

*General Conference*

THE LIBRARY OF THE  
MENNONITE BRETHREN BIBLE COLLEGE  
77 HENDERSON HWY., WINNIPEG 5

No. 2  
Box-5  
Folder-C

THE SCRIPTURAL PATTERN OF THE DIACONATE

R. M. BAERG

Date? 1958 *Donner*  
*Study Conf*  
5

A careful discussion of the teachings of the New Testament concerning the ministry of the diaconate should always be welcomed. The Reformation left to us the unhappy legacy of different schemes of ecclesiastical organization and orders of the ministry. Representatives of the episcopal form of church government teach that the church is a continuation of the Jewish "church" in organization and ordinances and that the government of the church is by three distinct orders of ministers: bishops, priests, and deacons. The presbyterial form of church government is by presbyters. There is but one order of the ministry; pastors or elders (presbyters) and deacons. The congregational form of church government has but one order of the ministry: pastors or elders and deacons.

In all forms of church government the diaconate is recognized. Differences of opinion occur, however, with respect to its origin, function, and duties. For us as Mennonite Brethren, at least, there are certain settled principles concerning the diaconate, and it is now the duty of the Mennonite Brethren Church to go on and realize as far as possible the ideal of the New Testament church in its ministry of the diaconate.

The particular purpose of this paper is to analyze the passages treating of the diaconate, to trace the etymology and the use of the word "deacon" and its cognates in their varied uses in the New Testament, to observe the origin of the diaconate, its functions, duties, and qualifications for office, to consider the matter of ordination, tenure of service, and to relate the diaconate to the pastoral ministry of the church.

Etymology of the Word "Deacon"

The term "deacon" is not a translation of the Greek word diakonos; it is the latter anglicized and transferred. Originally the word diakonos meant a "servant who waits on a table, a waiter."<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the common laws of language, this term was developed to denote any kind of service, even in the highest realms of life. These facts make it sometimes difficult to distinguish between the general and the technical uses of the term in the New Testament. The English word "deacon" is seldom used as a transitive verb.<sup>2</sup>

Use of "diakonos" in the New Testament

Disregarding the fact that the word "deacon" is not used as a transitive verb, let us use the word in the various ways in which it is used in the Greek to show something of its meaning in the New Testament. "The Son of Man came not to be deaconed but to deacon, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). "I am among you as one that deacons" (Luke 22:27). "If any man deacons me" (John 12:26). "It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God and deacon tables" (Acts 6:2). "Let them deacon" (1 Tim. 3:10). "For they that have deaconed well" (1 Tim. 3:13). "If any man deacon" (1 Pet. 4:11). "Martha was cumbered about much deaconing" (Luke 10:40). "Now this I say that Christ was a deacon of the circumcision for the truth of God" (Rom. 15:8). Speaking of the wicked emperor, among other officials of government, the apostle says, "For he is a deacon of God to thee for good" (Rom. 13:4). Paul calls himself and Apollos deacons when he says, "Who then is Paul? and who is

1. Charles Ewing Brown, The Apostolic Church (Anderson, Indiana: The Warner Press, 1947), p. 234. See also Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament.
2. A transitive verb is one in which the action described is directed to an object.

Apollos, but deacons by whom ye believed? (1 Cor. 3:5). Phebe was a deacon (Rom. 16:1)<sup>3</sup> Concerning angels we read, "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to a deaconship for them"? (Heb. 1:14).

As a noun diakonos occurs thirty times and is translated "minister," "servant," and "deacon". (See Matt. 20:28; Mark 9:35; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8, 12). The noun diakonia occurs thirty-five times and is translated "ministry," "relief," "ministering," "service," and "ministration." The verb diakoneō found thirty-seven times in the New Testament, is translated "ministered," "serve," "administered," and "use the office of the deacon." From all the various uses of the noun and its cognates we observe that the basic idea is the same; it is service, help, subordination.

It is apparent, from a careful reading of the various passages where the word "deacon" or its cognates are found, that this common use of the word in the Greek language to indicate all kinds of service, either humble or exalted, makes it sometimes difficult to judge clearly when or whether the term is used in its technical sense to apply to a certain office in the church.

