

# The Deaconess Calling;

Its Past and Its Present.

A BIBLE STUDY.

BY

W. A. BRIDGEMAN.

Published by the Board of Christian Literature, American Board of Christian Missions, 1892.

Copyright, 1892, by  
W. A. BRIDGEMAN.

11.13.05.

*Library of the Theological Seminary,*

PRINCETON, N. J.

Presented by

J. J. Ohi.

BV 4423 .W3 1893  
Wacker, Emil.  
The deaconess calling















# THE DEACONESS CALLING,

✻ ITS PAST AND ITS PRESENT. ✻

—BY—

✓  
EMIL WACKER

Rector of the Lutheran Deaconess House at Flensburg.

---

Translated by

E. A. ENDLICH.

Appendix by **REV. A. SPAETH, D.D.**



Published by  
THE MARY J. DREXEL HOME,  
Philadelphia, Pa.

1893.

Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1893

by

**THE MARY J. DREXEL HOME, Philadelphia, Pa.**

In the Office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington.

DEDICATED

—TO—

JOHN D. LANKENAU,

The Friend and Promoter

—OF THE—

**DEACONESS WORK IN AMERICA**

—BY—

THE TRANSLATOR.





# THE DEACONESS CALLING; ITS PAST AND ITS PRESENT.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### Origin and Nature of the Ministry of Christian Mercy.

1. The word *diaconate* means service, or ministry. It is used to designate, not every service, but only that which is done for the Kingdom of Heaven, or churchly service. It does not even include all of this. The Kingdom of Heaven is variously served, by word and deed. Modern usage inclines to limit the word "diaconate" to the ministry of mercy in the christian church. Where such a ministry is committed to women, as an especial life-calling, we speak of the *female Diaconate*.

2. *To serve*, is to use our strength and ability for the welfare of others. This may be done for life, or only for a time; voluntarily or by constraint; partially or entirely. If service is freely given, it is the exercise of a love, whose essence consists in living, not for ourselves, but for others. But genuine love is not to be found in this world of selfishness and sin, and therefore no wholly genuine service to God or man. The paganism of all times has held servitude in small esteem; paganism being the condition of the natural man, who loves only himself, and instead of serving others, strives to make all things serviceable to himself. Service was held to be unworthy a free-born man; and, as a yoke laid upon inferiors, was left to women and slaves. Service has come to honor, only upon the ground of divine revelation, and especially upon that of Christianity. All revelation of the Triune God is ministering love and compassion. Of His judgments even, it is said that, while the season of grace endures "mercy rejoiceth against judgment." (St. James 2, 13). The diaconate of divine grace and mercy began with the fall of man in Paradise, and is completed in Christ. He who, for the fallen, made "coats of skin and clothed them," He it is, who in

Christ invests the penitent with the garments of salvation; who feeds the hungry, and refreshes the thirsty with forgiveness of sins, with life and salvation. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." (St. John 3, 16). This is a service without a parallel. "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which is lost." (St. Matth. 18, 11). He is the Good Shepherd — the great deacon. It was He who said: "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." (St. Matth. 20, 28). In Him appeared the prototype of the holy diaconate. Wherever men believe on His Name, serving ceases to be despised, is rather loved above all things. Those who have been redeemed through His ministry can nevermore forget His example, of which He said: "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." (St. John 13, 15). By their works of ministering love will He one day recognize His own. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." (St. Matth. 25, 40). In His kingdom, in His church, those are greatest, who serve. He says of them: "If any man serve Me, him will My Father honor." (St. John 12, 26). Even though in this world our path of service lead us, as followers of Christ, through crosses and humiliations, inasmuch as the disciple is not above his Master, yet in truth, it leads to glory with Him. "He rules," says St. Augustine, "who serves Him."

3. Ministering love is not in every case the exercise of mercy concerning itself with the suffering. There is also a ministry of love for worship, for beauty, for honor, for adoration. But inasmuch as the ministry of divine love toward us sinners is essentially grace and mercy, so in this world of sin and misery, our ministry, as followers of the Lord, will be chiefly a ministry of mercy, the very conception of which was almost unknown to the heathen; while with it, Christianity stands or falls. *In the Church of Christ, mercy must have its home. The prophetic word and example of the Saviour demand it. His own sacrifice, as our High-Priest, imparts the needed strength.* Those who have been so dearly ransomed by it, must needs love Him, and in Him all for whom He has shed His blood. Love becomes a new law to them, — new, because now it is written in their hearts, not by the letter which killeth, but by life-giving grace. "The love of Christ constraineth us," writes the Apostle, "because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: And that He died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." (2 Cor. 5, 14. 15). The merciful are accounted blessed, because the mercy which they show, is an evidence that they have obtained mercy. The opposite is true of the unmerciful. (St. Matth. 5, 7; St. James 2, 13).

4. The Christian Church must let her light shine before men; that is, she owes it to them, to testify by word and deed, of the mercy of God, their Saviour. And this testimony must be pre-eminently one of deeds, "that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." (St. Matth. 5, 16). Especially is the duty laid upon the church, and the ability given her, continually to exercise mercy toward her own members; for those who have become believers, "being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." (Rom 12, 5.) "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it." (1 Cor. 12, 26). In the first christian congregation, "all that believed . . . had all things in common." (Acts 2, 44). The Christian Church, subject to the Lord, her royal Head, is one body, "and He is the Saviour of the body." (Eph. 5, 23). It is needful then, that the members, "Speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Eph. 4, 15. 16).

5. It follows then, that the Christian Church, in a matter as closely concerning it, as does the exercise of ministering love, must have its fixed rules. In the eyes of the world, as well as of the congregation, it must strive to render the practice of mercy as nearly complete as possible; and this is accomplished in the same proportion in which private and public, free and officially organized benevolence supplement each other. Here also the peculiar gifts of woman for the ministry of mercy will find due recognition. The Christian Church, beside other forms of the diaconate, cannot dispense with the *female diaconate*, which is an officially regulated service of mercy, exercised by women, for Christ's sake, among the poor, the sick, the wretched and the needy of every description, within and without the congregation. Only when the Christian Church abandons the faith, can she cease to strive after the most thorough realization of the apostolic charge: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Gal. 6, 10).

6. In contrast to christian charity stands modern worldly philanthropy. Christianity alone has taught humanity to recognize its oneness, and its common divine destiny. True humanity is christian. But, in its estrangement from God, humanity perverts the knowledge of self to its own heathenish self-glorification. It apes christian mercy, even to its name and dress. Among its endeavors, some are in themselves of value; while it may be said that its opposition to religion is as yet an unconscious one. Yet

in its alienation from the faith, it ranks among the strongest errors and forces in the kingdom of Antichrist. It is unacquainted with our deepest misery, — sin, and where it appears to help, it often works harm instead. It is either presumptuous self-love, or selfish good-nature proceeding upon the maxim, that “one good turn deserves another.” Vanity and ostentation are frequently the guiding powers. The Christian Church, in its war against Antichrist, dare not suffer the contrast between its own exercise of mercy and that of worldly philanthropy to be obscured.

7. In the christian exercise of merciful love, the principle obtains, that “charity to the soul is the soul of charity.” It ignores no form of misery, least of all the misery of sin. It distinguishes between the sinner and his guilt; not allowing the latter to serve as an excuse for leaving the former without help; but realizing also, that in order to aid the sinner, it dare not excuse his sin. With every benefit rendered, it bears in mind the “one thing needful,” and endeavors to render help for time and eternity. An imperfect copy of its divine original, it is alike humbled by this fact, and stimulated to further effort. The fundamental traits of this diaconate of mercy, as recognized in the example of Christ, to which it strives to conform itself, are: holy compassion, humble obedience and willing self-denial.

“For we have not a high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” (Hebr. 4, 15). In *holy compassion*, sparing the sinner but not his sin, He pitied the people, and recognized it as His office, to save that which was lost.

And “though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.” (Hebr. 5, 8). He called it His “meat, to do the Will of Him that sent me.” In *humble obedience*, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, He followed not a self-chosen path, but the path, appointed by His Father, to reach His end.

“For the joy that was before Him,” He “endured the cross, despising the shame.” (Heb. 12, 2). In *willing self-denial* He gave Himself up to death, even the death of the cross, until the time had come, when He could say: It is finished. Sanctifying Himself for us, He completed His work, that we also might be “sanctified through the truth.” (St. John 17, 19).

We then should look up to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. The human Diaconate must be found walking in the footsteps of the divine Diaconate, if it is not to prove vain, unprofitable and worthless.





## CHAPTER II.

### The Churchly Officers.

8. The Christian Church is built upon the foundation laid by the Apostles. *The Apostolic Office*, as the office of the founders of the Church, exists only for the beginning, but continues effective in the Church, especially through the testimony of the Scriptures. Bound up from the beginning with the apostolic office, was that office which is permanently needed for the continuance and growth of the Church, namely the office of the ministry. The Church could not have come into existence without the office, to which in her progress she is bound. The office of the ministry includes the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper, the office of the keys, and the preaching of sound, christian doctrine, without which the sacraments and absolution cannot be understood and spiritually appropriated. As the Saviour Himself instituted the apostolic office, by calling the Apostles, by preparing them to be His disciples, and by sending them forth, as He had been sent by His Father,—even so the pastoral office rests upon His direct commission. He has commanded His Church to baptize and to celebrate the Holy Supper, until His coming; He has commanded, to bind and to loose; and to teach those who are baptized, to keep His commandments. As regards other functions pertaining to the pastoral office, a direct divine commission cannot be proven. Neither has any fixed order been given by the Lord or by His Apostles, for the election of persons to the office of the ministry. No doubt it is proper that those already holding the office, should confer it upon others. But as to the manner of doing it, and in how far the christian congregation shall participate, there may be various methods, none of which, over against others, can lay claim to perfection. None can administer the pastoral office in the Church, who have not been regularly called.

9. In addition to the office of the ministry, we speak of churchly offices in a wider sense. Luther has translated the word "diaconia" with "office" (Amt). "There are differences of administrations (offices or diaconates) but the same Lord." (1. Cor. 12, 15.) The churchly diaconates are the practical exercise of spiritual gifts, incorporated into the congregational life. Every Christian possesses natural gifts, which sanctified by the Holy

Spirit, are made serviceable to the kingdom of God. Of these spiritual gifts—*charismata*—there is a great diversity. St. Paul, in the twelfth chapters, both of Romans and First Corinthians, mentions the most important. To these may be added the gifts of preaching and teaching, the gift of deeper spiritual knowledge, the gifts of administration, or rulership; the gift of caring for souls and the discerning of spirits, the gift of the exercise of mercy in its various branches, “the gift of healing,” of “divers kinds of tongues”, and others. The life of the Christian Church unfolds itself abundantly and vigorously, in proportion as a plenitude of spiritual gifts are operative within it. It is the duty of the Church, therefore, to awaken spiritual gifts, to perfect and organize them as completely as possible. The offices or diaconates thus arising do not rest upon the Lord’s direct institution, but are developments of the congregational life under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. From the diversities in the relationship sustained by the diaconates or ministries, to the one pre-eminent office of the ministry, have sprung the various form of existing churchly offices.

10. The Apostles combined in all their fullness both the most eminent spiritual gifts, and the churchly offices. As the Church increased, however, the Apostles were soon obliged to limit themselves to the most important of their duties. The first office to branch off was a diaconate. The duty of distributing the alms and of caring for the poor became too burdensome for the Apostles. “It is not reason, that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables.” (Acts 6, 2.) Thus, the laity co-operating, seven men were appointed to take charge of these matters. They seem to have assumed further duties, such as preaching and teaching. The administration of property and the care of the poor seem to have been the chief, but not the only work assigned to them. We hear later on, that in the churches the office of elders or bishops again became separated from the apostolic office; and their special function seems to have been the administration of the pastoral office proper. In addition, they had the oversight and government of the congregation, and the measure of their administrative ability seems to have decided their election. Still later, when the churches grew more and more numerous, an administrative office was formed, which extended over a plurality of churches; this office was again separated from the eldership over local congregations. Thus arose a three-fold group of churchly offices, the *administrative office*, the office of the *ministry*, having in its stricter sense the management of the individual congregation, and the office of the *diaconate*, embracing in its narrower sense the various duties of church-work and trust. Each office takes its name from the special charismatic gifts it demands, and the authority it confers. The name “diaconate” finally, remains only for more subordinate offices; although we emphasize

the fact, that administration, preaching, and the care of souls, are charismatic activities, and therefore diaconal. The bearers of the office of oversight are called bishops, those holding the office of the ministry in individual congregations, are called pastors. Deacons also may be entrusted with the ministerial office. There arise various combinations of the diaconates among themselves, and with the pastoral office. The New Testament already mentions one diaconate, to which women were appointed.

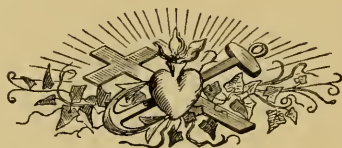
11. Church government has for its object, that the members of the congregation shall enjoy, in as regular and thorough a manner as possible, the services of the ministerial office. The diaconate, in its various administrations and exercises of charity, is entirely subordinate to it. The office of the ministry is and remains the one, with which the Church stands or falls. By "the perfecting of the Saints", into a "work of the ministry" is the "body of Christ" built up. (Eph. 4, 12.) To become a "work of the ministry" means, to experience the service of the ministry for our soul's salvation.

The diaconate in all its branches has been fitly termed a service at the doors of the sanctuary. Within, the ministry of the word has its place. The diaconate, however, prepares the way for its ministrations, or accompanies it, guarding and assisting it; gathers in the souls who are to benefit by the service of the sanctuary, or watches over the souls who have experienced its benefits, that the blessing may not be lost to them. It is always at the threshold of the sanctuary, that this service awaits those who come and go. In truth, it may be said of every diaconate, even though furnished with the most eminent spiritual gifts, that it is nothing but an auxiliary office, co- and subordinate to the one pre-eminent office of the ministry.

12. The office of the ministry cannot be administered without some charismatic gift. It can therefore be said of the call to all churchly offices, without exception, that it can take place only where the corresponding qualifications exist. To natural gifts must be added an adequate training, and an inward, spiritual vocation and preparation. At the same time such outward conditions as come into consideration, must be tested—the measure of talent, education and experience, the confessional standing, the general suitability of the candidate, as far as it can be determined. The inward and outward vocation culminates in the churchly ordination by prayer and the imposition of hands, whereby the co-operation of the Holy Spirit is the more assured, the more carefully and orderly all things have been conducted. The Scriptures speak of a "gift of God", which is imparted through ordination to a churchly office. (2. Tim. 1, 6.) And as this gift can be "stirred up", so also can it be "neglected". (1. Tim. 4, 14.) In no case is it to

be regarded as something that is outside of the general conditions of spiritual life.

13. Not all the charismatic activities in the Christian Church can be systematically gathered into offices. The Church must "covet earnestly the best gifts", and above all things, must endeavor to work "in the more excellent way of love." (1. Cor. 12, 31.) The more she does this, the more devoutly will her offices and ordinances be loved and cherished. But there are certain gifts of grace, of so tender and private a nature, that they are wholly beyond the scope of official classification; an attempt at which would rob them of their spirituality. It is enough, if we cite for instance the gift of healing the sick, or the gift of especially strong faith and spiritual communication. But apart from these, it is not to be imagined, that in this world the charismatic agencies will ever be fully covered by the existing offices within the Church. Therefore there can be no doubt, that in the churchly life, the *free, unofficial exercise of spiritual gifts is also legitimate*. The apostle charges the Corinthians with regard to the house of Stephanas. The members of this household are "the first fruits of Achaia", and "have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." To such, the christians of Corinth shall submit themselves, "and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth." (1. Cor. 16, 15. 16.) According to the Scriptures, certain diaconates thus rightfully existed, to which Christians, without especial commission from the Church "addicted themselves". These must have within themselves the love of order and discipline, and of obedience to the ministerial office. The less they are bound by any outward tie, the more must they in their confession and works of faith, bind themselves inwardly. Otherwise they fall under the condemnation, "He that is not with Me, is against Me: and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth." (St. Luke, 11, 23.) It is a feature of true churchly order, that while it permits freedom of charismatic activity, it excludes all confusion and caprice.



## CHAPTER III.

### The office of the Deaconess, according to the Scriptures.

14. The Apostle Paul writes, that women shall "keep silence in the churches". They are to "learn in silence with all subjection". (1. Cor. 14, 34. 35; 1. Tim. 2, 11. 12.) Anything else would not accord with the relation of the sexes, as ordained by God, nor with the position becoming to woman. She is therefore debarred from rulership within the Church, from public preaching and teaching, from the ministry in its stricter sense, and from all branches of the diaconate, which might bear any unwomanly features. For the rest, the Scriptures contain numerous testimonies in justification of woman's right to serve the Kingdom of God, voluntarily or in an official capacity.

15. Old Testament types of an organized official service of women in the sanctuary, are those who "assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation". (Ex. 38, 1; 1 Sam. 2, 22.). The care of the tabernacle, and the sacrificial rites performed there, gave sufficient reason for such service. These women seem to have been unmarried. When Jephtha's daughter was offered by her father as a sacrifice to the Lord, it probably means nothing else, than her consecration to such *celibate* service in the sanctuary. (Judges 11, 38. 39.) The "singing women", who are mentioned, (2 Chron. 35, 25; Esra 2, 65; Neh. 7, 67;) were probably also permanently employed in the sanctuary. Undoubtedly the Old Testament was acquainted with what we would term an organized churchly service of women.—Apart from their official character, the Old Testament prototypes of the Deaconesses are those prophetic women, in whom woman's most important spiritual gifts for the service in the kingdom of Heaven appear to us to be embodied. They are the four: Miriam, Deborah, Hannah and Huldah. (Ex. 15; Judges 4; 1 Sam. 1; 2 Kings 22) They prove that the Lord, in individual as well as in general cases, equips women with gifts of the Holy Spirit, needful for the service of His Kingdom.

16. New Testament types of Deaconesses are the women who ministered to the Lord during His life upon earth. Pre-eminent among them all is *Mary*, "blessed among women", who served Him, as did no other. She is the mother, whose soul was pierced by the

sword. As such, she is the exalted example of that spiritual dying, by which all natural gifts, all human relationship to Jesus must needs be broken asunder and transformed, before they can acquire spiritual value. In the Sisters *Mary* and *Martha*, of Bethany, is reflected for all time the relation our service to Jesus must bear to His service to us, which is "the one thing needful". The Gospels mention furthermore: *Mary*, the mother of James and Joses; *Salome*, the mother of Zebedee's children; *Mary Magdalene*, *Joanna*, the wife of Chusa, and *Susanna*. Of *Mary Magdalene*, *Joanna* and *Susanna*, and of many other women, it is said that "they ministered unto Him of their substance". (St. Luke 8, 3.) These believing women followed Jesus. Of some we hear, that they stood beneath His Cross, and that they went to the sepulchre, to anoint His body. They were of widely different social positions, and were indebted to Him for the peace of their souls. But as in Him they had found the fulfilment of Israel's hope, so they doubtless had a dawning consciousness, that through Him the temporal and social condition of woman was to be changed and improved. Throughout the Orient, and in a measure throughout heathendom, woman is regarded as a slave and a chattel. Even in Israel, woman's lot was by no means what Christianity has since then made it. This is proved by the statutes of the Hebrews with regard to divorce. How fully, on the other hand, did our Lord recognize the sacredness of marriage. (Matth 5, 31. 32.) How deeply he appreciated the honor of womanhood. (St. Matth. 5, 20.) His word, and the corresponding apostolic testimony (Gal. 3, 28; Eph. 2, 25—30) have defined the position of christian womanhood, which justifies our saying, that in an especial sense He became the Savior of woman. Thus the believing women of the Gospels rendered to Him, the Head, that service which all christian women, realizing their special debt of gratitude, should henceforward feel impelled to render His members.

17. More than a mere prototype of the Deaconess is *Tabitha*. (Acts, 9, 36.) The name signifies "a gazelle", and in accordance with her name, she was swift in well-doing in the Church, "full of good works and almsdeeds which she did." Although not regularly holding the office of a Deaconess, she yet, in her voluntary devotion, seems to have filled the position entirely. When she died, the poor and the widows of Joppa were her chief mourners. From this circumstance we may conclude that she was unmarried. That, having died in Christ, she was raised from the dead by the Apostle Peter, is only explained, when we recognize in the miracle a direct testimony from the Lord, as to the value He attached to such womanly ministry for the Church. That such special testimony was needed, is clear from the difficulty existing in the Christian

Church, regarding the regulation of woman's service in the Church, exercised as an exclusive life-calling.

18. A regular office of the diaconate of women is indubitably mentioned in Romans 16, 1. 2. Phoebe was "deacon" or servant of the church at Cenchrea, the port of Corinth. The Apostle calls her "sister". This mode of address presupposes, and arises from their christian unity of faith, a fact frequently forgotten in our day. Phoebe's service in the Church consisted in being a "succourer of many", doubtless in bodily as well as in spiritual needs. The Apostle himself enjoyed her ministrations, whether in weakness or sickness, or as a fellow-worker in the saving of the souls, cannot be determined,—it may have been both. Phoebe was probably the bearer of the epistle to the Church at Rome, an office with which, in the perilous times of the early Church, believing women were on other occasions honored. The apostle's recommendation of Phoebe is to us of general and special value for the cause of the female diaconate; first, as an *apostolic testimony* to the existence of a deaconess office at that early time; and secondly, as an apostolic recommendation, which enjoins upon the Church of all times, to receive Deaconesses "in the Lord, as becometh saints", and to assist them in whatsoever business they have need of the Church. The name Phoebe—"the sunny one"—is a beautiful reminder, of how the image of Christ, our sun, is to be reflected in the humble ministry of this handmaidens.

19. The New Testament tells of Lydia "a seller of purple" who, from the time of her conversion, began to serve the Lord among His poor (Acts 16, 15). The deacon and evangelist Philip, "one of the seven," (Acts 6) had four daughters, who lived unmarried and possessed the gift of prophecy, no doubt that of inspired testimony. (Acts 21, 8. 9.) Of Priscilla, the wife of Aquila, (Acts 18, 1—3. 24. 26; Rom. 16, 3; 1 Cor. 16, 19) it is related that she with her husband ministered to St. Paul, as well as to individual christians in the Church. The Apostle calls them both his fellow-workers. Their service was given in voluntary, but continued devotion, not only of their persons and strength, but also of their home and substance. St. Paul, in his Epistles mentions a succession of believing women, of some of whom he says that they "laboured much in the Lord", (Rom. 16, 12) as Tryphena, Tryphosa and Persis. Thus also Euodias and Syntyche (Phil. 4, 2. 3), who laboured with the Apostle in spreading the Gospel. Besides these, Julia and Olympas are mentioned, the sisters of Nereus. (Rom. 16, 15.) Of some of these women it is certain, that their service in the Church was generally known and recognized. Whether some of the women mentioned in the Epistles held an office similar to Phoebe's, we cannot say. It is not altogether improbable. At all events, these names are a weighty evidence for

the intense need felt in the Church of female co-operation. It is easy to understand, that many a germ and beginning of woman's churchly ministry, either preceded or coincided with the nascent organization of official service.

20. The passages in the Epistles of St. Paul to Timothy and Titus referring to the election of widows are also of great importance. (1 Tim. 5, 9. 10 ; Titus, 2, 3—5.) The widows in question were probably supported by the Church, and held a position of honor in the congregation. At the same time, they were obliged to take upon themselves certain labors and duties in the congregation, such as the instruction of the younger women in the christian faith, assistance at baptism and in the worship of the congregation, the care of the sick, and so forth. All such service was a necessary requirement of the church-life of that time. The position and the service of the widows explain the strict directions regarding their election. They must not be under sixty years of age, "having been the wife of one man," "well reported," as women and as christians, in practical and spiritual matters. In the election of widows, the questions to be considered as to the essential requirements of the office of Deaconesses, seem to have first been generally formulated in the Church. The office of widows was the form most readily available for such a churchly service, as that with which Phoebe, although not a widow, was specially entrusted.

21. In reviewing what has been said above, we find in the Old and New Testament :

a) Numerous types of the diaconate of woman, which abundantly express the inner nature of the matter.

b) Various germs and beginnings of a female ministry in the Church, from which its need, generally felt and, confirmed by the Lord, is made evident.

c) In a single case, the definite, apostolically recognized example of an organized deaconess office.

d) The rudiments of a form, in which the institution might easily and simply find general entrance into the Church,—namely the election of widows.

This is an important chain of evidences. The deaconess cause is securely established upon the sure foundation of God's Word. Therefore those who labor in it, may well have an easy and cheerful conscience.

"The Work is Thine. Lord Jesus Christ,  
The work in which we stand."

22. The Scriptures likewise give us ample directions, as to the requirements to be made of persons who are to serve in the Church as Deaconesses. They are in the first instance, the same



as apply to deacons. (Acts 6, 3.) Persons who are to be ordained to the diaconate, must be

- a) of honest report,
- b) full of the Holy Ghost,
- c) full of wisdom.

The first of these conditions demands that repentant sinners, if they have publicly suffered a loss of reputation, are yet, notwithstanding their repentance, excluded from the churchly offices. The second condition requires, that deacons be tried christians, experienced in spiritual matters. The measure of spiritual experience varies. One who lives spiritually, will have experience. Finally, the deacons must be practically gifted and competent, possessing insight and capability, each one for the office, to which he is appointed. More detailed directions are given in 1 Tim. 3, 8—10. They must “be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre.” Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience, they must strive to walk honestly and uprightly, according to the christian faith and confession. Their wives must equally enjoy the good report of a faithful christian life. In order that it may be ascertained, whether the men to be set apart for the office of deacons, fulfil these requirements, they must first undergo a term of probation.

23. In the requirements made of the Deaconesses by the Church, there is added to the three chief conditions of a *blameless reputation*, a *living christian experience*, and *practical skill*, a fourth—the *unmarried state*. Deaconesses must be either single women or widows. This is necessitated by the nature of the work. A married woman, whose duties lie in her home, cannot hold besides a regular office in the Church. It may even under certain circumstances, be advisable for a man who is a servant of the Church, to renounce marriage. (1 Cor. 7, 7. 8. 28.) “But every man has his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.” As a rule, and in peaceful times, a man is not bound through marriage, but made freer for the Lord’s service. On the other hand, if a woman is to serve the Lord, constantly and uninterruptedly, in a churchly office and calling, her single life must under all circumstances be taken for granted. (1 Cor. 7, 34. 35.) Of this, the apostolic ordinance of the election of widows is a confirmation.

24. If we review the passages of Scripture, which more or less bear upon the deaconess calling, the same chain of services and labors of love, as those which in our day constitute the duties of a Deaconess, may easily be deduced from them. To be sure, circumstances in the early Church differed greatly from those of the present time; and the work is determined by the circumstances. In the early Church, other duties no doubt occupied the foreground. To the Deaconesses was permitted a catechetical of-

fic in the Church, while the homiletical office was closed to them. Their catechetical service was exercised especially in behalf of those women who desired to become Christians. Instruction and education seem then to have held the foremost place,—that which in our day belongs to the care of the sick and the poor. Whatsoever claims the right of existence as a province of the female diaconate, must at all times and in some manner, establish its validity on the ground of the Holy Scriptures. And especially will the womanly service, once rendered to the Head of the Church, evermore remain the standard for all service toward its members.



## CHAPTER IV.

### Deaconesses of the Early Church.

25. Our knowledge regarding the conditions and circumstances of the early Church is very scant. During the first centuries the Church, under the pressure of persecution, was forced to exist in great seclusion; and this fact satisfactorily explains, why such written records as have been preserved, fail to give us a clear picture of its life. It is undoubted, however, that the need of a definite form of woman's churchly ministry early asserted itself; and in accordance with the need, the institution took shape. The period between the middle of the first and that of the second centuries probably solved whatever difficulties existed with regard to it. The origin of the ancient prayer of consecration of deaconesses, handed down to us, seems to belong to this time. As to the tradition, which ascribes it to the Apostle Bartholomew, there is no certainty. The purport of the prayer is a refutation of the objections and hesitations, which evidently were generally attached to the order of a churchly ministry of women. The manner in which the prayer solves these doubts, points to a very early period. They raised the question, whether such an organized ministry of women were not in opposition to the custom most carefully observed in the early Church, of strictly maintaining for each sex the position assigned it by God. The pagans had their priestesses. This the Christian Church justly regarded as sinful and unnatural. Tertullian and Epiphanius censure those heretics, who misconstrue the saying of the Apostles, that in Christ there is "neither male nor female"; who permit women to teach publicly in their churches, even investing them with the office of bishop or presbyter. Their censure throws a light upon the early times. The ancient prayer overcomes any objections, which may arise against the ecclesiastical ordination of women, by its references to the creation of man and woman; to the women of the Old Testament, who served at the doors of the tabernacle, or were prepared by the Holy Spirit for special duties; and to Mary, the Mother of our Lord. Were the prayer not of so early a date, a reference to the apostolic times, to Tabitha, to the writings of the Apostles, would not be wanting. But its origin seems to lie so near to the apostolic age, that the movements then taking place within the Church, may be considered as contemporaneous. We therefore venture to conclude

that this prayer affords us a glimpse into the very beginnings of the deaconess office in the early Church.

26. As regards the meagre historical information we possess upon the matter, it coincides closely with what we learn from the apostolic writings. We see that the existing need of woman's service within the Church, was at first remedied by the election of widows. The Christian writers of the second and third centuries, Polycarp, Ignatius, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen,—all make mention of the widows, who are designated as such, or as “elders”, “superiors,” or “sisters”. They were elected, installed in their office, ranked among the clergy, held a position of honor in the congregation, and received their support from it. Very remarkable is their designation as an “altar of God”, upon which gifts are offered, and from which the sacrifice of prayer ascends on high. They were to have reached the age of sixty years. Later on, younger women were elected. Their office of honor in presiding over the congregation of women, made their greater age a necessary condition. On the other hand, the work, among prisoners, in teaching, in the service of the bishop, called for younger women. The lowest age, at which widows were eligible, seems to have been forty years. Tertullian relates, as an instance of absurdity, that a woman of twenty had been received among the widows. As the requirements of the work became greater, the conditions originally laid down by the Apostles for the election of widows gradually receded. Not only were actual widows chosen, as in the olden time, women who had been married and had reared children, but also titular widows—or virgins. Ignatius sends greetings to the virgins who were termed widows. Although in the election of widows, woman's ministry within the Church was not the only object, yet this of itself became more and more prominent. In addition, a class of women was gradually developed, who led a pre-eminently contemplative life. The class of widows disappears, and in its place we find, on the one hand the order of Deaconesses, and on the other, the first beginnings of conventual life.

27. But in the earlier times there were not wanting followers of Phoebe in the distinctive calling of the Deaconess. As in Cenchrea, so elsewhere, a direct ordination of Deaconesses, unconnected with the election of widows, was found advisable. This is easily understood ; and an isolated instance, dating from the earliest time, is recorded. The prefect of the Emperor Trajan, Pliny the Younger, persecuted the Christians of Bithynia in Asia Minor. Pliny wrote to the Emperor with regard to these Christians, and his letter has been preserved to us. In it he relates what they had confessed to him concerning their faith and worship. Pliny writes further, that in order to learn the whole truth, he had deemed it necessary to *put to the torture two maids, whom the*

*Christians called servants*, that is Deaconesses. "I could not extort anything from them," he adds, "beyond a very perverted and boundless superstition." He therefore suspended his examinations, and submitted the matter to the Emperor. These statements of an imperial officer show that soon after the year 100 A. D., Deaconesses were found in the Churches of Asia Minor, and that their service was bound up with the religious life of the congregation. Outwardly their position was a lowly one. Pliny styles them maid-servants (*ministrae*). Even when put to the tortures of the rack, they remained faithful to their Christian profession.

Whether the churchly ministry of women was exercised by widows called in this capacity, or by Deaconesses especially ordained to the office, is not in itself of great importance. In the apostolic age as well, as later on, both forms were found, even the same names seem often to have been used for both, Deaconesses being spoken of as widows, and widows as Deaconesses. The institution attained its growth in obscurity, until we find that form predominant, in which the churchly office of the Deaconess has its distinct and independent position.

28. The book which gives us the most complete information regarding the Deaconesses of the early Church, is the so-called "Apostolic Constitutions", a collection of ecclesiastical instructions, which were gradually formulated in the Greek-Oriental Church, and were collected about the fourth century. Their contents as a whole, have no claim to apostolic origin, and their ecclesiastical value is contested, but their description of the congregational life is clear and trustworthy. They state that about the year 300 A. D., widows and virgins, living a life of self-renunciation, were commended, as consecrated to God, to the benevolence of the Church. But they no longer held a position of honor, as Superiors in the Church, nor any churchly office. *On the other hand, the various official activities of the Deaconesses are frequently mentioned; and their importance for the Church strongly insisted upon.* From the Apostolic Constitutions and other contemporary and later writings, are gathered the features, which complete the picture of the Deaconess of the early Church.

