

THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW,

VOL. XXXII.—NO. 2.

APRIL, MDCCCLXXXI.

ARTICLE I.

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS TO BE UNIVERSALLY CONFESED.*

The pure and unsullied righteousness of God lies at the foundation of all right conceptions of his nature, his word, and his works. God is himself absolute moral perfection. Whatever he speaks is absolute truth; whatever he does is absolute righteousness. It must be so. The God who is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom and power, must be so no less in his holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. You can more reasonably deny the existence of God altogether, than deny that. An infinite devil is a moral impossibility; our reason revolts at it, no less than our conscience. The heathen, with all their devil-worship, have never imagined, much less believed in, such a monster. The advocates of Dualism never held to such an absurdity; for even in their view, the eternal principle of evil is eternally limited and checked by the eternal principle of good. Consciously or unconsciously, the mind refuses to ascribe infinite attributes to a being even tainted with moral imperfection. Jupiter with all his magnificence

*Some peculiarities of this paper render it proper to state that it embodies the substance of a sermon preached before the late Synod of South Carolina, which has been reduced to writing and prepared for publication in this form, at the particular request of one of the Editors of this REVIEW.

ARTICLE X.

THE DIACONATE OF SCRIPTURE.

In a former article, reviewing an argument before the public, it was shown that one ecclesiastical order, whether of a different or of the same Church, whether higher or lower, excluded every other order only in the sense that one order is not the other; also that in the same Church, if there are two orders, there must be a higher and a lower, and that "the higher *ex vi terminorum*, whilst having a distinct energy and distinct functions of its own, must involve the energy and functions of the lower. There is no other sense in the word. It is now proposed to show from Scripture that this involution of the diaconate in the presbyterate is affirmed, explicitly and implicitly, in the most emphatic manner. Such a discussion of any subject will best begin with the word which stands vicariously for it; and happily this word *deacon*, with its cognates "to *deacon*," (meaning to be a deacon or to perform the functions of a deacon,) and "diaconate," (signifying the act of deaconing, or the status or office of a deacon, or possibly in a few instances the order of deacons as a collective body,) is of exceptionally frequent occurrence in the New Testament. The widest secular sense of *deacon* is simply that of *servant*, as distinguished from *slave*, and is translated servant or minister; and its derivatives, *service* or *ministry*, in the corresponding signification. See the following passages in which the words "deacon" and "diaconate," and the verb "to deacon," occur in the Greek: Matt. xx. 26 and 28, xxii. 13, xxiii. 11; Mark ix. 35, x. 45; Luke iv. 39; John xii. 26; 2 Tim. i. 18; Heb. i. 14.

A narrower secular meaning of "deacon," often occurring in the New Testament, is that of table-servant, or "waiter," as the word is now used; the verb and noun having the same limitation of meaning. See Matt. viii. 15; Mark i. 31; Luke iv. 39, x. 40, xii. 37, xvii. 8, xxii. 27; John ii. 5 and 9, xii. 2.

As examples of the transition of the words from the general sense of *servant* to that of *waiter* may be quoted the following passages: Matt. iv. 11, xxv. 44, xxvii. 55; Mark i. 13, xv. 41; Luke viii. 3; Acts xix. 22; 1 Cor. xvi. 15; Acts vi. 2.

As a specimen of the manner in which these passages would all read, if the Greek word be retained, take the following: "If any man deacon unto me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my deacon be; if any man deacon unto me, him will my Father honor."

Let it be remembered at the outset that the name can never lose the odor of the thing which it represents; and, therefore, that our search for the ecclesiastical significance of these terms must start with the idea of service as opposed to rule, and that, too, service rendered to the body immediately in distinction from service rendered to the spirit. This notion is the very soul of the word, and the word must die forever the moment it loses its soul. Bishop and presbyter, on the contrary, with their cognates, are words of authority and dignity, and, into what region soever they are transferred, bear with them always the insignia of rule.

