

2. We must confine reason to its proper work in matters of alleged revelation. That is, to discovering its meaning, judging of its morality, and examining its evidence. If reason usurps the right of criticising and approving or condemning the several doctrines of the revelation acknowledged to come from God, it is not to be listened to.

3. Miracles are not to be regarded as vexatious excrescences which have to be thrust into corners, explained away, or apologized for, but as attestations by God to the teaching of those who are enabled by Him to perform them. Testimony as to their having been wrought is to be accepted on the same conditions as other testimony by those who believe in a divine governor of the world.

4. Prophecies of Christ are not to be evacuated of their Messianic meaning.¹

A perusal of much of our modern theological literature will show that each of these warnings is greatly needed at the present time. We may derive them from a study of Butler's works.

F. MEYRICK.



ART. VI.—A PLEA FOR AN EFFECTIVE DIACONATE.

THE extension of the Diaconate as a permanent vocation, to be exercised by those who do not forsake their worldly calling, is advocated by many as one great remedy for the dearth of clergy. It is supposed that the aid rendered by such men on one day in the week would be a great relief to the overburdened incumbents of our large parishes, whose Sundays are a ceaseless round of services in church and mission-room, and who require a larger staff of helpers than they can afford to employ."

The words here quoted occurred in an article in the *CHURCHMAN* of January, 1903 (p. 178). That article, having reference to the existing dearth of clergy, only dealt in a passing way with the proposal for the extension of the Diaconate, which is quite seriously advocated at the present time by some Churchmen. There is so much to be said in favour of that proposal that it is fitting to deal with the matter separately in a special article.

The remarks which have to be made will naturally fall

¹ According to Professor Cheyne, Messianic passages "simply mean that the people of Israel is to work out the Divine purposes on the earth, and to do them with such utter self-forgetfulness that each of its own successes shall but add a fresh jewel to Jehovah's crown" ("On the Psalms"). "That," he says, "is the fundamental idea of the Messianic Psalms," which are therefore neither typical nor predictive of the Messiah.

into three divisions: I. The present position of the Church without an effective Diaconate. II. The way in which an effective Diaconate may be developed. III. The results which may be expected to follow.

I. THE PRESENT POSITION OF THE CHURCH WITHOUT AN EFFECTIVE DIACONATE.

The Church of England recognises in theory the office and work of Deacons, as well as of Priests and Bishops. In practice, however, there is no organized use for the Diaconate. By the plan now in vogue, we only use the Diaconate as a kind of probationership for the Priesthood. Most English people, if asked to say something about the Diaconate, would be unable to describe the duties actually done in each important parish by the Deacons of that parish. They would simply be able to say that a Deacon is a young clergyman who is hoping some day to be a Priest, but who for the present is unable to take certain parts of the service. We not only make our Deacons mere probationer Priests, but we require them to dress in Priest's clothes; we call them "Reverend," as we do in the case of Priests, and we require their separation from secular occupation to come at the time of admission to the Diaconate, whereas it might very well be delayed until the admission to the priesthood, when it would come with a greater degree of suitability, having regard to the special features of the Service of Ordination to the Priesthood.

Another point of importance is that through the practical disuse of the Diaconate we fail to utilize, in any very thorough-going way, a large body of devout and capable men who might easily be brought into close association with our ministerial arrangements. In every large town there are a considerable number of Churchmen engaged in secular business whose religious convictions and whose devotion to the work of the Church are such as to make them quite worthy of being compared as Christians and Churchmen with those who are in the ministry. Many of them are men whose education has been nearly equal to, perhaps better than, that of some who are admitted to the ministry. They are quite qualified by education for reading in public, in church, without offence to educated people, the various parts of Morning and Evening Prayer, the Litany, etc., and the standard of their Christian living would make it quite certain that their private lives would not render any public ministry of theirs an offence to any of the congregation. Many of these men are already devoting the whole of their Sundays, and much of their leisure hours during the week, to helping

Church work; they are doing so without one penny of remuneration, and are thereby showing that they have the cause of the Church at heart. It seems a great pity that for such men there should not be a position of closest association with the ministry if they are willing to occupy it.

