

According to the directions contained in 1 Tim iii, the Deacon was required to be a man of singular piety, prudence, sobriety, wisdom, and experience, who in ministering the office *well*, would "purchase to himself a good degree and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." There are other places in scripture in which allusion is made to the Deacons, but these which we have mentioned, are the most explicit of any, and are authoritative as they are clear as to their qualifications and functions.

It will not be denied that, according to these texts, the Deacons were not, as a part of their office, to concern themselves with the ministration of the "Word of God." For this another and different ministry was provided. While of the elder it was required that *he* should be "apt to teach," such a gift was not prescribed as necessary for the work of the Deacon.

Again, it will be acknowledged by all Presbyterians, that the Deacons were appointed to administer the *alms* of the faithful to "*widows*," whether to any other persons, it will be observed that the text does not in so many words say. This only is directly evident, that those who are designated under the term "*widows*," had a special claim upon the ministrations of the Deacons. But it may be asked, Was this all the work that the Deacons had to do? We say, that the text speaks for itself, and from it we must find out what further they had to do, the doing of which would have been a great burden to the "*twelve*," and a hinderance to their preaching the "Word of God," and which, as a matter of course, the Deacons ought to do in every well organised Church.

Some will say at once and without hesitation, that the Deacons had the general Church poor to attend to. This we acknowledge; but it will be noted that the text only speaks of "*widows*," and says nothing about any other poor or needy persons. That they were appointed to attend to the wants of the general poor, is, therefore, a matter of inference and history, and not of positive statement. Let us then for a moment look at the grounds of this inference, and see if it will not give us a yet more comprehensive view of the Deacons work than that of attending to the general poor.

It will be seen by turning to Acts vi., 2, that the complaint of the Grecians was that their widows were neglected "*in the daily ministrations*." If then, we can discover by any process of investigation what "*the daily ministrations*" were, we shall come at the work which the Deacons had to do. For this purpose we would refer the reader to Acts iv, 35, where it is said that the prices of the things which were sold were brought, "and laid down at the Apostles' feet, and *distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.*" This distribution is, doubtless, that which is spoken of as "*the daily ministrations*" which the Apostles had probably given in charge to some of the Jerusalem converts, and whose partiality as regards their *widows* was impugned by the Grecians. These "*daily ministrations*" were, therefore, made from the treasury of the Church, —from the *alms* that were "*laid at the Apostles' feet.*" as the representatives and teachers of the Church. This fund, let it be noted, was none other than the free-will offerings of the faithful to the Church, committed to the Apostles for distribution, "*according as every man had need.*" Nor was this a mere temporary source of income. The amount poured into the treasury, it is true, was unusual, but the free-will offerings, of which these are examples, continued in the Apostolical age to be the source, and the only source, of the Church's income. The Church of these days had, therefore, nothing but *alms* for her revenue; and nowhere in the New Testament is any other method of contribution inculcated than that of free and cheerful gifts. "While it remained was it not thine own," is what the Church, through the Apostles, says to every member regarding his property of whatever kind. The New Testament Church asks no tithe; it accepts with gladness the widows' mite, and does not think the thousands of the wealthy too