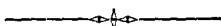


earth and ends with it. It is the wisdom of this world at its best. The Apostle's teaching had its beginning on the road to Damascus, when, with the miraculous light of heaven suddenly fallen upon him, he said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"<sup>1</sup> It went on in the spirit of Him Who said: "He is a chosen vessel unto Me." As with the man in all his hardships, as an Apostle even to the last most trying scene, so with his teaching, too, the promise is true: "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

THOMAS JORDAN, D.D.



#### ART. IV.—"CLERGY AND THE MASSES."—THE CURATE QUESTION.

THE subject "The Clergy and the Masses," which the Rev. H. T. Armfield so ably brought before the readers of *THE CHURCHMAN* in June last, is one of very considerable importance, and must, ere long, be taken up vigorously by our authorities, both clerical and lay. And closely allied to this is another subject of equally great and pressing importance, viz., the "Curate Question." We are forcibly reminded by Mr. Armfield that there is a marked "drop" in the number of men ordained last year even to the extent of fifty; and it must be remembered that a diminished number of men ordained means, at no very distant day, a diminished amount of work, fewer opportunities of instruction and edification for Christ's servants, lessened influence brought to bear by the Church upon the world, and at no remote period, a collapse of much of the good which is now being effected by the active, zealous, and assiduous efforts of Christ's servants.

Before dwelling further on this point and its bearing on the "Curate Question," let it be premised that the Curate<sup>2</sup> occupies a very anomalous position in the Church. That he suffers from many disabilities, and has many disadvantages to contend with, will be granted by all. His position is uncertain; his income is precarious; his opportunities of distinguishing himself are limited; he has no voice at the Diocesan Synod, because he is denied the right of admission; he does not possess the franchise for the election of Proctors; in the

<sup>1</sup> Acts ix. 6.

<sup>2</sup> In using the term "Curate" it will be observed that it is not in the sense that it is used in the Prayer-Book, "Bishops and Curates." It is used in its modern popular sense, and means "an assistant" to the one in the Cure of Souls.

majority of Dioceses he is excluded from Diocesan Conferences; and though he may be present at a Ruridecanal Chapter, yet he is naturally shy of offering an opinion, feeling that, having no *locus standi*, his beneficed brethren may look coolly on him, whereas in point of reading, research, experience, culture and inherent power he may not be one whit behind the best of their circle.

And why is all this? Simply because the Curate system is the growth of modern times; it is the outcome of a great want; it is the adoption of a temporary expedient to meet a great pressing necessity. The necessity is a rapid and almost incredible increase of population, combined with a great revival of religion in the Church, demanding more work and ministrations. And the expedient adopted to meet this necessity (*not* the legitimate extension of the pastorate of the Church on its own lines by an adequate increase in its permanent endowments) is an effort on the part of the incumbents to supply a great national and spiritual want, by calling in a new class of Church-workers, whom we term "Assistant Curates," *i.e.*, one clergyman assisting another in the self-same church and parish at the same time. The inevitable result has been to lay increased burdens on the already over-taxed resources of the incumbents, and to postpone the prospect of preferment to the curates.

It is of the utmost importance to the right understanding of the "Curate Question" to set forth clearly this fact: that assistant curates, holding the position and performing the duties which they now do, are, as a class, a creation of the present century. Our Curate system, both in itself and in the mode in which it is supported, is unknown to the ancient constitution of the Church. Curates there were, it is true, in former times; but they were merely the representatives of the incumbents, who, holding two or more benefices together, were non-resident. So extensively did this state of things prevail, that in the year 1810, from Parliamentary returns of the 10,159 livings held by incumbents, more than half of the parishes were supplied by curates-in-sole-charge. After the passing of the Pluralities Act this state of things became gradually changed: hence, in 1838 some 3,078 curates-in-charge acted for non-resident incumbents: in 1864 only 955 so acted: in 1881 only 387; and in all probability there are not more than 330 now, and the number is rapidly diminishing. It will therefore be seen that, simultaneously with this change—which thus, by reclaiming the services of so many beneficed clergy, has gradually done away with the occupation and means of support of a body of upwards of 4,000 curates-in-charge—so great an increase of population

has taken place, that a requirement has arisen for the services of even a greater number of assistant curates, to perform duties in parishes over and above those provided for by the ancient endowments of the Church. A great and remarkable change, therefore, has taken place in the body of the clergy, and in their relation to their parochial charges. Instead of having non-resident incumbents and a multiplicity of pluralists, with curates-in-sole-charge, we now have resident incumbents, and but a very few pluralists, with assistant curates: instead of having means of support for the whole of the clergy, both beneficed and unbeneficed, we have only the beneficed provided for, and no fixed and certain provision for the assistant curates. In some eighty years or so the number of benefices has been increased from 10,159 to about 14,000, and the parochial clergy from 10,300 to about 21,000. Another factor we must not overlook. In addition to these regular parochial clergy, we have a column of free-lances, moving on the body of the regular army, numbering something like 4,000, many of whom have left the regular force to seek a better means of subsistence than the Church provides in her regular parochial machinery.

