

THE CHURCH SERVICE SOCIETY.

MR. EDITOR.—In THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN of March 25th there is an article on "The Church Service Society," by the Rev. George H. Smith. Mr. Smith claims to have "studied the periodical literature of this Society," and to have "attended its last annual conference in Edinburgh." With Mr. Smith's opinions on "Liturgies" and "Ritualism" I have nothing to do. But I am bound, as secretary of the Society, to point out certain misstatements which he has made.

Mr. Smith asserts that, at the conference which he attended, he heard one member "eloquently advocate the removal of communion tables from the churches and the substitution of altars." Sir, I do not believe that, at any meeting of the Church Service Society, any member ever advocated anything of the kind. Will Mr. Smith kindly mention where and when the conference took place?

Mr. Smith further asserts that "at a private conference with the students of the Divinity Hall, the members brought all pressure to bear in insisting on young ministers abandoning their own 'mean' prayers, and reading 'good ones.'" No such conference was ever held with the sanction of the Church Service Society.

Mr. Smith gives it not as his opinion, but as a fact, "acknowledged by all," that the membership of the Society embraces only "a few affected faddists." As there are more than five hundred ministers in the membership, he can scarcely with propriety speak of them as "few," whether or not they are "affected."

I think I am justified in asking Mr. Smith either to substantiate the statements which, with an assumption of knowledge, he has publicly made, or else to retract them. I am, Sir,

Very faithfully yours,  
PEARSON M'ADAM MUIR, D.D.,  
Secretary of the Church Service Society.  
Edinburgh, April 27th, 1896.

IS IT EQUALITY OR INEQUALITY?

MR. EDITOR.—Articles have been appearing in your columns for some months respecting the appointment of ruling elders as Moderators of Presbyteries and other church courts. There is one aspect of the case I have not seen brought out. To this, chiefly, I would like to call attention.

The movement to have elders appointed as Moderators is confessedly to place them on an equality ecclesiastically with the ordained ministers of the Church. But what would be the result did this movement succeed? Would it be equality that would be obtained? Far from it! The men who would be appointed Moderators of our Presbyteries and Assemblies—lawyers, judges, occasionally a senator or governor—are already socially above the ministers. The world has been all before them—they have gone in and won. These gentlemen, when found in our Church courts, bring their social superiority with them; then, let them be placed ecclesiastically on a level with the ministers, and where are your ministerial members of these courts? Under the feet of these brethren, so deemed by them, so by others.

In the past history of the Church since Christ set it up, except, perhaps, for a few brief years in transition periods, ministers being as a class considered ecclesiastically superior, this superiority counterbalanced the oft-found social superiority of the elders, and brought all the members of the court to a level. Did this movement succeed, it would be no longer equality but manifest inequality that would obtain.

I am persuaded it is not the better class of our elders who desire this change. Here and there one such may be found, who from the continuous declaring of their entire equality, and that all the rights of ministerial Presbyters were theirs, have consented to

go in for this levelling down process. But not so with the majority of our God-fearing, church-loving elders. Their common sense, and sense of fairness, as well as love for the Church, revolts at it. They know ministers relegated to inferiority would soon become as inferior as their position. Contemptible positions make their occupants contemptible. Besides, they are no jackdaws. They don't want to be arrayed in borrowed feathers. They feel that the claim that is made for them of an ecclesiastical equality with the men who have turned aside from the business of life; from claiming a share in its honors and emoluments which they had a natural right to as certainly as themselves; with men who have given up six to eight years of the best of their early manhood to preparation for the ministerial work, and, passing from college-halls, continue to study year in and year out to attain ever-increasing fitness—is so far from having right or fairness on its side, that it carries its refutation on its face. That they can by the vote of half a score or half a hundred of their friends or neighbours, without any retirement from their ordinary employment in life and without any years of special study, be placed on an equality with the ordained ministry of the Church—is so utterly repugnant to every sense of honor or fairness that they feel it would be an insult to God to hold that He had appointed such a thing in His Word, or made such an arrangement for His Church.

This matter has been showing itself in the courts of our Church for a number of years. It was first—speak of the elders no longer as ruling elders, but Presbyters. Then, in accordance with this, cut off the heads of the ministers, as far as the minutes of the courts were concerned, by ceasing to have them marked in these minutes as "Rev," but simply Mr. Some of the leading ministers being D.D.'s, it did not affect them, as the title of "Dr." was continued to such, but it indicated that the thin edge of the wedge was being entered which is now being driven home. The times are favorable for the development of this levelling business; it is part of the communism which is abroad in the air.

