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ELDERSHIP.

By Rev. Daniel March, D. D.

The office of eldership in the Church of Christ is most sacred—sacred from time-honored usage—sacred from agreement with the spirit of divine appointment—sacred from the importance of the interests with which it is entrusted. Whoever takes this office upon himself should feel that he is called of God, and that God has given him a personal fitness for the duties he undertakes.

This simple Christian brotherhood which we call the Church, with all its imperfections, is the purest and holiest association of human beings on earth. And those who stand forth as its representatives before the world should be above all reproach and suspicion, sincere, true-hearted, faithful men. They should bear themselves so meekly in their holy office, they should be so consistent, devout and exemplary, in spirit and in good works, that all will say of them, "they are good men and filled with the Holy Ghost." In them, as its honored and authorized representatives, the Church itself should appear holy and without blemish, "not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing."

Elders are not simply official personages appointed to give dignity and propriety to public occasions and solemn ordinances. They should give unity, energy and spiritual life to the whole body of the Church. They are not chosen to relieve individual members from the discharge of duty, but to encourage and incite all to the best use of their time and ability in the service of the Divine Master. They are to be more abundant in labors and sacrifices for the common cause, that others may be encouraged by their example. They are to give of their time, efforts and possessions for the advancement of religion, with so much cheerfulness and liberality that the Christian profession shall shine forth with peculiar excellence and purity in their lives and conduct.

Overseers of the flock, who are found fit and faithful in office, give character, energy and growth to the whole Church. They hold up the hands of the Pastor and inspire him with confidence and hope in the dark days of discouragement and delayed blessing. They make themselves personally acquainted with all the families of the congregation. Going from house to house, and from individual to individual, they extend the feeling of brotherhood, they bind all in bonds of faith and affection to the Church, to the sanctuary and to the ordinances of God's house. When they call at the homes of rich and poor alike, they have so much of the law of kindness upon their lips, so much benevolence in their look, such a glow of right feeling in their conversation, that old and young are made better by their coming, and when they are gone, little children speak of them as servants of God and good men.

Elders can do many things that the Pastor can not do. They can promote peace, unity and good understanding among the members of the Church. They can allay jealousies and alienations, and prevent the springing up of any "root of bitterness" to disturb the harmony of the flock. They can be active and foremost in showing courtesies to strangers and in winning the careless and the indifferent to the house of God. They can keep the standard of Christian fidelity high in the Church, by causing it to be seen and said that they are always in their place at every service, and every call of duty is sure to be answered promptly and cheerfully by them. When the Pastor calls for laborers in any new field; when he would rouse the Church to greater spiritual activity; when he wishes to enlarge the benefactions of the congregation and secure for them the "greater blessedness" of giving; they can supply him with the best arguments and illustrations, by responding to the call with promptness and cheerfulness. It is hardly possible that any Pastor can fail to carry his church with him in any good work, if he has earnest, devout, highly-esteemed, honorable men in the eldership to enter into his plan and sustain it before the congregation.

Elders can visit the sick, the poor, the afflicted, the dying. They can carry the blessing of peace and consolation to the house of mourning. They can go as Jesus went, in meekness and lowliness, to the careless and wandering, and win them back to the fold, by words of gentleness and love. They can direct the anxious inquirer to the "Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." They can make themselves acquainted with the children and the

young people, so as to call them by name, and give them a word of cordiality and good feeling whenever they meet them. They can meet together to pray and to devise measures for the increase and upbuilding of the Church. They can carry themselves with such sacred and thoughtful propriety, when acting officially in the ordinances of the Church, that all observers shall be made to feel the purity, the selectness, the sanctity of the Lord's house. They can infuse into the whole body of the Church a spirit of devotion, of liberality, of self-denial, of self-consecration. They can do much to make the whole Church known and characterized by a pure, earnest, strong, spiritual life.

To do all this will take time, and thought, and study, and prayer. The responsibility is not met by giving it a secondary or an incidental place in the general plan for each successive week of the year. It is not met by attending to its duties simply when it is convenient. There can be no higher claim than that which comes in the name of Christ and His Church; and no work receives a higher reward even in this life, than that which is done for Christ and the salvation of men. These are known and admitted principles of Christian duty; and those who bear office in the Church should be the first to exemplify them by an earnest, constant, self-denying fulfillment of their official obligations. And while so doing, they should be sustained by the prayers, the sympathy, the confidence and the cooperation of the Church, over which they have been made overseers.

TREES.

(The first of a short series by Rev. E. E. Adams, D. D.)

