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A COUNTRY PARISH

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MCMVIII.

A
COUNTRY PARISH

STUDIES IN PASTORAL THEOLOGY
AND CHURCH LAW

BY THE
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PREFACE.

IN 1899 I delivered the following discourses in the parish church of Balmaghie, of which I had then been minister for seventeen years. They were afterwards published locally by Mr. J. H. Maxwell of the *Kirkcudbrightshire Advertiser*, by whose kind permission I have now had them reprinted. Two reasons have led me to do this. First, the old impression was exhausted. Secondly, the papers themselves seemed to me to be still apposite, on the whole; and they also form a brief series of studies in Pastoral Theology and in Church

Law. I am in hopes that my students may find them useful in the latter respect, since they embody actual experience in a rural parish. And for others they may have a special interest,—above all for our beloved Galloway folk, in whom I have a deep and affectionate interest.

The first impression was by permission dedicated to Dr. John Hunter of Trinity Church, Glasgow. This second one I take leave to dedicate, with heartfelt love and many precious memories,

TO THE PEOPLE
OF
BALMAGHIE.

H. M. B. REID.

GLASGOW UNIVERSITY,
December, 1907.

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I.

THE PARISH AS IT MIGHT BE.

The "Parochial Mind"—Gennesaret or Gadara?
—The Ideal Parish—Environment—Christian
Sentiment—Relation of Sexes—The Parish
for Christ.

"And when the men of that place had knowledge of Him, they went out into all that country round about and brought unto Him all that were diseased. . . ."

ST. MATTHEW xiv. 35.

"And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus . . . and they besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts."

IBID. viii. 34.

THE object of these discourses is to present a Christian treatment of the parochial idea. The two passages written above sharply illustrate St. Matthew's professional instinct. As

a tax-gatherer, he had constantly in his mind a departmental view of the country, or indeed a parochial map. Throughout his gospel, the reference is incessant to the districts amid which he himself had laboured, and in which his Master chiefly taught—the hamlets or “cities,” the rural cantons lying around the Sea of Galilee. He had an intensely parochial mind, a thing despised to-day by some, but, as we shall see, capable of high Christian uses and applications.

For one thing, it helped him to throw off vivid contrasted pictures of different localities, such as we see here. There is first the country around the lake—a strictly rural scene, with little groups of houses dotted over it; here, the people (or more strictly the men) of the

place welcomed Jesus eagerly. As soon as they heard the news that He was come, and what manner of person He was, they despatched runners to all the districts, and soon might be seen bodies of men carrying the sick towards His abode. What a striking scene the parish must have presented! And all these poor souls were being carried straight to Jesus! This is the scene which Scotland of old saw each Sunday, when from all quarters of a parish, men and women and children came, or were brought, to Church to hear about Him, and to worship His Father in heaven. Babes but eight days old were then conveyed over weary miles to receive His baptism. And then, too, as in the age of Matthew, and in our own, as many

as touched the hem of His robe were made "perfectly whole."

The contrast is to be found only a few miles off, almost, as we say, in the next parish. On the steep cliff frowning on the lake was a village called Gadara, whose people followed a trade held in scant honour by the Hebrew. Jesus had wrought terrible havoc in the trade, and so they came out as soon as they heard of His approach, and met Him in a serried crowd, with loud cries—"Go back! Go away! Leave the parish!" It is not often we read of the patient Jesus going away from people; but in this case, they had their will. He took a boat, and sailed across the lake to His own country. Even there, we know that He was hampered by local jealousies

and smallness of view, and “did not many mighty works because of their unbelief.” (St. Matt. xiii. 58.)

Look at the map for Galilee and its lake, trace our Lord’s movements and experiences, and you see how varied and opposite were the local characteristics, as shown toward Him who came to set up the government of Heaven. And learn how important it is, for our own future record, that as a parish, we should be ready to imitate the Gennesaret people, not the Gadarenes—ready, as soon as we feel Him to be among us or near us, to send out the good news, CHRIST IS COMING! and to bring to Him all souls diseased.

The division of Scotland into parishes dates from the twelfth century, and followed on the setting up

of dioceses—first the large, then the small. Every corner of the land was gradually marked out for Christ. It was the same from the beginning of the Christian Church; first presbyters—bishops in large cities, then preachers who were sent out into the country round to tell the people of Christ; then gradually country churches springing up and having settled pastors, who had one among them as chief of his equals, the chorepiscopus or country-bishop. It is the very word St. Matthew uses—"they sent out into all that chorepiscopate round about"—we might almost say in the light of after things. In Scotland it began with the landed men turning their estate into a parish by building church and manse, setting out a decent glebe, and having other endowment charged

for all time on their rents to support a minister of Christ. Often, an estate was too big for one minister, and then it was cut up into several parishes. Thus Wiston in Lanarkshire, a very large manor, gave us other three parishes, Crawfordjohn (a famous Covenanting parish), Roberton, and Symington. Or, again, a burgh or city grew up in an estate, requiring a church and its equipment for its own use. Thus the parish of Edinburgh was taken out of St. Cuthbert's, and Aberdeen from St. Machars: just as Castle-Douglas from Kelton. And it was all done because of the "green hill far away," because Christ had died. Nowadays, people talk of their parish, and rates, and boards, as if the parish were purely a secular thing. It never was so. It sprang from

Christ's blood; it is hallowed by Christ's tears; it ought to be holy in our eyes as Christ's people.

The ideal parish was a manor having its own bounds, its own tenantry and indwellers, its own church and minister, its own schools and institutions—and all for Christ. This is the Parish as it was, and as it might be again.

To revive and promote the Christian idea, we should aim at a united Church. In Scotland, the problem is simplified. We have now only two large fragments of the Scottish Church, whose ragged edges show where they were riven by the earthquake of 1843, and indicate the points where reunion may be effected. Parish life suffered bitter wounds from the Disruption, but those wounds are

healing, and may yet be quite cured. There may, there must, perhaps, be scars ; but they will be not altogether unwelcome if they are seen on a united Christian body. The original *esprit de corps*, which as we see arose from religious unity, may be revived in a distinctly religious form. But upon this I shall dwell in my second discourse ; and meantime, I urge the need of cherishing that *esprit de corps*, that parish sentiment, so far as it remains even amid our temporary divisions.

Who does not know how a Scotsman thrills when in distant places he meets some one from his own parish ? In Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, London, in South Africa, in the Colonies, on the Continent, the happy reminiscence when we return is—" I

met a man from our own parish." Clannishness we call it jestingly ; yet the Highland clan-feeling is not at its root, for we have no chiefs, no suzerains, no feudal lords. The land is tossed about from hand to hand. It is at bottom the bond of Christ, in whose service our parishes first extricated their separate existence from pagan Scottish life. The parish feeling is in the last analysis a religious feeling, and hence a preacher of Christ has full warrant to praise it, and to urge that we save it from dying out.

There is a danger, if not more than one. In the first place, we must somehow arrest the too fluid stream of migration, whether into the towns or from parish to parish. Men who live but a year or two in a parish

do not take fire ; it used to be a proverb that, after five years, in many parishes a man was still treated as an "incomer." When I went to Balmaghie twenty-five years ago that was what I was told. Five years before even the minister can stand up and speak as a parishioner ! Yet it is not too long to drink in the deep parish sentiment, to steep oneself in the air of the glens and hills, to absorb the local traditions and folk-customs, to learn to speak and to feel with the parish. I am assuming that one can accept this process of growth and assimilation almost passively ; but we know that there are things in a parish which are unchristian, airs which suffocate or relax, customs which must be fought to the death. Yet withal,

where Christ has been preached so long, where men and women have so long haunted the Holy Table after deep self-searching—above all, here, where laird and cottar, and even frail women, have gained the martyr's crown for Him—the parish feeling can never be prevailingly a bad thing. I firmly hold the contrary. Rightly interrogated, the parish generally answers true—true to brotherliness, true to neighbourliness, true to justice and fairplay for rich and poor, true to the spirit of almsgiving, true to common sense and Christian tolerance, and true to Christ.

Then why should we idly let this precious and powerful sentiment perish, because of constant movements among employers and employed? Why should the "Term

time" be so saddening a season to those who love their parish, carrying off as it does so many who might in time become whole-hearted parishioners—yes, whole-souled Christians? More stability and fixity are needed. Let the legislature, let the landowner and employer, let the hired labourer look to it; for all are interested in preserving the common good feeling which makes a parish no mere civil department or taxing area, but a living, loving whole.

Our parish sentiment will benefit, secondly, from improved conditions of life of all sorts. I have frequently dwelt on this, and although an old parishioner once wrote from London to say that in his far-off day (sixty years since) the worst man in the parish lived in the best house, yet

as a rule better houses, brighter surroundings, interest in gardening, beekeeping, and the like, strengthen the parish feeling. Flower shows and industrial exhibitions are most valuable factors. Libraries, and concert-halls, and social meetings, all help. A great and pressing need is a parish doctor for every parish ; not for paupers only, but for all who will have him. Miners, iron workers, Oddfellows, Foresters, Co-operative Associations have their own doctor ; and why not parishes ? Recreation should be a growing feature, but let it be free of temptation. It is a Christian parish we want, not a betting or a carousing one. Literature, the press, should do its part, by enshrining parish history, song, and legend. A parish magazine

worthy of the name is the need of the future. People, who spend from threepence to sixpence a week on London or Edinburgh newspapers, would gladly pay for a paper confined to the news and feelings of the parish. Everything that makes life happier and healthier should be brought in. It is from misery or from monotony that many ills of the flesh become part of our heritage. Cleanliness, airiness, cheerfulness, busy joyful work, will help mightily to strengthen the parish feeling. And the cottage was Christ's own ideal of a place for Him to take His ease in. And when death came, He made even death a blessing to the humble home at Bethany.

Lastly, we need a stronger and more pronounced Christian sentiment.

