

**Objection 1.** It would seem that the different kinds of almsdeeds are unsuitably enumerated. For we reckon seven corporal almsdeeds, namely, to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to harbor the harborless, to visit the sick, to ransom the captive, to bury the dead; all of which are expressed in the following verse: “To visit, to quench, to feed, to ransom, clothe, harbor or bury.”

Again we reckon seven spiritual alms, namely, to instruct the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to comfort the sorrowful, to reprove the sinner, to forgive injuries, to bear with those who trouble and annoy us, and to pray for all, which are all contained in the following verse: “To counsel, reprove, console, to pardon, forbear, and to pray,” yet so that counsel includes both advice and instruction.

And it seems that these various almsdeeds are unsuitably enumerated. For the purpose of almsdeeds is to succor our neighbor. But a dead man profits nothing by being buried, else Our Lord would not have spoken truly when He said (Mat. 10:28): “Be not afraid of them who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.”\* This explains why Our Lord, in enumerating the works of mercy, made no mention of the burial of the dead (Mat. 25:35,36). Therefore it seems that these almsdeeds are unsuitably enumerated.

**Objection 2.** Further, as stated above (a. 1), the purpose of giving alms is to relieve our neighbor’s need. Now there are many needs of human life other than those mentioned above, for instance, a blind man needs a leader, a lame man needs someone to lean on, a poor man needs riches. Therefore these almsdeeds are unsuitably enumerated.

**Objection 3.** Further, almsgiving is a work of mercy. But the reproof of the wrong-doer savors, apparently, of severity rather than of mercy. Therefore it ought not to be reckoned among the spiritual almsdeeds.

**Objection 4.** Further, almsgiving is intended for the supply of a defect. But no man is without the defect of ignorance in some matter or other. Therefore, apparently, each one ought to instruct anyone who is ignorant of what he knows himself.

**On the contrary,** Gregory says (Nom. in Evang. ix): “Let him that hath understanding beware lest he withhold his knowledge; let him that hath abundance of wealth, watch lest he slacken his merciful bounty; let him who is a servant to art be most solicitous to share his skill and profit with his neighbor; let him who has an opportunity of speaking with the wealthy, fear lest he be condemned for retaining his talent, if when he has the chance he plead not with him the cause of the poor.” Therefore the aforesaid almsdeeds are suitably enumerated in respect of those things whereof men have abundance or insufficiency.

**I answer that,** The aforesaid distinction of alms-

deeds is suitably taken from the various needs of our neighbor: some of which affect the soul, and are relieved by spiritual almsdeeds, while others affect the body, and are relieved by corporal almsdeeds. For corporal need occurs either during this life or afterwards. If it occurs during this life, it is either a common need in respect of things needed by all, or it is a special need occurring through some accident supervening. In the first case, the need is either internal or external. Internal need is twofold: one which is relieved by solid food, viz. hunger, in respect of which we have “to feed the hungry”; while the other is relieved by liquid food, viz. thirst, and in respect of this we have “to give drink to the thirsty.” The common need with regard to external help is twofold; one in respect of clothing, and as to this we have “to clothe the naked”: while the other is in respect of a dwelling place, and as to this we have “to harbor the harborless.” Again if the need be special, it is either the result of an internal cause, like sickness, and then we have “to visit the sick,” or it results from an external cause, and then we have “to ransom the captive.” After this life we give “burial to the dead.”

In like manner spiritual needs are relieved by spiritual acts in two ways, first by asking for help from God, and in this respect we have “prayer,” whereby one man prays for others; secondly, by giving human assistance, and this in three ways. First, in order to relieve a deficiency on the part of the intellect, and if this deficiency be in the speculative intellect, the remedy is applied by “instructing,” and if in the practical intellect, the remedy is applied by “counselling.” Secondly, there may be a deficiency on the part of the appetitive power, especially by way of sorrow, which is remedied by “comforting.” Thirdly, the deficiency may be due to an inordinate act; and this may be the subject of a threefold consideration. First, in respect of the sinner, inasmuch as the sin proceeds from his inordinate will, and thus the remedy takes the form of “reproof.” Secondly, in respect of the person sinned against; and if the sin be committed against ourselves, we apply the remedy by “pardoning the injury,” while, if it be committed against God or our neighbor, it is not in our power to pardon, as Jerome observes (Super Matth. xviii, 15). Thirdly, in respect of the result of the inordinate act, on account of which the sinner is an annoyance to those who live with him, even beside his intention; in which case the remedy is applied by “bearing with him,” especially with regard to those who sin out of weakness, according to Rom. 15:1: “We that are stronger, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak,” and not only as regards their being infirm and consequently troublesome on account of their unruly actions, but also by bearing any other burdens of theirs with them, according to Gal. 6:2: “Bear ye one another’s burdens.”

**Reply to Objection 1.** Burial does not profit a dead

\* The quotation is from Lk. 12:4.

man as though his body could be capable of perception after death. In this sense Our Lord said that those who kill the body “have no more that they can do”; and for this reason He did not mention the burial of the dead with the other works of mercy, but those only which are more clearly necessary. Nevertheless it does concern the deceased what is done with his body: both that he may live in the memory of man whose respect he forfeits if he remain without burial, and as regards a man’s fondness for his own body while he was yet living, a fondness which kindly persons should imitate after his death. It is thus that some are praised for burying the dead, as Tobias, and those who buried Our Lord; as Augustine says (*De Cura pro Mort.* iii).

**Reply to Objection 2.** All other needs are reduced to these, for blindness and lameness are kinds of sickness, so that to lead the blind, and to support the lame, come to the same as visiting the sick. In like manner to assist a man against any distress that is due to an extrin-

sic cause comes to the same as the ransom of captives. And the wealth with which we relieve the poor is sought merely for the purpose of relieving the aforesaid needs: hence there was no reason for special mention of this particular need.

**Reply to Objection 3.** The reproof of the sinner, as to the exercise of the act of reproof, seems to imply the severity of justice, but, as to the intention of the reprover, who wishes to free a man from the evil of sin, it is an act of mercy and lovingkindness, according to Prov. 27:6: “Better are the wounds of a friend, than the deceitful kisses of an enemy.”

**Reply to Objection 4.** Nescience is not always a defect, but only when it is about what one ought to know, and it is a part of almsgiving to supply this defect by instruction. In doing this however we should observe the due circumstances of persons, place and time, even as in other virtuous acts.