

but it has no inherent powers, for if so, then it would become an isolated power. Hence their comes the Presbytery in cases of difficulty coming before the Session, or in cases which from their nature are of wider interest than merely to the congregation in which they have arisen. These cases go to the Presbytery, and may go from the Presbytery to the Synod, and from the Synod to the Assembly. And all this not because any of these Courts is possessed of inherent powers, but because each of them in turn expresses more fully the voice of the Church. When the General Assembly is reached, it represents, speaks for, and gives voice to the whole Church. It is, under God, the whole Church, the fountain of power, speaking authoritatively and declaring its judgment on the matter at issue. But in all these gradations there has been no exercise of inherent power, but simply from stage to stage, a seeking to ascertain and know more fully the mind, and to reach the maturer judgment of the whole Church.

Again, is not the parity of the eldership, in theory at least, another foundation principle of Presbyterianism and of Scriptural teaching? We need not here enter upon and discuss the fact that other office-bearers besides elders are mentioned in the apostolic Church. Some of these, such as apostles and evangelists were temporary, while others, elders and deacons, were to be permanent. But there is no mention of three distinct classes: Teaching Elders, Ruling Elders and Deacons. We nowhere find any such distinction made in Scripture, the reference is to elders and deacons, and the term elder and bishop are applied in the same connection to the same individuals. There is only one class of qualifications demanded in the Scriptures for the office of elder or bishop, only one mode of setting apart to that office—that is, by ordination, in form, consisting of fasting, prayer and the laying on of hands, either by the Presbytery, an apostle, or one commissioned by an apostle.

What were the functions to be exercised by those who were thus solemnly set apart to that office in the Church of God? These functions were two fold—ruling and teaching—and while ordination included both, the individual thus set apart might exercise only one of them, that is, he might exercise the function of ruling only, or he might both rule and teach. That the ordination included and authorized the exercise of both functions is abundantly evident from I. Timothy v. 17, where it is said: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in word and doctrine. Here, of elders as a class, those who rule well are to be counted worthy of double honor. If an elder rule, he is to be honored; if he rule well, doubly honored, and a special honor to those who not only rule well, but labor in word and doctrine. There is certainly nothing here to indicate two classes of office bearers. The contrast lies in the degree of faithfulness and fulness of function. Neither the ruling well, nor the added laboring in word and doctrine, conferred any authority or prerogative over the others; it was honor, not power, to which they were entitled. Although the mode of conferring that honor may have led to the assumption of authority that has no Scriptural warrant for its exercise. What was at first a mere mark of honor, ultimately came to be claimed as a matter of right, by the successors in office of those on whom it was at first conferred.

We have said that ordination was by an apostle, Presbytery, or one commissioned by an apostle. Evidently Titus was commissioned by Paul to organize the churches in Crete and ordain elders. The qualifications for that office, and its functions also, are clearly set forth in that commission. Aside from his personal and social merits, his blamelessness of life and good repute, he was to be a man holding fast the faithful word as he had been taught, that he might be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and

convince the gainsayers. Thus the commission and its carrying out, in ordination, covered the whole ground of ruling and teaching.

The apostle himself was also an elder. Peter says: "The elders among you I exhort who are also an elder," and he defines the functions of the elder as the feeding and oversight of the flock of God, under the eye of the chief Shepherd, and in view of the crown of glory which the faithful elders shall at last receive. Hence, the apostolic or temporary office included the functions of the permanent, while necessarily the permanent was exclusive of the temporary. It is well to distinguish between the instrument that sets apart to the office and the source from which the powers and functions vested in the setting apart are derived. The instrument may be an apostle, his commissioner, or the Presbytery. But the sanction for the exercise of these functions by the individual thus set apart is based upon God's call, coming to him through the church, in his choice by it to that office. When the apostle Paul sent for the elders of Ephesus, to meet him at Miletus, he addressed them in these words: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood. The first thing to be noted in the injunction here given is to take heed to themselves—their own personal deportment, diligence and faithfulness; secondly, to all the flock of God, which the Holy Ghost, by His divine call, uttered through the church, had entrusted to them the feeding and oversight. A deeply solemn and responsible trust; to feed the flock of God which He hath purchased with His own blood.

What is meant by "feeding the flock?" Let us answer by enquiring what is meant by "feeding the flock" as that term is applied to the shepherd in every day life? It is generally taken to mean the due exercise of all the functions of the shepherd, viz., diligent, constant and tender watchfulness, due oversight, providing for all its wants and protecting from all its enemies. To feed the church of God means to minister tenderly and lovingly to all its needs according to God's appointment, through the means of grace which He has instituted for the edification of the body of Christ. What was the commission to Peter at his restoration? It was feed My sheep, feed My lambs; it was simply feed the Church of God. The same that was enjoined on the elders or overseers of the Ephesian church, and enjoined on them too without distinction of any kind or any intimation of any superiority of any one over the others. Only one class of officers, all equally addressed and equally enjoined.