### Origin of the Diaconate

As to the historical origins of the diaconate, the commentators are as disagreed on this question as are the Arminians and Calvinists on the question of the Sovereignty of God and the free will of man. Some seek to trace the historical origins of the diaconate to the diakonoi who distributed the meat to the guests at the Greek festivals, pointing out that in the temple "Metropolis," in Lydia, there were both deacons and deaconesses.<sup>4</sup> Others seek to connect the diaconate with a prototype existing in the Jewish community, or make it to be an adaptation of the order of Levites or of the Jewish Synagogue. Lightfoot, one of the strongest authorities on this question, sees no reason for relating the origin of the diaconate to any other event than that the special exigency of the time required a particular work and that the narrative in the Acts implies that the office thus created was entirely new.<sup>5</sup> Lightfoot also assumes that the diaconate thus created represents the later diaconate. Though this point is much disputed by commentators, the identity of the diaconate in the Acts and of the pastoral epistle to Timothy cannot be reasonably called in question.

The word "deacon" does not occur in the sixth of the Acts, yet the corresponding verb and substantive, diakonein and diakonia, are repeated more than once. "The functions are substantially those which devolved on the deacons of the earliest ages, and which still in theory, though not altogether in practice, form the primary duties of the office."<sup>6</sup>

The office of the diaconate, as related in Acts 6, grew out of a special emergency in the congregation of Jerusalem, in consequence of the complaints of the Hellenists against the Hebrews, that their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations (diakonia). Hence, the apostles, who had hitherto themselves attended to this duty, instructed the congregation to elect from their midst seven brethren, and ordained them by prayer and laying on of hands. "The seven" elected on this occasion were not extraordinary officers or commissioners, but deacons in the primitive sense of the word; for although they are not called "deacons" in the Acts, their

---

3. A masculine noun is used here, thus diakonos.

4. W. H. H. Marsh, The New Testament Church (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1898), p. 498.

5. J. B. Lightfoot, Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians (London: Macmillan Company Limited, 1927), p. 189.

6. Ibid., p. 188.

office is expressly described as one of ministry (diakonia) or "serving tables."

The deacon's office is not a lower order of the ministry of the church. This is evident from the fact that the term diakonos was applied to the primary functions of the ministry of the apostles, namely, the ministry (Greek, diakonia) of the Word and the ministry (diakonia) of tables. If we thus hold to the biblical-historic position that there was no distinction between the clergy and laity, it is equally apparent that this obtains with reference to the pastorate and the diaconate.

Whatever views may be held as to the origins of the diaconate, one thing is quite clear, namely, that the diaconate developed from the ministry designated in Acts six and may be traced back to it. Exegetical tradition is almost unanimously in favor of this view, and many of the best commentators sustain it.<sup>7</sup>

### Qualifications of the Diaconate

A comparison of the qualifications for the office of the diaconate as listed in Acts 6 and 1 Tim. 3 seems to indicate that the former were the three basic ones, namely: (1) Christian character, (2) being filled with the Spirit, and (3) practical wisdom, and that the latter list, additions made by Paul, were made because the ministry of the diaconate became more expanded.<sup>8</sup> The different qualifications point to different duties. The deacon's work evidently consisted very much in visiting and relieving the poor, where his special temptation would be in one direction to gossip and slander, in the other to picking and stealing from the alms.<sup>9</sup> Thus the qualifications of being "grave, not double-tongued, not greedy of filthy lucre" seem to apply to the particular duty in which the diaconate is to function.

The qualifications for the diaconate are similar to that of the "bishop," except that the ability to teach and "by sound doctrine to exhort and convince the gainsayers" are especially required of the bishop and not of the deacon.<sup>10</sup> The formidable list of qualifications in 1 Tim. 3 shows how closely the diaconate was allied to the authority and oversight of the pastor and to the influence, training, and all the spiritual interests of the church. It is at least presumptive evidence that the diaconate was designed to be a help to the church and the pastorate and an agency by which the church could direct its affairs in an efficient and orderly way. At most, these qualifications, however, give only hints as to the sphere and functions of this office. They have to do wholly with character and fitness. The passage of 1 Tim. 3:8-13 may be summarized as a description of the ideal Christian man in his spiritual character principles, ethical relations, in his reputation among those who are without, his tested and approved integrity, his established habits of life, his righteous control of his household, and his known consecration to the cause of Christ. The one thing lying at the center of these qualifications is Christian character tested and confirmed.

