

Towards a New Social Theology: The Contribution of Norman MacLeod

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In 1848, the year of revolutions on the Continent and riots in Glasgow, the Reverend John Robson of Wellington Street United Presbyterian Church, Glasgow, proposed a remedy for the malaise which he believed afflicted society around him. "The Gospel", he wrote, "is the grand, the efficient remedy for social disorder and individual wretchedness. While it supremely blesses the man, it also elevates and ennobles the state. Hence the importance, especially at this present time, of immediate, energetic, and enlarged efforts to disseminate its precious truths more extensively, and to take our measures, so that by the divine blessing upon our efforts, Christianity, in all its exalting and holy influence, may pervade the entire body of the people".¹ Evangelisation was, therefore, the solution to society's problems.

Just over forty years later the Presbytery of Glasgow of the Church of Scotland submitted an overture to the 1888 General Assembly calling for an inquiry into non-churchgoing. In its evidence put forward by Norman MacLeod's brother, Donald, the Presbytery commented:

Picture the tragedy of life in one room. Non-church going is the least of it. Civilisation itself, with all its common properties and primary duties and privileges is being outraged.... If intemperance is often the cause, I assure you that it is often the consequences of these conditions of living. People are driven out of their single rooms – but where to relax? The recourse too frequently found is the public house.... Christ cared for the body as well as for the

¹ 1848 Annual report of Wellington Street United Presbyterian Missionary Society. Held in Wellington Church.

soul, and it must be ours to embrace within the field of our operation everything which tends to the physical and social, as well as to the spiritual welfare of the people.²

These two quotations epitomise the fundamental change which occurred in the presbyterian churches' social theology in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. It was a change which transcended denominational barriers; Established, Free and United Presbyterian Churches all gradually shifted their emphasis away from attributing poverty, intemperance, and social disorder to failings in man's spiritual self, towards a greater realisation of the environment's role in shaping character. John Robson's panacea for poverty was Christianity, but many churchmen in the 1880's and 1890's were advocating a raising of people's material standard of living as an essential first step to eradicating poverty.

"On the one hand", wrote Norman MacLeod, "there is a breaking up of the old forms of thought about everything, social, political, scientific, philosophic and theological".³ MacLeod's observation encapsulates the spirit of the age which in the second half of the nineteenth century challenged many old tenets of the faith and contributed to a re-evaluation of the causes of poverty and the components of effective social mission.

In his first ministry at Loudoun in Ayrshire, MacLeod was invited by the local Philosophical Institution to give a series of lectures on geology. This interest in geology brought him into contact with discoveries which threatened to undermine the authority of the Bible in which as MacLeod commented, "the book of Genesis says that heaven and earth were created, step by step, in six days, and that on the seventh God the maker rested from his labours. The investigation of the strata which lie under our feet seems to tell us of enormously long periods, preceding the appearance of man upon the earth, during which, animal species, no longer existing, and not suited to the present

² *Non-Church Going and the Housing of the Poor* (Edinburgh, 1888).

³ D. MacLeod, *Norman MacLeod*, 2 vols. (London, 1876), ii, 383.

condition of the earth came into being and perished".⁴ MacLeod was prepared to deny both a literal interpretation of Genesis and earlier attempts to rationalise the Mosaic account with scientific discoveries which claimed that the days in Genesis represented long periods of time. For MacLeod the successive acts of creation were not to be regarded "as taking place in the visible, external order of things, but in the mind of God, that is in not a chronological succession which has been given us, but an ideal succession rising from that which is lowest and most rudimentary, to that which is highest and most complex". Genesis was in short "a poetical and not a scientific account" with God the "perfect Poet who in creation acts in our conceptions". Such a view, MacLeod believed, encouraged scientific enquiry and investigation "into the secret facts of laws which the creation can be induced to reach up to us.... He who made the light is pleased that we should enquire into the law of light".⁵ As with many other churchmen MacLeod was prepared to adapt the "old form of thought" to recent scientific discoveries, while also altering his theological position in ways which were to affect both his and the Church's social theology.

