

The Church Guardian

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CALENDAR FOR JUNE.

- JUNE 7—First Sunday after Trinity.
" 11—ST. BARNABAS. Ap & M.
" 14—Second Sunday after Trinity.
" 21—Third Sunday after Trinity.
" 24—ST. JOHN BAPTIST.
" 28—Fourth Sunday after Trinity.
" 29—ST. PETER. Ap & M.

Women's Work in the Church.

In view of the great importance of this subject, and of the fact that it is likely to come before several of our Diocesan Synods, we give at length the following report of a recent discussion and action taken in the Convocation of York upon this matter:

"The Dean of Chester presented a report of the Committee on the Church Ministry of Women. Copies of the report had been circulated amongst the clergy present. The committee recommended:

1. That a deaconess should be set apart by the Bishop, publicly and with imposition of hands.
2. That no candidate for the office should be presented to the Bishop without careful previous training, or without previous examination as to whether she considers herself to be truly called by the Holy Ghost to that office, and as to whether it be her purpose to dedicate her life to the service of God therein, or until she be 30 years of age.
3. That she should not undertake work in a parish unless called thereto by the incumbent, and that her work in the parish should be entirely under his direction.
4. That there should be a deaconess' home (not necessarily in, but) in connection with each diocese, which might afford facilities for training, and to which the deaconesses (if removed from it by parochial engagements) might return in case of leaving their work in a parish for good cause.
5. That the home should be under the direction of a deaconess appointed by the Bishop of the diocese, and that the spiritual and devotional life to be observed in it should be guided by a chaplain, also of the Bishop's appointment. The internal rule and management of the home should in every respect be subject to the Bishop.
6. The deaconess should retain complete control over her own property.

The report also contained the following in respect to Sisterhoods:

A Sisterhood is understood to be a community of women living under the following three obligations:—1. Single life. 2. Community of goods. 3. Obedience to a common rule. Sisterhoods are

an important branch of the existing organizations. That such a band of Church workers must be a strength to the Church is evident, if its members can be held in a position of obedience to the constituted authorities of the Church. The condition of their being under ecclesiastical control is their ecclesiastical recognition. Such recognition, under the following regulations, your committee recommend that these communities should receive: 1. The official dedication of the Sister to her work rests with the Bishop alone. 2. The ruling power of the Bishop over the Sisterhood is to be intimate and real. 3. Dispensation from the Sisterhood-life is to rest with the Bishop alone.

The Dean of Chester then proposed:—

1. That the recommendations contained in the report be adopted.
2. That the members of the Upper House be humbly prayed to sanction the principle drawn up in 1883 under the presidency of the Bishop of Winchester.

Canon Ware seconded the resolution.

Canon Trevor proposed as an amendment that the words, "And with imposition of hands," be struck out of the first recommendation, and the words, "As to whether she considers herself to be truly called by the Holy Ghost to that office, and as to whether it be her purpose to dedicate her life to the service of God therein." He also included in his amendment the omission of the words "single life" as one of the three obligations attached to sisterhoods. He argued that there was no comparison between the deaconesses of the fourth century and those that there was a desire to establish in the 19th century—the circumstances were not the same, and the duties to be done were not the same.

Canon Clarke seconded the amendment.

Canon Body said it was hardly possible to imagine a question which at the present time was of so great importance. It was a circumstance full of promise for the future of the Church that a Committee of such varied opinions and prejudices should have met, not to discuss or fight over the details of the subject, but to consider its fundamental principles, in all the calmness of Christian men. He re-echoed the statement of the Dean of Chester that it was a fundamental principle in the primitive Church that persons could only be separated to the order of virgins by the Bishop, and that they afterwards lived under his control. Therefore, without for one moment pretending to criticise their present position, it seemed to him that Sisterhoods in the Church of England could not be regarded as belonging to the order of ecclesiastical or canonical virgins until they had received the sanction of the episcopate. (Cheer). The question was not whether Sisterhoods should be called into being, for they already existed, but how to bring them into such a state of ecclesiastical reorganization and dependency as might save them from such lamentable developments as might grow up, if they were left outside the order of the Church. As regarded deaconesses, his conception of her briefly was one that superintended Church-workers, rather than one that engaged in Church-work herself; and with that view he held that no one should be separated for the office of deaconess without undergoing a long probation. As regarded the question of celibacy, the resolutions did not say one word about it, and he for one should have no objection to leave out the subsequent words to which Canon Trevor objected. With a view to meet cases where a false step had been taken, the

committee was anxious to recognize the existence of a dispensating power, not from any moral obligation or anything that had passed between a soul and its God, but from ecclesiastical obligations. As to the Sisterhoods, he again insisted that it was essential to the well-being of the Church, and certainly necessary to the well-being of individuals, that they should be under ecclesiastical recognition and control. (Cheers.)

The Archdeacon of Macclesfield drew attention to the fact that both deaconesses and sisterhoods at present exist in the Church, and no resolution they might pass would cause either of those institutes to cease to be. They would go on on their own lines to some extent, and it was for the Church of England to say whether she would devise measures to bring them within the Church or leave them to themselves. If the Bishops did not see fit to recognize sisterhoods they could not expect to exercise control over them.

The Archdeacon of Auckland was in favour of the omission of vows; Canon Tristram objected to the women being called upon to take vows as to perpetual chastity; and the Dean of Durham asked the House to reject the propositions of Canon Trevor, and to pass the resolution of the Dean of Chester, which left them more at liberty to carry on their work.

Archdeacon Blunt was opposed to celibacy, and expressed his opinion that the words of the recommendation left the matter open.

A suggestion was made that the word "called," in No. 2 recommendation, should be altered to "moved," and that was agreed to, and the Prolocutor ruled that that portion of Canon Trevor's amendment referring to "single life" could not be taken as the words were not part of the committee's recommendations.

On the vote being taken, the amendment was lost, and the original resolution was carried by a large majority.

Scholarship.

There is a convenient canon which is at the service of the rationalism of the present day. Whenever a fact or doctrine of Scripture is to be set aside, it is asserted that "all scholars are agreed in rejecting the passage in question." This is obtained by the easy process of assuming that no man is a scholar who defends the genuineness of the thing attacked. No matter how reckless the theory of the antagonist of revelation, no matter how untenable the position of the rationalist, they are sure to pass for profound scholarship. It is only orthodoxy which is unlearned and uncritical. It is high time that this arrogance was put in its right place. It is possible, in spite of these feeble disciples of German unbelievers, that a received opinion may be a true opinion.

But there is another point which is kept out of sight—a point which modifies very greatly the value even of the highest learning. The worth of a man's criticism depends somewhat upon the bias of his mind. Those who quote German "scholarship" at second hand, are often ready enough to accuse their conservative opponents of being committed to a foregone conclusion. Being held to an absolute and literal truth of Scripture, they force themselves, we are told, to reconcile the most glaring contradictions, and to overlook the plainest proofs of mistake and inaccuracy. "Free inquiry," it is said, breaks this bondage. Now the truth is the reverse of this. Whatever it may