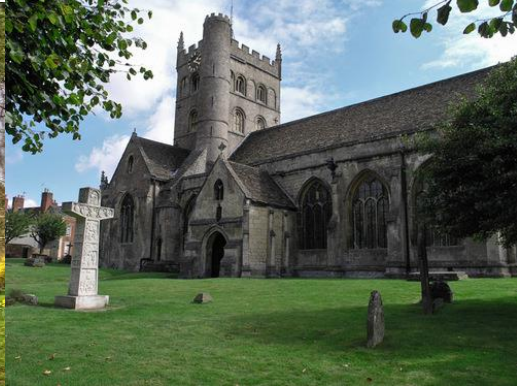




St. Mary



St. John

Embittered Letter from Charles Lucas, Assistant Curate

To the Parishioners of St. John and St. Mary, Devizes.

AFTER a residence of threescore years in the town & neighbourhood of Devizes, and performing ministerial duty in the parishes of St. John and St. Mary for the last 17 years, it is with great feeling and respect that I now address you, on the subject of my having suddenly resigned my situation among you: the best apology for which, I presume, will be found in the following explanation.

I will not dilate upon the total recklessness which has been exhibited towards the ancient rights of the inhabitants, in respect to their having a voice in the disposal of the living: but will merely state my own case, as the long established resident assistant curate.

Having been told by the friends of Mr. Phipps, since the death of Mr. Lediard, that he had been appointed the new rector, I wrote to him on the 23d of April, asking if it would be agreeable to him, that I should continue on the same terms as before- viz. the Assistant Curate. To this letter, I received no reply; but at about 8 o'clock on *Saturday evening last*, the 4th of May, Mr. Phipps, as the new Rector, called upon me and said, - that at the particular instance of the Bishop of Salisbury, he had appointed Mr. F. Bayly, jun. to the Curacy!

Now it has been repeatedly said in the town, which has been since confirmed, that at *the very time* Mr. Bayly, sen. was making his applications to the Lord Chancellor for the living, Mr. Bayly, jun. was applying to Mr. Phipps (to whom it had been reported the Living was *promised*) for the *Curacy!* and this, too, long before the death of the late lamented rector, the uncle of Mr. Bayly, Jun. !! But I never could be induced to believe that such application on the part of Mr. Bayley, jun, was for the situation I filled. I acted as Assistant Minister, in consequence of *double duty* being performed in each Church. Mr. Bayly, jun. came to Devizes to obtain a title to Deacon's and Priest's Orders, from his uncle, and was his uncle's assistant - *his* locum-tenens. I therefore considered that the application of this gentleman related to his acting for the Rector, in case the new Rector did not reside. My surprise, then, may be conceived, when the new Rector called upon me on Saturday evening, and admitted the ungracious truth, that the Bishop had desired him to appoint Mr. Bayly, jun. in my place! Notwithstanding this, however, I at first agreed to read the prayers on the following morning, and evening, when Mr. Phipps said he intended to preach: but for many reasons which the reader may perceive, and which were soon after the interview stated to me, I saw the inadvertency of my acquiescence with the new Rector's views: more especially, as the parishioners might have concluded, from my officiating with him, that I did not disapprove of the treatment I had received from him, as well as from the Bishop and Mr. Bayly, jun.; or that I was indifferent to the undue solicitations, influence, and patronage which had been used. As such indifference would have been opposed to the principles I had all my life advocated; and to prevent any further affront being put upon me, I resigned my situation immediately, being aware, from the previous arrangements Mr. Phipps had made, that by so doing, I should not inconvenience him.