"From atonement to incarnation" is a phrase which could be used to describe the major theological transformation of the period. Concentrating on natural depravity, original sin, and life's "ethical obstacle course" on which people are "tempted, tested and ultimately sorted into saints and sinners in readiness for the Day of Judgement",⁶ with redemption provided by Christ's Atonement on the Cross, the theology of Atonement was increasingly challenged as the century progressed for its other-worldliness and emphasis on punishment for man's depravity. Furthermore, the Scottish church-goer had to accept not only the prevailing interpretation of atonement but also the even less reassuring thought that Christ's vicarious sacrifice was limited to the Elect. In Scotland the attack on atonement and

⁴ N.MacLeod, "The Six Days of Creation", *Good Words* (1860), 636-40.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ B.J.Hilton, *The Age of Atonement* (London, 1987), 16.

predestination was led by Norman MacLeod's cousin John McLeod Campbell who had a "greater influence on Norman's views than any other theologian..."⁷ In 1825 McLeod Campbell was presented by the Duke of Argyll to the parish of Rhu, near Helensburgh on the Gareloch, but it was to be a short ministry. McLeod Campbell became concerned with the effect of the Calvinist teaching on election and the atonement. His parishioners were taught that their salvation depended on believing in Christ and living a good life. However, the doctrine of election meant that their faith came short of full assurance of God's love and peace after death. McLeod Campbell came to believe in "Universal Atonement through Christ, pardon for sin freely offered to all men as the ground of Assurance without which there is no saving faith".⁸

Norman MacLeod's theology shows the influence of McLeod Campbell's thinking, a fact recognised by MacLeod himself:

As to John Campbell's book on the Atonement, it is like himself, dark, but deep, and very true. I think it has led me captive. I shall read it again; but it finds me and fills up a huge void. I fear that no one has read it but myself.⁹

Commenting in his *Journal* in 1862 on the Evangelical Party, he noted:

They will tell you that you deny the atonement unless you believe that Christ on the Cross endured the punishment which was due to each sinner of the elect for whom he died; which, thank God, I don't believe, as I know he died for the whole world.¹⁰

⁷ D.MacLeod, *Norman MacLeod*, i, 275

⁸ J.H.S.Burleigh, *A Church History of Scotland* (London, 1960), 372.

⁹ D.MacLeod, *Norman MacLeod*, ii, 51.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 137-8.

Shortly before he died MacLeod was happy to be labelled as a latitudinarian if by this term it was implied that he did not believe “all mankind are damned to excruciating torments in soul and body for all eternity, because of Adam’s sin, and the original corruption springing therefrom, and that God has sent a saviour for a select few only, and that death determined the eternal condition of men....”¹¹

The interpretation of Atonement, as Donald C. Smith has pointed out, led to a failure to “take the real humanity of Christ seriously” which in turn meant that the “real humanity of men and women – their needs and problems, their misery and degradation” was not taken seriously for much of the nineteenth century.¹² However, as Atonement was replaced with a rediscovery of Christ so a new emphasis was placed on achieving the Kingdom of God on earth. The Church was concerned both with the world to come and this world.

Likewise MacLeod, who in stressing the Church’s duty to work for improvements in all aspects of life on earth, believed that this example would ensure that “man shall know through the ministrations of the body, the Church, how its living Head gives them all things richly to enjoy”.¹³ Furthermore, this would be a manifestation of God’s love:

When shall we learn to imitate, or rather to share, the love of Him who was love itself, who, knowing that all things were given Him of the Father ... girded Himself with a towel and washed the disciples’ feet?¹⁴

These broader parameters for evangelisation did not according to most accounts gain greater acceptance until the later decades of

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 382.

¹² D.C.Smith, *Passive Obedience and Prophetic Protest. Social Criticism in the Scottish Church 1830-1945* (New York, 1987), 61.

¹³ D.MacLeod, *Norman MacLeod*, ii, 8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, i, 287.

the century,¹⁵ with the opening quotation from the Reverend John Robson capturing the prevailing view of the 1840s that spiritual matters should be the sole concern of the Church. In 1866 the Glasgow City Mission still spoke for many when it claimed that “we must trace physical degradation and suffering in by far the majority of instances, to moral and spiritual degeneracy; and if we would lay the axe to the root of the tree, we must strike at the ungodliness which so fearfully prevails....”¹⁶ Fifteen years earlier, however, MacLeod wrote in terms which directly contradicted the prevailing social theology:

The common idea at present is that the whole function of the Church is to teach and preach the gospel; while it is left to other organizations, infidel ones they may be, to meet all the other varied wants of our suffering people. And what is this but virtually to say to them, the Church of Christ has nothing to do as a society with your bodies, only with your souls, and that too, but in the way of teaching? Let infidels, then, give you better houses or better clothing, and seek to gratify your tastes and improve your social state; with all this, and thousand other things needful for you as men, we have nothing to do. What is this, too, but to give these men the impression that Christ gives them truth merely on Sabbath through ministers, but that He has nothing to do with what is given them every day of the week through other channels? Whereas the Christian congregation or society ought not to consider as foreign to itself any one thing which its loving Head Jesus Christ gives to bless and dignify man, and desires man to use and enjoy. We must not separate ourselves from any important interest of our brethren of mankind, calling the one class of blessings

¹⁵ See, for example, C. Brown, *The Social History of Religion in Scotland since 1730* (London, 1987), 169-208, and D.C. Smith, *Passive Obedience*, 245-313.

