

CHAPTER VII

ORGANISATION OF WOMEN'S WORK

The Diaconate until the Reformation

It is impossible to find a systematic code of regulations in the New Testament for the appointment or the duties of any of the officials of the Church. We have seen this in the case of Bishops, Presbyters, Deacons. If, then, this be so, we cannot expect symmetry and system to be exhibited in the organisation of woman's work in the Apostolic Age. Phœbe was a Deaconess, but of the first appointment of Deaconesses we have no trace. There were "widows" in the sphere of Timothy's work, but it is not easy to say how many were enrolled that they might be supported, and how many in order to work, or how many for both purposes. It is not fair to fix our gaze on one side of the picture only and shut out the other. A man may solve the knot by saying, All "widows were almswomen in Scripture, while Deaconesses were quite different" (so Ludlow does), or another may say, "The sisterhood of widows is nothing more than that of Deaconesses" (so Bunsen), but in neither case can we accept the statement as complete.

Some say that we do not depend on Scripture alone; and that we must take tradition into account, but tradition means Church History, and it certainly does not remove the obscurity of Scripture.

Let us turn to Church History. One only needs to remember that Ignatius, in the second century, says "the virgins who were called widows," and that the Council of Epaône (A.D. 517) says "widows, whom they usually call Deaconesses," to be assured that Church History gives us no invariable line of demarcation between those three orders of women in the Church—virgins, widows, Deaconesses. It is long since any one of the names was in use to describe a Church Order. "Sisterhoods" take them all in, and that is no Scriptural Order at all. The "Apostolical Constitutions," dating, in part, from the third century, distinguish between Deaconess, widow, and virgin, while giving to each a place in the Church official rolls.¹ But from an early date the Western Church knew little of Deaconesses, while it was filled with the labours and honours of widows and virgins.

¹ Yet not at all the same place. The widows are to be obedient to their bishops, and their presbyters, and their deacons, and *besides these to the Deaconesses*, with piety, reverence, and fear (*Ap. Constit.* iii. c. 7). The Deaconess is also described as conveying to the widow the charity of the church (iii. 14). "Concerning virginity we have received no commandment, but leave it to the power of those who are willing, as a vow" (B. iv. 14). "Deaconesses were

ordained because the Diaconate was a type of service; widows and virgins were not ordained because theirs was only a condition of life" (Ludlow, p. 22). The widows and virgins were said to be "consecrated" (not ordained). The distinction between Deaconess and widows is by no means always observed. The (supposed) Fourth Council of Carthage in 398 gives to widows and virgins the function of instructing female catechumens (see Hofele, book viii. p. 412).

The Eastern Church was equally full of Deaconesses. Both Churches abolished all trace of the female Diaconate long before the Protestant Reformation. No considerable Protestant Church up to 1886 ever fully recognised a female Diaconate, yet many private Associations appropriated the title, and all Protestant Churches, and some that would reject the name of Protestant, nevertheless carry on their actual work by clergy and women. There is very little work done by laymen in comparison with what women do. Laymen have done great things, exceptional and individual laymen, but they have usually found it necessary to give up their ordinary secular avocations, and devote themselves to the particular missionary enterprise in which God has blessed them. They have not found others ready to share their burden. But women have seldom been left solitary by their own sex when they try to heal the ills of humanity, and apart altogether from official appointment of sisterhoods, there is no good work undertaken by the Christian Church in which "chief women, not a few," are not to be found heartily co-operating with each other as its chief supporters.

And yet when we ask under what name women have been most usually organised, it is not possible to answer. They had no special class-name in the Saviour's lifetime—those women who ministered unto Him. They were disciples, perhaps : even not certainly that till later on : apostles they were not. They have no special class-name in the Acts of the Apostles, those women who were of the company of disciples. Priscilla had

no official name, nor had Philip's daughters,¹ nor had Dorcas. But yet in that same period Phoebe was a Deaconess, and soon after that Timothy had a roll and order of "widows," which required new regulations, and must therefore have been some time in existence. When we come down through the centuries there is the same variation of names. We find Deaconesses, church-widows, virgins, nuns. We find all the names successively disregarded in the Church: and yet the inextinguishable Christian devotedness of women always assuming some new form in order that they might do some of the work of Christ's kingdom. All those early workers were drawn from the community without specific training, except what they might have found in their experience of life.

