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A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_bib-sacra\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php)

## ARTICLE V.

## NEW LIGHT ON THE PSALMS.

BY THE REVEREND ROBERT CAMERON, D.D.

THE writer has just read an advance copy of one of the most remarkable books<sup>1</sup> that have come from the press during the past hundred years. Unless one is laboring under a misconception of its importance, this book will create a greater sensation amongst the scholars of Christendom, and will become a greater factor in securing a return to sane thinking, than any event since the modern methods of the destructive critics have "had the floor," and have secured the ear of the Christian public. And yet, the fundamental facts upon which the book is based, are so simple, so self-evident, and in such harmony with every phenomenon in the Psalter, that one can only wonder why the discovery had not been made by others during the past two thousand years. The achievement of the author illustrates what a small amount of careful research and independent thinking there is amongst men of reputed learning, after all the boasting made in behalf of modern scholarship.

It is well known amongst all students of the Scriptures, that the titles of the Psalms—that is, their superscriptions and subscriptions—have been a source of great perplexity to the commentators and expositors. This is true amongst the Jewish scholars as well as amongst those of the Christian faith. In fact, one part of the titles has been given up in despair. In

<sup>1</sup>The Titles of the Psalms. By Joseph William Thirtle. London and New York: Frowde.

general terms these titles may be ranged under three heads: (1) the authorship and character of the psalm; (2) the historical circumstances out of which the psalm had its growth; (3) the place of the psalm in the service of the temple as indicated by such words as "To the Chief Musician." As to the first two classes of psalms, the only difficulties that have arisen have had their origin in the prejudices and preconceived notions of the expositors; but, when we come to the last class of titles, the case is entirely different. Everything is inconsistent, contradictory, and confusing. Neither Jew nor Christian, neither narrow evangelical nor broad latitudinarian nor spiritualizing mystic, has been able to thread his way through the jungle. Neither the reverent student who believes in the consistent unity of the Bible as a whole, and of the Psalms as a part of that whole, nor the flippant sciolist who talks about "sources" for which he had no evidence, and scraps and redactors and editors that never had an existence outside of his mental conceptions, could solve the problem. The difficulties have existed for more than two thousand years—they defied the ingenuity of the greatest scholars two hundred years before the days of our Lord. Dr. Delitzsch, speaking of these titles, says: "The LXX. found them already in existence, and did not understand them. The key to their comprehension must have been lost very early." By common consent, then, the key to an understanding of the musical titles of the Psalter has been hopelessly lost for more than two thousand years. How was it lost, and how was it found? The answer to these two questions, together with a few consequences that follow, is the essence of what we have in hand.

It is of importance that we take into consideration the condition of the ancient writing. It is conceded, that neither in prose nor in poetry were there any paragraph divisions, such

as we use at the present day with good results, to assist the eye in reading and the mind in understanding. The material was run along on papyrus or parchment or vellum without any break, and without any system of punctuation. In legal circles, where they draw up documents involving millions, it is the mark of good form to-day to affect this ancient custom—only, it is the custom to use capital letters at the beginning of the sentences. But even this feature did not characterize ancient writing. Hence it was often difficult, because the documents followed each other in such close proximity, to distinguish the one from the other.

Now the book of Psalms presented just that problem when the LXX. undertook their work of translating the Hebrew into Greek. Psalm followed psalm in the Hebrew text, and psalm follows psalm in the Greek translation. The only indications that one psalm ended, and another had begun, were the terms "Michtam," "Maschil," "by David," "by Asaph," "by Solomon," "a Psalm," "a Song." Where these were found, the material was broken up and separated. But where none of these terms were found, and the psalms were what the rabbis called "orphans," it was the custom to combine one or more of them together, both in the Hebrew manuscripts and in the early codices of Christian writings. The Psalter was in this compact form when the LXX. completed their work.

It is self-evident that *if* the psalms were originally written with *one* title at the beginning, giving its authorship and origin, and *another* title at the end, designating its musical use in the temple service, then the ending of one psalm might easily be bracketed by mistake with the beginning of another psalm following. In other words, the dividing line could easily be drawn in the wrong place. In this way, the psalm that had a title showing its nature, its authorship, and the

circumstances out of which it was born, would have a musical setting for a place or occasion in the temple altogether out of keeping with its contents. In modern times it would be like singing a funeral hymn at a wedding feast, or, having a hymn written for private devotion, chanted at a public thanksgiving, or a day of national humiliation. And this is exactly what has happened to many psalms at the hands of the LXX., and the whole of Christendom has followed, like "Israel following the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin—they have not departed therefrom."

This disorder continues until to-day. It is in the King James's version and it is in the standard American version. Indeed, it is in all versions of the psalms—Jewish, Roman, or Protestant. The musical title that belongs to the *end* of the psalm that precedes, is linked to the literary title which stands at the *beginning* of the psalm which follows. Hence, being out of their true places, they give no intelligent account of themselves—they are as much out of place as the sword of a king in the hands of a preacher; they throw a cloud over the psalm that they ought to illuminate; they baffle the ingenuity of expositors; and lexicographers, being "off the scent," have made guesses and suggestions that are neither creditable to scholarship nor helpful to devotion. For two and a half millenniums these musical titles have either been buried or silenced by learned lumber, or, when allowed to speak, their voice has confused and bewildered those who have lent attentive ears.

But, granting this, how could a knowledge of such a simple fact drop out of sight and out of mind? how, especially out of the Jewish mind? This is too large a question for the limits of this article. But, when one calls to mind the vicissitudes of the Jewish people from the days of the destruction of

Jerusalem by the forces of Babylon, down to the heroic period of the Maccabees, it will not be hard to believe that the cruel massacres of the rulers and of the priests, the awful persecutions, that drove from mind and heart every thought except that which gathered about food to sustain life, and shelter for its protection, the burning of the temple and its blasphemous defilement by invading tyrants, and the scattering of the Jewish people into every quarter of the globe, with plunder and plague, and fire and sword in hot pursuit,—it will not be hard to believe, that when a little respite came, and an attempt was made to reëstablish the ancient order “according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king’s seer, and of Nathan the prophet,” no one was found possessing the key to the rubrics, no one retained the national tradition of the use of the musical marks, and, to this day, no representative of any family of the “scattered nation” has come to the front to disclose the lost secret. It was lost out of national consciousness more than two hundred years before Christ, and it is too late to hope for its recovery from that source now.

A singular custom which obtained amongst the Jews during their captivity in Babylon, and which still obtains amongst the orthodox portion of the nation to-day, will throw light upon the way in which this tradition dropped out of memory. The orthodox Jews refused then, and they still refuse, to sing the songs of Zion in a foreign land. They wail and weep and cry out in their synagogues, but they never sing. “By the rivers of Babylon we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. Upon the willows in the midst thereof we hanged up our harps; for they that led us captive required of us songs, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing Jehovah’s song in a foreign land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cun-

ning, and let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I remember thee not, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." No joy apart from Jerusalem, no song outside of the Holy Land, and no harps while the temple is in ruins. In a foreign land the songs of the theocracy were exchanged for the woes of the captivity. They refused to sing these songs of Zion, and their refusal induced vocal atrophy, and produced mental oblivion. It thus came to pass that the Jewish men who made the Septuagint translation, knew nothing of the liturgical use of the psalms in the temple. There was no longer a chief musician, Asaph left no successor, and the glorious traditions of the golden age had faded away.