What do we gather from all this? First, that we have some 14,000 beneficed clergy, who are partly provided for by the ancient endowments of the Church; second, that we have close upon 7,000 assistant curates, for whom there is no fixed and certain provision; third, we have a large rolling-stock, consisting of some 4,000 unattached clergy, most of whom ought to be engaged in direct spiritual work in parishes, but who are lost to the Church, because, for some reason or other, they do not seek curacies, or are not accepted by incumbents, or are disqualified by age or other cause for the active service which is now required from every licensed curate.

With a rapidly increasing population, the universal cry goes up, "*More clergy*;" but this can only be met by a better maintenance and improved prospects of those already at work. If a feeling of hardship and disappointment prevails amongst the clergy, the natural consequence will be what Mr. Armfield tells us is the case, a deficiency in the supply of candidates for holy orders. We must remember that the world is not so destitute of openings for young men of talent and industry that they will be driven to seek a livelihood among the clergy if they have in the Church no fair and reasonable prospect of a competence after years of hard work and self-denial. To insure a constant and sufficient supply of good candidates for the ministry, we must hold out some attractions to the poor as well as to the rich, to the man without friends or patrons as well as to the possessor of both. We must bear in mind, more-

over, that this question of supply pertains not so much to the candidates themselves as to parents, who have to consider for what professions in life they will prepare their sons; and if they find that this profession does not provide a proper maintenance for its members, then it is but natural that they will give that little bias which is required to deter their sons from entering this particular profession. Even the clergy themselves take this view of the matter in the case of their own sons. Though they feel that they can themselves bear hardships, privations, and disappointments, yet they shrink from subjecting their sons to trials of such severity. It is all very well for thoughtless people to quote the hackneyed saying that a clergyman should devote his life to the work of the ministry and think nothing of his pay, but be ready to toil through life for wages that no skilled mechanic would take. What is the use of talking of "what men should do"? We have to deal with facts and realities, and not with fine-spun theories and quixotic absurdities. It is folly to expect from any body of men, whether in orders or otherwise, a superhuman elevation of disinterestedness and self-denial. We have to deal with a system that recognises a married clergy, and not a body of monks and mendicant friars. Clergy are only men; they require food and clothing like other people; they may endeavour to be, and succeed in being, spiritually minded, but they are not spiritually bodied; and it is an undisputed fact that hundreds of talented young men are lost to the Church because their common sense and their parents' advice deter them from taking holy orders under the present system of patronage, with the possibility of receiving no more than a curate's paltry stipend for life, with the unhappy knowledge, too, that after a certain time of life not only will his small income get less, even at the rate of £5 every five years, but his prospects for preferment will grow worse. Owing, also, to these miserable stipends which curates get, numbers of talented men who have taken orders are lost to the Church in this country, and leave her shores for work in other lands, or have gone to swell out that large body of "unattached clergy." There are many clergymen living now who have given up clerical work entirely, either for tuition or literature—men who might have been useful parish priests had the Church paid them better or recognised their long and faithful services. We must, as Mr. Armfield so well puts it, view "the sacred profession not" always "in its higher spiritual relations, but rather in its professional, its non-religious aspect."

Looking at it in this light, what are the deterrent causes so far as the clerical profession is concerned?

They may be put under three heads: (1) The scanty

remuneration to men in middle life, decreasing with age and experience if they continue curates. (2) The uncertainty of preferment to the great bulk of the clergy; not because they do not deserve it, but because it is not there for them. (3) The insecurity of a curate's position, and the extreme liability to change of locality, with a fast-decreasing income as he gets older; in other words, he goes down in marketable value. A man may remain, from no fault of his own, a curate from the day he preaches his first sermon to the hour when, old and feeble, he preaches his last; only, he will receive some £140 or £150 a year when he preaches his first sermon, but will in all probability have considerably less than £100 when he preaches his last.

There is no mistake about it that the country needs more clergy; but it must be borne in mind that while we increase the number of clergy without a proportionate increase of fixed positions, we at the same time diminish the hopes of preferment of those who are already in the profession. While we are claiming from the Church, and rightly claiming, more activity and more men—while we are swelling the ranks of the working clergy, and introducing into the Church additional curates through the two great societies, the "Additional Curates" and the "Pastoral Aid"—we are at the same time diminishing the chances of promotion for those already in holy orders; and we are indirectly impoverishing them unless we multiply the number of benefices and create more vacancies by the retirement of the old and infirm, and have some great national or diocesan fund for them when they are getting up in years.