29. The official functions of the Deaconesses of the early Church were essentially as follows:

a) The Deaconesses were the *doorkeepers* at the women's entrances to the churches. This service seems to date back to the earliest times. Ignatius suffered martyrdom early in the second century. In a letter bearing his name, he writes: "I greet the keepers of the holy doors, the Deaconesses, who are in the Lord." It was necessary, not only in seasons of danger and persecution, but also for reasons of order and discipline, to guard the entrance

to the assemblages of the Christian Church. The entrances for men had their doorkeepers also.

b) *The Deaconesses assigned to the women their places at worship.* If female members of the congregation, who were poor or strangers, came to the church, the Deaconess was "with all her heart," to find places for them, as the deacons did for the men. The Deaconesses seem also to have held a sort of presiding office in the women's assembly. In the catacombs certain seats are shown, which it is supposed, were appropriated to the Deaconesses. When it became more and more the custom for widows and virgins to take the veil, that is, in self-imposed celibacy to lead a life of contemplation, the Deaconesses had the oversight of these women, and were responsible to the bishop for their proper behavior.

c) A ministry of the Deaconesses *at the Altar* cannot be positively proven. Yet as early as the second century a Roman bishop, Soterus, issued a decretal against the encroachments of women in this province. A ministry of Deaconesses at the Altar can only then be justified, when it confines itself solely to external matters, to the care and cleansing of the vessels, vestments and surroundings. The complaints referred to were no doubt caused by an actual excess of zeal, although views not compatible with evangelical simplicity and truth, gradually gained currency also with regard to the pastoral office.

d) As at the Altar, so at the *Sacrament of Baptism* the service of the Deaconesses must needs confine itself to externals. But there was obvious need of such service, when adult women were baptized. Baptism was usually performed by immersion in the baptismal basin, and after disrobing, the candidates were anointed on the forehead, eyes, breast, shoulders, back, hands and feet. When women were baptized, the deacon anointed the forehead only; the rest was done by the Deaconess. It was she who placed a garment upon the one to be baptized, assisted in the baptism, and saw to it, that all was done with propriety and decency.

e) The service of the Deaconesses was also very necessary in the *instruction of the female catechumens*, and in the capacity of missionaries in the women's apartments, to which men were not admitted. The ability to teach, in a judicious and proper manner, was a chief requisite in a deaconess of the early Church. It often occurred, as in the case of the parents of the martyr Perpetua, that while the husband remained a heathen, his wife and children turned to the Christian faith.

f) It was the duty of the Deaconesses, to be present at the *pastoral conferences* between the pastor and his female members. As the Holy Spirit is the mediator between Christ and the Church, say

the Apostolic Constitutions, so is the Deaconess the mediator between the bishop and the christian women.

g) In seasons of *persecution* the Deaconesses, it seems, were less exposed to danger, than men, in bringing bodily and spiritual help and comfort to those in prison and under persecution. They carried food to the starving, and read to them from the sacred books. In peaceful times they ministered in various ways to the sick, the afflicted, the bereaved, especially among those of their own sex. "They understand," says Tertullian, "the manifold emotions of the human heart, and all things, wherewith a woman can be tried." When christian women were obliged to visit the public baths, the Deaconesses accompanied them. They prepared the bodies of women for burial, and in honor of the dead, rendered whatever service is proper to women.

h) The Deaconesses seem frequently to have had a part in the bringing about of *marriages*. Their advice was sought, and they especially befriended orphaned girls. At weddings, they attended the bride, as the deacon attended the bridegroom. They were, so to speak, the feelers of the pastoral office in various relations, where access was difficult to the deacons. If they often became the bearers of important letters from the bishops, like Phoebe, when she carried the Epistle to the Romans over land and sea to its destination, it was no doubt for the reason that they were less likely to attract attention, than male messengers. It is supposed that for the same reason, in times of persecution, they had charge of the most valuable possessions of the Church, the sacred books.

The statement made in the Apostolic Constitutions that "we have need of the Deaconesses for various purposes", is confirmed by the foregoing. It is evident that the customs of the East demanded in a greater measure a diaconate of the sort described, than did those of the Western nations, among whom the intercourse between the sexes was much freer. Obviously the strength of the female diaconate of the early Church did not lie where we recognize woman's chief fitness for service, in the gift of rendering help in every description of need and infirmity (*antilepsis*). This was the result of the general churchly tendency of that age, but in the end it became fatal to the deaconess cause.

30. As for the conditions of admission to the deaconess calling, the apostolic directions, as given in the Scriptures, especially in Acts 6, no doubt remained in force. For the rest, no honest class was excluded. We hear of Deaconesses from every rank in life, rich and poor, descendants of consuls and senators, members of distinguished families, and of the laboring class. According to the Apostolic Constitutions "a chaste virgin shall be chosen as Deaconess". The conditions of age and life, which obtained in the election of widows, gradually lost their force for the deaconess

calling. "Modesty of behavior imparts to a maiden the dignity, and a living faith the experience, which none acquire, merely from being old." This was the rule also in the early Church. Olympias in Constantinople became a Deaconess, when she was till a very youthful widow. Maerina, the sister of Gregory of Nyssa, was ordained as a young girl. Chrysostom desired to ordain a maiden, Nicareta, but she chose in preference the convent life. These and other known cases prove, that in the selection of Deaconesses, the same principles were observed, by which we at the present time are guided.

31. In proportion as the deaconess work became a part of the life of the Church, and the systematic disposition and division of churchly offices took shape, the fixed churchly form for the ordination of Deaconesses was developed. Repeated testimony certifies that a regular ordination took place. It occurred at the chief service. The candidate was invested with a veil, and with bowed head stood, not knelt, before the altar. The bishop, with the laying on of hands, repeated the prayer mentioned above, which is as follows: "Everlasting and merciful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hast created men and women for Thy service; who didst fill with Thy Holy Spirit Miriam and Deborah, Hannah and Huldah; who didst not disdain that Thine only-begotten Son should be born of a woman; who also, in the tabernacle and in the temple, didst ordain women to be keepers of Thy holy gate: look graciously down upon these Thy handmaids who have been appointed for Thy service; grant them Thy Holy Spirit and cleanse them from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, that they may worthily perform the work committed to their hands, for Thine honor and to the praise of Thy Christ, to whom, with Thee and the Holy Ghost, be glory and adoration, world without end. Amen."—Deacons and Deaconesses assisted. The stole, a strip of cloth typifying the yoke of Christ, was placed on the shoulders of the candidate, with the words: "The Lord clothe thee with the garment of His good pleasure." It seems that in some places a ring and a chain for the neck were given the Deaconess. The ceremony closed with the celebration of the Holy Communion in both kinds. Afterwards the stole was removed, and not worn again. The consecrated Deaconesses were reckoned among the clergy, but possessed no priestly rights whatever.

32. Regarding the Deaconesses' manner of life, we can do little more than conjecture. A strict supervision was exercised. When once they had become Deaconesses, they could not abandon their calling, for instance in order to marry. Even at that early period the principles began to assert themselves, which afterwards in the Romish Church were to govern marriage and ordination. As a matter of course, the servants of the Church were bound, in



their relations with men, scrupulously to avoid any appearance of evil. Carelessness was punished, sometimes with life-long seclusion. If the Deaconesses possessed property, care was taken that they administered it properly. They were not permitted, to the exclusion of legitimate claims, to enrich churches and institutions. For “if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” (1. Tim. 5, 8.) This does not however forbid the Deaconesses, with prudence and forethought, to exercise the most liberal beneficence within the Church. They seem not to have worn a specified dress, especially during seasons of persecutions, partly for the reason that it would have served to attract attention. Later on, widows are mentioned as having laid aside the lay habit, and assumed the ecclesiastical dress. Whether this applies to nuns or to Deaconesses, cannot well be ascertained. Doubtless the latter, in accordance with the directions given by the Apostle, wore a dress, “which becometh women professing godliness with good works.” (1. Tim. 2, 10.) A letter of St. Augustine intimates that black was the color preferred.



## CHAPTER V.

### The Rise and Decline of the Diaconate of the early Church.

33. The deaconess office, as described in the Apostolic Constitutions, answered pre-eminently to the requirements of the Greek-Oriental Church. As Phoebe, the deaconess of Cenchrea, sprang from and belonged to the Greek Church, so the entire female diaconate of the early times, had its origin and its growth there. The fourth century marks the period of its highest development. When Chrysostom, in 397—407, was bishop of Constantinople, forty deaconesses labored under his direction. Among them were women of noble birth, as Procula, Pentadia and Sylvana. Prominent among them all was Olympias. She was born in the year 368, the daughter of a highly distinguished family; and in her youth enjoyed the friendship of the bishop Gregory of Nazianz. After marrying a highstanding imperial officer, Nebridius, she became a widow about the year 386. She was beautiful, devout, and possessed of boundless wealth. The Emperor Theodosius wished to give her in marriage to one of his kinsmen, but she refused, giving as her reason, that if God had wished her to remain married, He would not have called away her husband. Now, she said, she desired to serve the Lord. The bishop Nectarius consecrated her to the deaconess office. When the Emperor, incensed at her resistance, confiscated her property, until she should have reached the age of thirty years, she thanked him, saying that he had shown himself, not as an emperor only, but as a bishop, toward her, by laying the troublesome administration of her estates upon his own officials, thus relieving her of the care and anxiety in properly using her riches. The Emperor, repenting of his severity, soon afterwards restored her rights. She then exercised so munificent a liberality, that her benevolence was likened to a stream, whence all might draw, and which flowed to the ends of the earth. She herself lived in the greatest simplicity. While Chrysostom warns against the dangers besetting women who lead a spiritual life, who, having renounced the vanities of worldly dress, now seek by their very simplicity to excel and appear more charming than all others, this danger, seems, in Olympias' case to have been entirely overcome. Her outward simplicity was merely the expression of her saintly simplicity of soul. Her benevolence

and her ministrations were guided by the pastoral advice of Chrysostom, that excellent man and bishop. When, because of his steadfastness in the faith, he was driven into exile, her path became a thorny one indeed. Wise and faithful as she was, she became a support to the adherents in Constantinople of the exiled bishop; in consequence of which she was traduced by his enemies, and even annoyed with judicial proceedings. Chrysostom, from his place of exile, wrote her many letters, seventeen of which are still extant. They bear abundant testimony to his high appreciation of the deaconess office, and to his faithful, pastoral care of the sisters. On the other hand, they show how strongly the current of a mistaken work-righteousness, had begun to assert itself within the church. Chrysostom died in exile in the year 409, with the words: "God be praised for all things!" Olympias, admonished by him to bear her cross with patience, was not permitted until the year 420, to enter into the rest prepared for the people of God.

As in the churches of the Greek-Macedonian peninsula, so in those of Asia Minor the diaconate was established. The letters of Ignatius mention the deaconesses of Antioch in Syria. Later testimony is furnished in the lives of the great bishops of Asia Minor, Gregory of Nazianz, Basil and Gregory of Nyssa. Macrina, the sister of the two last-named, was a deaconess. Descended from a noble, christian family, she, as the older sister, and as a woman of high spiritual endowments, exercised great influence upon the religious development and career of her brothers, and after her father's death became her mother's support in times of great sorrow. She was betrothed, but her lover dying, she remained unmarried. Consecrated a deaconess, she served in her calling; but in later years, in company with other, like-minded women, gave herself up to a more conventual and contemplative life, subject to severe discipline. This inclination was favored by the tendency of the time. Her death was very edifying, and multitudes accompanied to her grave the sister of two of their most eminent bishops, herself greatly distinguished for the sake of her faith.

34. That the deaconess office was brought to Italy and especially to Rome, seems to be proven by the mention of Phoebe in the Epistle to the Romans, even though further evidences were wanting. These indeed, are scant. The daughters of a Senator, Praxedis and Pudentiana, gave their house and property to the church, and were deaconesses. The Church of St. Pudentiana, one of the most ancient in Rome, is said to be built upon the site of the sisters' house. They were buried together, near the Salarian road. Daciana and Theodora were deaconesses, whose tombs are in the catacombs. Other names are Lampadia and Romana, who seem to have been superintending deaconesses.—

The diaconate penetrated even into Gaul and Ireland, yet few details of its fate in those countries are preserved to us. It is said to have been brought to Ireland directly from the East. Whether St. Bridget, a contemporary of the Irish apostle Patrick, was a nun or a deaconess, is uncertain. It appears from her history, almost entirely obscured however by mythical additions, that she received churchly consecration, and spent her life in the service of the church and in works of mercy. She died about the year 520, and is buried near the altar in the church at Kildare. In Germany, the regular deaconess-work of the early church does not seem to have found an entrance.

35. In reviewing the above notices upon the spread of the female diaconate in the early church we are struck by the fact, that the broad channel, which it evidently made for itself in the Greek church, became noticeably contracted in the West. If we look aright, it is not because the form assumed by the diaconate in the East, was unsuited to Western conditions. Woman's special gift for the service in the church, the gift of "antilepsis," of rendering help, has its field both in the province of education, and in the relief of the manifold ills of the body. The diaconate of the Greek-Oriental Church was indeed acquainted with the latter form of female ministry; but it seems not to have especially insisted upon, or to have officially developed it. On the other hand the educational features became more prominent, and in a manner which no doubt, greatly resembled the present missionary work of women in India. Most particularly was the deaconess' participation in churchly ordinances encouraged, in accordance with the ecclesiastical conditions of the East. In proportion as the church became the church of the people, by the fact that infant baptism took the place of missionary baptism, a re-organization of the diaconate became necessary; in the West such a re-organization would not have become imperative, owing to the freer mutual relation of the sexes. For this however, the church-life no longer possessed sufficient vigor and spontaneity. A two-fold tendency then asserted itself, which could not fail to become increasingly disastrous to the diaconate.

36. The first to make itself felt was the hierarchical tendency of the ecclesiastical office, and of the entire clerical life. We cannot commend it, leading as it did to the radically false position of the Romish priesthood, to the celibacy of the clergy, and to many other errors of the Romish church. In one point this tendency however, cannot be condemned, namely in its opposition to woman's participation in the churchly service in its stricter sense. Under the conditions prevailing in the Orient, and as a makeshift, it might in the beginning have been permitted; but if the chief strength of the female diaconate of the early church, actually lay in its

functions at the worship of the congregation, it was a mistake, and could not bear the test of time. A touching of the hem of the Lord's garment is the most that can be permitted to women. And extreme tact and discretion are required, to prevent even the small ministrations that may be allowed, from outraging churchly propriety. Without any idea on the part of deaconesses of bold intrusion into the province of the pastoral office, — the position held by them, as described by the Apostolic Constitutions, was sufficient to make a change imperative. The female diaconate of the early church approached too near the "altar;" withdrew too far from the "doors;" it took upon itself too much of the ministry in the church, at the expense of the ministry in the congregation. Doubtless, here lies the cause of its decline, which could have been avoided only by a radical re-organization. But that the latter had become impossible; that in this respect the church-life was no longer sufficiently pure and strong, may be chiefly attributed to the prevailing tendency of spiritual life, which we usually designate as a *falsely ascetic renunciation of the world*, and mortification of the flesh.

The unregenerate man is self-righteous. Therefore it is easy to conceive that notwithstanding the clear testimony of God's word, the christian life is continually in danger of lapsing into work- and self-righteousness, however refined. Where this tendency is changed into a seeking after genuine spiritual righteousness, in conformity with the divine law, it is aided by the constant realization of sin and grace, as experienced by St. Paul. But it is only too ready, to become externalized into ordinances and achievements, by means of which, even in the times of Old Testament Judaism, it succeeded in maintaining its ascendancy. When the tendency to work-righteousness became increasingly predominant in the early church, it sought at first to satisfy itself by the exercise of outward renunciation. Thus originated the life of the hermit and of the monk. Persons bound themselves by vows, to renounce marriage, wealth and their own desires. They endeavored to overcome the resistance of nature by mortification of the flesh; overlooking the fact, that outward renunciation differs wholly from inward sanctification. At all events, the form taken by monasticism was, and continued to be altogether unevangelical. We admit that the convents of old were productive of much good, and that a withdrawal from the world, in view of the rude and stormy condition of society, was in a measure justifiable. We are even inclined to believe that a certain cultivation of the associated life, within judicious limits, is at all times of great importance for the church; and cannot, without loss, be entirely dispensed with. Yet the monastic tendency, which in the olden time commended itself to women especially, could not fail to prove the grave of the

female diaconate. In the same measure, as the latter in its true form led its members abroad, into the life of the congregation, the monastic life became its ruin. And yet it was precisely the associative feature of conventual life, which in the fullness of time, became the protecting envelope, out of which the female diaconate blossomed into new life. It was not the outward form of convent life which was at fault, but rather the false ascetic principle which governed it, and which caused the diaconate of the early church, unable to adapt itself to changed conditions, to perish rapidly.

37. In the East, the diaconate reached its highest development during the fourth century, after which it fell into decline. In the West, being less deeply rooted in the life of the church, its decay was more rapid. We occasionally meet with indications of the suspicion with which deaconesses came to be regarded. Their mode of life did not offer the same safeguards as did the seclusion of the convent; therefore the age-limit, at which they were entitled to churchly ordination, was set forward. It has even occurred, that deaconesses, who married after their consecration, were punished with death. As early as the middle of the fourth century, an isolated decree of the council of Laodicea forbade the ordination of deaconesses. Such prohibitions were repeated in the fifth century by Gallican provincial synods; to be effective, of course only within their own restricted limits. In Gaul itself we hear of the ordination of a deaconess, as late as the sixth century. Yet these prohibitions are significant indications of the general drift of opinion. When the churchly ordination of deaconesses was discontinued, their calling became a mere private affair. And so it happened, that after the eighth century the female diaconate came to be practically unknown in the West. In the tenth century, the priest Ambrose, in Milan, wrote a letter in which he asks the meaning of the term *presbyteress* or *deaconess*, occurring in an episcopal decree. He knew nothing whatever of the office. In the East, notwithstanding the occasional early instances of opposition to the ordination of deaconesses, the diaconate sustained itself longer. In Constantinople there were deaconesses in the twelfth century, and there still exists in that city a church, known as the "Church of the Deaconesses." In other centers of the Greek-Oriental church, the diaconate seems at that time to have wholly disappeared. A famous teacher of canon-law in the twelfth century, Balsamon, writes that in former times deaconesses had been acknowledged by the canons, and even had access to the altar; while herefrom, he adds, women are debarred, by reason of their sex. In the holy congregation of the capitol, Constantinople, deaconesses continued to be elected, without however, being permitted access to the altar. They met together on frequent occasions, and presided at the churchly assemblies of women. These were not ordained.

38. Notwithstanding the disfavor of the times, various memories of the early diaconate have survived. In the convents, the sister who has charge of the cleaning of the church, and guards the door, is called the "deaconess." And in certain communities, which, on account of divergent doctrinal views seceded from the orthodox church, the office itself continued in force. The Jacobites of the Syrian church, under their leader Jacob Baradai or Zanzalus, about the middle of the sixth century, rejected the doctrine of the twofold nature of Christ. The diaconate was preserved among them, essentially the same as in the early church. Their patriarch Michael, in the twelfth century, gave the bishops renewed permission to ordain deaconesses, because they were needed. The same was the case among the Nestorians, a community which separated from the church under Nestorius when in the year 431, the council of Ephesus rejected his doctrine of the separation of the two natures of Christ. Regulations for the ordination of deaconesses, compiled by this sect about the middle of the sixteenth century, are still in existence, and closely resemble those of the early church. The deaconess is to be taken from a convent, is to be forty to sixty years of age, and well recommended. The ordination prayer is recited by the bishop, who places his hands upon the head of the candidate standing before the altar. It is an imitation of the ancient prayer of consecration, with a strong flavor of work-righteousness. The ceremony closes with the admonition to the newly-consecrated deaconess, to guard herself against pride.

More important than these petrified remains, seems to us a little branch springing from the Germanic church, otherwise almost untouched by the ancient diaconate, and which greets us as a blossom prophesying a new Spring-time for woman's service in the church.

39. In the middle of the seventh century there ruled in Alsace a duke Attich, who commanded his first-born child, a daughter, reported to have been born blind, to be put to death. The mother rescued the child, and secretly placed it in a convent, where it was baptized, and, it is said, after baptism became seeing. The little one received the name Odilia. Hugh, one of her later-born brothers, meeting her, after she was grown to womanhood, he ventured to introduce her to their father, who then resided in the Castle of Hohenburg. In his anger, the duke struck his son so violently, that he died soon after. Then the duke's hard heart was softened. He did not a second time repudiate his daughter. To be sure, she was not of a mind to please her father. Her heart was aflame with the love of Jesus. Instead of yielding to her father, who wished to give her in marriage to a princely suitor, her heart was set upon a life wholly devoted to the service of the Lord. After long resistance, her parents finally yielded. Odilia

then gathered around her at Hohenburg believing maidens for mutual improvement in christian knowledge, and for works of charity. Their number increased to one hundred and thirty. Her parents took an ever livelier interest in her efforts. Odilia was under the guidance of Scottish and Irish missionaries, who, more than was generally the case, had kept aloof from Romish influence. This may explain why she, although a daughter of her time, yet found no satisfaction in the self-righteous asceticism, the merely contemplative life of the convent. She gave her sisters no rules. "We should bind no one but ourselves," she said, "and be mindful of those who come after us." Mortifications of the flesh and severe penances were not practised, for "not that which enfeebles the body, but that which purifies the soul, should be our aim." The requirements of holy charity furnish sufficient bodily labor, exercise and discipline. The foundation Hohenburg became wealthy. Many of the poor, the sick and infirm being unable to climb the hill, Odilia established a colony at its foot, from whence the sisters could, without great loss of time visit the sick and needy. A hospice, a hospital and an almshouse, together with a church and a home for the sisters were built here. and in contrast to Hohenburg, the settlement was named Niedermuenster. Odilia superintended her sisterhood for forty years. She nursed her parents, and was the comfort of their old age. Many of her kinspeople also entered the service of the church, and founded institutions in her spirit. On December 13th, 720, after receiving the Holy Communion in both kinds, she fell asleep in Christ, surrounded by her sisters. Her death took place in the Hall of St. John, at Hohenburg. She was afterwards canonized, the pope appointing her patron-saint of Alsace, and placing her foundations under Benedictine rule. For this she is not answerable. A few miles from Strasburg, the ruins of "Odilia's Convent" are still to be seen.

Odilia was not a deaconess in the sense of the early church, nor yet a nun in the sense of the Romish Church, of that or of a later day. Compared with the Irish Bridget, she seems as a flower, compared to the bud. On the other hand, her work seems a prophecy of the form in which, centuries later, a new future was granted to the churchly ministry of women; corresponding alike to the needs of the church, to the Word of God, and to woman's capability. A german, princely woman, following Jesus, Odilia stands outside of the more and more strongly marked opposing tendencies of the church, — half-way between the female diaconate of the past and the present; a genuine deaconess figure, springing like a flower from the deep soil of the church, ever and indestructibly the same.

---



## CHAPTER VI.

### The Renewal of Woman's Ministry in the Romish Church.

40. In reviewing the history of the female diaconate, the corresponding developments in the Romish Church should undoubtedly be considered also. They have directly and effectively influenced the modern protestant form of the diaconate. A correct appreciation of the latter will therefore be impossible, without a knowledge of the former.

As a matter of fact, after the early centuries, during and after the Middle Ages, women were practically excluded from the charitable work of the Church. The passages of Scripture, especially of the New Testament, which refer to the female diaconate, cite as its center, the exercise of mercy, which is in harmony with the manifest abilities of women. But, as we have seen, even the female diaconate of the early Church, in its later development, no longer possessed this center. The exercise of mercy fell more exclusively to the share of the bishops and their deacons. Later on, their place was taken by the monastic, and afterwards by the chivalrous and civic orders, specially organized for the care of the sick and the poor. That in all ages devout women have practiced mercy, that they have used their gifts in the education of children, in the relief of suffering and destitution, is certain. It was this gift that led to an activity like Odilia's, which yet, as an exceptional instance, stands out the more prominently from the general tendency of the time. This tendency absolutely discountenanced all public and churchly ministry on the part of unmarried women, whether in the immediate service of the sanctuary, or in the exercise of mercy (antilepsia). From the close of the early period to the end of the twelfth century, this state of affairs seems to have formed the rule. Then a change began to take place, which very gradually led to fixed and generally acknowledged organizations. Our chief interest in the history of woman's ministry in the Romish Church, lies in the progress and consummation of this change.

41. If we ask, why women in the Medieval Church were excluded from all public activity, not only from the service of the sanctuary in its stricter sense, but also from the churchly exercise of mercy, we do not find that the reason lies in the principles of conventual asceticism and renunciation of the world. If it did, monks

would have been similarly debarred. The growing predominance of work-righteousness prevented the exercise of mercy in the proper spirit, but to the work itself this tendency was rather favorable than otherwise. While this tendency alike prevailed in the convents of monks and of nuns, and throughout these centuries the form uniting convent life and charitable activity, so eminently congenial to woman's nature, was yet not discovered,—the reason must be sought in the conditions of the age. Marriage or the convent were the two alternatives open to women. The unmarried woman was relegated to the convent; and convent-life, although not of necessity, excluded women from all public activity. The times were too disorderly, the manners too rude, for Christian young woman to go abroad unhindered and without danger. So long as the fact that she was a member of a closely compacted association was insufficient to protect her; so long as seclusion behind high walls was necessary, so long the condition of society forbade a public, churchly activity on her part.

42. In the Middle Ages it was only women of high degree, who, protected by power and rank, first ventured out into the world with deeds of charity. Among the names handed down to us is that of Ida of Herzfeld, of Frankish descent, who lived with her husband, Count Ekbert, in Saxony, near the river Lippe. After she became a widow, she wore the veil, but without entering a convent, and gave herself up wholly to a life of charity and prayer. The church at Herzfeld, which she founded, and after which she was named by the people, was the scene of her activity. Here she built a cloistered walk, and in it she had placed the stone sarcophagus, which was one day to be her own. Twice each day this was filled with gifts, which she herself, with the assistance of a devoted priest, distributed to the needy and destitute, who came from far and near to share her bounty. She died about the year 820. Another name is more familiar,—that of Queen Matilda, the wife of Henry I., and the mother of the Emperor Otho the Great. She was of the race of the Saxon Duke Wittekind, and was born about the year 890. She was educated in the convent of Herford, under the supervision of her grandmother, who in her widowhood had taken the veil. She married about 909. In the course of her happy, God-fearing married life, she and her husband founded the church and abbey at Quedlinburg, where they lie buried side by side. She was a widow for more than thirty years, and experienced many of life's greatest joys and deepest sorrows. Numerous foundations owe their origin to this pious and unweariedly active woman, especially nunneries, which she endeavored to convert into "walled castles and nurseries of a holy christian life in a violent and tempestuous age." There the innocent were to find a refuge, the needy help, the suffering consolation. From them a higher

intellectual and spiritual culture was to radiate throughout the land. Convents and schools were to be identical. The royal lady sought strength in prayer for her manifold and far-reaching activity, and was a touching example of industry and labor. Everywhere, at home and on journeys, she sought out the poor, assisted the traveller, visited the homes of the sick, and herself instructed her servants, especially in the art of reading. If during the day she had been unable to accomplish any handiwork, she reproached herself, since "if any would not work, neither should he eat." Beside her eager care for the highest good, she was not wanting in fidelity to her earthly household; and in her humility and her dignity, was the object of the reverent admiration of her contemporaries. She died in the year 968.

We see from these isolated examples, how Christian women were drawn by their own hearts to the service and imitation of Him, who first loved them. But if the Church was to be able to meet with general rules this bent of woman's mind, it was necessary that the times should change. Only toward the end of the twelfth century do we find distinct indications, that a new era is actually at hand.

43. Souls were more than ever attracted to convent life, as a harbor of refuge, and a means of certain salvation. In proportion to the growing degeneracy, justification by means of works and of mistaken, self-righteous penances assumed more definite shape. Persons were also permitted to connect themselves with the monastic life after the freer manner of the so-called Tertiaries, whose adherents lived in seclusion in the midst of the world. This order of Tertiaries found great favor, especially among women. And quite as a matter of course, women living according to this rule came to practise such works of mercy as were consistent with asceticism. All this is significant. This re-organization of the life of christian women, which gradually came about, was by no means confined to those of the higher classes, although it is mostly with these that history makes us acquainted.—The Duchess Hedwig of Silesia is said only once in forty years, during an illness, to have eaten meat. She daily fed thirteen beggars, often upon her knees. She cleansed and kissed the sores of lepers, and was distinguished by her patience, calmness and peace of soul. After the death of her husband, she entered a convent which she had founded, and of which her daughter was the abbess. She died in 1243.—The daughter of her sister, Queen Gertrude of Hungary, was St. Elizabeth, Landgravine of Thuringia, whose figure is surrounded by a halo of poetic traditions. More than all others, she became to the German people the embodiment of woman's calling, which consists in serving the Saviour by works of mercy toward the least of His members.

Elizabeth was born at Presburg in Hungary, in the year 1207 ; at the age of four years she was betrothed to the son of the Landgrave Herman of Thuringia, and taken to the Wartburg, near Eisenach. The Wartburg was then a center of courtly culture, of poetry and pleasure. Thus Elizabeth grew up amid brilliant surroundings, and was a happy child ; but even in her childish play, the serious bent of her character unconsciously asserted itself. Her betrothed, the Landgrave Ludwig, succeeded his father in 1216. Five years later, the youth of twenty was married to Elizabeth, then fourteen years of age. Ludwig sympathized with the seriousness of his humble, pious wife, and their marriage was a very happy one. Elizabeth inaugurated an increasingly lavish exercise of mercy, and soon became the refuge of all the needy and suffering. Her charitable activity reached its climax during the prevalence of a famine. She also built a hospital at Eisenach, for twenty-four patients. Her confessor, Conrad of Marburg, then Grand Inquisitor of Germany, gradually gained great influence over her. The Landgrave permitted her, with reservation of his own rights, to vow absolute obedience to the confessor. She began to subject herself to severe tortures, which, later on, Conrad inflicted with his own hands. But all these shadows cannot obscure the image of her exquisite humility, piety and compassion. She had three children. In the year 1227, Ludwig died in Italy, while preparing a crusade. When the tidings reached her, Elizabeth exclaimed : "Dead is to me also the world, with its joys and pleasures." Much trouble was in store for her. Her husband's brother, Henry Raspe, seized upon the sovereignty, and banished her and her children. Fear of the usurper made her everywhere unwelcome, and she wandered about in great poverty, until her brother-in-law, at her petition, granted her the castle of Marburg on the Lahn as her widow's seat and property. Here she lived from 1229 to 1231, wearing the gray habit of a Tertiary Sister. She occupied a humble cottage, and with her own means founded an almshouse and hospital in Marburg. Urged by Conrad, she parted from her children, and became a model of the severest self-mortification and austerity. As early as 1235, she was canonized, and a splendid church was erected to her memory. This proves, how deeply the public sentiment was touched by such unreserved surrender and devoted following of Christ's example. Even though many features of her piety were false and exaggerated, the motive was certainly genuine,—the faith and the love, the humility, and the longing wholly to yield herself to Christ, and to serve Him among His lowliest members. Such an example could not fail to find followers. St. Elizabeth therefore belongs to the history of the female diaconate, although she had no idea of a deaconess office. She marks the beginning of a period, from which we may practi-

cally date a re-organization of the life of christian womanhood, and of woman's service in the Church. That this period had in fact arrived, is proven by the establishment of the Béguine Houses.

44. At Liège, in Belgium, there lived a priest, named Lambert, and surnamed "le bégue", the stammerer. He preached forcibly the moral depravity of the age, to which the clergy frequently granted immunity. He owned a small garden outside of the city, where he built a number of little houses, in the midst of which, in 1184, a church was erected, and consecrated to St. Christopher. The whole establishment was given over to a community of pious women. After many persecutions, suffered because of his preaching, he died in 1187, and is said to have been buried under the high-altar of St. Christopher's. It has of late been questioned, whether the name and origin of the Béguine Houses are really to be traced to him. At all events, during the 12th and 13th centuries, these houses greatly multiplied throughout Belgium and the Netherlands; southward, along the Rhine, and also in France and Italy. In Germany they do not seem to have extended farther northward than Hamburg. The crusades made many widows; these, and many unmarried women sought refuge in religious communities. In many cases they took the vows of obedience and chastity, without binding themselves for life. The novel feature of this period is, that such a free form of convent life had become safe for women. The Béguines lived separately in small houses built closely together, their doors marked with a cross. Often such houses formed an extensive colony, placed under the superintendency of a priest, who was assisted by a "matron". The Sisters at first wore no distinctive dress, but later on a brown, bluish-gray or black habit and a veil, were worn. Some Béguine Institutions were obliged to earn their own support, —others were wealthy. In addition to handiwork of all kinds, they were employed in the instruction of little children; in nursing the sick, for whom they frequently founded their own hospitals; in the dressing of the dead; as peace-makers in quarrels, and in rendering such assistance as they were able, to the priests in their pastoral work. Their church-life was zealous and earnest. During the period of their highest development, they accomplished a vast amount of good. They were permitted to separate from the community in order to marry, and retained the use of their property. Their manner of living was free from the rigid asceticism, which often governed the convents. A considerable resemblance between them and the diaconate of our day is unmistakable; with this exception however, that the associative, religious life and conventual contemplativeness are not with the deaconesses, as they were with the Béguines, the foremost object in the formation of the Sisterhood. To the Béguine Houses corresponded similar communities of men,

who were called Béghards. In the course of time, the Béguine Houses became the objects of suspicion and persecution. The nunneries cast envious eyes upon their prosperity; and the age was such, that the Béguines themselves could not withstand the prevalent religious demoralization. Laziness, mendicancy and unruly behavior appeared among them; they gave themselves up to great spiritual pride; and all manner of heresies and peculiar notions found a ready entrance in the secluded houses. It is easy therefore, to understand the disfavor in which these communities were held by the popes. In the Netherlands they accepted the Reformation, and have continued to the present time,—but their numbers are fast diminishing. If we ask why they repeatedly became the objects of frequent and severe ecclesiastical censure, it is certain that the preponderance of the meditative life, as well as the lack of discipline, were the causes of their decay. Yet a strong, wholesome leaven must have dwelt within these communities, otherwise they would not have enjoyed so prolonged an existence.

