

not that exclusive and illiberal body that ignorant and prejudiced people imagine. In the same spirit, Robert Baillie, one of the Commissioners, in his book against Archbishop Laud, says: "With the English Church we have nought to do but as with our most dear and nearest sister. We wish them all happiness; and that not only they, but all other Christian Churches this day, were both almost and altogether such as we are, except our afflictions. We have no enemies there but the Canterbury faction—no less heavy to her than to us." Surely in this there is nothing illiberal and bigoted.

Coming down to our own day, and our own country, what Church in Ireland has given a more cordial welcome to other Churches? She does not sit alone—cold, distant, and solitary—from year to year. Leading ministers of foreign Churches occupy a prominent place at the meetings of her General Assembly. Regular correspondence is kept up with Christians abroad, and she recognizes and welcomes all who hold the truth as it is in Jesus. Thus it is evident that the tendencies of Presbytery are towards catholic views of the Church of Christ, and in an age when sectarian and exclusive principles are rapidly reviving, how important is it that we are able to make this statement.

We see, at the present day, the danger of departing, in any degree, from what is taught in the Word of God, and of making Prelacy essential to a Church of Christ. Men have been led to exalt this doctrine so far as to make it practically the great fundamental tenet and corner-stone of their religion. The Church has been made to displace Christ, who is its only and everlasting Head. The ministry has been substituted for the divine and omnipresent energies of the Holy Spirit; and Christianity, pure and spiritual and heavenly, has been transformed into a system of outward forms and ceremonies. Before the light of the Reformation dawned in England, Wickliffe taught in the halls of Oxford, and, by imbuing his students with the love of Gospel truth, he became the instrument of spreading it widely abroad, and England became a Protestant nation. But now doctrines the very opposite are openly taught in these very halls—doctrines subversive of the first principles of the Reformation—and Prelacy is either unwilling or unable to suppress them. What will be the end of these things God only knows. But one thing is certain: had Presbytery the control of the colleges and pulpits of England, things would be far different. Traitors would be expelled, pulpits purified, the fountains of knowledge cleansed, and floods of error would cease to desolate the land.

Farther, the system that holds the teaching elder to be the highest officer in the Church, is the most efficient system. We may have many illustrations of this, but let us take only one—the Free Church of Scotland. It was said that when the excitement of the disruption was over, all interest would subside, its members would fall away, and its funds be exhausted. The very contrary of all this is the fact. Its ministers and teachers are liberally sustained. Its churches and members are multiplying, and its missions are spread over the world. Nearly four millions and a-half sterling have been contributed towards these objects since 1843. And this has taken place in a country, and among a class of the community of that country not in possession in any large measure of the wealth, or the rank, or the influence of this world. Our Episcopalian friends often pay an undesigned tribute to Presbyterian principles. When they embark in any plan of usefulness—such as the circulation of the Bible, or the work of Missions—they adopt the principle of equality, and virtually set aside their hierarchy. The friends of

the object meet as equals, all having the same interest, and the same authority, and they appoint a temporary president only to preserve order in their proceedings. In such cases, where work is to be done, the hierarchical machinery is found wanting, and is, therefore, quietly laid aside. The inefficiency of the episcopate to carry on the work of evangelization, is acknowledged by themselves. An instructive example of this has just occurred. The Church Missionary Society is laudably desirous, at the present juncture, to promote the spread of the Gospel in India. But Prelacy is not a system for missions. The Committee of that Society have adopted a memorial in which they say, "The Church Missionary Society has had a long and large experience of missions in different fields of labour, and under a great variety of circumstances in respect of episcopal superintendence." And after referring to some of these, they proceed—"Viewing the case from this vantage-ground, the Committee are brought to the conclusion that it is *practically undesirable for all parties, for a bishop to take a leading part in missionary operations in their earlier stages.*" But if a missionary bishop should be sent out, and expected to take part in the work, his episcopal functions must be, for the most part, laid aside. He must join the mission as a fellow evangelist, and place himself under the general control of the managing Committee. This is a position at variance with the constitution of the Episcopacy of the United Church of England and Ireland." Not a doubt of it. The only efficient missionary is the teaching elder. Prelates are ornamental. Teachers are useful.