¹⁶ Glasgow City Mission Annual Report, 1866. Held in City Mission's Offices, 7 West George Street, Glasgow.

spiritual, and accepting these as the special truths of the Christian Church, and calling another class temporal, and recognising them as a trust for society given to the unbelievers. In so doing we give Satan the advantage over us.¹⁷

Moreover, as early as 1846 MacLeod emphasised that social disadvantage could make people deaf to the Gospel message:

The defect of most systems for benefiting man has arisen ... from forgetting that man is an intellectual, social, moral, active, and sentient being, and that his well being is advanced just in proportion as all these different parts of his nature are gratified. Better drainage ventilation, poor laws, deal with his sentient part; and so far so good. Reading-rooms, lectures, mechanics institutes, cheap literature, deal with his intellectual, and are good too. Amusements, coffee-houses, and some of the above dealt with his social, and are likewise good. The axiom “give the people always something to do” deals with his active powers; the gospel and all the means of grace with his moral nature; and as this is the mainspring of all he thinks and does, it is the most important of all; but it alone as a system of truth separated from a system of action, which includes all reform, will not do. To preach a sermon, and refuse meat to the starving hearers is a mockery; and so says St James.¹⁸

This recognition that an “environmental factor” could account for human behaviour did not become common currency until, as Donald J. Withrington has noted, the 1880s and 1890s and largely resulted from concerns which resurfaced in the 1860s

¹⁷ D. MacLeod, *Norman MacLeod*, ii, 7-8.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, i, 232-3.

and 1870s over the high levels of non-churchgoing.¹⁹ The bricks and mortar explanation of the 1820s and 1830s that non-attendance resulted from the maldistribution of church buildings would no longer suffice after a period of expansion in the number of churches. Within MacLeod's Barony parish in Glasgow, however, he could claim that the old explanation had some validity as in 1851, the year of his induction to the parish, for the population of 87,000 there was only one school connected with the Church. Resulting from the Disruption, four churches stood empty, and some areas had no Established Church at all. Nonetheless, MacLeod and many other churchmen came to address themselves to other practical solutions to non-churchgoing. Debates on home missions in the 1860s stressed the importance of extending evangelistic activities through ministers, missionaries and elders. In 1870 A.H. Charteris' Committee on Christian Life and Work encouraged voluntary support of lay men and women to evangelise their parishes a call which echoes MacLeod's belief in the personal influence of Christians: "We want living men! Not their books or their money only, but themselves".²⁰

With a welter of reports on social conditions, including the Church of Scotland's own report of 1888 on Non-Church Going and Housing of the Poor, and the Medical Officer of Health for Glasgow, J.B. Russell's reports of 1888 and 1889 on housing and sanitation, it became clear, however, that the environment influenced human behaviour and churchgoing in particular. In the forefront of this movement to encourage the national church to play a more active role in improving social conditions were Norman MacLeod's brother, Donald, and MacLeod's successor at the Barony church, John Marshall Lang, of whom it has been written that "for them, environmental factors and not personal sinfulness lay behind immoral, irreligious, unsocial behaviour of

¹⁹ D.J. Withrington, "The Churches in Scotland, c.1870 - c.1900: Towards a New Social Conscience?" *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, xix, pt.3.

²⁰ D. MacLeod, *Norman MacLeod*, ii, 6.

all kinds and the Church must remove or help to remove environmental problems before evangelisation had any hope of success....”²¹ Norman MacLeod, as has been shown above, had made the same point over forty years before.

MacLeod was influenced by debates on Atonement and early discussions on non-churchgoing but the above extracts show in addition a concern over the rise of “infidel organisations”. The last quarter of the century saw economic depression with increased unemployment and working-class militancy. The growth of Trade Unions, the Independent Labour Party and the power of the State saw social progress by evangelical self-help replaced by collectivist action by the State. Much of this happened after MacLeod’s death in 1872, consequently of more direct concern was the political religious current of the 1840s.

At Loudoun most of his parishioners were handloom weavers, sympathetic to Chartism. Nonetheless he was against Chartism and demands for universal suffrage, which he called “humbug”, believing that they would lead to anarchy and revolution.²² Here MacLeod showed himself as a strong supporter of the establishment, a sentiment which had influenced his attitude towards the Disruption. His decision to remain within the Church of Scotland was based on a belief that social revolution could only be prevented by a strong Established Church which he called the “bulwark of Protestantism, their act of righteousness, their conservator of social order and religious liberty”.²³ His views on social order were also evident in his attitude towards social classes where, although he rejected the “levelling principles of the Radical or the Chartist”,²⁴ he objected to the siege mentality which pervaded each tier of urban society:

²¹ D. Withrington, “Towards a New Social Conscience?”