In his description of the diaconate, Paul did not consider young manhood or advanced life. Maturity of character, wisdom, sound judgment, fixed relations in life, both domestic and social, tried and confirmed godliness--these are the traits Paul defines. Such men as possess these qualifications, regardless of their physical

---

7. Meyer, Alford, Lange, Lighfoot, and others strongly support this position.

8. W. Robertson Nicoll, The Expositor's Greek New Testament, Exposition on the Acts (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), Vol. II. p. 169.

9. James Hastings, A Dictionary of the Bible, Article on "deacon" by Alfred Plummer, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), Vol. I.

10. Compare 1 Tim. 3:2 and Titus 1:8,9.

age, are to be selected by the church, that confidence may be placed in them, and that they may wisely administer the affairs of the church whatever that may be. But Paul's words describe qualifications, not official duties!

### Duties of the Diaconate

The assumption, so far as the qualifications hint, is that the deacon may be assigned to different spheres of service by the church. What is said of the stability of their faith, evidently shows that the office may have a spiritual sphere and relation. But it is evident that we cannot deduce a definition of the specific duties of the diaconate from this description of qualifications for the office. It is assumed that the duties of deacons are defined in the sixth of the Acts, but since the service of the seven was to meet an immediate and temporary emergency, it is rather difficult to ascribe the specific duties of the diaconate for later church periods from this chapter. It may be implied, however, that since the noun diakonia and the verb diakoneō in the expressions "ministrations" (v. 1) "ministry" (v. 4) and "serve" (v. 2) occur in the sixth chapter of the Acts, the general outline of duties of the diaconate is hinted at.

In a general way, we may ascribe the duties of caring for the temporalities of the church to that of the diaconate; but the ministry is spiritual, as well as temporal, for the distribution of funds to the needy and the care of the widows and the sick requires a kind of pastoral care of souls. Instruction and consolation are vitally connected with the distribution of funds to the needy, hence the high qualifications of "wisdom," being "filled with the Spirit," and of Christian character. Preaching was not an essential part of the service of the deacon; and when it was engaged by them, it followed from a special gift of grace, rather than from their official standing.<sup>11</sup> "The seven" were elected to serve, and as there is no reference to their name of office in the Acts, though the corresponding verb diakoneō is used, is there not "quite a hint to their successors to be more covetous of discharging their duties than of wearing the name?" "If the early church could procure the ministration of deacons, it let the name take care of itself."<sup>12</sup>

That the diaconate was an established ministry of the apostolic age is evident from the epistle to the Philippians, where they are associated with the "bishops" (Phil. 1:1), and from the qualifications listed in 1 Tim. 3. In view of the absence of a specific list of duties of the diaconate, we may draw the conclusion that these duties were determined by the purpose for which, from time to time, as new conditions developed, the churches elected deacons. This conclusion more nearly conforms to what is said of deacons in the Epistles than from any other. There is a rather hidden reference to the diaconate in Paul's mention of "helps" which God has set in the church (1 Cor. 12:28). The word "helps" (Greek - ANTILEPSEIS) is not found elsewhere in the New Testament, and its primary meaning is "taking part with, defending, mutual acceptance, objection of a disputant." Thayer refers this term to the "ministrations of deacons."<sup>13</sup> Is there perhaps a hint, in the meaning of this term, that one of the functions of the diaconate is that of carefully defending the ministry of the Word against false accusations and from becoming involved in disputes and quarrelsome situations in the church? If this be so, we can visualize the ideal of the pastor of giving himself "wholly to prayer and to the ministry of the Word."

---

11. Henry C. Sheldon, History of the Christian Church (New York: Thomas Y. Corwell & Co., 1894), Vol. I. p. 126.

12. Joseph Exell, The Biblical Illustrator (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1954), Exposition on Acts. Vol. I., p. 538.

