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TRUSTEE CONSISTORY AND DEACONS.

HOW FAR EXPEDIENT AND WARRANTED BY THE WORD OF GOD.

BY REV. JAS. CHRYSTIE.

The question of a trustee consistory or trustee deacons is now more fairly and clearly before the church than it has yet appeared. For a considerable time it appeared, nominally, as a dispute respecting the office of the deacon exclusively, and in that state of the matter a considerable number of our church were placed in a very unjust and unfavorable position. The term anti-deacon was brought in with very great, but very unfair effect. Without presuming to assert that the vehemence of controversy, and the new, extensive, and to some minds, very forbidding claims asserted for the deacon may not have carried a few into an opposite extreme, and led to doubts and misconceptions respecting the office itself, it is very certain that there is a large portion of the church seriously opposed to the new light deacon, who are as intelligent and sincere in holding to the office of the deacon as our subordinate standards and the Bible require them to be.

If the question, in its first introduction, had been distinctly and exclusively on the question of the deacon as that office is exhibited in our subordinate standards, there can be no hesitation in believing that there would have appeared an overwhelming majority, if not an entire unanimity, favorable to it in the church. And then the only thing remaining would be to inquire how far the necessities of each congregation should make the office requisite, and how many their various circumstances might demand. For this principle is fully and distinctly asserted in our subordinate standards, that regard is to be had to the exigencies of each congregation in respect to the number of its officers, and particularly of the deacon. Thus in the Westminster Form of Church Government,

article, "Of the officers of a particular congregation," having enumerated elders and deacons after the pastor, it subjoins, "the number of each of which is to be proportioned according to the condition of the congregation." And in the historical part of our Testimony, which is therein expressly declared to be "a help to understand the principles of the Testimony," declarative or doctrinal, (Ref. Prin. preface p. vii. edition 1807,) we are informed, after asserting the great liberality with which contributions were poured in by the primitive christians for the relief of the needy, that, "The rulers of the congregations disposed of the collections of the church, and when paupers were so numerous as to require particular attention, distinct officers were appointed to inspect their state and to distribute, with the advice of the Presbyters, adequate relief from the general fund. The officers, who served the tables of the poor were called deacons, a word which signifies servants. They had no authority in ecclesiastical proceedings, any further than as they respected temporalities." Here we have at the same time an explanation of the extent to which the authority of the deacon reaches as to the temporalities committed to him, viz: only to distribute relief to the poor with the advice of the Presbyters, and that they are not requisite in a congregation until paupers are so numerous as to require particular attention. (Ref. Prin. Hist. part, p. 34.) And again, "the deacon at first ministered by order of the session to the wants of the poor." (Hist. part of Test. p. 38.)

From all which it is apparent both that the number of such officers is to be proportioned to the circumstances of each, and moreover, that the condition of a church or a congregation may be such as not to require them at all. A position, which, as our subordinate standards are confessedly founded on the word of God, furnishes a healing consideration for the reputation of our pious forefathers who have been so long without this office in congregations where it was not really needed, and whose reputation in this account has been in no little jeopardy by direct or indirect reflection, equally severe and unjust. It may yet appear and be acknowledged, that they were quite as wise, knowing and faithful as any of their more clamorous and reforming successors.

Had the original claims for the deacon been limited to the view so plainly exhibited in our subordinate standards, the remaining process would have been simple and easy, and the harmony of the church, the unanimity of brethren would have been undisturbed. All that would then have been requisite would have been to inquire whether in any of the congregations the ruling elders with the pastor had become oppressed by the charge of a too numerous body of the poor, and to issue directions to relieve them by the appointment of a sufficient number of deacons to share the burden.

But it is now evident and manifest to all that the present advocates of the trustee deacon, who plead this cause with such loud lament for the sin of the church in her neglect, and such vehement demands for reform, are not content with the scripture deacon of the standards of the church. More is claimed, and it is demanded that he be invested with the trust and charge of all the temporalities of the church, and moreover, of property of which it is not yet made manifest that it falls under the category of the temporalities of the church at all. For it certainly admits of some question, whether the house which the people buy to occupy for their own convenience, that their families may meet together for the public worship of God, is not as much their own, as the private house which each good man obtains to worship God therein with his family apart is his own. For it is inconceivable that any pious man obtains a dwelling merely that there he and his family may be fed and sheltered like swine or cattle in a pen, however finely furnished and decorated, but rather like an immortal and rational being, principally that there in peace he may serve and worship his Creator with all his household. Now no place or building can be made more sacred than another, as is most piously and truly asserted by our Westminster divines: "No place is capable of any holiness, under pretence of whatsoever dedication or consecration."* A church building for the public worship of people and families collectively, is certainly therefore no more sacred than the dwelling in which a good man worships God apart or with his family, and by a parity of reasoning may be, without sin before God or danger to the interests of religion, held by the same tenure, or by one or many entrusted by all. A trustee holding property for the pious is no more sacred and accountable before God and man, than a trustee for orphan and fatherless children, and may with equal propriety be in the same condition of life and in the membership of the church.

Hence the doubt whether this is really a part of property which the deacon may lawfully claim and actually demand, whatever else he may claim and demand.

But besides this, the claims instituted in behalf of the deacon as now exhibited, go in some minds still further, and deacons associated with elders and the pastor of the church are required to form a consistory, and in that form be endowed with a full and universal trust; a thing certainly new in our ecclesiastical order as judicially acknowledged by the subordinate standards of the church. Presbyterians strictly so called never applied, I think, that term in any judicial or authoritative form to such a body; our supreme judicatory has expressly disowned it; and the only court to which our church applies that name is the one more

*"An appendix, touching days and places of worship." Printed at the end of the Directory for Worship.

familiarly known as the session. "When a church was formed in Jerusalem, the apostles placed in every congregation presbyters of their (the people's) own choice. Of these presbyters, or elders, one was a teacher authorized to administer the word and sacraments, and the others were his counsel and aid in government and discipline. To the CONSISTORY, OR SESSION OF ELDERS, the whole ecclesiastical power of the church was committed." (Ref. Prin. Hist. p. 30.) This is the only consistory yet judicially acknowledged by the Reformed Presbyterian church.