45. To the improvement of morals, without which the Béguine communities would have been impossible, was added, in the 14th and 15th century, a reformatory tendency. A new, spiritual life seized upon many souls, and formed a strong contrast to the misrule and corruption, which everywhere, in the convents, among the clergy and congregations, made itself felt. This movement also led to a renewal of woman's churchly life, with which the Béguine Houses were undoubtedly connected. Again it is the Netherlands, to which attention is directed. In 1340 there lived at Deventer a priest, Gerard Groot. After experiencing a thorough conversion, he sought, by the austerity of his life and by his preaching, to awaken a desire for holiness and discipline. He too had to endure much hatred and persecution, especially from the worldly-minded clergy. His life-work was continued in a brotherhood, to which was afterwards added a sisterhood. Like the Béguines, the "Sisters of Common Life", took no life-long vows. They differed from the former, in that a less degree of independence in the conduct of their own life, was permitted to the individual Sisters. They had home and purse in common, supported themselves by handiwork and teaching, and also engaged in sick-nursing. Obedience, humility and kindness were the virtues they aimed at. Sometimes their numbers were very large, and during the first half of the fifteenth century they had eighty-seven houses, which were governed by rectors. The book "Of the Imitation of Christ", whose author is Thomas a Kempis, bears witness to the spirit in which the Sisters viewed the associated life. This little book has come to us from one of these communities.

The Brigittine order, which originated in Sweden, seems, in

the beginning at least, to have had some affinity with the Sisterhood of the Common Life. Bridget, the daughter of a prominent Swedish official, was born in the year 1302, and grew up amid surroundings of varied mental and spiritual culture. She was exceedingly gifted,—worldly-wise and strong-willed, poetic and enthusiastic. From her eighth year, she fancied that she saw visions, and heard the voice of the Lord, whose death upon the cross moved her deeply. She married; became the mother of eight children; was for a time grand mistress of the royal court; made numerous pilgrimages with her husband, one of which extended to Italy; and, after she became a widow, lived in a convent, without taking the vows. She was very learned, and revered as a prophetess by the people. Her favorite wish was to found an order for the renewal of the Scandinavian Church. The king aided her in her undertaking. A convent was established at Vadstena, and Bridget's daughter became its first abbess. The rules of the order Bridget fancied she had received from the Lord Himself, and she obtained their confirmation in Rome, whither she journeyed with her son and daughter. She afterwards made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and on her return died at Rome, with the words: "Lord Jesus, unto Thee I commend my spirit." The order founded by her sought to promote popular preaching, education, and pastoral care of souls; it also endeavored to exert an influence by means of devotional books, among others, by the translation of the Holy Scriptures. The order, which also included monks, enjoyed great prosperity, which was followed by a speedy decline. The Brigittines were indeed nuns, but their characteristic feature was, that their communities recognized it as their prime object, to exert an influence upon the christian people. The attempt is scarcely to be considered successful, the usual style of convent life soon becoming predominant. But in itself the undertaking was significant of the spirit of the time. Neither the Béguines nor the Sisters of the Common Life, so decidedly as Bridget, claimed general influence as the object of their associated life.

It is noticeable that the reformatory current, returning, more directly than was usual in the Church, to the word of God, became a power in shaping woman's life in the direction of her cooperation in the work of the Church. We meet with germs and seeds, for whose continued growth the soil was as yet not sufficiently prepared. The Church before the Reformation is the Catholic Church, from which the reforming element has not yet separated itself, and which therefore, in virtue of that element, is justly claimed by Protestants as well as by Romanists.

46. Let us cast a glance backwards. Monasticism and the hierarchy had undone the diaconate of the early Church. Yet it bore within itself the seeds of destruction, lacking as it did, the

ability to renew itself in conformity with new requirements. It had swerved from the line of healthy development. Its chief strength lay, not where alone it must lie, in the exercise of mercy, and in the various manifestations of womanly charity (antilepsis). The pastoral office, however jealously it guards its rights, will scarcely, in a rightly constituted diaconate, see competition, but rather an important auxiliary. As the conditions then were, the deaconess cause of the early Church went to ruin. The striving after christian perfection insisted upon renunciation, rather than upon the exercise of holy charity; although it would seem obvious that asceticism and renunciation of the world would include the exercise of mercy, as the healthiest of all means for the subduing of the unregenerate man. Hereto was added the growing insecurity of public affairs, during the agitated periods attending the decay of the ancient culture and the opening of a new era. We have seen that, as soon as the times and manners improved, new beginnings of woman's churchly activity appeared. And now indeed its final direction was given it, which could be no other than the care of the sick and the helpless of every description. Under the breathing of the reforming spirit, the narrow sphere of woman's conventional life was broadened, and it became the sheltering home of ministering, merciful love. It is significant that, simultaneously with the Sisters of the Common Life, an association was organized, solely devoted to the nursing of sick women. It was a society of Tertiarian women, established in 1395, at Foligno, which did not however acquire a very wide-spread popularity. Its members were known as Daughters, or Sisters of Mercy; they also called themselves after St. Elizabeth. Thus we see, that primarily in the Church of Rome the transformation has been accomplished, which was a condition of the renewal of woman's ministry. Nevertheless, two hundred years again elapsed, before this Church had perfected that form of woman's churchly activity, which, in its essential features, exists to this day. It is possible that the negative attitude of the reformation exerted an obstructing influence. On the other hand, the reformatory spirit, even where it did not cause the Church, in repentance and change of life to submit itself to the Word of God, and renew its conduct and doctrine, yet every where called forth an increased vitality. The great means of power, which the Romish Church possesses in her orders and organization, at the given time placed themselves at the service of practical endeavor; and this Church has ever understood how to utilize whatever the period offered, for her purposes. Without doubt, the form which Romanism has adopted for woman's public churchly ministry, is a pattern for all times. It is the form of the close community, without cloistral seclusion, which grants to unmarried women protection, a freedom sufficient to employ her abundant



gifts in the service of humanity. In making this statement, it is needless to emphasize, that we by no means agree with the spirit which in the Romish Church penetrates the form and essence of woman's ministry, shaping and controlling its details.

47. Vincent de Paul, the founder of the Romish order of the Sisters of Mercy, is among the most remarkable personages in the Church-history of all times. The son of a peasant, he was born on April 24, 1576, at Pouy in Gascony, and at the age of twelve was placed with the Franciscan monks for instruction. He studied at Toulouse and took holy orders. His inclination to self-sacrificing works of mercy early became apparent. An inheritance coming to him, he at once gave three-fourths of it to the man who paid him the sum, and who was in need of money. When he was captured by pirates and carried as a slave to Tunis, he by his conduct prevailed upon his master, a renegade, to return to the Christian faith. The hearts of high and low inclined to him. He went to Rome and to Paris. He became court-preacher to the Queen; then parish-priest; afterwards tutor in a noble family, and again parish-priest. He fell into doubts, which he overcame; and in all the vicissitudes of his life continued always the same, a man in whom the love of Jesus was noticeable in a rare degree. After he had vowed to the Saviour to devote his life to the service of the poor, he developed an ever increasing activity in this direction. The family of the Count of Gondy, of great wealth and piety, whose son he had educated, aided him in his labors. Abundant means flowed into his treasury, and many souls were awakened. When one day in the pulpit, he asked assistance for a poor family, money was offered in such abundance, that it became necessary to introduce some sort of system in its distribution. He then founded an association of women for personal, continuous care of the poor,—a sort of Women's Society (*confrérie de la charité*). Associations of this description quickly multiplied. Vincent concerned himself especially with the prisoners and galley slaves, for the sake of one of whom, it is said, he once allowed himself to be put in irons as a prisoner. He also waged an effectual war against mendicancy. For pastoral work among the poor and humble, he founded a society, the "mission-priests", in whose training and guidance he demonstrated his own eminent, practical gifts, himself ever the most humble and self-denying of them all. His influence grew equally in times of war and peace, extending to ever wider circles. He died on September 27, 1660, and seventy-seven years later was canonized by the pope. His most famous and influential foundation was that of the order of the Sisters of Mercy.

It very soon showed itself, that the women's associations were not able to carry on a really thorough and systematic oversight of the poor and destitute, although—or perhaps because—it had be-

came the fashion, to engage in these duties. Many an enthusiastic beginning had proved but a flame of straw; and many a high-born lady soon left the exercise of her charitable duties to her maid. Vincent perceived that what was chiefly needed, was not large numbers of women, but rather the absolute self-surrender of individuals. The pious widow of Count Legras had for some time devoted herself to the care of the poor, to whom she brought bodily help and spiritual comfort. Vincent made her acquaintance, and, after proving her ability, induced her to become the superior of a sisterhood (1625). This sisterhood was confirmed in 1633 by the arch-bishop of Paris; and its members, called from their dress, the "grey Sisters" (*sœurs grises*) soon spread over many towns of France and other countries. According to the rules laid down by Vincent himself, the Sisters were to see in every sufferer the Saviour Himself. They must rise at four in the morning, twice each day engage in silent prayer, render willing service to those afflicted with loathsome diseases, and submit with unconditional obedience to their superiors. They were not to be nuns, nor bound by life-long vows; but after a five years' probation, were to take a vow of obedience, to be renewed each year. They were to come and go, wherever they were needed. The hospitals were to be their convents; the sick-wards their cells; their chapel, the parish-church; their cloisters, the streets of the town; their vow, obedience; their grille, the fear of God; their veil, holy modesty.

48. According to the rule of the order established by Vincent, the Sisters of Mercy remind us in many respects of the diaconate of the early Church, in so far as the latter numbered among its duties the exercise of mercy. The rules, however, did not remain as originally made, but were altered in later times, to conform with the monastic ideal. A rule of the order, approved in our century by the pope, provides that the Sisters shall rise daily at four,—on one day of the week an hour later. At half past four, morning prayer is said. From four to seven, from eleven to twelve, from two to three, and from eight in the evening, the Sisters observe a holy silence among themselves. The day begins with the hearing of mass; then follows breakfast, after which each one goes to her work. At half-past eleven is self-examination. At noon they dine, three quarters of an hour being allowed for this meal, during which, and also during supper, one of them reads aloud from an edifying book. At two there is a short lecture, at three adoration of the cross; at half-past four, evening meditation and self-examination, at five, supper. This rule, given for a certain diocese, probably does not apply in all its particulars, to the entire order, although similar directions are everywhere in force. It is difficult to understand; how the Sisters, with such cutting up of their time, can accomplish

much. Yet they have developed an activity, which is truly surprising. The power of adaptability, peculiar to the Romish Church is no doubt, in a high degree peculiar also to this order.

Vincent lived to see his sisterhood possess in Paris alone 28 Houses. The growth of the order has subsequently progressed in a similar manner. Its importance, notably in France, cannot be overestimated. In that country, the care of the sick underwent a complete revolution. Even a scoffer like Voltaire was obliged to confess, that nothing on earth was greater than the sacrifice of physical advantages, youth and often noble birth, made by the weaker sex, for the sake of relieving human misery, the sight of which is so humiliating to our pride, so offensive to our luxurious senses. Nevertheless, during the French revolution, a persecution broke out against the order. The Sisters were made to endure tortures of every kind, dishonor, and inexpressible brutality. Some were beaten to death amid the jubilations of the populace. The order was entirely abolished; and in consequence, the hospitals became scenes of revolting lawlessness. This continued, until Bonaparte restored order, and in 1808, at his mother's suggestion, again placed the order in possession of all its rights. At present, the activity of the Roman Catholic Sisters engaged in the service of mercy, is more wide-spread than ever. There exist, in Roman Catholic countries, more or less independent branches of the order, among them some, whose members are not permanently bound by vows of any sort, as the Ladies of Mount Calvary, a society of widows, devoted to the care of the sick. Convent rules predominate. Various female orders, as the Franciscans, have, after the example of the Vincentines, included the care of the sick and destitute among their duties, and furnish a large contingent of workers. A prominent community of Sisters, which has great influence in Germany also, is that of the Sisters of St. Charles at Nancy, named in honor of St. Charles Borromeo. A German sisterhood of this order has existed in Westphalia since 1808, and was founded by Droste Vischering, the Archbishop of Cologne. Approximate statistics place the present number of Vincentines at 28,000; of Franciscan nursing Sisters at 22,000; the Sisters of the Holy Cross at 6000; the Sisters of St. Charles at 5000;—more than 60,000 Sisters thus being at the disposal of the Romish Church in the service of mercy.

49. The fields of labor of the Sisters of Mercy and kindred orders are the care of the poor and sick, and the instruction and training of little children and young girls. Certain orders include both branches, others devote themselves to either one or the other.

A short sketch of the order of the Charles-Sisters, whose Mother-house is at Nancy, will serve to acquaint us with their manner of

living and working. The order is under the superintendency of a Sister Superior General, elected for three years, of a Vice-Superior, a Procuratress, a Mistress of Novices, and a pastor appointed by the bishop. The following persons are excluded from admission as postulants or probationers of the order : Widows, divorced women, women in weak health, orphans without property, girls who have been supported from the poor-fund, the children of humble parents, and girls who have been servants. The age for admission is not under eighteen, nor over twenty-four years. These are under the immediate control of the Mistress of Novices, and besides the cap, wear no distinctive dress. Their fare is meager, and the discipline to which they are subjected, is very harsh, in order to quench any false enthusiasm and exaggerated expectations. Such duties especially are assigned to them, as cause horror or loathing, and no relief or relaxation is permitted. Those who are found worthy, are admitted as novices, wear the habit of the order and a white veil, and receive practical training in the stations outside of the Motherhouse. In the third year of their novitiate they return to the Motherhouse, and it is decided, whether they shall remain. It is said that out of a hundred novices, as a rule only twenty-five are received into the order.

Those about to be received, must in addition, make considerable pecuniary sacrifices, first as postulants and novices, and finally on the occasion of their consecration, which demands at least 1000 francs, while frequently very large sums are paid over to the order. These moneys furnish the order with the means to carry on its work among the poor, the sick, and the little children. In spite of the difficulties attending admission, the applications are said to be very numerous. The consecrated Sisters wear a black veil. They take the convent vows before the bishop or his vicar, and, according to the views of their Church, are bound for life. The civil law permits an obligation for five years only, but this immunity is rarely claimed. Besides the veil, the Sisters receive a ring and a consecrated medal. They are passive instruments in the hands of their superiors. Sometimes they are recalled to the Motherhouse, and labor in its branch institutions; in the St. Charles hospital, with beds for two hundred patients; in St. Julien, where orphans are educated, and three hundred old and infirm persons are gratuitously cared for; in the Foundling Asylum, with four hundred children, who remain until the age of sixteen or eighteen under the supervision of the Sisters; in the asylum for four to five hundred invalids, whose ailments exclude them from the hospital; in the Almshouse and parish; in the Insane Asylum with five hundred patients, who are received at a nominal price. The activity of the order is enormous. We cannot calculate the influence exerted by one sisterhood like that of St. Charles; and what

can not be the result of the combined activity of the Roman Catholic female orders.

The Sisters of Mercy are the pioneers of Roman Catholic mission-work among the Protestants, as well as among Mohammedans and heathens. They know how to gain, in a high degree, the confidence of all classes, and command for every kind of work the most suitable persons. Within their own Church also, the importance of their work is very great. By their care of the poor and sick they serve the general good; by their educational activity they exert a wide-spread influence, especially among women of the higher classes.—The order of the Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus was established about the year 1800. The founder, Mother Barat, lived to see her sisterhood, principally devoted to the education of young girls of the higher classes, numbering before her death, 3500 members, with seventy convents in almost every civilized country. We can readily understand the attention given by the pope and the highest circles of the Romish Church, to an order of this description. Indeed, we of the Protestant faith can only feel deeply shamed, when we see how among the Romanists, high and low seem equally to realize the value of woman's co-operation in the service of the Church. Bavaria alone, a small Roman Catholic kingdom, is said to have as many nuns, as the entire Protestant Church has deaconesses. To be sure, forces are there enlisted, with which it is impossible to compete upon Protestant soil; and this must not be overlooked in our estimate of the above facts.

50. In the Romish Church, the Kingdom of Christ has become, what it avowedly desires not to be,—a kingdom of this world, a political power of the first rank. This position has been attained by adaptation to the pagan under-current in the life of mankind, and by the perversion of the Gospel of Grace into a more or less refined work-righteousness. Woman's ministry in the Romish Church also bears this impress. The vow of the Romish Sister, to follow the so-called evangelical counsels,—that is, to remain unmarried for life, to live in poverty, and to yield unconditional obedience to her superiors, is a yoke, which it would be permissible to lay upon others, or to take upon ourselves, only if God's Word expressly directed it.

But it is absolutely contrary to the Word of God, that a human being should thus arbitrarily dispose of himself or others. The Romish Church teaches, that a person, by following these counsels, acquires a higher degree of perfection; that in addition to the crown of life, he gains for himself a special little crown, and is moreover able to be useful and serviceable to relatives and friends in the matter of their salvation. It is obvious, how great a temporal power lies in such a binding of consciences, as is thus prac-

tised by these orders upon their members. Of this they are fully aware, and glory in it, over against Protestants. It is no less clear that, as the natural man is constituted, thousands are enticed by the allurements of work-righteousness, whose ears are deaf to the Gospel of Grace.

An inscription on the grave-stone of a Sister of Mercy in the Zillerthal testifies to the fact, and whosoever will ask these Sisters, will hear it corroborated, how deeply the thought of an *expected eternal reward* penetrates their service. No proof is needed, to convince us, that faith, bound in the Word of God, cannot, in a worldly sense, equal this. And yet it is faith alone, built upon the foundation of the pure Word and Sacrament, which possesses the power to animate with a true purpose the outward and modern form of woman's churchly ministry, which in its principal features originated in the Catholic Church previous to the Reformation. A renewal of the female diaconate in the spirit and in truth, was not possible upon Romish, but only upon Protestant soil.



## CHAPTER VII.

### The Protestant Renewal of the Female Diaconate.

51. The Reformation of the Church, which took place in the 16th century, was a return to the unchanging foundations of christian doctrine and life. The sole standard of christian doctrine is the Word of God, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Whatsoever contradicts this standard, must perish. The sole source of christian life is justifying faith. Whatsoever does not flow from this source, is not genuine christian life, not genuine christian morality, not genuine christian service. Wherever that faith gained the mastery, which knows no other doctrinal standard, save the Word of God; no justification, save that granted by grace for Christ's sake, without the works of the law,—there the rubbish of mistaken Romish traditions could not survive. The ancient fountains of life gushed forth; new life-germs burst their buds—a spring-time of regeneration had come to the Church.

The question is an idle one, whether the cause of the diaconate was among the subjects seized by the reformatory movement. Every age has its own problems to solve, every individual his own duties. Each one of us cannot and must not meddle with all. Consciences bound by God's Word could not remain strangers to a subject, to which that Word renders such abundant testimony. But under the pressure of circumstances it might easily occur, that a matter like the female diaconate did not for a long time enter the horizon of the men, whose foremost office and duty bound them to the questions which were to determine the christian and churchly life.

52. It is remarkable, that certain of the pre-reformatory movements proposed the immediate restoration of the female diaconate of the early Church. This purpose was pursued in a manner differing from those churchly agitations, in which the breathing of the reformatory spirit was felt, and which led to a re-organization of the associated life, as for instance in the communities of the Brethren and Sisters of the Common Life. For while here no rupture with existing conditions was contemplated, there was in the currents which actually ushered in the Reformation, a lively consciousness, that without a radical change, no genuine renewal of the churchly life was possible. It is significant that, disregarding existing circumstances, it was here deemed practicable to return

directly to the biblical diaconate of the early Church. Here lay at once the strength and the weakness of these attempts. The Waldensians, the reforming party in Southern France and Piedmont, who are traced back to Peter Waldus, and became prominent in the second half of the 12th century, appointed deaconesses in their congregations, according to the Scriptural directions. The same was the case among the Bohemian-Moravian Brethren, who in consequence of the movement inaugurated by Huss, separated from the Romish Church. Among the latter, the endeavor to construct and order the churchly life to conform with the apostolic congregation, went hand in hand with a deep and strong grasp of the saving faith. Since about 1457, they appointed Parish-deaconesses, in addition to the elders of the congregation. They were to constitute a female council, consisting of older women, whose duty it was, as mothers in the House of God, to look after and advise the married women, widows and young girls. They were to settle disputes, see to it that no one was falsely accused, and especially, that chastity and discipline were not neglected. Where they saw any wrongdoing or impropriety, they were to examine into it, and admonish the guilty persons.

These attempts failed to acquire any great significance for the Church; but they prove the close connection between the female diaconate and the Reformation.

53. The one thing needful, in order that the service of Christ might be revived in the Church in apostolic truth and purity, was the liberation of souls from the delusion of work-righteousness. Here lies the chief and permanent significance of the work of the reformers also in behalf of woman's ministry in the Church. The immediate restoration of the female diaconate did not lie within the scope of their activity. All the reformers, and pre-eminently Luther himself, never wearied of insisting, that "good works do not make a good man, but a good man makes good works," whereby the fallacy of meritorius achievements, the prevalence of which had brought about an inconceivable degree of despotism, was destroyed root and branch. He only is righteous and devout in the sight of God, who in faith possesses Christ, "made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Only in so far as we have faith in Christ, believing that by His blood alone we are cleansed from sin, only in so far can there be with us any question of good works. "Faith is a living, active, busy, powerful thing, working without ceasing."—"Faith is a living, confident trust in God's grace,—so certain, that a thousand deaths could not shake it. And such knowledge and confidence in Divine grace, which is effected by the Holy Spirit in faith, makes us joyful, fearless and glad toward God and all creatures. Thus without compulsion, we become willing and glad to do good to all men,



to serve all men, and to suffer all things for the love and to the praise of God, who has shown us such mercy ; therefore it is impossible to separate works from faith ; yea, as utterly impossible, as it is, to separate the light and flame of the fire.”

The modern female diaconate, wherever it deserves to be called evangelical, rests upon the rock of these fundamental gospel truths. Yet this preparatory reformation of life and doctrine by no means exhausts the influence, especially of Luther, in this direction. The royal spirit of this prophet of the Germans possessed the gift, with a marvellous perception of the truth, to grasp the smallest, as well as the greatest matters. Although he took no steps towards organization in the province of the diaconate, yet there is no lack of testimony on his part, which defines his position with regard to it. And we do not hesitate to attribute to these utterances of Luther an exceedingly great importance for the female diaconate.

54. Luther, as was to be expected, recognized woman's gift in the service of Christian love and mercy. The female sex, he says, has of itself, more than the male, the inclination to take pity on others. And it is notably among devout women, that this gift appears. “Women who love godliness, are wont to have especial grace, wherewith to comfort others, and relieve their pain.” This remark refers equally to the care of souls and of bodies. Luther also highly appreciated woman's educational gifts. In one instance he urged a parish to employ female teachers in its schools for girls. Bugenhagen also, in his church-orders for Brunswick, Hamburg and Luebeck, advised the Senates to employ devout women, obedient to the Gospel, as teachers for girls. In all this, there is no word of deaconesses. The actual deaconess institution remains outside of the horizon of Luther and his fellow-laborers. Yet we have cause to rejoice in this expression of their opinions. But we consider other remarks of Luther as still more important for the matter ; these refer partly to the diaconate in general, partly to monastic associations.

As regards the diaconate in general, it was Luther's wish, that an office for the administration of church property be associated with the pastoral office. “After the office of the ministry, there is within the Church no higher office, than this administration, by which the church property is rightly and honestly managed, so that needy christians, who are unable to gain their own livelihood, may not suffer want, but receive assistance.” This suggestion of Luther's was subsequently complied with, by a regulation of the oversight of the poor, which, however, gradually became mostly a State or municipal office, in more or less close connection with the Church, or entirely separate from it. The election of the Seven, (Acts 6,) and the remembrance of the charitable work

of the Church of all times, could not fail to direct Luther's attention to this matter, which appeared to him both necessary and practically feasible. On the other hand, he did not consider a more comprehensive organization of the diaconate possible in his time. "It were well, if we had the right kind of people to begin it, could it be begun in this manner, that a city be divided into four or five parts, and to each part be assigned a pastor and several deacons, who would supply that district with preaching and almsgiving, visit the sick, and see to it, that none suffered want. But we have not the men for it. Therefore I fear to undertake it, until our Lord God shall make christians." Here the entire province of the diaconate, as a personal office of rendering bodily and spiritual aid, is placed beside the office of the ministry, to relieve the latter, that it may the more unhindered give itself to preaching and prayer. Had such an arrangement been practicable, christian women would no doubt have found their place in it. But Luther did not venture upon the undertaking; the times and conditions seemed unpropitious, and the individuals were lacking. His clear, unprejudiced mind here also remained true to itself. But if the congregation, as such, cannot furnish the individuals, the question arises, whether they cannot be found elsewhere. This brings us to Luther's position with regard to conventual associations.

He had broken the spell of monastic vows and traditions, and had recognized that the whole doctrine of the evangelical councils, and the condition of Christian perfection to be attained through their observance, by means of adherence to the vows, was nothing but "unbelief, blasphemy and contempt of the Gospel." He knew too, what a miasma of immorality and ignorance had prevailed in the convents. Thus he waged war upon monasticism, and was almost inexhaustible in fresh attacks. It was not the form of the conventual association, which he combated, but the false Romish spirit which animated that form. Where God's Word and the Gospel are held supreme, there the life in convent-form has Luther's approval, and he even acknowledges that it may be of signal benefit to the Church. In the year 1532, the Senate of the City of Herford proposed to abolish the Brothers' and Sisters' houses there, and compel the inmates to relinquish their calling and distinctive dress. Luther then wrote to the Senate: "You doubtless know that needless innovations in divine things are very dangerous. Now, inasmuch as these brethren and sisters lead an honest life, and have an honorable, well-conducted community; moreover as they faithfully honor and obey the pure doctrine—which they were the first among you to receive—it is my friendly petition, that your worships will not permit them to suffer anxiety and bitterness in this matter, and will allow them furthermore to wear their clerical habit, and practise all praiseworthy customs, not contrary to

the Gospel, for such convents please me beyond measure. Would to God, all convents were thus, then all cities and lands would be well served." To the prior and reformer of the Brother's House at Herford, Montanus, and to one of the brethren, Luther wrote: "Grace and peace! I received your letter and Gerhard's, and have written to the Senate of your city in this matter, that it may protect and defend your Society. For your conduct of life, which is lived and taught purely according to the Gospel of Christ, pleases me exceedingly, and I wish that there had been, and were now more such monastic institutions. I dare not wish much, but if all things were thus, the Church were fully blessed, even in this life. Your habit and other praiseworthy customs, heretofore observed, are no detriment to the Gospel, but rather an aid against the unrestrained, lawless christians of our day, who are well able to destroy, but not to build up." Luther acknowledged that convent life afforded protection, saying that men like Bernard of Clairvaux did not enter the monastery in order to become righteous and holy, but because they were righteous and holy before, and might there live apart from the world. Luther appreciated the associated life, because it permits more fixed habits of devotion. But he doubtless considered how great a practical use it could have for the Church at large. Yet, after the experiences heretofore made in the convents, he did not venture to establish organizations like those he recommended to the people of Herford. He probably did not think former monks and nuns proper material, with which to begin the work. They were not in his eyes, the "christians," of whom he said that God must first make them, if the true diaconate were to be arrived at.

Luther's unprejudiced appreciation of the associated life appears very significant. We find with him the germs of all the fundamental views, which afterwards asserted themselves in the protestant renewal of the female Diaconate. In our day, to be sure, an understanding is often lacking of the connection between these same fundamental views, and that which had become a matter of history in the Church before the Reformation. It might prove profitable, to the Diaconate as well as to our churchly life, if such an understanding were more general.

55. Luther and the men of the Reformation prepared the soil for a new growth of charitable activity within the Church; but they did not reach noteworthy practical results in this direction, especially as regards the female Diaconate. There was no lack of women, in whose lives the justifying faith expressed itself in all its strength and beauty, yet the idea did not present itself of a churchly office and calling. Little more was accomplished during the period immediately following. Some of the isolated attempts to re-awaken the deaconess-work were a continuation of the pre-reformatory

movement, while others were of a different character. But none of them led to any abiding results.

The societies of the Bèguines and of the Sisters of the Common Life seem not to have been considered; the reason perhaps being, that it is much more difficult to put new life into old and stiffened forms, than to create new. Another and more probable reason is, that these communities existed for the greater part in countries, where the influence of the Swiss reformers was predominant. The Reformed Church, in its anxious dread of Romanistic leaven, has in a great measure lost its touch with the historic past of the Church. Its ordinances claiming to be derived directly from the Scriptures frequently transplant to the present the conditions of biblical times in a wholly legalistic manner. In regard to congregational organization, it has gone to work more zealously, than the Lutheran Church, and in its congregational orders, the female diaconate, having Scriptural authority, has been kept in view. But there was in most cases no understanding of the associated life in its relation to the old-time convent-life, and therefore no learning from the past. The attempt was made to realize the female Diaconate, as directly proceeding from the congregational life, and to establish it in the midst of the latter. The consequence was, that no organizations, with strength to sustain themselves, were effected. The fact was overlooked, as it frequently is to this day, that the congregations of the established churches of our time are not to be compared with the congregations of the apostolic age. The latter, compared with the congregations of our present State Churches, would be more of the character of modern religious associations, where all the members are personally acquainted with each other and held together by one bond of unity and under one discipline. If in the modern congregation, the single Christian woman is publicly to administer a churchly office, without sacrificing her womanly delicacy, without feeling herself alone and unsupported, she must be protected by a close association, which yet is broad enough to fulfill its purpose. A man like Luther would have understood this lesson, taught by experience, had his attention been directed to the female Diaconate, as such. But this was not the case; and the Lutheran Church did not advance beyond him in this matter, but, as regards appreciation of the associated life, soon failed to follow him, and strayed into the reformed path. Wherever therefore, after the Reformation, woman's churchly ministry has been advocated, the appreciation of the associative form in its historical connection with the past has been wanting,—with a single exception, to be referred to later. However just an estimate may have been formed, on the Lutheran side, of the associative form, a true, practical understanding of the matter was not reached. Thus the actual course of the matter is sufficiently characterized.

56. Among the Reformed, Henry Robert de la Marek, prince of Sedan, in the Netherlands, in the year 1560, began an undertaking which, however, was misunderstood in his own church, and therefore failed to take root. He did not confiscate the property of secularized convents, but used it to establish, besides other educational and benevolent institutions, a sisterhood of "Virgins of Mercy." These, living either in special institutions, or in their own homes, were to devote themselves to the relief of the destitute, the sick and infirm. Rejecting convent vows, they were yet to be bound by certain rules of the house and sisterhood. This attempt seems to us the most important one made in this direction. But upon the soil of the Reformed Church, it appears almost as the accidental inspiration of a thoughtful, influential man, abruptly begun, and speedily disappearing, without leaving a trace behind.

Quite different were the efforts, wholly in accordance with reformed characteristics, to found a Diaconate within the Church. The General Synod of the Reformed Church of the Lower Rhine and the Netherlands, held at Wesel in 1568, proposed that in larger cities, besides the appointment of deacons for the care of the poor, "women should lawfully be won for this work." A later Classis-synod, held at Wesel in 1579, occupied itself expressly with the restoration of the deaconess-office. The question is asked, in case it is found advisable to restore the office, "whether widows only shall be chosen, or married women also, with the consent of their husbands; whether only persons of sixty years shall be appointed, or persons under that age, according to the directions of St. Paul (1. Tim. 5). This question is to remain open until the next Classis-meeting, in order that the congregations may reflect well upon the matter. As regards those who are already called, they shall continue in their calling, until such time as the Classis shall have come to a decision. If any desire to be relieved of their office, they shall be so relieved." The beginning is thus made, without a strict adherence to 1. Tim. 5, which passage they understood to mean, that the widows there mentioned, were to be regarded as deaconesses. In the resolutions of the Classis of 1580, it is said: "In the fifth article of the previous acts concerning the restoration of the deaconesses, the brethren have declared, that if this office, which has fallen into disuse in the Church of God, be re-established, it shall be done as it was in the beginning of the Church, and as it is described by St. Paul, namely by electing widows and unmarried women. As regards age, the brethren are of opinion, that women lacking four or five years of sixty, may be received, provided they possess the other qualifications demanded by St. Paul, but that we keep as near as possible to the age fixed by him. And the brethren deem it advisable,

that the coming Synod be reminded, as to whether this office shall also elsewhere be renewed.”

