

JOHN LEWIS OF MARGATE

By THE REV. CANON JOHN SHIRLEY, D.D., F.S.A.

FOR near upon forty years John Lewis was Vicar of St. John's in Thanet, *alias* (as the old Registers say) Meregate or Margate; from 1705 to 1746. Financially it was not much of a Living—about £50—but by the favour of Archbishop Tenison the Rectory of Saltwood with Hythe was collated to him, and the “*ecclesia desolata*” of Eastbridge, until he could become Vicar of Minster in Thanet in 1708 at £250 p.a. As Eastbridge brought in £30 and Saltwood £80 p.a., Lewis managed to keep the wolf from the door. These values in the beginning of the 18th century should now perhaps be multiplied by ten, if not fifteen. Ordained deacon in 1697, Lewis had been promptly preferred, for he was given the Rectory of Acrise at £70 p.a. in 1699, together with the sequestration of Hawkinge, worth another £30 to £40 p.a. A good Whig and Low Churchman, as he had in Tenison's, so he dwelt in Wake's favour, and in 1717 the Archbishop gave him the substantial Mastership of the Eastbridge Hospital in Canterbury. In his *Notitia Diocesis Cantuar.*—Wake's private notebook, now in Canterbury Cathedral Library—his character in the archiepiscopal eyes is summed up as “*vir probus, doctus, diligens; concionator bonus.*”

Lewis was an important man, and the curious will find an abundance of references and authorities under his name in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. That dictionary devotes two pages to him, and tells us he was born in 1675, the son of John Lewis, wine cooper of Bristol, whose own father had been incumbent of Worth Matravers in Dorset. Young John went to the grammar schools at Wimborne and Poole, and after some tutoring experience to Exeter College, Oxford, in 1694. He took his B.A. in 1697, and, as so many did in those days, became a member of the other University, proceeding M.A. from C.C.C.C. in 1712. Consequently he figures both in Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses* and Venn's *Alumni Cantabrigienses*; Foster describes him as the son of John, of Worcester, *plebs*, but Venn agrees with the *D.N.B.*

Lewis was a scholar and a prolific writer and author. A list of published and unpublished works is given in the *D.N.B.* He wrote biographies of Wycliffe, Reginald Pecock, Caxton and Bishop Fisher; tedious, if showing research, the *D.N.B.* decides. He wrote Lives that have not been printed—George Hickes, the Non-juror, and John

Johnson of Cranbrook, his contemporary and one-time friend. The *D.N.B.* implies that this MS. of Johnson's *Life* is in the Bodleian : so it is, but there is one other, in the possession of the present writer ; both are in Lewis's handwriting and many pages are the same, but the Bodleian copy is less personal and more theological. But he wrote very much more, and published such works as *The Antiquities of Thanet*, *The History of Faversham*, the two books perhaps most noted by antiquaries of his time.

According to his own description, Lewis was an untiring parish priest, visiting, preaching, conducting services. But one who turns over the pages of Registers in the Canterbury Cathedral Library, or the volumes of the Wake MSS. in Christ Church, must conclude that John Lewis was happiest when he had a pen in his hand. If there was a chance to write, he would write. If incumbents were required to answer a Questionnaire, most contented themselves with the briefest—and sometimes even the curtest—replies, but Lewis would leave no width of the official paper unfilled, and could be guaranteed to add several pages of his own. So, too, with letters—and Wake's heart must often have failed him when he opened his mail-bag.

But he wrote sense when it came to ecclesiastical and administrative questions, and the purpose of this present article is, in fact, to give some picture of the state of the Church as John Lewis saw it in 1716 and described to Wake. In 1716 the Archbishop prepared for a personal Visitation by means of a paper of printed questions, sent to all incumbents. The Returns made are to be found now in the Christ Church Library, defined as *Visitatio Dioces. Cantuar.* 1716.

The Questions were twelve in number, thorough and searching in quality, cast with a political as well as an ecclesiastical eye. They are to be found as follows :

1. The number of families in the parish ; how many Dissenters and of what sort ?
2. Are there any Licensed or other Meeting-Houses ? If so, how many and of what kind ; how often people assemble and in what numbers, and who teaches them ?
3. Are there any public or charity endowed schools ? If so, the number of pupils ; and what care is taken to instruct them in the principles of the Church of England, and to bring them to Church ?
4. What Almshouses, Hospital or other charitable endowment ?
5. Does the incumbent reside upon his cure and in his parsonage ? If not, where does he live, and what reason for non-residence is there ?
6. Is there a resident curate, and is he qualified as the canons require ? Does he live in the parsonage and what is his stipend ?
7. Do any come to Church who are unbaptized, or being baptized

- and "of a competent age" are not confirmed? Have any adults been baptized since Wake's arrival? If so, a schedule of names and ages is called for.
8. How often is public service read? Is it duly performed twice every Lord's Day? If not, how often and when, and why not twice as required by the Act of Uniformity and the Canons of the Church?
  9. How often and at what times does the incumbent catechize? Do parishioners send their children and servants who have not learned their catechism? What exposition of the catechism is used?
  10. How often is the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper administered? How many communicants are there in the parish? How many usually come to the Sacrament and how many at Easter?
  11. Is warning given of the Sacrament? Do parishioners send in their names? Has the Sacrament been refused to anyone, and, if so, why? How has the party refused behaved since?
  12. Have any public penances been performed in the Church since Wake's arrival? Have any Commutations of Penance been made? If so, by whom and for how much money?