Now let us consider the recovery of the key to the liturgy, which in time will restore the Psalter to its primitive use in the nation. In the near future, when, according to the infallible predictions of the inspired prophets, the Jews return to their ancient home, in unbelief towards Christ, and when they rebuild the temple and reestablish its services according to the appointments of the Law and the Kingdom, this key will be of great importance to the lovers of Zion. It has been recovered just in time to serve the interests of the Jews when restored to Palestine, and to serve the interests of the church in its battle against the unbelief of the enemies who have found a lodgment within its own citadels.

Why was not this key discovered centuries ago, and fitted to the lock that opens the door? It lay upon the surface; it has been seen and handled by millions of believers as they have thumbed over the leaves of the prophets; it was stumbled over by thousands of Jewish rabbis and Christian scholars, but it was never recognized, never picked up, and never used.

Every one will see that, if even *one* psalm could be found, anywhere in the Old Testament, *standing alone*, that psalm

would furnish the typical example, the authoritative standard, for all the others. If two such psalms could be discovered, and if they should agree in the arrangement of their rubrics, then the difficulty would seem settled. For, it is beyond a question, that these puzzling titles could not be misplaced in a case where a psalm stood all alone by itself. Now, if, after such a discovery were made, the titles should be readjusted to the psalms, and if thing should fit to thing, as the shadows in the unruffled bosom of a stream answer to the forest and to the stars of the heavens above, then doubt is impossible, and faith is a necessity to every sane mind.

Two such psalms have been found, the titles have been readjusted to the Psalter, and the utterances of the respective psalms respond to the note of the rubric. These psalms are found in the third chapter of Habakkuk, and in the thirty-eighth chapter of Isaiah. The former is a psalm-prayer of the prophet, and the latter is a song or poem of the King after his supernatural recovery from a fatal disease. Here is found the key to the misplaced, misunderstood, and vexatious titles of the psalms. In both of these isolated psalms, the liturgical lines are found in their true place, revealing the confusion that has obtained so long in the Psalter, wherever a musical rubric appears.

In Habakkuk the superscription reads thus: "*A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.*" Now when we come to the end of the psalm a subscription is added as follows: "*To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.*"

In Isaiah, at the head of the psalm, we have the occasion of its writing given thus: "*The writing of Hezekiah, King of Judah, when he had been sick and recovered from his sickness.*" Then at the end, and forming a part of the psalm itself, we read: "*Therefore we will sing my songs with stringed*



*instruments all the days of our life in the house of Jehovah."*

In the first of these psalms we have at its opening a literary description of the class to which it belongs, viz. that it is a prayer, assigning its authorship to Habakkuk, and describing the character of the composition as Shigionoth, or outcries in praise. Then when we come to the close of the psalm, we have a liturgical note "to the Chief Singer" or Musician. Here, then, we have the key to the titles: a *literary description* at the *beginning* of the psalm, and a *musical rubric* at the *end*. Out of the mouth of a second witness these facts are confirmed in the psalm found in the thirty-eighth of Isaiah. It, too, opens with a literary heading and closes with a musical note. True, we do not exactly have the name of the chief musician, as the one to whom the psalm was committed, but it is safe to assume that its royal and religious author would see that the Levites would do his bidding according to the service of the temple. He would have it sung "with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps according to the command of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet."

Thus, out of the mouth of two unimpeachable witnesses, whose dumb lips have been speaking through their written words for two thousand five hundred years, but whose voices have never been heeded until now, we have it definitely determined that the *literary* title of a psalm should be placed at its head, where it has always been. But the musical title should be pushed forward from the head of one psalm to the foot of the other psalm that precedes it. The title at the beginning may tell whether it is a song, a psalm, a *michtam*, or a *maschil*; it may state whether the author is David, Asaph, Solomon, Moses, or one of the sons of Korah; it may tell of the circumstances under which it was written, as it does in thir-

teen of the psalms; or it may make known the object for which it was composed. But every other title or description belongs to the foot of the preceding psalm. Thus, we shall have a distinction made between authorship and historical origin on the one hand, and liturgical application and use in worship on the other.

As a further confirmation of this wonderful discovery, the author, in a private letter, assures me that Lieutenant Conder, so well known at the head of the Palestine Exploration Society, has, over his own signature, written to say that the oriental psalms and hymns on clay tablets which have come under his observation, have an arrangement exactly corresponding to the one which is so plainly stamped upon the psalms in Isaiah and Habakkuk.

Now, suppose we accept the testimony coming from these two isolated psalms, and its confirmation arising out of the examination of similar productions of contiguous nations, at a date of from five hundred to fifteen hundred years before Christ,—the date that corresponds to the traditional view concerning the time when these psalms of the Old Testament were written,—then, does the key fit the lock? Does any new light come to the individual psalms affected? Do we have any clearer insight into the service of the temple, and the calendar of the nation? Is there a verisimilitude in the results that follow? All of these questions can be answered promptly in the affirmative. And thus we have at last, without doubt, discovered the true and original arrangement of the psalms in their use in the temple services. All the results of this simple but far-reaching discovery have not yet come into view. A few of those that are very obvious may be briefly named:—

1. We have surely come to the end of all attempts at explanations that have never explained. There will no longer

be an effort to find an echo to the musical settings, as they now stand, in the contents of the psalms which follow. No longer will expositors try to make Gittith or Shoshannim mean musical instruments, as the massoretic scholars suggested and the Christian commentators adopted. Nor will the more modern tendency to follow another Jewish school, making these terms catchwords of popular airs, or "ragtime songs" of foreign nations, repel us, because of their absurdity. The musical instruments and popular airs are as absent from any historical data, or monumental allusions, as are the now famous "original sources" and the J. P.'s and other "Jays" of the destructive critics. The lexicographers could not define so as to fit the apparent use, and the expositors could not explain the contents of the psalms so as to correspond to the meaning of these titles, and they gave vent to their imagination while they published their guesses.

2. The Hebrew lexicographer will be saved much needless toil in a bootless effort to adjust the plain meaning of a term to its environment in a psalm. The word *Alamoth* means "maidens," and the word *Shoshannim* means "lilies." There is no dispute—no possible dispute—respecting these words. But as soon as they appear among the psalm titles, their signification is changed by the imaginations and guesses of lexicographers who have produced weak, worthless, and foolish explanations "from the bottomless ocean of things unknown." These men have stumbled in the dark, without the key that opens the door for the dawn of light, and we must set them and their learned guesses aside out of our path, and return to the primary, natural, and obvious meaning of the words which will readily adjust themselves to the new psalms with which they are now to be identified.

3. This key will open the door through which we can see

the liturgy of the temple service as related to the psalms, in a new, intelligent, and attractive light. The chief musician is evidently the director, the leader, the precentor, or chorister of the modern song-service. The psalms are presented to him for consideration, acceptance, and assignment to their proper place and use. Thus it became both a psalm of David and of the musician—David's by creation and the musician's by adoption. The two settings were similar to those in modern hymnals, giving the name of the author of the hymn first and the author of the music after.

