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I.

THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH.

SMITH'S Dictionary of the Bible, in the article on the First and Second Books of Kings, by Lord Arthur C. Hervey, publishes a good many statements like the following :

“It must, however, be admitted that the chronological details expressly given in the books of Kings form a remarkable contrast with their striking historical accuracy.”

“When, therefore, we find that the very first date introduced is erroneous, and that numerous other dates are also certainly wrong, because contradictory, it seems a not unfair conclusion that such dates are the work of an interpolator trying to bring the history within his own chronological system ; a conclusion somewhat confirmed by the alterations and omissions of these dates in the LXX. As regards these chronological difficulties, it must be observed they are of two essentially different kinds. One kind is merely the want of the data necessary for chronological exactness. Such is the absence, apparently, of any uniform rule for dealing with the fragments of years at the beginning and end of the reigns.” “And this class of difficulties may probably have belonged to these books in their original state, in which exact scientific chronology was not aimed at. But the other kind of difficulty is of a totally different character, and embraces dates which are *very exact* in their mode of expression, but are erroneous and contradictory. Some of these are pointed out below, and it is such which it seems reasonable to ascribe to the interpolation of later professed chronologists.”

“Now, when to all this we add that the pages of Josephus are full in like manner of a multitude of inconsistent chronological schemes, which prevent his being of any use, in spite of Hales' praises, in clearing up chronological difficulties, the proper inference seems to be that no authoritative, correct, systematic chronology was originally contained in the books of Kings, and that the attempts to supply such afterwards led to the introduction of many erroneous dates, and probably to the corruption of some true ones which were originally there. Certainly the present text contains what are either conflicting calculations of antagonistic chronologists, or errors of careless copyists, which no learning or ingenuity has ever been able to reduce to the consistency of truth.”

Abundant similar statements, in regard to either the chronology of the Israelite and Judaite kings as a whole, or to particular dates in this chronology, may be found in other ar-

III.

DEACONESSES.

IT is a first principle, in regard to sacred offices, that each one is founded on a proper gift bestowed by our ascended Lord. A profusion of these gifts in Pentecostal time made a corresponding profusion of offices. And offices were discontinued when the gifts on which they had been founded were withdrawn, after the establishment of Christianity. Miraculous endowment, moreover, supplied the infant Church with services and functions, which only anticipated the development of her capacities, to be reached in the progress of her culture. If an office passed away with the discontinuance of a gift, poured out "upon the servants and upon the handmaids" of the primitive time, that office may return when the gift is recalled; as "the effectual working in the measure of every part maketh increase of the body," which is seen to reproduce much of the power and adaptation for spiritual functions, that the Holy Ghost conferred on the Church in her cradle. True and full development in her growth will restore what divine anticipation bestowed on the weakness of her infancy. Besides, her living Head, with the control of all circumstances in His hand, from age to age, may order the occasion, and create the need for an office now, which had ceased for centuries, according to His will, to exercise its functions with any formal distinctness. The fitness which He bestows, and the necessity which He governs, may bring back without a Pentecost, what that initial epoch revealed in a suggestive pattern. If woman is now educated and qualified, as she never was before in the history of the race, and if her peculiar delicacy of tact has become of course more signal, as her true nature is developed under the holy calling of the Gospel, then, if there be a function in the Church with which she was invested,

by apostolic warrant or intimation, corresponding to her peculiar gift, we are authorized to restore that order to which it belongs.

This recovery of a primitive gift, in the course of Christian refinement, will also bear the stamp of progress upon it ; and so vary from the original pattern in being less accidental and exact. The incipency of ascension gifts from our Lord was like the tutelage of the Old Testament Church, in the necessities of multiplied direction and particular method. The childhood, which it led by the hand, needed the letter more than the scope of a principle ; precision of order, until the sentiment involved should be mature enough to drop the shell in expanding, with wide applications, which retain the object, whilst leaving the original form of prescription to the age and the circumstances that gave it the terms. For "a widow—threescore years old—who had brought up children, lodged strangers, washed the saints' feet," etc., the early Church soon substituted, exceptionally at least, reputable wisdom, maturity of judgment, sanctity of manners, fidelity in trust, and immunity from cares ; whether the official woman was old or young, married or unmarried, a widow or a virgin, when "taken into the number." To condemn such variation as a departure from the scriptural rule, as Tertullian did, is to make the rule an obsolete contingency, inoperative beyond a single century of time, incapable of meaning more than it expresses, and profitable for our instruction, only so long as the color and sense of its metaphors can be translated or transferred to the idioms of succeeding generations.

Beside this lateral expansion, to which we may interpret the divine warrant for an office in the Church, there is an ecclesiastical unity of functions, to which "the body of Christ" is tending evermore in the line of true progress and gracious evolution. What was divided in the Old Testament is united in the New. Instruction, worship, and rite, distributed in divers ministries and divers places, before "the fulness of time," have come to be united more and more in one minister, one sanctuary, and one hour of divine service. So, the development of woman's capacities in the advance of Christian charity will reveal convergence to unity in the exercise of her varied gifts for doing good. However diversified her

adaptations, and multiplied the uses of her office, in the vast varieties of need and vocation which the spread of Christian civilization may bring, the progress of light and truth and grace will gather all she is called to do, in the visible service of Christ, into one denomination. And that is given to us in Scripture—*Deaconess*, Romans xvi. 1: “I commend unto you Phebe, our sister, which is a servant of the Church which is at Cenchrea.” The word translated “servant” here is *διάκονον*, literally and fairly to be rendered *deacon* or *deaconess*.

