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with simple tradition. Hooker remarks that he objected to "a perverse following of antiquity." Maurice goes so far as to say that "what he craved for all along was a new religion." Always, together with a tradition, he demanded also the *ratio* of it; and if a fresh revelation gave a rational account of itself, it was to him equally acceptable with the old; for no rule, he thought, could be valid against what was right or good, and the purity and perfection of a theory were amply justified by its inward meaning, and proved by its agreement with the original scheme of doctrine. Thus did Tertullian and Montanism, within the limits of an authoritative creed, establish subjective opinion as the ultimate test of truth.

HISTORICUS.

ART. V.—THE SUFFERINGS OF THE CLERGY.

A PLEA FOR THE QUEEN VICTORIA CLERGY SUSTENTATION FUND (LONDON BRANCH).

ST. PAUL asks the question whether the Christian ministry have not the power to eat and to drink. At home, the answer must certainly be, No; a large part of the clergy of the Church of England are improperly fed, and almost on the verge of starvation. It is no exaggeration to say so. "It's not my turn for dinner to-day!" was the confession of a growing boy, one of the family of the vicar in an agricultural East Anglican parish. His father had sent him to the Hall with a message immediately after the morning service, and the Squire had kindly told him to run home quick, or he would be late for dinner. But, alas! it was not his turn for dinner that Sunday. In every agricultural labourer's cottage the whole family would be gathered round their substantial mid-day meal; but the parson could only afford to give his children a dinner on alternate Sundays.[1]

This is, unhappily, an illustration of an enormous number of cases. Tithes, as we know, have been sinking in value for years, and now only bring in £66 a year instead of £100. Ordinary agricultural land has been growing more and more difficult to cultivate profitably, and on this many of the country clergy depended. Some of it has gone out of cultivation altogether. There were always about 2,600 benefices in the Church of England with an income below £200 a year;

[1] The story is given by Mr. P. Vernon Smith.

but now that number has gone up in consequence of this state of things to the proportion of more than half.

There are at present 13,890 incumbents in England and Wales, and more than half of them are now in receipt of an income of less than £180 a year.

It is quite true that the greater number of these men and their families have not enough to eat and drink.

It is quite true that many of them, in extremely cold weather in the winter, have no fuel to keep themselves warm, and if they are at all delicate have to remain in bed merely to prevent attacks of illness.

It is quite true that most of them are obliged to bring up their sons and daughters to quite humble trades, because they cannot be educated for employments becoming to the position of a clergyman. Some are lady's-maids, some are footmen, some grocers' and drapers' assistants, and the like. Respectable as these callings in life are, we had hitherto hoped that the families of the clergy might have a more intellectual outlook.

It is quite true, again, that several hundreds of the clergy and their families have to be clothed with second-hand garments sent to a charitable society.

I am interested in most of the societies for the relief of the sufferings of the clergy, and the facts that are disclosed are very pitiable. Here is a letter from one: "My income is reduced to about £140. Even on that I think I could have managed, but nearly two years ago my wife had an attack of paralysis, and has since continued quite helpless. The consequent heavy medical and nursing expenses have reduced my finances to a very low ebb, so that my difficulties at the present time are many."

Or think of this: An incumbent, fifty-two years of age, twenty-one years in Holy Orders, with an income of £85 a year. His Archdeacon wrote to one of the societies that he really did not know how any words of his could emphasize the appeal which the figures themselves made to the generosity of the society. Apart from the wretched pittance he received from his benefice, his health was almost continually ailing in the winter.

Or this: An incumbent of eighty-four, with two children still dependent on him, and his benefice only £104 net. What is he to do?

Or this: An incumbent of forty-seven, whose children's education cost £65 a year, and whose net income is only £107. How can he live?

Or this: A vicar of fifty-five, with three children dependent

on him; a son in Earlswood Lunatic Asylum, his wife ill, and a net income of £193. What accumulated misery!

Or this: A vicar of seventy-eight, with four children dependent, and a net income of £95.