In this new light we discover, not merely a collection of poems, but a well-arranged hymnal in the Psalter, not arranged in different parts of the book, but under distinguishing titles. Hence, we find songs, prayers, meditations, and homilies, to be rendered by singers with the accompaniments of players on appropriate instruments of music. These musical notes, restored to their rightful places, show that the various psalms have been selected with reverent care, with deep insight into fundamental truths, and with the best of judgment. Although we may not yet discover the complete calendar as conceived by David, and as realized by Solomon and his successors, yet we do see plainly that the rubrics indicate the elements of appointment for the great festivals of Israel, and for other occasions of national commemoration and national experience. And in the whole of Jewish history it is manifest that the highest aim was to have everything done "according to the commandment of David." Hence, we have in Solomon's appointment of the Levites, Jehoiada's provision for service, Hezekiah's revival, Josiah's solemn pass-over, Zerubbabel's work at the restoration, everything done "according to the commandment of David the king."

The following facts will serve as illustrations of this dis-

covery. Few of the musical terms have excited greater interest than *Shoshannim* and *Gittith*, but not until now do they find a voice, a setting, in the psalms, and a place in the Jewish calendar. *Shoshannim* means "lilies" and *Gittith* means "winepresses." The one title suggests *spring* and the other speaks of *autumn*; the one tells of beauty and fragrance and the other of plenty and peace. Flowers and fruit fall into line with combinations of great significance in the monumental and literary history of Israel. The garments of the high priests were fringed with lily-shaped bells and pomegranates; the temple was adorned with carvings of lilies and pomegranates; the furniture given by Ptolemy Philadelphus was adorned by the carving of lilies and clusters of grapes; purple flowers and golden vines ornamented the doors of the Temple of Herod, and the candlestick of gold had its adornments in the figures of lilies and pomegranates. Moreover, the monuments and the half-shekel coins, recovered from oblivion, also have their tracings or stamps of the lily-flower and the bowl of wine. Aye, even on tombstones, and in the Jewish catacombs at Rome, these symbols of flowers and fruit appear.

Now for the explanation. The Passover was celebrated in the *spring*, when the flowers began to bloom in the meadows, and the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated in the *autumn*, when the fruit was gathered and "the presses burst out with new wine." The Passover spoke of the birth of the nation, while the Feast of Tabernacles told of its majority when it entered upon its inheritance; the one told of the making of the nation, while the other recalled Jehovah's care in its preservation. Jehovah both redeemed from bondage and spread a table in the wilderness for the redeemed. He was the *Redeemer* and the *Keeper* of Israel. These two feasts, the one at the begin-

ning of the year and the other at its ending,—the one when the winter was past and the flowers appeared on the earth, and the other when the summer was ended, the vintage was gathered, and men were in “joy before the Lord according to the joy of the harvest,”—became associated, by the time David came to the throne, with lilies and winepresses. By an association of season with festival, by that subtle tendency of simple people to link the material with the spiritual, and by a touch of poetic taste not altogether wanting in the Jewish mind, “for the lilies” was placed under the Passover psalms, and “for the winepresses” was placed under the psalms set apart for use at the Feast of Tabernacles. As these two feasts began and ended the calendar year, and as they were memorials of the essence of all that Jehovah had done, and promised to do for Israel, in redemption and preservation, they became the national symbols on coins, in sacred services, in present sorrow and in future hope. Even when placed over the tombs of the dead, their dumb mouths still spoke in touching tones, declaring that the sleepers beneath belonged to the Pesach, when the lilies blossomed, and to the Succoth, when the grapes were pressed. They belonged to the Redeemer and Keeper of Israel, and *they* were the redeemed and the preserved by Jehovah. The God of the Jew was the God of the living and not of the dead.

The Passover psalms rehearse the oppressions of those that rise up against the people and cry for deliverance, and they also acknowledge that deliverance has come. But the Feast of the Tabernacle psalms—those that celebrate the harvest home—have quite another note. Here is one:—

“Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel;  
Thou that ledest Joseph like a flock,  
That sittest upon the cherubim, shine forth !”

“Thou broughtest a vine out of Egypt;  
Thou drovest out nations and plantedst it.”

“The mountains were covered with the shadow of it,  
And the boughs thereof were like cedars of God.”

No comment is necessary to show how the sentiment of this psalm fits into the pious reflections appropriate to the feast.

But, in addition to these, we have psalms for the choir of virgin women, and also for the choir of circumcised men; psalms for seasons of national humiliation and others for seasons of rejoicing; psalms commemorating great national struggles and victories, and events of national importance. A singular but certain discovery is made that the Jews also had their national anthem—their *Aijeleth hashshahar*—literally “the hind of the dawn.” This is at once delicate, poetic, patriotic, and full of glowing promise. It is a figure of speech expressing the feelings of the heart’s desire when gratified by the passing of the darkness and the coming of the morning. It pictures the gratification of the long-deferred desire of David for sanctuary privileges and for national peace and prosperity. “Thou hast given the king his heart’s desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. Thou settest a crown of fine gold upon his head.” But, later on, there is a tinge of the “politics” and “knavish tricks” in the psalm when it turns toward the enemies of the nation: “Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies, the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath. They imagined a device which they were not able to perform.” All this is concerning David, who was the swift-footed child of the nation’s morning. He always was the nation’s hero, towering above Abraham or Moses in Jewish pride. He captivated their vision like the dawn of an oriental morning.

4. Some apparent contradictions, as well as much confu-

sion, will be removed from the psalms. As it now stands, Psalms lxxxviii. is a song of the sons of Korah, and a Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite—two different statements as to the authorship of the one psalm. Hereafter we will not be obliged to ask, in the language of Dr. Delitzsch, "Which notice is the most trustworthy?" They are both trustworthy and true, like the whole of the Scriptures when freed from the marring of man's hand. Each heading has a psalm of its own.

In Psalm lvii. the most beautiful adjustment of title to contents is made, and a puzzling problem is removed. At the head of Psalm lvi. stands the title *Jonath-elem-rehokim*, "the dove of the distant terebinths," but there is no allusion to either dove or terebinth in that psalm. Drs. Green, Hengstenberg, Delitzsch, and others, however, have observed the connection between this title and the *preceding* psalm, but no one seems to have had the slightest suspicion of the misplacement of the titles of this, and the rest of the psalms. With this discovery, however, it is most touching to read: "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove; then would I fly away, and be at rest. I would lodge in the wilderness." It was written by David at the time when Absalom was a traitor at heart, plotting to usurp the throne of his father, even at the expense of becoming a regicide and patricide. Ahitophel, smarting under the wrong done to one of his "kith and kin," in the house of Uriah, had ceased to be Premier in the king's cabinet. He had been David's familiar friend, with whom he had taken sweet counsel, but now he was his deadly enemy—a political trickster behind the scenes pulling the wires that moved the puppets in the front. David, seeing the coming storm, and dreading the dangerous treachery, longed to hide himself in the distant forests, where he might brood over his



sorrow like the moaning dove. How beautifully the psalm responds to its old title restored to its true home after an absence of two thousand five hundred years!

5. This discovery opens the way for consideration of the Psalms as a whole. No reverent scholar has ever doubted that he had reached the throbbing heart of a living book when he came to the lyric cadences, the poetic conceptions, the plaintive pleadings, and the jubilant praises of the Psalms. But the key to their unity was lost, and the clear light of the Psalms, as focused through the Christian lens, has never yet been obtained. We shall now see that the whole book, beginning with "the blessed man," and ending with "everything that hath breath" blessing Jehovah, has a sympathetic response to the experience of Christ, first of all and most of all; then with the elect race of Israel and with the church, during all the ages of the past, since the inauguration of the kingdom under David, and down through the ages to come, until David's Son and Lord shall possess the kingdom that he may deliver it back into the hands of God the Father. The Psalms record the exercises of the Spirit of Christ, whether in his own individual person, or in the Jews of the past, or in the church of the present, or in the hearts of the restored and regenerated Jews of the millennial age. When this vital chord of the Psalms is recognized, and when their prophetic, as well as historic, setting is restored, then, the imprecatory psalms, which have been such a stumbling-block to the ill-taught child with narrow outlook and limited horizon, will tower up with a grandeur and a glory worthy of a God of love, whose sense of righteousness is as the whiteness of light and whose majesty is above the heavens—preceding, marching through, and surviving the succession of the ages. The God of the Psalms is "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders."