This noun is often used in the widest adjective sense of serving. Often also in the largest appellative sense, for any officer of the Church, ordinary and extraordinary, including the apostles themselves and even our sovereign Mediator himself. (Rom. xv. 8). Its third use, technically given, as the proper name for a particular class of officers in the Church, our translators have been compelled to recognize, in Phil. i. 1, and elsewhere. Phebe was a *deaconess* of the Church to which she belonged, in the official and not common sense of serving. That Church would not have been so titular in describing a private and unofficial member; the commendation of “our sister” would have used the ordinary phrase of the apostle in his letters, “a servant of Christ,” “servant of the Lord,” without such identification with a small particular Church, as to indicate at once an official relation to the Church at Cenchrea, and an official errand to Rome. The “business” on which she was making her journey to Rome would hardly have been so conspicuously noticed in a call to the Roman Christians as a body to “receive her in the Lord,” as we read in the second verse, and “assist her in whatsoever business” she had need of them; if this had been some private business of her own, in trade or exchange, or appeal to the imperial court from provincial wrong. For, one of her character, as it is given by this commendation itself, would have practical wisdom enough to keep her own plans and purposes and means in reserve from the assistance of strangers. This receiving and assisting her in business, “as becometh saints,” must have been urged upon the Romans, therefore, with churchly spirit and churchly phrase, in pursuance of a deacon’s work, to help the poor, to relieve the afflicted, and to succor the distressed; “for,” as the apostle

subjoins the reason, "she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also." A resort to Rome, where wealth accumulated early in the Church, and the influence of Christian converts could be had in "Cæsar's household," to favor the application of a feeble Church for funds to cherish the poor, sustain the ordinances, and propagate the Gospel, would seem to require *official* agency in a Grecian woman. Greek ideas of her proper sphere withheld a virtuous woman from the amenities of hospitality, even in her own home, according to Cornelius Nepos, in his contrast between Greek and Latin manners of the household. And we know, that through the whole period of Ante-Nicene Christianity in Greece and Asia, when martyrs could not be visited by Christian men in prison without exposure to suspicion and danger of death, women had to go veiled with the authority of office, in order to do, without hindrance of jealousy, the errands of mercy and kindness to both sexes in such distress. We may well conjecture, that Phebe could not, therefore, have been the "succourer" of men and women both, and commended publicly on her arrival at Rome for assistance in "whatsoever business" she had need of help, and called a deaconess in connection with the particular Church at Cenchrea, without a proper official import in that name.

The apostle seems to take it for granted also that Roman Christians, who had such sisters among themselves, would understand it in the official sense when they came to read the salutatory close of the great epistle, which had probably been carried to them by the hands of this woman from the eastern port of Corinth. Here we have their own Tryphena and Tryphosa, mentioned (verse 12) as known to be then occupied with consecrated work among them; and "the beloved Persis," to have been much occupied with such labor in the past, probably under his own inspection, among the churches of Asia or Greece; and Mary (verse 6), "who bestowed much labor on us," indicating the benevolent care and kindness of a deacon's ministrations, in the analogous work of this woman also. The very same word *κοπιᾶω* that is used in different forms to express the engagedness of these devout women is used to describe labors in the ministry of the Word some ten times at least, and that alike by ordinary and

extraordinary officers of New Testament times. (See 1 Cor. xv. 10, 1 Thess. v. 12, 1 Tim. v. 17). And when we consider how stringently women were forbidden to preach, and yet see in these verses how laboriously they were occupied with religious work, living at the altar with busy consecration, and extolled for it by the same great apostle, we are shut up to the conclusion that they also were officers in the Church; originated by the same necessity that brought "the seven" deacons to the office of serving tables (Acts vi.), that the apostles might give themselves "continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word."

The Latin word by which *διάκονος* was commonly translated is *ministra*. And this word, unlike *ancilla* in the same language, denoted a regular service of office to which women were set apart, corresponding to the masculine *minister*. Not the mere house-maid, which *ancilla* signified, subject to the whims and arbitrary caprice of menial service, but the voluntary beneficence of love and conscience in performing duty at some chosen task. Near the beginning of the second century, about the year 107, the younger Pliny, Governor of Pontus and Bithynia, under the Emperor Trajan, wrote to the latter his celebrated letter about the Christians; reporting what he had done to carry out the persecution of that reign, and asking for instructions how to proceed in consistency with Roman law against a people, whom he had discovered to be free from every crime but that of obstinate persistence in their faith. To reassure the Emperor that his inquisition had been sufficiently severe and particular, he wrote that he had subjected two women to torture, who had evidently been selected as knowing and prominent individuals, from whom he could obtain accurate information—*Ex duabus ancillis quae ministrae dicebantur*. Here we have the apposition of *ancillis* and *ministrae* to be rendered fairly into English, "two handmaidens who were called deaconesses," importing that the one was the common, and the other the official name of these Christian women. Hence the early translations of the Bible into Latin, and notably the Vulgate, rendered *διάκονον* by the round phrase, *quae est in ministerio ecclesiae quae est in Cenchrís*.

