

THE  
CHURCHMAN

---

JULY, 1882.

---

ART. I.—EXTENSION OF THE DIACONATE.

1. *Convocation of York: Report of Committee on the Diaconate.* Presented February 14, 1882.
2. *St. Albans Diocesan Conference, 1881.* Paper and Motion by Rev. J. W. IRVINE. Re-issued in a Pamphlet, entitled, "The Revival of a true-Working Diaconate." London: Simpkin & Marshall.
3. *The Extension of the Diaconate.* Papers read by Rev. Canon JACKSON, at the Church Congress, Leeds, 1872; by E. L. G. HOUNDLE, Esq., at the Winchester Diocesan Conference, 1877; and by Rev. C. H. SALE, at the Ripon Diocesan Conference, 1880. Published respectively by Hamilton, Adams & Co., Paternoster Row; E. Stanford, Charing Cross; W. Weighell, Boroughbridge.

IF the important document which heads the above list should indeed find general echo in the Northern Province, and if Mr. Irvine's motion, "That it would be of advantage to the spiritual work of the Church to revive the diaconate as a permanent order, and that the office of deacon be tenable by persons pursuing an honest secular calling," should meet in other dioceses anything like the warm reception which greeted it at St. Albans, we might fairly conclude that we are on the eve of a discovery greater than any which has aroused our Church since the Reformation. The discovery, however paradoxical it may appear, is simply this; that, although the present supply of curates is utterly inadequate to cope with the rapidly increasing population, and barely sufficient to meet the almost stereotyped demand of incumbents, yet there is nothing in principle or in fact to prevent the third order of the ministry from developing an inherent power, which, with God's blessing,

may at least tide over the perilous pressure of untaught masses upon our Church. Few familiar with our towns and cities can doubt that this tide is setting in with ever-increasing strength from the country districts to the centres of labour. The multitudes without a shepherd are no longer scattered abroad, but huddled together; and while, on the one hand, they are thus the more exposed to the predatory wolves of atheism and agnosticism,<sup>1</sup> on the other hand, as we clearly learn from such a phenomenon as the Salvation Army, they answer all the more readily to the call of any zealous evangelist who may undertake to be their pastor. In this emergency some, jealous for the honour of their Church, would fain cry, as these Eldads and Medads of the camp arise, "Forbid them!" Others, with the nobler aspiration of the Hebrew leader, would desire a larger outpouring of the spirit of prophecy upon all the people. But neither godly jealousy nor enthusiastic aspiration should delay the appeal for increased powers to the sanctuary. And amid tumultuous cries for sub-deacons, lay-deacons, lay-readers, and other nondescript "vicars of the laity," it will be, as we predict, a relief to many a zealous layman to hear the trumpet of Convocation give a certain sound, and at the same time to learn how his own services may be chartered in his Church's need, and stamped, not merely with a bishop's license, but with the seal of the ordaining Spirit.

The Report commences with a short and lucid statement of the difficulty. The Census of 1881 shows an increase of the population in England and Wales during the last decade amounting to three millions and a quarter. Add to these the arrears previous to 1871, with the present rapid migration from the rural districts into the large towns, by which the disproportion of our ministerial staff to the population of the latter is continually increasing, and the critical question of supply is at once apparent. The growth of population alone reaches a thousand a day; to overtake which, after all societies, such as Pastoral Aid and Additional Curates, have done their utmost, we should require, allotting 4,000 to each clergyman, an increase of about eighty clergy every year above the number ordained during the previous year.

The Report then proceeds by a gradual method of exclusion to discuss the problem—

1. Can the parochial system be stretched by creating new incumbencies? No. For estimating the cost of endowment—church, vicarage, school—we should need more than £16,000,000 to meet the increase of population in the last ten years.
2. Can we rise to this fresh demand upon us by reinforcing

---

<sup>1</sup> For an alarming view of this infidelity and ignorance of the masses, see Lay Memorial presented by Earl Nelson.

the staff of stipendiary curates? No. For these are already more than the overstrained system can support; and even if it could be shown (as an adverse pen has attempted) that the number of clergy ordained is now becoming nearly equal to the demand, these, be it remembered, are all required for the regular duty of manning the walls; the outside masses are still untouched; moreover, the young and inexperienced recruit is hardly the man for the trenches.

3. Can we enrol laymen to remedy the deficiency? Again, No. For that deficiency is ministerial, and they would be laymen still. However desirable such help be in itself, and how eager soever the Church to claim it as a part of the universal priesthood of all Christian people, yet no episcopal license or *quasi*-ordination could make it in the eyes of the people, or indeed in the true ecclesiastical sense, ministerial. Incompetent for all such requirements as, for example, baptizing, burying, marrying, reading prayers, or preaching in Church, the lay-deacon would be neither more nor less than a layman with a sounding title.

