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"LAY ELDERSHIP."

This is the title of a paper contributed by Prof. Hitchcock, of Union Seminary, to the April number of the *American Presbyterian and Theological Review*. It is an historical argument to prove the modern origin of the office now known in the Presbyterian Church as that of Ruling Elder. The office, as the writer thinks we have it, was originated by Calvin and introduced into the Genevan Church after his return from Strasburg, in January, 1542. Some hints upon the matter were derived, it is supposed, by Calvin, from the United Brethren in Bohemia, with whom the Reformer corresponded about this time. These brethren had elected elders for the first time in 1487. As for the Waldenses, Prof. Hitchcock regards their Presbyterianism as of comparatively modern date, going back probably only to 1620, or 1624; and, at all events, they were not heard of in contact with the United Brethren until after these had instituted an eldership for themselves.

The attempt of Calvin and others to show a divine right for their Ruling Eldership, the Professor sets down, with equal *sang froid*, as a failure. The Eldership of Calvin's Institutes, he shows, is a very different affair from the office as the Reformer actually established it in Geneva. There, it was only a rotary board of Lay Assessors, elected annually and aiding without ordination in the discipline and government of the Church. In the Institutes, on the contrary, where they first appear in the third edition of 1543, they are mentioned in a way which implies that they were to be ordained men, to whom the terms Elder, Presbyter, and Bishop might be applied, as much as to those who labor both in word and doctrine. This is what is called a *Dual Presbyterate*; implying two classes of ordained Church officers in the Church Presbytery or Session, one of which only ruled, and the other both ruled and taught. The main and almost only proof text cited was 1 Tim. v. 17.

Quoting now a series of distinguished Presbyterian authorities against admitting the Scriptural warrant for any such sharp distinction among the Presbyters or Bishops of the early Church, Prof. Hitchcock declares this to be the growing conviction even among Presbyterians of the staunchest sort in our day. Calvin, they acknowledge, was mistaken in his interpretation of the famous proof text, 1 Tim. v. 17. Two orders of Presbyters are not here referred to, but only one order: the difference being simply that of service, not of rank. Prof. Hitchcock then takes up the view of Principal Campbell of Aberdeen, in which the claim of our Ruling Elders to the title of Presbyters or Bishops is abandoned, but the attempt is made to show that they correspond to Calvin's Lay Assessors; and that a Scriptural warrant for such Lay officers is to be found, not in 1 Tim. v. 17, but in Rom. xii. 8 and in 1 Cor. xii. 28. Principal Campbell's argument both from Scripture and from Church History is easily set aside. So too is a third argument for "Congregational Episcopacy," urged by Dr. Thornwell, of South Carolina. This consists in ascribing entire equality in dignity to each of the bench of Presbyters or Bishops in a congregation, but in supposing that the exclusive right to teach was conferred upon certain individuals of the Session by the apostolic appointment. Of such exclusive right Prof. H. finds no trace in the New Testament. His view is that the Elders of apostolic times were, one and all, officially Pastors, competent alike to perform both the duties of teaching and ruling. Some of them may have been eminent in one department and some in another, and there may thus have existed practically a difference in their functions, but the same office covered both. Consequently there exists now no exact copy of this primitive Presbytery or Session either in the Presbyterian, or any other branch of the Church. Our own polity is nearest to it of any, not so much because of a likeness between our own and the primitive elders, as because the principle of Lay representation is wrought into the very fibre and marrow of our system.