That this word of the apostle was intended to intimate an

office of women then existing in the Church, and proper to be continued as long as any of her sex could be found qualified with the gift, and desiring to exercise it, was the unanimous comment of post-apostolic interpreters; including the most renowned of exegetes in primitive and early Christianity: Origen, Chrysostom, the Gregories, Theodore, Theodoret, etc. So at the Reformation, in both its branches—Lutheran and Reformed—the most learned and judicious annotators give the same sense. John Calvin says: “He first commends to them Phoebe, to whom he gave this epistle to be brought to them, and in the first place he commends her on account of her office, for she performed a most honorable and a most holy function in the Church. And then he adduces another reason why they ought to receive her and show her every kindness, for she had always been a helper to all the godly. As then she was a deaconess—‘ministra’—of the Cenchrean Church, he bids that on that account she should be received in the Lord; and by adding, ‘as it is meet for saints,’ he intimates that it would be unbecoming the servants of Christ not to show her honor and kindness ‘we ought surely to regard and especially to love and honor those who perform a public office in the Church.’”

Without citation from any other in the long line of our best authorities who have agreed with Calvin: Beza, Van Maastricht, Macknight, Bingham, Suicer, Schleusner, Parkhurst, Kitto, Brown, Hodge, etc., we may well quote the striking words of Dr. Chalmers, in his lectures on Romans, not only because he was an eminently fair expositor, but also because no man of his generation surpassed him in constructive aptitude for ecclesiastical economy. These are his words: “Here, too, we are presented with another most useful indication—the employment of female agency, under the eye and with the sanction of an apostle, in the business of a Church. It is well to have inspired authority for a practice too little known and too little proceeded on in modern times. Phoebe belonged to the order of deaconesses, in which capacity she had been the helper of many, including Paul himself. In what respect she served them is not particularly specified. Like the women in the Gospels who waited on our Saviour, she may have ministered to them of her substance, though there can

be little doubt that, as the holder of an official station in the Church, she ministered to them of her services also."

Thus it must be conceded, that we have a name for office given to woman in the Christian Church by the Apostle Paul himself, and that there is, at least, color of reason for believing that he meant it in the official and not common sense of the term. If now we can find a list of qualifications, analogous to those of the same office among men, given in Scripture as expressly required of woman also in the service of God, we go far in making out a warrant for the perpetual existence of her office with the name of Deaconess. Early interpretation, with unanimous consent, and modern interpretation, with increasing force and clearness, recalling the old, give us the list we look for in 1 Tim. iii. 11: "Even so must *their* wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things." The Vulgate *mulieres similiter*, is nearer the sense of the original than our English version of this place. Although *γυναῖκας* may be rendered "wives," it more generally denotes *women* as antithetic to men; women, whether married or unmarried (see, for example, 1 Tim. ii. 8, 9); and the word "their" in our translation is not in the original. The word for transition here in the Greek rendered "even so," suggests fairly passage to another class in the enumeration of offices, rather than a supplement of close identification with the class just mentioned, as the word "wives" would make it. Such a supplement follows in the next verse (12th), which intimates the domestic proprieties of a good deacon; and this 11th verse, while giving a distinct class of officers in women, may connect the 10th and 12th verses with the obvious thought, that deaconesses might be wives of deacons, as they probably often were, and yet hold an office entirely distinct, though analogous to that of their husbands. So, in like manner, let women who are deaconesses, whether they are wives of deacons or not, whether married at all or not, be grave, etc. Such is the sense of this passage according to the ancients, whose familiar observation of this order, unquestionably existing in their time, entitle them to more acceptance than they have received from the modern expounders generally. But they are sustained by Whitby, Macknight, Bloomfield, Fausset, and many others, among the latest and best of

our critical commentators. This chapter (1 Tim. iii.) evidently proposes, for the guidance of Timothy, to describe in due proportion all the ordinary and permanent officers of the Church committed to his care as an evangelist. If Cenchrea had the deaconess, Ephesus must have had the same office. And we have here first the bishop, then the deacon, then the deaconess. The qualifications of this third order are given with exact correspondence to those of the second, excepting only the difference of words more suited to the sex. But if we are to understand that these women are only the wives of those mentioned in the second place, the question must be asked, why does the apostle say nothing in the proper place about the wives of bishops and their qualifications, so much more important for the welfare of pastoral charges in every age? And if, with Calvin, we connect these "wives" with both bishops and deacons, why insert them in the midst of a diaconate subject, giving to women a parallel part in serving the Church, described in official parlance, answering in every particular to the qualifications required of men for a similar office? If wives merely, why are the qualifications mentioned for them so little specific, belonging to the sphere of woman in married life, where the household is precisely her dominion?—and yet here in the next verse this home rule is turned over to the deacon himself, without any mention made of aptitude for family government in the helpmeet, whom our translation gives expressly and exclusively to the deacon. These difficulties are avoided only by the supposition that deaconesses and their proper qualifications are mainly intended by 1 Tim. iii. 11. And had it been the mind of inspiration that female officers were to be all unmarried persons, either virgins or widows, the construction would not have been left open for so many versions and interpretations to say *wives* instead of *women* with any good sense.