Pure air is much ; but pure morals and kindly Christian charity are far more. Scotland in its purest times, when ploughmen went out on the moor to kneel and die for Christ, was a marvellously sordid and ill-clad and unwholesome country. In Balmaghie, in the year 1700, the roads were few and wretched. "The houses were built of stone plastered with mud, and they had roofs of straw and turf, often far from providing shelter in rainy weather. The windows, even of the churches, generally had no glass in them. They were mere holes in the wall, through which the smoke from the peat fire escaped, when it failed to emerge through the chimney hole in the roof. The live stock were sheltered under the same roof as

their owners. Man and beast entered by the same doorway, and slept in the one undivided chamber."¹ The food was of the coarsest, and forks were unknown. Butcher meat was hardly ever eaten. The dress was in keeping. Children had no shoes till they were able to go to Church; and would that all our children were shod every Sunday on such terms! The poor did not know what clean linen was. The cottages at sunset were shrouded in gloom; candles and oil were yet unattained. The poor inmates lay huddled together for warmth, and slept through the long winter nights.

Yet it was out of such a wretched home that John Brown, of Priesthill, stepped on May day, 1685, at the

¹ *A Cameronian Apostle*, p. 51.

dawn, and faced Claverhouse and his soldiers, and died for Christ. It was from such homes that our own parish lads, George Short, and the "two Davids Hallidays" fled on the days they were caught at Kirkconnel and elsewhere, and were shot to death by the infamous Grierson of Lag, and the Earl of Annandale. Their parishes came and tenderly carried the shattered toil-worn bodies, each to his own parish kirkyard. At Kirkconnel, five men, of whom one was a gentleman by birth, one a portioner or feuar, one a tenant-farmer, and the other two perhaps shepherds or ploughmen, were surprised as they lay in the glen and were shot; and their parishes claimed the poor shells with pride and tears. Bell of Whiteside, the gentleman, lies in Anwoth, Len-

nox in Girthon, M'Robert in Twynholm, Halliday here, and Clement, a stranger and wayfarer, sleeps where he fell. His parish was too distant ; he was assuredly not a Galloway man, for we were very jealous of our rights in the blood of the saints.

The parish feeling, the Christian sentiment, was stronger in those days of miserable sanitation and coarse manners of life, than I fear it is to-day, when there are but two or three thatched roofs among us, and most men have a comfortable house of two or more apartments. So, it is plain that cleanliness is next to godliness, but you must first have godliness there, or it is next to nothing. We plead then for a purer, warmer, religious atmosphere, and the poor are pleading themselves. Why are

our reserved Scottish men and women, who have become earnest in the faith, so often drawn away to lay "meetings" and open-air preachings? It is because the air is warmer, the feeling is more intimate, than in our parish life. We want more heartiness, wholesomeness, and helpfulness. We want a purer public opinion on the relations of the sexes. We want young men to be more self-controlled (shall I not rather say Christ-bound?), and more dainty in their courtship. We want young women to be more exacting and large-minded. We ask them to take as their motto, *Respice finem*—think of the years to come! Think of your character, your husband's esteem for you for the whole of your life, your children who should rise up and call you

blessed. There is another appellation that you should rather die than be the cause of putting into their mouths. We want masters and mistresses to watch over young lives committed to their care. Wages are not all, though they be good, and promptly paid. See that your dependents are not under your eye earning a second wage—the wages of sin, which is moral and spiritual death.

The Parish as it Might Be is for Christ. We are here taking instruments that He is our chief, and we must be His clansmen. Let us try to realise our close organic bond in Christ. There may be great distances, separate hamlets, different social grades and sets, different political or local views; but let us practise the new commandment

preached so long ago to Rutherford's congregation at Anwoth Kirk—"Love one another," and love one another because our common parish bond is not one of taxes, or boundaries, or folk-customs, or churches, but because we are one in Christ.

II.

THE PARISH CHURCH.

Free Room—Free Gospel—Free Minister—The Parish Church to be comprehensive—Union of Presbyterians—Equality of all in Church—Work and Worship—Need of Class-rooms and Waiting-rooms—Weekly Receptions—Singing—Permanence of the Parish Church.

“And there was in that synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out saying, ‘Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth?’ . . .” ST. MARK i. 23, 24.

OUT of the village synagogue the Parish Church of Christendom grew up, as its ripest fruit and fulness. Synagogue just means Assembly Hall, and in the Synagogue the Hebrews of a village or canton

came together regularly each Sabbath day for sacred song, for prayer, and for the reading and explanation of the Scriptures. It was therefore to the synagogue that Christ bent His steps when He wished to meet His neighbours ; it was here that He announced Himself as the promised Messiah ; it was in a synagogue that He cast out the unclean spirit which resented His presence. And His Apostles, as well as the early missionaries, always sought out the synagogue as their point of departure in Christian work.

There is not on earth a more exact counterpart of the synagogue service than that which we observe from Sunday to Sunday. The Christian Parish Church is practically the Hebrew synagogue in a Christian

dress ; it is a converted synagogue, as indeed were not a few of the earliest of Christ's churches in Palestine and Asia Minor.¹ Moses has yielded his seat to Christ, and to-day it is in Christ's name and stead that the preacher, His ambassador, leads the devotions of our churches.

In treating the ideal of a Parish Church we are, of course, to think primarily of the country districts. In Scotland, every country parish has its parish church and minister, and under the present law the minister is chosen by that section of the parishioners which adheres to the Church, either as communicants, or as persons willing and worthy to be so. The day may come when all parishioners, being Christians and of

¹ See Cunningham's *Growth of the Church*, p. 24.

age, shall have this sacred franchise, since all are entitled to claim the services of the person elected.

The intention of those who erected these churches was to provide three things for all parishioners, namely, Free Room, Free Gospel, and Free Minister. In theory, all these are still ours. The area of the church, wherever vacant at the beginning of service, is open to all who come to worship God; and no charge may be made of any sort for accommodation. Seat rents are illegal. The good news of salvation is proclaimed without money and without price. The minister is provided for by the Church from her own funds bestowed by pious donors, and he is at the disposal of all for religious uses, to preach, to teach, to visit, to exhort,

or to rebuke—all without charge. Payments for marriage, burial, or christening, are illegal. The small fee for banns is a charge authorised for the trouble of registration and extracting, but it cannot be received by the minister as such. The whole aim is to separate Christ from Mammon, and so to offer a holy assembly open to the poor.

Whatever, therefore, forms a barrier to the free use of the building is out of harmony with its first and true design. If Christ is here, the way to Him must be kept open; no ticket-collector or money-changer may arrest the seeker after Christ; no social caste or vested interest should be allowed to hinder the approach of the worshipper to God. The avenues of an earthly palace are

guarded, and the entrée is jealously conferred ; but it must not be so here. For this is the sacred Assembly Hall of a whole parish, where every parishioner has a natural and a legal right of admission. Care should be taken, also, to invite and encourage men to come. Miserable jealousies about pews or sittings should be regarded as unchristian. In church, we should have all church things in common, as Bibles, hymnbooks, and the like. The passing stranger should be treated as a parishioner, and eagerly welcomed to seat and service. As the slave stepping on British soil becomes a freeman, so the wayfarer among us who treads this threshold should feel himself made a freeman of our Christian society.

The abolition of the present system

of allocation of sittings, which leaves large parts empty, while others are overtaxed, would tend to realise the purpose of Free Room. Benches or chairs without name and without ownership would make men feel that the church is to be used to its capacity as a free space. Men will flock to a hall or tent because there is no invidious reserving of seats. No one can frown on you or turn you out. The Church suffers constant hurt from those reserved seats.

The Free Gospel is one which is delivered to men as sinners for whom Christ died. As Carlyle said, "That built Dunscore Kirk"; and the suppression or corruption of that may well demolish any church. There should always be a reticence about money matters, albeit the weekly

offering has apostolic rule for its reverent use. Incessant appeals for collections have chilled many hearts which Christ's love, fully displayed, would have warmed. It is essential that the preacher should, as much as may be, stand quite above a pecuniary relation to his hearers. In Scotland's brightest age, there were men who read and expounded the Holy Scriptures for as little as one merk a year of fee. Much useless pity is spent on ill-paid clergy. What faithful labourer can count himself ill-paid to whom Christ says—"I will give thee a crown of life"? The crowds who throng the meetings held by earnest laymen are drawn partly by the thought, "Here is one who preaches for nothing; here is one who seeks not our substance, but our souls."

In the varied play of parish life, the minister was meant to be the servant of all, being first the servant of Christ. It is a terrible perversion to regard him as a mere dignitary or stipendiary. He is where Christ has called him by the voice of His people, in order that he may feed the flock, not that he may feed himself or his household. The pride or power of office should never come into play; the thought of service should be the paramount factor. While he should be a leader in the path of moral, spiritual, and intellectual progress, he ought to be such a leader as Christ Himself was, who hung upon the Cross that He might draw all men unto Him. The want of the age is a passionate self-devotion, whether in clerical or in lay life. If

our churches are to be refilled with a true parish gathering, it must be by the attraction of a whole-hearted service of men for Christ's sake. Pulpit eloquence will not do it. House-going (which Chalmers vaunted as making a "kirkgoing people") will not do it. Love alone will do it; the love of Christ first, and in Him of all the parish which has sprung from His blood. St. Paul's masterpiece in pastoral theology is the chapter on Christian Love; for there he decides that while we should "covet earnestly the best gifts," the way of excellence is to "follow after charity," and *then* "desire spiritual gifts." In the Parish Minister, the supreme and specific quality is loving-kindness, Christian brotherhood, the affectionate passion of a Christian

man for his kind ; to these let there be added, by all means, gifts of eloquence, learning, devotedness to duty, but let it be remembered that they are profitless apart from simple human emotions of tenderness and compassion.