Driven thus, step by step, to the conclusion that no hope of remedy appears either from multiplying incumbencies, or from reinforcing the curate staff, or from employing lay help *as such*, the committee of anxious explorers suddenly strike upon a new vein. New, yet how ancient! For that rich stratum has run within the Church ever since the day when the first murmuring of neglected multitudes came up into the ears of the Apostolic Twelve; and if in these latter times there has been found a fault in its continuity, or rather if it has run too long in confusion with another yet richer seam, most surely are they entitled to cry "Eurekamen!" who have been fortunate enough to distinguish anew, and from the deep gold-mines of truth—

to lift the hidden ore,  
That glimpses moving up.

Among such happy discoverers we think we may number those bishops and clergy of the Northern Province who have been engaged on this Report, as well as very many other deep thinkers and earnest workers, now bestirring themselves in the same direction. But it must not be forgotten—nor does the Report forget—that pioneers of still greater note have gone before them. Hale and Hook are only two of the *veneranda nomina* whose papers and conclusions here illustrate the proverb, "Keep a thing, its use will come." It shall be our business further on to quote men of very different and even opposite schools of thought, who unanimously maintain that the revival of the primitive diaconate, so enlarged as to comprehend all

such laymen as were of old eligible to the order, is the only hope of raising a force of organized volunteers that shall relieve the Church in her present distress.

But we must first endeavour to show (1) What were the original functions and limits of the diaconate; and (2) That these are still contemplated in our Ordinal, though, virtually, many of them, obscured or obliterated at the present day.

1. *The Constitution of the Diaconate.*—It would seem, according to Bishop Lightfoot, that to the office, as at first constituted, teaching and preaching were only incidental. But, as the Holy Spirit brooded over this new creation, new powers were developed; and a Stephen or a Philip, chosen "to serve tables," thus became, without ceasing to be dispensers of alms, ministers also of the Word. The Apostles themselves had directed that the persons chosen should be not only "men of honest report," but also "full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom." Hence the glorious and highly spiritual result. But still the deacon, as described by St. Paul thirty years later, is to be sharply distinguished from the presbyter. His qualifications are such as would be most important in persons moving about from house to house, and entrusted with the distribution of alms. His graces are those of ordinary laymen, "holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." He has no "cure of souls," though he does much to minister to their higher as well as to their temporal interests. And as we trace him into the first three centuries, we find that although, to distinguish him (at least in the Latin Church) from the inferior orders, he was ordained with imposition of hands, yet were those the hands of the bishop alone, because his office was "only a ministerium, not the priesthood."<sup>1</sup> Bingham adds the significant remark that, for the first two ages, before the rise of the inferior orders, the *deacons performed all their offices*; such duties as afterwards fell to readers, sub-deacons, exorcists, catechists, doorkeepers, and the like.

Turning now to civil restrictions, we note that, although the Apostolical canons forbid the holding of public offices by the clergy, it was avowedly as diverting them from their special calling, or when pursued for covetousness' sake. On the other hand, there are Canons of Councils, notably the fourth of Carthage, not only permitting but requiring the clergy to earn their own living—

Arte petat victum, cui non res est, et amictum.

And Mr. Irvine gathers from Bingham and his authorities, that the "mind of the Church was only set against her ministers

---

<sup>1</sup> Fourth Council of Carthage, c. 4.

being secularized and given to filthy lucre; but that with her full approval, in primitive times, even her bishops and presbyters, and *much more* her deacons, were allowed to pursue non-servile callings, subordinately to their highest duties, for the sake (1) of example to their flocks; (2) of ability to give alms; and (3) of maintenance."<sup>1</sup>

From all this it is evident that the primitive deacon was in his ministerial functions clearly differentiated from the presbyter, while in social status he was half a layman, and performed much lay service which afterwards fell to the inferior and unordained orders. As regards the question of clerical habit, it does not appear for several ages that the clergy wore any distinctive dress. Yet it is not unworthy of remark that the earliest dispute on this subject turned on the question of *priestly* garb, and implies that the same black dress was worn by both priest and bishop—but is silent altogether about the deacon's attire.<sup>2</sup> Probably he was in the days of Chrysostom, as in those of Laud, undistinguishable in apparel from the layman.

*The Diaconate as contemplated in our own Ordinal.*—The exact agreement of the primitive deaconal functions with those adopted in *theory* by our Church may be best seen by comparing Bingham's portraiture with our English Ordinal.

#### BINGHAM.

The Primitive deacon bids prayers in the Church; receives the oblations at the altar; distributes but not consecrates the eucharist; reads the Holy Scriptures and the homilies of the Holy Fathers; catechizes; baptizes with the bishop's leave; directs and dismisses the congregation; preaches, but only in the absence of the presbyter. Out of Church, inquires after the poor and acts as almoner to them. Sometimes keeps the door and performs other inferior duties which afterwards devolved upon the minor orders.

