



Good day Worthy Knights,

In this part 83, The Alms

Wikipedia

Christianity

The giving of alms is an act of charity toward those less fortunate. In the Apostolic age, Christians were taught that giving alms was an expression of love which was first expressed by God to them in that Jesus sacrificed himself as an act of love for the salvation of believers.

The offertory is the traditional moment in Roman Catholic Mass, Anglican Eucharist, and Lutheran Divine Services when alms are collected. Some Protestant groups, such as Baptists or Methodists, also engage in alms, although it is more commonly referred to as "tithes and offerings" by the church.

Some fellowships practice regular giving for special purposes called Love Offerings for the poor, destitute or victims of catastrophic loss such as home fires or medical expenses. Many Christians support a plethora of charitable organizations not all of which claim a Christian religious affiliation

In the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Eastern Catholic Churches, the collection of alms and tithes has not been formally united to the offertory in any liturgical action. However, either having a collection plate in the narthex or passing it unobtrusively during the service is not uncommon. In Eastern Orthodox theology, almsgiving is an important part of the spiritual life, and fasting should always be accompanied by increased prayer and almsgiving.

In the majority of Christian forms of worship and denominations, a collection of "tithes and offerings" is given for the support of the church's mission, budget, ministry, and for its relief of the poor, as an important act of Christian charity, united to communal prayer.

In some churches the "offering plate" or "offering basket" is placed upon the altar, as a sign that the offering is made to God, and a sign of the bond of Christian love. In addition, private acts of charity, considered virtuous only if not done for others to admire, are seen as a Christian duty.



Woman giving alms by Janos Thorma

Judaism

In Judaism, tzedakah - a Hebrew term literally meaning righteousness but commonly used to signify charity - refers to the religious obligation to do what is right and just.

Contemporary tzedakah is regarded as a continuation of the Biblical Maaser Ani, or poor tithe.

Tzedakah, along with prayer and repentance, is regarded as ameliorating the consequences of bad acts.

In Judaism, Tzedakah is seen as one of the greatest deeds that man can do. Jewish farmers are commanded to leave the corners of their fields for the starving to harvest for food and are forbidden to pick up any grain that has been dropped during harvesting, as such food shall be left for the starving as well.

Famous Jewish scholar and sage Maimonides has been noted for creating a list of charity, with the most righteous form being allowing an individual to become self-sustaining and capable of giving others charity.



tzedakah box

Islam

In Islam, the concept of charitable giving is generally divided into voluntary giving (sadaqah), and an obligatory practice, the zakat, governed by a specific set of rules within Islamic jurisprudence, and intended to fulfil a well-defined set of theological and social requirements. For that reason, while Zakat plays a much larger role within Islamic charity, Sadaqah is possibly a better translation for the Christian notion of 'alms'.

Zakat is the third of the five pillars of Islam. The literal meaning of the word Zakat is "to purify", "to develop" and "cause to grow". Zakat is the amount of money that every adult, mentally stable, free, and financially able Muslim, male or female, must pay to support specific categories of people.

According to Shariah it is an act of worship. Our possessions are purified by setting aside a proportion for those in need. This cutting back, like the pruning of plants, balances, and encourages new growth.

Various rules attach but, in general terms, it is obligatory to give 2.5% of one's savings and business revenue and 5–10% of one's harvest to the poor. Possible recipients include the destitute, the working poor, those who are unable to pay off their own debts, stranded travellers and others who need assistance, with the general principle of zakat always being that the rich should pay it to the poor. One of the most important principles of Islam is that all things belong to God and, therefore, wealth is held by human beings in trust.

This category of people is defined in Quran 9:60: "The alms are only for the poor and the needy, and those who collect them, and those whose hearts are to be reconciled, and to free the captives and the debtors, and for the cause of Allah, and (for) the wayfarers; a duty imposed by Allah. Allah is knower, Wise." (Qur'an 9:60).



Buddhism

In Buddhism, alms or almsgiving is the respect given by a lay Buddhist to a Buddhist monk, nun, spiritually-developed person or other sentient being. It is not charity as presumed by Western interpreters. It is closer to a symbolic connection to the spiritual realm and to show humbleness and respect in the presence of the secular society.

The act of alms giving assists in connecting the human to the monk or nun and what he/she represents.

In Theravada Buddhism, nuns and monks go on daily alms round (pindacara) to collect food. This is often perceived as giving the laypeople the opportunity to make merit. Money cannot be accepted by a Theravadan Buddhist monk or nun in lieu of or in addition to food, as the training rules make it an offence worth forfeiture and confession.

In countries that follow Mahayana Buddhism, the practice of a daily alms round has mostly died out.

In China, Korea and Japan, local cultures resisted the idea of giving food to 'begging' clerics, and there was no tradition of gaining 'merit' by donating to practitioners.

After periods of persecution, monasteries were situated in remote mountain areas in which the distance between the monastery and the nearest towns would make daily alms round impossible.

In Japan, the practice of a weekly or monthly takuhatsu replaced the daily round. In the Himalayan countries, the large number of monks would have made alms round a heavy burden on families.

In Buddhism, both "almsgiving" and, more generally, "giving" are called "dāna". Such giving is one of the three elements of the path of practice as formulated by the Buddha for laypeople.