Such are the claims now in various forms spread before the church; and the sources from which they proceed are as various. For it is very remarkable that this whole controversy has as yet assumed no clear and determinate form. It yet wears more the character of a guerilla warfare in which small bodies, and some of them very small, are employed in successive, rapid and frequent assaults upon a well appointed army on its march. Well qualified it might be to chastise and suppress its various and harassing foes, but they are not to be apprehended and brought to full and open contest. It is most certain that there is not before the church any one full and entire statement of what is contemplated, either as the act of a reforming party in the church, or any judicial deed of a church judicature, supreme or subordinate, embodying in one lucid and comprehensive view the matters really contemplated and desired. And perhaps it is doing no injustice to those of our brethren who are most active in urging the improvement sought, to assert that no three of them can produce a tenure and a trust of what is judged ecclesiastical property in all points exactly alike. Certainly, at least, this has not yet been made apparent. And it is this very circumstance in the progress of the controversy that has given it a character of unfairness, at least of very great difficulty, so that some sentiments have been charged as libellous, others have not escaped the imputation of schism and insubordination, when in fact such is the unsettled and indeterminate form which the matter yet wears, that some of the most exemplary and faithful among the fathers and sons of our Zion are at a loss to know what is imperatively and authoritatively required.

In such a condition of the matters yet undetermined, I propose to offer some observations on the expediency of ecclesiastical trustees, consistory or deacon. I say on the expediency, for while I shall introduce such scripture testimony as I may find illustrative or confirmative of the truth, it is my mind that any obligation of such trustees has no existence in the Reformed Presbyterian Church. I am free to assert that a demonstration has been afforded that no such thing has place in our judicially authorized standards of doctrine and order, and I assume that we have truly acknowledged them to be agreeable unto and founded on the word of God, and that the one unalterable form of church government

and manner of worship, of Divine right, are there for substance justly exhibited—and being so, I have on my side by inevitable inference the scriptural argument by which they are supported. I feel equally assured that the validity and obligation of these same documents, as terms of ecclesiastical communion, and binding on the whole church, have been proven and are indisputable. And on this ground I feel myself released at present from an inquiry into the scripture doctrine, well assured as I am by actual investigation, of the most satisfactory result; inasmuch as if our subordinate standards do, as we acknowledge they do, teach agreeably to the scriptures, and justly exhibit the mind of God, my work on that head is already done to my hand. In the present state of the question I should deem such an argument as much a work of supererogation, as an argument to prove to the Reformed Presbyterian church that the first day of the week is the Christian Sabbath, in order to detect and censure a profanation of the Lord's day. What session or pastor would do that? And I am well assured that however the considerations which have been offered in proof of these important points may be assailed by declaration, they will never be disturbed by argument. Our subordinate standards teach and bind to no trustee, consistory or deacon; and the Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechisms larger and shorter, Directory for Worship public and private, and Form of Church Government, in that Form and condition of original integrity and entireness in which they were received by the Church of Scotland, are now received and binding on all the ministers, other officers, and members of the Reformed Presbyterian church.

While the obligation; by judicial or ecclesiastical authority, or by the word of God as at present understood, to force such trusteeship on all or any of our congregations is wholly disowned and denied, it is freely admitted, 1: That as all human compositions are imperfect, there may be a defect in the established order of the Reformed Presbyterian church not now known and which may therefore require an orderly correction. But it is with equal freedom asserted that no church court, superior or inferior, has a right to overturn the foundations of ecclesiastical order, and at their pleasure add to, or take from a constitution that has been deliberately and solemnly adopted and ratified as agreeable to and founded on the word of God, without previous notice and a full and open overture of the matter in hand to all concerned. And such is precisely the matter now at issue. Any additional claim without such action by the church, and then solemnly ratified by the supreme judicatory itself, is assumption and *ipso facto* repugnant to the word of God. The recusants also in such case, are clear in the court of conscience, of the church, and of the Supreme Judge, clear of the charge of schism and insubordination. They yet wisely and faithfully "whereto they have attained, walk by the same rule, and mind

the same thing." And it is also admitted, 2. That any people are at full liberty to make such trust of their property. It is their own, as is the house wherein they severally worship God with their households, and being their own they may do with it as they list. They are at full liberty in this, as in all other cases, to make such disposition of that wherein God hath prospered them, as they shall judge most consistent with his glory and the welfare and purity of his church. "But let all your things be done in charity."

The question, therefore, which I propose to consider, is whether such procedure is expedient, congenial to, and required by the teachings of the word of God in every case; but especially whether it is so to make such a procedure binding universally and in all future time on the church. On these matters I shall dwell in a future article.

And on the present occasion I may be allowed to acknowledge my deep and serious conviction of the importance of the subject, more as respects its possible issues, than its intrinsic merit, and also of the importance of the manner in which it should be treated. I have no interest, for who in the church really has any interest, in treating with insensibility or contempt honest convictions of brethren, of whom I am bound to believe that they are at least as much in earnest in the cause of God as I desire myself to be, and at this moment, certainly, I have no wish so to do. We are all bound to remember not our public but our private devotional and fervent supplications, wherein we have held communion with one another in the most solemn and secret exercises of our souls before God—and are therefore under obligations the most sacred to study that that precious bond of ecclesiastical fellowship, by which we are united, shall be strengthened by that higher bond, "the love of the brethren," which shall endure when prophecies shall fail, and all outward forms and administrations shall have ceased to us forever. If this shall prove, as is feared, the time of Jacob's trouble, what pious heart but must be moved as we enter into its cold and threatening waters; what pious heart but must most earnestly desire that we may all be held fast and firm together by the mighty hand of our Redeemer, as the dark and chilling cloud of tribulation and of trial is passing over us.

