

ship in the Church presupposes the personal decision of the individual " (p. 270) ?

The information given in this book is valuable and fascinating—one read it with unabated interest, thanks, as already stated, to the pleasantness of the translation. But the argumentation, and the philosophy of life implied by the conclusions, are unconvincing. Nevertheless, in conclusion, let it be said that on the subject itself of baptism, its meaning and use in the Church, there is indeed need for a re-study of it by all Christians who place the Scriptures as the sole authority for doctrine—together, if possible—and in such a re-study, the point of view expressed in this book should receive the most careful consideration.

The Church in the Countryside—

A Plea for Realism

By "RUSTICUS"

LAMBETH will discuss many things of importance to the whole Anglican communion, but there is one matter to which it is high time the Church in England gave serious consideration. And that is the present and future of the rural ministry—the Church in the countryside.

It is hard to resist the criticism that a great wastage of manpower is being perpetrated, and that a system—the parochial system as at present constituted—is being kept going for its own sake rather than because it is still the best that can be devised for the job.

I am not speaking of the sub-rural parishes such as are found in the Home Counties or in the hinterlands of great cities. Rochester, for instance, has a number of "country" parishes, but to all intents they are, in population and type, extensions of the town and suburban parishes, though more lovely to look at, or are welcome lungs, and green pastures to which hard-working clergy can be retired for light work. My discussion is directed to the more remote countryside, the far north-western, the west country, the marches of Wales, and so on.

Apart from those few clergy who have a real vocation and gift for work in a village, you might divide the present country clergy into three groups, which we might call (a) Old War Horses (put out to grass) ; (b) Absentees (i.e. specialists, whether diocesan or not, given a "small parish" as a base for wider work) ; and (c) Vegetables.

As regards the Old War Horses, no one would deny that the country parish—whether single or in plurality—provides a valuable field for retirement. The man has done his tough job, abroad or in big town parishes, and now has somewhere not too strenuous where he can exercise a pastoral ministry as his strength allows. It is just the place. The specialist is in a more difficult position, because he is up against the System. Unless he has very strong diocesan backing (a pep talk to the people at his induction : "patience and understanding

on both sides", and so on), and not every specialist gift fits the "official" picture and gets diocesan backing, he will soon find that his absences or absorptions in his vocation, to which he believes he is called, breed resentment.

And then there are the Vegetables. It is a startling and disturbing fact that the majority of country clergy—I stand to be corrected, but I guess it is the majority—are comparatively young men, or at any rate in the prime of their powers. And what are they doing? Either they are caught up in a ceaseless round of pretty barren (spiritually) activity, or they vegetate: they are not doing a *man's* job.

They vegetate because the System grows vegetables.

What is expected, traditionally and by public opinion and, alas, by many bishops, of the country clergy? The traditional picture is very pretty and a part of the typical English scene, and all that, but is it what the Church ought to be doing in twentieth-century England? Let's be frank. The country parson is expected to be the social welfare worker of the village; the master of ceremonies, always ready to preside at the whist drive, the office boy and odd-job man of village affairs (he's the only one who has plenty of time, they say). He visits the sick and aged, of course, as he should, and in that he has the advantage of the town parson, for he knows them all—that is one up to the System, and the same for Sunday School and youth work, he knows them all.

He is also expected to visit regularly the hale and hearty, quite regardless of their continued indifference to churchgoing; that is one of the astonishing things about the System. The faithful visitor, with exceptions, does not seem to be able to fill his church more than the slack visitor, or the man who is prevented by outside duties. And of course he spends much time raising money to keep his charming old-world church from falling down, etc.

If he is a prophet, or an evangelist, or a man who says that the *primary* and possibly exclusive function of the minister is to proclaim the Gospel and not to make men and women more comfortable (except in the Prayer Book sense), and won't go to whist drives, he is up against Public Opinion. If he tries to build up a team of lay visitors, if he brings in the Church Army or the Caravan Mission, if he gets part-time help from a retired colleague (if he is in the "Specialist" category and does not like to leave unvisited those for whom he has not opportunity himself) he will at once hear the cry, "The Rector is getting someone else to do his job!"

And the System supports that cry. It is extraordinary how easy it is for a village not to "like" its parson, and thus kid itself that it has a virtuous excuse not to support him. Before I became a country parson I used quite often to be in different parts of England, and how often when chatting with people I used to hear them start running down their clergyman. There was always something wrong with him. I'm afraid I used to sympathize. They still do it—but now I spring to his defence, whether I know him or not—even when (by their report) he is a Vegetable.

The country parson must be one of the most criticized of figures, both among the gentry and the villagers; it's an occupational hazard!

