

## CONVOCAION OF PROVINCE OF CANTERBURY.

The Upper House, at its last meeting, adopted the following rules as to Sisterhoods, Deaconesses and Brotherhoods:

### I. Sisterhoods.

1. That those who enter a Sisterhood should be permitted, after an adequate term of probation, and being not less than thirty years of age, to undertake life long engagements to the work of the community, provided that such engagements be subject to release, on cause shown, by the Bishop of the diocese in which the Sisterhood is established.
2. That the form of such engagements should be a promise made at the time of admission before the Bishop or his commissary.
3. That the statutes of the community should be sanctioned by the Bishop under his hand, and not be changed without his approval signified in like manner.
4. That no statutes should contain any provision which would interfere with the freedom of any individual Sister to dispose of her property as she thinks fit.
5. That no branch house of a Sisterhood should be established, or any branch work undertaken in any diocese, without the written consent of the Bishop of such diocese.
6. That no work external to the community should be undertaken by the Sisters in any parish without the written consent of the incumbent of such parish, subject, if that be refused, to an appeal to the Bishop.

### II. Deaconesses.

1. 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, it is desirable to encourage the formation of Deaconesses' institutions and the work of Deaconesses in our dioceses and parishes.
2. That a deaconess should be admitted in solemn form by the Bishop, with benediction by laying on of hands.
3. That there should be an adequate term of preparation and probation.
4. That a deaconess so admitted may be released from her obligation by the Bishop of the diocese in which she was admitted, if he think fit, on cause shown.
5. That no deaconess shall be admitted to serve in any parish without the licence of the Bishop of the diocese, given at the request of the incumbent or of the curate in charge.
6. That the dress of a deaconess should be simple but distinctive.
7. That a deaconess should not pass from one diocese to another without a written permission of both Bishops.
8. That special care should be taken to provide for every deaconess sufficient time and opportunity for the strengthening of her own spiritual life.

### III. Brotherhoods.

The Bishop of London, in introducing a series of resolutions respecting Brotherhoods which had been passed by a committee of the House, touched on the nature of the work to be done by these bodies. The clergy needed associations of men who would devote themselves to work without requiring pay for what they were doing. It would be to the advantage of the Church if there were funds to increase the number of the clergy in each diocese, but the members of Brotherhoods were substitutes. Brotherhoods were new things, but there were new conditions of things prevailing. The Church now had to consider how to meet the enormous mass of practical heathenism amongst the lower classes in great cities, and especially in London. They could not grapple with everything, but the moral degradation of these masses was a matter which concerned them, and one of the most effective measures towards

dealing with it would be the establishment of Brotherhoods, lay and clerical, to reach the people by constant personal intercourse. It was not enough to preach them, and get them to come to church. Men were wanted to give themselves up with enthusiastic devotion to living amongst them, and he thought the Church was prepared to welcome these. He moved as a resolution:—

That in the opinion of this House the time has come when the Church can with advantage avail herself of the voluntary self-devotion of Brotherhoods, both clerical and lay, the members of which are willing to labor in the service of the Church without appealing for funds to any form of public support.

The Bishop of Rochester, in seconding the resolution, agreed that other means were now needed to reach the people, and proceeded to point out some of the advantages to be attained by such organizations as were proposed. Men, by living together in a house, would practice economy in both money and service, and their inter-communication would encourage them over depressing work and foster sympathy and the deepening of spiritual work. They did not wish to try to carry out this work by arranging rules that could only be accepted by one school in the Church, or to limit personal liberty, that freedom which God had given to everyone and which was a part of man's manhood. Nor was there any idea of going back to anything—he felt ashamed to use the word—Roman. They did not want to commit themselves to details that might cause opposition, and had no desire to interfere between the soul and God. A point that had been much dwelt upon in connection with this movement was the celibacy of the clergy, concerning which a great deal of what he must qualify as simple nonsense had been talked. They thought that young men joining these brotherhoods would shrink from taking wives and children into such surroundings as they would find, but they had no thought of interfering with what they might do ten or twelve years later. No one thought of accusing the Wesleyans of Romanism because they laid down a rule that young ministers were not to marry, and these accepted it. He ventured to impress on them the necessity for some devoted effort of this kind. They saw schemes springing up with which they could not co-operate, but some effort of this kind would meet the need.

