

## INTRODUCTION

*A National Church in the National Life***The Route to Ordination**

I am an Anglican of the Anglicans . . . a Perfect Man, with four angles impinging upon my neighbours and producing among them many a sore. Withersoever I go, into whatsoever society, I take my angles with me. They do much damage, but they establish the principle of Anglicanism.<sup>1</sup>

Sabine Baring-Gould (1834–1924) published his little satire *Caught Napping* in 1866. He had been ordained as a Church of England priest only in 1865 and was still a mere curate, but he had been entrusted by the rector of the parish of Horbury in Yorkshire with the task of establishing a new church at Horbury Brig, then a rough area full of newly urbanised mill workers. The venture was a success. He found he had the ability to engage a mixed population with his stories and sermons and the attractive hymns he wrote for the congregation to sing. Here in microcosm was the complex challenge the Church of England was facing in the newly industrialised society of the nineteenth century. It had to serve a population which found itself in radical social and religious change, with a wide choice of Dissenters offering local chapels as an alternative to ‘going to Church’.

Canon C4 now requires an ordaining bishop to ‘take care’ only to ordain those who are ‘sufficiently instructed in Holy Scripture and in the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Church of England’.<sup>2</sup> Canon 34 formerly required an Oxford or Cambridge degree, or at least that a candidate be

<sup>1</sup> Sabine Baring-Gould, *Caught Napping* (London: n.p., 1866), p. 3. ‘Anglican’ is a label which seems to have been derived in the early seventeenth century from *Anglicani*.

<sup>2</sup> ‘C4: Of the quality of such as are to be ordained deacons or priests.’ *The Church of England* (website, n.d.). [www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/canons-church-england/section-c#b62](http://www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/canons-church-england/section-c#b62)

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able to ‘yield an account of his faith in Latin’ and ‘confirm the same by sufficient testimonies out of holy Scriptures’.<sup>3</sup> Possibilities of non-graduate entry for ‘literate’<sup>4</sup> were quite extensive in some parts of England by the early nineteenth century,<sup>5</sup> through the creation of ‘theological colleges’, parish clerical seminaries<sup>6</sup> and provision made by some grammar schools.<sup>7</sup> Evangelicals were perhaps more likely to enter the ministry by such routes.<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, for most of the century, a period as an undergraduate at Oxford or Cambridge remained by far the most usual route to the career of a Church of England clergyman. ‘In 1845 a man went up to Oxford because it was the gentlemanly thing to do’, wrote the satirist and controversialist Arthur Featherstone Marshall, in his account of *The Oxford Undergraduate of Twenty Years Ago*,<sup>9</sup> published in 1874.<sup>10</sup> It could be taken for granted that the undergraduate was at least nominally a practising member of the Church of England. Until the 1850s Oxford would not even admit a student who would not subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles, and though Cambridge might let him in it would not allow him to graduate. It was not until 1871 that the Universities Tests Act removed all such barriers and allowed Dissenters, Roman Catholics and non-Christians full entry to both.

Beyond that assumption that the ordinand was a practising Anglican, preparation could be mixed. Marshall described a Professor of Theology in his *Comedy of Convocation*,<sup>11</sup> commenting that it was to be regretted that ‘the University, in appointing a Professor of Anglican Theology, had not thought it unnecessary to say what Anglican Theology was’. His fictional Professor, ‘throwing the end of his cigar into the fire’:

said that it would be a great convenience to all who held office in the English Church, if the candour and good sense of their friend Pliable were a little

<sup>3</sup> This was a consequence of reconsideration of the conclusions of a number of earlier studies which had taken university education to be by far the most usual route to ordination, though mostly this concentrated on the diaconate. See Sara Slinn, *The Education of the Anglican Clergy, 1780–1839* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> David A. Dowland, *Nineteenth-Century Anglican Theological Training* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> Slinn, *Education of the Anglican Clergy*, pp. 5–7.

<sup>6</sup> Slinn, *Education of the Anglican Clergy*, pp. 8–10.

