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ARTICLE I.

## THE DEACON'S OFFICE IN THE CHURCH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

[by the Rev. William Ellison Boggs]

“ BY INTRUSTING ALL PECUNIARY MATTERS INTO THE HANDS OF MEN ORDAINED UNDER SOLEMN SANCTIONS FOR THE PURPOSE, OUR SPIRITUAL COURTS WOULD SOON CEASE TO BE WHAT THEY ARE TO AN ALARMING EXTENT AT PRESENT, MERE CORPORATIONS FOR SECULAR [FINANCIAL?] BUSINESS. . . BOARDS COMBINE WHAT GOD HAS SEPARATED, THE PURSE AND THE KEYS.”—*Thornwell's Works*, Vol. IV., page 155.

It richly deserves to be reckoned among the blessings which a merciful providence designs bringing out of the tribulations of the past fifteen years, that the thoughts of our Church have been more and more turned to what has been happily styled “ The Financial System of Jesus Christ.” Our difficulties have scarcely been less than those of the Free Church party at the memorable crisis of the disruption in 1843. Like our Scottish brethren, we were cut off as in a moment from the benefits of monetary endowments and organised schemes of Church work. And it remains to this hour a grievance suffered at the hands of our former associates, that they have held fast to every dollar of the common property which, for reasons of convenience, had been chiefly invested in the large commercial centres at the North. We retained, for the most part, our Church edifices, and the few manses attached to them. But as the South became occupied by Federal garrisons, the strong arm of the military was invoked to

place representatives of the Northern Church in many of our pulpits. And as the struggle went forward, not a few of our Church buildings shared the fate of the towns, homesteads, and barns that were being daily consumed by the invader's torch, or else, after being used as barracks, hospitals, and stables, were left to us in such a condition as to be unfit for religious worship, without costly repairs. Perhaps, on the whole, our advantages over our brethren of the Free Church, in the shape of organised congregations, were fairly counterbalanced by our being compelled to devise ways and means for general purposes, amid the terrific throes of civil war, every available dollar and every able bodied man being imperatively demanded for the public necessities. Elders, deacons, and people, had gone in large numbers to the Confederate camps, and our pastors had, in many instances, followed their flocks with the counsels and consolations of the gospel to the scene of danger and suffering.

Such were some of our embarrassments during the long years of the war; nor have they been much lessened since. For it is a melancholy fact, that, after the immense destruction of our resources by the war and its immediate consequences, the process of depletion has been going on more silently, but not less surely, during the nine or ten years of nominal peace. It is confidently believed by the most competent observers, that not less *than fifty per centum* of the capital, in various shapes, left at the cessation of hostilities in the hands of Southern farmers and planters, has been sunk in agricultural operations since ! It is not relevant to our present purpose to inquire at length into the fatal causes of this frightful waste, though they may not be hard to find—want of energy, thrift, and economy at home ; a persistent clinging to old habits of living ; “ keeping up appearances” when the wealth which warrants them is gone. But, dominating over these private follies, every impartial eye must see the costly experiments of State Governments forced upon us by the reconstruction measures of Congress—greedy strangers placed in power by the suffrages of ignorant and venal negroes; legislatures, largely composed of the non-taxpaying element, squandering millions upon senseless pretexts or private schemes of plunder. Besides

this, our whole system of labor was instantly crushed by the rude hand of fanaticism ; and it becomes only too painfully apparent that for the tax-burdened South, it will be a difficult lesson to learn how to prosper by the labor of the freedmen. However, let the causes be what they may, whether the fault or the misfortune of our bewildered people, the stubborn *fact* remains, that a large class of them are hourly sinking into what seems to be a bottomless quagmire of bankruptcy. And the question ever returns, like the ghost of murdered Banquo, *How, in the face of all this public fraud and private loss, shall we provide for carrying on our work as a Church. ?*

The question has sent pious and able thinkers among us, to inquire at the oracles of God. And as the result, in part, of such anxious questionings, we have the excellent treatises of Dr. Arnold W. Miller and Rev. A. L. Hogshead. Concerning Dr. Miller's monograph, "The Law of the Tithe and the Free-will Offering," we can devise nothing more suitable than to repeat the substance of a remark made to us by Dr. B. M. Palmer, to the effect that he considered it the most learned and thorough discussion of the subject which has yet appeared. This, we feel sure, is the opinion of every competent reader; though like the speaker just quoted, he may not be able to accept the Doctor's suggestion as to the enforcement of tithes by the Church. Dr. Dabney has expressed, in his own forcible way, through the columns of the *Central Presbyterian*, his approval of Mr. Hogshead's tractate, "The Gospel Self-supporting." These excellent treatises, differing on some points, are thoroughly agreed in setting forth the main features of the biblical doctrine of worshipping God by frequent thank-offerings of our substance. They exhibit the fallacy (savoring in some cases of little less than insult to God our Almighty Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer,) of the prevalent habit of terming our gifts to religious purposes a *charity*, and succeed in putting the thank-offering on the same footing as our praises and our prayers, among the holy duties of the sanctuary. And more than this, unless we are in error, Christian readers of Dr. Miller and Mr. Hogshead will be apt to rise from the perusal of their discussions convinced that Scrip-

ture furnishes ample evidence that it is a service, both reasonable in itself and well pleasing to God, that we dedicate to him in this way not less than the tenth part of our incomes. Let these scriptural principles once get full possession of the mind and heart of our people, or even a respectable minority of them, and we shall see a perpetual end to some of the evils which now humiliate us. The Church's treasury will no longer be empty. We shall not need the importunate pleadings of committees, reiterated again and again by Assemblies, Synods, and Presbyteries. Brethren of whom the Holy Ghost has said, through the solemn decisions of the Presbyteries, as he did of Barnabas and Saul, "Separate me these for the work whereunto I have called them," will not then be detained for months or years in their purpose to go far hence unto the Gentiles, by the failure of the churches to furnish the necessary means. We shall have no cause to blush at the meagre alms doled out to aged and infirm ministers, and to the widows and orphans of such as have spent their lives in the service of the Church. Nor shall we be mortified by the generation of "Church-beggars" who tease and vex worldly men by their constant applications until they make religion itself hateful. And we shall be forever quit of fairs, "hot suppers," tableaux, charades, "hops," raffles, *et id omne genus*, human devices all of them, though not necessarily all equally wicked, to accomplish what the Lord Jesus has already provided for, if only he be heard in his own house.

It is with some hope of helping forward the same good cause that we venture to present these reflections relative to the Deacon's office in the New Testament Church, and a plea for its more complete restoration among us. For it may be that all efforts to bring up the modern Church to the apostolic standard, have hitherto fallen far short of our aim, in part, from a failure to employ in its full extent that very office to which Christ, through his inspired apostles, has intrusted the revenues of his kingdom. "To the law and to the testimony ; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The deacon's functions have been, with great propriety, termed by Prof. Wilson "a part of the order of the Church of God

which has, in modern times, been remarkably overlooked.”\* And this learned writer suggests one of the possible occasions for this neglect, in the prominence naturally given in the discussion of our system to the office of the presbyter. But he judiciously adds : “ The office of the deacon is not, it is true, so important as either that of the pastor or of the ruling elder ; yet it is not without its importance as a distinct part of the building of God. The care of the Church’s poor, and the wise and faithful administration of the contributions of the saints for the promotion of Christ’s cause, are matters that cannot, without injury to the Church, be forgotten or neglected; and it is worth our serious inquiry, whether the manifest deficiency in the first of these, and the almost insuperable difficulties that often beset the Church in regard to the second, may not be in part owing to the want of the deaconship as an actively executed function in the churches. For two other reasons, however, this subject should engage the most careful and solemn attention of the members of the Christian Church. 1st. If the deacon’s office be, as it is generally admitted to be, a divinely instituted office, can the churches be guiltless in the neglect of it ? And 2dly. Most of the churches explicitly recognise this office in their standards as of divine right; but how few have such an officer as the deacon ! . . . That we may know Christ’s will as King in Zion, and pay our own vows, we ought to examine this subject honestly and prayerfully; and not only examine, but act, by restoring this office to its original and proper position in the Christian Church.”

It is matter for astonishment to note the contrast between the ample discussions by the great masters of the eldership, and their meagre notices of the diaconate. Calvin’s hands were too much preoccupied with the outlines and leading principles of Presbyterian Church Government to allow of his stopping to elaborate the minuter questions of internal polity. And besides, the diaconate could not become a matter of such vital consequence before the interest of the Church in missionary schemes had

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\* Essay on the Deacon, by James M. Wilson, D. D., late Professor in the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. Philadelphia : William S. Young, No. 14 South Seventh St. Pp. 58.

been revived after long ages of neglect, and while she was continuing to receive aid from the State. Calvin's doctrine, however, while expressed very briefly, will be seen to be in accord with the best results of later thought. It occasions us some surprise to find absolute silence in the able discussions of Principal Cunningham. Prof. Addison Alexander's *Essays on Primitive Church Offices* have nothing to say of the Deacon. And even Dr. Bannerman's elaborate volumes on the Church of Christ, contain no more than a hasty announcement of the well known fact, that the four leading types of Church polity—Papal, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Congregational—agree in recognising the divine appointment of an office bearing the name, and of its consequent perpetuity in the Church, (Vol. II., p. 260.) Pre-occupation and want of the necessary books have prevented our intended examination of the earlier Scottish writers. Their conclusions, however, are embodied in the First and Second Books of Discipline. And citations from such authors as Rutherford and Guthrie, show how much more important the deacon was in their eyes, than in the opinion of their successors in Scotland, Ireland and America. Prof. Wilson (*Essay on the Deacon*, pp. 10 and 25,) asserts that the placing of ecclesiastical funds in the hands of deacons, was one chief ground of objection to the First Book. The Court party wished the funds to be handled by a civil functionary, it would seem. The Kirk refused, and so the First Book of Discipline never was adopted by the Government, though it is claimed as a standard by the Church of Scotland. Dr. John Lorimer, of the Established Church, in his little work on the Deacon, calls attention to the use made of this office in the financial system of the Free Church, and expresses the confident opinion that much of their wonderful success as a Church enterprise is due to the wisdom of those financial measures, suggested in the main by Dr. Chalmers. Indications seem to point toward a revival of the scriptural office, and these are linked to the need of free-will offerings to carry on such enterprises as Foreign Missions. And when Church and State are once separated in Scotland, as has been done in Ireland, the diaconate will assume its proper place as an arm of the Church.

