

For the Christian Messenger.

The Scriptural Principle of Church Government.

No. 8.

Seven men were chosen to take charge of the temporalities of the Church. Acts vi. 1-6. By almost universal consent in the Christian Church, this has been regarded as the origin of the deacons' office. Some, indeed, have supposed that it originated earlier, but the evidence is against such a hypothesis. Mosheim, Kuinoel, Olshausen and Whately are of opinion that the young men who carried out the bodies of Ananias and Sapphira were the deacons of the Church at Jerusalem.

Up to this time it does not appear that there were any officers in the church except the twelve Apostles, or as they are sometimes called "the twelve."

In a foot-note to his Commentary on Acts vi., Olshausen says, "Neander supposes that the deacons were first appointed, and that until their election all the members of the Church at Jerusalem stood upon a level, so that the Apostles themselves were the only rulers and guides." Olshausen himself says, "That during the first weeks or months this may have been the state of matters. But if we consider how rapidly the church increased, how much the time of the Apostles was occupied by transactions with magistrates, by imprisonment and the like, it will appear, I think, more probable that very soon, men with the gifts of teaching, were appointed by them as presbyters, and persons with powers of management chosen for deacons."

For Neander's view which is the one generally held, there is the significant silence of the history up to the point when the "seven" were chosen; and what is of greater weight, there is upon the face of the account of the election of the "seven," the strong appearance that it is a new move—the first of the kind that had occurred. "The twelve" (hearing the murmuring and knowing the trouble) called the multitude of the disciples unto them." They did not say that the staff of deacons was inefficient and more were required, but said "it was not meet for them to serve tables." Had there been deacons before, the Apostles surely would not have been burdened with the distribution of the common funds. Then they said, "look out men of honest report whom we may appoint over this business." They were not called upon to look out men qualified for a certain office, and to be appointed to a certain office, but over business. It certainly appears like the beginning of the diaconate.

But for Olshausen's view there is nothing better than conjecture and speculation. The young men who carried out the bodies of Ananias and Sapphira were not necessarily in office. It seems very natural, that before the offices were called into existence and filled, that in case any service was to be performed, christian young men would volunteer to do it. It was doubtless the case in the community of christians in Jerusalem. Obedience to the benevolence and energy of youth required such a course to be taken by the young, and the strength and the relations of the young men in all analogous circumstances lead to similar results.

But these men who were chosen are no where called deacons. The evidences that they were deacons may be found:

1. In the fact that the seven were to take charge of the temporalities of the new community.
2. They are named deacons in the word *serve* (serve tables—*diaconein trapezais*.) It literally means *deacon tables*—minister at tables.
3. The records in the epistles show that the office of deacon was the second, and included the care and management of the temporal affairs of the church. When writing to the Philippians Paul addressed the ministers, or bishops and deacons, and in 1st Timothy he mentions as a qualification that the deacon should "not be greedy of filthy lucre." Evidently he had in mind the temptations of the pecuniary duties of the position.

The history of the early days shew that the deacons had the care of the temporal affairs of the church. We will only give the testimony of two eminent men on this point. Neander says, "The duties of this office were simply external as it was instituted in the first place according to Acts vi. to assist in the distribution of alms. The care of providing for the poor and sick of the communities, to which many other external duties were afterwards added, devolved particularly on this office," G. H. of Ch. R. and Ch. Vol. 1, p. 188.

"It (as is reasonable) we explain these intimations by what we know of the Diaconate in the succeeding Century we may assume that its duties in the Apostolic Churches (when their organization was complete), were to assist the presbyters in all that concerned

the outward service of the church, and in executing the details of those measures, the general plan of which was organized by the presbyters." *Conybeare and Howson's. Life of St. Paul*, Vol. 1, p. 434.

Ecclesiastical historians affirm that the early church never went beyond the number seven in appointments to the deacon's office. Olshausen says, "We are led to this conclusion (that these seven were deacons) not only by the expressions *diaconia kathemerine* in Acts vi. 1, and *diaconein trapezais* in ver. 2, but also particularly by primitive exegetical tradition. The ancient church did not venture, in consequence of the number here specified to go beyond seven deacons in any church. In the third century there were in Rome, along with forty presbyters, not more than seven deacons."

From these considerations it is demonstrated almost beyond a doubt that the seven men chosen at Jerusalem were deacons.

Thirty years after the appointment of the seven, the office had become universal in the churches and the officers were technically called deacons. Paul addressed his letter to the Saints, Bishops, and Deacons when writing to the Church at Philippi. In his 1st Epistle to Timothy may be found the qualifications for this office. This is about all that we know of the office and duties of deacons from the divine records.

