

the state is bound so to enforce outward rest and quiet, and the cessation of secular labors and public amusements, as to honor God's natural ordinance, and to give the allied institutes, the family and the Church, their proper opportunity for doing their work on the people.

R. L. DABNEY.

ARTICLE VI.

THE DIACONATE.*

[by the Rev. Dr. John L. Girardeau]

II. Secondly, we proceed to consider the scope of the deacon's functions. Under this head we design to treat the question of diaconal functions as terminating on, 1. The care of the poor; 2. The management of ecclesiastical stipends, goods, and property 3. Collections for congregational purposes, and for the temporal support of the benevolent enterprises and the institutions of the Church ; and 4. The service of the Lord's table.

FIRST. The subject of the care of the poor is distributable into three parts: the care of the poor of the Church; the care of Christian strangers; and the care of the poor of the world.

1. We will briefly consider the relation of the deacon to the poor of the Church. It is usual to regard it as the chief function of the deacon to care for the poor—that is to say, as his chief specific function. Generically considered, his office is concerned about all the temporal interests with which the Church has to do as we hope to show under another head. As donations are spontaneously made, and legacies left, to the Church, he is the receiver; as money is to be raised for various purposes, he is the collector; as funds and property are to be kept and administered, he is the treasurer and manager; and as relief is to be extended to the poor, and stipends paid to church-officers and agents, he is the distributor. While, therefore, distribution is his principal

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and, it may be, designative function, it is by no means his only function. He is the temporal officer of the Church, appointed by Christ's authority; and consequently, all which strictly comes under the denomination of ecclesiastical temporalities falls under the scope of his functions.

As the fact that the deacon sustains an official relation to the poor of the Church is conceded on all hands, there is no need to discuss it as if it were a moot point; but taking it for granted, it may be proper to glance at some of the principles which underlie the diaconal office in this its prominent feature, and note a few of the practical inferences which may be deduced from them.

(1.) The first principle which may be mentioned as fundamental to this office is that of the unity of the Church, as expressed in the fellowship of temporal suffering. Conceived as invisible, the Church is one by reason of a spiritual life derived from Christ her Head, infused alike into all the members of his mystical body by the vitalising power of the Holy Ghost, and uniting them not as a mechanical aggregation of parts, but as a living and organic whole. Conceived as visible, and as capable of manifesting her inward life by corporal association, the Church is one as a communion of saints in the joint participation of the ordinances of God's appointment—a united worship at his altar, a common hearing of the preached gospel, and especially a holy fellowship around the sacramental board. Conceived as a visible institute susceptible of governmental organisation and polity, the Church is one by virtue of the representative principle, beginning its grand activity in the primary assemblies of Christ's professing people, uttering itself through the medium of their free suffrages, and expanding in the majestic sweep of its influence from the parochial presbytery through a correlated series of courts to a possible culmination in a supreme (Ecumenical Assembly. Conceived as the suffering body of Christ, a company of pilgrims through a scene of discipline to a heavenly home, the Church is one by the fusing power of an all-pervading sympathy. So far as this sympathy is related to spiritual distress, it finds its legitimate expression through the tender and consolatory ministrations of the pastoral office; so far as it is connected with temporal want,

it meets its provided channel of expenditure in the humble but Christ-like office which was filled by the illustrious proto-martyr of the Christian Church. The deacon's function is grounded in the Church's unity of suffering. It becomes him, therefore, as the representative alike of the sympathy of Jesus for his afflicted brethren and of that of his body for its needy members, to put the material tokens of that sympathy, with loving gentleness, into the hand of the poor believer. It is easy to see that if the deacon's office were thoroughly employed, in accordance with its beneficent spirit and design, such a thing as the communistic agitation which is the great fret of secular society would be rendered impossible in the Church. The clamor of the discontented Hellenists was at once silenced by the increased vigor of diaconal ministration. The Church is a sacred brotherhood; and if dissatisfaction arises in its bosom in consequence of a disproportionate possession of worldly goods by its members, the deacon is the appointed, and, if he use his office well, the efficient, mediator between the rich and the poor.

(2.) Another principle which grounds the office of deacon is love; in that form of it which is usually denominated charity. As discharging the function of instruction, the Church is a school; as propagating the Christian faith and inviting the nations to partake of the blessings of redemption, she is a missionary college; as performing the office of rule, she is a government, a polity—the city of God; as related to temporal want, she is an asylum for the poor and the sick, offering the advantages and conferring the benefits at once of an almshouse and a hospital. Contemplated in this last aspect, the Church not only acts as the minister of sympathy to the afflicted members of the body of Christ, but, we think, also, more generally, as the almoner of charity to the suffering and needy members of the family of man. She is by her very constitution an eleemosynary institute, and according to the extent of her means, receives as beneficiaries upon her charity every real and worthy child of want. Like redemption, in which she is founded, she bestows her benefactions upon the whole personality of man, body and soul alike, and ex-

tends her compassions, through her diaconal organs, as well to the sinner as the saint.

(3.) A third principle which underlies the deacon's office is the duty resulting from the perpetual presence of the poor in the Church. The poor, said our Master, ye have always with you. As there is no community in which the gospel is not needed by the spiritually poor, so there is none in which the Church's help is not a boon to the temporally poor. A church in which there are no poor would do well to raise the question, whether it does not lie outside the pale of God's election. For, "hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him?" Christ's poor relations will ever be found where Christian organisations exist, and the nominal church which neglects to provide for them confesses itself apostate.

(4.) A fourth principle in which the deacon's office is founded is the necessity of a permanently operative official obligation, which will render certain the performance of charitable offices by the Church. Christ has not left this matter to the option of his people. The voluntary principle would not have answered, as experience has shown. Its efforts are spasmodic, its fruits but Jonah's gourds. The enthusiasm which springs out of it like a flame, burns vehemently to-day and to-morrow is cold. Possibly if the Church were a society grounded in commutative justice, and her so-called charities had been the *quid, pro quo* payments upon life insurance contracts, she might have continued to exist as an organisation for mutual relief. But the free unbought ministration of charity, such as that which the Church bestows, never could have flowed on an unceasing stream through the centuries, concurrently with that of human want, had not the infinite wisdom of her Head provided against the contingency by the appointment of an officer whose business it is, under the solemn sanctions of ordination vows, to extend gratuitous relief to the poor. The duty of the Church to elect the deacon, and the obligation of the deacon to Christ, are the guarantees that diaconal functions will not fail to be discharged.

(5.) Still another principle which may be noticed as lying at

the root of the deacon's office is the unreasonableness of mingling spiritual and temporal functions. They are incongruous, and hence one of the grounds of necessity for the office of deacon as distinct from that of the minister of the word and the other kind of pastor—the ruling elder. But as this has been previously considered, we will not dwell upon it here.

In regard to the question, how the deacon may assist the poor in addition to the extension of pecuniary relief, we simply present one or two citations which are deserving of attention. From an Act of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland “anent the duties of Elders and Deacons, and on the management of the Secular Affairs of Congregations,” 1845, we extract the following clauses: “II. Respecting the peculiar duties of deacons:— ... 4. That they watch over the education of the children of the poor” [that is, the congregational poor mentioned under a preceding head].

Lorimer, in his work on the Deaconship, says:

“In most towns there are a variety of institutions for the relief of disease, such as dispensaries, infirmaries, etc. To meet particular wants at certain seasons of the year, there, are societies for clothing and fuel. There are also friendly societies and provident institutions for accumulating the savings, not, perhaps, of the poor, but of classes which may become poor. There are schools, too, for the education of children—the Sabbath and week-day school for all; the evening class for those whose education has been neglected. By making himself master of all the means of humane, literary, economical, and religious good in his district or town, and becoming acquainted also with the respective managers, an intelligent deacon may do much to prevent poverty and suffering, and greatly mitigate them where they exist.”*

There are other special offices falling under the general consideration of the care of the Christian poor, which we cannot enlarge upon in detail; such as the extension of counsel to them as to their little temporal interest, the provision of seats for them in the house of God, helping them to places at the communion-table, in fine, all the courteous attentions which the heart of the true deacon would prompt him to render to the representatives of the Master's poverty on earth.

*P. 71.

2. A few words, next, require to be said in regard to the functions of the deacon's office as terminating on the care of Christian strangers. Kindness to strangers is dictated by the instinctive feelings of nature, as is sometimes beautifully and touchingly evinced in the customs of barbarous tribes. This natural duty is reënfined in the Scriptures, and us an element of Christian ethics, guarded by the most solemn and impressive sanctions. "For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward ; He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye, therefore, the stranger; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers ; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." And from the wonderful and affecting account given by our Lord of the procedures of the last Judgment, we gather that some will then be surprised to learn that, in providing for strangers on earth, they had entertained unawares not angels, but the blessed Master himself. "I was a stranger, and ye took me in." "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." But this office which is obligatory on the private believer is eminently incumbent on the Church, acting through her official organ, as the exponent of her charity. We add a passage from the learned Dr. John Lightfoot, in which is exhibited the practice in this matter of the Jewish Synagogue and of the Apostolic Church ; and an extract from the Second Book of Discipline of the Church of Scotland, as a specimen of what ancient practice was, and what modern ought to be. Says the great English scholar:

"It may be observed from hence that strangers and travellers were entertained in a place near the synagogue (compare Acts xviii. 7) which was a public Xenodochion, or receptacle of strangers, at the charge of the congregation ; which laudable custom, it is almost apparent, was transplanted into the Christian churches in those times : as compare such passages as those, Heb. xiii. 2; Acts xv. 4. And possibly those *Agapæ*, or ' feasts of charity,' spoken of in the Epistles of the Apostles, are to be understood of these loving and charitable entertainments of strangers. ' These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you

feeding themselves without fear.' False teachers, travelling abroad undiscovered, and being entertained in these public receptacles for strangers, and at the public charge, would find here a fit opportunity for themselves to vent their errors and deceptions. In this sense may Gaius very properly be understood as 'the host of the whole church', as being the officer, or chief overseer, employed by the Corinthian church for these entertainments: in which also it was almost inevitable but some women should have their employment: according to which custom we may best understand such places as these: 'Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchrea, she hath been a succorer of many'; 'Mary bestowed much labour on us.' Rom. xvi. 1,6; 1 Tim. v. 9, 10."*

The passage from the Second Book of Discipline is: "The same Canons [the ancient] make mention of a fourfold distribution of the patrimony of the Church, whereof . . . the third [part was applied] to the poor, sick persons, and strangers."†

The following Canon of the Reformed Church of France suggests cautionary measures, to be taken in the assistance of strangers, which merit consideration:

"To prevent those disorders which daily fall out by reason of certificates given unto the poor, every church shall endeavour to maintain its own; and in case any one be constrained through the urgency of his affairs to travel, ministers shall examine, with the greatest care in their Consistories, the just causes of his journey, and thereupon shall give him letters directed to the next church, lying in the straight way by which he must go, specifying his name, age, stature, hair, and the place whither and the cause of his travel, and the assistance which was given him; nor shall the date of the day and year be omitted; which letters the church he is directed to shall keep by it, and give him others unto the next; and "all certificates formerly given shall be torn to pieces."‡

3. In the next place, the question arises, whether the functions of the diaconate terminate on the poor of the world, as well as on the poor of the Church?

There has not been much discussion of this subject, so far as we have been able to discover, although some difference of opinion has existed in regard to it. We venture to support the position: that deacons, as official organs for the ministration of ecclesiastical charity, ought, when warranted by the ability of the church,

* *Works*, London, 1823, Vol. III., p. 274.

† Chap. IX., §4; Dunlop's *Confessions*.

‡ Quick's *Synodicon*, Discipline, Ch. IV., Can. IV., p. 29.

to extend relief to the poor of the outside world. Before stating the reasons which we have to offer in behalf of this view, we cite a few testimonies in its favour:

Voetius, the distinguished Dutch writer on Presbyterian polity, speaking of deacons, says: "That they may exercise beneficence towards all men, especially towards those who are of the household of faith."*

Dr. Timothy Dwight, of New England, gives a striking quotation from the Emperor Julian, known in ecclesiastical history as the Apostate:

"If Hellenism [that is, the religion of the heathen] does not prosper according to our wish, it is the fault of those who profess it. Why do we not look to that which has been the principal cause of the augmentation of impiety [that is, the Christian religion]: humanity to strangers, care in burying the dead, and that sanctity of life, of which they make such a show? It is a shame that when the impious Galilæans [that is, Christians] relieve not only their own people, but ours also, our poor should be neglected by us. . . . It having so happened, as I suppose, that the poor were neglected by our priests, the impious Galilæans, observing this, have addicted themselves to this kind of humanity ; and by the show of such good offices have recommended the worst of things [that is, the Christian religion] ; for, beginning with their love-feasts, and the ministry of tables, as they call it (for not only the name but the thing is common among them), they have drawn away the faithful to impiety."

In regard to this passage President Dwight remarks:

"We have here the strongest evidence, that the ancient Christians, down to the days of Julian, maintained the charity of the gospel to their poor and suffering brethren, and to strangers also. . . . It is plain also, that in the view of this emperor, this charity was a primary reason why Christianity prevailed in the world. For he exhibits his full conviction that it was impossible to spread heathenism by any other means than a strenuous imitation of this excellent character. The justness of these opinions is in my view unquestionable."†

Lorimer, in his work on the Deaconship, has the following remarks :

"The leading duty of the office is unquestionably the care of the poor. Here a question, however, arises, what poor? Is it the general poor

**Eccles. Polity*, Vol. III., p. 496.

† *Theology*, Sermon. CLV.

of the community, whether religious or irreligious, or is the office intended only for the Christian poor? This is a very important inquiry. There can be no doubt that the poor members of the congregation are the *peculiar* objects of the deacon's care, and are, it may be, entitled to a higher provision ; but the question is, Is the deacon to exclude all other poor from his special regard? . . . Besides her own poor, she [the Church] is surrounded with many poor who do not belong, by living membership, to her communion. . . . There is no authority in Scripture for restricting the donations of the deacon to poor *communicants*. . . . It is an honorable light in which Christianity is presented, when she appears as the friend of the poor, even those who do not make a profession of religion.”*

These testimonies serve to show that we are not **promulging** a new and peculiar view when we express the opinion that the Church should, through the deacon as the almoner of her charities, so far as her circumstances will permit it, extend relief to the outside poor.

To this position it may be objected, that injustice would be done to the needy and suffering members of the church—that bread would be taken from the children's mouths and given to strangers and aliens. To this we reply that the qualifications appended to the proposition we have submitted, provide against such a contingency. The poor of the Church ought to be preferred before the poor of the world. But where both can be helped without injustice to needy communicants, both ought to be helped.

It may be objected, in the next place, that the Church is not able to provide relief for both classes of the poor; that the outside poor are a great multitude who would speedily drain her resources; in short, that the thing is impossible. We answer, that we have only contended for such a discharge of this beneficent office as would consist with the Church's ability. If she cannot, she cannot; that's all. But if she can, she ought, to the extent of her ability, no more.

It may be objected, in the third place, that State provision is made for the poor, and that the Church would perform a superfluous office in attempting to relieve the wants of those who are

*Chap. VII., pp. 66, 67, 69.

able to draw from the treasury of the State. To this it may be replied: First, that the same objection would in part hold against the relief of the Church's poor, since they are equally with other poor entitled to State provision. Secondly, the Church poor are not debarred from participating in the State provision because the Church relieves them ; why should the State poor be excluded from Church provision because the State relieves them ? Thirdly, the payment of a State tax for the poor is a mere duty exacted upon penalties; but God requires charity freely bestowed. The Church is the organ of that charity, and the deacon the hand of the Church. If, therefore, it is true that the members of the Church contribute to the payment of the tax, that fact does not exempt them from the obligation to be also charitable to the poor. That obligation is independent of all human provision for the poor. It is imposed by God himself. The following considerations, concisely stated, are offered in justification of the view which we have advanced :

(1.) The genius and spirit of the gospel, as a scheme of redemption for the souls and bodies of men, freely offered to all who will avail themselves of its provisions, are in favor of it.

(2.) The precepts of Scripture enforce it, both of the Old and the New Testaments. "And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleanings of thy harvest; thou shalt leave them unto the poor and to the stranger : I am the Lord thy God."* "And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him ; yea, though he be a stranger or a sojourner."† The touching parable of the good Samaritan, with its lesson, "Go and do thou likewise," and the apostolic exhortation, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith," may be taken as plain examples of New Testament instruction on the subject. The fact that these precepts are specially addressed to individuals, makes no difference. We have long accepted the principle that

* Lev. xxiii. 22.

† Lev. xxv. 35.

the duty of charity which is incumbent on the private believer is emphatically and eminently imposed upon the official organ of the Church's alms.

(3.) We plead the example of the Lord Jesus in support of this view—a consideration which, if there were room, might be impressively expanded. It must suffice to say, that no suppliant for bodily help ever left his presence unblest. The fact of need was enough to secure his help. The members of the Church in which he was born were not the only recipients of his charity. The daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman—a member of a foreign and accursed race—was rescued by his mercy from bodily degradation and torture, as well as from Satanic oppression of mind. The inference is obvious. The Church is, in a sense, the representative of his charity in the midst of an afflicted world, and the deacon is the agent of her benefactions.

(4.) As the Church gives the gospel, containing spiritual relief, to all men indiscriminately, so, as far as it is compatible with her ability and circumstances to do so, ought she to extend temporal and bodily help to all. We recognise this principle in the admitted legitimacy of rendering charitable assistance to the heathen, as, for example, to the Chinese who recently suffered under the ravages of famine ; and we do not hesitate to raise collections in our churches for the relief of our fellow-citizens of all classes, irrespectively of religious relations, who may be crushed down by calamity, as, for instance, those who suffer from the dread visitation of pestilence.

(5.) The view under consideration seems to be enforced by the principle of reciprocity. Some persons of the world, who are *not* poor, help the Church by the free contribution of their means ; why should not the Church help some persons of the world who *are* poor, by the bestowal of her charities.

(6.) The effects of such a practice, particularly if generally adopted, would effectually vindicate it against all objections. If the Church would extend temporal relief somewhat as she affords spiritual ; if all churches, of all denominations, would do it, what splendid results would be reached ! What impressions for good would be made upon the masses of the outside world, who are ever attracted more by the palpable benefits of material bene-

factions than by the viewless blessings of a spiritual religion! What a check would, moreover, be given to Socialism, that tremendous threat to modern society! And let it not be said that the Church would thus drastically offer bribes to the outside poor to draw them into her communion, and would purchase her conquests by her gold. It is difficult to see how the bestowal of charity upon those who remain outside of the Church can be any greater inducement to a profession of religion than the fact that only those who are inside the Church can be beneficiaries upon her bounty. If any bribe, if any solicitation, there be to outsiders, it would seem to be more fairly imputable to the invitation : Come in among us, and then we will help you. But the ascription of any such motive to the Church, on what plan soever she proceeds, is utterly unfair and unjustifiable. It is the old slander of the Church that she won the heathen by her largesses. No doubt her extension of help to the poor would have a tendency to attract them to her communion; but that would be an incidental and not an intentional result.