Trees occupy a large space in material nature. Living or dead, their uses are many and important. They have intrinsic value. They contribute to our comfort in the structure, furniture, and warmth of our dwellings; in our implements of labor; our defenses; our vehicles on the land; our commerce on the seas. We admire their fruits and foliage; their graceful forms and majestic dimensions. They seem more than animate—almost divine. They stand about us in their beneficence, pouring on the air of spring the fragrance of blossoms, and waving their garlands of leaves. They hang out for us the juicy apple, the mellow pear, the plump, red cherry, and the downy peach. They weep sweet gums for us and give us odorous barks and buds. They shelter the birds that sing for us in the morning hour, and cast their cool shadows over us in the hot noon-tide. They catch the whispering breezes and make them tuneful for our ear. They spread their strong arms above us, and lift their heads in majesty and mystery, as if conscious of a sublime and solemn life. Who does not love the trees,—whether they flourish under the limiting hand of art and mingle their life with ours in the orchard and garden, or "bourgeon and broadly grow" in the luxuriance of nature,—the glory of her ministries and ornament of her realm?

Is it strange that the old Druids, in their severe and sombre superstitions, made the dark oaken groves their habitations? or that the Indians of our Continent are grandly serious and silent, listening, from infancy to age, to the voice of the Great Spirit in the woods? Or, is it strange that the ancient Greeks heard "wood-nymphs wild" whispering in the leaves, and naiads singing by the shady fountains? Or that you and I, reader, when straying in the forest, where every tree is a harp, and every twig a string touched by invisible fingers, should feel what the poet has spoken in language like this—

"Wakes there some spirit here!
A swift wind, fraught with change, comes rushing by;
And leaves and waters, in their wild career,
Shed forth sweet voices—each a mystery!
Surely some awful influence must pervade
These depths of trembling shade!"

"Yes, lightly, softly move!
There is a power, a presence in the woods!
A viewless Being, that, with life and love,
Informs the reverential solitudes.
The rich air knows it, and the mossy sod,—
Thou, thou art here, my God."

We miss the majestic growths of olden time. They have yielded to the blasts, and moldered to dust; or man has moldered them into a thousand forms of utility. In our cupidity and ignorance of nature, we have robbed our soil and climate by "lifting up axes against the thick trees." The late war made terrible havoc of those stately pines and oaks which once covered the broad southern plains. And in the North and West, the spring floods and crowded marts give evidence that the forests still yield their majestic contributions to the demands of commerce and manufacture.

Had our fathers known economy in this matter, we would now behold, on our hills and in our valleys, myriads of the grand old sentinels that lifted their heads and stretched their strong arms

to the light of the past century. It would be a refreshment and a glory to see some of those old *divinities of nature* which tower upward three hundred feet, and swell to the circumference of fifty or sixty! It is interesting to contemplate them with all their vital forces in action, taking in the influences of light and air, of earth and water, of gases and chemical elements, stretching their strong roots into the soil, and pushing themselves into grandeur and majesty. So may we thrust our faith into the invisible and sure foundations, and lift our hands to heaven to take in God's light and life.

The Bible says much of trees. The Patriarchs pitched their tents under the oaks, and buried their dead in their shade; thus blending the memory of the loved and gone with the scenery and localities of their transitory abodes. The cedars of Lebanon are renowned for their age, their majesty, and historical associations, and are called "the trees of the Lord." Sacred poetry gathers some of its best imagery from trees. "The righteous shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." The Psalmist calls on the trees "to rejoice before the Lord," to "clap their hands" and utter praises unto God as if they were conscious of his presence, entered into sympathy with his great and beneficent thoughts, and could, almost better than human creatures, rise to the grandeur of the theme.

MR. HAMMOND'S SIXTH WEEK IN ROCHESTER.

From our Rochester Correspondent.

This is the sixth week of Mr. Hammond's labors in this city, and the interest has not at any time been so high as now. Our largest churches are still thronged by those who go night after night to hear the plain, pungent words of truth from his lips. Hundreds rise at the close of the sermon to ask for prayers, and a large part of the great congregation regularly remain at the inquiry meeting which follows.

It is the unqualified judgment of those who heard Mr. Hammond preach when he was in our city six years ago, that he has greatly improved; that he has more force and pungency in the presentation of truth than he had then. He has preached more steadily, to adult congregations, less to children than he did then, and his power is evinced in the fact that such multitudes throng to hear him week after week, and so many are brought to Christ by his instrumentality. He is often very rich, and also suggestive in the reading of the Scriptures, which precedes the sermon. Sometimes he will spend nearly half an hour in this service, the whole congregation listening most attentively.