I have spoken of the ministers being reduced to inferiority in the Presbyteries and higher courts by this movement did it but prevail. The same would be the case in the Session. The number of elders in the Session is, say three, or five, or twelve to the one minister. The minister by being perpetual Moderator, and no meeting of Session being legal without his presence, makes him equal to those who in number overtop him so much. Let this new movement succeed in making every elder in the Session eligible for Moderator, and you have the minister on as much of an equality with the elders as one is on an equality with three, or five, or twelve.

And what and where is the Scripture warrant for this change? I have said the minutes of our higher Church courts have been giving indications of the levelling process for a number of years. This has arisen from a supposition that there was some sufficient foundation in the New Testament for the equality of ministers and elders in the courts of the Church. Besides, the favorers of the change who have been writing in your columns are continually talking about Scripture supporting them. Where is the Scripture support. The main, indeed the only passage, which seems to favor their views is that oft quoted I. Tim. v. 17: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labour in the Word and Doctrine." The word elders here, as everybody knows, is Presbyters—Gr. *Presbuteroi*. The question is, are there two classes of Presbyters here or one? "New Testament Elder," writing in your columns, says there is but one. I agree with him. But I hold, not he, that this one class is "ministers." The interpretation turns on where the emphasis is to be placed in this sentence. If you place it on labour you have but one class, and that

class ministers. Let the Presbyters that rule well, and especially those that labour—are "laborious" in Word and Doctrine—be counted worthy of double honor. The Greek word for labour, here used, means "labor intensely." Some of the Presbyters that would be ordained by Timothy would show marked ability in ruling. Let them, Paul directs, be counted worthy of double honor, especially if with ruling well in the house of God they are laborious in preaching and teaching "in Word and Doctrine."

The Westminster Assembly of Divines utterly refused to admit that the passage I. Tim. v. 17, brought out a second class of Presbyters. Calvin held it did; but this Assembly, from which emanated our Confession of Faith, refused utterly to allow this was taught in that scripture. The grand committee declared unanimously in favor of lay elders in the Church, but never once in the Confession or Form of Church Government issued by that Assembly is the term presbyter or elder applied to any but ministers of the Gospel. Authority for lay-elders is sufficiently and unmistakably found in the New Testament. Such passages as I. Cor. xii. 28 show it. There "helps," "governments," are spoken of as "set by God in the Church," but never such an anomaly as this new elder would be. All this is brought out in a work entitled the "Theory of the Ruling Eldership," by Principal Campbell, of Aberdeen University, published some years since by Blackwood & Sons. Dr. Campbell adds: "The term Presbyter, which we have translated elder, in the New Testament uniformly denotes the pastor or minister of the gospel and is never applied there (i.e., in the New Testament), or in the language of primitive antiquity, to what we now call ruling elder." The editor of the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*—at the time Dr. Oswald Dykes, I believe—in discussing the merits of the work, declares himself as agreeing fully with the Aberdeen Principal in the above conclusion. It may be said that the "Calvin-mistake," for such we hold it was—I presume it is allowable to suppose that, great and good man though he was, he could, and sometimes did, make a mistake—the Calvin mistake, we say, was followed by our Scottish churches, and from the Scotch-Irish teaching brought over into America. Dr. Miller of Princeton, in his work on "Presbyterian Church Government," favors it, for which he is taken vigorously to task by Dr. Campbell in the treatise above referred to.

Since writing the above Rev. Dr. Laing's words, in your issue of the 13th inst, have come to hand. As he says, let the matter be taken up and gone thoroughly into. Our Canadian Church is brave and strong enough, by God's help, to go back of the Scottish and Calvin interpretation, to that of the Assembly of Divines, to that of the other Reformed churches, to primitive antiquity and above all to the New Testament teaching. If we find, as I believe will be the case, that Dr. Campbell is right in his statement that the word *presbuteroi*, presbyters, translated elders in our English version, when it refers to officers in the New Testament church is applied only to ministers of the gospel—should this be found so, it will take nothing from the just honour or usefulness of our elders as at present found in our church courts. They are now and would still be representatives of the people in these courts with an equal voice and vote with our ministers in all matters of doctrine, government, and worship, but not possessors of the ministry of the Gospel; not as ministers, not as *presbyters*, who, as all now allow, are called bishops also in the New Testament Scriptures, and whom the Holy Ghost, by Paul, requires to be apt to teach and to give themselves wholly to the work, and so necessarily to give up the ordinary business of life.