N.B.—Deacons not to be or-

#### THE ORDINAL.

The English deacon assists the priest in divine service, and specially when he ministereth the Holy Communion; helps him in the distribution thereof; reads Holy Scripture and homilies in the Church; instructs the youth in the catechism; in the absence of the priest baptizes infants; preaches, if he be admitted thereto by the bishop.

Furthermore, it is his office to search for the sick, poor, and impotent people of the parish, to intimate their estates, names, and places where they dwell to the curate (who has the cure of souls), that by his exhortation they may

<sup>1</sup> We might instance from modern times, under (2) and (3), the case of Robert Walker, priest in Cumberland, who supplemented his £40 a year by rope-making; and under (1) that of Dr. Strachan, now Bishop of Rangoon, who, when a missionary priest in India, returned on furlough to Edinburgh to qualify himself as an M.D.—for the Gospel's sake, that he "might gain the more."

<sup>2</sup> See Socrates, lib. vi. c. 22.

dained before the age of twenty-five years. Bishops and priests not under thirty.

be relieved by the alms of the parishioners and others.

N.B.—Deacons not to be ordained under twenty-three; priests not under twenty-four; bishops not under thirty.

If we consider the long interval between the primitive and our English Church, nothing can well be conceived more exact than this correspondence. And Archdeacon Hale would have us further note the promises required of the deacon, how carefully they, too, are framed on the ancient model:—

The promises made by the deacon are:—official, that he will fulfil the ecclesiastical and temporal duties of the office; and personal, that he will frame his life, and that of his family, according to the doctrine of Christ, and make them exemplary to the flock of Christ; and lastly, that he will be obedient to the ordinary, and other chief ministers of the Church. Such, and such only, are the duties and obligations of the deacon's office, entrusted to him by the bishop alone, without the concurrence or sanction of any persons whatever. From the bishop alone he derives his authority, and from him alone receives it by imposition of hands.

There is not one word said about a cure of souls. His office is spoken of as "this inferior office." Nor is there any exhortation given to him, as to the priest, "to give himself wholly to his office, to apply himself wholly to this one thing, and to draw all his cares and studies this way."

*Our Diaconate in Practice.*—However accordant with orthodox antiquity be the theory of our diaconate, it may abundantly be shown that in practice we have long got off the right road of the primitive Church. "You are entering on an office extinct in all but in name;" so wrote Dr. Arnold to a pupil about to be ordained a deacon. And again, in a letter to the late Dean Stanley, the same writer says: "It seems to me that a great point might be gained by urging the restoration of the order of deacons, which has long been, *quoad* the reality, dead." More dispassionately, Archdeacon Hale writes: "We have not, practically, a distinct order of deacons; there will be found scarcely a single instance in which a deacon confines himself to the specific duties of the office: if the Church in her Ordinal has prescribed a sphere of duty, the boundaries of that sphere are openly transgressed." This is strong language. Let us test it by tracing the start of the English deacon.

Full two years earlier than in the ancient East—where yet men ripened more quickly—he applies for deacon's orders. He passes a difficult examination—designedly difficult, for it is viewed as the outer door (which can be barred more easily than the inner swing-door) of the priesthood. In the light of a

degree—a step, which must necessarily lead to something higher—he looks upon his novitiate. In keeping with his examination is the sacred service which usually follows—two blended into one. Perhaps he reads the Gospel—the Gospel for Priests, since priests are ordained with him. Everything—even the new habit on his back—tends to assure him that he is in some sort one of them. Certainly he must believe himself a probationary or apprentice priest: for is there not a quasi-compact between him and the bishop—very damaging, as we judge, to the deacon as such—that his novitiate shall expire at twelve months' end?

Overawed with a sense of his responsibilities, greater far than is justified either by the promises made or the charge received, he goes forth, it may be, to a sole cure or a district church, the realities of which, while they utterly outstrip the terms of his commission, will overwhelmingly confirm his awful misapprehensions. But on his way—our readers will pardon the anachronism—he meets, let us suppose, a brother deacon. No clerical garb has this other: he wears a silken court dress. A sword dangles at his heels. It is Deacon George Herbert. How strangely would these two look, the one upon the other!<sup>1</sup>

The example of George Herbert—whose long diaconate would have been, like his friend Ferrar's, lifelong, but for the urgent entreaties of Bishop Laud—goes far, in our opinion, to disprove Mr. Irvine's suggestion, that we have *inherited* this serious decline in practice from the Pre-Reformation Church. But there may have been contagion, if not hereditary taint. And the words he quotes from Van Espen, certainly indicate that the mischief was already begun therein, and indicate no less acutely its probable origin. Van Espen says:—

