

Deacon, a word study

The concept of serving is expressed in Gk. by many words which are often hard to differentiate even though each has its own basic emphasis. → means to serve as a slave, with a stress on subjection. → emphasises willingness for service and the respect and concern thereby expressed (esp. towards God). → means to serve for wages. In NT days it had come to be used predominantly for religious or cultic duties. → denotes official public service to the people or to the state, being used in the LXX for service in the temple and in Christianity for service in the Church. means at root to steer. In terms of service, it signifies esp. the relation to the master to whom the service is rendered. In Xenoph. → is often used in the sense of adjutant. As distinct from all these terms, has the special quality of indicating very personally the service rendered to another. It is thus closest to , but in there is a stronger approximation to the concept of a service of love.

A. outside the NT.

Fundamental to an understanding of in all its uses is the fact that it has an original concrete sense which is still echoed in its figurative meanings. In secular Gk. , which is first found in Herodot. and is never too common, means a. “to wait at table”: Aristoph. Ach., 1015 ff.:

4: Γ ... ; Diod. S., V, 28, 4: Γ ... ; Athen., IX, 21: , K , ; cf. Plut. Virtutem Doceri Posse, 3 (II, 440c).

In particular it means “to taste,” Ps. Luc. Asin., 53:

; or “to direct a marriage-feast,” Athen., IX, 20: ; so also Athen., VI, 46; Dio Chrys. Or., 7, 65. b. Rather more generally it means “to provide or care for,” Soph. Phil., 285 ff. In this sense it is often used of the work of women, Plat. Leg., VII, 805e: Θ

; Plut. Adulat., 22 (II, 63d):

. On the basis of these original senses, it has

c. the comprehensive meaning “to serve,” Hdt., IV, 154: ; Demosth., 9, 43:

; P. Oxy., II, 275, 10:

In Greek eyes serving is not very dignified. Ruling and not serving is proper to a man, Plat. Gorg., 492b. The formula of the sophist: “How can a man be happy when he has to serve someone?” expresses the basic Greek attitude (Plat. Gorg., 491e). This attitude is still reflected in Plato’s characterisation of the servant as a contemptible flatterer (Gorg., 521ab). In Gorg., 518, shopkeepers, bakers and others, as distinct from physicians and the teachers of gymnastics, pursue activities for the nurture of the body which are described as . Service acquires a higher value only when rendered to the state, Demosth., 50, 2; Plat. Leg., 955cd:

. Even the merchant, tradesman or moneylender can in his way render service in the state, Plat. Resp., II, 371a ff. The statesman, however, does so directly, though naturally in terms of an idealistic understanding. For the Greek, the goal of human life is the perfect development of individual personality. This determines the nature of service to others. Logically, the sophist argues, a real man should simply serve his own desires with boldness and cleverness, Plat. Gorg., 492a. Plato contradicts this, but his basic attitude is the same. The only point is that a harmonious individual personality is for him interrelated to the harmonious totality. Gorg., 508a:

. The form of this for social life is . Hence the statesman rules as , not for the sake of ruling nor for the sake of his own desires, but for the sake of the service laid upon him, which consists supremely in the education of good citizens. Even this service, however, is determined by the self-understanding of the ego as a microcosm. Thus, even though it demands certain renunciations, it does not entail any true self-emptying for the sake of others. Service is not one of the powers which

hold heaven and earth together, and it does not lead to sacrifice.

This view persists in Aristotle and Hellenism. The significance of the *diakonos*, however, gradually yields before a stronger cosmic awareness in which the wise man has the sense of being a servant of God, Epict. Diss., III, 22, 69; III, 24, 65. As such he is the instrument and witness of God, Diss., III, 26, 28; IV, 7, 20. On the other hand, “if expressions for service become more common in relation to God, they withdraw into the background in relation to one’s neighbour.”² To be sure, realisation of the service to be rendered to God carries with it a certain interrelationship with the totality of creation. But concrete obligations towards one’s neighbour almost completely disappear. For the Greek in his freedom and wisdom there can certainly be no question of existing to serve others.

