



Renovaré BOOK CLUB

A Blockhead Can Never Do Well Enough for a Parson

By James Catford

John Wesley didn't go along with William Law on all matters of doctrine, but they shared an aversion to pulling people out of regular life and thrusting them into the church. Very often, not much seemed to separate the everyday character of a tradesperson from that of the clergy.

In one amusing article, Wesley railed against the idea of a wealthy family making their least capable son a minister ("a parson"). Wesley called him "a blockhead" but we might say he "is not the brightest bulb on the Christmas tree," or "not the sharpest chisel in the toolbox." "A blockhead," joked Wesley, "can never do well enough for a parson."

"He may do well enough for a tradesman; so well as to gain fifty or a hundred thousand pounds. He may do well enough for a soldier; nay (if you pay well for it), for a very well dressed and well mounted officer.

"He may do well enough for a sailor, and may shine on the quarterdeck of a man-of-war," the finest naval vessel afloat. Or, "He may do well, in the capacity of a lawyer or physician, as to ride in his gilt chariot" – or perhaps the latest Bugatti car model on the market.

"But Oh!" exclaims Wesley, "think not of his being a minister, unless you would bring a blot upon your family, a scandal upon our Church, and a reproach on the Gospel, which he may murder—but cannot teach!"

Humor aside, there is no doubt about what these contemporaries were driving at. Uppermost and always is the intention "to please God in all their actions" and, with the right ordering of the heart, to live for him in the school, the office, the factory, or on the farm.

**Selections from the Writings of John Wesley* compiled and arranged with a preface by Herbert Welch. Published by Eaton and Mains 1901. Page 196.