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THE DIACONATE

A CALL TO WOMEN

PAMPHLET

DEACONESS M. CHRISTIAN SYNGE

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(Continued on p. iii)

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THE DIACONATE

A CALL TO WOMEN

BY

DEACONESS M. CHRISTIAN SYNGE, S.Th.

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THE DIACONATE

A CALL TO WOMEN

THERE is a well-known legend which tells how, when Our Lord returned to Heaven, the angel Gabriel asked Him how He had arranged for the carrying on of His work in the world; He replied that He had entrusted it to Peter and James and John, and some women. "And what if they fail You?" asked Gabriel. "I am trusting them—they will not fail Me," came Our Lord's response.

The legend embodies a truth which is ringing out to-day as never before. The fulfilment of the work of Christ on this earth has been entrusted to His servants, the members of His Body. "As it has been through the ages, so is it still; the power of God breaks into the world through men and women who have knelt humbly at the foot of the Cross, and seeing in it the measureless love of God, have loved what they have seen, and have given themselves without reserve to Him Who was crucified there and is alive, the Lord of all true life" (Bennett).

The following words are especially addressed to the women whom "He is trusting." Perhaps they have not seen a vision of the vastness and possibilities of the work. Perhaps they have not recognized that His words refer especially to them. Perhaps they have not realized the power that is granted to those members of His Body who surrender themselves entirely and forever to His service. But surely they will not fail Him in this day and generation.

PART I

THE CALL TO CO-OPERATION WITH GOD

THE "World Call" is becoming almost a hackneyed phrase, and it sounds so big and impersonal, that there is a danger of its force being lost. Let us examine it more closely.

Self-expression is one of the most characteristic demands of the present age, and it is not confined to educated Englishwomen. Women of every nation are seeking self-expression of themselves and of their nation; but they seek without the clue, for they know not the words: "He that loveth his life shall lose it!" They know not the Speaker Who not only taught but demonstrated that "He that loseth his life shall find it." Still may be heard the almost bitter remark of an Indian woman when she learnt that we had a good reason for believing that the Creator of this world is a loving Father, not a jealous and spiteful God, "Why could not someone come and tell us poor Indian women about Him before?" At home and abroad women are seeking restlessly, seeking in many cases for they know not what; for the heart to-day, even as in St. Augustine's day, is restless till it finds its rest in Him.

A deaconess who has spent many years in village work in India writes: "The English deaconess is needed as a servant of the Church in India, to guide Indian women workers as a fellow-worker and a loving sister, living as simply as she can, and, if possible, among her Indian fellow-workers. About forty miles from Delhi, in a country town

which is the centre for many villages, and where there are Christians, catechumens and inquirers, there stands a fairly large house of Indian type, built round an open courtyard. In the lower part live the Indian priest and his family; in the rooms above, the English deaconess and (when there is a second worker) her companion. Several Indian teachers live near, and in the little chapel (a white-washed room, once a stable, but now fitted up with altar, with pictures on the walls and mats on the floor) all the workers, except those out on tour, gather daily for morning prayer, and weekly or oftener for the Holy Communion. Meetings are held there for Bible study and united intercession, and for taking counsel over matters connected with the work. With the strength gained from the corporate life there, the workers go forth day by day into the villages round, or for a few days at a time to more distant places, in order to preach and teach, to help the sick and sorrowful, and to lead the people to higher things morally, intellectually, socially, and spiritually. Villagers know they have friends in their midst, and often visit us, and we sometimes call them together for a few days for some special occasion, such as the annual Confirmation. Then the Christian villager realizes better that she is not merely a member of a small, despised, sometimes persecuted congregation in a lonely village, but of a much larger body; and she learns a little of the meaning of the Holy Catholic Church."

An educated Indian lady was lately visiting England to study educational methods, and was asked if she knew the deaconess who wrote the

above words. Her face, sad with the burdens of her Indian sisters, lit up as she answered, "She is one of those who endure hardships for the Master."

But it is not among the simpler people of the villages that the greatest problems are to be found. We have not found the ways of freedom easy or safe for the girls of England; and they are a thousandfold more perilous and difficult for women who have lived behind the purdah in India. Are not those who have the privilege of experience bound to extend a hand to those who have not? Yet the help is not easy to give or to take. Christianity has come from a ruling race; how shall those attracted to it reconcile their loyalty to India and to Christ? The women who offer help must be truly humble servants of the Church, who have studied principles and are willing to stand by and help others to lead.