<sup>7</sup> Slinn, *Education of the Anglican Clergy*, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> Grayson Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals: Protestant Secessions from the Via Media (c.1800–1850)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> Marshall, *The Oxford Undergraduate*, p. 10. Ordained in the Church of England, Marshall became a convert to Roman Catholicism in 1845 and was the author of a series of controversial and satirical works.

<sup>10</sup> See Slinn, *Education of the Anglican Clergy*. <sup>11</sup> *Comedy of Convocation*, Scene 2.

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more common. He knew something personally of the excessive awkwardness of trying to import, for the sake of appearance, a quasi-divine element into a human subject.

When this Professor of Theology faced a class, he found the majority ‘profoundly indifferent to theology in general’, though ‘a few cherished faintly certain Catholic ideas, which they had picked up in books, and of which he was obliged to take account’. In front of this ‘motley group’ stood the lecturer, ‘who was assumed to have made up his mind, more or less definitely as to his own views of religion, and who received a liberal salary to impart them to others’. His students’ ‘notions of Christianity – moral, doctrinal, and historical – were as various and many-coloured as the patterns of their waistcoats’.

In any case, ordination was one of the few choices open to a graduate who, if his family could not provide him with independent means, would need to work for his living. Ordination was normally a requirement for a Fellowship in an Oxford or Cambridge College. Acceptably gentlemanly alternatives were few: the law or possibly a military life or service for his country helping to govern the colonies, or what would become the British Empire.<sup>12</sup> A strong vocation did not necessarily come into it. Despite this unsatisfactory provision for qualification and training, the Church of England clergy we are going to meet tended to be articulate theologically and ecclesiologically highly sophisticated. That was why some of them got into such trouble.

*The Scholar Becomes a Clergyman*

Until late in the century when it ceased to entail giving up their Fellowships, young ordained Fellows who wanted to marry could often hope that their colleges would ‘present’ them to one of the ‘livings’ to which it had the right of ‘nomination’.<sup>13</sup> That provided them with a house and an income for a lifetime. For most of the Anglican clergy who chose life as incumbent of a parish, there was assurance of a place in local society as a gentleman who could be expected to be invited to dine with the gentry or aristocracy of the locality.<sup>14</sup>

Some exiles from academic life tried and failed to pursue a pastoral career, finding they were ill-suited to it. The scholar of Anglo-Saxon

<sup>12</sup> Under the Government of India Act 1858, Queen Victoria became Empress of India.

<sup>13</sup> On ‘nomination’ see Chapter 5 (5.5) and Alan Haig, *The Victorian Clergy* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), chapter 2.

<sup>14</sup> Brian Heeney, *A Different Kind of Gentleman: Parish Clergy as Professional Men in Early and Mid-Victorian England* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1976).

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Walter Skeat (1835–1912) became a curate in Norfolk during 1861–2, but soon had to give up and after an unsuccessful attempt at a curacy elsewhere, he was back in Cambridge by 1864 and remained a scholar there.<sup>15</sup>

A scholarly clergyman could maintain his intellectual interests even if he failed to adjust his sermons to the people of his parish. One of Marshall's examples, he said, probably 'preached to his rustics on Greek particles'.<sup>16</sup> Innumerable pamphlets and published letters survive from such intellectually inclined parish clergy, eager to comment on the controversies we shall be following.

Benjamin Armstrong was probably more typical, a clergyman who took the demands of parish life at local level very seriously. He wrote in his diary late in 1857 of 'the three grand compartments of parochial life, viz. the Church, the Schools, and the Cottage'.<sup>17</sup> It was his considerable achievement to work in his parish for decades while preserving a general climate of goodwill. His own leanings were 'high church', though he did not go far towards the Tractarians; he was tactful in avoiding conflict with parishioners who thought differently. But he kept up with the intellectual life of the nation. Visiting London from his Norfolk Parish of East Dereham, where he served from 1850 to 1888, he 'heard Dickens read *Little Dorritt* & the trial from *Pickwick*' in 1859, but thought he looked 'ill-temper[ed]' during the 'reading'.<sup>18</sup> In 1863 he met the novelist Anthony Trollope, who happened to be in Norfolk 'having a Post Office appointment in East Anglia'. This was no respectful encounter with a great man. 'I could not get a rise out of him',<sup>19</sup> he noted.