REJOINDER TO THE REMARKS OF T. S.

IN RELATION TO THE SECOND BOOK OF DISCIPLINE, AND THE WESTMINSTER FORM OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

Mr. S. says: "We have heard it remarked, that the Form of Church Government is binding as far as it goes." Query: How

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No. I.

TRUST IN GOD, THE REMEDY FOR UNBELIEVING FEARS.

What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.—PSALM LVI. 3.

Apprehension of future evils is, to the human heart, a cause of no little disquiet and uneasiness. This is peculiar to our fallen and imperfect state, and will cease only when the last remains of indwelling sin are taken away, and we become meet for the heavenly inheritance. The emotion produced by a dread of danger is called fear, a term embracing a variety of shades of meaning, but all capable of being reduced to two classes, distinguished by the objects of the emotion. "The fear of the Lord," is an expression frequently occurring in the bible, and always indicating the exercise of gracious principles in the renewed heart. Whoever, or whatever else may be the object of our fear, except in so far as reverence is due to superiors by divine appointment, usurps the place of God, and our fear of it "has torment." "Fear not them," says the Saviour, "which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." It is the believer's privilege and happiness, procured for him by Christ, "that being delivered out of the hand of his enemies, he might serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of his life."

It is, nevertheless, painfully true that much of our mental suffering in this life arises from misplaced and unbelieving fear. Through fear of death, there are some all their lifetime subject to bondage. Satan employs this as an instrument, well suited, if not to destroy, yet to wound and afflict the soul. Happy for those, who, when the adversary attacks them by exciting unbelieving apprehensions in their minds, can say and do with the Psalmist, "what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee."

It is a fact known to the believer in Christ, that the *tendency of such fears is not to bring the soul to Christ.* They rather tend

of." Num. xxxiv. 2. "From the south all the land of the Canaanites." Josh. xiii. 4.

The boundary of the promised land on the north side is thus identified with the northern boundary of Syria.

With the great sea on the west, the river Euphrates on the east, and the mountain Amanus on the north, the land of Israel is clearly defined by natural limits on three sides. The limit on the south, or fourth side, is an imaginary line drawn from the river of Egypt, at some point south of the great sea, and passing through Azmon, Hazar-addan to the ascent of Akrabbim, whence it passes in a more southerly direction to the river Euphrates.

The extent of the promised land, as thus ascertained, from south to north is not less than five hundred miles, with an extent from east to west varying from one hundred, to upwards of a thousand miles; the average perhaps not less than five hundred. According to this the promised land contains an area of two hundred and fifty thousand square miles.

2. The original promise made to Abraham and subsequently renewed to the patriarchs was a grant in perpetuity, and secured by covenant. "I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession." Gen. xvii. 8. "And to Israel for an everlasting covenant; saying, unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance." Ps. cv. 10, 11.

The application of this article and the use we intend to make of it, shall (God willing) furnish an article for an early No.

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In order to a right understanding of the matters at issue it is of importance to define the terms in use. By a Trustee Consistory is meant the minister, elders and deacons of a congregation, entrusted with the whole property owned and used by such congregation for religious worship or such other purposes as may pertain to them as a congregation. A like trust constitutes the trustee deacon. Such trust is claimed for these officers of the church *ex officio*, as necessarily pertaining to the office they hold.

The first view of this claim, and a very natural inquiry in connection with it is, how it happens that in no formula of ordination to office of pastor, elder or deacon, is mention made of any such trust, nor even any allusion to it. In the formula of questions ad-

dressed to pastors and to ruling elders at their ordination, there is not only a full confession of their faith required, but a very stringent and minute enumeration of the duties expected of them and of the charge imposed upon them. But in respect of a trust of "the whole temporalities of the church," there is a silence the most complete and absolute. In becoming "stewards of the mysteries of the kingdom of God," and "overseers of the flock, to feed (to teach and rule) the church of God which he hath bought with his own blood," they become also, by this new claim in their behalf, stewards of the temporalities of the flock, and overseers of the *property* of the church of God. Now if such be the very truth indeed, how has it happened that such charge is not committed to them in form as direct and explicit in the one case as the other? And if required to vow their fidelity in the assembly of the Lord's people, in the one case, why are they not in the very form which inducts them into office, required to give like vows of fidelity in the other? Is there in all, in any of the Reformed Protestant churches, such a formula of ordination as thus brings Christ's eternal and spiritual kingdom, Christ's flock, God's church, to be bound up in the same trust with houses, lands and money? Is there any thing like it in the form of ordination in the Reformed Presbyterian church?

I must confess that I never met with, never witnessed, never heard of such a form of ordination; and until better informed shall believe as I do that none such exists. The church existing in any degree of purity and reverence for divine authority and her own sacred character, never has had the boldness to declare in the name of her exalted Head, that in one and the same ordaining act of the imposition of hands and solemn prayer she unites two forms of trust so palpably diverse and unlike. The unavoidable inference is that in the faith of that church which is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone," the two things are not combined, and that the temporality trustee or stewardship does not, *ex officio*, pertain to the other. For no man in his office is bound to any other trust and charge, no man is entitled to any other trust and charge than such as is expressly charged and committed in the form of his induction to the office which he occupies. The constant and universal usage of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and I think I may with safety assert, of all the purer churches of the Reformation, furnish a silent but a most significant evidence that such trust is inexpedient and not warranted by the word of God.

And it is remarkable that this silence in the forms of ordination prevails even where the practice of the churches has been to devolve that very charge and trust on the person inducted into office. They have found it expedient, to meet certain exigencies in the church for the time and occasion, to devolve such charge on such

officers, and they have found it expedient for reasons which are their concern, not mine to judge of, to continue such charge and trust. But they never found it expedient solemnly to connect them with the higher charge and trust which they commit and impose in the name of the Head of the church, when they were solemnly and by prayer ordained to hold office in his church. I have no hesitation in believing and asserting that there is a moral sense in the church of God, a moral sense in the souls of the people of God, which would shrink from any attempt at such a combination in a solemn form of ordination and effectually prevent it from becoming a universal or a lasting usage.

