

THE
PRESBYTERIAL CRITIC
AND
MONTHLY REVIEW.

No. 6

JUNE, 1855.

Vol. 1

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The soul bows in mute and astonished awe before the solemn and overwhelming fact. Let us nevertheless believe it, and gird us up to meet its issues humbly, earnestly, affectionately, and with a meek, resolute trust in Jesus. All will be well with such a soul: the man is blessed who trusts in God. This period so awful as it is, is passing rapidly with its mysterious train of dim and infinite issues. The rapid revolution of the days, marks the cycle of the march: the thunder of the sun on its path in the heavens, is the music of the host, and the spirits of men are passing daily by thousands through the embossed and cloud-spotted archway of the material heavens. *The night comes when no man can work.* Let us be in haste to the harvest;—

“ Let’s take the instant by the forward top,
For we are old and on our quickest decrees.
The inaudible and noiseless foot of time
Steals ere we can effect them;
Thus we play the fools with the time,
And the spirits of the wise sit in the clouds and mock us.”

THE OFFICE OF DEACON.

It is not proposed here to consider the issue between us and Episcopalians in reference to the office of Deacon; nor to test the views here presented by the teachings of Scripture ; but simply to define the Presbyterian idea of Deacon.

In the 6th chapter of the Form of Government, we have the doctrine of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. on this subject, which is precisely the doctrine of Calvin, Knox and the Reformed Churches generally. It is in these 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.”

As this chapter includes all that is taught in our constitution, as to the nature and functions of the Deacon's office, let us analyse it closely.

1. Let it be observed that according to the book, Deacons have no doctrinal functions, so far at least as the congregation is concerned. Whether in “ taking care of the poor,” is included anything more than seeing after their temporal or bodily wants, we shall not now inquire: but these officers are not, in any sense, congregational expounders of the word of God.

2. They have no legislative powers of any kind. Their powers are wholly executive or administrative, in the narrowest sense. They are, in virtue of their office, trustees and agents of the congregation as to a certain specified class of subjects.

3. They have no judicial or disciplinary powers. In former times they had certain advisory privileges in sessional matters—but even this was irregular, and not sanctioned by the constitution.

4. Their functions are bounded by the limits of the particular congregation, which they serve.

5. Hence, they are not in any proper sense *ecclesiastics*. They have no spiritual functions whatever. They neither rule, nor labor in word and doctrine. They have no part in the general work of the Church as have ministers and elders. They have no seat or voice in any court of the Church, even the lowest. They belong to the *popular* element, as distinguished from the ecclesiastical element, in Christianity. They attend to the business of the people who elect them, and to no other business. So far as their *functions* are concerned, they are no more ecclesiastical or spiritual officers than are the trustees who commonly manage our church temporalities ; practically much less so.

6. But whilst Deacons are not ecclesiastics, they are subject to ecclesiastical authority, not only as members of the Church, but also in their official capacity. For any mal-appropriation of congregational funds, they are liable to censure, suspension or deposition as the case require. It is no anomaly in a republican system of government for an officer to be elected by one body, and to be under the discipline of a different body. It is so even with the President of the United States. The Deacons are chosen by the people, and governed by a body composed also of representatives of the people in session assembled. So that whilst the Church spiritual, in her organized capacity, is entirely independent of the State, and not liable to be called to account by the State, for the manner in which she manages even her temporalities, she can yet avail herself of the power and protection of the State in the free use of all the worldly goods placed at her disposal. The Deacons indeed owe a certain official responsibility to the State, but, as has been said, the Deacons represent the popular, as distinguished from the ecclesiastical element in the Church. Hence, powers being granted to the Deacons by the State, by no means “renders the Church a part of the State,” any more than in the case of ordinary trustees elected by the congregation. All men who manage any sort of worldly property, whether it be money, personal effects, or land, are subject to the State in that regard, of necessity; for all property is controlled by State legislation. So that Deacons who do nothing more than receive and disburse contributions, do *ipso facto*, act upon powers derived from the State, and owe an inevitable responsibility to the State for the faithful application of the funds entrusted to them. So that if the “holding of a meeting house, and grave yard” by deacons, incorporates the Church with the State, the wedlock is accomplished the moment a Deacon discharges *any* function of his office. And if, as *some* have advocated, all the eleemosynary operations of the Church at large, should be committed to the management of Deacons, we should (according to that theory) have one of the grandest Church and State alliances known