Every feature of these resolutions is characteristic,—their legalistic adherence to the Scriptures, no less than the total absence of all questioning, as to whether something might not be learnt from the past. It is obvious, that no satisfactory progress was made in this way. At first, widows and married women were chosen by ballot. These were entirely dependent in their activity, upon the deacons, and seem to have been elected for one year only. Soon afterwards, the election of married women was recognized as un-biblical. But it would soon have come to nothing if their labors had been at all arduous. The duties of these women however seem to have been very limited; indeed, the entire enterprise was of small value. Later on, the circumstance that the prescribed age of sixty years was not adhered to, caused difficulties. Finally it seems to have become the general practice, to appoint married women, and that to a very limited extent,—perhaps only in the town of Wesel, in the “Netherland congregation,” which consisted mostly of dutch fugitives, and was separate from the regular town-parish. Here this sort of female Diaconate existed until 1610. As early as 1581, a Synod at Middelburg opposed the re-introduction of the deaconess office, “because of certain inconveniences that might arise from it.” No great acuteness is needed, to see that married women cannot be deaconesses, while the position of isolated unmarried women as parish-deaconesses was scarcely tenable as a permanent arrangement. About the year 1600, an English reformed congregation in Amsterdam, of about three hundred members, employing two pastors and four deacons, had, in addition, a deaconess, an aged widow, elected when she was sixty, who served for many years, and was an ornament to the congregation. It is related of her, that with a birchen switch in her hand, she kept order among the young folk in church; that she helped with word and deed the poor, the sick, and especially the young girls and married women of the congregation, and that, as a mother in Israel and a true christian, she received willing obedience from all. Such exceptions may occasionally have occurred. But they only confirm the result, that in the manner attempted in the Netherlands, and perhaps among the puritans in England, a female Diaconate, as an abiding congregational institution, is not practicable. Our experience to-day would doubtless be precisely the same, were we to expect the Diaconate to issue directly from the congregation. It is a matter of surprise, that in some quarters, this is not even now understood.

57. In the Lutheran Church there was no such abrupt and legalistic return to the Scriptures, as among the Reformed. Therefore the Diaconate of the early Church remained at first quite out

of the question. Circumstances were not calculated to bring it near to men's minds; and so it essentially continued, until the beginning of our century. A church-order of Minden, of the year 1530, claimed woman's service in the care of the poor, but no mention is made of a regular Diaconate. On the other hand, among Lutherans, two cases of convent - reconstruction are reported, which might have proved promising, had the Diaconate as such, and on a scale embracing a wider circle of congregations, received attention. But nothing of this is observed. Those attempts in which we again recognize Luther's unprejudiced views of conventual life, when purified according to evangelical principles, are germs possessing abundant vitality, like the undertaking of Henry Robert de la Marek. But these germs, for various reasons, found the soil unprepared for their development.

The convent at Kappel, near Siegen, held to the Lutheran faith, according to which its rules were framed. The superior or *domina* conferred upon the canonesses their individual offices, secular and spiritual. Two of these were assigned to every sister. The spiritual offices were those of the preceptor, the precentor, the deaconess, who distributed the alms, the catechist and the sacristan. To these corresponded the secular offices of cellarer, stewardess, mistress of the kitchen, gatekeeper, the teacher of handiwork and the *domina's* attendant. The convent devoted itself chiefly to the education of little girls, and was famed for its piety and discipline. It probably existed until the beginning of the 17. Century, when a Roman Catholic Count drove out the canonesses. An actual continuance of convent forms does not appear here. In the old convents the church-sister had been called the deaconess, here it was the almoner. This indeed seems a short step in advance,—but it is without meaning for the deaconess cause.

The Lutheran Convent at Walsdorf in Nassau was further advanced in its development. On September 16, 1562, Count Philip of Idstein sent to the Convent of Benedictine nuns at Walsdorf, a copy of the Augsburg Confession, a number of copies of the Bible, and Luther's Catechism. On December 5, 1608, Count Ludwig, through the Superintendent Tobias Weber in Idstein, published a constitution prepared by the latter for the convent. The worship in the convent was to be evangelical "according to God's Holy Word, as contained in the Old and New Testaments, and as explained to us in the three Symbols, the Apostles', the Nicene and the Athanasian Creeds, furthermore in the unaltered Augsburg Confession, together with its subsequent Apology, the Smalcald Articles, and both Catechisms, the large and small, of that godly man Luther." Preaching, the administration of the most holy sacraments, catechization and other godly exercises shall be attended to by a pastor, in obedience to the superintendent's instruc-

tions, until a regular pastor be appointed for the institution. Chapters from the Holy Scriptures shall be read daily by the Sisters in turn, until a regular reader be appointed. The Scripture-lessons shall be chosen according to a fixed order, and appropriate to the festival seasons of the Church.

Young women desiring admission to the convent, must be of devout behavior, and must have reached their eighteenth year that they may justly appreciate the great responsibilities of their calling. Their entrance must be entirely voluntary, without any coercion whatever. Every Sister is free to leave the convent at any time, or to embrace the opportunity of an honorable marriage. Every Sister must undergo a probation of one year, and after its favorable conclusion, is consecrated by the superintendent. At this ceremony, Scripture-passages, referring to the unmarried and associated life, were read, and the candidate, with a hand-clasp, promised the pastor to live a pious, chaste and godly life in union with the convent. The following prayer of consecration was used: "Our heavenly Father, Who hast for many years preserved this house of worship, and hast finally granted it grace, that Thy Word is preached in it, pure and unperverted by human doctrines, and that Thy service is performed in it according to Thy law and testimony,—we pray Thee through Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, our Lord, that Thou wouldst bless the good work, which we have this day begun, and grant that it may redound to the glory of Thy Holy Name, to the building up of this church and convent, and to the temporal and everlasting welfare of us all." The Sister paid two hundred florins to the institution for her support, a part of which was refunded to her, in case she left the convent.—The abbess received her instructions from the superintendent.—Not more than eight young women were to be received, and their duty was to be the education of "little-school-maidens". These paid twenty florins annually, and were instructed in prayer, reading, writing, arithmetic, and all house and handiwork, such as spinning, sewing, knitting, lace-making, preparing linen, butter-making and gardening, that they might grow up as children of God, "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The offices were similar to those at Kappel. The "preceptor" gave the Bible-lessons, the "school-mistress" superintended the pupils, the "deaconess" looked after the poor within and without the precincts of the convent, the "catechist" taught Luthers small Catechism, the "stewardess" had charge of the income and expenditures, the "mistress of the kitchen" superintended the cooking, and the "gate-keeper" watched at the little window of the convent portal. Some taught fine, some coarse handiwork. A steward was appointed for the management of the farm. The Sisters wore a habit of black woollen stuff, and a veil. The door of



the convent was to be always locked, and the abbess herself carried the key. The Sisters might receive visitors only by permission, these must conduct themselves properly, and leave before evening. Inasmuch as idleness is the beginning of all evil, each Sister shall, praying and working faithfully, fulfil her duty.

All this was excellent, well-planned, and certainly far superior to those foundations for women of nobility and others, that were reconstructed from Roman Catholic convents. Yet there was in it no trace of the actual diaconate, which was not even thought of. The institution did not enjoy a very long life. In the winter of 1624, the last inmates, with their Abbess Marie von Klingelbach, died of the plague.

58, While the renewal of the diaconate was not accomplished in the period immediately succeeding the reformation, the following age was even less propitious. The thirty years' war, with its distress, laid waste all churchly life. Germany was filled with ruins, all national energy was paralyzed, innumerable blossoms were trampled under foot. It was impossible that a matter of so tender a nature, as woman's ministry in the Church, could thrive. The succeeding years continued unfavorable. The administration of the established Church hardened more and more into a bureaucratic form. The care of the poor fell into the hands of the state, and the charitable activity of the Church was forced into the background. The doctrinal discussions did not abate, and often claimed exclusive possession of the minds of the clergy. Worst of all, the congregational life, as such, was without self-reliance and free activity. Thus it remained, until the Lord Himself ushered in the hour, when the female diaconate in the Protestant Church should obtain its rights; and with them, that form and development, for which the Reformation had laid the foundation, and prepared the way.

It must be mentioned, that in two Protestant communions, whose paths lay apart from the general churchly development, the deaconess cause obtained, if not a vigorous growth, yet a permanent organization. The one of these communions is that of the Mennonites in the Netherlands; the other, that of the Moravians. The founder of the latter, Count Zinzendorf, proposed to the synod of Marienborn, held in 1745, that deacons and deaconesses be appointed, after the manner of the early Church, the former to preach the Gospel, and assist in the administration of the blessed sacraments, and in the visitation of the sick, and the latter to aid those of their own sex in all cases of need. They would thus be continuing what their fathers, the Bohemian-Moravian brethren, had begun. To be sure, the question here was of woman's ministry to a very limited extent, not of the diaconate as an independent life-calling. The organization existing among the Mennonites offered valuable sug-

gestions to Fliedner, during his travels in the Netherlands, when the thoughts began to stir within him, which led to the renewal in our century, and on an evangelical basis of the female diaconate.

59. In Germany, a new awakening of the religious life succeeded the wars of liberation. The ancient treasures of the Church, for which a rationalistic generation of pastors had well-nigh lost all appreciation, were again brought to light. And then it was, that the hour of its resurrection upon an evangelical basis came to the female diaconate. We may confidently assert that this period, more than any previous one, had been prepared by God. Many influences co-operated. Not only was the clergy stirred by a new spirit, but from among the laity likewise, new impulses and signs of life proceeded. In the Protestant Church, the harsh opposition to all forms of a pre-reformatory origin had abated. The new breath of life, which penetrated all conditions of life, was felt also in the Romish Church. Both sides showed an inclination to learn from each other. In France the Sisters of Mount Calvary, and in Germany the Sisters of Mercy, whose society was founded in 1808 by the Archbishop Droste von Vischering, were not bound by monastic rules. They took no vows,—the doctrine and example of Christ were to be their only rule. Their Superior was to be their “Mother”, and so she was called. In England a bishop of London, Dr. Julius, recommended the founding of a protestant association of Sisters of Mercy. Especially was this idea advocated by various prominent personages in Germany. It is unmistakable, how the Lutheran appreciation of historic associations here asserted itself. At the same time the reformed spirit also manifested itself, which supposed it possible to transfer the scriptural practice directly to the present. It is, however, especially noticeable, that in all these attempts, worn-out paths were avoided. It was a season of new life, of new beginnings, endeavoring after a fashion of its own, to comprehend and realize its aims. The deaconess work may in a measure be characterized as a result of the nearer approach of the confessions toward each other. Even to-day, in the tangle of countless unionistic misunderstandings, it is shown, how great a blessing attends this approach, if the vital point of churchly organization, confessional loyalty, remains untouched by it.

60. The Rev. John Adolf Francis Kloenne, of Bislich, near Wesel, afterwards of Calcar, where he died in 1834, had fought in the wars of liberation, and as pastor took the liveliest interest in the efforts for spreading the Bible on the Lower Rhine; and also in the labors of a missionary league, which afterwards became a building-stone in the construction of the Barmen Mission Society. Stimulated by the activity of the women’s associations during the war, he soon after its close published a pamphlet: “The Revival of the Deaconesses of the early Church in our Women’s Asso-

ciations." He deploras that these associations, whose labors had been so abundantly blessed should cease without resulting in a lasting institution, after the pattern of the diaconate of the early Church, as presented to us in Romans 16, and by the church-fathers. He proposed a plan, which had suggested itself to him. The women of a parish should unite to form a society, under the management of a superintendent, for the care of the poor and sick. After two years, one-half of the number withdrawing, others are to be elected to serve in their places. These deaconesses, under the authority of the presbytery, rank equally with the deacons. They are the holders of an office of honor, which can be declined only for the weightiest reasons. The project was immature. It overrated the congregational powers, and underrated the demands to be made upon deaconesses. It is significant that this plan, which did not wholly advocate the direct adoption of the methods of the early Church, expected to realize the idea of the female diaconate on the basis of an association.

Kloenne submitted his plan to certain influential persons. Minister von Altenstein, with hearty recognition of his purpose, wrote him, that only after such societies, through the efforts of the clergy, were once at work, would it be possible to determine the position the congregation was to occupy toward them, and whether the female diaconate was capable of renewal in this way. Princess William of Prussia (formerly Princess Marianne of Hesse) wrote, that she herself had often desired an arrangement of this kind; but she justly considered the voluntary assumption of such a calling as more promising than election by the congregation; she also perceived the incompatibility of the deaconess calling with the duties of married women. Bishop Eylert told Kloenne that his words were assuredly not spoken in vain, but that such an idea presupposed a high order of congregational life. A physician, Dr. Guenther, of Duisburg, called attention to the importance of the matter especially from a pastoral point of view, adding that a similar institution was in force among the Moravians. These various replies did not promote the plan; for while they approve, they also criticize Kloenne's idea. Yet the sympathy accorded him indicated that the fulfillment of his wishes was not far distant. But it was not to be brought about in the manner proposed by him.

61. A nearer approach to a realization of the idea was made by two other persons, both of whom were, as it seems, uninfluenced by Kloenne. These were the Minister vom Stein, and the Hamburg patrician's daughter, Amalie Sieveking.

Incited by the activity of the Sisters of Mercy, Stein earnestly assured Minister von Bodelschwingh, who visited him at Nassau, that it was among his greatest desires, to see established in the Protestant Church an institution similar to the Sisterhood of Mercy.

He opened negotiations with a pastor Stein in Frankfurt. Through von Bodelschwingh, Miss Sieveking in Hamburg heard of Stein's idea, and wrote to him. He replied, that his knowledge of the Sisters of Mercy was only superficial; but that he had been impressed by their contentedness in the quiet and blessed work of well-doing, to which the discontent of aging, unmarried women of the upper and middle classes, whose idle lives left them only emptiness and bitterness, formed an offensive contrast. The question suggested itself, why similar institutions were not to be found among protestants. Benevolent institutions and charitable women's societies indeed existed. But an enduring, fixed association, like that of the Sisters of Mercy, with its many excellent features, was lacking. The resolve, which Amalie Sieveking had communicated to him, of founding a Protestant Sisterhood of Mercy, he pronounced in the highest degree praiseworthy and useful.

Amalie Sieveking relates that in her eighteenth year she first heard of the Sisters of Mercy. That the thought had flashed through her brain like lightning, whether she were not perhaps destined to organize a similar institution in our Protestant Church. The more dearly she loved her Church, the more painfully she felt its lack of the fair adornment of an active, organized charity. Prominent men, like Gossner, vom Stein, and others, encouraged her. But she felt, that she must beware of self-chosen paths, and waited for divine guidance. She recognized as such the breaking out of the cholera in Hamburg, in the autumn of 1831. She entered the cholera hospital as nurse, and published an appeal to women, to join her in this work of mercy. None came, and the matter was at an end for the time. Her thoughts then turned to the organization of a women's society for the care of the sick and destitute in her native city. This society was called into being through her efforts, and became of great importance. When Fliedner, in later years, tried to enlist her for the deaconess calling, first for Kaiserswerth and then for Berlin, she was unwilling to relinquish the work in which she was engaged, and which the Lord had assigned to her.

What Stein and Miss Sieveking desired, was precisely that which afterwards came to pass; this recognition should not be withheld from them. It is true, the path which led to the establishment of the Protestant female diaconate, was not that of mechanical imitation. Only the free, creative power, inherent in a living faith, could accomplish lasting results. Yet the form, in which woman's ministry in the Church has been realized among us, is no other than that adopted by the women's associations before the Reformation. It is this form, which Vincent de Paul developed upon the Roman Catholic, and Fliedner upon the Protestant basis, each in

his own original manner, and in a totally different spirit, but practically with one and the same purpose in view.

62. A year before the opening of the first Deaconess Mother-house, Count Adalbert von der Recke-Vollmerstein, a man of high repute in Christian charitable work, the founder of a reformatory near Duesseldorf, and of an idiot asylum in Silesia, believed that a Protestant diaconate was possible, as an institutional and associative organization, but not as a direct emanation from the congregational life. In the Spring of 1835, he began to issue a periodical, entitled: "The deaconess, or the Life and Work of the Servants of the Church, for Instruction, Education and Sick-nursing." Only one number appeared. In it, the author states that twenty years ago, he had already felt the need of deaconesses, and had frequently urged the matter. He wished the female diaconate to exist as a churchly office, its activity to be enlisted for institutions of mercy of every description, most especially however, for Christian congregations, and also for mission-work among the heathen. The receiving and training of deaconesses demanded an institution, a "Deaconess-Convent", which he proposed to establish near Duesseldorf. He planned every feature after the pattern of the early Church, yet adapted to the needs and conditions of the present. For larger districts he suggested an abbess, and under her arch-deaconesses and deaconesses. He submitted his plan to the crown-prince, Frederick William, who replied on November 6, 1835: "Your ideas regarding the revival of the order of deaconesses in our Church I have welcomed with true delight. Such a revival has for many a year lived in my imagination as a longed-for ideal; as one of the many things greatly needed and yet lacking in our Church; as a want, such as the absence of a nose for example, would be to the human face. I especially agree with the view that the office should be formally recognized as a churchly office. But this must be sanctioned by the Church herself, and from her the order of helpful women must receive its citizenship. This I would advise you first to secure, and by no means to proceed with the official consecration, before such recognition is obtained. Two paths seem to me open; whether both should be followed at the same time, I will not now decide. The first would be, to make application to the Rhenish Church, or perhaps to that of Berg, to recognize by a resolution the order of deaconesses, as a branch of the church-administration; the second, to request the Church to petition His Majesty for the re-introduction of this order."

It is clear, from the ideas of the count and crown-prince, both of whom remained warm and faithful promoters of the work, that the question was ready for immediate solution. The path was marked out. The hope of incorporation with the congregational life of the

established Church was no doubt premature. Moreover, such matters are not arranged by the authorities, or according to a fixed program, but are subject to growth. The Lord had prepared the soil, as it is proved by the personages whose utterances have been quoted; and He had already chosen the man, who was to plant the grain of mustard-seed.

63. George Henry Theodore Fliedner, the son of pastor Fliedner, was born at Epstein, in the Taunus, on January 21, 1800. He was a sturdy child, of quiet disposition and manner, and of fair mental endowments. His father once said jestingly of the seven-year-old child: "This is my dear little fat boy; one of these days he will become an honest brewer." The child, blushing and in tears, crept away; for like his father and grandfather, he wished to be a clergyman. In the lessons which the father himself gave his children, he made rapid progress, studied with ease, and was a great reader, without being a close student. When, on Whitsunday, 1813, he was confirmed, his new clothes gave him more to think of, than the solemnity of the occasion. But times of sorrow soon followed, which proved decisive for him also. The cossacks came to Epstein, and with them plague and famine. Pastor Fliedner fell ill. The daughters of the house were forced to dance with the officers, while their father lay dying. When the cossacks left, after plundering barns and store rooms, the indignant Theodore could not deny himself the satisfaction of flinging a piece of wood from the open barn door, after the last unwelcome guest. Shortly before Christmas the father died, leaving his wife with eleven children. By the aid of friends and relatives, Theodore and his brother were sent at New Year, 1814, to the gymnasium at Idstein. He was obliged to practise great economy, and shrank from no work. His favorite reading was travels and the biographies of eminent men, which incited him to emulation. By Easter of 1817 he was ready to enter the University of Giessen, in order to study theology. He supported himself by giving lessons and by copying, in addition to such help as he received from others. He was of a cheerful disposition. With two florins in his pocket, he made a journey on foot to Nuremberg and Wuerzburg. He kept aloof from the immature political aspirations of his fellow-students; his practical common-sense being his safe-guard. Nor did the rationalism of the theological professors succeed in blinding him. He held fast to the miracles and the resurrection of our Lord. At that time already he was interested in the writings of the reformers, and put to shame by their faith. His practical mind was active in various ways. He collected directions for children's games, household remedies for man and beast, instructions regarding harmful plants, and so forth, for country people. These were beginnings, which afterwards, in the management of institutions and little children's

schools, bore valuable fruits. From Giessen he went to Goettingen. He was still, although of a candid, seeking spirit, without deeper, spiritual life. Repeated journeys on foot contributed materially to his culture. He travelled as far as Bremen and Hamburg, and visited the Harz mountains. At Halle he saw August Herman Franke's Orphanage, which left a powerful impression upon his mind. After a year's study at the Theological Seminary of Herborn, having reached the age of twenty, he passed his examination with credit. The acquaintance with several earnest christians, one of them a professor at Herborn, and another a young land-owner, exerted a lasting influence upon him. Fliedner then went to Cologne, as private tutor in a refined and cultured family. There he was obliged to acquire polish of manner. He was eager and faithful in his duties, and prayed diligently with his pupils. He preached occasionally, became a member of the Rhenish Bible-Society, and came visibly nearer to God. In the autumn of 1821, he was appointed pastor at Kaiserswerth, "chiefly," he writes, "because I was a Lutheran." Kaiserswerth on the Rhine is a Roman Catholic town, to whose former importance the ruins of an ancient stronghold still bear witness. The little Protestant congregation was Lutheran and Reformed united. On January 18, 1822, Fliedner arrived, unnoticed and on foot, so as to cause the poor congregation no expense. His sister kept house for him. The congregation was in a precarious state, and its very existence seemed threatened by the bankruptcy of a manufacturing establishment. Fliedner could have had a better parish, but he was daily growing in earnestness, and did not wish to prove himself a hireling. He therefore resolved to secure the continuance of the congregation by undertaking a collecting tour. He began with great trepidation in Elberfeld. A pastor of the town, who received him kindly, told him, that for this work, beside trust in God, three things were needful, namely "patience, impudence, and eloquence". Fliedner soon perceived that the Lord was granting him success, and decided to extend his journey to Holland and England. God blessed his tireless activity, and the future of his congregation was made secure. Fliedner himself, through his intercourse with many active christians, attained to a more and more positive faith, and by the inspection of numerous institutions of mercy, received a strong stimulus. He wrote Kloenne an account of the deaconesses of the dutch Mennonites.

64. Fliedner's life, thus far, was God's school, in which he was being trained for his real life-work. Although he was zealous and successful in the fulfillment of his pastoral duties, and taught a number of pupils besides, yet the smallness of his parish left him time for outside work. He first took pity on the prisoners. After the example of Elizabeth Fry in England, he began to examine

into the condition of the prisons, and to hold services in the gaol at Duesseldorf. The first German Prison Association was formed, in whose interest Fliedner made several journeys. In pursuance of this work he met his first wife, Frederica Muenster, who was laboring in the reformatory at Duesselthal. He married her in 1828, and she became to him a true and faithful help-mate. By the opening, in 1832, of an asylum for discharged female convicts, the beginning was made of the Kaiserswerth Institutions. The first inmate, Minna, was temporarily lodged in the summer house of the parsonage garden. The means were mostly obtained by collections. The little summer house became the cradle of the Kaiserswerth Magdalen Home, and of all the institutions established there.

This first undertaking of Fliedner's was followed, three years later, by a second, with which especially his name will forevermore be connected. It is the *Kaiserswerth Deaconess Motherhouse*. October 13, 1836, was the birthday of the modern female diaconate upon evangelical basis.

For a long time the condition of the destitute sick had troubled him. He had visited many hospitals. Sometimes the portals were of glistening marble, but the patients received insufficient care, the nursing staff being depraved by drink and immorality. Should not Protestant christian women be able and willing to nurse the sick? Had not the women of the apostolic age exercised the diaconate? Had not women during the wars of liberation abundantly proved their fitness for this work? Fliedner was persuaded, that the talent only required to be awakened, and individuals would not be wanting. *Institutions must be established, in which unmarried women should be trained for the care of the poor, the sick, and the prisoners, and associated together in a close community.*

Fliedner's ideas, as we see, were practical, fixed without hesitation or deviation upon what was attainable,—undeterred even by the ideal of a direct imitation of biblical and apostolic types. Without much examining and theorizing, his clear, dispassionate glance found that method, for which the past history of the Church had prepared the way. His thoughts gave him no peace. His wife's courage was even greater than his own. It seemed unadvisable to make the beginning in the little town of Kaiserswerth. But wherever he approached the clergy of more important places, his request was denied. He thus became assured, that the Lord meant to lay this work upon no other shoulders than his own.

In the Spring of 1836, without having any money in hand, he purchased the largest and finest house in Kaiserswerth. Through his efforts, the Rhenish-Westphalian Deaconess Association was organized. God provided both friends of the cause and pecuniary means. An unmarried woman, Gertrude Reichardt, a physician's



daughter, offered her services as deaconess. But before her arrival the institution was opened, on October 13, with the scantiest furnishings, without patients, but amid heartfelt praise and thanksgiving. On October 22, Sister Gertrude, the first deaconess, came. Patients soon arrived, and other Sisters applied for admission. About a month after the opening of the House, Fliedner, who was absent on a collecting tour, wrote to the little band of Sisters: "Your labor of love is continually before my eyes.—I pray daily, and many dear friends with me, that the faithful Shepherd and Saviour may daily and hourly strengthen you in body and soul, to serve Him, without growing weary, among His poor and suffering. Oh, how sweet a burden and toil, to wash the wounds of Christ, and to anoint His body for burial. Who would not gladly, with Mary Magdalene and Salome, have done this, counting herself blessed, to render this service to His most holy body? Yes,—what Christian would not willingly have washed the blood from His tortured body on Calvary, and dried it with her hair? And now, my dear Sisters in the Lord, your work among the sick is the same as was that of Mary Magdalene and Salome, if you perform it, looking up to Him, in love to Him and in faith." Communications regarding his business matters, practical advice and commissions conclude the letter. The instruction given by Fliedner to the Sisters was in the same spirit. Even at that early period a detailed house-order and rules of service were prepared for the Sisters, treating with equal care the spiritual and technical aspects of the calling. It became the basis of that house-order, after which the orders of most of the newer Motherhouses are patterned. It embodies the fundamental principles of the Protestant deaconess work of our day, and is replete with wisdom and thought. In January, 1838, the first outside station was undertaken,—the municipal hospital at Elberfeld. The members of the royal household, and especially the crown-prince of Prussia aided the work. The Lord opened the hearts of high and low throughout the land. Among them all, and more than all, Fliedner's wife was his chief helper. In regard to rules, dress, and other regulations, the right method had to be found; and her clear insight, sanctified by religion, preserved him from mistakes. To the domestic virtues of cleanliness, order, simplicity and economy, she united a large-hearted tenderness toward all who needed help, and again, with almost masculine energy, knew how to resist the abuse of ministering love. To the deaconess she was at once a mother and an example, and her name deserves to be more frequently mentioned, than it is, in connection with the protestant renewal of the female diaconate.

65. After the beginning had been made, the work grew from year to year. In 1842, the Seminary for teachers of little children's

schools was added. Fliedner possessed excellent gifts for the management of little children. Later on he associated with himself the young teacher, J. Ranke, who was equally calculated to promote this important branch of charitable work. Fliedner also obtained an assistant in his pastoral office. The Publication-House of the Deaconess Institution was established, the Kaiserswerth Almanac made its appearance, and later on the "Friend of the Sick and Poor" was issued. An orphanage was founded. Deaconess Houses were opened elsewhere, mostly with the cooperation of Fliedner and the Kaiserswerth Motherhouse. In the midst of all this success, God's hand lay heavily upon Fliedner's family. His brothers and his children died; but the heaviest blow of all was the death of his faithful wife, on April 22, 1842. "She died first, of all the deaconesses," Fliedner wrote, "as like a mother she walked before her spiritual daughters in life, so in death she preceded them." The Lord provided for Fliedner's family and institutions a fitting successor in Caroline Bertheau, of Hamburg, whom Fliedner married in May, 1843. She too, possessed the inestimable gift of being a friend and guide to many, as she continues to be, in her old age.\*) Fliedner was trying to secure a Superior for the Deaconess House about to be established in Berlin, when he made her acquaintance. Of his two marriages he said: "Twice I experienced that, while I was seeking something for the Lord, I found what was best for myself."

The secret of Fliedner's comprehensive activity was his faith, a great capacity for work, and an untiring energy. He was always cheerful and good-humored. His large family of children grew up, while their father spent nearly half of his time in travelling; and the Lord helped abundantly, above all that he asked or thought, both in the home and in the institution. In 1846, the Seminary for Elementary Teachers was opened, where afterwards, teachers were also trained for high-grade schools for girls. Thus, by degrees, woman's gifts for the service of God were developed and utilized to their full extent. The buildings for a multitude of institutions were provided, for numerous officials and for the gradually enlarging farm. The Lord never failed to furnish the means as they were needed, and Fliedner's own family was not allowed to suffer want. Fliedner's faculty for putting the right persons in the right places, manifested itself more and more amid the excessive burden of work. He used to say humorously: "Any one can do everything himself; but to set others to do it, is an art." This art he thoroughly understood. In many institutions, all the arrangements are fitted to the capacity of one person,—this is a great source of weakness. While Fliedner was the moving spirit

---

Mrs. Fliedner d'ed, April 1892, aged 81.

of the multifarious institutional activity, he at the same time knew how to make the others do without him. This was not the least of his talents.

In the beginning of 1848 he resigned his pastoral office, in order to devote himself wholly to the deaconess cause. The Asylum for Insane Women was opened; and to the numerous outside stations of the Kaiserswerth deaconesses, were added new ones, in other continents. Fliedner also took a number of Sisters to the United States, where however, owing to peculiar social conditions, the success of their work has been slight. In the East he was more fortunate. The king of Prussia placed the necessary means at his disposal, and in the Spring of 1851, Fliedner repaired to Jerusalem with four Sisters, among them the first teaching deaconesses, who were afterwards followed by many others. Nursing and the christian training of young girls are the chief branches of the deaconess mission in the East. Besides Jerusalem, the Kaiserswerth Sisters have other fields of richly blessed activity, in Constantinople, Smyrna, Alexandria, Beirut and Cairo. To Fliedner, the multiplying stations meant constant increase of work. His literary activity grew in equal proportion, although his principal work continued to be the training, placing and superintending of the deaconesses. His journeys grew more frequent. Collections had to be made, stations and branch institutions organized or visited, and the work promoted in other ways. In the mean time the building operations at Kaiserswerth proceeded almost without interruption. Among the important buildings erected during the later years were a Health Station, and a House of Evening Rest for the Sisters. Although much contempt had to be endured, a full appreciation of his services was not lacking. In the autumn of 1855 he received from the University at Bonn the degree of Doctor of Divinity, the only distinction which gave him pleasure.

66. Fliedner's last years showed that the Lord had broken the strength of the active, untiring man, and led him into the silence for which he had so often longed. Partly to relieve a pulmonary trouble, he made a second journey to the East; but he returned without improvement. The Lord permitted him to remain for seven years longer. Sleeping, and spending many hours of the day in a cow-stable, delayed the progress of the disease, without curing it. He dictated in a low voice, and continued uninterruptedly busy, even though he could no longer preach or travel. His son-in-law, Pastor J. Disselhoff more and more supplied his place. Fliedner lived to see the twenty-fifth anniversary of the deaconess-work. The numerous Deaconess Motherhouses, which had meanwhile come into existence, began at regularly returning intervals, to send their representatives to a general conference held at Kaiserswerth. A union

of these resulted, which has been productive of much good. The last building begun by Fliedner was a deaconess school at Hilden.

On September 12, 1864, the Kaiserswerth Institutions celebrated their anniversary, and Fliedner consecrated nineteen Sisters to the deaconess calling. With tottering steps he reached his home after the ceremony. On the morning of October 3, he took leave of his family. The next morning he rose from his bed with the words: "It is time; I must be going." At 2 o'clock, in the afternoon he fell asleep. His watchword was: "He must increase, but I must decrease." A great man in the Kingdom of God; steadfast and childlike in his faith, clear and instructive, impressive and stimulating in his speech; as mild and kindly, as he was firm and decided; of a gentle and serious mind; of great strength of conviction and of untiring energy; ruling by serving others; a master in the art of asking and thanking,—he labored more than most men, and died, trusting in grace alone. "Conqueror of death—victor," were the last words whispered by his dying lips. His grave was made in the midst of a colony of institutions of merciful love, erected to the glory of Christ. Not only are the Kaiserswerth Institutions, which at his death numbered 425 deaconesses, his living monument, but the *entire modern female diaconate as well*, whose spiritual father he became, by the grace of God.