2 Judaism showed a much deeper understanding of the meaning of service. Eastern thinking finds nothing unworthy in serving. The relation of a servant to his master is accepted, especially when he serves a great master. This is supremely true of the relation of man to God. It is noteworthy that the LXX does not use the term *diakonos* at all, but renders the Heb. equivalents by \rightarrow *diakonos*, or, in the cultic sphere, by \rightarrow *diakonos* and \rightarrow *diakonos*. The harsher term *diakonos* is in no way thought to be unsuitable.

Philo uses *diakonos* in the general sense of “to serve,” with a clear echo of the original meaning “to wait at table,” Vit. Cont., 70: *diakonos*; cf. also Vit. Cont., 75. From the material understanding of the concept of service one can see how Greek thinking softens the severity of the Jewish view.

In Joseph. *diakonos* occurs in three senses: “to wait at table,” Ant., 11, 163:

diakonos; so also Ant., 6, 52; 11, 166; 11, 188; a woman serves in the night: 18, 74; b. “to serve” with the meaning of “to obey,” Ant., 9, 25: *diakonos*; cf. also Ant., 17, 140; c. “to render priestly service,” Ant., 7, 365:

diakonos, at the Passover, Ant., 10, 72: ...

Israel had the great heritage of the commandment of Lv. 19:18: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” This included full readiness for and commitment to service of one’s neighbour. In later Judaism, however, 3 factors tended to obscure it. A sharp distinction came to be made between the

righteous and the unrighteous in the antitheses of the Pharisees, and this dissolved the unconditional command of love and service. There arose the attitude lashed by Jesus in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Again, the service was less and less understood as sacrifice for others and more and more as a work of merit before God. Finally, there arose in Judaism the idea, which is so obvious to the natural man, not to accord service, especially service at table, to the unworthy. When Rabban Gamaliel II, the son of the rabbi, served other rabbis reclining at table with him, this caused astonishment. But Rabbi Jehoshua observed (Qid., 32b, cf. M. Ex., 18, 12): “We find that a greater than he served at table. Abraham was greater than he, and he served at table. A third added: God ... spreads the table before all men, and should not Rabban Gamaliel therefore ... stand and serve us?”

B. *diakonos* in the NT.

Jesus’ view of service grows out of the OT command of love for one’s neighbour, which He takes and links with the command of love for God to constitute the substance of the divinely willed ethical conduct of His followers. In so doing, He purifies the concept of service from the distortions which it had suffered in Judaism. Jesus’ attitude to service is completely new as compared with the Greek understanding. The decisive point is that He sees in it the thing which makes a man His disciple.

In the NT *diakonos* is first used in the original sense of “to wait at table”: Lk. 17:8:

diakonos; Jn. 12:2: *diakonos*, M *diakonos*, A

. At table there is a palpable distinction between the worthy man reclining on the couch and the girded servant or the attentive woman. It is thus a high honour for the vigilant servants when their returning lord rewards them by girding himself, setting them at table and coming to serve them (Lk. 12:37). The astonishing act of Jesus in the appraisal of service is to reverse in ethical estimation the relation between serving and being served (Lk. 22:26 f.). Among the disciples *diakonos* must be

diakonos; *diakonos*; *diakonos*;

The natural man—and especially the Greek—would see no difficulty in answering the question who is greater, the one who serves or the one who is served. It is obviously the latter. Jesus in His emphatic statement (*diakonos* ...) does not oppose to this view the general thought that serving is greater than being served. Instead, He points to the actu-

ality: I am among you as a servant. This is said by the uncontested leader of the disciples, by the Son of Man who knows that He is Lord of the kingdom of God (Lk. 22:29) and who summons the disciples to exercise final judgment on Israel with Him (v. 30). It is thus clear that Jesus is not merely bringing about a radical change in the academic estimation of human existence and action; He is instituting in fact a new pattern of human relationships. He makes this no less clear in terms of the specific process of waiting at table than by His own action in washing the feet of His disciples.

