צדקה**.)

Also Sirach xxix. 9-11:

"Help a poor man for the commandment's sake;

Bestow thy treasure according to the commandments of the Most High;  
And it shall profit thee more than gold."

Also Tobit xii. 9: "Alms doth deliver from death, and it shall purge away all sin."



two sayings: "If there were no poor the greater part of your sins would not be removed";<sup>1</sup> and "By prayer we seek to propitiate God, by fasting we extinguish the lusts of the flesh; by alms we redeem our sins."<sup>2</sup> In contrast to the Jewish self-regarding doctrine which penetrated (and to a large extent vitiated) the mediæval theory of charity we may contrast the wisdom of the teaching of the early Church where the words "Give to him that asketh thee" are followed by "Woe to him that taketh; for if, indeed, anyone having need taketh he shall be guiltless, but he that hath not need shall give account . . . and being in distress shall be examined concerning the things that he did."<sup>3</sup>

When we speak of the influence of the Græco-Roman world upon Christian charity after the conversion of the Empire and during the early Middle Ages, we must be careful to define our meaning, for in those days as in these the practice of the community usually fell far below, and so was widely different from, the principles of its clearest thinkers. If we go to teachers like Aristotle among the Greeks, or to Cicero, Seneca, or Epictetus among the Romans, we shall find excellent and extremely wise principles enunciated upon a man's treatment of his poorer neighbours. We shall find many a valuable axiom which would come under the head not only of justice, but of charity, or what the Latin would term *de beneficiis*.<sup>4</sup> But this would be in the realms of ideal ethics and philosophy. When, however, we come to the sphere of actual practice we find something very different. We find in Rome and other great cities an immense, and to a great extent an indiscriminate, and therefore unwise, distribution of free food,<sup>5</sup> just as there were free amusements. When, as in the time of Gregory the Great, the Church had become possessed of very considerable means, when, also, the

<sup>1</sup> "St. Chrysostom," Homily xv.

<sup>2</sup> "Leo the Great," Sermon xv. 4.

<sup>3</sup> "The Teaching of the Twelve," cap. i. 5.

<sup>4</sup> On this subject much which will be found useful may be learnt from Professor Lock's "Charity and Social Life," especially chaps. iv., ix., xii., and xv.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., The *Annona Civica*.

number of professing Christians had enormously increased, and the poverty of the vast majority of the population had become far more acute, can it be wondered that the Church took over a great part of this free distribution of food from the State? Christianity is the religion of love. Could the Church see these people starve? Doubtless where there were men with the organizing power of Gregory the Great, efforts would be made to distribute charity as judiciously as was possible under the circumstances; but we can well understand that frequently this distribution would be far from wise. Two effects inevitably supervened: First, the Church felt a responsibility towards the poor; secondly, the poor learnt to look to the Church for support; and so, ultimately, the care of the poorer classes became the charge of the Church. By its teaching the Church strengthened the feeling of pity for those in need. But the work at its best was simply one of palliation; the Church relieved poverty, but made no attempt to abolish it by attacking its causes. Still, on the whole, good was done; for even indiscriminate almsgiving, if it created pauperism, was probably better than dependence founded on a civic right to relief. For the pauper stood higher than the slave; the first was at least free to support himself, which the second was not.<sup>1</sup> Rather by its teaching, which made slave-holding by Christians impossible—though this reform was only very gradually carried out—than by any sound theory of charity and its distribution, the Church prepared the way for better social conditions under which men might learn the duty of doing all in their power to support themselves and their families in independency of external help whether civic or eleemosynary.

To understand the work of the Church for the poor, not only during the Middle Ages, but indeed from its earliest days, it is essential to gain at least some conception of the principles upon which it was based—that is, of the ideas which inspired it. These principles have been grouped under the term “The Theory of

<sup>1</sup> Lock, p. 234 *et seq.*

Charity," and the title is a useful, if not altogether a satisfactory, one.

This "theory," or these principles, changed in process of time, chiefly because Christian doctrine itself changed. I do not imply that the practice of charity was always in strict agreement with these principles, but undoubtedly the principles did very greatly influence the practice. From time to time a change of circumstances also demanded a change of practice. It would not be quite true to speak of a "development" of this theory, or even of "revisions" of it. By development we generally mean a change from the less to the more perfect, from an inferior to a superior condition. But this is not true either of the change of Christian doctrine generally, or of the theory of charity in particular, during the long period which stretches from the Conversion of the Empire to the Reformation. In many ways and at various times during this period Christian doctrine departed further and further from the truth; so also did the principles of charity, which were commonly held, from those which we believe to be correct.

The subject of changes in the principles underlying the distribution of charity is an extensive one, and I must confine myself to the examination of two points: First, the growth within the Church of the idea that almsgiving procured remission of sins; secondly, the greatly increased proportion of "institutional" relief through the hospitals and monasteries of various kinds.