To these twelve questions a postscript was added, inviting the clergy freely to communicate their thoughts to the Archbishop, if they had met with any particular difficulties in their work, or had noted any defects in the Canons or the Discipline of the Church, or abuses and corruptions in any of the ecclesiastical officers; or they might have advices to give or proposals to make.

Most recipients give thin and scanty answers; not seldom a bored and grudging note suggests itself, and maybe we can understand something when Wake's private notes remark of a man, "*vir non optimaë famaë*," or, "*vir lascivus, mendax, perditus*," or "*vir non optimus moribus praeditus*," or "*vir aenae frontis; comptator strenuus*"; one is "*sobrius*" but "*nullius valoris*" even at the age of 28, another regarded as "*sobrius*" but otherwise "*non magnopere laudandus*," while a number are only "*mediocriter laudandus*," and others even worse, much worse. And at first sight we are prone to think that the general character of the clergy is past praying for, till we remember that "*mores*" and "*fama*" and such like are to be interpreted in terms of politics and not personal morals. A gentleman described as "*pessimis moribus*" is not necessarily one whose moral life is grossly irregular, but one who joins in the ale-house catch "*The King shall enjoy his own again.*"

The two clergymen who give the most careful and ample answers are John Lewis and John Johnson; sometime friends, but not for many a long year. The Whig and Low Churchman—not unready to truckle to Authority—had little in common with the High Churchman,

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suspected Jacobite and friend of Non-jurors, pious and devout, and a choicer and abler scholar than himself. While Mary and Anne reigned all seemed set fair for John Johnson's preferment to great heights, and it would not have been unfitting adequately to recognize the worth of the author of the *Clergyman's Vade Mecum*, and the *Unbloody Sacrifice*; but by 1716 the best that could happen to him was to remain unmolested at Cranbrook. His enemies were eager enough—Did he pray for the King? Did he observe Thanksgiving Day?—and he knew that to the Hierarchy he was suspect as a dangerous man, one who could unite scholarship to political and ecclesiastical views. "Sobrius; doctus," Wake allows him, and adds "superbus" to other epithets which have been heavily erased. We cannot then but admire the Note which Johnson appended to his Cranbrook Returns—the composure, dignity and courage of the Note as of the Man, and the challenge to the Authorities to make rich as well as poor feel the weight of the Church's Laws.

So he writes, "As to the rest, May it please y<sup>r</sup> Grace, I have met with exceeding great difficulties in the service of my cure at Cranbrook: & I would willingly spread them all before y<sup>r</sup> Grace, & do not question, but you would comiserate my case; but the difficulties proceed from the tempers, & passions of men, which GOD alone can cure. I am sensible my enemies will impute all the hardships I am under, to my disaffection (as they call it) to the present Government: but it is certain in fact, that my difficulties in serving the cure were well nigh as great in the Reign of her late Majesty, when my loyalty was not in the least questioned, as they are at present."

"I rejoice to understand, that y<sup>r</sup> Grace is disposed to revive Discipline; I take it for granted, that you mean True, Primitive Discipline, without That respect of persons, w<sup>ch</sup> is in truth the destruction of it. Now the first step toward this most Glorious end, I humbly conceive to be this, that the absolute Necessity of Comunion with the Church to all that live within the pale of it, be universally press'd on the consciousness of men. For if Comunion be not absolutely necessary to Salvation, then Excommunication can be no real punishment; nor can there be sufficient reason for men to undergo just penances for the regaining this Comunion, when they are deprived of it. Formal penance, & a *capias* are indeed a sort of punishment, but civil rather than spiritual: & they have but a very weak tendency to real Reformation, which I take to be the chief end of True Discipline. This & all other my opinions are humbly submitted to your vastly superior judgement by

May it please y<sup>r</sup> Grace,  
Y<sup>r</sup> most obedient clerk  
John Johnson.

Cranbrook  
Jun: 21 1716.

The tone is the same as that of his letter of 11th February, 1715, in which he notes the Archbishop's intention to hold a Visitation in the summer of 1716, and takes for granted that Wake will hold confirmations then. The rarity of confirmations is, in Johnson's opinion, one of the causes of the prevalence of Anabaptism. "The Ministers and best people of all this country do greatly complain of their having now been neglected for 28 years together." True, in winter their roads are the worst in England, and now and then even in summer time they may be bad; but however bad the roads, temporal peers venture themselves to visit their Weald Estates!

