

Contributors and Correspondents

[of the Presbyterian.]

DIVINE ROYALTY.

BY REV. ALEXANDER MCKAY, D.D.

The royal character of the Supreme Being stands very prominently on the pages of inspiration, Pa. v. 2; x. 16; xxiv. 7; xlv. 8; xxviii. 6; (1) Tim. i. 17; Rev. xvii. 14 etc. As a king (1) He has his dominions and dwelling places. These embrace the vast universe. He controls innumerable systems. He rules everywhere, in heaven above, on earth below, and in hell beneath. The whole planetary and cometary systems are within the range of His Dominion. All existences whether animal, rational or angelic, are subject to his authority. "Worlds innumerable own his governing might." Worlds in many instances far larger and more glorious than our own; the 80,000,000 of suns which the power of glass has brought within human vision and human enumeration, give light to an indefinitely larger number of worlds, in all of which, in an endless variety of created wonders, the power and wisdom and majesty and goodness of the Maker and Lord of all are seen, acknowledged and celebrated." There may be sovereigns who rule over groups of worlds, like Pleiades and Orion; but what is the dominion of these compared with that of the Great King. Every principality, power and kingdom throughout creation is subject to Him. He is King of kings in every sphere where government exists. Though he be the high and lofty one who inhabited eternity, He condescends to dwell with them who are His people. His greatness is not inconsistent with His regard to little things. He is not so taken up with the immensities as to forget the infinitesimals, not so employed with manifold engagements as to lessen His interest in the smallest part of his boundless kingdom. "He sees with equal eyes, as God of all, a hero perish or a sparrow fall." He dwells in the heart of the believer, and in the midst of His Church; but heaven is His imperial palace, his peculiar dwelling place.

II. As a king He has His throne and crown. While worldly kingdoms rise and fall, He sits on His throne in a state of deep repose, undisturbed felicity and everlasting blessedness. No revolutions disturb the security of his reign. His throne is firmly fixed, stable and unchangeable; other thrones are unstable and tottering, but this throne is Divine, Supreme and universal. "The changes of time, the revolutions of the earth, the mutations of the world, the convulsions of nature, the rise, decline and fall of empires," make no change in His majestic and immutable throne, which is eternal in its origin and everlasting in duration, having neither beginning nor end, succession nor change. There is a manifold throne attributed to this king. His spiritual throne is in the heart of the believer. The throne of grace is erected in the Church. The throne of glory is placed within the veil, the throne of judgment will be established in the aerial heavens. The throne of the universe is in the Heavens, Isa. lxvi. As a king, (III.) He has His royal retinue and army. He is surrounded by angels and archangels who incessantly obey Him and veil their faces when they approach Him. The chariots of this king are twenty thousand. The armies of heaven, and the inhabitants of this world obey His behests; myriads of holy beings vested with power, and swifter than the lightning are ever ready to execute his commands, and perform all His pleasures. "The winds are His chariot; the stars are His flashing coronal; the lightning the glare of His eye; and the seraphim are His ministers. The subjects of this king are an innumerable multitude out of every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. He has royal revenues and royal magazines of spiritual armour. When the children of Israel were travelling in the desert, the tabernacle, the symbol of the Divine presence was placed in the centre, and the tribes surrounding it, so the government of God is surrounded by the best beings in the universe, who are in sympathy with it, and wait its orders. As a king, (IV.) He has a sceptre and laws. The Divine sceptre is one of righteousness; in all his administrations just and right is He. The Lord loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity. Those laws and statutes are the established principles for the regulation of all things pertaining to the boundless empire of Jehovah. He has given physical laws for the government of matter, and moral laws for the guidance of rational and intelligent beings. These are holy, just and good. These laws which relate to the human race are revealed and proclaimed in the Bible. Here we have God's revealed will, written under the infallible inspiration of the Divine and unerring Spirit. These laws are sanctioned by the most awful threatenings, and most precious promises or rewards. The whole duty of man is directly or inferentially laid down in the Scriptures. The duty which God requires of man is obedience to these commandments. He that doeth the will of God

