

Rose is right in avoiding the issue of the persistence of the “blood libel” throughout the nine centuries that followed the murder of Saint William. Social historians, rich as their archives may be, are unable in my opinion to untangle the persistent attachment of Western civilization to this story. Only interdisciplinary campaigns may uncover one day this hidden thread in western civilization.

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SARA SLINN. *The Education of the Anglican Clergy, 1780–1839*. Studies in Modern British Religious History. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2017. Pp. 272. \$120.00 (cloth).  
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Sara Slinn’s *The Education of the Anglican Clergy, 1780–1839* is, as she claims, “the largest historical study of recruitment to the ministry of the Church of England attempted to date” (1), and to achieve it she adopted a largely prosopographical approach driven by quantitative analysis. The education of the clergy in this period has previously been examined by Frederick Bullock in the 1950s, Brian Heeney in the 1970s, and Alan Haig in the 1980s, so it is a field that has been considered, but not so in the light of the most recent scholarship or of access to quantitative data. Slinn’s findings are paradoxical: by the 1830s the day of the literate, or non-graduate, clergyman was coming to an end; but the “heyday of the non-graduate clergy was about to begin” (201). This paradox is resolved in two trajectories: first the erosion of the numbers of non-graduates by the end of the eighteenth century, especially in those dioceses that traditionally relied on recruitment of literates. Secondly, Slinn traces a growth in parish clergy from the 1830s that was supplied by new institutions, such as theological colleges, rather than the universities. She also argues that the claims from the seventeenth century that the church had become a predominantly graduate profession were overstated. A further finding is that the clergy in the period 1780–1839 were socially, culturally, and educationally diverse. None of this is surprising for scholars familiar with the eighteenth century. Bishop Gilbert Burnet had attempted to create a diocesan training college for clergy at Salisbury in the early years of the eighteenth century, and there had been attempts elsewhere, including in St. David’s in the 1730s to establish clerical training colleges. Many an episcopal act book is marked by the ordination of literates who had satisfied the bishop’s examining chaplain that they knew enough Latin and Greek and sufficient biblical and doctrinal teachings to discharge parish offices. And the clergy encompassed a huge range of individuals, from the poorest galloping curates to the scions of aristocratic families who entered orders from the mid-eighteenth century.

Where Slinn’s work adds to our knowledge is in her identification of a much richer and more complex history of some of the training of the clergy. For example, the use of grammar schools for the training of ordinands in Wales and the north of England before the founding of St. David’s College, Lampeter, in 1822 and St. Bees College, Cumberland, in 1816 was a significant feature, and one that underwent regulation in this period. In some respects, these institutions bear comparison with the dissenting academies, whose curriculum was much broader and more innovative than has been hitherto recognized. Slinn also points out the regional variation in character of clerical recruitment, with poorer dioceses remaining much more dependent on literates than did the wealthier. There were compensatory mechanisms, such as the Elland Clerical Society, which ensured that clergy received some ongoing academic and professional training during their careers. Such ideas further erode the old

idea of “unreformed” and “reformed” periods in the church between 1780 and 1840. Nor is Slinn credulous about the value of a university degree; clearly some graduates got little benefit from an undergraduate education, especially at Cambridge where the emphasis was on mathematics and the sciences. The so-called Cambridge ten-year Bachelor of Divinity statute seemed designed to award a degree to those who had not attended the university at all. What literates might have lacked, perhaps, was the sophistication and polish that attending a university could bring. It is undoubtedly the case that graduates were much more likely to rise through the ranks of the church than were literates—as late as 1870 Gladstone was embarrassed to discover that his newly appointed bishop of St. Asaph, Joshua Hughes, had a Bachelor of Divinity from Lampeter rather than from Cambridge.

Slinn also explores the interesting idea of the social distance between parson and parishioner. If it is the case that, with rising clerical incomes and a greater tendency towards clerical magistracy, some clergy were becoming remote from their parishioners, the use of literates might have been an opportunity to reduce that gap. However, Slinn is careful to avoid the assumption that literates were more likely to be socially compatible with their parishioners than were graduates. There is no clear evidence that graduate or literate clergy were more or less successful pastorally.

In general, Slinn’s work is methodologically robust and she demonstrates a caution in her judgments. Her research across a very wide range of archival sources is exemplary. She has also been fortunate in having access to the papers of the Elland Society, which have been planned for publication by the Church of England Record Society for some years, and remain inexplicably delayed. However, it is unfortunate that she frames her study with use of Peter Virgin’s *The Church in an Age of Negligence* (1989), a work that has now been largely discredited. She also relies heavily on the Clergy of the Church of England Database. The database, though a useful tool for historians, is by no means complete or accurate—some periods are incomplete, and records and data for the complete periods are often badly fragmented (this is especially so for Wales, for which it remains a source on which scholars cannot rely)—so scholars approach it warily. Nevertheless, Slinn’s is a useful study that will inform discussion on clerical educational standards in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. It will also contribute to the study of clerical career patterns and the wider issues of the relations between parsons and parishioners.

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JON STOBART and MARK ROTHERY. *Consumption and the Country House*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. 320. \$110.00 (cloth).  
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Jon Stobart and Mark Rothery’s *Consumption and the Country House* is a key output from a project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. In their book, Stobart and Rothery seek to bridge the gap between eighteenth-century studies of the country house (typically concerned with high living and high art) and studies of consumption (concentrated on the middling sorts). On the one hand, they do this by embracing a much wider span of country-house consumption than is typical, including everyday goods such as candles and chickens, as well as paintings and books. On the other, they situate this consumption fully within networks of supply, exploring the identities and locale of retailers and craftsmen as well as the roles of family, friends and household servants. Their aim is to draw out the