The search for the ecclesiastical meaning of the word also starts out with an *a priori* conviction of the impropriety and violence of distinguishing the office of the presbyter from that of the deacon by the *scope* or objects of their official powers. They both equally care for persons and things—things both in and apart from their personal relations. The principle of discrimination lies in the fact that the one occupies the place of ruler and the other that of servant in the same house. This adjustment of their mutual relations also makes evident the inclusion of the lower service in the higher oversight and direction. The master may not command what he is excluded from doing in his own person. How often did *the* Master serve? "For which is greater, he that sitteth at meat or he that *deaconeth*? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that *deaconeth*—Luke xxii. 27. "Blessed are those bond-servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and *deacon* unto them—Luke xii. 37. Most certainly the master must superintend and oversee the work of his servants, and engage in it too, so far as he can, without sacrificing his higher position and duties as "the lord of those servants."

II.

It is time, however, to pass on to the religious and ecclesiastical sense of the words, which will appear in self-evident light, if the following passages be examined: Acts i. 17 and 25; vi. 1, 2, and 4; xi. 29; xii. 25; xx. 24; xxi. 19; Rom. xi. 13; xv. 8, 25, and 31; 1 Cor. iii. 5; xii. 5; 2 Cor. iii. 6-9; iv. 1; v. 18; vi. 3, and 4; viii. 4; ix. 1, 12, and 13; xi. 8, 15 and 23; Gal. ii. 17; Eph. iii. 7; iv. 12; vi. 21; Col. i. 7, 23, and 25; iv. 7 and 17; 1 Thess. iii. 2; 1 Tim. i. 12; 2 Tim. iv. 5 and 11; Heb. vi. 10; 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11; Rev. ii. 19. The inspection of these passages will reveal that "deacon," "diaconate," and "to deacon," have a religious sense exactly parallel with their secular sense, to wit, that the deacon *serves* in religious thing, and is bound to a religious *service*, and performs it as an act of religion, both in the general sense of service, and in the special one of *caring for the poor saints*. But, whether the service is rendered to the soul or the body or the man, whether it is a service in spiritual or temporal things, it is a *religious* service, performed under authority, by duly appointed agents of the Church. It is a service rendered by the Church as such, through its servants as such, for the welfare of the whole body. It is part of the internal economy and autonomy of the Church; and the agents are responsible only to the Church. They do not properly come into contact with the civil magistrate. Christ himself, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, all "deacon," whatever else they do; all hold a "diaconate," whatever else they hold; all fill the office of deacon; whatever other offices they fill—*all are deacons*.

And it will not do, in the presence of these scriptures, to say that the words are predicated of church-officers as Christian men, and are to be taken unofficially as denoting those services of charity which every saint is bound to render to every other. Why, these are the very passages which give, and are quoted to justify, the leading official title of *minister* and *ministry* to the foremost officer and office of Christ's Church on earth. It is a singular exegesis that makes the Greek word unofficial, and the English word by which it is rendered official. There are no other

passages which can give the title. Some of the passages, indeed, do signify the Christian services of all Christ's people; but far the most demand an official sense. Listen to some of them. Peter says of Judas, "For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this *diaconate*;" and in the third verse below (Acts i. 20), referring to the same office which Judas vacated, he says, "His *bishopric* let another take." When the qualified candidates for the vacant office were before them, the eleven prayed the omniscient Lord to show "which of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this *deaconship* and *apostleship*, from which Judas, by transgression, fell." Surely here, in the same breath, the office of the apostles is called, once a bishopric, once an apostolate, and twice a deaconship. The only possible harmony of the passage is the assumption that the extraordinary apostolate included the ordinary episcopate and diaconate.

In that address of Paul to the elders of the church at Miletus, that same address which contains one of the classic proofs of the identity of the episcopate with the presbyterate, Paul says (Acts xx. 24), "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the *deaconship* which I have received of the Lord Jesus." Paul's apostleship "to testify the gospel of the grace of God," included a deaconship, and therefore, when he reached Jerusalem (Acts xxi. 19), in the presence of all the elders, "he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his *deaconship*." Writing to the church at Rome he says (Rom. xi. 13), "I speak unto you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify my *deaconship*." Reproving the Corinthians (1 Cor. iii. 5), he asks, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but *deacons*, by whom ye believed?" Speaking to the same church of his apostolic labors, he says, (2 Cor. iii. 6), "Our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able *deacons* of the New Testament," and (iv. 1), "seeing we have this *deaconship*, as we have received mercy, we faint not;" and (v. 18), "God hath given to us the *deaconship* of reconciliation;" and again (vi. 3-4), "giving no offence in anything that the *diaconate* be not blamed; but in all things approving our-