The last message from Deaconess Katharine Beynon, received just after the news of her death, was: "Our one cry is for more helpers. Trained and ordained women are far more necessary now than in the past, especially in anticipation of the Indian Church Measure, which is expected to become law within the next three or four years, when the number of chaplains will be considerably reduced, and congregations of Indian Christians, hitherto supported by Church societies at home, will come under the immediate control of the Bishops. Then deaconesses will be very necessary, to take positions of trust and responsibility and oversight in all manner of ways under the direction of the clergy, and to train Christian women and children, both European and Indian."

The Metropolitan of India is building a headquarters for deaconesses, in faith that supplies will be forthcoming. One sees a vision for the future of a college for the training of deaconesses in Calcutta parallel to the great college for the training of clergy. But the work will probably be very slow, and only those who have learnt discipline and patience will have courage to carry on.

Again there comes the plea sounded by Miss McDougall at the World's Call Conference, when speaking of the Indian people: "They are all the children of frightened mothers." Every woman with a mother's heart will long to take her part in trying to help to cast out fear, a task which needs doing at home and abroad. So there is no doubt about the need in India.

From Africa comes a rather different but no less urgent appeal, though the finances of the Church there are constituting a temporary difficulty in the employment of women. The Government in Africa is realising that the terrible race problem can only be solved by Christian education. The African woman has immense power; she is responsible not only for cooking food, but also for growing it. Moreover, war has now been stopped, and she will soon find herself no longer the wife of a polygamist, for there will not be women enough for the polygamous system. "Here," says one who has travelled in all parts of the world, "is the opportunity for deaconesses to guide these women as they receive education, and to help them, both to find their new places in the home, the State, and the Church, and to use their new-found powers aright."

The same cry for help comes more or less articulately from China, Japan, and the colonies. Little groups of deaconesses are working now all over the world, and all plead for reinforcements. There is room for the use of every gift, enhanced a hundredfold if dedicated at the foot of the Cross, for lifelong single-hearted service.

Not only abroad, however, but in England also, are deaconesses urgently needed. There are signs that the constant movement and "busyness" of most people to-day are only hiding an underlying unquiet; many of the faces one meets betoken the lack of peace and harmony within. Here at once is an appeal to those who have found by prayer, by study, by experience, that inner peace which passeth all understanding; who have learnt, however humbly, to understand something of the purpose of God as revealed in His Son and in the history of the world in the last 2,000 years, and who are striving to co-operate with it. Every priest in the large town parishes needs a colleague to help him in his work among the men and boys, a deaconess to work among the women and girls. Is it not easier for a woman than for a man to enter into a woman's life, with its difficulties and its problems; for one who has been a girl to understand the aspirations and temptations of a girl? The one essential for all spiritual help is friendship, fellowship, understanding. It was the method of the Master as He lavished His time and His friendship on His immediate followers.

But there is much to be done, also, through teaching and organization. Guides, Clubs, Camps,

Confirmation Classes, Discussion Circles—here are some of the many methods in use.

"I am trying to write down what you say, because everyone in the office where I am working wants to know about it"; so spoke a girl to the present writer a few months ago, when the subject being taught was the revelation and reality of God. At the Medway Towns Crusade, men and women stood for over an hour, night after night, for a fortnight, listening to definite teaching about Christ and His Church, and their faces showed that they were hungry for help.

Country parishes at home are suffering from a shortage of clergy. Some think that a partial solution of the problem might come through grouping the parishes and having an itinerating priest (helped by motor and telephone), with a resident deaconess in each parish. It would be easy to paint a picture of the transformation that might be effected in many a country parish by a deaconess caring for every human detail of the village life, sharing the joys and sorrows of it all, yet with "her head above the mists!"

The possibilities of what may be done by women who are commissioned servants of the Church as instruments of the Spirit-bearing Body are only dawning. Supply and demand react in this realm as in others. Already deaconesses are finding their sphere of usefulness not only in parochial life, but in hospitals and infirmaries as assistants to the chaplains; in administrative work as secretaries to Boards of Women's Work; as teachers of theology in schools.

An American graduate writes: "The stress is

laid too exclusively on work for the poor; so little is said of the great opportunity of contact with people of every kind, rich as well as poor, educated as well as ignorant, with the college girl and the leisured society woman as well as with the poverty-stricken working woman. A deaconess is, in a degree, limited by her office, but to a far greater degree she is set free and emancipated for service. She has more than a normal contact with the world; it is supernormal. She is in the world, but not of it; she alone can maintain her own standards and manner of life without cutting herself off from the life around her. She is free to do and to speak as no ordinary woman can. She can witness freely to the things of religion without giving offence or being listened to merely with a courteous condescension. She can do the unusual in a natural way by virtue of her profession, and because she is sure of herself, not with an assurance of self-satisfaction, but by faith in Him Who has called her. The more women of education and experience of the world listen for this call and respond to it, the more will this side of the deaconess's life come to a full development."

