

The Church Guardian

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CALENDAR FOR JUNE.

JUNE 1st—TRINITY SUNDAY.

" 8th—First Sunday after Trinity. *Notice of St. Barnabas.*

" 11th—ST. BARNABAS. Ap. & M.

" 15th—2nd Sunday after Trinity.

" 22nd—3rd Sunday after Trinity. *Notice of St. John Baptist and of St. Peter.*

" 24th—Nativity of St. John Baptist. (*Athan. Creed*),

" 29th—4th Sunday after Trinity. St. Peter. Ap. & M.

DEACONESSES.

The Bishop of Winchester in presenting to Convocation the report on Deaconesses observed: I may say that in dealing with Deaconesses we have rather a freer scope than we had with Sisterhoods, because Sisterhoods have grown up recently in great numbers, and have received no recognition or authority on the part of the Church. Deaconesses have, on the contrary, been established in a certain number of dioceses under the immediate direction and control of the Bishops. I believe no true Deaconesses' institutions have grown up in the Church of England of late years except under the direct authority and control of the Bishops. There is therefore to a certain extent a *tabula rasa* as to any rules and regulations concerning them. The first resolution which I will move is in the following terms:—

"That Deaconesses having, according to the best authorities, formed an order of ministry in the early Church, and having proved their efficiency in the Anglican Church wherever the order has been revived, it is desirable to encourage the formation of Deaconesses' institutions and the work of Deaconesses in our dioceses and parishes."

There is a statement then that Deaconesses, according to the best authorities, are an ancient order of the Church. I think I may refer to learned writers on the subject. My right rev. brother the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol in his learned commentary distinctly refers to Deaconesses as mentioned by St. Paul. That is in his Lordship's work on the Epistles to Timothy. The late Bishop of Durham takes decidedly the same view, and though I do not

know that in any of his commentaries he has actually said so, yet in a sermon he preached and published on the sermon of Deaconesses he went so far as to say that the orders of the Church were imperfect unless there was an order of Deaconesses—that the order of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons were imperfect without an order of Deaconesses. Therefore I think we are justified in saying, looking to the writings of two of our own right reverend brethren—one happily with us still, but the other unpappily passed away—that the best commentators are agreed that there are allusions in St. Paul's writings frequently to the order of Deaconesses. If that is true, it seems to me that the English Church, which always professes to follow the example of the primitive ages, is certainly almost bound, at least morally bound, to recognize that order of Deaconesses which has existed in the Church so long. I think there is no doubt that at first anything like organized women's work in the early Church was carried on by Deaconesses. I believe they were always admitted by the Bishop with the laying on of hands. Whether that was a form of ordination or not I cannot exactly say, but it was something like it. The report which I presented to your Lordships on the subject says this—

It is now generally agreed by scholars and divines that Deaconesses formed an order of ministry in the early Church, that they are definitely referred to by St. Paul, that in all probability they were like Deacons admitted to their office by the Bishop, and that they worked chiefly among women much as Deacons worked among men. In the course of time this order fell into abeyance, while Sisterhoods gradually commended themselves to the religious feelings of the Church. As, however, the distinctive principle of the English Reformation was a return to primitive practice, it seems specially reasonable that the order of Deaconesses should be revived amongst us.

The reason why Deaconesses fell into desuetude was the growing feeling in favor of what are now called conventual institutions, and also a feeling in favor of hyper-asceticism. I do not think that was an advantage: in many respects it was a great disadvantage, and many of the evils which in the middle ages existed in conventual institutions would have been avoided if Deaconesses' institutions and the order of Deaconesses had been kept up. The report of the committee further says—

The difference between Deaconesses and Sisters seems to be this:—Sisters necessarily live in a community, and act either in the community or in settlements or branches sent out from it. Deaconesses act and work in parishes under the direction of the pastor of the parish and the Bishop of the diocese. There can be no true Deaconess who is not admitted by the Bishop, and who is not subject to the Bishop and to the clergyman in whose parish she works. There has been an extraordinary prejudice on the one side and on the other against Deaconesses. There is a prejudice against them on the part of those who are great advocates for Sisterhoods simply because Deaconesses are not in the technical sense Sisters, and do not live always in community bound by certain vows and acting almost entirely on mediæval principles. On the same side there is also prejudice and a feeling that Deaconesses' institutions have been established in this and other countries on what may be called extreme Protestant principles. Speaking with the greatest respect of some of those so-called Deaconesses' institutions, I think I may say they are not true Deaconesses' institutions at all. A true Deaconess means a woman acting in spiritual matters under the Bishop or the Parish Priest. And the Deaconesses' institutions I have alluded to against which prejudice is entertained by some people do not come under the cognizance of the Bishop or Parish Priest at all. Those Deaconesses live in a community, and go

through their work as the like. On the other side, there is a prejudice, which we hope is wearing away—there is a strong prejudice in the opposite school of theology—I do not like to speak much about schools of theology, but we must acknowledge them—there is a strong prejudice against Deaconesses because they are sisters. Of course, the word is used in a different sense by different people, but the fact is, a true Deaconess properly constituted is a sister inasmuch as the life of a Deaconess is not well ordered unless there is an institution in which she is trained. And so they become members of sisterhoods. They are ladies—I would rather say women—who devote themselves to the service of God, especially in visiting the sick, suffering and afflicted, under the authority of the Bishop and Parish Priest. I think Deaconesses cannot be properly constituted unless under these authorities. They have in a certain number of dioceses been revived. They have been revived in the dioceses of London and Gloucester and Bristol and Chester. I tried them myself in the diocese of Ely and I have tried them also in the diocese of Winchester. A few other Bishops have likewise tried them in their respective dioceses. I do not know what my right reverend brethren can testify, but I have never seen anything in Church work of any sort more devoted, earnest, and successful than that of the Deaconesses in my own diocese. I have the highest admiration for those Deaconesses, struggling amidst difficulties and prejudices until they have established themselves in the affections of everybody who knows them. They continue to work day and night. Ladies in good positions in life give themselves up to every kind of hard work, every kind of labor, self-denial, and self-sacrifice. They have attended the sick; they have nursed patients in the worst infectious diseases, in hospitals and elsewhere; they have brought up the young; they have worked orphanages; they have in every way sought out the lost and brought them into the fold of Christ. They have done such an amount of good work as I have never seen men or women elsewhere do. I cannot but believe if those Deaconesses are regularly and orderly established in the country they will be of the greatest possible help in our parochial work, and will carry on the best Home Mission work that can possibly be carried on. I really feel that Deaconesses have been overlooked hitherto, for neither the clergy nor the laity have recognized the truly wonderful work they have been doing or the wonderful self-sacrifice with which they have done it. I hope we shall revive the order of the Apostolic Church, which is the pattern the Anglican Church has always professed to follow, and so I am sure the Deaconesses will be found one of the greatest agencies for good in the Church which at this day can be found.—*The Churchman, N. Y.*

THE INEQUALITY OF MEN.

(From an address delivered on Sunday afternoon, May 4th, 1890, at the Finsbury Polytechnic, by the Bishop of Carlisle.)

In thinking the matter over, as to what I should speak to you about, it seemed to me that certain circumstances pointed to a subject which I will describe by this title: THE INEQUALITY OF MEN.

I do not know that this is a very popular subject; because, in these days, one of the most popular doctrines is that every man is as good as another, and perhaps a good deal better; and I have no doubt I should meet with much more favor at the hands of some audiences,—not from this, because no doubt you are a wise, and judicious, and penetrating audience, and therefore I will not accuse you of any folly,—but some audiences would be much more pleased to listen to a man who told them that