

appears that the sole business entrusted to the deacons was the administration of the funds of the Church. What is recorded of Stephen towards the close of the chapter is, not that he preached, but that, in opposition to disputers, he gave a reason of the hope that was in him.—Philip, it is true, preached in Samaria, and founded the Church there, but he did that not as a deacon, but as an evangelist, which he is called, Acts, xxi. 8.—But even with respect to the administration of the funds of the Church, the deacons did not supersede either the apostles or the elders, whether preaching or ruling elders. This is evident from the fact that when at a subsequent period, as recorded Acts xi. 28–30, the disciples in different countries determined to send relief to the brethren which dwelt in Judea, they sent it not to the deacons but to the elders; and they sent it by the hands of Barnabus and Saul. Nor was this the only case in which Paul was thus employed. His writings show the deep interest which he took in the financial affairs of the Church, in respect to the provision which should be made both for meeting the wants of the poor and for the support of the ministry; and the mission on which he went to Jerusalem, on that occasion on which he was at length lodged in prison and afterwards sent in bonds to Rome, was with a special reference to this very object, as appears from his language in the epistle to the Romans Chap. xv. vv. 25–28.

The principles thus shortly stated have been acknowledged and maintained by our Church from the period of the Reformation. The First Book of Discipline, which was put forth in 1560, says, “The office of deacons is, to gather and distribute the alms of the poor, *according to the direction of the session.*” According to the fuller statement of the Second Book of Discipline, agreed to in 1578, the office and power of deacons is “to receive and to distribute the whole ecclesiastical goods unto them to whom they are appointed. This they ought to do, *according to the judgment and appointment of the presbyteries, or elderships* (of the which the deacons are not members) that the patrimony of the kirk and poor be not converted to private men’s uses, nor wrongfully distributed.” The same doctrine is maintained in the Directory for Church Government, agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, where it is said, “Dea-

cons also are distinct officers in the Church, to whose office it belongeth not to preach the word, or administer the sacraments, but to take special care for the necessities of the poor, by collecting for, and distributing to them, *with direction of the eldership*, that none amongst the people of God be constrained to be beggars.” In the large Overtures of the General Assembly, 1705, it is stated with respect to the kirk-session, “This judicatory being the lowest, and which is in every parish, consists of one minister or two and a competent number of ruling-elders, and the deacons of that parish and church are to be present, and have a decisive vote *only in matters belonging to their own office*, having attending them a clerk and a beadle.” Lastly, Stewart of Perdivan, speaking of kirk-sessions, and stating the practice in his time, says, “The deacons are always present, *not for discipline, but for what relates to their own office.*” It was amid the bustle occasioned by the disruption that the separate courts called “Deacons’ Courts” came into use. They were formally sanctioned by the Assembly 1846, but the working of these courts has not been much calculated to encourage us to be very hasty in adopting the innovation.

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FREE CHURCH COLLEGE, HALL-FAX.

The Session of the Free Church College here closed on Friday the 11th current; the students, before separating having been suitably addressed by Professors King and Lyall. The following subjects were given out as exercises for the students during the summer.

I. Hume’s argument against the possibility of proving miracles by testimony, so as to be the foundation of a system of religion, stated and answered. A prize will be awarded for the best essay on this subject, the competition being open to all who may be in the Theological class next session.

II, Essay on the origin of our Ideas: 1st our primitive Ideas—the part which Sensation and Intellection, respectively, have in them: 2nd, our Ideas as modified by the original principles of the mind—and the modifying laws of Intellection. A prize will be awarded to each of the two best Essays, the competition being open to all students who may be in attendance on the preliminary classes of the College next session, and impera-