In connexion with this aspect of our subject, it is proper to advert to the question, What ought to be the course pursued by the Church as to the diaconal administration of relief to the suffering, in seasons of heavy public calamity, such as the prevalence of a destructive pestilence ? It has been said, in the tone of criticism, that at such times the eleemosynary agencies of the Church melt away. The subject is a difficult one, and merits a more thorough discussion than the limits of this report will afford. We venture only a few suggestions. In the first place, it would be utterly unfair to infer, from the fact that at such times the organised efforts of particular churches within the circle of the supposed calamity come to a temporary close, that the Church neglects to furnish assistance to the stricken community. On the contrary, we have no doubt that the amounts collected for that purpose by churches outside of the suffering territory constitute a considerable part—we are not prepared to say precisely what part—of the general fund derived from all sources for the relief of the needy. They go, however, with sums contributed from secular sources, into the hands of secular administrators, and so are sunk out of view as churchly contributions.

In the second place, the question presses, Ought the diaconal functions of churches so circumstanced to be suspended? We are disposed to think that the deacons, as well as the minister and elders, ought, if possible, to remain at their posts ; and even if the ordinary and stated meetings should be interrupted and the collections consequently arrested, they should continue their offices of love to individuals, and should act as channels through which the contributions of outside churches and persons might be distributed. The deacons of all the Presbyterian churches in a community ought, in such seasons, to combine into a working committee, and we think should form a further union with official committees from the churches of all other Protestant denominations. This consolidated committee would constitute the medium of distributing Church contributions from every part of the land to the needy of all classes, without distinction as to religious faith. And as further combination would probably be necessary, this general committee of the Churches might cooperate with whatever secular organisation controls the distribution of relief, for the accomplishment of an end made common by a universal affliction. Two results at least would flow from such a course of action : a serious effort would be made, in accordance with her sacred vocation, to operate in an organic capacity for the relief of the suffering; and the reproach would be removed that she vanishes with her whole apparatus of ordinances and agencies before the onset of a public calamity.

In the third place, if the Church suffer her organised and official methods of work to lapse in the presence of severe public trials, it is not surprising that the means and the energies of her members should flow into secular channels, and that thus the honor be lost for her which might otherwise be won. Other organisations would receive the credit of what her own members achieve, and the glory of her Lord be tarnished. If, on the other hand, when these official methods are in operation, members of the Church should expend in secular channels the energies and the money which ought to be employed in the furtherance of ecclesiastical ends, and then turn and rebuke the Church for inefficiency, they kiss their mother and betray her to her foes.

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SECONDLY. We pass on to the discussion of the question, whether the deacon's office includes the management of the stipends, revenues, goods, and property, real and personal, of the Church. Our Book of Church Order, Form of Government, Chapter II., Section IV., Article IV., says of deacons: "To them also may be properly committed the charge of the temporal affairs of the Church"; and in Chapter IV., Section IV., Article II.: "To the deacons also may be properly committed the management of the temporal affairs of the Church." We are free to admit that this does not enforce the obligation to make the deacons curators and managers of church property. But it sanctions such a measure. There is nothing in the terms of the Constitution to hinder any particular church from adopting such a course. The way is clear for it to do so, as far as any constitutional bar is concerned. We are not prepared to say, with some, that the word "properly" contains a recommendation of the committal of church property to the care and management of deacons. The language of the law seems, in view of the known practice of many churches, to imply that the opposite course is not improper. It has the effect of making the question an open one, to be determined according to the judgment of each particular congregation. We regret that such is the construction which we are constrained to put upon the terms of the law. We would have had it otherwise if we could; we would have greatly preferred the mandatory "ought to be" of the Memphis Book of 1866 to the permissive "may be" of that which we have adopted. But so it is; and we avail ourselves of the option in the matter which is allowed to the churches, and the absence of all constitutional obstacles in the way of argument, to show the reasonableness and the scripturalness of the committal of the whole property of the Church to diaconal administration. We begin by citing in favor of this view testimonies from Church standards and eminent theologians.

The Discipline of the Reformed Churches of France, Chapter I., Canon XLIII. :

"No pastor, under the title of pastor, shall be permitted to possess an inheritance; but in case his stipend or any part thereof were assigned

upon some particular tenement, rent, or revenue, the whole shall be administered by the deacons, or other persons commissioned and ordained thereunto by the churches; through whose hands the minister shall receive his pension, that so all suspicion of covetousness may be removed, and lest by such worldly cares he should be diverted from the weightier duties of his calling.”*

The First Book of Discipline of the Church of Scotland:

Chapter VIII., § 3: “We require the deacons and treasurers rather to receive the rents than the ministers themselves. . . . We think it expedient that common treasurers, viz., the deacons, be appointed ... to receive the whole rents appertaining to the kirk.”

Chapter VIII., § 8 : “The receivers and collectors of these rents and duties must be the deacons or treasurers.”

Chapter X., § 11: “The office of deacons, as before said, is to receive the rents and gather the alms of the kirk, to keep and distribute the same.”

The Second Book of Discipline of the Church of Scotland:

Chapter VIII., § 3: “Their [the deacons’] office and power is to receive and distribute the whole ecclesiastical goods, . . . that the patrimony of the kirk and poor be not converted to private men’s uses, nor wrongfully distributed.”

Chapter IX., § 1, 3 : “By the patrimony of the kirk, we mean whatsoever thing hath been at any time before, or shall be in times coming, given, or, by consent or universal custom of countries professing the Christian religion, applied to the public use and utility of the kirk. So that under the patrimony we comprehend all things given, or to be given, to the kirk and service of God, as lands, buildings, possessions, annual rents, and all such like, wherewith the kirk is endowed, whether by donations, foundations, mortifications, or any other lawful titles of kings, princes, or any persons inferior to them ; together with the continual oblations of the faithful. We comprehend also all such things as by laws or custom, or use of countries, have been applied to the use and utility of the kirk ; of the which sort are teinds, manses, glebes, and such like, which by common and municipal laws and universal custom are possessed by the kirk. . . .

“The goods ecclesiastical ought to be collected and distributed by the deacons, as the word of God appoints, that they who bear office in the kirk be provided for without care or solicitude. In the apostolical Church, the deacons were appointed to collect and distribute whatever was collected of the faithful to distribute unto 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,

*Quick, Synodicon, Introd., p. 24.

as some suppose; but other goods, movable and immovable, of lands and possessions, the price whereof was brought to the feet of the Apostles. This office continued in the deacons' hands who intermeddled with the whole goods of the Church ; ay, and while the estate thereof was corrupted by Antichrist, as the Ancient Canons bear witness.”

The Free Church of Scotland, Act, anent the Administration of the Secular Affairs of the Church and the Appointment of Deacons, 1843:

“4. In addition to these general boards of administration [that is, for the Church at large], there must be local bodies to take charge of the secular affairs of particular congregations. For this purpose, and on various and very important grounds, the Committee cannot hesitate to recommend that this administration should be exclusively vested in deacons chosen by the congregation, to be conducted in accordance with such general regulations as may be agreed to by a subsequent Assembly.

“While the ultimate object to be kept in view is to have a sufficient body of deacons for the administration of secular affairs in each congregation, the Committee are aware that in some instances it may be impossible immediately to accomplish this ; and in the meanwhile they would suggest that in such cases elders might be allowed to attend to these matters in addition to their own peculiar duties; every exertion being made, however, that the period during which they should continue so burdened should be as short as possible.”* [The Committee’s Report was adopted.]

Act anent the Duties of Elders and Deacons, and on the Management of the Property and Secular Affairs of Congregations, 1844:

“II. Respecting the peculiar duties of deacons: 1. That they give special regard to the whole secular affairs of the congregation.”†

“The following extract,” remarks “Willson, in his Essay on the Deacon, ‘from a ‘Catechism on the Government and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church,’ compiled by Presbyterian divines in Britain, and which has had a large circulation in the Scottish churches and in the Presbyterian Synod of Ulster, shows that the doctrines advocated in this Essay are taught in these churches. The quotations which follow are from the third edition, Glasgow, 1838, Chapter I., Quest. 15: ‘What are the ordinary church officers appointed by Christ? Ana. Presbyters or elders (called also bishops or overseers) and deacons. Quest. 31: For what duty were they [deacons] appointed ? Ans. To manage the temporal

* Acts of the Free Church for 1843.

† Acts of the Free Church for 1844.

affairs of the Church, and especially to attend to the wants of the poor, in order that the Apostles or teachers might give themselves continually to the ministry of the word.' ”*

These references are sufficient to show that, whatever may have been the defects of their practice, the doctrine of the various branches of the Presbyterian Church, as expressed in their formularies, has been to a great extent in favor of committing to deacons the management of all ecclesiastical goods. The difficulty is that the practice has, in great measure, been out of harmony with the doctrine of the Church—an inconsistency which tends to bring the doctrine itself into contempt. It is true that the law of our own Church has not been explicitly developed in the direction of that of the French and Scottish Churches; but it is to be hoped that the spirit of inquiry which now appears to be aroused in regard to the subject will issue in bringing our Constitution, in this respect, into harmony with that view which has been set forth in the purest standards of Presbyterianism. The Scotch and American Presbyterian Churches ought, in relation to the Diaconate, to be governed by the full and positive utterances of the First and Second Books of Discipline rather than by the inadequate and unsatisfactory statement of the Westminster Form of Government.

