

which may bring God's blessing, and the sermon that would have done me great good.

5. My presence is more needful on Sundays when there are few than on those days when the church is crowded.

6. Whatever station I hold in the church my example must influence others. If I stay away, why may not they?

THE SUPPLY OF CLERGY.

The writer of an article in the September number of the *Contemporary Review*, on 'The Nationalisation of Cathedrals,' would have us believe that the clergy are fast becoming a body of men undistinguished by intellectual power and mental culture. 'As a body,' he states, 'they are nowhere in science, in literature, in art, in scholarship. In every department, for one clergyman who is above the average, you will find twenty laymen who are ahead of him.'

Let the Church do what she may, she can only press second-raters (*sic*) into her service, while year after year she taps a vein of greater social and intellectual inferiority. As for her rank and file, the majority are passmen; a great mass have never been to Oxford or Cambridge at all; in the large towns they count for nothing among the intellectual influences of the hour. Many who would have no desire to express agreement with this highly coloured and somewhat ill-natured statement would be obliged to admit that the number of men of an inferior type who find their way into the ranks of the clergy appears to increase. We are frequently told by Bishops and others, whose opinions are based upon facts within their own knowledge, that there is great difficulty in finding suitable candidates for Holy Orders. The supply of men, both for the home dioceses and for the mission field, falls far short of the demand, and no doubt many candidates are admitted to ordination who would not be accepted if the Bishops had a wider field of selection. The object of the present article is to suggest one means by which the supply of properly qualified men might be largely increased.

Briefly, the suggestion is that every parochial clergyman should feel it a duty to act as a recruiting agent for the ranks of the ministry of the Church. The writer has often thought it a remarkable thing that in all his life he has never heard an appeal made from the pulpit with the view of encouraging young men of culture and promise to offer themselves as candidates for Holy Orders. It would not be right to assume that such appeals, if made, would be only fruitless, but probably they are not the most practical and effectual means that might be tried of attracting candidates for the clerical office. The influence of the clergyman in this matter might, however, be used with great effect in private and friendly intercourse with his people. In parishes where the middle and wealthier classes are represented, there would generally be two or three boys of fair ability and promising character, with parents in a position to send them to one of the Universities, who might be led to prepare for ministerial work in the Church if advised by their clergyman to do so. It is not unlikely that there are now men in other careers of life who, in their earlier years, had a desire to enter the ministry, and would have made earnest and efficient clergymen, but who were deterred from offering themselves for the work by a too modest appreciation of their own qualifications. In such cases, the encouragement and advice which the parish priest could have given, if he had known their inclinations, might have turned the scale, and sent them forward as candidates for ordination.

The writer does not impute any negligence to the clergy in this matter, but merely seeks to show that there are possibilities attached to their personal influence which—in the midst of other duties and claims—have not been yet

fully considered. It might often happen that a suitable aspirant for the priesthood would be without the means of proceeding to the University, and in such a case the clergyman might stir up interest in his behalf among some of the wealthier parishioners, and lead them to offer assistance which, under the circumstance, would not compromise the independence of the recipients.

Amongst Nonconformists it is not unusual for a congregation to make a point of having always one of their number in training for the ministry, chargeable, if necessary, on their joint resources, and, if Church people adopted a similar policy, the supply of clergy might be considerably increased.

Two names occur to the writer as deserving honourable mention in connection with this question—one, the late Canon Bardsley, rector of St. Ann's, Manchester, and father of the Bishop of Sodor and Man; the other, the present Dean of Norwich, Mr. Bardsley's influence led many young men from his congregation to take Holy Orders, while seven of his own sons became clergymen, and one of the features of Dean Lefroy's work as a parochial clergyman in Liverpool was his Greek Testament class for men, several members of which were led to seek a career in the ministry of the Church. Whatever be the means employed, it seems clear that the clergy—without any appreciable addition to their labours—might do a great deal to recruit the ranks of their own order. They could at least let it be known from time to time that they would gladly give information as to the steps to be taken by young men desiring to prepare for Holy Orders, and answer any questions on the subject. This would induce some persons to discuss the subject with them, and the information furnished might lead to important results.