Traces of the idea that sins could be remitted by almsgiving are found very early. By Origen it is held to be a means of covering slighter transgressions; but by Cyprian the doctrine is clearly taught.<sup>1</sup> As Archbishop Benson says, "There can be no better illustration than this teaching (in which a distinct propitiatory value is assigned to our own action) of the combined results in the development of doctrine, of resorting to the Jewish Apocrypha, relying on a version, and constructing a theory from a word. When this thread of erroneous, or at least

<sup>1</sup> Uhlhorn, "Christian Charity in the Ancient Church," p. 211 *et seq.*

ambiguous, theory was presently woven in with Tertullian's new forensic language on satisfaction being made to God by penance, a commencement of much mediæval trouble was at hand."<sup>1</sup>

This teaching of the propitiatory value of almsgiving spread rapidly. In the East we find it insisted upon by Chrysostom,<sup>2</sup> while in the West Ambrose,<sup>3</sup> Augustine,<sup>4</sup> and Gregory the Great dwell strongly upon it. It became, in fact, an established doctrine of the Church, and continued to be so throughout the Middle Ages. Indeed, something not very different from it goes far to vitiate much of our almsgiving at the present day. I do not assert that English Church people give alms with the same intention as that recommended by Chrysostom or Gregory the Great; but far too often, from mental indolence—*i.e.*, from a want of clear thinking, the duty or satisfaction of the giver rather than the needs or the condition or the worthiness of the recipient, is the deciding factor in an act of charity. Too often we give simply because we "feel it our duty," or because we do not like to refuse, or because public opinion demands it, or in order to stifle the qualms of conscience. We do not give because we have made a thorough investigation into the circumstances and character and needs of those who appeal for help, and because we feel we can and ought to give really useful and substantial help in a particular way. To this extent much of our giving to-day resembles that of the Middle Ages—it is rather "self-regarding"; instead of being like the giving inculcated in the New Testament and practised in the earliest age of the Church—"other-regarding."

<sup>1</sup> Archbishop Benson's footnote is as follows: "Such are distinctly the sources of the idea: Sicut *aqua* (*i.e.*, Baptism) extinguet ignem (*i.e.*, gehenna) sic eleemosyna extinguet peccatum (Sirach iii. 30), and again, Prov. xvi. 6: 'Misericordia et veritate redimitur iniquitas' (xv. 27: 'per misericordiam et fidem purgantur peccata'), which, in the African version, was '*Eleemosynis et fide delicta purgantur*'" (Archbishop Benson's "Cyprian," p. 249).

<sup>2</sup> "With whatsoever sins thou mayest be burdened, thy charity outweighs them all" (Homily on "Penance," iii. 1). "Let us purchase salvation through alms" (Homily on "Penance," vii. 6).

<sup>3</sup> "They who have kindled the flames by sinning, may extinguish them by almsgiving" ("Sermo de Eleemosynis," c. 30, 31).

<sup>4</sup> "Men are cleansed by alms from those sins and transgressions without which life cannot be passed here below." (These are only a few of the quotations given in Uihorn, p. 279 *et seq.*)

Arising in part from this doctrine of the propitiatory value of almsgiving, but also due to one of the many survivals of heathen customs which were taken over or absorbed by the Church, there came into existence another source whence a very considerable amount of money became available to the Church for distribution to the poor. I refer to the idea that almsgiving affects the sufferings of souls in purgatory. By the time of Cyprian it was held that Masses could be offered for the dead to their advantage.<sup>1</sup> Augustine adds the idea that alms could be offered efficaciously for them.<sup>2</sup> Alms were also given at funerals and on the anniversaries of deaths, in order that their merit might avail for the deceased. We must remember the reverence of the ancient world for the dead. Frequently, among the heathen, money was bequeathed in order that the grave might be decorated on the birthday of the one buried in it, and in order that a feast might be held at it.<sup>3</sup> At such times money was often distributed to the members of the *collegium* to which the deceased had belonged or to his fellow citizens. The Church so far changed this system as to substitute for the banquet a celebration of the Mass, and directed that the money should now be given to the poor. Hence the origin of endowments for Masses for the dead, and of the custom of distributing alms on the anniversary of a death. It is true that teachers like Augustine and Gregory<sup>4</sup> are careful to maintain that only those will be benefited who on earth have not been guilty of great, but only of trivial, sins. But it will easily be understood that in practice it was difficult to maintain this distinction. When we say that these propitiatory means were not to be used for those whose lives had plunged them into perdition,

<sup>1</sup> Uhlhorn, p. 288.

<sup>2</sup> "Neque negandum est defunctorum animas pietate suorum viventium relevari, cum pro illis sacrificium Mediatoris offertur, vel eleemosynæ in Ecclesia fiunt." But Augustine is careful to add: "Sed eis hæc prosunt, qui cum viverent, ut hæc sibi postea possint prodesse, meruerunt" ("Enchiridion," c. 110).

<sup>3</sup> Uhlhorn, p. 290 *et seq.*

<sup>4</sup> Who adduces 1 Cor. iii. 11 in support of this. Uhlhorn refers to Greg. M. dialog., iv. 39, 57.

but had only sent them to purgatory, we can see how easy it was to decide charitably, especially when money was much needed both for the clergy and the poor. Salvian, in fact, admits that almsgiving *may* help even the quite wicked, and Augustine allows the possibility of a *mitigation* of perdition.<sup>1</sup>

I have shown enough to prove how strong was the temptation to the Church (especially in such an hour of need as the beginning of the Middle Ages) to succumb to the use of more and more doubtful means for obtaining the resources which she believed she needed. To that temptation she did, unfortunately, succumb. And it was a case that, when once the principle had been admitted, the applications became constantly wider and more numerous. The results, so far as the moral life and moral influence of the Church were concerned, were nothing less than disastrous, and these results persisted to the time of the Reformation.

[The effects of the doctrinal teaching of the early Middle Ages upon institutional relief I must defer to my next article.]

<sup>1</sup> Augustine's words are curious: "Pro valde malis, etiamsi nulla sunt adjumenta mortuorum, qualescunque vivorum consolationes sunt. Quibus autem prosunt, aut ad hoc prosunt, ut sit plena remissio, aut certe ut tolerabilior fiat ipsa damnatio" ("Enchirid.," c. 110).