It is not easy to say what special causes led to the discontinuance of the order of Deaconesses. Many theories have been made, each of them probably containing some part of the truth. Deaconesses had been always more needed in the East than in the West, because their ministry was essentially social, and the social position of women in Asia Minor, and throughout the Eastern section of the Empire, was one of greater seclusion than in the Western, requiring therefore the ministry of woman. Both in the East and West, however, the idea of the ministry of each sex as a special caste overturned the earlier and better principles under which the officials of the Church were men and women discharging sacred functions along with the duties of

¹ Unless indeed they were counted among the prophets.

daily life. This led to nuns superseding Deaconesses. In the East, as we see from the experience of Chrysostom, Deaconesses were official members of the congregation; and this, probably, led to the order continuing longer than in the West, where the congregational idea was not so powerful. But even in the East there seemed to be less need of Deaconesses when, with the spread of Christianity, baptism of children became the rule instead of adult baptism. There was no longer need for Deaconesses to prepare female catechumens. There was also an element of independence in the position of a Deaconess which made her, especially in the West, troublesome to the male ecclesiastical authorities. While the vows of a nun, centring in obedience, made it easy for an ecclesiastic to govern a nunnery by mere authority, the Deaconess, who was ordained to do many fixed duties as well as some that were indefinite, had a more secure position, and her life was under the influence and protection of public opinion. The clergy, therefore, were more jealous of Deaconesses than of nuns, for such is human nature. Councils disputed the ordination of Deaconesses, and doubted their right to official seats in view of the congregation, and as the members of the Diaconate were thus discouraged, and the order was attenuated, devout women were increasingly attracted into nunneries. This process was hastened in the West more than in the East. Popes found it easier to govern nuns than Deaconesses, inasmuch as the latter were always more connected with the local bishop than the former were.

Perhaps the principal stages of the history of woman's work in the early Church may be presented in an almost tabular form at intervals of about a century.

I. *Period ending A.D. 100.*—In the period ending about A.D. 100 we find that the absolute freedom of the Church led to many various functions and honours being attached to Christian women. The varied custom of the Apostolic time still continued : there were women without class-names, also Deaconesses like Phœbe, and those of 1 Tim. iii. 11 (not "wives" but female deacons). In St. Paul's Pastoral Epistles there is undoubted mention of a special class who were called widows, whose functions he defines and whose qualifications he recounts. It seems, indeed, that there were two classes (1 Tim. v.)—one (vv. 9 ff.) of women old, and lone, and poor, who needed support ; another of women who had occupied a good position in life, and, having used it well, were now desirous of being registered as workers for the Church (vv. 3-8). Notices forty years later show similar variety.

About the end of the first century Pliny, as Governor of Bithynia, was desirous of ascertaining the truth about Christianity ; and, in order to gain knowledge, the elegant Roman did not hesitate to put two officials to the torture, choosing official women as less likely than men to resist the solicitations of torment ; and those women were Deaconesses, "*Ancillae quae ministræ dicebantur.*"¹ One reason for his fixing upon them

¹ "*Quo magis necessarium credidi ex duabus ancillis, quae ministræ dicebantur, quid esset veri et per tormenta quaerere*" (Pliny's letter to Trajan). *Ministræ* is the Latin translation of

to give him information may have been that they had official duties in the meetings about which he was inquiring. Not long after this period the oldest Christian Roman, Hermas, speaks of Grapte as having authority over widows and orphans. Grapte is not said to be a Deaconess; but in later times a Deaconess was often over widows or virgins (see *Apost. Constit.* iii. 7).¹ Near the same time, Ignatius salutes the Christian household, and the "virgins who are called widows"; in which passage he probably means *widows* whose holy continence and activity were so valuable to the Church.²

II. *Period ending about A.D. 200.*—We pass over a century, and about the year A.D. 200 we find Tertullian in North Africa, silent about Deaconesses, but full of the difficulties of arranging for Church widows and virgins. (His testimony comes next in date of Latin

the Greek *διάκονοι*, which meant deacons of either sex. In later times *διακονίσσα* was used to denote the deaconess.