Having now ascertained an official name, and a list of qualifications prescribed in the Word of God, we complete the category of an office in the Church for women, if we can find a roll on which she had been entered, with considerate choice and the solemnity of vows. We do not need to see a formal origination like that of deacons in Acts vi. (for this office is supplementary in its nature to that), nor to inquire how general or

how special the duties to which she must have been assigned in such consecration, as these must, of course, correspond to civilization, of the age, and the place, nor to know that her precise occupation in the apostolic age has a need and a place in the Church of to-day as it had in the forming age of Christianity. We need only observe once for all, the fact that, under apostolic direction, there was registration of an order, with a votive bond for faithfulness in office, devolved on women.

The notable passage, 1 Tim. v. 9, 10, comes now to be considered: "Let not a widow be taken into the number, under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, well-reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work." This text is taken from the midst of directions to Timothy, respecting widows in the Christian community; who, from the beginning, were special objects of care and kindness in the Church. "Honor widows that are widows indeed"—begins the direction in the 3d verse. And in the rapid and distributive abruptness peculiar to the style of this apostle, we have keen discrimination, of widows who should be supported at home, by children, or nephews, or any believer able to do it; and widows who being desolate are properly to be supported at the charge of the Church. Among the latter, he distinguishes, again, between the young and the old, the devout and the gay, the once married and the twice married, the commendable and the blamable. And suddenly, as if his allusion would be of course understood by Timothy and the Churches, he refers to an order of women, who would necessarily be employed in the care and superintendence of any charitable provision made for those who were needy and desolate. "Let not a widow be taken into the number," etc.—of those who are put into such an office. So the Arabic version reads, "If a widow be chosen a deaconess." There must be a circle, within the community of widows, qualified to give them counsel, consolation, and succor. There must be a selection made, even from the consecrated deaconesses, to attend on this duty, of managing and sustaining widows of all ages, in their indigence and

ignorance. And then the apostle proceeds to describe minutely widows who only are qualified for such a care.

Neander, the great historian, rejects this interpretation, and insists that the whole section respecting widows must be more unique, understood without such minute distribution; and that "taken into the number" means only taken into the register of those who are to be supported at the expense of the Church, in distinction from those who may be supported at the homes of relatives and friends. Probably the majority of readers agree with Neander. But the whole text and context must refute this popular explanation. In the first place, the word *καταλεγέσθω*, "taken into the number," means enrolment of the most particular kind—picking out from a general register, a few in detail for special duty—*in album et numerum referri*, says Erasmus, the unrivalled scholar, in giving the sense of the word; and Beza followed him, with express approbation, giving *allegatur* instead of the Vulgate *eligatur*, in his Latin translation. At any rate, the use of this word itself, as applied to the admission of poor widows to the charities of the Church, must be wholly inappropriate. There would be no picking and choosing for eleemosynary honor, apart from official trust, among the distressed and desolate widows of Christian faith. The admission must be free to loneliness and need, without regard to age, or even comparative desert in sanctity of life, to be the rule of Christian charity.

2. If "the number" be taken in the sense of beneficiaries only, it would be nearly, if not quite, no number at all for admission to the benefit of Christian asylums; according to the conditions required in the 10th verse. Scarcely one widow in a thousand, of any generation in the Church, could be found uniting in herself all the requisitions. She must be sixty years old at least, and a widow but once, in the sense of having never availed herself, as women in good circumstances of life so often did in those times, of facile divorce, to marry another while the divorced man was living. She must be a widow "well reported of for good works," importing that she had ample means in her hands with which to earn such reputation. One also that had "brought up children," who, coming from such a home, would rather die than see

their mother in the ranks of public pauperism. One who must have had a spacious home, in which she "lodged strangers" with generous hospitality, and without stinting the room or table of her children. One also of such a social rank, as to signalize the grace of condescension, when she "washed the saints' feet." Affluence also, and leisure must have been her lot, when she "relieved the afflicted," and "diligently followed every good work." It would be a miracle of ill-fortune for such a widow in reverses to have neither "children," nor "nephews," nor "any man or woman that believeth," to keep her from being a charge on the public alms of the Church, through the evening of her life. We can easily comprehend how such a woman would be admirably fitted for presiding over a house filled with less favored and younger widows. But how the charities of Pauline benevolence could shrivel to such a rare selection of beneficiaries in old widowhood, is inconceivable.

3. Such a sense as that preferred by Neander has an aspect of cruelty, when we read on in the next verse, "But the younger widows refuse." The lone childless widow, the widow that has always been poor, without fame or friends, without opportunities for doing good, or time, which is the treasure of the poor to give, are not only not to be taken into the number, but positively refused, if they are "younger widows;" and all the more needing to be instructed and guided, as well as fed and clothed, by the charities of the faithful.

