

"Deacons belong to the obtaining charitable assistance, and the distribution of the same for the poor. When joined together in one board, the Elders and Deacons have all an equal voice in whatever relates to the temporalities of the Church, &c.; but in admitting members to the Church, in exercising discipline, or in choosing delegates to the Classes, or Presbytery, the Elders with the Minister have alone a voice." This is substantially what is proposed as the constitution of Deacons Courts in our Church.

When we look to Scotland from whence our Colonial Church has sprung, we find equally decided testimony to the early introduction into the Reformed Churches of the Deaconate. Some are disposed to think that Deacons and Deacon's Courts are Free Church inventions, and were never heard of until the disruption in 1843. This is a most mistaken notion. From the first formation of the Church in Scotland, this subject engaged the earnest attention of the Assemblies. Our Fathers were above all things desirous to conform the Church constitution to the word of God. They would admit of nothing into the Church that was not plainly required by the Scriptures. It was therefore to be expected that an office so fully and clearly set down in the Word as that of the Deacon's, would not be overlooked by them. Accordingly, in the "First Book of Discipline" of date 1560, under the *sixth* head, which pertains to the "Rents and Patrimoine of the Church," we find it said, "We require the Deacons and Treasurers rather to receive the rents than the ministers themselves; because that of the tiends must not only the minister be sustained but also the poor and the Schools. And, therefore, we think it expedient that common Treasurers, viz: the Deacons, be appointed from year to year to receive the whole rents appertaining to the Kirk. The receivers and collectors of these rents and duties must be Deacons, or Treasurers, appointed from year to year in every Kirk, the Deacons must distribute no part of that which is collected but by command of the Ministers and Elders; and they may command nothing to be delivered but as the Kirk hath before determined, *to wit*, the Deacons shall of the first part pay the sums either quarterly or from half year to half year, to the ministers which the Kirk hath appointed, receiving always an acquittance for their discharge." In case of any controversy as to the payment of monies arising among the elders and Deacons, then the congregation was to be consulted and their judgment followed. The Deacons were also required to "make accounts to the ministers and elders of that which they receive." This lucid statement of the duties of Deacons concludes thus; "If this order be perfectly kept, corruption cannot suddenly enter. For the free and yearly election of the Deacons and elders shall suffer none to usurp a perpetual dominion over the Kirk." In the *eighth* head touching the "Election and office of Elders and Deacons," it is further said, "The office of Deacons, as before is said, is to receive the rents, and gather the alms of the Kirk, to keep and distribute the same, as by the ministers and Kirk shall be appointed; they may also assist in judgment with the Minister and Elders."

These articles inform us what our Reformers wished the Church constitution to be as regards the office of Deacons, and we know of no better practical commentary upon Acts vi, than these sage sentences are. In all the writings of these learned and God-fearing Fathers and Martyrs we find no countenance whatever given to the idea that the Ministers and Elders of the Church have nothing to do with the alms and property of the Church. In their eyes the whole policy of the Church consisted in three things, viz: "doctrine, discipline and distribution," and according to the parts of this division there appeared to them to be a "threefold sort of office bearers, *to wit*, of ministers or preachers, elders or governors and Deacons or distributors,—the Deaconship to have the care of the ecclesiastical goods." Such, too, was the strength of their convic-