

But Aunt Ruth, was not perfect, though the admiring gaze of others could scarcely see a fault in her. "I wish I was always as good as you," said her niece, after the conversation already related. "Don't, dear Alice; don't say so," was the quick and earnest response. "I am a sinner; and if a sinner saved, it is by grace alone." Christ is the only model, the sole perfect example; follow him.

"But I cannot think of you as a sinner, auntie; I never see you do or feel wrong; and you are always so happy, while the consciousness of sin makes one wretched."

"That I am not tempted to actual and out-broken transgression is due Alice, to the Divine mercy. Sins of thought and feeling, God, who knows the heart and sees it not as man seeth, beholds in me daily. But though such offence ought to and does humble me, yet it is only sin unrepented of and unforgiven that could make me wretched."

"How can that be, Aunt Ruth? Will you explain it?"

"How is it with a child and its earthly parent, Alice? The little one has disobeyed, and thus displeased a kind and good father.—So long as the child is stubborn and unsubdued the consciousness of the disobedience and of the parent's displeasure only makes it sullen and wretched; but if, with confession and penitence, the offender seeks a father's pardon and is restored to the embrace of his loving arms, is he not happy?"

"If it is thus with our earthly relations, shall it not be much more so with our heavenly Father and his sinning children? True, our sins are base and black ingratitude; we should heartily repent of and abhor them; but we should not let them keep us away from our Father in heaven; no, not for a moment.—Sorry and ashamed and covered with confusion as we may be on account of them, we should only fly the more quickly to the open arms of our loving and forgiving Saviour, who has promised to wash them away in his atoning blood, and to bestow on each penitent believer justification and peace. It was to pardoned sinners that the exhortation was addressed, 'Rejoice evermore.'

"While the sweet experience of Divine forgiveness makes us happy, it also increases our abhorrence of sin. The more we see and feel the great love of God in pardoning and saving us, the more careful we shall be not to grieve and displease him; and this will lead us to more diligent study of his will, and more fervent prayer for grace and strength to do or suffer it. Thus all our experience should lead us to feel as the poet sang:

'Nearer my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee.'

"Dear aunt you have thrown light on my dark path, and I wish others could hear you explain how we may 'live near to God.'"—*American Messenger.*

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, OCTOBER 16, 1867.

Woman, in the Christian Church.

From an examination of the sacred Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments it, would appear that in ancient and in more modern times the work of God has frequently been materially aided by women. In numerous instances a woman has been the most prominent person. In former days we have a Miriam, a Deborah, and a Huldah and several others standing out in bold relief upon the historic page. In the later are the Marys and the holy women from Gallilee, who followed our Lord and ministered to him, besides "Phebe our sister which is a servant of the church at Cenchrea, and others, who appear as "helpers" to the Apostles and to the churches in primitive times.

All experience shows that the Gospel is not without its mission for woman as well as for man in extending the Gospel among the heathen nations, as well as in getting its holy principles to permeate through all classes of society in nominally christian lands.—Mosheim in his Ecclesiastical History, Cent. I. cap. 2. sec. 10, says, "churches elected deaconesses, matrons or women of eminent sanctity who also ministered to the necessities of the poor, and performed several other offices that tended to order and decency in the church."

Although we have no special offices in our churches designated for woman, it is not to be therefore concluded that we have not the same work to be done in the Christian churches of the present day that was performed by her in former times. In every active, useful church, we need not inform our readers, there are now women who in various ways render similar service as in those days were rendered by such official personages.

The condition of woman in heathen coun-

tries and the disabilities under which she there labors, and which almost without exception prevent her from obtaining a full participation in gospel privileges, is a powerful vindication, if such were needed, of the propriety and necessity of woman being actively employed in carrying to them the message of a Saviour's love and mercy.

The labors of pious women as "Bible readers" in many of the larger towns of Great Britain too, have of late years supplied what has been termed the "missing link" in the chain of the church's operations. These labors have been attended by such beneficial results that none but the cold-hearted misanthrope can say aught of the plan, but in warm approval and hearty commendation.

The Roman Catholic Church has had no scruples in employing female agency in carrying forward her mission in the subjugation of the nations to papal rule. Macaulay in his review of "Ranke's History of the Popes" says of that Church:—

"Even for female agency there is a place in her system. To devout women she assigns spiritual functions, dignities, and magistracies. In our country, if a noble lady is moved by more than ordinary zeal for the propagation of religion the chance is, that, though she may disapprove of no one doctrine or ceremony of the Established Church, she will end by giving her name to a new schism. If a pious and benevolent woman enters the cells of a prison to pray with the most unhappy and degraded of her own sex, she does so without any authority from the church. No line of action is traced out for her; and it is well if the Ordinary does not complain of the intrusion, and if the Bishop does not shake his head at such irregular benevolence. At Rome the Countess of Huntingdon would have had a place in the Calendar as St. Selina, and Mrs. Fry would be founder and first superior of the Blessed order of the Sisters of the Gaols."