²² D. MacLeod, *Norman MacLeod*, i, 286.

²³ *Ibid.*, 199.

²⁴ *Good Words* (February 1860), 162. Although this article was untitled, it was in all likelihood written by the editor, Norman MacLeod.

The separation outwardly of society is terrible. Only see the old and new Town of Edinburgh! What type of British Society! It used not to be so. In the old town and in the older times families of different grades used to live in the same tenement, and poor and rich were thus mingled together in their habitation and in their jobs.²⁵

This description of a bygone golden age provides a clue to the origin of many of his ideas. Although influenced by contemporary discoveries and events, MacLeod cast an envious eye back to seventeenth and eighteenth-century Scottish society, or perhaps more accurately, his rose-tinted memories of this society. One theme running through his *Recollections of a Highland Parish*²⁶ was the oneness of society therein. “The upper and lower classes”, he wrote, “were not separated from each other by a wide gap. The thought was never suggested of a great proprietor above ... and the people far below looking up to him with envy. On reviewing the state of Highland society, one was rather reminded of a pyramid whose broad base was connected to the summit by a series of regular steps.”²⁷ The shepherd felt at home in the Laird’s house while “the Highland gentleman never meets the most humble peasant without chatting with him as an acquaintance...”²⁸ MacLeod summed up the community spirit which resulted:

The people of every estate were as one family – the knot of kindness tying every heart together, and the friendly eye of the superiors was over us all.²⁹

Into urban society he aimed to transpose the clan characteristics of paternalism, human contact and “kindness” so that the “knot

²⁵ D.MacLeod, *Norman MacLeod*, i, 287.

²⁶ N.MacLeod, *Recollections of a Highland Parish* (London, 1891).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 174.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 133.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 346.

of kindness would bind every heart together” to counter the anonymity, gulfs and tensions of the city population. He did not, as had been shown, advocate a classless society but he rejected the social dislocation of the towns. Despite major differences on issues including the Disruption, Norman MacLeod and Thomas Chalmers shared one common objective. Both wished to transpose their view of an earlier rural society into the context of nineteenth-century urban life to solve the problems of urbanization and industrialisation.³⁰

The Highland influence may also partly explain MacLeod’s belief that the Church should meet some of the material needs of the poor. According to MacLeod, one of the moral obligations attached to the position of clan chief was to ensure that the basic material requirement of food, clothing and housing were provided for his clan. Furthermore, MacLeod’s father organised famine relief in the Highlands in 1836 and 1846.

The various strands of MacLeod’s thought came together in his concept of the duties of a Christian congregation. This should have been a body of Christians who were associated not merely to receive instruction from a minister but also to “consider one another and to provoke to love and good works, and as a society to do good unto all as they have opportunity”. The Church acting through its congregations was to be the “grand social system which Christ has ordained, not only for the edification of the saints, but also for advancing all that pertains to the well being of humanity”.³¹ Many other churches emphasised books and money, but MacLeod held to the conviction that ministers and church members should go out and meet intellectual, moral, active, sentient and spiritual needs. In so doing class divisions would be broken down, but more importantly, all men would come to know the power of a living, saving Christ.

On being inducted into the Barony in 1851, one of his first acts was, like Thomas Chalmers, to organise the administrative

³⁰ See S.J.Brown, *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth in Scotland* (Oxford, 1982), xv, 91-151.

³¹ D.MacLeod, *Norman MacLeod*, ii, 4-5.

framework of parochial work. The Parish was divided into twelve units each under the supervision of at least one elder and deacon. To facilitate contacts between minister, elder, deacon and congregation, regular district meetings were held. MacLeod had introduced them in Dalkeith and their object was "to afford an opportunity to the minister, the elders and the deacons of the district to meet with the members of the congregation and their children, in order to communicate and receive information, and to cultivate personal acquaintanceship, and Christian intercourse".³² These meetings were a practical result of his desire to foster a sense of community spirit in the congregation.

Such a scheme catered to existing church members, but MacLeod was equally concerned with the wider missionary work among those who had weaker, or no ties at all with the Church. MacLeod divided this work into two areas, parochial and non-parochial. The former covered the spiritual, educational and social needs of the parish, while the latter included the Church of Scotland's home and foreign missions.