This section may well be summed up in the words of one of our Bishops: "Men who are ordained in future must, in the offering of their lives, envisage not merely the Church of England in the narrower sense, but the service of the Anglican Communion throughout the world. A catholic priesthood involves catholic service, and in receiving the great commission a man lays himself open to the call of authority from and in any part of the great fellowship to which he belongs. These words

apply equally to the call of women to the diaconate. The more we demand complete surrender and real self-sacrifice, the more we shall attract the sort of women we want."

PART II

THE WAY OF RESPONSE TO THE CALL

ALL through history we find that, when any great need arises, special people are raised up, endowed with special capacities to fulfil that need. It was in the "fulness of time" that the Christ came; in one sense we might truly say "in the fulness of time" the Christ comes through His Body the Church. Is it, then, presumptuous to think that in these latter days God is raising up a special instrument in the Church, an instrument fashioned slowly through the ages to meet special needs in the present time? If we may quote words spoken in a slightly different connection, "To meet the need the Catholic Church in England, by the Holy Ghost, has revived and recognized the order of deaconesses as the only order for women in the ministry of the Church. To present a bulwark against future dangers, an outlet for future needs, an answer for future demands, the Church has set up this body of women in its ministry. What, in a large view, does the Church demand of them? A supply of trained women workers? That is not enough. A band of women who can take services or be publicly authorized? That is not enough. What the Church needs is an order, a ministry of

women, a compact body, conscious of its unity and purpose, able to speak for and to the women of the Church with authority, and representative of womanhood."

Let us briefly trace the history of the order from New Testament times to the present day.

Stage 1.—To the thirteenth century.

The ministry of women is often referred to in the New Testament. Especially, one Phœbe of Cenchreæ is mentioned as a deaconess in Romans xvi. 1 (R.V., margin); and 1 Timothy iii. 11 is now generally held to refer, not to the wives of deacons, but to deaconesses as a recognized class of Church officer. "We have, in fact, here," writes Dean Howson, "the man-deacon and the woman-deacon, co-ordinated side by side, in the same general ministry, just as we find to be the case afterwards in the post-apostolic age." Bishop Lightfoot sums up the matter thus: "As I read my New Testament, the female diaconate is as definite an institution as the male diaconate."

This is not the place in which to record all the evidence for the history of deaconesses down to the thirteenth century. It can be found in *The Ministry of Women* (published 1919), which is the title of the report drawn up by a committee appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury; or a more popular account can be read in *The Ministry of Deaconesses*, by Deaconess Cecilia Robinson (second edition, 1914). Our information is scanty, but sufficient to enable us to believe in the existence and work of deaconesses throughout the early centuries. Certainly, as Dr. C. H. Turner writes, "It does not admit of doubt that as the fourth

century wears on we find the deaconess enjoying a position of high distinction in the churches of the Eastern empire."

Bishop Collins, writing of the time of St. Chrysostom, who became Bishop of Constantinople in 398, says: "In the great church of St. Sophia, we are told, there were not to be more than 100 male and forty female deacons. . . . The Council of Nicæa recognizes the office as a matter of course, and later Eastern Councils do so too."

Gradually the particular need for deaconesses in the distinctive function of their office, the anointing of women in Holy Baptism, passed; the custom of anointing the whole body was dropped, and adult baptisms became rare. The rude character of the Middle Ages contributed to the decline of the deaconess, her work passing into the hands of the nuns.

The name still survived in Eastern service books, but practically the office ceased in the East in the thirteenth century; in the West somewhat earlier. "The Ministry of Women" sums up this first stage thus: "Notwithstanding local variations of practice and long disuse, it is beyond all question that the diaconate of women had a very real existence. There has been no decision of the Church as a whole against it. No Council of importance has condemned it. It is impossible to maintain that the disuse has been of so complete or decisive a nature as to render the revival of the order incompetent to any part of the Church."

Stage 2.—The restoration of the diaconate for women in the Anglican Communion.