The learned Professor's argument for the most part is sound. We can freely admit his general principle that no existing Church polity is to be found fully developed in the New Testament. Presbyters, Elders, and Bishops, it is now universally admitted, designate the same official persons from different points of view. But we do not agree with the assumption of the title of the article. We have no "Lay Eldership" in our churches. Our Elders are wrongly called laymen. The term is used by way of accommo-

modation or comparison merely, inasmuch as this class of officers is not, in modern times, called away from lay pursuits by any exigency of their office. They still engage, as the preaching elders do not and cannot, in secular pursuits. They are, therefore, representatives of the people. But they are not laymen. The Lay Assessors of Calvin in Geneva, are not their prototypes. Our Ruling Elders are ordained men. Unaccountably the Professor ignores this fact, important as it is. He says: "We might easily be rid of it [the novelty of Lay Eldership] any day, by ordaining our Lay Elders, and making them ministers of the word and dispensers of the sacraments." Our Ruling Elders being already ordained men, the Presbyterian Session comes so much nearer the apostolic bench of Elders than the Professor has conceived. It is only necessary to enlarge the sphere of the Eldership, not to elevate its ecclesiastical standing, in order to bring back the Presbytery of apostolic times to the Church of our day. Whether this would accord with the teachings of the Spirit in the history of the Church; whether it would be a step backward instead of forward, is an open question.

CRITICAL NOTES ON THE LATE GENERAL ASSEMBLY. III.

Soon after the Assembly convened, the conviction got abroad that the Re-union sentiment was in overwhelming strength. It is difficult to point to any one thing; before a vote was taken, as proof of the fact. Certainly only a very few of the well-known members of the body showed any great zeal for Re-union. These were chiefly the Moderator (Dr. Stearns), Prof. H. B. Smith, and Hon. W. E. Dodge. Dr. S. W. Fisher spoke on that side; President Hickok, as Chairman of the Special Committee, defended his report; Dr. Skinner, when the interpretation of the Doctrinal Basis became known, threw himself warmly on the side of the Basis; but the first three named, to whom should be added the venerable John Rankin of Ohio, were the only prominent men who could have been regarded as originally very zealous for Re-union in the Assembly. The California delegation was understood to be for Re-union, also most of the Minnesota and part of the Philadelphia delegation, while it was known that it was regarded with little favor by such men as Patterson, Spear, Swazey, John C. Smith, Noble, Hutchins, McCorkle, of Detroit, J. Ambrose Wight, Eva, Darrah, of Missouri, Elders Bodine of this city, Edwards, of Pittsburgh, if not also Geo. Duffield, Jr., T. Ralston Smith, D.D., of New York city, and not a few others in W. Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana and Missouri. If not in opposition, no special zeal in the affirmative could be ascribed to Profs. Nelson and Morris of Lane Seminary. The Assembly certainly saw no demonstrations of zeal from President Tuttle, Prof. Edwin Hall, and not much from Dr. Prentiss. And yet the conviction was strong in the minds even of those who disliked the Basis, that Re-union was largely in the ascendant. Almost all the prayers and exhortations from the beginning of the Assembly ran in that channel, and the applause, which it was found necessary to check, took the same direction. The only conclusion we can reach is, that the great majority of the less known members, ruling elders and ministers, were largely pervaded with the Re-union sentiment.

It is to be noted, however, that any impressions that the Basis could of would be construed illiberally, were met at the outset, by the positions taken in the retiring Moderator (Dr. Nelson's) sermon, that our Church regards itself as "called unto liberty in the study and exposition of Scripture," and of "the Confession of Faith," a liberty allowing not only different modes of viewing the doctrines, but extending to a doubt of the correctness, or even to deliberate rejection, of propositions in the Confession not believed to be "necessary to the integrity of the system or even consistent with it." And these views, afterwards re-stated by the ex-moderator, on the floor of the Assembly, of which fortunately he was a member, with such clearness and ability, were shown so plainly to have been those of the Joint Committee, of which he was also a member, and were put in such relations to the Christian honor of the other Branch in reference to the interpretation of the Basis, as to make all feel that the adoption of the terms in a narrow sense by that body, or its Presbyteries, was next to impossible. The explanatory and argumentative parts of the Joint Committee's Report confirmed this impression; and when the Special Committee's Report still further interpreted the doctrinal article as recognizing in the United Church the orthodoxy of all pronounced orthodox in the separate churches, the opposition of many disappeared, and at least sunk to

indifference; others said, There can be no harm in a Union with such an understanding, let us go in for it; others said, We don't care for Re-union, but it is safe on this basis. It won't do for us, in the present state of public opinion to go against Re-union; we can't afford it. Let the Old School take the responsibility of defeating it. Others rejoiced at the removal of a great and hitherto insuperable obstacle to a movement they had desired, but now for the first time felt they could favor. Of course the original phalanx of re-unionists, who we suppose to be a large majority, without these gains from the other side, were more than content, and would have been, we fear, with a less favorable handling of the documents.