The venerable Owen, alone of all the great masters, seems to have considered the functions of the deacon in all its bearings. And this he has done with that patient examination and thorough analysis of Scripture which entitle the greatest of the Puritans to the surname of "The Judicious," bestowed with infinitely less merit upon the great Anglican, Hooker. Dr. Owen's opinions coincide with the citations affixed to this article.\*

The doctrine of our Church, as to the deacon, is briefly expressed in chapter VI. of the Form of Government, and embraces the following points : I. The deaconship is a permanent office by divine appointment in the Church of Christ. II. It pertains exclusively to matters of finance. III. Deacons have entire control over the alms of the saints, intended for the use of the poor. IV. To them also may be properly committed the temporal affairs of the Church.

I. As to the first element in the doctrine of the deacon, the permanence of the office as of divine appointment in the Church, there is no difference of opinion, according to Dr. Bannerman, among Papal, Anglican, Presbyterian, or Congregational Churches. The denial of this position, therefore, may be set down as individual opinion, though it be acquiesced in by some of the smaller bodies calling themselves Christian. The permanence of the diaconate has been called in question (1) on the allegation that the necessity recorded in Acts vi., as the occasion of appointing men to this business, was transient in its nature; and (2) that the term used to designate the supposed office, is applied to so many persons, and in such a variety of relations, that nothing definite can be inferred from it. To these objections it is only necessary to answer, (1) that the necessity for such an office has not passed away ; the poor are always with us, accord-

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\* Some discussion of the deacon's office may be found in such treatises as those of King, McKerrow, and Dr. Samuel Miller on the Ruling Elder. Prof. Wilson's Essay, already cited, seems to be the most thorough. But Dr. A. W. Miller, of Charlotte, N. C., has ably criticised defects in the Scottish Theory adopted by Prof. W., in two valuable contributions made by him to the *North Carolina Presbyterian*, in 1869. These papers ought to be more generally known to the Church.

ing to the Master's word ; and if inspired apostles needed such help, how much more those who come after them ! (2) Paul's salutation to the "deacons," as a separate class of office-bearers in the church at Philippi, (Phil. i. 1,) and yet more clearly his directions to Timothy, (1 Tim. iii. 8-13,) as to the qualifications necessary to fit persons for holding the office, place it beyond all question that a separate and permanent office is intended. (3) The same objection of various significations in the name of this officer can be, on the same grounds, made against others also, both ordinary and extraordinary. *Pastor* signifies one who takes care of sheep as well as those church officers who supervise the flock of Christ. *Apostolos* (ἀπόστολος) signifies a messenger sent upon any errand, as well as those inspired men, twelve in number at first, to whom Paul was afterwards added, sent forth by the Lord Jesus to found churches and write Scripture. *Presbyteros* (πρεσβύτερος) is used in the common meaning of an old man as well as the ecclesiastical sense of a ruler in the Church. The only question is, Have we sufficient evidence of this special or ecclesiastical application ? And in reply, we allege the instances cited above.\*

II. The second point in the doctrine of our Church is, that the deacon's office pertains exclusively to the finances, and not to government, preaching, or administration of Sacraments. Here we part company with Papists, Anglicans, and with most of the Congregational bodies also. In the Congregational churches, deacons exercise functions nearly akin to those of the Presbyterian elder, the chief point of difference being that discipline is commonly administered immediately by the church-members, and not by their official representatives. The finances being for the

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\* According to Hutson's Critical Greek Concordance, *diakonos* (διάκονος) occurs thirty times in the New Testament, in twenty of which cases our version renders it *minister*; in seven, *servant*; and in three only, *deacon*. The verb *diakoneo*, (διακονέω) and its derivative, *diakonia*, (διακονία) are found thirty-seven and thirty-four times respectively, and with about the same renderings in the English version. It is a curious circumstance, that the old Anglo-Saxon seems not to have been able to furnish a suitable term for *doulos* (δούλος) or *diakonns*, (διάκονος) and hence borrowed *minister*, *servant*, *deacon*, or the correlative words *serf* and *slave*.

most part in the hands of committees, the Congregational deacon is the spiritual adviser of the pastor and of the people. In virtue of his office, he conducts religious exercises, and feels authorised to preach when occasion offers in frontier and destitute neighborhoods. Dr. King justly observes that the usages of our Congregational brethren bear a silent testimony to the wisdom of our Presbyterian system, by showing the need of just such an office-bearer as the ruling elder, intermediate, as it were, between the people and the preacher.

The Anglican and Methodist Episcopal doctrine is for substance the same as that of Rome, certain excesses being omitted. They hold the deacon to be the third order of the clergy, bishops being the first, and priests being the second. To the deacon pertain the preaching of the Word and the administration of baptism. He is also to assist the officiating minister in distributing the bread and wine at the Lord's Supper.

So far as any direct authority from Scripture for these clerical functions of the deacon is concerned, it is easy to find large concessions in our favor made by the chief Anglican writers. The learned antiquarian, Bingham, scarcely pauses in his eager investigation into post-apostolic customs, to glance by the way at the New Testament. (See *Antiquities*, Book II., chap. 20.) His antiquarian researches terminate too soon. Hooker is forced to concede our point so far as direct authority from God's word is required : " Deacons were stewards of the Church, unto whom *at the first* was committed the distribution of church goods, the care of providing therewith for the poor, and the charge that all things of expense might be religiously and faithfully dealt in." (*Eccl. Pol.*, Book V., chap. lxxvii., 5.) This clearly concedes all that we claim ; only Hooker is too " judicious" to replace the somewhat indefinite phrase, " at the first," by the more outspoken equivalent, *by the apostles*. The Anglican doctrine of a third order in the clergy, he must, therefore, establish upon the ground of an alleged right inherent in the Church to modify at will the apostolic constitution. He proceeds to specify next the duty of attendance upon their presbyters at the time of divine worship, and then adds:

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“ These only being the uses for which deacons were first made, if the Church hath sithence [since then] extended their ministry farther than the circuit of their labor at the first was drawn, we are not herein to think the ordinance of the Scripture violated, except there appear sonic prohibition which hath abridged the Church of that liberty. Which I note chiefly in regard of them to whom it seemeth a thing so monstrous that deacons should sometime be licensed to preach, whose institution was at the first to another end.\* To charge them for this, as men not contented with their own vocations, and as breakers into that which appertaineth unto others, is very hard. For when they are once thereunto admitted, it is a part of their own vocation, it appertaineth now unto them as well as others; neither is it intrusion for them to do it, being in such sort called, but rather in us it were temerity to blame them for doing it. Suppose we the office of teaching to be so repugnant unto the office of deaconship, that they cannot concur in the same person ? What was there done in the Church by deacons which the apostles did not first discharge, being teachers? ‘ Yea; but the apostles found the burden of teaching so heavy that they judge it meet to cut off that other charge, and to have deacons which might undertake it.’ Be it so. The multitude of Christians increasing in Jerusalem, and waxing great, it was too much for the apostles to teach and to minister unto tables also. The former was not to be slacked that the latter might be followed. Whereupon we may rightly ground this axiom, that when the subject wherein one man’s labors of sundry kinds are employed, doth wax so great that the same men are no longer able to manage it sufficiently as before, the most natural way to help this is by dividing their charge into slips, and ordaining of under officers, as our Saviour, under twelve apostles seventy presbyters, and the apostles, by his example, seven deacons to be under both. Neither ought it to seem less reasonable, that when the same men are sufficient, both to continue in that which they do, and also to undertake somewhat more, a combination be admitted in this case, as well as division in the former. We may not, therefore, disallow it in the Church of Geneva, that Calvin and Beza were made both pastors and readers of divinity, being men so able to discharge both. To say they did not content themselves with their

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\* T. C, that is, Thomas Cartwright, was pressing him with this very objection : “ If the apostles, which had such excellent and passing gifts, did find themselves (preaching of the Word and attending to prayer,) notable to provide for the poor, but thought it necessary to discharge themselves of that office, to the end they might do the other effectually and fruitfully, he that shall do both now must either do none well and profitably, or else he must have greater gifts than the apostles.”—[Footnote to the text of Hooker.

pastoral vocations, but brake into that which belonged to others ; in allege against them, ‘ He that exhorteth in exhortation,’ as against us. ‘ He that distributed in simplicity,’ is alleged in great dislike of granting license for deacons to preach, were very hard.’ ”

“ The ancient custom of the Church was to yield the poor much relief, especially widows. But as poor people are always querulous, and apt to think themselves less respected than they should be, we see that when the apostles did what they could without hindrance to their weightier business, yet there were that grudged that others had too much and they too little, the Grecian widows shorter commons than the Hebrews. By means whereof, the apostles saw it meet to ordain deacons. Now tract of time having clean worn out those first occasions for which the deaconship was then most necessary,\* it might the better be afterwards extended to other services, and so remain as at this present day, a degree in the clergy of God, which the apostles of Christ did institute.”