As in other churches, the greatest emphasis was placed on education.³³ This, however, raises an important question which also applies to the whole range of parochial work. How far were MacLeod's ideas shared by his congregation? Because he played the dominant role in these schemes, it is very difficult to answer this question. A possible answer is a negative one. Had there been any serious divisions of opinion between minister and congregation they probably would have appeared in minute books or even in public. Even during the heated Sabbath controversy the Kirk Session and congregation remained "loyal" to MacLeod.³⁴ In mission work no serious rifts were recorded between minister and laymen, the latter being prepared to help finance and implement MacLeod's plans. Therefore, it is

³² *Barony Church Magazine*, 1855-1856. (Held in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow, Glasgow Room)

³³ See the author's "Education and Evangelisation, Presbyterian Missions in Mid-Victorian Glasgow", *Scottish Historical Review*, lxxvi (April, 1987).

³⁴ D. MacLeod, *Norman MacLeod*, ii, 188-212.

reasonable to assume the MacLeod's thinking percolated through most of the congregation.

When considering the Established Church's motives in education, it should be remembered that there was a legal obligation on the Church and heritors to provide schools. In the Barony Church this obligation, as has been noted, had not been carried out with much enthusiasm before 1851, but by 1862 MacLeod had instituted the opening of seven schools in various areas.

Legal obligations apart, these schools were a practical result of MacLeod's aim of satisfying some of the five human senses in an attempt to create his ideal form of society. If this appeared to be building castles in the air, then some of his other objectives, especially the creation of a more ordered society, were more down to earth. These may well have had a stronger appeal to the middle-class communicant.

The Barony's schools were run by the Kirk Session and thus classified as Sessional Schools. Unlike the non-established presbyterian churches, until the 1840s and 1850s, the Barony's schools received State aid if both master and school met certain criteria. Once financial help was given, the school was regularly inspected by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, although in the important areas of the curriculum and fees the Church was free to act as it pleased.

The curriculum did not differ from the one taught in other schools. Religious Instruction was the central subject but also included was reading, writing and arithmetic (the Three Rs), grammar, geography, sewing and knitting. The last two subjects were for the girls only. Fees were charged per subject; a month's instruction in the three Rs for boys cost 1s 2d., while lessons in reading, sewing and knitting over the same period cost girls 1s. Although calculated on a monthly basis, fees were payable weekly and free education also provided. It was only granted after careful investigation by the elder and deacon concerned.

The records do not illumine to a high degree the background of those who received free education. One entry suggests that

there may have been two categories; children of workers who had fallen on hard times, along with widows and one-parent families:

Applications for gratuitous education for the following parties were considered and allowed:

Andrew Donnelly, aged 9 years

Isabella Donnelly, aged 8 years. Children of James Donnelly, weaver, residing at 37 Burgher Street

Robert Pettigrew, aged 10 years, son of Robert Pettigrew, weaver, 28 Burgher Street

One of the children of Mrs Christie, East Miller Street

And William Roger, illegitimate child, aged 7 years.³⁵

Low fees and gratuitous education ensured that the schools were not placed beyond the means of the unskilled worker and urban poor. A brief analysis of pupils' parental occupations at Bluevale School showed that 37.8 per cent of the "pupils belong to Parents who are tradesmen and mechanics". 62.3 per cent were children of unskilled or unemployed workers.³⁶ Referring to Kelvinhaugh and Bluevale Schools, John Gordon, an Inspector of Schools, reported that "these are under considerable disadvantages, the attendance being irregular and many of the people very poor".³⁷

Gordon's statement pinpoints the problem of irregular attendance which went hand in hand with attendance from these pupils. In 1855, 912 children attended all the schools but of this total almost 50 per cent had been present for under one year and were soon expected to leave. Furthermore, in the same year, one

³⁵ Barony Church Elders' and Deacons' Minute Book, 30 November 1858. Strathclyde Regional Archives (SRA), CH2/173.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 11 September 1854.

³⁷ *Barony Church Magazine*, 1855-1856.

third of the pupils had been absent for periods ranging from 26 to 49 days, in a school year of approximately 290 days.³⁸

Parental apathy towards education combined with the attraction of factory employment were cited as the two main reasons for this in the Church Magazine of 1855:

The limited period of attendance is occasioned by the indifference frequently manifested by parents to the education of their children, and the facilities afforded to the manufacturing population for the employment of children at an early age.³⁹

The result was that most pupils left schools without having mastered the basic skills of reading and writing.

With a view to countering this trend, an attempt was made to interest parents in education through a series of lectures. These appear to have fallen on deaf ears since the problem continued and in 1863 a system of monthly fees was begun. By charging fees a month in advance it was hoped to encourage more stable periods of attendance. This was the system's sole objective, unlike many other schools where it was also aimed at increasing the school's economic and social standing. However, the effect, as in other schools, was that monthly fees excluded "from good schools the children of the lowest orders, many of whom cannot pay more than a penny a week, and who have neither the ability nor the inclination to pay a month in advance".⁴⁰ The Barony's schools had now inadvertently succeeded in driving away the very people they were aiming to attract.