Such was the ancient history which began to be

considered in the middle of the nineteenth century. Deaconess Cecilia Robinson reminds us of the history of the time in the following words: "A tide of fresh life and energy was rising in the English Church, stirring her to a sense of her responsibility to the town parishes as well as to the deep though less crying needs of the country districts. She woke to find dense masses of human beings crowded together in great cities, for the most part uneducated, and almost untouched by Christian influence. Strive as they might, her clergy were quite unable to keep pace with the growing needs of their people. The Church wanted women as well as men, who could give themselves entirely to her service, free from all outside claims and especially fitted and equipped for their work."

So it came to pass that inquiries concerning the diaconate for women began, and in 1862 Elizabeth Ferard was ordained by the Bishop of London, Dr. Tait. The second stage of the history had begun. Thenceforward individual Bishops ordained women; but the Anglican Communion as a whole had no mind on the subject.

Pioneers such as Emma Day, Isabella Gilmore, and many who are still living, ventured their all, having seen a vision; they have "blazed a trail" down which the women of to-day may walk.

Stage 3.—The recognition of the order by the Lambeth Conference and provinces of Canterbury and York.

"We are persuaded," wrote the committee in the report presented to the Lambeth Conference of 1920, "that this period of tentative and provisional action ought now to come to an end, and that the time

has arrived when in the interests of the Church . . . the diaconate should be canonically and formally recognized in the several provinces. . . . In our judgment the ordination of a deaconess confers on her Holy Orders. In ordination she receives the 'character' of a deaconess in the Church of God; and therefore the status of a woman ordained to the diaconate has the permanence which belongs to Holy Orders. She dedicates herself to a lifelong service." Resolutions were drawn up in accordance with this opinion, and these resolutions were considered, and with some modifications were passed, by the Convocations of Canterbury and York, in the years 1923 and 1925.

The decree went forth that "The time has come when, in the interests of the Church at large, and in particular of the development of the ministry of women, the diaconate of women should be restored formally and canonically, and should be recognized throughout the Anglican Communion." (The resolutions passed by the Canterbury and York Houses of Convocation can be read in the new edition of "The Anglican Deaconess" published by S.P.C.K., price 6d.) Subsequently a service for "The Form and Manner of Making of Deaconesses" was drawn up jointly by the two provinces, and is similar (except in a few small details) to the service for the "Making of Deacons" in our present Prayer-Book. It is hoped that this service will be printed in the revised Prayer-Book.

Different temperaments will interpret differently the legislation of the Church on this subject. Doubtless in St. Paul's day earnest followers of

Our Lord understood the work of the Council of Jerusalem differently; but the Holy Spirit guides the "Spirit-bearing Body" slowly but surely. It behoves the women of to-day to thank God for the present opportunity of service, and by responding to it to prove that it is His will that women should thus help to solve some of the present problems of the world.

It was for this reason that a service of prayer and thanksgiving was held in St. Martin's Church in June, 1926, when the Bishop of Manchester said:

"For this recognition we give most hearty thanks, and our thanks must show themselves, as Christian gratitude must always show itself, not merely in the joyful utterance of words of praise and gratitude but in further and renewed dedication. That is the only form that Christian thankfulness can ever truly take.

"And so we come back to ask in what spirit is that claim made which women are preferring? In what spirit is the offer made which women are presenting?

"We know what the spirit ought to be—not what will most completely answer the demand for a sphere of self-expression, but the claim for an opportunity of self-devotion. No doubt self-devotion is the expression of what is best in ourselves if we are Christians at all. But it is of the most vital importance, not only in connection with the Church, though especially there, that this claim should be seen to be a claim for spheres of service only.

"Now there have been some quarters in connection with the women's movement, at least outside

the Church, where it has largely consisted of a complaint that women have been shut out from certain spheres. It has been a claim, if you like, for justice, and to such a claim the Church ought not to be deaf, because, for its own sake, in order to be true to its own principles, it must be keen to see that justice is done. But so long as the claim is mainly for justice on the part of those who make it, the goal will not be reached. We must here, as in everything else, come forward, not with a claim for ourselves, but with the offering of ourselves, to be used as may be found best.