It is further to be observed, that the office of teacher is that which God has specially honoured in His word and in His providence. God Himself is the source of light, the fountain of all knowledge. He is described as "He that teacheth man knowledge," and blessedness is the declared portion of the man whom He *teacheth*. (1st. xlv.) "Behold, God exalteth by his power; who *teacheth* like Him?" (Job xxxvi. 22.) Christ Himself is the great prophet, "the teacher come from God." (John iii. 2.) And what was the Redeemer's employment during His public ministry? Let the sacred historians reply, "Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom." (Matt. iv. 23.) "He taught them as one having authority." (Matt. vii. 29.) We have his own recorded testimony, "I sat daily with you *teaching* in the temple." (Matt. xxvi. 55.) It was the testimony of His enemies, that "He taught throughout all Jewry, from Galilee to Jerusalem" (Luke xxiii. 5.) "Never man spake like this man." (John vii. 46.)

The apostles and ministers of the early Church followed the example of their divine Master. We read how Peter and the rest of the apostles "stood in the temple and taught the people" (Acts v. 25), and how "Paul and Barnabas continued in Antioch teaching and preaching the Word of the Lord, with many others also." (Acts xv. 35.) This duty was regarded by Christ and his apostles as above all others in dignity and importance. The administration of rites and ceremonies, however proper and necessary, was in their view, quite inferior. "Jesus himself baptised not, but his disciples" (John iv. 2), and the Apostle Paul emphatically declares "Christ sent me not to baptise but to preach the Gospel" (1 Cor. i. 17.), and again he exclaims, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." (1 Cor. ix. 16.) In the early Church the office of a teacher was looked upon as more honourable and elevated than any other, for we find some who were not fitted for its duties ambitious to attain it. (1 Tim. i. 7.) And in later periods of the Church's history this office has been honoured above all

others. The leading Reformers were teaching elders. Such was Wickliffe, "the morning star of the Reformation." Such were Huss and Jerom, Luther and Calvin, Zwingli and Melancthon, Farel and Knox. Such, too, were most of the eminent theologians of the Church of England—Prideaux, Scott, Paley, Whitby, &c. It is often said that there were learned men upon the bench of bishops. Doubtless such divines as Marsh and Hampden, Magee and Sumner, have added to the stock of theological literature; but let it not be forgotten, that it was when they were teaching elders their works were written. Elevation usually paralyzes the best of men. Place a learned divine or a faithful pastor on the bench, and it is a miracle if his usefulness survive the shock. He is raised in worldly rank and increased in earthly goods, but he surrenders the high and honourable office of a teacher. He ceases to go about instructing the ignorant and comforting the afflicted. He betakes himself to employments comparatively mean and insignificant, and wastes his time and talents in civil and secular affairs. This is what the world calls advancement, but, viewed aright, it is advancement downwards. When do such employments attain the great objects of the Christian ministry—the salvation of souls—the revival of religion—the extension of the Messiah's kingdom? Do not these rather spring from the labours and follow the steps of the humble teacher going about doing good?

In fine, the office of the teaching elder is to be estimated, not by the pomp and glitter of external appearances, but by the magnitude of its objects and the duration of its consequences. That office surely is important whose end is the recovery of man to his original purity and happiness, the preparation of immortal souls for the blessedness of heaven. It is an office of greater importance than it is possible for language to describe or imagination to conceive. Compared with this, the most important trust that can be reposed in man sinks into nothing. However weighty may be the interests suspended on the wisdom or fidelity of those to whom our civil rights and bodily health are entrusted, they are vanity itself when compared to the consequences of the Christian ministry. For nothing less than the glory of God, the interests of eternity, and the fate of immortal souls are closely connected with it. As the soul is more valuable than the body, as eternity exceeds the duration of time, so does the work of God's ambassador exceed in importance the employments of this world. It is his to tell of a God ready to be reconciled, of a Saviour waiting to be gracious, of the Holy Spirit ready to renew, and sanctify and bless. It is his to proclaim the Father's love and the Redeemer's sufferings, to bear the bright torch of revelation to the tomb, to point and lead the way to heaven. And never, never can mortal man be more nobly occupied than when like the great Apostle of the Gentiles, he is faithfully engaged preaching Christ the hope of glory, "warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that he may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." (Col. i. 28.)

Such are the views of the Presbyterian Church regarding the office and position of the Teaching Elder. We have seen that these principles are taught in the Scriptures, that they were held by the Apostolic Fathers, and embodied in the constitution of the earliest Churches, that they have been maintained throughout ages of corruption by faithful witnesses for the truth, that they were held by Reformers, that they are acknowledged by the Protestant Churches (one only excepted), that they are proved by practical experience to be the most efficient, and have been signally honoured by God in His Word and in His Providence. We have seen that in duties, aims, and consequences it is an office infinitely and eter-