But it is time to return to Lewis, and, before printing his Visitation Returns, to make some attempt to see the man more clearly. Thomas Hearne, the antiquary, of Edmund Hall, did not like him; and we can but wonder why the *D.N.B.* makes no reference to Hearne. Partial and prejudiced of course he would be, since he despised Lewis's scholarship as heartily as he loathed his political and his church views. However, a grain or two of truth there must be, and it may be Lewis was not the scholar he wanted people to think he was. He certainly got all the help he could. Ralph Thoresby says (II 315 D. & C.) he is "writing to Mr. Lewis, of the Isle of Thanet, concerning Wickcliff (whose *Life* he is about to publish, and desires my assistance)." It may be this sort of thing that prompted Hearne to ask if the editor or compiler of the *Antiquities of Kent* deserved the name of antiquary (*Coll.*, VI, 32). He certainly preferred Earbury's account of Wycliffe—as "best and honestest"—to Lewis's, and no doubt rejoiced to include in his *Collections* the quotation from Mist's Journal for Saturday, 28th October, 1721, inserted by Earbury and which begins thus: "Whereas a pretended Vindication of John Wicleff has been published under the Name of one Lewis of Margate, by the Incitement, as the Preface asserts, of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and in the same I am injuriously reflected upon as a scurrilous Writer: This is to inform the Publick that I shall reserve the Author for a more serious Whipping in my leisure Hours, and, in the mean time, give him a short Correction for his Benefit, if he has Grace and Sense to take it." But Earbury was an "honest non-juror." As to a later book, *The Antiquities of Thanet*, Thomas Allen, Vicar of Murston, sometime Fellow of University College, writes to his bosom friend Hearne that it has only an indifferent character and is a poor performance (*Ibid.*, VIII, 259). So, as time goes on, Lewis who once had been a correspondent of Hearne, and a flattering one too, becomes "that vile, silly Pimp," "that vile wretch," "Lewis the Pyrate," "the same poor writer that drew up and published Wickliff's Life. He is a Wicklivist, Calvinist, Puritan & Republican, and hath wrote and published divers other things of no manner of Esteem among honest learned men" (*Ibid.*, X, 98-100). The long

preface which Lewis published with Wyclif's N.T. was mostly Waterland's work, he concludes: and in the last published volume of the *Collections* Hearne decides that Lewis has the character of rogue and villain (XI, 361).

There is little doubt that Lewis set out to ingratiate himself with Wake with an eye to preferment, and it is not improbable that his brother clergy loved him little. Thus on 19th January, 1719, he writes to the Archbishop complaining that the latter's orders as to curates are in general disregarded: they are underpaid and "sweated," Incumbents deliberately not taking out Licences for them. The consequence is that "the men who are thus meanly and servilely used, act accordingly." He denounces pluralities—citing three churches held by one man nearby and all recently augmented in income. "I cant but wish that our buyers and sellers were all whip'd out of the Church, and no longer suffered to make a gain of their Flocks only to gratify a covetous and worldly mind." In a letter of date 20th January, 1718, he admits "I have almost these twenty years been in all places of the Diocess represented by some of my brethren as an enemy to the Church and Clergy." Poor Lewis could not even keep a curate. At the Visitation of the Archdeacon of Canterbury in 1711 one with the significant name of Richard Idle appeared as Lewis's curate at Minster. His stay seems to have been of short duration and Mr. Idle fades from history. Six years later the unhappy Vicar of Margate was compelled to inform Wake that his present curate, Mr. Le-, had been living with a lady thought to be his wife and now brought to bed, but miserably it turns out that they had never been married. Here Lewis is seen at his best. "I loved the man, and do love him still. But I abhor his wickedness . . . I hope therefore, Your Grace will be tender to him, and in the midst of Judgement remember mercy." However, it is clear that Mr. Le-departed, for only next year there happened a first-class quarrel between Lewis and his new curate, Mr. Portal. Mr. Portal was incompetent and too much concerned with his health. "So affected by sparing is he of his own dear self, y<sup>t</sup> I have been assured by a neighbouring Clergyman that he could scarce hear him read the Office of Baptism tho' he stood at the Font as Godfather."

In these and similar letters we can read also Lewis's disappointment at not being preferred. No doubt he had a grievance—he was a scholar, he was loyal to the Hanoverians, he was by his own testimony a diligent parish priest, he had sought for nothing. "I can truly say, my Lord, that whatever I have, and for which I am so much hated and envied, was never my seeking." In all his years he was scarcely absent from church—preaching twice every Sunday and often in the week—assisting neighbouring Churches. "I have been long and often ill in this place,

and have more than once gone to Church, when I have been desired by some of my neighbours to stay at home, nor do I know that I ever officiated here in my life, without being sensibly the worse for it. But all this avails nothing to me. I have set my hand to the plough and, I can with great sincerity say, I count not my Life dear." So he wrote in February, 1719/20, but he kept going till 1745. The air of Margate seems to have been as bracing then as now.

Lewis answers the twelve Visitation Interrogatories in most copious manner, using foolscap sheets as the official printed paper was totally insufficient for him. These finished, he jumps at the chance offered by the postscript invitation to incumbents to inform the Archbishop of any particular difficulties they experience. Here we may allow the Vicar of Margate to speak for himself, as most of the evils afflicting the Church of England pass in review.

