

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

belonging to the narrowest party that I know of within our national Church.

Strong currents run in narrow channels, and it is quite possible to hold firmly the great doctrines for which Nicholas Ridley died, which Charles Simeon taught, and the founders of this Hall desired to perpetuate, and yet live in friendly relations with all loyal Churchmen who are willing to endeavour, though each working on separate lines, to save our Church from error in doctrine, formality and superstition in worship, and coldness in life. Nor let us forget that even Evangelicals cannot all see eye to eye in minor matters. We must avoid suspicions, hope all things, hold all together, *pro patria, pro ecclesia, in Christo.*



Mr. Burns and the Unemployed.

BY THE REV. W. EDWARD CHADWICK, B.D., B.Sc.

DURING the last few months interest in the proceedings of Parliament has been so concentrated upon the Education Bill that other matters, in themselves of great importance, have not generally received the attention they deserved. One of the most useful debates which has taken place for some time in the House of Commons was that which arose on the proposition of Mr. Burns to devote £200,000 to carry out the provisions of the "Unemployed Workman's Act" during the next few months. The speeches with which Mr. Burns opened and closed this debate deserve careful study. He spoke with a very full sense of his responsibility, and at the same time with the feeling that he must tell the House, and through the House the country, some very unpalatable truths. In making the proposition Mr. Burns stated that this Act, which was somewhat hurriedly passed by the late Government almost at the end of their term of office, had satisfied no one. The Central Poor Law Conference, the Municipal Corporations Association, the Charity Organization Society, Trades Union officials, Labour

leaders, and pronounced Socialists had joined in condemning it. He said he had been urged to extend the scope of its operations, but this he declined to do, because he thought that even now we did not possess the knowledge requisite to say with certainty how this could be done wisely. If the Act had done little directly to benefit the unemployed it had at least enabled us to obtain a large amount of useful information as to the causes of unemployment and the condition of those who were unemployed. In another twelve months this body of knowledge may be largely increased. Mr. Burns then gave detailed statistics to show what we had so far learnt. He showed that by far the largest proportion of the unemployed were men between forty and sixty years of age; that "casual, unskilled, and general labour, and the building trades combined accounted for 75 per cent. of those for whom work under the Act had been found." He stated that the work done under these artificial conditions would have been done by similar men, at less cost, and perhaps of better quality had the Act not been in operation. The men who applied for work "were to a great extent lacking in resourcefulness, energy and efficiency"; in very few cases indeed were they organized for industrial or provident purposes by means of sick clubs, trades unions, or benefit societies; lastly, while owing to the recent improvement in trade the number of those actually unemployed seemed to have diminished, the proportion of those who must be regarded as "unemployable" had shown a tendency to rise. Such is some of the information which investigations made possible by the Act has enabled us to obtain. In the light of this knowledge what action seems to be demanded? I think Mr. Burns was right in urging the following:—Steps must be taken to educate better technically the unskilled labourer; his numbers must be reduced to the merest *minimum*, and the sources of the supply of the "unemployable" must, as far as possible, be cut off.

During the last few years in many towns "relief works" have become almost a recognised institution, indeed so much so that with the approach of winter such work is now expected

almost as a matter of course. At the same time most of those who have had experience of this method of dealing with the unemployed will endorse Mr. Burns' opinion that "relief works ought to be the last resort of any community. They sterilized volition, sapped self-reliance and introduced into industry those very conditions of irregularity and low pay which we are seeking to remove. Besides this they checked the flow and movement of labour." Words more true than these were never spoken. We must remember that over this work there is rarely efficient supervision ; many of the workers are unaccustomed to this kind of labour, and many more do as little as they can during the hours of work. Then, necessarily, the work is ill paid. Thus the evils of the system are manifold. Men are tempted to cease from making a determined effort, at any cost, to find their own proper work. It is rarely that the work is continuous. It generally means that each man, according to the size of his family, is found two, or three, or four days' work each week. On the other days he is generally idle, though supposed to be looking for work. Thus he suffers from the evils of irregular employment, and on the "off" days he frequently drinks. Then, as the result of small wages, some part of which is often mis-spent, both he and his family receive insufficient food. And this, as was clearly shown in a paper read at the last meeting of the British Association, is one of the causes of the want of energy, listlessness, and general lethargy which the unemployed, or irregularly employed workman generally displays. The whole system is radically evil, it fosters and perpetuates the conditions and qualities in the men which it should be our aim to eradicate.

