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

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

THE

CHURCHMAN

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ART. I.—THE SUPPLY OF CLERGY.

IS the supply of clergy adequate to the needs of the Church? This is a question which may be asked with at least three different intentions. It may mean, "Is the supply adequate to fill existing incumbencies and curacies, for which stipends have been provided?" or, "Is it adequate to the needs of the population to which we have now to minister?" or, "Does it progressively increase with the vast yearly increase of population?"

The last two questions are full of anxiety. The Church of England boldly holds to her claim and duty to be a National Church. No shocks or losses to come can affect this. Moreover, she claims, what other Protestant Churches scarcely claim—the responsibility of pastoral care. How is she to continue to give this to the whole vast ever-increasing mass of population? If she were content to gather and minister to isolated congregations, or merely to perform services, the prospect would be easy. But can money be found to maintain more clergy? Can men be found to minister? Here it is that the scheme of a permanent Diaconate comes forward. Without entering on this question, which cannot be treated here, it may certainly be said that all thoughtful men must be convinced that some wider, firmer use of lay help is daily becoming more necessary. But speaking of clergy only, and without reference to lay help, there are many who take a hopeful view of the matter. It is true that there are parishes of 10,000 or 12,000 where incumbents are working without a curate, but an incumbent who is fit for his post can almost always raise funds for a curate if he makes the effort. It is true that there are parishes of 20,000 people, which require subdivision. But very much has been done, and every year sees the most pressing cases dealt with. Such statements

sound vague and general, but they are not made without inquiry, or without the authority of persons competent to speak. It is not, of course, intended that there is anything in the present state of things to allow a relaxation of the unwearied efforts by which alone past neglects have been repaired, and the needs of the present are being met. But there is a sense in which, in spiritual things as well as in temporal, we are to take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Great changes in outward circumstances and conditions, new unforeseen waves of feeling, great outpourings of grace, may make our foresight valueless. Our business is with the immediate future, still more with the present. Leaving, then, the second and third questions proposed, let us confine our attention to the first.

Is the supply of clergy adequate to present needs in the limited sense of adequacy to fill existing posts? There are two ways of making the inquiry. The first is by the comparison of statistics. The number of incumbencies and curacies has been constantly increasing; but, omitting the hopeful figures of 1883, the number of deacons ordained has only crept up from 697 in 1877 to 727 in 1882. Nevertheless, as was pointed out in an article in the *Guardian* of February 7, 1883, these figures do not imply that the increase has been so slight as would appear. If the supply was almost stationary, it was stationary at a point higher than the waste, so to speak, caused by death, by withdrawal from active duty, and by colonial appointments. Every year the number of clergy in actual work grew larger, and supplied the new posts, although if one year was compared with another, the numbers showed no marked increase.

The number of clergy whose deaths were publicly notified between July, 1881, and July, 1882, amounted to 378. The number withdrawing every year from active work cannot be ascertained, because such withdrawal is often only temporary, and in this uncertainty lies the weak point of the calculation. But allowing fully for this item, for deaths omitted from the calculation, and for appointment to schools or abroad, there still seems margin to show a considerable yearly gain. The opinion of the Clergy Mutual Assurance Office is that the number of the clergy is undoubtedly on the increase.

The second method of inquiry is simply that of experience and observation. Answers from a wide area go to prove that the supply of curates is sufficient, or nearly sufficient, to meet the demand. Before stipends were raised this could scarcely be said. But now that £120 is in the North of England almost the lowest stipend offered to a deacon, there is no