If there was a fitness during the past in the direct destruction of Israel's foes by the hand of Jehovah, because the whole of his purposes of grace towards the race of men were linked with that chosen people, will it be less fitting, less worthy, of God to repeat, under similar conditions, these acts in the future? What about that coming day, when the "man of lawlessness" becomes "the beast" of prophecy, and when the world wonders and follows in his train? Will it not be worthy of the Spirit of Christ, as it will then be embodied in the martyr saints, to sing: "Arise, O Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for my help. Let them be put to shame that seek after my soul. Let them suddenly go down to the pit."

6. This discovery throws great light upon the antiquity of the Psalms as a finished collection of lyric poetry. It will go far to settle, if indeed it does not completely settle, many questions raised by modern men of reputed scholarship.

It is conceded that there are no manuscripts of the Old Testament extant where this confusion of titles does not exist. The earliest versions into Greek and Syriac show their existence by variant translations, in a vain effort to conform title to psalm. There is not a shadow of doubt that this confusion existed between 200 and 300 B. C., when the LXX. completed their most important work. "To the Chief Musician" was translated, *eis to telos*, "for the end," and these words occupy the same line as *psalmos tou David*, and similar literary headings, showing that the key was gone. They were utterly at sea as to the meaning of these titles, and hence they bracketed the title belonging to the *foot* of one psalm with that which rightly belonged to the *head* of another. Indeed, the LXX. had no thought of a director, or chief musician, in the temple service, and they transferred into their text *Alamoth*

and *Sheminith* in Greek letters, thus confessing that they knew nothing of female and male choirs. The same confusion is seen in all ancient Hebrew texts, and it appears in the Vatican and Alexandrine codices. Now, with these facts before us, it logically follows that the Psalter is much older than the Septuagint version, made not later than two hundred years before Christ. How much older we may not definitely determine just yet. As the College of the Great Synagogue at the time of Nehemiah was succeeded by the Sanhedrim of the days of the LXX., it is extremely improbable that the psalms could have been compiled and their titles attached after the return from the captivity. Religious customs amongst a people cherishing such a veneration for the past do not go out of fashion and out of mind even in centuries, unless there is some break or revolution in organic existence. The knowledge of temple psalmody, the existence of the precentor, the terms designating psalms to feasts, the existence of the male and female choirs, indeed every liturgical note, was absolutely out of mind long before the days of the Maccabees. With Keil we may say: "The singing was lost with the extinction of Solomon's Temple, so that, in the post-exilic Temple-worship, only feeble remnants survived." Accordingly, we are compelled to conclude that the music of the psalms and the meaning of the rubrics passed away with the destruction of the first temple. If one post-exilic psalm (137) has been added, this would not affect the fact that the collection was already in existence. In the words of Dr. Robertson: "Here at least we have a psalmist who looked back fondly to the *old* songs—songs of Zion, songs of the Lord of pre-exilic times." The fifty-one psalms which bear the mark of the chief musician are scattered through every book of the Psalter, except the fourth. But the fourth book contains the psalm which celebrates the trans-

fer of the ark from Gathrimmon to Mount Zion, pushing it back to the days of King David. Moreover, it is beyond dispute that the division of the Psalms into books took place after the unfortunate confusion of the titles, as may be seen by a glance at Book II., where the title "For the Chief Musician" stands at the head of the first psalm, instead of being placed at the foot of the last psalm in Book I. Had the division into books been made before the key was lost, this title would have been put in its right place. The fact is, the Psalter is the same in number and in order as it was at a very remote period—long before the dawn of the Christian era. It has been bound together by verbal chords which have preserved its contents and order, although their meaning was misunderstood by the post-exilic men to whose keeping these oracles of God were entrusted. With the exception of our present break into verses, psalms and books, their number and order, are exactly the same as they were in days of the Second Temple.

I do not press this matter further than to call attention to the fact that the rubric of the chief musician was attached after the psalm came into existence. Indeed, the psalm may have been in existence centuries before the director did his work under the instruction of Solomon and the Levites, "according to the command of David the king."

These musical titles, under this new light, must be reckoned with in all future discussion. They push the date of the Psalter far back beyond pre-exilian times—in fact, back to a date that corresponds with what had been called, in derision, "the traditional belief" of the origin of these religious poems. The psalms must antedate the musical notes, and the musical notes had been made, used, lapsed out of mind, and utterly forgotten, at the return from captivity. Prior to that event, the very latest date to which these psalms could be as-

signed is the period of revival under King Josiah. This will compel us to the belief that the psalms must have come upon the scene at the exact time when they profess to have lifted their honest heads above the horizon.

7. Lastly, this discovery will help to restore David to his rightful distinction in the authorship of the psalms, and our Lord to his rightful supremacy in the minds and hearts of those who are posing as scholars. If the present collection of Psalms existed, just as we have them now, at the time of the LXX., then there is no room for a single contribution to the collection in the days of the Maccabees. All, or nearly all, of the Psalter must have been complete when the prophets of the Restoration laid down their labor with their lives. But at that time seventy-three out of one hundred and fifty psalms were ascribed to David, and thirteen more of them have historical inscriptions fitting into events in the life of the king. Besides this, the name of the king is found in twelve other psalms. David has the preëminence in the praises of the temple as well as in the government of the throne. Hence, while the name of Moses occurs six hundred and fifty times in the Old Testament, that of David appears nine hundred and fifty times. He stands preëminent amongst the obedient servants of Jehovah—a man after God's own heart—and also preëminent amongst the poets, the heroes, and the kings of Israel. He is both the hero of the Old Testament and also of the book of Psalms.

If the modern fad to find editors, instead of authors, must continue to obtain in the imaginations of the critics, and to obtrude itself into biblical research, still it must not be forgotten that these imaginary editors, at a very ancient date, made the name of the poet-king second to no other in the collection of the psalms. Discuss or discard the titles, their very

existence at that remote period has to be accounted for, as well as the oblivion into which they fell. And there can be no explanation so satisfactory as the one that is obvious, natural, and historic. David was the greatest king of the Jewish nation, and he was the very man,—emotional, sensitive, God-fearing, strong in his keen sense of righteousness, and brave in his intense hatred of sin—the very man from whom these pious poems could come. Further, this discovery of the proper place and meaning of the musical titles shows that commemorative and national services were held in the temple in honor of David, in the days of the chief musician. Psalm viii. shows that David is the champion who went out between the camps in the time of a nation's crisis; for it is evident that no people celebrate fireside fame or private heroism in public song.