And it is still more remarkable that in the ordaining service or formula by which deacons are inducted into office a like peculiarity prevails. It has been the prevailing faith in the church of God, that the proper duties of the deacon are his care of the poor, and a sympathizing attention to their wants, and a kind and judicious distribution of the fund appropriated for their relief. Hence this charge and trust are distinctly held forth in his ordination as pertaining to his office, and are fully and clearly asserted in the ordination service. If he becomes, by virtue of his office, not only the trustee of the poor for the time that he holds funds for their relief in his hands, but also the trustee of the whole congregation of the people in all the property which they may hold in common during his whole term of office, in all probability for life, why is he not invested as solemnly with the one as he is with the other? Why not required to give vows as solemnly and explicitly for fidelity in the one as in the other trust? I know not what individuals may do in their own private capacity, but I am well satisfied that there is no formula of ordination for deacons framed and solemnly adopted and enjoined by ecclesiastical authority that asserts or recognises any such thing.

And the reason is at hand—it is not warranted by the word of God. None of the churches of the Reformation, recognising the authority of the word of God in settling the order of his church, ever incorporated such an element in the ordaining service and vows of the officers of Christ's house. Let us then look briefly at the functions of these offices as they are represented in the word of God. And first the enumeration of the ascension gifts of Christ and the ends for which they are furnished. "When he ascended up on high he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Eph. iv. 8, 12. Here are Christ's ascension gifts, when he ascended up on high, and as our triumphant and victorious surety and Redeeming head, took possession of his eternal throne; and here are the ends for which they are given. By what forced

interpretation shall they be diverted to any other end than that of the spiritual care, instruction, sanctification, and comfort of his people, their present attainment of one pure, holy and saving faith, and their future and everlasting salvation. How shall they, from this evidently designed description of the officers essential to the perfection of the house of God—for these and no others are given “for the perfecting of the saints”—be understood as invested, in the design, gift and appointment of Christ, with another and altogether diverse trust, charge and service, earthly and temporal in its character?

Let us look again at the brief narrative of apostolic ordination: “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord on whom they believed.” Acts xiv. 23. In accordance with which apostolic practice, Titus receives charge from the apostle Paul as follows: “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order *the things that are wanting*, and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee,” Titus i. 5; which he immediately follows by a minute detail of the qualifications with which an elder, presbyter or bishop should be furnished. Now it is remarkable that in all these passages, so direct as they are to the perfection and order of the church of God, deacons are not even mentioned. And what is the inference? Why that the great and important concerns of the church are in the constitution of her spiritual guides and rulers, that their office is wholly spiritual, and that the matters which pertain to them *ex officio*, or by virtue of their office, are not at all involved with a temporality trust, or a charge of the temporalities of the church. In every instance there is the most direct and unequivocal testimony in the christian ministry and in the spiritual and indispensable offices of the house of God to this holy principle. “We seek not yours but you.” 2 Cor. xii. 14. The deacons come in afterwards when the exigencies of the church require their aid.

And in this very spirit, and in precisely such emergency did the office of the deacon originate. “And in those days when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said: It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables; wherefore brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

Here it is evident that the church growing into many thousands in number and with a very considerable charge of the poor on her hands, had yet been, from the ascension of Christ, for several years

without the office of deacon separately and in itself. Calvin, whose learning and resources for information will hardly be disputed, and whose impartiality on this point will not be questioned, makes it out in his commentary on the preceding chapter that the events there recorded did not transpire till some twelve or fourteen years after the ascension of Christ. (See his commentary on Acts v. 34, 37.) Now as the narrative before us begins, "And in those days," it is natural to conclude that the difficulties in the church which issued in the appointment of the deacons were at least no earlier in her history, and we have the best reason to conclude that that office was not judicially and authoritatively introduced into the New Testament church until some fourteen years after her first organization on the day of Pentecost. During the greater part of this time the apostles had the charge of a fund, which, since it is expressly said it was contributed that no man might "lack," be "in need" or in want, I shall believe was designed for distribution among the poor. But did they hold that charge *ex officio*, or by virtue of their office, or did they so claim it? Not at all. They expressly assert that it was inconsistent with their office and the proper discharge of their duties. "It is not reason" they say. And then with what reason shall they who profess to be the successors of the true Apostolic ministry of the word, or rulers in the house of God, claim for themselves now what these holy men rejected and disclaimed? While they did hold that charge, it is evident they held it not as inherent in their official obligations, for then they could not have relinquished it, much less inherent in their official rights, but only as a matter of condescension and indulgence in regard of the exigencies of the church at the time, which they not only cheerfully resigned, but determinately relinquished as soon as an appropriate opportunity offered. The trust was then transferred to the seven deacons. And moreover, these were all the deacons among thousands of disciples, certainly several congregations. And what besides was the nature of the trust? Houses, lands and any fast property during office and for life, to them and their successors in perpetuity? Not at all. It was manifestly of a fund for daily distribution, contributed for the relief of the necessitous. And it is very evident from the history of the contributions that were afterwards brought in from the Gentile churches, for the relief of the poor saints in Judea and Jerusalem, (Acts xi. 29, 30, xii. 25, Rom. xv. 26,) that this fund disappeared in a few years. Now while it is freely admitted and indeed earnestly asserted that the deacon, or office for the relief of the poor is an integral office in the church of God, (Phil. i. 1, 1 Tim. iii. 8,) I hold it to be unscriptural to maintain in the face of all this light of the word of God that it is absolutely essential to the perfect organization of every congregation and in every condition, much less is any countenance given to constitute

such officer the trustee of all the property which church members may in common occupy and possess for their own and others convenience in the worship of God.

