

Deacon of the English Church differs from the Priest in but three particulars, so far as the performance of ministerial duties is concerned; viz, he cannot celebrate the Eucharist, he cannot absolve, he cannot bless. But he is continually put in care of souls, entrusted with large and important shares of missionary labour, on exactly the same conditions as the Priest; though this is expressly against the Ordinal, in which we clearly see the deacon is *not* intrusted with care of souls. While in the Office for the ordaining of Priests, this main idea runs through the whole, and receives the most awfully solemn and distinct recognition. I maintain, then, our practice is against our theory as set forth in the Prayer Book, and against the example of that antiquity to which we make such confident appeals in behalf of our ministry. It is easy to say that we have the three Orders, including the Diaconate; but it is as easy to answer with incontrovertible truth, that we have it as the Romish Church has the Scriptures—and not otherwise, i. e., we have it but do not use it aright; nor would it be an unpardonable hyperbole to say—at all. With reference to all those works which peculiarly belong to the Diaconate, that Order practically does not exist. A Diocese with us may be a year without half a dozen Deacons even in name, and may be forever without one in reality. Contrast this with the primitive Church. It is true that for the first ages a sort of prejudice confined the number of Deacons in each church to *seven*; but this was seen to be unreasonable, and accordingly in the sixth century we find a *hundred* deacons in the principal church of Constantinople, and at a little latter period *one hundred and fifty*. In any organized body, civil, military, or religious, the absurdity is obvious of having the higher ranks vastly outnumbering the inferior—as in the Yankee militia of peace times all were colonels, or as in our church, in which the specially assisting ministry is “nowhere.” Every one knows what various orders of inferior attendants waited on the Temple-service, and even in the Synagogue. The primitive Church had a pretty long list of ministering classes.* So has the Latin Church. So has almost every Protestant sect that is making a mark upon society. But “dignity” is our idol. Our lowest ministers must be “scholars and gentlemen.” The church is dying of dignity,” said the American Bishop Griswold—strange; when she is not sick of it yet!

If the Rubric prefixed to the Office for the Ordaining of Deacons were insisted on, “When the day appointed by the Bishop is come, after morning prayer is ended, there shall he a Sermon or Exhortation declaring the duty and office of such as come to be admitted Deacons; how necessary that Order is in the church of Christ, and also how the people ought to esteem them in their office;” if this were insisted on, how nonplussed would he the most ingenious amongst us to reconcile our practice with the relief of the necessity which we proclaim. I am bold to say, and I am safe from contradiction, that if a Deacon be no more than he is in

the Diocese of Toronto, we can do quite as well without this office, and it seems a profanity and a mockery to talk of it as a Divine Order and necessary. Were our candidates at once admitted to the Presbyterate—supposing that possible—what conceivable difference would it make in the aspect of the Church or in the work done? Would the mass of the Laity even notice the change?

I do not now ask, Have we the ministry given by the Lord Jesus? but I do ask, Are we using it as He designed and as the Apostolic and primitive Church has set us the example? And if we are not, can it be possible to do effectually the work of the ministry without the fullness of the ministry,—if any of its parts be maimed, or its labours not properly directed? Our first Provincial Synod gives a decided negative.

Our next enquiry must be how to make this Holy Order, so long in practical abeyance, a reality—a living power: how, almost literally, to revive it.

While positive in what I have already stated I would speak with becoming hesitation as to the remedy. But the Diaconate, I conceive, may be restored in two forms.

First. There might be a class of Deacons wholly separated to sacred ministration, and paid from the common revenues of the church and this class should, I think, be as large as possible. Then as to their qualifications; since the peculiar duties of the Deacon as set forth in the Ordinal, require little or (to speak correctly) *no* scholastic learning, we need look for no more than good sense, well attested piety and such a competent knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, the Prayer Book, and Theology in general, as an ordinary English Education will enable any one, with Divine assistance, to obtain. Most assuredly it is quite as much in our power to obtain men of this class for deacons, as it is for the Methodist body to secure them for preachers. These latter, too, are obliged reasonably enough, to go through a course of English Divinity, in private reading, during the first four years of their ministry, on which they are from time to time examined by proper persons. And who can say that such a person as I have described is not apt or meet for the duties of a deacon as laid down in the Ordinal? Can he not assist the Priest in Divine service? Can he not aid in distributing the elements in the Holy Communion? Can he not read Scriptures and Homilies in the church? Are there not scores of lay readers and catechists doing this? Can he not instruct the youth in the catechism? Are there not thousands of Sunday School Superintendents with less knowledge than we presuppose doing this with acceptance and earning the thanks of the clergy and the whole church? Does it require Greek and Philosophy to enable a Deacon to baptize infants in the absence of the Priest? And as for these offices of temporal charity to the sick, poor, and impotent people are there not many lay people, men and women, with no learning other than the loving instinct of the heart, endeavouring to do this in an imperfect irregular way, in all our large towns and cities? And shall a Divine and formal commission render one of these charitable souls less competent to those

* Cornelius, Bishop of Rome, A. D. 254, in Euseb. H. E. Book VI., states the Roman clergy to be 48 Presbyters, 7 Deacons, 42 Acolytes, 52 Exorcists, Sectors and Porters.