These examples of dire poverty, taken at random from the records of the charitable societies, must be multiplied by scores every month, and by thousands every year. This is the kind of thing that is meant when you are told that more than 7,000 of the benefices of the Church of England are in receipt of an income of less than £180 a year.

Listen to some of the letters of thanks which these poor men write when some little measure of help is sent them. It is very pathetic to see what small sums excite so much rejoicing:

"I beg most gratefully to thank you for your extreme kindness to me, having voted me a gift of £15 in money, and also clothes. Words fail to express my gratitude sufficiently, or to say what brightness you have brought into my life. I can now, through your kindness, pay small bills owing for the necessaries of my household, and have money in hand to go on with. I am suffering much pain, both in my hands and feet, from rheumatic gout, and the tumour in my side; but your goodness has brought ease to my mind, and that will help me to get well sooner than anything: for to lie awake at night through pain, and then to wonder how things will fare for others and yourself when you cannot work at all, makes you feel very troubled."

Here is another: "I have this morning duly received your cheque for £25. Words quite fail to express the deep gratitude I feel to the society for so kindly helping my case. I can assure you my wife and I have never had such a kindness and help bestowed on us in our lives. I am so very thankful and grateful; it has in a moment seemed to make all things new again, and lifted an anxiety from our hearts. The clothing, I assure you, will be an immense help to us. To live without having a tailor's or hosier's bill means wearing clothes until they are very 'shiny' and very 'thin.'"

Here is another: "I thank you more than words can do for your timely help. It does much to lift a burden from me which has weighed me down unduly these last few weeks."

Here is another: "I try to keep up appearances for the sake of the parish. Nobody knows what we suffered last winter, being without a servant, as we had to do. The lack of nourishment has weakened my wife so much. Not a house in this parish has suffered more than mine from poverty and sickness, yet I have had some begging at my door, and I have known what it is to give the last sixpence out of my pocket."

Here is another: "Will you kindly convey to the committee my most grateful and heartfelt thanks for so kindly giving me a grant of £10? Oh, what a relief! I wish I could say all that is in my heart, but it is too full. I am brimming over with thankfulness, and so excited I can scarcely hold the pen; and I feel so grateful, too, for not being kept in suspense. I can arrange in comfort for my little child's holidays. 'God bless you all' is my heartfelt prayer."

Here is another: "I am profoundly thankful for the very generous grant your corporation have made me, and I beg you to convey my deep sense of gratitude. By this kind aid my little sick daughter will be able to have another stay at the seaside, and my insurance premium will be paid."

Yet again: "Words can never express what we feel, or what you have been to us. We could not have come through our troubles but for what we have had from your society. God bless both it and you!"

Yet again: "I scarcely know how to express my feelings of thankfulness and gratitude for your kind letter enclosing a cheque for £15. I never for a moment expected such a handsome gift, and upon seeing the cheque both my wife and I were overwhelmed with joyful gratitude. Will you please accept and convey our most heartfelt thanks for this truly kind assistance, which has, I need hardly say, relieved our worried minds of a heavy burden. I thank you also exceedingly for what you say about a grant of clothing. It will be most acceptable and helpful. We are truly grateful for this valuable help."

Yet once more: "'Believed not for joy' was the first impression at the sight of your magnificent £15 cheque. Thank God, and thank your committee, one and all, and those kind hearts who have learned the lesson, and will have the promised reward, 'Blessed are they who consider the poor and needy.' What a boon this £15 will be only such sufferers as myself can experience. All last week I was unable to open my lips, either to eat or talk, owing to neuralgic gout. Here is my lot—helpless and hopeless—when amidst the deepening gloom a bonnie bit of bright brotherly burst of sunshine floods my path; so, amidst my tears of delight, I shall try to be brave again, and hope by a good and healthy change to grow strong enough to work again by God's blessing."

Such are the facts laid week by week before the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy, the Poor Clergy Relief Corporation, and other societies. Think of it. Leaving aside all the necessitous curates for the moment, we find more than half of the incumbents of the Church of England—that is, more than 7,000—bringing up families on less than £180 a year; and a

very large number of them indeed have insufficient food, insufficient clothing, insufficient warmth; their lives are one perpetual struggle to keep themselves alive and to avoid debt.

