

will be found that the deacon's office is a wise, and salutary, if not an essential institution.

All the church office-bearers we have seen, are deacons by virtue of their official relation to the church. Ministers and elders are thus deacons, but as these have so much to do with spiritualities, the great King of the church has appointed a class of persons, who are less engaged in spiritualities, to be "helps" to the ministers and elders in the temporalities of the church, and to act with them as deacons.

Now, from the foregoing remarks, the proper range of duty for deacons may be easily gathered, and will be seen to be onerous and extensive. For, let it only be remembered that the whole machinery of the church, whether at home or abroad, whether supporting and advancing christianity where it is planted, or extending it by missionary effort to the dark places of the earth, depends on its temporalities. Though, doubtless, the great head of the church could easily employ the ministrations of angels to proclaim salvation, yet it is his pleasure to constitute so close a connexion in this world between spiritual and temporal things, and to make the success of his gospel depend so much on outward instrumentality, that it is usually in proportion as temporal means are furnished with seasonableness, liberality, and zeal, that christianity is found to prosper through the blessing of God. Deacons are thus a class of office-bearers whose peculiar province it is to enlighten the christian people on this subject, and to regulate and superintend their efforts, to receive, protect, and apply, the whole contributions of the church, as they find it best for the glory of Christ, and the interests of religion; and not only so, but they should themselves be patterns and promoters of christian liberality and zeal,—that Christ's kingdom may be preserved and promoted at home, and may be prosperously extended over the whole habitable earth.

How erroneous then is the notion, that deacons have nothing more to do than to look after the poor of their own congregation! If this were all, they would often have nothing to do, for in many congregations there are no poor. But the scriptural views, which have been adduced, demonstrate that the office of deacon is much more ample and elevated than is generally supposed; and that those who hold it have weighty duties to discharge, which will require all their attention, energy and zeal. Had it been only to take care of the poor, and, in particular, to see that the widows were not neglected in the daily ministration, that these office-bearers were appointed, I cannot see why it was necessary that they should be men of such extraordinary endowments as is described. In the address which you have presented, whilst this duty is not overlooked, other and higher duties are traced out for those who hold the office of deacon, and the subject might even be further prosecuted than it is in that document. It is evident from Scripture that this office was found necessary when the church was in a state of rapid growth, and when its extension over the whole earth was zealously contemplated. Never was the christian church more practically of the character of a missionary church than when this office was appointed. And what were the deacons to do? Whilst they were to attend to the necessities, both outward and spiritual, of their associates at hand, they were to look around that they might discover the destitution which prevailed in more distant regions: they were to cast an eye of holy zeal over the exigencies of the whole church, nay over the spiritual wants of the world at large, and both report these to the christian office-bearers and people with whom they were more closely connected, and suggest, and endeavour to provide the best means of affording relief. The widows of the Grecians were neglected in the daily ministration. This was not because there was no provision for them, or because there was partiality in the distribution; but because there was so much to do that there was a neglect, through inadvertency, of cases less at hand. It is true, that in the primitive church there was a community of goods, and the immediate reference is to outward provision. But it should also be recollected, that where outward provision was made, spiritual provision was likewise imparted: nay, that the circumstances of the primitive church were such, that this community of goods was practiced chiefly as a step to the

more effectual extending of the bread and water of spiritual life.

How then are deacons to be employed, and more especially when this community of property is not necessary? I reply, that their proper work is the care of the poor,—not the poor, however, not in an outward view only, or carnally, but of the spiritual poor,—of a perishing world around them,—wretched, and miserable and poor, and blind, and naked, by reason of sin,—that they may receive the bread of life, the word and ordinances of grace, for the nourishment of their immortal souls. In short, deacons should be like those men of Issachar of old "that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do."—With liberal and enlightened zeal they should look around, not thro' their own congregations alone, that they may prompt and encourage every "labour of love" that may be practicable and necessary; but they are to extend their care over the whole church, or rather over the field of the world, which the church is required to occupy; and they are to plan, and labour, and sacrifice, and pray, and to stir up all around them by their example and influence, to such activities and exertions as may be required for the prosperity and extension of the kingdom of Christ. Deacons are thus a class of office-bearers who, with a disposition to "devise liberal things," and to be "zealously affected" in the best of causes, should, individually and collectively, consider and inculcate the progressive movements incumbent on the church, and by their own contributions, and those of their christian brethren, to which they should direct and stimulate, make it their business and their delight to devise and furnish, as far as possible, the ways and means by which the gospel may be respectably maintained at home, and successfully extended over the whole earth.