As far as concerns deacons, the modern discipline has so declined that scarcely any office is left to the deacons except the ministry of the Altar; and even in this the ministry of the deacons is often (especially in cathedral and collegiate churches) supplied by presbyters; so that at last it has come to this, that deacons are not ordained to discharge the duties of deacons, but to ascend by the diaconate as a step to the Presbyterate. Whence, also, no one is ordained deacon that he may continue in that office, but in order that he may be promoted to the Presbyterate, when the canonical interval of time has elapsed. Whether this be entirely conformable to the will and intention of the Church let the bishops consider,

We are much mistaken if that notion of a "step to the pres-

---

George Herbert, while he was a deacon, wore the dress of a layman, and kept his place of orator in the University. It was not until Laud had persuaded him to take priest's orders, and the living of Bemerton, that "he changed his sword and silk clothes into a canonical coat."—See *Life*, by Isaac Walton.

byterate"<sup>1</sup> be not the one screw loose, which has thrown things so completely out of gear. So inveterate had become the idea of the diaconate as being a "step," and nothing more, that Archdeacon Hale expresses the opinion, that a very few years since, "a Bishop would have refused to admit a person to be a deacon, if he desired to serve the Church no further than by the fulfilment of the duties of that office; and that the very expression of such a wish on the part of the deacon would have been considered to indicate a mind so unprepared to devote itself to God, and so engrossed in the pleasure of the world, as wholly to disqualify him for admission even to the lowest step in the Christian ministry." Surely, the Archdeacon argues, this is a grave injustice. While no man condemns the presbyter, who declines the office of a bishop, because he is unwilling or unable to undertake that burden of duty, why should he, who being ordained a deacon desires to remain a deacon, and not to undertake the higher duties of the priesthood, be visited with censure or suspicion?

But it is more than a grave injustice; it is a grave mistake; yet at least as ancient, so we suspect, as the Vulgate version of 1 Tim. iii. 13:—" *Qui enim benè ministraverint, gradum bonum sibi acquirent et multam fiduciam in fide,*" &c., where the Latin arbitrarily turns the tense of the Greek word into the future, whereas the text simply runs: "are compassing to themselves a good standing." Surely as much as this might have been said of Philip, the Deacon and Evangelist, so long resident at Cæsarea, without the slightest hint of his aspiring to the priesthood. And whether the "good standing" mean in the eyes of God (as Theodoret interprets), or in the estimation of the Church (as S. Chrysostom), certain it is neither adjective nor noun involves of necessity any comparison between one order and another, nor is the presbyterate so much as glanced at in the entire context. Therefore, all the best modern criticism prefers to translate "standing" rather than "step" or "degree," in disregard of the traditional error.

Interesting as it might be to trace that erroneous drift<sup>2</sup> from

<sup>1</sup> Let it be once understood, that it is no more of necessary course that a deacon should go forward to the priesthood than that the scholar of his college should go on to a fellowship, and with the theory of the mere step will vanish many an earnest layman's reluctance to commit himself too far.

<sup>2</sup> Besides the Vulgate gloss, there are also liturgical echoes of the Apostolic text, which, in the interest of a permissibly permanent diaconate we cannot overlook—more especially as there exists a rooted doubt in some scholarly and theological minds, whether it be not part of the inspired discipline of the Church, that a deacon by discharging his office well establishes a *claim* to the priesthood. According to a form found



its probable beginning, we must here pause and devote the remainder of this article to the more practical inquiries: Would such a revived diaconate as we advocate meet the modern requirements of the Church in England? would it enlist the class of men acceptable to society? or is the project hampered with so many difficulties—canonical, statutory, and social—that however practical and restorative it be in its essence, it must succumb before the cries of “visionary” and “revolutionary.”

That none of these difficulties appeared insuperable to Dr. Arnold forty years ago is sufficiently evident from the following passage, which we shall venture to analyse by the help of later utterances, to see if any subtler chemicals disturb his conclusions:—

The first step towards the restoration of the Church seems to be the revival of the order of deacons, which might be effected without any other change in our present system than the repeal of all laws, canons, or customs which prohibit a deacon from following a secular

---

in the Apostolical Constitutions of the fourth century, the bishop prays over the head of the newly ordained deacon that, “having ministered blamelessly, and without reproach,” God will “make him deserving of being accounted worthy of a higher standing through the mediation of the Only-begotten Son.” This apparent echo of Pauline language is again reflected—and, let it be well noted, reflected in a solely spiritual sense—by the Greek Ordinal, still in use; where the bishop prays over the deacon, that God will bestow on him the grace which He bestowed on His first martyr Stephen, and grant “that he may discharge the office according to Thy good pleasure. For they who serve the office of a deacon well compass to themselves a good standing. Do Thou therefore perfect Thy servant. For Thine is the kingdom, &c.” A prayer, like the rest of the service, entirely free from any petition for promotion as such, and pointing (we think) even in its quotation of the Pauline text, to the next world.

