

admission into the Christian ministry might ultimately be lowered.

"(c) Other impediments present themselves from the provisions of statute law which affect persons in Deacon's orders.*

6. From these and other considerations, we are of opinion that, whatever increase may take place in the number of persons admitted to the Diaconate, a new agency is also required which may be supplemental to it, and disturb as little as possible our now present ecclesiastical system.

6. Our attention has therefore been directed, in the next place, and according to our instructions, to the expediency of reviving the ancient order of Readers. We find that this office, which can be traced back to the third century, or even to an earlier period, was partially restored, at least in name, for a short time, immediately after the Reformation. The purpose of its restoration was to secure parishes from being entirely destitute of all religious teaching, there being a want at that time of persons duly qualified in respect of learning for admission into holy orders. That want, indeed, no longer exists. But a class of persons is now needed to assist incumbents of populous and scattered parishes in house-to-house visitation, in catechising, and in performing such religious services as may be assigned to them by competent ecclesiastical authority.

"7. Various terms have been suggested as indicative of the nature of the office which the present necessities of the church require. But, whatever name may be assigned to the office, we think that its duties should be so adjusted that it may include persons of all ranks and classes of society, the time of some being given wholly to the work; of others, only a part; some receiving stipends, and others rendering gratuitous services; and those admitted to it should be subject to ecclesiastical jurisdiction, receiving their commission on the nomination of the incumbent from the bishop of the diocese, after due examination as to their moral character, their religious knowledge, and their efficiency, with the solemnity of a public service in the church, and by an instrument under the Episcopal hand and seal; and that they should be in all respects under the control and direction of the incumbent in whose parish they are employed. We further think that they should be at liberty at any time whatever to resign the commission so received from the bishop, and that the bishop, on the other hand, should have the authority to revoke such commission, on the ground of erroneous teaching or immoral conduct.

"8. We make this recommendation with a full conviction of the pressing wants of the Church of England, and of the need of a greatly multiplied agency to enable her to fulfil the purposes of her high and holy calling. Nor would we conclude without the earnest prayer, that, whether by these or by some other means, an "effectual door" may be opened for the piety and zeal of those who seek, by a definite mission from the Church, and in hearty communion with her, to promote the temporal and spiritual welfare of their fellow creatures.

February 9, 1862. (Signed,
EDWARD BICKERSTETH, Chairman

The Rev. C. F. MASSINGBERD—I hope it will not be deemed presumptuous in me, considering the important nature of the petition with which I was intrusted on this subject from the diocese which I have the honour to represent, to move that this report be adopted, and be converted into a representation from this house to the Upper

House of Convocation. The great question which arises on this subject, and to which my attention has been specially devoted, is that of a subordinate ministry in the church. The question, therefore, which arises is, whether, with a view of providing more efficiently for the great and increasing spiritual wants of the people of this country, it will be sufficient that we increase if we can the order of Deacons, or whether it might be more expedient, or perhaps I might say absolutely necessary, that we should avail ourselves in some definite form of some further agency by the introduction within our own branch of the church of one of the inferior orders of the ministry of the church. And I desire to put the question in that manner in order to avoid the possibility of misconception concerning what I mean, and what I believe so large a body of my constituents meant in the petition which I had the honour to present yesterday to the house. I mean to say, not that we desire to give some defined authority to those who are called Scripture-readers, invaluable as their services are, but that we desire to call the attention of this house in the first place, and then eventually that of their lordships the bishops, with whom the decision must ultimately rest, to the importance and, I might say, the necessity of having in the Church of England an inferior order of the ministry. Now, in the first place, can we accomplish the object we have in view by any enlargement, any sufficient enlargement, of the Diaconate? I am well aware that this is a favourite object with many for whom I entertain the greatest possible respect; but whatever we may think abstractedly of the advantage of intrusting the ministrations of the church exclusively to the two Scriptural orders of the ministry under the Episcopate, the question is, what is best to be done to meet the difficulty in which we are placed by the enormous increase of the population, and the utter impossibility of raising funds sufficient to supply anything like an adequate ministration to supply their spiritual wants out of the existing resources of the church? and in the next place whether, by any attempt of that sort, in accordance with the existing state of the law on the subject, we can reasonably expect to accomplish the object we have in view. I assume, as a matter of course, that we all feel that the Church of England has at this moment to grapple with a vast and mighty deficiency; that we have to consider how we can operate upon those masses of our population who have risen we scarcely know how, and whose existence looks us in the face, and calls upon us with a mighty voice to supply them, if we can, with the blessed ministrations of the church, and the Divine consolations of the Gospel of our dear and blessed Lord and Master. And now, to look upon the question, as I have said, practically. I may venture to remind those of my brethren especially who, like myself, are Oxford men, of those words, heathen indeed, but of almost more than human wisdom, of that great philosopher who says that when you are to consider practically what is the wisest course for you to adopt, the way of a wise man is not to speculate upon that which seems to him to be absolutely the best, but to seek for that which is best under existing circumstances, not the best *ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀπορίτου* but the best *ἐκ τῶν παρόντων*. Looking upon the matter in that point of view, it appears to me that by the mere revival of the Diaconate we should not be able to accomplish the object which we have in view; and that on two grounds—first, as regards expenditure; and secondly, as regards the status of those persons whom we should have to admit to that sacred order. As regards expenditure, it seems to me that we should gain hardly anything towards our object. We should have to call upon a class of men who we