abideth for ever, whereas he that is disobedient shall be favoured with the sword. From this important subject we may learn several lessons. (1) To reverence this King. Many speak lightly of God, and profane his name. We should serve Him with humility, reverential feelings and godly fear. We should remember that He is above all kings. His throne is above all thrones. His laws are above all laws. Immensity peopled with innumerable worlds constitute His vast and extensive kingdom. He is higher than the highest, He is holier, mightier and happier than the holiest, mightiest and happiest; He is the blessed and only Potentate. (2) We should submit to His rule. Our hearts are often rebellious, our wills obstinate, and we are not resigned to His providential dealings. This is folly; we should endeavour to maintain His dominion in our hearts, and advance it in the world. Submission will lead to peace, security and prosperity. (3) We should ask great and many blessings from Him. This great and glorious King delights to give, and to give according to his ability and munificence. He has pleasure in giving largely. Great expectancy in His people please Him. Those who ask much from Him are never disappointed.

"I am coming to a King, Large petitions I will bring: For His grace and power are such, None can ever ask too much."

The Eldership.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR,—Before entering upon any discussion as to the most efficient ways of discharging our duties as Elders, it would be well to pause and endeavour to ascertain what our official position in the church is.

The question is, are we spiritual office bearers in the church, as our name indicates, set apart for the performance of certain duties prescribed by the word of God; or, are we but the representatives of the private members in the courts of the church, restricted from the performance of certain duties pertaining to the Eldership in the Apostolic Church?

In other words, does the term "Elder," in the Apostolic and Presbyterian churches, mean one and the same office bearer, having the same duties, responsibilities, and privileges as defined by the Apostles to the first churches?

If not, why not? And what means will be most effectual in bringing Presbyterian practice into line with scriptural precept? These are important questions, and their solution will be most effectual by comparison and contrast. It will scarcely be necessary to produce proof that there were only two classes of permanent office bearers appointed in the small communities of believers gathered together and organized into churches by the first preachers of the Gospel, viz., elders and deacons. The qualifications necessary in the candidates for these offices are fully given in Paul's Epistle to Timothy and Titus. Also the manner of setting them apart for the performance of these duties is minutely given in different parts of the scriptures. It will scarcely be called in question (especially by any Presbyterian) that the titles elder, bishop, presbyter, and pastor, are terms descriptive of, and applicable to, the same office bearers, who were to possess all the qualifications necessary for the discharge of the varied duties pertaining to the office, as laid down by the Apostles.

Proof for the above will be found in Acts xx. 17, 28; 1 Timothy chap. iii; Titus chap. i; and 1 Peter v. 1, 2. The marginal references connected with these passages will direct to numerous passages confirming the same. It is of importance to observe, that every Elder was not only to have the qualifications that would enable him to rule well, but he was also, to be "apt to teach," as he was required to "feed the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made him an overseer." It is also worthy of note, that there is no mention made of two classes of elders set apart for the performance of different duties. It is true, we are incidentally informed in other passages, that it was not uncommon for the elders of a church to make a division of the labours, each taking the department for which his natural gifts best qualified him, without thereby forfeiting his right to occasionally discharge the duties of the other departments; and those that were equally well qualified, and did discharge the duties of two departments, were to be counted "worthy of double honor."

I presume it will be unnecessary to produce proof that every elder after being chosen to that office by the Church was solemnly set apart to discharge the duties of his office by the imposition of "hands." For even the deacons, an inferior class of office-bearers, were set apart in that manner. The whole may be briefly summarized as follows:—The permanent office bearers in the Church were of two classes, viz.:—elders and deacons. The duties of the former were twofold, the government, and the instruction, of the Church. And as each member chosen to that office was to possess in some measure the qualifications necessary for every department, there was therefore a perfect equality amongst the members.

I shall now put the Presbyterian elder into contrast with his namesake in the early Church, and see if there is a sufficient likeness to identify him as belonging to the same family. To those unacquainted with the workings of the human heart, especially

the besetting sin of our nature, it may appear strange that in the present constitution of the eldership there should be such a departure from scriptural precepts and practice.

It is true the elder is scripturally chosen to that office by the free voice of his brother members, but here the parallel ceases, as the ruling authorities of the church refuse to ordain him to that office by the imposition of the hands of the Presbytery, as the Apostolic constitution of the church directs. As a substitute she directs him to be set apart by prayer and the right hand of fellowship.

By confining him to ruling alone, she curtails him of one-half of his duties and privileges, which, as we have proved, were to rule and teach.

