

SPECIAL  
ARTICLES

## Our Contributors

BOOK  
REVIEWSTHE ELDER: HIS CHARACTER  
AND WORK.

By A. H. Armstrong, London.

The eldership is the most honorable and important office in the Presbyterian Church. It is divided into two sections, commonly known as teaching elders and ruling elders. The teaching elder is a ruling elder, though the ruling elder cannot lay claim to be a teaching elder. The ordination of both is the same; both being spiritual officers, and both attending to the higher welfare of the members of the church. There is, however, some slight superiority in favor of the minister. The ruling elder "rules well," like the minister, "is worthy of double honor," but Peter says, "especially" they who labor in word and doctrine. Efficiency of service and "teaching" being otherwise on the same footing. Character counts in this high office. In the New Testament the name or title of elder has a somewhat broad meaning; it embraces apostles, bishops, pastors and teachers, and any others who perform spiritual functions.

The Apostle Peter lays claim to being an elder. In his first epistle he says (v. 1), "Who also am an elder."

Both branches of the Church of Christ—the Jewish and the Apostolic—have had their elderships, and we must go back into ancient times, some three or four thousand years, to arrive at the origin of the office. The earliest reference to the "elders of the congregation" being in Leviticus, iv., 15, so the office must be of fairly good antiquity. But this paper has nothing to do with anti-Christian times, but with the church dating from the era of the apostles.

Christ in the strict sense of the term did not establish a church organization. This was left to his first disciples, who are called apostles, and in their early missionary efforts to evangelize the nations, we find that where converts were made a church was formed and elders were ordained.

The first reference to Christian elders is in the Acts of the Apostles, xi., 30, and it is gratifying to know that this reference has to do with an act of benevolence, to provide assistance for the followers of Christ who were in distress through "great dearth." "The disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea, which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul."

My subject is large, my space limited, so I must of necessity only give the barest outline. The subject upon which I am requested to write is: "The Character and Work of the Presbyterian Elder."

Elders should be men of prayer and piety, filled with the spirit of God, and walking in the footsteps of Christ. They should be men of sound wisdom, discretion and good judgment; able, willing and ready at all times to help the minister and advise and control the congregation for spiritual edification, and as far as prudence would suggest also be guides in temporal matters. A minister's duties are twofold, teaching or preaching, and pastoral. To neglect either would be a dereliction of duty, and would tend to weaken his influence and lose the respect of his flock. The elders should be watchmen, overseers of the church, in touch with both pastor and people, and reporters of cases of sickness, poverty and trouble, so that the pastor could by prompt visitation be a source of comfort and consolation to those in any kind of distress.

Having such a high, holy and responsible position, what manner of man should

the elder be? A man who "takes head" unto himself, so that his example and his precept should harmonize; his conduct should be transparent and not open to doubt or suspicion. He should have a good supply of common sense and have scriptural precepts as the basis of his conversation; otherwise he would not be in a position to "reprove, rebuke and exhort," which form an important part in the work of an elder. Who is sufficient for these things? None but those who are led by the spirit of God, and who are under his power, guidance and direction.

The Apostle Peter says: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." So that if the work of an elder is one of labor it is also one of reward.

Elders are selected because of Christian character. Social status, financial position, education or any kind of worldly distinction should not be considered—no, not even mentioned. "For by faith the elders receive a good report."—Hebrews xi., 2.

To summarize his work, the elder should be prayerful, pious, pure in life, sound in doctrine, should let his conversation be such as becometh the Gospel of Christ. He should be sympathetic in his nature, kind and gentle in his manner, not affected unduly by discouragements and the indifference of those who should be energetic in the interests of the church. He should be instant in season and out of season, using his best efforts to promote sociability and friendliness among the people, being himself friendly towards all. He should become acquainted with all the families of the congregation, especially those of his own district or parish, and in no case should the children be overlooked, and he should even be a constant attendant upon the sick, helpless and poor.

As a ruler he should be wise with the wisdom that cometh from above; discreet, as he has sometimes to discipline the thoughtless and erring. His manner should be simple, as his duty is to feed and influence the lambs of the flock. He should be humble in his character, after the pattern of his Master; in short, be modelled like the Saviour, who went about doing good, and in all things never forget that he is accountable for his conduct; by so doing he will gain the confidence, esteem and love of those he seeks to serve.

An elder is not altogether without safeguards against unfriendly men. The church is warned: "Against an elder receive not an accusation but before two or three witnesses."

Elders are also not open to rebuke: "Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father," though in case of flagrant sin a rebuke may be administered, and that as a warning to others. "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear."

An elder is a bishop, and Paul, in counselling Timothy on what a bishop should be, talks him in 1 Timothy, chapter iii., verses 1 to 7, which you should read.

Elders or bishops, have not only a status in the Church of Christ on earth, but they take a prominent place in the everlasting home of the saints. Revelations iv., 4: "And round about the throne

were four and twenty seats, and upon the seats were four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment, and they had on their heads crowns of gold."

## SUNDAY AT COBALT.

"B. R.", the clever correspondent of the Toronto News, writes on the religious conditions at Cobalt as follows:

But to return to Cobalt on Sunday. There are already three denominations installed in the town and worshipping in their own buildings. The Episcopalians are already represented here, but they meet, for the time being, in the schoolhouse. The denominations more favored for the moment are the Presbyterians, the Methodists and the Roman Catholics. The Presbyterian clergyman, a young graduate of Queen's University, has possibly caught the spirit of the town more rapidly than have the others, for he purposes constituting himself a Salvation Army, and will shortly commence open-air services to meet the needs of those who either will not go, or do not desire to go, to church.

This new innovation should be productive of much good in a community that is still in its formative stage. All day long, and especially during the hours of the afternoon, large crowds of men congregate on the public square, just as they used to meet in Queen's Park on Sundays, in the old days, to listen to religious exhortations, or to indulge in Socialistic controversies. Nor have these men any more objectionable qualities than had their prototypes in Toronto. They idle about, looking for something of interest in surroundings that—the activities of week-day life entirely gone—are about as prosaic as could well be conceived. There is a certain glamor in the strange attire, and in the moving panorama of a mining camp, but even these qualities are apt to pall full soon upon those who speedily come to recognize in them a stated outlook.

Certain it is that since its establishment Cobalt has succeeded in maintaining a quiet Sabbath. Having abandoned the artificial life of the larger centers, the people here have also, in a great measure, turned their backs upon the various little vices they may formerly have entertained. Gone all thought of restless disputation; they are content to live in amity with their fellows. On every hand are heard expressions of surprise that Sunday in such a new community should be decently observed. Those who have seen many of the old mining camps say that never was one established that is quieter or more orderly than the Cobalt of the present.

## COBALT.

The eyes of the world are now turned towards Ontario where the newest silver discoveries are creating the maddest excitement in the whole history of North America.

Cobalt is the centre of a greater mining boom than was Dawson City in its palmiest days. Instead of the hard trails and strenuous effort that were necessary to reach the Klondyke, the way to Cobalt is easy and can be reached direct in a Pullman sleeping car. The Grand Trunk Railway System will carry you there with all the comforts of modern travel.

A postal card to the following address will bring you a comprehensive and complete illustrated description of the new Eldorado with maps and all information. J. Quinlan, District Passenger Agent, Bonaventure Station, Montreal.