We also find an interesting passage on this subject in an Associational Circular Letter by Rev. H. C. Leonard, M. A., of Edgbaston, England. The writer says:—

"In spite of the admitted obscurity of the scriptural references to deaconesses, the balance of evidence leads to the conclusion that the female diaconate was of apostolic appointment. It is possible that the women of 1 Tim. 3-11 were, as King James's translators imagined, the wives of deacons. It is possible that the widows of 1 Tim. 5-6 were merely the necessitous widows supported by the church, and that Phebe was called by St. Paul *diaconos* because she served the church rather than because she held any distinct official position in it; but a careful examination leads to the opposite opinion, confirmed as it is by the universal judgment of early Christian antiquity. In the former of these passages nothing is determined by the word used in the original, which may with equal propriety be rendered "the wives" or "the women," but the whole connection is against the former rendering. Timothy had nothing to do with the choice of wives for the deacons. That was a matter best left to their own private judgment. In the whole passage St. Paul is evidently giving directions to Timothy, which might help him, as the deputy of the apostle, to guide the choice of the churches. It will be noticed that the qualifications required in the women referred to are substantially the same as the qualifications expected in the deacons. They were first of all like them to be "grave." Next the government of the tongue is referred to, but whereas the deacons were to be "not double-tongued," a vice which pertains to men rather than women, the deaconesses were to be "not slanderers," a weakness, which in the judgment of the apostle, belongs to women rather than men. The other qualifications, "sobriety" and "faithfulness," are the same, and suggest a similarity of office.

The second passage has given rise to great difference of opinion, and it would be impossible to discuss it briefly and yet adequately. The question raised is whether the widows there referred to were deaconesses or simply recipients of the charity of the church. It is alleged in support of the former view, with great force, that if the apostle meant to describe widows supported by the church without ecclesiastical duties or official position, he would scarcely have refused church support to necessitous widows less than sixty years of age, to those who came short of the qualifications there described, and to those who were not prepared to remain single. Probably the middle view, suggested by Conybeare, is nearest to the truth, that the widows spoken of were deaconesses, that is to say, had distinct duties to perform in the service of the church, but that the choice of the church might naturally fall on those whose widowed condition might otherwise entitle them to church support.

The duty of deaconesses in the primitive church was to do for female members and candidates what the customs of the Greek as well as of the Oriental churches forbade to men. The existence of the female diaconate at a very early period is proved by Pliny's letter to the Emperor Trajan, written A.D. 107, in which he says that he had just examined by torture "two women-servants who are called ministers," the Latin word minister being the equivalent of the Greek *diaconos*. The deaconesses in the church of the third century had to instruct female candidates for baptism as well as to assist them at the baptism, and to care for the poor. The rule laid down by St. Paul that they were to be sixty years old, so that they might not by marriage forsake the duties of their office, was in time altered. The Council of Chalcedon

lowered the age to forty, and afterwards it was further reduced to twenty, single women as well as widows being then considered as eligible.

They were, in time, called *nuns*. The order of deaconesses continued in the East up to the twelfth century, but in the West was discontinued in the sixth. That discontinuance was partly owing to the fact that the diaconate became a more priestly office, and as such women were thought unfit to fill it—partly to the diminished need for their special functions, occasioned by the state arrangements made for the poor by Constantine, and by the general introduction of infant baptism, which, first appearing in Africa in the third century, became general in the fifth, and superseded the necessity for their services at the baptism and in preparation for it. Deaconesses were publicly ordained to office. The work called the "Apostolic Constitutions," which was written about A.D. 300, contains the beautiful form of prayer used on such occasions,—"Eternal God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Creator of man and of woman; Thou who didst fill with Thy Spirit Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, and Huldah: Thou who didst vouchsafe to a woman the birth of Thy Only begotten Son: Thou who didst in the tabernacle and in the temple, place female keepers of Thy holy gates: look down now also upon this Thy handmaid and bestow on her the Holy Spirit, that she may worthily perform the work permitted to her to Thy honour, and to the glory of Christ." In modern times the ancient order of deaconesses has been revived by the Moravians and by the Baptist church at Broadmead, Bristol, a church which in more respects than one, deserves to be regarded as a model church. The Broadmead church more than two centuries ago organized itself on the apostolic model by choosing a plurality of elders, together with deacons and deaconesses. The elders are called in the "Broadmead Records" by the title of "ruling elders and teachers," and the pastorate is called the "pastoral eldership." The female members of the diaconate were over sixty years of age when elected, and are described as "widows or deaconesses." The church at Broadmead required them to engage not to marry again, and defined their duties to be the care of the bodies and souls of the sick and poor. The office still survives in this church and is suitably filled at the present moment by one of its oldest members, a lady who is we believe the only deaconess in the country outside the Moravian communities.

It would be well if at the present time, when the need of "sisterhoods" is being widely felt and variously met, our churches would exhibit the divine provision for this felt need, by reviving the female diaconate of the apostolic church."

Whilst we place the above before our readers and would invite the brethren and sisters in our churches to a serious consideration of this subject, we have no intention of proposing that any official order shall be introduced with any vow or peculiarity of habit, as has been done in the Roman Catholic Church, and by some Romanising Protestants. Benefits have doubtless arisen from such arrangements when the women have been really seeking to do good to the souls and bodies of their fellow creatures. The adoption of a peculiar dress is supposed to be a protection to such ladies in their visits of charity. But we think its disadvantages far outweigh its benefits.

