

which God imparted Himself to men. The theology of the Reformation re-established the aspect of the Sacraments as a means of union and participation with the person and nature of our Lord, and thus supplied a practical guarantee of the reality of that union and communion.

HENRY WACE.



ART. IV.—THE AGE OF ORDINATION IN RELATION TO THE SUPPLY OF CANDIDATES.

THE ordination statistics published by the *Guardian*¹ show that there has again been a fall for the whole of the year 1901. The Deacons ordained in 1901 were 562, in 1900 they

¹ January 22, 1902. The diocesan distribution of the Advent candidates is there given as follows, the figures in brackets being those of last year :

	Deacons.	Priests.	Total.
Canterbury	3 (4) ...	6 ...	9 (10)
York	— ...	4 ...	4 (5)
London	19 (12) ...	18 ...	37 (38)
Durham	18 (9) ...	12 ...	30 (34)
Winchester	9 (14) ...	9 ...	18 (22)
Bangor	2 (2) ...	1 ...	3 (4)
Bath and Wells	4 ...	3 ...	7 (5)
Bristol	8 (6) ...	6 ...	14 (7)
Carlisle	8 (9) ...	11 ...	19 (16)
Chester	2 (8) ...	6 ...	8 (14)
Chichester	4 (4) ...	3 ...	7 (11)
Ely	1 (4) ...	4 ...	5 (6)
Exeter	6 (7) ...	6 ...	12 (15)
Gloucester	3 (2) ...	4 ...	7 (4)
Hereford	2 (1) ...	2 ...	4 (4)
Lichfield	— ...	14 ...	14 (11)
Lincoln	10 (9) ...	7 ...	17 (18)
Liverpool	4 (8) ...	18 ...	22 (8)
Llandaff	6 (10) ...	13 ...	19 (17)
Manchester	12 (20) ...	31 ...	43 (46)
Newcastle	6 (9) ...	9 ...	15 (14)
Norwich	5 (3) ...	6 ...	11 (10)
Oxford	7 (4) ...	3 ...	10 (10)
Peterborough	4 (11) ...	12 ...	16 (14)
Ripon	1 (1) ...	— ...	1 (1)
Rochester	15 (14) ...	27 ...	42 (33)
St. Albans	4 (5) ...	5 ...	9 (12)
St. Asaph	1 (2) ...	3 ...	4 (7)
St. Davids	5 (2) ...	5 ...	10 (8)
Salisbury	7 — ...	5 ...	12 (5)
Sodor and Man	— ...	2 ...	2 (4)
Southwell	7 (6) ...	5 ...	12 (18)
Truro	4 (2) ...	2 ...	6 (5)
Wakefield	5 (4) ...	4 ...	9 (7)
Worcester	4 (10) ...	— ...	4 (20)
For the Colonies	4 (2) ...	2 ...	6 (2)
Totals	196 (204)	273	469 (465)

were 594. The Priests ordained were 605, and the grand total for 1901 was 1,167, against 1,194 for last year. The fall at Advent was in Deacons only, the number being 196 Deacons, as against 204 Deacons ordained in Advent, 1900.

Unhappily, too, the proportion of Oxford and Cambridge graduates continues to grow smaller. Of the 469 men ordained at Advent rather more than 62 per cent. were graduates of Oxford or Cambridge, as against nearly 65·6 in 1900. Of the grand total for the year the percentage was only 55·5, as against 58·8 in 1900.¹ This is a long way the lowest percentage of the last ten years, and the fall is the heaviest known for some time. In 1893 the percentage was as high as 62·70. We are, in fact, getting perilously near the period at which only every other man ordained will be a graduate of Oxford or Cambridge, and that at a time when the proportion of Nonconformist ministers who are graduates

¹ The *Guardian* gives the following analysis of the educational antecedents of the Advent candidates :