It follows, therefore, that our Lord was right when he spoke of what David said in the psalms. For more than a quarter of a century the hearts of those who believe in the supreme deity of Christ have been either bleeding with pious sorrow, or boiling with righteous indignation, at the flippant way in which professed scholars and (God save the mark) *professed* Christians have said that "Jesus did not know," that he was "limited in his knowledge by his environments and his opportunities," that he "may have accommodated his teaching to the ignorance" of the people of his day, when he spoke of Moses as the author of the Pentateuch and of David as the composer of the psalms. Let us hope—although one cannot but confess that it is hoping against hope—that this new light on the old psalms may suggest to modern students the fitness of having more modesty and less assumption; more seemly reverence and less unseemly pride; more of the sublime conceptions of the "Roundhead" and less of the shal-

low pomposity of the "Cavalier," in their future speculations and published findings. Let us hope and pray that this old light of bygone days, dropped out of the consciousness of the successors of the patriarchs and prophets, and buried beneath the learned labors of the lexicographers and expositors, but now recovered and placed upon its divinely appointed lamp-stand, and shedding its lustre upon the meaning, the past use, and the prospective outlook of the Psalms, and revealing the national experience of Israel, as well as the personal struggles and hopes of God's saints in ages gone by, may lead men to recognize that there are some things which *they do not know*, and some things which our *Lord did know*. May we all learn that it is better to let the Scriptures judge the man than for the man to sit in judgment upon the Scriptures. May these leaders of modern thought learn that the best of all is to give to Christ the same preëminence in judging of the authorship, the truthfulness, and the abiding character of the whole of the Scriptures, which they affect to give him in the peerless perfection of his personal life, and the elevated character of his matchless teachings.

## ARTICLE VI.

## THE DIACONATE: A NEW TESTAMENT STUDY.

BY THE REVEREND ROBERT E. NEIGHBOR.

THE evangelical denominations are not in agreement as to the office and functions of the deacon. This, however, does not indicate the perversity of the theologic mind, but rather the meagerness of the New Testament records in regard to the diaconate and the consequent difficulty in determining the matters variously pertaining to it. In the Episcopal and Methodist Episcopal churches it constitutes the lower of two "orders" in the ministry; and accordingly the deacon, though not ranking as a full "priest," is, nevertheless, a minister in the sense that he is authorized to preach and is placed in charge of congregations. In the Methodist Episcopal churches he is required to prepare for it by taking a prescribed course of study, and then, after having passed a successful examination, and being also of approved character, he may be formally "ordained" a deacon. In due time he is advanced to the full priesthood by passing an examination in a second course of study, provided there be no bar to his advancement on moral grounds.

In non-episcopal churches, on the other hand (with perhaps the exception of the Lutheran), there is but one "order" in the ministry, and the deacon's functions are therefore non-ministerial. He does not preach,—or, at least, preaching functions are not regarded as included in his office. Among Presbyterians he has charge of only the temporal and



secular affairs of the congregation, while in Baptist and Congregational churches he is not restricted to this, but assists the pastor as a sort of qualified adviser in the general supervision of the church's spiritual interests. He is not, however, a preacher; if at any time he preach, having ability to do so to the edification of the congregation, he is not considered as doing it in virtue of his office as a deacon. In Baptist and Congregational churches, therefore, the deacons collectively constitute a kind of pastor's cabinet, and divide with him theoretically, at least, the responsibility of the church's welfare. In practice, however, they sometimes, it must be confessed, add to his responsibility; and since they stand to him in the relation of the many to the one, they not infrequently overrule his larger knowledge and experience by their prejudices and unwisdom, limit his efficiency, and hasten his resignation.

It is sometimes offered as a criticism that the deacons content themselves, as a rule, with officiating at the Lord's Supper in the distribution of the bread and wine to the membership; but there are pastors who would consider themselves fortunate if their deacons could be persuaded to limit their official activities to that simple and innocent service. On the other hand, a body of deacons composed of wise and experienced and godly men, thoroughly loyal to both the pastor and the church, and cordially recognizing their true relation to him and to it, knowing the duties of their office and being qualified for them, is an undoubted tower of strength to the pastor and also to the church. Such deacons there are, and they are worthy of being held in very high esteem for their work's sake. Happy the pastor who, instead of having to manage his deacons as well as his church, can rely upon their cooperation, is strengthened by their wise suggestions, and rejoices in the assurance of their personal sympathy.

As this article is a New Testament study, and as also the various opinions held and carried into practice in regard to the functions and qualifications of the deacon by different denominations are supposed to rest upon the New Testament teaching, we may enter at once upon our investigation of what the New Testament actually does and does not say on the subject. We begin by examining the three words which we find it using, namely, the verb *diakōnēō*, and the nouns *diakōnia* and *diakōnōs*.

The verb *diakōnēō* is used twenty-seven times, and is variously applied as follows: to the service rendered by angels, by the Son of man, by men and women; by Martha busied with the preparation, necessary, as she thought, for the suitable entertainment of her Lord; by the king who himself waited upon his servants at the banquet; by the seven brethren of the church in Jerusalem who superintended the distribution of relief to the dependent Hellenist widows in its membership; to the service rendered by Timothy and Erastus to the apostle Paul, and by Onesiphorus when the apostle was in Ephesus; to that rendered by Paul himself to the church in Corinth considered as an "epistle of Christ," the epistle having, as he says, been "deaconed" (translated "ministered") by him; and to that which he rendered to the poor saints in Jerusalem by means of the collections made for them among the Gentile churches. The man who serves and follows Christ is, according to Christ's own declaration in John xii. 26, the "deacon" of Christ. The leading idea in the word is thus very plainly that of service in a subordinate capacity to one of higher rank. It is translated variously by such words as "minister," "serve," "administer," and by the circumlocution "use the office of a deacon" in the passage where it occurs in connection with the noun *diakōnōs* as a church officer.

The noun *diakōnia*, which corresponds to the verb just noticed, indicates the thing diakonized, if we may so say, and it occurs thirty times. It also is variously rendered in the Revised Version by the words "serving," "ministering," "ministration," "ministry," "charge," "relief," "office," "service," and "administration." The apostolic function enjoyed for a time by Judas Iscariot is spoken of by Peter as his *diakōnia*; the *diakōnia* and the apostleship are classed together and united in the same person, as in the case of Judas just now mentioned, and in that of Paul by himself in his Epistles. Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem to Antioch, having fulfilled their *diakōnia*; Paul, addressing the Ephesian elders who met with him at Miletus, desires "to finish his course with joy, and the *diakōnia* which he had received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God," and later, when he had reached Jerusalem, he recounted "what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his *diakōnia*," and in writing to the brethren at Rome he "magnifies his *diakōnia*." In the First Epistle to the Corinthians he writes: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit, and there are differences of *diakōnia* [A. V. "administrations"], but the same Lord." The household of Stephanas was worthy of special honor, not only because it was "the first-fruits of Achaia," but because its members had "addicted themselves to the *diakōnia* of the saints."

Contrasting the dispensation of the law with the more glorious dispensation of the gospel, he speaks of the *diakōnia* of death and of the *diakōnia* of condemnation, setting over against these the *diakōnia* of the Spirit and the *diakōnia* of righteousness. He says, also, that there had been committed to him "the *diakōnia* of reconciliation," and that, having "received this *diakōnia*, we faint not." He is solicitous that, be-

cause of the factions which had broken up the harmony of the church at Corinth, the *diakōnia* of himself, Apollos, and Cephas "be not blamed." He alludes to "the fellowship of the *diakōnia* of the saints." Again, in Eph. iv. 11, 12, he says that the officers provided by Christ for his church—apostles, evangelists, prophets, pastors, and teachers—are "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the *diakōnia*, for the edifying of the body of Christ." He is glad and grateful that the Lord had "counted him faithful, putting him into this *diakōnia*"; that is, this apostleship of the Gentiles. He bids Archippus of Colosse "take heed to the *diakōnia* which he had received in the Lord, that he fulfill it," and he counsels Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist, and make full proof of his *diakōnia*." Finally, we have the question asked in regard to the ministry of angels in the present gospel dispensation: "Are they not all ministering (*leitourgika*) spirits, sent forth for *diakōnia* for the sake of those who are about to be the heirs of salvation?"