In striking contrast, however, with this oriental loyalty to the spiritual interpretation of 1 Tim. iii. 13 is the Western decline. Indeed, most significant is the fact, that, whereas Latin commentators and Latin ordinals have mostly adopted the mundane notion of this good “degree,” Greek authorities, liturgical as well as critical, have as a rule escaped the snare. If the Vulgate be supposed the *fons et origo mali*, this peculiarity is accounted for. Nor need we wonder if the stream has run muddier as it flowed further; so that in our own Anglican Ordinal the prayer is more mundane even than the Roman, which simply petitions that the deacon “by worthy ascents from the inferior office, may deserve through Thy grace to receive better things”—*i.e.*, we presume, hereafter.

With all these signs of deterioration, we must rest content with our prayer as it stands; nor, in the event of a permanent diaconate being again permissible, do we apprehend any appreciable liturgical difficulty. For, strictly speaking, it is almost as visionary for the ordinary, as it would be for these extraordinary, deacons to pray for “the higher ministries” of the Church. That ambitious plural has long had about it something incongruous, and is a curious crescendo upon the simple Apostolic cadence.

calling, which confer upon him any civil exemptions, or subject him to any civil disqualifications.

The Ordination Service, with the subscription to the Articles, would remain perfectly unaltered; and, as no deacon can hold any benefice, it is manifest that the proposed measure would in no way interfere with the rights and duties of the order of presbyters or priests, which would remain precisely what they are at present. But the benefit in large towns would be enormous, if we could have a large body of deacons, the ordained ministers of the Church, visiting the sick, managing charitable subscriptions, and sharing with the presbyter in those strictly clerical duties, which now, in too many cases, are too much for the health and powers of the strongest. Yet a still greater advantage would be found in the link thus formed between the clergy and the laity by the revival of an order appertaining in a manner to both. Nor would it be a little thing, that many who now become teachers in some dissenting congregations, not because they differ from our Articles, or dislike our liturgy, but because they cannot afford to go to the universities, and have no prospect of being maintained by the Church if they give up their secular callings, would in all human probability be glad to join our Church as deacons, and would thus be subject to her authorities, and would be engaged in her service, instead of being aliens to her, if not enemies.

All this is most telling in favour of the project. But there is one ominous sentence—"Repeal of all laws, canons, or customs" prohibiting a deacon from secular occupation. These different points, however easily disposed of *à priori* by the great school-master's pen, will, some of them at least, occupy the fore-front of controversy, now that the subject is coming "within the range of practical politics."

(a.) *Canons.*—The thirty-fourth of these imposes a certain Latin test upon all candidates for holy orders. They are, "at the least, to be able to yield an account of their faith in Latin according to the Thirty-nine Articles." This somewhat oracular requirement may mean, either conversing in Latin, as was once the habit at the universities, or simply reading the Articles in that tongue. In either case it is out of date now; whatever modicum of Latin each bishop may think fit to require in these days, when Latin helps towards the understanding of Holy Scripture are less needed, he will hardly refurbish this particular rusty weapon for the special discouragement of our new deacon. It may rest among other ecclesiastical relics.<sup>1</sup>

Canons 75 and 76 restrict the clergy from engaging in secular employment for gain.

<sup>1</sup> As to the crucial test of accurate scholarship and theological attainment, it should be placed at the entrance of the priesthood, to secure men learned in the Word of God, perfect and well expert in administration; not at the door of the diaconate, to discourage men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.

By Canon 75 they shall not give themselves to any *base or servile labour*, or to drinking or riot . . . &c., under pain of ecclesiastical censures.

By Canon 76, no man being admitted a deacon or minister (*i.e.*, priest) shall from thenceforth voluntarily relinquish the same, nor afterwards use himself in the course of his life as a layman, upon pains of excommunication.

"The base and servile labour," read with the context, explains itself. Like similar enactments of the early Church, it restrains only from base traffic for filthy lucre's sake.

The other canon is directed against ministers who "forsake their calling"—an altogether different view of the question from that contemplated by the present movement.

The plain fact is, these canonical restrictions were intended for a less educated age, and for conditions of society, which will now be exceptional, not to say impossible. So far as the third order is concerned, they may be left where and what they are. Nothing like repeal appears to us to be necessary.

(b.) *Laws*.—It is assumed by many that the Statute 1 & 2 Vict., c. 106, ss. 27, 28, 29, must be repealed by Parliament, as forming an insuperable barrier to the proposed scheme. We venture to doubt this necessity. For the Act forbids "spiritual persons holding any preferment, benefice, curacy, lectureship, or ecclesiastical office, to engage in or carry on any trade or dealing for gain or profit, or to deal in any goods, wares or merchandize." Is it quite certain, we may ask, that this applies to non-beneficed clergy? And even if it does, there are specified exceptions—*e.g.*, farming lands not exceeding eighty acres, acting as schoolmaster, being a manager, director, partner or shareholder in any benefit, or fire or life insurance company. Furthermore, there would still be physicians, barristers, architects, bankers, military and naval officers, professional men, and men of independent fortune, persons in the civil service, country gentlemen or semi-retired merchants, all of whom, so far as the Statute is concerned, would be strictly eligible for the diaconate. Moreover, it is doubtful whether persons who are supported by fixed stipends are traders in the view and application of the Statute.