out of Rome—indeed, we should have “Popery” itself! All of which shows the objection alluded to, as having no force, because it would prove too much. The truth is, that there can be no union of Church and State, as long as each party acts freely in its own province without interference from the other. When the State goes into the Church, and interferes with her elections, and foists officers upon her that form no part of her system, and are not under her control in any way, *then there is* ground for the cry of “Church and State;” but not when the State simply enacts laws, giving the Church liberty to manage her business in her own way, so long as she does not interfere with the rights of others, or with the well-being of the State. If the granting of powers or privileges to the Church by the State, incorporates the Church with the State, then the very toleration which we, as a Church enjoy, places us in bondage. What we supposed to be an act of emancipation, turns out to be an act of enslavement! The power to use the State officers to protect our freedom of worship is only an index of our degraded condition! Then the Protestant Church in the Pope’s dominions is in a remarkably free and happy condition, for it gets no powers or privileges from the State of any sort! Let us not be accused of obtusity, if we cannot see the soundness of this view of the subject, and still cleave to the idea that the Church is freer when she manages her own business than when she leaves it to the State to manage it for her.

7. The first class of positive duties assigned to Deacons, is “to take care of the poor, and to distribute among them the collections which may be raised for their use.”

It will be observed that the framers of the constitution designed the Deacons to perform some duties with reference to the poor, other than, or rather, in addition to the distribution of alms among them. Let it be observed likewise, that whilst writers upon the office of the Deacon, usually confine the duties of those officers to the poor belonging to their several congregations, the language of the constitution is *general*; as if this office were meant to perpetuate in the Church that humane, sympathetic attention to the “wants, sorrows and sufferings of man,” which so characterized the life on earth of our blessed Lord. There was, no doubt, a deep providential design, in that ancient want and murmuring among the Grecian widows, which gave occasion for the appointment of these officers; a design which it becomes Christians in all ages to study. When the day comes—and its dawn is now appearing,—in which Christianity receives its proper development on the side of humanity,—the world, and possibly the Church too, will be astonished to find provided, by the forethought of the inspired Apostles of Christ, just the agency needed for carrying out the most enlarged conceptions of Christian duty, in this bench of Deacons, who now seem to have too little to do, to render a separate office necessary at all.

8. The second class of duties declared in the constitution to belong properly to the *diaconate*,—but which are now generally ignor-

ed, and by some openly opposed,—is “ *the management of the temporal affairs of the Church.*”

The exact nature of these “temporal affairs,” is not particularly defined. But it is here admitted, that the Church—as *Church*, has properly, yea, necessarily, temporal affairs, which should be managed by her own officers, the Deacons. If asked to state what these temporalities are, we would reply first, in general terms, that they include all temporal things, which are unavoidable accidents of the Church’s existence and progress; and then more particularly,—without pretending to state all,—that they include the support of the ministry, and the providing of houses of worship, and the appliances for making those houses comfortable. In those countries where the State provides both of these, the diakonate is certainly curtailed in its fair proportions;—but even in that case, the Deacons still manage the patrimony and revenues of the Church. That these affairs are designed by the language of our constitution, to be managed by the Deacons, we have never known to be denied, even by those who favored a different system of management. It is admitted that the book does not on this point express itself in the language of positive requirement. This was doubtless owing to the fact that at the time our present constitution was framed, the practice of committing the estate and revenues of the Church to Boards of Trustees had been introduced, and allowed by vote of the Synod of New York, and the evils of the system had not then transpired. But still, the conviction of the Church was clearly expressed in the constitution, that to the Deacons “ may be *properly* committed the management of the temporal affairs of the Church.” And as long as this sentence remains a part of the constitution, it ought to command the obedience of every Presbyterian congregation, as much as if it were a positive enactment. The wish of a superior, has the intrinsic force of a command. But lest our interpretation be regarded as an evidence of “ ignorance” or “ treason,” we proceed to fortify our position by reference to the ancient symbols of Presbyterianism, and to the commentaries of authoritative expounders of Presbyterianism, both ancient and modern.