1“ The *particular Difficulties* that I have met with in the Discharge of my Duty are these.

I. The parish in which I now minister is very large, in so much that some of the houses are at least two miles distance from my house. The Number of parishioners is too great for me personally to know them, and the servants of our Farmers are so constantly employed in their Master's business that a Minister can have no opportunity to apply himself personally to them but in the field or the stable. Nor have I been able by my discourses in publick, or my private application to Masters and Mistresses to prevail with many of them to pray with and instruct their Families. The poorer sort especially the men, I very rarely find at home.

II. Through the pride of Young people none of them can be prevailed on by me to come to be Catechised, who are capable of understanding it, or being instructed in it. So that all those I catechise are very little advanced above the years of children, and know scarce any thing more than how to repeat the words of their Catechism.

III. The neglect of administering Confirmation at such times, and within such a distance as is necessary for every one who is desirous of it to reap the benefit of it ; and the admitting very children to it has very much contributed to that Ignorance which is so very visible. Whereas were none admitted to be confirmed but such as are of years of discretion, and of knowledge sufficient to ratify and confirm in their own persons the solemn vow and promise made in their Name at their Baptism, as more care would be taken to fit them for Confirmation, so Catechising would not be so much despised as an exercise only fit for children.

<sup>1</sup> *Visitatio Dioces. Cant.* 1716: f. 426 sq.

IV. The making the receiving the H. Sacrament necessary to qualify those in Office brings a great many difficulties along with it to a Minister. Since if by an Officer's being repelled he loses his place the Minister may be sued for Damages. And tho' the person repelled be never so notorious an Evil Liver, and give never so much offence to the Congregation yet the proof of it lies on the Minister. And a few such causes tho' the Minister be never so much in the right are sufficient to ruine him. And it is pretty notorious what manner of persons the generality of our Officers are.

V. The Office for Visitation of the Sick is very defective in furnishing proper prayers suitable to the various Occasions of sick persons. And yet tho' there be a Liberty given to preaching Ministers to *instruct* and *comfort* ym as they shall think most needful and convenient, yet they are tied up and obliged to use no other prayers with ym than what are prescribed by and contained in ye Office.

VI. I labour under a difficulty in the use of the *Order for the Burial of the Dead*. By the Rubric prefixed to it, it is ordered not to be used for any that die unbaptized, or excommunicate, or have laid violent hands upon themselves. And by Canon 68 It is Decreed, That if any Ministers shall refuse to bury any Corps, except the party deceased were denounced excommu: *Majori excommunicati*. for some grievous and notorious crime (and no man able to testifie of his repentance) he shall be suspended. But how many are there who die in this Nation reputed Members of this Church who never were thus denounced excommunicated, or however who have not died so, to whom a Minister cannot truly apply the words of that *Order*? as, that Almighty God of his great mercy hath taken unto *him self* the soul of our dear brother or sister here departed; yt we commit his or her body to the ground in sure and certain hope, not of a resurrecti: in General, but of the Resurrection to eternal Life; that he is dead in ye Lord; that we give God hearty thanks for that it hath pleased Him to deliver this our — out of the miseries of this sinful world, — intimating yt he or she is departed in the true faith of his Holy Name & will have their perfect consummation and bliss both in body & soul in God's eternal and everlasting glory: That we hope, he or she rests in Christ. In this Age it is not so uncommon for men to die in the outward Communi: of their Church, I mean, who are by Baptism made members of it, and who usually come to prayers and sermons who yet will never be persuaded to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's supper, tho many of them have lived lives free from scandal. And others agen who have been very loose and profligate in their Lives have yet never been denounced excommunicate. What shall a Minister do now in these cases? Shall he use this *Order* etc. and thereby be guilty of a deliberate

Falshood ; or shall he refuse to bury the deceased and so render himself liable to Suspension ? I have often thought that the ordering that this *Order* etc. should not be used to any who did not receive the H. Commun: three times a year at least and live lives free from scandal would remove these difficulties. I am afraid the promiscuous and common use of this Form has had very ill effects on the common people in making them think that they may make a good end, as they say, tho their lives have been far from such as become the Gospel of X<sup>t</sup> and that it gives great offence to our Dissenters, & makes them to think hardly of our Clergy, to hear them use this *Order* etc. over *papists*, those yt die in Duels, and sometimes where the person is wealthy, over those yt have laid violent hands on ymselves : however over very notoriously wicked and infamous persons.

VII. The want of Uniformity among the Clergy occasions Difficulties to a Strict and Regular Clergyman. I have been often told of my neighbouring Clergy their baptizing in private houses according to the Form of publick Baptism ; of their Marrying at Canterbury at any time ; and I have been censured as unnecessarily troublesome because I would not do the same. The different ways of the Clergys' praying before the sermon, some using an Exhortation to pray, others using a Form of prayer is attended with ill consequences, to the very great prejudice of our Ministry.

The particular Defects which I have observed in the present Canons or Discipline of the Church, are these.

