





THE BISHOP'S ADDRESS

TO THE

DIOCESAN CONFERENCE, WORCESTER,

1902.

WITH THE BISHOP'S COMPLIMENTS.

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I.—My brethren of the clergy and of the laity—after seven months of experience of being Bishop of Worcester, I must confess that I address myself to the task of speaking for the first time to the gathered representatives of this diocese, which has received me with such generous kindness, with some feeling of disappointment. I had hoped—vainly as it now appears—that after seven months of hard work I should feel to have emerged from the preliminary difficulties—the difficulties which beset the beginning of any task of administration—and should see my problem before me as something most weighty and serious indeed, but not altogether impracticable. But I am very far from such a position. The work required of a bishop of this diocese, if it is to be performed with any approach to tolerable adequacy, does seem to me impracticably vast. When people think of the work of a bishop they are apt to think chiefly of the occasions when he acts or speaks in public—the confirmations, ordinations, church-openings, sermons, meetings, etc. But, in fact, these opportunities for moving about the diocese bring with them a good deal of refreshment and very often the grateful opportunity for preaching the Gospel; and the severer work lies behind them. A bishop means a superintendent; and as such he ought to have a real knowledge of the parishes—in the case of this diocese (speaking roughly) almost 500 parishes with an average population of nearly 3000 people. He ought to know the clergy; the special character and needs of each place; the efforts that are being made, or that ought to be made, to consolidate or extend the work of the Church; the exceptional hindrances or failures or scandals; the more important disputes and controversies; he ought to attend to the cases where his attention is legitimately claimed, and to those others where it is not claimed or wanted, but is needed. Schemes of all kinds, from the addition of a memorial brass or window to a church, or a case of disputed dilapidations, upwards to very much more important measures, material and spiritual, require his personal intervention before they can proceed. To a great many of these matters—perhaps to almost all of them—the bishop, unless he has had a very special training, is entirely strange. He has to

learn his business while he is doing it. And the burden, as it has seemed to me, is such as to crush the life and spirit out of a man before he fairly begins. I am not saying this because I wish to complain. I have no wish to shrink from working hard. And a man's responsibility is a limited one—limited among other things by the available working hours. But I am saying what I am saying deliberately, for this reason. Because I wish to impress upon you, if I can, that it is bad policy—utterly bad policy—in any church, in any responsible society, to lay so exaggerated a burden upon its chief officer, as—unless he is a giant in physical, mental, and spiritual capacity—to make it impossible that the work can be properly done. I do not think that an episcopal system which does not admit of real episcopacy—that is, effectual supervision—is being given a fair chance. I say this with the profoundest feeling of its importance. We have had great spiritual revivals in the century past—evangelical, catholic, and ethical. Their main tendencies were supplementary to one another, and in no necessary antagonism. They stirred the energies of the Church, and they brought to the front in doing so, as every revival of life in an old community must do, a peremptory requirement for the readjustment of the old ecclesiastical machinery. Such readjustment might, I believe, have enabled us to attain some result in the whole corporate life of the Church adequate to the greatness of the spiritual impulses which had been at work amongst us. But the mere weight of the inert mass, aided by a good deal of wilfulness and narrowness in ecclesiastical parties, have too long delayed such readjustments. Meanwhile the religious revivals have been dying down, and the ecclesiastical machinery has been left utterly inadequate for the work which they had helped to create. I do not want to go into statistics this morning, but for this diocese they seem to indicate, as far as they go, that in a growing population we are losing ground. I am quite sure that a large part of the reason is because we have not allowed our recovered spiritual force to act upon our antiquated and worn-out machinery.

