

tion, when, for the maintenance of her ministers and other purposes, the Free Church appointed Deacons to be elected in every congregation, to whom, along with the other office-bearers, the ingathering and administration of the Church's alms should be entrusted. From that time to the present, Deacons have been appointed in every congregation of the Free Church in Scotland; and their functions have been defined and prescribed by an Act, passed by the General Assembly of 1816. It is felt in Scotland that the Free Church could not maintain herself in her present efficiency without the Deaconate, and that no substitute can be devised to take its place or to do its sacred work in the Church. It has been found true in this matter, as in all others, that the wisdom of the Bible is the best rule for the Church.

With but few exceptions, the Presbyterian Churches in England have followed the example of the Free Church in this matter, and in most of the new Churches, the Deacon's Courts there not only administer the contributions of the faithful, but also are "ex officio" trustees of the property; and in this way, the society and communion of the Saints is restored to its primitive and apostolical model.

We are aware that all the churches which belong to the Free Church family have not followed the same wise and scriptural course, but from causes which might be named, have been led to some extent to look with disfavour upon the revival of the Deaconship. In this country, a prejudice is entertained by many against the constitution of the Deacon's Courts, and the entrusting of Deacons with the administration of Church property and funds. Such feelings and views are, however, for the most part, we believe, entertained by a class of men whose ideas are of an ancient date, and who, conservative of the past in all that pertains to religious forms, wish to get on just as their fathers did without the Deacon or the Deacon's Court. We may try to enlighten such men, but we rather fear that the faithful will have to contend against them, to build up the walls of Zion, and to guard its defences, notwithstanding hostility on the part of these, their professed friends. There are others, it is true, who, while they acknowledge, with the Westminster standards, that the Deacon is both a scriptural and a permanent officer in the church, cannot as yet make up their minds as to the nature and extent of his functions, and as to the constitution of what, perhaps unfortunately, has been called by the Free Church the "Deacon's Court." With such persons, we apprehend no difficulty in adjusting the details of the Deacon's office, and feel certain that their further consideration of the question in the light of scripture and experience will lead them to see its importance to the Church.

In our present article, we shall consider the scriptural character and work of the Deaconate, and in a subsequent number, we shall discuss the question of the relation of the Deacon's office to the Church Session and the constitution of Deacons' Courts. As these questions are of vital interest to the Church in this land, we ask for a patient and unprejudiced consideration on the part of our readers of the arguments and views which in the course of these papers we shall be permitted to set before them.

Regarding the primitive origin of this office it is not necessary that we should say much. In the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles it is recorded, that "there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily administrations." Upon this, the twelve Apostles called the multitude of the disciples and said: "It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables." They counselled that men "full of the Holy Ghost" should be selected and "set over this business." Finally, seven men were chosen, whom the Apostles, by prayer and the laying on of hands, set apart to "this business," and to "serve tables."