So reasons the great champion of Anglicanism in support of their doctrine, as to the right of deacons to exercise the teaching function in the Church. His argument is not free from the vice of an “ ambiguous middle,” as the conclusion shows, the playing between an order of office-bearers, ordained by the apostles to do a certain work, and an order in the Church of England, bearing the same name, but discharging functions entirely different from those of their ancient namesakes. If the *kind of work* to be done, be not the essence of an office, (*ob-facio*) in the Church or out of it, there is no meaning in the term. Identity of name is not identity of office, but identity of *work* to be done is. And as to the alleged analogy of the case of Calvin and Beza, it is only necessary to remark that the teaching office in the Church is exercised solely in expounding God's word to his people. Whether this be done in the audience-room of a church-building to an ordinary congregation, or else in the class-room to a congregation of students preparing to be preachers, this is merely a question of manner in teaching. The work done as pastor or as reader of divinity is the same thing.

These blemishes being duly noted, it is evident that the stress

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\* A foot-note to the text shows the sense, either of the author or else of his editor, to be that the Poor Laws of England anticipate the need of the original function of deacons—that is, that a civil functionary supersedes Christ's appointment.

of Hooker's defence rests upon the Anglican principle, (see Article XX.,) that the Church is warranted to decree, abolish, and amend rites and ceremonies as she judges expedient; provided only nothing be enacted by the Church which is expressly forbidden in Scripture, and that such enactments of hers be not declared to be "of faith, necessary to salvation." By these two limitations, the founders of the Anglican Church considered that they had sufficiently guarded themselves against the evils of the Roman theory of church power—with what success, let the developments of Ritualism say. It is precisely at this point, the discretionary rights of the Church, that, as all know, there lies the "*cardo præcipuus*" of the differences between Anglicanism and ourselves. They hold the right of the Church to decree at discretion all things not forbidden; we hold the right of the Church to do only the things commanded. Her discretion consists in choosing *among things commanded*, what seems, in view of the circumstances, to be most suited to glorify God and edify the saints. To attempt the discussion of this long-standing controversy, would carry us far aside from our course; and besides, it would be doing poorly what has already been often done with masterly ability. In dismissing the topic, we venture the remark, that we have little hope of any proposed schemes of "reform," within the Protestant Episcopal Church or elsewhere, which fail to extirpate this root of all evil—the right of the Church to change the apostolic constitution. Branches may be lopped off as they become offensive; but like the hydra's heads, they will multiply with baffling facility. Our brethren must learn the full meaning of the battle-cry of their own Chillingworth, "The Bible! The Bible is the religion of Protestants!" The only safe "reform" is that elaborated with preeminent ability by the great Reformer of Geneva. The experiment has been fairly tried, and results sustain our opinion. And if the Methodist Episcopal Church has hitherto escaped the seductions of Ritualism and Sacramentalism, while retaining this doctrine of church power in her symbols, we believe it due, under God, to two causes—complete separation from the historical associations and the traditions of the mother Church, and to the purifying influence of that

amazing activity which has made them the "Cavalry of Christianity."

Hooker very properly does not lay any stress upon certain additional arguments which have been advanced by Anglican apologists to sustain that theory of the deacon's office. Such, for example, are the alleged preaching of two, at least, of the seven original deacons, and the "good degree" promised as the reward of the faithful deacon in 1 Tim. iii. 13. So far as the asserted preaching of Stephen is concerned, *the record* only shows that he made a masterly defence of himself and of Christianity before the Sanhedrin, in which he seems to have been miraculously inspired, and that he was very successful in his public arguments with the Rabbins. More than this the facts of the inspired history do not authorise, and in it all we see nothing which unordained men are incapable of doing with equal right. If more be insisted upon, the reply is, that he was evidently not appointed to preach by the election spoken of in Acts vi., and nothing is said of "aptness to teach," in the detailed statement of the qualifications for the deaconship given by Paul in 1 Tim. iii. 8—1-5. As to the case of Philip who administers baptism to the Ethiopian eunuch, (Acts viii.,) and afterwards appears as "Philip the Evangelist," (Acts xxi.,) as an English bishop (Dr. Croft) well puts the case, it is altogether unreasonable to suppose that Philip, the preacher, was, during the time of his incessant travels, holding the appointment of deacon in Jerusalem, the duties of which, though represented as very pressing, he would be manifestly unable to discharge. The "good degree" which the faithful deacon is to receive, according to 1 Tim. iii. 13, carries with it no necessary reference to his being advanced to the presbyterate. (See Bishop Ellicott's *Critical Com. in loco.*) And even if it be assumed that *καλὸν βαθμὸν* implies ultimate advancement to the higher office, (though deacons not being required to possess certain qualifications for the eldership, might be unfit for it in some cases,) still this does not affect our position. Let all such as have the needful gifts be regularly called by the election of the people, and ordained thereto by the presbyters. It is all proper enough, and in no wise inconsistent

with the scriptural teaching, that deacons, as such, are appointed to the care of matters financial only.

III. We now reach the third element of the Presbyterian doctrine of the deacon, viz., that to the deacons especially belongs the care of the poor and the distribution of the alms of the saints for their benefit. The language of the Form of Government is unmistakable. The deacons have the final disposal of funds collected for the poor, to the end specified. Their decisions are not liable to be reversed by the session, unless they are convicted of misappropriating funds, after due process of trial. A difference of judgment as between the deacons and session cannot be entertained by the court; as, for example, the question, Does this or that person deserve the aid of the poor fund; and if so, how much should be given ? Of all such questions the deacons are to judge. It is not competent to the session to interfere until accusation is brought of maladministration or of gross negligence of duty, which cannot be explained upon the supposition of honest difference of opinion. Only then can session take up the case, except by way of fraternal suggestion, which the deacons are at liberty to follow or not.

This point has been settled by the General Assembly of 1857, in response to the following overture :

“ 1. Has a church session any original or direct control over the management and distribution of the fund collected and in the hands of the deacons for the benefit of the poor of the Church ?

“ 2. Or does the management of this fund belong exclusively to the deacons ?

“ 3. If the session has any control over this fund, what is the nature of that control ?

“ The committee recommended that the first inquiry be answered in the negative ; the second in the affirmative : and that the third be answered as follows: They may advise respecting the use of funds. [Adopted.]” See Baird's Digest, (Revised Ed.) p. 65.

So much for the control by deacons over funds for the poor. The decision is, that their *lawful* disposal thereof may not be interfered with. The case is analogous to the right of jurisdiction inherent in the session, of admitting persons to the privilege of communion at the Lord's table. The Scripture lays down

certain qualifications which are to be possessed by persons claiming this privilege ; and by the Constitution of the Church, (based, as we hold, upon the word of God,) the session is appointed to decide when the profession by this or that man of such qualifications is *credible*. The higher courts may not touch that decision, unless proof be adduced that the session violated the Law by requiring qualifications not laid down in Scripture, or else by failing to require a credible profession of such as are therein revealed. The higher court may, upon due consideration of all the facts, differ in opinion from the session; it may make suggestions which session may or may not adopt. But the original jurisdiction to judge under the law of the qualification of communicants is by the Constitution vested in the session. And difference of opinion does not warrant interference, except by way of advice, which leaves the lower court free. The analogy holds good as to the inherent rights of presbyteries to judge of the qualifications of candidates for the gospel ministry. This has been recently tested by an appeal to one of our Synods, wherein Synod rendered decision, asserting the original jurisdiction of Presbytery in the premises.

As to the control of the alms for the poor, then, it is apparent that our Form of Government, chap. VI., departs from the older doctrine of the First and the Second Books of Discipline. “ The First Book of Discipline teaches,” says Dr. Arnold Miller, “ that ‘ The office of the deacones is to gadder and distribute the almes of the puire according the directione of the sessione.’ And the Second Book, that ‘ thair office and power is to receave and to distribute the hail ecclesiastical gudes unto them to whom they ar appoyntit. This they audit to do according to the judgment and appoyntment of the presbyteries or elderships, (of the quhilk the deacons ar not,) that the patrimonie of the kirk and puire be not convertit unto privat men's usis, nor wrangfullie distributit.’ ” (See papers above referred to.) Our Book gives deacons more, therefore, than the symbols of the ancient Church of Scotland allowed, by placing the poor fund in their hands for distribution to lawful purposes, even though they may differ with the session in matters of opinion. And in contrast

with the Scottish theory, it may be well to ponder the words of Owen: "This office of deacons is an office of service, which gives no power in the rule of the Church. But being an office, it gives authority with respect unto the special work of it, under a general notion of authority ; that is, a right to attend unto it in a peculiar manner, and to perform the things that belong thereunto." (See Works, Orme's Edition, Vol. XX., p. 524.) Divested of its quaint scholastic and Puritan phraseology, Owen's meaning is, that while in the Scriptures we find no carefully drawn definition of the precise limits of the deacon's authority, yet the fact of an office being instituted by Christ, carries with it a grant of power from him to transact the duties pertaining to it, in such way as their own judgment shall decide. Otherwise, is the diaconate an office at all, in the same sense as the presbyterate is ? Is it not made the mere creature or tool of the session ? Owen argues that office implies a certain original endowment of discretionary power; and if he is correct, does not the earlier Scottish theory vacate the office of deacon ? The office of preacher involves a certain discretionary power; *e.g.*, the selection upon his own judgment of topics from the word of God for presentation to the people. And the office of ruling elder implies, *ex necessitate rei*, the right to judge of applicants for the privilege of communion at the Lord's Table. Has the deacon no discretion as to matters financial ? And, in so far as the Scottish theory proposes to secure *unity* and *honesty* in the administration of the congregation, does our Book not secure the same necessary end ? For the parochial presbytery, having "the care of the *persons* of the Church," as Dr. Girardeau expresses it, certainly has the charge over the morals of the deacons, and may discipline them, when necessary, for neglect of duty, or for misuse of funds.