We go on to adduce the opinions of distinguished theologians:

Eusebius, in his Ecclesiastical History: “These seven approved men were by prayer and the imposition of the hands of the apostles ordained deacons for the public administration of the Church’s affairs.”†

Origen : “The deacons preside over the money-tables of the Church, as we are taught in the Acts of the Apostles.”‡

Sozomen, the Ecclesiastical historian : “The deacon's office was to keep the Church's goods.”§

Calvin : “Nor was the case of deacons then [during the Nicene period] different from what it had been under the Apostles. For they received the daily offerings of the faithful, and the annual revenues of the Church, that they might apply them to their true uses; in other words, partly in maintaining ministers, and partly in supporting the poor.”||

“Now let the deacons come forward, and show their most sacred distribution of ecclesiastical goods.”¶

**The Deacon*, p. 37, footnote, † Lib. II., C. I.

‡ Treatise 16th upon Matthew, quoted by Willson. § Quoted by Willson || *Institutes*, B. IV., C. IV., §5. ¶ *Ibid.*, B. IV., C. V., §15.

“But the deacons have the treasures of the Church to dispense, that is to say, such as are wholly dedicated to God, and ought not in any wise to be applied to profane uses. . . For the goods of the church, as we call them, ought to be applied no other but to the use of the Church, that is to say, to find the ministers, to find school-masters, which serve to preserve the seed of the Church, and such other like things, and specially to find the poor.”*

Voetius, in his great work, *The Ecclesiastical Polity* : “Hither refer all those special modes of acquiring which Zepperus indicates in the place cited and others to be prudently thought out by the deacons.”†

Steuart of Pardovan: “By the ninth chapter of the Policy of the Kirk, deacons were not only to collect and distribute the ordinary alms, but all the church-goods, teinds, etc., and uplift and pay to the ministers their stipends. This were indeed a work proper for their office, an ease to the minister, and would prevent much noise and offence that is raised, when charges to make payment are given, either at their own instance, or in the name of their assignees or factors.”‡

Alexander Henderson, one of the illustrious Scotch Commissioners to the Westminster Assembly, in his *Treatise on the Government and Order of the Church of Scotland*, quoted by Lorimer :§ “Their [the deacons] main duty is to collect, receive, and distribute not only the alms for the poor, but the whole ecclesiastical goods, which are not assigned and appointed for the maintenance of particular persons.”

Samuel Rutherford, another renowned Commissioner from Scotland to the Westminster Assembly, and Professor of Divinity at St. Andrews’, in his *Due Right of Presbyteries*: “I cannot well deny but it is apparent from Acts vi. 4, that the apostles themselves were once those who cared for the poor; but I deny that hence it follows in the case of fewer poor that the office can return to the pastor, as to the first subject, except you suppose the intervention of a divine institution to place it again in the pastors; and considering the afflictions of the churches, the object of the deacons’ ‘giving’ and ‘shewing mercy,’ as it is Rom. xii. 8, cannot be wanting, as that the church’s fabric be kept in good frame, the poor, the captives of Christian churches, etc., be relieved.”¶

David Dickson, an “influential member of the Reforming Assembly, 1638”: “But the deacons not a little aided by their ministrations; for they took care respecting the salary of ministers, and the necessities of the saints, and distributed the public goods of the church.”

“The official treasurers of the church are referred to [Rom. xii. 8—‘he that giveth’]; those who distribute the goods of the church, and the contributions of the faithful, for the public uses of the church.”**

* *Sermon* 24 on 1 Timothy, quoted by Willson. †Vol. III., p. 501.

‡ *Collections*, p. 31. §*The Deaconship*, p. 85.

¶ London Ed., pp. 160, 163: quoted by Willson.

** *Expositio Epistolarum*, 1645; quoted by Willson.

John Owen, in his *Treatise on the True Nature of a Gospel Church* : “Whereas, the reason of the institution of this office was in general to free the pastors of the churches who labor in the word and doctrine from avocations by outward things, such as wherein the church is concerned, it belongs unto the deacons not only to take care of and provide for the poor, but to manage all other affairs of the church of the same kind ; such as are providing for the place of the church-assemblies, of the elements for the sacraments, of collecting, keeping, and disposing of the stock of the church for the maintenance of its officers and incidences, especially in the time of trouble or persecution.”*

Dr. John Lightfoot: “And therefore it is no wonder if the apostles were so circumspect in their election and so observant in their ordination. For these seven were to take this work of the apostles out of their hands, and to dispose of the stock of the church.” †

“The function to which the deacon was appointed by the apostles was to manage the pecuniary affairs of the church, and especially to preside over the collections and disbursements for the poor.” ‡

The London Ministers, authors of the *Divine Right of Presbyterian Church Government*: “The deacons being specially to be trusted with the church’s goods and the disposal thereof, according to the direction of the Presbytery, for the good of the church,” etc.§

Ridgley, in his *Body of Divinity* : “Others [that is, other church-officers besides pastors and ruling elders] who have the oversight of the secular affairs of the church, and the trust of providing for the necessities of the poor committed to them, who are called deacons.” ¶

Dr. Samuel Miller, of Princeton : “It is a great error to suppose that deacons cannot be appropriately and profitably employed in various other ways, besides ministering to the poor of the church. They might, with great propriety, be made the managers of all the money-tables, or fiscal concerns of each congregation : and, for this purpose, might be incorporated, if it were thought necessary, by law, that they might be enabled regularly to hold and employ all the property, real and personal, of the church.” ¶¶

Dr. Thomas Smyth, of Charleston : “All the Reformed churches agree in believing that the Scriptures clearly point out deacons as distinct officers in the church, whose business it is to take care of the poor, to distribute among them the collections which may be raised for their use, and generally to manage the temporal affairs of the church.”**

Dr. Thornwell, in his *Argument against Church-Boards*, remarks: “The Book provides that our churches should be furnished with a class of

*Chap. IX., *Works*, Goold’s Ed., Vol. XVI., p. 147.

† *Works*, Lond., 1823, Vol. VIII., p. 107.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 249. § P. 184. ¶ Phila. Ed., Vol. II., p. 553.

¶¶ *Essay on Ruling Elder*, p. 244. ** *Presbytery and Prelacy*, p. 242.

officers for the express purpose of attending to the temporal affairs of the church.”

In the Argument for Church-Boards Answered, he says: “But it seems that deacons are to be intrusted with nothing but the care of the poor. Is the Reviewer yet to learn, that the common method of instruction pursued in the Scriptures is to inculcate general truths by insisting on their particular applications, rather than dealing in abstract statements? Our Saviour teaches the doctrine of a special providence, by pointing to the fowls of the air, the lilies of the field, and the hairs of our heads. Just as in the contemplation of the works of nature we rise to the abstract from the concrete, the general from the particular, so in the book of Revelation we are often to pursue the same process of cautious and accurate induction. When our Saviour is asked, Who is our neighbor? he gives no formal and elaborate definition ; he simply states a case, and from that case the principle may be gathered. The Decalogue itself can be proved to be a perfect law only by admitting the principle that ‘under one sin or duty all of the same kind are forbidden or commanded’—many of the precepts containing only examples of a large class. As, then, it is frequently the method of Scripture to teach by example, where is the impropriety in supposing that the attention to the poor enjoined upon the deacons was intended to include the whole department of secular business with which the church was to be concerned? It is certain that the reason assigned by the apostles for ordering their election applies just as strongly to the collection and disbursement of funds for one purpose as for another. Their purpose was not to get rid of attending to the poor, but to get rid of secular distractions. ‘It is not reason,’ said they, ‘that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word.’ What would they have gained by divesting themselves of the care of the poor, and continuing to be perplexed with the collection of funds for all other purposes? It must be perfectly obvious to every candid mind that the entire secular business of the church was intrusted to the deacons; that one specific duty is mentioned, in accordance with the general method of Scripture, as a specimen of a class, and that the reason of the appointment determines the extent of the duties imposed.”*

To these names might be added those of distinguished commentators, who, in their exposition of the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, take the ground that the seven were deacons, and that the scope of their functions included the administration of all the secular affairs of the Church. It is true that the learned Vitranga, in his great work on the Synagogue, maintains the view that the seven were not deacons, such as those

* *Collected Writings*, Vol. IV., pp. 154, 200, 201.

permanent officers whom Paul addressed in his letter to the Philippians, and whose qualifications he describes in his first Epistle to Timothy, but were simply “stewards” appointed to meet the emergency in the affairs of the infant Church by the discharge of an extraordinary and temporary function.* This opinion, although ingeniously defended, is manifestly paradoxical; for, “although,” as Dr. Addison Alexander remarks, “the title *deacon* is not used in this passage, nor indeed in this whole book, yet the judgment of the Church has in all ages recognised this as ... that office, the continuance of which in other places and in later times is inferred from 1 Tim. iii. 8, 12; Phil. i. 1; Rom. xvi. 1.”†

We have, it is believed, adduced sufficient authority from the past to show that we are very far from innovating, in contending for the position, that the management of all ecclesiastical goods and property ought to be committed to the deacons, as officers of Christ’s appointment. The French and Scotch Formularies of Government, and the great names which have been mentioned as supporting this view—among which shine those of Calvin, Henderson, Rutherford, Owen, and Thornwell—must be confessed to carry with them to Presbyterians a heavy presumptive weight. It is the practice of the majority of our churches, under what we must consider the unhappy license furnished by the language of our particular Constitution, which has been characterised by novelty; and in abandoning it for that which is advocated in this paper, we would return to the older and the better paths.