Probably the most notorious case where a college's nomination went badly wrong was that of the scandalous Edward Drax Free (1764–1843), who had become a Doctor of Divinity in 1799.<sup>20</sup> St John's College nominated him as Vicar of St Giles in Oxford in 1801, and he remained a Fellow of the college fronting St Giles. In 1808, after he had assaulted the college bursar, the college felt it desirable to move him elsewhere and he resigned his Fellowship to become rector of the parish of Sutton in Bedfordshire. There he proved to be a drunkard, a foul-mouthed public troublemaker and a thief; he got more than one of his housekeepers

<sup>15</sup> *Under the Parson's Nose*, 20 October 1860, p. 145.

<sup>16</sup> Arthur Featherstone Marshall and Thomas W. M. Marshall, *The Oxford Undergraduate of Twenty Years Ago* (London: Washbourne, 1874), p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> *Under the Parson's Nose*, 30 November 1857, p. 115.

<sup>18</sup> *Under the Parson's Nose*, 20 January 1859, p. 132.

<sup>19</sup> *Under the Parson's Nose*, 24 August 1863, p. 172.

<sup>20</sup> R. B. Outhwaite, *Scandal in the Church: Dr Edward Drax Free, 1764–1843* (London: Hambledon Press, 1997), p. 64.

pregnant. He quarrelled with the churchwardens, instigating an attempt to get one of them, Montagu Burgoyne, fined for non-attendance at church. When the parish tried to have him called to account,<sup>21</sup> the case went on for many years in the ecclesiastical courts, and eventually the court of King's Bench and in the end the House of Lords had to grapple with the question of the powers of an ecclesiastical court in such a case.<sup>22</sup> This does not suggest that clergy of such outrageousness were common, but it suggests that the system was not yet well-shaped for dealing with them.

### **A Bishop's Work and a Bishop's Pay**

Bishops, though commonly made Doctors of Divinity, were not necessarily appointed for their theological expertise. On 6 September 1868, Benjamin Armstrong mentioned in his diary that he had a new curate, the Rev. Forbes Winslow.<sup>23</sup> By the following February, the curate's doctrines on the ever-contentious subject of the Eucharist were causing offence among the parishioners, one of whom took matters into his own hands. 'My old enemy Mr. H. Cooper has appealed to the bishop against Winslow, for false views of the Eucharist', wrote Armstrong. In his view it had been discourteous of Mr Cooper not to raise the matter with him 'in the first place'. But Cooper was entitled to take the matter to the bishop, and we shall see much business in the ecclesiastical courts arising in such ways and about such concerns.<sup>24</sup>

John Pelham (1811–94) had been Bishop of Norwich since 1857, and Armstrong enjoyed good relations with him. He wrote to the bishop 'informing him the case had never come before him'.<sup>25</sup> The bishop wrote in response on 7 February to say that Cooper had nevertheless been entitled to approach him:

it is only due to me that I should have been consulted & asks 'my mind' on the sermon, extracts of which (as laid before him by Cooper) he encloses.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Outhwaite, *Scandal*, p. 1 and 75–121 on the complications of prosecuting him.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Bligh (ed.), *Edward Drax Free v. Montague Burgoyne, New Reports of Cases Heard in the House of Lords on Appeals* (London: n.p., 1828), Vol. 2, pp. 55–7.

<sup>23</sup> *Under the Parson's Nose*, 6 September 1868, p. 197.

<sup>24</sup> *Under the Parson's Nose*, 16 February 1869, p. 200.

<sup>25</sup> *Under the Parson's Nose*, 7 February 1869, p. 199.