There can, we think, be no question as to the increasing importance of the deacon's work among the destitute families of our population, and especially in the large cities. The great problem of pauperism, which has long baffled the skill of European statesmen, has become a practical question in our own country. Particularly is the change perceptible in the South, where, before

the war, we rarely ever saw a case of honest want. Dr. Lorimer's little volume on the Deacon's Office addresses itself especially to this very question, What shall be done for the poorer classes ? And he proposes the Church of Christ as the reconciler of the alienation between the rich and the poor, which is showing itself in the International and the Commune. The diaconate he considers to be the helping hand of the Church : and he contends that no organisation likely to be devised, can take the place of God's ordinance. The Doctor's suggestion strikes us with great force. There is a mighty work to be done for the glory of God and the good of man, among the poor of our cities. And it must be confessed that our modern Christianity, with all the manifest advances in certain directions, is far short of the apostolic exemplar in caring for the poor. When we look upon the congregations of prosperous, well-dressed citizens, who press through the carpeted aisles and rest in the softly cushioned pews of our churches, we can hardly realise that our Master announced to the despondent Baptist, as the crowning demonstration of his Messiahship—as the climax in the splendid array of miracles which attested his mission—that “ *to the poor the gospel is preached.*” This breach between the churches and the poor must be healed by all means, if Christianity is to attest her divine origin. It will not do to say, self-complacently, that the poorer classes can go to church if they please. We must obey the Master's injunction to go out into the lanes and by-ways, that we may compel them to come in, that his house may be filled. The very sight of this apostolic Christianity shall do more to silence the cavils of materialistic infidelity, than all the tomes of learned controversy which the teeming presses of Christendom can put forth. The world is and has ever been intensely practical. It sets far greater store by deeds than by words. The primitive Church comprehended this feature of human nature, and met the scoffs of infidel philosophy by simply pointing to the deeds of love which Christ had, by his Spirit, evoked from his disciples. The masses have neither the time nor the capacity for abstruse argument; and if they are declaring themselves in favor of Infidelity, when it claims to ally itself with physical science.

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we believe it is more because they see the practical power of science to meet the wants of men, than from any appreciation of the asserted demonstrations of Positivism and Materialism. Of course money alone will not "answer all things" in this cause. It will require wisdom and prudence to check any disposition to follow Christ for the loaves and fishes. But the homely logic of the apostle's question is instinctively appreciated by the suffering people : " Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him ?" The Church will ever find her richest harvest of souls among the sons and daughters of poverty and sorrow. For it is written, not as a passing feature of early Christianity, but as an everlasting fact, " Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ; and base things of the world and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." The *reason* for this procedure would seem to be of a permanent character. The modern millionaire, clothed in dainty apparel and faring sumptuously every day, is not a more hopeful subject for missionary effort than his prototype in the parable. It is time that the Church should appreciate this fact, and our Presbyterian body more than some others. For our zealous brethren, the warm-hearted Methodists, and the Baptists, too, can better than we afford to inscribe over the doors of their sanctuaries, " The rich and the poor meet together ; the Lord is the Maker of them all." Providence is preparing a great work for those who will use the office of a deacon well.

IV. So much for the duties of the deacon towards the poor, and his control of the poor fund. Do the Scriptures restrict his responsibilities and his authority at this point ? Does the Constitution of our Church so restrict him ?

It might almost be inferred from the custom of the churches, that our organic law, sustaining itself by an appeal to the Scrip-

tures, either expressly limits the deacon's handling of church finances to the poor fund, or else that it somehow discourages the thought of his being further employed. But when we turn to the Form of Government, chapter VI., we find the law, after first establishing the deacon's control over all the gifts of God's people for the use of their needy brethren, going on to say: "To them also may be properly committed the management of the temporal affairs of the church." The Constitution, then, is very far from restricting the deacon's responsibility to the poor fund. Its language cannot be construed to imply less than an explicit approval of placing deacons in charge of all the finances of the congregation, wherever and whenever the way is clear. For not only is a bare permission granted—"may be committed," would have expressed such permission—but more than this, the word "properly" seems to add a sanction of such proceeding. A legal gentleman tells us that in the ruling of civil courts, "may" in a statute is always equivalent to *shall*, and that deacons could claim, upon such a showing, the management of all funds. But the Assembly has not so construed the language of Chap. VI. of the Form of Government. For when the question came before that Court in 1833, from the Synod of West Tennessee, as to the interpretation of the law, the Assembly replied: "The answer we conceive to be explicitly given in our Form of Government, Chap. VI. Their duties are there plainly made to consist in distributing the charities of the church to which they belong to the poor of that church. Over charities collected for any other purposes than those specified, their office gives them no control. In addition to this, the temporalities of the church generally may be committed to their care." (Baird's Digest, p. 64.) This decision, though bearing on its face evidence of that haste which so often characterises the ruling of our Courts, even upon points of constitutional law, seems to present two points: 1. That the law, as now received, does not, of itself, put deacons in control of all the congregational funds, but requires the further action of some one of our courts to do this. 2. That some court other than the Assembly, is competent to carry this legal permission into effect. The wording of the Assembly's

answer suggests the church session as competent to do this, by limiting the deacon's functions to a particular congregation. And the Book itself, by placing this definition of the deacon's duties along with matters congregational, plainly suggests the same course. We have heard objection made to the sessions of churches taking order to place all finances under management of the deacons, on the ground of departure from general custom. The reply might be made, that such variety is within the terms of the law and has the sanction of the highest court. And besides, the Assembly's sanction in favor of carrying into effect the provision of Chap. VI., may be fairly claimed on the ground of its adoption of the "New Book," which places all funds under the control of the deacons.

As to the ground of the discrimination made between the deacon's power over the poor fund and that over other finances, we have heard the suggestion made, that at the time of the last revision, suitable material could not always be had for elders and for deacons also, and so the framers of the law hesitated to place such grave responsibilities in untried hands. The difficulty still exists in many of our congregations. But even if the discrimination had been removed by the adoption of the Book of Church Order by the Presbyteries, there need not have arisen any serious complications thereby, inasmuch as the Assembly of 1840 decided that when necessary the same persons might hold both offices. "*Resolved*, That while it is important and desirable that the several offices in the Christian Church should be kept distinct, and be sustained by different individuals, whenever a sufficient number of competent men can be found, yet, in the opinion of this Assembly, it is not inconsistent with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church, nor with the precedent furnished in filling the office of deacon at its first institution, that where a necessity exists, the same individual should sustain both offices." The language being somewhat ambiguous, it is not perfectly clear in what manner the Assembly expected one man to receive both offices—whether by his being regularly called to the second office, or upon the theory of the greater office including the lower, which has been formally sanctioned by the

Free Church of Scotland, and made the basis of her "Deacons' Courts."

But it must be confessed that the discrimination made in the Form of Government, between the deacon's positive control over the poor fund and those for other purposes, may have arisen from a doubt on the part of the framers of the law as to the teaching of Scripture. They may have felt that while the poor fund is clearly placed, according to Acts vi., in the hands of deacons, the word of God does not decide so plainly who shall handle any other funds. And if this conjecture be correct—as there is much in the circumstances of the times and in the history of the Church to make it probable—our law departs from the older Scottish symbols in two directions, (1) by limiting the control of the session over the poor fund, and (2) by leaving it an open question, to be determined by each church for itself, whether the remaining funds shall be handled by the deacons, or by the elders, or by some other parties. And as a matter of fact, each of the three courses has been adopted. In the Established Church of Scotland, the elders gradually superseded the deacons altogether; so that the deacons being found to be a useless piece of machinery, they were no longer elected. In the Irish Presbyterian Church, "committee-men," representing both the ecclesiastical and the civil authority, have largely taken the place of deacons. In the American churches, both methods are in vogue: Baird's Digest showing that the highest court has openly approved of "temporal committees," and also of trustees to hold and manage fiscal affairs; the members of which bodies need not be ordained men, or even communicants. Such has been the practical working of the discrimination made between the management of the poor fund and of other moneys, whatever may have been the unexpressed opinion of those who drafted the law in its present shape. And it is a hopeful sign of a return to better views, to find strong voices on both sides of the Atlantic, pleading for the divine right of deacons. Dr. Lorimer, in his treatise, points to the evils which have, in his opinion, grown out of the neglect of Christ's office, reminding his brethren that the two Books of Discipline have not been set aside by the Westminster Confes-

sion, and are therefore parts of the organic law of the Church of Scotland. Prof. Wilson turns the main force of his able discussion against the experienced evils of trustees and committees. Chapter III. of his Essay treats “ of the substitutes for the deacon,” and this he manages under the following heads : “ I. *Boards of trustees are an innovation.*\* There were no such officers in apostolic times. There were no officers sustaining such a relation to the Church in the congregations of Geneva, France, Holland, and Scotland, at the time of the Reformation. Their introduction has been gradual; but no doubt keeping pace with the downward progress in doctrine and godliness that has been manifest among most of the descendants of the Reformers. . . . II. *Boards of trustees are unscriptural.* The authority, or even the permission, of Scripture is not often pleaded in behalf of trustees. The argument in their defence seems generally to take for granted that upon this system alone can all the rights of the people be secured. . . . The scriptural order does by no means deprive the members of the church of an interest in the management of the ecclesiastical goods ; for deacons are chosen by the people, and are the representatives of the church; not, indeed, the agents of the people. . . . Trustees having no scriptural warrant, can stand upon no principle that does not impugn the wisdom or the goodness of the Church's Head. If it is necessary for human wisdom to devise a system of pecuniary management for the Church, then it follows that on this point her arrangements have been left incomplete by her blessed Head, etc. . . . III. *Boards of trustees are anti-scriptural.*” Under this head Prof. W. argues that the objectionable system embodies the serious error that church property belongs exclusively to the people, instead of being a trust managed for Christ, to whom it

