

ESSAY ON THE DIACONATE.

In the late meeting of the Provincial Synod, the movement in favor of the restoration of the Diaconate, undeniably made considerable progress. There seemed to be a good deal of prejudice against it when it was brought in; but the subject was referred back to an enlarged Committee in a different tone of feeling: with a *hope*, I am sure, that something may be prepared before the next meeting of the Synod, which will meet the views of all parties. The former Committee sat only once, for a few minutes (so to speak), and that during the session of the Synod. They did no more, and could do no more, than adopt the report and canon submitted to them by their able, earnest, and indefatigable chairman, the late Rev. E. H. Dewar, M.A. (See Appendix A.)

It was his wish that I should succeed him in the chair of that Committee; and it was the pleasure of the Committee to entrust to me that responsibility; and also their desire that a meeting should be held, in the coming summer, in Canada West, as being most convenient to the majority of the committee. It is my intention, D. V., to call the Committee together accordingly. With a view both of expediting the business of the Committee when it meets, and also of eliciting, as far as possible, the view of the Canadian Church on the subject, I am induced to republish an Essay which appeared anonymously in the Ontario Episcopal Gazette, a few weeks before the meeting of the Synod, in the hope that more attention may be drawn to this all-important subject, and that the Committee may have the benefit of the suggestions of those who cannot be present at their meeting. The names and constitution of the Committee are appended. (See Appendix B.)

I have little doubt that any Member will have great pleasure in receiving suggestions from the brethren, whether Lay or Clerical, on both sides of the question. As Chairman, I feel it my duty to invite them; and I do so in the hope that something may be prepared next summer, to be probably then published, and reconsidered and remodelled, if necessary, by the Committee at some subsequent meeting previous to the next Provincial Synod.

In republishing this Essay, I would premise that I have no wish to dictate any particular line as the one to be pursued. My aim, in writing it, was two-fold,—to show the immense importance of the subject: and to demonstrate that a living permanent order of Deacons was not only a desideratum in the Church, but a possibility; and I ventured even so high as to assert (and I have no wish to retract the assertion) that the continued neglect and practical

abolition of the Diaconate in the Church, was a *sin the Church must answer for*, and that its restoration here would be a *glory to our Canadian Church*. It may perhaps be imagined that in proposing a plan for the restoration of the Diaconate, I believe, that my plan is *the plan*. Not so. But I do believe that the vital points to be considered are set forth there, and that wherever my Essay is read or discussed, the whole question will be well looked into.

Go with me a little while in imagination, and you will understand my views on the subject. Suppose an intelligent Dissenter to come to one of our Bishops and say, "I have read much, of late, of your Church, and have been led to look on it with great respect. I come to you to be made acquainted with its practical workings. I have been examining its liturgies and formularies, and am greatly delighted with them. The machinery for the working of the Church is very beautiful—so beautiful that I begin to feel that its origin is Divine. Now give me a little information about its working. You are the Bishop. Well. You have under your rule Priests and Deacons. Their ordination vows are very striking to one who has been a stranger to them, and they present a very thorough view, when combined, of ministerial work. Your Priests and Deacons, I am told, are mixed together; (for I had made some enquiry of others.) Tell me how many Priests have you?" The Bishop may be supposed to answer, some forty or fifty. "Forty: indeed; why I thought you had only about that number of Clergy altogether! The Deacons you have—so few as they must be—must have a great deal to do. I should have supposed you would have had at the very least a Deacon to each Priest ('to assist him in divine service. &c.; to search for the poor, sick, and impotent,' &c.) It is a great work for a few Deacons to assist so many Priests." The Bishop answers, "No. I have only three Deacons in my Diocese! one at P.N.* and another at C** ministering in 'parts adjacent also.' The latter has three townships in his charge. The third is *all alone in Labrador!* In a few months they will be full Priests: and then I shall *not* (most likely) have any Deacons for a year or so. The Priests

* I am undisguisedly alluding here to the present state of our own Diocese of Quebec. Those who know me will not need to be told, and those who do not, will believe me, I hope, when I assure them that I am not intending the very slightest reflection on our saintly and most devoted Bishop, whom God has so lately taken to his Rest and to his Crown. I felt that to give my case weight, I must build on fact; and it seemed to me unfair for a clergyman of one Diocese to cross the orders of another, in order to point out defects.