selves as the *deacons* of God." Speaking of his Judaising (xi. 23) opponents, he says, "Are they *deacons* of Christ? I am more." In Eph. iii. 7, and Col. i. 23 and 25, speaking of the gospel or the Church, he says, three times, "Whereof I am made a *deacon*." Speaking of Christ's ascension gifts to his Church, he says (Eph. iv. 12), "He appointed some apostles, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the *deaconship*." In the First Epistle to Timothy (i. 12), the Apostle exclaims, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the *deaconship*." Twice does Paul call Tychicus (Eph. vi. 21; Col. iv. 7), and once (Col. i. 7) Epaphras, both of whom are believed to have been travelling preachers and companions of the Apostle, "faithful *deacon*." Of Timothy, the evangelist, he says (1 Thess. iii. 2), "We sent Timothy, our brother and *deacon* of God, and our fellow-laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and to comfort you concerning your faith:" and to him he gives the solemn charge (2 Tim. iv. 5), "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy *deaconship*." The church at Colosse, in reference to their bishop, he charges (Col. iv. 17), "Say to Archippus, *take heed to the deaconship which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.*"

It is important, too, to note that, whenever mention is made of the particular work which the Apostle and others performed in virtue of their status and functions as *deacons*, it is always *the care of the poor*. It is said, (Acts xi. 29,) "Then the disciples determined to send (means) to *deacon* unto the brethren that dwelt in Judea; which also they did, and sent it *to the elders* by the hands of *Barnabas and Saul*." Again Paul says, (Rom. xv. 26,) "But now I go to Jerusalem *to deacon unto the saints*, for it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem." Compare Rom. xv. 31; 2 Cor. ix. 12; Heb. vi. 10; 1 Pet. iv. 11; Rev. ii. 19. In all these passages the context necessitates the same sense of *deaconing to the poor* with the charities of those to whom God in his providence has given a competence or an

abundance. Now, in the presence of these passages of the inspired word, the *rule* of faith and practice, it is *righteous* to ask: *Why* does any man, when reading these words in English, under the rendering of *minister* and *ministry*, dare to give them an *official* application; but, when reading the same words in the original Greek, say they must be taken in a general and *unofficial* sense? If these quotations were translated so as to contain in English, as they do in Greek, the words "deacon" and "deaconate," or their variations, the evidence of the involution of the office of the lower order in the higher would be so overwhelming, that no amount of prevenient prejudice, except that which reached an invincible force, could make successful resistance. The scriptural proofs that the *pastor* is a *teaching* deacon are a hundred-fold more numerous, and tenfold more strongly corroborated, than those which evince that the pastor is a *teaching* presbyter. This same conclusion might be reached by an argument founded on the technical verb which expresses the functions of the pastor, or bishop, or presbyter, viz., "*to feed*" the flock. This verb is formed from the noun "shepherd," and signifies "to shepherd," that is, to fill the office and do the work of a shepherd. This "shepherding" of the flock is not only guiding and ruling the innocent sheep, but chiefly the humbler task of feeding them with food, sufficient and comfortable and convenient for them.

The first appointment of deacons as *officers* of the Church (Acts vi. 1-6) cannot be put later than A. D. 33, and the name must have been bestowed at the same time. The date of Paul's earliest epistles, those to the Thessalonians, was about A. D. 54; that of his latest epistle, second Timothy, about A. D. 66, thirty-three years, at least, after the institution of the diaconal office. Is it possible, if Paul had held this new theory of the office of deacon, that for these twelve years, at so great a distance from the origin of deacons, when their office and work were so well and universally known, that he could or would have regularly and officially spoken of himself, his fellow-apostles, evangelists, pastors, preachers of every kind, as *deacons*; their status or office as a *diaconate*, and their work as a *deaconing*? It is plainly impossible. No one of the brethren who have invented

the new doctrine, would for a moment be guilty of speaking either of himself or his fellow-ministers in such misleading phrases. There is no escape from the conviction that Paul believed that "the higher" office included the lower, and it will be a sad day when the Southern Presbyterian Church differs from Paul. It would be far better to reform our language and put into the word *minister* that consciousness of a deaconship which it has lost.