<sup>26</sup> *Under the Parson's Nose*, 7 February 1869, p. 199.

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However, it turned out that ‘the bishop’s sympathies’ were ‘unfortunately on Cooper’s side’.<sup>27</sup>

On 16 February, Armstrong recorded that:

Winslow has been before the Bishop, who accepts his explanations, he has also written to Cooper to say so – and furnished Winslow with a copy of the letter. Nothing could be more courteous and kind than the Bishop’s conduct, but he is no theologian & has evidently no distinct views as to the presence of our Lord in the Eucharist. He has so managed affairs that neither side can claim a victory.<sup>28</sup>

Here was the diplomatic way for a bishop to deal with allegations of the alleged doctrinal waywardness of ‘his’ clergy, but as we shall see, it was not necessarily one that would satisfy warring holders of different opinions where doctrinal differences were perceived.

The decision to retain an episcopate had been controversial when the Church of England removed itself from the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome in the sixteenth century, and in Scotland the Presbyterians’ preferred option of getting rid of bishops had triumphed. There, a non-episcopal Church, largely founded by John Knox (c.1513–72), had commanded much stronger support than the episcopal Church of England, and it was to be the Presbyterian Church of Scotland which became the Established Church in Scotland.

Bishops meant dioceses. A bishop’s clergy were his own ‘vicars’ (meaning ‘deputies’ of their bishop), in an ancient tradition which shared the bishop’s pastoral responsibility for the whole diocese with priests, to whom he granted a licence to serve in one of the parishes of his diocese. A lay person who had the ‘gift’ of a living could choose who to nominate to it, and award the ‘temporalities’, that is the income and the property of the living, to the new incumbent. However, he or she could not actually make his nominee vicar or rector. The bishop’s undisputed powers, with which the State could not interfere, lay in the ‘spiritualities’. Only a bishop could ordain a priest or deacon.<sup>29</sup>

A given bishop would not necessarily have ordained all those serving in his diocese. He would, however, have licensed each of them to serve there. The bishop had – and still has – a corresponding right to the obedience of the diocesan clergy licensed to serve on his behalf. Licences were not transferable. A Church of England priest could find himself in an

<sup>27</sup> *Under the Parson’s Nose*, 7 February 1869, p. 199.

<sup>28</sup> *Under the Parson’s Nose*, 16 February 1869, p. 200.

<sup>29</sup> ‘A clergyman’, *Ordination: an Enquiry* (N.p., 1849) stressed that apostolic succession was essential.

ecclesiastical court for breaking the rules which limited where he might lawfully preach, by going beyond the area for which he was licensed. He could be sentenced to imprisonment as a debtor, facing the costs of the protracted litigation which followed.

It was all strictly territorial and, as in the early Church, if a priest moved elsewhere his bishop was expected to testify his good standing in writing to his new bishop. The bishop of a diocese receiving a priest already ordained was expected to interview new incumbents before licensing them, to ensure that he had satisfied himself of the Anglican orthodoxy of the newcomer's beliefs. This he could do personally, or by appointing an Examining Chaplain such as George Denison (1805–96), who served in that capacity to the Bishop of Bath and Wells and of whom we shall hear much more in due course.

Once satisfied, the bishop would formally commit to the new vicar or rector the 'cure of souls' in the parish. This granted the priest responsibility for the 'spiritualities' of the benefice. Finally, the incumbent was admitted by 'institution' to the 'temporalities' of the 'living', the income and any house which went with it. The vicar or rector could then appoint (and pay) a curate to help in the work of a busy parish. The curate must be an Anglican priest, and he would also have to be licensed by the bishop.

Cathedrals formed a partial exception to the overarching control of a bishop in his diocese. The cathedral, though it contained the bishop's throne (*cathedra*) was its dean's domain and it was run collegially by the chapter of its canons. When a new bishop was to be installed in his diocese, he could not enter the cathedral without permission. He must arrive at the closed door of the cathedral and knock to be let in.