Having endeavored to remove the difficulty by which this question is likely to be encumbered, at its very threshold, to wit, that the practice for which we contend would involve a departure from prescriptive usage, and be liable to the charge of novelty, we proceed, under the limitations of a necessary brevity, to adduce arguments in favor of the committal, wherever it is practicable, of the care and management of all ecclesiastical stipends, goods, and property to deacons. And in entering upon the discussion it is expedient that we take with us, as regulative data,

**De Synagoga Vetere*, Lib. III., Pars II., Cap. V.

†*Comm.* on Acts vi. 6.

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certain great principles concerning which there is, among ourselves at least, no dispute, but which, in doubtful cases of ecclesiastical practice, it is always needful to restate and confirm; such, for instance, as these: That the Lord Jesus, as he is the sole Priest, by whose blood the salvation of the Church was purchased, so, also, is the sole Prophet whose instructions she is to hear, and the sole King whose authority she is to obey ; that he has left none of the real wants of the Church unsupplied, but has made ample provision for them all; and that as she has a temporal as well as a spiritual side, is composed of the bodies as well as **thes ouls** of his people, he has in his word secured her interests in both these relations; that without a warrant from his word, which is the constitutional law of the Church, either explicitly given in it or derived from it by good and necessary consequence, no element can lawfully exist, no office be established, no measure be adopted, within the whole extension of the ecclesiastical sphere; that a good and necessary consequence—a logical and therefore legitimate inference from facts, statements, principles, in the divine word—is, with us, formally acknowledged to be of equal authority with the word itself, and when declared to the Church bind her conscience and enforce her practice; that there ought not to be a union of secular and ecclesiastical organisations, or an admixture of secular and ecclesiastical authority in the administration of any affairs which properly come under the denomination of ecclesiastical; and that, on the other hand at the same time, there are natural and civil rights which should not be trespassed upon by ecclesiastical prerogative or requirement—the natural and civil right, for example, of the owners of property to control its management and use. We shall mainly follow the line of these principles in developing the considerations we have to submit.

1. The applicability of these principles to the case in hand must depend upon the definition of the things under consideration, namely, stipends, goods, and property. If they are ecclesiastical, they fall under their scope; if not, they lie outside of it. It is plain that we cannot define in this case from the nature of the things, in themselves considered, for the simple reason that

in their own nature they do not differ from precisely similar things employed for secular purposes. A church-building, for example, does not, in itself, differ from a building devoted to secular uses, as is proved by the fact that it may be, under certain circumstances, alienated from its original purpose. It may become a school-house, or a ware-room, or a place of public meetings of any character whatsoever. We must look, therefore, for a ground of definition to something peculiar to these things and predicable of them alone. That distinctive mark is the end for which they are employed. That end is ecclesiastical. Salaries of ministers, church-buildings, church-lands, church-revenues, all derive their denomination from the end upon which they terminate. And as the end is ecclesiastical, and that gives them their peculiarity which discriminates them from all other kinds of property, all other sorts of things, we properly call them ecclesiastical things, and assign them to the temporal department of the ecclesiastical sphere. They are things set apart and devoted to the service of God as conceived under the idea of the Church. Let it be observed, then, that the things of which we speak are ecclesiastical as contradistinguished from secular things.

(1.) This being granted, it follows that the appointment of trustees, or committees, other than the ordained officers of Christ's house, to take care of and manage these ecclesiastical things, is an infraction of the first principle signalised, viz., that the Lord Jesus is the sole Prophet, whose instructions we are to hear, and the sole King, whose authority we are to obey. For man's wisdom and man's authority ground the appointment of such officers, and consequently usurp the place of Christ's wisdom and Christ's authority. Officers of purely human creation are set over ecclesiastical and devoted things which fall under the control of Christ within the limits of his Church. His wisdom is impugned and his will disregarded.

If this view be just, we are discharged from the necessity of considering the injurious effects, the dangers, the want of guarantees for a safe administration of church funds, accruing from the substitution of humanly appointed agents in the place of the ordained officers of Christ's house. The great principle which we

have erected as a standard is sufficient to settle our practice, since it binds our conscience. If its applicability to this case is valid, we need no other argument. The law of our King is enough—we adore and obey. Those who wish to see the argument from expediency ably handled may consult the Essay of the Rev. James M. Willson, of Philadelphia, to which allusion has already been made.

(2.) If we discard deacons and place other officers, of man's call and appointment, over the temporal things of the Church, we violate the second principle, which we acknowledge to control our practice, to wit, that the Lord Jesus has left none of the wants of the Church unsupplied, but has made ample provision for them all ; and that as she has a temporal as well as a spiritual side, is composed as well of the bodies as the souls of his people, he has in his word secured her interests in both these relations. It is certain that if our Lord did not in the appointment of the office of deacons make provision for the care and administration of the temporal affairs of his Church, he has made no such provision. He has appointed no guardian of her secular interests, no officer of finance, no treasurer of his kingdom, if the deacon be not assigned by his authority to that office. It is not conceivable that this omission to provide by Christ's own instructions for the complete welfare and efficiency of his Church would have occurred. And the case involves, we cannot forbear to think, an insult to his wisdom and his love for his people, when it is supposed necessary to invoke human wisdom to supply the defect, and human authority to create the absent and needed office.

(3.) But if the question be, by what right these extra-ecclesiastical agents are appointed to administer ecclesiastical affairs, we encounter the third great principle which we have assumed, the neglect of which is one potent reason why the Church so soon developed a tendency to abandon the purity of an apostolic condition, and let in a flood of errors and corruptions into the departments of doctrine, government, worship, and distribution; and that she has repeated the same disastrous course, whenever it has pleased God to interpose with his recovering and reviving grace, and lifting her from the mouth of the grave as by a resurrection

power, to give her a fresh start and invite her to a new career of obedience, prosperity, and glory. We allude to the mighty principle, that without a warrant from his word, which is the constitutional law of the Church, either explicitly given in it, or derived from it by good and necessary consequence, no element can lawfully exist, no office be lawfully established, no measure be lawfully adopted, within the whole extent of the ecclesiastical sphere. Now, where is the warrant, express or implied, in the Scriptures for Trustees, or Committee-men, appointed by men apart from and to the exclusion of the ordained officers of the church, to administer its temporal affairs ? To say that, in the absence of a scriptural warrant, their appointment is authorised by necessity, is to say that the Saviour has left his Church incompletely equipped for her work, nay, for the protection and conservation of her own existence. To say that a secular corporation has the right and authority to make these appointments, is either to invalidate and deny Christ's authority in the ecclesiastical sphere, or to except the stipends, goods, and property of the Church from the category of ecclesiastical, and reduce them to the denomination of merely secular things. We have but little doubt that this last supposition lies at the root of the practice against which we are contending. We do not impute to those who cheerfully support the institutions of the Church, a conscious and deliberate intention to cast any discredit upon Christ's wisdom or authority, or upon the offices which he has created. But we have seen that the things which are usually assigned to the care of secular trustees and committees, are really ecclesiastical things, and that, consequently, they cannot be legitimately treated as secular. If this could only be distinctly apprehended, there can be little doubt that the incongruity would be clearly perceived of putting secular officers over ecclesiastical things, or of extending divinely ordained officers from their proper sphere, by filling it with those of man's election. But if no warrant can be pleaded from Scripture for the existence of these extra-ecclesiastical officers within the ecclesiastical sphere, what is left us, but to change our practice in this matter and conform it wherever practicable to the requirements of the Word ?

(4.) If the question be pressed, by what warrant from the Scriptures the management of church-property should be committed to deacons, we ground our answer in the fourth principle to which we have adverted, namely, that a good and necessary consequence—a logical and therefore legitimate inference from facts, statements, and principles contained in the divine word—is, with us, formally acknowledged to be of equal authority with the word itself, and, when declared to the Church, bind her conscience and enforce her practice.

In the first place, it is admitted that the deacon was divinely charged with ministration to the temporal relief of the poor. The sixth chapter of the Acts definitely settles that point. The office of the deacon, therefore, is concerned about a temporal business in which money and provision of other kinds for the maintenance of the body must be handled and managed. Now if, as we have already argued, the Head of the Church could not have left her unprovided with officers whose duty it would be to look to her temporal interests, and administer her secular affairs, we are constrained to infer that he who was certainly charged with one department of secular duties, would be appointed to the discharge of all such duties. Reasoning from the analogy of the deacon's office as related to the temporal relief of the poor, contemplating its very genius and spirit, the inference is a legitimate one, that whatever other function of a temporal character was to be performed for the benefit of the Church, would be imposed likewise upon him who was designated and known as the temporal officer. In the second place, this inference is immensely enhanced by the reason assigned by the apostles for not yielding to the solicitation of the Hellenist believers that they would personally superintend the daily distribution of relief to the poor: "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables." It is perfectly legitimate to infer that this reason holds good in regard to all business of a temporal or secular kind. We have already heard Dr. Thornwell arguing that the apostles would have gained little by divesting themselves of the care of the poor and continuing to be perplexed by the management of other secular affairs. Indeed, it was not attention to the relief of the

poor to which they objected, but the distractions resulting from secular business, of which the ministry to the poor was a part. The case must to his judgment have been very clear, to impel him to say: "It must be perfectly obvious to every candid mind that the entire secular business of the church was intrusted to the deacons."

In the third place, the concurrent judgment of the Church, which cannot be affected by the opinions of a few exceptional thinkers, like Vitringa, has been that the officers whose election is narrated in the sixth chapter of the Acts, were deacons; and that the officers whom Paul afterwards addressed under that title, and whose qualifications he furnishes, were charged with the performance of the same functions. That being so, it follows that, if our inferential reasoning has been valid, the management of the temporal business of the Church ought, on scriptural grounds, always to have been committed, ought now to be committed, to the hands of the deacons.