There is a variant reading of Lk 22:27 f. in Codex D. This would give the following sense: "Better the leader be servant than the one who sits at table. For I have come among you, not as one who sits at table, but as one who serves. And you have grown through my service." Blass and J. Weiss regard this as the original version. It blunts, however, the sharpness of the antithesis between the current view and that of Jesus, and reduces to mere pedagogy the impressive reference to the manner and conduct of Jesus. It is surely a later softening.

In a rather wider sense *diakonein* means "to supervise the meal" in Ac. 6:2: *κατασκηνώσας*. The reference is not merely to the provision of food but to the daily preparation and organisation. H. J. Holtzmann describes the men to whom this task was committed as organisers, dispensers and overseers of meals, *κατασκηνώσας*. The *κατασκηνώσας* is brought into emphatic contrast with the *κατασκηνώσας*, and embraces practical love rather than the proclamation of the Word.

It is a debated question how this service, in which the Hellenistic widows felt they were being overlooked, was executed in the period depicted in Ac. 6, whether by the distribution of portions to those in special need or by the arranging of common meals.⁸ The latter is more likely. For it means that the overlooking of the Hellenistic widows was probably no mere matter of partiality, and therefore of petty wrangling for the better portions, but a radical difference of opinion on whether they should be admitted to the fellowship and therefore whether they really belonged to the community. Possibly such issues as the attitude to the Law and to the strict Jewish concept of purity were already involved. For the committing of this service to the Hellenistic Seven surely implies rather more than a purely external release of the leaders of the community from administrative duties.

Martha's care for her guest is described as

in Lk. 10:40, the narrower sense being included as in Jn. 12:2. Peter's mother-in-law cares for her guests in the same way in Mk. 1:31 and par. The word also seems to be used in this sense of the angels who ministered to Jesus after the temptation (Mk. 1:13; Mt. 4:11); their ministry consisted in bringing Him food after His period of fasting.

The same change in evaluation as we find in respect of waiting at table applies everywhere in the NT to *diakonein* in the wider sense of "to be serviceable." Sometimes the link with waiting at table may still be discerned, as when it is said of the women who accompany Jesus: *κατασκηνώσας* (or *κατασκηνώσας*)

(Lk. 8:3). Cf. also Mt. 27:55; Mk. 15:41. In Mt. 25:42-44, however, Jesus comprises under the term *diakonein* many different activities such as giving food and drink, extending shelter, providing clothes and visiting the sick and prisoners. The term thus comes to have the full sense of active Christian love for the neighbour and as such it is a mark of true discipleship of Jesus. For what the Christian does to even the least of his fellowmen he does to the Lord Himself. Here it is plain that "*κατασκηνώσας* is one of those words which presuppose a Thou, and not a Thou towards whom I may order my relationship as I please, but a Thou under whom I have placed myself as a *κατασκηνώσας*." In exact accord with His own attitude as expressed in Lk. 22:26 f., Jesus draws from this basic insight the demand of Mk. 10:43-45; Mt. 20:26-28:

ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔρχεται ἵνα ᾖ διάκονος. ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔρχεται ἵνα ᾖ διάκονος. ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔρχεται ἵνα ᾖ διάκονος. Jesus consciously opposes this command to the natural order whereby the princes of the nations lord it over them and their great ones exercise authority (Mk. 10:42; Mt. 20:25). The aim of Jesus and His disciples is not to set up human orders in this world. Their concern is with the kingdom of God and the age of glory. But the way to this goal leads through suffering and death. This determines at once the attitude of all whom God calls to His kingdom. The point of suffering is to be found in the service therein accomplished. This makes it sacrificial. For the Christian, then, there is only one way to greatness. He must become the servant (*κατασκηνώσας*), indeed, the slave of all (*κατασκηνώσας*); cf. Mk. 9:35; 10:44.