The following resolutions were also adopted:

That a wide elasticity is desirable as to the rules and systems of such Brotherhood as may be found in the several dioceses.

That those who enter a Brotherhood should be permitted after an adequate term of probation, and being not less than twenty-five years of age, to take life long engagements to the work of the community, provided such engagements should be subject to release, on cause shown, by the Bishop of the diocese in which the Brotherhood is established.

That such Brotherhoods should work in strict subordination to the authority of the Bishop of each diocese in which they are established or employed, and only on the invitation and under the sanction of the incumbent or curate in charge of the parish.

That the statutes of the community should be sanctioned by the Bishop under his hand, and not be changed without his approval signified in like manner.

### OUR CONFIRMATION CLASSES—BELIEF AND CONDUCT.

The fourth question in the Catechism will open up an ample opportunity for setting before the candidates the two great divisions of the Christian life—belief and action. The necessity for a right belief must be insisted upon, and it must be pointed out how right conduct will always depend upon a true and genuine belief. The consideration of the

Apostles' Creed will afford a fine opportunity likewise for dilating on the chief points in the Christian faith, the belief in God, in the mystery of the Trinity, of the two Natures in Christ, the Atonement, the Resurrection, and the Life to come. It must also be pointed out how intimately the existence of the Church is connected with the work of the Third Person in the Blessed Trinity—God the Holy Ghost—'I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church.' On the general subject of Creeds it is desirable to show how such forms came into existence, that they were in the first instance required as an expression of faith on the part of the catechumens, and were necessarily short and simple in their character, such a confession of faith, for example, as was made by the Eunuch before his baptism; how creeds afterwards become longer and more complex as heresies arose, and different portions of the Christian faith came to be questioned; how creeds eventually took the form of fences—to use Canon MacColl's illustration to hedge in and protect the domain of the Church of God against trespassers, who would ravage it and lay it waste. It will be well to point out that creeds are no unusual thing, but that we find their germ in the New Testament, and evidence that forms of sound words and traditions existed from the first. The larger and fuller symbols of the faith that afterwards came to be used were lawful developments drawn out of Scripture, and legitimate conclusions from the original deposit of the faith.

A well known passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans—chap. x. verses 9 and 10—will here be found very suitable to enlarge upon, as showing after what manner we are to hold and confess the Christian faith; that it is 'with the heart man believeth unto righteousness,' while 'with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' The Creed in itself may be only 'a form of sound words,' but it is full of vital truth to the saving of the soul. The concluding portion of the Creed will suggest a few words on the nature of the Christian Church; and its 'Notes,' as set forth in the Apostles' and Nicene Creed combined—'One,' 'Holy,' 'Catholic,' and 'Apostolic'—each of these notes is fundamental and ought to be pressed home, and the sin of schism enlarged upon; the injury done to Christ's Body, which is the Church, by breaking it up into parts and parties. It will be important likewise to point out that while 'holy,' our Lord plainly foretold that tares would be mixed with the wheat from the first, the sheep with the goats, that it was to be a net that would gather together the good and the bad alike, and that the discrimination is out of our hands and will only be made by the angels at the end of the age. One fruitful source of schism arises from fancy pictures of the Church drawn by Plymouth Brethren and others, and which have their weight often with young and emotional Christians, drawing them away, perhaps, into strange folds, where they will find sooner or later to their cost that no body of professing Christians is perfect, and that 'pride, vain glory, and hypocrisy, envy, hatred, malice, and uncharitableness,' may flourish and abound even where the lines are drawn the closest. 'Take a ladder and climb to heaven by yourself,' was the saying of an ancient Christian to one who clamoured for a perfect Church on earth. 'There are those who would dry up the ocean to a thread in the hope of keeping it pure,' was another saying of ancient times.

From belief to practice is a natural step; right conduct is founded on a right belief (see Art. XII.), and so the rehearsal of the Ten Commandments follow on a repetition of the Creed. It will be well in passing on to these latter to draw attention to the tenses used in the answer to the question, 'What dost thou chiefly learn in these articles of thy belief?' Creation is past, redemption is past, but sanctification, obedience to the will of God in thought, word and deed, is present and progressive.