It is unnecessary to enter into further detail. The various duties which the deacons are to discharge must be left in a great measure to the circumstances of the times. I only speak of what I conceive to be the grand scriptural design of the office itself. I shall close this communication with a few general remarks.—I would say, that there ought to be deacons in every church, I mean in every congregation; and the more that these office-bearers in one place, can co-operate with their brethren in other places, so much the better for the good of the church at large. For, from the aspect of our own period, so pregnant with great events, and when the time to favour Zion seems to be near, even at the doors, I would suggest that the christian church was never more in need of deacons than at this moment: and that were we to particularize any portion of the earth, we might say that never was any, in the visible church, more in need of vigilant, energetic and devoted deacons, than the Province in which we live.

The reason of one arrangement, of later times, connected with this office, I am not able to conjecture, except it be that the office itself has not been recognized in its high importance. Why should deacons not be members of church courts as well as elders? There is no reason for this from the word of God, but rather the reverse. And when we consider that ministers and elders, judicially assembled in Presbytery or Synod, have so much of a cons' business to transact, and in transacting which they are officially, in their capacity, not of pastors and elders, but of deacons, I see no reason why a representation of deacons proper, under judicious regulation, should not appear in our ecclesiastical courts, especially in assisting in those numerous parts of business, peculiar to their office, which necessarily fall to be discussed. What is a Synod, or even a Presbytery, I would ask, when deliberating, as they often do about financial business, but a deacons' court? And to me there appears to be an inconsistency in the fact, that there is not a deacon properly so called among them. This defect in our ecclesiastical constitution has been felt, and has, we apprehend, originated the proposal of a deacons' court, to which we have no particular objections, and every conceivable objection to which, (whether strong or trivial,) would be removed by making such a court nothing different from a Presbytery or Synod constituted for deacons' business, that is, for attending to the temporalities of the church, and in which ministers, elders, and deacons, in well regulated proportion, and all acting as deacons, might very properly conjoin in discussing and enacting about those

external, and for the most part, pecuniary means, on which it has pleased God that, in the present world, the very existence, and all the progressive operations, and our most achievements of the christian church, should be inseparably dependent.

In our work, I would connect the deacon's office with all the great schemes of the church,—especially with the sustentation of ordinances in fully planted congregations, and with all missionary exertions, both foreign and domestic. This office is onerous: let its nature not be mistaken. It is also honorable: let its nature not be under-rated. It was the office of Stephen, who was full of the Holy Ghost, and who was signalized as the first martyr for Christ. It was held by Philip, who taught the Ethiopian Eunuch, and hereby was probably the honoured instrument of carrying the gospel far abroad among the Gentiles. Immediately on the institution of this office the word of the Lord increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly. Let us give this office a due consideration, and instead of doing any thing to lower, let us do every thing to elevate it to its scriptural character and importance. Let men of gravity, of severity, of sobriety, of conscientiousness, as the Scriptures expressly require, be chosen and ordained to this office: and let such be directed to undertake and prosecute its duties, in humble dependence on divine grace, and encouraged by the prospect of a great reward. For, let them remember the words of scripture,—“They that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

I have thought the present communication necessary to complete my design in transmitting the Address on the Superintendence of the Temporalities of the Church. Let me apologize for already occupying so many of your pages, which might otherwise have been filled with more valuable matter. If you can spare room for this letter, I shall feel particularly obliged, and I shall not, at least for some time, be likely to request so much of your kind indulgence.

I remain, my dear sir,

Most faithfully yours,

ANDREW FERRIER.

LONDON, C. W., Aug. 31, 1846.

MY DEAR SIR,

As I am now about to leave Canada and return to my own charge, I have thought that it might be proper to communicate to you and through you to the Church here some of the facts which came under my observation during the period I spent here as a deputy from the Free Church. You are aware that my labors have been chiefly confined to the eastern part of the country, that part in which the destitution of religious ordinances is most extensive. With that part of the country I am now pretty well acquainted, and nothing has impressed me more than the wide and promising field of usefulness which it offers to a faithful gospel ministry. I spent some time in the Townships south of the St. Lawrence, from Dundas eastward through the eastern Townships as far as Quebec. In Dundas I found a most respectable congregation which had hardly been visited by any of your ministers. Several individuals here separated from the establishment party as soon as the disruption in the Church took place, and in the absence of other means set on foot a meeting of their own on the Sabbath, in a neighbouring school-house, which is carried on still. Some of the firmest adherents to the Free Church cause are to be found here. I was very much delighted during my short visit to them, and do hope the Church will not be forgetful of them. A congregation of about a hundred was collected on a few hours' notice.

I spent some time in Melbourne, where Mr. Fraser, missionary of the Free Church, has been laboring for some time. I understood there is a good congregation here, and that Mr. Fraser's services have been peculiarly acceptable. An individual belonging to the congregation told me that the seeds of doctrine had been sowed in Melbourne which he believed would bear fruit before many days hence; and certainly, from what I understood of the state of matters there, no place needed it more. It seems to be abounding with all sorts of creeds—universalism, millenium, and such like by no means wanting. As there is a prospect