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\* Prof. W. expressly exempts from these strictures such boards of trustees as may act under church courts in the management of the funds of theological seminaries, etc. He does not say Foreign and Domestic missions may be so managed also. But even in these cases, would not the analogy of Scripture suggest what Dr. Thornwell advocated, a bench of deacons, co-ordinated with the Assembly, to transact its financial business ?

has been solemnly consecrated, and by officers of his appointment. “ IV. *Boards of trustees are of dangerous tendency.*” His argument is, that bodies composed wholly or in part of worldly men, will assuredly develop a disposition to accommodate themselves to outside sentiments, which may embarrass the minister and hinder the spirituality of the church. “ V. *Boards of trustees are not, as depositaries of church property, so safe as deacons.* And that because they are, comparatively, irresponsible. Trustees are not, indeed, without responsibility to the laws of the land ; and provided they are church-members, they are individually accountable to the courts of the church for immoral or scandalous conduct. But they have no such responsibility, as trustees, to any ecclesiastical tribunal, as deacons have.” Every competent witness of the working of the trustee or committee system, must have seen the reality of the evils thus pointed at. Dr. Miller gives an incident which places in an almost ludicrous light the incongruity of putting worldly men to control important interests in the Church: “ A minister, at one time pastor of a church in Philadelphia, informed the writer that, during his ministry in that church, the president of the board of trustees was a rich Jew, who often complained of the trouble he had in keeping the session of the church in order!” Dr. Miller also signalises the objectionableness of throwing the deacon's work into the hands of the elders; but we shall have occasion to direct attention to this in connexion with other matters. Meantime, it is well for us to bear in mind that, whatever may have been the unexpressed reasons which led the Westminster divines to make this discrimination between the funds for the poor and those for other purposes, yet no obstacle is interposed by the law to placing all temporal concerns in the hands of the deacons. It does not require a revision of our present Constitution to render such a step legitimate; for the law already provides for it, and in fact *advises* it, as a measure of expediency, if not of absolute right.

We are prepared, therefore, to examine such considerations as may be adduced to move our church sessions or other courts to

put this clause of the Constitution into operation, without waiting for the adoption of the New Book, or other needed reforms.

I. And the first reason—the controlling consideration, in fact, with us all, as holding to Presbyterian Church Government, established “*jure divino*”—is that such management of church funds is fairly implied in the transaction recorded in Acts vi. 1-6 : “ And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, look ye out from among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch ; whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.” We shall quote Prof. Wilson’s exposition of this leading proof-text:

“ This passage contains the history of the appointment of the first deacons of the New Testament Church. That we may have a complete view of this transaction, we must go back a little, and ascertain what was the ‘ daily ministration’ of verse i., the ‘ serving of tables,’ of verse ii., and the ‘ business’ of verse iii. This we learn from chap. ii. 44, 45 : ‘ And all that believed were together, and had all things common ; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.’ And chapter iv. 32-37: ‘ And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own : but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked : for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need,’ etc. From these passages it appears that the ‘ daily ministration’ was the management, for public purposes, of a common fund, created by the contributions

of the disciples; that from this stock all the ecclesiastical expenses were defrayed, and, likewise, the poor, if there were any, supported. The apostles and other ministers were supported from this fund, and the other charges (and there must have been some,) attendant upon the dispensation of the Lord's Supper, and other ordinances, were, unquestionably, defrayed out of it, for there was no other source whence they could be drawn. It is plainly impossible that there could have been any fund at that time distinct from this common stock, or another fund under the control of distinct officers, such as the trustees or committees of modern times. Such officers could not have existed. The funds required for the promotion of the good of the whole body, and to meet all demands upon the Church, were 'thrown together at the apostles' feet.'\*

"Indeed, the very circumstance that is sometimes relied upon as favoring the view, that the 'widows' were chiefly concerned in this ministration, namely, that when they 'were neglected,' the deacons were appointed, is of itself, enough to show that 'this business' was not merely attending to the poor. For then it would follow that the apostles had altogether neglected to attend to the very object for which the contributions were thrown at their feet! This is impossible. It, therefore, appears plain, that there were other objects contemplated in the formation of this fund, attention to which interfered in some degree with due attention to the 'Grecian widows.'

"The 'business' over which the deacons were appointed was the whole of this daily ministration—the whole service of the tables. The apostles themselves say, referring to the whole of that charge, which they had at first undertaken, and for a time managed, that the deacons were appointed 'over this business.' It is plain, therefore, that the entire fund formed by contributions for ecclesiastical purposes, was at first managed by the apostles, and by them transferred to the deacons. There could at the time have been no other officer, such as a trustee or a committee-man, appointed to any part of this charge. The whole was first placed in the apostles' hands, the whole was placed in the hands of the deacons when

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\* It is not properly within the scope of this paper to warn the reader against the error of mistaking the purport of this record as to a community of goods. There is not a word here or elsewhere in the New Testament enjoining such a course. Everywhere we find the apostles alluding to money matters under the notion of *private property*, and discussing the duties entailed upon its possessors. And even in the carrying out of this spontaneous resolve of the zealous brethren, the apostles record the acknowledgment of the rights of private property, as when Peter, in Acts v. 4: "Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?" The Communism of the Roman Catholic orders and of the Quakers find no precedent here.

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they were ordained. These are the views which have been entertained of this passage by the purest churches, and by the greater part of the most judicious commentators.

“ As the passage has a very important bearing upon our investigations respecting the deacons duties, a few quotations, and but a few, for our space is limited, are given from standard commentators, with the hope that the reader will carefully examine the passage, in the light thus reflected upon it. These quotations are not classified ; our limits do not admit of this. They are given, however, nearly in the order of time beginning with Origen, one of the early fathers. He lived in the commencement of the third century, a little more than one hundred years after the death of the Apostle John. He says : ‘ The deacons preside over the money-tables of the church,’ and adds, ‘ as we read in the Acts of the Apostles.’

“ Passing over many centuries, our next quotation is from Beza, the distinguished colleague of John Calvin, in the Theological School of Geneva. He explains the passage, ‘ To serve tables’—‘ to attend to that which was then observed, the common table, and the other necessities of the church.’

“ The Scottish Reformers, in the Second Book of Discipline, chapter IX., are very explicit. ‘ In the apostolic kirk, the deacons were appointed to collect what sum soever was collected of the faithful, to distribute to the necessity of the saints; so that none lacked among the faithful. These collections were not only of that which was collected in manner of alms, as some suppose, but of other goods moveable and immoveable, of lands and possessions, the price whereof was brought to the feet of the apostles.”

“ Henry, on Acts vi. 1-6: ‘ And these (the deacons,) must take care of the church's stock ; must review, and pay, and keep accounts ; must buy those things which they had need of against the feast, (John xii. 29,) and attend to all those things which are necessary, *in ordine ad spiritualia*. in order unto spiritual exercises, that every thing might be done decently and in order, and no person or thing be neglected.’

“ Scott, (Comm. on Acts vi. 1-6): ‘ To lay out their contributions in the most satisfactory manner, both among the poor and in other necessary expenses.’

“ Guyse, (*ibid*): ‘As all the necessary expenses for carrying on the

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\* This opinion, says Prof. W., was maturely formed after years of close examination, the Reformers contending for putting all temporalities into the deacon's hands, while the sovereigns. Mary and James VI., bitterly opposed it. The Court party contended that these contributions were for the poor alone ; the Reformers that they were intended for all church uses.

worship of God, and as the apostles themselves, as well as the poor, were doubtless to be supported out of the common stock, I have given such a paraphrase as may take in the Lord's table, and the tables of the apostles.'

" Dick, (Lect. C.): ' It is true, indeed, as the design of the institution was not to divert the attention of the apostles from the ministry of the word, the care of the temporal matters in which the church is concerned, may be considered as belonging to deacons.'

" Dr. Miller, of Princeton: ' It has been supposed by many that the phrase, ' serving tables,' in the history of the institution of the deacon's office, had a reference either to the Lord's table, or to the overseeing and supplying the tables of the poor, or perhaps both. But I am inclined to believe that this is an entire mistake. The word *trapeza* signifies, indeed, a table ; but in this connexion it seems obviously to mean a *money-table*, or a counter on which money is laid. Hence *trapezites*, a money changer, or money merchant. The plain meaning of Acts vi. seems to be this : It is not suitable that we should leave the word of God, and devote ourselves to pecuniary affairs.' The passage from Origen, quoted above, is conclusive evidence of the soundness of this criticism." (Essay on the Deacon, pp. 19-22.)