This reversal of all human ideas of greatness and rank was accomplished when the Son of Man Himself came, not to be ministered unto (→ 84, in exposition of Lk. 22:26), but to minister. The new feature as compared with Lk. 22:26 is that in Mk. 10:45 and Mt. 20:28 Jesus does not stop at the pic-

ture of table service. is now much more than a comprehensive term for any loving assistance rendered to the neighbour. It is understood as full and perfect sacrifice, as the offering of life which is the very essence of service, of being for others, whether in life or in death. Thus the concept of achieves its final theological depth. And what is true of Christ Himself is made a command for all His disciples in Jn. 12:26:

It can be seen quite irrefutably from v. 25 that discipleship of Jesus Christ demands service even to death. To serve the neighbour, Christ, or God is one and the same thing. The resultant fellowship with the Father is the reward of such service.

This gives us at once the meaning of in the community. According to 1 Pt. 4:10, every charisma is a gift entrusted to man with the condition that the man who has been blessed by it should serve as a good steward of the manifold gifts of God. As there is at the beginning of this train of thought (1 Pt. 4:7) an exhortation to prayer and brotherly love, so grateful regard for God and concern for one's neighbour together make the divine gift which each is to receive into a gift which is owed to the neighbour. In 1 Pt. 4:11, as in Ac. 6, the charismata are divided into ministry of Word and ministry of act, the latter being specifically described as . This ministry is to be discharged in the power which God gives and to His glory alone. In true Christian service there can be no thought of the righteousness of works or of religious pride. It takes place both from God and to God.

The Christian has many opportunities of service. Timothy and Erastus are assistants () of Paul in the preaching of the Gospel (Ac. 19:22). Paul would have liked to keep Onesimus with him for similar personal and material service in prison (Phlm. 13). What Onesiphorus did in Ephesus (2 Tm. 1:18) was a free service of love and not the exercise of an official diaconate, in contrast to the normal usage of the Past. The searching and foretelling of the prophets was an advance service to the community (1 Pt. 1:10-12). The apostolic office is a similar service, as we see from Paul's description of the Corinthian church as X (2 C. 3:3).

A particular service which played a great role in the life of Paul was the gathering and transmission of the collection for the saints in Jerusalem (2 C. 8:19: ; cf. 8:20). When

Paul goes to Jerusalem with this gift, he expresses its purpose in the formula:

(R. 15:25). When it is said of the recipients of Hebrews in Hb. 6:10:

, this does not mean that they rendered particular service either to Jerusalem as a whole or to outstanding individuals, e.g., the preachers of the Gospel, but that they discharged the general service of love which Christians evince to one another as saints.

In the Past. means "to discharge the office of a deacon" (→ , 89): 1 Tm. 3:10, 13.

denotes the activity of . It occurs in the various senses of the latter both in secular Gk. and twice in the LXX: 1 Macc. 11:58:

(where we have to render "table vessels of gold"); and Est. 6:3, 5 A: (B:).

In the NT means 1. "waiting at table," or in a rather wider sense "provision for bodily sustenance." Lk. 10:40: M . The supervision of the common meals in the early church is called in Ac. 6:1 (→ 85).

It is also used 2. for any "discharge of service" in genuine love. Thus the house of Stephanas gave itself to the service of the saints (1 C. 16:15). Ministering love is linked with , , and in Rev. 2:19. A decisive point for understanding the concept is that early Christianity learned to regard and describe as all significant activity for the edification of the community (Eph. 4:11 ff.), a distinction being made according to the mode of operation. There were corresponding to the and according to 1 C. 12:4 ff. But all these different services were rendered to the one Lord. In each of them the believer serves not only his brother but also Christ. He is responsible for the service committed to him as a gift of grace. In general the → mentioned in 1 C. 12:28 must have formed the content of these acts of service, namely, acts of care and assistance on behalf of the community. In R. 12:7 is placed between and . But even the highest Christian office, the preaching of the Gospel, is described as a ministry of the Word in Ac. 6:4. Probably the original meaning is reflected in this phrase. The Word of God is offered as the bread of life. The true service of the preacher is with a view to the salvation of his brethren, to whom he must render by proclaiming to them the Word of reconciliation (2 C. 5:18 f.). In this respect the

angels are a model (Hb. 1:14):