The freeness of the Gospel ministry is never clearer than in doing and saying unpopular things. Of a famous French preacher we read that he was ever worst pleased when most applauded. A ministry that is always acceptable is no disinterested service, for praise is payment.

Let us now put into short separate statements the fundamental ideal of a Parish Church, where room, gospel, and minister, are all free.

(1) The church must be comprehensive. Our divisions have some-

what hindered this, and parish religion is broken into pieces. I regard the church of the majority as the true parish church, essential truths being always conserved. There are Highland parishes where the people mostly worship elsewhere than in the parish church. Nothing can make an empty building a church in the real sense ; for that consists not of stone and lime, but of Christian people built into a living temple. The reunion of our broken Presbyterianism is not more a duty, than it is a necessity, if the Parish Church is to stand. People talk as if Disestablishment were a mere legislative proposal ; it is rather an organic process which has been going on since 1690, and if not arrested must reach its natural result in spite of all the legislation in the

world. The story of the Irish Church is known, and forms a complete illustration. Unless the parish church embraces the parish, it has "a name to live and is dead." Let us not scout as a dream the project of re-assembling Scottish men and women under one sacred roof. Already, we read the same Bible, preach the same doctrines, sing the same spiritual songs, offer the same type of prayers, use the same forms of simple adoration. And why should not we, some day, sit on the same benches and haunt the one religious house? Meantime, we ought to study what makes for comprehension. Room should be left for difference in non-essentials. The bitterness of faction should be eschewed. We should realise that here is a rallying-ground for Christians of the Scottish

mode, amid the tombs of our forefathers, and nigh to the memorials of our martyrs. Let all narrow phrases be dropped. Do not say "I belong to the Established Church," since that is no true differentia of your religion. It is the parish church, and establishment did not make it so, as disestablishment cannot destroy it while it deserves the name, and fulfils the noble end, to comprehend all classes as Christ's people.

(2) There should be a perfect equality. On Rerrick Church is carved the motto—"The Rich and Poor meet together." It was the intention that, here, all classes should worship not as rich, or as poor, but as God's creatures; for "the Lord is the maker of them all." We cannot abolish outward distinctions even here.

Some will come in carriages, some will wend wearily on foot. Some will wear costly raiment (though taste dictates plainness for God's House), and others will be in homespun. Some will give of their abundance to the weekly offering; the widow must give only her mite. But all, as they enter, are stripped of rank, or means, or merit; we are here as equals before God, as sinners all trusting to Christ's merit only. For this cause, we are addressed as brethren, and none is singled out for honour or contempt. That preacher is self-condemned who preaches *at*, not *to*, his people. It is something that equally concerns all which he must with utmost earnestness do or declare in this place. And it must be something true, though at times unpalatable.

The parish pulpit is the place where things may be said, and ought to be said, which no other platform could so well befit. But it is no place for party or politics, or anything which divides and embitters the classes.

It is our sorrow and fault that the equality and fraternity of the Scottish Church are so much impaired. And it is a national danger too, that many segregate themselves into religious coteries, whether rich or poor. In the social crisis which is upon us, the weekly gathering of parishioners, without regard to rank or opinions, will form an element of crystallisation, a rallying-point for forces which unite and heal. For it will constantly testify that One is our master, even Christ, and that we all are brethren.

(3) Another quality is helpfulness.

The church in a parish should be a body of Christian helpers, bracing themselves by worship for work. The closing benediction bids grace be with us all, not as a mere pleasing virtue giving a private or limited satisfaction, but as an emanation of Christian goodness blessing others around us. "I always carry away something good from church," we say; but do we carry it away to others? Or is it the one talent of the unprofitable servant, hoarded and unused? A church which does nothing except keep itself going is the barren fig tree over again, and stands accursed. There should never be lack of workers. The minister should be sure of eager volunteers for Sunday School, for visitation of the poor and sad, for every species

of duty which Christ calls us to. The widespread difficulty of getting elders would melt away, if we realised that all ought to exercise their special gift in the Church. Women can and will do noble work; let them not be ashamed to offer themselves. And life will spring anew in an active church where people no longer look on, but help on. Ask yourself what you can help in. Can you sing? Then help the choir. Can you teach? Come and help in classes. Can you be kind to old and poor and lonely folk? Take a few cases, and exercise your gift of sympathy. Can you collect for Missions? the Church needs that gift, too. If you can do nothing special, you can at least join the worshippers who pray every week that Christ our Master, the Divine

Householder, may strengthen those who have talents to use them to the full.

(4) I mention, lastly, a few things more closely bearing on the building. We all ask for God the best house in the parish. We want everything which can make Christ's people love the place, and long to return. Therefore, let Christian art, in architecture, colour, music, and devotion, do its work unhindered. The church should be at least as comfortable as the home, and as beautiful, for it is to be Christ's home. I have long felt the need of better equipment, as compared with secular-meeting places. We provide them with waiting-rooms, and why not the church? We have in our halls, when properly built, classrooms; why not here also? There

is a great educational work to do, both among old and among young, and proper space should be given. The social element of church life is too much in the background. In an elder day, people lingered at the kirk-stile to greet each other and have friendly talk; but in this hurrying age the kindly function is being lost. Is it not conceivable that, some day, scope might be found for a weekly gathering under the church's shadow, either before or after the sacred rites? What else would so speedily put warmth into our cold and stilted services? What could better keep alive the religious sentiment of a parish? When youth and maiden are drawn to each other, the sweetest hour is at the kirk; and God help the cold Pharisee who can see sin in it!

That sacred tie might be lengthened through a lifetime, if the social side of church life were duly honoured.

The power of song is admitted in our religious life ; but in many cases, the congregational part is but slight. Every parish church should have its song-school, where children could learn to render their Redeemer's praise ; and when grown, they would not stand dumb, as so many do. In this parish no less than £26 a year was once paid to a teacher of sacred music, whose assigned duty was to instruct the young throughout our bounds, and yet we talk of progress in Church Service ! The gift of song is denied in reality to few ; what should be aimed at is a distinct cultivation of that gift for Christ's service.

But I close these scattered observations, which are meant rather to open than to exhaust the subject. Let it be said, once for all, that the ideal of a Parish Church is one which no changes of law can shatter. We may be on the verge of such changes; we know how long they have loomed ahead. But since Christ has died, and since parishes have been set out for Him to save and bless, there will always be a Parish Church while He has parish people to meet and praise Him. Scotland did not make her parish churches; they rather made Scotland. And she cannot unmake them but by destroying herself. Therefore, we go on hopefully to the next stage, assured that nothing of real disaster can come to those who seek to serve Him in the

Church. That Church rests not on money, or statutes, or human support of any kind. It is built upon the unmoved rock. Let it be our aim, up to our humble powers, to realise the fine thought embodied in these walls. Let us "pray for the peace of Jerusalem," and let us be confident that they shall prosper that love her.

III.

THE PARISH SCHOOL.

Origin of Parish Schools—Their first aim, to teach Religion—Importance of the Parish Sentiment among Children—Old Parochial Education best—Character the main end, not Book-lore—The Scotch Education Code a Christian Code—Importance of Playground—School Games to be purged—School Dinners—A Religious feeling needed.

“Jesus said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not. . . .”

ST. MARK X. 14.

As the synagogues radiated from the Temple: as the parish churches grew on the trunk of the Cathedral and Abbey; so the parish schools were the gradual fruit and emanation of

the University. And the University was always Christian and ecclesiastical in its origin. It is remarkable that three of our Scottish Universities were founded in the century which heralded the Reformation; St. Andrews in 1411, Glasgow in 1451, and Aberdeen in 1494. And they all sprang from the Church. Grammar schools or academies in towns and burghs speedily followed, like the larger branches; and then began the slower growth of the twigs of this scholastic oak, the parish schools. It is a favourite misrepresentation of certain historians who dislike the Reformation, that Education flourished better in the corrupt times before 1560, than afterwards; but as a matter of fact the Reformation here, as elsewhere, accompanied a

revival of learning, and Knox was emphatic on the need of providing every church with its school. It was the fault of the "merciless devourers of the patrimony of the Church," and not his, that this provision was not made fully and at once. Until the Reformed Church emerged in 1690 from its hundred years' conflict, the work of erecting schools went on very slowly. For it was not always possible to have even a church in the parish, and our forefathers began with that. The rule was, No church, no school. They could not have understood the phrase "secular education." The Reformation found the people almost illiterate. The priesthood, in many cases, could not read the prayers, and had to place their mark instead of a signature. By

stationing minister or "reader" in every parish, the Reformers began the work of education. The "reader" not only read the Scriptures on Sundays, but he taught the children their Bible and Catechism during the week. Later, the Church Courts were required to see that each parish had its school, and finally, after the Revolution, the Presbyteries were empowered to plant a school in every parish in their bounds at the cost of the landowners. In the Presbytery of Kirkcudbright much energy was shown, and it is recorded in the minutes that Balmaghie in 1700 had no school, but that steps were to be taken.

Thus the Parish School, like the Church, was Christian in its origin, and as for its end, it was to teach

the Bible and the Catechism. The first Scottish school-books were the Authorised Version of Holy Scripture, and the Catechism of John Calvin. Education was desired because through it the people could be brought to Christ. It was never conceived as an end in itself, or as a means of worldly advancement. Even singing was of sacred purpose, and, as is well known, the 'sangschules' had been instituted with a primary view to the service of the Church. James Melville, who was a schoolboy about the time the old Church fell, learned the "gam, plean-song, and monie of the treables of the Psalmes"; and he and lads like him were taught to play the lute and zither, while some learned the spinet, an instrument from which the

modern piano was developed. The Parish School cannot be understood but by bearing in mind this Christian root and use. As we see it to-day, changed and enlarged, it still shows traces of the pious object which created it. Scotland, in retaining so generally the "use and wont" of religious instruction, has held fast by the Church, and has not yet contravened our Lord's command to permit little children to come to Him, and not to hinder them.