¹ Polycarp speaks of widows as a church-order or class, always engaged in prayer for all and free from meanness and blame; and reminds them that they are God's altar, and that all their sacrifices—*i.e.* their words and thoughts—are minutely inspected by God.

² This view of Lightfoot's seems to solve the long-standing difficulty quite satisfactorily. (Lightfoot, *Ignatius*, vol. ii. p. 322). To suppose that Ignatius salutes those who, really virgins, were called

widows, is open to many objections. Were there no other "widows"? If there were, why did he not salute them also? If virgins were already eligible as widows, why does Tertullian, many years afterwards, speak (see next note) of the "collocation" of a young virgin of twenty in the widow-order as a "monstrous thing"? It is true what he specially denounces is the appointing of one not more than twenty years old, but he also vehemently dwells upon the anachronism of installing virgins in the widows' honoured place in church (*De Veland. Virg.* c. 9).

writers after Pliny.) Tertullian argues that virgins ought to be veiled in Church: that just as they veil from heathens in the streets, they should veil from Christians in Church. He urges married women to wear a full covering for their heads, and not a small tuft of something or other in mere pretence: and quaintly argues that the "head" which women are to cover is the whole head. In the course of his vehement, sometimes coarse, argument he lets us see incidentally what the position of women was. "Women are not allowed to 'talk in Church,' but the same prohibition applies also to teaching, baptizing, offering, or any manly function, lest they should claim for themselves a share in sacerdotal office"¹ (Tertullian, *De Virginibus Velandis*, c. 9).

¹ We have ample proof in Tertullian's writings that the merits of celibacy were growing in common esteem, so that, even in the assemblies of worshippers, special honours were paid to virgins; and that some of them, when admitted as church-widows, still went unveiled, inasmuch as they were virgins. It is after the passage quoted in the text he goes on to speak of a case in which a virgin of less than twenty years of age had been placed in the order of widows, whereas, had the bishop wished to make some provision for her, he might easily have found some less objectionable way. Thus it would appear that, at this time, those enrolled as "widows" re-

ceived salary or support from the Church. It does not seem that they were very active: they were honoured and provided for. The same idea of honour rather than of office, honour with support when it was needed, may be found in the Clementine *Homilies* (in part probably) of earlier date than Tertullian. It names "widows who have lived well," among those who are to be suitably "honoured." The passage which undoubtedly refers to support, because it cites the Lord's example as taking support in order to live, says, "Therefore suitably honour elders, catechists, useful deacons, widows who have lived well, orphans as children of the church" (Clem. *Hom.* iii. 71).

III. *Period ending about A.D. 350.*—After about another century we are in the era of Constantine and the Nicene Council, when the Christian religion became the religion of the ruler of the State; and the Church, amid great outward prosperity, was rent to its centre by controversies regarding doctrine. In those controversies women had great influence, mostly on the wrong side! Athanasius¹ complains of them. We are disappointed to find so little about the ministry of women in the work of the Church, but, thanks to recent discoveries, we can now show an official document of the third century directing the Deaconess to assist in the baptism of women, to teach and educate them afterwards, and to visit and nurse the sick (*Syriac Didascalia Apostolorum*, translated by Mrs. Dunlop Gibson, LL.D., c. xvi.).²

¹ Athanasius, *Hist. Arian. ad Monachos*, c. 5.

² Julian compelled virgins and widows (who were reckoned among the clergy, ἐν τοῖς κλήροις) to refund the provision which had been assigned to them from public sources. When Constantine adjusted the temporal concerns of the Church he had devoted a sufficient portion of the taxes raised upon every city to support the clergy everywhere (Sozomen, v. 5).