"There are many of us who are somewhat loud in our complaints that the Church is offering inadequate opportunities for women, and that this is one reason why more women do not come forward, especially women of the highest qualifications. I think we are right to speak of that and right to demand that there shall be more opening given, more responsibility conceded, more real freedom of action, in order that women may exercise the gifts with which they are endowed. But, while we make that claim for the Church's sake, let us try to be careful that we do not make it for our own sake. Let us try to do what in the end brings the gift of the highest, and that is to ask for and expect the highest; and while in the Councils of the Church, whether general or local, I should wish to press for the opening of such greater opportunities for women, to any individual woman to whom I might be speaking, I would say: 'Pray that you may have the grace to see if you are called to serve God through the Church. Go and offer yourself. Do not mind whether the sphere

that is put before you at the moment is adequate to your conception or not. If it is not, then the sacrifice involved in your giving yourself to the Church may do more for the Church you wish to serve than any efforts of your own in a sphere that you would think more worthy.' And it is now, by women who have great gifts coming and dedicating them to the Church, even before there is an opening there, that the openings will be made. It is through their self-sacrifice in this way that they will manifest both their sincerity and the gifts which will win for them at last the fuller recognition that we desire. 'Walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness'—and we trust that this full recognition of the order of deaconesses will lead to the coming forward of more women, especially women of ability and education, to be trained as deaconesses."

PART III

THE QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED BY THOSE WHO WOULD RESPOND

SUCH is the World Call; such is the way in which the Church seems to have been guided to respond. What of the women who are being called to avail themselves of this opportunity of service?

First and foremost they must have a true desire to serve. "I am among you as He that serveth" must always remain the motto of those who are called to be the servants of Christ in His Church—servants who are ready for any adventure, who,

seeing a vision of "Him Who is invisible," count not too carefully the cost and difficulties of the way, and above all servants whose eyes are so fixed on the goal that they have no sight left to be used for self-regarding.

"It is required, therefore, of a deaconess that she should surrender herself wholly to the service of the Church of Christ; giving and not demanding, keeping nothing back for selfish ends, neither complaining nor questioning concerning the service she is given to do. It will readily be seen that this vocation demands from those who are called to it a completeness of surrender not to be exceeded by any other vocation in the Church of Christ." ("Manual of an Anglican Deaconess.")

They must be capable of grasping some real, true message, and of passing it on to the world, concerning God's Purpose, Presence, and Power; therefore, during their preparation time for their life's work, they must study His Purpose, live consciously in His Presence, and be filled with His Power.

"We lay great stress on the requirement that each candidate should pass through a course of appropriate training—devotional, practical, and intellectual. Special attention should be paid to the study of the Bible, Christian doctrine, the Book of Common Prayer, and the history of the Church. It will be important to maintain a high standard in intellectual attainments. Each candidate should be examined by persons well qualified for the work, and appointed by the Bishop himself"—so run the recommendations of the Lambeth report. This opinion has been trans-

lated into the following resolutions by the Houses of Convocation: "That it is desirable that there should be within the province institutions for the training of deaconesses, varying in character, each formally recognized by the Archbishop and the Bishops; and that in one of these institutions, as a rule, every candidate for the office of deaconess should reside at least a year, and receive there a training spiritual and devotional, intellectual and practical." And, again, "That before he ordains a woman as deaconess, the Bishop shall, by careful inquiry, satisfy himself as to her character, her training, and her general fitness; that he shall also, by examination, ascertain that she has adequate knowledge, especially of the Bible, of the Creeds and the doctrine of the Church, of the history of the Church, and of the Book of Common Prayer."

A Bishops' examination approximating to the General Ordination Examination for men will probably be standardized shortly; at present the various colleges and dioceses determine the standard of their own examination to a great extent.

So it comes to pass that a Deaconess House of training must be a theological college approximating very nearly to the men's theological colleges. The tutor of one of the colleges in a paper on the "Theological Preparation for the Diaconate" writes: "The purpose of a theological training is, I take it, threefold—devotional, educational, practical. Its first and its ultimate aim is to fit its subject for worship. True worship, as the prophets are never tired of maintaining, is only possible when men think rightly about God."

The second aim follows naturally from the first: it is the training of character, the development of personality. That, of course, is the aim of all true education. It is more particularly the aim of a study which not only seeks to develop the natural faculties of the mind, but to present in its fulness and beauty the ideal towards which mind and heart must strive, that we, "with unveiled faces reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord," may be "transformed into the same image from glory to glory."

"Lastly, there is the practical aspect of a theological training. A sound theological knowledge, an aliveness to theological issues, are an essential part of the deaconess's equipment. At no time, perhaps, in the history of the Church has the demand for help and guidance in theological matters been so strong as at the present day. The ordinary lay person, educated and uneducated, is crying out for light on the new problems and difficulties presented by modern thought and intensified by the war; and there are hardly any to give it. The work of scholars is generally inaccessible; the average sermon, too, often evades or ignores the issue. The ordinary lay person's view of what the Church really thinks is pathetic in its crudity and ignorance. No wonder that Spiritualism and the rest batten on our neglect. Here, then, is an essential part of the deaconess's work. She is to be the bridge-builder between the scholars and the mass, to carry over to the ordinary folk the guidance which they need, to interpret in simple and practical terms the best knowledge of the day."