Has that order been reversed? Has the commission of the eldership of the church been cancelled? We answer, No; we believe that, that divine order still remains. Then we ask: Are all those who are regularly called and chosen, and set apart by Scriptural ordination as elders on a par so far as divine authority and the right to exercise the functions of the eldership are concerned? We believe that they are. There may not be the same capacity for the exercise of these functions, but the right to their exercise in an orderly manner is based on Scripture authority and the practice of apostolic times.

Let us now trace briefly the mode of procedure in choosing and setting apart to the office of the eldership.

A new congregation has been organized or an existing one desires an addition to the number of elders. The session discusses, decides, brings the matter before the congregation and the members are asked to give the matter their most earnest and prayerful consideration, asking divine guidance in seeking out from among themselves men fitted of God for the office of elder. On the day appointed, the church comes together, and, after devotional exercises bearing on the matter in hand, proceeds in the name of

the Lord Jesus Christ to the choice of men for that office. When the nominations have been duly made, as those who have been prayerfully considering the matter think they ought to be made, then the church in solemn prayer, led by the minister presiding, appeals to God, to the Lord Jesus Christ to show which of these men have been chosen. The vote is then taken and the choice is declared. The newly elected elders are conferred with regarding their acceptance of office, and, on acceptance subsequently, with regard to fitness and doctrinal views, then followed by their assent given to the church standards they are solemnly ordained by prayer and the laying on of hands. The right hand of fellowship is given them, their names are added to the roll, and henceforth, according to the teaching of Scripture and apostolic usage, they are overseers or bishops over the church of God. The form of procedure varies. In some cases balloting is resorted to instead of the open meeting, and the laying on of the hands of the session is dispensed with. It was the mode when I was elected and ordained; it was considered Scriptural in those days. I think it is so still. The elders thus ordained are co-Presbyters in that oversight and feeding of the flock, and co-Presbyters too with the elder, who may in an orderly way be set over the same congregation to administer ordinances and labor in word and doctrine. He is simply a co-Presbyter with them, but in an orderly way set apart to the functions of double honor, the laboring in word and doctrine, giving himself wholly to the ministry of the word, but in no sense whatever a lord over God's heritage, or possessed of any special authority by virtue of his position, or any difference whatever, except the honor and exercise of the special functions to which he has been set apart, and which any of the others would have the same right to exercise by being set apart in the same orderly manner, on their manifesting their fitness for the edifying of the body of Christ. In short an elder, now, is expected to, and many of them do, exercise nearly all the functions of the pastorate, the dispensation of ordinances excepted. They are charged with the oversight of the families of their district in particular, while their oversight and responsibility extend to the congregation in general. They visit these families, read God's Word and pray with them; they visit the sick; they seek to comfort those that mourn, to cheer the sorrowful, to encourage the weak, to reclaim the erring, to win to the Lord Jesus Christ those that are straying in the paths of sin; to speak a word in season not only to the weary, but to all others on all suitable occasions, to teach in the Sabbath schools and Bible class, to conduct prayer meeting, to preach if they are competent, and in the absence of the pastor to bury the dead, to do that through their whole lifetime during which the generations of the fathers have passed away, and the children's children are being gathered into the membership of the church, and taking the place of those who sleep in the dust, having been gathered to the generation of their fathers.

PARIS: This Presbytery held its regular meeting in Ingersoll, Sept. 24th, Rev. P. Straith, M.A., presiding. Mr. Millar was appointed Moderator of Windham and Waterford, and it was agreed to ask proportion of Augmentation grant from April to date of translation of Mr. Leitch. It was agreed to ask for grant for Mount Pleasant and Burford for current six months at the rate of \$150 a year. The Presbytery entered on consideration of Mr. Sinclair's resignation of said charge, and parties having been heard, Messrs. Young, Bryce, Taylor and McIntyre expressing on behalf of both stations strong attachment to Mr. Sinclair and earnest desire to retain him. The resignation was accepted regretfully, and Messrs. Cockburn and Millar were appointed to prepare a suitable minute, and Mr. Hamilton to declare the pulpit vacant on the second Sabbath of November, and act as Moderator of Session during the vacancy. The work at Baden, Wellesley village and New Dundee was placed under Chesterfield Session, Mr. Johnston to have charge of supply, and a grant of \$2 a Sabbath to be asked for the winter.—W. T. McMULLEN, Clerk.