Oxford	...	...	...	147	...	Non-graduate	2
Cambridge	...	...	...	148	...	" "	
Dublin	...	...	...	22			
Durham	...	...	...	40	...	Non-graduate	14
London	...	...	...	11	...	" "	1
St. Davids, Lampeter	...	...	...	18	...	" "	3
Owens College	...	...	...	2			
University College, Liverpool	...	...	...	1			
University of North Wales	...	...	...	1			
Royal University of Ireland	...	...	...	7	...	Non-graduate	2
Melbourne University	...	...	...	2			
King's College, London	...	...	...	12			
London College of Divinity	...	...	...	8			
St. Aidan's, Birkenhead	...	...	...	5			
Chichester Theological College	...	...	...	2			
Gloucester	"	"	...	1			
Lichfield	"	"	...	2			
Lincoln, Scholæ Cancellarii	...	...	...	12			
St. Michael's, Aberdare	...	...	...	1			
Manchester, Schol. Episcopi	...	...	...	9			
Salisbury Theological College	...	...	...	1			
Bishop Wilson Theological School	...	...	...	1			
Truro, Scholæ Cancellarii	...	...	...	1			
Queen's, Birmingham	...	...	...	2			
St. Stephen's House, Oxford	...	...	...	1			
Denstone	...	...	...	1			
St. Nicolas, Lancing	...	...	...	1			
Mildenhall	...	...	...	2			
St. Augustine's, Canterbury	...	...	...	2			
C.M.S. College, Islington	...	...	...	2			
St. Boniface, Warminster	...	...	...	1			
Literate	...	...	...	3			

of the older Universities is higher than ever and shows a tendency to rise.

The facts witnessed to by these figures are at last receiving some attention. Several of the Bishops, by founding Theological Halls under their own immediate attention, doubtless hope to attract an increasing number of graduates. In the meantime the non-graduate theological colleges are not idle, and the aim of the memorial to the late Rev. A. Peache is the very practical one of reducing the fees at St. John's Hall, Highbury, and offering exhibitions to worthy men. Such agencies as the Ordination Candidates' Exhibition Fund are endeavouring to enlarge their work, and there are some welcome signs that private endeavour is also being fruitfully employed.

But we can hardly feel surprised if many thoughtful Churchmen regard these measures as unlikely to do all that is needed just now. It must be remembered that it is not enough to stop the falling off in the provision of candidates. That is only one step. For years the supply has been unequal to the demand, not only to the demand from incumbents, but to the demand of the population. There are also the needs of the colonies and the needs of the mission-field to be kept in mind. What we have to aim at, therefore, is not merely a return to the figures, let us say, of 1892—although that would mean an increase at once of no fewer than 166 Deacons—but such an advance as would help to make up for the shortage of the intervening years. The population has gone on steadily increasing; the total number of the clergy has steadily declined.

Now, is there any reasonable hope that the existing endeavours can, within a year or two, or even more, bring us to this point or to anything like it? Surely there is none. The most that can, at the present, be hoped for is that we may "stop the rot," and keep up with the totals of the last year or two. But, even if that were done, we should still be going behind. We should have overtaken no arrears, have got no nearer to catching up the population. Is it, then, enough to rest content with the means at present employed to meet the difficulty, to hope that the unexpected may conveniently come to our aid, and that, for reasons not very apparent, and in ways not easily traceable, the necessary men at last may somehow come to us? The innate conservatism of the English mind and of the English Church may make such a policy attractive, but it is not the policy which will long be possible. More than this is obviously needed. What can be done?

It is a little curious that more attention has not by this time been given to the age of ordination as an important

factor in the problem which fathers with sons who think of entering the ministry have to face. Is it not time to ask how far the lowering of the age for the Diaconate would procure a larger supply of men, and whether, if it be probable that it would, such a lowering of the age would be wise and justifiable?

Happily the subject is one which can be considered with perfect freedom. There is nothing in Holy Scripture which suggests any difficulty in lowering the age. The light thrown by the New Testament on the primitive Diaconate in no way suggests an office for which the maturity of twenty-three as compared with the youth of twenty-one is essential; neither does Catholic tradition embarrass us with a fixed age. At present our Church is at one with the custom of the Church of Rome as settled for the latter by the Council of Trent, but in the Greek Church the age is fixed at twenty-five. The Reformation settlement in no way suggests difficulties, but rather invites action. The first Prayer-Book of King Edward VI. in its Ordinal required a Deacon to be twenty-one. So did the Second Prayer-Book of Edward; so did the Prayer-Book of Elizabeth. Nor yet is the question in any way prejudiced by a unanimous agreement amongst the Church of our day. We agree with Rome in putting the age for the Diaconate at twenty-three; but the American Church and the Scottish Church return to the earlier age of twenty-one. It is clear, therefore, that the subject is more or less open. The age is to be determined by practical considerations, and there is no reason why the limit of one century should necessarily be the limit of the next.

What are the practical considerations which suggest the lowering of the age?

