

of spending the residue of their days in the special service of God.

Such men as these would not desire to be looked upon as wholly or exclusively devoted to the work of the ministry; they would not aspire to the full honours and duties of the sacred profession; they would not aim at the priesthood, they would be content with the *Diaconate*.

When last in the mother country, it was my privilege to meet with a gentleman of this description,—a large landed proprietor who had taken orders in the Church; but who, from the pressure of secular duties, would not assume a full ministerial charge nor go beyond the *Diaconate*, but as a deacon he made himself useful to his clerical brethren in the neighbourhood, and was behind none more advanced in the Church in zeal and energy to serve her. My belief is that, wanting such an opening, we are losing the services of a large body of earnest and pious auxiliaries, and the Church is suffering in proportion.

It is admitted on all hands that lay agency will not effect the good we desire from increased ministrations, and we have the testimony of those on whom we can best rely—the laity themselves. Experience teaches us that they are correct; and I honour them for the avowal. I respect them for the reverence it implies for constituted authority in the Church, and that they reject the idea that it matters not whether sacred duties be performed by those with a sacred commission, or by those without it. They give us thus their willing testimony that regular and irregular ministrations are not to be so confused and blended that men at last may come to the conclusion that each individual in the Church of God may be his own priest, or the priest of his family, and that a distinct sacerdotal order may be swept away. There are, nevertheless, many ways in which lay agency may be profitably employed,—in which, indeed, it is all but indispensable: and we shall be proud to employ it when we can.

The Provost of Trinity College in his admirable address yesterday,—a considerable portion of which I had the misfortune to lose,—adverted in a friendly spirit to an expression of my own in reference to this subject while addressing the Synod in another place. I contend,—as I believe he will contend,—that we require the bond between pastor and people to be closer, and that this is effected not so much by eloquent preaching on the Lord's day, as by assiduous week-day ministrations to all classes,—reading to the poor and ignorant, comforting the sick and bereaved, and giving to assembled families a taste for religious thought and conversation by occasional expositions of God's word at their firesides. This it is which goes to the hearts of our people, and rivets their affection to the Church and her pastors.

But solitary clergymen, with it may be hundreds of families to visit, cannot effect what their hearts and consciences would prompt them to undertake in discharge of this duty. The intercourse under such circumstances is necessarily unfrequent, and so the chasm between them gradually widens. We may say then with truth that the "missing link" which is to bind and keep them close in concord and love, would be that intermediate agency which the *Diaconate* would supply.

It is not meant that a permanent diaconate implies of necessity the exclusion of any in that order from the higher grades of the ministry. Its boon is gained. He discerns rising out of the will be visible to the Church as a distinct and permanent order, which it is not now; it will not have, what hardly exists at present, its line of demarcation from the order immediately above; once more it is fertilized and the famine ceases. It is, my brethren, the process by which Almighty God worked out this wondrous mercy, that to us is chiefly striking. The small begin-

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A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE PROVINCIAL SYNOD, IN CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL, MONTREAL, ON WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 10, 1862, BY A. N. BETHUNE, D.D., D.C.L., ARCHDEACON OF TORONTO, AND RECTOR OF COBOURG.

I Kings, xviii 41—"And it came to pass at the seventh time that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand."

The narratives of Scripture, my brethren, are always simply told; its scenes described without touch or colouring of art. And, no doubt, in being so related and set before us, they reach the heart with more impression; their influence is deeper, and their effects do not pass so speedily away. Such unadorned descriptions are more congenial to our natural feelings: they mingle better with our common sympathies and tastes, they have a closer and more lasting influence upon the heart and life.

Here, in this chapter, we have a startling and varied picture set vividly before us. The height of Carmel,—the spreading sea beneath,—the gathered thousands of Israel,—the solitary prophet of the Lord beside the broken altar, in the majesty of his calm appeal,—the hundreds of Baal's prophets calling wildly on their god. At last the fire from heaven, in answer to Elijah's prayer, and the shout from Israel's thousands, "The Lord he is the God; the Lord he is the God."

For three years, we read, there had been neither rain nor dew in the land. And soon the effects of this providential judgment shewed themselves. The herbage of the field, the fruits of the earth were parched and withered; the cattle were perishing; and upon man man himself the calamity was pressing with terrible severity.

But in answer to the prayers of the faithful who bowed not the knee to Baal,—through the acknowledgment of the watering and divided heart, awakened by the recent sign from heaven,—God was pleased to arrest this fearful judgment.

The process of this merciful restoration of health and vigour to the dying fruits and withering plants is touchingly described. On the top of mount Carmel, Elijah is engaged in long and earnest prayer to God for his suffering country, and then desires his servant to ascend the highest eminence, and look towards the sea. At first, there seems no answer to his prayers; but he is not on that account faint or weary in his supplications. Seven times in succession the messenger is sent upon the same errand; and at last the boon is gained. He discerns rising out of the sea "a little cloud like a man's hand." Rapidly it spreads: by and by the heavens are overcast, and the long-expected rain descends: the earth is once more fertilized and the famine ceases.

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