Service is orientated to the Gospel. All effort to keep the Law is . On the other hand, faith in the glad tidings is (2 C. 3:7–9). These phrases coined by Paul bring out the dialectical tension in the Christian concept of service.

It can also denote 3. the “discharge of certain obligations in the community.” The apostolic office is service acc. to R. 11:13; 2 C. 4:1; 6:3 f.; 11:8; Ac. 1:17, 25; 20:24;

; 21:19; 1 Tm. 1:12. So, too, is the office of the evangelist (2 Tm. 4:5), or the activity of Mark, who combines personal service and assistance with missionary work (2 Tm. 4:11). Activity in office is also in view in Col. 4:17 when Paul admonishes Archippus:

, though it is uncertain whether the reference is to the office of deacon.

In keeping with Paul’s use of , 4. the collection for Jerusalem is described as . The apostle emphasises that this is not to be regarded merely as an external incident but as a true act of love: R. 15:30 f.; 2 C. 8:1–6; 9:1, 12 f.; cf. also Ac. 11:29 f.; 12:25.

A. General Uses of .

1 “The waiter at a meal,” Jn. 2:5, 9.

2 “The servant of a master,” Mt. 22:13: . In this sense the Christian is a servant of Christ, Jn. 12:26. It is part of his task, however, to serve his fellows, Mk. 9:35; 10:43; Mt. 20:26; 23:11.

3 In the figurative sense, “the servant of a spiritual power,” whether good or evil, 2 C. 11:14 f.: , ; Eph. 3:6 f. and Col. 1:23: ; Gl. 2:17: ; R. 15:8: ; 2 C. 3:6:

. The action of the servant is to the benefit of the magnitude which he serves.

When it is said in R. 15:8 that Christ is a servant of the circumcision, this simply means, of course, that His work is on behalf of Israel.

More difficult is Gl. 2:17: “If, then, we who are accounted righteous in Christ are found to be sinners, is Christ a servant of sin? By no means.” “Servant” here might be rendered “promoter.” This

would give us the following line of argument. In Jewish eyes everyone who does not keep the Law is a sinner (→ , I, 322; 325); this applies to all Gentiles, with whom Jews may not hold table fellowship. Thus, if Christ causes the Jews who follow Him to renounce the provisions of the Law, He is extending the domain of sin which embraces all the Gentiles.—Yet it is not impossible to keep to the stronger expression “servant of sin.” If we do, we must interpret the saying in the light of Gl. 2:20. Christ Himself lives and acts in the man who trusts in Him. If this man is found a sinner, this applies to the Lord Himself dwelling within him, as though He were enslaved to sin. The absurdity of the conclusion naturally illustrates the falsity of the presupposition, namely, the Jewish view of sin.

4 As the apostle (→ , I, 437) is X (2 C. 11:23) and in a very special sense, with all the troubles and sufferings and with all the responsibility of this office (2 C. 6:3 ff.). In his description of himself from this standpoint, Paul usually prefers the term (R. 1:1 etc.; Tt. 1:1), which expresses far more clearly the fact that he belongs wholly and utterly to Christ or to God.

5 Timothy is a “servant of God” to the degree that with the preaching of the Gospel he confirms and admonishes the faith of the Thessalonians (1 Th. 3:1–3). Timothy is also called a true servant of Jesus Christ (1 Tm. 4:6). Epaphras is of the apostles and X (Col. 1:7). Tychicus is (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7).