In that heart-reaching and overpowering charge of the apostle Paul to the Elders of Ephesus, the elders ruling and teaching, as I think there is every reason to believe they were, who would think of discovering such a charge as that which relates to the so called, but as I judge erroneously called, temporalities of the church universal and entire—"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one of you night and day with tears. And now brethren I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

And this was an address to the ministers of the word, and to the rulers of the house of God, assembled to hear for the last time from the lips of this great apostle of the truth and grace of Christ to the Gentiles, the summing up of their duties, and the great charge devolving upon them. How remote from anything like the addition, the imposition, or the assumption of a secular trust and charge over houses, lands or money! And how properly and fitly does it correspond with that view of the order of the house of God in its officers and their functions which we have here seen from the oracles of truth. It is because the various formulas of ordination service in the churches have all been framed more or less upon such views of the church of God in her structure, design and offices, that no such secular charge or trust has place in them. I know not what few exceptions may have occurred in her history wherein, for a season and some special emergencies, such charge may have been imposed and corresponding engagements required, but I confidently assert that no form of ordination of pastors, ruling elders and deacons, either collectively or separately, has ever been framed in any part of the christian church involving in its terms such trust and charge to become a constituent and permanent part of the public service in the order of the house of God, and the induction and ordination to the several offices appointed by her exalted Head.

If on the other hand such secular charge and trust be inherent in the office one or more, or all, shall we be ashamed to insert it in the form of ordination by which the persons elected are to be inducted into office, or conscious that it has no place of right there, shall we conceal from the church and the world the claimed assumption, and practice hypocrisy in the house of God? Neither I trust. If it is claimed by the word of God, let it occupy its proper place, and let the church and the world see what we mean when we ordain a man to office in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only king and head of the church, and understand from the terms of the charge imposed and the trust committed, and from the vows required, all that we demand of power, spiritual and temporal, in his great name.

Is the church prepared to acknowledge, that so to reconstruct and frame our forms of ordination is expedient and warranted by the word of God?

THE DEACONS, NO. 4.

Phil. I. 1.—"Bishops and Deacons."

Objections against the view of the Deacons already presented, claim attention, and to these the present article will be directed. In meeting them, it is not intended to notice every whim that has been urged against the system, such as that the deacons lay on a tax and extort money from the members, that they borrow money on the credit of the congregation, that they alter the direction of funds put into their hands for a specific purpose. If deacons in any particular place, have ever done any of these things, it affects not the system any more than an officer or member getting drunk, would affect either the doctrine or practice of the church. It is intended only to handle objections that are plausible, and may, and do bear some weight in the minds of good men, and we give them in the form in which they are proposed as nearly as possible.

Obj. I. *What is so sacred in the brick and mortar of a meeting-house that it requires to be under the care of ordained officers?*

Ans. I. There is nothing so sacred in the brick and mortar, timber and tiles of a meeting-house as to require ordained officers. The sacredness consists entirely in the use that is to be made of it, and not in the materials of which it is composed. The use of a meeting-house, we think, will be admitted to be sacred; and we need not burden either the reader or the writer with proof of this point. It is God's house, built for his service and owned or possessed in some way, by his family, a divinely constituted society. Might it not be asked in return, What is so profane in the use of

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THERE IS ROOM.

*And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.—
Luke xiv. 22.*

Among the most deeply interesting and instructive of our Lord's parables is that of the neglected supper. It exhibits many important truths in an impressive and forcible manner, truths plain enough in themselves, but strangely overlooked. We are taught that the carnal mind, instead of making all other things subservient to Christ and his salvation, does the very reverse—chooses every thing else in preference; and, also, that contempt of spiritual blessings, and an inordinate love for worldly things, even such as may be lawful in themselves, are the great reason of neglect and procrastination in matters of religion. Another lesson that we may learn is that so far as God is concerned there are no obstacles in the way of salvation. When the servant reported that, in obedience to the direction of the master, he had brought in from the streets the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind, he added, "and yet there is room." After all the countless multitudes that have come to Christ there is still room for more. The palace of our king, in which he has placed before us a feast of fat things, is not yet full. The seats at his table are not all occupied and provision there is in abundance for all that will come.

1. There is room in the mercy of God. Mercy is that attribute of Jehovah which is exercised in relation to the miserable. It pre-supposes the existence of wretchedness in its objects, and is concerned in relation to those only who are in a suffering state. Divine mercy is in its very nature infinite, and if this were not the case it would be unworthy of God. Like every other perfection of the Almighty it can be measured only by the infinitude of that nature to which it belongs. What lofty and impressive representations of this mercy are made in the word of God. It would almost appear as if the Most High had magnified this above his

southward as far as the "waters of strife in Kadesh, and to the river (Nile) toward the great sea" on the south-west side. On the other extremity of the land, Dan shall have his portion *far* to the north of any part of the land ever yet occupied by any of the tribes of Israel. From the north, and to the coast of the way of Hethbon, as one goeth to Hamath, Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus northward, to the coast of Hamath; for these are his sides east and west, a portion for Dan, chap. xviii. 1. Dan will thus have his portion upwards of three degrees of latitude, (say two hundred miles,) farther north than any part of the promised land *ever yet* occupied by any of the tribes.

As the word of the Lord, by promise and by prophecy, standeth sure, we are persuaded that a division of the land entirely different from any state of things *ever yet* realized, will be exemplified in the future history of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, when they turn to the God of their fathers. That the temporal part of the covenant-promise is as continuous as the sun and the moon. Our conclusion does not rest upon a few isolated passages of Scripture, torn from their contexts, but on the plain and unambiguous meaning of a great number. It rests not upon a single consideration, or view of the subject, but upon a number which we have illustrated, any one of which might warrant our belief in the future return of the seed of Abraham to their father-land.

TRUSTEE CONSISTORY AND DEACON.

HOW FAR EXPEDIENT AND WARRANTED BY THE WORD OF GOD.

BY REV. JAS. CHRYSTIE.