13. Thayer, ibid.

Whenever Paul used diakonos to refer to the office and diakoneo to refer to the service, his meaning was readily understood by the early church. The dominant idea of these two words was familiar to the apostolic churches. Referring to faithfulness in the performance of the duties of the office (1 Tim. 3:13), he employs the expression "they who have deaconed well," or as the R. S. V. has it, "Those who served well as deacons." It is clear that Paul emphasized the universally understood significance of the words "help," "service," and "subordination." There is no intimation of any misconception of the nature of the office of the diaconate during the apostolic period. And while in later periods of the history of the church, ecclesiastical perversions of the office were always defined, the New Testament does not define them. That was left, it appears to the church under the progressive leading of the Holy Spirit, in accordance with the varying needs and circumstances. A deacon is merely a servant of the church, a helper, not a ruler of the church nor of the pastor.

From the structural view-point of the church, the New Testament does not contain a hint that any officers besides pastors and deacons are necessary.<sup>14</sup> But both these are permanent; churches will always need pastors and deacons, nor is there any work to which a church may be called by the Spirit and by the providence of God for which the diaconate of the apostolic period is not the provision for today. This makes the distinction between the diaconate and committees. The latter is often necessary but the necessity of the diaconate is perpetual. Though the office of the diaconate is permanent, we do not mean by this that the person elected to this office is elected for life, or even during good behavior. The period for which they hold office is as much within the determination of the church as the object for which they are appointed. We mean only that the office is permanent. Again, one church may need a larger diaconate than another, because of a larger membership, a wider field. For lack of a diaconate sufficiently large, properly organized, and its duties clearly defined, much work is either not done, or at best imperfectly. Consequently, sub-organizations are multiplying to do the work the church itself ought to provide for through the diaconate and thereby have it under its immediate direction.

#### Selection of the Diaconate

Assuming that "the seven" constituted the diaconate of the Jerusalem church, it is evident that it was the first organization called forth by the church. The overseers of the Jerusalem church were the apostles, who were still at the head of the church, for no other presiding body was certainly as yet instituted.

As to the reason for the selection of "the seven" to the diaconate, the Scriptures clearly state that the apostles might be relieved of the temporalities, not because they assumed their "position" one of superiority, neither because they had a low estimate of the temporal interests of the church. Their reason for being relieved of the ministry of tables arose out of the absorbing claims upon their specific ministry, namely, that they might give themselves wholly to their proper duties of prayer and the Word. Various reasons have been suggested as to the number of deacons selected, as (1) the number seven being the sacred number among the Jews, (2) that there were seven thousand believers at that time--one deacon for each thousand members, (3) that there were seven congregations in Jerusalem, (4) that it referred to the supposed existence of seven archangels, (5) that it was a contrast to the twelve apostles, (6) that it was a reference to the seven days of the week, etc. Lightfoot, however, well observes, "Let him that has confidence enough pretend to assign a sufficient reason."

Concerning the method of selection of deacons, it is clear that the candidates for office were carefully examined this being implied by the expression "look ye out among you seven men" (Acts 6:3). Just what particular procedure was employed in the

---

14. Pastor, elder, and bishop refer to the same office.

15. Lightfoot, *ibid.*, p. 132.

election, we are not told; but as "the Lord did not furnish His church with an apparatus of government already complete," he did give His Holy Spirit by Whom the church was to be guided according to emergencies and needs of the times.<sup>16</sup>

For all practical purposes for the church of today, it would seem advisable that the following procedure, or one similar to it, be used in the election of brethren to the diaconate. First, the church should be thoroughly prepared by instruction from the Word as to the qualifications and duties of the deacon. Second, much prayer and fasting should precede the selection of candidates for office. Third, each member should be given opportunity to indicate his candidate, this being done on a secret ballot. Fourth, these ballots carefully tabulated, the ones with the highest number of votes should be considered possible candidates for election; however, their candidacy should not become public until the church council has reviewed the list of candidates, having secured each one's personal willingness to serve and thus to allow the council to place their names on the ballot for final election. Fifth, the candidates, having been reviewed, their names would be placed on a ballot and submitted to the church for publication. Sixth, adequate time should be given the church to consider the candidates for election, after which the election may be effected. This particular procedure, or at least one similar to it has the advantage of carefully reviewing the candidates for the high office of the diaconate and of securing only those who are willing to serve. Hasty elections and rash decisions are thus avoided. All in all, much prayer and spiritual instruction must go into any church election.