*First.* Many of them are impracticable, viz.

I. Canon LIX orders Ministers to catechise every Sunday, which neither is done nor can be done in abundance of Churches, especially those where the Congregations are large, there is but one Minister, and preaching twice a day.

II. Canon LXIV requires every parson, Vicar or Curate in his several charge solemnly to bid Holy days, which is scarce ever done in small country parishes on account of their being none to observe them.

III. Canon LXXIV enjoins Ministers to wear such apparel as no one knows how to make.

IV. Canon LXXX requires every parish to provide a Bible of the largest Volume, by which must be meant the Translation before this last, since our present Bibles were not then in being.

V. Canons XLV, XLVI suppose Beneficed men not allowed to be preachers, and on that acct needing a License to preach in their Cures, which is directly contrary to the Law as it stands at present which allows none to be Beneficed men who are not priests, and consequently

who have not Authority, without a Licence, to preach the word of God, etc.

*Secondly.* Many of these Canons are generally disused viz.

I. Canon XXIV requires Copes to be worn in Cathedral Churches by those that administer the Communion, which its said is done no where in *England* but at Durham.

II. Canon XLI provides that they who have Licences or Dispensations for the keeping of more Benefices with Cure than one shall by a good and sufficient Caution be bound to make his personal Residence in each his said Benefices for some reasonable time in every year. By *good and sufficient caution* I take it is meant some bond or such like security to be given for the making such personal Residence. By *reasonable time* the Dispensation intimates is meant *two months* to be spent in residing on the Benefice from which the Incumbent is for the most part absent. But how seldom or never is this Canon observed? It is very plain yt was it obeyed the most scandalous pluralities among us viz. Where both Livings are each sufficient to maintain an Incumbent, and are a great distance from each other would in a great measure cease. Since if they were not of a very good value they would not answer the charge of a Man's keeping two houses and residing in each of them some part of the Year.

III. Canon XLIV orders that no prebendaries, nor Canons in Cathedral or Collegiate Churches, having one or more Benefices with Cure shall under colour of the said prebends absent themselves from their Benefices with Cure above the space of one Month in the Year etc. How seldom is this observed? We are told yt notwithstanding this Canon Residence upon a prebend, saves a Man from Residence on his Benefices with Cure. And how great a mischief is thereby done to Religion in the Country is too plain. The Richest Livings are supplied by the poorest Clerks, and by that means Hospitality and Charity are neglected; and the poor Incumbents of small Livings are deprived of the assistance they might have from the Incumbents of these larger ones in case they made their personal Residence on them, by their Conversation, Books, etc.

IV. Canon XLVIII orders, That no Curate or Minister shall be permitted to serve in any place without Examination and Admission of the Bp. of the Diocese; or Ordinary of the place etc. This is very often neglected; by which means poor ignorant and scandalous men are permitted to serve, such as the Incumbent can get to serve cheapest.

V. Canon LVIII orders every Minister—as is a Graduate to wear upon his surplice—such a Hood as by the orders of the University are agreeable to his degree. The Canon dos not say by whom the Hood

shall be found : And it has been so long neglected in Country parishes, that I question whether the wearing one would not create some disturbances among the people.

VI. Canon LX orders Confirmation to be performed once in three Years. Instead of that it has not been performed in some Dioceses once in seven years. And when it is performed, it is performed in so few places, That a great many can not by reason of the Distance come to be confirmed, and those that do come by reason of the great Numbers occasion a great deal of hurry and disorder. Where as were Confirmation performed duly every three Years, and at such places as that all in the Dioceses need not go above five or six miles from their own homes ; as All might have the benefit of this useful appointment, so it would be performed without any of that hurry and disorder which now too generally accompanys it.

VII. Canons LXII, CI, CII, CIV order That No Minister upon pain of Suspension, shall under any pretence whatso ever join any persons in Marriage—in any private place, but either in the said Churches or Chappels where one of them dwelleth ; That no Faculty or Licence shall be granted for solemnization of Matrimony—but unto such persons *only* as be of good State and Quality, and that upon good caution and security taken ; That the security mentioned shall containe this condition—That they shall celebrate the said Matrimony publickly in the parish Church or Chappel where one of them dwelleth, *and in no other place* ; That the parishes where the parties to be married dwell shall both be expressed in the Licence, as also the parish named where the Marriage shall be celebrated. All which wholesome institutions if observed would be a good means to prevent clandestine marriages. Whereas its too well known that they are now almost, if not quite, every where not minded. Licences are granted to any that have but money to pay for ym. There is no Security required for the celebration of Matrimony in the parish church etc. where one of the partys dwelleth, nor is the parish named where the Marriage shall be celebrated : but instead of that Several Parishes names (in none of which either of ye parties perhaps dwelleth), are set down : and the parties are married where neither of them are known to the injury very often of parents and their children, and to ye defrauding of the poor Country Clergy of their just Fees.

