

Still more, when we investigate the entrance of the minister upon the office which he holds, we find additional indications of the close relationship subsisting between the ministry and the people.

Let us take for example the appointment of the seven recorded in Acts vi. These seven are nowhere called "deacons," yet they are regarded as such by the majority of interpreters, and if this be not the case, we have no account whatever of the origin of the diaconate. We may reasonably grant the identification which is so largely acquiesced in. Observe how every point I have already indicated is here corroborated. The Church appears as a community of believers in Christ, a solidarity of life in Him. Through their union with Him, they are brought into fellowship with one another. Out of the purely internal community of faith and life arises the external association, but at first undefined and formless. Here we have the first recorded step towards definite organization, originating in the complaints of the Hellenists and the necessity for a better administration of the gifts of love spontaneously provided by the Church for its needy members. The office established was simply a transference to the Church of an existing Jewish institution, as Professor Lumby, of Oxford, notices, and as Schurer, in his learned investigations into the antiquities of the Jewish nation, has demonstrated. The Talmud refers to the seven leading men of the city, called frequently "the seven good men," as constituting a board for the management of its affairs; and Josephus refers to certain local courts which consisted of seven persons. The men chosen for the office were to be men "full of the Holy Ghost and Wisdom," according to the apostolic injunction, or, as they are subsequently described, men "full of faith." Thus this basal and indispensable qualification appears upon the forefront of this first step in organization.

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