Often we are asked for a time-table of the day at a theological college. Each college varies slightly, but here is a typical one.

Rising bell, 6.30. Chapel (probably a celebration of the Holy Communion), 7.30. Breakfast and household duties, 8.15 to 9.15. Mattins and meditation, 9.15 to 10. Lectures and study, 10 to 12.45. Intercessions, 12.45 to 1. Dinner, 1, followed by a period of recreation, unless there is some parochial work to do. This generally takes up two afternoons and one evening in the week, but depends largely on the previous experience of the student.

Tea, 4. Study, 4.30 to 7. Evensong, 7. Supper, 7.30. Compline, 9.30. Eight to 9.30 being a free time, to be used for recreation, reading, writing, discussion, or study, according to the circumstances.

Saturdays free.

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that this outline time-table is subject to modification, and that each individual student has to have a different time-table; and that no outline of this sort expresses the life or training. Each has to learn just what will fit her to be the most perfect instrument for God's work—sharp corners have to be removed at whatever cost, everything that savours of self-centredness has to be replaced by Christ-centredness; this can only be done through the power of prayer. It follows, therefore, that the chapel must be the centre of the house and work.

PART IV

MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

THE following are some of the questions to which readers of this pamphlet may desire definite answers:

Is a deaconess sure to be able to obtain work?
If she is unfettered by physical or other disabilities, willing and able to go wherever the Church needs her, she should be able to do so. The call from parishes at home is increasing, being limited only by finance. The call from abroad, especially India, is insistent, and at present far exceeds the possibility of supply.

What is her stipend? £120 to £150 is the normal salary for deaconesses working in a parish at home. The deaconess who is qualified for teaching work in a secondary or public school will probably obtain more. The missionary deaconess will receive a stipend according to the scale given to other women missionaries.

Is there any provision for old age? In most dioceses there is a voluntary pension fund, with contributions on the ordinary scale. In some dioceses there is a house where deaconesses who are no longer able to work can live rent free. Deaconesses can, of course, receive the old age pension, but, like priests and deacons, are not eligible for insurance under the Insurance Act.

What is the cost of training? The cost in the various colleges varies somewhat. £70 to £75 a year is the ordinary charge for board, lodging, and

lectures. This does not, of course, provide for holidays or personal expenses. Each college has bursaries, however, which make it possible to take suitable students either free or at greatly reduced fees. The period of training is two or three years, but this depends upon previous experience and qualifications, and is decided in each case by the warden and principal of the college in consultation with the Bishop.

Can anyone of elementary education become a deaconess? Yes, if she can pass the necessary examinations, and has the other qualifications for leadership. It may be that her training will have to be three years or even longer—so that some preliminary work can precede the ordinary course. Where there is a real call to this life a way will be found to fulfil it.

What is the age for ordination? The Convocation resolution on the subject states: "That a Bishop shall not ordain as deaconess a woman under the age of twenty-five years; but that in ordinary circumstances it is advisable that before her ordination as deaconess a woman shall have attained the age of thirty years." Often it is found well for a woman to take her training, pass her examination, and work in a parish for a few years, coming back for a month of special preparation and prayer just before her ordination.

Under whose authority does a deaconess serve? Under the Bishop of the diocese in which she is working. From him she receives a licence authorizing her to do work specified in the licence, normally in a parish or group of parishes under the supervision of the incumbent or incumbents. Her

relationship to the Bishop is similar to that existing between the deacon and the Bishop, and to him only, as the head of the Church in the diocese, does she owe allegiance. In many dioceses there is a head deaconess, responsible to the Bishop for the work of the deaconesses in his diocese, who therefore acts as "go-between" between the deaconess and the Bishop.

May a deaconess work as a school teacher? Yes; just as there are priest schoolmasters, so there can be deaconess school teachers (see "School Work for Deaconesses"). Of course, in addition to being a deaconess, she must be fully qualified for teaching. It seems likely that deaconesses may have an important work to do in this sphere, especially as teachers of theology in all grades of schools.

May a deaconess work as a nurse? On the Continent many nurses are deaconesses. In these days of specialization, the two vocations have become separated in England, but it is conceivable that a deaconess might make her contribution as a nurse or a doctor. Again we have the precedent of the priest doctor. It may well be that some who are called to help in spiritual healing may find their spiritual work aided by being fully qualified in some branch of the medical profession.