Meetings for young converts were held in the various churches last Monday evening; meetings of great interest and literally of joy unspeakable, words utterly failing many to express their gratitude and delight. In Dr. Shaw's church one hundred and two gave in their names as among those indulging hope. Over sixty of these spoke or prayed in the meeting of an hour and a half. It will be seen that they are not born dumb; which is a good sign for the future of their Christian lives.

One striking case of conversion, which has greatly interested all, is that of a poor blind man, who has literally sat or stood by the way-side begging. He is known by everybody as "Blind Tom"; and his case was not very encouraging to begin with. He was once in the Blind Asylum at New York, but was turned away, as we are told, because he made trouble. He has been somewhat dissipated, and in many ways anything but what a poor blind man should be.

But he is now a new creature, and we will let him tell his own story. Standing up among the young converts and anxious ones, his face all aglow with love and joy, though his sightless orbs cannot behold the eager gaze and rapt expectation of his audience, he says: "I've found Jesus! It is amazing how such a hardened sinner as I ever found him; but I have, and joy and peace are my portion! I was first drawn to Central church, though I didn't believe in religion. I came out of curiosity and to have a little fun. I scoffed at all that was said, and laughed and made such a disturbance, that some man was going to put me out; but I promised to keep still if he would let me stay."

"I staid; but did not mean to listen for any good, only to get something to laugh at afterwards; but before the sermon was ended some words fell into my ears that weighed like a burden. I left hardened, but troubled. I was burdened with sorrow. I kept coming to meeting; and staid to the inquiry meeting; some persons talked with me, but I could not understand them; and it was all dark before me; I thought there was

no salvation for me. But last Wednesday I went to my room; I knelt down and prayed and prayed until just midnight, and then God had mercy on my soul. Thank God the burden was all gone then. I gave myself to Jesus, and He took it all away, and now I am a new creature; all my scoffing has disappeared; I am clean-ed and made anew by the blood of Christ; and I want all you sinners to come to this same Saviour. He will cleanse you and save you."

Wonderful is the change in this poor man. He seems one of the happiest of all the converts. His face is absolutely radiant when he rises to speak. Most persons would have said his looks were coarse and besotted before; but to many his countenance now is beautiful. Old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.

Of course, such a work as that which is now progressing in our city excites opposition. This was to be expected, and should surprise no one. Some have tried to make a great adp, because Mr. Hammond said the devil was the first Universalist. Perhaps a more cautious man would not have made such a remark; but it set one Universalist at least to thinking of the evil paterity of his doctrine; and thinking has brought him to repentance. Perhaps no milder way of putting the truth would have reached his case. Why should we quarrel with those things which bring sinners to Christ; especially, when all the proprieties of a more staid way of representing the truth have failed to reach their case? Some seem to need to have all their proprieties shocked and startled before they will hear and live.

Mr. Hammond was expecting to close his labors in Rochester on last Tuesday; to go then for a short time to Clifton Springs to rest; and then hold a series of meetings in Lockport, where we trust God's blessing will follow him as it has in other places.

THE BIBLE IN THE WHITE HOUSE.

The first public deputation to wait on our new President after his inauguration was that from the American Bible Society. The members of the deputation—Ex-Senator Frelinghuysen, Chief Justice Chase, and George H. Stuart, Esq., (who was offered a place in the Cabinet) waited on the President in the presence of a part of his own and his military family, in a room of the Executive Mansion. Mrs. Grant and her little daughter Nellie, Gens. Schofield, Badeau, Porter and Dent were present, as were Jos. Patterson, Esq., and Rev. Dr. Dales of this city. Chief Justice Chase opened the interview, by announcing the purpose of their visit, to present the General with a copy of the Holy Bible, in behalf of a Society devoted to its dissemination and representing all denominations of Evangelical Christians. He expressed the hope that this precious volume might be the guide of Pres. Grant's Administration. Mr. Stuart then read the following letter from the venerable President of the Society:

BRIDA HOUSE, Astor Place, N. Y., March 1st, 1869.
To General Ulysses S. Grant:—President of the United States:

HONORED AND DEAR SIR:—The Managers of the American Bible Society, having heretofore presented copies of its largest edition of the Holy Scriptures to the Rulers of the several peoples of the earth, have prepared a similar volume to be presented with this letter to yourself, after your inauguration as the President of the United States.

The distribution of the Word of God in the Army and Navy throughout the late civil conflict, and the Third general resupply of the whole country with the Bible, in which this Society is now engaged, illustrate its national and catholic character.

The historical and necessary relation of our civil and religious liberties to the truths of the Sacred Scriptures is self-evident in a nation, whose institutions are dependent upon the morals of its people.