But link by link the chain has been broken, and soon, perhaps, Church and School will be carried away from each other on the swell of modern indifferentism, falsely called Religious Equality. First, the minister has ceased to teach as Knox's readers did; then, the Pres-

bytery has bidden goodbye to the School, which it formerly fathered and directed; the landowners have been relieved of the sacred burden of providing a school and schoolmaster; the question of religion has been left to the chances of a popular vote in each parish. Secular Instruction alone receives encouragement from the State. And many say, that ere long Secular Instruction alone will be permitted.

Yet, even were this mournful prophecy fulfilled, nothing can alter the radical fact that the school is Christ's, because the children taught there are Christian children, and because it was His Church which first built and taught at all. We are a Christian State, and although the ideal has been broadened, and its outlines

are less strict and clear, we can still see the noble meaning of the Parish School, and it should be ours, under the privilege of self-government which we enjoy, to strive after a fuller comprehension and disclosure of that meaning. Let us consider several modes of doing so, on the broadest Christian grounds.

(1) The parish idea should be kept, and reinforced. We have advocated this for the adult; but it is as needful for the child. It should be the parents' aim to school their offspring in the Parish School. Mean motives of pride or pique should not have play, as against the enormous advantage of having your children early imbued with the sentiment of parish unity and neighbourliness. In after life, we know how the heart goes

back. We sat on the same bench together: we observed the same annual round of fashion in the school games: we "paidlit in the burn," and auld langsyne draws a magic heat from that: we fought and made it up: we got into scrapes and suffered together, and were loyal comrades. In African swamps, Joseph Thomson's heartstrings thrilled to the mere thought of sweet Morton and Thornhill. James Melville looked back to school days and wrote—"A happie and golden tyme!" I venture to say that even a higher-class education, lacking this parish feeling, is not so valuable for character. The mingling of rich and poor, cottar's children and farmer's or "portioner's," is of the same noble uses which we value in the Parish Church. Men have risen

to giddy heights, who never forgot or despised their playmates, and you meet homely ploughmen who can say of some hero in battle, or magnate in civic life—"I was at the school with him!" The boy who has risen comes back to the old parish in broadcloth, and with gold in his purse; but he has a tear in his eye as he stands at the kirk-stile, and grasps the hard hand of his school-fellow, who is still what his fathers were, a son of the soil. It is a priceless Christian training to be in the same parish school, because it softens the heart, and forbids us to grow quite worldly.

(2) The old parochial education should not be given up, but rather enriched and enlarged. There is a process known to gardeners, called

root-pruning, which consists in this, that when a fruit tree in its age has run to wood, and ceases to bear fruit, the roots are tenderly laid bare, and superfluous growths are cut away. The tree spends one year in recovering, then bursts into new strength and richness. Let us, if we will, root-prune the School, by removing mere dead custom and methods, but let us keep the root itself, which I take to be the idea of common and spontaneous education. Common, because the children are taught together regardless of social caste ; but spontaneous, because no child is forced, and because every child is permitted to grow as quickly as nature means it to do. The stiff division into standards has at last been abandoned after twenty-seven years of obstinate

and violent compulsion. Children are no longer to be forced to grow in monotonous rows at the same rate, any more than vegetables. The general and common tone of a school is now the main test, and it is the Christian one. The quick-growing boy or girl will not be held in leash till the slower ones come up. Those whom nature has made dull in school-book work will not be pressed. The primary meaning of education, a drawing out of powers which are already within, will in future be more distinctly kept in view. The aim is a high one—to treat the School as a garden, with Christ for its owner, and to plant and tend the young character, so that it may send out its own spontaneous and distinctive qualities, and may become ready for

transplanting hopefully to the fitting life-work.

(3) The main end is character, not knowledge. How little, after all, we can teach a child of book-lore! To read, to write, to reckon, is almost the total still; and these humble arts are often quickly laid aside after work begins. How much reading, or writing, or counting, does an ordinary labouring man find time or taste for? Parish libraries spread, but readers are still few, except for newspaper or novel. Letter-writing is little practised except by our women, and it is generally a laborious task rather than a social pleasure. But character is a perennial growth, and it is this to which our efforts should more and more be given. The teacher has a magnificent sphere,

to make not scholars chiefly, but men, and men of worth, parishioners who shall not need to be ashamed. It is in reality upon moral sentiment that he must rely for his success. A bad boy will always be uneducated in the right sense, for he will not learn to obey, to work, to be neighbourly. The best teachers are those who rouse and maintain a moral feeling in children—nay, let me say, a Christian feeling. We rejoice, therefore, to see in our Education Code a condition of obtaining the Government Grant in the following terms:—Scotch Code, 1899; Art. 19 A (2).—"That all reasonable care be taken, in the ordinary management of the school, to bring up the children in habits of punctuality, of good manners and language, of clean-

liness and neatness; and also to impress upon the children the importance of cheerful obedience to duty, of consideration and respect for others, and of honour and truthfulness in word and act."

These are splendid elements of character, and they are rightly put first as part of the "ordinary management." Punctuality, courtesy, cleanliness, obedience, unselfishness, honour and truthfulness; are not these simply the Christian Code, and are not our teachers now publicly recognised as Christian instructors? Even were Bible and Catechism formally expelled, they come in again in these religious principles; for they are of the teaching of Christ and His apostles, and the name is nothing if we get the thing itself. The State

may cease to endow religion ; she is not likely, so far, to deny her gifts to Christian character. And for the realising of this beautiful ideal, the Parish School as a seminary of good habits, we should lend every aid to the teacher. School and Home should go together ; and Church should bind them fast. Under these influences, working in harmonious co-operation, the child should be father of the man in the best sense, and the School should be a second and hardly inferior Church.

(4) The playground should be honoured and valued. The moral influence of play is not less grave than its physical effect. The child is a growing plant, and needs air, light, exercise, intercourse. A child's earliest liking for school is gained

in the playground, rather than on the benches. Lessons are always irksome at first, but games unlock a whole volume of healthful and good energy, which in school is more or less restrained. Every school should have a spacious playground properly fitted up for different exercises. The playground is the real field of character. There the child is quickly divested of disguises, and temper, disposition, aptitude, vigour of will, are all drawn out and exposed. The old name for a schoolmaster was "master of the play," *ludi magister*; and he is not a perfect or a born teacher who makes too wide a gulf in his judgment and habits between school hours and play hours. The most natural instinct of children, as of all young and tender creatures, is

to play, and the absence of this is a sure token of mental or bodily want. A child that does not play will not work well, or work long. It is in this characteristic sphere that excellent, if not the best education can be given ; for here we may inculcate "good manners and language, cleanliness and neatness, obedience, consideration for others, honour, and truthfulness." When a village is reputed rough and noisy, it were well to seek the cause at school. A rough man or woman has almost always become so at play, and when serious interests are involved, these unchecked faults do harm beyond measure. Cruelty to animals, a general failing among children, and a proof of our fallen nature, is in its root undisciplined

and unchristian play. Samson's bleeding eye-sockets made sport for the Philistines, because they saw sport in suffering. If we desire growing amenity in parish life, let us heed our children's games. Let the playgrounds be improved and duly fitted with simple appliances; and let a stern hand be brought down on fighting, lying, meaningless noise, cruel treatment of younger children, and of animals and insects, cheating, sneaking, and the familiar school vices. We own that Government fills the teacher's hands full with indoor work; but are there not Christian people with leisure to go and play with the children? Here is work, and good work, for "idle hands to do." Parish life would be sweetened and refined if our school

games were purged. Every student of folk-lore knows how vile some of the rhymes and practices are, though the children in their ignorance remain usually innocent. School games are old as Eden, and retain an archaic grossness in some instances. A teacher who could supplant bad rhymes or words by good ones would be a Reformer among children, as great in his measure as Knox among ministers of religion. Allied to games is the great health question, and especially that of food. Death levies an annual tribute among school children for want of a good mid-day meal. I am not one who can talk lightly of the "weary miles" our little pilgrims traverse, for I know the early start, the loss of appetite for the morning meal, the

sinking and sleepiness of a fasting school-day. And as I remember that Christ fed five thousand from a little child's store long ago, so I plead that we should do something from our own abundance for the hungry children of Scotland.

(5) But we must close by reiterating the chief element of our ideal School, if it is to be Christian. This is, a religious emotion in the School. We ask no Government Grant for this, but we ask the thing itself. Scottish teachers are still trained as Christian men and women; and a life like that of James Shaw, of Tynron, shows what mighty influence they can wield as such. Not what they teach, any more than what the minister preaches; but what both of them are, what they diffuse as men in contact with souls,

determines their highest effect. I cannot, however, see why the clergy of Scotland should not be admitted one day to teach in the schools, under due rules as to hours and scope of teaching. The ideal of our clergyman is, a family man, who vows at ordination to "rule well his own family," and in a large and noble sense his family is the whole parish, and especially the children. The old gatherings for catechising recognised this paternal relation; and why should they not be restored in a 'modern form? In any case, the ultimate test of a school's quality, from our Christian standpoint, must be, Is Christ honoured there? Are our child-Christians being brought to Him there? Black shall be the condemnation of any school where they are hindered.

There is a famous picture which represents a group of modern children, mostly poor and ill-clad, gathered in a room at their teacher's knee. He is instructing them, and from his parted lips we can almost hear his words. The children are modern, such as we see in any playground; but the teacher has the face and the look we all know to be Christ's, and He is saying—"Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not."

Such is the highest type of Parish School, and makes it a very gate of heaven. From such, as from scenes of family prayer, "old Scotia's grandeur" rose in the past. Upon such it must arise in the time to come.

IV.

PARISH CHARITIES.

Food, Shelter, Clothing, Kindness—The Friars—
God's Money or Teind—The Weekly Col-
lection—The Poor at Church—Love-feasts
—No moral Distinctions—Mortifications—
Almshouses needed—Personal Charities :
Doctors' bills, holidays, clothes for working-
men's wives.

