

much to be devoted to God. Its whole revenue then, from whatever quarter it may come, whether from the individual, the society, the municipality, the State, and by whatever name it may be called, should only be free-will offerings or *alms*, out of which as its alms distribution, should be made to every man "according as he had need." The Church is not justified in receiving anything that is not *alms*, or offerings to God. Receipt of money for value received, after the manner of the world, is abhorrent to the genius of the Gospel. The Master's injunction to his servants is, "freely ye have received, freely give." Alms, it will further be observed, were always given to the Church, in those days, through its recognised representatives, who were the Apostles in the case of those who sold their lands, and made offerings of the prices obtained; and in the case of the Churches in Asia, mentioned in Acts xii, were the *Elders*, to whom these were given "by the hands of Barnabas and Saul." We do not say that the money was given either to the Apostles or Elders for their own absolute disposal, such was not the nature of these gifts, but they were presented to them as the official organs of the Church for the use of the Church. Just as in these days when offerings of any kind are made to a Church, they are sent either to the pastor or to the other office-bearers, as the official representatives of the Church, so it was in the days of the Apostles, and it will be difficult, nay, impossible, we believe, to show that it should be otherwise now.

The Deacons then were charged by the Apostles with the "daily ministrations" of the Church's alms, in other words they were "to serve tables," even the *money tables* of the Church. The offerings put into the Apostles hands were, it would appear, entrusted to the Deacons to administer them not only to *widows*, on whose behalf the complaint was made, but also to the general poor, and to *every man* "according as he had need." The inference from the words of the text leads us, therefore, to comprehend within the scope of the Deacon's work, the distribution of alms, not only to the *general poor*, but also to "every man according as he had need." Among those who had need we must include persons who "laboured in word and doctrine," and gave themselves to the Gospel ministry; and as a matter of course, we must include Apostles, Teachers, and Evangelists. These were especially Christ's "poor one's," having left all to follow Him and to be His servants, they had a just claim on the almshouse of the Church, and to live by that Gospel which they devoted their lives to preach and to propagate. The ministry are, therefore, among the number of the *poor* of the Church; too often they are painfully so, but really, in regard to support, they occupy scripturally no other position. They have a claim, it is true, to a "decent maintenance," but have no authority to make compulsory assessment for this purpose, nor is it right for them to countenance any such way of filling the treasury of the Church. Taking the Bible as our guide it would appear that, "according as every man has need" ministers are to receive support from the *alms* of the faithful, ministered to them by the Deacons, who, after the Apostolical model, are appointed and ordained to serve the "*tables*" of the Church. The Deacon's work is, therefore, it would appear, to administer the property given to the Church, according to the appointment of the Church, and for the purposes for which such property has been specially devoted. Can any other conclusion than this be drawn from the Word of God? Is any other view of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church tenable than this? With just views of the Church as the "Communion of the Saints," and just conceptions of the work which the Church is appointed to do in the world for God, we cannot conceive how any man can imagine that any other office or agency than that of the Deaconship is in ordinary circumstances lawful in the Church for the administration of its property, or necessary to complete its organization.