## Teacher and Scholar.

BY REV. W. A. J. MARTIN, TORONTO.

Oct. 13th, 1895. } THE TRIUMPH OF GIDEON. { Jud. vii. 1-23.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Ps. xxvii. 3.  
MEMORY VERSES.—19-20.  
CATECHISM.—Q. 4-6.  
HOME READINGS.—M. Jud. vi. 1-10. T. Jud. vi. 11-24. W. Jud. vi. 25-40. Th. Jud. vii. 1-8. F. Jud. vii. 9-25. S. Ps. xx. 1-9. Sab. 1 Cor. i. 21-31.

This week's lesson deals with the deliverance of Israel from Medianish oppression at the hands of Gideon, the son of Joash, the Abiezrite. On three preceding occasions, during the couple of centuries between Joshua's death and Gideon's triumph, God had raised up judges for the deliverance of His repentant people from the oppressors He had caused to come upon them for their infidelity to Him. The periods of oppression amount together to about fifty-three years out of the two hundred, so that it is evident the lesson taught by each deliverance lasted at least as long as the generation delivered lived. The form the Medianish oppression had taken was a peculiarly aggravating one. For seven successive seasons just as soon as the grain commenced to ripen these marauders had swooped down and taken possession driving the inhabitants to the caves and rocks for shelter, which they either carried off or destroyed the crops. The triumph of Gideon could not be complete unless the marauding bands were destroyed, as we find recorded here. Seeing that this is the only lesson we shall have from the record of deliverances found in Judges, we shall try to discover the lesson which God designed to teach His people at these times, and shall therefore consider *Gideon's helpers*, and *Gideon's victory*.

I.—*Gideon's Helpers*.—First of all we must remember that Gideon was a man who had been specially prepared for this work, not in any miraculous manner, however, but by the patient development of his own sterling character. He feared the Lord with his whole heart, this formed the foundation of his character, and upon that foundation he had been building for many years. He had done faithfully whatever his hand found to do, he had cultivated true faith in God as is shown by his seeking double assurance of the fact that his call was indeed from God. If we would be equipped for great things in God's service it can be only through the faithful discharge of every day duties. Then Gideon had human helpers, 32,000 men responded to his call to arms—only about one-tenth of the fighting strength of Israel however. This number was reduced to 10,000 by the withdrawal of all timid ones, and the 10,000 were sifted down until only 300 were considered fit to go with Gideon against the foe. God's design in reducing the number in this way was to impress upon the people the fact that deliverance came only from His power, and that therefore safety lay only in faithfulness to Him. This seems to have been the lesson God designed to teach the people by every deliverance. It is the lesson we need to learn in this nineteenth century, when there is such a tendency to admire and boast ourselves in great numbers. No matter how great the number of followers any cause may have, unless their help is on the Lord nothing will be accomplished; and no matter how small the number of faithful adherents of a cause may be, if God be with them, their cause is bound to triumph. Gideon's helpers, were evidently men who had never bowed the knee to idols, and thus men with whom, and through whom, God could show forth His help to the very best advantage. For after all God was Gideon's only helper, these faithful followers were only channels through which His help was manifested.

II.—*Gideon's Victory*.—Three hundred against four hundred and fifty times as many Midianites was great odds. No wonder if their hearts quailed, and therefore the Lord sent one more encouragement to Gideon. He, with his faithful servant, was sent by God to spy upon the camp of the enemy, and what he overheard as one of the Midianites told his dream of the barley cake, and another interpreted it caused him to worship, and returning to inspire every one of his little band with the assurance of victory, "Arise, for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian." Then followed the attack and the victory. Trumpets and torches in a night attack were usually the marks of leaders; so that when Gideon scattered his three hundred men with their trumpets and torches hidden in pitchers, around the camp of the Midianites, and when at a preconcerted signal every pitcher was broken and every torch permitted to flare out in the darkness, and every trumpet was sounded with the battle cry "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon," the effect upon the surprised foe would be to convince them that there were hundreds of leaders each with an unknown number of followers. Therefore each man felt it a duty to defend himself on every side. This, taken in conjunction with the confusion into which the whole army would be plunged by such an attack, led every man to smite his fellow instead of his foe, and so the power of the Midianites was broken. Then Gideon sent out swift runners and called armed men to keep the fords of the river, and these, with those who pursued after the flying enemy, succeeded in all but exterminating them. It was a clever stratagem, but the Lord made it to succeed. He did not, however, do the part which Israel could do for themselves and thus left them to complete the work of destruction. God gave Gideon the victory through very unpromising helpers, equipped with foolish weapons. So will He give us the victory if only we use that which is still foolishness to the wisdom of this world, viz.: "The Gospel of Jesus Christ."