

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

The interview lasted till dusk. As Napoleon dismissed the Prince, he said, as he held the door, "We shall see one another again." "At your pleasure, Sire," replied Metternich, "but I have no hope of attaining the object of my mission." "Well, now," said Napoleon, touching the Prince on the shoulder, "do you know what will happen? You will not make war upon me?" "You are lost, Sire," said the Austrian; "I had the presentiment of it when I came; now, in going, I have the certainty." He *was* lost. It was the will of God. The victories of Lützen and Bautzen were followed by the defeats on the Katzbach and at Leipsic, and by that terrible campaign of 1814, which led to the lonely isle of Elba.

Here we take our leave of these interesting volumes; they are certain to appeal to a large circle of readers, for few subjects are more fascinating than history written by those who have created it.



ART. V.—CLERGY SUPPLY AND THE PLURALITIES ACTS.

IN No. III., p. 239, we quoted the following expression of opinion by the Bishop of Norwich, at his Diocesan Conference, on what we ventured to call "a really practical question:"—

Small cures with small incomes are evils in more ways than one. It is an evil to have an impoverished clergy, and it is an evil for a clergyman not to have enough to occupy his time. Further, there is great waste of strength which could be utilised elsewhere, particularly in London, where, with four times the population, there is only half the number of benefices which exist in the diocese of Norwich.

It will be observed that the Bishop here speaks only of small parishes with small incomes. But he would have included, no doubt, parishes with small populations and large incomes. For if it be an evil for a clergyman with a small income "not to have enough to occupy his time," it is hardly less an evil in the case of a clergyman with a large income. The "waste of strength," which his lordship complains of, is the same in both cases; and in the case of the disproportionately well-endowed benefice, the waste of strength is intensified, and its supposed mischievousness is increased, by waste of endowment.

The subject to which the Bishop of Norwich has drawn attention is one of interest and importance in many ways. For certainly under the present strain to keep abreast of the ever-growing demands upon her strength, the Church of England can

but ill-afford to let any of it run to waste. It is admitted on all hands that there never has been so much difficulty experienced by incumbents in getting curates as at the present time, and this, notwithstanding an increase of some 40 or 50 per cent. in the average of stipends. Instead of the ordinations increasing annually at the rate of 20 per cent., which would probably be no more than is necessary to keep pace with the erection of new churches, and with the growing desire of incumbents, wherever possible, to keep a curate, we believe that they are nearly stationary. This state of things has been variously accounted for. It is alleged to be due to our unhappy differences; to the stringency of the rubrics as to the Athanasian Creed; to the so-called Erastianism of our ecclesiastical system; to the widespread doubt which prevails among educated young men. Mr. Gladstone, in his recent Address to the University of Glasgow, referred to the subject in the following terms:—

I am glad to infer, with confidence from the figures before me, that there is no lack of youths in Scotland who like the business of the Church ministry for their vocation in life. That is not so in all lands at the present time. In two great countries, Germany and France, there is a great decline in the number of candidates for ordination both in Protestant and Roman communions. In Holland, it is said that one-seventh of the cures are vacant. There were, some time back, similar apprehensions on this score in England—at least, in the Established Church of England, amid the desolating convulsions it has undergone; but I think they have diminished or passed away. There are, however, traces of a latent feeling here and elsewhere, that Divine interests are secondary or unreal in comparison with those of the physical or experimental world, or that the difficulties belonging to subjects of religion are such that to handle them effectually and with a sound conscience is hopeless.

For ourselves, we believe that the influence on the supply of clergy, of the causes to which we have referred has been, and is, much exaggerated. Even were it not so, and the state of the case to be as alleged, we should be sorry to see the ranks of the clergy extended by any sacrifice at the shrine, either of Liberalism or Mediævalism, of the Protestant and Scriptural truth which characterises the doctrinal and liturgical standards of our Reformed Church, or by covering over and concealing the differences and divisions of antagonistic schools of thought with a veil of so-called charity. We do not say that here and there some of these causes do not operate, but we are satisfied their effect is very limited, and that the chief cause for the stationary figures of the annual ordinations is to be sought in other directions. Two kinds of influence have been at work. One is the deepened sense of responsibility as to the ministerial office which has happily grown up of late years, and *pari passu* with this, there has been the