The coat of arms of Kaiserswerth represents a grain of mustard-seed, springing up under the rays of the sun. If we bear in mind the beginning, in the summerhouse of the parsonage garden; if we remember the many futile attempts to renew the diaconate of the early church, in conformity with the needs of modern congregational life; if we remember the problem which awaited solution, and realize the measure of genuine practical and spiritual wisdom, with which it was solved; if we finally consider the growth which this work has enjoyed, both at home and abroad, we must confess: "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes."

Among the evidences of life in the Church of modern times, there is, beside the mission-work among the heathen, none more important, than the renewal of the female diaconate on the basis of the reformation. In order the more clearly to recognize this fact, a presentation of the protestant deaconess work, in the entire extent of its present activity is required. For this purpose, we will direct our attention first to the Motherhouses, then to the Sisterhoods, and finally to the Fields of Labor of the deaconesses.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### The Deaconess Motherhouses.

67. After Fliedner had prepared the way, the deaconess work speedily established itself in the protestant church, and we are now able to review the first half-century of its progress. It is noteworthy, that with very slight deviations, it has followed the line marked out by Kaiserswerth. This is especially true of the practical aspect of the work. We may therefore conclude, with a reasonable degree of certainty, that its fundamental principles were not arbitrarily chosen, but inspired by God for our time. Incompletenesses may still adhere to this form—yet criticism is easier than improvement. Thus far it has not proved advisable, nor productive of more generally satisfactory results, to deviate in any essential particulars from the path marked out by common experience.

The number of Motherhouses organized upon the model of Kaiserswerth, and represented at the General Conference, is 57.\*) The first decade, 1836—1846, after the establishment of the first Motherhouse at Kaiserswerth, witnessed the organization of the Motherhouses in Berlin (Elizabeth Hospital), Paris (Rue de Reully, 95), Strasburg, St. Loup (Switzerland), Dresden, Utrecht, Berne—eight in all. During the second decade, 1846—56, were established the Motherhouses in Berlin (Bethany), Stockholm, Rochester (U. S.), Breslau, Koenigsberg, Stettin, Ludwigslust, Riehen near Basel, Nenendettelsau, Stuttgart, Augsburg—twelve in number. The third decade, 1856—66, produced the sixteen Motherhouses at Halle, Darmstadt, Zurich, St. Petersburg, Spire, Hannover, Craschnitz, Hamburg (Bethesda), London (Westbourne Park), Dantsic, Copenhagen, Cassel (Wehlheiden), Hague, Mitau, Posen, Sarata. Between the years 1866—76 were established the Motherhouses at Buda-Pest, Frankenstein (Silesia), Riga, Berlin (Lazarus Hospital), London (Tottenham), Reval, Helsingfors (Finland), Altona, Bremen, Christiania, Wiborg, Bielefeld, New-Torney near Stettin, Brunswick, Frankford a. M., Flensburg, Paris (7, Rue Bridaine),—seventeen in number. Finally, during the fifth decade, 1876—86, were founded the four Motherhouses

---

\*) Since the above was written, their number has increased to 63, with 9000 Sisters, and 2800 fields of labor.

in Berlin (Paul Gerhardt House) Nowawes, Gallueukirchen, and Arnheim. The number of Sisters in these Motherhouses was, at the the time of the 50th anniversary, 6366, the fields of labor 1925. Besides the above-mentioned Houses, there are several, which thus far have not been represented at the General Conference in Kaiserswerth; for the reason that in some cases the principles and development of the work do not in essential details coincide with the views of the above mentioned Motherhouses; in the case of others, the Conference, which meets only once in three years, has not assembled since their organization, and their admission has therefore not yet taken place.

Of the 57 Motherhouses belonging to the General Conference, 33 are German; Switzerland has 4, France 2, Holland 3, Denmark 1, Norway 1, Sweden 1, Russia 7, Austro-Hungary 2, England 2, America 1. In America, the cause is slowly taking root; a second Motherhouse is however in course of erection in Philadelphia. In England, in addition to the two Houses above cited, one of which is High-Church, the other dissenting, there are various other deaconess institutions, whose regulations seem to differ widely from those of Kaiserswerth. In Switzerland and in Scandinavia the work has made great progress. In Holland, Finland and the Baltic Provinces of Russia, it has also met with much appreciation.

68. As regards the history of the individual Motherhouses, it can only be considered here, in so far as it is characteristic for the general development of the work, and therefore of immediate interest.

Kaiserswerth is and will remain the Motherhouse of all Motherhouses. It embraces all branches of the female diaconate, with the single exception of church-ornamentation. In addition to all varieties of sick-nursing and parish-work, Kaiserswerth has cultivated the educational features of the diaconate in every possible direction. In Kaiserswerth itself, ten daughter institutions are connected with the Motherhouse, among them an Asylum and Magdalen Home, a Little Children's School, with a Seminary for teachers of such schools, a Hospital, an Orphanage for girls, a Seminary for teachers of elementary and high-grade schools, a Sanatorium for Protestant insane women, a Preparatory Deaconess School, a Home for feeble and invalid single women and widows, and a high-grade school for girls. Kaiserswerth furthermore possesses fourteen branch institutions in different parts of Germany, and eleven outside of Germany; among these being servants' training schools and lodging-houses, one German and several foreign elementary schools for girls, rest-stations for the deaconesses, &c. As regards enthusiastic delight in the work, the most varied practical efficiency, carefulness and self-denial of the deaco-

ness service in each and every direction, Kaiserswerth is and will continue to be the mother-soil, upon which, and in contact with which, the workers in the deaconess cause receive continually new strength. This is an experience which moves to gratitude all who from time to time visit Kaiserswerth, either during the General Conference, or for the purpose of learning, at other seasons.

The Elizabeth Hospital in Berlin was founded by Gossner, the gifted pastor of the Bohemian congregation in that city. From the Roman Catholic communion, to which he in his youth belonged, he had brought with him an appreciation of woman's ministry in the Church, especially in the care of the sick. Very soon in the course of his far-reaching activity, he undertook the training of protestant sick-nurses, or Sisters of Mercy, whom however, he did not wish to have called deaconesses. Gossner was a very independent man. Everywhere, and in all things, he insisted upon Scriptural truth, but he had little understanding for fixed forms, and even dreaded them. As in his missionary efforts, so in his deaconess House, he himself was the living rule and standard for all things. This led to disastrous consequences, especially after his death. For a long time the Elizabeth Hospital was unable to obtain an established Sisterhood. Only since the House, in 1867, was led into the path of the Kaiserswerth order, has it enjoyed, inwardly and outwardly, a continued and prosperous growth. The history of this House may serve as an instructive example for more or less intelligent attempts at the independent organization of Motherhouses.

The Deaconess House at Strasburg in Alsace was called into life by Pastor Haerter,—a man, in whose thoughtful mind a deep yearning after heavenly things was joined to the liveliest, practical appreciation of the needs of the Church on earth. His watchword was: "For me to live is Christ; to die is gain." The Strasburg Motherhouse, with the motto of its founder, retained also his idea of the closest possible union with the Church. This has been expressed in the arrangements of the Motherhouse, in which the Kaiserswerth order is adhered to, based upon the most strictly "constitutional" foundation. The result has been, that this House, in its model organization of parish-work at Muelhouse in Alsace, has been permitted to become a pattern for all Motherhouses.

The Deaconess House "Bethany" in Berlin is a foundation of the noble-hearted King Frederick William IV., who while still crownprince of Prussia showed a warm interest in churchly things, including the deaconess-work. Worthy of its royal founder, the entire style of the house is upon a generous scale. The administration is a sort of "female monarchy." In Bethany, hospital-nursing especially has been brought to a very high degree of perfection. In regard to the principles, by which the position of the dea-

coness in the congregation is regulated, this House also, through its standing and influence, has become typical.

Finally, we will mention two Motherhouses, which are distinguished from those above-mentioned by the fact that the one originated upon strictly Lutheran, the other upon decidedly Reformed soil. These are the Houses at Neuendettelsau and Berne.

The Deaconess House at Neuendettelsau is a foundation of the eminent pastor W. Loehe, who as one of the mightiest preachers and most exquisitely gifted liturgists of all time, was especially called to set before our century in a vivid manner, the glory of the Lutheran Church and her confessions. The deaconess work in Neuendettelsau began with a society for the promotion of the female diaconate, without however making experiences similar to those of the Elizabeth Hospital in Berlin. Loehe soon gave to the undertaking a firm, institutional construction, whose fundamental rules became the same as those of Kaiserswerth. In addition, Loehe's personal characteristics and talents greatly contributed to the enrichment of the deaconess-work. His original idea was, in a reformative manner, to direct the life of christian womanhood generally into nobler paths. This idea he endeavored, within the narrow bounds of the deaconess House, to realize as far as possible. In Neuendettelsau, in addition to practical efficiency, the mental and spiritual culture of the Sisters received most careful nurture. To this end served the regular preaching and instruction, the rich, liturgical form of worship, and the emphasis laid upon noble simplicity and sanctified beauty of form in all the relations of woman's life. Neuendettelsau is the first Deaconess Institution, in which the psalmody again found a home. While in Kaiserswerth, church-ornamentation is not practised, Loehe, by this branch of the service, established for the beautifying of the sanctuary, and for the joy and honor of the Church, has woven into the deaconess life one of its loveliest blossoms, and has convincingly proven, that in woman's ministry to the body of the Lord, Mary, with her box of precious ointment, must forevermore keep her place. It may be characterized as Loehe's abiding merit, that he firmly established the female diaconate upon God's Word, and greatly promoted its fine appreciation of details, as well as its christian ideality.

In contrast to Neuendettelsau the Deaconess House in Berne came into being almost out of touch with the Church and the pastoral office. The peculiarities of republican Switzerland, and of the reformed faith, do not forbid the adoption by this and other strictly Reformed Motherhouses, of the practical organization of Kaiserswerth. The House in Berne owes its origin to a noble circle of patricians, who first caused the establishment of a Women's Society. When this society endeavored to obtain for its purposes a hospital, there was a difference of opinion, as to whether



it should be “constitutionally or monarchically” governed. A highly gifted member of the society, Miss Sophie Wurstemberger was in favor of the latter form. She had for years striven to “break through the rigid orthodoxy” prevailing in her aristocratic home, and “to penetrate to the enjoyment of full grace”. When she found herself alone in her views, she withdrew from the association, and through her connection with Baron Bunsen, was induced to visit London. During her journey she became acquainted with Fliedner and Kaiserswerth; and had frequent intercourse with Elizabeth Fry. In the meantime, the dispute among the ladies in Berne had been settled, by their agreeing, after continued prayer, to leave the decision entirely to the Lord, and to ascertain His Will “by drawing lots”. This decided in favor of the “monarchy”, which was accordingly offered to Miss Wurstemberger upon her return. Being left wholly without encouragement from her relatives, the beginning was very trying to her; but in the course of time, her path became smoother. Her devotional exercises in the hospital made a strong impression upon the patients. “Many had never heard the Lord so earnestly proclaimed. His Spirit acted powerfully upon the hearts of many of the sufferers. Many found peace, and thenceforward walked in communion with the living Saviour.” Yet it was not until three years later (1845) that the first probationers entered. In ten years the Sisterhood numbered only seven. After the marriage of Miss Wurstemberger with Mr. Dandlicker, of Berne, the House made rapid strides, both, as housefather and housemother placing their considerable fortunes at the service of the Institution. At present, as regards the number of its Sisters, it ranks as fourth among all the Motherhouses. It is incorporated, but still continues to be governed as a large private family, at whose head stand the housefather and housemother, and in which the pastoral office, as such, has as yet not found a place.

69. This short sketch of the history of six among the oldest Motherhouses, is sufficient to characterize in general the methods, by which the deaconess cause in the protestant churches reached its present extent and importance. Each individual Motherhouse has its own peculiarities, and these are conditioned in a great measure by the personal character of the individual who first exerted an enduring influence upon its development. The locality must also be taken into account, whether city or country, whether a large town or a small one, as well as the closer or more distant relations to municipal or churchly organizations. National peculiarities and the political life also exert at times a very perceptible influence. Most especially does the confessional position of the individual houses express itself in the life and habits developed there. In addition, it must be taken in consideration, whether the management inclines to the “constitutional,” or more strictly

“monarchical” order. We will be pardoned for thus expressing it, as we have no better or more accurate term. For the rest, it must be said, that in the Motherhouses the practical requirements are far more potent and influential, than any statutory provisions.

As a matter of fact, and excepting outward titles, the management in all Motherhouses is almost identical, and is shared between a male and female superior. All deaconess houses are excluded from the Kaiserswerth Union, whose administration is solely in the hands of either a man or a woman. It is one of the fundamental rules of the Motherhouses, that in the government of the house, man and woman, as divinely ordered, must supplement each other; because only where this is the case, a healthy diaconate is possible, and those conditions are supplied, without which the female diaconate would possess small value for the churchly community. In reviewing the different Motherhouses in all their diversity, we will find that Kaiserswerth is everywhere to be recognized as the model. Beside Fliedner, of the first importance to the deaconess cause, Loehe stands prominent; his influence is unmistakable in most of the houses belonging to the Lutheran Church. Finally, the example of “Bethany” in Berlin may be quoted here, as well for its general activity as for particular features, introduced by its rector, Pastor Schulz. If we consider these three Institutions as types, we can readily recognize in the individual houses the prevalence of one or the other, without detriment to the predominant importance of the oldest house.

70. We will, in the first place, examine more closely the organization of the Motherhouses. With very few exceptions, the persons entrusted with the immediate management of the house are a pastor and a deaconess. Whether both have equal authority, whether one is subordinated to the other, how and to what extent they are answerable to other managers, are points upon which, as has been said above, divergences exist. The titles also vary. The clergyman is either merely the pastor of the institution, or at the same time superintendent, rector or inspector. The deaconess who superintends the household, especially in North German houses, and in those of a Lutheran character, bears the title of “Superior” (“Oberin” and “Frau”). In the South, the title of “superintending Sister” is often preferred. The proper relation between these two persons must not be that of actual subordination on either side; least of all would the subordination of the man to the woman be justifiable, this being contrary to God’s Word. The most suitable arrangement is, to assign to each of the superintending persons an independent province; while upon common territory, the male voice should give the decision, unless there is an insuperable difference of opinion. Experience shows that, upon the whole, the gifts of both

so supplement each other, that the adjustment of opinions results as a matter of course. In detail, fixed rules cannot be laid down. Both are answerable to God, and bound to work together in harmony. The special province of the pastor, superintendent or rector is the churchly, spiritual and intellectual care of the house, the theoretical instruction of the Sisters, the consecration of deaconesses, the business transactions with outside authorities and associations, and the preparation of such periodicals and reports as are published by the house. The duties assigned to the female superintendent or superior, are those of housemother and immediate superior of the Sisters. She has charge of the Sisters' practical education for their calling; she is responsible for the management of the household; she supervises and regulates the work of the Sisters, the placing and the care of the sick, and enforces the observance of the rules of the House. She will also keep the books and accounts of the House, while the pastor has the right of revision. Both together decide upon the admission, induction, consecration and dismissal of probationers and deaconesses; upon the stationing of Sisters, upon the regulations and instructions to be adopted for the Sisters and the House, upon the undertaking or relinquishing fields of labor. The medical education of the Sisters, as well as the medical treatment of the sick in the hospital which must be connected with the Institution, for the training of the Sisters is usually entrusted to a specially appointed physician. The Board of Directors represents the House in its property-holding capacity, and appoints the pastor, the Sister Superior and the physician. By this power, which of course includes that of dismissal, the board of directors preserves a sufficient influence upon the inner development of the House. Where the board seeks by its resolutions to regulate the actual domestic management and work, such a procedure will either render the administration much more difficult, or it will prove to be more a semblance than a reality. The existing church authorities may be given a certain measure of influence in the Board, which will not fail to be more or less noticeable in the character of the House. As already intimated, even in those Motherhouses, whose printed regulations may differ essentially from the above, the division of labor will practically be pretty much the same. In the interest of christian truth, however, and to avoid temptations and inconsistencies, the letter of the written law must not be undervalued in this connection. If the early beginnings of certain Motherhouses made it imperative that man and wife should at first hold the positions of housefather and housemother, this is by no means to be regarded as a rule, but as an exception, which cannot be of continuance. That the persons in authority should bear parental relations to the Sister-

hood, is clearly a matter of course. To deduce from it a title, must as a rule be considered a mistake.

71. Inasmuch as the deaconesses of our day come forth from Motherhouses as above described, they *differ from the deaconesses of the early Church*. These came directly from the congregation, and in their ministry usually remained identified with the congregation, from which they had sprung. The present deaconesses, on the contrary, are sent out from their Motherhouses to the places where their services are needed; and even though they labor at a distance, yet they continue in close connection with the Motherhouse. They receive from it the instructions, by which their general service is regulated, and as it sends them out, so it recalls them. The individual parish or institution, in which they are to labor, negotiates with the Motherhouse, and receives from it the deaconesses, without individuals being named. The contract is made for the "Sister", not for the person. The majority of the Motherhouses have originated and are supported by voluntary christian charity, by associations and corporations, which have little or no official connection with the authorities of Church and State. As matters are in the existing State-churches, a change in this direction is not desirable. It is questionable, whether the Motherhouses could endure it, were the voluntary character of their work of faith and charity taken away. This is not in contradiction with the development of an active system of reciprocity between the church authorities and the Motherhouses. The more fully the Motherhouses, as free institutions, enter into organic union with the Church, the more gratifying and profitable will their labors be.

The question has been asked, whether the female diaconate of the present day, in the form in which it has been realized by means of the Motherhouses, is to be understood as a *churchly office*. The question has been answered in the affirmative by Kaiserswerth and other Motherhouses. Fliedner is termed the restorer of the Diaconate of the early Church, or of the "Apostolic Diaconate". Protest has been entered here, especially on the part of the Lutheran Motherhouses. An office is a legally ordered condition, in which strictly prescribed duties and privileges counterbalance each other. Such an office was the diaconate of the early Church; and the position of our deaconesses, in parishes and institutions, often approaches very nearly to such an official standing. But upon the whole, the deaconesses of the present time are not office-holders of the Church. They cannot be, if for no other reason, than that their appointment and installation into public, official connections never refers to the individual, as such. It must be conceded that, practically viewed, the modern female diaconate is and desires to be no other than was that of the early Church, in so far as it observed the lines laid down by the Word of God. It is therefore questionable,

whether we have the right to extend the idea of the office in the churchly sense, beyond its legal acceptation. If the question is answered in the affirmative, then the voluntary, officially organized service, rendered by the Motherhouses through their members, may likewise be termed a scriptural office of the Church, to which the deaconess knows herself to be firmly bound in the Lord who called her. For the rest, our Motherhouses, like the household of Stephanas (1. Cor. 16, 15), have voluntarily "addicted themselves to the ministry" of charity; and this conditions the outward standing of our deaconesses. The only exception in favor of a complete, organized incorporation of deaconesses into the official church organization, seems to be found in the Church of England, especially where it is under ritualistic influence. In England, the deaconess cause has found favor, especially in high-church circles, while the dissenting elements seem averse to it. Among the former it appears to be loved as "a catholic institution", while among the latter it is avoided for the same reason. The one mistake is calculated to produce the other. It remains to be seen, whether the English deaconess institution, standing under immediate episcopal guidance and management, will have a successful future, and whether the Rome-ward tendency will not bear disastrous fruits. It is not to be imagined how, in other protestant communions, the Motherhouses could exist otherwise than as based upon voluntary effort. The associated activity must replace what the official church-life lacks in energy of faith and mobility. Yet all this renders the more apparent the essential difference, in regard to the official, churchly institution, between the female diaconate of the present, and that of the post-apostolic period.

72. In observing this difference, it cannot be denied that in a general way, the method of the early Church was the more ideal. On the other hand, the Motherhouses have their own advantages. Practical experience, to which thus far no sufficient contrary experience has been opposed, leads us to consider the form of the Motherhouses as the only one, in which in our day a public churchly ministry of women can exist. We have previously shown, how the consideration of history leads to the same result. And inasmuch as this form is for us the only one possible, it likewise follows, that it is the best. The advantages of the Motherhouses can be briefly enumerated. They are more or less the outcome of the special form of christian and churchly community of faith and calling there attainable.

The Motherhouses are small, religious communities within narrow limits, in which, upon the basis of voluntary union among their members, the churchly life is able to unfold itself in greater purity, richness and consistency than in the larger public congregations,

which are formed upon an entirely different plan. The confessions of the Church obtain unreserved recognition. The beauty of worship, the frequency and variety of the services, the abundant preaching of the Word, the efficacy of the ordinances, and many other treasures from the wealth of a more believing past, here receive loving nurture. These small communities are thus able to afford a *churchly training*, such as is not easily found elsewhere. It would scarcely be necessary to insist upon the great value of this feature, were it not, that many protestant communions have lost the realization of the educational power, inherent in a carefully conducted and richly developed worship.

Special weight must furthermore be placed upon the healthful influence of religious association, for which the foundation is laid in the Motherhouses. All good and genuine association exerts an educational and refining influence. Therefore the Christians of all times have sought to establish closer communities. But we would fall into the most dangerous error, if we thus externalized the privacy of personal faith, by trying to establish without further preparation visible "Communions of Saints". In addition to the churchly union of confession, worship and sacrament, it is the Christian communion of work and calling, which alone affords a wholesome center for a union of faith. Both are found side by side in the Motherhouses. Sectarian narrowness, which makes a caricature of the community, and undisciplined laxity, which robs the community of its strength, are equally absent. All matters are judged by the Word of God, and to it all the members are subject. Such association is an invaluable means of *personal, spiritual progress, and Christian development of character*. This, to be sure, is not what many imagine, being above all, no life of mere religious enjoyment.

It is furthermore clear, that the Motherhouses, as religious working associations, afford the opportunity of a *practical and theoretical training for the deaconesses*, which would otherwise be unattainable. Such training is indispensable in our day, if the female diaconate would lay claim to the general confidence. This is primarily true of the care of the sick, yet it is equally the case in other relations. In the Motherhouses, a tradition of service is developed. One Sister learns from another. The physician, the Sister Superior, the pastor, impart to the deaconesses a technical education, which is the result of continuous, diligent labor, of careful observation, experience and practice. Without places of education, wholly devoted to this object, there can be no adequate training of deaconesses.

As regards the utilization of the *various gifts of the deaconesses*, the Motherhouses offer exceptional advantages. In the Sisterhood, each individual is not called upon to serve in every branch

of the calling, but each one can be placed where, according to the measure of her ability, her efforts will be most successful. Many an one, whose unaided efforts would avail little, in connection with others accomplishes excellent results. In the community of the Motherhouse, the one-sided employment of a special faculty is avoided. To one, whose strength has for a long period been strained in one direction, change of work is a relief. Accurate acquaintance on the part of the superiors with the individual persons, and a variety of duties, unite to secure to the work the most abundant results, and to the worker the longest possible period of usefulness. When a Motherhouse has the good fortune, to see represented among its members women of all ranks and all degrees of education, reflecting on a small scale, the whole of Christian womanhood, the Sisters will find in this variety a richness and mutual stimulus, which cannot be too highly estimated. There they can learn how in Christ "the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love". (Eph. 4, 16)

Besides the advantages cited, and chiefly concerning inner affairs, the fact must be emphasized, that the Motherhouses afford the deaconesses outward *protection and support*, over against the world; and a quiet, peaceable and yet spiritually active retreat in times of incapacity or old age. The dress likewise, which characterizes the Sisters as members of the House, and as upon an equality among themselves, is a protection, as well outwardly as against all secret enemies of the personal and associated life. And as it outwardly equalizes the Sisters, differing so widely as to birth, education and talents, so it affords them the most effective introduction and recommendation amid the various relations into which they are brought by their service. Therefore this dress is copied by preference by the secular trained nurses, a circumstance, which, although inconvenient to the deaconess cause, yet certainly indicates a recognition of its value.

Finally, it may be emphasized, that the Motherhouses, by their firm and well-developed churchly organization, and the discipline observed in them, are alone able to offer those guarantees, without which the church, as such, can have little interest in the female diaconate. Indeed, if the ministry of the deaconess in the congregation is to become an abiding and uniformly operative institution, it must be borne up by an organization like the Motherhouse, and not by individuals. Moreover, by the fact that the Motherhouse holds itself responsible for its members, and these remain bound to it, the work is raised so far above any possible vicissitudes, that it continues, even though individuals should cause trouble, or have to be excluded. Woman's public ministry in the

church is of so delicate a nature, that without the institution of the Motherhouses, the church of our time could certainly neither foster nor preserve it, and indeed, could never have secured it.

73. While the indispensableness of the Motherhouse is obvious both from the historical and practical point of view, it remains our duty to examine the objections which are made against this form of the female diaconate, occasionally even by persons apparently competent to judge. We can best do this, by considering, more carefully than has been done heretofore, the *differences between protestant deaconesses and Roman Catholic sisters of mercy*. Strangely enough, the objections against the Motherhouses seem to be made with more or less direct reference to the Romish church.

The principal reproach made to the deaconess houses, is that they are an imitation of the convents of the sisters of mercy. So much is true, as is proved by our presentation of the matter, that the public ministry of woman, both in the Romish church and in our own, is based upon a common form, which originated in the church before the Reformation,—that of a voluntary, close association, sanctioned by the church. Does this furnish cause for reproach? We think the contrary. We have heard how Luther approved of this form of the associated life,—when it accorded to the Word of God the place which belongs to it. And we do not hesitate to say, that it is a defect in our protestant church-life, that this form has been neglected among us. As a result, almost the entire burden of the work of the church has been laid upon the clergy. Many other matters have had to suffer neglect, or perish. While, in recognition of these needs, a remedy has been sought in the so-called lay-activity and the christian associations for inner mission-work, it remains a burning question, whether these forces, instead of building up the church, will not exert a disintegrating and destructive influence? As far as we can see, the solution of the problem lies mainly in the free, churchly associations of the deaconesses' and deacons' institutions. If the free, associative activity of the church is to furnish a reliable diaconate, this activity must culminate in the formation of closely-compact communities, carefully organized according to churchly principles. These communities, as circumstances now are within our church, must, in essential matters, create for themselves a fixed churchly organization. Experience shows that the road leads to the goal, and that the way has been prepared. We hold, that the formation prompted by faith, of free religious communities, should be promoted and favored by the church authorities. If a church is unable to give place in her midst to these voluntary organizations, or in some way to incorporate them with herself, it indicates a sad state of spiritual impotence and want of adaptability. There should be no doubt in the matter, where church affairs are judged



from a churchly, and not from a political point of view. This, however, is to us protestants, from force of habit, more difficult than we ourselves know.

But, say some, in the communities of the deaconess Motherhouses a Romanistic spirit of work-righteousness may easily gain ground. Attention is called to the fact, that the pietistic and methodistic tendencies of modern belief, in connection with the zealous performance of good works and slight insistence upon doctrine, actually produce various dangerous phenomena. It is possible. In the deaconess Motherhouses, which are regulated more strictly than any existing associations, upon churchly principles, such extravagances will be least observed. This assurance we can confidently give. The solicitude, with which the faith and confession of the Reformation are cherished, the united and unreserved submission to the Word of God, and the habit of discipline, resist at every step the stirrings of self-righteousness. Ask, if anywhere in the Motherhouses, any practice openly contradictory to God's Word can maintain itself? Were any such thing discovered, its removal would be immediate. But we may safely trust, that in the Motherhouses themselves all eyes are open, and nothing is more feared, than an unevangelical spirit. This is true in great things and small. But, they urge, even though doctrine and confession be beyond reproach, yet the very separation, incident to the associated life, is a dangerous feature, opposed to the evangelical spirit. Even the dress of the Sister suggests that of a nun. How easily may not a spirit of caste be fostered, a Romanistic sense of a condition of higher perfection, than is attainable in every day life? We have heard of the "deaconess vanity", and not always without justice,—but it will be conceded that without the prescribed dress, the close association would be impracticable. But we have furthermore shown, that without the association, the deaconess, as a class, would be impossible. And if we desire to retain the class, the class-spirit dare not be rejected. Among teachers and pastors, not to speak of secular professions, a certain esprit-de-corps is regarded as inevitable, as well as desirable. Deaconesses also must know, what they are, if they are to know, what they are not. This spirit has no affinity with presumption or vainglory, but it is highly salutary for discipline and self-restraint. For the rest, all of us are everywhere only human. As regards the isolation from the world, which the Motherhouses are said to promote, there are many features in the churchly conditions of the present, which it were pleasanter not to contemplate. Smaller communities, in which a more active religious life prevails, have at such times easily become the homes of spiritual pride. If to the pressure of circumstances is added a certain narrowness of mind, and hostility on the part of the larger communities, this danger

becomes almost fatal. But in the religious life and in the calling of the deaconess everything unites to counteract such a danger. The light of the Word penetrates into every hiding-place. The calling itself, spiritually viewed, is a school of humility as no other. The Motherhouses owe to the Church to which they belong, all their treasures of spiritual life and churchly custom. The fact that here these treasures are often found gathered together in great profusion, and by diligent use are kept bright and free from dust, tends solely to increase the responsibility, which the Motherhouses feel as debtors to the Church. And what do they desire further, than to serve the Church? This is possible only when, in the midst of the Church, and as its members, they remain actively in touch with it.

The deaconess Houses founded upon the doctrines of the Reformation, exclude, in their teachings as well as in their life, whatever tends to Romanism—work-righteousness, as well as monastic vows,—whatever goes beyond God's Word, and whatever is contradictory to it. Therefore we may ignore the reproach of a Romanizing tendency; while we commend the associative form, adopted by them, to the Church, as especially worthy of its care. Many pastors are dissatisfied, that the deaconesses who labor in their parishes, continue in a measure subject to the authority of their Motherhouse. The cause may partly be, that the pastors, through the unfortunate necessity of having to do all their work unaided, have unlearned to rejoice in a division of churchly labor. It ought to be self-evident, that, as regards the training, the spiritual requirements and the work of the deaconess, outsiders should be content to claim a less degree of experience, than is possessed by the directors of a Motherhouse. As a matter of fact, the Motherhouses represent a province of practical christianity, which does not reveal itself to the casual glance; into which experience alone permits a deeper insight; which offers problems, such as do not elsewhere occur,—a province, in which the most experienced have still much to learn. Outsiders, in proportion to their own spiritual advancement, should appreciate this; and, undeterred by jealousy and idle questionings, be content, if the female diaconate fulfils its purpose, as a humble and reliable auxiliary to the pastoral office.

One more objection must be met, which, although of a different nature from the above, is, also frequently with an eye to the Roman Catholic sisters of mercy, made to the deaconess houses. It is, that the deaconesses accomplish less than the Romish orders, or at least do not enjoy the same degree of general popularity. This reproach is made by the very persons, who, if the occasion offers, with great protestant self-consciousness, accuse the Motherhouses of Romanizing tendencies. Both accusations show in reality,

that the Motherhouses stand firmly upon the ground of their churchly confession, and in their statutes give the widest possible influence to the Word of God. The sisters of mercy are very numerous, and for proselyting purposes, their most capable representatives are sent out into the Protestant districts. The Romish Church moreover, in accordance with its habit of adaptation to the natural man, permits to the sisters of mercy a sort of service, which in many respects, and in the light of God's Word, appears unsuitable for deaconesses. As regards the work, the Protestant Sisters, in certain Roman Catholic circles, curiously enough, enjoy the same preference as is frequently accorded the Romish Sisters by Protestants. We admit that the dearth, especially of educated Sisters; the numerous difficulties, churchly and otherwise, that have to be encountered; the criticism and prejudices to be met by the Motherhouses, from believers and unbelievers in their own Church, do not make it easy for them to maintain their position over against the sisters of mercy. Yet, with confidence and due humility, we may affirm, to the glory of God, that hitherto they have very successfully maintained this position, not only as regards the true ministry in the Gospel spirit, but also as to practical efficiency. It is certain that spiritual work is not made easier in this world by taking the Word of God seriously. The Romish orders, owing to their vows, and to their general conception of the matter, escape many of the difficulties which beset our Motherhouses. At the same time, true faith need fear no competition from error or from unbelief.

The double reproach, that on the one hand the deaconess houses resemble too much the convents of the sisters of mercy, and yet on the other hand, are not equal to them, may spring from ignorance, but certainly not from faithful love to the Church, the pure Word and Sacraments. Where this love is found, united with proper insight, the peculiar dangers and difficulties will not be ignored, with which the Motherhouses have actually to contend, *The public churchly ministry of women certainly is not, and never will be, among the simplest churchly problems.* For this very reason we should find great cause for gratitude in the abundant success and blessing, which the Lord has accorded to this work, after it had been guided into the right path. And with the occasion for gratitude is offered that of more faithful intercession and co-operation.