May a deaconess marry? The Lambeth Conference report states: "The status of a woman ordained to the diaconate has the permanence which belongs to Holy Orders. She dedicates herself to a lifelong service.

"But here at once there arises the grave question of the possibility of a deaconess marrying. We are

well aware that opinions on this subject differ, and many who hold the office of deaconess desire that though they have taken no vow of celibacy, marriage should be regarded as wholly out of the question for them. We have given the question our anxious consideration, and we record our deliberate belief that it ought plainly to be understood that no promise of celibacy is required for admission to the order of deaconesses."

The Convocation resolution runs as follows: "That a deaconess is dedicated to a lifelong service, though the extent and manner of its exercise by her may vary at different times of her life in accordance with her circumstances; that no vow or promise of celibacy is required of her, nor is it implied in her ordination; that, nevertheless a deaconess who desires to do so may legitimately pledge herself, either as a member of a community or as an individual, to a celibate life, provided that due provision be made under proper safeguards for episcopal dispensation from such pledge."

Marriage is therefore permissible, but a great number of those who have been ordained feel that for a woman her calling as a deaconess, with the obedience thereby involved to her Bishop, is incompatible with her duties as a wife and a mother. Perhaps it is difficult for those who have not themselves heard the "call" to a lifelong service to realize what it means. It comes in many ways: to some swiftly or through some outward indication; to some the dawning comes slowly that for them it is God's way of service—no holier or higher than other ways, but for them *the way*.

An American deaconess has stated this aspect in the following words: "Deaconesses do not take vows, but one hardly asks for the greatest gift the Church can give—a special sacramental grace—unless one is ready to offer at least the best gift one can—namely, one's life service. Marriage is not absolutely precluded, but one has to choose between two Holy Estates; both are too great for either to be made a secondary consideration. Quite apart from practical considerations, it is derogatory both to Holy Matrimony and to the diaconate to attempt to combine the two, and a deaconess should be the last, in these days of many broken homes and lax moral conditions, to do anything that would tend to belittle the claims of family life.

"The spirit of a woman's offering of herself for the diaconate may be expressed in the words of Francis Ridley Havergal:

'In full and glad surrender we give ourselves to Thee,
Thine utterly and only, and evermore to be!
O Son of God, Who lovest us, we will be Thine alone,
And all we are and all we have shall henceforth be
Thine own.'

Once for all she puts service in the Church in the first place in her life; nothing may take precedence of it, and nothing but urgent necessity will cause her to cease from it. It is a free-will offering, given for all time, and perpetually renewed through the whole course of her ministry; it is her daily sacrifice of love, not the fulfilment of a duty enjoined upon her."

Does a woman take vows at her ordination? The deaconess at her ordination does not take the

threefold vows that are taken by a sister, though her life dedication is not a whit less entire. Some deaconesses, however, join a community also, and they, of course, are bound by the three vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. Again we have a parallel in such communities of priests as those at Mirfield and Cowley, where priests find their vocations strengthened and fulfilled by a corporate life under strict rule. A deaconess who does not join a community orders her own daily life, retaining control of her money, and owing allegiance only to her Bishop, as stated above.

Must a deaconess wear a distinctive dress? The Convocation resolution says: "That it is desirable that a deaconess should normally wear a distinctive dress approved by the Bishop of the diocese in which she serves." This often causes a difficulty in the minds of those who are doubtful as to their vocation. Those who wear the uniform testify that in most cases it acts as a help and not a hindrance. Most clergy feel that it is a gain for everyone who sees them to realize at once their profession. But there are other reasons which make it essential for a woman consecrated to a life of sacrifice. Those to whom a distinctive dress presents an insuperable difficulty have probably not yet understood that the life stands for self-surrender and limitation.