II. THE WAY IN WHICH AN EFFECTIVE DIACONATE MAY BE DEVELOPED.

1. By procuring an alteration of the statute (1 and 2 Vict., c. 106, §§ 29, 30) to make it apply to Priests only, and not to Deacons, and by altering the practice of the Church accordingly, so that those who are admitted to the Diaconate need not be obliged to surrender secular occupations.

2. By withdrawing the custom for Deacons to use clerical clothing and the title "Reverend."

3. By allotting to these Deacons such minor ministerial duties as the reading of Morning and Evening Prayer, the Litany, and the Lessons on Sundays as well as on week-days, the reading of the Gospel, and the ministering of the Chalice at the time of Holy Communion. The admission to the Diaconate should not *ipso facto* carry with it any authority to preach. The Deacon should only have the privilege if he "be thereto licensed by the Bishop himself," and he would not have any claim to be advanced to the priesthood unless he could show himself well qualified for the higher office, and be ready to withdraw himself entirely from secular work.

4. By inviting educated and cultured men employed in secular work to apply for admission to the Diaconate thus extended. The men thus invited might be expected from among those engaged in Government offices and in the offices of large banks, insurance companies, etc.

III. THE RESULTS WHICH MAY BE EXPECTED TO FOLLOW.

The outcome of a step of this kind would speedily appear in many different ways. I will endeavour to suggest some of the advantages which may with reasonable certainty be looked for.

1. In country places there would be a greater prospect of fuller remuneration and fuller occupation for the incumbents of small parishes. Many such parishes have but a very small number of inhabitants, and an income of under £150; two of these lying close together might be united under one incumbent, who might receive the income from both parishes, and in return be responsible for all the celebrations and sermons, while the duty of reading Morning and Evening Prayer might be provided for by the voluntary service of one of the suggested Deacons. The improvement of the position of the country clergy could thus be attained without any large

financial scheme, and, on the other hand, without any diminution of the opportunities of worship at present provided.

2. Many town parishes which now have three priests on the staff could manage with only two priests if these were aided by one, two, or three Deacons appointed in the way suggested. As a result, one of the priests would be released for the charge of some newly-created conventional district, while the remaining assistant-priest could have a more satisfactory stipend paid to him without any burden falling on the incumbent.

3. The Easter Day Communion difficulty would, to a large extent, disappear. The parish which has two Communions on Easter Day could have them taken by the parish priest, who, with some two or three Deacons, could manage the administration to a large number of communicants.

4. The existence of a large body of intelligent and vigorous Deacons would necessarily tend very quickly to raise the standard of general capability in their superior officers—*i.e.*, those admitted to the priesthood.

5. A very important link would be supplied between the ministry of the Church and those men who are connected with commercial life, to the very great advantage of both Christianity and commerce. The gap which at present appears to exist between commercial men and the clergy would necessarily become much lessened.

6. The plan would be the means of leading many young men to desire a more intimate connection with the Church's ministry, and to be willing to leave commercial life and prepare for the priesthood. This result would work itself out in two ways. Firstly, some of those admitted to this Diaconate, if still young men in years, might desire to save up their money for a college course, and then, after obtaining a University degree, ask the Bishop to exchange their Deacon's Orders for the Priesthood. Secondly, the sons of middle-aged men, who had continued for many years to serve the Church as Deacons, might very reasonably feel a desire not merely to minister as Deacons, as their fathers have done, but to go on to desire the Priesthood.

Conclusion.—I have endeavoured to set forth fully the proposal for an extended and effective Diaconate. It is difficult for the Church to deny that a large amount of good material exists at this moment near to its hand which is not being utilized in the fullest and most effective way. It is quite certain that the Church, by making more effective use of the most earnest-minded and energetic of her sons now in secular business, must, by using enthusiasm, increase its quantity and its power, to the immense gain of the Church's health and life and work.

PAUL PETIT.