When the ruling powers of the Church undertook to improve her Divine constitution by dividing the eldership into two classes, they should at least have shown a desire to be guided by principles of equity, and put the ruling elder (as regards ruling, at least) on terms of equality with the teaching elder. She has not done so, but has placed him, even in his own special department of the work, in a subordinate position to the teaching elder; inasmuch as she has declared him incapable of choosing the moderator of his own court, and disqualifies him for holding that position himself.

For example, and in illustration, take a church which has been deprived of the services of their teaching elder, but has still a board of four or more ruling elders, each of whom possesses all the scriptural qualifications necessary for that department of the work. They may have age, experience, be husbands, and have families, and have proved their capabilities for ruling in the church by ruling their own families well. Yet all these marks go for nothing. They are not permitted to choose one of their own number to preside over their meetings for the transaction of the most ordinary business.

But a teaching elder from another church must be set over them by the Presbytery. But suppose further, a call is given and accepted by a young probationer, not much more than out of his teens, before being ordained he, very properly, must give satisfactory proof of his ability to teach; but no test of his ability to rule is required of him, and though lacking some of the qualifications declared by Scripture to be essential, yet in virtue of his office as teaching elder, he is placed over the ruling elders, who, in age, experience, and proved ability for ruling, would be more than fathers to him.

In proof of these statements I appeal to the standards of the church, and the authorized rules and forms of procedure in church courts.

I am aware that sometimes ministers set some of these man-made rules aside and ordain their elders as the Scriptures direct; but these are the exceptions to the rule. I do not bring up this matter for needless agitation, but as the Church by the recent union is now entering upon a new phase of her existence in this country, and is revising her rules of procedure, I look upon this as a proper time for revising the elders' standing in the Church, and where it lacks, bring it into conformity with the precepts and practice of the teachers of the Apostolic Church.

I appeal to my brother elders to take these matters into serious consideration, and if these conclusions are not correct, show where they are not; but if they are, then move and agitate in every lawful manner, for a reform that will make him in fact, as well as in name, a Scriptural elder.

I may have occasion in a future article to examine the proofs adduced, and reasons assigned by the authorities for their present practice. EQUITY.

King, Jan. 1st, 1877.

Our Home Mission Work.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

SIR:—The proposal to appoint lay members of our Church to active personal service in the Home Mission field, as embodied in the overture which appeared in a recent number of the PRESBYTERIAN,—while open to the charge of being an attempt to introduce an innovation on our former practice, will, I have no doubt, commend itself to many of your readers as a feasible solution of a hitherto very difficult problem, viz.:—how the Church, with the limited means at her disposal, is to discharge the obligation laid upon her—to minister to the spiritual necessities of adherents in destitute localities, and bring the waste places all around under the influence of sound religious truth.

Coming up at the present crisis in the state of Home Mission affairs, the suggestion opens a door of hope; for if acted upon, not only will the Church thereby be enabled to occupy important positions, which, in the absence of such aid, she would be compelled to abandon; but an element of power, hitherto dormant, will be called to the front, the development of which, under judicious management, and with the Divine blessing, will very materially contribute to her enlargement and general efficiency as a witness for Christ. While, as has been said, the appointment of laymen to this species of service is an innovation on our previous practice as a church, it presents us new features in the history of evangelism, as other branches of the Church of Christ have, to a greater or less extent, utilized this agency, and found it eminently successful as an aggressive power. Illustrative of this, there are few places even in the most sparsely settled districts of the country, where we will not find the disciples of Methodism, with characteristic zeal and defective theology, laboring, and that successfully, to lighten the community with their peculiar views of truth, and thus gain a foothold for their denomination.

As compared with our own tardy efforts to occupy the land, Methodism spreads itself with something of the rapidity of the prairie fire; and this aptitude for mission work would be cause for unmingled satis-

faction, were it not for the unfortunate fact that the system lacks backbone, and that in all these settlements which it has travelled, there is a "want of adaptation," as Dr. Chalmers would have expressed it, which renders impossible the planting, or at least the successful working, of Presbyterian institutions, which are so indispensable to the carrying forward to a successful issue, pioneer Christian work, by whatever agency such work may be done.