Dr. Spear, influenced by these interpretations, unwilling to face a movement of his brethren which seemed so strong, and being in poor health, gave way early in the debate. He opposed the tenth article, but he was not in the house to record his dissent when the roll was called. Dr. Skinner followed, in one of his most energetic, impassioned appeals for the whole Basis; and pleaded with the brethren to make no exceptions in the form of their assent; allowing meanwhile, his New Schoolism in the most emphatic, defiant way. Geo. Duffield, Jr., was merely a looker on in the debate. Thus the opposition was deprived of all its pungent and most effective speakers. Patterson, erudite and massive, could no more carry on the battle, than the artillery of an army can, without skirmishers, cavalry and infantry. Swazey belonged to the same arm of the service. The sabre-like cuts and stinging minnie-ball hits of Spear, the dashing cavalry charges, the *flendrum est* of Duffield, were wanting. Ambrose Wight damaged his side by asserting as facts, what, on better knowledge, he was afterwards compelled to withdraw. Such popular speakers as Fisher, H. B. Smith, Stearns, Skinner and Dodge, backed by Dr. Adams, were too much for the opposition.

The fact was, the first and most important article of the Basis, after the explanations given, was regarded as conserving nearly all the interests involved in our denominational position. The question was not seriously weighed. What authority have these interpretations? or the other, Why may not the other branch adopt the terms with an interpretation of their own, quite adverse to ours? Giving our brethren our own view of the Basis plainly, it was thought becoming to trust them to adopt it in that sense, or not to adopt it at all. And the language of the Answer to the Protest in the Albany Assembly, shows our trust not misplaced. Nevertheless, the course of our body seems to us wanting in the highest prudence, and they are not excused because the event has turned out better than they might have feared. Being thus satisfied on the leading point of the Basis, many ceased utterly to be concerned as to the hearing of any other point of it. Only a few were left to point out the dangers that might arise in connection with the Tenth Article. The true New School doctrine that the right of examination can be properly exercised upon members bearing credentials of good standing in our own church, only in special and extraordinary cases, if at all, was stretched to cover its introduction, as a broad, general principle of policy, into a document of equal solemnity and authority, if adopted, with the constitution itself. Dr. Patterson's attack upon this right of examination was the great speech of the session. No other speech on any subject approached it in fullness, scholarship, and power. No point in the Constitution or the Digest bearing upon the subject was left without adequate and conclusive examination. The introduction of a test to be applied to men in good standing in our body, he showed to be a novelty of '37 and '38. He showed that its application would make Old School men the current coin of the United Church, while the range of New School men would be limited to their own Presbyteries. In an admirable manner, he turned the guns against those who claimed that the decisions of '37 and '38 were the law of the New School Church, unless our Assembly had expressly repealed them. There was a prophetic tone in his peroration. Speaking consciously against a strong current of Re-union feeling, he said: "Sir, you may crucify these reflections, and bury them now, but I tell you they will rise again after three days." When he concluded, he was congratulated on all sides. Nor can the speech be said to have had no result of importance. It secured a record of dissent from nearly one-sixth of the entire membership of the Assembly—mostly in the Central West—against the tenth article, and it sowed the seeds of reflection on the very structure of Presbyterianism as related to liberty, which will yet germinate and bear fruit.