4. It is inconsistent, as well as cruel. Younger widows were to be refused, because they would marry again. That was a good reason for keeping them out of an office, which could not be filled so well with persons who were bound to husbands, and engrossed with family cares; but no reason for keeping them out of shelter and subsistence for a time, until another marriage would relieve the Church of a burden, and promote the best economy, in administering alms; according to the apostle's own advice. He advises younger widows to marry, for the sake of a good example in decency and thrift; and yet he had just written, they will do so when they "wax wanton against Christ," "having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith." Surely he does not mean they must marry or starve; that "marriage is honorable in all,"

and yet, rebellion, apostasy, and damnation to "younger widows." It must refer to the prior obligation of vows, the vows of an office in the service of Christ, which they cast off in being hastily wedded again, after due consecration to a most useful Christian life. A facile abandonment of such anterior obligation, for another husband, would be disturbance of order, inconvenience, and scandal even, which would call for severe condemnation. What, however, would be the sin or harm of quitting the poor-house, where a gratuitous living had no bonds to detain the registered inmates; who would naturally covet what the apostle preferred they should have—private homes, in which they could be cherished and "the Church not be charged?"

Thus, we are fairly constrained to bring the 3d verse and the 9th together: "Honor widows that are widows indeed. Let not a widow be taken into the number," etc. As the elders, in the 17th verse following, "who rule well," are worthy of "double honor," so the widows who are well fitted to preside over communities, and guide individuals, young or old, of their own sex, should be honored indeed—personally revered, and amply supported, in their work of faith and labor of love.

It must be evident, from the terms of rare selection, which we have seen to be incompatible with the free and full admission of inmates, to the gratuitous provision made for desolate widows, that "the number" of qualified persons, for the charge of such beneficence, would be small, even without the restriction of personal indigence besides, overtaking themselves in the reverses of life. If the widow of threescore, as described in the 10th verse, without reduction to poverty herself, should desire and consent to be enrolled for the service of others, it was just at the entrance of old age, according to Jewish ideas; and the shortness of her time, along with the peculiar assemblage of qualifications required, must reduce to a minimum this wing of the female diaconate. There might be, therefore, a great lack of service for this particular duty, if confined to widows of the sort which the apostle requires. Accordingly, we should notice that only *widows* are subjected to the rigid tests which the apostle details. He does not say that virgins should be excluded, nor married women; although, for obvious reasons, the retreat for widows should be tended as much as possible by

venerable women of their own kind, whose experience and tenderness, and ripeness of piety would be most profitable in managing that particular trust.

Neglect of widows "in the daily ministration," by apostles themselves, occasioned the introduction of deacons into the Christian Church. And so, neglect of their "tables" by the best of chosen widows, in consequence of age and infirmity, as well as fewness of number, would inevitably bring younger deaconesses to the help of these matrons. Thus, the two names would be interchangeably used for the same order, the chosen widows being really a special branch of the diaconate and the earliest, the most venerable, and yet the most incapable, without the aid of such women as Phœbe, who were active and energetic in "business;" though it cannot be known whether Phœbe was virgin, wife, or widow. So much, however, did the term *widow* gradually cease to be used as a name for woman's office, that we find in the "Apostolic Constitutions" at the close of the third century this direction for their conduct: "The widows, therefore, ought to be grave, obedient to their bishops, and their presbyters, and their deacons, and *besides these, to the deaconesses*, with piety, reverence, and fear."—Book 3, cap. 8. And we find in canons of Councils, afterwards, that deaconesses were called *προκαθήμεναι*, *governesses*.

Thus, we observe, without multiplying citations, what we should expect to see, after finding the office of deaconess in the Word of God itself, that other names than the only one given in Scripture, would, after specifying and emphasizing this and that important duty of the office, for a time, fall away in popular use, from an official to a common signification. So it was with *χήρα*, *πρεσβύτιδες*, and others. Historians, councils, and scholiasts, for generations after the sacred canon was closed, would use these words to designate, no one can say what, if it be not the order of deaconesses. The perplexity of modern writers on the subject darkens itself by overlooking the simple fact, that other terms, expressing every phase in the versatility of woman's exquisite power and adaptation for "every good work," would naturally attach themselves, by way of emphasis, to this and that specialty of her vocation; although the one name given by inspiration of God, remained the generic term, and at length the only name in history.

The Fathers, both before and after the first General Council, were peculiarly interested in this office; they refer to the Scriptures for its warrant and fitness; and abundantly intimate the benefits enjoyed by the Church from the various work and good repute of the female diaconship. Martyrs, apologists, exegetes, and historians, united in the praise of this ministry. And it overspread the whole extent of Christendom, the West as well as the East, the rugged Latins of North Africa, as well as the more effeminate Greeks and Asiatics; where the greater seclusion of woman made the service of woman, at the tuition and baptism of her sex, indispensable. No less than forty deaconesses were connected with the great Church of Constantinople. Candidates for the office were always abundant, and these, according to Epiphanius, were either virgins, or widows, or wives who lived in sanctity with their husbands. Rank, as well as condition, yielded its quota. Publia, distinguished in the time of Julian, was a deaconess. The virgin sister of Gregory Nyssen, Macrina, was another. And he mentions Lampadia, also a virgin, of rank in this office. Sozomen, the historian, relates the effort of Chrysostom, to persuade a noble virgin, Nicarate, to become a deaconess; and the success of Olympias, a young widow of rank, in obtaining admission to the order.