We find one interesting passage among the canons of the Nicene Council. There was a sect called Paulianists, followers of Paul of Samosata, who were heretical on the doctrine of the Trinity, and

it is enacted that they were to be re-baptized if admitted to the orthodox Communion, and their priests to be re-ordained. Then follows a difficult sentence regarding Deaconesses, and all who are ranked "in the list" (canon). "We remind those Deaconesses who were in this position that, as they have not had any imposition of hands, they must be classed merely among the laity." There has been much dispute about this, but we may conclude that some Deaconesses were unwilling to be ostracised with the rest of the Paulianists, and they were reminded that—owing to some peculiarity of proceduro in

IV. *From about A.D. 350 to the end, in the West.*—The year 400, using the date with some latitude, is the centre of the chief epoch of our historical survey. Councils, great and small, deal with the official position of women; learned fathers speak at some length of it; Canons, claiming to date from the Apostles, legislate upon it; the Eastern and Western divisions of the Church are seen to take opposing views of it; and, above all, the growing admiration of celibacy culminates in the predominance of Monasticism, in which Scriptural female ministry of women was, along with many other good things, eventually absorbed.

To begin with the "Apostolic Constitutions and Canons," a composite work, probably of various dates, some parts of A.D. 400, some even 150 years earlier. The Constitutions treat the Deaconess as precisely on a level with the Deacon, but having her special duties among the female members of the Church. And she is not only recognised as being on the clerical staff, but is ordained exactly as her male colleague was.¹ "The Deaconess," said Lightfoot, "was not a member of a community, but the officer of a congregation." In the assembly of the

the Paulianist Churches—they had received no ordination whatever. The subject of the ordination of women will come before us more fittingly at the next stage; but we may meanwhile note the fact that Deaconesses were sufficiently well known in the Eastern Church to be legislated for when the

First Great Church Council sat. Compare Hefele, i. 430, Lauchert's Canons, and Bright's Canons (1892). See Armitage Robinson in his appendix to his sister's book (p. 208), Cecilia Robinson on *The Ministry of Deaconesses*, London, 1898.

¹ See especially viii. 19, 20.

congregation the Bishop, who is compared to the commander of a great ship, is enjoined to give the Deacon charge of the doors by which men enter, while the Deaconess, in like manner, is to stand at the doors for the women and arrange places. "The very same thing let the Deaconess do to the women, whether rich or poor, that come unto them." She was to give charity, travel about, "minister and serve." "Let not any woman address herself to the deacon or bishop without the deaconess" (*Constit.* bk. ii. 57, 58; iii. 14, 19; ii. 26). [Comp. Ep. of Clem. to James, c. 14; prefixed to Clementine *Homilies*.]

Elsewhere the widows are enjoined to be subject to the Deaconesses with piety, reverence, and fear; and many directions are given to widows¹ which are an amplification of the injunctions of St. Paul, with no special importance for us except that they show that widows were distinct from deaconesses.² At the solemn service of the ordination of a Deaconess the following beautiful form is enjoined:—

¹ *Apost. Constit.* bk. iii. 7; and also cc. 1, 3; and ii. 26 (end).

² "Let not a bishop or a presbyter or a deacon or any one else of the sacerdotal catalogue defile his tongue with calumny. . . . For which reason, O bishop, do thou appoint deacons as thy fellow-workers and labourers for life and for righteousness, such as thou approvest to be worthy among all the people, and such as shall be unencumbered [ready] for the neces-

sities of the diaconate. Appoint also a deaconess who is faithful and holy for the services to the women. For sometimes thou canst not send a man-deacon to the women, because of the unbelievers. Thou shalt therefore send a woman-deacon because of the imaginings of the bad. For we need a woman-deaconess, for many necessities, and first in the baptism of women," and ff. (*Apost. Constit.* bk. iii. c. 15).