A word, in conclusion, on the quotation from the *Contemporary Review* with which these remarks commenced. Proficiency in science or art, or eminence in literature, are not essential qualifications for the work of a clergyman. Men with exceptional intellectual power, and scholarship of a high order, are not necessarily the most successful parish priests. A man with a brilliant reputation at his University may be quite out of place in parochial work, while some of the names worthiest of record for earnest, efficient, and useful service are those of clergymen who have only taken an ordinary degree. It is, of course, of great importance that the clergy should be a learned body, and it appears to be true that men of eminence among them are fewer in number than formerly; but a wholesale and sweeping assertion like that referred to appears to be prompted more by an unfriendly spirit than by a desire to represent the facts with impartiality and accuracy.—J. G. C. P. in *Church Bells*.

"ALONE WITH GOD."

(Gen. xxxii, 24)

It was a time of spiritual crisis in Jacob's life—a time such as comes but seldom to men, and from which they issue new creatures with the mark of the crisis upon the whole after life. We know the story; it is one that appeals very strongly to human sympathy, because it is that of a man who was not very brave or strong, and who was sadly lacking in moral courage. We can trace all his life, until now we find him 'left alone,' face to face, with God. His possessions are powerless to aid him, and have gone on before. Even his nearest and dearest must not share in this crisis, or witness the laying bare of his soul; so they go across the brook, and he is left alone to the solitude of the desert, so once again; and as then his future was all uncertain, so is it still, and the question that troubles him is 'how will it all end?' But as he muses he is dimly conscious of an Awful Presence and realizes that he is alone with God. My brethren, so it must always be; every conflict of the soul must be fought alone

with God, and we miss many a victory by not realizing this. The spirit of the present day says, 'Be active; doing is better than dreaming, to fall in action better than to rust in ignoble idleness. Study mankind, interest yourself in social problems, lend a hand to the raising of your brothers, take a part in the stir and stress of life.'

But still there are questions which demand solitude for their solution; the deeper things of the soul cannot be touched by the clubs and newspapers, the political and philanthropic excitements of the day. For every man who would do his life's work aright, there are two things necessary which can come only in solitude

1. First there must be knowledge of self. As Jacob came across the border with his long droves of cattle—almost the only signs of wealth in those nomadic days—an accidental observer would have come to the conclusion that here was a man to be envied; rich, prosperous strong, what could be lacking to his happiness? But when Jacob stands alone in the desert with the darkness around him, he knows himself to be but a weakling and a coward, shrinking in terror from the uncertainty that lies before him. The world perforce judges by outward tokens, having no other criteria. The rich man is esteemed for his wealth and his manner of using it, the man of intellect for the power which raises him above his fellows, the artistic genius for his ability to interest, instruct, or amuse. And too often we complacently accept the world's estimate of ourselves as true, and try to soothe our conscience and hush our fears to rest by trusting to it. But when, in some time of spiritual conflict, when 'deep calleth unto deep,' we stand alone with all disguise stripped off and the search light of truth scanning every secret recess of the soul, then there comes the knowledge of ourselves as we are and not as we seem, then it is that we are filled with dread for the future, with remorse for the past, and with shrinking from the duty of the present. Then it is that neither possessions, nor power, neither reputation nor skill, can avail anything for comfort, or peace, or refuge from that terrible knowledge of self.

2. But with this there comes, too, the knowledge of God. It is when we are alone, trembling and afraid, that we become conscious of an Awful Presence, and that we are face to face with God. This knowledge is necessary for us all. We need to get back to first principles of our faith. What knowledge have we of God? Do we take the latest phase of popular thought? If we collect a dozen definitions of Him from the literature of the day, we shall find ourselves plunged in hopeless confusion, and as far off as ever from any true knowledge. The current ideas of God run into every extreme, from the 'we know not' of the agnostic to the sickly familiarity, so repellent to all reverent souls, of some forms of popular religion.

To know God we must be alone with Him—must realize that we stand, with soul laid bare, in His presence. We read how men have felt His presence thus. On the deserted deck of some vessel far out at sea, with the great waste of waters around, and the silent stars overhead; in the mighty presence of some great mountain range; or in the dim shades of some vast forest—there men have met God face to face, and have entered into the secret of His presence, and found rest.

For us, too, somehow and somewhere, it is needful that we should get alone with Him, for it is only thus that we can at all realize His greatness and His power. To know ourselves only would end in despair; to know God brings hope and peace. There follows, too, upon this knowledge reality, earnestness of conviction, of repentance, of worship, of faith. Thence, too, ensue the satisfaction of life's deepest needs, the fulfilling of life's best hopes, the issuing forth from the crisis an Israel instead of a Jacob; then is it ever true that 'He blessed Him there,'—*Rev. E. A. Cooke*.