And remember that they do not complain. All this information, all these facts, come from societies and Church authorities; the suffering clergy themselves have formed no union or committee, and uttered no murmur of despondency. Their high calling and their principles as preachers of the Gospel and stewards of the mysteries of Christ prevent them from making their troubles known. There is a dignity of self-respect in their lives that amounts to heroism, and is a very noble example to us all. Few are aware of the sorrows, the privations, the perpetual fastings, the dismay when sickness comes, which are to be found inside the quiet, decent-looking parsonages of half the parishes in the Church of England.

Remember also that they cannot earn money for themselves. It is against the law of the Church and realm that they trade. St. Paul supported himself by making sail-cloth, and some of the Bishops of the early Church were shepherds and artisans; but working for profit is, for various reasons, forbidden to our clergy now. They have chosen a lofty profession for life, but it is one of deep poverty and unceasing hardship, and they must abide by their choice and its rules. Indeed, they have no other wish.

It is a pitiable state of things which I have described to you, and it is not exaggerated. It has come about, as I said, largely from the extraordinary depreciation of tithe, and from the failure of the little glebe-lands, often attached in the country to the benefice for its support. It has also come because upwards of £700,000 a year of tithe is in the hands of the laity. The amount of the tithe belonged to the monasteries, besides vast estates in land. All this was confiscated by Henry VIII. at the Reformation, and, instead of being given back to the poor parishes, was squandered on his courtiers and their dependents. The landed gentry of England, who hold this enormous property in their hands, which was once used for the purpose of religion, owe a vast debt of obligation to the Church to whom it once belonged. One other reason I may mention, and that is, that the population has in the present century increased with prodigious speed in the towns; and a huge number of churches have had to be provided for it, for which very insufficient provision could be made.

And I wish to recall the fact that the clergy who are better off have themselves made great sacrifices. What is meant, for instance, by the Ecclesiastical Commission, with its income

of £1,000,000 a year? It represents the estates of the bishoprics and cathedral chapters, which have been taken away for the endowment of new parishes, and for the improvement of those that are very poor. On that object all that income is spent, and it is all now allocated. The other great sacrifice made by the clergy of the Church is in the payment of the 8,000 or 9,000 curates. Some of them, of course, are paid for by societies, some by rich congregations, but the greater number by the clergy themselves. Many of the incumbents of large parishes, where several assistant clergy are needed, draw nothing at all from their benefices, when they have paid their curates, but live entirely on their own private means. One London rector told me that during the course of his ministry he had paid £10,000 to curates out of his own purse; another told me he had paid £15,000.

Why do we allow all this grinding poverty which I have sketched to you, to continue? England is the richest country in the world in proportion to its population. The riches of the City of London alone are beyond the reach of imagination. Why do not rich men, who hardly know what to do with their money, take pity on the sufferings of so large a section of their fellow-countrymen, who are precluded by their very profession from doing anything whatever to help themselves? Englishmen are always generous when their hearts are touched by real distress. Here are hardships and privations on a very large scale scattered all over the country. Why is it that they are not relieved with liberal and grateful hand?

It is mainly because the facts are not known. The thing is not understood. It is very difficult to make a statement of the facts reach the minds of the wealthy. There is a sort of hazy idea that the Church is endowed, and that this is enough. Many people make the extraordinary mistake that the clergy are paid, wherever they are wanted, like army, navy, policemen, and inspectors, from the rates and taxes. They forget that the little endowments of old days have gone down to nearly half their value, and that even at their best they were intended for a population not one-tenth the size at which it now stands. They do not understand that the Church of England, in proportion to the requirements of the enormous increase of population and the extraordinary depreciation of tithe and glebe, in reality needs endowing over again.

