

Editorial

THOSE who have a liking for columns and statistics will find a plethora of cyphers in *Facts and Figures about the Church of England* which has been prepared by the Statistical Unit of the Central Board of Finance and published by the Church Information Office (price 4s. 6d.). It has been said that figures in cold print are misleading, and there are doubtless many people to whom the mere sight of them is bewildering and uncongenial. Certainly, circumspection is desirable in seeking to arrive at an estimate of their significance (to conclude, for instance, from the baptismal returns that two-thirds of the population of England are devoted worshipping members of the established Church would be very wide of the mark). But statistics can be a source of illuminating information to the person who is prepared to give them intelligent consideration, and it cannot be denied that there are some instructive lessons to be learnt from a study of the present brochure. Those who have prepared it have in fact gone out of their way to be helpful, for not only have they tabulated a mass of statistics concerning the buildings, manpower, membership, and finance of the Church of England, but they have also analysed and interpreted these facts and figures with the aid of coloured diagrams. In what follows we give a selection of the significant information which may be culled from this document. (We give round figures.)

In the hundred years from 1851 to 1951 the population of England increased from 17 million to 41 million, but the number of clergy increased only from 16,000 to 18,000; that is to say, that where one hundred years ago there was an average of one clergyman to one thousand of the population today there is one clergyman to upward of two thousand. Not only is this so, but a study of the age groups shows a marked percentage increase in older over younger clergy. Today, indeed, the annual number of ordinations, whereby the ranks of the ministry are replenished, is not merely, as is well known, seriously inadequate but even considerably less than was the case last century, when the population was so much smaller.

The majority of babies born in this country are still presented for baptism—about sixty out of every hundred. Over the years, in fact, this proportion has remained relatively steady. In the population as a whole sixty-six per cent of persons have been baptized in the Church of England, some of them (upwards of 10,000 per year) as adults.

Twenty-four per cent of the total population have been confirmed in the Church of England. Leaving out of account those baptized children who are still under thirteen years of age, this means that less than half of those who are baptized come forward for confirmation. The proportion of confirmations has also remained relatively steady over the years.

Six per cent of the total population are parochial Easter communicants, or a quarter of the number who have been confirmed and who thus have the status of communicant members. During the past twelve

years, however, the proportion of Easter communicants, which in 1947 had slumped to a "record low", has been steadily improving, though it still stands, of course, at a very low level.

The 18,000 parish churches of England can boast 100,000 Sunday School teachers and 1,300,000 scholars—that is, seventy-two scholars per parish; again, not an impressive figure.

In Church of England primary and secondary schools there are 933,000 pupils, or 14.7 per cent of the total in all primary and secondary schools. In Roman Catholic schools there are 479,000 pupils, or 7.6 per cent of the total. And the latter figure is not static, but constantly moving up.

An examination of the returns for parochial expenditure shows that in 1956 3.1 per cent was allocated to overseas missions, 0.9 per cent to home-overseas missions, and 1.2 per cent to general charitable objects—totalling 5.2 per cent. In 1920 the figures were 8.6 per cent, 1.1 per cent, and 4.8 per cent respectively—totalling 14.5 per cent. The drop in giving to general charitable objects may in part be attributed to the introduction of the welfare state.

What may we learn from this information? Little, certainly, for complacency. That six babies out of ten continue to be baptized in the Church of England is no cause for self-congratulation when we take into account the number who eventually come forward for confirmation and the paltry few who attend our Easter communions (many of whom in turn are seldom seen during the remainder of the year). As has been said before in these columns, we need to rediscover the theology of the covenant, which assigns the family its proper place in the divine scheme of the Church. This will mean that ordinarily only those who are regular worshipping members of our congregations (that is, who are *seen* to be Christians) will be permitted to bring their children for baptism. It will mean a drop in the proportion of infant baptisms and a rise in the proportion of adult baptisms, and also the institution of a regular catechumenate preparatory to the latter. It means, further, that we must regard England as a mission field rather than as a Christian country.

We may expect that the vocation to the sacred ministry will be heard and responded to by an adequate number of men when our Church becomes in itself more spiritually dynamic than it is at present. The challenge of a church that is intent on evangelism will attract young men to offer themselves (and the right kind of young men) rather than a church that has come to easy terms with the world or which offers them emoluments comparable to those provided in secular occupations. What does a young man of vision and enthusiasm think of a church that is so turned in on itself that a mere £4 out of every £100 is devoted to the fulfilment of her Lord's missionary mandate? Let this amount be increased tenfold, and then we shall see things happening!

Above all, we need to pray and work for a true revival of spiritual religion, founded upon the rock of God's Word and Covenant, remembering that the things of the Spirit of God are **not** subject to human organization, however outwardly impressive, or dependent upon ecclesiastical decisions, however much publicized. Such a revival, sent

in answer to the supplication of God's people, will inevitably (as the history of the Church clearly shows) bring with it a phenomenal increase in the numbers of those offering themselves for the ministry, the mission field, and the lay work of the Church, and it will also witness a renaissance of sacrificial giving on the part of God's people for the evangelization of the world to the glory of our Triune God.

We trust that this number of *The Churchman*, with its articles by four distinguished contributors who have a first-hand knowledge of the mission fields of the world and a concern for world evangelization, may in some small measure serve to remind the Church of England of her missionary obligations and responsibilities. P.E.H.

Missions and the Church

“ You may always measure the value to yourselves of Christ's Cross by your interest in missions. And it is a safe test of the Spirit's presence in a Church. They are of the essence of an apostolic Church as distinct from a Church of culture, or a school of thought, or a social club. . . . The Church that missions really dies with Christ, and its missionaries but show forth His death. . . . There is nothing finer nor more pathetic to me than the way in which missionaries unlearn the love of the old home, die to their native land, and wed their hearts to the people they have served and won ; so that they cannot rest in England, but must return to lay their bones where they spent their hearts for Christ. How vulgar the common patriotisms seem beside this inverted home-sickness, this passion of a kingdom which has no frontiers and no favoured race, the passion of a homeless Christ ! . . . One reason why the Church is too little missionary abroad is that it is not a missionary Church at home. It is established on good terms with its world instead of being a foreign mission from another. . . . A Church which is not missionary will soon cease to be a Church. It has lost the Holy Spirit. It has lost the Cross as a living power. A Church cold to missions is a Church dead to the Cross. It may have religion, but not the Gospel.” (P. T. Forsyth.)