6 Heathen authorities can also be called the servants of God in the discharge of their office, since they are appointed by God and have the task of maintaining God’s order in the world (R. 13:1–4).

7 Paul describes himself in Col. 1:25 as a “servant of the Church” () in virtue of his divinely given commission. Paul and Apollos are no more than servants of both God and the Church as they use their gifts to bring the latter to faith (1 C. 3:5).

B. The Deacon as a Church Official.

1 A distinction may be made between all these general uses and the employment of the term as the “fixed designation for the bearer of a specific office” as in the developing constitution of the Church. This is found in passages where the Vulgate has the loan-word *diaconus* instead of the minister used elsewhere (cf. Phil. 1:1; 1 Tm. 3:8, 12).

Members of the community who are called deacons in virtue of their regular activity are first found in Phil. 1:1, where Paul sends greetings to all the saints in Philippi . Already in this phrase there emerges a decisive point for our understanding of the office, namely, that the deacons are linked with the bishops and mentioned after them. At the time of this epistle there are thus two co-ordinated offices.

We cannot gather with any certainty from this reference what constituted the special work of these officers. It is highly improbable that the reference is to two different aspects of the work of the same men, since this is supported neither by the context nor by 1 Tm. 3:1 f.), 8 ff. Nor can there be any doubt that the description of office has here become a definite designation. Nevertheless, we are not told what the offices involved. Attempts have been made to deduce this from the contents of the epistle. It has often been argued that special thanks are due to the bishops and deacons for the affectionate gift which was sent to Paul in prison and which they collected.⁶ This seems to be a very likely reason for the particular mention of and in this epistle. E. Lohmeyer sets this in the light of the main purpose of the epistle, namely, to strengthen the Philippians in a time of persecution, in which their leaders were in prison. As he sees it, this gives us the main reason for the special greeting to them. There is no proof for this conjecture. The task of the can in fact be deduced only from the actual name of their office and from their later function.

That the diaconate stands in the closest relationship to the episcopate is confirmed by 1 Tm. 3:1 ff. Here an account is first given of the way in which a bishop must conduct himself (vv. 1–7), and this is followed by a list of the requirements for a deacon (vv. 8–13).

Like the bishops, deacons must be blameless and temperate, having only one wife and ruling their houses well. While the bishops must satisfy many other demands, including an aptitude for teaching, deacons are not to be doubletongued or avaricious—qualities necessary in those who have access to many homes and are entrusted with the administration of funds. Yet inward qualities are also demanded of good deacons. They are to hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.

That the primary task of deacons was one of administration and practical service may be deduced a. from the use of the term for table waiters and

more generally for servants; b. from the qualities demanded of them; c. from their relationship to the bishop; and d. from what we read elsewhere in the NT concerning the gift and task of .

Appeal is frequently made to Ac. 6 in explanation of the rise of the diaconate, though the term is not actually used. On this view, the deacons undertake practical service as distinct from the ministry of the Word. It is to be noted, however, that the Seven are set alongside the Twelve as representatives of the Hellenists, and that they take their place with the evangelists and apostles in disputing, preaching and baptising. This fact shows (→ 85) that the origin of the diaconate is not to be found in Ac. 6. It is possible, however, that ideas gained from the existing diaconate influenced the author when he gave its present form to his rather puzzling source concerning the relationship of the Seven to the Twelve. If this is so, Ac. 6 may be regarded as indirect evidence concerning the diaconate.

If we ask concerning the origin of the diaconate, we must start with its relationship to the episcopate. It is mentioned with this in the earliest sources, and was never separated from it. The is not merely the servant of the church, but also of the bishop. Two problems arise: a. how two integrated offices came into existence; and b. how the Greek words and came to be used to describe these offices.

