

Churches would but cultivate apostolic love and apostolic simplicity.—*Evangelical Witness, Belfast.*

### CHURCH DEBT.

We know of nothing more calculated to paralyze the energies of a congregation, and interfere with its progress every way, than a burden of debt on the church building. A congregation so situated cannot greatly or rapidly increase. Strangers will not readily connect themselves with it, fearing the amount of toil and trouble to which they may be subjected. The members will have no heart either to increase to a reasonable extent their pastor's salary, or to contribute to the missionary operations of the Church. At all events, there will always be those who will make the church debt an excuse for disregarding every other call. Perhaps they would do little in any circumstances, but the debt is a convenient and ready excuse for their refusal. It will also be generally found, we believe, that those who do connect themselves with a congregation afterwards, feel but comparatively little interest in the removal of burdens, in the formation of which they had no part. They may be even more able, with regard to means, than the original members of the congregation, but not having had anything personally to do with the erection of the church, they do not feel any special interest in the removal of the burden, and their contributions are often not in proportion to their means. In addition to all these evil results, the burden of debt and the incessant efforts necessary to keep it afloat, often tend to create ill feeling among the members, and to discourage the pastor in the performance of his work. For all these reasons, it is most desirable that when church edifices are erected, they should be completed without debt. The writer has had to do with the erection of more than one church in connexion with country congregations, and it is his deliberate conviction that it would be far better to worship in all the more humble building, than to contract debt which it may require years to liquidate.

But yet, how few churches are free from debt? How many are groaning under a load, from which their spasmodic efforts from time to time fail to relieve them? Either in town or country it is comparatively difficult to find congregations not suffering in this respect in a greater or less degree.

We trust that for the future this evil will be carefully avoided. One means of escaping the danger will be the mature and careful consideration of every thing connected with the erection of a church, the site, &c. For we doubt not much evil has arisen from hasty and inconsiderate action on the part of the people. Let the site, and the extent and character of the building, be deliberately discussed and settled; and let the congregation, except in peculiar circumstances, resolve that, God helping them, they will themselves carry through the work, and depend solely upon their own efforts.

In regard to a large class of churches burdened with debt, we are of opinion that, were the country in more prosperous circumstances, it would be desirable to institute some general scheme for the removal of the evil. Other churches, both in Great Britain and America, have done this. Some are at present successfully carrying on movements in this direction. We believe it would be for the good of the Church at large, and for her rapid expansion in regard to missionary enterprise were this done. But if this is not done, in the meantime, it would be well for congregations, not by an occasional spasmodic struggle, but by a united, determined, well-considered effort to break their fetters, and throw the burden from their shoulders. In many cases the thing could be done. Were there a will, there would be found a way. And they would assuredly reap the benefit in their own increased comfort, and their freedom in carrying on the real work of a Church of Christ, and helping to send the gospel to the regions beyond.