### The Ordination of Deacons

Those who are chosen by the congregation are ordained by the ministry, this being in keeping with the biblical pattern of ordination in the sixth of the Acts. Gabelein points out that the "laying on of hands was based on the Old Testament practices which signified the identification of the Israelite with the offering itself." "The apostles identified themselves and the assembly with them in their work for which they had been chosen. It was a very simple and appropriate act to show their fellowship with them."<sup>17</sup> Whether or not there is more involved in the matter of ordination, we would leave to a particular study on the subject of ordination, with particular reference to 1 Tim. 4:14 and 2 Tim. 1:6. Suffice it to say, however, that the deacons of Acts 6 were set apart for their office by the laying on of hands and the Lord's blessings invoked upon them. This practice was freely adopted by the early church, for we read of it in connection with the appointment of missionaries (Acts 13:3) and the appointment of elders (1 Tim. 4:4; 5:22; 2 Tim. 1:6).

The laying on of hands on the seven brethren for the sacred task of serving in the sphere of the temporalities indicates the greatness of this office and enhances this ministry before the membership of the church. Any tendency to lower the status of the diaconate constitutes a violation of the biblical pattern. Inasmuch as there was no distinction between the laying on of hands on Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13) and on the "seven" (Acts 6), the former being ordained to missionary service, the latter to the temporal duties of the church, we do injustice by making distinctions between the ordination to the ministry of the Word and the ministry of tables.

### Term of Service

It should be pointed out again, that although the office of the diaconate is permanent, there is nothing in Scripture to warrant the conferring of a lifetime

---

16. Exell, ibid., Acts 1, p. 534.

17. A. C. Gabelein, The Acts of the Apostles, An Exposition (New York: Publication Office "Our Hope," 456 Fourth Avenue, n. d.), p. 121.

place in the office to which the deacon is appointed. Spurgeon's tabernacle practised the election of elders year by year, while the tenure of service of deacons was permanent.<sup>18</sup> There seems to be no more logic in appointing a deacon to a lifetime service than there is in appointing a pastor as a lifetime pastor of a church.

In his treatment of the diaconate, Harvey observes:<sup>19</sup>

"Experience has shown the desirableness of election for a limited period rather than for life, the body of deacons being so organized that a part go out of office at stated intervals, thus ensuring at all times a diaconate which shall possess alike the stability and wisdom which experience brings, and the energy and efficiency which may come from the occasional substitution of younger and more active men in the place of the infirm or incompetent. The term of service should not be so short as to require frequent changes. This takes from the dignity and moral power of the office, and introduces an undesirable element of instability."

### Deaconesses

The view that the duties of the office of the diaconate are under the leading of the Spirit and determined by conditions and circumstances makes self-consistent provision for deaconesses. The usual view of the diaconate, based on what is said of "the seven" does not. They were men. If their appointment was the beginning of the diaconate, the inferences would be that men only are eligible to the office. It is admitted by scholars of church history that there were deaconesses in the apostolic church, but that they are unnecessary now. If we grant the temporary provision for deaconesses, it must be assumed on the basis of the enforced seclusion of women in the Orient in the early centuries. Propriety often forbids inquiries by men and their extending help and counsel to girls and women. It is the sphere of women to give these.

There is, however, necessity for direction and sympathetic oversight of the girls and women in the church, or they will be neglected. This help afforded to the sisters of the church is basic in the consideration of deaconesses, and this is the reason, if any at all, why the ministry of deaconesses of the New Testament seems to be a permanent, and not a temporary provision to meet the peculiar social conditions of the female constituency of the church. That deaconesses were included in the diaconate in the apostolic churches is generally agreed. Paul designates Phebe as diakonos (Rom. 16:1), a deacon of the church at Cenchrae. This is as definite as it could be, for at that time the Greek language had no corresponding feminine term. The word for deaconess, diakonissa, was coined some years after the close of the New Testament era.<sup>20</sup> Phebe is first called "the sister." The definite article shows that she was well known. The word diakonos is explanatory, thus: Phebe, the sister, "a deacon."