know are not generally accustomed to be admitted into the Diaconate, to leave their professional avocations to devote themselves for life exclusively to the ministrations of the church; and therefore we should have at least to supply them with some degree of adequate remuneration for their services. We cannot hope to obtain any sufficient number of persons with a less remuneration than that which is now given in many instances to persons who enter the holy order of the Diaconate, during their continuance in it, with a view to enter the order of the priesthood. And therefore what should we have gained towards the object which we have in view? No doubt there are many men who would be invaluable either as deacons or in the inferior order of the ministry, but nevertheless, one part of the object which we ought to propose to ourselves is to find, if we can, some way by which we can supply the great want of the church at a less cost, but which we shall have to meet if we continue to confine our operations to those who are actually admitted into the order of Deacons—to an order, mind, which requires that they should forego all other means of subsistence for the whole course of their lives, so that they should not be at liberty even, at least not without some loss of character, to give up their vocation afterwards, and devote themselves to some other calling. That appears to me to be the first difficulty with regard to that proposal, and I am not aware how it could be met, because, it appears to me that in large and populous places you would want in many parishes a great number of such persons. Then supposing another difficulty, which I shall come to presently, respecting the period during which these men should serve, were overcome, still you would have the endowment, so to speak, of your permanent deacons to provide, and you would have no means of meeting that difficulty. You would be where you were in respect of it. How could we supply the means of having five or six, or as many deacons as might be required, under a single priest in our great overgrown and populous parishes, if we are to pay them at the rate at which they are now paid? Then, supposing that to be overcome, or setting it aside, what is the position which these men would hold? It is proposed that they should be required to pledge themselves to remain in the Diaconate for, say, five or seven years. I apprehend it is out of the question that we should propose that they should pledge themselves never to apply for the Priesthood, for this sufficient reason, that the Holy Scriptures say that they shall by filling the office well obtain a good degree, and, further, they would have a right to demand it by our own Ordinal. We cannot, therefore, go further than to require them to confine themselves to the inferior ministry of the Diaconate for a certain number of years, and then that they should not go further unless in the meantime they should qualify themselves to pass the ordinary examination for the Priesthood, which would, of course, be a great hindrance to many. That being the case, let us see the position of those who should be so ordained. Having given up all their other avocations, having given up all prospect of promoting themselves, except by the loss of character, is it not conceivable that some of them might be dissatisfied with their position, and that they should attempt more or less, as some of us even now are found to attempt more or less, to revert to some secular calling?—and then we shall have that evil which existed before the Reformation, of a number of clerical persons holding and entitled to bear the title of "reverend" but living as it were loose in the world, professing no spiritual functions, and devoting themselves to secular callings. These are some of the difficulties which promise to arise,

*For example, clergymen in holy orders are exempt from serving on juries (6 Geo. IV., c. 50, s. 2). They are also precluded from sitting in Parliament (*St. Stephen's Commentary*, vol. II., p. 391), or from engaging in trade (1 and 2 Vic., c. 100, s. 29), &c.