

placed over the great door of the grand edifice they love so well—are they to be thrown into the funeral pile and destroyed as a sacrifice to the wretched system under which the Church of England in Canada is now governed?

These are questions of serious import to every churchman of the Dominion, and it is of the utmost importance that they be answered correctly. Nay, it is of serious consequence to all "denominations." It is said that the debt on the various churches of Ottawa runs up into hundreds of thousands. In the list are included Episcopalian, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Congregational buildings. I observe that the church in Montreal of a wealthy congregation is in almost as bad a plight as the cathedral in Hamilton. The evil is, therefore national, and should be treated first of all by the several Christian bodies, and then by legislation. In the particular case of Christ Church Cathedral the usual difficulties have been enhanced by personal differences. These have become so intensified in their bitterness that a powerful portion of the congregation now seem to be determined to be satisfied only by the entire removal of the Dean. This most unhappy state of affairs is a scandal to the whole Church, and nothing but a vigorous expression of public opinion and a large-hearted movement on the part of the churchmen will remove it. But where is the root of all this discord and misery? Doubtless in—debt. The curse of debt has reached even the House of God! What a mockery! It may seem irreverent, but I say it with the most profound respect for all sacred things, that it is a wretched sham and a deceitful hypocrisy solemnly to speak of a church in the hands of the Sheriff as the House of God. No such house can be His. His blessing can hardly rest on an edifice whose stones are unpaid for. Here, then, is the initial error. The Roman Catholics, I believe, have a rule which is the only true one—"Build not until you have the money on hand." So long as they observed this rule in its integrity we saw splendid churches slowly rising. Long years indeed were spent in their erection, but the system of paying as they went had these manifold advantages—that a worthy object was kept constantly before the eyes of the people; their ambition as well as their devotional feelings were appealed to; their proper pride in seeing the beauty of their church gradually bursting out into full bloom was nurtured; the nobility of strict honesty in their dealings with creditors was a constant delight to their souls; and when the last bit of golden decoration was added to the beautiful altar they could, in a rapture and honest of undiluted gratitude, say, "Here is a noble monument to God, and we present it to Him unsullied by the clamour of a creditor and unmarred by the iron claws of the money-lender." I am sorry to learn that here in Ottawa the vicious example of their Protestant brethren has proved too much for even the stern rule of the obedient Roman Catholic congregation. With us there are no special bonds to tie us to a particular church. Our freedom of thought and action is exerted and, like cowardly rats, who desert the sinking ship, the holes in whose sides we have ourselves worked with our own hands. Nor have we—I say it with shame and sorrow—that loyal and noble love for our Church, which animates the Roman Catholic Church; many poor domestic servants in the fold of whose communion, give more to its needs than their wealthy Protestant employers do in support of their own system. It is therefore of especial consequence to non-Romanists, that when the bonds which tie their congregations together, are so loose, the system of erecting churches should be of the best possible description. Incorporated cities and towns and other municipalities, are prevented by law from involving themselves in debt until a certain provision is made for its discharge. Why should not a congregation be similarly restricted? It is all very well to say that the liberty of the debtor to borrow and of the creditor to lend, shall not be interfered with, but there are many cases in which the public interests demand that private individuals shall be protected, even against themselves, and this, to my mind, is one of them. In the case of churches, this rule would carry with it the clear justice, that where a sinking fund is established, the burden of paying for a building