Very likely the conjectures of Olshausen are not without foundation. We have not come to the point yet when the ministry, except the apostles, has an existence. But the duties of that office were discharged before Christ finished his public life. He sent out the seventy. There was preaching before there were preachers as officers in the christian church. The external labors of the community of believers no doubt were performed to some extent by young men, and others whose standing and relations to the society of christians naturally led to the performance of such duties. But at last the necessity appeared for the creation of an office. In this way the Diaconate grew up in the christian church.

We have traced this office from its beginning through the epistles and into the early history of the church. The true place of this office in the church will be given in this discussion when all the offices are defined and arranged. With this office established we can proceed, in our next article to trace from the appointment of the seven, the government of the church, as it may be found along the line of sacred history.

EDWARD MANNING.

For the Christian Messenger.

Prince Edward Island Association, &c.

Dear Brother,—

The above Association has now been constituted, and its first session has been held. It met, according to appointment, with the North River Church, about four miles north-east of this city, at ten o'clock, A. M., on Saturday, the 18th inst. Its engagements were preceded by devotional exercises, which were continued until noon. Steps were then taken for the organization of the proposed new body. Your correspondent was chosen as Moderator of the Association, with the brethren H. Warren, and — McVane as Clerks. In the afternoon our Constitution, and Rules of Order were considered and adopted. These, with the requisite alterations, were taken almost *verbatim* from those of your Eastern Association; with one important exception, which I propose to notice in a farther communication. Routine matters then received attention, and the brethren adjourned until the following Monday morning.

The Lord's Day was occupied with the opening services of the new Meeting House recently completed for the use of the North River Church. In connection with these your correspondent delivered the Dedicatory Sermon; text, Ezek. xlviii. 35. In the afternoon brother G. F. Miles preached; text, Ps. xx. 5. In the evening, brother Theodore H. Porter, Jun., preached. In the morning also the overflowings of the congregation assembling at the new house of worship were invited to occupy the old one; which place again was more than filled. Here brother W. H. Porter preached. I have not learnt what were the texts selected by these brethren Porter. And so the day was occupied; its interest being scarcely damped by the rains which distilled in its later portions. There could scarcely have been fewer than six hundred persons present at the above services, including some strangers; but also largely composed of members and friends of our Baptist body. Liberal collections were given for the building fund of the new erection; which, by the way, is a neat and appropriate structure.

On Monday morning our veteran brother, J. Shaw, delivered the Association Sermon. His text was, Isa. xliii. 11. His discourse was full of the great truths which he so warmly loves, and of the quaint fancies for which he is so remarkable. The Circular Letter was read at the close of the sermon, and the morning sitting closed.

In the afternoon the letters from the churches were read. The churches from which these letters came were then recognized, as constituting the nucleus of the new Association. Other churches had failed to send letters, they were represented, however, in the persons of some of their brethren. From these we learnt, that they also were desirous of uniting in our new organization. They were therefore received into our body, it was then found, that every Baptist church in the Island was included in the Association; making an aggregate of thirteen churches, with more than six hundred members. This is a pretty good beginning for our little body. At the same time it leaves your Eastern Association in respectable force; comprising as it yet does some forty-six churches, with more than three thousand members. The afternoon was filled up with reports, and discussions upon them. The report upon your paper went to sustain you in your conduct of the unhappy controversy with which your columns have been burdened during the past year. But of course you will become acquainted with the whole of our proceedings in due time.

The evening was occupied with Missions, Home, Acadian French, and Foreign. On these the brethren Kidstone, Normanday, Miles, Boggs, and W. H. Porter spoke with great interest and power. A collection was taken, probably the first on the Island, for the French Mission.

On Tuesday morning we transacted Home Missionary business, gathered up the odds and ends of associational matters and adjourned until next year.

You perceive we were largely favoured with the presence and aid of brethren from abroad. I will not say, that I do not know what we should have done without them; but it is certain that we did a great deal better with them. Their presence, bearing a fraternal address from our old friends of your Eastern Association, made us feel that the ties between them and us are not wholly severed after all; and inspired a hope, that, notwithstanding our new ecclesiastical position, we shall yet from time to time enjoy personal intercourse with them. Our straits are our highway, and our steamers the vehicles traversing that way. And so we trust, that, in the future, as in the past, many a Baptist brother may avail himself of these facilities for travel, especially about the time of our associational gatherings; going and coming on errands of heavenly commerce rather than worldly, and in pursuit of spiritual pleasures as well as of earthly ones. Our meetings, as a rule, were largely and patiently attended. Our Island Baptists have never had such a gathering as that which has now come to a close. It has awakened an interest which has almost taken us by surprise; and marked for us, as we would fain hope, not a new era alone, but an auspicious one: auspicious indeed, if our Great Head will but be pleased to smile upon us and prosper us as heretofore, only much more abundantly.

