

converted to private men's use, nor wrongfully distributed." "The Government and Order of the Church of Scotland," a valuable treatise published in 1641, and ascribed to Alexander Henderson, says with respect to Deacons, "Their main duty is to collect, receive, and distribute, not only the alms for the poor, but the whole ecclesiastical goods which are not assigned and appointed for the maintenance of particular persons. These duties they must perform *at the discretion and by the appointment of the pastor and elders*: for which cause, and not for government, they are to be present at the ordinary meetings of the eldership." According to the "Directory for Church Government," agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, "Deacons 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."

While these passages show that the full equipment of a congregation as to office-bearers includes Deacons, they also show that it does not require what has been called "Deacons' Courts." These had no existence prior to the Disruption, and are an excrescence attached to the Free Church shortly after that event, by a piece of hasty and ill-advised legislation which has been the source of a variety of serious evils. Deacons have been led thereby to misapprehend their proper standing in the church, and to attempt to supersede both Ministers and Elders in the discharge of duties which are really incumbent on them; while the body itself has no proper place in the gradation of courts, and cannot have its proceedings brought regularly under review. The right position of the Deacons is very accurately stated in the passages already quoted, and may be still further understood from the Larger Ordinances of 1705, in which the constitution of the kirk-session is thus stated; "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."—The court in which they should sit is the

kirk-session; but they take part in its proceedings only when it is engaged in administering the temporalities.

We say then that it is necessary not merely for the prosperity, but the continued existence of the Free Church here, that attention be paid to the scriptural organization of our congregations. Let all concerned be dealt with that they may feel their individual responsibility. We have no doubt that in all our congregations men may be found well qualified for discharging the duties both of the Eldership and of the Deaconship; and we trust that no false modesty will prevent those whom the church judges qualified for the discharge of such duties from accepting an office in which the best interests of the church are so deeply involved. No doubt, elders and deacons must be prepared to devote some due portion of their time and thought to the right discharge of their duties, they may expect also in the discharge of these duties to meet occasionally with what may try their temper, what may exercise their patience and forbearance, what may be painful to their feelings—But what is the sphere of duty in which something of this kind may not be met with? Is it only where no sacrifice is required—where no cross is to be borne, that we are to be found willing to follow Christ and to serve him? The spiritual destitution of our people calls loudly for the application of a remedy for the evils referred to, and we hope due diligence will be shown in the application of the means which the Scriptures themselves so clearly point out.

LETTER FROM THE REV. ALEXANDER SUTHERLAND.

Rev. Dear Sir,

I beg to transmit to you some information regarding Charlotte Town, where the nucleus of a congregation exists.

Not long after the disruption, Dr. Burns of Paisley and Principal Cunningham visited America as Deputies from the Free Church. Dr. Burns visited Prince Edward's Island, of which he writes in the following terms (Report p. 32): "Our reception at Charlotte Town, the capital of the Island, was most cheering. Except from the existing Presbyterian incumbent, who was on the eve of his departure for Scotland, there was not the shadow of opposition to the Free Church—the congregation of St. James', which was requested to declare