The most conflicting diversity of usage and opinion among the ancients was about the proper age for admission to this office. Tertullian, of the second century, who evidently interpreted the text 1 Tim. 5-9, as we have done, insisted on the age of *sixty*, at least, and denounced the admission of a young virgin under twenty as a "monstrous" thing in the Church. He therefore called the order "widows." The Council of Chalcedon, in the fifth century, ordered, that no one under the age of *forty* should be admitted. The Theodosian code, reverting to the prejudice of Tertullian, because of some scandal at the opposite extreme, enacted *threescore* as the proper age. And after this, the "Novels" of Justinian reduced, by imperial authority, the age to forty or fifty years. Finally, the Council in Trullo (692) attempting to reconcile discrepancies of the past, which had entailed confusion in the varieties of usage, determined that sixty should be the age for widows, and forty for deaconesses; not meaning, however,

that the latter did not include the former, as a special class of the same order; but merely to classify the office with some certain distinction, which might establish more uniformity of observance. But the partisan spirit which prevailed in this Quinisext Council, East against West, and Greek against Latin, deprived it of ecumenical value.

No scriptural office ever suffered so much from the hands of men, notwithstanding the vast beneficence with which its devout and beautiful charity always performed its work. Bondage to the letter was inflicted just as soon as apostolic direction left the stage. Forgetting the typical deaconess in Phebe, which the liberal Paul commended for abounding activity in business, it was required that they should all be literally widows, shut up in homes for widows, who were so desolate and poor as not to have upon earth another home in which they could live. Exceptions which would prove the apostle's rule, by substituting for the decrepit widow a wise and godly virgin to help her, and take care of her also, brought upon that virgin the ridiculous name of "virgin-widow," as the pseudo-Ignatius has it. And when exceptions forced themselves into the order from necessity of the case, and filled the diaconate of every diocese with active and efficient agency, the thunder of conciliar canons and imperial edicts came to remand the whole order back to the letter of a widows' home, and the desolation of old widows' life.

The rise of hierarchy must be noticed as another hostility, in its progress and consummation, to the usefulness and even existence of this woman's office in the Church. When the bishops began to claim succession to the Jewish priesthood, after the final overthrow of the Jewish State by Adrian, and to claim superiority of rank, and another ordination, over elders, who are so familiarly the same as bishops in biblical description, deacons became the favorites of episcopal influence, and were industriously promoted over the elders in being the companions and helps of the bishops; while the elders naturally gave up the parity of ministers with some annoying protest or dissent. Then came the sacerdotal affectation of three orders in the ministry, and the deacon must be the third, and therefore he must be a preacher, and leave the service of tables to which he was exclusively ordained. But what

now of the feminine counterpart in the office of deaconess? She must not preach in any event or under any changes in the progression of office, for God has forbidden it in His Word; and canons and "constitutions" beyond number had been duly orthodox from the beginning, to enforce the restraint of woman in the Church, declaring that no sacerdotal function should ever be hers; and it was mere heathenism to think of women preaching, because among the heathen only were priestesses employed on account of the female divinities, which men and women worshipped together. Thus, forsaken by the parallel order among men, the order among women was left to perish. Accordingly, the very same council, about 347, that of Laodicea, which, in concert with Sardica, abolished the *chorepiscopi*, country bishops, who had persisted in being parochial and not diocesan; abolished the order of deaconesses likewise—a prelatial consistency of more logical force than manliness and courage. For this blow struck the order under the name of *πρεσβύτιδας*, to escape the condemnation of striking down the office of woman under its true scriptural name. Thus hierarchial development went on, just in proportion to its compactness, in suppressing the office of deaconess. And as its despotism was more intolerant by its unity in the West than in the East, the order was extinguished at Rome, two hundred years before it ceased at Constantinople.

"Forbidding to marry," in the ascetic perversion of Christian society, by the prevalence of conventual and monastic life, was another antagonism, fatally adverse to an order of office, which required the Church to "honor widows that are widows indeed;" and to take into its number, of specially well qualified members, those who had brought up children, and spent six-sevenths of this lifetime in family relations and cares. Society is the province of woman. Social amelioration is the great errand of woman's office in the Church. To relieve, refine, enhance, the joys of family, the relations of friendship, the accession of strangers, the "business" intercourse of laudable industries, and the free interaction of all Christian people, "for the edifying of the body of Christ"—was ever conspicuously the institute of this devoted guild. Rather than renounce the principle of its existence, by incor-

porating the vows of celibacy, rejecting marriage as unclean, and looking on virginity, in every kind of monachism, as the flower of Christian perfection, it would wither and die. Originating for the service of her own sex especially, and most useful wherever it suffered a disparaging seclusion, the official woman lost her occupation, when monks and nuns became the "regular" ministry of Christendom.

These causes of decline and discontinuance to the female diaconry of old, were equally the causes of decline and fall to Christianity itself. It was in the midst of medieval darkness and corruption that the office of deaconess passed away. Other offices were multiplied apace, in the downward apostasy of all religion. Subdeacons came to supplement the lack of service at "tables," when the divinely appointed deacon vaulted into sacerdotal distinction—"ordines majores." Man-made "ordines minores," of which subdeacons were the chief, swarmed on every hand, to remain at the cathedral to this day. The solitary exception to be found in all history, of the entire decadence of a sacred office before the Reformation, is in this one, with which the primitive Church had been so much adorned. It was only the religion of Christ in its apostolic purity that could elevate woman, and of course develop her capabilities for service in His kingdom. When that had gone, her gift was gone: "and if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" She sunk again to the disabilities of her sex in barbarism, just as her faith and hope and charity were extinguished under clouds of superstition.