What would be the result of appointing a Cabinet minister, perhaps with not more than the general experience of a politician, to the headship of some great Government department—say the Board of Works, or the Ministry of Education—without any appreciable staff of permanent officials and secretaries on the spot to help him, so that he was left in the great majority of subjects to inform himself, as to how to act, by laborious correspondence with subordinate officials living at a distance, or individuals whom he may learn to be trustworthy and well informed, or the chiefs of other departments who have been longer in office? The result would be, of course, disastrous. But I have often recently wondered whether the experience of your new bishop is not parallel to such a situation. The business

he has got to do is, of course, not as great as that of a whole Government department which is concerned with the whole country. But his permanent officials are scattered over the two counties. (To the one whom I may constantly summon to my elbow, Mr. J. H. Hooper—the Diocesan Registrar and my legal secretary—I wish to tender my cordial thanks for the ready help he has constantly given me.) He must write letters to Archdeacons, Rural Deans, and to the Chancellor, and most carefully guard himself from falling into the hands of the first or most irrepressible voluntary informant who presents himself, or from acting on inadequate information. Meanwhile, on matters small and great, he is constantly being told—in a phrase which I can never hear without its sending a shiver through me—“It must be as your Lordship pleases.” We leave too much—altogether needlessly much—to the solitary judgment of an individual, who, while he is learning his business, has a disagreeably abundant opportunity for making mistakes.

There is no necessity for conducting the government of a diocese in this way. It is not certainly the catholic ideal of the episcopate. I am not trying now, however, to suggest remedies; I am only trying to help you, as a diocese, to realise the peril of the situation; to realise that, without necessity, you lay by far too much upon the solitary discretion of an individual, and make by far too little provision for continuous or corporate administration. And in the case of this diocese it is necessary—imperatively necessary—that the area of administration should be reduced. A man might well hope to be the bishop of the area of the Archdeaconry of Worcester. But here a man is called to be the bishop of three areas, corresponding to the Archdeaconries of Worcester, Coventry, and Birmingham, which are, as you all know, strangely distinct in interests and sympathies. And to be to Birmingham—to take that example only—anything at all like what a bishop ought to be, according to any ideal of the episcopate, a man should be a citizen and a churchman of Birmingham, looking at the local Church from Birmingham as a centre, over the area which it in fact dominates. And this a man cannot be unless he live there.

There are many things, gentlemen, which it would be premature for me to say. But with the fresh experience full upon me I want to say this one thing. It is, I am convinced, very bad policy on the part of any society to lay upon its chief officer the sort of burden of work which is calculated to crush heart and spirit out of him before he has begun—the burden of a work which he cannot hope to fulfil with any tolerable degree of adequacy—the burden of a work which so crowds up his life with details as to leave him no time nor energy for thinking what the Church or Diocese as a whole—to say nothing about the cultivating and enlarging of his own mind—the burden of a work,

moreover, which shows every sign of growing as one makes further acquaintance with it. This is the sort of burden not to stimulate, but to overwhelm and to demoralise a man. There is no real reason why it should not be reduced. And it will matter little that one or two individuals should suffer in the process if the diocese as a whole can be roused to alter the situation.

II.—But now to take the situation as it is. I have determined to live at Worcester, not at Hartlebury,—to the regret I know of many people, and to my own deep regret whenever I have visited in summer its beautiful garden. But I desired, if possible, to live in a place less inconvenient for moving about the diocese and more accessible to the clergy. Again I felt, and I still feel, sure that a Bishop ought to be at or near his Cathedral. Once again—dealing as he must daily with a great variety of legal points—I felt and, after my first experience, I feel still more strongly, that he ought to have his legal secretary at his elbow. These, as well as other motives, led to my approaching the Ecclesiastical Commissioners with a view to seeing whether the permanent transference of the Bishop's residence to Worcester were practicable. The Commissioners finally passed a resolution expressing an abstract readiness to sanction the sale of Hartlebury Castle. But they have no power to sanction the sale in fact, unless another residence is available for the Bishop or money enough to provide one. These conditions not being fulfilled, or likely to be fulfilled at present, nothing is being done, or is to be done in the immediate future. The Castle remains legally with the Bishop of Worcester. But a great deal has been done for my relief. I was fortunate in an opportunity to lay my case before four of the chief laymen in this county: Lord Beauchamp, Lord Cobham, Lord Dudley, and Lord Windsor, on the occasion of the Yeomanry Camp at Madresfield. Somewhat against the *sentiment* of most of them, I think, a plain statement of my reasons against living at Hartlebury convinced them that under present circumstances I was right in my desire, and they very generously agreed to relieve me of the burden of keeping up the house, taking the cost of its maintenance on their own shoulders and leaving me a Bishop, houseless, but (so far) happy. They ask me to say that Sir John Holder has since joined this body of, (shall I say?) Castle Wardens, and they would be glad of some more to help them. And I am also requested to say that the financial responsibility is not distributed equally among them. I am deeply grateful for the relief they have given me. Meanwhile, I have secured the only fairly suitable house I could find in or close to Worcester, and I have called it Bishop's House; but I have never intended it as a permanent residence for the Bishop of the diocese.