Canon 62 orders that Marriage shall be solemnized *in time of Divine Service*. The same is supposed by the Form of solemnization of Matrimony, But this I never knew done, or so much as heard of its being done any where. And yet by the Canon the Minister is required thus to solemnize Matrimony *upon pain of Suspension*.

VIII. Canon LXXXII supposes the Communion Table to be removed

from the East end of the Chancel when the Holy Communion is administered: The same does the Rubric before the Order for the Administration of the Lords Supper, which is utterly inconsistent with the present usage of encompassing the Table with Rails.

IX. Canon CXI orders the Church-wardens truly and personally to present the names of all those which behave themselves rudely and disorderly in the Church etc. But this rude and disorderly behaviour is supposed to be in time of Divine Service, such as hinders the Minister or Preacher. But no manner of provision is made to prevent such rude behaviour in the Church before Divine Service begins, when its much more usual especially in country Churches, than afterwards, to the great disturbance and hindrance of such devout and pious persons as are met to-gether to worship God.

X. Canon CXII orders the Minister, Ch: wardens etc. to exhibit to the Bishop or his Chancellor the Names and Surnames of all the parishioners, as well men as women, which being of the age of Sixteen years, received not the Communion at Easter before. This in large parishes, particularly in this, is impracticable. I and the Churchwardens do not know every person in the parish of the age of 16 Years. And should we present them, and they should be cited to appear in the Ecclesiastical Court and put to any charges, this would so effectually prejudice them, against me and my Ministry, that I question whether they would ever again attend upon it. Besides, abundance of the age of 16 are very ignorant and utterly unfit, on that account to be admitted to the Lord's Table.

X. Canon CXXVII orders that Surrogates shall have some skill in the Civil and Ecclesiastical Law. The allowing Surrogates is an occasion yt the Officials make a perfect Sine-cure of their place living out of the Diocese, and never appearing in Court but at ye Easter and Michaelmas Visitations. By which means causes are long delayed, and they who have causes to be tried in the Ecclesiastical Courts are put to an unnecessary expence. For tho' the Canon requires Surrogates to have some skill etc it is very notorious that for the most part they have none or however so little that they are forced always to be directed by the proctors. And indeed so small is the allowance generally made to Surrogates, (ten pound a year as Ive heard in this Diocese) that it is but a poor encouragement for a man to study the Canon and Civil Law. However *Dr. Godolphin* assures us That articles were exhibited before the Commissioners Ecclesiastical against *Sutton* Chancellor of the Bp of *Gloucester*, because he being never brought up in the Science of the Civil or Canon Laws or having any Intelligence

in them, took upon him the Office of Chancellour of the Bishop of Gloucester.

XI. Canon CXXXV orders that not above Ten shillings shall be taken for parchment etc in admitting of any into Sacred Orders. When I was ordained Deacon by the late Bp of London I had demanded of me by the Bps Secretary Fifteen shillings which I paid : But when I was ordained priest by the same Bishop no more was demanded than Ten shillings. In other dioceses I have heard it complained of, that it has cost the Candidates for Holy Orders three pounds for their Ordination.

XII. Canon CXXXVI orders a Table of the Rates and Fees to be set up in Courts and Registers in such sort as every man whom it concerneth may without difficulty come to the View and perusal thereof, and take a copy of them. There is such a Table set up in the Ecclesiastical Court at Canterbury but not in such sort as every many whom it concerneth may without difficulty come to the perusal thereof—since it is written in such a hand as very few can read, and if I mistake not in Latin which fewer yet understand.

XIII. Canon LXX orders the parish Register to be kept in a sure Coffer with three Locks and Keys,—and that neither the Minister without the two Church-wardens nor the Church wardens without the Minister shall at any time take that Book out of the said Coffer. This is no where that I know of, done. But in some parishes the Register is kept by the Minister at his own house, and in others by the parish Clerk, as in most of the parishes in and about London, and in some parishes in the Country, particularly this. By whom it has been so kept, as appears by the Register, ever since the Year 1653, before which time, the Vicars used to keep it. The same Canon requires the Church-wardens *once* every year within one month after the 25th day of *March* to transmit unto the Bishop of the Diocese or his Chancellor a true Copy of all the Names of all persons Christened etc in the Year before (ending the said 25th day of *March*) Whereas the Officers of the Ecclesiastical Court in this Diocese require the Churchwardens twice every year viz after Lady day, and after Michaelmass to transmit to them a true Copy of the Names of the Xtned etc in the Year before (ending March 25, and septem: 29).

XIV. Canon XXVIII orders strangers not to be admitted to the Communion. But this is very rarely complied with, in Cities etc it is very common for persons of another parish to receive the Communion in other parish Churches : And every body that offers himself is admitted without any exception. I have known my self a person whom his parish Minister scrupled to admit to the H: Communion on account

of the doubtfulness of his Baptism, his parents being Quakers, and his name inter-lined in the parish Register in a different hand and with different Ink, who going to another parish was admitted. The Test Act has given too much countenance to this Liberty by not requiring persons to receive the Holy Sacrament in their own parish Church but only *in some parish Church*. By which means there is room left for very scandalous men to be admitted to the H. Communion in order to qualify themselves for Offices.”