The facts which Mr. Burns brought before the House of Commons are widely known among experts. But, unfortunately, knowledge filters but slowly downwards, and even now the vast majority not only of those who may be termed "workers among the poor," but of members of Town Councils and of Boards of Guardians have only the most elementary knowledge of the problem. They do not realize the dangers or the evils of unwise action, they do not foresee the inevitable results of creating

artificial labour under such conditions. Nothing is more easy than to take away from men the last remaining fragments of their power of initiative or of self-reliance. We have recently been told that we lack faith in popularly elected local authorities. I wish that these more often showed themselves worthy of our confidence. We may give them credit for wishing to do well, only unfortunately their knowledge is not equal to the responsibilities they are called upon to discharge. Government "by the people for the people," may be excellent in theory, but if it is to be so in practice the people must see the necessity of choosing experts to perform duties which demand special knowledge and good judgment. Until the public realize this necessity we shall muddle along from bad to worse, and the experience of Poplar and West Ham will be repeated in many other urban areas.

But Mr. Burns was not only critical, he was also constructive. He did not merely condemn much which had been done in the past; he showed what might be done in the future. He spoke strongly in favour of migration or emigration from districts where the work was insufficient for the number of workers, and he favoured the assistance of these means of increasing the "mobility" of labour. Such measures are often unpopular, but, Mr. Burns said, he did not much trouble about unpopularity if the right thing were done. Further, he said, that the Government was considering a scheme for rural housing in both England and Scotland, and they had appointed commissions to inquire into both coast erosion and the improvement of canals. All useful and necessary work which can be started and carried out under natural economic conditions must be good. The danger lies in artificial work created and pursued under artificial conditions. We have not yet fully realized the ultimate evils of such work, which in London and elsewhere has been initiated and fostered by various philanthropic societies. We must not think only of the present but of the future. We must assiduously seek for further knowledge, and, however pressed to do so by enthusiastic but ill-informed philanthropists, we must refuse to inaugurate schemes of whose ultimate effects, in the

light of past experience, we must feel more than doubtful. I only hope that the wise counsels given by Mr. Burns may become widely known, and that workers among the poor may see the necessity of bearing them in mind.



The Parson and his Flock.

A REPLY.

BY THE REV. F. ST. JOHN THACKERAY, M.A.

IT was wisely said by Epictetus, "Everything has two handles—one by which it may be borne, the other by which it cannot. If your brother be unjust, do not take up the matter by that handle—the handle of his injustice—for that is the one by which it cannot be taken up, but rather by the handle that he is your brother."

Let us endeavour, in meeting the indictment brought by Lieutenant-Colonel Pedder¹ against the Church of England, to do so in the spirit of this maxim. Let the answer come, not from an attitude of irreconcilable aversion or uncompromising hostility; rather, we will try to take up the question by the handle of kindly appreciation, readiness to learn our own faults, and a resolve not to impute evil where evil is not meant.

The Colonel begins with deprecating abstractions. He desires above all to arrive at a practical basis in things ecclesiastical, as in things electrical and commercial. The influence of the Church on conduct is his test of efficiency. And no one can doubt that this is essential. But we must ask, What are the authorities for his conclusions, and how is efficiency to be measured? Not by quoting a letter from the Bishop of Salisbury to his laity, in which he laments the vices that still stain our age, though we may believe they do so far less deeply than they did that of our fathers and grandfathers. To call on

¹ *Contemporary Review*, May, 1906.