withdrawal of many inducements—worldly inducements may we call them?—to take holy orders which formerly existed. During the last twenty years or so, partly as the result of changes introduced by the Endowed Schools' Commissioners, by which holy orders are no longer in most cases a requisite condition for masterships, there has been a considerable decrease in the ordination of graduates engaged in tuition. The great majority of college fellowships are now held free of the obligations to take orders. The termination of the Concordat between the Education Department and the Archbishops, as to the inspectorships of Church schools, and the action of the department in confining the office of H. M. Inspector to laymen, have also not been without some influence. We believe also it would be found, on investigation, that fewer family cadets are now destined from early years for the occupation of family livings. The *tone* of public opinion has been raised, and parents are more shy of putting pressure on their sons in the direction of the ministerial office.

All this affects materially, no doubt, the number of ordinations. But it is really the reverse of discouraging. For it proves that, even with the ordination-figures stationary, there must be a positive increase in the number of men ordained for parochial work. Moreover, it is as true of the Church as of the army, that twenty hearty volunteers are worth more than any number of pressed or bribed men. The mischief has been incalculable which has been done to Christianity and to the Church of England in days gone by, and is done now, through the ordination to the ministry of men without spirituality or a converted heart—of men to whom all truth is unreal, and the discharge of ministerial and pastoral functions a mere perfunctory thing, empty of life, and unction, and peace. Such men may go through the round of ceremonialism with decent propriety, and perhaps even deceive themselves by imagining that religion is equivalent to godliness, the regulation-posture at a so-called altar an act of faith, and busy-ness about ecclesiastical decoration or Church work the realisation of the ministerial ideal. But let the ideal embrace, as it must, the honest preaching of God's truth, the skilled and faithful dealing in tenderness with souls in all the varied phases of spiritual experience, and who does not see how entirely uncongenial hearty work of this kind must be to the man who is of the world worldly, who has no conscious sympathy with God, no living experience of the power of the Holy Ghost in his own heart, who knows nothing, and can tell nothing of what God has done for his own soul. We can well believe that the consideration of this has had something to do with the deficiency in clergy supply. Men are not so ready, as formerly they were, to answer offhand the plain and searching

questions of the ordination service, and every true Churchman may thank God for it.

It is in view of these circumstances that once and again during the past few years the question has been boldly pressed forward whether the time has not arrived for reconsidering the provisions of the Pluralities Acts, with a view to the more economical employment of the strength which the Church of England possesses in the aggregate number of the clergy. It is impossible, in the limited space at our disposal, to present the case so strongly as it might be presented, but a few facts as to the relative numbers of the town and rural clergy, and the work which devolves upon them, will suffice to indicate the grounds on which the advocates of a change rest their case. Some few years ago the *Quarterly Review* had some remarks on the unequal distribution of the clergy, though not with any reference to the repeal of the Pluralities Acts and the union of small parishes. So far as we know, the figures then published have never been controverted. It was there stated that for some 15,000,000 of town population there were employed less than 6000 clergy, incumbents and curates included, with endowments of only 750,000*l.*, while for 7,500,000 of rural population there were upwards of 13,000 clergy, with endowments of about 2,750,000*l.*! Further inquiry has elicited the fact that of 10,700 benefices in the Southern Province, about two-fifths have a population of less than 400 all told, while of these two-fifths, nearly one-half or 2100 have a population of 200 or less—that is, on an outside estimate, about forty or fifty families. What makes the anomaly more conspicuous is the fact, that very often the smaller parishes are the better endowed, so as to justify the sarcastic criticism sometimes heard, that Church endowments are distributed in an inverse ratio to the population and the amount of work to be done. It is now forty years or more since the author of “*Essays on the Church*” specified the unequal distribution of endowments as one of the glaring illustrations of the need of Church reform.