In the controversy now before the church, an earnest desire has been manifested to introduce the second Book of Discipline as of judicial authority, and a constituent in our ecclesiastical order. A document until lately unknown among our people, except a few, and even now but very sparingly and imperfectly understood, is urged into such a position, for the supposed countenance it affords to the trusteeship of ecclesiastical officers. Nor does it appear that there is any argument to be derived from its authority in its original form in the Church of Scotland, to enforce its obligation on us now. Our ecclesiastical order was most deliberately and solemnly adopted without naming it. And the attempt to bring it in by including it in the whole order of the Church of Scotland, as bound up and entailed in our covenant obligations, would be far beyond the limits which have been defined and settled in our terms of ecclesiastical communion; would wholly unsettle our present

order, and require an entire reconstruction. A specious argument to escape this obvious difficulty, and to meet the acknowledged unacquaintance of our people with it, is that in swearing to a constitution it is not requisite that every individual should be acquainted with all the laws of the community, civil or ecclesiastical, founded on such constitution. But there are two objections to this consideration. 1. The Second Book of Discipline has too much of a constitutional character to be regarded merely as a compilation of laws and regulations growing out of, and corresponding to an established constitution. And it surely can be no injustice to observe, that the obvious design of the present effort to recall it from its long state of exclusion, and to give it a place in our subordinate standards now, is to secure the triumph of Trustee Consistory, or of Trustee-deacon. A significant proof that our proper standards afford countenance to no such system. 2. Even if it be regarded merely as a summary of ecclesiastical laws and regulations consonant in their nature to an established constitution, they ought nevertheless to be deliberately examined, and judicially ratified by the supreme judicature of the Church, before they can have any authority, and made publicly known as such before they can demand obedience, or justify the penalty of transgression. "Where there is no law there is no transgression."

I have alluded to this subject because it is due to our venerable forefathers in the Church of Scotland to admit, as I certainly do in general, that there may be circumstances rendering such a trustee and claim expedient; so I am entirely willing to admit it may have been theirs, while property, clearly the just right of the Church, made over to her by civil enactments and laws, and necessary to her support, was surreptitiously withheld by selfish and profligate individuals under false and iniquitous pretences; it was proper that she should claim the possession and distribution of her own revenues, that her ministers of religion might be supported, her places of worship kept in decent repair, her literary institutions maintained, &c. But is there is a shadow of similarity in the present condition of things? What property is there made over to the Church, by civil authority, or by personal grant and endowment, the possession and avails of which are now withheld? As their conduct then furnished no data for the establishment of a general law of perpetual obligation on the Church, so it admits of no application now. And, in fact, even so far as it went then, I have not yet seen the specific case now pleaded for, a Trustee Consistory or Deacon, holding in their possession of right and perpetuity, the building and the grounds occupied as a place of worship; although under the circumstances this would not apply, because the claim there was for property which by provision of civil statutes had been formally made over to the Church as her own. When a people have erected a place of worship, and formally ceded

it into the possession of the Church as represented by her officers, then, and not till then, will the cases be at all parallel.

But in our condition the circumstances are wholly dissimilar. To obtain a Trustee Consistory, or incorporated Board of Deacons, we set up in the Church of God a creature of the State or Commonwealth, in a body of Christ's officers,* officers whom he has appointed and set in the Church, for ends altogether divine. Eph. iv. 12. Acts xx. 28. These by the civil deed of incorporation, become a new form of office-holders, acting in the Church, and yet deriving their life and power from the State. And that State too, it should be observed, founded on a constitution, and claiming an authority, which these officers, as Christ's representatives, disown and testify against, and yet in the Church they are also the representatives of such a disowned Commonwealth, in the management of her secular concerns. Methinks this is a gross contradiction, and a perversion of the institution of Christ's officers in his kingdom. A Commonwealth, not the ordinance of God, not acknowledged as such, disowning Christ's authority, moulding Christ's officers into a creation of its own, to exercise authority in Christ's Church! The manifest, and to me most painful inconsistency, has from my earliest convictions, and through a long course of years, compelled me to regard this movement, always with hesitation, often with repugnance. On the other hand the trusteeship of private members of the Church, chosen to hold property in their name and for their use and others, is liable to no such objection. They do not act in the matter as officers in Christ's Church, and in his name. They appear in the same character as all private Christians who have the right, and claim the power, to hold and be protected and sustained in holding their real estate, and act in precise accordance with the course pursued by all other private members of the Church, and with that laid down in our Testimony. "Virtuous persons, who in their private capacity, are endeavoring to further the true end of civil government, the maintainance of peace and quietness, in all godliness and honesty, although they dissent from the constitution of civil government of the nation in which they reside, have a right to protection in their lives, liberties, and *property*, they contributing their proportion of the common taxation; but they are not to act inconsistently with their declared dissent, and it would be tyranny to constrain them to such measures." Testimony, chap. 30, sec. 3. They are under no obligation to interfere, more than in the other case, with the order of God's house; they could be visited with ecclesiastical censures and exclusion if they did; and, indeed, the very form of tenure requires an exact observance of the doctrine and

* Reference is had to the practice of incorporating congregations by consistory.

order of the people in whose behalf they act, because in civil law, every such violation vitiates their tenure, and puts it in the power of the true adherents to the established truth and order to eject the disorderly occupants, and put it into proper hands.*