Let the matter be gone thoroughly through with; let us get down to the solid rock of Scripture in the matter. It will repay all its costs both to ministers and elders if it be found there is but one class of Presbyters appointed by Christ in the New Testament church. To God fearing elders it will be a boon—who, coming in as lay elders, as "helps," "governments," which I Cor. xii. 28 cited above, declares are "set in the church, by God," will not feel God blinds them, as this new movement would have it supposed to be, all that New Testament Presbyters are required by Scripture to be—apt to teach, to labor in the world and doctrine, and "give themselves wholly to the work," necessarily giving up worldly business; and to the ministers a relief, as they would no longer be required by loyalty to what was supposed to be Scripture teaching, to allow that the elders have a right to all the work and all the honors Christ has attached to the ministry of the Gospel.

J. S.

Manitoba, May 20th, 1896.

Teacher and Scholar.

BY REV. A. J. MARTIN, TORONTO.

June 14th } JESUS CRUCIFIED. { Lu. xxiii.  
1896. } 33-46.  
GOLDEN TEXT.—I. Cor. xv. 3.  
MEMORY VERSES.—44-46.  
CATECHISM.—Q. 63.

HOME READINGS.—M. Luke xxiii. 1-12. T. Luke xxiii. 13-26. W. Luke xxiii. 27-46. Th. Mark xv. 22-32. F. John xii. 20-33. S. I. Pet. ii. 19-25. Sm. Ks. viii. 31-39.

Dr. Stalker has written a book of upwards of three hundred pages upon "The Trial and Death of Jesus Christ," in which he deals only with the matter to be considered in this one lesson. Nothing further is needed to show the impossibility of doing justice to such a subject in the limited space allotted to "Teacher and Scholar." Each must read for himself all the incidents of that last terrible night and morning, commencing with the agony in Gethsemane, and ending with the weak surrender of Pilate to the clamors of the chief priests and elders expressed through the fickle mob. We have only time to touch lightly upon "The Incidents of the Crucifixion and Their Meaning."

I. The Incidents of the Crucifixion.—These are so many and so important, that it is difficult to make choice as to which should be dwelt upon. We need not, however, give much time to the physical agony caused by death upon the cross, for what Jesus endured of physical suffering was of but small importance as a factor in His atoning work. Sometimes Christ's physical agony has been dwelt upon until the impression has been left, that that was the one thing by which atonement was made for the sin of the world. While we do not make light of Christ's sufferings (they were beyond our comprehension in intensity), yet the humiliation He endured was of much greater import in making atonement. First of all, the death He died was the death of a slave or a criminal. The position of His cross, between the crosses of two notorious outlaws, stamped Him as the chief of such men. The superscription written over His head—"The King of the Jews," was designed to humiliate and anger the chief priests and leaders of the Jews, by indicating that the prince of the outlaws and slaves was a fit king for a nation of slaves, but it was a further mark of humiliation to the Lord of glory. The mockery of the two thieves was on a par with all the rest, an appeal to Him as their leader. The action of the soldiers in mocking Him by offering Him vinegar to drink, and hailing Him a King was just one additional element in His humiliation, for vinegar was the drink of slaves, and thus they hailed Him as the very king of slaves. That cup of humiliation at man's hands he drank to the very dregs, for according to John's report He exclaimed, "I thirst," "that the scripture might be fulfilled," that scripture where the King complains that His enemies have humiliated Him by giving Him the drink of a slave. But most terrible of all for Jesus to endure, was when the "Holy One did hide His face," when God, as it were, regarded Him as vile and sinful, and One from whom His face should be hid. Thus was "He who knew no sin made sin for us." Thus did "He bear our sins in His own body upon the tree."

II. The Meaning of These Incidents.—This has been in some measure hinted at. If He be the substitute for sinners then He must take the sinner's place, He must endure the contempt both from man and God which is the sinners due, so that now "that face of radiant grace may shine in light on me." Stalker points out that of all who were in any way interested in the crucifixion of Jesus, only He Himself knew the meaning of what was being done; and that it is from the seven utterances which fell from His lips that we can best learn what we want to know. There was a prayer for His enemies, a cry for their forgiveness. There was a welcome for the penitent, and a word of counsel for His friends. Then His house being set in order there was that painful cry which marked the completion of His work when the Father's face, which had been hidden from Him, was restored to Him again; yet so terrible had been the experience that His agony could not be repressed even when it was about over. Then came the bid for further humiliation as He asked for a drink and received a slaves portion. Then came the cry of triumph, "It is finished," when an end had been made and man's redemption perfected. And last of all the breathing out of His spirit to God. He did not die in the same sense as we die, for He had power to lay down His life and did so. Thus we learn of the substitutionary character of the Master's work and of the perfect completeness to which He brought it.