*"Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and
that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy
house? when thou seest the naked, that thou clothe
him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine
own flesh?"*

ISAIAH lviii. 7.

FOOD, shelter, clothing, and kind-
ness—these are the things set forth
here as making up a true religious
conduct. If we wish to keep any day

holy, we cannot do so better than by deeds of charity. The ancient Church joined together fasting and almsgiving by law ; it was upon holy days that the Christian was commanded to relieve the poor. Such godly custom Scotland kept for centuries. In the old abbeys and monasteries, the poor found help on saints' days and fasts ; the Scottish man says yet—"The better day, the better deed." And had the old Church used her enormous wealth faithfully for the poor, she would not have fallen so quickly. But the princes of the Church were eating up the poor man's dole. Revenues which should have gone to relieve poverty were appropriated to support priestly luxury. In Knox's *History*, there is a terrible message purporting to issue from "the blind,

crooked, lame, widows, orphans and all other poor so visited by the hand of God as cannot work." It is addressed "to all the flock of friars within this realm," and claims "restitution of wrongs past, and reformation in times coming." It declares that the alms collected by the Friars, "pertaineth to us alone, which ye, being whole of body, strong, sturdy, and able to work . . . have these many years . . . most falsely stolen from us." They had persuaded people to believe that "to clothe, feed, and nourish you, is the only most acceptable alms allowed of God; and to give a penny or a piece of bread once in a week is enough for us." They had built great hospitals out of pious gifts, and had occupied them to the shutting out of

the real poor. And the scathing placard, "affixt in your gates where ye now dwell," summons those men to "remove furth of our hospitals . . . so that we, the lawful proprietors thereof, may enter thereinto, and afterward enjoy the commodities of the Church. . . ." ¹

Just when the churchmen were most flourishing, we find that poverty prevailed in a deplorable amount. The sentimental tourist, who moralises over our ruined abbeys, will do well to remember that those splendid fanes were ruined because they had ceased to use their wealth for the poor, and were content to nourish their own brood of clergy and brethren. The cry of the poor went up to heaven, and after the storm had swept away

¹ Knox's *History*, i. 170, 171.

those corrupt institutions, efforts were made to get hold of some part of their funds for the uses of charity. But the result is well known. The spoil was greedily divided among the great Scottish landowners, and only a scanty remnant was flung to the Church for the maintenance of clergy, teachers, and the poor.

But the principle was recognised then, as it ought to be to-day, that the Church's money is under divine claim for the poor, as well as for the maintenance of the minister and of the school.

The changes of Scottish law have taken away the burden of education and poor relief so far as human law can go. The small patrimony of the Scottish Church is now used, with an easy conscience, wholly to support

her clergy. And this not too abundantly, as many say. Yet the first ideal was, I think, the best and truest; that God's money, which we call teinds or tithes, should not be expended merely on the building of churches and the payment of ministers, but should be available also for little children at school, and worn-out peasants in the fields. We have had to submit to the changes. The children have been taken from us. The poor have been taken from us. Time was when the elders passed from house to house with the secret gift from the Church. That time is gone, but the fact is imperishable. Much of the Kirk Session business of old was in feeding, and clothing, and sheltering the parish poor. What is left, many of us think to be of far less

moment to true religion. For we hold St. James's definition to be right, that "pure religion and undefiled . . . is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction," just as much as to keep oneself "unspotted from the world."

Our present business is not to deal with the established mode of Poor Relief, for every one holds that to be purely a business matter, and not in any sense giving of alms. True Christian charity must seek its sphere outside poor rates, although one knows people who say—"We pay our rates, and why should we do more?" You must, however, do more if you are to deserve Christ's approval as "good and faithful servants." To pay rate is needful, and Christ did so. But to show kindness

to your own flesh, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to shelter the houseless; these are not a duty merely, but a high religious privilege. You never felt the glow of brotherly love in paying your poor rate. But you may feel it warm your entire being in obeying Christ's command to "give, hoping for nothing again." Therefore, as a Christian duty and joy, we go on to note some thoughts regarding parish charities, how they might be done as our fathers wished in a Christian parish, and under the holy sanction of Christ's Church.

(1) In the first place, let us bear in mind the original end of the weekly collection. Here, we touch a most ancient Catholic sentiment. The money put by on the first day

of the week was to be used for the poor of the Church. We use it for our church expenses, and do not find that we have too much. As a rule, nothing is over after we have paid our lawful debts in keeping up needful church arrangements. But that fact cannot wipe out the other fact. We should pay our dues, and yet have something for the poor; even the law says so, and we break the law when we withhold any free balance at the ordinary dates from the poor to whom it is legally due. But let us put aside law, and think of love. Is it creditable to our Church that so much goes for selfish uses, so little comparatively for the poor? I say comparatively, because I have elsewhere shown that the Church has since 1846 given no

less than £457,000 to the poor out of Sunday collections. But then, she has taken for herself nearly £1,075,000. That is not a fair proportion, and efforts should be made to correct it. This can be done in several ways; by increasing our weekly contribution, by giving freely when a special collection is taken for our parish poor, by availing ourselves of the poor's box at the door, by sending our spare coins to the minister or the elders. I confess to being alarmed when I look at the sums which we raise annually for missions, and compare with them the meagre dole dealt to the poor at our gates. Most earnestly do I urge a larger liberality on Sundays, and a more open eye to the box we have at our church door. Would to God that each Lord's Day saw

some charitable gift privately made in the church, or some distressed parishioner visited and cheered! No other 'improvement of our services' would be so sure to put life and warmth into them.

(2) A second suggestion is, that the poor should be brought back to church; at present, an ordinary congregation might be defined as "an assembly of persons having good clothes, and good health, and something to give away." In Christ's day, it was the "poor, the halt, the lame, and the blind," who lent distinction to His meetings. The really poor people have practically ceased to appear, and the reason is not only a consciousness of unfit dress, but the absence of hope to get anything which they need. Distribution of alms was

a part of the worship of the early Church of Christ. The feast of charity afforded a meal to the hungry communicant, and this love-feast gave opportunities of sympathy and kindness. What beggar comes near a Church nowadays? It is the last place which he dreams of visiting, for he knows that he is not expected, will not be welcomed, and has not been provided for. How are we to get the poor back? By making our distressed neighbours feel that we want them back, and by conveying assurances that we have something to give them beyond words and ceremonies. "Oh, but now, you are advocating a 'blankets and coals' religion!" says some clever listener. Yes! undoubtedly, and without fear, I do advocate a religious worship

which shall present a plain hope, for this life, to our hungry and ill-clad fellows. Has not St. James declared the hollowness of good words alone when spoken to the destitute? And is not our present conduct very like the man who says, "Depart in peace; be ye warmed and filled"; and thinks that he has done enough? How this element of helpfulness could be brought in, it is not for me to decide. Ostentation must always be shunned; a church parade of the poor of the parish is obviously impossible and undesirable; and yet, and yet—how much nearer Christ would seem to be, were His poor people here to-day! But you can quietly give food and clothes to those who are kept back by sheer hunger and rags; and you can bring the

feeble and the aged in your vehicles. If you knew what joy is in some old widow's heart to be "at the kirk" once more; if you realised the sorrow of aged men whose once strong limbs now refuse to carry them across the moor; you would often try to persuade them to accept a seat and come to God's house.

(3) In parish charities, let the widest view be taken. There is no excommunication of the poor in Christ's Church; rather, they are the rightful owners of the best place. When He washed the feet of His disciples, He washed Judas's feet too; and however ungrateful and undeserving the poor may be, as we are often told, our duty and our delight remain. We must aim at seeing distress apart from moral

facts. It is very likely that your hungry neighbour in the parish has himself to blame; he made two or three shillings' wage a day for many years, and he might have saved against this time! He has been idle, intemperate, law-breaking, insubordinate; he is perhaps even now ill-tongued, irritable (as the poor often are), gossipy and slanderous—a person not nice to go near either in his manners or in his home. All this is nothing to be surprised at, since in a country like ours honest poverty is not so common as in less favoured climes. Work, there, abounds, and life can be maintained at small cost after a fashion. A large part of our poor people are so by their own fault, although we perhaps lay too much stress on saving habits in

people whose wages have just supported them and their household. It is none too easy to save even on twenty shillings a day, much less on three! But there is no room in our religion for moral distinctions among the poor; your brother's need is your warrant and your command to help him, and help him again. In the parish, too, there is the dear bond of parish unity. One of our own folk! and be he ill-conditioned as the worst, the phrase should open our hands. And we have seen why. It is because it is Christ's parish, and all we are brethren in Christ.

(4) Fourthly, let us keep, and increase, our parochial institutions or endowments expressly given for the poor. Undoubtedly, the law has

interfered in many cases with disastrous and unfair results. Funds intended for the poor have been diverted to the well-to-do. Funds meant for charity have been seized for education, not always confined to poor children. One wonders at some people with good incomes who allow their children to compete for and to carry off sums of money originally earmarked for the poor. Parish mortifications, to use the old Scottish name, were endowments left at death by parishioners to benefit their poor neighbours; in too many cases they have been wrested from their kindly use, and frittered away in relief of the rich. This must not be permitted. And we should strive to encourage the giving of money by way of endowment for the un-

happy, a custom less common now than in the older time. Shall I say here what I have often said in ordinary conversation? There should be almshouses in the parish—decent cottages where worn-out age could carry its homely “sticks” of furniture, piteous relics of life’s long voyage, and say, “Now, here, I can stay rent-free, here I can die in peace, none daring to make me afraid.” You know as well as I how the poor cling, as a sinking man to any scrap of wood, to their scanty collection of movables—the dresser bought at the marriage long ago when the world looked bright, the table where the dear hard-worked dame stood daily at her tasks, the clock that ticked against the wall, the homely chairs, the bed, the “kist,”

and all our Scottish gear. It is like tearing out the entrails to take these away. And yet, the law takes them when it gives the parish dole. The poorhouse may be a fit abode for strangers who come to us, for sturdy beggars and tramps; but our own folk should never go there by my voice. We should have some cottages of our own, and when poor rheumatic John or Andrew has to put by his spade or tool, and wages can be earned no more, and his small savings are eaten up, then minister or elder should go and say—"Here is a home for you, aged brother in Christ! Bring here the faithful partner of your joys and sorrows: bring her in with honour as one who has shared your wanderings and soothed your woes; and tell her every stick

shall be sacred, and none shall make her afraid!" I would to heaven some one with more means than I would purchase or build even a few such simple almshouses for the Church; it seems to me every day more pressing, and I am filled with shame to remember useless expenditure on smaller things, fitted to yield far less benefit. I put it on record to-day, that any one who will leave a cottage to begin with, to be used in all time for an almshouse, shall do a thing which Christ will reward, and which some of us here will enshrine in our thankful prayers.