To the same effect our author cites Calvin's Comm. on 1 Tim. iii. 8-13, and Inst., Bk. V. 13. Hooker's words already cited, point to the same exposition, as also Owen's views, and Dr. Thornwell's.

It is obvious that this exposition of the record which exhibits the origin of the office, so far as we have authentic information, militates against placing over church funds any person other than a deacon. Elders are not the proper persons to take upon them this charge, though their doing so may be less obnoxious than the employment of committees. And even if the argument in favor of one consolidated fund in the church at Jerusalem, used for all congregational necessities, could be set aside, still the claim of the deacons to control all ecclesiastical funds and properties might be fairly established upon a principle which is extensively used in elaborating the details of our Presbyterian Church Government. If it be insisted, (contrary to the implication of the words, as we think,) that the " business" to which the deacons were appointed was only the care of the poor and widows, yet that particular fund might justly be regarded as a specimen of the class financial, which, being confided to

the deacon, serves to direct us in the committing of other like matters to his charge, unless we are otherwise instructed elsewhere. The principle is commonly recognised by the best Presbyterian authorities, that a system of church government is given in the New Testament, in general principles, certain examples under them being given also to illustrate their application. It is only by keeping this maxim in view that we can construct our system of courts, and adjust their several relations to each other. And it seems to us that this is eminently a fair use of the principle. We have in the New Testament a class of office-bearers, concerning whom we are expressly told that they were appointed to take charge of financial matters. They have no other duty. Concerning no other office have we any intimation of appointment for such a work. We read, it is true, in Acts xi., of collections made at Antioch for the suffering brethren at Jerusalem, being sent up to the elders there. But, without stopping to question how far the action of these uninspired Christians at Antioch furnishes a precedent, it is evident that such a fund must have been placed in the hands of the deacons who had been appointed about ten years before in this church for this very "business." The elders may have been a presbytery, presiding over many congregations in Jerusalem. For these ten years had witnessed the conversion of many thousands to Christ, and it is impossible to suppose that they attempted worshipping together. No hall could have contained them—no voice could have reached them in the narrow streets. The funds were probably sent to the body of elders who had the oversight of the several congregations in the city, in order that they might be distributed equitably among the various congregations.

It has been supposed, in opposition to the views of the eminent scholars cited by Prof. Wilson, that, at the time of the appointment of deacons, there were elders in charge of such funds as were not expressly given to the newly ordained officers. And from this it is inferred that the church session ought now to control all funds except those intended for the poor. But to this it is sufficient to reply, that proof is wanting for the presence of any such ordinary officers at the time of the appointment of deacons.

It was only a few months after Pentecost, and it would seem likely that the apostles and the seventy evangelists sufficed for the spiritual control of the body of disciples. So far as we can see, the deacon was needed before the ordinary presbyter, and so was first appointed. The brief sketch of apostolic history gives no notice of the first appointment of elders ; but they seem to have made their appearance at some time between the establishment of the diaconate and the year of Paul's carrying up alms to the needy saints at Jerusalem, which was about ten years after.

The conclusiveness of this argument is not materially affected if, with Dr. Arnold W. Miller and many others, we understand that Acts vi. 1-6, gives us a hasty notice of the appointment of the first Grecian deacons, while implying that Hebrew deacons had, from the beginning, charge of this business.

"Many persons," says the Doctor in his papers on the Deacon, "without sufficient examination, entertain the opinion that this office was for the first time introduced into the Church of God on the occasion recorded in the sixth chapter of Acts. This is to overlook the fact which has been abundantly proved by learned Jewish and Christian writers, Maimonides, Vitringa, Lightfoot, Hammond, Adam Clarke, Neander, Mosheim, Burnet, Olshausen, and others, that the office of deacon existed in the Church long before the days of Christ and his apostles.

"In the Jewish Church, the Synagogue, there were not only elders, but deacons. 'The office of the deacon,' says the learned Lightfoot, 'was translated from the Jewish to the Christian Church. There were in every synagogue at least three deacons, to whom the care of the poor was intrusted.' 'The synagogue deacon,' says another learned scholar, 'collected money for the maintenance of the poor and for the general support of the synagogue, including the stipends of the office-bearers. Many learned Jewish theologians affirmed that the office belonged to the synagogue. This testimony is decisive of the point that the Presbyterian Church of the New Testament is identical with the Presbyterian Church of the Old Testament, equally with respect to the deaconship as to the eldership ; and that, in the language of Archbishop Whately, 'Wherever a Jewish synagogue existed, that was brought to embrace the gospel, the apostles did not so much form a Christian Church or congregation, as make an existing congregation Christian, by introducing the Christian sacraments and worship, but leaving the machinery of government unchanged, the officers being already provided in the existing institutions.'

‘ A synagogue became a Christian church as soon as its members acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah.’

“ Thus the Old Testament Church naturally glided into the New. The deacons of the converted synagogue became the deacons of the Christian church. This is the reason why no record exists of the original institution of this office by the apostles. For the narrative in Acts vi. implies that the seven chosen and ordained on that occasion were added to the number already existing. The office is not mentioned in that narrative ; only the duties of the office are incidentally alluded to, which would imply that the office was already in existence. There were Hebrew deacons before this; deacons in every converted synagogue. Besides this, the New Testament Church must have had some dispensers of its bounty before this; and therefore either the apostles officiated as deacons in the distribution of the money which was laid at their feet, derived from the sale of lands and houses, or else these officers already existed and discharged this duty. If the former, then, as the matter was in the *apostles'* hands, it would seem that the ‘ murmuring’ of the Grecians should properly have been against them, and not against the Hebrews. Complaint of neglect should have been to the apostles, *against themselves*. But that the apostles did not officiate as deacons, is evident from their own words: ‘ It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables’—showing that they had not left the word of God and served tables. For the apostles to have ‘ served tables,’ would have involved their abandoning the preaching of the word of God. The one is evidently spoken of as not only distinct from, but incompatible with, the other. How absurd, then, to make the deacon a minister of the gospel ! ‘ Serving tables,’ then, had already been done by the proper officers, the deacons. The seven who were afterwards elected were all Grecians, as their names show, because the Grecians (or foreign Jews) had murmured against the Hebrews, (or native Jews,) on account of their widows being neglected in the daily ministrations. ‘ Now this surely would have produced, in turn, a murmuring of the Hebrews against the Grecians, unless they had some already in office, looking after their rights.’ (Encyc. Metropolitana.)”\*

We need not undertake to sit as umpire between these rival interpretations. Some minds will probably prefer one, some the other. But in either case the record sustains our point, that deacons are the revenue officers of Christ's kingdom, who should collect and disburse its funds, and hold its property.

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\* Dr. Miller has pointed out the prevalent inaccuracy of making the *chazzan* of the synagogue the equivalent of deacon. The *shadrash*, he says, is the deacon, while *chazzan* is nearly the same as our sexton.

2. We urge that steps be taken by the Church to put this clause of her Constitution into operation, because it will tend to promoting greater efficiency in the entire system of our church work. Let one class of office-bearers understand that their duty consists in caring for “ the *persons* of the church,” and the other class that they are responsible for “ the *things* of the Church.” This will secure in the Church that very *division of labor* which has so greatly aided in advancing the sciences and the mechanic arts. As matters now are—the clause recommending that deacons be placed in charge of all finances being overlooked, as if by common consent—the need of such division of labor is obvious. For, not only are church courts clogged with pecuniary business for which many of their members have no aptitude, but in every congregation confusion and negligence are seen to result. Deacons are overshadowed, and, in many instances, set aside, by unscriptural substitutes in the shape of committees or trustees ; who, like the Canaanites left in the land, only too frequently become thorns in the sides of pastors and sessions. In most of our village and rural congregations, there being scarcely an indigent member to be found, the deacons have nothing to do, unless it be to pass the collection-plate at the bidding of the session. And so the office helps to manufacture a class of inactive men, who are but little more than “ cumberers of the ground.” Nor is the injury less real, as we honestly believe, to the preacher and ruling elders. The elders are in part withdrawn from their appropriate vocation, which is to “ *shepherdise* the Church of God,” (*ποιμαίνω*) by the care of perplexing finances, which in the end come to be regarded as the more important part of their duty. And thus the undivided responsibility of visiting, counselling, and comforting the people, is devolved upon the preacher, who is in turn withdrawn from his peculiar sphere of labor, to the great detriment of his public ministrations for the whole congregation. In fact the care of the poor also passes into his hands, the diaconate, like an unused limb, becoming enfeebled and inert. Any lawful expedient for restoring the eldership to its scriptural duties, and developing in the deacons an increased sense of responsibility, should be hailed as an omen of good. Lorimer, in his Essay

on the Office of Deacon, states that Dr. Chalmers, in his "Christian and Economic Polity of a Nation," devotes a chapter to a discussion of the reasons which render it inexpedient that the same officers who look to the spiritual interests of the poor, should also distribute alms among them. And Lorimer himself occupies a chapter in pleading for the general advantages to the pastors and eldership, and to the cause at large, of reviving the deacon's office. He argues that, by relieving the elders of a burden for which many of them are confessedly unsuited, they will be enabled to devote their undivided time to the work of guiding, instructing, and correcting the flock. He mentions that in some, places in Scotland, the undivided burden had proven too heavy, and many excellent men had declined the eldership altogether, or until relief could be had. The minister, he contends, would be greatly strengthened by surrounding him with a large body of intelligent men, who would relieve him of oppressive cares of a pecuniary nature, which, despite the help derived from the elders, often rest as a burden upon him. It would bring, he says, a larger body of chosen men into active service, and by making them a blessing to others, secure a blessing for their own souls. And, as regards the poor themselves, it would call attention to other matters besides physical suffering, and by promoting kindly intercourse between rich and poor, greatly tend towards softening down the asperities of social distinctions. And the result of it all must be greatly to strengthen the hold of Christianity upon the masses of the community.