Thus I find myself housed in the place most convenient for my work as Bishop of Worcester. In beginning to do it I have

leaned very heavily on the Archdeacons and some of the Rural Deans and other officers of the diocese, who have been most generous and ungrudging in the help they have given me. And I shall continue to make a claim on them which will not diminish. But most of all upon the Bishop of Coventry. I could not easily put into words my sense of what the diocese owes to him : still less of what I have owed to him. And I wish to take this opportunity to give notice that, after seeking for some months painfully, but ineffectually, to make time to deal with the various problems connected with the recognised Lay Readers in this diocese, including the Church Army Captains, I have handed the whole matter over to the Bishop of Coventry—with his consent—so that he will be the Bishop of the Lay Readers for all intents and purposes. Of course, I am sorry for this—for my own sake ; but the work, I am sure, will be most efficiently done. He will also—in spite of a mistaken notice in this month's *Magazine*—undertake the drawing up of the Confirmation List for next year, and all communications on the subject should be sent to him.

As for what remains, I think it is the duty of the Bishop to get to know the clergy as soon as possible ; and I have arranged to occupy almost all October in going round the Rural Deaneries of the Worcestershire Archdeaconry, hoping to do the same for the other Archdeaconries as soon as I can. I would ask of the clergy, as far as possible, to let me meet them *all* at the appointed centres. In general—I will do my best ; but I shall have to lay a great claim upon the patience of all of you before I can be said even fairly to have explored the work that has to be done. Meanwhile, many important problems and projects must wait indefinitely. A man must know the situation as it stands, and the men with whom he has to deal, before he can profitably contemplate new departures.

To my predecessor I would renew the thanks, which I have had occasion to pay before, for his uniform kindness. Experience of the last seven months has deepened my admiration for all bishops who manage to administer dioceses like this. Now that he has laid down the burden, we wish him many years of quiet and happy retirement in his new home, whence he can look into his old diocese and pray, I hope and do not doubt, for his old friends and his perplexed successor.

Among recent losses, we deplore Canon Melville, whose hearty friendliness, keen wit, and persistent vigour I have associated with the Cathedral at Worcester since, 15 years ago, I first came here to lecture to the clergy. We respect his motives in resigning when he was no longer able to fulfil his duties. Those who care for the diocese and the Cathedral will have been praying earnest prayers that the advisers of the Crown may recommend a worthy successor—a man who is free to give himself wholly, and with unimpaired vigour, to the great opportunities which the canonry

affords for giving spiritual and intellectual help to the diocese. From the other side of the diocese we have lost a learned mathematician and physicist in Dr. Watson, also by resignation. And death—sudden death—has taken from us Mr. Chesshire (whom again I associate of old with the clergy lectures in the Chapter House) from Worcester; and Dr. Nicholson from Leamington. The death of Mr. Taylor, of Littleton, leaves a sad vacancy—and I would commemorate his services, as in other matters, so also in aid of the Missionary Studentship Association, of which a word later. Besides these, I must commemorate Dr. Robinson, the late Rector of St. Martin's, Birmingham; Mr. Heskett-Biggs, of Ettington; Mr. E. Morley, Master of Leicester Hospital, Warwick; Mr. Raymond, of Upton Snodsbury; Mr. Saunders, of Peopleton; Mr. Faulkner, Curate of Hallow. Of the laity Colonel Victor Milward, Mr. Martin Curtler, and Mr. John Homer Chance are, I believe, among the chief of those we have lost. If there are wounding omissions in these commemorations, you will attribute it to the ignorance of a new-comer, and not to ill-will.