A great influx of volunteers might thus, so it would seem, be added to the diaconal staff without repealing a letter of the Statute. Some relaxation, at the same time, might be sought, and (it is thought) easily obtained from Parliament, in order to enlarge the area of choice.

(c.) *Custom*.—It is here, if we mistake not, that the tug of war will be encountered. The scheme will be denounced in some quarters as revolutionary, dividing the clergy and bringing the diaconate into contempt with the laity. Already we may hear the pattering of the first thunder-drops. "There would be

two ranks," said a recent speaker, "created within the clergy themselves—(1) the aristocracy of the clergy; (2) those who would be looked upon as the very *canaille* of the profession." To an objection savouring rather of a synagogue of Libertini we might be content to reply with S. Ignatius: "The Deacons, who are ministers of Christ's mysteries, ought to be pleasing to all, for they are not ministers of food and drink, but of the Church of God." The deacon proto-martyr was no Hebrew of the Hebrews: he was an Hellenist, despised as belonging to the Dispersion; none the less, lit up with love of souls and the grace of his commission, men saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

"Again," objected the same speaker, "it would tend to lower the clergy in their social status—one of the greatest dangers to the English Church." Granted the need of a caveat here. But the measure proposed is less open to this danger than even the existing system. For let us consider the stamp of men chiefly contemplated. "Not novices," as Dr. Hook said in 1851,<sup>1</sup> "not novices in any sense, but men proved in the trial of life, and so brought to think soberly of themselves, and to know their own mind: men of above thirty years of age, married, and in independent circumstances" (needing no stipend), their characters already known, their Christian love already manifested, whether in the chamber of commerce or the chamber of sickness: candidates for no other "standing" than that of God's approval: men, in short, as in old time, of honest report which none can despise, and full of a spirit and wisdom which none can resist. We have ourselves met with a physician mighty in the Scriptures, Hebrew and Greek, and greatly blessed in spiritual as well as professional work, who at any time during a practice of forty years would gladly have further consecrated it by deacon's orders could he have found a bishop on the bench willing or enterprising enough to ordain him. Can we doubt, when we consider the thousands of Church laymen at work for Christ among the masses, that such cases at least of mature spiritual capacity, if not also of theological power, abound among the professions? "Archdeacon Hale," we are told, "left behind him more than 100 letters, many of them from persons apparently the very cream of the men whom we long to draw into the Church's ministry." It is idle to speak of such men as lowering the diaconate. On the contrary, they will tend to raise it. For the very first effect of thus "tapping a new stratum of churchmen" will be to secure an influx of choice and zealous workers;

<sup>1</sup> In a remarkable and far-seeing document issued by a Committee of the Clergy of the Rural Deanery of Leeds, which, under a pressure of population since then so intensified, advocated this revival; "Scarcely daring to express the degree in which they believed that, with the blessing of the Holy Spirit, it would promote the interests of pure and undefiled religion throughout the land."

who, in the maturity of their own Christian life, have hitherto been held superannuated, as candidates for the diaconate. Instances now and then may occur, after the most careful sifting, of fanatical, or eccentric, or unrefined, and pushing candidates; but even such characters, so far from seriously hindering the Church's work, as they may now do as "free lances," will often become invaluable when under control as regular Church officers. Their definite relations to bishop and incumbent will commit them to a definite course, alike steadying to themselves and beneficial to the people. Their sacred position once secured in the rank, they will readily "fall in;" and if seeming incongruities do arise, rather from novelty than from any inherent incompatibility between their title and honourable secular employments, these will be absorbed and gradually disappear in the order of march.

In spite, then, of all innuendoes to the effect that they will divide the clergy and offend the laity, we venture to assure the worshippers of custom that our new deacons will justify themselves. Difficulties there will be, of course; but none that ought to turn the scale in a question of right principle like this; none but what will adjust themselves in practice without dangerous friction.

In fact, thanks to the indomitable perseverance of those who have kept this Apostolic principle steadily in view, the sky is already clearing. Signs are not wanting that the visions of such men as Hook, and Hale, and Arnold, were seen in that darkness just before dawn—

#### When dreams

Begin to feel the truth and stir of day.

