

In the primitive Church voluntary collections* were regularly made for the poor, the aged, the sick, the brethren in bonds, and for the burial of the dead. All fraud and deceit was abhorred, and all usury forbidden. Many gave all their goods to feed the poor. "Our charity dispenses more in the streets," says Tertullian to the heathen, "than your religion in your temples." He upbraids them for offering to the gods only the worn-out and useless, such as is given to dogs. "How monstrous is it," exclaims the Alexandrian Clement, "to live in luxury while so many are in want." "As you would receive, show mercy," says Chrysostom; "make God your debtor that you may receive again with usury." The Church at Antioch, he tells us, maintained three thousand widows and virgins, besides the sick and the poor. Under the persecuting Decius the widows and the infirm under the care of the Church at Rome were fifteen hundred. "Behold the treasures of the Church," said St. Lawrence pointing to the aged and poor, when the heathen prefect came to confiscate its wealth. The Church in Carthage sent a sum equal to four thousand dollars to ransom Christian captives in Numidia. St. Ambrose sold the sacred

* *Nemo compellitur, sed sponte confert.*—*Tertul. Apol. c. 39.*