

countable to men and to God for the way in which we fill this office; for our own sake, for the sake of the church, and especially for Christ's sake we must be faithful.

On the Eldership rests to a very large extent the responsibility of keeping the church pure. The Session admits members to the communion of the visible church; and thus the character of the communion roll depends on the vigilance and wisdom of the Elders. It is the Session's work to administer discipline, to expel the contumacious, to vindicate the innocent, and keep careful watch over all. The regulation of public worship rests with the Session. The success of Sabbath Schools and of Prayer Meetings depends on the hearty and vigorous co-operation of the Elders. There is no department of church work in which they may not make themselves eminently useful.

The sick, the dying, and those who mourn the dead have special claims on the Eldership. "Is any sick among you?—let him call for the Elders of the church, and let them pray over him." The chief shepherd of the sheep has set an example of tenderness and care for the widow, the fatherless, the stranger and the poor.

The Ruling Elder must be a blameless, circumspect and attentive man, who watches carefully over his charge; one who is prompt to embrace opportunities of usefulness; "moderate in all his desires and indulgences; meek, kind and prudent towards all men; given to hospitality especially towards the poor; not greedy of filthy lucre; not quarrelsome; resigned, peaceable, forgiving." "The folly, ostentation, conformity to the world, extravagance and ungodliness of an Elder's family will inevitable and greatly lessen his influence and prevent his usefulness as well as ruin his comfort."—*Scott*.

Elders should be examples of pliant temper "so far as their own interests and humours are concerned, but firm in the cause of God; their children should be patterns of good conduct and the blessed results of faithful training."

Throughout every period of her history, the Presbyterian Church has derived much benefit from her Eldership. What is true

of the past holds true of our own time. In the ranks of the Eldership we find eminent Statesmen, Lawyers, Judges, Lords, Earls, and merchant princes, side by side with humble plowmen and artisans,—love to Christ and to men being the all-sufficient bond of union between the high and the lowly. What do not the Free Presbyterian Churches of England, Scotland and Ireland owe to the zeal, and liberality, and public spirit of their Ruling Elders! Recently, when the Irish Presbyterian Church had to confront the crisis of her history, when she had to determine whether she was to be a living and expansive church, or a dwarfed and dying sect; the men who struck the keynote of the noble music to which she is now marching to glory, and honour, and immortality, were her Ruling Elders.—Bishop Burnet tells us that in Queen Elizabeth's day it was proposed by the truly Protestant party in the Church of England to introduce the Eldership, but the Queen and Burleigh disliked the proposal, seeing danger in it to the royal prerogative "since if the concerns of religion came into popular hands, there would be a power set up distinct from the Queen's, over which she could have no authority." In the rejection of this proposal may we not read much that is dark and wild and hopelessly errant in the story of the Anglican Establishment?

The Elders or Presbyters are all, as we believe, regarded in Scripture as one class of office-bearers; and our church rightly holds the "parity of Presbyters" as a fundamental principle. Yet we must recognize differences of function according to the gifts and calling of the Head of the Church. Some are distinctively Preaching Elders; others are Ruling Elders. But the Elder who is a Pastor, is also a *Ruling Elder*. He combines the two functions. According to Scripture teaching as well as analogy we hold that the *Ruling Elder*, while his distinctive function is to rule, should also be a *teaching Elder* according to his ability whenever opportunity offers, whenever the necessities of the people demand it.

When a congregation is without a Pastor