After this survey of his own parochial perplexities, of abuses common to the Church, and of the need for Canon Law reform, the Vicar of Margate devotes some concluding pages to particular matters in the principal places in South East Kent. Nor can it be denied that he often puts his finger on the spot, though the Canons of Canterbury (twelve in number and owing only one month's residence a year) would not have thanked him for adding a city parish to their liabilities. Alas, he never got his Six Preacher's place.

“The principal Defect of our ecclesiastical establishmt and which has been the principal Cause of our Religious Dissentions is the want of making a good provision for able and worthy Ministers in Citys and Market Towns and other populous places.<sup>1</sup>

In many of these, the places for Divine Worship are not large enow to contain the Inhabitants, and in others where the Churches are sufficient for all the Inhabitants to assemble together in there is not any tolerable provision for the Minister. On which account many well disposed people chuse rather to go to the Meeting houses than to stay at home and frequent no publick Worship at all. To instance only in this Diocese (though this is commonly the case all over the Kingdom, That Citys, Market and Corporation Towns where there is occasion for ye greatest Care and Labour are many of them so pitifully & meanly provided either with Churches or Ministers as that the doing any thing almost towards promoting ye Common Salvation is utterly impracticable.)

The City of Canterbury and Suburbs has fifteen parish Churches, but they are generally so small that if every one of them was to be open and officiated in at the same time there would not be room enough for all the Inhabitants. But now by the Union of 12 of these Churches they not being singly any tolerable maintenance for a Minister their number may be said to be reduced to Nine, there being but so many of them, at most, open and officiated in at the same time. Nay in a Morning on Sundays, there is, generally, preaching in but Five of these Nine. It is true there is the Cathedral. Where there is preaching every Friday Morning. But the Quire is very ill contrived for any

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, f. 434.

considerable Auditory, and that Venerable Body have thot fit for a long time to disuse the Sermon House commonly so called tho' a most commodious place for Divine Worship, and where on Sundays, Morning prayer and preaching might be used without prejudice to the Cathedral Service.

In the parish of *St. Lawrence's* in this Island a Vill called Ramsgate is so much encreased within these 50 or 60 Years, as that the parish Church cannot contain above one half of the Inhabitants of it and of the rest of the parish. This Vill. stands on the sea side, and is above a mile from the parish Church. For which reasons there is a presbyterian Meeting House in this Vill, to which most yt go do it not out of principle, but because they have not room in the Church, or cannot go so far.

In Sandwich there are three parish Churches and which if all used at the same time I believe are large enough to contain all the Inhabitants. But one of these Churches is always shut up, that is every one of them four months each which was first done on acct of the Dutch Inhabitants who were computed to be one third part of ye Town and who had therefore one of thé parish Churches allowed ym to asseble together in to perform D. Worship. But there are none now but what understand English, and they have not for these eight or nine years past had any Minister among them. So that now when the Churches are not used by the English Ministers they are made no use of at all ; by which means there is not really room for the Inhabitants in the Churches which are used. The Incomes of the Ministers here are very strait *St. Peter's* the principal Church is said to be worth but £40 a yr. *St. Mary's* abt £60, and *St. Clement's* abt £70. There are near this Town the Rectory of *Ham* worth its said, £80 p. ann, and but one house in ye parish, in the gift of the Crown : and the Sine-cure of *Stonar* worth £16 p. year which if annexed to the poorest of these small livings, would encourage a worthy man to labour in the place.

The Corporation of *Folkstone* is a populous Town and very large parish. The Minister has £80 paid him out of the parsonage which is a Lease of Yr Graces, and thro a mistake in wording the Lease, the Lessee has all the Easter dues, and I don't know whether or no he has not sometimes obtained the Fees for Marriages, Churchings and Burials. The late Archbishop gave the present Curate of *Folkstone* the Rectory of *Hawkings* which before the late augmentation by His Grace and the Corporati : of *Q. Anne's Bounty*, was let for £32 p. ann. It is a very small parish, and most convenient for the Minister of *Folkstone* it being so situated as to be a Chappel of Ease to His parishioners which are most remote from their own parish Church, and the income of *Folkstone* alone, Taxes being deducted, & rent

for a house being to be paid is very mean and no way proportionable to the Labour and Duties of ye place which are very great.

Dover has two Churches St. Marys and St. James: St. Marys tho' a large Church cannot contain near all the Inhabitants of the precinct Belonging to it, the Minister of it has £80 a year allowed by the Corporation and the perquisites are supposed to make near £20 more. St. Jame's was very small before ye late augmentation of £20 p ann. And therefore there used to be D. Service performed in this Church only once a fortnight, and as I remember in the afternoon. Where as considering the populousness of this parish, and ye want of room in the other Church it must certainly be of very great use to have Divine Service performed in St. James's every Lords day.

The Corporation of Hithe has one Church a very stately and beautiful one. But it is only a Chappel to ye Rectory of Saltwood, and affords ye Minister but £21 a year: and D. Service is performed only once a day there viz One Sunday in the Morning, and another in the Afternoon.