Nevertheless, it was not necessarily certain where the bishop's powers in a cathedral ended. The Bishop of Exeter demanded the removal of a reredos in Exeter Cathedral, after a visitation in the 1870s. But did a bishop have jurisdiction to do this in a cathedral?<sup>30</sup> In *Boyd v. Phillpotts* (1875) the question before the court was whether the reredos was an 'image' or a 'decoration'? Worship of images was forbidden. Decoration was allowed in a church. The Church of England, it was argued, had come to its views on images rather gradually. There was room for discretion. On appeal in this case the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council heard arguments that a cathedral is a 'spiritual corporation' over which the bishop has powers as Ordinary. It also heard arguments that he did not.

<sup>30</sup> Dan D. Cruickshank, 'Debating the legal status of the Ornaments Rubric: Ritualism and Royal Commissions in late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century England', *The Church and the Law*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick, Charlotte Methuen and Andrew Spicer, Studies in Church History, 56 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 434–54.

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It held that a bishop's visitatorial powers did extend to 'the fabric' of a cathedral. It found that the reredos had counted as 'decoration'. The Committee stated: 'It is plain to their Lordships that the whole erection has been set up for the purpose of decoration only', but it reserved its position about the risk that someone might try to worship this decorative image. 'Nothing decided in this case affects the question of superstitious regard being paid.'<sup>31</sup>

*Temporalities: Should Taxpayers Pay for Bishops or Interfere in the Fixing of Their Incomes?*

An Ecclesiastical Commission<sup>32</sup> was set up in 1835 to look into the problem that the wealth of the dioceses was unequal, which meant a consequent inequality of episcopal incomes. Historical chance had created all sorts of inequalities. Bishops were responsible for a widely varying number of parishes. 'Lincoln had 1,234 benefices, and Norwich 1,021 benefices, while Bangor had only 124, and Ely 149 benefices . . . The income of Canterbury was £18,090 Durham £19,480, London £13,890 while the income of Llandaff was £1,170 Oxford £1,600, and of Rochester £1,450'.<sup>33</sup>

The Ecclesiastical Commissioners reported on ecclesiastical duties and revenues. Their figures were listed by Lord John Russell when Parliament debated the matter.<sup>34</sup> It had seemed appropriate to the Commissioners that a bishop's income should depend on the scale of his responsibilities, so they had proposed to divide up the total revenues of the Church of England in a new way, so:

that nine sees should be reduced from £102,860 to £70,700 leaving an excess of £32,160[.] One see was to be raised from £4,220 to £5,000[.] This was the united see of Gloucester and Bristol. Twelve sees were to be raised to £4,500 each, or in the whole from £33,560 to £54,000.

The new sees of Ripon and Lancaster:

were fixed at £4,500 each, or £9,000 together, and two remained unaltered at £9,700. The only exceptions to the general average of England were Canterbury, York, and London, where the duties were necessarily heavy; and Durham and Winchester, which required a greater expenditure than other bishoprics.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Boyd v. Phillpotts* (1875) LR 6 PC 466–7.

<sup>33</sup> HC Deb 08 July 1836 vol. 35 col. 13–60.

<sup>35</sup> HC Deb 08 July 1836 vol. 35 col. 13–60.

<sup>32</sup> The Commission retained this title until then.

<sup>34</sup> HC Deb 08 July 1836 vol. 35 col. 13–60.



However, the Commission had begun to think it 'had no more right to interfere' with this distribution than with private property.<sup>36</sup> In any case, it could not risk finding that it needed 'to seek an increase of revenue'.<sup>37</sup> Also to be considered were many complications about the incomes of deans and chapters and those of the ordinary incumbents, which were also derived from the property-based wealth of the nation and which revealed many further anomalies and inequalities.

That had been tempting some bishops to hold livings alongside their bishoprics (technically known as *in commendam*). This was widely regarded as an abuse because it left the people of such a parish with no minister, except perhaps a curate. We shall shortly see Henry Phillpotts get into trouble over exactly this practice as Bishop of Exeter.