Concerning a Deaconess, I, Bartholomew, direct: O Bishop, thou shalt lay thy hands upon her with the presbytery standing beside, and the deacons and deaconesses, and shalt say:—

“O Eternal God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Creator of man and of woman, who didst fill with the Spirit Miriam, and Deborah, and Anna, and Huldah; who didst not disdain that Thy Only-Begotten Son should be born of a woman, who also in the tabernacle of the testimony, and in the temple, didst appoint women to be guardians of Thy holy gates—do Thou now also look down upon this Thy servant, who is to be appointed to the office of a deaconess, and grant her the Holy Spirit, and cleanse her from all defilement of flesh and spirit, that she may worthily accomplish the work committed to her, to Thy glory and to the praise of Thy Christ, with Whom, glory and worship be to Thee and the Holy Spirit for ever. Amen”¹ (*Apost. Constit.* viii. cc. 19, 20).

While the Deaconess is thus solemnly ordained, it is expressly said that the virgin is not ordained, nor the widow² (cc. 24, 25).

The Deaconesses had a special place set apart for them in Church, and, where widows were honoured, there seems to have been a similar respect paid to them. There were official seats to which they were expected to go. There seems to have grown up a confused idea that certain elderly official women had rank and place equivalent to that of elders; and the Council of Laodicea (after the middle of the fourth century, perhaps A.D. 364) gives a vigorous prohibition of their being solemnly installed with that view: “The installation of those called elderly women or female presidents in church shall not take place.”³ This does not bear

¹ The word for “appoint” is προχειρίζομαι (eis διακονίαν).

² Another passage says that deaconesses are not, like deacons,

to assist Bishops and Presbyters in the Eucharist (*Apost. Constit.* viii. 28).

³ The Greek is περί τοῦ μή

upon the offices of Deaconess and widow, but puts an end to the manufacture of another class of officials for whom Scripture gives no warrant.

When we come westward in our observation of the state of the Church, other officials than Deaconesses meet us on every hand. Deaconesses have never been accepted by the Roman Church to the same extent as by the Eastern, and it is of widows and dedicated virgins that the Councils of Hippo and Carthage and Nimes treat. "Priests are not to consecrate virgins without the consent of the Bishop" (Hippo, A.D. 393, Can. 34); widows or virgins are not to be consecrated unless they are competent to instruct ignorant women how to answer questions at baptism (Carthage, Fourth Synod, Can. 12).¹ This is Deaconess-work in the East.

There is no word of the Scriptural Deaconess in those injunctions, but there is abundant proof of the growth of monastic ideas, and of the absorption of all earlier offices into the ranks of nuns. It is even provided that when a virgin is presented to the Bishop for consecration, it shall be in the clothes she will thereafter wear "in accordance with her sacred calling" (Carth. (4), Can. 11).

δὲν τὰς λεγομένας πρεσβυρίδας ἤτοι προκαθημένας ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ καθίστασθαι (Laubert's text, p. 73). The old Latin forms of this vary, and ancient Greek renderings also differ. Epiphanius takes the word *πρεσβυρίδας* to denote age, not official rank; and this is the meaning in Titus ii. 3. Modern and mediæval critics and historians also take opposite sides,

some arguing that it forbids deaconesses to be appointed (so Hefele); others, that it only forbids their being ordained publicly in church (so Neander). But it does not name deaconesses.

¹ This Synod (A.D. 393?) is of uncertain date, and its Canons are regarded as a compilation (some time before the sixth century) of earlier Canons.

It is going too far to say that this abolition of the female Diaconate characterised the Western Church as a whole.¹ It was certainly true of the African Church. Monasticism was so completely predominant there that Augustine and other bishops gathered their clergy round them in such fashion as to become heads of monasteries, and Augustine's sister lived and died as head of a nunnery. The Gallican Church, like the Celtic, had always a hankering after independence of Rome, though submission was, for the most part, only a matter of time, so that it was Romanised a little later than the Italian and German churches. This tendency to resist Rome had probably been strengthened by the bringing in of Deaconesses from the Eastern Church to some parts of Gaul in the fourth century. At all events, we know that Deaconesses had still been found here and there in Gaul, because there was a Synod at Orange in the middle of the fifth century by which they were formally and summarily abolished! Even after that, the abolition was incomplete, for it had to be repeated at intervals for a hundred years. The privilege on which, it appears from frequent mention, women set so much stress, that of a special benediction in divine service, was also brought to an end in the fifth century.² Gallic courtesy seems to have made some bishops still

¹ It seems to have lingered here and there till perhaps the ninth or tenth century.