The Corporation of Deal is a large and populous Town, And is above a mile from the parish Church. There is lately a very commodious Chappel built there but it is not endowed, and the Income of the Rectory is too small to maintain a Chaplain to officiate in it.

The Vicarige of Ashford, is worth abt £70 a yr too little an Income for a Family and very disproportionate to so large and laborious a Cure, where there are required at least two Ministers.

The Curacy of Maidstone is computed worth £120 p. ann, perquisites and all, which is too little to provide for ye Service of that very great Cure which is sufficient fully to employ two Ministers at the least. The late ABp was sensible of this, and therefore gave Mr Weller the present Curate the Vicarige, I think, of Newchurch, worth, as its said, £120 p ann. to enable him to keep an Assistant Curate.

All these deficiencies might if the King and parliamt and respective patrons thought fit be easily supplied by annexing to these poor Churches, either a sine cure, or desolate Church, or Six preachers place. For instance the R. of Little Mongeham might be annexed to ye Chappely of Deal, The Rectory of Ham to St. Peters in Sandwich. And a Six preachers place to St. Mary's & St. Clements. The desolate Ch: of W. Hithe to Hithe etc. The rights of patronage might still be preserved by allowing the patrons of the Sine Cures etc an interest in the presentation to the Church to which they are annexed in proportion to the Value. Thus this poor Vicarige of which Your Grace is patron might be augmented by annexing to it one of those Desolate Churches or Sine Cures of which your Grace has ye patronage, and a Six preachers place, which together, would make this Vicarige worth

about 100 p. ann. A Revenue little enough in ye Country for a Family to subsist upon.

Whereas I before intimated that in Sandwich there are two Churches always in use. I am since told yt when St. Peters is out as they term it (in which, when in, by ye subscriptions of the parishioners Divine Service is performed Morning & Afternoon) Divine Service is performed but in one of the other Churches. viz in St. Clements in ye Morning, and in St. Marys in ye afternoon or vice versa. So that it is no wonder yt the Meeting houses are full since there is not room for 1/3 of the Inhabitants at Church.

One Mr John petit of Ramsgate did offer to give ground to build a Chappel of ease upon, but did not meet with any encouragement.

It would be mightily for ye advantage of the people of Canterbury if every prebend had a parish Church annexed to it.

It has been so commonly observed that the Rod of excommunication is made such a common use of as to be despised and neglected, that I need not mention the Reforming *that* as wt is most necessary.

Abt 3 or 4 Year ago one Francis Dixon a barber a married man and Joanna Witherden the wife of George Witherden were severally presented for the Crime of Adultery. The Fellow was so impudent as on ye advice of Council to put himself on his Tryel, and after about a years dependance of the Cause in our Ecclesiastical Court, he & she were both sentenced to do penance which they did, & to pay costs which came to above £11. But then they pleaded poverty, and threatned to leave their families of Children which were very large to ye parish, which rather than they should do the parishioners agreed to pay the proctor's bill. The Man since never comes to Church, nor, I believe, goes any where else.

The Multitude of Ale-houses which thro ye Interest of the Common Brewers and the Favour of ye Justices keep daily encreasing, are a great Means of ye encrease of Vice and of addition to the number of the Poor."

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We peruse these pages and form a picture of John Lewis of Margate ; a good, earnest man, with a high standard as a parish priest. Ambitious no doubt, and his Scholarship, Low Churchmanship and loyalty to the Throne might well have earned for him a greater reward.<sup>1</sup> His very virtues may have rendered him difficult to live with ; he could not keep curates, and his brethren perhaps thought him Pharisaical. He could be really mean, as he was to Johnson, and maybe he was

<sup>1</sup> It is impossible not to sympathize with him. After all, he only asked to be made a Six Preacher, less than he might have looked for ; for he knew that there was ample precedent for the giving of prebends to incumbents of market-towns, a custom on which Burnet of Sarum and Sharp of York prided themselves.

## JOHN LEWIS OF MARGATE

in some degree a fawner inclined to toadyism. But he did his duty splendidly by the standards of the day, and stands eminent among the clergy of the Diocese of Canterbury. He was a working example of the parish parson at his best, while Patten of Whitstable kept a mistress and did not pay his debts; Bourn of Ash was "allied to the sons of Eli"; Roberts of Queenborough, ale-house sot and debtor, "so impudent as nothing is like him"; Bate of Chilham, "proudest and stiffest man" in the diocese, allowing corpses to lie unburied for want of fees; Burroughs of Kingston, "most horribly covetous"; Ansell of Stowting and Cade of Sellindge, Jacobites and tavern-brawlers; Edward Dering of Charing who fought his own sister at the Swan Inn and threw her "head-cloaths" into the fire; Hobbs of Dover, who amassed pluralities; Isles of New Romney, a notorious sot and Jacobite; Nicholls of Fordwich who preached that George was a Foreigner, a Lutheran, and a Beggar—"a wicked, swearing, Lying, Drunken man."