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contains elements of truth that will hereafter be acknowledged ; but we have no hesitation in adopting Dr. Edersheim's words, " We do not profess to explain every difficulty that may be urged ; nor indeed do we believe that, with the material at our command, it is possible to do so. But with all deference for the learning and ability of the scholars who have adopted the views of Wellhausen, we must be allowed to express, in plain language, our conviction that their theory lacks the one element which is primary : it lacks a reliable historical basis."

Here, for the present, we leave this most fallacious and seductive theory, though we hope by the courtesy of the Editor to assign at an early date solid grounds for rejecting it. In the meantime, we cordially recommend this erudite and valuable Warburton Lecture to the attention of our readers. It will furnish them with cogent reasons for refusing to be led away by the rush of contemporary opinion, and will render them able to appreciate the tremendous issues with which this controversy is fraught.

FREDK. E. TOYNE.

Correspondence.

THE DEACON'S YEAR.

To the Editor of "THE CHURCHMAN."

SIR,—The minimum age for ordination to the office of priest in the Church of England is twenty-four years. In the ancient Church thirty years was the minimum fixed, but it has, I believe, been understood that at that time the Bishops had greater liberty to relax "rules" than now exists. It appears, then, that at present, in the English Church, there is but one year necessarily spent in the Diaconate before the ordination into full orders as priest ; and thus any young man arriving at the age of twenty-four may attain full orders, and be held qualified to hold any benefice, be it large or small, for which he may obtain the preferment.

I can scarcely meet the end I have in view in this letter by any better means than here quoting from one I not long since wrote in the *Times* : " I would ask any true friend of the English Church, lay or clerical, to " read calmly the service for the ordination of priests, accepting its language in a natural sense, as really representing the authority given to " this young man of twenty-four years of age. Can he conceive language " capable of conveying a more solemn bestowal of an authority such as " scarcely any human being, except by special help from Heaven, could " be qualified to exercise ? I refrain from quoting it. Is it rational to " suppose that such a youth, having served one year in the Diaconate, " could be willingly accepted by any body of parishioners as qualified to " exercise over them the awful spiritual authority with which he has thus " been invested ? He may be a sound theological scholar, really pious " and earnest, but what measure of life's experience can he possess to fit " him to meet the demand made upon him at the bedside of the sick and

"dying ; to deal with the mental struggles of those who doubt ; to struggle with all the difficulty of awakening the sinner to repentance ; to be the spiritual adviser in the home, the evangelist in the Church ? He would scarcely be held of the age to be a tutor in a family, and yet the Bishops, and the congregations, and the parishioners are alike helpless in the matter. Far better, in my opinion, would it be if the Diaconate stage was extended, that a more matured line of thought might be acquired, with the judgment better calculated to meet those exigencies in the work of a priest that are for ever rising up to try that of the most experienced in this ministry."

We have no mechanical agency by which we can test the exact growth of spirituality in regard to age ; it requires, however, no great knowledge of human nature to arrive at the conclusion that although at the age of twenty-four some advanced habits of thought may have been acquired, it has not as yet done its full work in maturing the character which will form the foundation of life's future.

We have many of what I may call manuals—literary publications adapted to give information relating to clerical work—aids for private devotion and for such devout exercises as parochial ministration may demand ; these, if even they could give the willing mind which would accept them, would be, after all, a sort of catechism of clerical mechanics.

Real Apostolic work can never be a matter subject to any mechanical restraint ; it deals with elements so variable, so complex in their nature, as to defy the strict definition of means to a given end, which obtains in secular work. The priest has to walk by faith. His path is for ever confronted with obstacles, which only faith in a higher than human power can enable him to struggle with, in the belief that he will conquer them. Faith his support, experience becomes his guide ; the two in combination are the highest qualification for his ministry as priest in the Church of Christ.

We must also bear in mind that under the existing system, the Deacon's year has attached to it the task of reading up for the examination for full orders. I have always felt this to be most unwise. It has appeared to me that the whole Diaconate stage should be given to the acquirement of efficiency in the practical work of the ministry. Deacons acting as curates have, if themselves earnest in their work and acting under earnest incumbents, full occupation. They may have been exercised in sermon-writing previous to ordination. They very soon discover the thesis from a text calculated to draw out their knowledge of Scripture is one thing ; the composing a sermon to be delivered from the pulpit in the face of the congregation they have to instruct is a very different thing. Again, I would urge the principle that it is important that the Deacon curate should feel that he is no longer under tutorage in regard to further purely scholastic acquirements ; that as he is, with some few restrictions, held to be qualified to act as an officiating minister of the Church, daily having to do so, no additional proof of scholarship should be required of him to pass the limited boundary separating him from the office of priest. At the same time, it would be but wise for him to understand that before admission to the priesthood, he should pass some form of examination, to satisfy the Bishop that he has so used the term of his Diaconate as to have obtained full qualification for that higher order in the Church, fitting him to administer all her services.

And now, sir, I feel I cannot do better in connection with the subject of this letter than make some quotations from one of two letters in the *Guardian*, published in 1871, under the signature "Sexagenarian O." No one has a better claim to quote from these letters than myself. It was headed "The Deacon's Year" :

"No books ever written, no lectures ever delivered, can afford the teaching the Deacon has to obtain from the leaves of human nature, turned for study where they are sadly torn and soiled, wanting for ever even the slightest approach to any binding in character with our common Christianity; however heart-stricken and yet hopeful and undaunted he may be, I have yet to learn that human nature can, without injury to mind and body, go through this experience, and yet find time to give the hours of many a day to read up for 'priests.'