In requesting your acceptance of this precious volume, the managers also express their wish that its principles of truth and righteousness may become the joy of your heart, the light of your home, and the pillar and ground of your administration. Be pleased, therefore, to receive it as a token of regard for the great office which you hold by the people, and in the Providence of God; and also of the best wishes of all who love the Bible, for your personal and domestic welfare, and for the successful discharge of your solemn trust.

With great respect I remain, in behalf of the Board of Managers, Yours very truly,
JAMES LENOX, President.

During the reading of this letter all seemed deeply affected. The President replied:—

"GENTLEMEN: I sincerely thank you for this token, and shall carefully preserve it, and hand it down to my children in commemoration of this day."

The Bible presented is one of the most beautiful ever printed by the Society, and is bound richly but simply, and bears an appropriate inscription.

CURRENT TOPICS.

—The American Bible Society has abolished its Anniversary, thereby provoking as much buzzing and discussion as if it had dropped the Epistle to the Hebrews from its issues.

—The Presbyterians of the States around Cincinnati have been holding a Convention in that city, for the discussion of the needs and methods of the work of the churches. It seems to have been quite a success. Dr. Nelson rather startled his conservative friends by the strong ground he took on the Women question. One Methodist brother, when observed in the audience, was jokingly asked what brought him there, and replied that he expected to meet so many Presbyterians in heaven, that he thought it wise to make the acquaintance of some of them beforehand.

—The free pew system is slowly making progress in the Presbyterian and other churches, hitherto accustomed to pew renting. We have lately noticed that the church in Elkton, Md., of our branch, had adopted it, with what success does not yet appear. The Calvary Baptist church, of this city, has recently taken this course, and found it to pay far better than the ordinary mode of renting. The Second church, at Cedarville, N. J., is now announced as having recently taken the same ground with a newly-dedicated church, and as having experienced a gracious outpouring of the Spirit at the same time. These movements, in the direction of greater popularity, and a bending from the old, stiff proprieties of Presbyterianism, are full of interest, and bear directly upon the question of bringing the Gospel to the outside masses and neglectors.

—President Grant's denominational preferences are variously stated. His wife is claimed as a member of the Methodist church, and certainly the good and able Bishop Simpson is among his near friends. He was present at the dedication of the famous M. E. Metropolitan church, in Washington, February 28th, and gave \$500, when others, displeased with the impertinence with which the collections were accompanied, withheld what they profess to have designed giving. On the other hand, it is stated that the President is a regular worshipper in Dr. Sunderland's church, and that his children go there to Sunday-school. His leading associate and friend in this city, is the Covenanter Presbyterian, Mr. George H. Stuart. Without doubt, it is his personal preference to be reckoned among the earnest respecters of religion, and he has privately, as well as publicly, with deep earnestness sought an interest in the prayers of God's people. The prayer meetings on Inauguration day, held in this and other cities, were well attended, and the President goes into office with a great wave of Christian sympathy and prayer to sustain him, to keep him firm in his habits of temperance, and to convert his heart to Christ.

—The effort now so noisily pressed by a very limited but very talented class of women for the equalization of their own sex with the other, will, we earnestly hope, produce some good practical results; as the free admission of woman to every position of trust and profit which she is able to fill, and a hearty recognition of her right to every cent that her work is worth. But to make the sexes politically equal, while it may remedy some evils, is such a manifest contradiction of the relation of dependence of one sex upon the other, that the result must prove in a large degree demoralizing and uncivilizing. One of the highest beauties of our Christian civilization is the recognition of this dependence, and the arrangement of our entire social code in accordance with it. What a blemish and scandal is the absence of this delicate feeling of protect- orship, may be seen in a recent description of the customs of Dresden:—

"The women toil like beasts of burden; hard physical labor falls very largely to their share. You see them in the streets sawing wood, one holding each end of the saw; they tug along with loaded hand-carts, employed for draught almost as commonly as horses—much more so than men. They carry huge baskets on their backs, under which they must bend far forward. Such figures are among the commonest you meet. In doing coarse, rough work, and even such as seems to demand simply muscular strength, there is no difference whatever in their favor, unless it be as a weaker animal. And it is not only in the lower classes that one notices this want of regard for woman. Of a couple whom you meet on the street, even if well dressed and respectable, the woman is pretty sure to be carrying the baby or the bundles. As for turning out on the sidewalk for a woman, no man thinks of it! An American walking with a lady is constantly provoked with the rude way in which she is jostled by men, not the rough and poorly dressed alone. A German in like circumstances goes composedly along, letting his weaker and burdened companion stem the tide as best she can."

Why not, if she is his equal?