great difficulty in finding men. On the contrary, it is not unfrequently the case that men who have kept their terms at a theological college, and can have satisfactory testimonials, are unable to find a title for Orders till the last moment, if they are not even obliged to delay their ordination. It is true that one of the societies which help in the payment of curates always reckons on a part of its grants not being taken up. Yet for various reasons this does not appear to invalidate the general conclusion that the supply, if not quite equal to the demand, at least drags on close behind it. But there is a difference between a sufficient and an efficient supply. There is a fairly adequate supply of men, but not an adequate supply of useful men. An incumbent can find a curate without difficulty if he has the money to pay him, and if he is content to engage a man of good moral character, in Orders, or accepted as a candidate, without any strict inquiry as to his attainments or fitness for the ministry. But if he seeks for a man of average mental power, who has received and retained some theological training, who can hold the attention of his hearers for a few minutes, in teaching or in preaching, then he may have to wait some time before filling his curacy. We have, then, a supply which is barely sufficient in number, but which is not adequate in quality. Here arises a dilemma, the solution of which is of the highest importance for the Church. Are we to continue the present system, which is practically that of accepting all candidates of good character who offer themselves? The number of those rejected by Bishops on examination is comparatively very small, and it is further reduced by the cases of those who are accepted on a second trial by the same or by another Bishop. If the present system is continued, we shall be in part recruiting the ministry with weak men, whom no careful or earnest incumbent would willingly accept as a helper. Still more will this be the case if, in mistaken kindness, help is given to every man who seeks it, for the expenses of that minimum of theological training which is at present required. The other horn of the dilemma is evident enough. If you reject any of the class of men whom you are now accepting, the supply will at once fall short. You have barely enough as it is. Any change will make the case serious.

No sound decision can be arrived at without taking into account that unfit men bring positive weakness, not strength, into the work of the Church. The unfitness meant is the want of mental power to see the connection of ideas, the want of ordinary powers of expression, the want of common shrewdness and judgment, the defect of general education and of special knowledge. It is not a question of Greek and Latin, gentleman

or no gentleman, but a question of mental power and common education. If a man is considerably below the average in these respects he cannot be anything but a source of weakness to the Church, as an ordained minister. He may be a good and spiritually minded man, but his place is not in the priesthood, at least not in England and at the present time. It is true that there is a certain amount of routine work, of late much increased, which almost anyone can do. It is true that under the protection of the Act of Uniformity a man may minister in the congregation without displaying his incapacity. But in daily contact with the parishioners his weakness must be felt by the working-classes, as well as by their employers, and their estimate of the office and of the Church and its doctrine is affected by their estimate of the man. You may multiply classes and mission services, but to what purpose, if the man who conducts them is not efficient? An incumbent of a West Riding town parish says, "I would rather be single-handed for months than be yoked to an inefficient helper." The loss of some of the weaker men now ordained would be a loss to some incumbents, but not really a loss to their parishioners, still less to the Church at large.

Again, it is not certain that a higher standard for admission would really diminish the number admitted. The case of particular dioceses where the standard has been raised and yet the ordinands have increased in number, is not quite conclusive as to the result of general action in the same direction. But it is certainly encouraging. The higher any office stands in public estimation, the more it attracts candidates. A higher estimation of the ministry does not, indeed, depend on the character of a small portion of the men admitted to it, but there is a danger of its incurring contempt by being too easy of access.

If more scrutiny was used with regard to candidates, it would undoubtedly be necessary to make special efforts to increase their number. Can it at present be said that clergy in important positions use their influence earnestly in this direction? Does the subject have the place it deserves in our pulpits? Even in the universities themselves, where the call to Orders is urged, there is room for more effort, not in pressing ordination upon young men, but in laying it before them as a matter which it is their duty to consider, in telling them what the work and the life are, in disabusing them of prejudices which have not unnaturally grown up at the sight of party strifes and party narrowness. Such a sermon as that preached at Cambridge last year by Mr. Wilson of Clifton will illustrate what ought to be done. It would be easy to criticize its tone

in some respects, but there was a striking vigour and freshness about the appeal.

We have keen competition for employment in almost every other walk of life, and none for the ministry. It is usual to account for this by the poverty of the material prospect which it holds out. But what are a man's prospects in the navy, in the army, or in employment as a clerk? A deacon in a northern diocese begins with a stipend varying from £120 to £160 a year. And for an active, earnest curate there are, besides, fair prospects. A district church is not generally a great preferment; but such as it is, it is within his reach. It is said that in the populous northern districts a curate who does his work well, scarcely fails to get a district church within five years. Of course in the south, and in the land of private patronage, things are different. But even there, the son or nephew who was to hold the preferment is beginning often to fail the patron, and the living is given to some one else, selected often, though not always, solely for merit.

The real causes of the absence of competition are more probably a felt deficiency of faith and devoutness, and in many cases the absence of any influence to lead them to consider the ministry as a profession, and to dispose them towards it.