74. We have compared the advantages of the Motherhouses with the objections urged against them, and have shown, how the deaconesses of to-day differ from those of the early Church, and from the sisters of mercy of the Romish Church. The question now suggests itself, how do the Motherhouses of the *different Protestant Churches stand toward each other.* The answer is both easy and

difficult ; difficult, inasmuch as the great unity of principle and practice which binds together the Motherhouses, must not be obscured by the answer ; and yet easy, for the reason that the doctrinal differences are and remain unmistakable, notwithstanding the levelling tendency of our time. We have already called attention to the fact, that the Motherhouses embody a union which is sound, because there is in it no thought of a weakening of the churchly confession. On the contrary, with all their community of interests, the Motherhouses show themselves very sensitive to confessional differences. They may be classified into three principal groups,—the Reformed, the United and the Lutheran Houses. In the United Houses, the tendency toward either the Lutheran or Reformed Church is clearly perceptible. Sometimes the doctrinal view is more Lutheran, while the worship is more Reformed, as is the case for instance at Kaiserswerth. The strictly reformed type, Calvinistic or Zwinglian, is very rare in our day. Yet the spirit of the reformed belief is the same as it was from the beginning. The Scriptures are understood in a more legalistic manner, the “spiritual, inner life”, with works as its outward expression, is strongly emphasized, in contrast to which the means of grace, and especially the sacraments, recede into the background. In its various deaconess Houses the Lutheran Church has abiding-places of the most faithful love and devotion to its spirit. The thoroughness of its teachings, the scriptural and conservative practice of Lutheranism, exclude all methodistic and pietistic tendencies. In order to avoid the development of a one-sided over-activity, a very thorough intellectual and spiritual education of the deaconesses is insisted upon. Loehe said that the deaconesses must be among the most cultured of their sex. The assurance that in the multiplicity of the work the one thing needful will not be lost sight of ; and that the practical service will evermore remain true to its purpose,—a service for Jesus, and not mere philanthropy—is found, among Lutherans, in union with the Church, rather than in the subjective “spirituality” of individuals. These few hints may suffice. We rejoice heartily in the communion of ministering love in faith, which unites the protestant Motherhouses, while it in no wise impedes the cultivation and expression of churchly characteristics. Only a very superficial observer will deny that the character of a deaconess community is greatly influenced by the latter. May the different Motherhouses faithfully and carefully strive with each other in the faith for that pre-eminence which is alone permitted in the Church, and among the followers of the Lord—pre-eminence in the humility and self-denial of ministering love. (Matth. 20, 26. 27.)



## CHAPTER IX.

### The Deaconess Sisterhoods.

75. The Deaconesses of a Motherhouse form a community, a *Sisterhood*. The name of Sister, by which Christian custom addresses the deaconesses, beautifully expresses the communion of faith, in which they stand. Used originally toward the female members of the Church, and still customary in certain religious circles and among the Moravians, this form of address has, in our Motherhouses as well as among the Roman Catholic orders, become the customary one. A simpler and more suitable name for the deaconess cannot be imagined. Together with the prescribed dress, this name wipes out all differences of birth and position, and is so convenient, that it has been adopted by the secular associations for sick-nursing. Among these however, it is robbed of its original, purely religious meaning. The general use of the name has also rendered it more difficult, in public life to distinguish the deaconesses of the Church from the professional nurses, who stand solely upon the ground of secular philanthropy. May the name of Sister ever remind the deaconess, that in all her labors she desires to serve the Lord alone, in whom, by the communion of faith and baptism, all are called as members of His Body, to the communion of one service, and one household.

76. In order to gain an insight into the classification and organization of the Sisterhoods in our Motherhouses, we will follow the steps, by which the deaconess becomes a regular member of the community. To be sure, these steps are not in all Houses precisely the same; but the differences, mostly of name and form, are so slight, that they scarcely need to be considered. We distinguish as steps upon the way, the *entrance into the Motherhouse*, the *period of probation*, the *novitiate*, and the *consecration as deaconess*. The term "novice" originated in the Romish Church. In some Houses, the Sisters who are no longer probationers are called "assistant Sisters"; but there is no reason why they should not more correctly be termed novices, that is, beginners in the deaconess calling. In some Houses, all Sisters are called probationers until their consecration. And such they are in reality. But it is obvious, that the first year after their entrance is in an especial sense to be regarded as the actual season of probation. As a rule, a Sister does not receive consecration, until she has labored in the calling at least three or

four years. During the time between the close of her actual probation and her consecration, the Sister is a novice. In some Houses, the first weeks of the year of probation are regarded as a preliminary probation. If any young women, preparatory to their admission as probationers, wish to acquaint themselves more closely with the deaconess work, and desire an opportunity and guidance in testing themselves, their own strength and the demands of the calling, the Motherhouses will cheerfully receive them as boarders on very reasonable terms. In this position they share the work of the probationers, yet their duties can be lightened, without infringing the rules of the House, and especially of the "probationers' hall", the sleeping apartment of the probationers. If they decide to remain, the time of their previous stay may, in its due proportion, be deducted from their term of probation.

77. The terms of admission for probationers to the Deaconess Motherhouses are essentially the same everywhere. Single women, unmarried or widowed, desiring to become deaconesses, must not, as a rule, be under eighteen or over thirty-six years of age. Exceptions may of course occur. Among women of considerable mental culture and energy, the elasticity of mind, which adapts itself to the requirements made by the Motherhouses of its members, is usually greater, even at a more advanced age. Yet it is scarcely advisable, to go beyond the fortieth year. If the habit of physical labor is wanting, the mental vigor and activity at a riper age should be all the greater. Some Houses have established special preparatory deaconess schools for girls under eighteen. Much may be said both for and against these. Young aspirants are best placed in christian families, notably in pastor's families, where they have opportunities of receiving instruction. The advantage of this arrangement is, that young girls will not enter the institutional life too early; that they will become better acquainted with the ordinary conditions of life, and better able therefore, to examine themselves. Unfortunately, it is not always possible to find families, who are able and willing to render the Motherhouses such a service of love. In individual Motherhouses, the establishment of preparatory deaconess schools thus becomes unavoidable.

The question as to the age most suitable within the above limits for entrance into the deaconess calling, is difficult to answer. There are some natures, who at a very early age possess the necessary clearness, decision, and devotion to the Lord's service. There are instances of absolute self-surrender, which are exceedingly precious. Some undecided natures, by long waiting, become ever more irresolute and hesitating. On the other hand, there are some, who require a long time to ripen inwardly, and to gain the strength needed for any great resolve. The sage advice: Not too old and

not too young, says little. God's guidance will always prove itself the best wisdom.

It is often the case, that the measure of physical strength, required for the deaconess calling, is overrated. Generally, a physician's certificate, that the aspirant is not afflicted with any chronic ailment, which would unfit her for the work, is sufficient. Chlorosis and nervous troubles, both of them the root of many disorders, are often effectually overcome by the deaconess' life. It often seems simply marvellous, what results can be accomplished by apparently very delicate women, if only they are willing.

As regards the mental and spiritual requirements to be made of applicants for admission to the deaconess House, the foremost condition is an absolutely blameless reputation. If the good name of a woman has suffered, her relations toward the Lord, in the matter of faith and repentance, may be the right ones, but for the deaconess calling she has become impossible. The question, whether persons of illegitimate birth can become deaconesses, must be decided in every individual case. The exact measure of education to be demanded of a probationer, cannot be determined. Some knowledge of woman's handiwork and an ordinary school education are desirable, yet intelligence and industry supply much that is wanting in this direction. A deaconess cannot have learned too much, cannot be too well educated. Yet sometimes those, who originally stood upon a very low plane of education, have in a few years made astonishing progress. Intercourse, the duties of the calling, study, and above all, the christian community, and the abundant religious life, co-operate in the advancement of the deaconess. The chief requisite however is, that the proper christian condition of heart should have been attained.

As a matter of course, the members of a Sisterhood will always differ greatly as to spiritual maturity. Therefore no fixed measure of advancement in this direction can be exacted of those about to enter. Those alone will find enduring satisfaction in the deaconess calling, who labor in faith; not for the sake of wordly support, to obtain honor among men or merit before God, but constrained by the love of Christ. It is not impossible, however, that a Sister whose entrance was prompted by wrong motives, may in time acquire the proper position toward her calling. Sometimes the mistaken motive lies on the surface,—a craving for activity, a fanciful view of the diaconate, dissatisfaction with her position in life, make a change seem desirable,—while in reality, it was the Lord, whom her soul was seeking, and now receives peace in finding. The human heart is often a mystery to itself, but the Lord knows, how to bring hidden things to light. His ways are wonderful, and the means innumerable, by which He draws souls to Himself. Friends, relatives, meetings apparently accidental,

temporal sorrow, a sermon, a church festival, a lecture, an impression from earliest youth, a report, a book,—the most insignificant occurrences have proved sufficient. Through such means the Lord has seized upon a soul, led it into the deaconess House, and then drawn it to Himself. But often the heart remains untouched, and its hard, unbelieving worldliness gradually reveals itself. A deaconess House, standing upon the right foundation, and having the right spirit, will have strength to cast out such elements as have no place there. Either a soul is drawn into the spiritual communion of the service, or a separation from the community takes place, the person in question going of her own accord, or receiving her dismissal. Experience in all Christian institutions teaches, “that the Lord layeth up sound wisdom for the upright.” One who comes, believing herself to have recognized the Lord’s Will, and placing her trust in the grace and power of Him, whose strength is made perfect in weakness, will assuredly not be put to shame. In the calling itself, those who serve are led from degree to degree, and “if they use well the office”, a “good degree” is promised them. (1. Tim. 3, 13.) Truthfulness, and willingness to be taught, openness and simplicity, humility and a taste for the associated life, as well as a cheerful temperament and love of work are necessary qualifications of a true deaconess. In short, an inner vocation is needed, if a deaconess is to advance to a position in which she contributes to the glory of God, to the profit of her associates in the work, and to the welfare of those committed to her care. If she possesses a living faith, she will soon become assured of this inner vocation. Where such certainty is wanting, it can be arrived at during the season of probation. Not by speculating and questioning will irresolute natures accomplish anything, but by trying. An aspirant should enter upon her probation with firm, calm and modest determination. This is merely a trial, not a decision, and the entering upon it in a right spirit, may at the outset be regarded as a favorable indication; for “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble”.

78. Frequently those who desire to enter a deaconess House as probationers have to overcome many difficulties and prejudices, before they can carry out their purpose. Parents, relatives, friends try to dissuade them. Parents or guardians refuse their consent. As regards the parents’ consent, this is to be positively insisted upon, as a condition of admission. The Romish Church says in such cases, that we must obey God, rather than men. But there is no evidence, that God desires any one, against their parents’ wishes, therefore in violation of the fourth commandment, to enter the service of the Church. “Honor thy father and thy mother” is God’s unequivocal command. And if it is God’s Will, that a son or a daughter should serve Him in His Church, He will see to it, that it can be done, without breaking the fourth commandment. If



the desire of a young woman to be a deaconess, is from God, is genuine and sincere, she must pray, and quietly wait. The Lord will grant what she asks, and human opposition will not continue forever. It has been said by some protestants, that the mere consent of the parents is not enough—that it must be cheerfully given; but this is certainly going too far. The honor which we owe our parents, merely bids us not in defiance of their wishes, to go our own way. But where father and mother perhaps stand aloof from the faith, or cannot understand the matter in question; where their horizon is a limited one, or they are filled with the prejudices of their time and position,—in such a case, children are not debarred from the service of the Lord in mission- or deaconess-work, because the parents do no more than merely consent. Children are not bound by the fourth commandment, to demand their parent's unconditional acquiescence, or to sit in judgment upon the spirit in which their permission is granted; but only to have a care that no disrespect to their parents adheres to their entering the service of the Lord.

The task of removing the prejudices, which stand in the way of a young girl's entrance into the deaconess House, would belong above all to the pastors, if these were not often themselves influenced by the same prejudices. We have here to deal with a state of affairs, which stands in close connection with the conditions in our Church. The great superficiality and unbounded subjectivity of many so-called believers, the wide-spread unbelief, the lack of decided doctrinal churchliness, and thorough churchly training, the often purely worldly tendency of mind, even where the Church and her affairs are concerned,—all these unite to prevent the diaconate from being fully understood in wider circles. Lectures and writings upon the subject do not go far. The best means of dissipating prejudices is a practical acquaintance with the diaconate, an experience of its attendant blessings, and the contemplation of the peaceful joy and humble gratitude, which animate the service of the Sisters. But at least, of pastors and educated Christians a thorough familiarity with the matter, even without practical observation, might be expected, and a willingness to oppose with decision the current objections. The Church needs an organized service of mercy, which, in so far as it is exercised by women, demands an unmarried life. This does not contradict the Scriptural idea of marriage, but merely opposes that over-estimation of marriage, which is very general in our day, and is justified neither by the Word of God, nor by experience. Whenever it has asserted itself with especial prominence, it has been an indication, that the religious life was inactive, and the spiritual interests at a low ebb. We shall return to this subject later. If the female diaconate is a calling desired by the Lord, and needed by the Church, it is always a serious mistake, when

parents prevent their daughters from obeying the inclination which draws them to this service. That it is too arduous, that it necessitates great physical strength, that coarse work, and even an excess of it, is demanded, that it is injurious to the health, that it shortens life, or draws lines too narrow for evangelical liberty,—all these are prejudices which we cannot dispel, while people insist upon retaining them, but which a careful and candid examination will easily overcome. It would lead us too far, were we to enter more fully into this question. The Sisters renounce a life of unrestraint and caprice,—that is certain. For the rest, they are free, in spite of their restraint, and find abundant opportunities to develop their talents and their individuality, which would not be possible without freedom, with mechanical training and legal constraint. Most married women, if they conscientiously fulfill the duties of their calling, are far more bound than a deaconess. The assertion, that deaconesses become estranged from their families, is also incorrect. So much is true—the associated life and the calling of the Sisters is not so openly displayed to fathers and brothers, mothers and aunts, as is the everyday life of the family. For the rest, the deaconess can be to her family all that it is possible to be, in connection with a life-calling, by which she no longer belongs to her parents' house, but to the household of the Lord. Believing parents will learn that spiritual sacrifices, like that of Hannah, when she returned to the Lord's service the child she had asked of Him, enrich, instead of impoverishing a household. It should be to us a source of deep humiliation, that so few families among us, even the religiously inclined, seem to have any conception of the glory of the New Testament "sacrifice of praise", offered in gratitude for mercies received. We need not say, that where God has given a daughter a life-calling elsewhere, she has no right to exchange it for one of her own choosing, even though it be that of a deaconess. We would not be standing upon Gospel-foundation, if we advocated self-chosen paths, and self-chosen "spirituality". Yet parents, who would at any time consent to the marriage of their daughter, have scarcely the right, *as Christians*, permanently to oppose her purpose of devoting herself to the service of the Lord in His Church.

79. If the path of the young girl or widow has been smoothed for her entrance into the deaconess House, she must make application to its immediate superiors. This must be accompanied by a certificate of baptism, a physician's certificate, the written consent of her parents and guardians, a short sketch of her life, prepared by herself, and a sealed testimonial from her pastor. As to further preparations to be made, she will have to inform herself. During the actual year of probation, she provides her own clothing, etc., but receives her board, together with her aprons and caps. Besides the necessary underclothing, footwear, and suitable dark

dresses, she must bring with her a Bible. In almost all Mother-houses there is a dearth of Sisters, and an earnest helper is always welcome. For less robust persons, it is advisable, to enter in the Spring, rather than in the Autumn.

80. The deaconess House, in its various branches and in its hospital, offers ample opportunity for the training of the probationer. This training is obtained by practical exercise in sick-nursing, together with theoretical instruction of various kinds.

The trained superintending Sisters introduce the probationers to their work, and while working with them, give them the necessary directions. As a rule, the Motherhouses require all probationers to go through a course in nursing. Even if a Sister is afterwards employed exclusively in teaching, or in the household, her training as a nurse will always be valuable to her. Times and circumstances will not be wanting, when she will be called upon to exercise her skill. Through the training in the care of the sick, the education of all the deaconesses receives a uniform character, which brings the Sisters who do not nurse, into full sympathy with the far greater number of nursing Sisters. More than any other, this branch of the work proves a test of the true deaconess spirit. Not all deaconesses can have eminent talents for nursing. Various gifts and abilities are useful and necessary for other purposes as well. But no deaconess will pass through her year's probation in the hospital without signal benefit. If possible, a Sister should have become familiar with every form of nursing, and should thoroughly understand those duties which are taken for granted in the care of the sick, such as keeping the sick-room in order, etc. Many good workers have to re-learn familiar duties, because the care of the sick demands greater exactness and attention, than are called for in ordinary cases. It is easier than might be supposed, to become accustomed to witness serious operations and great suffering. The ability to afford relief in distress is a powerful aid in overcoming the stumbling-blocks, which to a nervous, sensitive nature seem insurmountable. There is much to learn in the service among the sick, and all the forces of body and mind are enlisted in the work. Hereto is added the instruction.

The probationers are instructed in the catechism of the Church, and in biblical knowledge. The former, especially, is indispensable. The relation of these studies to the deaconess calling will make old things appear new; and nothing else so effectually leads the probationers into the spirit of the house and religious community, of which they desire to become members. Of equal importance with the study of the catechism, is that of the female diaconate as to its Scriptural foundation and history, and its present inward and outward form. The pastor

of the institution gives this instruction. Probationers who are deficient in the elementary branches, must be advanced in these. Singing is especially cultivated. It is well, if a fixed course can be arranged for the probationers, so that for instance, they are practically employed during the forenoon, and study in the afternoon; but usually the numbers are too small, both of workers and teachers, to admit of such a complete and systematic arrangement. There can be a superabundance of theoretical study. Deaconesses, if they are faithful, learn continually and in every direction, through their religious life and their calling,—and this is the best school. The medical instruction given the probationers by the superintending physician dare not encourage any half-knowledge or self-conceit. The requirements of sick-nursing are alone to be considered, and this object is most effectually attained, if the Sisters not only have become thorough and capable in the duties of their calling, but have learned to maintain a judicious reserve in all things not pertaining to their office.

81. It is easily understood, that the varied activity, the multiplicity of new impressions, the often wholly unaccustomed mode of life, make great demands upon a probationer. To many there come seasons of disappointment. They expected a vigorous advancement of their religious life, and now, tired and sleepy in body and mind, in spite of divine services and spiritual activity, they experience a greater inner dryness than ever before. Perhaps they mistook a meditative sentimentality for genuine faith, and must now learn that their faith was a broken reed, upon which they cannot lean. Or their imagination pictured the life of the religious community as a lovely idyl,—a paradise, as it were, without the serpent. Now they must learn, that where poor sinners dwell closely together in the light of God's Word, the miseries of sin become very evident. The most promising spiritual growth is often hidden under these and similar experiences, but meanwhile the probationer is unaware of it. Frequent disappointments occur also in the pursuit of the work. Perhaps she has overrated her strength; others progress more rapidly; and if the motives which prompted her entrance, were unworthy ones, this knowledge will add to her sorrow and pain. But very often the probationers proceed on their way without many troubles, and the deaconess life is entirely congenial to them. From the greater ease or difficulty of the beginning we can draw no conclusions as to the future. A hard beginning often indicates the earnestness of a strong character, to whom the Lord in the end awards a most happy result. A probationer must above all things be entirely frank toward those who are guiding her education. If we discover that our clothing is on fire we do not hide it, but uncover it, that it may be quenched. It does no harm, if a Sister makes mistakes. A bishop once wrote to a young

pastor, that he hoped he would make many blunders. His opinion was that honest and conscientious natures, by their very errors, would learn to avoid error. Insincere natures hide their faults, and these of course retrograde, instead of advancing. A sin, which cannot, under any circumstances be tolerated in a deaconess community, is falsehood in any form. A Sister who lacks truthfulness will sooner or later be forced to relinquish her calling.

82. In addition to the pastor and Sister Superior of the House, and those deaconesses who have the superintendency of the outside stations, an older deaconess is usually appointed for the special supervision and training of the probationers. She is called the training Sister. She is chosen by the Sister Superior, and must act entirely in her spirit and according to her directions.

When the time arrives for the probationer to be received into the *novitiate*, all the novices and deaconesses employed in the House, are entitled to a voice in the matter, the responsibility thus being shared by all. The Sisterhood must answer for its members, all for each, and each for all. Therefore the sense of unity and of common responsibility must be carefully cultivated.

With the introduction of the probationer into the novitiate a little festivity is connected. Too much must not be made of it, for the novitiate is still a period of probation. Especially must the ceremony not partake of a public character, or in any way resemble a consecration.

83. The novice is acquainted in general with the duties and obligations of the deaconess calling, and her promotion is considered a testimony to her inner fitness, as well as to her possession of the needed outward skill. This expectation must be verified on her part by faithful work and good behavior, within the Sisterhood, and in the different fields of labor, to which the Motherhouse may send her. As a rule, she no longer receives special instruction. She herself must now continue her education, by her life in the calling, and by faithful devotion to it. A deaconess must be able to stand upon her own feet. It is only by a comparatively independent participation in the duties of the House, that the capabilities of a Sister are fully awakened, and her probation is brought to a certain conclusion, such as is necessary for her consecration. The duration of the novitiate varies greatly. A longer time is needed to gain a thorough acquaintance with those of a reserved nature; and very young novices must not be surprised if the end of their probation is not hastened. Many circumstances are to be considered. The greater the experience gained by the Motherhouses, the more important will be to all without exception the principle "lay hands suddenly on no man".

84. We have now reached that period in the life of the deaconess, which is only second in importance to her entrance into the Motherhouse—her *consecration*. This in a certain sense corresponds to the ceremony of ordination to the pastoral office. According to Lutheran, that is, Scriptural principles, we dare not over-estimate the latter,—the comparison is therefore not presumptuous. The consecration of a deaconess, as well as the ordination of a pastor, is the outward confirmation of an inward call. The Sister has had the opportunity for years, to prove herself as to her inner vocation for the deaconess life; and this inner vocation must be her first consideration. To this is added the outward call. As she has proved herself, so the Motherhouse has proved her. The pastor and director of the Motherhouse now declares to her, that he is ready to consecrate her to the deaconess calling, and that she, on her part, must declare her readiness to be consecrated. If both sides have the full assurance, in the sight of God, that all is well prepared and considered, both inwardly and outwardly, the consecration may take place, with the certainty that the Lord Himself will pronounce His Yea and Amen. This Yea and Amen finds its expression in the consecration at His altar. There the inward and outward vocation of the deaconess meet. The Sister *vows*, before the altar of the Lord, that she will, as a deaconess, serve Him, her Saviour, in His Church and according to His Will. With the laying on of hands and prayer, she receives the blessing, in the Name of the Lord. Throughout the transaction, she is dealing with the Lord. He must be sensibly present to her. Her vow is the answer to His call, of which she has become inwardly sure,—and His blessing is His answer. The inward and outward vocation are thus in full harmony, as far as this is possible with poor sinners. The inwardly experienced call becomes a spoken vow and confession; the audible confirmation and blessing, an inward seal. Without any admixture of unscriptural ideas it may be said, that in this ceremony an actual gift is imparted to the one consecrated. For the certified vocation assures the heart of the presence of the Holy Spirit, and of His aid in all the duties of the calling. If any one knocks, it shall be opened unto him; if any one asks, it shall be given him. The “Yea” of the Lord is an assurance, that the Sister, according to the measure of her receptivity, will not lack the grace and gifts needed in her calling. In so far we may say that a communication of the Holy Spirit is connected with the laying on of hands and prayer at the consecration.

85. By her consecration the novice becomes a deaconess, and is definitively received into the Sisterhood of the Motherhouse. The Motherhouse henceforth provides for all her needs, even though she become incapacitated for work. Consecration thus, by the binding of each individual Sister in her own conscience, forms the tie

which binds the community of Sisters among themselves. It is necessary to give more detailed attention to this matter, so important for the entire deaconess cause; and here the *vow* of the deaconess is first to be considered.

We cannot recognize the Romish doctrine of the so-called “evangelical counsels” of poverty, chastity and obedience, and of the justifiableness of a vow which binds the person to them for life. We firmly maintain, that the one vow of a Christian is the baptismal vow, and that no special vow is justified, which is not in some way included in the vow of baptism. Whatever we, as protestant Christians, promise with regard to any special office or calling, is nothing further than the application of the baptismal vow to the individual case. Yet this does not preclude, that the individual case be fully secured in its rights by a special vow, demanded and taken with reference to it. Such a special vow continues in force, while we, by the Lord’s Will, continue in the office or calling which demanded it. Our baptismal vow only is binding for life. It does not become Christians, to bind themselves otherwise. No Christian has arbitrary power over his own life, but is forevermore bound to the Will of God.

Certain vows bind us, as before God, to the civil and churchly administration. Inasmuch as the deaconess work rests wholly upon voluntary action, these administrations have nothing to do with the consecration of deaconesses. The deaconesses remain free in their calling, they voluntarily promise themselves to the Lord’s service. No outward force compels them. Yet they do not possess their freedom, to use it “for an occasion to the flesh”. They are bound to the Lord, inwardly and spiritually, to serve Him, as long as He desires, as deaconesses. He only can absolve them. To earthly-minded persons this means little; to the spiritually-minded, it means everything.

86. What is the purport of the special vow, which the deaconess takes at her consecration? We emphasize, in the first place, that it includes the vow to remain unmarried, because this is a condition of the deaconess life. Marriage is a right, and a gift of God. All prohibitions of marriage are devil’s doctrine, as the apostle expressly states. (1. Tim. 4, 1—3.) On the other hand, single life may also be a gift and a right, which can be denied to no one. Any-one may voluntarily renounce marriage. It is an indication of the pagan under-current in human life, when the notion again and again asserts itself, that life without marriage is a failure. God said, it is not well for man to be alone. And He gave him woman as a helpmeet. The sexes supplement each other. This is surely, pre-eminently but not exclusively, true of marriage. It is a fact, that St. Paul (1. Cor. 7) commends single life. He takes for granted, that persons have the gift of living unmarried; otherwise

marriage were better. But where the gift exists in persons, it leaves them greater freedom and independence to surrender themselves to the Lord, and to serve the kingdom of Heaven. With this commendation of single life, the apostle does not desire to “put a rope on any man’s neck”. Single life is no holier, no more pleasing to God, than marriage. It permits greater liberty of movement, and insures freedom from the anxiety which “careth for the things of this world”. But the gifts differ. Those who have not the gift of living unmarried, will, humanly thinking, be best promoted in their spiritual life by a christian marriage. Neither is holier than the other, but each is a different gift. Upon this territory mysteries abound. To many persons the possibility of marriage is practically denied. Men are often not able to marry until late in life; many women not at all. And if we were at greater pains to learn the will of God, and to secure our everlasting salvation, the opportunities of forming a suitable marriage would be even rarer. The union of a believing woman with an unbelieving man no doubt often becomes the ruin of her religious faith. Mixed marriages, and all marriages which preclude a true, spiritual communion between man and wife, are undesirable. Marriage brings its own cross to all who enter upon it; but it may also become one of the most fearful spiritual temptations. Where God has not granted to a christian person the gift of living unmarried, and has likewise withheld the opportunity of marriage, He has Himself thereby set a task to that person. A christian will sooner or later discover, it not here below, then hereafter, that in this also the Lord had a gracious purpose in His behalf. While in this relation sin has a fearful power, destructive to body and soul, yet the golden wonder-threads of grace are very visibly interwoven with the rest. If a young woman, either because she has the gift, or because God’s guidance has led her, serves Him in the single state, her *right* to do so dare not in any case be disputed. The above suggestions will fully prove this assertion.

87. A right includes a duty. All cannot perceive the beauty and honor of unmarried life according to God’s Will, “save they to whom it is given”. (Matth. 19, 11.) A deaconess should seek to grasp it, and pray without ceasing, until it is given her. Purity of heart may be a gift of nature, or a gift of grace, obtained by prayer. Even though it be the former, it must become the latter. Where it exists, it must be guarded with prayer and faithful vigilance. Even where it is a gift of nature, it may be quickly lost. It is greatly endangered by spiritual pride. The fall from the heights of spiritual self-exaltation, mostly leads to the depths of fleshly pollution. For the rest, the service of the deaconess provides effective weapons for the war, which purity has to wage in this world of impurity. Among these weapons we would



reckon especially the truth and clearness regarding human relations, which are given by God's Word, and confirmed by experience; and furthermore, the true, spiritual fast of constant work, stimulating and absorbing all her faculties. If with it all, as the chief requisite, the deaconess truly stands under the influence of the Gospel of peace, carefully avoiding all fanciful affectation and self-delusion, she will discover that the Lord causes a bright light to shine upon the humble path of maidenly devotion to His service. The more dispassionate and calm the soul which beholds this light, the more beautifully, as an unquenchable star, will it rise within her.

88. What then, with the Scriptural view of unmarried life, is to be thought of a deaconess, who relinquishes her calling for the purpose of marrying? As a matter of course, she is not bound outwardly by any tie. Nor can the possibility be denied, that in leaving her calling and entering upon married life, she may be obeying God's will. It would be a perversion of the Gospel, if other views became prevalent in the Motherhouses. If any attempt were made, by human ordinances to restrict the evangelical liberty of the Sisters, which the Son of God has purchased for them with His blood, they would do better, to shake the dust from their feet. But we dare not, unadvisedly, after the manner of those who have no understanding of the questions concerned, speak of the marriage of deaconesses, as though there existed no calling to which they were bound in the Lord. If it was His will, that a young woman should become a deaconess; if, after careful trial and examination, the inward and outward vocation, as in the sight of the Lord, received His confirmation by her consecration, it is not likely, that He will soon afterwards desire something different for her. It is more probable, that in devoting herself to the calling, the Sister now desirous of leaving did not go carefully to work, and that she did not take her vow before the Lord's altar as seriously as she should have done. It is not for us to judge. But this we may say, that a Sister should examine herself, and faithfully endeavor to learn the will of God. If she fails to do so, it will be her own fault, if there rests upon her forsaking her calling and upon her marriage, the stain of fickleness or unfaithfulness. If she is acting conscientiously, the deaconess will in such a case, before she makes a decision, seek the advice of the Superiors of the House, and in accordance with the fourth commandment, take heed, lest she take counsel with flesh and blood, rather than with the Lord. Other circumstances will also suggest themselves for examination. After all things have been honestly and carefully considered, and the Sister decides upon going, no obstacle will be put in her way, even though the superiors may not fully approve her decision. Her going will be without reproach, and she will be able to continue in friendly intercourse with the Motherhouse. The

human heart often follows strange paths. When we have really sought to know and to do the will of God, His blessing rests upon all our efforts, whether they are easy or difficult. The experience of the Motherhouses shows that the chapter of deaconess-marriages, besides a few bright pages, contains many dark ones. It is not a false doctrine of marriage and single life, but only the carefully developed doctrine of the christian calling; it is not Romish, but truly evangelical, if deaconesses do not lightly abandon a calling, to which in voluntary self-surrender, they permitted themselves to be consecrated before God's altar. They are free, and are to remain so. It is their treasure and their glory, that they may so continue. But they are not as such who use their liberty as a "cloak for maliciousness", or who, because they serve of their own free will in the House of God, may therefore do as they please.

In many Motherhouses, the Sisters at their admission, give the solemn promise, not to leave, before communicating their intention to the Superiors of the House. This is only as it should be, for the Motherhouse has to answer for its Sisters, and it has the right to demand that they do as much for the Motherhouse. All this receives in the consecration its confirmation as from God. There is in it no idea of constraint, or enslavement of consciences.

89. The obligation to remain unmarried is not expressly mentioned in the vow of a deaconess, being a condition of the calling itself. She promises to serve the Lord as deaconess, so long as He desires it; and she remains unmarried, while she is a deaconess. That she binds herself to the service, according to the *rules of her Motherhouse*, and by this to the Motherhouse itself, must be expressed and emphasized; likewise that she binds herself, as a deaconess, to serve in accordance with the *rules of the Church*. If the Motherhouse is a Lutheran one, its rules will be those of the Lutheran Church. If it belongs to another confession, the obligation is to that one. The form in which this obligation to the confession and churchly rules is expressed, differs greatly in different Houses, and in some may be omitted almost entirely. In this case the obligation to the Motherhouse, and therefore to its churchly character, will be brought into so much greater relief. We consider it the only suitable proceeding in the consecration, to make separate mention of the Motherhouse and of the Church.

Inasmuch as the deaconesses serve according to the rules of their Motherhouse, their entire institutional life is fitted into the frame-work of obedience. This affords them great strength and comfort. Of course, no obedience is here meant, which would bind them to men rather than to God. It is scarcely likely that anything will be required of deaconesses, that is contrary to God's Word. If it were, they must obey God, rather than men. But

women will not be qualified for wholesome service within the Church, unless they walk in well-defined and decided paths of order and obedience.

The fact that the deaconesses are bound to the rules of the Church, affords them support and protection against the subjectivity and arbitrariness which often prevail in churchly matters. The Sisters are removed from all partisanship in the Church, if they are simply and firmly bound to the churchly confession. All their books and prayers, all that, for instance, in their attendance upon the sick, they may read to these, must of course be in harmony with it. Only such books are to be used by the Sisters, as are, so to speak, of a churchly-classical character. Extemporaneous prayer cannot be forbidden the deaconesses in their ministrations in private houses, but it must be limited to exceptional cases, where it is urgently desired. For the rest, a deaconess must know what agrees, or does not agree with the confession of her Church, in worship, preaching and doctrine, at confession, baptism and the Holy Communion. With sects and conventicles she has nothing to do. Where the proper rules are wanting, or are not observed, the deaconess must keep them in her mind and heart, and work in their spirit. In so far as it does not conflict with these rules, she must, wherever she is placed, simply yield to existing conditions. In many cases it is not churchly authorities, but private persons, municipalities or societies, who place the Sisters. The Sisters must treat these managers with respect and obedience. To this their instructions from the Motherhouse bind them. These instructions regulate the service of the Sisters, and guard its character as a churchly diaconate. The Motherhouse must see to it, that the instructions furnished by it fully define the duties of the deaconess toward itself, the Church, the individual parish and the local managers, and that they are unreservedly obeyed.