The objectionable character, and manifest inexpediency of ecclesiastical and official trusteeship does not end here. Persons or incorporations who hold real estate are not unfrequently liable to be prosecuted in civil judicial courts, and required to appear there to defend and prosecute their secular rights. And surely it is not a fitting position for a minister of the word, for elders of God's house, for any of the officers whom he has appointed to appear thus in such oftentimes angry, anxious, and vexatious litigation; and that, be it remembered, in their official character, style, and title, as the officers of Christ's house. And this becomes highly aggravated in the scandal, when in the event of division, "a minister, Elders and Deacons of the Reformed Presbyterian Church" are enlisted before a civil judicature against another "Minister, Elders and Deacons of the Reformed Presbyterian Church," with all the eagerness and exasperation which such cases almost inevitably generate. Nor does such trusteeship afford the least shadow of security to the people of God, greater than that of the other. It has been proven by painful experience, that ecclesiastical and office-bearing Trustees, can go as far wide of their duty, at least, as private members occupying the same position. We have in our own history the mournful fact that a Consistory bearing the name of "Minister, Elders, and Deacons of the Reformed Presbyterian Church," incorporated specially by the State, dragged our people before a civil court in a protracted and expensive suit at law, to defend their rights, and afterwards getting possession of the property, sold the place of worship to Papists. Proh Pudor! O shame! Another valuable building erected for Reformed Presbyterians, and held by a Consistory Trustee, has passed away from their possession, and its history is almost unknown. With such facts before them, our brethren, seeing that not only our judgment disapproves, but our feelings have been embittered, ought to make some allowance for the antipathy entertained against a "Consistory of Ministers, Elders, and Deacons of the Reformed Presbyterian Church," as of judicial, universal and perpetual authority over not only their spiritual, but their secular concerns.

The inexpediency of such forms of Trustee authority is further manifest, in that it may not be unfrequently the occasion of bringing the spiritual officers of Christ's house in collision and conflict

* Perhaps this matter may require a more detailed examination, in which case the most ample evidence could be afforded of the freedom of this system from every serious and valid objection. Could I see one interference with the purity and established doctrine and order of the Church I should be among the first to disown and reject it.

with the people in matters which are not properly and especially their concern. Their office relates mainly to the purity of divine truth and ordinances, to the piety and purity of life required of the flock under their supervision, and to a just and merciful regard to the necessities and comfort of the poor or afflicted committed to their care. But the location or dimensions, or finish, or furniture, or cost of a building for the meeting of the people of God for public worship, falls not within their proper sphere of jurisdiction. The people themselves are the proper, and it may be supposed certainly the competent judges on all such subjects; of the location for their common convenience, of the expense to be incurred in the construction of the building and its interior arrangement they, and not their spiritual officers, ought to be the judges. This is purely a secular not a spiritual or strictly ecclesiastical concern. And even though it be claimed to be in some sort, and in some measure an ecclesiastical interest, inasmuch as it relates in some sort and in some measure to the interests of Christianity and the Church of God; yet it should be remembered that the people separately from their spiritual officers are also in some sort, and in some measure the Church of God, and have, therefore, surely so much of an ecclesiastical or spiritual character about them as to admit of their being allowed to retain so inferior a form of ecclesiastical trust and authority, if it should deserve and claim such a name. Christ's officers are the Church's servants, 2 Cor. iv. 5; as such they are "stewards of the mysteries, and bearers of the keys of the kingdom of heaven." 2 Cor. iv. i. Matt. xvi. 9. On the other hand the Lord's disciples are emphatically denominated "the Church," apart and separately from their officers. These officers are given to "the Church," Eph. iv. which is also "God's heritage," over whom these officers are, for that reason, warned not to exercise lordship, 1 Pet v. 3, but of whom they are to take the most diligent oversight. "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Acts xx. 28. Although therefore it is certain that Christ's officers are his Church representatives, and for her spiritual government, nothing is more evident than that in all these various and most unequivocal forms of expression, the Lord honors his people with the name, and of course with the properties of his "saints," "his body," his "flock," his "Church which he hath purchased with his own blood," separately and as distinct from his officers whom he bestows upon them, and to whose spiritual charge and oversight he commits them. Certainly, therefore, they are in such sort, and in such measure, "the Church of God," that their character and actings may not be wholly divested of ecclesiastical reputation and name in such sort, and in such measure as to admit of their retaining in their

own possession and direction, the place of meeting in which they hold their assemblies. Let the rulers see to it, that in such matters God's truth is not dishonored, the purity of his institutions not defiled by idolatrous or unseemly decorations, the order of his house not disturbed by human inventions, and that the sanctity of his people be undefiled by immorality or irreligion in their lives—and his their work and trust is fulfilled.

Now it is most unseemly that such diverse forms of trust, charge, and duty should be confounded, and that the pastors and rulers of a congregation going beyond the legitimate sphere of their functions should be involved in collision and conflict with the people in matters not required of them, and often productive of mistrust, alienation and bitterness. I speak not now of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, but I know that in other churches where this ecclesiastical form of secular trust prevails, there have arisen very disastrous results, personally and socially. And from the infirmities of human nature, and the very nature of the case also, we have reason to apprehend such effects will be generated from such causes. Ministers of the word have often too much worldly care of their own to require any additional burden in a work from which they may be spared. And when strifes arise on such subjects as these, it is of the highest moment that they occupy the position of peace makers among a divided and agitated people.

But it has, moreover, been a lamentable circumstance in the history of ecclesiastical power held by the officers of the Church over secular affairs, that it has to a very great extent issued in the corruption of the whole body throughout all the members. I need only refer to the history of Prelacy and Popery to illustrate and confirm the observation, and I think there is much reason to believe that in other churches where the same principle is at work, but under greater restraints, it is nevertheless prejudicial to the interests of the ministry and of the people. And to what excesses it has been carried let the condition of the priesthood, and of the people in those countries where it has been accumulating for ages, bear witness. On the one hand a priesthood rioting in wealth, and moving in worldly splendor, and actuated by worldly ambition, on the other hand a people crushed to the earth by ignorance, superstition and penury. All this, doubtless, originated in trifling beginnings. The honest, and perhaps intelligent devotion of a few, the feeble superstition of more, and the blind and misguided zeal of the larger part, thinking to redeem their souls by donations or legacies to the Church, commenced and carried out a system fraught with evil, and fraught with warning to the pious.

"Tall trees from little acorns grow:
Great streams from little fountains flow."

