

attention to which, however, was indispensably necessary to the prosecution of their labours and to the fulfilment of the Saviour's Commission,—“To go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” Now this was not to be done and could not be done, at their own charges. It was necessary that the church should furnish the means. It was also found necessary that a benevolent and zealous agency should be appointed to rouse and direct the church in making this provision. There is reason to think that the appointment of Deacons, which is evidently a distinct and solemn office for which not very many are qualified, had this great end in view: and that this order of office-bearers was intended to secure and apply the necessary secular means for the success of the gospel both at home and abroad.

Our opinion is that no Presbyterian church, since the Reformation, has exactly struck on the full design of this office. We would almost think, from what Paul says to Timothy, in the third chapter of his first Epistle, that the office of Elder or Bishop, whether ruling or teaching, and the office of Deacon are of equal importance; for the qualifications prescribed for the one are nearly the same with those prescribed for the other. At all events, we think it will be admitted, that both offices are essential, equally essential, to a fully constituted Christian church.

It is not difficult for those who are acquainted with Ecclesiastical History, to discover the time when, and the causes why, the office of Deacon was either perverted or discontinued. In general, we would only remark, that this took place just in proportion as the original commission of Christ to his disciples was neglected. For a considerable time the Christian church were zealous in following out this ample commission, and they did so with marvellous success, and then the office of Deacon was in full play, and was found to be indispensable to the operations of the church. But, with the growth of Anti-Christ, the external state of the church was materially deteriorated, and although Christianity was still the same, and its objects prosecuted by the scattered remnant of the faithful, as far as their light, means and opportunities enabled them, yet their endeavours were greatly counteracted by untoward circumstances.

Many of the churches of the Reformation did not completely return to the primitive model; and although by some of them the Saviour's commission was considered binding, and both domestic and foreign missionary efforts were made with considerable success, to carry out its design, yet it must be confessed that among reformed Presbyterian churches, there was, in this view, a mournful dereliction of duty, a selfish and monopolizing spirit, contrary to that charity which the gospel inculcates, and a cold, heartless indifference about the everlasting interest of men, whether at home or abroad. But in some of our churches the spirit of Christian philanthropy has recently been rekindled, and it is now felt, among the different Presbyterian denominations that a pure, consistent and faithful church, must necessarily be a missionary church, and that it is the duty of Christians not only to maintain the gospel among themselves, but to extend it to others.

This is the true scriptural character of the church of Christ, and