

clear from the statements in that chapter, that the only matters that were entrusted to their administration were the temporalities of the Church: "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." "This business" had been previously in the hands of the Apostles and other office-bearers of the Church, namely, Elders, whether simply Ruling Elders, or Elders who also laboured in word and doctrine. We have no direct information as to the first appointment of Elders; but it must have taken place early, as appears from the practice of Paul and Silas in organizing Churches in places which they visited: Acts xiv 23. "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." The attention which the management of these temporalities required, was in danger of interfering to an injurious extent with the due discharge of the spiritual duties which belonged to these existing office-bearers. The Apostles accordingly say, "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables." "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." Many have interpreted these words of the Apostles as amounting to a complete throwing off from themselves of all care about these things, and a devolving of the management of them exclusively upon the Deacons. A due attention, however, to other passages of the word of God will show that this is a mistaken view; and that the Apostles are to be understood as speaking here not absolutely but comparatively.—For instance, we find in the eleventh chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, that Barnabas and Saul did not hesitate to take charge of the contribution which the Christians at Antioch had made in behalf of their brethren at Jerusalem, in prospect of the dearth which was foretold by Agabus; and when they reached the place of their destination, although we know distinctly that Deacons had been already appointed there, they handed the money over not to the Deacons, but to the Elders of the Church. Not only does the Apostle Paul in various parts of his writings enforce the duty of Christian liberality, but it is evident also that he held himself ready to take an active part in managing the funds which might be the fruit of those principles

which he doctrinally expounded. Thus, in 1 Cor. xvi. 1-4, he says, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches in Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality to Jerusalem.—*And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.*" It appears that, notwithstanding his anxiety to preach the gospel, one great object which he had in view in undertaking that last journey of his to Jerusalem of which we have an account in the Acts of the Apostles, was the administration of certain funds which had been raised in various churches where he had been labouring, as he himself states in Rom. xv. 25-27, "*But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.* For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things." In the appointment of Deacons, therefore, the Apostles did not denude themselves and the Elders of the power which they had hitherto exercised in the administration of the temporalities of the church; but they adhibited Deacons, as assistants, in a matter which otherwise would have been too burdensome for them.

The Church of Scotland, accordingly, has always held that these temporalities should be under the management of Ministers and Elders, with Deacons to assist them in the administration. The language of the First Book of Discipline, drawn up by John Knox and others in 1560, is "The office of deacon is to receive the rents and gather the alms of the Kirk, to keep and distribute the same, *as by the minister and kirk shall be appointed.*" In like manner, the Second Book of Discipline, agreed upon by the General Assembly 1578, says of Deacons, "Their office and power is to receive and distribute the whole ecclesiastical goods to them to whom they are appointed. This they ought to do according to the judgment and appointment of the Presbyteries or the elderships (of the which the deacons are not), that the patrimony of the Kirk and poor be not