(5) As the Parish is made up of individual parishioners, so let the parish charities have their home in private deeds and thoughts. I do not believe that we are less kindly

than our fathers because there is less of the "mortification" or endowment; we are better provided with public systems of relief, and hence the scope seems less for personal benefaction. Why should I leave my goods to the parish? a man may say; there is already a Poor Law with ample powers to deal with the necessitous. I should simply be relieving the rates, and thus benefiting the well-to-do. There is some force in the argument, but none at all as applied to deeds of personal helpfulness. Beginning with your church, you should be on the watch for chances to help and cheer your fellow-members. Sit at the Lord's Table, and cast a quiet glance around; you will see more than one anxious face and threadbare garb.

What makes men and women look anxious? Most often it is that "poortith cauld," which Burns knew and deplored; and when you make cautious inquiries, you find that a trifling gift on your part will send joy into the careworn breast. "Oh, that weary doctor's bill!" cried one; "will we ever manage to pay it?" And it was thirty shillings! And some of us spend as much in a few moments without heed. Go into that cottage, where an overdriven mother is languishing; "change of air is needed," you are told, but—"How can the like of us poor folk get that?" A week at the "salt water" would give new life to the harassed nerves; and it would cost less than a railway ticket to London. Here is a respectable family of church-

goers, all but one, and she the best by every vote—the mother, the queen of the house. She has not been in church for years, nor at the Lord's Table since her marriage. Are you so dull as to ask why? As a maiden, she never missed churchgoing, and the "Sacrament" was a high sacred and social event. Now, she sits at home, and husband and children go. Why? Why did Christ die? Why do men crush every natural impulse, and toil on unpitied, while others flourish by their toil? The poor mother puts herself last, and so, fitting out all besides for God's house, she has nothing left for her own seemly apparel. Men of the parish, do you ever think of this, as you gaily spend your wages? Do you see, in a flash of penitence, the

patient mother of your children, who has no holidays, no pleasures, no games or sports, and darkest of all, at last no Church? And here, some happier sisters can help. The non-churchgoing of our women is largely due to want of suitable clothing. You who have a superfluity will not miss the blessedness of helping your poor parish sisters.

It was a peasant woman who bore the Saviour, and He felt a keen sympathy with all such. When they brought Him their babes, He blessed the little ones; He sat at the wayside in talk with the Samaritan peasant woman; women of humble life followed Him to the Cross. Of all parish charities, the most Christ-like, perhaps, would be that which should aim at helping working-men's

wives in the parish to come to Him in the Church; and to come as their decent Scottish womanhood demands.

V.

PARISH GOVERNMENT.

Parish Rulers to be chosen by the People from themselves: to be of "honest report"; to be "full of the Spirit" and of wisdom—The Age of "Boards"—Parish Unit to be defended against "Larger Areas"; and why—Aim of Parish Government, to promote the happiness of the Poor—The Parish Interest should be paramount—Principle, not Party or Pique, should rule—Sphere of Church or Party is in Election, not in Administration—Relation of Parish Minister to Parish Government one of (a) Instruction, (b) Service, (c) Representation of the Poor.

"Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."

ACTS vi. 3.

THE "business" referred to was to manage the daily almsgiving which

formed part of the earliest Christian worship. The alms were committed to the apostles, "laid at their feet" (iv. 37); and at first the apostles themselves presided at the distribution. Tables were set out, and the widows of Christian disciples were entertained. It was part of the "pure religion" defined by St. James. But even apostles could not escape censure where alms-distribution was concerned. We know, ourselves, the hot jealousies of a "divide." Therefore, they directed that seven qualified men should be chosen by the whole body of disciples, to wait at the tables and give to each the due portion. Why seven, and not more or fewer, were fixed, we cannot tell. There were twelve apostles, and we should have thought

that twelve deacons were needed at least. But so it was, and so it continues to be at Rome, where seven deacons, and not more, form the unchangeable number in that order of the ministry.

We may find in the description of those men an ideal of the persons to whom the government of a parish may safely be committed.

They were to be chosen by the people. "Look ye out among you," or from your own number. The need arose from complaints of neglect by the Hellenists or Greek-speaking Christians ; from them, therefore, were the deacons to be chosen, and it has been pointed out¹ that the whole seven were foreigners, in name at least, at Jerusalem. But they were

¹ By Mosheim, *Eccl. Hist.*, Century I.

able to speak to the poor Grecians in their own tongue, and as compatriots they understood the local ways and feelings. In Parish Government, it is a primary maxim to have rulers who are of ourselves, who dwell among their own people, speak the common phrases, and sympathise intelligently with the common needs. The principle of popular election, also, requires no argument at the present day. It is almost universally adopted throughout our land. The people of the parish choose their own governors in matters religious and secular. And as a rule they choose from among themselves. Surprise and regret are sometimes expressed at the results; but those feelings arise largely from narrow judgment of men's capabilities, and of the conditions of successful

administration. Very humble and ill-educated men may make more acceptable rulers, than others of higher grade who have not popular qualifications. People will be quiet and content under rulers whom they have themselves chosen, and who are of their own class and sympathies. Some one has said that the best government would be "An angel from heaven, and a Despotism"; but in default of the Angel, we reject the Despotism. Popular rule has its drawbacks, but viewed over a series of years, it shows wonderfully well upon the whole.

Again, they were to be "men of honest report," men *attested*, as the original has it; men whom their neighbours certified as fit for office. The word is that from which our

martyr comes, and we know that one of the seven became the first Christian martyr. The whole idea is that of men who are in the public eye as active, resolute, and faithful; men without fear and without reproach; men to be relied upon in time of stress for their honour and constancy. Such should be the rulers of a parish. Honest report is an indispensable thing in public life, and ought to be guarded most jealously. We should beware of exalting unfit men for mere temporary causes. The spirit of heedless comedy is sometimes at work, and persons are hoisted into office for a jest; not because we respect or trust them, but because of a kind of rough humour in popular election. It is just so that, in the middle ages, the rude mob annually

chose an ass to be decked in priestly trappings, and hailed with hymns of praise. Such elections may pass for jests, but where serious interests are at stake, the choice should fall on men of gravity, character, and courage, well attested among ourselves.

Thirdly, they were to be "full of the Holy Ghost"; the best versions say simply, "full of the Spirit." This means that our rulers should be true Christian men. None other could have played the part of deacons or managers of the poor; for to relieve the poor demands an entire devotion to Christ. Our whole contention is, that these parishes are for Christ; hence, their administration, at its best, should be by Christians. Without suggesting bigoted or persecuting action, I venture to urge that if a

man is a churchgoer, a religious man, keeping family worship, and ruling well his own house, godly and charitable in his life, a practical follower of Jesus ; that man should poll higher than those lacking such qualifications. The stupidest cry of all is, "What has religion got to do with such things?" If all our reasoning be not astray, religion has everything to do with them, and irreligious or non-religious governors will serve us ill.

Then, the deacons were to be "full of wisdom." A high degree of mental ability was demanded, not indeed mere book-lore (which may leave a man very unbusinesslike and foolish), but the wisdom of a high character and an ordered life. The rule of scholars or of scientists is

rarely successful. Few places are worse governed than universities, and even church courts would benefit by a larger dash of the layman's hard-won common-sense. What we shall seek is, the services of reasonable, broad-minded, intelligent men, who can face the real needs of a parish, and deal with them in a way which all, or most, shall be forced to commend as wise. It is a supremely important quality, and perhaps not widely diffused. Good men we may get, and approved Christians; but wise men have ever travelled in small companies since the Three in olden time came in the Star's bright wake to see their King.

This is an age of Local Government. The parish is ruled more and more by "Boards" chosen by the

parishioners, and it becomes a duty of the pulpit to offer humble advice as to how we may make the best of them, and of the whole system. The thoughts drawn from our verse are a contribution, at least; for they suggest that, for our governors, we shall do well to select men of our own number and class, men of admitted character, men of Christian heart, and men of high common-sense. It is freely granted, that this is a "parochial" view; for I do not concur with those who advocate a restoration in some measure of the centralising plan—*e.g.* to replace parish boards by county ones. The parish unit is to me a thing most precious, and not to be hastily swallowed up in "larger areas." It would be foolish, for instance, even were it practicable, to go back to the

method which empowered the Crown, or an absentee landlord, to appoint the minister of the parish. It would be a mistake to take the appointment of teachers out of the hands of the parish, although Lord Balfour¹ had reason in his suggestion that their dismissal might well be subject to appeal and argument before a County Committee. For there have been flagrant cases of unjust and cruel dismissal. I do not touch the question whether expenditure would decrease if the areas were increased, except to say that existing features of county expenditure hardly support such a view. Let what faults of haste, heat, and extravagance soever be noted in parish rule, the thing itself is entirely fit to be preserved, because it repre-

¹ See his speech at Dumfries, July 14, 1899.

sents a fine ideal, capable of progressive realisation. To be ruled in parish matters—in kirk, school, and poor—by the parish, means to be ruled by our Christian neighbours, if we choose aright who shall rule. The faults will gradually grow less, with experience and training; the shining advantage is always there, that we rule ourselves, and, if we choose, may make our parish more and more such as our Heavenly Master will bless with His approval.