I am aware that large countenance is supposed to be derived from the liberal endowments in land and otherwise to the ancient priesthood of the Mosaic dispensation, and their charge of the temple. But there are certainly some circumstances involving these facts in obscurity. After all the provision instituted in lands and otherwise for the support of the priesthood, the Levite, it would appear, was still dependent upon the sympathy, hospitality, and aid of the people of God. "Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the tithe of thy corn," &c. &c. "But thou must eat them before the Lord thy God in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose, thou and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man servant, and thy maid servant, and the Levite that is within thy gates; take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth." Deut. xii. 18. This charge is frequently repeated, Deut. xvi. 11, and xiv. 27; and certainly in such language as to show that all that had been bestowed in land and other gifts, did not place them in a position of independence, but one which still required a perpetual attention to their necessities and comfort. Solomon built the temple, and offered the dedicatory prayer; how shall this be reconciled with such absolute authority in the priesthood over ecclesiastical property and affairs, when a service so solemn was performed, and with divine acceptance too, by one of a tribe to whom the priesthood did not pertain. Besides, we ought to be careful in our attempts to engraft the New Testament order of the house of God on the Old Testament institutions. Paul says that Christ "is our peace, who hath made both (Jews and Gentiles) one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himself of twain one new man," Eph. ii. 14, 15—expressions which cannot signify less than reconstruction of the order of the house of God, adapted to its New Testament state. In like manner in his Epistle to the Hebrews, he asserts directly the termination of the Levitical covenant at mount Sanai, (Heb. viii. 9,) "In that he saith a new covenant he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." Heb. viii. 13. He had shown, moreover, that the very constitution and completion of the priesthood of Christ brought the former dispensation to a close. "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law."—"For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did." Heb. vii. 12, 18, 19. And in the conclusion of the same epistle, in language the most solemn and significant, he asserts the utter exclusion of the one form of administration from that of the other: "We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle." Heb. xiii. 10. It was surely such considerations as these tha'

suggested the distinct enumeration of a tendency to Judaism among the progressive corruptions of the Christian Church, in our Historical Testimony. "The Jewish converts endeavored to make the Church more similar to the Temple; and the Pagan endeavored to bring it to bear some resemblance to the house of his idols. The philosopher endeavored to corrupt its doctrine, and the politician to model its form according to that of the Roman Empire." "They represented the Jewish as the model of the Christian ministry, and taught their disciples that Aaron typified not the Redeemer, but a prelate of the Church. The Deacon who at first ministered by order of the session to the wants of the poor, began to employ servants under him, and in process of time the whole office was changed, and rendered a spiritual ministry." Hist. part of Tes. pp. 42, 43, ed. 1849. A very natural consequence, for whenever men are thrust or admitted into an office, of which the proper functions do not afford them a sufficient employment, from having nothing to do, they are in danger of thrusting themselves into employment and service, to which their office never called them, and which it never allowed. On this subject, in conclusion, I remark, our Westminster Confession is at once explicit and satisfactory. "God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a Church under age, ceremonial laws, containing several typical ordinances; partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, his graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits; and partly holding forth divers instructions of moral duties. *All which ceremonial laws are now abrogated under the New Testament.*" West. Conf. of Faith, ch. 19, 3, larger catechism, Ans. 34, 35.

I rejoice to add my testimony to the worth, excellence, and authority of the Old Testament writings as of Divine inspiration. And while I am yet unwilling to found or build up the order of the New upon that of the old economy, I am sensible that the one may be often employed to illustrate by analogy the services of the other. There are throughout treasures of moral and of spiritual wisdom, amply sufficient to task the most earnest and most able minds and to satisfy and gladden the most devoted hearts through all time.

And now I have done. I think that in these humble efforts to spread before such of my brethren as may deem them worthy of attention, my thoughts on a subject, alas, too exciting, though deeply interesting, I have been actuated by a desire, first to know and assert the truth, secondly, to cast my mite of knowledge into the common treasury for the edification of the Church, and lastly, to apply, if possible, a healing hand to threatening discord. In common with my brethren, whom I would love and honor, because we are bound in one common and noble cause; devoted with them from my heart to this cause, there are moments when I am overcome with sorrow at the prospect of possible issues. These newly instituted and disputed claims have already, in several instances, been pro-

ductive of discord and division; are they to terminate thus throughout the whole Church, and do they furnish a justification of such a catastrophe? Can it not be now as it has been in years past that such as prefer one form, and such as prefer the other, should be left to their several preferences in peace, without rending the bond of love of the brethren or covenant relation? With the judgment of the Synod sufficiently, though informally, expressed, that there should be no prohibition of discussion, I now entirely accord, and have done, as best I could, my part. Let us argue the matter fairly, fully, and as brethren. For such alienation of heart as the subject has caused I certainly grieve, and for such part as I may have had therein implore the forgiveness of heaven and my brethren. "Forbearing one another in love," always a Christian grace and duty, appears at present more imperatively required. And in the large and solid ground, so long and so honorably occupied by our witnessing forefathers, and to us transmitted, there is enough to occupy our most devoted efforts, and hold us in the firmest union, till the present issue shall be happily and harmoniously settled.

This expression of my feelings will, I trust, be received with forgiveness. Such a subject, in such an emergency, can be regarded by no friend of our Zion without emotion. If there is among the sights on earth that gladden the heart of a faithful lover of the house of God in the very article of death, one that has the pre-eminence, methinks, it must be that in his last visions of earth, he beholds truth and peace in Israel.

"Oh God, arise and have mercy on thy Zion, for her servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof. Oh, let judgment yet return unto righteousness, that all the upright in heart may follow after it." Amen and amen.

THE DEACONS, NO. 4.

Phil. i. 1.—"Bishops and Deacons."

Obj. VIII. *The people must be consulted about a meeting house, or rather, they have the right of determining its size, location, materials, &c. Now it is at variance with Presbyterianism for officers to consult the people, or receive directions from them, in relation to official duties: hence it is inferred that ordained officers have no concern officially in such matters.*

Allowing the first part of this objection to be correct, which the writer does with all his heart; the second proposition is in direct opposition to the whole structure of Presbyterianism. We admit that the people have no jurisdiction over their officers; but consul-