There are many new arrivals to welcome. I cannot welcome them all by name, but I would say one word of gratitude to the body of trustees who have given to Birmingham and the diocese the Rev. John W. Diggle.

With regard to the programme of this Conference, you have it before you. I am going to use what remains of the time which I can reasonably claim, to speak upon the education question, very briefly, and upon the training and supply of clergy. As to the other subjects, I propose to speak a word by way of summing up each discussion. In the debates I intend to keep speakers to their time, save and except that the introducer will be allowed, where he requires it, twenty minutes. The seconder will have ten minutes and the selected speakers. After that it will be at my discretion. There is a sufficient variety of opinion on the education question to make it necessary to secure more time for its discussion. I am, therefore, going to close in one hour the debate on the supply of clergy, and take two hours for the Education Bill, the motion of Mr. Lloyd and Mr. Pinchard ranking as an amendment to the Bishop of Coventry's resolution.

III.—As to the Education Bill, I want to make three points:—

First, the reason why the religious difficulty bulks so large in the field of education is because so small a proportion of the nation really take an interest in education at all. If the average good citizen really cared about the provision of a better and more uniform system of national education, I am convinced that the religious difficulty would not prove at all insoluble. As it is, it is those persons who are specially concerned in the religious problem who are allowed to occupy the field, in default of the nation as a whole.

Secondly, the best contribution we can make to the solution

of the question is to reiterate, as clearly and succinctly as possible, what is our demand as a religious body. It is this: That in schools provided by the Church there should be the fullest liberty to teach religion to the children of the Church on the basis of the Catechism, by means of a teacher chosen by the Church, as part of the ordinary school curriculum. And what we ask for our schools, we ask for all those provided by other religious denominations. Let the State and local authority vigorously test and regulate the general education, and vigorously require that the teacher appointed by the denomination should be educationally qualified. But it must not show any preference for what are called undenominational, over denominational schools. There are only two bases on which religious education can now be given. It can be given on the basis and by the standard of a recognised religious society; or it may be left to the individual proclivities or opinions of individual teachers. The day is past when the State could dream of issuing a religious standard and requiring the teachers to conform to it. The alternative, I repeat, is the religious standard of a denomination, or the accidental opinion of a particular teacher. Now, we claim that the former is infinitely preferable. We wish children to be brought up in the principles of the religious body to which they belong. But we recognise that the religious bodies cannot provide enough schools for the whole nation, and that for the rest it is better that some religious education should be given—of the illogical and insecure sort called the undenominational, which is very often very good—rather than none at all. All we ask is that the State should show no preference for undenominational over denominational schools. We claim, therefore, I repeat, the fullest liberty in all schools provided by the Church to teach the children of the Church the Bible on the basis of the Catechism, by means of teachers appointed by the Church. This claim we cannot abate, and we call attention to the fact that in providing the school buildings we are more than paying the money equivalent of the expense of the religious education. Now our power to enforce this claim of ours lies partly in our political force, which might be much greater than it is if we knew half as well as the Nonconformists do how to make our weight felt, and which will become more evident the more our just demand is threatened or grossly misconceived; partly in the fact that we own so many schools which the State cannot do without.