The influences of “Boards,” therefore, has in my humble opinion, been on the whole for good, and may be for even more good if we act upon a high and Christian ideal of government. Let me mention some broad principles, fit to be treated here.

(1) The aim of Parish Government

is to promote the happiness of all classes, but especially of the poor. Those deacons of the early Church had one main business, to take oversight of the alms. More than this they certainly did, very soon after their election; they preached, they baptised, they founded Christian communities. One of them, Stephen (whose name means *a crown*) won the martyr's crown. But their essential responsibility was, to see that the widows and other poor disciples were not overlooked, but got their fair share of material comfort. It is even so, to-day. Men are chosen for parish governors, not to grip tight the privileges of a class, not to "keep down the rates," not to represent any single interest, least of all to posture in pride of office; but to take heed

that the whole flock be justly guided and tended, and especially, like all good shepherds, to have a careful eye to the poor, the feeble, the aged, and the young. Every question that arises should be brought to the test of this principle; and even the smallest question receives light when we begin to ask, How will it affect the poor or weak? When in the course of time a parish grows plainly happier, life becomes easier, health is improved, morals are elevated, grievances disappear; then we say, There is a well-governed parish. Our aim should be the same as Rutherford's aspiration for the parish of Crailing, where he was born—"My soul's desire is that that place, to which I owe my first breathing, in which I fear that Christ was scarcely named as touching any

reality of the power of godliness, may blossom as the rose." To make the parish better and brighter ere we leave it, should be the uppermost thought; and hence our efforts should naturally be directed toward removing abuses, rectifying inequalities, adjusting more easily the balance between the strong and the weak, vindicating the latter against oppression and unjust fear, and diffusing more widely the blessings of Christian education, benevolence, and freedom.

(2) A deep parish feeling should possess us. People say, "Take a large view; do not be so parochial; remember other parishes." We may for our part reply, that other parishes will be tolerably sure to remember themselves. While we carefully avoid whatever must hurt our local neigh-

bours by way of example, or of consequence, we are on the right track in cherishing a profound love and zeal for our own parish. For our special end, it is enough if we acquit ourselves so that our fellow-parishioners must confess that we are acting in their truest interests. To hinder any good cause, because our forwarding it may interfere with a neighbouring area in some of their own plans, is to lose the right to be called a loyal parishioner. Let the neighbouring area have all scope for its local development; but not at our cost. A good instance occurs. There have been shortsighted churchmen who said, if the Church is disestablished, one church will do for two or three small parishes. A late notorious agitator used to point out,

that the National Church would not be missed, since there were so many others that could serve a group of parishes. His own church lay on a stream between two parishes ; and, said he, it could perfectly well serve them both, while each might with an easy mind close its old parish church. To us, who know how hard it is to gather people into a church even at their doors, his argument will seem unutterably cruel and hopeless. But are there no such arguments heard in other spheres, to-day ? Do not some argue about schools in a similar way ? “ There is a school in the next parish ; therefore, we do not need to build one here ! ” The true parish view is, to have our own churches and schools, so that the religious feeling imbedded in the

parish area may be kept up. Never be ashamed of being "parochial" in your administration. The member of Parliament is not ashamed to be patriotic, for he rules a nation. Let the members of Parish Boards cultivate a parish patriotism; for it is the parish they rule.

(3) Principle, not party or pique, ought to guide the rulers of a parish. It is a sentence easily written, but the whole sadness of parochial history is in it. Let us all confess our fault; we all tend to be moved more by personal feeling, than by the pure motive of doing good to our parish. And I do not readily echo those who say that local government should always be free of the influence of Church, or party, or private feeling. That is an absolute and frank

absurdity, as experience has shown again and again. On that basis, our government must be quite colourless, and ought to be confided to children, if any children can be found among us who reckon all Churches indifferent, all parties equally good, all strong feeling inadmissible. But even our children have their prepossessions. The true statement of principle is, that while the choice of our rulers must always be determined by the religious and other predispositions of the electors, the actual routine of government ought to be kept as free as possible from prejudice and party. And so it largely is in the majority of cases. But sometimes we note a perverse tendency to settle important matters not on their pure merits, but from the standpoint of Church or party.

It is a natural depravity in mortals; let us own it, and let us mend it by divine help. To clear our mind of cant, whether ecclesiastical, political, or social, is a bounden duty if one would govern justly. It is a growing danger, in large parishes, that men sit not as parishioners but as partisans; as socialists, as politicians, as private persons with private "axes to grind." And so, they act like automatic machines; put a particular thing in their minds, and they turn out always the same remarks, the same parrot cry. Let it be our ideal, if it may not always be our habit, to weigh questions on their merits, as promoting or as hurting the good of the parish committed for a term to our care.

I close with a personal topic,

risking the usual danger of being misunderstood or misrepresented. In our day a cry is raised periodically, that there should be "no ministers" on parish boards. The first time I heard this, it made me inexpressibly ashamed. What! have Scottish pastors fallen so low, that you must say to them, We are better wanting you? Is Scotland about to say like a famous Frenchman, *Le clericalisme c'est l'ennemi!* Are we fit to preach, to celebrate, to visit your homes, to preside over your religion; but not, to govern? I cannot believe that this is meant. What is intended is, a censure on incompetent or quarrelsome clergy, not on all. But what, then, ought exactly to be the minister's relation to Parish Government? I answer, firstly, one of *instruction*, for is he

not set in his place to teach? And if he may not teach anything that affects government, and the welfare of his parishioners who are governed, what is left? You say, the Gospel is left, and the retort is, that Christ's Gospel made your parish, and can alone rule it aright. How is it possible to preach the Gospel without touching on the treatment of the poor, the young, the weak, the ignorant, the criminal? Secondly, his relation is one of *service*, to help to his utmost in every parish institution. Without neglecting, nay with the effect of actually strengthening, his special pastoral and pulpit work, he ought to be a loyal and active parishioner, and, if need be, a devoted administrator in parish affairs. If the qualifications be such as my

verse enumerates—a man of your own selves, a man of honest report, full of zeal and wisdom,—the minister is probably as fit as any other among you for office; if he is not, he shall hardly be a good minister, and you must choose a better next time. And thirdly, his relation is one of *representation*; he represents, or he ought to represent Christ's poor people, and he ought to be God's advocate in every weak and righteous cause.

Such were Scotland's first parish ministers. It will be partly the people's fault if, in days to come, the clergy are found, or are held, to be unfit for a share in Parish Government.

VI.

THE WHOLE DUTY OF PARISHIONERS.

The "Whole Man"—The main thing in Character—Whole Duty of Parishioners is to fear God and do the Right—This seen at the Reformation—What "Parochiners" or "Parishioners" meant—The Modern "Heritor" a survival—Neglected Duties of our Heritors—The Church Collections—The Churchyard and Church Buildings—Scandal of Neglected Churchyards—Charles Kingsley's plan at Eversley—State of Parish Churches discreditable—Duty of Parishioners generally—Tendency to stand aloof from Parish Government—Its causes—"Ill-will"—What Parishioners should do for their Representatives—Coming Problems: The Land, Village Communes, Peasant Proprietors—Conclusion.

*"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter :
Fear God, and keep his commandments ; for this
is the whole duty of man."* ECCLES. xii. 13.

It is significant, that the fear of God and the keeping of the Command-

ments should be so emphatically described as forming "the whole duty of man." It becomes more significant when we find that what the old writer really says is—"This is the Whole Man." A simpler statement of moral duty was never given, or a more profound. The simplicity of it is a Hebrew quality, for all through the Old Testament we find an intense longing after short and clear maxims of duty ; and the burden is always the same—"Only fear the Lord and serve Him" ; "Do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God." A casual glance at the pages, from Genesis to Malachi, shows how the strain recurs. To the Hebrew, life was a simple thing : there were unmistakeable lights to guide a man ; and the whole

of human happiness was in steering constantly by those lights, without argument, and without addition. The man who just feared the great God, and strove to observe His laws, was safe and sound; he was a Whole Man. Whereas, he who veered from point to point, finding out "many inventions," was no man at all, and the melancholy Preacher wrote over his life the blighting word—"Vanity."

But this is a profound maxim, too, as all experience shows. It cuts clean down to the core of character, and lays bare the impelling fibre, the motive-power. After all our experiments, from boyhood to age, what do we retire upon at last but simply the thought that "godliness and honesty" are the main things?

Whence comes a man's fall, but from the loss of true fear of God and the neglect of the simple rules of conduct? You may have brains, money, books, health, prospects; and miserably fail, because you have not a wholesome terror of sin, and reverence for the unseen things. Without these, you may indeed go on very well, to outward appearance, for a time. A tree hollow at the heart often makes brave show of foliage for years; and even so, a man destitute of true manliness may offer a fair and pleasing performance up to a certain point. But the strain comes, and we find that the "conclusion of the whole matter" is, that the tree and the man are both empty shells.

The whimpering broken outcast,

who borrows half-a-crown from you in the streets of Edinburgh or London, was a "successful" and "popular" professional man two or three years ago. Look at him now, and you will cease to wonder. He never was a real man at all. The "stalk of carle-hemp" was never there. The temple of the heart, where God should be, was empty all along, or echoed to unclean steps. The moralities of God's boundless world, those simple stern laws of right and fairplay which He gave to the Hebrews most fully, were thrust aside and made little. And so, the nature became feeble and faltering, and the strain broke it down.