Five women besides Phebe have "honorable mention" in the same chapter, but the term "deacon" is not used in connection with them. The position Phebe takes is that of a servant, and hence subordinate to the church. Nowhere is it said that she was a preacher of the Word, or administered ordinances. She, no doubt, along with other deaconesses, did the work of the church which women were especially fitted to do, and to which they were especially appointed.

---

18. Augustus Hopkins Strong, Systematic Theology (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, reprinted 1945), p. 918.

19. H. Harvey, The Church: Its Polity and Ordinances (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1879), p. 80.

20. Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1946), Vol. III, p. 176.



In further support of the conclusion that deaconesses were required for the work among women is a reference to the qualifications of deaconesses, as the literal rendering seems to indicate. In our version the reading of 1 Tim. 3:11 is, "Even so must their wives be grave . . ." The Revised Version reads, "Women in like manner . . ." This is quite different, but correct, and thus does justice to the contextual setting in which Paul is writing about qualifications for office in the church. On this point Lock remarks: "From the context and from the parallelism between the qualities required for them and for the deacons . . . these must be deaconesses (not 'wives of deacons'), women who help".<sup>21</sup> Lenski, a Lutheran theologian who would naturally hold to the view of the deaconesses as being included within the diaconate, observes that "Paul would be the last one to select both husband and wife for an office and assign to the wife duties that would take her away from home and her children."<sup>22</sup>

Kenneth Wuest suggests four pertinent reasons why he believes Paul was speaking of deaconesses and not of the wives of deacons, namely:<sup>23</sup>

"First, the words, 'even so,' are the translation of hosautos, which is used in introducing a second or third in a series. The series here is of Church officials; second, there is no possessive pronoun in the Greek, which would be needed if the women were the wives of the deacons; third, the four qualifications which follow correspond, with appropriate variations, to the first four required of deacons as regards demeanor, government of the tongue, use of wine, and trustworthiness; and fourth, this is a section dealing wholly with Church officials. The reference here is to women who hold the office of deaconesses, as Phoebe (Rom. 16:1)."

The early Fathers bear witness to such officers, as Chrysostom, and others to whom Alford makes reference in his one-volume commentary on the New Testament. Authorities differ as to whether the wives of deacons are meant here, in 1 Tim. 3:8, and 11, or not, but in either case they agree that they are deaconesses. Whatever the reason for the discontinuance of deaconesses, if such be the biblical pattern of the diaconate, the biblical pattern is reason enough for restoring it.

### Summary and Conclusions

Summarizing this study on the diaconate, one that might well be allotted more time and space in an extended treatment of thorough research, we believe the following conclusions to be warranted upon the basis of the facts presented, namely:

1. The diaconate is of permanent existence in the church; the term of service of a deacon need not necessarily be of permanent duration.
2. The diaconate fulfills a ministry within the sphere of temporalities, primarily, and functions in this field of ministry due the particular circumstances and conditions.

---

21. Walter Lock, A Critical And Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), p. 40.

22. R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus, and to Philemon (Columbus, Ohio: Wartburg Press, 1946), p. 598.

23. Kenneth S. Wuest, The Pastoral Epistles in the Greek New Testament For the English Reader (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), p. 61.



3. The deacon is a helper of the church, and thus a servant of and subordinate to the church, not a ruler.

4. The high qualifications for the office of the diaconate point to the exalted ministry of "serving tables."

5. The selection of deacons is to be made by the whole church; their appointment or ordination by the ministry.

6. The ministry of deaconesses is biblical, and whatever reason may be assigned for its discontinuance, the biblical pattern is sufficient reason for restoring it.

7. The ordaining of deacons is biblical, a practice when observed in our churches, enhances the ministry of the diaconate and gives it the rightful place of respect and honor.

8. The deacons are primarily helpers, not of the pastor, but of the church, in order that the church may more richly benefit from the undivided attention given by the pastor to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.