But why may not we ourselves evangelize on the same scale, and by the same agency? There is nothing in the doctrinal belief of the Presbyterian Christian layman, which should render him less energetic or less successful in his efforts to win souls, than his Methodist brother. Take the embargo from off his lips; let the sympathies of his soul—begotten by the Word of Life, which, in their outflow to his fellow men, have hitherto been trained to develop themselves chiefly through the pulpit—have the benefit of his voice as well, and with his superior training, and clearer views of Divine truth, he will prove a more efficient worker, the Church of Christ will reap more substantial benefit, and both Church and world see and hear vastly less of falling from grace.

If we can appreciate the value of the labors of such men as Moody and others, whose love for souls has carried them far beyond the bounds prescribed by our Church for lay members, is it too much to say that, while all our members are not Moody, our Church, by sending forth her best laymen as evangelists, would reap unspeakable advantage, both as regards addition to membership and increased spiritual power, thus hastening the coming of the time when "the Lord will comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody." Isaiah li. 8. W. T.

The Highlander's Prayer.

No man can live in the constant habit of prayer, without acquiring a familiarity with the spirit of devotion, which will clearly indicate to others that he is a praying man. A true Christian can generally infer, both from the language and manner of prayer; whether the suppliant is in the habit of daily communion with God. I have even thought, that after preaching to a congregation for a few times, I could infer from the expression of the countenance and the manner of attending upon ordinances, what heads of families are in the habit of regular family prayer.

The celebrated Hugh Miller gives a striking illustration of this in his work on the "Headship of Christ." A Scotch Highlander, who served in the first disastrous war with the American Colonies, was brought before the commanding officer one evening, charged with the capital offence of being in communication with the enemy. The charge could not well be preferred at a more dangerous time. Only a few weeks had elapsed since the execution of Major Andre, and the indignation of the British, exasperated almost to madness by the event, had not yet cooled down. There was, however, no direct proof against the Highlander. He had been seen in the gray of the twilight stealing out from a clump of underwood that bordered on one of the huge forests which at that period covered much the greater part of the United Provinces, and which, in the immediate neighborhood of the British, swarmed with the troops of Washington. All the rest was mere inference and conjecture. The poor man's defence was summed up in a few words. He had stolen away from his fellows, he said, to spend an hour in secret prayer.

"Have you been in the habit of spending hours in secret prayer?" sternly asked the officer, himself a Scotchman and a Presbyterian. The Highlander replied in the affirmative.

"Then," said the other, drawing out his watch, "never in all your life had you more need of prayer than now; kneel down, sir, and pray aloud that we may hear you." The Highlander, in the expectation of instant death, knelt down. His prayer was that of one long acquainted with the appropriate language in which the Christian addresses his God. It breathed of imminent peril, and earnestly implored the divine interposition in the threatened danger—the help of Him who, in times of extremity, is strong to deliver. It exhibited, in short, a man who, thoroughly conversant with the scheme of redemption, and fully impressed with the necessity of a personal interest in the advantages which it secures, had made the business of salvation the work of many a solitary hour, and had in consequence, acquired much fluency in expressing all his various wants as they occurred, and his thoughts and wishes as they arose.

"You may go, sir," said the officer as he concluded, "you have, I dare say, not been in correspondence with the enemy to-night."

"His statement," he continued, addressing himself to the officers, "is undoubtedly correct. No one could have prayed so without a long apprenticeship; fellows who have never attended drill always get on ill at review."

CANDOR is the brightest gem of criticism. —Dissert.

Oh! what deep humility there is in deep pleadings of the cross!

THE Bible is the young man's own book. It denounces vice without feeding a dangerous curiosity. It dignifies virtue, not as a means of getting on, but as success and happiness now; and best of all, it gives the young man the one exclusive way in which vice is vanquished and virtue attained. It lifts up Christ. It invites to the cross. It offers the new heart and the right spirit. It penetrates the disguise of elegant sin, and exposes the sophistry of cultivated iniquity. It flashes its revealing rays upon the opening abyss to which the tempter leads. It unmasks the voluptuous angel of light, and shows the malicious fiend, into the soul against the "pleasures of sin for a season." It throws the "pains of God," and the "pleasures for evermore." Dr. John Hall.

The Old Year and the New.

Gone at last, and gone forever,
With that solemn midnight ohime,
Gone—with all its spring-tide blossom,
And the fruition of its prime;
Faint we hear its parting footsteps
Down the echoing aisles of Time.