On the whole, the consequences of admitting men at best only capable of discharging routine duties seem to be more grave with danger than the possible, but not certain, decrease of the supply. But how and by whom must the discrimination be exercised and the standard raised? It is no mere question of marks and papers. The present lax state of affairs is the natural result of a divided responsibility. In the case of many ordinands there are, besides the final and supreme arbiter, the Bishop himself, three other persons, or sets of persons, who share the responsibility of their acceptance, and, as a matter of course, feel it the less heavily in consequence. These are the authorities of the theological college who have admitted the candidate to study for Orders, and by receiving his fees and encouraging his stay for two years have enabled him to establish a kind of equitable claim to ordination. There is the incumbent whose work he is to help, whose stipend he is to receive, and who therefore may *prima facie* be supposed to have selected him as the best man he could find; and lastly, there are the chaplains, who have power to examine him thoroughly and to report for or against him. The result of this division of responsibility is far from increasing the severity of the test.

Nothing short of the system adopted in the American Church of candidature as a recognised grade lasting for two or three years, to which the Bishop himself admits with advice, and after careful inquiry, would seem to meet the case fully.

But in the absence of that system, a deeper sense of responsibility, and a more strict standard in each of the three above-mentioned authorities, seem to be needed. Let us consider the three tests in order.

The admission of a student to a theological college practically amounts to accepting him for ordination, unless he afterwards shows some marked unfitness, or is guilty of serious idleness or misconduct while at the college. This may be objected to as an over-statement, but attention must be drawn to the fact, even at the risk of over-statement. The next point is that there is a severe temptation to many theological colleges to admit any tolerable applicants. The colleges have little or no endowment; they are anxious to improve their teaching by enlarging their staff; and, without any petty motives, must naturally desire to increase their numbers. Numbers are regarded as a sign of prosperity; and they are so, but in a very limited sense. It is no doubt the case that, at some colleges, the inquiry respecting candidates has always been strict and thorough; and that elsewhere the conditions and standard of admission have been materially raised. But it is still the case that a thoroughly weak and ignorant man may, if he has perseverance, at last obtain admission somewhere to begin a course of training which will most probably lead in time to his ordination. Perseverance is, no doubt, a proof of some vigour; but this kind of perseverance is said not unfrequently to be found in those who are least qualified for the work which they seek. The scheme of some secular examination to test in a general way the ability and education of ordinands, would not be accepted by all the colleges as a condition before admission; and if required after the course, and before ordination, in addition to the present theological examination, would seriously interfere with the course of work at the colleges. Besides, an examination would by no means be all that is wanted.

It remains for the colleges themselves, and their Visitors, or governing bodies, to realize more fully their share of responsibility in the selection of fit men to serve in the sacred ministry of the Church. The absence of refinement, of a classical education, of social advantages, can be more than compensated for by simplicity and humble-mindedness, by shrewdness and vigour, by gift of speech. These things are not rare among the better class of artisans; and if we are to draw from that class, we should seek those, and those only, who are thus endowed.

The next share of the responsibility is borne by the incumbent who gives a title. It is, perhaps, much to ask that he should consider the candidate's fitness generally for the ministry, and not merely for the special work which for the time he

wishes him to perform in his own parish. And yet some reminder of this wider view does seem required by those who press weak candidates on their Bishop, as quite capable of doing this and that, which is all that is wanted in such and such a parish. How strong this pressure sometimes is, and how lamentable results sometimes follow, is pretty well known.

The difficulty of inquiry by an incumbent about the candidates for his curacy is no doubt great, but yet the weakness sometimes shown in examination, by men nominated by clergy of ability and position, shows that this inquiry is not always very thorough or successful, at least so far as regards mental attainments. Any real improvement in the matter under discussion must rest on a growing feeling among incumbents that it is better to be overworked, or to drop work without a curate, than to engage a thoroughly weak one.

The third share of responsibility is borne by examining chaplains. Their work, if confined to its own narrow limits, is comparatively easy, and is free from any personal temptation to yield unduly. Men practised in examining have no difficulty in keeping before themselves a standard of attainment fixed by agreement, and in saying, with little hesitation, whether this or that candidate reaches it. So long as they report only on the work done, without any reference whatever to circumstances or private information, their task is simple. But if they assume to themselves any part in that which belongs only to the Bishop himself, namely, the responsibility for the acceptance or rejection of candidates, then they are obliged to open their minds to all sorts of considerations other than the examination, considerations deserving the utmost attention and the most careful investigation, but distinctly beyond their province as examiners. It is true that in practice this confusion is difficult to avoid, and that the answer as to fitness required from the presenting Archdeacon, and actually given by the chaplains, appears to involve the responsibility which has been deprecated. But a more definite understanding on all sides that the report of examining chaplains is simply made on the merits of the papers, would prevent misapprehension.