In addition to day schooling, the Church ran evening classes. The motivating forces behind them were more clearly outlined

³⁸ Typical holidays for Sessional Schools were a two-week autumn break, two long weekends at the Lord's Suppers, and three single days – Christmas, New Year and the King's Birthday. See J.Scotland, *The History of Scottish Education* (London, 1970), i, 247.

³⁹ *Barony Church Magazine*, 1855-1856.

⁴⁰ J.Greig and T.Harvey, *Report on the State of Education in Glasgow, 1866* (Edinburgh, 1866), 140.

than in day schools. "We require", wrote MacLeod, "a wider education for our artisans themselves, so as to train them up to such fixed ideas and habits as may fit them to meet the actual temptations to which they are exposed..."⁴¹ The object of Sunday evening classes was "to endeavour to perpetuate any good impressions which they (the pupils) may have received in Sabbath schools, to induce them to form habits of self culture, and to spend their leisure in intellectual pursuits or innocent recreation".⁴² Although these classes fitted in with MacLeod's aim to satisfy the intellectual side of man's nature, the temporal advantages accruing from them may have encouraged church members, worried about social and political unrest, to contribute more money. Evening classes were held by the day school teacher and the Sabbath School Society, but the most famous were the classes held in Martyrs' Church.⁴³ All these categories fit into broadly the same pattern. No pupils under 18 years of age were admitted which gave the classes the heading Adult Evening Classes. It has been claimed that "the idea of establishing such schools originated with the Rev. Dr MacLeod..." This is not strictly true as many other churches were running evening classes before MacLeod came to Glasgow.⁴⁴ They took in younger pupils but adults attended evening classes in secular institutions. MacLeod merely joined together these two existing practices in an ecclesiastical environment.

The curriculum offered by all but Martyrs' School included Religious Instruction. The latter taught only secular subjects and this was a radical departure from previous curricula which gave religious education top priority. For the origins of this scheme we must go back to MacLeod's first charge at Loudoun. There, as described above, he gave a course of lectures on geology to the Newmilns' weavers. Many had never been to church but

⁴¹ D. MacLeod, *Norman MacLeod*, ii, 57.

⁴² *Barony Church Magazine*, 1855-1856.

⁴³ J. Scotland, *A History of Scottish Education*, i, 302.

⁴⁴ See the author's "Education and Evangelisation".

after two or three lectures some began to attend church. From this experience MacLeod believed that the Church should first “win” people on “common ground” and then bring them to “holy ground”.⁴⁵ However, it may have been MacLeod’s personality rather than any innate causal relationship between these areas which encouraged the weavers to go to church. It was hoped, however, that some of those who went to Martyrs’ classes would then go on to attend and join the Church.

As one Inspector of Schools, John Gordon, noted, the dominant social grouping were skilled workers at the classes. “The male pupils are nearly all engaged in mechanical occupations during the day.”⁴⁶ Their numerical superiority was the result of three factors. The skilled worker often worked a shorter day than his unskilled counterpart and had more time to spare for evening education. Unskilled workers could not afford the fee of 3s a quarter, while the artisan’s desire for self-improvement was also a strong motive force. Education was highly valued *per se*, but it was also necessary for progress up the social ladder. In Barony Street Evening School, architectural drawing was taught to pupils whose object was “generally to fit themselves for practices as draughtsmen”.⁴⁷ Unfortunately the Church did not record how many adult pupils were, or became church members. Consequently, we cannot test whether MacLeod won men on both “common” and “holy” ground.

Similarly inadequate information was given for Sunday schools. Apart from data on the number of schools, pupils and teachers there were few sociologically interesting facts. For example, in 1853 the Church ran twelve Sunday Schools with 105 teachers and an average total attendance of 1,172 pupils.⁴⁸ No information was recorded about these pupils’ social status, but if the schools were bedevilled by the same problems of

⁴⁵ D. MacLeod, *Norman MacLeod*, i, 166-7.

⁴⁶ *Barony Church Magazine*, 1861-1862.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Glasgow Sabbath School Union Annual Report, 1854. Held by National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

indiscipline and irregular attendance as other Sunday Schools, their achievements would have been negligible.⁴⁹

Although education swallowed up a large part of missionary resources it was not the sole concern since MacLeod aimed to satisfy material and social needs. With these ends in view, a Refreshment Room was opened in the Port Dundas area of Glasgow opposite an iron foundry in St Rollox. It was hardly surprising that the convenor of the committee which ran the room was D.Y. Stewart, an elder in the Church and owner of the iron foundry. The facilities appear to have been well used since in one day in April 1856 the following quantities of food and drink were sold; 121 cups of coffee, 149 slices of bread, 190 pints of soup and 36 pints of broth.⁵⁰ In addition to supplying food, the centre provided a reading room which was free to those taking refreshments.