(5.) If the ground be taken, that the non-communicating members of a congregation, who are contributors to its support, or donors of church property, have a right to joint control, through officers in whose election they have a voice, with the officers of the church; or that a corporation, composed partly of communicating members of a church and partly of non-communicating attendants, may elect trustees representing both these elements—the secular and ecclesiastical—we meet the case with the acknowledged principle, that there ought not to be a union of secular and ecclesiastical organisations, or an admixture of secular and ecclesiastical authority, in the management and administration of any affairs which are properly denominated ecclesiastical. None among us would hesitate to apply this great principle to a union of Church and State, for the accomplishment of ecclesiastical ends; but what essential difference is there between that case, and the case of the coexistence and cooperation of communicants and non-communicants for the management of ecclesiastical property, and, therefore, for the attainment of an ecclesiastical end, except that one is enacted upon a larger, and the other upon a smaller scale? Let the principle which we here hold up to notice be

faithfully applied to all cases, and it will exclude the coalition of secular and ecclesiastical authority as well on the narrow theatre of particular congregational societies, as on the wider one of the Church as an organic whole. It does not constitute any valid objection to this view, that the influence and power exerted by the secular element in an ecclesiastical corporation is professedly and actually limited to the merely temporal interests of the Church; for, first, we have seen that the temporal things of the Church are ecclesiastical things, and that there are officers of Christ's appointment whose function he has ordained to terminate on those things, and to whom alone they ought therefore to be intrusted. Secondly, those who exercise a controlling influence over the temporal interests of the Church, have necessarily, from the intimate relation between them, some power, it may be at times, commanding power, in regard to the spiritual. Thirdly, the tendency, growing out of the possession of power by imperfect human beings, is from the professed control only of temporal matters in the first instance, to the assertion of a right to interfere in the management of spiritual. He who holds the purse wields power, and they who manage the property of the church hold the purse.

2. There would be some flaw in this discussion of the subject, if it logically necessitated the denial of their rights to the non-communicating adherents of the Church; for we have admitted the principle, that there are natural and civil rights which should not be trespassed upon by ecclesiastical prerogative or requirement—the natural and civil right, for example, of the owners of property to control its management and use. It is incumbent on us, therefore, to show that the committal of church-property to diaconal administration would involve no infringement of these rights.

Either the property in question belongs entirely to the church, or it does not. If it does, the corporation which owns the property is numerically coincident with the body of the communicants. It is plain that the committal of its property to the management of deacons would involve no violation of its rights. For, first, the election of deacons would be the act of the body which, personally considered, is the same with the corporation,

and the choice could always be made with a regard to their qualifications to discharge financial trusts of so grave a character. And, secondly, there could not possibly result a sacrifice of rights by the subjects of Christ's kingdom in consequence of paying obedience to his requirements. Surely, if a corporation consist only of communicants, it should, as there would be no bar to its doing so, make the deacons the trustees to whom its property would be committed.

If the property does not belong to the church, but to a corporation composed partly of communicants and partly of non-communicants, then we may urge the consideration, that, for the reasons already mentioned, this state of things should be discontinued. The non-communicating members of such a corporation should pass over all their original rights in the property to the church, and consent that where it is practicable the corporation legally holding it be limited to the communicants. As this would be a purely voluntary act on their part, there could be no infringement of their rights. In favor of the adoption of such a course, we submit an additional consideration derived from the provision embodied in our new Book of Church Order, touching the electors of pastor. The non-communicating pew-holders, or subscribers to the support of the church, although contributors to the salary of the pastor, are excluded from the privilege of voting at his election. Their rights of property are in a certain sense implicated; but it was deemed proper that those rights should give way before the principle that only those who are spiritual are qualified to vote for a spiritual officer, and only those who are the professed subjects of Christ's rule are entitled to vote for an officer of his kingdom. The non-communicants who contribute to the support of a minister really pay for a religious benefit to themselves, their families, and the community of which they are members, and if they feel that they get not value received, if they are dissatisfied with their relations to the pastor and the church, they are not bound: they can remedy the difficulty by withdrawing. It is, of course, always optional with them to stay or go. So, reasoning from analogy, the non-communicants, who contribute towards the erection of a church-edifice, or the maintenance

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of a church-organisation, are not by that fact invested with a right and title to vote in the election of those who manage the property of the church. What they contribute ought to be considered, not as retained under their control, but as given, freely given, to the church, and as therefore passing out of their hands and beyond their direction. In case of dissatisfaction, measures of redress are open to them, and failing those, they can get rid of the difficulty by withdrawing from connexion with the ministrations of the church. The circumstance that they have no voice in the election of deacons, need no more militate against their attendance at a church whose temporal goods are managed by those officers of Christ's appointment, than should the fact that they do not vote at the election of pastor prevent their cordial reception of his spiritual instructions.

It may be objected against this view, that the church has a civil side, and that acting in that relation, she may, in combination with those who are not church-members, elect officers and discharge functions, not strictly ecclesiastical. Here the great distinction to be noted is in regard to the *ends* contemplated. Where the ends are purely civil, such a combination is warranted in order to compass them, and secular agents may very properly be appointed with a view to their attainment; but where the ends are ecclesiastical, none but the church should act in reference to them, and none but ecclesiastical officers should undertake their accomplishment. In those cases, for example, in which a congregation as a collection of citizens or subjects of civil government seek redress at law, or by an appeal to the civil magistrate, for an infraction of those civil rights which they enjoy in common with their fellow-citizens, it acts in the capacity, not of a church, but of a civil society, seeking purely civil ends, and may appoint non-ecclesiastical agents and adopt civil and secular means to attain those ends. But where the ends are ecclesiastical, and the congregation acts in the capacity of a church, as in the case of property for religious purposes—buildings, lands, rents, stocks, etc., it ought to commit the attainment of those ends to ecclesiastical functionaries. This distinction, once clearly apprehended, removes many of the difficulties by which the investiture of the

deacons, as church-officers, with all the powers and responsibilities connected with the care of church-property is embarrassed.

It may be said that the very definition of the deacon's office is, that it is concerned about temporal objects and temporal ends, and that therefore the distinction vanishes between agents appointed to act in behalf of a congregation for civil purposes and the deacons who are elected for temporal. But, in the first place, civil and temporal are not convertible terms. That which is civil is temporal, it is true; but that which is temporal is not necessarily civil. And in the next place, only the proximate end of the deacon's office is temporal; the ultimate is ecclesiastical—ecclesiastical, we say, though not spiritual.

These reasons are, we conceive, sufficient to show that church property ought not to be held and managed by a corporation composed partly of communicants and partly of non-communicants; and that the latter should acquiesce in the administration of the property by the church through her own divinely ordained officers. It deserves, however, to be remarked, that where there is not a sufficient number of male members of a church to render this course practicable, necessity justifies the management of church property by secular persons who are interested in the support of gospel institutions.

But, if these reasons should be deemed inadequate, and there should be congregations, which, availing themselves of the terms of the constitution, choose to retain corporations partly spiritual and partly secular, we proceed to submit considerations which should induce such corporations not to elect secular trustees, or executive committees, but to elect the deacons of the church their trustees or executive committees.

(1.) These corporations might with great propriety show deference to the appointments of Him who is Head and Lawgiver of that society with which their members are pleased to connect themselves as professed worshippers and hearers of the gospel.

(2.) The communicants who are members of these corporations are bound to conform to the requirements of Christ. They cannot without guilt violate his appointments and substitute for the officers of his ordination others created by themselves. Conse-

quently, against the alleged rights of the non-communicating property holders must be **offsetted** the duties of those who are communicants ; and as the rights may be waived while the duties cannot, the rights of the non-communicants ought to yield to the obligations of the communicants. If this were done, as equity requires, the care of church property would always, where practicable, be lodged in the hands of the deacons. They would be elected its trustees.

(3.) The contribution of their means for ecclesiastical purposes, or the holding of ecclesiastical property by non-communicants, is not with a view to the reaping of pecuniary profit, but to secure moral and religious advantages to themselves and their families, which can only be obtained in connexion with the ordinances of the church. And, looking at the case from this **point** of point, we remark:

In the first place, the risk of temporal loss cannot ordinarily be any greater in consequence of committing the property to the care of church officers who may not only be sued at law, but are directly responsible to ecclesiastical authority for the manner in which they discharge their trusts.

In the second place, no gain but one purely religious being contemplated in the holding of church property by non-communicants, that end cannot be defeated by intrusting it the care of ecclesiastical officers.

But, in the third place, it is more probable, on the other hand, that religious benefit will be secured by connexion with a church which pays a strict obedience to the laws of Christ, and refuses to substitute officers of man's creation for those of his appointment. The purer the church, the greater the advantages to accrue from sustaining it.

(4.) The transference to other hands of duties which belong properly to the deacons has generally led to their merely nominal existence, if not to their obliteration, "In most Presbyterian denominations throughout Great Britain, Ireland, and America," says Dr. David King, in his able work on Presbyterian Church Government, "such deacons are generally dispensed with, and the charge of ecclesiastical funds is divided between elders and managers, or allied agencies." This statement has a sting in

it to the heart that honors the laws and appointments of Christ. Ought we not to see to it that any of our own churches which may have failed to elect deacons, should proceed, if it be possible, to supply the defect, and that the temporalities of the Church be committed to the hands of Christ's appointed officers? When will we conform our church order to the pattern **showed** us in the New Testament? It is a solemn remark which Willson makes in his Essay, that the deacon and the trustee have never for any considerable time coexisted in any denomination of Christians. Which, then, will we retain?

