

was fully constituted by his inspired apostles, everything was proceeded with in an orderly way. The social relation of believers to one another, the maintenance of the means of grace among them, and the execution of the Saviour's commission, that the Gospel should be preached to every creature, were not left to the spontaneous action of the spiritual life in individual converts, but secured under orderly and authoritative direction. In proof of this we might refer to the way in which a successor to Judas was chosen, in which Deacons were appointed to attend to the interests of the poor, in which the first Gospel messengers to the heathen nations were sent forth, and in which the young man Timothy was taken into the work of the ministry. To these we shall have occasion to again refer shortly. In the primitive church there may have been, and there doubtless was, much voluntary service rendered, but the interests of the Church were not left to depend on such. And if the maintenance and propagation of the gospel in the Apostolic age could not be left to the zeal and discretion of individual converts, how much less could they be so left now? Would not the discontinuance of a regularly appointed ministry be to a large extent the dissolution and destruction of the church itself?

The constitution of the christian church seems to have been formed after the model of the Jewish Synagogue, and where the converts were chiefly Jews, the one seems, by a kind of natural transition, to have taken its rise out of the other. A bench of elders with one of their number as president, was the synagogue form of government, and when such officers were converted to the gospel they probably retained in the christian church the same position which they had held in the Jewish. Where such were not among the converts or not in sufficient number, others were by election and ordination set apart to the office. As in the Acts of the Apostles and in several of the Epistles, we find frequent reference to these elders as the constituted rulers of the church. The relief funds for the destitute saints at Jerusalem were sent to the care of the elders; the disputed question of circumcising the Gentile converts, was referred for decision to the apostles and elders; the