It may, under certain circumstances, appear desirable, that a deaconess be permitted to leave one Motherhouse, and enter another. The Motherhouses have an agreement among themselves, by which the transfer of a Sister from one to the other can only take place, on condition that the Motherhouse she leaves, does not object. The proper transfer demands, that the House to which she belongs by her consecration, does not dispense her from her obligation, but transfers it to the other House. A re-consecration in such a case would be absurd. A deaconess continues to be faithful to the promise made at God's Altar, even though the one Motherhouse hands over to another its right to her service. Re-consecration of a deaconess who has wilfully broken faith cannot conscientiously be permitted. In no case can she be received into another Motherhouse, until she has obtained forgiveness for her breach of faith, and is again at peace with the Motherhouse she had forsaken.

Neither in another Motherhouse nor in her own, in case her service there is resumed with the promised faithfulness, can there be any question of a re-consecration. Of course, no Motherhouse can sanction the transfer of one of its deaconesses to another House, if it necessitates a change of confession.

90. In most Motherhouses the day of consecration is preceded by a season of preparation. During this time the Sisters to be consecrated are instructed by their pastor as to the significance of the consecration, and are prepared for it. The public services, the morning and evening devotions of the household,—all will have a bearing upon the act about to take place. The Sister Superior also gives instruction to the candidates. In addition, these have abundant time allowed them, to examine themselves, and to study the Word of God; while to all the deaconesses in the Motherhouse, this is a season of spiritual renewal. In the Romish Church, certain times are set apart for spiritual exercises, for spiritual retreats, which are greatly lauded, because of their profitable results. The seasons of preparation in our deaconess Houses have little affinity with the Romish convent exercises. But this may be said of them, that they are usually very rich and precious days to the Sisters. The desire has often been expressed, that all the older Sisters of the Motherhouse might from time to time be permitted to enjoy such periods of spiritual quiet and meditation. The ordinary vacations and rests do not answer the purpose. While we are resting, God should be at work within us. But this requires earnest preparation and care. Unfortunately their numbers are too limited, to admit of regularly recurring spiritual as well as physical vacations. They are therefore obliged to help themselves as well as they are able. The Lord does not fail to provide seasons, when He approaches them in peculiar ways; such as He gives to all christians, to arouse them to meditation, self-examination and prayer. These are the best seasons of preparation,—better than any that can be arranged by man.

91. The preparation closes on the eve of their consecration with a service of confession and absolution for the candidates. With the consecration is connected the full morning service and celebration of the Holy Communion. We still consider this ancient custom appropriate from a churchly standpoint. The sermon is followed by a short address to the Sisters, the pastor standing at the altar; whereupon each is called by name, and the question is put, which embodies the vow of the deaconess. The wording probably varies in the different Houses. In the one in which the author is engaged, it is as follows:

“Having been instructed from the Word of God, how to minister in the Church of Christ, I now ask you before God and His holy angels, as well as before the Christians here

assembled,—is it your purpose, according to the rules of our Lutheran Church and of your Motherhouse, in humility, obedience and faithfulness, out of gratitude to your Saviour, to serve as deaconesses in His Church, as He may give you grace,—if so, answer yes, and give me your hand in confirmation of your promise”.

The question is put to the Sisters, all standing, by the pastor of the House; they make reply, and give him their right hand. It is not to be considered good churchly order, that they should also give their hand to the Sister Superior. For having given it to the pastor, the Sisters bind themselves to the rules of the Motherhouse, and therefore to obedience to the Sister Superior. After the profession, the Sisters kneel on the steps of the altar, and the consecration follows in these words: “May Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd and Bishop of your souls; seal your profession with His gracious and almighty Amen! And I, as an ordained minister of the Church, in virtue of my office in this House, and according to the measure of its authority, receive you into the Sisterhood of our deaconesses, and commit to you their office and ministry in the name of Jesus! (laying on of hands) May the blessing of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be upon you, make you faithful unto death, and give you the crown of eternal life. Amen.” Then follows, again with the laying on of hands, the ancient prayer of consecration for deaconesses, which on sound scriptural ground, expresses in strong and concise terms, what in this important moment is to be asked, and surely is asked effectually, in behalf of the Sisters, for their whole life in the calling. After the Lord’s Prayer, the pastor and the older deaconesses, gathered around the newly consecrated Sisters, salute them with the greeting of peace, and with the words: “May the beauty of the Lord our God be upon you, and may He establish the work of your hands upon us.” The ceremony closes beautifully with the responsive recital by the pastor and deaconesses of the 121. Psalm, the newly consecrated Sisters reciting the first two verses. The Magnificat, a short hymn, and the celebration of the Holy Communion for the Sisters just consecrated, brings the service to its culmination and conclusion. In most Houses the Sisters at their consecration receive, as a mark of their calling, a small silver cross. Less suitable seems to us the gift of a ring on this occasion, although no Sister must be censured, if a ray of bridal happiness enhances the joy of her consecration. But at the same time, any notion that the consecration of a deaconess signifies in a special sense a betrothal to the Lord, must be avoided. All christians, who by saving faith in Christ desire to live and to die unto Him, are betrothed unto the Lord. Deaconesses are the same as all christians, except that, like every body else, they have their special calling.

This being a calling to serve in the House of the Lord, they receive their consecration at His altar. That on such a day the Motherhouse, as well as the friends and relatives of a Sister should endeavor to give her pleasure by evidences of loving sympathy, is very natural.

92. The association of deaconesses in a Motherhouse may be variously constituted. Circumstances are not everywhere the same. It would seem a matter of course, that a Sisterhood, bound to the confession of the Church, cannot receive a pastor or director, without having had an opportunity of expressing an opinion in regard to his appointment. Managers who should ignore this privilege, would greatly endanger the continuance of the Sisterhood. The right of suffrage need not be granted the Sisters, although even this might not be inappropriate, if the election were carefully conducted upon religious principles. The choice of a Sister Superior has nothing to do with the vow of the Sisters.—It is a very desirable and practical arrangement, to have an independent treasury, managed by the Sister Superior in the interest of the House and Sisterhood, whose members, beside the necessaries of life, receive from the Board of Managers, a small allowance of pocket money. By this independent treasury greater freedom of action is permitted the Superiors of the House, and this is really necessary, if the Sisterhood, although not publicly and legally, yet privately and actually, exists as a congregation. By such an arrangement, the churchly relations of the House, which cannot be as fully appreciated by the managers, as by the members of the household, would be greatly benefited. Many other advantages will be secured by it for the House, and for those under its care.

93. The life of the Sisterhood represents on a small scale a world in itself, of whose many interests and relations outsiders can scarcely form a correct idea. In the distribution of labor, many Sisters are unavoidably subordinated to others; yet this does not interfere with the actual equality of all. Such a supposition must not be tolerated, as little as the notion, that in the sight of God any one form of labor is more important than another. Each field of labor, each member of the whole, has its own use. The Sisters are called to the service of the household of God in the church, and nothing more is asked of them, than that they be found faithful. The more fully a Sister becomes one with the Sisterhood, the more will its united interests become her own, and the richer her life will be. It is difficult, to realize the multitude of interests which meet together in the Motherhouse. Members of the Sisterhood are stationed throughout the land, and the ties which bind them to the life of the church, are becoming more and more numerous. Private and public needs touch the heart. The work provides new duties, new points of view, new problems and new impulses, in inexhaustible fulness

To this is added the constant activity within the Sisterhood itself. We see the growth and progress, the spiritual and technical advancement of individuals. The diversity of relations and positions incident to the calling, sharpens the perception. The heart is touched by sickness, by recoveries, by death. Contact with persons of all classes, journeys, and the interchange of experience, often with members of other Motherhouses, increase knowledge, broaden the thoughts and enlarge the horizon. As the Motherhouse provides for the bodily and spiritual nourishment of the Sisters, so it is careful to educate them in the perception of what is suitable, beautiful and lovely in a christian sense. Churchly and family festivals are celebrated with much love and devotion; nor are the anniversaries in the life of individuals disregarded. Deaconess Houses should delight in holding festivals, and should understand how to conduct them. God has given to most Sisters a love of flowers. They should therefore learn, in an intellectual and spiritual sense, to see with joy and gratitude the flowers of His own planting, which the faithful God permits to grow in the path of their life. With an appreciation of these things, and especially of that which always remains to us human beings the most interesting of all, the mental and spiritual growth of individuals,—we can understand that amid such fullness of life the hearts of the deaconesses must continue young and fresh, and that they are like trees planted by the rivers of water.

94. The deaconess calling, as such, does not endanger life; neither is it a protection against contagion and danger. Many Sisters live to a great age. All Sisters would rather be called away from their work, than bear the cross of long years of inactivity before their departure. But this burden the Lord may lay upon the very one, to whom it seems hardest. Many a Martha must be educated to the quietness of a Mary. Many a one is called upon to serve her fellow Sisters by the example of her patient cross-bearing. Older Motherhouses have to provide a place of rest for the deaconesses who have become incapacitated for work. This must be near enough to the Motherhouse, to allow a full participation in its life, without the inmates being disturbed by its activity.

Among the most painful experiences of a Sisterhood is to see one of its members dismissed on account of unfaithfulness or wrongdoing, perhaps even bringing dishonor upon the community. When on the other hand, the Lord calls to her rest a Sister who has labored faithfully, there is sorrow indeed, but also gratitude and gladness. The deaconesses who are faithful in their service, often, amid the troubles and manifold trials into which their calling leads them, attain a surprising decision and steadfastness of faith; and experience shows that upon their sick and dying bed, the Lord, according to His promise, refreshes them abundantly. Their de-

sire is, to continue in the service, or to depart, as their Saviour wills. The death-bed of a deaconess is to the whole community a visitation of the Lord, in the strictest and sweetest sense of the word. At the bier of a departed Sister, resting from her labors, in her white shroud, the myrtle wreath upon her head, and the cross upon her breast, every true deaconess will earnestly renew the prayer of her consecration day, for faithfulness unto death.

A rare but precious day in the life of aged deaconesses comes when the Lord permits them to celebrate their jubilee,—the twenty-fifth anniversary of their service. The jubilee of the fiftieth anniversary is among the possibilities, but has not yet occurred in the history of our work. On the occasion of the jubilee, a ring, as a symbol of tried faithfulness, in addition to the Jubilee-Bible, is a suitable gift. A ceremony at the altar is one of the features, but must in no wise partake of the nature of a re-consecration. A true deaconess on such days, as throughout her life and in death, will evermore gratefully and humbly praise and acknowledge the mercy of her God, in that the lines have fallen unto her in pleasant places, and that she has indeed a goodly heritage.





## CHAPTER X.

### The Fields of Deaconess Work.

95. In order to convey an adequate idea of the importance of the female diaconate to the Church of our day, we must glance at its *fields of labor*. We can take as a starting-point the typical ministry, which women exercised toward the Lord Himself in the days of His earthly life. The comparison could easily be carried out. Childhood and youth, food and raiment, bonds and dishonor, suffering, death and the grave, furnish points of resemblance. There was not lacking, on the part of the women who believed in Him, a ministry to His joy and honor, as well as to His needs. It will be simpler however, to proceed from the reality, as we see and experience it. Woman's gift in the service of the church is that of *rendering help* (antilepsis), especially within the provinces of *nursing* and *teaching*. The problems correspond to the conditions of the age. In general, the ministry of women within the Church, is not "Home-Mission-Work", which is a service necessitated by the peculiar and extraordinary needs of the Church of our day. At all times and in all situations, the Church has needed the diaconate, both male and female. Even though she has not always possessed it, especially the female diaconate, in a definite form and in a public capacity, yet surely in no age has the gift of believing women been entirely hidden, nor can it be said, that there has ever been a time, when its exercise was not needed. The idea of Home Mission Work in our day is a vague one. In reality, only the Church's mission among its emigrated members, corresponding to the work of the Church among the heathen, is properly to be called Home Mission Work, in distinction from Foreign Mission Work.

But we have to accept the idea of Home Missions, as it has shaped itself in our day. And here it is the special churchly needs of the present, which have called forth a variety of activities heretofore unknown. The female diaconate also has its share in these labors, and in so far as this is the case, it may be described as a branch of Inner Missions. But as this applies by no means to the entire field of labor of the Sisters, this distinction is best omitted altogether. The idea of the diaconate fully answers to the sphere of duties, with which we have to deal, and is far preferable, because of its ancient churchly significance and clearness.

96. Among the labors of the deaconesses, *nursing*, and especially the care of the sick—has in modern times obtained great prominence. This is doubtless in accordance with woman's gifts. We will therefore first consider nursing, in so far as it chiefly or exclusively deals with sick-nursing. Under this head must be reckoned the care of the sick in Hospitals and Infirmarys, of the inmates of Homes for the Aged, Insane Asylums, Institutions for the Blind, &c.

A second group of deaconess labors may be described, primarily as *educational*. Here may be classed the service of deaconesses in Day-Nurseries, Little Children's Schools, Homes for Girls, Industrial and Servants' Training Schools.

A third group may be characterized as a *combination of nursing and teaching*, using the word "nursing" in the wider sense of woman's activity in the household. Here the Sisters have to deal with persons, whose social position demands protection, or whose moral and mental condition is endangered. The service of deaconesses in servants' lodging-houses and hospices, in reformatories, asylums, and prisons, comes under this class.

All the work here mentioned is done in *Institutions*. Necessary as these are, and important as is the division of labor they permit, yet the most comprehensive development of the deaconess activity lies elsewhere, namely in the work of the *parish*. Here too, nursing and teaching, both to be understood in their widest sense, go hand in hand. Among the sick and the poor lie the Sisters' chief duties. Associated with the pastoral office, their ministry is directly incorporated into the congregational life. While the diaconate of the present day cannot dispense with the support afforded by the institutional life, it is in the parish-work that its real nature manifests itself most freely and fully. As one of the branches of parish-work, may be mentioned *private nursing*.

If to these fields of labor we add, what must be taken for granted in connection with them all, namely all manner of *service in the management of the house and farm*, and if we remember, that there is also a *ministry of beauty and honor*, which in the deaconess life takes various forms, and in the department of church embroidery has matured some of its choicest fruits, we have surveyed the entire territory of woman's present ministry in the Church. We turn to the separate branches, in the order indicated, whose importance in themselves and in connection with the Church will be briefly presented.

---

97. The *care of the sick in hospitals* is the result of necessity. During epidemics, when sickness multiplied, or care and shelter had to be provided for homeless strangers, who were taken ill, the

hospital has at all times been a necessity ; the more so, the greater the number of sick, and the more dangerous the nature of their disease. It was christian charity, which founded the hospital system. In the 4th century, the distinguished teacher of the christian Church, Ephraim the Syrian, placed beds for the sick and starving in the colonnades at Edessa ; while Basil the Great, Bishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, founded an entire colony for the sick, for strangers and the poor, and especially for lepers. Small houses, such as were elsewhere occupied by private families, were built side by side. In the Middle Ages the civic and knightly orders for the care of the sick, began to build palatial hospitals. The hospital of the Holy Spirit in Rome, and the labors of the order of the same name, caused hospitals of the Holy Spirit to be established all over Europe. In recent times the hospital work, partly from an enlarged philanthropic humanity, and partly owing to the progress in medicine and surgery, has advanced in a manner heretofore unknown. The care of the sick by religious organizations had a prominent share in this development. Yet the best hospital system, affording its patients abundance, of light, air, and every other requisite, together with the most excellent medical skill, is incomplete, without proper nursing. Without it, many forms of treatment cannot be carried out at all. The service of paid nurses, male and female, has often been the worst conceivable, chiefly because these were not trained to the work. A great improvement has taken place in this respect. Such dreadful conditions as in former times prevailed in hospitals, have become impossible. Professional nurses are now regularly trained,—at least in so far as persons are found willing to receive such training. These do not seem however, to be very numerous. Genuine sick-nursing can only be prompted by the self-surrender of merciful love, born of faith. This conviction is becoming more and more general, being the result of experience, and to it may be ascribed the fact, that the hospital doors have been opened wide to the deaconesses. The care of the sick, and the hospital management of the Sisters, who do not work for pay, recommends itself also from an economical point of view. And as the number of hospitals is constantly increasing, smaller ones being established in small towns, the number of Sisters engaged in hospital work is very large, in proportion to their total number.

The care of the sick in the larger hospitals is classified ; certain departments being appropriated to children or adults, to men or women, to internal diseases or surgical cases. The erection of hospitals for special forms of disease has also been inaugurated. In smaller hospitals, the classification of patients is of course less complete, and the work of the Sisters is rendered more difficult. It is the duty of the deaconesses, in every kind of nursing, to satisfy, to the

best of their ability, not only all medical and economical requirements, but also the demands of christian truth and charity. The care of the sick is practised by the Sisters simply for its own sake, and not as a means of proselyting, which latter is on principle to be condemned. It is a deviation from evangelical truth, when, as is sometimes the case in our day, over-spiritual, so-called believers, are indifferent to an imitation of Christ in the path of bodily helping and healing. Inasmuch as the Sisters render their service, as servants of Christ, and in distinct union with the faith, ordinances and ministry of the church, the objection is unfounded, that their labors in behalf of the sick are not distinguished from a service of secular philanthropy, or from mere medical aid. It is a matter of regret, that the hospital service withdraws so many Sisters from the immediate parish-service, but that cannot be remedied. Yet the hospital work, in its importance for the church, must not be undervalued. The requisition of Sisters for the hospitals furnishes a strong and valuable testimony to the faith, which alone, notwithstanding its labor and unrest, its trials and dangers, sustains the strength and cheerfulness needed in the service among the sick, and preserves to the Sisters their womanly delicacy, together with firmness and unaffected simplicity. The duty is also laid upon the Church, to provide spiritual care for the sick in the hospitals. Deaconesses are to be neither physicians nor pastors. Yet we may say, that precisely in the hospitals, a spiritual care of the sick can be effected only by the nurses. This is true, not only of hospitals, for which no pastor is appointed, but also of those, which have their pastor. While in the congregation the pastor is acquainted with the sick in their ordinary circumstances, those in the hospitals are removed from their accustomed surroundings; the visiting pastor does not easily learn to know them, and is further embarrassed by the fact, that usually a number of patients are lying together in one room. The care of souls among the sick rests upon a knowledge of their personality, of their disease and other conditions. All this is most readily disclosed to the nursing Sisters, who are constantly about the patients; they form an indispensable link between the pastor and the sick; and what is of greater value, than all direct pastoral influence, they fill the hospital, the scene of such manifold forms of wretchedness, with the living atmosphere of Christianity. Wherever deaconesses are at work, there is a christian house-order, there God's Word dwells, there is prayer, and beautiful, spiritual hymns are heard. Although the Sisters never attempt to force their religion upon any, their silent labors in behalf of the sufferers speak even to those, whose ears are perhaps closed to spiritual comfort. We may best summarize the importance of the hospital work of the deaconesses, by saying that necessity calls for it, and love commands it, and that it

practically fulfills, in the best manner possible, an undeniable duty of the Church.

98. What has been said of hospital-nursing, is generally applicable to the work in *Infirmaries*, or *Asylums for Incurables*. Akin to these are the *Homes for the Aged*, in which the old and infirm may pass the evening of their life in quietness and peace, whether they themselves, the parish, or the beneficence of deceased founders defray their expenses. The work of the Sisters demands far less technical skill in such institutions, than in the regular hospitals. In regard to the faith and love which must animate their ministrations, the demands are everywhere the same. In the hospital, patients come and go; the diseases in their course often excite a deep interest; different stations impose different duties. Among old people and in infirmaries, the service is the same, day by day. Chronic patients, who perhaps have suffered for years, have to learn and exercise faith and patience in a very trying school. The weakness of old age necessitates quietness and waiting on the Lord. Oftentimes old people relapse into second childhood. The duty of the nurse is, to deal with them in unwearying patience and cheerfulness, yet with the gravity which their nearness to eternity demands. The Sister in the children's ward of the hospital deals with the rising generation; the Sister in charge of the aged, with the dying generation. Both here and there, although in a widely different manner, it is necessary to become a child among children. Infirmaries and Old Peoples' Homes are harbors, where the ships of life are brought to anchor, mostly in such a state, that it is easy to see, how wind and wave have buffeted them. Often the result of a long life is nothing, or less than nothing, either for time or eternity. Faith can transfigure a dying bed, and the weakness of old age; and we often see the sunset glory, which precedes the dawning of a blessed eternity. But when the heart has not turned to the Lord in the years of its strength, it is seldom that old age repairs what was lost in youth. Yet true to His promise, the Lord carries and delivers with souls, even to their old age. The service of the deaconesses in Infirmaries and Old Peoples' Homes is therefore difficult and yet gratifying. They see, even more rarely than is usually the case, the fruit of their labors in the Lord's service. On the other hand, if the latter years of the aged and suffering are made pleasant through their efforts; if those, who perhaps all their life-long were strangers to the Word of God, now, being brought under Christian influence, live, as it were, under one roof with the Word of Life, their labor is not in vain. And this is made manifest even here below. Without this care, given in the Name of Jesus, especially to the aged and infirm, and then to the sick in our hospitals, it would scarcely be possible for the Church to minister properly to these her members. In this respect also, the diaconate does not

cease to be an auxiliary office, in a special measure indispensable to the ministry of the Word.

99. The *care of the Insane*, just the same as general hospital work, is suitable for deaconesses, only that the lines of service are far more closely drawn. Whoever has seen the beautiful Institution for Insane Women at Kaiserswerth, and knows how important for mental sufferers is the quiet, steady influence of truly religious persons, can only regret that the female diaconate has not been more generally enlisted in this service. There are among women many sufferers from mental aberration, who are not fit subjects for ordinary hospital treatment; are not far enough advanced to be placed in an Insane Asylum, and yet cannot remain with their families. The deaconess hospitals are ready to serve such people, wherever they are able. Far more could be done, if there were special institutions for the proper treatment of such persons. It would surely be of advantage, if among female sufferers of this class, the aid which the deaconess is able to give to the efforts of pastor and physician, could be made more generally available.

As regards the care of the *blind, deaf and dumb*, and others similarly afflicted, it does not seem likely that this will ever become an extensive branch of the deaconess work; since it requires peculiar technical ability adapted to the purpose, as in the case of the blind and deaf-mutes. It is different with the institutions for *epileptics* and *idiots*. Only in modern times a livelier interest has been taken in making provision for persons suffering from physical defects, and also of epileptics and idiots.

The causes of epilepsy have thus far baffled scientific research. This grievous disorder is usually aggravated where the patient remains with his family, while in institutions the number of cures is larger. Institutions for epileptics demand a numerous staff of nurses. In the case of epileptic women and children, deaconesses are the chosen nurses. Calm and strong natures quiet the patients, and relieve the anguish of their condition. The devotional life, abundant opportunities for work, and the exercise of all the faculties form the basis of the treatment.

Incurable epilepsy often leads to idiocy. This seems to be a sort of mental paralysis, by which the bodily organs of the intellectual life more or less refuse their service. Here too, limits will continue to be set to human knowledge. The work in Idiot Asylums, especially in those for children, is largely educational. The abler pupils sometimes become useful members of society, and the greater number learn something. The task requires great patience. The strengthening and training of the will-power by unwearied repetition is the proper mode of treatment. Woman's gifts are most available in these cases. She renders her service to such as continue to be irresponsible children, even after they

reach years of maturity. Among idiots, the emotional side of human nature seems to be the most capable of development ; and they are therefore surprisingly susceptible to christian training and belief. The experience is often made in institutions of this kind, that the Lord looks with special favor upon these unfortunates. The Sister who with the necessary self-discipline, clearness, and faithfulness in small things, relieves the misery of these poor in spirit, will receive much gratitude and affection, and will realize, far more frequently than elsewhere, that her labor is not in vain.

In order to labor among the insane, among epileptics and idiots, the mind of the nurse must be so self-controlled, and at the same time so clear and sharp-sighted, that she can look without flinching into the prison-depths of mental darkness. One who cannot keep her own nerves and thoughts under restraint, is not the proper person for the care of those whose mind and nerves are disturbed. The Church, in her ministrations to this class of afflicted ones also, walks in the footsteps of her Head and Saviour, and constantly experiences anew, what is written in St. Matthew 17, 14—21.

---

100. In the foregoing pages we have already touched upon services, which are also educational, pertaining, to be sure, to the education of the sick. We will now consider the actual *work of education* of the deaconess, among those in good health. Even though, as in the case of babies, its principal feature is the care of the body, yet the education of the child is the real and foremost object in view. The first branch of the deaconess' educational work to be considered, is the Day Nursery.

*Day Nurseries* were called into existence in 1844, through the efforts of Marbeau, an official in the municipal government of Paris, and have come into very general use in France. In other countries also, especially in Southern Germany, they have made themselves a home. They are an expedient for the mothers who are obliged to work away from their homes,—an institutional substitute for the placing of little children in the care of more or less objectionable individuals. Any one really acquainted with the needs which the Day Nurseries are intended to meet, knowing the great mortality among infants, and the truly horrible conditions which often existed and still exist in private nursing establishments, and having any conception of the disorder of the foundling-houses, will not attach much weight to the objection urged against Day Nurseries, that they are an unnatural institution. Mothers are certainly the persons appointed by God, to take care of their children ; but if it is unavoidable, that the mother must go out to work, provision must be made for the proper care of her little children. The state

and the community have a share in this obligation. But if, as is generally the case, nothing is done by either, and the Church, with equal responsibility, likewise holds aloof, voluntary christian charity must endeavor to remedy the want. The deaconesses may regard their participation in the work of the Day Nurseries as a religious duty toward the poor mothers and their babies. This duty is to be performed for the sake of Him who for us lay in a manger, from which the Day Nurseries abroad have taken their name (Krippe, Crèche). In the management of Day Nurseries, care must be had, that they are not made subservient to the mother's laziness and sin. The age of admission is from six weeks to two years. As a rule, only children of legitimate birth are admitted. If exceptions are made, the case must in every instance be examined into. The children must be brought and called for by their mothers. If the latter are employed at home, they must, if possible, keep their children with them. It indicates a sound condition of affairs, if the attendance at the Day Nursery is fluctuating. The mothers must be urged to great cleanliness and care with regard to their children. If possible, they must continue to nourish their babies, and must therefore visit them several times a day. The deaconesses employed in the Nursery, share with the mothers the responsibility for the children, in sickness and health, and must therefore endeavor to gain their confidence. Inasmuch as the earliest years of childhood are of the very greatest consequence in the development of the individual, the Sisters in the Nursery have a very important educational work to perform. The careful training and feeding of the little children, although very important, is but a part of their duty. The Nursery must be a cheerful place, and the Sister must rule as a mother, tenderly and strictly, in play and in discipline. The quieter and gentler she is, the kinder, the more interested and prompt in her attention to the children, the quieter and gentler will these become. A child-loving heart is needed for the task, and a prayerful spirit, which continually brings the little ones to Jesus, and is conscious that in serving them, she serves Him. The task of a Nursery Sister, notwithstanding its simplicity, is yet a very difficult one, demanding for its success much grace from God, and great faithfulness in small things; but possessing, according to the Lord's Word, a beautiful promise.

101. From the Nursery we come to the *Little Children's School* (Warteschule), which is closely related to it. Here, children from two to six years old, are received. In families where both parents go out to work, children at this age also, are in danger of being neglected. Many a mother cannot, even if she is able to be at home, take the proper care of her little ones. The children, left to themselves, run about the streets. If the older ones are to take



care of them, they are obliged to miss school, without much gain for the little ones. In many families, an utter lack of discipline is the rule. Even though the parents had the time, they lack the ability to be what they should to their children. These grow up without prayer. The mother cannot relate the sacred stories, which touch so closely and tenderly the childish heart,—because she does not know them herself. The precious years of childish development pass by, without the child's capacities being awakened, and without its learning cleanliness, order and obedience. These considerations led to the establishment of Little Children's Schools.

The first beginning was made by a devout young girl, Louise Scheppler, of Bellefosse in Alsace, the servant of Pastor Oberlin, of Waldbach in the Steinthal. The Steinthal (Stone Valley) in the Vosges mountains, was inhabited by a poor and degraded population. Oberlin's faithful labors wrought in them a complete change, in material as well as in spiritual things. Valuable aid in his work was rendered him by the young woman, who on June 11, 1779, at the age of sixteen, entered his service. Oberlin had recognized her peculiar talent, when he saw her, as a little girl, devote herself to the care of a frightened hen and her chickens. After the death of his wife, she took charge of his household, although then only twenty years of age, and raised his seven children. To the sick and needy of the entire parish, she brought help for body and soul. She feared no weather, no exertion, no distance. But most especially were the children of the parish the objects of her compassion. She gathered them in, employed them, told them of the Saviour, and possessed the rare gift of permanently winning the affection not only of larger girls, but of little children. Her school finally numbered nearly a hundred pupils. The French Academy awarded her the Prize of Virtue of 5000 francs, all of which she devoted to charity. She herself chose the text of her funeral sermon from St. Luke 17, 10 : „When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say : We are unprofitable servants : we have done that which was our duty to do.” She died in the year 1837, and her name shines among the most prominent in the history of the female diaconate, although she wore no deaconess dress. The idea of little childrens' schools seemed at that time to pervade the atmosphere. In Germany, and especially in England, beginnings were made, independent of the work in Steinthal. The plan first obtained general acceptance in England, then in France, and finally in Germany. It was Fliedner especially, who established the standard regulations for these schools, and with his assistant Ranke, carried them to perfection. The Kaiserswerth Seminary for teachers of little children's schools, has become an unsurpassed model and a nursery, for this branch of the work, in so far as it is carried on by the Deaconess Houses. Two

Motherhouses, of very recent origin, almost exclusively adopted this form of the work. All deaconess Houses, to some extent, furnish Sisters for this department, and some have seminaries for the training of such teachers. There are, to be sure, other training-institutions for this purpose, which have little or no connection with the deaconess work.

The objections urged against these schools, are in part similar to those made against the Nurseries. Surely, the home, of which a faithful mother is the soul, and believingly and sensibly fulfils her duty, is the best place for the little ones. But, as we have already observed, such homes are rare, not only among the poor, but among the well-to-do. The need for little children's schools reaches far beyond the need for Day Nurseries. When it is said, either that they blunt the children's mental faculties, or force them prematurely, this reproach applies only to badly conducted schools. It is certainly unpardonable, that persons wholly untrained for the work, are still here and there permitted to support themselves by managing Little Children's Schools. The argument, that a mother, without previous training, takes care of her children, does not apply in this case. Many mothers are, unfortunately, by no means equal to their high calling; and besides, the ability to control five children is not sufficient for fifty. In order to maintain peace, order and happiness among so many, an adequate education and previous training are needed, in addition to the necessary natural gifts. The Little Children's School must be a play-school, a nursery on a large scale. The children learn by playing, and by play their faculties are awakened. They must be trained to good behavior and cleanly habits, and above all, must be taught the beginnings of the knowledge of the Divine Word, in a motherly, not in a schoolmasterly manner. The children are not to be estranged from their natural condition in life.

The Little Children's School thrives best in connection with parish-work, under the judicious guidance of the pastor. The deaconess thus employed renders to the church and to the community a service, which is well calculated, to bring an abundant blessing to parents and children. A Sister, to conduct such a school with success, must possess a motherly heart, the gifts of song and story-telling, a cheerful and patient manner with children, a mind not pre-occupied with personal concerns, a spirit trusting in Christ, an inventive faculty for devising all sorts of games and occupations for the children, and finally, the gift of order and discipline, not only in regard to her charges, but for her own person. She must also know how to gain and cultivate the confidence of the mothers, and must visit the children in their homes, especially if they are ill. A Women's Aid Society can render the Sisters valuable assistance, but must not embarrass her by a many-headed supervision. Suitable

festivities, on churchly and patriotic occasions, must not be omitted. The christian Little Children's School must be a scene of really fresh and happy child-life, free from any religious affectation, simple and true in work and play,—then the Angels of God will love it, and daily bring it light from the children's heavenly Father, whose face they evermore behold, as the Lord has said.