The Basis of union was then ratified and sent

down to the Presbyteries by a unanimous vote. Nor can it be said that our Assembly abdicated its New School character, or proved recreant to Presbyterian liberty in this act. Time was necessary to prove that it had acted prudently in trusting in the liberal purpose of the other branch; but is plain that, with a liberal understanding of the first or doctrinal article, the tenth is robbed of half its force. The examination, wherever conducted, dare not be rigorous or exclusive in its character. The act is not and cannot be a New School act, but it may not be so performed as to give offence to New School men. It was doubtless, in this view of the case, that a unanimous vote was given for the Basis as a whole. Certainly, in the light of the Albany Answer to the Protest, no examination may be conducted upon a doctrinal Basis more rigid and narrow than the Auburn Declaration. Of course this answer had not been made when our Assembly voted on Re-union. And it may be that even without the liberal interpretations given to the First Article, that and the tenth would have gained a majority of votes in our body; but it would have been a comparatively small majority, and only after a greater and more nearly matched debate, to be followed with certain defeat in the Presbyteries.

THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE'S REPORT ON RE-UNION, presented by the Chairman, Dr. Hickok in our body, is with justice regarded by our brethren of the other branch as having an important bearing upon the interpretation of the Terms of the Basis. We are very glad that report was before the other Assembly on the eve of their own vote upon the same subject. A Correspondent of the *Presbyterian* of this city, (G. H.) gives an exposition of part of the language of the Report, enforced by the comments of Dr. Hickok himself. The correspondent says:

It seems to me perfectly plain that, in the judgment of the author of this report, the umpire, in the case of trial for heresy in the United Church, is not to be the independent judgment of the court before whom the trial is had, as to what doctrines are, or are not, consistent with the Confession of Faith, but the judgment of the body to which the person on trial may have belonged previous to the union. "If the man" says Dr. Hickok, "is not out of the pale of his former church's orthodoxy, he cannot be in danger from any ecclesiastical court's rigidity or bigotry." All this seems to me perfectly plain; but if the language were capable of a double meaning, all doubt in my mind is precluded by a free and very pleasant conversation which I had with Dr. Hickok, in his own house, the day after our Assembly adjourned at Albany.

In that conversation he assured me that it was the consideration that the First Article of the Basis bound the United Church to tolerate as orthodox whatever had been tolerated by the New School previous to the union, that finally reconciled many in their Assembly to vote for the Basis, notwithstanding their objection to the Tenth Article. And as to what he regarded as within the pale of orthodoxy, he said that as he regarded the First Article as binding the New School to tolerate the Old School doctrine of immediate imputation, so he regarded it as binding the Old School to tolerate—well, (said he,) to give it *definite form*—Taylorism. I expressed to him my conviction that the present Basis is more latitudinarian than the one of last year; and to this he answered that he so regarded it, and was surprised—not grieved, but surprised—that our Committee consented to it.

Subsequently, in reply to a note of inquiry from Rev. V. D. Reed, D.D., Dr. Hickok says he does not remember to have mentioned Taylorism in this conversation at all. He adds:

"I am willing to stand publicly responsible for the opinion that the said first article will bind the United Church to tolerate such doctrines and explanations as have been allowed as orthodox by either branch—and that any particular Presbytery must judge, not merely from its own opinion of the orthodoxy of the same, but in view of what has been allowed by either one or the other of the separate branches. I do not choose to say of any doubtful specific doctrine or explanation, whether it has or has not been so allowed by either branch. Certainly, I should not wish to be understood as saying that 'Taylorism' in any definite form had been so allowed."

A Secretary of one of our benevolent societies recently presented his cause in one of our prosperous churches, in a small city, where there was no settled pastor. Among the cards of contributions was one for twenty dollars from the church. He did not quite understand that, and so asked for an explanation. "That," said one of the leading men, "is what we pay each Sunday for the supply of our desk; and as you are our welcome supply to-day, beside our individual contributions, as a church we give that amount to your cause."

This, we fear, is unusual; some, at least, of the representatives of our benevolent causes have not often met with such a pleasant experience. Sometimes, indeed, it appears as though they were used as a mere convenience, perhaps preach-

ing faithfully and acceptably all day, and getting a collection about equal to the price of a supply. It is a cheap operation for the church; but it is not every church, as is seen above, that does it. We would name, with honor, the church above referred to, except that we fear it would be at once overwhelmed with applicants from the benevolent societies. It could not bear them all at once.