Now, perchance, some one will suggest that the argument is invalid, on the ground that it proves too much; because, as it is conceded to be equally true that the presbyter is a bishop and the bishop a presbyter, therefore it must be true that the deacon is a presbyter as well as the presbyter a deacon. To such an objection the easy reply is that presbyter and bishop are not names of a higher and lower order, but merely interchangeable names of one and the same order. The bishop is only a presbyter and nothing more. But, *ex concessio*, the presbyter is not only deacon, though truly a deacon. The standing formula of logic is: man is an animal, but an animal is not, therefore, a man.

The conclusion, therefore, is, that Scripture demands that we hold the old doctrine steadfast, that *the higher order includes the lower*.

III.

It remains to inspect those passages of Scripture which speak of deacons and the diaconate as a separate order of Church officers, in order to form a just judgment of the nature and scope of the office. These passages are few, and some of them simply affirm the existence of the office. "Paul and Timothy, (Phil. i. 1,) the bond-servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and *deacons*." Very probably also the word "diaconate," occurring twice in Rom. xii. 7, refers distinctively to the office and functions of the *deacon* as well known in the Church. The only other passage, and the only extended one in the whole New Testament, in which any of the words occur in their restricted

sense, is 2 Tim. iii. 8-15. The verb is here translated, "use the office of a deacon." This statement of the qualifications for the diaconal office, like the other passages, assumes that its nature and functions are well-known. No qualifications seem to be required other than those which belong to every exemplary Christian of good common sense. Compared with the prerequisites for the office of a bishop, given in the previous part of the chapter, they appear to be less varied, but are conspicuous for the absence of two, to wit, aptness to teach and skill to rule the Church of God. These omissions are commonly taken to justify the inference that teaching and ruling are not distinctive diaconal functions, but rather that their office requires aptness to hear, and skill to execute. We now turn to the only remaining passage—the classic passage on this subject: Acts vi. 1-6. It is conceded on all hands, that we here have the history and occasion of the institution of the diaconate. The word is not in this passage formally applied as an official term; but it is thrice used in such a way as to suggest the origin and aptness of it as an official designation. The Grecians murmured that their widows were neglected in the "daily *deaconing*;" and the apostles declared to the Church, that it was not right for them "*to deacon tables*" at the cost of neglecting the word of God; whereupon the seven were elected and ordained and charged with this business; and the apostles, thus relieved, adhered to or persevered in "prayer and *the deaconing* of the word." The simple inspection of the passage seems to compel the admission, that we have here two classes of deacons: those who labor in the word and doctrine, or teaching deacons; and those who do not so labor, but only serve tables, or ministering deacons. The passage in its whole spirit, and to a good extent in its letter, stands side by side with the solitary passage (1 Tim. v. 17) on which is scripturally grounded the distinction between teaching and ruling elders. And if we are filled with admiration of the perfection of the plan, when we contemplate the economy of grace under the majestic aspect of a divinely appointed twofold episcopate, why should we doubt and wonder at the discovery of a twofold diaconate, when we behold that same economy in the

tenderer aspect of a service—a face of inexpressible sweetness that is far oftener unveiled to our admiration than any other?

When we remember the vast variety and rigorous unity of all that God has elsewhere caused to be or to happen, how each higher takes up into itself the lower, and thus creates a seamless robe of praise, why should we not feel infinite relief in discovering the same divine “handiwork” in the constitution of his Church? Nay, more: the thoughtful mind cannot rest until the one body, constituted of many members, forms one mystical person by its union with the living head, crowned with “majestic sweetness,” at once Bishop of bishops and Servant of servants. But not only does some such view of the diaconate—the old view—appear to be justified and required by the facts of Scripture, but it is the only escape from the monstrous but inevitable result, which logically flows from two coexclusive orders throughout the whole Church. If we start from such data, then the two orders can never be united in one court, but necessarily stand apart from beginning to end of the series; each one clothed in its own envelope of logical repulsion. And what then, if deacons belong to the Church at large? Why, necessarily a series of diaconal courts, parallel with the presbyterial courts, but separated from them by an impassable gulf—two series of parochial, district, synodical, general, and finally ecumenical courts. The two streams never unite. Is there a Presbyterian in the wide world prepared for theory involving such results? There is nothing like it in Scripture, unless it be the beast and the image of the beast in the Apocalypse.