All that we intend to encourage in our sisters is a greater readiness to engage in Christian work, especially on behalf of their own sex, not merely amongst the poor but to speak of Christ as a friend and Saviour on all proper occasions, and so to shew that with woman exists an amount of latent power, when earnestly employed and wisely directed, that will accomplish much for the glory of God and the welfare of souls.

It will not be difficult to see how all this bears on the action of the recent Baptist Convention in accepting a Christian sister to go forth with an experienced lady to Burma as their missionary to the heathen. We trust it may awaken earnest prayer on their behalf amongst the brethren and sisters and produce new zeal in imitation of her example by doing good at home.

The "Visitor" and the Council's "Decision."

We are not desirous of engaging in a lengthened controversy with the Editor of the *Christian Visitor* concerning the proceedings of the late Ecclesiastical Council in Halifax, of which he was a member. If we were we might find abundant material for so doing. It is doubtful if the cause of righteousness and scriptural church order would be subserved by such a proceeding. We abominate matters of this nature appearing in the public prints, especially when they relate to acts of church discipline. We like straightforward, honorable dealing and are willing to meet him on that basis; but when a person adopts any other course we much prefer to let him alone. Advantage has been taken of our disposition in this respect and our silence has been misconstrued. We are well assured, however, that the public generally have not been misled in reference to this matter.

The case submitted to the Council, and

first made public in the columns of the *Visitor*, would prove a prolific field for further investigation and discussion.

Whilst the mode adopted by our contemporary of presenting the action of the Council to the public—by giving his own version, instead of the Decision itself—is open to most serious animadversion it was sufficient to awaken suspicion of a desire existing to ignore the real "Decision" to which the Council came.

The *Visitor* of last week has, at length, given the "Decision of the Council," as it appeared in our columns, but the editor still makes no correction of the wrong impressions he gave respecting the two brethren mentioned in his previous article. Why?

Our contemporary says he "gave a faithful report of the proceedings, so far as they appertained to the question of Dr. Pryor's guilt or innocence, hoping that authority would soon be given to place the action of the Council in full before our readers." Authority! from whom did he hope that authority would be given? Was not the Decision publicly read before the Church and Congregation previous to the Council being dissolved? Why, the Editor says, a few lines below the above quotation, "It is a part of our business, as the *Messenger* ought to know, to give timely and faithful reports of the proceedings of all committees, Associations, Conventions, Boards and Councils, having charge of denominational interests." What then does our brother mean by saying, "It does not appear by whose authority the *Christian Messenger* has given the document in question"? Did not the reading it in public make it public property? Of course it did, as he very well knows. It is curious that our brother does not perceive the strange inconsistency of saying, "we were not authorized either by the Council or by the parties implicated to give the original copy, &c." whilst he admits that it is his duty—a part of our business—to give timely and faithful reports of the proceedings of Councils.

We are sorry to find our friend giving way to petulance in treating of so grave a matter. The following paragraph does not comport with the dignity it assumes:

"Our bro. *Messenger* may assume the right, if he think proper to do so, to say as to when and what we shall publish; but we are not sufficiently docile to acknowledge any such right on his part, and therefore we must beg to be allowed to follow the dictates of our own judgment and conscience in all that appertains to personal responsibility."

If our brother of the *Visitor* had the right why did he not publish the document itself, instead of something else which he chooses to dignify by calling it "a faithful report," for the purpose, as it would appear, of giving the public a different impression than the Council's Decision itself would have given, and that before the church had had time to act in reference to it. We venture to affirm that the editor of the *Visitor* could not, by any amount of pressure he could bring to bear on the members of the Council, get them to endorse his version of their verdict, and pronounce it "a faithful report." No, not even the five brethren who with him were chosen by Dr. Pryor himself to adjudicate in the matter. Whoever heard of a judge in any tribunal leaving the bench and publishing what he imagines "perfectly harmonizes in sentiment" with a sentence decided upon by the full bench of judges, instead of the sentence itself? The following may be taken as one specimen of the *perfect harmony* between the two:

THE "VISITOR'S" REPORT.	DECISION OF THE COUNCIL.
"The Council unanimously decided that while Dr. Pryor had shewn a great want of discretion in his manner regarding a single case of pastoral visitation, &c."	"It is at the same time the opinion of the Council that Dr. Pryor has shown great want of discretion in his visits to Mrs. McMillan."

The italics are the *Visitor's*.

A comparison of the two documents will shew other contrasts.

The editor of the *Visitor* seems to think that the publication of the Decision *verbatim* is not in good taste. He says "As the putting the names of females in print in such a connection does not seem to us in good taste, we should have preferred simply giving their initials," &c. We reply, We had no choice, we must either publish the Decision as a whole or not at all. We dare not alter the document. We should willingly have omitted the names referred to, and should have corrected what we supposed an inaccuracy or two, but we had too much respect for an official document to take any such liberties with it.