"In ordinary social intercourse, social tact gives the tone which enables others to appear blind to our own, just as we so appear blind to the failings of others. No curate dare be unfaithful in his ministry; he will, however, soon discover that to become the religious friend and pastor, he has for ever to go behind the family curtain—read 'homes' as they are. If he has much to teach, there is a great deal in his teaching, as regards its scene, he must be careful not to betray, or he will miss the welcome so invaluable for his work. To know when to be in season to advise, is to acquire one of the highest qualifications to act as an adviser; to know when and how best to admonish, is to obtain the power to do so without offence.

"To become the welcome spiritual adviser of those depraved legions which go to form the lowest *strata* of our towns, the ear must be content to hearken to a continual outcry of complaint. The curate's first work is with the soul; he will soon discover that out of the abundance of the body's trials, be they the result of sin or sickness, of poverty hardly deserved or recklessly invited, the heart will speak, and he must stay and listen. Many are the wearied days he has to pass, distracted by appeals for compassion he is helpless to prove real or false. He goes to his home perplexed and harassed, lest he has been deaf where he should have heard, or has yielded where he may have been deceived. He has yet to acquire some power of that discernment which shall find in many a profession of religious inquiry the artful weapon of interested hypocrisy, which shall perceive beneath little spoken of the soul, little begging for the body, the spirit of an industrious independence, a really humble, however simple faith.

"There is work to be done in the 'schools,' work altogether new to him, and requiring from him the learning how best to do it. There are parish 'associations,' religious and secular meetings to attend, 'collections' to be obtained, sermons to be prepared, the acquaintance with the occupants of the best sittings in the church to be cultivated; they may not require or expect the exercise on his part of purely pastoral intimacy, he yet has many hours in the week of down-sitting amongst them. It is not time wasted, far from it; for only thus can he establish the link between them and himself, by which he may profit when opportunity is afforded to minister to them in a day of trial.

"The curate Deacon's work grows on him in the doing of it. The latter months of the Diaconate of a zealous industrious man finds his daily field of toil increased, in proportion as he has sought to be faithful in his office, by seeking more and more field for Apostolic work. And now, alas! must come to the front that dreaded skeleton, whose bones have rattled on his bookshelves throughout his whole year: there is yet the work to be done—the books to be got up for 'priests.'

"Would it not be a practice more humane in regard to Deacon humanity, more wise in the best interest of the Church, for the Bishops to be content with proof carefully obtained that the Deacon has studied and worked out the duties of his holy calling, thus acquitting himself 'to the honour of God and edifying of the Church;' being content with this, rather than demand of him proof that he has acquired a certain

"further amount of scholarship, in the midst of all his work, to qualify him to do what it is on proof he has well done?"

The status of curates, as the rule, is one well deserving the compassion of all thoughtful Churchmen. They are made the butts of novelists, servants of incumbents, at wages scarcely equal to the emoluments of the butlers of many parishioners; apprentices, yet doing rarely much less, often far more than their masters; denied all voice in any of the important movements connected with the Church; mere youths, with all youth's disposition, hampered on all sides by the discipline which cuts off from them so much of youth's natural enjoyment; they toil on, battling in these their young days against sin, the flesh, and the devil; but too often with little consideration from those they serve to their utmost, in regard to the fact, that for such warfare, at such an age, all encouragement should be accorded to them, all possible allowance made for any of their shortcomings. If I contend for a prolongation of the Diaconate, I at the same time claim that while it lasts the Deacon should have his just due.

S. G. OSBORNE.

Lewes, Feb. 4.

VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE CHURCH FOR TWENTY-FIVE YEARS, 1860-1884.

SIR,—As it will doubtless afford interest to many to be acquainted with the following facts, which, after long and laborious inquiry, I am in the position to represent, may I ask you, on behalf of the Committee of the Official Year-Book of the Church of England, to be good enough to give them publicity? This statement records an endeavour to ascertain what has been contributed by members of the Church of England during the last quarter of a century to the various branches of Christian work indicated by the following summary.

The statement may be accepted as perfectly accurate, inasmuch as the figures have been tabulated from returns made by those officially representing the Societies and Institutions that have been severally dealt with. It will be seen, however, from the explanations appended, that the statement is by no means an exhaustive representation of the Church's voluntary offerings within the given period, as it will be clear to all that it would be impossible to gather the sum of contributions flowing through private channels, or devoted by Churchmen to Societies and Institutions and Charities of a general and unsectarian character.

Explanations of the following Summary.

I. The Summary is *inclusive* of, and confined to, Societies and Institutions organized and administered by the Church of England alone. Every care has been taken to prevent any over-statement of facts. "Balances carried forward" from previous years have, of course, been deducted from the return of the annual income in every instance; dividends and interest from the investment of bequests and such like voluntary offerings being included. With regard to the figures representing the expenditure upon church building and restoration, the endowment of benefices, and the erection of parsonage houses, this total has been arrived at after a careful examination of Lord Hampton's returns, the Parliamentary reports of the Ecclesiastical Commission and Queen Anne's Bounty, and with the practical experience of the Editor of the Year-Book after a three years' systematic inquiry made throughout the Church in reference to this special branch of Church work. In arriving at the