Scottish writers of the Established Church do not hesitate to ascribe much of the efficiency of the Free Church to its use of the diaconate. It may not be amiss, therefore, to give, in the briefest form, some account of the peculiar arrangement made at the Disruption, under the guidance of such leaders as the sagacious Chalmers, for the management of matters financial. In Forbes's "Procedure in the Inferior Courts of the Free Church of Scotland," p. 7, we find the following statement of the Free Church's doctrine:

"The peculiar duties of deacons are thus stated, (Assemb., 1846, VII.):  
(1) To give special regard to the whole secular affairs of the congrega-

tion; (2) To attend to the gathering of the people's contributions for the sustentation of the ministry, and to receive donations made for other ecclesiastical purposes; (3) To attend to the congregational poor; and (4) To watch over the education of the children of the poor. Along with the elders they may receive the Sabbath collections of the people, according to such arrangements as may be made by the deacons' court. It is their duty to visit periodically the districts assigned to them, and to cultivate an acquaintance with the members and adherents of the church resident therein. When a sufficient number of deacons cannot be had, the elders may be employed as deacons; while, on the other hand, the deacons may assist the elders with their advice, whether in session or otherwise, when required so to do. According to Pardovan, (Bk. I., Title 8, § 3,) the deacons may be employed to provide the elements, to carry them, and serve the communicants at the Lord's table. While the deacons' court now provides the elements, the latter duties are now universally discharged by the elders; but in case of a deficiency in point of numbers, it is competent for the deacons still to be employed for these purposes."

Forbes next proceeds to give the constitution and procedure of the deacon's court, which is one of the most striking peculiarities of the Free Church's polity. "Viewed apart from the theory of the inclusion of the lesser office by the higher, which is not essential to such an arrangement, there is nothing unconstitutional in the deacons' court. For if elders may, *ex officio*, take charge of church funds, and if they may coöperate with committees and with trustees, made up of unordained men, there can be no valid objection to their cooperating in the management of finances with the deacons. Tested by its fruits, the Free Church system of the deacons' court would seem to have proved itself superior to all the various plans adopted by churches in Scotland, Ireland, or America; while at the same time it does not precisely meet the whole doctrine of the New Testament, we think, which fairly implies a separation of the management of finances and the spiritual oversight of persons.

1. The members of the deacons' court, according to Forbes, are the pastor, (or pastors, if there be more than one,) the session, and the deacons. All sit as deacons, and have the same rights.

2. *Officials.* These consist of a chairman or moderator, a clerk, and two treasurers. In the absence of the minister, any mem-  
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ber, whether elder or deacon, may be elected chairman for the occasion. In all cases the presiding officer has only the casting vote in case of a tie. The clerk keeps the roll and accurate minutes of all proceedings. He may receive a salary, if agreed upon. The treasurers are elected by the court: one to be the general or congregational treasurer, who is to receive and disburse, under instructions, all moneys save those raised for the sustentation, education, and missionary funds; the other, or associational treasurer, to receive and transmit to the Assembly's treasurer such moneys as may be intended for the purposes above specified, at the bidding of the court.

3. *Meetings.* The deacons' court may assemble upon citation from the pulpit, or upon regular notice to each member. But it is advised that they have a regular time, *e.g.*, once a month. Three members constitute a quorum. Minutes state that each meeting is opened and closed with prayer.

4. *Jurisdiction.* This court has the charge and management of the whole property belonging to the congregation, including church, session-house, manse, school-buildings, etc., and of all its financial affairs, including, of course, the appropriation of seats, with the determination of all questions relating thereto; and it is the duty of said court to transmit to the general treasurer of the Assembly the sums contributed to the Sustentation Fund, and to distribute the remaining funds to the supplementing of the minister's salary, to subordinate officers, and the defraying of all necessary charges connected with the property; to take up special collections for the poor, and to receive the deacons' reports touching them, and to instruct the deacons concerning the disposal thereof. The business, therefore, consists of the administration of the funds and property and financial affairs of the congregation. (Assemb. of Free Church, 1847, XIV.) The members of this court are to be incorporated as trustees for holding the property before the civil authorities, for the congregation as connected with the Free Church. Provision is made for the disposal of the property in case of a disruption. To the deacons' court belongs the right of giving or withholding the use of the church or other buildings for meetings not of a strictly religious

nature. In all other cases, and especially when divine service is to be performed, the church is solely at the disposal of the minister. [We should probably say the session.] It assigns to each deacon a certain district, requiring him to keep an accurate list of all adherents therein, and to see that the collectors punctually gather in all the church funds.

The accounts are to be audited annually, and, being attested by the moderator, are, along with the minutes of the court, sent up to the Presbytery to be reviewed and attested. And soon thereafter the deacons' court is required to lay before the congregation an abstract of the work accomplished by them, for their information.

“ The deacons' court and session are to be regarded as co-ordinate courts, having separate and independent jurisdictions. There is, therefore, no appeal from one to the other, nor can the proceedings of the one be reviewed, altered, or reversed by the other, while each remains in its own province. By carefully attending to the jurisdiction of each, all collision will be avoided.”

“ An appeal from a decision of the deacons' court is not usually sustained ; for it has been declared by the Assembly inexpedient to sustain complaints or appeals against its ordinary administration in secular or financial affairs. (Assemb., 1847, XIV.) A member, however, may dissent from any finding of the court, and place his reasons in the record (if given at the time,) for so doing; but he cannot usually complain to a higher court. It is to be observed, that all the proceedings of this court are subject to the review of the Presbytery, and are regularly brought under its notice by the annual examination of its record and accounts : so that by this means any step taken or resolution adopted of a censurable nature, or in violation of the laws of the Church, can be checked, and means taken for having it altered or reversed.”

Such is a brief, but, we think, accurate outline of the main features of the Free Church's plan. As we said before, the questionable theory of the necessary inclusion by the higher office (the eldership,) of the lower, (the deaconship,) is not essential to the scheme. The session of any church can agree to deal with finances by such an arrangement as the deacons' court of the Free Church ; and we see no reason to debar a presbytery from commending it to the churches within its bounds, and supervising the records of such courts when regularly submitted to it

for review and amendment. Intelligent Christians the world over are aware of the wonderful success which has crowned this effort—the nearest approach, so far as we know, to the plan taught in the New Testament, and approved, though not enforced, by the Westminster Confession.

Two questions remain, to which we shall give very brief replies. The first is, Should the deacons distribute the bread and wine at the Lord's table ? We shall present our reply to this query in the words of Dr. Arnold W. Miller:

“ The principal business of deacons is to *serve tables*. The old distinction, current for ages past, refers the term ‘ *tables* ’ to three departments : the table of the Lord, the table of the pastor, and the table of the poor. All cognate duties, all duties of the same class, are embraced in the comprehensive definition of *table-service*—‘ the table of the Lord ’ including not only the furnishing and distribution of the elements of the communion table, but also the care of the sanctuary vessels, and entire furniture of the Lord's house, and the providing every thing necessary to the proper celebration of divine worship, and of all the services for the social and public duties of religion. As the office of deacon had for so long a time, through the culpable negligence of the Church, fallen into disuse, its duties had to be discharged by the elder, who, in turn, neglected, to a great extent, his own appropriate work, and came to be known chiefly to the Church as the officer who served in the distribution of the sacramental elements on communion occasions. And to this service some of this class cling ; for, were it taken away, their occupation would be gone. But this is not their business. Visiting the flock, oversight, and government, are assigned to them. Table-service is no part of government, but belongs to those appointed by Christ to ‘ serve tables, ’ (literally, to *deaconise* tables,) viz., deacons. Some have objected that this is ‘ too sacred ’ a service to be discharged by the deacons. But if the communicants may distribute the elements, when received from the minister, *among themselves*, as the Scotch Directory for Worship prescribes, then the deacons may perform the same office for them without encroaching upon ‘ too sacred ’ a service. Besides, the scriptural qualifications of deacon are *spiritual*, as well as those of the ruling elder : they must be ‘ full of the Holy Ghost, and of wisdom, ’ ‘ holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. ’ This objection comes with a better grace from a Papist or a Ritualist than from a Presbyterian.

“ Others have objected, that the office of deacon is contingent, dependent upon circumstances, if not unnecessary ; and as the inferior office is comprehended in the superior, may be dispensed with, his duties being discharged by the ruling elder. This contradicts our Book, which

teaches that ‘ the offices of ruling elder and deacon are perpetual, and cannot be laid aside at pleasure.’ If the greater part includes the less, if the inferior be comprehended in the superior, then may not only the duties of deacons be assumed by ruling elders, and the office of the former expire, but also the duties of the ruling elders may be assumed by ministers, and the office of the former expire! And this some have even dared to teach ! Then all power may be absorbed by the ministry ; the monarchical principle against which Presbyterianism has ever deemed it to be its vocation and its glory to protest and to resist, be fully enthroned in the Church; and abominable Prelacy or Popery install the man of sin over the house of God !