Hitherto we have spoken on the supposition that the communicants of a church, or the communicants and non-communicating supporters of a church, constitute the body corporate for the legal holding of church property. But the deacons themselves may be made the corporate body, as Dr. Samuel Miller, of Princeton, suggests. We will not undertake to decide between the incorporation of the communicants with the deacons as trustees on the one hand, and the incorporation of the deacons on the other. What we urge is that one or the other of these two plans be adopted, to the exclusion of a mixed corporation partly spiritual and partly secular; or, failing that, that a mixed corporation should elect the deacons as their trustees.

If the deacons be made trustees, and the management of church property be committed to their hands, it deserves to be remarked that the checks against a maladministration of it would be more ample than upon any other scheme. For, in addition to their legal responsibility, the deacons could be prosecuted for official delinquency before the bar of the Session.

It is proper to observe that in case the deacons are made the trustees of a corporation, they would lie under an obligation to present to that body periodical fiscal accounts, and reports of their proceedings in reference to the property committed to them. If they are themselves constituted the body corporate, they would have to report their proceedings and render their accounts to the church, in its congregational capacity, as holder of the property under their care.*

* It gives us pleasure to say that there is a church in this Synod—

THIRDLY. We propose briefly to consider the functions of the deacon as terminating on collections for congregational purposes and for the temporal support of the benevolent enterprises and the institutions of the Church.

By collections for congregational purposes, we mean all collections made for the purpose of meeting the necessities of the particular church in which they are lifted, apart from those for the relief of the poor—those, for example, for salaries of the minister and sexton, and for current expenses. By collections for the temporal support of the benevolent enterprises and the institutions of the Church, we intend to designate those made both for the maintenance of the benevolent schemes of particular churches such as missionary Sabbath-schools and congregations, and asylums for the poor; and for the benevolent schemes and institutions of the Church at large—such as Home and Foreign Missions, education of needy candidates for the ministry, publication of religious literature, support of invalid ministers and the indigent families of deceased ministers, theological seminaries, and the like.

The legitimacy of employing the deacon in the discharge of secular ecclesiastical functions in addition to his care of the poor, has already been considered under the head of the management of church property. The general conclusion there reached covers the specific case in hand. If the deacon's office is legitimately employed in relation to all the temporal affairs, of the Church, it is of course legitimately employed in relation to the raising of collections for congregational and benevolent purposes. There is no need, therefore, to discuss the question in the special aspect of it before us. It is, however, worthy of remark, as something curious, that those who objected to the extension of the deacon's functions to the care of church property, on the ground that he was appointed to attend to the relief of the poor,

that of Abbeville—in which, by a Constitution drafted by that able lawyer, our late lamented brother, Col. Thomas C. Perrin, the body of communicants is the corporation, and the deacons the trustees. It is to be hoped that all our churches will, where it is practicable, adopt this plan.

did not appear to see that in sanctioning his employment in raising all the collections of the Church, they were inconsistent with themselves, and had, indeed, abandoned the ground on which they stood. If the deacon was by virtue of his appointment restricted to the care of the poor, the church had no right to use his services in making collections for other purposes. But the practice of our Church has long since settled that question as a practical one. Deacons are universally employed among us to take up collections for all purposes. We are gratified, too, in being able now to say, that our Constitution also settles the question and confirms our practice. It says, Form of Government, Chap. II., Sec. 4., Art. IV.: "To the deacons belongs the administration of the offerings for the poor, and other pious uses;" and in Chap. IV., Sec. 4, Art. II. : "The duties of this office especially relate to the care of the poor and to the collection and distribution of the offerings of the people for pious uses." There can, therefore, no longer be any doubt that the deacons are our constitutional agents for making collections for all purposes.

1. We would call attention to the *negative* bearing upon our practice of this declaration of the Form of Government in regard to the duties of deacons. It is admitted that the Constitution binds us because, as we believe, it represents the law of Christ as **enounced** in the New Testament Scriptures. The duties, consequently, which the Constitution assigns to deacons are, we believe, those which the law of Christ imposes upon them. But these duties are obligatory upon them as a distinct class. They are distinctive of, and peculiar to, that class. They can, therefore, be the duties of no other class, on the supposition that the one exists to which they are authoritatively attached. That is to say, if there are deacons in a church, no other officer is called or empowered, under ordinary circumstances, to discharge their peculiar functions. The minister and the ruling elder are not entitled to perform them. They have their own appropriate duties assigned them by divine authority. So have the deacons. It would, therefore, be illegitimate, in a regular condition of the church in which deacons have their place, for the minister and elder to leave their own functions in order to discharge those

of the deacons. Every one should stand in his own lot and perform the duties which belong to it. These views must hold good, unless it can be proved that the higher office includes the lower, so that while it is not competent for the lesser officer to discharge the functions of the greater, the greater may perform those of the lesser. We can conceive no other ground upon which it can be urged that the minister and elder may do the work of the deacon, while the deacon is limited strictly to his own. In a previous part of this discussion, we endeavored to show that this doctrine of the inclusion of the lower office in the higher, in a regular condition of the Church, cannot be sustained by an appeal to Scripture, or to the consent of the Church, or to rational considerations. But if it be untenable, it remains that the peculiar duties of the diaconate cannot be transferred to other church officers, or to special agents. This we conceive to be the constitutional and scriptural view ; and if so, it needs no re-enforcement from human arguments. When the Lord speaks, let all the earth keep silence. But the importance of our compliance with the divine will in the premises, may be evinced by a few considerations.

In the first place, it is obvious that where the principle of a division of labor can be employed, so that different functions may be assigned to different laborers, and so that by virtue of this distribution experts are thrown together for the accomplishment of the ends to which they are peculiarly adapted, and so, moreover, that a facility for performing certain kinds of work is increased by an habitual and exclusive devotion to it of a particular class, greater efficiency would be attained by a working organisation, and higher results in every way would be reached, than by jumbling officers together, and, to use a homely but forcible aphorism, making the peculiar function of one class attach to all, so that "what is everybody's business becomes nobody's."

In the second place, the principle of responsibility lies across the path of this doctrine, that other officers or agents may discharge the functions of deacons. If the deacon is made to feel that no one but himself can perform duties which belong to him alone, his sense of responsibility, if he be a true man, will operate

in full force; but if his functions may be discharged by others, his responsibility is divided, it is shared with others, and his sense of it must be proportionably decreased. And it will equally follow that those who depart from their own peculiar vocation to act as the deacon's substitutes, cannot have that powerful conviction of accountability which is one of the surest guarantees of efficiency. No officer can profoundly feel responsibility for functions to which he is conscious that he was never ordained, and which he never bound himself, by the vows of ordination, to fulfil. Throw his full responsibilities upon the deacon alone, and he will be sure to rise under them. Divide them with others, and you dwarf him.

In the third place, we may derive instruction in this matter from the analogous case in the past of a substitution of special agencies for pastoral ministrations, in the effort to advance the benevolent enterprises of the Church. Time was when it was deemed necessary for paid agents to circulate among the churches in order to stimulate them to the duty of beneficence. The Church had the grace to discard that system, and the results have been gratifying. We are slow to learn. Why should we not refuse to thrust out the deacon from the work to which he is called, as well as the pastor and the elders from theirs? When we shall thoroughly trust and use the deacon, if ever we shall, we will find that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

2. Let us next look at the *positive* bearing upon our practice of the constitutional requirement, that the deacons shall raise and distribute all collections for pious uses. There are two modes of making collections: first, from congregations during the services of the sanctuary, and as an element of public worship ; secondly, from individuals by special application, apart from the public services of the Church. What the function of the deacons is in regard to the first of these methods of collecting, it is not necessary to inquire. Our practice is sufficiently settled to render discussion needless. But the same is not true in reference to the second mode of collecting—by special application to individuals. Here, we think, our practice is defective, and we desire

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to indicate a way in which the defect may be remedied. We are unable to see why the deacons should not be as exclusively employed to make one sort of collections as another. They ought not, as has been shown, to be thrust aside, and in our practice, they are not thrust aside, by other agents, in making the public collections in the house of the Lord. Why should not the deacon discharge his own duties also, in respect to the collections made from individuals? We see no real ground of difference between the two cases, and therefore think that they ought practically to be brought into unity. Now we lay down the proposition, that the deacons are congregational agents for making collections not only for congregational purposes, but for general benevolent objects, and that this holds good in relation to collections from individuals in behalf of those general objects. Let us illustrate this position by reference to a particular case. We will suppose that a theological seminary, under the care of our Church, is in need of pecuniary help. We will suppose also that every Presbytery, within the scope of country from which the institution might legitimately expect to derive its support, recommends or enjoins the Sessions of its churches to present the case, as an extraordinary one lying outside of their regular schedules of causes, to individuals for their contributions. Now let the deacons of each church, all or some of them, be directed by the Sessions thoroughly to canvass the congregations, and the communities, so far as accessible, in which the churches exist, for the purpose of securing contributions to the support of the institution,—that would be an instance which would elucidate our meaning. Ascend from the particular to the general, and you have the principle for which we are contending in its application to general objects of benevolence, viz., that when it is sought to bring them before individuals for their contributions, they should be intrusted for that purpose to the hands of deacons as officers appointed by Christ with reference to all the financial necessities of his Church. We strongly urge the adoption of this course.

We would not be understood as advocating the exclusion of other agencies, contemplating the attainment of the same end, provided they be confined to their own appropriate spheres.