Evidently the predominant conception in all these passages is that of service rendered in the discharge of obligations imposed, but there is nothing to indicate the existence of a special order in the church known as a diaconate; the nearest approach to it is in the case of Archippus. But here it is to be noticed that his *diakōnia* is said to be *en kuriō*, and not *en ekklesia*. Timothy, also, who is encouraged "to make full proof of his *diakōnia*, was not a "deacon" in the sense of filling an office so known in the church; on the contrary, he is exhorted in the very same sentence to "do the work of an evangelist," and we know, from the entire tenor of the Epistles addressed to him, that he had the superintendence of the church or churches, and was rather therefore an *ēpiscōpōs*; that is, a bishop or pastor. He was not a deacon. The

fact is, that, as the verb *diakōnēō* means "to serve," so also the noun *diakōnia* means "service," and that—as all these and other passages, that might have been quoted, show—in the widest sense.

The other noun is *diakōnōs*, and means the individual who discharges the duties involved in the *diakōnia*. It occurs in twenty-eight passages of the New Testament—eight times in the Gospels, not so much as once in the Acts of the Apostles, and twenty times in the Pauline Epistles. Peter, James, John, Jude, and the book of Revelation furnish no example of its use, nor of either the cognate noun or verb. It is translated in the Gospels twice by the word "minister," and six times by the word "servant." In the Epistles, "minister" renders it sixteen times, "servant" once, and "deacon" three times. That is to say: Out of eighty-five passages in which either the verb, or the noun for the person or the thing, occurs, it is translated only five times as applying to an ecclesiastical office known as the diaconate. And these five instances are all, with the exception of the superscription to the Epistle to the Philippians, found in 1 Tim. iii. 8-12, where the qualifications of a deacon are set forth.

The following examples of the application of the word are both interesting and suggestive: The servants at the marriage-feast at Cana are the deacons on that occasion, and the fifth verse in the story may be read thus: "And his mother saith unto the deacons, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." And also the additional statement in verse 9: "But the deacons which drew the water knew." In Matt. xxii. 13 we read (translating literally): "Then the king said unto his deacons, Binding his feet and hands, cast him into the darkness which is outer." Jesus says, as reported both by Matthew and Mark: "Whoever would be great among you, let him

be your deacon" (Matt. xx. 26; xxiii. 11; Mark ix. 35; x. 43). He applies it also to his disciple in John xii. 26, saying: "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall my deacon be." Paul says (Rom. xiii. 4) of the civil magistrate: "He is the deacon of God to thee for good." He does not hesitate to call Christ "a deacon of the circumcision for the truth of God." He and Apollos are each of them "deacons" by whom the brethren of the church of Corinth believed (1 Cor. iii. 5). In the second epistle to the same church he declares, that God had made him and his fellow-workers in the sphere of Gentile Christianity "able deacons of the new covenant" (2 Cor. iii. 6), and later on he speaks of "in all things approving themselves as the deacons of God," and he asks concerning those who had been seeking to undermine his authority within his own special sphere of work: "Are they deacons of Christ? . . . I more." He speaks of false apostles who transform themselves into apostles of Christ, and then of Satan who sometimes appears as an "angel of light," arguing that, if this be so, "it is no great thing if his deacons also be transformed as the deacons of righteousness" (2 Cor. xi. 13-15). To the Ephesians and Colossians he writes that he has been made a deacon of the gospel, and to the latter he also says that he has been made a deacon of the church. Timothy, he says, is "our brother and a deacon of God in the gospel of Christ," and he exhorts him: "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good deacon of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained." In Gal. ii. 17 he will not permit a gospel of justification by faith to be charged with the unholy living of professed disciples, and indignantly asks, if Christ can be *hamartias diakōnōs*=of sin a deacon, or a deacon of sin.

Of course, in none of these passages from Paul's Epistles, nor yet in the words of Christ quoted from the Gospels, is there any reference to an ecclesiastical officer known as a *diakōnōs*. In all of them the word is used in its general sense of one who renders service and ministry. Neither Paul nor Apollos, neither Timothy nor Christ, were deacons of any church. Neither was this office in contemplation when the Lord, rebuking the unholy ambition of the Twelve, said that whoever would be greatest among them should be their deacon. This is evident and no one thinks of affirming otherwise.

But how about Tychicus and Epaphras of Colosse? Have we any ground for supposing that they held this office? Of the former, Paul writes: "Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful deacon in the Lord"; and of the latter: "Epaphras, the beloved fellow-bondservant of us, who is a faithful deacon of Christ for you." Neither the King James's translators nor the Revisers thought so, for they both translate the word by "minister" as the general term expressing service rather than official position. And so far as I know it is not claimed by any that these two brethren were deacons in the official sense. In the case of Phœbe, however,—possibly to afford some sort of support, which, though slender enough, is as good as there is in the New Testament for the office of deaconesses,—it is claimed by some that she was an official deacon of the church at Cenchreæ. The Revisers seem to favor this notion; for, while retaining the word "servant" in the text, in agreement with the Authorized Version, they insert "deaconess" in the margin. But this, in view of the general use of the word in the Epistles, is wholly without authority, and is no more justified in her case than in those of Tychicus and Epaphras.

The investigation thus far may be summarized, then, as follows :—

1. The Acts of the Apostles—the book which tells the story of the founding of the church in Jerusalem and of churches throughout Syria, Asia Minor, and Greece—is absolutely silent with reference to an ecclesiastical diaconate. It does not even contain the word “deacon.” This is certainly somewhat remarkable.

2. The apostle Paul makes no mention of deacons in his lists of church officers in 1 Cor. xii. 28 and Eph. iv. 11.

3. The only passages in the New Testament to which we must look for proof of the existence of such an office in the early church are Phil. i. 1, where deacons are named in connection with bishops in the superscription of the Epistle, and in 1 Tim. iii. 8–13, where the deacon’s necessary qualifications are described. But it may be remarked, in passing, that a single Scripture of unquestioned import is as decisive as a hundred in settling a matter of this kind. These two Scriptures are sufficient so far as they go.

4. Neither of them, however, says anything about the functions of these officers. What these were must be gathered largely from the meaning and use of the word, and (since the functions of an officer and his qualifications are necessarily correlative) from what is laid down as to these latter.

We will proceed therefore to consider the deacon’s qualifications as set forth in 1 Tim. iii. 8–13, after which we shall be prepared to determine perhaps what the nature of his service was.

1. The deacons were to be “grave” men. The Greek word is *sēmnōs*, and of its signification Trench says: “The *sēmnōs* has a grace and dignity not lent him from earth, but which he owes to the higher citizenship which is also his; being



one who inspires, not respect only, but reverence and worship. In profane Greek, *sēmnōs* is a constant epithet of the gods—of the Eumenides, the *sēmnai theai*, above all. It is used also constantly to qualify such things as pertain to, or otherwise stand in very near relation with, the heavenly world. . . . How to render it in English is not very easy to determine. . . . Grave and gravity are renderings which fail to cover the full meaning of their original. . . . The word we want is one in which the sense of gravity and dignity, and of these as inviting reverence, is combined; a word which I fear we may look for without finding.” The deacon, therefore, was a sacred person, and his demeanor and character were to be such as to inspire, not only respect for himself, but reverence for his office—an office of the church of Jesus Christ. The church and its Lord were to be honored among men by the dignified and honorable bearing of the deacon, and the electing authority must take care for this in his choosing.