“ If ‘ the greater office includes the less,’ then the greater officer MUST possess, not only *all* the qualifications, but *all* the opportunities, too, of *all* the lesser—otherwise the Head of the Church has made very imperfect provision for his Church.

“ Others, again, have objected, that custom now sanctions the discharge of this service by the elder. But was it the custom of the primitive Church? The custom of allowing the deaconship to fall into disuse, in many churches, and of transferring its duties to the elder, is an old custom. And so, the custom of elders distributing the elements at the Lord’s table, and neglecting their own work, may be as old, and as unwarrantable, too. Abundant testimonies prove that the distribution of the elements at the Lord’s table pertained to the deacons in the primitive Church. The first witness we adduce is *Justin Martyr*, who wrote his two Apologies for the Christians within fifty years of the Apostle John. His writings form an impregnable bulwark of Presbyterianism, and furnish a complete refutation of Prelacy, as they show us but two officers in the Christian Church of his day—presbyters and deacons. Describing the administration of the Lord’s Supper, he says: ‘ There is then brought to that one of the brethren who presides, bread and a cup of wine mixed with water, and he taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at a considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying, Amen. And when he who presides has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons, give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine; and to those who are absent, they carry away a portion.’

“ This one testimony is sufficient to settle the question, and has been deemed decisive by a multitude of learned writers, in various ages of the Church.

“ Bingham, in his ‘ Antiquities,’ says : ‘ It belonged to the deacons to take care of the holy table, and all the ornaments and utensils pertain-

ing thereto, *and to distribute the elements to the people.*' Poole says: 'To the deacons was committed the serving of tables, *the Lord's table*, and the poor's,' etc. Annot. on Phil. i. John Brown of Haddington, whom Dr. Samuel Miller (of Princeton,) terms 'one of the most decisive, consistent, and devoted Presbyterians that ever lived,' thus speaks: 'The business of the deacons is to serve in *distributing the elements at the Lord's table*, and to provide and duly distribute provision to ministers and to the poor. Their work is to manage the temporal affairs of the congregation relative to the table of the poor, the table of ministers, and the table of the Lord.' Rutherford says: 'I yield that the deacon is to serve at the communion table, and provide the elements, and to carry the cup at the table.' Pardovan's Collections (concerning the worship, discipline, and government of the Church of Scotland,) teach that 'deacons may be employed to provide the elements, to carry them, and to serve the communicants at the Lord's table.' Dr. Owen, who strenuously maintained the distinction between the elder and the deacon, says: 'It belongs to deacons not only to take care of the poor, but to manage all other affairs of the church of the same kind, such as providing for the place of church assemblies; of the elements for the sacraments; of collecting, keeping, and dispensing of stocks of the church for maintenance of its officers, and for incidences.' 'The work of the deacon lies in the providing and disposal of earthly things, in serving of the tables of the church, and those private of the poor.' So likewise Dr. Ridgeley, who recognises the distinction between the elder and the deacon: "The deacon's work is described as 'serving tables,' that is, the Lord's table, by providing what is necessary for the Lord's Supper, and assisting in the distribution of the elements,' etc. Dr. Guyse, in his learned exposition of the New Testament, includes in table service, 'the Lord's table, the tables of the apostles, and of the poor members of the church.' Dr. Dwight, who also distinguishes between the ruling elder and the deacon, observes, 'It is the proper business of the deacon to distribute the sacramental elements to the communicants. This they have done in all ages of the Church.' Dr. James P. Wilson, a learned Presbyterian divine, in his work on Church Government, says: 'The presiding presbyter (in the primitive Church,) administered the eucharist, and the deacons carried it to the people.'

"Dr. Miller, (of Princeton,) quoting the testimony of Justin Martyr, relative to the distribution of the sacramental elements by the deacons, remarks: 'This is still one of the functions of the deacons in the Presbyterian Church.' Other testimonies could be adduced, but these are sufficient to show that we are the advocates of *no new doctrine*. The cry of 'Novelty,' 'Innovation,' has often been raised against what was subsequently proved to be a time-honored truth, or a time-honored usage in the house of God; and time-honored, because God-honored."

Such is Dr. Miller's reply to the question, Whether deacons should distribute the elements from the hands of the preacher at the Lord's table ? The reply is conclusive so far as ancient custom is concerned; and the propriety of the custom cannot be successfully called into question. The chief value to be attached to it is, as he intimates, that, by removing all side issues, it may help to bring out more clearly the real work of the eldership—the oversight of the flock of God. And, for that reason, we would gladly return to the old paths. Take out of the way the “ table service” in all its cognate departments, and let our elders see more clearly, that to them is committed by the Lord Jesus the weighty charge of caring for the *persons* of his Church. Let this Senate of associate pastors give themselves to visiting, counselling, and admonishing the people from house to house, while the preacher is allowed to devote himself “ to the ministry of the word and to prayer.” In this way shall the full strength of our apostolic Presbyterianism be developed, and our Church become a joy and a praise in all the land.

The other question is, May the service of deacons be extended beyond the bounds of the particular congregation ? And to this we reply in the words of Dr. Thornwell, already cited in part, at the head of this article:

“ Our Book does not confine deacons to particular congregations. There should be a competent number of them in each particular church ; but we insist upon it, that Presbyteries, Synods, and the General Assembly, should also have their deacons to attend to their pecuniary matters. Those ordained at Jerusalem were not confined to a specific congregation, but acted for the whole College of Apostles. By intrusting all pecuniary matters into the hands of men ordained under solemn sanctions for the purpose, our spiritual courts would soon cease to be what they are to an alarming extent at present—mere corporations for secular business. . . . Boards combine what God has separated, the *purse* and the *keys*.”

So speaks “ a master in Israel,” second to none in his intuitive comprehension of our divinely ordained system of church polity. The evil of which he complains is painfully apparent to every one who attends our higher church courts, and witnesses the tiresome discussions upon pecuniary questions, resulting, for the

most part, in measures devoid of fruit. Many excellent ministers and ruling elders seem not to possess any special gift for the management of such matters. It behooves us to ponder well a suggestion from such a source. The experiment might be made with ease and safety. Let the Assembly elect a bench of deacons to do the work now in the hands of its trustees, and let these deacons of the General Assembly be incorporated as trustees to represent it in the civil courts. And then let it constitute these deacons into a general committee of finance, to devise ways and means for conducting all schemes of church work. The advantage is obvious of such a body in dealing with complicated monetary questions, wherein it is so important to have *time* to consider well what is to be done, over an Assembly made up of new men every year. The conclusions reached by such a body of men, "full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom," bound by solemn vows to do this part of the work faithfully, would have all the weight which our necessities would require. They would be the Church's hand carrying into effect what she has in her highest council devised. The Church seems to have rejected the idea of ecclesiastical taxation, the apportionment of Presbyterial, Synodical, and Assembly expenses among the churches hitherto, according to their roll of communicants, being considered as a convenient way of meeting a trivial expense, but not a recognition of a right in courts to compel payment of assessments, it is difficult to see wherein the calls of the Assembly, or its committees, for contributions, could possess any greater authority than those of its deacons. And of course the Assembly's approval of the schemes would give all the force of its sanction to such lawful measures as its deacons would devise for giving them effect. The same separation of the purse and the keys, which Dr. Thornwell finds made in the word of God, could very easily be made in the workings of Synods and Presbyteries also.

But whatever may be done by the higher courts, to give effect to some such plan as Dr. Thornwell's, for getting rid of the troublesome questions of finance, we long to see this divine system carried into effect in our congregations at least. There is no constitutional barrier in the way of immediate action. The

law expressly allows and sanctions it. The General Assembly, by adopting the Book of Church Order, has thrown all the weight of its authority in that direction. We are sure that such a step is sanctioned by God's word, and that infinitely outweighs all else. We devoutly wish to see all the friction which human use of it produces in our divinely contrived machinery, eliminated, and church work simplified by a wise division of labor—" *the things*" to the deacons, " *the persons*" to the elders, the " *ministry of the word*" to the preachers. We shall then expect to see some such results as followed the first introduction of the diaconate by the apostles. Dr. Addison Alexander, in his Commentary on Acts, thus speaks of it:

" To prepare the way for the extension of the Church, a difference is permitted to arise within it (1), in consequence of which the twelve assemble the disciples (2), and propose a cure for the existing evil (3, 4), which is accordingly applied by the appointment of seven men to dispense the charities of the church (5, 6). A great addition, from the most important class of Jews, ensues upon this measure (7)". (See summary of contents for Chap. VI.)

## ARTICLE II.

### ITALY AND ITS RELIGIONS.

*Taylor's Manual of History ; Coleman's Ancient Christianity ; Lecky's History of European Morals; Evangelical Alliance Proceedings ; Ranke's History of the Popes, etc.*

It has been said of Bunyan's immortal allegory, that it is equally interesting, and for different reasons, to the child, the poet, the Christian, and the theologian. With similar appropriateness it may be affirmed of the history of Italy, that it is equally interesting, and for different reasons, to the tourist, the artist, the poet, the scholar, the historian, the statesman, and the believer. It is proposed, by the aid of the authorities above named, partly to unravel one of the threads (in too many places crimson-hued,) of this marvellous and variegated tapestry. \*

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