- a. There were two offices in the Jewish synagogues. Conduct of worship was entrusted to the , the , who was accompanied by the , always translated and never in Greek. If any model is to be sought for the Christian offices of bishop and deacon, this is where we shall find it. It must be remembered, however, that the activity of the and the is restricted to worship. The direction of the synagogue is in the hands of the elders. There are also collectors of alms) (who for their part have no connexion with the conduct of worship. Thus we have in the Jewish community many points of initiation for the Christian offices of bishop and deacon, but neither here nor in paganism are there any exact models which are simply copied. The creative power of the early Church was strong enough to fashion its own offices for the conduct of congregational life and divine worship.
- b. The same is true of the terms adopted. These arose in the world of Gentile Christianity,

though Jewish Christianity contributed the term *diakonos*. Yet in pre-Christian Greek we never find the words *diakonos* and *diakoneo* used in the Christian sense, whether individually or in the distinctive Christian relationship. Early Christianity took over words which were predominantly secular in their current usage and which had not yet been given any sharply defined sense. It linked these words with offices which were being fashioned in the community, and thus gave them a new sense which was so firmly welded with the activity thereby denoted that in all languages they have been adopted as loan-words to describe Christian office-bearers.

The secular sense of *diakonos* corresponds to the meanings of *diakonos* and *diakoneo*. It denotes one who waits at table, Xenoph. Hier., 4, 1 f.; Demosth., 59, 33; with *diakonos* and *diakoneo*, Hdt., IV, 71 f.; Athen., X, 17; with *diakonos*, Xenoph. Mem., I, 5, 2; or “messenger” with *diakonos* and *diakoneo*, Poll. Onom., 8, 137; Soph. Phil., 497; “servant,” Aristot. Eth. Nic., VII, 7, p. 1149a, 27; Luc. Alex., 5; Aesch. Prom., 944; “steward,” Demosth., 59, 42; Aristoph. Av., 70 ff.; “as” sistant helmsman,” Xen. Oec., 8, 10 and 14; “baker,” “cook,” “wine-steward” as *diakonos*, Plat. Gorg., 518bc; “statesman,” Plat. Gorg., 518b; of a woman “maid,” Demosth., 24, 197; 47, 52. It is rare in the LXX, and occurs only in the secular sense. In Est. 1:10; 2:2; 6:3, 5 it is used for the courtiers and eunuchs of the king (Heb. *shofar*). Acc. to Prv. 10:4, the fool shall be the servant of the wise. In 4 Macc. 9:17 a prisoner addresses spearmen who torture him:

The word is first used in relation to God by Joseph. on the one side and Epict. on the other. Joseph. also has the customary meanings in Ant., 6, 52; 7, 201 and 224; 11, 188 and 255. The word corresponds here to the new Heb. *shofar*. Elisha *shofar*, Ant., 8, 354, just as the rabbinic pupil is the servant of his master. But Joseph. can also call himself *shofar* (Bell., 3, 354) or *shofar* (Bell., 4, 626) on account of the revelation given to him concerning the reign of Vespasian. In Epict. we often find the idea that the cynic is the servant of God. Thus Diogenes is the *shofar* of Zeus in Diss., III, 24, 65; cf. III, 26, 28; IV, 7, 20. Either in description of calling, or with reference to activities in sacral unions, *shofar* often occurs on inscriptions, mostly in lists of similar titles. Thus in 3rd century (B.C.) Troiza it occurs after *shofar* and *shofar* (IG, IV, 774) or between *shofar*, and *shofar* (824). Again, a 1st or 2nd century (B.C.) list

of names from Acarnania contains the following: *shofar*, *shofar*, *shofar* (IG, IX, 1,486). And there is a similar list on the pillar of a temple to Apollo dating from at least the time of Christ’s birth (IG, IX, 1, 487 and CIG, II, Add., 1793b, p. 982). This is probably how Inscr. Magn., 109 should also run. There can be no doubt that the reference is to cultic actions, sacrifices, consecrations etc. But the work of the *shofar* obviously remained the same, i.e., the serving of food, since they are always mentioned after the cooks. Thus H. Lietzmann can describe as a cellarer’s guild the *shofar* which acc. to CIG, II, 1800 dedicates an inscription to Egyptian deities.¹³ Yet this is obviously a sacral rather than a secular guild, as we can see from the fact that a priest stands at the head. Similarly the inscr. from Metropolis in Lydia (CIG, II, 3037) mentions male and female deacons along with priests and priestesses. According to Inscr. Magn., 217 *shofar*, took part in the dedication of a statue of Hermes.