It will be clear, from what has been said, that without venturing to enter on any discussion of the course taken by the Bishops, individually or as a body, there is reason and there is opportunity for other persons concerned to exercise more discrimination in the acceptance of candidates. But that they will of themselves agree to do so does not appear very probable.

It may naturally be objected to this article that it deals with measures tending not to the increase, but to the decrease, of

the supply of clergy. But if the undoubted needs of the Church are now to be put forward as justifying the acceptance of very weak men, it becomes necessary to say clearly that these are not the men who are wanted, and that we have done wrong in taking some of them already. It becomes necessary to endeavour to turn the earnest efforts of those who feel the need, towards diligent, prayerful, systematic inquiry for really suitable candidates in classes of society and occupations where they have not hitherto been sought. There are societies, and there are private individuals, who have been doing this work for many years; but there is room for more. Perhaps there should be some permanent agency for the purpose in every diocese. Such advice may seem very inadequate to those who are face to face with masses of people whom they cannot personally reach, to every one of whom they desire to bring home the good tidings. They say, and truly, that dangerous times are at hand; that unless the Church becomes better known to the working-classes as their guide, teacher, and friend, and obtains now a hold on their affections, they will not be slow to take any bribe that demagogues may offer them to assist in measures of spoliation. But those who say these things, who have the keenest sense of the real danger of the situation, who have the truest love for souls in peril from sin and unbelief, should remember that their own influence with the working-classes grows not from their being ordained clergy of the Church of England, but from their having freely given their life to their people, with all its powers and gifts of nature and grace. It is not a supply of any ordained clergy, *qualescunque*, which is wanted; but more men such as those of whom we speak, men who do possess special gifts, and give them freely back to the Giver.

"The English view—which seems to us that of the New Testament—is, that the clergy are first and chiefly a teaching body." These are the words of the *Church Times*, in a leading article, and they express the unanimous view of the English Church. No need of clergy, however great, should make us abate the requirement, nay, our need should give stress to the requirement, that a "teaching ministry" should be supplied from those who have spiritual experience and mental grasp of the truth which they are to teach, and also the power to convey it with clearness, proportion, and force.

And the policy which is right for the present will also be wise for the future. It will be wise in view of those ever-increasing needs of men and money which have been purposely excluded from the scope of this paper. The laity of England will not find money to pay men who cannot teach or help them except by the performance of routine duties. A Yorkshire

parish, not a rich one, raised its contribution to a curate's stipend from £100 to £140, on the condition that the incumbent should find them a university man. Is it not probable that a like increase of liberality will be shown by the laity of the Church at large, if they are assured that they will always have in return, not necessarily university men, but teachers to whose piety, learning, and judgment they can look up with confidence and respect? Such teachers they have already, for the most part. No one can deny the devotion and ability of the great body of the clergy. But there is an element of weakness. That element ought to be reduced.

EDW. R. BERNARD.

ART. II.—BIBLICAL ASPECTS OF THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN.[1]

HAVING before me in prospect the duty which I am now about to try to discharge, and feeling seriously all the responsibility of the occasion, I determined to limit myself to the ground of the New Testament. When we are thinking of religious subjects, we find no freshness like the freshness of the Holy Scriptures. Whatever other streams of spiritual help there may be, for instruction, for edification, and for comfort—and there are many, and very precious—"behold," when we have the Bible close at our side, "we stand by the well of water." And there is another reason for this limitation. We stand thus on the ground of safety. We cannot conceal from ourselves that there are many difficulties connected with this subject of the Ministry of Women in the Church. This is not the moment for the discussion of such difficulties; and, after all, they are, for the most part, either personal on the one hand, or ecclesiastical on the other. They are not Biblical difficulties. In this respect, as in others, we are conscious of the value of the truth that is set before us in the hundred and nineteenth Psalm, "Thy Word is a lantern unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

Thus I believe I cannot make a mistake if I select three illustrations of the religious ministry of women from the

[1] This address was delivered on the occasion of a meeting of Deaconesses at Farnham Castle on Thursday, July 26th, 1883.