Let us all ponder this well. When we come to strike a balance, we shall find that what bulks most is,

not money, popularity, or friends, but—God and the Right! These are the rocks to build upon, against which the floods and storms of life cannot tell.

The Whole Duty of Parishioners is none other than this—to hold fast the Fear of God, and to keep His Commandments. It was thus our fathers built up the parish. The “rude fore-fathers of the hamlet,” who sleep somewhere near us, laid their foundations on a solemn, and even stern, fear of God. They brought every man to the test of the simple moralities. The heartcry of Scotland, at the Reformation, was for God and pure morals. Away in Kyle, where Robert Burns long after tried another plan and died, men arose and said—“We want God,

not images. We want God, not saints. We want God, not priests. We want God made man in our hearts, not God created from bread in the Mass." They said, too, with throbbing and hot hearts—"We want the Commandments to be kept in God's Church. We want God's ministers to be chaste, to be honest, to be humane. We want them to illustrate by their example, and enforce by their spiritual powers, plain good conduct such as befits plain men." It was for so little as the want of this, that Scottish men flung down the old Church; and yet, that little is the irreducible minimum. It is the One Thing Needful. No parish can flourish, where God is not honoured and His laws are not put first.

When our fathers, then, set about reforming the Parish, they called themselves "parochiners," or parishioners, and laid on themselves the whole burden. The "parochiners" were the flower of the parish manhood, singled out in every old Act as the men willing and able to keep things right in the Parish. They were the leading men in the place, but they led because they suffered. It was they who had to provide kirk, manse, and school. It was they who had to find a good minister and teacher. It was they who gave the tone in morals and manners. It was they who ruled what, even yet, we hear called the "haill parochin," and who lovingly guarded its privileges and purity. They were the "head-men" of the parish, and they never

dreamed of evading their duties and liabilities as such.

The old "parochiners" are the new "heritors," a body, however, vastly different, and rather like to a survival, or a rudimentary organ, than to a living force of manhood in a parish. For all their functions are gone save one, to upkeep the church buildings, and to be faithful stewards of the church money, the teind or tithe. The honourable title of "parishioner" is now applied to the whole population in a parish, and with it have, I submit, fallen upon us also the serious responsibilities.

Yet there are duties which heritors even now ought to perform, and have a right to claim till the final act comes. They are entitled to examine the Kirk-Session's accounts, and pro-

tect the poor man's small remainder interest therein. They are bound to see that the parish churchyard is properly kept, by appointing and paying a sexton. They are entitled to see justice done equally to all their fellows in regard to interments. They are entitled to prevent a wrong or improper use being made of the whole church buildings. They are liable to the whole parish to provide against those public buildings falling into ruin.

The condition of many country churchyards is a crying scandal. Ruinous walls, weed-grown walks, broken tombstones, or others lying at all sorts of ugly angles, rank overgrown grass which smothers the sweet spring flowers, and sometimes things even darker, are every year the theme of public complaints. Those complaints

are not creditable to the heritors; nor will it serve to shift the burden on to the Kirk-Session, whose means are dependent on the fitful attendance and small coins of a weekly divine service. One can conceive a public-spirited body of heritors which should take pride in making the parish resting-place such as the parishioners would love to visit often, to sit there on comfortable garden-seats watching the shining river flow on to the ocean, to plant and tend flowers on their dear ones' grave, to stroll peacefully in trim walks among shrubberies, and find Death less ghastly for the springing life of Nature.

To such a body I commend the views of Charles Kingsley, as set forth by his wife :¹

¹ *Life*, Edit. 1890, p. 234.

“The churchyard at Eversley was enlarged at this time. It had long been his wish to make it an arboretum, and gradually to gather together rare shrubs and evergreens, so that it should be truly a ‘Gottesacker’ (God’s Acre) in a double sense; and he now planted an avenue of Irish yews from the gate to the church door. He writes:—‘I and B. (his churchwarden) have been working with our own hands, as hard as the four men we have got on. We have planted all the shrubs in the churchyard. We have gravelled the new path with fine gravel, and edged it with turf; we have levelled, delved, planned, and plotted.’”

And later on, we read how he was “laid in his own gravel bed, the old trees, which he had planted and cared

for, waving their branches to him for the last time."

Here is a graceful work for heritors, and a bounden one, as far as mere decency goes. Nor is there less need for such work as regards buildings, for many churches, in their white-washed and dismal nakedness, stand as a reproach. Men need more than a wind and water-tight barn. There should be a heaven-pointing spire, a solemn full-toned bell (not the cracked tin-kettle so often hung up for our torture or laughter), and a reliable clock. Unpunctual ministers are to be censured, but the censure must partly fall on negligent heritors. It is pitiful to see the church-time regulated (as in a certain Dumfriesshire parish) by an old kitchen clock stuck close to the gallery-window, a mark for Cockney jeers.

But I go to larger matters. The real "parochiners," now, are the whole men of a parish, and we say, Let them fear God, and do their duty. Upon them, as we saw in our last chapter, the government of the parish now falls, and will fall more and more in the future. This matter of the churchyard could be handed over to the Parish Council to-morrow, if the parties were agreed; and I, for one, would rejoice. But already, you govern yourselves in most things, and you have powers to make everyone lend a hand through the rates. The main thing, under the new system, is to get the best men to do your governing business. Upon this I offer the remark, that there is an alarming tendency among the best men to despise and avoid public

life. Long ago, it was seen in our Town Councils, but just lately the example of some of our best noblemen and gentlemen has quickly raised municipal office to a desirable point. "Provost" and "Bailie" are at present a little less prone to excite a smile, or to designate mere busybodies. But in the rural parish the first wave of popular election threw out excellent and experienced men, who now continue in a sore and contemptuous retirement. To be "at the foot of the poll," or even to be "out," while others quite new to parish business are "in," cannot be encouraging to self-respecting and substantial men. Also, parish meetings are not always, or evenly, harmonious. Friendship sometimes points one way, duty and the fear

of God another; and so, men keep out of the turmoil for peace sake. Again, it is not easy work: it takes up valuable hours: it rouses at times keen feeling. Thus, a practice grows up of standing aloof, and allowing office to go to less qualified and less worthy persons. The electors must choose from the men who offer themselves. If the best do not offer, the next best must be seated at the Board, and sometimes the next best hang back too. And then we see large interests ruled by men of straw: we see parish government turned into a mock: we see parish life growing worse, and parish property wasted.

Against this danger I raise a warning; and appeal to the best men to realise their responsibilities. In the Church the best men should be

elders, and in the Parish they too should administer School and Poor Law. This they can only do by enduring contradiction and contention in the free play of popular forces ; but the best men will, in the end, prevail. The Parish, as I began by affirming,¹ answers true if you ask it rightly, and ask it often enough. Never join in the foolish ridicule of popular election. *Vox populi* is not *vox Dei*, but it is *vox pauperum*, the voice of the poor ; and the poor are never far from God. And never make complaints of misgovernment while you lazily shirk your privilege of taking part in the government and trying to mend it. For then, you are the man with his hands in his pockets criticising those who work,

¹ See page 12.

but standing self-condemned as an idler.

Here is my opportunity to say, that men are generally too easily affrighted by the bugbear called "ill-will." "It just brings ill-will," say our kind-hearted folk, and urge you to stand aloof. Against this, let me pit another equally common saying—"You cannot please everybody." Therefore, ill-will you must bear in any event; but the ill-will of ill men need not vex you. "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you," said a supreme authority, Who Himself got remarkable ill-will, and still suffers at the hands of men who seek mere ease and "peace." No parish can be governed without "ill-will," if we govern by the fear of God and the plain rules of the

Decalogue. The lazy, the careless, the sinful, the criminal, the "men of Belial" or mere mischief-makers, as well as those having selfish interests and unneighbourly hearts, will always be offended by good government. And they ought to be. The man who will be a Whole Man, and a Whole Parishioner, must not look for more than the approval of a good conscience.

Get the best men to work for you, and give them your best support, would be my counsel to parishioners. When you have done this, you may almost rest. Yet there are duties for each man to remember in a parish, even though he hold no office. You must take an interest in the doings of your rulers. No man, not even a member

of Parliament, can safely be left to himself. At the least, he will lose heart and grow negligent; and he may, if a man of force and vigour, do great harm. You should attend the public debates of your representatives. You should, at proper seasons, require an account of their stewardship. Orderly public appearances of candidates is much to be desired, but will not come till the rowdy, and the mischievous "heckler," are chained up. You should show gratitude to those who serve, and serve faithfully; the phrase, "a thankless job," would not then be so often heard. You should pray for them, as you pray for your Parliament-men; they need it, and they will be the better for it.

Of the questions in parish life which are now pressing forward to the front, I do not ask you to hear me speak at this time and in this place. Undoubtedly, the Land Question must be dealt with soon, so as, if possible, to prevent our parishes from becoming a "wilderness and a solitary place." Every census shows the slipping away of our toilers from the farms and the villages, the disappearance of cottages, the growth of dangerous disproportion between the sexes. Many Scottish villages resemble an Indian settlement where only the squaws are left. The men are gone out into the devouring prairies of city life. Village life must be consolidated: special rights of government must be conceded to the village, so that

it may promote its own comfort and happiness at its own charge. Village streets are a scandal for untidiness and ugliness, and for pernicious gloom at nightfall. Voluntary effort has done, and can do much; but there are many cases calling for law and rates. The village should be turned into a commune, with its little Council, and its Headman. Peasant proprietors or crofters should be revived, for they gave the backbone to Church and State. Their holdings are now mostly represented by odd names in the kirkyard, a mark on the old ordnance map, and a broken hedge, a mouldering hearth, or a neglected well, and the blooming rowan-tree which no Scottish peasant failed to plant near his door.

And in all this future movement,

the Church of Christ must take part, as a softening, healing, and consecrating force. God give her, and us all, strength and courage for our Whole Duty.

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