But to return to the passage. Here is the institution of an order of *officers* in the Church; and if ever it is wise and obligatory to observe most strictly that rule of interpretation that the “*expressio unius*” is the “*exclusio alterius*,” here is the very case. Manifestly the Apostles, before the ordination of deacons, performed these functions as part of their pastorate; but the peculiar domestic economy of the mother Church, and its great increase of membership, made it impossible for them to attend to the daily ministerial routine without sacrificing the duties of their higher office. They therefore, by the guidance of the Holy

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Ghost, moved, and the Church adopted the motion, to appoint distributing agents for the efficient performance of this duty of the body towards the poorer members; whilst they themselves kept the general oversight and control of the work. When aid was sent from the richer Gentile churches, it was brought not to the deacons, but to the *elders*, whose counsels the deacons merely executed. The elders did not merely advise, but authoritatively directed the distribution. They needed no relief,—they proposed no relief,—except that which freed them from the actual but constant labor of daily distribution. Here again we see the conformity of the universal practice of the Presbyterian Church with the holy Scriptures. The Scotch doctrine with its mixed court, a convention of the elders and deacons of a particular church, has always been the Presbyterian theory and practice, though in our country, instead of the elders' presence in a body, they are represented by their moderator, who is *ex officio* the moderator also of the board of deacons, and conveys to them the decisions of the Session. The writer is unacquainted with a single Presbyterian church, whose pastor does not sit and vote with the deacons and preside over their meetings. He needs indeed relief from the burdens and details of the executive work; but he needs not and dares not to shirk his official oversight thereof. Who will affirm that, in even our largest churches, the pastor or the whole session would be over-burdened by his or their attendance once or twice a month on the meetings of the board of deacons? The Apostles did not think or feel or act in such a manner; and woe to that church whose bishops pursue a contrary course! The elders, before and after the appointment of deacons, throughout the churches founded by the Apostles, nowhere give the least sign of a suspicion that they had parted from their deaconship, but recognise the fact that the official deacon was their executive officer, sent forth like angels to minister to their brethren, the Lord's poor saints; and thus to show forth the communion of the saints in things both temporal and spiritual. Just here, too, looms up the importance of the deacon's office. It is an essential mark of a true Church that it preaches the gospel to the poor—preaches

it as a doctrine and as a life, by precept and by deeds. No church can afford to be without its poor. The rich need the poor more than the poor need the rich. If any church have no poor, they must find them and bring them in from the highways. Each church is judged in time as each professed disciple will be judged at the last day, according to its "deaconing" to the poor,—the representatives of Christ in his humiliation as he still stands before his visible people to see whether they will receive or reject him. The church that fails to endure the test is "salt that has lost its savor," and the secret providence of God will, after patient endurance, reveal the true judgment that it is "good for nothing." Instead of exhorting the deacons to covet a "larger scope" for their office, and agitate a claim for wider functions, and grasp the custody and rule of "ecclesiastical things apart from their personal relations," let them rather be instructed to appreciate the vital importance and divine sweetness of their office and work in caring for the poor. This work is enough to occupy all the time and energy of the deacons, and, if faithfully done, will place them by the side of those women of blessed memory who followed Christ and "deaconed" to him; and, in this blessed service, they will "purchase to themselves a good degree," and crown their heads with a saintly halo, that, above all others, will liken them most to Him who "came not to be deaconed to, but to deacon, and to give his life a ransom for many." O ye able and faithful deacons, whilst I live, when I die, and on the morning of the resurrection, to your assembly let mine honor be united! Let me, with you, hear the Saviour-Judge say, "Ye deaconed unto me." Let me not then be terrified or shamed by the high name of bishop or presbyter; but, let me know the divinest of all joys—that of having been the dear Lord's *faithful deacon!*

Thus far the point has been reached that the deacon is an executive officer of the Church, the hand of the presbyters, and that he has the official daily care of the poor, that the higher officer may not be hindered in the discharge of his other duties. It is wished now to deny emphatically that there is any justification or excuse for burdening the deacon as such with other