Thirdly, I would say, with reference to the Nonconformist grievance, this only: It is quite true that there are a great many areas where there is only one school, and that a Church School. There at present the children can have no religious education, except such as involves the Catechism. How great a grievance that is, it is not for me to estimate. But there are also a number of other areas where the only school is a Board School, where

there is no other religious instruction than that (to us at least) unsatisfactory sort which is called undenominational. The one grievance—great or small—stands over against the other. There does not appear to be any other way of meeting them than by the method of “facilities:” that is, as the Committee of Convocation proposed, “that whenever a reasonable number of parents desire that religious instruction in accordance with their own belief should be given to their children, opportunity for such instruction shall be secured to them by statute in all Elementary Schools, provided that this can be done without expense to the managers.” Many of our Educationalists say that little would come of the provision of facilities. I am not convinced of that, but all I would say is this: if facilities for undenominational instruction are provided in denominational schools, the same facilities for denominational instruction must be provided in undenominational schools at least in single school areas.

These are the claims which, in my opinion, we ought as a Church to make and reiterate: we want simply to have liberty to teach our own children according to the principles to which they belong: and to give all possible encouragement for children of other denominations to be brought up in the manner approved for them. We do not want to proselytize through the schools. And having made our claim understood, we ought to leave it to the State to determine how our claim is to be met and harmonised with others. The most real obstacle to a settlement is, I am convinced, the utterly unreasonable demand that the State should give a preference to undenominational religious teaching, or constitute undenominationalism—which is a shifting sand—the State religion.

IV.—The consideration of how to secure a better supply of clergy is rendered necessary by a confessed dearth. Birmingham was declared by the Commissioners of 1895 to need about 80 additional clergy, if there was to be one to every 3000 of the population. Since then Birmingham has been growing, and I suppose the deficiency of clergy is at this moment at least proportionately as great.

The fewness of the clergy in the thickly-populated parts of North Worcestershire and Dudley, and in many other districts, is most distressing. The difficulty in supplying vacant places is constantly being forced upon us. In part, the difficulty is to find money to support a clergyman, but it is also that we share with the whole of our Church, and with many other parts of the Church, a deficiency—not in the number of men who offer themselves for Holy Orders, but in the number of those so offering who are properly qualified, or have funds sufficient to provide themselves with the necessary education.

First of all, let me speak a word to those who find themselves set to minister alone among many thousands. I would beg of

them to remember both the stringency, and the limits, of their responsibility. Its stringency. When God presents Himself to us in our experience as a hard task master, "reaping where He has not sown, and gathering where He has not strawed," or—as we should say—giving so little and asking so much—we must lay to heart the lesson of the parable of the man of the one talent. We must *not* faint under the seeming unjust burden, and in despair do nothing. It is by corresponding to the uttermost and to the end with the stern requirement that we are to find out that God is really not a task master, but a bountiful Father. We are not put into this world to be comfortable. "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master." But on the other hand, our responsibility is limited. We are not responsible for the Church or the world, but only for doing our best where we are stationed. I have in my mind the picture of a priest alone amidst a great population. He kept his own soul first. He was much in prayer. He meditated. He studied the word of God. He took great pains with his sermons. He rendered his daily and Sunday services most reverently. He taught the children. He prepared the young for Confirmation. He visited the sick. That was about all he did do. Those are the primary points of a clergyman's duty. He had little of the organisation of a "well-ordered parish." He had no reputation for universal activity. Perhaps he did not make enough use of his laity. But because he was a man to reverence and love and trust, and because he performed his primary duties so well, he built up in and about his church a flock of converted, faithful, progressive, earnest Christians, who really were a salt, a light, a leaven. And the Church was more adequately represented in that parish than in many others better staffed. What we want is not so much more clergy as good clergy; not so much more Christians as good Christians. So much for the situation as it is. And for multiplying the number of clergy in the future the same rule must hold. We must not lower the standard of moral requirement, in order to supply vacant places. I implore all the Clergy and Churchwardens of the diocese to give me all the help they can in keeping out unworthy clergy. I must be given full opportunity of enquiry before a curate is provisionally engaged; and enquiry must go before even a very temporary engagement. And in ordaining clergy for the future, the same rule must hold; we must not sacrifice standard, moral or intellectual. The intellectual standard is low enough already. It must be raised rather than lowered. Does this mean that we are only to draw from the classes who have wealth to command an expensive education? I say, "No." Examine the records of the most famous English Churchmen, and you will be surprised to find how many have had a very humble origin, and have owed their opportunities of education to the liberality of founders and