They are mainly, no doubt, financial. The cost of sending a son into the ministry of the English Church is in any case considerable. At its best it implies an expenditure upon training successively at a public school, at a University, and at a theological college or hall. The sum total so expended varies enormously, but even with the greatest care it means much unless the candidate is well fitted out with school and college scholarships. Now where the strain is most felt is towards the end, for a young man may very well take his degree at twenty-one. What is he to do until he is full twenty-three? The ideal is that he should address himself to the serious study of theology, either taking it as a second School at Oxford or Tripos at Cambridge, or by entering a theological college, or by reading at a foreign University. But whilst the son is earning nothing it is only the few parents who can stand this additional strain. It is probable

that the colleges and clergy schools will soon offer inducements in the way of exhibitions more freely than is now the case, but although this will do something it will not do all.

Instead of the ideal training, we know what often happens: a certain number of young men spend a year or two at home. They are supposed to be "looking around"—a desultory occupation not without its special temptations. In practice it comes very near that "loafing" which preparatory and public schoolmasters had so pertinaciously fought against. These men do a little reading for Orders, but until the Bishop's examination is within sight it is usually very little; it is mainly undirected, unsystematic, and as a result of very uncertain and variable advantage. Others take for a time to teaching—not a bad preparation if seriously regarded. But, as the candidate knows he does not mean to be a schoolmaster, he very rarely does take it seriously, and for this reason he does not for the most part obtain much advantage from it. As, however, assistant-masters are not, as a rule, underworked, his time is fully occupied, and he has little or no opportunity of seriously reading theology. Thus it happens that a year or two years which might be of inestimable value to a man both with the means and the inclination to use them well are very often wasted. The candidate is in no real sense a better candidate than he was at twenty-one or twenty-two; perhaps, indeed, something of the freshness of his resolve has been lost.

Now let us suppose that the age for the Diaconate were twenty-one instead of twenty-three, the age for the Priesthood remaining unaltered at twenty-four. At the son's age of twenty-one something of the burden may be lifted from the parental shoulders. I say "something" because it could not be expected that under such conditions the stipend of a Deacon should be upon the same scale as prevails at present. The stipend assigned to a younger Deacon might not be enough for him to live on, but, whatever it was, by so much would the cost to the parent be relieved.

That is one side of the question. There are other aspects of the subject which must receive due consideration before any definite conclusion can be reached.

1. There is the question of the candidate's call. There are some who fear that ordination to the Diaconate at twenty-one might mean the wide acceptance of men before their characters were formed. Men, it is urged, would enter the ministry without due forethought, trusting, perhaps, to a passing impulse, or relying upon convictions which would not stand the test of closer contact with the world. The result, if that were so, would be a greater proportion of men who, in entering

the ministry, mistake their vocation—men who all their lives are more or less confessed failures—men who are the Church's bad bargains.

There may be some danger in this; but is it not the case even now that the majority of men who take Holy Orders in the normal way had made up their minds before they reach twenty-one? Parents, as a rule, are anxious that their boys should come to some decision as to their profession or calling as early as possible. A boy who is going into the navy must know his own mind by twelve or thirteen; he can wait a little longer before deciding about the army. The law and medicine can also be held in suspense. Business or a branch of science cannot too soon be settled on. In like manner it is fairly certain that a considerable number of the candidates for Holy Orders will always be those who from boyhood have looked forward to such work. In their case is there any ground for the fear that their final decision at twenty-one would be less trustworthy than their decision at twenty-three?

2. There is the question of spiritual fitness. This raises the question of the work which the Deacon has to do. It is hardly to be expected that a young Deacon of twenty-one should be competent to instruct from the pulpit congregations whose spiritual experience and general mental equipment may be far greater than his own. The same complaint has been made about the Deacon of twenty-three, and, for matter of that, about the Priest of twenty-four also. A Deacon's work should be strictly confined within the limits assigned in the Ordinal, and, if he may not preach, it is at least possible that the congregation will derive as much profit from hearing him read a printed sermon by another hand. The way in which the distinction between Deacon and Priest is more than half obliterated under present circumstances is responsible for a good deal of the objections urged under this head.

3. The question of mental equipment is a little more difficult. It is an undoubted and regrettable fact that, under our existing circumstances, a Deacon is too often assumed by the incumbent to have completed his education. He is not expected or invited to work seriously at his books, save in so far as they refer to the Bishop's requirements for the Priesthood. Some of the Prelates are doing their best to counteract this evil by requiring Deacons to attend certain courses of lectures. It is a prudent arrangement which might be extended with great profit to the junior clergy. But in spite of this Deacons under the present system spend too little time on their books. Now if, with ordination at twenty-one, it were to be assumed that the young Deacon's opportunities for systematic study were to be no more than they are at present, such a change would indeed be disastrous. The standard of

learning amongst our clergy is not even now what it should be; under the new order that standard would be very greatly lowered, unless due care were taken.