Although the concept of providing an alternative to a public house was not original, as similar centres existed in Dundee and Edinburgh, this room was one of the first of its kind in Glasgow marking a new departure in the Church's social action which had previously concentrated on spiritual needs.

MacLeod was first and foremost a pastor and, although he was concerned with his parishioners' physical condition, his primary concern was their spiritual well-being. This was ill served by the lack of churches and in an attempt to fill this gap he devoted much of his time to raising money for new churches. In his twenty-one years at the Barony he assisted in procuring ministers and congregations for the four vacant chapels and in founding five new churches.⁵¹ By any standards this was a remarkable achievement.

In line with other churches, district missionaries were employed to spread Christianity in the wynds and closes of Glasgow. One of their duties was to hold Sunday evening

⁴⁹ See the author's "Education and Evangelisation".

⁵⁰ *Barony Church Magazine*, 1856-1857.

⁵¹ These new churches were Bluevale opened in 1872, Kelvinhaugh (1873), MacLeod (1865), Port Dundas (1868) and Springburn (1854).

services “designed exclusively for people in their working clothes”.⁵² This design was met and these services often formed the basis of a new church. One example was the service at Kelvinhaugh which led to the founding of the Kelvinhaugh Church in 1859. These services lead us on to MacLeod’s most famous innovation at the Barony.

In 1857, he began his evening services for working people. The aim was to encourage those who “from poverty or other causes had fallen away from all church attendance”.⁵³ To this end none was admitted except in their working clothes and the services proved an outstanding success.

A newspaper reporter from London gave an amusing account of one service. In order to gain admittance he swapped his normal clothes for a “dirty coat, a dirty white flannel vest, striped short, red cravat and Glengarry bonnet”. Further cosmetics were needed, as it was only by “pulling my hair down over my brow, and, in the most slovenly manner possible, wiping my nose with the sleeve of my coat ... ” that he “passed in”. Once inside he found that the pews “were filled with men in their fustian jackets, and with poor women, bareheaded, or with an old shawl drawn over the head, and dresses most of them in short gown and petticoat. Unkempt heads, faces begrimed with labour, and mothers with infants in their arms, gave a strange character to the scene. The police sometimes reported that several well-known thieves were present”.⁵⁴ The reason for the success of the services in attracting working people, especially the urban poor, was that they bypassed the major obstacles to an increased lower working class presence at many normal church services. Without the emphasis on respectable dress, and financial commitment, combined with a worship catering for their needs, working people felt that they belonged at these services which they made their own.

⁵² *Barony Church Magazine*, 1857-1858.

⁵³ D. MacLeod, *Norman MacLeod*, ii, 57.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 262-4 for a fuller account of this service.

MacLeod's theory on the transitional relationship between "common" and "holy" ground could not be tested. There was, however, a direct correlation between his Sunday evening services and full church membership. In April 1857 he reported to the Kirk Session that "between sixty and seventy" of those who had come to the evening worship "had expressed a desire to remember Christ at the Lord's Supper, and profess faith in Him".⁵⁵ They had never before been communicants. By attending evening services some went on to join the Church while others formed their own church. This was Barony Mission Church opened in 1855 in Parliamentary Road. The name was later changed to MacLeod Church. Its congregation was almost exclusively working class with all but two members in 1866, represented by parents bringing their children to be baptised, being either skilled or unskilled workers. The two exceptions were clerks. Therefore, MacLeod's evening services were successful in three areas. Firstly, they attracted working people to go to church. Secondly, many of these same people went on to become communicant members of the church. Thirdly, others who attended the evening services formed their own church.

MacLeod made contacts between Christians and non-Christians one of his policy's cornerstones but it is doubtful whether it was successfully implemented. Most work was done by himself, day school teachers and missionaries. Congregational activity would appear to have been limited to Sunday School teaching along with elders' and deacons' visitation. As such, it was no greater than in other churches. MacLeod's congregational meetings may have helped to build up a community spirit within the congregation, but it only made up a very small percentage of the parish population. Herein lay the perhaps insurmountable barrier to the achievement of his aim. The sheer size of the population meant that one congregation could not hope to contact a significant proportion of the whole.