If with the staff of clergy we had five years ago it took twenty years on the average, as Bishop Lightfoot said, before all the clergy could be promoted—and with the present staff now, as the Bishop of Winchester said the other day, at the annual meeting of the "Curates' Augmentation Fund," it will take upwards of twenty-one years on the average—then it will take a longer time if we multiply their number; and if promotion be exceeding slow, we have necessarily inefficiency amongst the older members, and discontent amongst the younger ones. No wonder that the Bishop of Winchester said "he felt sure that the Curate Question was one which was becoming more and more important."

This consideration, although of vital importance to the Church and country, appears to be lost sight of by the majority of Churchmen, both clerical and lay; and therefore there is great need that it should be urged on our attention.

The hardship of the curate is twofold, and arises, first, from the fact that, as a body, the curates are almost entirely depen-

dent on the resources of the beneficed clergy, whose usually narrow professional incomes oblige them to offer a stipend to their curates utterly inadequate not only to the value of the services rendered, but insufficient to meet the inevitable claims of their position as clergymen of the National Church; second, from the further fact, that whilst the parochial clergy have been increased by one-third or more, there has been no corresponding augmentation in the creation of permanently endowed posts, thus postponing almost indefinitely the prospect of preferment. It cannot, therefore, be matter for surprise if these concurring causes have issued, and are likely to do so, in a considerable falling off in the number of candidates for holy orders.

It was with these circumstances of the Church fully in view, and in the absence of any large scheme for extending the permanent endowment of the Church, that the society called the "Curates' Augmentation Fund" was founded twenty-one years ago, for it meets one of the greatest financial weaknesses in the Church of England, it ministers to one of her most pressing needs, and is doing a most excellent and necessary work. It is only a society based on such principles as it is that meets the cry for more clergy in a fair, straightforward and statesmanlike way. We have no right to entice young men into the ministry by providing decent stipends—stipends far in advance of those of "ordinary recruits" in other professions—for them when young and in their early training and bachelorhood, and when they get old, and their best energies are exhausted, to leave them to do as best they may, or throw them upon the tender mercies of the "Poor Clergy Relief Corporation," and the other two hundred and fifty charitable societies founded for the relief of the clergy. Unless there is an increase of fixed positions, or an increase in the maintenance funds of the Church, or we get men with private means, then a large increase of her clergy, instead of being a blessing and a subject of congratulation, would be a positive evil. We should, in no great length of time, only have a pauper staff of clergy ministering to the spiritual wants of the wealthiest nation in the world.

What said a leading layman in Liverpool at a public meeting held some short time ago? "So long," said he, "as all other walks in life offered comparative comfort and affluence as compared with the incomes of the clergy, it must be expected that there would be a falling off in the supply of clergy, for, as a rule, the laity did not encourage their sons to enter a profession which, in this age, was practical poverty. When all things are considered, it could not be wondered at that the supply of clergy was not equal to the demand."

If we are not careful, one of two things will happen: (1) we shall either have fewer good men coming forward for holy orders, or (2) we shall have to put up with a supply of ill-trained, half-educated, ill-cultured men, and the laity must not grumble if, in the near future, they find the tone of the clergy plainly deteriorating. If good men are worth having, they are worth fair pay. This is a self-evident proposition. In the words of one of our Bishops: "It will be a fatal day to the Church of England when she shall be obliged to recruit her ministry from men of lower education and social position." Further consideration of this subject will be taken up in a future paper.

J. R. HUMBLE.



#### ART. V.—THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

ANY sufficiency to which the Christian minister can attain is, of course, only of a relative kind. According to New Testament usage, the word always conveys the idea of fulness or adequacy with regard to a given standard. But what is this standard as it regards the minister's office? It so happens that the two Epistles to the Church of Corinth alone afford us the fullest answer to this question. The true evangelical ideal of the Christian ministry in relation to Christ is that of an agency devoid of any meaning or worth, save only as it receives strength and energy from Him, the whole Source of any motive power it may possess. Hence this ministry, if not a life-like or real representation of its great Prototype, is nothing at all.

In the fourth chapter of the first Epistle we have what we may call a formal definition of the estimate which St. Paul wishes us to take of such an office. The Christian minister is a *ὑπηρέτης* (*lit.* "an under-rower;" "a servant"). This name had long previously been commonly applied to anyone who bore a responsible office under a higher authority. But in the beginning of St. Luke's Gospel we have the first instance of its consecration to religion; and in the twenty-sixth chapter of the Acts we find Christ Himself designating St. Paul by this title of honour on his election to the Apostleship.

But what an apt expression is this word of the dependent place which a minister fills under the only Leader and Commander, the only effective Worker, Priest, Pastor, and Bishop of the Christian Church!

Ministers are mariners and stewards in God's ship under the direction of a Divine Captain. They are appointed to render service to the passengers of this ship during the