temporal or secular business. No one pretends that there is direct command or example in Scripture for this extension of the deacon's office—no more than that official preaching is also one of his functions. But it is argued, that such extension is a good and necessary inference from the fact that one kind of temporal business, to wit, the care of the poor, is by divine warrant, given to their charge; and, therefore, all kinds of temporal business must follow into their hands. We have already given the only safe principle that can regulate the interpretation of the language which enacts an office and appoints the corresponding officer, viz., that what is not expressly commanded is forbidden, and this to a Presbyterian ought to be enough. But the argument is a most singular example of logical inaccuracy. *In the first place*, it is utterly unjust to argue from one kind of temporal business to *another kind*; the utmost that can be claimed at the bar of sound reason, is that all business of the *same* kind, besides that expressly named, is included in the decree. *Secondly*, it is a confusion of terms to call the *church's* care of its poor, *business*: it is not business, but charity—not the natural virtue, but the divine grace—whose end is the realisation of the communion of the saints, a peculiar mark of the true Church; and not the realisation of justice and common humanity, which is the end of the civil ordinance. *In the third place*, “temporal” is not a properly discriminating word, as opposed to “spiritual,” in this connexion; at least not sufficiently accurate for logical uses. Just as the pure ruling elder necessarily teaches in his ruling, so the administrative deacon also performs spiritual functions in virtue of his office, whilst he performs his daily ministering. Surely no one will go the length of denying that it is the deacon's duty, *as such*, to pray with the poor and proclaim to them the consolations of the gospel.

In the next place, it is wild to argue from the temporal affairs of the Church, as an institute of grace, to the secular affairs of the Church as a mere civil corporation to hold property and funds, to sue and be sued. The officers of the one and those of the other belong to totally different orders. The Church can exist and do her work without the latter, but never without the

former. The one is of the earth, earthy; the other is of the Lord.

Finally, there is not a particle of scriptural evidence that the deacons belong to the Church at large and not only to a particular congregation. The care of the poor is a matter necessarily congregational, and where a congregation is blessed with more poor than it can itself care for, then it is the province of the *elders*, according to Scripture example, to call for help on the *elders* of other churches.

IV.

It is affirmed, finally, that the position "that the functions of the deacon were not confined to the care of the poor, but were extended to that of all other temporal business connected with the Church, has been maintained by the whole Reformed Church, except that portion of it from which the leaven of prelacy was never purged out." This is the argument from authority—an argument to which the writer is disposed to attach more weight than perhaps the great majority of his brethren. But to claim its weight in favor of this proposed enlargement of the scope of the diaconate is, he is sure, utterly unwarranted by the facts of the case. He freely confesses his ignorance of what *all* the Reformed Churches "maintain" on this point, but professes to know what the greater and better part, to wit, the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland, England, Ireland, and America, have constantly maintained as their doctrine of the diaconal office. These all, except our own, since the days of the Westminster Assembly, maintain and declare their position in the following words: "The Scriptures clearly point out deacons as *distinct* officers in the Church, whose business it is to take care of the poor and to distribute among them the collections which may be raised for their use. To them also may be properly committed the management of the temporal affairs of the Church." "The new Book" of our own Church does not differ essentially from the old, which has been quoted. Now, it is here plainly stated (*a*) what the business is that accompanies and flows from the office, and

also (b) what other business, not scripturally comprehended in their office, *may* be properly committed to them, but may likewise be properly committed to others, as it is not part of the deacon's business as such. The last clause is manifestly intended to be a mere permission, without claiming scriptural warrant, in a matter that is not peculiar to the church or church-officers, but common to it with secular organisations. We hold with the distinguished advocate of this proposed reform that a permissive decree grounds only the certainty of the permission and leaves the author of the deed to his own peril. Besides, the clause looks very like an amiable concession to a conscientious minority, which indeed it was right to make. Of course, the Church, under its civil incorporation, can elect whom she chooses, if they be discreet and reputable men, to be her trustees, treasurers, &c. Is it the true explanation, that the predecessors of the present advocates of the extension of the diaconate were to be found in the Westminster Assembly? Some of them were undoubtedly favorable to a mixture of civil and spiritual jurisdictions. However this may be, it is certain that no man can properly argue from *may* to *must*. Indeed, it cannot be argued from this clause that this extra-diaconal business may not *more properly* be committed to special agents created for this sole purpose. No violence is done to the words or spirit of the chapter if we add: "Which, however, it is best for the deacons and the Church *not to do*. At any rate, the whole Presbyterian Church has declined to avail itself of the doubtful permission, but has with singular uniformity not committed to the deacons, as such, this extra-official business; and to the wisdom as well as authority of this fact, the example of the fathers, we do most cordially bow. It is good logic. It is good scriptural doctrine. It is a plain and practicable plan, and has received the blessing of the great Head of the Church.

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