John Calvin declares that the proper province of the Deacon, is “ to receive the daily contributions of believers, and the *annual revenues* of the Church, and to apply them to their proper uses.”

The Scotch Church believing that Calvin and the Reformed Churches of France and Switzerland had, in the duties of Deacon, copied the order of Scripture, did, under the leadership of John Knox, copy the order of the continental Reformed Churches. Hetherington tells us that, “following what they believed to be the Scripture, they required that each congregation should be taught and governed by Presbyters, and *that its secular affairs should be under the management of Deacons.*”

McCrie in his *Life of Knox*, and in his *Scottish Church History*, gives the same account of the functions ascribed to the Deacon in the first Book of Discipline.

In the Second Book of Discipline, the language is still stronger. The book declares “the deaconship to have the care of *the ecclesiastical goods.*” Speaking of the collections made in the primitive Church, under the eye of the Apostles, and committed to the Deacons, this book says: “these collections were not only of that which was collected in the manner of *alms*, as some suppose, but of *other goods, movable and immovable, of lands and possessions.*”

It is not necessary to multiply quotations, as it will scarcely be denied that *all the Presbyterian Churches* of Europe, the British Isles, and America, *have agreed* in declaring Deacons to be the proper managers of all the temporalities of the Church :—such was their doctrine, whatever is now or has been their practice. But lest our authority be not considered sufficient to establish that assertion, we quote a single sentence from “Presbytery and Prelacy,” by Dr. Thomas Smyth, whose knowledge of the *facts*, in the case, no one will question. He says, (almost in the language of our book) “*All the Reformed Churches* agree in believing that the Scriptures clearly point out Deacons, as distinct officers in the Church, whose business it is to take care of the poor,—to distribute among them the collections, which may be raised for their use,—and generally to manage the temporal affairs of the Church.”

Such being, undoubtedly the *principles* of Presbyterianism the world over, with regard to this officer, how is it that in these United States, the *practice* of Presbyterianism has allowed the Deacon almost every where to expire, from sheer idleness;—his business having been taken from him and put into the hands of a committee appointed by the State Legislature! And stranger still, how is it that many of the very ablest and purest Presbyterian ministers in the land, now argue that the Church cannot safely be trusted with her own business; as if she were a thief, like Judas, who carried the bag, that he might squander the money of the poor upon his own lusts?

It was not so in the beginning of Presbyterianism in this land; and the change was not made from any new light breaking upon the Church, as to the scripturality, or safety of Deacons managing the temporalities; but it was the first birth of that doctrine of expediency, which in its after growth, well nigh destroyed the Church utterly. A reference to the records of the Synod of New York in 1752, will show that in that first act sanctioning the introduction of Trustees into our system, there is no intimation that the Synod were smitten with any conviction of the danger or illegality of the old Presbyterian principles on the subject. We will quote the resolutions on the subject, and leave it to candor to say, if they did not as flagrantly violate the principles of Presbyterianism, as did the subsequent action of the Assembly, adopting the famous “Plan of Union;”—and hence was “null and void from the beginning.”

“*That it is not inconsistent with the Presbyterian plan of Government, nor the institution of our Lord Jesus Christ, that Trustees, or a*

committee chosen by the congregation, *should have the disposal and application, of the public money, raised by said congregation,* to the uses for which it was designed; provided, that they leave in the hands, and to the management of the Deacons, what is collected for the Lord's Table, and the poor. And that ministers, of the Gospel, by virtue of their office, have no right to sit with, or preside over such trustees or committees. And that it appears that the Trustees of said Church, have faithfully discharged the trust reposed in them, with respect to its temporalities, *much to its advantage.*"