In this business, it appears the new rector has acted at the instigation of the Bishop, I have therefore only to remark, that I think it was due to my long residence as assistant curate, to have consulted me before he made the promise to the Bishop: or, under the circumstances, to have ascertained the whole case from the

parishioners. Mr. Phipps might at once, in the ultra-tory language have said, " I have a right to do what I will with mine own." The right is not disputed: but certainly the manner of using it must be condemned. Mr. Bayly, jun. might also set up the ultra-radical claim upon the possessions of others. The argument, however, turns on the Bishop's plea, that I was *not* licensed, and that Mr. Bayly *was* licensed. Licensed to what? Not to the situation I filled; but merely licensed to his late uncle's nomination - that he might be admitted a Deacon and a Priest!! The old license of Mr. Bayly, jun. is therefore not now applicable; another must be substituted. Besides - Mr. Bayly, jun. *has not been a twelvemonth in Priest's orders while I have been seventeen years a resident Curate at Devizes !!*

The Bishop in this case, acted in the capacity of a judge: and it will be admitted, that one of the first principles of Jurisprudence is, that "no one shall take advantage of his own wrong." The Bishop, however, does take this advantage. He gives to Mr. Bayly, jun. my place because, he says, I was not licensed. Now, I was never required to be licensed. The late rector spoke to the Bishop upon this very subject ! and as Mr. Lediard did not wish to be confined to a licensed curate, nor I to confine him (not wanting to serve the Curacy in opposition to any in authority) BISHOP BURGESS ACQUIESCED, and THUS SANCTIONED MY SITUATION ! Yet, will it be believed ? this very same Bishop now takes advantage of his own omission (or by whatever term it may be called) and makes the want of a license, a plea to dispossess me of the curacy !!! If the license of Mr. Bayly, jun. gave him a *perpetual right* to the curacy, there could have been no need of his application to Mr. Phipps; or even of the Bishop's interference.

I recently wrote two letters to the Bishop, to which his Lordship did not deign to reply, but which clearly reminded him of the situation, and put him in possession of the whole facts: and Mr. Phipps, from being at school in the town but a few years ago, could bear testimony to some of those facts, and also to the correctness of the letter he himself had received from me.

Surely, then, the moment the Bishop felt it necessary that the situation I filled, should be held by a *licensed* clergyman, and Mr. Phipps agreed to it, no one would have considered that they acted derogatory to their station, had they asked me, whether or not I was willing to be licensed ? It might be right that there should be a licensed curate; but certainly not at my expense - at my detriment.

It is not necessary that I should enter into any further particulars relating to this scene of intrigue and subserviency, for I can designate it by no other terms. The injustice and duplicity evinced towards myself; the contempt and imposition exhibited towards the parishioners; and the total want of good feeling and honourable conduct throughout, are apparent, and need not be dwelt upon. It is matter of deep regret, that I feel obliged to use such epithets; but a weak remonstrance would be smothered by the affectation of dignified silence or contempt; or answered in private by insinuations, and all the security of secrecy.

After being forty years unbeneficed, with constant and resident duty, and without the slightest impeachment of my morals my services, or my doctrines- never having made but one complaint during my curacy, and that, in consequence of the seats for the poor being removed from the body of the church to a distant gallery - I could not suffer myself to be thus dispossessed of a curacy, which I confess I was desirous of holding, (in reference to my family, and habits of life), without exposing the means which have been put in practice against me. I have therefore, in self-defence, proved the plea of the Bishop, of Mr. Phipps and Mr. Bayly, concerning the license, to be a mere trick and deception.

I have often written and said, that I would sacrifice any hope I had of church preferment, sooner than tacitly yield to the abuses and corruptions which have so long disgraced the establishment; and, I humbly trust, I *gladly* now become the victim, (although my all was but a poor curacy) if the exposition I have made should add but a little to the holy sense of a temperate arrangement upon the Christian principle of equity and usefulness. At the same time, I cannot but deeply lament, that two young men, who have but just entered the sacred pale should, by their sycophancy and subserviency, become the agents of one so well, and, so fatally for me, long versed in the system.

I am, with great esteem and respect,

Your very faithful servant,

CHARLES LUCAS.

Devizes, May 6th, 1833.

Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette, 9 May 1833