MacLeod's attempts to recreate paternalistic rural relationships with the Barony Parish, a belief that the

⁵⁵ SRA, CH2/173, Barony Kirk Session Minutes, 9 April 1857.

environment could but help and hinder a faith in Christ and the influence of current ideas and events, largely explain his work in Glasgow. A congregation was obliged to spread the Gospel message of God's love which necessitated increased contacts between Christian and non-Christian. Additional means to satisfy intellectual and spiritual needs were religious, and secular education alongside increased facilities for worship. MacLeod would have agreed that man cannot live by bread alone but he realised that material factors influenced man's whole character. The Refreshment Room helped to satisfy one part of the bread of life. One Refreshment Room was a tiny drop in the ocean but much of its significance, alongside MacLeod's belief that the environment could help or hinder a faith in God, lay in the direction in which it helped point future resources.

After his death, MacLeod's influence on the Church is evidenced in the work of his brother Donald, minister of the Park Church in Glasgow, and John Marshall Lang, his successor at the Barony. Donald MacLeod's dominant role in pressing the church into investigating housing conditions has already been described. In his moderatorial address to the General Assembly in 1895 he pointed out that great numbers of the working classes had been alienated from the Church because, for too long it had advocated an "otherworldly individualistic religion and was indifferent to the appalling social conditions of the poor".⁵⁶ Earlier he had noted that it was not enough for the Church merely to concentrate on giving words of advice:

... the Church ... has to teach that it has more for these so-called "lapsed masses" than to assault them with armies of district visitors and to shower upon them tracts and good advices, while we are leaving them to swelter in dens and under conditions where Christian life is difficult, if not impossible to realise....⁵⁷

⁵⁶ D.C.Smith, *Passive Obedience*, 283.

⁵⁷ *Non Church-Going and the Housing of the Poor* (Edinburgh, 1888).

By the turn of the century John Marshall Lang was claiming that the churches had to back social reform if they were to survive at all. In his Baird Lectures of 1901 Marshall Lang argued that the churches' fear of Socialism and the Socialists' dislike of organised religion, although real, were in fact differences of degree rather than of principle when it came to the "social question":

Nowadays it may almost be said ... that we are all Socialists, and there can be no doubt that we are now in the throes of a social upheaval, the consequences of which must be twofold – either the betterment of society or its dissolution.⁵⁸

The churches could not afford to be seen standing in the margins as others proposed practical solutions to the social question:

No-one can attach himself to a crowd ... where Socialist orators are haranguing their audiences, without finding a strong tendency to pass unlimited censure on the Church, either for apathy towards the social problem or positive neglect of doing anything to help towards its practical solution.⁵⁹

He went on to argue that the Church should utilise her resources "not for the purpose of administering mere temporary aids, but for the permanent improvement of estate, and the permanent blessing of the life". Recognising the seminal influence of Norman MacLeod, Lang continued:

More and more the words spoken by Norman MacLeod nearly fifty years ago are accepted as a rule of action: 'Let congregations take cognisance of the whole man and his various earthly relationships; let them seek to enrich him

⁵⁸ J.M.Lang, *The Church and its Social Mission* (Edinburgh, 1902).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

with all Christ gave him; let them endeavour to meet all his wants on active, social, intellectual, sentient, as well as spiritual being, so that men shall know through the ministrations of the body, the Church, how its living Head gives them all things richly to enjoy.⁶⁰

Notwithstanding MacLeod's later influence, his schemes were not always successful. Day and evening schools largely failed to reach the "neglected population". The greatest impact on non-churchgoing sections of the working class was made by MacLeod himself. Here his evening services stand out as a major achievement, while his love of Glasgow alongside a sympathetic concern for, and defence of working people made him a popular figure. When sitting in his study early in the morning, MacLeod would know that six a.m. had struck "by hearing far down below him in the Valley of the Clyde, the thud of a great steam hammer, to which a thousand hammers, ringing on a thousand anvils at once replied..."⁶¹ He never lost his boyhood fascination for boats and down at the Broomielaw he "would wander with delight among the ships and sailors, criticising hulls and rigging..."⁶² His popularity was illustrated when a minister of the Free Church not far from the Barony was asked to visit a sick man. Before seeing him the minister asked the invalid's wife if her husband was a member of any church. She replied that he was on the Barony's roll. The minister then asked why she had not sent for Norman MacLeod and she answered: "Weel ye see, sir, it's a very bad infectious complaint, and we didna like Dr Norman to run any risk, so we called on you".⁶³

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ D. MacLeod, *Norman MacLeod*, ii, 2.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ A.G. Gallant, *St Mungo's Bells or Old Glasgow Stories Ring Out Anew* (Glasgow, 1888), 129. Gallant was a pseudonym for one J.R. Russell.