But why should not care be taken?¹ The incumbent would pay a lower stipend, and expect less in return. Would it not be fair that the period between Deacons' and Priests' Orders should be regarded as a time during which every young clergyman was expected to undertake solid and systematic study? Why should it not be the business of the Bishop's examining chaplain to direct their study, or of one of the cathedral Canons to help the men in it? If this view of the Diaconate were accepted, instead of such change tending to lower the educational standard of the clergy it might rather help to raise it. Possibly such a plan might have the additional advantage of leading more of the clergy to continue habits of reading, and that all who have considered the intellectual side of modern clerical life will agree would be a very genuine boon to the Church.

4. There remain some practical considerations. It may be urged that clergy would not give a title to a man who could not for two or three years get Priest's Orders. There is something in that. In some parishes where there is only one Curate an incumbent will gladly put himself to the inconvenience of having only a Deacon with him for one year, who might be unable to face the prospect of having only a Deacon for three. On the other hand, there are incumbents who at present find it extremely difficult to get a Curate at all. Would they also decline to look at a younger Deacon because it would be so long before he reached Priest's Orders? Against this doubt we might perhaps put the possibility of a new class of Curacy rising up. There might be incumbents who have not the work for, and incumbents who have not the stipend for, a Deacon or a Priest under present conditions. But they might be glad to have just so much aid as a younger Deacon could give, and be able well enough to pay a proportionate stipend. Perhaps, too, some of them would feel a peculiar pleasure in training a young mind in the opening days of its ministry.

Doubtless other difficulties would be raised, and it is possible that other advantages might also emerge. Balancing the arguments for and against the change it seems at least certain that a case is made out for inquiry. No one would ask that a reform of so serious a character should be carried into effect without adequate thought and the fullest considera-

¹ The *Bristol Diocesan Magazine* for February, commenting on such a proposal, says: "We should think that such a plan might be worked in a way not inconsistent with attendance at a Theological College for the usual period" (p. 40).

tion of the subject from all points of view. But as inquiry and consideration must of necessity occupy some time, they cannot too soon begin. It is not a subject which can be left merely to the energetic support of the Church's volunteer advisers. It is one of these cases in which Convocation, if it were so minded, could be of real service. I say "if it were so minded," for it must be confessed that the high hopes expressed at the revival of Convocation have hardly been borne out. If the two Lower Houses had, for example, to show cause why they should not again be relegated to silence, and to prove by actual work done a right to continue in active existence, they would not find the task an easy one. Now here is a new opportunity for them—a possibility of rendering very real service to the Church, and through the Church to the nation. Let the two Lower Houses—and the two Lay Houses also, if they will—examine fully the propriety and wisdom of lowering the age for the Diaconate, and let them do it as speedily as possible.

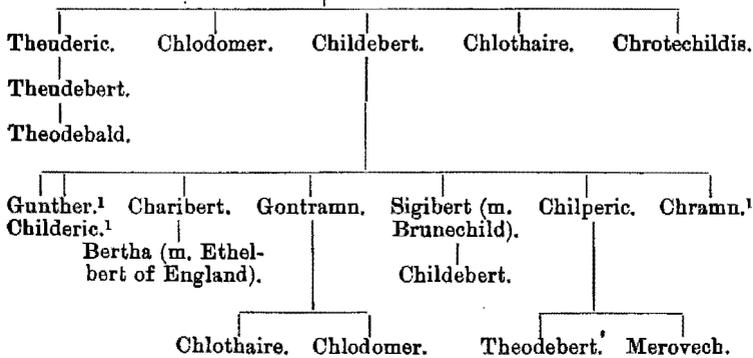
In truth, the whole question of the supply of candidates for Orders is so urgent, and present methods offer so little hope of effectively changing the situation, that any reasonable project calls for attentive and respectful treatment.

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ART. V.—THE LIFE AND TIMES OF GREGORY OF TOURS.

I.

Chlovis (died 511).



GUIZOT, writing on the "Civilization of France" in the sixth century, describes Gregory of Tours as being "always, without his knowing it, the truest painter of the manners and

¹ Died during the lifetime of their father.