benefactors. The real vocation of the Divine Spirit comes to rich and poor alike. Are we in the Church of England to stand alone in limiting the area of vocation to the upper classes? I believe not. The objections which people urge against drawing from a wider area are really urged against imperfectly trained and educated men. A thorough education can quite obliterate the early defects of circumstance. What is wanted, besides a good heart and a pure conscience, is a trained intelligence and spirit; it is here we are defective. The liberality of founder and benefactor in ancient days supplied the opportunity of such a training for poor boys in our old universities. We must do it also in connection with our new universities. Gentlemen, is it not a scandal that the Church of England, rich as it is, should stand so far behind all denominations, Roman Catholic and Nonconformist as far as I know, in supplying education, full and thorough, for those who are thought worthy of the ministry. Once again the Churchman must recognise it as a normal duty to supply funds to train those who seem to have calling and aptitude for Holy Orders. Let the possibility of a call to the ministry be set before all. Let the thoughtful clergyman keep his eye on promising boys. If they have a desire for Holy Orders, let them be first subjected to a preliminary test. Will they be patient and persevering in mastering their first obstacles, in some work that is set them to do, or in making way with the rudiments of Latin and Greek? When he has satisfied himself that they are persevering, and capable intellectually, and fit morally—and it is the poorest kindness to encourage those who are not all these things—let him interest his parish in them, and gain funds locally to give them further training. Into the details of that training I will not go. But it must be thorough. It must be a general education, as well as a theological, and a training moral and disciplinary as well as intellectual. It must be severe and rigorous enough to test and sift the candidates. There must be no false good-nature about it. For those who seem to have a vocation to missionary work something is already being done, and I want to call your attention to the Missionary Studentships' Association in the diocese, of which Mr. Lawson, of Clent, is the new secretary, and to ask for better support for it. For those who desire to serve in the Ministry at home, there are religious societies among us who have made a beginning of supplying an absolutely gratuitous education and training, of such a testing character as to sift off the unworthy or the unfit. The Society of the Sacred Mission at Mildenhall has begun to do this with some remarkable promise of success. The Society of the Resurrection is following suit. If you say, these are societies of a particular colour, there is no reason at all why people of another ecclesiastical colour should not do exactly the same. We hope much in this diocese from Queen's College, with its renovated buildings and

renovated management, working in connection with the Birmingham University, which is showing itself most willing to co-operate. The point is: there are many applicants, and capable and fit applicants, for the Christian ministry. The members of the Church of England are at present behind all other Christian bodies, and behind their own pious ancestors, in supplying them with the means of testing or realising their vocation. Our wealthier members must again learn that this is a moral and primary duty of the Christian body. But the path, though possible to aspirants without means, must not be easy. The education must be liberal and full. It must be prolonged; and the discipline of the training must be severe enough to sift out the incapable or the unpersevering or the unfit. There must be no false good nature. And the bishops, with their examining chaplains, must be vigorous in seeing to it that they do not allow themselves to yield to the temptation of increasing the supply by lowering the standard. The subject will be taken up this afternoon

Meanwhile, while this and much else is being planned for the future, we are in the present in a period of some religious depression. We want a revival among us of the public spirit, which shall make the whole body of Churchmen recognise that they must spend and sacrifice themselves, and their goods, for the Church of Christ, and the maintenance of the work, the need of which was never more manifest than it is to-day. We must be a people of urgent and faithful prayer, imploring God insistently to "revive His work in the midst of the years," to "raise up His power and come among us, and with great might succour us." The work of the Church, the praying for the Church, the service of the Church, belongs not to the clergy only, but to all Christians; and the work of the Church means—not the multiplications of buildings and plant only or chiefly—but the perpetual effort in season and out of season—that is, when times seem favourable and when they seem unfavourable—to convert souls from sin to God, and to build them up in the society of the redeemed.