After what we have seen of the real principles of the "Presbyterian plan of government," does it not seem strange that the Synod of New York could have ever affirmed a statement so directly the reverse of the fact. If it is the proper business of the Deacons to manage the temporalities of the Church, it *cannot be* the business of an outside committee. Whether the last four words of the passage quoted from the minutes, furnish the clue to this whole proceeding, we shall not undertake to decide;—but history informs us of this fact, that the difficulty arose from an union having been formed in a particular congregation, between a feeble, Scotch, pure Presbyterian Church, and a Church neither Scotch nor pure; and hence the trouble. The old Scotch party never gave up the battle until the *Synod itself* was brought to pass another resolution, requiring the Trustees to be communing members, and to be under *the control of the "ministers, elders and deacons."* A most ridiculous farce it was : but it implied an acknowledgement of its own error by the Synod. With the exception of a single allusion to Trustees as distinct from Deacons in the matter of pastor's salary, in our form of government, (which is a palpable inconsistency in the book, foisted in by the influence of the anti-Scotch party,) we know of no other ecclesiastical endorsement of the views of the innovators.

A sketch of the progress of this corruption, is thus given by Wm. L. McCalla, in his work on the subject, entitled "*Cleansing the Sanctuary,*"—(a small book which all who feel an interest in this subject would do well to possess themselves of.) He says,—“Among the framers of our constitution there was no party, nor shadow of a party, in favor of these corruptions. The only thing then claimed by the anti-Presbyterian party, was a board or committee appointed by, and responsible to the consistory. This was their substitute for the consistory; while the Presbyterian party wished the consistory, of Pastors, Elders and Deacons, to occupy their own place. The latter party is now annihilated :—[not quite]—and the former party have shifted their ground, until they have taken away the body of Christ, and some know not where they have laid it. * * * And all this mighty change has taken place during my life, through the operation of the *Proton Psuedos*—a communicating trusteeship, supplanting the ordained Deacons. In my childhood, they existed in only one congregation, and were chosen by the consistory : in my youth, by the people: in my middle life, they obtained power over the consistory and people, and in my old age, they break down our wall,

pour in their hostile legions, and scatter the Church with a scourge of scorpions."

But general as is the practical defection of the Church, from our standards on this point, we still find that when the appeal is made to the Constitution, the truth is acknowledged. And is it not astonishing that this corruption should remain so long unrebuked, seeing that almost, perhaps altogether, the whole living generation of ministers were educated in the doctrine of the Constitution ? We cannot speak for other seminaries, but it is evident from the writings of the learned Dr. Miller, that the doctrine taught in the Princeton Seminary, from its foundation, at least up to the time of his death, was the true doctrine of historic Presbyterianism. Dr. Miller says in one place: "The function to which the Deacon was appointed by the Apostles, was *to manage the pecuniary affairs of the Church*, and especially to preside over the collections and disbursements for the poor." And as if to put his meaning beyond all doubt, he says in another place: "It is a great error to suppose that Deacons cannot be appropriately and profitably employed in various other ways, besides ministering to the poor of the Church. *They might with great propriety be made the managers of all the money-tables, or fiscal concerns of each congregation: and for this purpose might be incorporated, if it were thought necessary, by law, that they might be enabled regularly to hold and employ all the property, real and personal, of the Church.*"

We have finished all that we designed in this article; which was, to prove that by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church, the Deacons are the proper officers to manage all the temporalities of the Church. We belong to the strict construction party. If the Constitution is wrong, let it be regularly and formally altered ; but do not let us sneer at, and trample upon any part of that instrument which we have vowed to support entire.

[For The Critic]

"THE AMERICAN PARTY."

For the great and distinguished name which has appeared in other quarters as responsible for the article in the May No. of the Critic, with this title, no man has more sincere and unaffected veneration than the writer of this reply. The very splendor which his genius and character will throw over this movement, and the impetus which his endorsement will give to it, only make us more anxious to protest against it, and if possible, to prevent the evils of the cause from being gilded by the virtues of its advocate. We hope nothing we may say will be construed into disrespect to him. With sentiments of unaffected and profound regard for his abilities and virtues, we must take the liberty, with perfect decision, to question the propriety of the whole movement, which he has so emphatically approved.