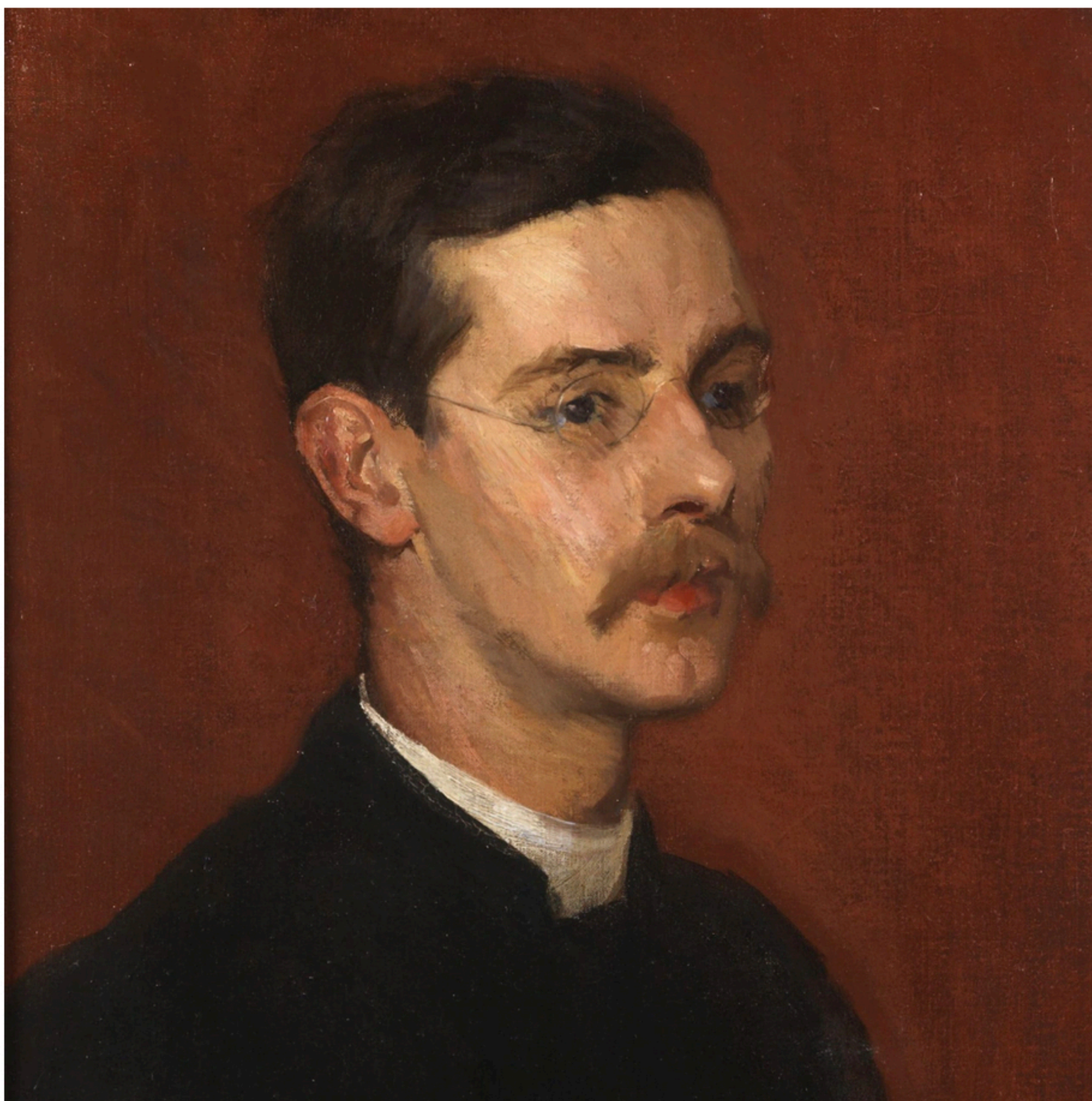


The Church puts bureaucracy before ministry



Rev James Court, rector of Widdington in Essex, by George Clausen (1852-1944)
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SIR – Sandra Clark ([Letters, December 4](#)) quite rightly draws attention to the fact that the Church of England is managing its own decline by cutting parish clergy in order to reduce costs. She also points out that in 2020 the Church generated some £84 million more than its expenditure.

The real issue is that the Church's 42 dioceses have become bloated bureaucracies funded by the parishes but are accountable to no one. The diocese of Oxford has just 310 stipendiary parish clergy and yet it has more than 150 staff listed at its diocesan office. Twenty-seven of the 42 dioceses are operating at a deficit and their response is to reduce the number of parish clergy rather than reduce their own costs. This results in reduced income from the parishes, which leads to further reductions in clergy and will eventually bankrupt the dioceses as well as empty the churches.

One solution to this issue is to take away all administrative and financial functions from the dioceses and put these into a slimmed-down central body accountable to the Church Commissioners. The bishops and archdeacons, thus unburdened from administration and finance, for which they are untrained and unsuited, would focus on ministry and mission, to which they have been called. The substantial reduction in central costs would mean that more money could be spent on providing clergy in parishes, which is where the Church ministers to the people and provides support to communities in times of stress as well as times of joy.

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