We conclude that since the ministry of the diaconate is one of high requirements, similar to that of the bishop, it is incumbent upon Mennonite Brethren to continue the biblical pattern, and to restore the biblical emphasis of the diaconate for the spiritual enrichment, dynamic growth, and effective service of the church.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alford, Henry. The New Testament for English Readers. Chicago: Moody Press, reprint.
- Brown, Charles Ewing. The Apostolic Church. Anderson, Indiana: The Warner Press, 1947.
- Exell, Joseph. The Biblical Illustrator. Acts I. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1954.
- Gabelein, A. C. The Acts of the Apostles, An Exposition. New York: Publication Office "Our Hope", 456 Fourth Avenue, n.d.
- Harvey, H. The Church: Its Polity and Ordinances. Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1879.
- Hastings, James. A Dictionary of the Apostolic Church. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919.
- \_\_\_\_\_. A Dictionary of the Bible. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908.
- Hause, Alvin G. A Church At Work. Rev. ed. Kansas City, Mo.: Western Baptist Publishing Company, 1936.
- Heidel, William Arthur, Article on "deacon" in The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. II. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1938.
- Lenski, R. C. H. The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles. Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1944.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Interpretation of Colossians, Thessaolonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. Columbus, Ohio: The Warburg Press, 1944.
- Lightfoot, J. B. Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians. London, St. Martin Street: Macmillan Company Limited, 1927.
- Lock, Walter. The International Critical Commentary. An Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924.
- Marsh, W. H. H. The New Testament Church. Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1898.
- Meyer, Heinrich Augustus Wilehelm. Commentary on the New Testament. Acts of the Apostles. New York: Funk & Wagnalls Publishers, 1883.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Commentary of the New Testament. Timothy, Hebrews, Titus. New York: Funk & Wagnalls Publishers, 1883.
- McClintock, John. Cyclopedia of Biblical Theology and Ecclesiastical Literature, Vol. II. New York: Harper Brothers Publishers, 1883.
- McGiffert, Arthur Cushman. A History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age. rev. ed. New York: Charles Scribners & Sons, 1914.

Bibliography, continued.

- Nicoll, W. Robertson. The Expositor's Greek Testament. Vol. II, "Acts," by R. J. Knowling. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n. d.
- Schaff, Philip. History of the Christian Church. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895, 3rd ed.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Article on "deacon" in The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, Vol. III. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1952.
- Sheldon, Henry C. History of the Christian Church, Vol. I. "The Early Church." New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company, 1894.
- Strong, Augustus Hopkins. Systematic Theology. Philadelphia: The Judson Press, reprinted 1945.
- Thayer, Joseph Henry. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. New York: American Book Company, 1886.
- Vincent, Marvin R. Word Studies in the New Testament, Vol. I. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1946.
- Wuest, Kenneth S. The Pastoral Epistles in the Greek New Testament For The English Reader. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1952.

## SUPPLEMENT, BY THE FINDINGS COMMITTEE, ON THE PAPER

"THE SCRIPTURAL PATTERN OF THE DIACONATE"THE TERM OF THE DIACONATE

In the teachings of Christ and the Apostles, we have a general pattern and framework for the organizational structure of the ministries in the church. In this pattern and framework not all details have been clearly set forth. Times, circumstances and methods change, but principles remain. Thus the diaconate was called into existence through prevailing circumstances and temporal needs of the apostolic church. Paul, at a later date in 1 Timothy 3:8, - - emphasizes this and outlines the qualifications for this ministry including them with the bishops or ministers in the essential structure of church government. Though the office of the diaconate belongs into the permanent structure of the church, the Scripture is silent as to the length of the term of service. The election of a deacon is with the specific purpose for service, and is therefore not the conferring of a special rank upon him, but rather the assignment of a sphere of service. This according to the purpose of his election the length of the term of a deacon's ministry would be determined by his effectiveness and his spiritual and physical fitness, as well as the manifestation of the blessing of God upon his work. In view of this, the ordination would not necessarily be for life, but rather for an indefinite period of time in which he willingly and devotedly serves the Lord and the congregation.

"DEACONESSSES"

Scripture indicates that deaconesses have had a special place in the ministry of the early church. They were to teach the younger women in the way of holiness, and to instruct them in christian living. The practice of the Mennonite Brethren Church has been to delegate this area of service to the wives of the deacons. In this we have made provision for the ministry of the deaconess. On the basis of the scripture, and in view of the needs of the missionary outreach at home and abroad, we recognize also the importance of this particular ministry in the church and accept the Biblical provision for the function of this ministry, circumstances or conditions determining the establishing of it.