102. As circumstances are in our time, a more extensive co-operation of deaconesses in the province of *female education* is not for the present to be expected. In the Romish church it is very different. As far as we know, only a small number of Kaiserswerth Sisters are as yet employed in public elementary schools for girls. No doubt this would be different, if the tie between church and state were loosened. The *higher female education* has only of late years been taken in hand by the state. Heretofore it was mostly a private affair. For this reason probably, some of the older Motherhouses have acquired an extensive activity in this province,—notably Kaiserswerth, which even has a Teacher's Seminary, also Strasburg, Neuendettelsau and Dresden. It is evident that in this direction the Deaconess Houses might have a great mission for the church. Female education will always thrive best in privacy. Therefore the best public schools for the higher education of girls, will never wholly crowd out the private schools. The deaconess schools,—and this is their pre-eminent advantage,—have as their background the rich, religious life of the Motherhouse. The entire course of female education can therefore be the more refined and higher in its aims, in proportion as it is removed from fashionable folly and nervous restlessness. The religious consistency to be aimed at in education, can be strictly maintained; and the cultivation of the intellect will not gain the ascendancy over the cultivation of the heart. Ample opportunity is offered for the training of the practical faculties. The simplicity of living makes it possible to do the work on such reasonable terms, that the home education of young girls, if the same results are to be reached, is not cheaper, but rather more costly. We may incidentally mention, that through the educational work, many excellent elements are added to the sisterhoods of deaconesses, which would otherwise remain aloof from it, and that the life of the Motherhouse is greatly enriched by this activity. A detailed consideration of this matter would exceed the limits of our subject.

103. Two further branches of female education have, through the needs of our time, fallen to the share of the deaconesses, in some cases to a considerable extent. First to be mentioned, is the *training of servant-girls* in institutions established for that purpose, and for the most part managed by deaconesses. They also conduct *Industrial Schools*, whether as modest branches of the parish-work, or as independent institutions. The training of girls for domestic

service is necessary, because in the families of many working-people, especially in large cities, the growing girls, while they attend school, have no opportunity of acquiring a knowledge of such duties. The same is true of sewing, knitting, etc., which are indeed taught in the public schools, but not in a manner calculated to meet reasonable requirements; even the slight dexterity needed by every housewife, is frequently not acquired. It is not our purpose, however, to enter upon the extensive domain of the servant question. No proof is required to convince us, that the deaconesses engaged in the practical training of girls, have a very important field to cultivate within the church, one which bears many thorns and thistles, but also much precious fruit. For this work the Sisters need chiefly a large measure of experience, by which alone the necessary educational gifts are brought to their full development. They scatter their seed, like all husbandmen of Christ, and must wait in patience until it receives the morning and the evening rain.

We cannot recognize Sunday-school work as a special branch of the deaconess activity. It is to be recommended only to a limited extent, and only if they are in a position, to give the children continued attention during the week. This is rarely the case. Deaconesses who are wholly occupied with their calling, and frequently change their stations, can usually do little in this direction. They also need the Sunday-rest for themselves. But even if they have time and strength for this work, it is not to be considered as an actual duty, incident to their calling.

---

104. We have mentioned above a third group of deaconess-work as a *combination of nursing and teaching*. Nursing is not only the care of the sick, but includes woman's entire activity in the household. The more the work enters into the congregational life, the more will it partake of this twofold nature; subject, to be sure, to innumerable gradations, one or the other feature becoming more prominent. We have first to deal with institutions.

The dangers, to which servant girls without positions are exposed, especially in the larger cities, have caused the establishment of *servants' Inns* or *Lodging-houses*. These are frequently managed by deaconesses, often in connection with servants' training-schools. Christian charity has an urgent call in behalf of girls, who stand alone. If the christian inns are a great benefit to all who are obliged to live among strangers, this is most especially true in the case of solitary women, servants and working-girls. Where it is possible to secure the services of a deaconess in a *ladies' hospice*, she will find it a congenial and profitable employment. The latter, of

course, cannot, in point of importance, be classed with the servants' inns. Properly managed, these become gathering-places for respectable girls. Families will prefer their agency in procuring servants. The superintending deaconess has an opportunity of exercising a silent and often very far-reaching influence upon the conditions of service. The lodging-house offers to the girls wholesome Sunday-enjoyment, and by its means seeks to preserve them from the dangerous pleasures of the world. If possible, it watches over their religious life, and induces them to attend a suitable place of worship. A knowledge of human nature; foresight and forbearance, such as can be exercised only by a heart resting in grace, and enlightened by the Word of God; a thorough, kindly, untiring sympathy with the girls, which never obtrudes, and yet is ever ready to serve them,—these are some of the requisites for the work in the lodging-houses. All that the diaconate is able to effect within this province, will not remove the existing great evils, but will often ameliorate them; and—a chief consideration—it shows that the church, the woman seeking her lost piece of money, has carried her lighted candle also into this portion of her vast house. The latter is true, in an even greater measure, of the labors which may be designated as rescue-work among those who are morally and spiritually endangered.

105. The *Houses of Refuge* and *Asylums for neglected children*, as they have been developed by men like Joh. Falk, Zeller, Wichern and others, offer to deaconesses a field of labor only in so far as they deal with girls. Neglected girls are fewer in number, than neglected boys. Separate institutions for girls, although rare, are desirable. Where they exist, they will find it to their advantage, to procure from the deaconess houses the persons needed for their management and for the education of the children; if for no other reason, than that the uniform continuance of the work is thus secured. The education of *orphan girls*, and the superintendency of the places known as "*Girls' Homes*", where poor girls receive food, instruction and employment out of school hours, are akin to the work in the Rescue-Houses, but differ from it as regards the moral condition of the children. Whether the agency is to be of a preventive and protective nature, or proposes the actual rescuing of more or less depraved children,—the chief object is, if possible, to make the Gospel of Peace a power within their hearts. Not restraint and severity, but love born of the experience of grace, is the first means of education. To this must be added of course an energetic training in discipline, order and industry. For this very reason it is difficult to find persons adapted to the work. The value in God's sight of each individual human soul must be vividly realized by the deaconess who is called to it. She must have experienced baptismal grace within herself. She must influence less

by words, than by her example; above all, she must not talk too much. And she must be able to pray; then her sowing in hope will in due time bring its fruits.

106. The task set before the deaconesses in the *Magdalen Asylums*, among the fallen of their sex, is a particularly difficult one. The warfare against immorality and unchastity demands these asylums; and Fliedner's efforts in this form of charity became the cradle of the modern diaconate. A discharged female convict was his first charge. Through Fliedner and through Holding, of Steenbek in Holland, the Magdalen Asylum was first established upon a large scale. It is more and more recognized and acted upon, that the Church cannot and dare not keep aloof from this work. Experience teaches, that deaconesses, if they are the right persons for this work, are equipped with a hidden power, over against these most miserable of their sex. Very similar to the work among the fallen is that in *Female Penitentiaries*, which however the Motherhouses have only in isolated cases found an opportunity of undertaking. The Sisters laboring among such deeply fallen girls and women, must learn with a clear eye and a steadfast heart to fathom the abysses of sin. Illusions are useless. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and falsehood have wrought the desolation. A foundation upon which to stand must first of all be secured, in God's eternal truth, and in strict insistence upon truthfulness. But afterwards, the labor of truly compassionate love in Christ, among these souls who, oppressed by the fearful misery of sin, have learned to look about them for deliverance, is by no means hopeless, even though many relapses occur. A chief means of rescue is severe physical labor. And a Magdalen Asylum must be able, by such labor, almost entirely to support itself. The deaconess must be capable of superintending the work; she must be candid and straightforward in her intercourse with those under her care; with patience exercise love and severity, and in the face of so much sin and uncleanness, pray the more fervently through the blood of Christ, for a clean heart. If she is sustained in her efforts by the faithful co-operation of the pastoral office, which in this field she can least of all dispense with, the female diaconate will here show itself like unto Deborah, gaining the victory, where man alone would despair of success. Would that church and state, as regards prisons, would more than heretofore realize, that for the work at the outposts in the warfare against the kingdom of darkness, God has bestowed upon woman gifts to be used in His service.

---

107. Whatever practice a deaconess is able to acquire, in the various offices entrusted to her, will be found useful, when she is called upon to undertake the work of a parish. The Mother-

houses fitly designate this as the crown of their labors. By a parish we understand a congregation, with official organization. Even though the parish-work may be under the management of societies or magistrates, it yet belongs to the Church, inasmuch as it can and must exist, only in subordination to, and in harmony with the pastoral office. Otherwise it would not be a diaconate. Of course this does not exclude, that the community at large is likewise benefited, and that the deaconesses yield due submission to their special boards of managers. But they do this as servants of the churchly community; as called to serve the Lord among His members, and therefore owing obedience to the pastoral office, and to the rules of the Church.

Parish-work is a service among the sick, the infirm, the weak and poor, and the helpless in body and soul, such as are found in the families of a congregation; the same, to whom, with word and deed, the pastoral office is called to minister. But the shepherds in the church can often fulfil these duties only to a limited degree. Therefore they need the co-operation of the diaconate,—all the more if the parish is large, and the conditions difficult. In very large parishes, a service of deaconesses alone is not sufficient; a service of deacons must be added. But for the first and more urgent needs, and in parishes of moderate size, the former will answer; the deaconesses of course, must be in numbers corresponding to the magnitude of the work. They are the aids of the pastoral office; and the more they are able to work in harmony with it, the more will it afford them support and guidance, and the more cheerfully will they perform their duties. Inasmuch as the interests of the municipal authorities or private societies, who call the deaconesses to the parish, are directed to the care of the sick and destitute, who are at the same time the objects of pastoral care, the Church can only rejoice, to see the parish-work thus established. A conflict of interests is scarcely likely to occur. Nor will the interests of the physician in charge be likely to conflict with those of the pastor and other promoters of the work. The municipal care of the poor cannot without loss dispense with churchly and voluntary co-operation. And again the latter cannot do without the former, which steps in where the diaconate and christian charity cannot help, without becoming untrue to themselves. Thus the service of deaconesses in the parish, when once it is introduced, usually develops simply and naturally, in accordance with the various demands made upon it. Indeed, the inward vitality of the diaconate, and the need of it, are so great, that its progress is not hindered by the indifference or resistance of one or the other party. Following their quiet path of humble, kindly ministry, the Sisters, often to their own surprise, pass easily and without hindrance over many prejudices. Mulhouse, in Alsace, furnishes a splendid

example, where the demands of the pastoral office and the religious life, of a high state of industrial advancement, of an extensive municipality, of a careful observance of sanitary laws, are harmoniously met by a generally developed system of parish-work by deaconesses, rich and poor alike sharing in its blessings. Other similar examples might be cited, but none are carried out so systematically in every direction. The deaconesses here form the connecting link between rich and poor, without dispensing the former from personal co-operation in the work. It must not be overlooked that such parish-work, in addition to its spiritual importance, and its immediate benefit as an evidence of practical Christianity, contributes largely to the solution of the social problem. It is only to be regretted, that the ready co-operation of many cannot always be secured, for by it alone considerable results can be attained.

The deaconesses employed in a parish need practical wisdom and active energy. They must, with common-sense, circumspection and kindness, discriminate between truth and falsehood; must distinguish real from mistaken help; they must be able to act with readiness, and yet with forethought, and be prepared to face the deepest misery, the most pitiable depravity. They must be equally at home in the kitchen, at the wash-tub, by the sick-bed, and in the managers' offices. They must procure assistance, where their own strength is not sufficient, as for instance in night-watching; but must at all times themselves set the example. They see much sorrow, wretchedness and danger. They dare not despond with the faint-hearted, nor become excited with the restless, and yet they must be able to weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that do rejoice. They must learn to ask, without being importunate; they must, with ready tact, assist the physician, and adapt themselves to difficult situations among rich and poor. They must be communicative and yet discreet; motherly toward the children, the poor and the sick; able to pray, and without intrusiveness and self-importance, to serve souls by faithful intercession and heartfelt words of comfort. "Blessed wonder-workers" some one has called them. There is no faculty of christian womanhood, which does not find employment in this work. May the Lord grant that persons be found in increasing numbers, who count it grace, in humility and faithfulness to strive to fulfil this office so necessary and precious. Not every deaconess can be a parish Sister. Of none can it be said, that she meets every requirement. But each may ask the Lord, if it be His will, to prepare and strengthen her for this service. And each may rejoice, if the Lord permits her to be a helpmate of truth, a successor to the parish deaconess Phoebe, whom St. Paul commends, as having been a succourer of many, and of him also. The female diaconate within the congregation stands upon a foundation, which, unlike that



of the institution, is an altogether natural one, and prevents the growth of one-sided notions. To be sure, the order and protection of the institution are lacking as well. The parish deaconess must carry order within herself. She is fortunate, if she enjoys the protection and advice of the pastor's family, congenial in love and faith. For the rest, the Lord Himself will be her best Protector, whose angels, according to His promise, will guard her in all her ways.

108. The first aim of parish-work is to aid the poor. But the deaconesses must also be prepared to render help in the homes of the wealthy, in times of need. This service is termed *private nursing*. The parish-Sister, even when she is laboring for the rich, is in a position to benefit the poor; for it is the wealthy who must fill her hands with gifts for the needy. In well-ordered parish-work there must be no remuneration for the Sister's services. Least of all must the managers endeavor to obtain from private cases an increase for their treasury. The Sister's service belongs to the poor, and if the rich show their gratitude for assistance rendered, their gifts must be at her disposal, to be used in behalf of the poor. Otherwise the main artery of parish-work is cut off. The Sister must have money in her hands, and the managers should rather aid her in procuring it, than use her labor for the benefit of their own treasury.

Private nursing is undertaken by the Motherhouses throughout the land. In many cases it affords the only means, by which country parishes experience the blessings of the female diaconate. In many large country parishes, a deaconess service could easily be established with two Sisters, combining the parish-work with a school for little children. Experience has shown, that it is not advisable to send out less than two Sisters. The Lord, we are told, sent out His disciples, two by two. If the necessary good will existed, much might be thus accomplished, and the deaconesses, especially in country parishes, would prove a blessing to the people, and a great help to the pastor. Until that time comes, and even then, small and remote villages would not be greatly benefited, and therefore private nursing is the one service the Motherhouses can render such congregations. Great care must be exercised in the sending out of private nurses. It is not an easy matter. In a parish or institution a Sister is of service to many, while in a private family she may be claimed for a long time by a single patient. If the number of Sisters in the Motherhouses were larger, this would be of no consideration, but at present the matter is attended with many difficulties. Private nursing is not without its peculiar dangers, especially to less experienced Sisters. They are often exposed to adverse influences, without having help or advice within reach. But whether the matter is difficult or otherwise, it does not lessen the obligation,

which must be admitted to exist in such cases. Of course the individual instances must be examined into. The cases of real need are those which require help. The deaconesses must not consider their own personal comfort. Where the Motherhouses, often at the expense of much trouble and great sacrifices, practice private nursing, the Lord will not fail to send His blessing. This experience is made in various ways, and contributes in a large measure to the success of the deaconess work.

109. From the review given above of the deaconess activity in our time, observant readers will gather, that familiarity with household duties is everywhere a preliminary condition of the work, and sometimes these duties constitute the actual work. The deaconess serves her Saviour and His church in the household, as well as elsewhere, and such service is not without its immediate spiritual side. The sister comes in contact with all sorts of personalities, and, if she serves in the spirit of prayer, may by her example furnish a testimony of deeds, which will not fail to reach the heart. Deaconesses must understand simple book-keeping. Much is often entrusted to them, and they must be ready at all times, with minute care, to render an account of their stewardship.

It remains to show how, closely linked with the service which the sisters render the poor and needy, there is a *service of honor and beauty*. Sisters, when they are instrumental in bringing children to baptism, must be able, in an attractive and fitting manner, to prepare the christening dress and table. When they have nursed a sick person until the end, they must know what is proper in the care of the dead. They must be able to teach their charges, to celebrate the christian festivals. Especially will Christmas time give them abundance of work. But other festivities also have their churchly and popular features, which the deaconess must be able to present and explain to those under her care. Musical skill, where the gift has been granted, belongs to the duties of the service in almost every field of labor. Indeed whatever helps to give the service a gracious and lovely form, has its value,—only womanly vanity must remain out of the question.

*Church-embroidery*, the adornment of the sanctuary, has become a special branch of work for individual deaconesses. All deaconesses should, if possible, possess an appreciation of what is beautiful and appropriate in the House of God. It is essential therefore, that deaconess houses be enabled, with loving care to beautify their holy places, and the order of their worship. It is by no means optional, to do this or to leave it undone. The perception of what is beautiful and suitable in a churchly sense is notably cultivated, when within the Motherhouses a work-room is established for churchly ornamentation, in so far as this lies within the limits of woman's skill. Here the draperies for altar, pulpit, font and lec-

tern are made. A Motherhouse has reason to rejoice, if it possesses a sister with an artistic gift for this work, who can at the same time be spared for it. This work also is a service to the Body of our Lord ; and it is an honor to a Motherhouse if it is permitted thus to serve the Church. It will prove a source of pleasure and profit to all the sisters. The preparation of *communion-wafers* is also a suitable service for the deaconess houses. And the ties which are thus formed between the houses which render such service, and the altars and churches throughout the land, are not without importance.

---

110. Short as has been our sketch of the fields of labor of the deaconesses, it is sufficient to convince all who wish to see, how deeply the deaconess work has entered into the life of the church. In times of public calamity, during epidemics or wars, the female diaconate has taken its place in the front ranks of those who devoted themselves to the relief of the suffering. This will continue the same in the future, and the power of such testimony will never fail. The danger cannot be wholly ignored, that the service of the deaconesses, instead of remaining a service of Christ, a churchly service, might deteriorate into mere philanthropy, as salt that has "lost its savor." It is the more to be feared, in proportion as the service of the sisters is valued and desired by the world. But so long as the firm and intimate union between the Motherhouse and the ministry of the pure Word and Sacraments is maintained and carefully cultivated upon all their fields of labor, the danger will not be great, or where it exists, will be overcome. It is certain that the female diaconate cannot stay the growing defection from the faith among protestant christians. That is not, and cannot be its calling. But even though it were nothing more than the renewal of a phase of genuine christian womanhood as it was in the early days of the Church, it would be a great and prophetic calling, similar to that of Huldah, as described in 2. Kings, 22. It is difficult to read clearly the signs of the time within the Church. Light and shade are strangely mingled, as perhaps at no other time, and the evening shadows are lengthening. But whatever may come, this is certain, that on the Day of the Lord it will be asked, what place in the life of the Church was held by the works of love, performed as an evidence of faith towards Him who first loved us. If God has granted, that in the tissue of our churchly present, the threads of the female diaconate shall shine more and more brightly, we will gladly receive this as a kindly and hopeful sign, that the old age of the Church is to be like its youth,—that Church which the Lord knows as His own and against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. It is not for us to ask what may be God's thoughts in the

future, with regard to the deaconess work, but to pray that in the deaconesses and their calling, the Word of Christ may through grace be abundantly fulfilled :

„I am the true vine, and my father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away : and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

„I am the vine, ye are the branches : He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit : *for without Me ye can do nothing.*“



## THE MARY J. DREXEL HOME AND PHILADELPHIA MOTHERHOUSE OF DEACONESSSES.

---

More than forty years ago the first efforts were made in the Lutheran Church in this country to transplant the Deaconesses from Kaiserswerth to America. The Rev. W. A. Passavant, pastor of the English Lutheran Church in Pittsburg, Pa., and founder of numerous charitable institutions, hospitals and orphans' homes in Pittsburg, Rochester, Pa., New York, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Jacksonville, called to this country the Rev. Theodore Fliedner, who arrived in the summer of 1849 with four Kaiserswerth Sisters, who took charge of the Pittsburg Infirmary, one of whom is still living at Pittsburg.

In 1884 another colony of German Deaconesses was transplanted from the Fatherland to American soil. This time the movement originated with the leaders of the German Hospital in Philadelphia. Its President and chief benefactor, Mr. John D. Lankenau, with his friend, Consul Charles H. Meyer, after repeated attempts to induce Kaiserswerth or some other prominent Motherhouse in Germany to give up some Sisters to the Hospital, at last succeeded, through the assistance of the late Rev. Ninck in Hamburg, in bringing over an independent community of seven Sisters from Iserlohn, Germany. They arrived on the 19. of June, 1884, and at once took charge of the Hospital work, introducing, as President Lankenau testifies, "a more healthy system of management, and inaugurating a complete renovation of the old system of nursing." It was not long after the introduction of the Sisters into the Hospital that Mr. Lankenau, and the friends who sympathized and co-operated with him in this cause, came to the conviction that if the work of Deaconesses was to take firm foothold among us and become permanently established, steps should be taken as soon as possible toward founding a separate Motherhouse, where probationers could be received and trained, and where disabled and aged Sisters could find a home in the evening of life. This Motherhouse was to be separate from the German Hospital and in organic union with the Evangelical Lutheran Church, to which the Sisters belonged.

Mr. Lankenau had for many years matured a plan for an old people's home in memory of his wife, Mary Joanna Drexel; in the

execution of this plan the Motherhouse of Deaconesses was to be connected with the Mary J. Drexel Home, both institutions being combined architecturally, in one magnificent building and being placed under one government, a special Board of Directors, in which the German Hospital Board is represented by three members and the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America by at least three ministers. On the 11th of November, 1886, the corner-stone of this Mary J. Drexel Home and Philadelphia Motherhouse of Deaconesses was laid, and on the 6th of December, 1888, the building was consecrated to the service of the Triune God. On the same day Rev. August Cordes, formerly assistant of Rev. Ninck in Hamburg, was installed as Rector of the Motherhouse.

The first Oberin (Sister Superior) Marie Krueger, having died in November 1887, Wanda von Oertzen succeeded to her place in June 1888. Rector Cordes having resigned in June 1892, the Rev. Karl Goedel of Weinsheim, Germany, was called and on July 9th 1893 was installed as pastor of the Mary J. Drexel Home and Motherhouse of Deaconesses.

The work of the deaconesses at present covers the following fields :

1) The *German Hospital* in Philadelphia with about 150 patients on a daily average, 50,000 nursing days per year, and about 28,000 visits in the dispensary during the same time. Some 25 Sisters, including probationers, are on duty in the Hospital work.

2) The *Children's Hospital*, in the western wing of the Mary J. Drexel Home, since its opening in May 1889 has nursed 1011 sick children. The dispensary was visited in 1892—93 by more than 5600 little patients. Three Sisters and several associates have charge of this work.

3) The *Old People's Home* on the second and third floors of the West wing of the Mary J. Drexel Home which was opened in November 1889, with room for 40 inmates, is now filled. Two Sisters have charge of this station.

4) *Parish Work* has been done thus far in three German Lutheran Congregations, St. Paul's, Philadelphia, Zion's, Philadelphia, and St. James', Altoona, Pa. At present only one Sister is engaged in this work, in Zion's Congregation, Philadelphia.

5) In a few instances Sisters have been sent out for *private nursing* in peculiarly urgent cases, but, owing to the small number of Deaconesses, it has thus far been impossible to engage regularly in this work.

6) On the 16th of September, 1890, a *Girls' School* was opened in the fourth story of the Mary J. Drexel Home. Through this institution the Philadelphia Motherhouse of Deaconesses has undertaken to do its share in the Christian training of the future mothers

of our nation. The school is attended by some forty pupils, from 10 to 18 years of age, the majority of whom are boarders in the house. Their instruction and training is in the hands of most competent teachers under the supervision of the pastor, the Rev. Karl Goedel. An experienced Deaconess acts as manager and directress of the school.

7) *The Day Nursery and Children's Home in Germantown.* The Ladies' Aid Society of the Mary J. Drexel Home, in October, 1890, opened a day nursery on Cayuga Street, Germantown with two inmates, whose number afterwards increased to twelve. This institution has now been changed into a Children's Foster Home, admitting children from one to four years, and, if possible, keeping them as inmates as long as practicable. Two Sisters are in charge of this work.

8) *The Kindergarten.* For several years Kindergarten-work was done with the convalescent children of the Children's Hospital. This has now been enlarged into a regular Kindergarten and infant school, receiving children from outside. The attendance has already reached the number of thirty.

9) *The Evening School.* In the fall of 1892 this school was opened for boys who had formerly been inmates of the Children's Hospital, with ample provisions for their instruction, culture and entertainment. The school is well attended and shows the grateful attachment of the former patients to the place where they were cared for in the days of their suffering.

10) *The Hospital in Easton, Pa.,* a young but rapidly growing institution, incorporated in July 1890 and under the management of a Board of Ladies, is in charge of two of our Deaconesses. During the last year 1892—93 108 patients were treated there.

11) *The Old People's Home in Allegheny, Pa.* On September 10th 1893, this institution, recently established by the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio, was taken in charge by two Sisters from the Philadelphia Motherhouse of Deaconesses.

The Philadelphia Motherhouse aims to adapt, as nearly as possible, the principal features of the Deaconesses' work in Germany to this country. The foundation of the whole work is to be unity in the faith and love to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Sisters seek no earthly gain, and do their work without wages; but in giving themselves fully up to this work, they are assured that they will be well provided with all the necessaries of life. They have a comfortable home, enjoy every summer a vacation of three or four weeks, which they spend either in the homes of their relatives or in the beautiful seaside home which Mr. Lankenau built for himself, and to which he invites the Sisters who are in need of the refreshing and invigorating sea-breezes. If disabled by sickness or old age, the Motherhouse is the home of the Sister, so that she enjoys abso-

lute immunity from the cares of this world, so far as human provision may free one from them.

The Sisters are divided into full-consecrated Deaconesses, and Probationers. The time of service before the consecration generally covers a period of four years. During this time there is a regular course of instruction for the Sisters, both theoretical and practical, which is intended to prepare them, as well as possible, for the various duties of their office. The Pastor of the Motherhouse, who must be a clergyman of the Lutheran Church, is the pastor of the Sisters. He conducts the services in the beautiful chapel of the home on each Lord's Day, and also a daily Vesper service through the week, in which the inmates of the Home participate.

There are at present in connection with the Philadelphia Motherhouse 38 sisters, including probationers and five aspirants.

The Motherhouse of Deaconesses in Philadelphia has always been ready and willing to the best of its ability to assist the Deaconess cause in other places and among other churches. In 1887 and 1888 the Rev. E. A. Fogelstroem, Swedish Lutheran pastor in Omaha, sent five young women to be trained in Philadelphia for the Deaconess Institution which he established in Omaha under the name Emanuel Deaconess Home. One of them, Sister Bothilde afterwards also visited the deaconess institutions in Stockholm and Kaiserswerth. In April 1891 she was consecrated in Omaha. In September 1893 there were 15 young ladies in the institution: 5 Deaconesses, 6 Assistant sisters, 3 probationers and one aspirant. They work as nurses in Emanuel Hospital and in Bethesda Hospital, St. Paul, Minn., also as parochial teachers in Swedish Lutheran Congregations, thus representing a fair and prosperous beginning of this great cause among the Swedish Lutherans of this country.

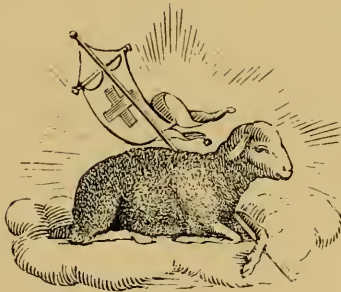
The General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America also, through its Committee on Deaconesses, has sent several young ladies to the Philadelphia Motherhouse to be trained for the work.

The Deaconess House in Dayton, Ohio, which is undenominational, has at present several of its sisters in the Mary J. Drexel Home for the purpose of giving them a thorough education and preparation for their service. This house was established in 1890 in connection with the Cincinnati Deaconess House. But afterwards it received its Sister Superior from Rev. von Bodelschwingh, Bielefeld, Germany, and is making rapid progress under its present management.

The Norwegian Lutherans have for a number of years, been active and successful in the Deaconess work. At the solicitation of the Norwegians' Seamens' Mission in Brooklyn, Sister Elizabeth



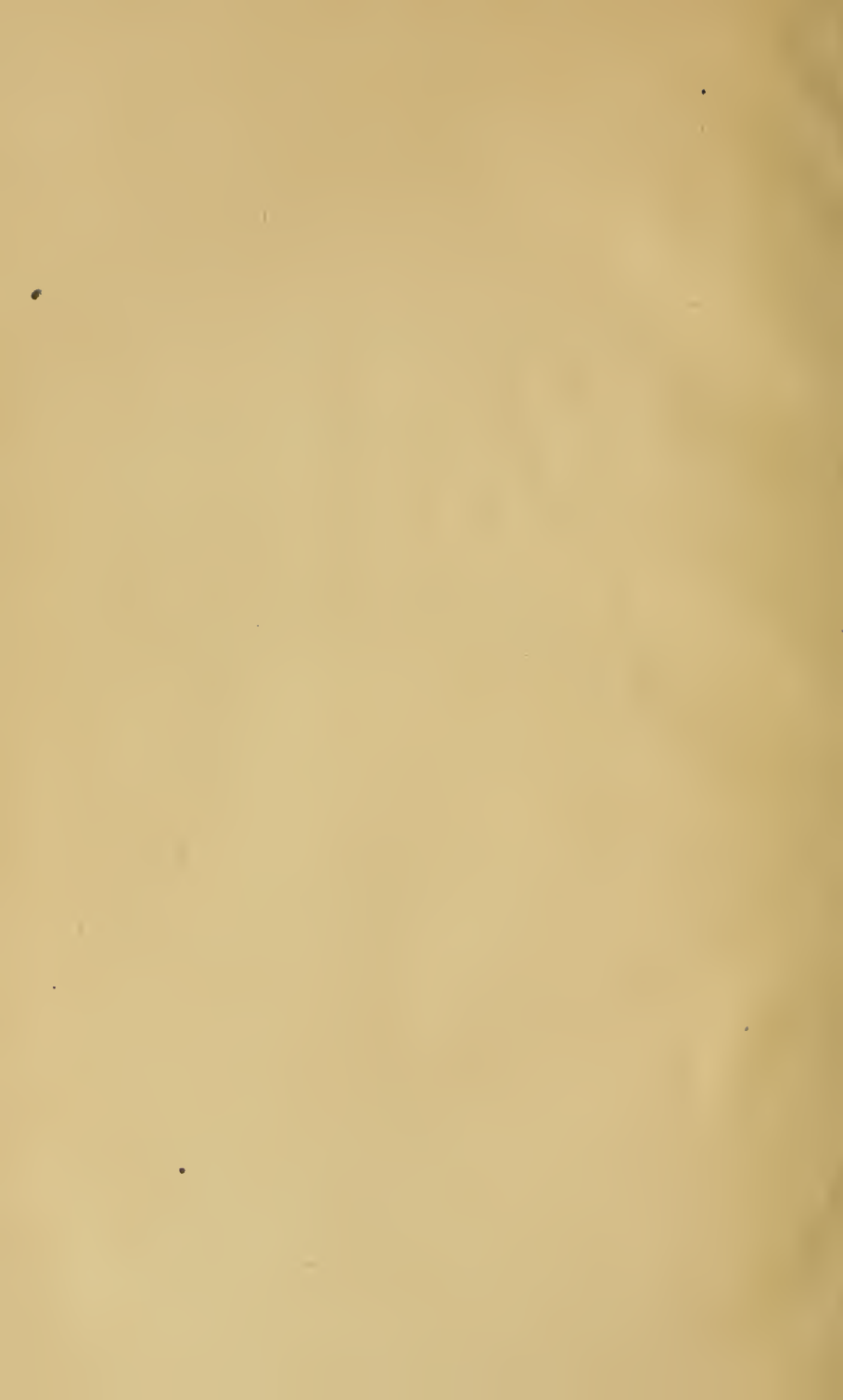
Fedde, who had been a deaconess since 1872, was sent to this country in 1883. Having begun the work in Brooklyn she was, in 1888, called to Minneapolis, to take charge of the institution, which had been established there chiefly through the efforts of Rev. M. F. Gjertzen. After a short absence however, Sister Elizabeth had to return to Brooklyn, to reconstruct the work, which had there been commenced. Now the Norwegians have in Brooklyn a hospital with accommodations for 33 patients and a Deaconess House. The property is owned by the Norwegian Aid Society with Consul Boers as its president. Nor has the Norwegian Deaconess work in Minneapolis been less successful. It is now in charge of Sister Ingeborg from the Motherhouse in Christiania, Norway. The number of sisters is twenty, of whom three are at work in St. Lukes' Hospital, Grand Forks; three in the Orphans' Home at Beloit, and three in the hospital at Hillsboro, N. D.





# TABLE OF CONTENTS.

I. ORIGIN AND NATURE OF THE SERVICE OF CHRISTIAN MERCY .....	5
II. THE CHURCHLY OFFICES.....	9
III. THE DEACONESS CALLING ACCORDING TO THE SCRIP- TURES.....	13
IV. THE DEACONESS OF THE EARLY CHURCH.....	19
V. THE SPREAD AND DECAY OF THE DIACONATE OF THE EARLY CHURCH.....	26
VI. THE RENEWAL OF WOMAN'S CHURCHLY SERVICE IN THE ROMISH CHURCH.....	33
VII. THE PROTESTANT RENEWAL OF THE FEMALE DIACO- NATE.....	47
VIII. THE DEACONESS MOTHERHOUSES.....	69
IX. THE SISTERHOODS OF DEACONESSSES.....	85
X. THE FIELDS OF LABOR OF THE DEACONESSSES. ....	105
APPENDIX.....	125















Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01091 7161