"Have we not power to eat and drink?" That is the mute appeal that comes from hundreds, and even thousands, of rectories, vicarages, and parsonages, in town and country this day. I wish I could bring home to the country what we all owe as Christians to these men. They have devoted

their lives to preaching the Gospel of Christ, to administering the Sacraments to sick and whole, to training children, to comforting sorrow, to advising those in doubt and difficulty, to encouraging and solacing the dying, to assuaging the grief of the mourners. Even sceptical persons would allow that the high ideals and principles where Christianity prevails are a part of our civilization which is of incalculable value. As sincere believers in Christ's Gospel, you hold that the influence of the clergy is far higher than civilizing, for it is the saving of souls, the bringing of sinners into the knowledge of life and light and immortality. They may not all be endowed with the highest gifts of wisdom and eloquence, but the vast majority of them are loyal servants of their Master, sacrificing their lives in His service, preaching His Divine message of truth, showing His example in their lives, giving constant encouragement by their presence to the godly, righteous, and sober life, waging perpetual warfare against ignorance and sin. And who shall say what the country does not owe to their wives, whose one pleasure it is to work for others, and in countless gracious ministrations to alleviate the sorrows of those poorer than themselves, and enlisting their daughters to follow the same bright example of mercy and sympathy? Have not the clergy and their families power even to eat and drink? Shall we not see to this?

The Queen Victoria Clergy Sustentation Fund, which I had the honour to propose to Convocation and to our own Diocesan Conference as the most fitting memorial from the Church, of the completion of sixty years of Her Majesty's happy reign, and which was unanimously adopted, was founded in order to cure in some degree this scandal and evil. We remembered how Queen Anne had given up her right to certain extra charges on clerical property, and had inaugurated a fund known as Queen Anne's Bounty, which has been of great use in building parsonages and in such-like ways. We thought that a fund for raising the incomes of the poorest of the poor clergy from subscriptions voluntarily given, in honour of our beloved Queen, would be our best thank-offering for the great mercies and blessings of her reign. We could not hope to raise all the poor benefices to £200 a year, for that would require every year a million of money in subscriptions, but the poorest we hoped to improve. And that we have done, and are doing. In some cases by endowments, in some cases by annual allowances, we are relieving the pressure of acute distress. In London we have increased all the benefices to £200 a year, because living in London is expensive, and because the claims of a large London parish of 10,000 people are quite different from those of a little parish

in the country of a few hundred souls. But for all this we depend on annual subscriptions and collections. If at any time the interest that has been aroused should be checked, we should have to lower our allowances again, and bring bitterness and disappointment to the hearts of those whom we had encouraged to hope. But we trust to God that this fund will continually grow, and enable us to counteract a still larger area of suffering and distress, to distribute a still more adequate amount of comfort. It would be no great thing even if we could raise the income of all benefices alike to the modest level of £200 a year, even though we should have to raise a million annually. By bringing this cause, a cause of humanity and justice and gratitude, home to the hearts of the whole Church, high and low, rich and poor; by asking for large sums from the rich and small sums from the poor, we hope to make the effort general, if not universal. I appeal to all members of the Church to become annual subscribers—large or small—to the fund. I believe that we are all thankful for the mercies and victories of the past weeks, and rejoice that the honour of the Queen and the integrity of her Empire have been vindicated. I believe we shall all pay with cheerfulness the necessary imposts, which, as they are widely distributed, will fall heavily on none. I believe, also, that the sacred cause of charity, far from suffering, will benefit by the loyalty, the enthusiasm, the deep and heartfelt thankfulness, of Churchpeople. And amongst all the appeals united in that sacred cause I know of none that comes to us with greater force than that of those who are spending their lives and energies, their time and talents, for the good of others, and who are unable, from the very circumstances of their holy calling, to plead, like others, for themselves.

WILLIAM SINCLAIR.

Reviews.

The Life of Edward White Benson, sometime Archbishop of Canterbury. By his son, ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON, of Eton College. In two volumes. London: Macmillan and Co., 1900. Price 36s. net.

IT was, of course, inevitable that the life of Archbishop Benson would be written by someone, and we are glad that the Bishop of Durham laid it as "a sacred charge" upon Mr. A. C. Benson to fulfil the task, which he has faithfully and lovingly done in the two full and handsome volumes now before us—volumes the aspect of which do the printers