² Deaconesses shall no longer be ordained, and (in divine service) they shall receive the bene-

diction only in common with the laity (not among those holding clerical offices). Orange, Synod of, A.D. 441, Canon 26; Hefele, iii. 163 (Eng. trans.).

continue to honour the good ladies with the special benediction and with ordination too: because, a hundred years afterwards, some of them who had married again, in defiance of this isolating benediction, are actually excommunicated.¹ But, while the Deaconesses were thus abolished, the widows and their special dress are provided for and recognised.²

We see the whole process come to a head in a council which regards widowhood as the office, and the Diaconate as a mistaken name. "Widows whom they usually call deaconesses," says the Synod of Epaône,³ (A.D. 517, Can. 21). Thus the little struggle for a Diaconate in Gaul has been killed out; monastic ideas are in the ascendant, and, as Deaconesses were never monastic, they are no more heard of in the Roman Church. A plausible reason to account for the supposed past error of the Western Church has been found by this Synod of Epaône in a statement which contradicts the Bible. The Diaconate was too free an order—of too miscellaneous usefulness—to be under the dominion of men: and so it disappeared.

V. *The East*.—Far otherwise was it in the East. There the Diaconate was flourishing in the fifth and sixth centuries. There was need to restrict to the

¹ Synod of Orleans, A.D. 533, Canon 17.

² Orange, A.D. 441, Canon 27.

³ The locality of Epaône or Epaône is uncertain. It was somewhere in Burgundy. This is the full text in Harduin: *Viduarum consecrationem, quas diaconas vocat*

tant, ab omni regione nostra penitus abrogamus; sola eis penitentiae benedictione (benedictio?) si converti ambiunt, imponenda, Can. 21. Hofele seems to give a defective version. See Armitage Robinson in *Ministry of Deaconesses*, p. 212, by Cecilia Robinson (1898).

large number of forty the women who aspired to this sacred office in connection with the great Church of St. Sophia in Constantinople. There were gathered around the great bishop and greater preacher, John Chrysostom, many ladies of high birth, who counted no humiliation too great, no bodily austerity too afflicting (and, we must add, no amount of unwashedness too detrimental to health) to be undergone by them in their endeavour to adorn their sacred calling. The letters of Chrysostom tell this lady and that how much he relies on them for pious example and holy deeds. On one occasion he complains that women who had taken the vow of perpetual virginity make shipwreck on the rock of costly dress. His famous treatise on the Priesthood expatiates on the difficulty of managing widows and virgins, but does not speak of Deaconesses.

Two hundred years after Chrysostom, the Patriarch Cyriacus built a magnificent church in honour of his dead sister, who had been a Deaconess, and for centuries it was known as "the Deaconess Church." It is quite clear from decrees of subsequent Councils that for many centuries this Scriptural office of the Diaconate was a mighty power in the Eastern Church. Corruption, it is true, grew in upon it; the Deaconess ceased to go to and fro upon errands of mercy, and waited till she was sought out by applicants, or she confined her activity to conducting in some central place a class of female catechumens to prepare them for baptism, and then she became a sacerdotal official, with more and more of monastic peculiarities attaching to her, and doing less

and less of the work which Phœbe did. It is wonderful how all Christian activity tends to stiffen into formalism, and how in those earnest days robe and ritual and processional solemnity were substitutes for the lowly ministering of which the Son of man was the Example, and which His first disciples observed and enjoined. Chrysostom struggled, not too successfully, to *reform* the widowhood, but, I have said, he does not mention the Diaconate. We see Emperors and Councils trying to fix the best age for ordination, and changing it with a frequency which shows how unsuccessful they were.¹ They tried 60, and 50, and 40; they quoted St. Paul as their authority, and yet kept Deaconesses distinct in name from widows. Sometimes they did not keep their functions satisfactorily distinct. As Monasticism rose into such pre-eminence that, in order to hold their own in public esteem, the ordinary clergy had to become monks, and sovereigns were fain to buy the favour of the popular "Orders" by gifts and privileges, the ancient Scriptural Diaconate also conformed, and became (as the parochial clergy were) subordinate to the nearest brotherhood and sisterhood.