There is now, among darker symptoms, a stirring as of renewed life, or desire of life, in the streets and lanes of our cities; there comes a murmur of multitudes and of heterogeneous classes, like that of the Hellenists at Jerusalem, which cannot long be neglected by our successors of the Apostles. Indeed, we have reason to know that many of our spiritual rulers, and more year by year, have been awakening to the consciousness that they might do worse than revert to the Apostolic and Scriptural type of remedy in this pressing need. The question has made great progress among them since the meeting of archbishops and bishops at Lambeth, in 1866. The minority in that adverse manifesto has been ever since growing in weight and numbers, till we have reason to count on many of the foremost and most experienced on the bench. Nor is it too much to hope that the Archbishop of Canterbury, favourable as he has recently declared himself to the admission of lay help, will ere long see his way to enlisting it on the lines of Apostolic institution, primitive use,

and the principles of the English Church. All this, added to the Report in York Convocation, justifies the hope of speedy action, and action in the proper quarter. For this is pre-eminently a case of "nil sine episcopo," or rather, episcopis. Only by concerted action of the bishops can the thing be done. Otherwise, the deacons ordained in one diocese might "appear as ghosts to trouble joy," and cause confusion in the next.

Meanwhile, bishops are naturally and rightly cautious, because on them will devolve, with all its intricacies of handling, the arrangement and the care of the revived order. And we are free to confess a certain apprehension, lest, in view of this grave addition to their responsibilities, the conductors should hesitate, and this relief-train, now all but in motion, should either be recoupled to admit a new carriage, or shunted into a convenient siding. Our misgivings point to two alternatives which have been suggested; the first, after a trial of one hundred years, long ago discredited; the second, in fear of issues the most deplorable we shall do our best to disparage.

I. Some propose to supplement the diaconate by admitting to the order at the age of twenty-one. Not to dwell upon the significant fact that this is four years earlier than the age appointed by the ancient Church, the plan, as Mr. Sale points out, has been tried, found wanting, and discontinued by our own.<sup>1</sup> The proposal to revive it was argued out of the field in the Southern Convocation, in 1879, when, on the motion of Archdeacon Ffoulkes, it was negatived by a very considerable preponderance of authority, and by a large majority of votes. No less distasteful has it proved to the Lower House of the Canadian Provincial Synod, who, in their Session in 1880, rejected for the second time a clause submitted by the Upper House, empowering a bishop to ordain at the age of twenty-one. "All our experience in the Colonies," says the writer of the report to the *Guardian*, "shows that the relaxation would have a most injurious effect; and every member of the Lower House connected with the education of the clergy voted against it." We agree with him entirely. At home, too, such an addition would be an additional element of weakness. A better educated laity requires a more fully educated clergy; and at a time when technical education is demanded for every calling and profession, the ministry should not be the only profession open to imperfectly prepared and untrained novices. Moreover, the youths of our universities, often more versed in athletics than in theology, should not be encouraged to make, ordinarily at the immature age of twenty-one,

---

<sup>1</sup> It was the rule in the Anglican Church, from the Reformation to 1663, and is still the practice of the Churches of Scotland and of the United States.

so solemn and irrevocable a choice, involving the reception of indelible orders. The American Church may be fertile in innovations, and the Scotch distinguished by the greater gravity and stability of the national character; still, we best know our own requirements; and it was not without such valid reasons, as must be accepted as conclusive, that our Church, after experiment of a century, reverted more nearly to the primitive practice of all Christendom.

We note, therefore, with satisfaction, that the York Committee is not prepared to recommend this lowering of the age of admission; while we re-echo the hope of the Canadian reporter that we "shall hear no more of it."

2. The second alternative proposed is a sub-diaconate. There is something most attractive in this pretentious title to all who fear the shock to public opinion or to episcopal nerves, which would be caused by a revival of the Scriptural reality. But, beyond the title, we fear it has little to recommend it. The primitive sub-deacon was little more than a verger; in the Roman Church, "bearing the chalice and the dish at Mass, and attending on the assistant minister." According to a regulation of 1385 he might be ordained at seventeen! Have those who propose the revival of this minor order seriously considered that sub-deacons were never of any great real service? So far from supplying any part or province of the increased spiritual ministration which we now require, they were (to quote the able Appendix of the Report of the Exeter Conference) mere "ritualistic accessories." Add to this Bishop Temple's valuable comment, that it would be incomparably more difficult to induce Parliament to consent to the necessary legislation for creating and controlling such a body, than to procure a relaxation of the restrictions on the occupation of a deacon. "After all, although the new order might seem to be a revival of an old order that bore that name, it would not really be a revival, but an entirely new creation. And the innovation might be apparently less, but it would be really greater."

We further question—and it is a matter well deserving their most serious consideration—whether the bishops *per se* have any power whatever to create such an order; and whether such a quasi-ordination without the authority of the Church formally and synodically expressed, be not, as Canon Jackson gravely warns, a great unreality, which must sooner or later cause "confusion in the little isle."