All these reasons for the disappearance of deaconesses, in the night of dark and leaden ages, are now only strong reasons for the restoration of the order, especially to the Presbyterian Church. It is not much more than one generation since deacons were elected again, generally, in central regions of our American Church; and men are yet living who remember how strongly the General Assemblies of 1840, '41, and '56, had to enjoin upon the churches the universal duty, wherever it was practicable, to have a board of deacons established, beside the bench of elders. A strong unwritten protest against the order had existed for generations in the Presbyterian mind, because it had been so generally per-

verted in other denominations. Prelacy, on the one hand, made it sacerdotal, and in the early ages exalted deacons over the ruling elders of the parish bench; annihilating the primitive consistory, and keeping it suppressed in every system to this day, which makes a preacher of the deacon. Independency, upon the other hand, came to make "governments" out of deacons; and, of course, gradually dispensed with ruling elders, from the days of John Owen, who warned it against this tendency, to the beginning of the present century. Although for these reasons chiefly, our American Presbyterian churches were slow to accept a deaconry handed down in scriptural form by the Second Book of Discipline, and the Westminster Directory also, which was derived from the Standards of Scotland, it has been at length embodied, in almost every organization of the particular Church, and that with intelligent adoption. Why should the churches not proceed now, and without delay, to restore this primitive and apostolic supplement to the deacons of Scripture? No perversion or discredit ever came upon the analogous functions of deaconess, when the original deacon ceased to feed widows, in serving tables. It had been always faithful to its principle, and loyal to its Presbytery. It followed the parity of elder and bishop, as Ruth followed Naomi. When Presbytery perished, it perished. Three orders in preaching dug its grave. A great stone, the colossal hierarchy, hindered its resurrection. And the great Reformation is not completed until this primitive office be restored.

Other denominations, less cognate, have been engaged in restoring it for half a century. In 1836 Pastor Fliedner established "the Institution of Deaconesses" at Kaiserswerth for the care of the sick. It was entirely successful, and rapidly enlarged from year to year, and has led to the establishment of many similar ones in Germany, France, and England. In our country, beginning at Pittsburg, Pa., Dr. Passavant, of the Lutheran Church, has been eminently successful in founding and propagating the same beneficent order. Presbyterians, who ought to have been first to organize an office that is more at home and kindred in their system than anywhere else, may see in such examples how practicable it is, and useful and necessary to the complete equipment of evangelical benevolence. In-

deed, there is more than all the need of early Christianity for this office now. Less the jealousy of social intercourse between the sexes now, and less the dungeon of imprisoned martyrs and confessors, there is far more the "business" activity which took Phebe from Cenchrea to Rome, far more the open and effectual doors for the gospel to all people, both at home and abroad, far more the neglected work of male deaconship for the female to take up and finish and adorn. And then, of course, we have the poor always with us, the sick, the afflicted, the widow, the orphan, the stranger, all that ever occupied at first the care of deaconesses. On the other hand, especially in this country, men are busier than ever with the world, and women are less busied than ever before with domestic occupations. "A virtuous woman" hardly recognizes herself any longer in the glass, which used to mirror the value and excellence of her place at home. "She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands." "She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field and buyeth it; with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard." "She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff." But now the industrial organizations of men and art have come to supersede this toil and trouble. The central part of modern civilization is emancipation of woman from drudgery, and the old engrossment of her time and tact in the monopoly of household labor. The sewing-machine, co-operative cooking, and a great variety of other inventions, which are at once auxiliary and improving to her own capacities, have come to set free her adaptations from the letter to the spirit of Solomon's portraiture. With all these changes she is still the same. Her instinct is productive labor. "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." No "art and man's device" will ever avail to repress the determination of educated woman to "do something" by herself. From the close of attendance at school, to the entrance into married life, there is an interval in which this beautiful energy is more and more tempted to pass the boundary of her sphere, for something to do, unless we hasten to fill with Church work the vacuities made in that sphere by the applied arts which have brought leisure to her home. The professions of law and

medicine, the pulpit also, and even the political arena, invite her enterprise and win her ambition. We know already the embarrassments we have had to stop her from preaching in Presbyterian churches. And we cannot but see that all she needs to level the barriers of Bible forbidding is the suffrage of her own sex. Already, the question goes up to the highest council of a great popular Church in this land, with large suffragan favor of women.

Now, let us consider in time what we may give her to do in the service of Christ and the Church. What can be imagined better than what the Bible suggests, and primitive Christianity exemplified on its brightest pages? Mothers and sisters, widows and virgins, have already anticipated our answer by the virtual resuscitation of deaconesses in the noble success of "woman's work" for missions at this day. And, perhaps, the strongest objection to the constitutional insertion of such an order in our system is, that we have already the advantages of a female diaconate, without formulating what might be repelled as an innovation, and a wheel too much to be normally affixed in the movement of our charities. But we must bear in mind that charity, outside of ecclesiastical norm, will make a channel for itself, and mostly a narrow, partial one, running to exaggeration, and like the Jordan when it swells to the overflow of its banks, it may start wild beasts from their lair, to devastate the valley which it was designed to fertilize with irrigation. We crave the activity of woman's benevolence in all its rich variety of kinds and appliances. We want it for the widow's home, the orphan's nursery, the poor man's cottage, the hospital, the stranger's lodging for her sex, the prison cell with succor to the doomed, the school-house, alike for the staff of teaching and board of direction. In short, the seven are seventy times seven, beyond the good work of subsidy for missions, in which her name is now redolent all the world over. Only that organized economy which divine wisdom has given to the Church can adjust the balances of such philanthropy, restrain excess, and shape this many-sided goodness to that fair proportion which becomes "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