In the hushed and solemn moments
While the light to morning dings,
Comes a velled and silent angel
With a rattle of soft wings—
'Neath his flowing vesture hid den,
Unknown gifts to all he brings.

What they are—in vain we wonder,
All in vain we question now;
Well the angel keeps the secret
'Neath his calm, impassive brow;
But we know Love plans our future,
So we are not careful how!

If there come not what we hope for,
If there come the things we dread,
Yet we will not faint nor falter—
One hath marked the path we tread,
Blest, in gladness or in sorrow,
Following where Himself hath led.

But the stately, silent angel
Bears a volume, black and white,—
What within it shall be written
Mainly it is ours to write,—
May it show a fairer record,
Than the one that closed to-night!

Where dark lines of wrong and hatred
Marred the record as it ran,—
This year stand, in golden letters,
Love and truth to God and man,—
So our perverse human passions
Mar not the Designer's plan.

Yet, oh Life's Recording Angel
Take each blurred, imperfect line,
Dip it in Love's cleansing fountain
Till all fair and pure it shine,—
And, as grow the pages fewer,
Lift us nearer the Divine!

Kingston. FIDELITY.

Random Readings.

Prove all things: hold fast that which is good.

PRAYER.—A plain man once said: "Before my conversion, when I prayed in the presence of others, I prayed to them; when I prayed in secret, I prayed to myself; but now I pray to God."

LIFE is made up of trials! what mercy there must be in the heart of God, that can enter into all the circumstances of those trials, from the aching body to the tried soul. How often when we have been sinking low, He has put His arm under, just to assure us—I am beneath the trouble!

ROMAN Catholic papers are praising the British Government for granting a fine sight at Gibraltar for the erection of a Roman Catholic church. They are also praising the Spanish Government for compelling British Protestants to close their churches in Spain. Consistency is a jewel, but you must not go to Rome to look for it.

THE ADVANCE says:—"A bit of advice which Mr. Moody gave in a meeting in Liverpool, may contain a useful hint over here. Some people, he says, come to the meeting to find fault. He never knew a meeting yet without a fault. It don't take brains or heart to find fault. Any fool could do that. The question was, could they do it better? If so, let them come, by all means, and he would pray for God's blessing upon their efforts, and stand aside."

THERE is danger in permitting young men to decide to study for the ministry before their minds are matured. It is well when they can put off decisions of this sort until they have had a broader outlook on the world. When a young man has felt the stirrings of power and ambition in his soul, and then comes with a whole-hearted consecration, and lays all on the altar of God, he is likely to be a man of power with God and men. Not every man who can make exhortation is fit to preach. There must be power to control men.—Dr. Anderson.

To do good to men is the great work of life; to make them true Christians is the greatest good we can do them. Every investigation brings us round to this point. Begin here, and you are like one who strikes water from a rock on the summit of the mountains; it flows down all the intervening tracks to the very base. If we could make each man love his neighbor, we should make a happy world. The true method is to begin with ourselves, and so extend the circle around us. It should be perpetually in our minds.—J. W. Alexander.

LOVE descends, not ascends. The might of a river depends not on the quality of the soil through which it passes, but on the inexhaustibility and depth of the spring from which it proceeds. A parent loves the child more than the child the parent, and partly because the parent's heart is larger, not because the child is worthier. The Saviour loved his disciples infinitely more than his disciples loved him, because his heart was infinitely larger. Love trusts on, ever hopes and expects better things, and is a trust springing from itself, and out of its own deeps alone.—Rowland Hill.

SOMETIMES people wake up when it is too late. Had Jonah been on his knees he might have escaped being dropped into the sea. There is one here who does not expect death more than do I. But see! the breeze has freshened into a gale. See the white caps. Unseen hands are stretched towards him from the gaping sea. The lightnings light their torches. The sea plays the funeral dirge with open diapason of a lost soul. "Because I have called and ye refuse; I have stretched my hands and no man regarded," etc. How many there are who do not wake up until it is too late. The doctor places his hand on the pulse—110, 90, 80, 70, 60, 50, then he is gone. "Where am I?" he cries. He sees no marks on which to set sails. Those who rattled the sails are frozen. The compass needle goes round and round in search of the North star. The "white" commands here has an iron mark, and he curses the sea, the vessel, the crew. His name is Despair. The harpoon is fast and the summer is ended, and the boat is not saved.—Metropolitan Register.