From these examples we can see that the *shofar* might have a cultic function. But it is a long way from this pagan conception of the deacon to the Christian. If the inscriptions teach us anything, it is that the original meaning of *shofar* (“to wait at table”) persisted. In accordance with the saying and example of Jesus, early Christianity made this the symbol of all loving care for others. Here is the root of the living connexion between ethical reflection on service in the community and the actual diaconate. Again, the persistent sense of waiting at table is reflected in the fact that the Christian office had its origin in the common meal at the heart of the life of the community, namely, the Lord’s Supper. Only in this way can we understand the later history of the diaconate, which has always consisted in assistance at divine service as well as in the external service of the community.

With the episcopate, the diaconate achieved its full stature only with the passing of the first, charismatic group of apostles, prophets and teachers. The capacity for diaconate was also a gift (1 C. 12:28). It is worth noting, however, that *shofar* and *shofar* are not among the charismata which in the next verse are stated not to be given to all members of the community. To exercise these offices the Christian needs to be elected and called rather than specially endowed by God. The transition from the first group of office-bearers to the second may be seen in 1 Cl., 42, 1ff. according to the sequence: God, Christ, the apostles and the

bishops appointed by them. Clement is obviously conscious of a break in the development at the latter point, and he therefore supports the institution of bishops and deacons by an appeal to the widely divergent text of Is. 60:17:

. The origin of this rendering, and its significance for the history of the development of the diaconate, have not yet been elucidated. An interesting point is that Cl. derives both episcopate and diaconate from the one root. In Did., 15, 1 the summons to elect bishops and deacons is already self-evident. It is also stated that these succeed to the ministry of prophets and teachers. Cf. also Herm. v., 3, 5, 1; s., 9, 26, 2. The position of deacons naturally changes with the rise of moniscopacy. They become much more subordinate in relation to the bishop. At the same time, a clear distinction arises between deacons and presbyters. In 1 Cl., 44 presbyter is still an imprecise term for the leaders of the community, but now three distinct offices of bishop, presbyter and deacon emerge in this order (Ign. Mg., 2, 1; 6, 1). Thus deacons are to have in the church an honour similar to that of Christ, bishops to that of God (Tr., 3, 1). This gives us the basis of the later hierarchy, though the development was slow. Deacons are assistants, representatives and often successors of the bishops, e.g., Eleutherus in relation to Anicetus. Shortly before 250 Fabian divided Rome into seven districts, each set under a deacon.¹⁶ Explicit

directions concerning the office and consecration of deacons may be found in the Hippol. Canons, the Syrian Didasc. and the Apostol. Constitutions. These bring to an end the development of the diaconate in the early Church.

Alongside the deacons there were also deaconesses. Their history begins with R. 16:1 where Paul describes Phoebe as

K . It is, of course, an open question whether he is referring to a fixed office or simply to her services on behalf of the community. Similarly, there is no agreement whether 1 Tm. 3:11 refers to the wives of deacons or to deaconesses. It is indisputable, however, that an order of deaconesses did quickly arise in the Church. A particular part was played here by widows who, on the strength of their chaste conduct on the one side and their loving service on the other, already received official recognition in 1 Tm. 5:3 ff.

The relationship between widows and virgins varied in different parts of the ancient world. Both groups had ecclesiastical functions with respect to women members of the Church. In the East the widows were primarily responsible, and though from the time of the Syr. Didasc. there was an independent office of deaconesses, this fell into decay in the early Middle Ages. In the West an independent order of deaconesses never developed in the Roman Church.