The characteristic loyalty of woman to the sway of her Lord Jesus would greatly promote the legitimate influence of

the Church upon the world, if along the confines of mundane and spiritual things respectively, she could be seen of all men to represent the counsel of Christ, in any office of His own appointment suited to her peculiar adaptations. Many an association, though voluntary and free, combining possibilities of power more potent than courts or senates, might thus be made to render homage to Him, whose we are, and whom we serve. Take for example the latest known organization of benevolent ladies, for the help of the oppressed in her own sex, a dispensary of law, entitled in expressing the object of their society, "Legal Protection for Working-Women." It had become a notorious fact that this class of the poor were often imposed on and wronged without a remedy. Sometimes, in purchasing a sewing-machine to be paid for by instalments, when all but the last had been made up, a spell of sickness or some domestic adversity hindered the poor woman from meeting her last payment; the merciless contract compelled her to forfeit the whole, the article itself and all the hard earnings already expended in struggling for the ownership. Sometimes, again, they are defrauded by middle men or women, who take from the clothing houses great piles of cut-out garments to be made up by the needle, and then subdividing the task, they distribute portions to the humble poor, who can hardly be trusted at the counter. At first these are punctually paid the pittance allowed. But afterward they are paid in part only at the time, and this part is less the next time, and still less the next, until the debt of the petty factors to these working-women is large enough to be repudiated altogether; and being without friends or means, they have to suffer the wrong in silence, if they would get work at all to keep them from starving. Fraud, more cruel than misfortune, calls for woman's interposition. This new association proposes to have law, as well as food and medicine, dispensed in such cases. And for this purpose they consult men learned in the law, and interpose, with signal success, to search out and punish the injustice, and at the same time to enlighten the ignorant and helpless women in regard to contracts and evidence and right, making them take better care of themselves. Now, if we had the deaconesses in every city, whose office would include this object as one of its details, and attract to its organization educated women, young

and old, married and unmarried, whose aspirations for the Bar, now becoming frequent, might all be satisfied with the specialty of this kindness to the poor, how materially would it lengthen the cords with which we should reach out for the poor, and draw them to an inner as well as outer sanctuary, in the Presbyterian Church. Without a full diaconate, male and female, identified in form as well as in fact with the Church at home, we can hardly hope to retain our poor, born within our own pale, and much less gather from the world its downtrodden millions, who languish for good Samaritans to come on their way. And wanting the poor, we shall want a full Church, and be without a full representation of Christ himself with us always.

The space allotted here will not allow of more expediency, as well as warrant, to be written out, in pleading for this office. Instead of subjecting our good old standards of Government and Discipline to crucibles of revision, making crude again what was ripe, and well digested too, would it not be far better, for strength and beauty both, to add a feature, which was lost at the very time our faith and form were lost, and which has waited for a recognition and adoption, until faith and form have become hoary in our hands? Let us renew our age by renewing our youth. The deaconess nourished, and succored, and adorned the youth of our true Christianity. "Thou hast the dew of thy youth." Restoring the office need cost no trouble. If the people of a particular church would simply elect women as well as men to the office of deacon, making one board, or two separate boards, at their pleasure; of course, ordained with the same vows, and responsible to the same authority, as now provided in our Constitution, the order is restored. From this beginning, a development could be made of larger boards, in gradation; corresponding to Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assembly, by way of representation; keeping records at every step of such gradation, and reporting their work done or projected, to the Judicatories of each plane, composed of ministers and elders. The approbation, counsel, or injunction, of authorities in ruling the Church, would be communicated to these boards of deaconesses, respectively, according to the series of their gradation. And thus, without confusion, or danger from an influence, kept outside of churchly mechanism, and waxing apace in its power, irrepressible al

ready, and just on our path, bound to help us onward, or wreck us by collision, we should be able as a Church to shine upon the world, "fair as the moon and clear as the sun." The will of the majority would be better expressed in all the councils that govern us, though the great female majority of church members itself should take no part in judicial decrees, or voting on overtures. Its organized form, co-ordinated, at every grade of Assemblies, only in the great work of Christian charities, would, though meeting in separate convention, give lustre and animation to an organism so congenial from the beginning.

But however this may be, and whatever be the structural fitness our people may prefer, in attaching again to the Church of Christ the official functions of mothers, sisters, and daughters, the time is near when something in this way must be done. Permission to continue as we are, with voluntary societies of women, even called by the General Assembly to the good work of winging two of our ecclesiastical Boards, will hardly be granted long, without roots of bitterness coming up to trouble us, for the bias it gives to woman's work, being not more than a tithe of what the Church needs at her hands. The Master calls her to other work also, and as well. His vocation is churchly. "The Spirit and the Bride" call together. And they call to order. Contingencies are never left by the grace of God to shape the purchase He made with His own blood. Spontaneities of men and women alike, in serving Him, must be regulated "according to the pattern" shown to us in the Mount.

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