2. Deacons were not to be “double-tongued”—a very good rendering of the word *dilōgōs*. Dr. Boise explains it as “not ambiguous or doubtful in what they say.” The word is not used elsewhere in the New Testament, and so the translation here cannot be compared with that in other passages. Dr. Boise’s gloss may be accepted as correct. Etymologically it means saying the same thing twice, and of course differently each time, and thus saying one thing while meaning another—in other words, unreliable in speech.

3. They were not to be “given to much wine”—in other words, temperate men in an age when wine-drinking was common and often indulged to excess. Cf. Eph. v. 18: “And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess [dissoluteness], but be filled with the Spirit.” If this was the rule for the church as a whole, how much more must it not be regarded as such by the deacons?

4. "Not greedy of filthy lucre" is the next qualification laid down. The deacon must not be an avaricious man; literally the words mean "greedy of base gain," as Dr. Boise explains them in Titus i. 7, where they occur in respect of the bishop. In the present passage he says, "not sordidly greedy of gain."

5. The deacons were to be men who "hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." That is to say, they were to be men having faith, and having likewise a good conscience as the sphere in which faith and all the great truths of the gospel are held; for, as another has well said: "Without a good conscience there can be no clear view, no just comprehension of spiritual truths." The deacons must be men who illustrate their faith by their conduct, and also the doctrines of Christianity, proving thus that "the faith" is with them something more than a creed confession, even a practical power in life.

6. The deacons before being inducted into office were to be "proved"—tested, examined; and then, if found blameless (*anēgklētoi*) to "use the office of a deacon." But this word translated "blameless" really means "unaccused," and is used by only Paul among the New Testament writers. In his Epistles it occurs five times, being rendered once by the word "unreprovable" (Col. i. 22), but elsewhere by "blameless." Says Archbishop Trench: "It is justly explained by Chrysostom as implying not acquittal merely, but absence of so much as a charge or accusation brought against him of whom it is affirmed. It moves, like *amōmōs*, not in the subjective thoughts and estimates of men, but in the objective world of facts. It is an epithet by Plutarch accurately joined with *alōidōrētōs*" (unreproached, and therefore akin to the "having a good report of those that are without," which is among

the qualifications of the bishop). Trench continues with a reference to the ritual of his own church: "In a passage cited above, namely 1 Tim. iii. 10, there is a manifest allusion to a custom which survives in our ordinations, at the opening of which the ordaining bishop demands of the faithful present whether they know any notable crime or charge for the which those who have been presented to him for Holy Orders, ought not to be ordained; he demands, in other words, whether they be *anēgklētoi*, i. e., not merely unaccusable but unaccused; not merely free from any just charge, . . . but free from any charge at all—the intention of this citation being, that if any present has such a charge to bring, the ordination should not go forward until this has been duly sifted." The word used by the apostle means, according to this, that the deacon is not only to be blameless, but unblamed. He is to be not only a good man, but also a man of good report.

7. The remaining qualifications refer to the deacon's family relations. "Even so must their wives be grave (*sēmnai*), not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well,"—or, as Dr. Boise translates, "standing honorably at the head of his own household or family." The reference to "wives" is thought by some, for various reasons, to be to women acting as deacons, i. e., to deaconesses. But whether it be or not needs not be discussed here. The chief matter is clear enough, namely, that the family relations of those who bear this office must be commendable—such as do not bring reproach upon themselves or the church.

To sum up: The deacon must be a man of high personal character, adorning the Christian profession; a man of unworldly spirit, not absorbed in the affairs of the world nor possessed with a mania for money-getting; one who has the re-

spect of the community, and against whom there is no reproach or slander astir, for, if so, it must be investigated and removed before he can be regarded as qualified to serve in this office; he is also to be the wise, patient, kind, approved head of his own family circle. The deacon contemplated by the apostle was certainly not a man chosen because of his availability, his ambition, or his popularity, but was a man carefully sought out among the brethren of the church for his peculiar fitness for the responsibilities involved in the office he was to fill.

By whom was he selected? As this article is wholly a Scripture study, a passing word as to what the New Testament indicates in regard to this may be expected. It is to be noticed that the several instructions we have been reviewing were given to Timothy, and not to the church as a body. If it be said that they were given to the church through Timothy, still it is true that the apostle expected him to see that the church complied with them. The word "must" is also employed, and this certainly suggests that the apostle expected his requirements in the appointment of deacons to be attended to and obeyed. It would seem, therefore, that even though the suffrages of the church were given, Timothy himself was to carefully supervise the election, and to see that the apostolic conditions were complied with. In the selection of the seven brethren on the occasion narrated in Acts vi., the apostles kept the matter in their own hands for final approval, saying to the church: "Look you out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, *whom we may appoint over this business.*" The church was merely to nominate (as we should now say), after which the apostles would "appoint," if, upon canvass of the appointees, they were found to measure up to the full standard of the require-

ments laid down beforehand, namely, that they should be men of "honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom." The matter was by no means thrown absolutely into the hands of the members of the church.

If our Congregational polity had been kept within the bounds of the New Testament models, and the bishops of the churches had always been such men as were contemplated by Paul, appointments to the diaconate would be made now also with the approval, and in view of the approval, of the pastor, rather than with his tacit consent. Too frequently he finds it prudent to accept in silence what he is powerless to change. If any one is constrained, in defense of the modern practice of a popular election to a sacred office, to take issue with what has just been said, we would remind him that the only passage in the entire New Testament which touches, even remotely, upon the method of choosing deacons is this incident in Acts vi., and that neither here nor anywhere else is there a hint that these important concerns were left absolutely and without corrective to the whims, prejudices, or caprice of a popular assembly.

It may be noted, too, that there is no hint anywhere in the New Testament (except in Acts vi. 6) of the ordination of deacons by the imposition of hands, or any formal ceremony.<sup>1</sup>

Passing now to the consideration of the deacon's functions,

<sup>1</sup> A scholarly friend, who has given special study to the subject, is of the opinion that the word "elder" as used in the New Testament, includes *all* ecclesiastical offices—pastors, bishops, and deacons alike. If this can be made out, it will follow that, in such passages as Acts xiv. 23,—“And when they had ordained them elders in every church,” etc.,—the ordination included deacons as well as those to whom the term is commonly understood to apply. But this has not yet been made out fully, and it is certainly a theory which would not readily suggest itself to even a studious and careful reader of the New Testament. With all respect to my friend, it seems to me that the “if” in this case is a tolerably large one.

we are again embarrassed by the silence of the New Testament. It gives us no definite information, and we have no warrant to import anything into it. We can only rest whatever opinions we may hold upon the meaning of the word, upon the common New Testament use of it, and upon the nature of the deacon's qualifications as laid down by the apostle Paul.

