

He laid the foundations without which the work of his successors could not have been accomplished. Only a simple head-stone marks his last resting-place in the quiet church-yard, but his more enduring memorial will be found in the impress left upon this community by his early labors. A prosperous parish, a united neighbourhood, a God-fearing people. To anyone who may desire a better memorial than the simple stone that marks his grave, we can only say, *Circumspice*—look around you."

We cheerfully commend this little pamphlet to the attention of churchmen, of students of our provincial history, and all other classes.

W. P. D.

### The Organization of Parochial Almsgiving.

A Paper read before the Rural Deanery of St. John, Dec. 15, 1891.  
by the Rector.

[I have chosen a practical subject with a most practical motive,—that of making personal profit out of the suggestions and experiences which the present discussion will generate. But the subject I have taken is also one of the most important in the range of practical theology. It was the first "burning question" in the history of the Primitive Church. It marked a new departure, gradual, but most significant, from that system of voluntary communism which was the necessary attribute of the first Christian Congregation. It was sealed by the institution of a new ministerial order, the practical disuse of which for so many centuries was the serious loss of the Church, and its present revival (in most recent days), one of the brightest proofs of her permanent vitality. Every incident of that movement recorded in Acts vi. is incurred in the personal experience of each parochial minister. He has known too well the 'murmuring' which arises when alms are distributed. He has felt, and felt most bitterly, the mistakes in the method of distribution, whether due to his own lack of experience, or the difficulty of ascertaining the exact circumstances of each particular case. He has longed, and longed too often in vain, for the regular assistance of some man or woman, "of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom," whom he might appoint over this business.

Now the *principle* which stands out clearly in the record of the institution of the Diaconate, is the separation of the ministerial and gleemosynary functions. Not an absolute iron-bound separation, not a slavery of routine, which only commends itself to inferior minds, but the recognition of important facts in human nature and method, the neglect of which is speedily its own condign punishment.

It is tempting to dwell upon the period when the christian life still exhibits all the character of youthful vigour. All is spontaneous and instinctive with love: there is indeed the true method, not yet burthened with any *rational* of almsgiving. "We communicate to all, and give to everyone who is in need,"—says Justin:\* and the older fathers interpret our Lord's saying, "*Give to everyone that asketh of thee*" to mean quite simply that every applicant was to receive without dis-

inction. "*Give simply to all,*" is said in the Shepherd of Hermas,—"*without asking doubtfully to whom thou givest, but give to all. For God desires thee to give to all of that which thou hast.*"—(Past Herm. Mand. 2.) Similarly, Clement of Alexandria warns, not to judge who is deserving and who is undeserving, "for by being fastidious and setting thyself to try who are fit for thy benevolence, and who not, it is possible that thou mayest neglect some who are the friends of God." There was no thought what the giver of alms would obtain for himself. It was the direct constraint of sympathy, and the consciousness of the love experienced in Christ. How simply does the reference to reward appear in the Epistle of Barnabas, and how completely within the limits of apostolic teaching? "Hesitate not to give, and give without grudging, but consider who will be the good repayer of the reward." (Ep. Barnab. c. 19.) There was no need of houses of hospitality, orphanages, hospitals, so long as every christian house was an asylum, and every christian man and woman was ready to receive the indigent. And after the Church's victory in the 4th century, for a long time the same admirable spirit worked with enlarged resources, and more developed machinery. The direction lay as before in the hand of the bishop, numerous deacons and deaconesses were his assistants, the official list or *matricula* of the poor contained the names of hundreds of thousands to whom the Church granted assistance. In the Church of Antioch, in Chrysostom's time, the *matricula* numbered 3000 widows and other poor persons. To these Chrysostom adds many who were lying in prisons, who were lying sick in the *Xenodochium*, or stranger's refuge, the lepers, and the daily suppliants, to all of whom the church gave daily food and clothing.

I dare not prolong this glance at those early and glorious times, so dear to the student of church history, so profitable as a study to all who would understand the spirit of our own church. I must not glance at the causes of deterioration, in part due to the breaking up of the Roman state, and the gradual growth of newer organizations. The much abused middle ages can teach something at least in the surviving instinct of duty to the poor, which finds a characteristic expression in the memorial verses describing the seven works of bodily mercy:

*Vestio, poto, cibo, redimo, tgo, colligo, condo,* to which another hexameter added seven spiritual charities:

*"Consule, carpe, doce, solare, remitte, fer, ora,"* (advise, admonish, teach and comfort one's neighbour, to forgive him, to bear with him patiently and pray for him.)

How easily is the theory, and how hard the efficient and beneficial practice! I turn to our own age and our own requirements. Every minister, whether his lot is cast in one of the immense parishes of London, or in a rural hamlet, has known and experienced these difficulties, of ascertaining facts as to character, means, labour, thrift, or its absence. Then the danger of giving too much and pauperizing where we seek to aid; or of neglecting the opportunity where a prompt and liberal assistance raises one who has stumbled in the race of life, and gives him renewed strength to run his course. And

\*Just. Apol. l. 14.