

# Southwark ordinand

CEN. 13/9/63. Please return this when you have finished with it.

ON September 29, Michaelmas Day, 14 of us from the Southwark Ordination Course are to be made deacon. This will be the culmination of three years' study and preparation. We have had evening lectures, one full weekend away each month, two weeks' Summer School per year, examinations set by the London

University and by C.A.C.T.M., and, in the final year, a term of almost five weeks in residence at the diocesan training centre at Blechingley.

## Kenneth A. Gardiner describes his three years with the Southwark Ordination Course.

for a week or perhaps two it was all we could do to get to the lectures and take notes; giving up any attempt to write essays and keep up with our reading until the tiredness or pressure at work, or whatever it was, had passed off.

Then there was the problem of ordinary social contacts. It is difficult to explain to friends how it is that you cannot manage an evening in six weeks' time to come to have a meal; no, nor seven nor eight weeks' time. Perhaps it shouldn't be difficult; perhaps it is only our own impression that people do not understand whereas, in fact, they do. But it is difficult and it is a burden that has fallen mainly on our wives.

Full-time ?

Over three years ago, when I applied to join the course, I was asked whether I intended to continue my existing job after ordination or to work full time in a parish. I explained that I believed I should go to a parish because I did not see what I should be able to do as an ordained man that I ought not to be doing already. This view was expressed recently by the C.E.N. in a leading article, as follows:—

It should not be thought that clergymen who earn their living by doing a secular job can exercise some special ministry day by day which is denied to equally dedicated lay Christians.

I still believe I am right to be going into parish work but I am no longer sure that my reasoning was correct. This has nothing to do with sacerdotalism but is a matter of authority.

Once it became generally known at my office that I was training for ordination (and this was about half-way through the course) I found that what I said in discussions and conversation about the daily news, work and, indeed, about most things, was regarded as having a greater authority than before. I do not mean that it was necessarily accepted any more than it had been, but there was a change in the manner of rejection. The views I expressed were no longer those of a chap who had chosen to be a "bit religious," but they were regarded, in some indefinable way, as demanding greater consideration, before they were rejected, for my views were not mine alone but were regarded as those of the Church. This made me even more acutely aware of my responsibility.

In theory the ordained minister and "the equally dedicated lay

Christian" should be equally torn, hurt and wearied by the conflict between the Kingdom and the existing world order. In the light of personal experience, however, I can only say that whilst this should be so, in fact it is not. The strain has increased immeasurably during the three years of our course.

I cannot say that I have drawn closer to Christ during this period, that I am more aware of His presence. (I am not sure that such judgments are valid anyway.) I do not believe that I am more dedicated than I was before I began training; indeed, under pressure I have often thought the reverse to be true.

So, perhaps, it is a result of the reading, teaching and constant discussion (which is a vital part of the S.O.C.) that I have come to a clearer understanding of what the Kingdom of Christ is, and therefore it has become a greater strain to be in the world yet not to be of the world.

On the Monday morning after my ordination it may be that I will begin to experience difficulties and trials which I have never even imagined as an insurance clerk; but I am convinced that many of our clergy, who so passionately and rightly urge us from the pulpit to go and live out our faith in the world, have no real concept of how difficult it is to be a Christian from Monday to Saturday, and just what the difficulties are. That they should know is, perhaps, sufficient justification in itself for having clergymen involved in the daily business of the so-called secular world; but there is more to it than this.

If you once catch a glimpse of what it would mean if the whole world really did bow down before Christ: if you see what it does mean to say that God created everything and that therefore it is true that there is nothing in the created order which can rightly

be described as secular (except sin which surely is not part of that order); then you begin to see that if there is any place at all for the ordained ministry—and the Church of England has always held that there is—that place cannot be confined to the church building, the church service or the traditional tasks of the clergy: but that in everything there is a place for ordained and unordained, for trained leader and for the whole people of God as one Body, in bringing to full reality the work of reconciling the whole world to Himself which God effected in Christ on the Cross.

Employment

It is for this reason that some of my colleagues are to continue in their existing employment after ordination—not entirely clear yet just what function they are to fulfil, but endeavouring to learn and certain that this is the place where Christ would have them be.

The rest of us are to go as assistant curates in the more usual sense. Each of us will serve in a parish where we are happy to conform to the tradition, high, central or low. We have not surrendered our beliefs and certainly we have not been forced into some "Southwark Mould"; but we have found a wonderful spirit of unity beyond all this and not one of us would doubt what that Spirit is.

When I kneel at the Holy Communion at the ordination service I may be next to one of my colleagues with whom I have often argued as to the meaning of this Sacrament, and whose views I cannot accept any more than he accepts mine. But I am sure that he and I are at one in our longing to preach the Gospel—he at his office desk and I in the parish, for truly we are all one in Christ! Jesus and ultimately it is this that matters.

and "the equally dedicated lay