As to the etymology of the word itself, I find this in Dr. Marvin Vincent's "Word Studies": "*Dōulōs*, perhaps from *deō*, to 'bind,' is the *bondman*, representing the permanent *relation* of servitude. *Diakōnōs*, probably from the same root as *diōkō*, 'to pursue,' represents a servant, not in his relation, but in his *activities*. The term covers both slaves and hired servants." He also has this: "to be a *follower* of a person; to attach one's self to him." Archbishop Trench, in his "Synonyms," agrees with this, but is more explicit. He says: "The difference between *diakōnōs*, on the one side, and *dōulōs* and *therapōn* on the other, is this—that *diakōnōs* represents the servant more in his activity *for the work*; rather in his relation, either servile, as that of the *dōulōs*, or more voluntary, as in the case of the *therapōn*, *to a person*." He then points out that, in the parable of the Marriage Supper, those who go out to bring in the guests are the king's *dōulōi*; those who execute his sentence against the man who had not on the wedding garment are his *diakōnōi*. The idea in the word, as distinguished from *dōulōs* and *therapōn*, is therefore that of *personal attendance*, and, as applied to the ecclesiastical office, it suggests that the deacon is the personal attendant of the bishop or pastor within the sphere of the church's service. The passages already abundantly quoted from the Gospels and Epistles uniformly show that the service rendered by *diakōnōi*, whatever kind of service it might be, was such as is rendered

by those who stand in a subordinate and also personal relation. Within the sphere of the church, however, the duties and office of the deacon are sanctified and ennobled by the sacred character of the church, whose servant he is. His personal character is to accord with, and sustain, the dignity of the office. It is, nevertheless, a subordinate office to that of the bishop, whose personal assistant he is to be.

My own judgment is that the New Testament deacons were men who performed any of the various subordinate services of the church, and that they were under the supervision and direction of the *episcōpōs*, or bishop. He, as the word *episcōpōs* shows, was the church's overseer, who had the general charge of all its interests, and these brethren, chosen from the very best of the membership, were his personal assistants. To illustrate: The pastor is responsible for the order and becoming administration of the Lord's Supper, but he needs in the service the assistance of a number of brethren of the church. These are, for this service, its deacons. Similarly the pastor has, or he ought to have, the oversight of the Sunday-school and the Young People's Society, two most important departments of the church for the prosecution of its work along special lines. But this is not to say that he should be the "superintendent" of the one, or the "president" of the other. Both superintendent and president are, for these services, the pastor's assistants, i. e., his "deacons." They do not, as such, "run" the Sunday-school and the Young People's Society as independent organizations with which the pastor has nothing to do, or, if he have, only on sufferance.

Even what we call the secularities of the church, such as we commit to boards of trustees, finance committees, etc., were considered in these churches, which were the models for all time ( in at least the fundamental principles of their organiza-

tion), of such importance in their relation to its general welfare, that the apostles required the seven brethren, nominated by the church in Jerusalem for so simple a matter as the distribution of relief, to be "men full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom." And there can be no question that our church finances, benevolences, and general business matters, would be, as a rule, in vastly better condition than they are now, if we were more careful to entrust their management to men distinguished in the church for similar practical wisdom and piety. But all such service as this comes within the range of the diaconate. It was in the hands of the deacons—within the New Testament meaning of the word. The apostolic churches knew only one "Board," and that was the Board of Deacons. The purpose in view in the creation of the office was to enable the pastor, or bishop, to devote himself, with less interruption than would otherwise have been possible, to the ministry of the word and to prayer. This is the legitimate inference, albeit only an inference, from the statement in the sixth chapter of the Acts.

I do not mean that, according to the New Testament, the various affairs of the church now entrusted by us to various boards and committees, would be administered by the few brethren whom we are at present recognizing as deacons. This would be to place the affairs of the church of all kinds in the hands of a few men—which would be undesirable. What is meant is that the word "deacon" carries in the New Testament a wider scope of application than we now allow it. It extends to a much larger range of service than now, so that the men (or women) who compose these several boards and committees would all be included in the church's diaconate. The fact is, there are no secularities in the church, strictly speaking. We call them such only for convenience'



sake. The care of the church's finances, the oversight of its property, etc., are as much spiritual duties as the service of the bread and wine at the Lord's Table, for example; and the men and women to whom such matters are committed need to be—even as those were in Jerusalem, who were chosen to distribute relief to the Grecian widows—"full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom."

The results, then, of this investigation are as follows:—

1. The early churches were under the supervision of a person known as bishop, pastor, or elder, according as one aspect or another of his work or character was in contemplation, and it was only he who—except for the single instance given in Acts vi. 6—was solemnly set apart to his office by the formal ceremony of ordination or the imposition of hands. That is to say, there is no rule laid down anywhere for the ordination of deacons; and in the absence of such a rule it is as invalid to *insist* on the ordination of deacons as to insist on the imposition of hands as a method of imparting the Holy Spirit immediately after the administration of baptism.

2. As it soon became necessary, under the multiplication of the bishop's duties, to relieve him of a part of them, the nomination of personal assistants was asked for, in order that he might be more at liberty to attend to the spiritual side of his work.

3. Such, however, was the conception of the dignity and sacredness of the church as the body of Christ, and of the vital relation of all its interests, secular and sacred, to each other, that only men of the highest Christian character, as indicated by the words "full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom," and by the qualifications laid down by the apostle Paul, were deemed worthy of having entrusted to them even its temporal affairs.

4. All these assistants and coadjutants of the pastor, what-

ever the particular duty of each, or of groups of them, constituted the church's diaconate. In relation to the church they were the pastor's fellow-workers; in relation to him they were not independent of him, but officially subordinate to him. Nevertheless their office was one of great dignity. It was a dignity derived from that of the church itself, for which no service necessary to her prosperity could be considered menial; and they were also themselves to dignify their office by their lofty and irreproachable Christian character as exhibited both in their business life and their home relations.

In conclusion, the only divergence of the present practice in churches of the Congregational polity from the New Testament models, as herein set forth, seems to be that they have limited the sphere of the diaconate, and then—notwithstanding the theory that there are only two offices in the New Testament church, namely, those of the pastor and deacons—they have been obliged to supply the vacancies thus made, by appointing boards and committees, which, too, have been generally composed of men of lower grade. Furthermore, they have not been as careful as they ought to have been, with the apostolic teaching before them, in the selection of men for a diaconate of even this limited range of service, and thus they have lowered the moral standard of the office, greatly to the detriment of the church and the efficiency of the pastor. Finally, the proper relation of the deacons to the pastor has not been properly maintained. Too frequently they have been the pastor's critics instead of his assistants and fellow-helpers. Cheerfully acknowledging the many exceptions, which there are among our churches, of boards of deacons composed of brethren who exalt the dignity of their office, adorn the gospel they profess, serve the church with utmost fidelity, and by their wise counsels and timely sugges-

tions contribute to the stability of the pastorate, we are constrained to admit that in the most of them, and these perhaps the weaker churches, which can the less afford to be careless in this matter than the stronger ones, such departures from the New Testament standard for the diaconate as we have noted may be found, and the inevitable consequences are lowered church efficiency, more or less friction in the membership, and shortened pastorates.

The case in Acts vi. 6 cannot be quoted in support of the ordination of deacons in our churches now, because those seven brethren were not deacons at all as we have now limited the functions of the office, although they were such (as we have shown) in the New Testament meaning of the word and the scope of duties covered by it. That is, we must readjust our notions of the office, and bring it up to the apostolic or scriptural standard, making it inclusive of all service rendered the church other than that of the pastor, before we can quote the ordination of the Seven as a precedent for the ordination of those whom we call deacons.