The Church wants deacons for what has been deacons' work for almost nineteen centuries; and to give her men, dressed in a little brief authority, to trespass on those functions without the inherent power to fulfil them, would be a wrong to the laymen themselves and to the Church at large. And with the

true diaconate ready to hand, its principle and suitability admitted, its motive powers capable of almost immediate expansion, the timid substitution of this mediæval anomaly would well deserve the above-quoted caustic illustration of a train already in motion shunted into a *siding*—a situation parallel for a little way, yet leading nowhere but where the ordinary pedestrian can go equally well.

While we thus deprecate a sub-diaconate, on the ground that it would be either a dangerous and unconstitutional encroachment upon sacred functions, or an unmeaning distinction of the mere layman, we emphatically disclaim all intention of disparaging the lay element itself. On the contrary, it is from a conviction of the glorious mission now opening before our godly Church laymen—never since the Reformation more clearly fitted by latent ministerial powers, or designated by special gifts and graces—that we desire that numbers of them should wait no longer to be hired, but be lawfully called and sent into the Lord's vineyard. By all means utilize the laity as Sunday School teachers, Scripture readers, Church helpers of every kind; but let the picked men among them be enrolled in a new ministerial contingent, which will be in effect the revival of an old and all but lost ministry. The material to work upon is only too apparent; witness such memorials as Earl Nelson's, and its appalling picture of spiritual destitution: the material out of which to enlist this organized phalanx is no less obvious; witness not only the busy hive of Church workers in almost every diocese, but also the remarkable consensus of Christian judgment which cries, pointing to these earnest labourers, "Out of these restore us the diaconate." True to its name, the CHURCHMAN has always sympathized with this growing desire. We advocate the plan on principle, and we admire that principle's vitality. What Bible-student can forget that the first missionary expansion of the Church was due to the Third Order? To the Samaritan harvest, years before foreseen whitening by Him who sat on Jacob's Well, it was Philip the Deacon who put in the sickle. God may yet again honour the diaconate, if we have confidence in its inherent powers. And, indeed, the movement in this direction is unmistakable, and gathers impetus every month. Mooted years ago at Winchester by the present bishop, as he had before mooted it at Ely, the subject has taken root among the clergy of the former diocese. From conference after conference—Exeter, Rochester, Manchester, St. Albans, Ripon—the cry is echoed on; the laity in most instances enthusiastic and in large majorities, while at Ripon there was not a dissentient voice, clerical or lay. Many bishops in the United States are considering the same great question. And from Canada comes the welcome news that the Church in that dominion has embarked boldly on the



proposed scheme, thus setting a salutary example to the mother Church at home.<sup>1</sup>

With the report of our York Convocation before us, we cannot but hope that action will be shortly taken, and that our bishops will at last accept a responsibility too solemn and too obvious to be ignored. "*Quieta non movere*" is in the abstract an excellent maxim. But here things are not quiet; it would be a scandal to our English Church if they were. For inaction has come to mean something very like the deadlock in the first stage of the Indian famine, when thousands of natives lay dying within a few yards of thousands of rice-bags—unavailable for lack of authorized hands to distribute. The sanction came at last, and all went well.

We await anxiously—and if we, how much more our neglected masses—some analogous word of command; may it come speedily!

Meanwhile, as chroniclers of recent facts, we cannot think the triumph of a cause can be far distant, when all schools consent, and all opponents, not venturing to deal with the principle, content themselves with objecting hypothetical difficulties and alternatives, either obsolete or demonstrably insufficient.

We congratulate the Northern House on its courage in bringing out of its treasures things new and old; while we hail the omen that in this new departure of home evangelization, missionary soils so ancient should be found intermingling, as those of British St. Albans and Anglo-Saxon Deira.

JACKSON MASON.

<sup>1</sup> The Synod, which is said to have been at work in committee now since its establishment endeavouring to devise some practical means for the revival of the primitive permanent diaconate, has at length adopted the following canon:—

A deacon need not surrender his worldly calling or business, if the said calling be approved by the bishop, unless he be a candidate for the office of the priesthood, to which he shall not be admitted till he shall have passed a satisfactory examination in Latin and Greek, and have further complied with such other requirements as the bishop of each diocese may impose. Every deacon, who shall from necessity be placed in charge of a parish or mission, shall be under the direction of a supervising priest until he be advanced to the priesthood.—*Report*, Nov. 3, 1880.

June 9, 1882.—As we write, comes another Canadian Report. "On St. Mark's Day the Lord Bishop of Ontario held a general ordination in St. George's Cathedral, Kingston, Ontario. *Deacons*—Several names. *Perpetual Deacons*—Major Bate, and Mr. H. G. Parker, Professor in the Deaf and Dumb Institute, Belleville.

"This ordination is the second occasion on which Bishop Lewis has taken advantage of the above canon for increasing his staff of ordained workers in his large and important diocese."