

The Presbyterian Review.

Vol. X.—No. 34.

TORONTO, MARCH 1, 1894.

\$1.50 per Annum.

The Eldership.

REV. D. V. MAYS.

(Concluded.)

THANKS be to God for the many noble elders whose example to the flock in promoting the benevolent work of the Church is so conspicuous. But if the tithing system could be introduced by them, God's kingdom would make gigantic strides from year to year. "The tithe is the Lord's." The ten million evangelical Church members in our country give five million dollars annually to home and foreign missions, or fifty cents each, whereas, if they gave only one cent on the dollar of their real and personal property they would give eighty-seven million dollars to these objects. In "Parish Problems" it is stated that "the average increase of wealth in the lands of professed Christians between the years 1870-80 was seventy-one times greater than their offerings to Missions, Home and Foreign." Here then, there is room for the increased power of the eldership in promoting systematic beneficence in the churches.

But the chief development needed in the elder's power is in winning souls to Christ in co-operation with his pastor, both within the bounds of the parish, and in extending these bounds, and in any other Christian activities in which he may have time or inclination to engage.

Here the Evangelical Alliance's plan of denominational co-operation, by districting cities and neighbourhoods, and appointing monthly visitors to invite non-church-goers to attend the church of their choice, and to gather Sabbath school scholars, and to redeem the in-temperate and fallen, opens a wide field still latent.

If the chief increase of power needed in the eldership is soul-winning power, how shall this power be obtained and be utilized for the upbuilding of Zion? If this power be possessed it will exert itself and will be accompanied by all other needed spiritual graces.

1. The first way in which this power may be obtained is to desire it, to pray for it, and to continually strive to put it forth. To seek and to save that which was lost was Christ's mission and is the leading purpose of all his true imitators. But the winning of souls depends upon being anointed with the Christ-like spirit. The Church to-day, more than in all her previous history, is giving prominence to the training of her young people in active Christian service. The elder should fall in line with this movement and give it his hearty co-operation and counsel and wise control as a part of the spiritual oversight required of him. His sympathies and feeling of responsibility should extend to the promotion and success both of the Junior and Senior Christian Endeavour work of his church. In and through these organizations and in the Sabbath-school his opportunity to win souls and train souls for Christ constantly presents itself.

But the church also still believes in waging Gideon-

like campaigns in pursuit of souls, and the Great Head of the Church will save sinners in greater multitudes when elders more earnestly seek to obtain soul-winning power.

2. But doubtless the chief burden of responsibility for bringing out and securing the greater putting forth of this power lies with the pastors of our noble elders.

The elder or other Christian is not conscious of his dormant power until it is put to the proof by its exercise. The first apostolic method was to go forth two by two, and Christ has said, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven." The following of this precedent and the claiming of this promise has been often owned of God in the blessed experience of many ministers and churches. By such methods the soul-winning power of elders has been utilized in conjunction with the pastor with immense increase of good results. Let illustrations widely prevalent suffice.

When the time has arrived for holding meetings of the church preparatory to communion, or for holding special services, God's people having waited together and in the closet in earnest preparatory prayer, and old feuds, if any, between church members being removed on the basis of "forgetting the things that are behind," so that all can lift up holy hands to God without wrath and doubting, let the minister take with him an elder, and after planning the round of visitation, let them unite in earnest prayer for the souls to be called upon. Let them go forth with God's spirit and with the love and tenderness of the Friend of Sinners in their hearts, and with confident faith in God, engage in earnest personal effort, with individual souls, and in no case close the interview in the home or in the private business office, if agreeable and suitable, without engaging in a few words of earnest prayer with the person approached, and let the person thus visited come under the power of the preached word in the church and remain for the inquiry meeting. Let the ministers thus thrust forward their elders prepared in this most joyful work on earth. Let them continue in such work, together or separately. Let them continue in it while life shall last, and the power of the Presbyterian Eldership will be marvellously developed for the upbuilding of Zion, and the 47th Psalm will oftener be the shout of joy appropriately expressing the jubilation of God's saints in earth and in heaven. "O clap your hands, all ye peoples. Shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the Lord Most High is terrible. He is a great King over all the earth. God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises, sing praises unto our King. Sing praises. For God is King of all the earth. Sing ye praises with understanding. God reigneth over the nations. God sitteth upon his holy throne. The princes of the people are gathered together to be the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth be long unto God. He is greatly exalted."