There is need, in regard to such objects, of instruction, exposition, and appeal. The educated mind, the trained speaker, are demanded for the discharge of such offices. The apostles and their fellow-ministers stirred up the churches to contribute to the relief of the poor saints at Jerusalem; but the apostles did not make collections either from churches or individuals. We are not called upon to discuss the question whether such a preliminary office should be discharged by pastors in their regular ministrations, or whether it might not be more appropriately assigned to special agents, particularly under extraordinary circumstances, as, for example, when an endowment is sought for an institution. All that we strive for, is, that the collections should be made by deacons, with that minute, thorough-going canvassing of a congregation and community which only such a method could possibly compass. Whatever a single individual might or might not accomplish, let this be done, and there is hardly a person within the limits of our congregations who might not be approached, and have the opportunity presented to him of giving his contribution. Here, then, we have Presbyteries approving and enjoining, pastors instructing and exhorting—perhaps special agents adding their stirring appeals—Sessions ordering the collections, and the deacons making them. The system seems perfect. It may, it will, in consequence of human imperfection, prove practically defective; but we verily believe it to be the best which can be conceived, and for the simple reason that it is God's system. Duty and policy alike urge us to its complete adoption.

FOURTHLY. This discussion of the scope of the deacon's functions will be concluded with some remarks upon the question, whether they terminate upon the Lord's Table.

It is by some contended that the office of deacon includes the service of three tables : the table of the poor, the table of the minister, and the table of the Lord. We confess our inability to perceive why the Lord's table should be embraced in this classification, except that the mere name, *table-service*, is made generic, including under it the specific service of every sort of table. There is really no analogy between the Lord's Table and the other tables, which would lead to its being reduced to unity with

them as falling to the care of the deacon. It would properly belong to that officer to provide the table itself, and then, as occasion requires, to provide also the elements to be placed upon it; for the reason that the moneys of the church are committed to his hands, and whatever in the preparation for the sacrament involves expense, would naturally fall to his charge. But this having been done, what else remains which would belong distinctively to his office? It is admitted that the administration of the sacred ordinance is restricted to the minister of the word, by reason of the analogy between the teaching function of the sacrament and that of preaching. As, moreover, the administration of the ordinance contemplates spiritual ends, the deacon as a temporal officer is debarred from it. The only remaining thing to be done is the actual transmission—the handing—of the elements to the communicants. Now, can it be shown that the manual transmission of the bread and wine from the officiating minister to the recipients pertains so peculiarly to the deacon's office that others are precluded from undertaking it? We think not, for the following reasons :

1. The only place in Scripture, so far as we know, which is supposed to warrant the threefold classification we have mentioned is that in the sixth chapter of the Acts, recording the arguments used by the Apostles for the election of the seven : “It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.” But it is evident that the Apostles could only have meant the tables from which the bodily wants of the poor were supplied, and those on which the money or the goods of the church were laid—the provision tables and the money tables. Otherwise they must be understood as having transferred the sacramental table with the others to the sole care of the deacons, and as having asserted that it was an unreasonable thing for them, and by parity of reason, for all ministers of the word, to serve the Lord's Table. The argument is invalid, from the fact that it proves too much.

2. We do not know of any other passage of Scripture from which a good and necessary inference can be derived, making it the peculiar duty of deacons to distribute the sacramental ele-

ments. The question would be settled, could such an inference be indicated. In its absence, we are left to be guided by the nature of the case, and by the analogy of the deacon's office. Now the end contemplated in the distribution of the bread and wine at the Lord's Supper is not the nourishment or refreshment of the body; and as the function of the deacon terminates on the body, there would seem to be no special reason why he should, to the exclusion of others, circulate the elements. This function does not come under the head either of the care of the poor, or of the care of moneys, or of the care of property; and these exhaust the scope of the deacon's duties, unless some scriptural evidence exists for another head—the service of the Lord's Table.

3. It is often the case that, the communicants themselves in part transmit the elements from one to another. This is as much a distribution of them as the deacon may be supposed to perform ; and if it belongs to the deacon alone to distribute them, the passage of them by the hands of the recipients would be an unwarrantable intrusion upon the diaconal office. But could it, on scriptural grounds, be arrested for that reason ? In all probability, if we are at liberty to form an inferential judgment in the matter, this was what was actually done in apostolic times. It is almost, if not entirely, impossible to see how the Corinthian communicants could have become drunken at the Lord's Supper, if Paul had instructed the church that the deacons ought to distribute the elements.

4. The opinions and practice of the Church have been too uncertain and conflicting to furnish any satisfactory argument from ecclesiastical authority and precedent in favor of charging the deacon alone with the duty of distributing the elements at the Supper. We furnish specimens of this difference, which are sufficient to illustrate our position :

Justin Martyr, the early father, in a passage in his Second Apology, which is often quoted, says that in his time the deacons distributed the sacramental elements to the people.

Bingham, after citing this passage of Justin Martyr, proceeds to say:

“The author of the Constitutions likewise, describing the manner of the

ancient service, divides the whole action between the bishop and the deacon ; appointing the bishop to deliver the bread to every communicant singly, saying, ‘The body of Christ!’ and the deacon in like manner to deliver the cup, saying, ‘The blood of Christ, the cup of life!’ This the author under the name of St. Austin calls the proper office of the deacons’ order. Yet it was not so proper to their order, but that they were to depend on the will and license of the bishops and presbyters, if they were present; as is expressly provided in some of the ancient Councils, which forbid the deacon to give the Eucharist in the presence of a presbyter, except necessity require, and he have his leave to do it.”*

Steuart of Pardovan says:

“They [the deacons] may be employed to provide the elements, to carry them, and serve the communicants at the Lord’s table.”†

As an offset to the testimony of Justin Martyr, that of Origen is as often quoted to the effect that “the deacons preside over the money-tables of the church.”

Rufinus said that when there was no presbyter present the deacons might distribute the elements of the Lord’s Supper.

Aymon, in his Acts of the National Synods of the Reformed Churches of France, gives this decision of the National Synod at Lyons, 1563:

“As to the question which has been referred to the Brethren of Geneva, whether the pastors only should distribute the bread and the wine to the people at the table of the Lord, they have answered : That it would be very well if they would do it, and that they would do it at all times; but the thing appearing impracticable at present, and still more so for the future, if God should multiply the number of believers, that it would not be unsuitable for the deacons and elders, as the arms and hands of the ministers, to distribute the sacramental elements, after their consecration, to the people who are too far from the minister to be reached by him.”‡

The same author gives the following decision of the National Synod at Vertueil:

“Our brethren having proposed a doubt, to wit, whether any person except the minister of the gospel may deliver the cup to the people in the sacrament—the Synod, after duly weighing the reasons on both sides of the question, do decide, That the fourteenth article decreed by the

**Antiquities*, Vol. I., p. 253. † *Collections*, p. 31.

‡ *Synodes Nationaux des Eglises Reformées de France*, Tom. I., p. 57.

Council of Lyons should remain in force, namely, that none other than the minister, if possible, should deliver the cup.”†

He furnishes also this decision of the National Synod at Privas:

“This body confirms the judgment rendered by the National Synod of St. Maixent, which shows that the elders and deacons, in case of necessity, may distribute the cup, but without speaking.”*

It seems exceedingly probable that in the early Church the custom of the distribution of the sacramental elements by deacons originated in the hypothesis, which very soon began to prevail, that the diaconal office subordinately involved the preaching function, and that the deacon ought to be, in a peculiar sense, an assistant of the bishop, as the presiding officer of the presbyterial college came to be exclusively called. It is easy to see how, under the influence of such a view of the diaconate, the deacon was employed to assist “the bishop” in the administration of the Supper. Sometimes, as we have heard Bingham saying, the bishop distributed the bread and the deacon the cup. This looks very much like the recognition of a teaching prerogative as belonging to the deacon, grounding his participation with the bishop in the dispensation of the elements.

While, therefore, we cannot perceive that either Scripture, or the analogy of the deacon’s office, or the consentient practice of the true Church, would lead us to conclude that it is a distinctive duty of the deacon to distribute the elements at the administration of the Lord’s Supper, neither do we see any just reason why he may not assist the minister in the manual circulation of them ; provided, that function is not considered as proper to him by virtue of his containing in himself the germ of the preaching office. For, it is not, so far as we know, made obligatory on any other officer than the minister, strictly speaking, to distribute the elements—that is, to give them from the table to the people ; and we see no reason why elders and deacons may not, after the sacramental action of distribution has been done by the minister, unite in merely passing the elements about among the communicants without the use of any words; or why, in the absence of elders and deacons from a church, some reputable private mem-

**Ibid.*, p. 74. †*Ibid.*, p. 415.

ber may not be called upon to render this service of love to his fellow-communicants. Where there is no male member of a church, the transmission, as well as the distribution, in the first instance from the table, would devolve on the officiating minister, as a servant of the Church for Jesus' sake. Lest, therefore, it should be regarded as peculiarly imperative, upon either the elders or the deacons to discharge this service, we would express the judgment, that, in the ordinary practice of our churches, both classes of officers should take part in its performance; for it does not distinctively appertain to the elder any more than to the deacon. Decency, order, and convenience, make it expedient that some particular persons should be charged with the circulation of the elements among the communicants; and the church-officers, without distinction, would, we think, most appropriately be called upon to assist the minister in putting the elements into the hands of all the recipients, especially those remote from him. We concur in the opinion, already cited, of the "Brethren of Geneva"—and Calvin was alive when that judgment was rendered*—that, the distribution of the sacramental elements properly belongs to the minister; but that after he has distributed them from the table, the mere manual transmission—the handing—of them among the communicants should be jointly performed by the elders and deacons.

*This judgment was adopted by the National Synod of Lyons in 1563, and Calvin died in 1564.