But the immediate question which the Bishop of Norwich seems anxious to ventilate is not the readjustment of disproportional endowments, but the union under one incumbent of small and scantily-endowed parishes, so as thereby to set free clerical power, which is now running to waste for want of sufficient material on which to employ itself, and at the same time, to give to the clergyman a sufficient, or, at least, a better income. *Prima facie*, any proposal to repeal or modify the stringent enactments of the Pluralities Acts would probably be met with a decided negative. More than forty years have passed by, carrying with them an entire generation of clergy, since the Act 1 and 2 Vict. c. 106, received the Royal assent

with the unanimous approbation of all parties. The crying abuses of nepotism and plurality which disfigured the Church of England for the half century preceding the Queen's Accession, and made it a by-word and a reproach to the enemy, have become so entirely a thing of the past as to linger only in the memories of the elder clergy. It was a time when the Sparkes, the Norths, the Pretymans, and others of equal notoriety revelled in the enjoyment of piled-up preferments; when a hack curate, holding also perhaps the mastership of a grammar school, would take three or four services in parishes miles apart, before sunset; when three brothers in the diocese of Norwich held between them fifteen livings; and when of some 500 curates, four-fifths were employed by non-resident incumbents. "A burnt child dreads the fire." It is therefore not unnatural for those who recall the experiences of those days to feel somewhat suspicious and even alarmed at the proposal to undo even partially what was so wisely done when Parliament passed the first Pluralities Act.

On the other hand, it will be replied that though the law was wisely brought to bear at that time in a trenchant and sweeping way, as the only effectual method of eradicating very gross abuses, yet now that the abuses are got rid of, and a healthier moral tone has been developed alike among clergy and laity, the Church may fairly be allowed to reconstruct her ecclesiastical system and reorganise her forces. Even should this involve the union of contiguous small parishes, the Church authorities, it is argued, may be trusted to provide ample safeguards against the possible recurrence, under cover of the proposed arrangements, of these now extinct abuses. For ourselves we are by no means prepared to say that such safeguards are impossible of construction. But the danger is a palpable one, and would demand the most careful and stringent precautions to protect the Church against it. There is, unquestionably, a good deal of truth and justice in the contention of the Bishop of Norwich as to the waste of strength under existing circumstances. But in the absence of other and equally important changes, we are by no means sure that the suggestion for uniting under one pastorate adjacent small parishes is capable of very extensive realisation; in cities, it may be feasible, because the people are clustered together, though even there, the union generally involves the removal of one of the churches, a result which is not contemplated in the case of the rural parishes. But in the country, where the churches are two and perhaps even three miles apart, it is not clear how the people can be provided with two services at each church, unless the incumbent be compelled to employ a curate. In that case there seems no sufficient reason, speaking generally, why each parish should not have its own resident pastor, as at present. We should view with something stronger than regret any attempt

to re-establish the custom of restricting the services in a parish to one on a Sunday, unless in the case of a very small parish, or where the neighbouring parish church is within easy walking distance. It strikes us, indeed, that any such proposal as that hinted at by the Bishop of Norwich, even if desirable on the grounds indicated by his lordship, would be of small practical use for setting the clergy free for town curacies, unless steps were taken for the establishment of a permanent diaconate. This element of the question is, however, too large an one to be fairly considered at the close of our Article.



ART. VI.—THE MAGNIFICAT.

ITS LITURGICAL USE.

THE Song of the Virgin Mary has become a Song of the Church. Therefore the reflections (presented in a former Paper¹) on its first intention and personal bearing may properly be followed by a few words on its liturgical use.

The Christian instinct has rightly felt that the first utterances of faith and joy at the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ should not be left as silent records in a book, but should sound as living voices for ever, and that the breath of the Holy Ghost, which is in them, should be felt in the congregation to the end of time. These Songs thus become both a means of unity and a refreshment of faith: for thus the devotions of the ages become one with each other, through the element which they all successively inherit from their common source; and, in using the words, every generation feels closer to the time when they were spoken first, and renews its sense of the historic truth of the events which attended the incarnation of the Son of God.

But, besides these benefits from the liturgical use of the Canticles, there is a fitness in the words themselves to become the perpetual voice of the Church. Has not this been always felt? Is it not felt now? How many worshippers still breathe out their own emotions in "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour!" knowing now the full meaning of that word, as she who first uttered it could not at the time have known it. How many, with a larger intelligence than was then possible for her, marvel and rejoice at the "great things," which "He that is mighty has done" for servants in such "low estate!" How many repeat the assurance that

¹ THE CHURCHMAN, p. 301.