So late as A.D. 691 the Great Council of Trullo kept Deaconesses and widows quite distinct; but that was an Oriental Council. In the end of the twelfth century they were extinct in the ordinary Church, though they lingered among the Jacobites² till the sixteenth

¹ See the Council of Chalcedon fixing (Can. 15), 40 (A.D. 451), while Theodosius had fixed 60 about half a century before.

² The Jacobites are the Monophysite Christians, so called by themselves in honour of Jacob Baradaï, Bishop of Edessa (A.D.

century.¹ So far as I know, Deaconesses were almost, if not entirely, unknown as a part of the organisation of the Protestant Church, "Reformed" or "unreformed," until about a quarter of a century ago. In 1880 the Alliance of Presbyterian Churches, which met in Belfast, appointed a Committee to consider the propriety of reviving the Scriptural Order. At the next meeting of the Alliance, held in London in 1885, it was unanimously agreed, in accordance with the report of that Committee, to recommend the revival of the Order on a Scriptural basis, and as a recognised branch of Church organisation.² In 1886 the Church of Scotland carried that recommendation into effect and laid down Rules and Regulations, according to which women should be trained for the work they proposed to undertake. A Deaconess House for systematic training was established, and candidates for the Diaconate coming by that

541), who revived the Patriarchate of Antioch, and resuscitated the Monophysite sect everywhere. The Monophysites are found in Syria, Armenia, and Egypt; but the Jacobites, perhaps specially so called, are in the first-named division, and are under the Patriarch of Antioch, whose sway is owned from Mesopotamia to Palestine.

¹ There were at the Reformation several societies of United Brothers and Sisters. The sisterhoods in their several houses served or span and nursed the sick. There was one such house at Herford in Westphalia where the sisters and brothers gave up the mass

and became preachers and taught children, keeping their former garb. Luther wrote asking the municipality to let them be. Another community in Wallsdorf also became Protestant (see Schäfer, i. 70).

² I have pleasure in remembering that when I gave in the Report of the Committee—at the appointment of which many good men had expressed their doubts and fears—its adoption was moved by the eminent historian of the Church, Dr. Philip Schaff, and seconded by a distinguished minister of New York, Dr. John Hall; and its adoption, as said in the text, was unanimous.

avenue were required to be two years in training before they are set apart. It was also, however, provided that one who has for not less than seven years been known as a worker in the congregation of which she is a member may be set apart without further training. In either case, whether the candidate comes through the Institution, or through seven years of parish work, the kirk-session which ordains has to secure the sanction of the Presbytery of the bounds before proceeding to ordination. A Deaconess Hospital has also been opened, and in it, under the charge of a Deaconess, herself a trained nurse, candidates are trained in sick-nursing. Many Deaconesses are now at work in Scottish parishes and not a few are in the mission-fields of Africa, India, China, and Asia Minor. It is not too much to say that the Female Diaconate is now regarded with universal favour and respect throughout the Church of Scotland. Many of the Deaconesses work at their own charges, some at home and some abroad. It seemed a great step, this revival of the Diaconate, but, as we look back, we are convinced that a bolder and more complete plan would have secured even better results. Perhaps, at some not distant future day, the defects may be supplied.

But the ministry of women was never confined to the Diaconate, though the above was, as far as we know, the first official sanction of Deaconesses by a corporate Protestant Church; nor has the Diaconate been without imitation of the thing and appropriation of the name in our own day, although, in several cases, not the office of any church, but the result of private enterprise.