FROM OUR ROCHESTER CORRESPONDENT. THE AMERICAN SABBATH.

It would seem from various indications, in different parts of the land, that there is a settled determination among a large class of citizens of foreign birth, to break down and trample upon the American and Christian Sabbath. We have, indeed, long been accustomed to hear of outrages upon the sacredness of the day in some of our cities; especially in New York, Cincinnati, and St. Louis; but we had not expected like manifestations in our own goodly Rochester; generally so quiet, so Christian, in its manner of keeping the holy day.

But, we too, have had our Romish procession, with a band of music, parading our streets at church time, attracting general attention, and to some extent disturbing our public religious assemblies. There is a boldness, a defiance, in this manner of proceeding, which by its very audacity may go far toward carrying its point, but which ought rather to arouse the just indignation of every virtuous citizen, and call forth such stern and persistent rebuke as shall abate the nuisance.

SKANEATELES.—A recent visit to this place revealed to us one of the prettiest little villages of our State. We did not before know how much of a gem it is. It boasts some fifteen hundred inhabitants, or three hundred nice houses nestling just around the outlet of the beautiful Lake which bears the same name. The Lake is some sixteen miles long, about two miles wide, with sloping banks, covered with cultivated farms, clean and productive clear down to the water's edge. A little steamer plies upon the miniature sea, which is often used by pleasure parties. The Lake is deep and cold, and furnishes fine fishing also. The village is something of a summer resort for New Yorkers. It is but a short ride from Syracuse.

But we are even more gratified to look into the Presbyterian church on a pleasant, though intensely hot, Sabbath. The house was full. Hardly a vacant seat could be seen, showing appreciation of the faithful services of their pastor, Rev. M. N. Preston. He is a young man. This is his only settlement; but already it is time that his people gave him a larger house of worship. Twenty feet could be advantageously added to the length of the present building, and all the additional pews would be needed almost at once. We hope to hear soon that a movement is being made by the parish in that direction.

A PARSONAGE.—The Presbyterian church of Campbell last year built them a neat, comfortable house of worship. This year they are building a fine parsonage alongside of it, and expect to install their minister, the Rev. Dr. Wakeman, in it, by the middle of September next. The church was almost dead a few years since; but there were some members in it that began to think it ought to live, after all; went to work accordingly, and this is the happy result.

A CALL.—Rev. Erskine N. White, of New Rochelle, has received a unanimous call to the Westminster church of Buffalo, which it is earnestly desired, and confidently expected, he will accept. This church is now happily in an admirable condition to receive a good pastor. It has recently received a noble accession to its strength, some twenty desirable families having united with it from the down town churches. It has a large, fine house of worship; is now a harmonious body; and every thing looks well for the future. We sincerely hope Mr. White will come to them.

HON. C. T. HULBURD, the upright and popular member of Congress from St. Lawrence County, delivered the address this year before the Barrett Browning Society, of Houghton Seminary. It gave great satisfaction, as we were quite sure it would when we named him for that service. He is a very suggestive and instructive speaker; full of matter, having read and thought extensively.

REV. C. M. WINES has resigned the pastorate of the First Presbyterian church, of this city, and preached his farewell sermon last Sunday evening. The Presbytery of Rochester city (O. S.), is summoned to meet on the 14th, to dissolve the pastoral relation. GENESEE. Rochester, July 11, 1868.

The *Advance* (Chicago) says: "The First Presbyterian Church of this city are trying to induce Rev. Newman Hall, of London to fill the pastorate lately vacated by the Rev. Z. M. Humphrey, D.D. They laid upon the cable the burden of telling him that if he would come, he would find a nice house, rent free, and a salary of \$10,000 per year payable in gold. To these attractions may be added that of a hearty welcome by the many who had already learned to think so much of Newman Hall as to make it impossible to fully express their appreciation in the short time he was here."