What can a deaconess do that a lay woman cannot do? As far as any distinctive functions are concerned, the Church has entrusted nothing to the deaconess that the lay woman may not do (see resolutions of Houses of Convocation). Perhaps, temporarily, this is as well. Perhaps the great

contribution a deaconess has to give is to demonstrate the power of an utter life of sacrifice and self-surrender. We talk a great deal of sacrifice and the Cross, but both are very unpopular among the Churchpeople of this generation; may it be that in this form of service women have a chance of making their contribution towards a new realization of this fundamental truth. For there is no room for personal glorification and ambition; the deaconess cannot look forward to promotion or to improving her position; the diaconate is not a stepping-stone to the priesthood as is the case with men. Both the Lambeth report and the Houses of Convocation are very clear about this. The diaconate "is for women, the one and only order of the ministry which has the stamp of apostolic approval, and is for women the only order of the ministry which, in the judgment of this House, the Church of England as a branch of the Catholic Church can recognize and use." We leave the future of the order to God, confident that the Holy Spirit will guide, if we faithfully use the opportunities that are given us. It has always been so; when women showed their capacity for service during the war they were entrusted with further responsibility in the shape of the vote and seats in Parliament. The parable of the talents is still being spoken by the Master, and still to those who venture forth to walk to Him on the waves, forgetting all save His Call, does He give a joy and a power sufficient to enable them.

Is the diaconate connected with any special party in the Anglican Communion? No, it is as wide as the Anglican Communion. As with men's theo-

logical colleges, some centres of training emphasize some special aspect, so it is with those for women (*e.g.*, St. Catherine's House, Highbury, is primarily suited for those in sympathy with the Evangelical party; St. Andrew's Community House for those who wish for community life under rule as well as for ordination): but several of the colleges feel that it is a help for students of every school of thought to mix freely together, and so learn wide-ness of sympathy and charity combined with personal conviction.

Is there any corporate organization of the order? (a) A Central House is being built at Hindhead, and will, it is hoped, be opened in the summer of 1927. The object of this house is thus sketched by the chaplain (the Rev. R. Somerset Ward):

"With this forward movement of the Church, it would seem of the first necessity that there should be a Central House belonging to the whole order and not connected with any one diocese, a home at the service of every deaconess, a rallying-point for all ordained women. In such a place it would seem possible to build up a corporate life and opinion. So long as we are in the flesh, abstract truths must have outward and visible expression if they are to have power. It is an axiom consecrated by the sacramental system. If the corporate ideal of the order is ever to be a power in the Church, it must have a central meeting-place to embody it. But it is not enough to have a central meeting-place. It must be a place full of life and power, and this can only be the case if it is consecrated by prayer. The central rallying-point of the order must be a spiritual

one. So we look for a house where prayer shall be the main object and the supreme business, a house to which every deaconess can turn of right for inspiration, for help in intercession, and for rest and refreshment. It must be a house in touch with all the problems of the order, and able to formulate the needs of the diaconate."

(b) An advisory Provincial Council "for the superintendence of matters connected with the order of deaconesses and of the preparation of candidates for that office." The Bishop of Winchester is the chairman of this council for the province of Canterbury. The province of York has not yet appointed its council.

(c) A chapter of deaconesses which meets twice a year with an elected president and vice-president and representatives of each diocesan group of deaconesses to consider matters connected with the order.

(d) An annual conference open to all duly ordained deaconesses for the discussion of any problems and opportunities of special interest to the members.

(e) A "News Sheet" published three times yearly (1s. subscription), containing news as to deaconesses and their work.

NOTE.—Each Diocesan Deaconess House has also annual retreats and other gatherings for those trained in the house or working in the diocese.

Until the Central House is opened, further information can at any time be obtained from the president of the chapter at 113, North Side, Clapham Common, S.W. 4,

DEACONESS TRAINING HOUSES IN ENGLAND

St. Andrew's (Community) Deaconess House, 12, Tavistock Crescent, Westbourne Park, W. 11.

The Rochester and Southwark Deaconess House, 113, North Side, Clapham Common, S.W. 4.

St. Catherine's Deaconess House, 90, Grosvenor Road, N. 5.

Winchester Diocesan Deaconess House, Portsmouth.

Diocesan Deaconess House, The Chantry, Exeter.

Diocesan Mission House, The College, Durham.

The Deaconess Institution, South Ashfield, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

The Diocesan Deaconess House, Victoria Park, Manchester.

LITERATURE

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The Anglican Deaconess. By the Reverend Oscar Hardman, D.D. S.P.C.K. Price 6d.

Report of the Lambeth Conference, 1920. S.P.C.K. Price 2s. 6d.

Resolutions passed by the Convocation of Canterbury (1923) and the Convocation of York (1925). Price $\frac{1}{2}$ d.*

The Order of Deaconesses in the Anglican Church. Price $\frac{1}{2}$ d.*

Deaconesses as School Teachers. Price $\frac{1}{2}$ d.*

Form and Manner of Making of Deaconesses. S.P.C.K. Price $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

News Sheet. Published three times yearly. Price 1s. a year.*

Reports of Conference of Deaconesses. Yearly. Price 6d.*

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