serving many generations would be paid for by them, and not by the first one. There would be little difficulty in framing a canon to be adopted by the Synod, and enforced by act of Parliament which would provide for the general erection of churches without bearing unduly on the people, and which would avoid the wretchedness and scandal so frequently arising from church debts. What are synods for? I look through the reports of their proceedings year after year in vain for any broad policy. The Church of England in Canada is not advancing as she should, and I attribute her backwardness to the incapacity of some of our bishops and the inertness of our synods. The Church, comparatively, is dead. The great ecclesiastical parliaments called synods meet and dawdle over a few matters of routine, squabble over a few matters of ritual, of which the great living mass of their zealous constituents know little and care less, while the noble and grand old Church of England is quietly drifting to the lee of the sleepless Roman Catholic, the ever moving Methodist, and the zealous workers of the numerous other denominations of the intelligent and cultured people of Canada. Our synods are asleep; our clergy are sunning themselves on the deck of the stately old vessel, and fancying that in poor and democratic Canada she will make the speed of rich and aristocratic England. Our people need but the leaders. They are zealous and willing, nay anxious, that their Church shall take her natural position—that of first among the foremost—but until master minds arise in our synods, they will be compelled to tug and strain and chafe like a chained lion, and feel that their noble aspirations are crushed under the weight of an effete ecclesiastical system. But I am wandering. How does debt operate on the clergymen? Most disastrously. It is a fact known to all church workers that the moment a church debt becomes troublesome to the congregation, at that moment is blame heaped on the clergyman. So long as the people can resort to a handsome edifice, listen to good music, and be gratified by a pleasing service, there will be no sound of discontent; but when the lender demands his money, and declines to take promissory notes instead of gold, then the storm arises. And upon whom does it burst? On those who suggested the building? On those who assisted in the scheme? On those who planned the field of operations? On those who carried the resolution through the vestry, who composed the building committee, who employed the architect, who signed the contracts, who watched the progress of the work, who stimulated the zeal of the people, and intensified their delight in seeing a beautiful church gradually developing itself for their glorification? No; not at all. The poor clergyman is instantly seized by the throat and made a scapegoat to the popular disappointment. It is then alleged that he exerted an undue influence in the vestry; that he arrogated to himself powers of forwarding the movement, and unwisely and extravagantly used them; that he, carried away by pride, seduced the people into the creation of a debt which he should have known they would be unable to meet; that he manipulated his friends and hoodwinked his opponents into the scheme; that by his hauteur he drove from his church many valuable families; that by his want of eloquence in the pulpit he made attendance at church an unpleasant duty; that by his coldness he attracted no young people, and loosened the ties which kept the old ones in his congregation; that if he were supplanted by a younger, more active, and more brilliant man, the church would again fill and its debt be met; and the natural result always is, as I find it now is in Hamilton, that the faithful old servant of half a century is told to depart and give place to a younger and better man. They are not alone in this difficulty. I could mention other churches where the very same influences are at work, where the same injustice is being inflicted on the clergyman, and where some of the people are vociferously calling him to account for faults they themselves have committed, or in which they have themselves deliberately and coolly taken their part. Now, I know that in these disputes there are always two sides, but I also know that as a rule the clergyman is unjustly, harshly, and tyrannically treated.

In the important work of building a church he is powerless against his people. They possess the controlling power of money, and unless they deliberately support him in his building schemes he must of necessity abandon them. But, I may be told that he has used his personal influence, which is great, to carry out some pet extravagance. Well, even if it be so, what then? At the worst he has been injudicious, but you yielded, and should not now sacrifice him. If he was unwise in suggesting, you were worse in enabling him to proceed. If he was guilty of a grave indiscretion you were *participes criminis*, and should not now abandon him to all the punishment. It is contemptible to cast the whole blame on him, cowardly to desert him in his distress, and—no! I will not use the proper term in expressing my idea of your conduct in now attempting to cast him, like an old worn out horse, into the streets—to live, if he can; to die if he must.

What is the remedy for this crying evil of our system? I commend this most important subject to the serious consideration of our Synods and the ecclesiastical authorities. The conduct of some wise clergymen furnishes the answer, which is this: The clergyman should have nothing whatever to do with the secular matters of his charge. Some of them will, I know, scout this as a cowardly laying down of an influence and power which they should properly use. I venture to dissent. The most successful clergymen, those who exert the greatest influence for good over their flocks, those who are most dearly loved by their parishioners, are those who have the least to do with the finances and business matters of their Church. The clergy of all denominations are too fond of money power; they are not sufficiently willing to trust to the respect and love of their congregations, they seek,—naturally, I admit, but unwisely, I think—for a control over their flock quite inconsistent with their true characters as spiritual guides and teachers. The day will be a happy one for them when the canon law is so altered as to remove from them all the grave responsibilities of secular management, and to cast upon the people all their troubles, vexations and increasing misery of financial duties.

Though I have used Christ Church Cathedral as a text, I have written this letter more especially for the purpose of drawing attention to the ecclesiastical authorities of the Church of England to two most grievous ills—the facility for building churches on an improperly constituted basis credit and the injury to clergymen occasioned by their being mixed up with the financial affairs of their congregations. The present case of the Cathedral at Hamilton furnishes further evidence of its ruinous power in other directions. It would be presumptuous in me even to suggest a mode of extrication from the scandalous position now occupied by a congregation I have never ceased to love and a clergyman I have never ceased to respect, and who now has my deepest sympathy; but I trust I may be permitted to say that there are noble men and noble women on each side of the calamitous difficulty now rending the grand old parish—that I know all of them to be actuated by the highest and purest motives—and yet here, standing aside, and viewing them uninfluenced by aught save a warm sympathy for the church we all love. I feel that by mutual concessions a way will soon be found of healing all dissension, and rescuing their Church from the scandal which we all most deeply deplore. Those in Hamilton cannot understand how sincerely the troubles of their beautiful Cathedral are lamented here. Their cause is looked upon as the cause of the whole Church throughout the Dominion, and to me, as an old Hamiltonian, feeling a pride in their splendid city, it is painful to hear those difficulties discussed by those who have no sympathy with my Church, who are therefore inclined to take an uncharitable view of the whole matter, and who utter sentiments far from complimentary either to the Church, to Hamilton, to the Cathedral, or to the contestants.

OTTAWA.

Ottawa, July 21 1879.

—These warm summer months bring some special trials and temptations for which we need special strength. It is hard at any time to live at our best. But it is peculiarly so in August.