Luckily lots of them don't realize what is said of them. But the trouble is, the System encourages this criticism. You are *expected* to be the traditional parson. Of course, there are many clergy who favour the tradition, who are content that the Church should be merely at the circumference of village life, almost in a medieval sense—sanctifying the common things of life, etc. But is that, in its currently accepted sense, the New Testament view of the function of the ministry? The worst is, it puts the village in the centre. One of the hardest things is to get a real missionary interest going—whether directed to overseas, or to the over-populated and clerically under-staffed city not far away. They are prepared to dish out a little surplus, or even knit woolly vests for Central African babies, but to consider themselves as simply a tiny link in God's plans for the world—no.

And even if a country parson is deeply spiritual, a faithful pastor with a real passion for souls, he will inevitably reach the ceiling of sowing and reaping comparatively soon; and then either he must move, or he gets discouraged and even in danger of becoming a Vegetable. As for the sincere man without much message, it is quite pathetic how he will have to search about to fill in his time (I am not referring to elderly men, but those in their prime).

Can we afford to perpetuate this System? The time is probably coming when we shall not be able financially to keep going so many churches and clergy serving such small population units. But can we afford it *spiritually*? Is this the way to the evangelization of rural areas, the backbone of England?

The parochial system for England was worked out over a thousand years ago in the days of ox-drawn transport, and was highly suitable. But to-day we can move faster. "Ah, but," you say, "what about pluralities? Most country clergy have two or three parishes." True, but is that the answer? Not only do you, believe it or not, get the village where the parson is not living saying, "We haven't got a parson now, we have to share ——'s," but plurality is an inefficient improvisation. Two churches, naturally, but the poor man has two P.C.C.s, and so on, sometimes two rural deaneries, and I even heard of a case (corrected now) of two dioceses!

We must overhaul the System, and bring the size of units more into line with modern conditions. Naturally it is a nice thought that every little hamlet should have its own parson, but it is not realistic. Ideally, the smaller the unit the better—but why not start on the towns, where so many parishes are such impossibly big population units? After all, England is very much one: TV. bringing the "town" into the village, and buses bringing the village into town. Surely we ought to seek to release the man-power tied up in the countryside by this archaic System, and put it to work.

Yet when you come to consider the remedy, difficulties begin.

I would like to suggest that the remedy may lie in making (for countryside districts) the rural deanery as the unit, rather than the parish, though some R.D.s are probably too big. The present local government R.D.C., centring round the neighbouring town, is perhaps a rough guide.

The Rural Dean would be "Rector" of the whole area. Under

him, living in various parsonage houses but appointed for duty throughout the deanery, would be a team of clergy, as population and geography dictate. One man's principal place in the team would be as deanery youth leader, another the superintendent of lay visitors, another specializing in the old people's and social welfare work, in so far as the Church's duty still lies, another might be particularly a Bible teacher (they would all preach freely in the different churches). Another might be responsible, for his own and the neighbouring deanery perhaps, for building up evangelistic teams to operate now and again as called for in city parishes—what possibilities that opens up! The Old War Horse would have his place, and here and there a parsonage house would be free for the true specialist, the man serving a wider ministry, by his pen, or in a ministry of healing, or so on—the sort of man who can do so much, but for whom there is really little place materially in the Church to-day, now that most residential canonries are taken for diocesan workers.

Of course such a scheme would have many difficulties. Something like it was tried in a midland diocese some years ago, without success. Probably there can be no success until the scheme is adopted officially on a wide scale; it will meet massive prejudice, and needs fullest official backing.

A deeper difficulty is that it must upset patronage as it is now constituted. Personally I think patronage has done much to keep the Church of England free of ecclesiasticism, or domination by bishops. I'm not guying bishops, but one of the strengths of our national Church would be removed if all patronage fell into episcopal hands. And how we are going to get round that problem, in launching a scheme such as I outline, quite foxes me.

But surely we should think and pray about this whole problem of the countryside, and approach it with realism. We long that ordinary men and women in the villages should be convicted of sin, brought to the foot of the Cross, and find the Lord Jesus as Saviour and crown Him as Lord, and not be lulled into false security and selfishness.

The Lure of Magic

BY A. P. WATERSON, M.D., M.R.C.P.

THE nearer that a counterfeit approaches the reality which it simulates the more successful is it likely to be. The caricature of true religion which is known as magic is a far subtler counterfeit than any of the more or less extravagant variants of Christian orthodoxy. These are concerned with doctrine or Church order or ritual, while magic is an attitude of mind which can insinuate itself into any of these things. Evangelicalism is not exempt from it, and is indeed in some respects peculiarly prone to it.

THE ESSENCE OF THE MAGICAL

The essence of the magical attitude is that it starts with, and centres round, man rather than God. It is the desire and attempt by man to