The Ecclesiastical Commissioners Act of 1836 made it possible to set up the Ecclesiastical Commission as a corporation so that it could purchase and hold lands. That would allow it to propose schemes to the Privy Council with the purpose of bringing about a more equal distribution of the revenues of the dioceses. A series of Acts of Parliament were to follow in an attempt to end various corrupt practices, though achieving finality – or any satisfactory solution – was going to prove a lengthy task.

Charles Lushington (1785–1866) was a career politician. He made his maiden speech in the debate on bishops in the House of Commons on 26 April 1838 and spoke twice in the ensuing debate in July. He seized on a concern expressed by Lord John Russell that the holder of a poorly remunerated bishopric was likely to neglect it in favour of campaigning to get himself a better one. In supporting an amendment to prevent such 'translations', he demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the early history of the Church and its councils, in order to show that this was no unforeseeable consequence but one highly likely to be damaging to the Church.<sup>38</sup>

The problem of the need to rethink episcopal incomes so as to avoid negative consequences, coupled with the great question of whether Parliament had powers to interfere at all, was not quickly resolved. The Bishop of London came before the Commissioners in 1847 'protesting he had a great deal too much money, but declaring at the same time his intention to keep it all to himself'.<sup>39</sup> Commons indignation was understandable. There was no Member in the House:

<sup>36</sup> HC Deb 08 July 1836 vol. 35 col. 13–60.

<sup>37</sup> HC Deb 08 July 1836 vol. 35 col. 13–60.

<sup>38</sup> HC Deb 08 July 1836 vol. 35 col. 13–60.

<sup>39</sup> HC Deb 14 December 1847 vol. 95 col. 1083–121.

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who could not but know something of the property of the Bishop of London in the neighbourhood of the metropolis, and the immediate vicinity of Hyde-park, flanked by the Edgware-road on one side, to the Uxbridge-road on the other, running in an immense angle up to Hyde-park, Kensall New Town, to the terminus of the Great Western Railway, and Oxford and Cambridge-squares, and covered by an immense mass of buildings which had risen up within the last few years.<sup>40</sup>

Fact-finding exercises suggested returns made by bishops ‘to assist the Legislature in its proceedings’ were:

so understated, and the returns themselves appeared so little capable of explanation, that an idea might have been entertained that it was their intention to keep the public in the dark as to the exact state of their revenues.<sup>41</sup>

Edward Horsman proposed that the ‘revenues of the larger Sees’ should be ‘determined’ and that then ‘fixed annual sums be paid to the Commissioners’. Out of these revenues, the smaller ones should receive enough money to bring the average annual income of the Archbishop of Canterbury to £15,000, that of the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of London to £10,000 and that of the Bishop of Durham to £8,000, with decreasing amounts until those of Worcester, and Bath and Wells, respectively, which received £5,000, with ‘other Bishops getting an income between £4,000 and £5,000’. This should be revised every seven years.<sup>42</sup>

On 4 April 1848 episcopal funding was being debated yet again, and once more Mr Horsman was indignant. In 1836 an Act had been passed regulating episcopal incomes, reducing the emoluments of the richer sees and applying the proceeds to augmenting the poorer ones. In 1840, another Act had been passed ‘carelessly by the House’, for reducing the cathedral establishments and abolishing other sinecures, blindly trusting the views of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.<sup>43</sup>

*The Bishop of Exeter and His Controversies*

It is time to introduce one of the beneficiaries of the opportunities for upward social mobility offered by university and Church, for he will make

<sup>40</sup> HC Deb 14 December 1847 vol. 95 col. 1083–121.

<sup>41</sup> HC Deb 14 December 1847 vol. 95 col. 1083–121.

<sup>42</sup> HC Deb 14 December 1847 vol. 95 col. 1083–121.

<sup>43</sup> HC Deb 04 April 1848 vol. 97 col. 1260–99.