

In the New Testament Church, as organized by Christ and His apostles, there were two permanent orders of office-bearers, Deacons and Elders.* I do not forget that in subsequent days sundry other orders were added, an imposing hierarchy was set up by mere human authority, with Cardinals, Arch-bishops, and so forth. These were all post-apostolic, and are now acknowledged by candid and scholarly men to be destitute of Scriptural warrant. They no more belong to the simplicity of the apostolic church than the adoration of saints and angels.

With respect to Deacons, we read of the institution of the office in the sixth chapter of the Acts, when "seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom," were elected and ordained to serve in this capacity. They are not called Deacons in the record, but their character, qualifications and work correspond with what was afterwards set forth as belonging to Deacons. And that the office became universal in the apostolic church, and was designed to be permanent, seems clear from Paul's directions to Timothy touching the sort of persons to be chosen as Deacons. They "must be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience."

We are concerned, however, just now with Elders, and regarding them we may note the following points:—

I.—*They are called of God's Spirit to this office.* No man should take this honour to himself unless so called. Hence elders are persons separated and distinctly consecrated to the Lord by their high and sacred vocation. Good men, of course, but more than this as we shall presently see—men of superior intelligence, possessed in some measure of the qualifications which Christ requires of those whom He

* Vide Note A, Appendix, p. 17.