Yours ever,

J. DAVIS.

Charlottetown, P. E. I., July 22, 1868.

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, JULY 29, 1868.

Y. M. C., Association Convention.

It is not necessary that we should tell our readers what a Convention is. The meeting in this city last October was a practical illustration, and we are pleased to learn that it is the intention of the Association to call another to assemble on Thursday, the 17th September next. It is a good thing for members of the same denomination to be in intimate acquaintance, but it is still better when no boundaries of sect prevent earnest christian men from speaking and listening to each others thoughts. Practical unity can only follow upon acquaintance. Esteem must rest upon knowledge. Therefore it is that conventions are so productive of good. They do not break down the line fences and throw all creeds into a common. They make neighbours better acquainted, and so the more likely to live as neighbours should in harmony and love.

In the city we see little of the party spirit and bitter rivalry that sometimes has existed between denominations whose common Protestantism demanded better things. Here, our churches have room to expand and grow

up to full stature beside each other. In a village with a handful of each denomination struggling for independent existence there is apt to be more zeal for the particular denomination, than for the common cause.

Delegations from such places to a convention such as are held by christian associations, ripen men into mellowness and sweeten their acidity by the warmth of christian affection. Withdrawn for a time from the narrow circle in which they have moved, they take wider views of christian life and see the divergent branches unite into one vine, they mark that the confluent rivulets all pour their waters into a common channel and that,—the river of God. And so made wiser they become humbler, and find that all of the cause of Christ does not rest on the shoulders of their denomination. They see that God blesses the efforts of others as well as their own and that He has none of the narrow bigotry which sometimes disfigures some of his children. They are led to perceive what Peter through the aid of a vision was enabled to understand: "Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation, but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean."

Such is one view of the good done. Another is, that we are all too full of lethargy, too lazy to exert ourselves, too stingy to give, too unfaithful in prayer, too slack in the discharge of every duty. Whatever wakens up to more vigorous life is a blessing. Whatever quickens the aspirations of the soul for closer communion with God makes men better able to fight the good fight of faith. Therefore we are glad when the Christian Association says to us: Let us go up to the house of God, let us worship him in his tabernacle. To our churches we would earnestly say in response to the appeal which will shortly be made to them: Send your most active prayerful men. They will go home to do you all good carrying with them the spirit of the meeting, and we have every reason to trust will be blessed by our Heavenly Father in making themselves a blessing to others.

What we can do in aid of the Convention we will cheerfully, heartily do. It has our best wishes for its complete success.

We desire that God may indeed open the windows of Heaven and pour out upon his servants such a refreshing from His Spirit as shall quicken them into new life and energy, and make them bright and shining examples of what his free grace can alone effect.

The two Spurgeons,

On a recent occasion at the recognition of the successor to the Rev. James A. Spurgeon at the Cornwall-road Chapel, Nottingham, London, from which place he had gone to become co-pastor with his brother the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle; several ministers were present and addressed the meeting:

"The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon took occasion to refer to the generosity of feeling evinced by the church in giving him what he considered to be an inestimable boon, viz., the services of his brother. He said that he believed it would be found this year that the increase to their church at the Tabernacle had been upwards of 600, which was probably the largest number ever added to a Christian church, since Pentecostal days, in the course of twelve months. He attributed it very greatly to the way in which his brother had looked up the members of the church, and had visited cases which it was simply impossible that he could attend to. He hoped that in the providence of God the church that had given him so good a helper would be abundantly rewarded. Referring to the Bishop of Oxford's speech in the House of Lords, as reported in that morning's papers, he said the Bishop must have been at a sad loss for arguments in favour of the Irish Church when he had to turn to articles that had appeared in the *Record*—which paper it was no honour for a bishop or anyone else to read—two months ago. No question was so great and interesting at the present day as the power of voluntarism as compared with State aid. He had been recently charged with inconsistency in calling the voluntary principle a giant, while admitting the poverty of many of their brethren in the ministry. Well, the ministers of the Church of England, with all their State aid, showed equally bad, if not worse, results. Only last week there was an advertisement in the *Rock*, in which help was asked for a clergyman who had been living on buttermilk and potatoes. (Laughter.) He had not heard of a Baptist minister being reduced yet to that position. (Hear, hear.)"

At the evening meeting the Rev. W. Brock addressed the minister: Their work as ministers, Mr. Brock proceeded to say, was really the most solemn one that any human mind could well

*To understand the above reference it is necessary to know that the Bishop of Oxford in the House of Lords read two letters Mr. Spurgeon published some time ago—one complaining of the small salaries of many Baptist ministers, and another shewing that the Irish church clergy would be benefited by a separation of the Church from the State.