

Nor would the labors of a territorial eldership be confined to the actual members of the church, or congregation. Christian love is aggressive in its operations. Those in whose heart it dwells, would try to persuade the aliens from the common-wealth of Israel to come nigh. The elder would be prompt to give the affectionate invitation in his domestic visits—"come with us and we will do thee good;" and thus the church would spread a wider wing and embrace under her shelter a greater multitude of those for whom Christ died. This scheme possesses not merely the merit of being framed on a scriptural model; it is adapted to the wants and necessities of a world lying in wickedness, and blessed of God, it is an instrument framed for its regeneration.

5. This parochial episcopacy has the merit of possessing "a living centre as the personal object of reverence and love." The pastor is the object of the people's choice, and therefore of their confidence and esteem; the elders, moreover, have been invested with their office by popular concurrence, and it may therefore be presumed that the church will be disposed to esteem them highly in love for their work's sake. The faithful and unwearied labours of these office bearers will tend to strengthen those bonds of attachment by which the people and their elders were originally united. But chiefly he that labours in the word and doctrine will attract their confidence and love. His time, his talents, his whole life, are devoted to their spiritual edification. "He calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out; and they know his voice." He hath brought many of them back from their wanderings in the wilderness into the fold. By his pulpit ministrations they have been often enlightened and comforted. He blessed their nuptial union; he consecrated their children at the baptismal fount unto God; he spoke soothing words to them in the season of distress, and commended the departing spirits of some of the dearest of their kindred, into the hands of a merciful Creator. His abilities, his faithfulness, his piety, have secured him a proper influence among his people, and in the labors of Christian benevolence they are prompt to obey his call. Some imperfections may be found in the pastor, and some in the flock, counteracting these happy influences, (for is it not so in all things human?) yet, in despite of this, the faithful pastor will be an object of the purest affections, of those whom he is blessed to lead onward in the way of the Lord.

4. Our system "admits the laity to a just and apostolic place in the management and administration of the church." In temporal things the power belongs to the whole community that provides

them, and therefore the election of the Deacons, to whom this business is entrusted, appertains to the whole community. Nor is the power of the laity restricted to temporal things. The session, to which belongs the spiritual discipline of the congregation, consists wholly of laymen, with the exception of its moderator, who in all cases of division has only a casting vote. We have here therefore an effectual barrier against clerical tyranny or prejudice, while the right of judging in such cases as come under the consideration of spiritual rulers is vested in men, who may be thought to have fuller knowledge of all those circumstances which ought to be taken into account in judging of the actions and characters of their brethren moving for the most part in the same sphere with themselves. The christian community will submit with greater readiness to the power of discipline placed in such hands; and its influence upon the order and purity of the church will be more effective and salutary. "If the maintenance of discipline all be important to the interests of true religion, it is a matter of no less importance that it be conducted with mildness, prudence and wisdom. Rashness, precipitancy, undue severity, malice, partiality, popular fury, and attempting to enforce rules which Christ never gave, are among the many evils which have too often marked the dispensation of authority in the church, and not unfrequently defeated the great purpose of discipline. To conduct it aright, is undoubtedly one of the most delicate and arduous parts of ecclesiastical administration: requiring all the piety, judgment, patience, gentleness, maturity of counsel, and prayerfulness which can be brought to bear upon the subject. Now the question is, by whom shall all these weighty and indispensable services be performed? will any say that it is the duty of the Pastor of each church to perform all? It is impossible. He cannot be every where and know every thing. He cannot perform what is expected of him, and at the same time so watch over his whole flock, as to fulfil every duty which the interest of the church demands. But even if it were reasonable or possible, that a Pastor should alone perform all these duties, ought he to be willing to undertake them; or ought the church to be willing to commit them to him alone? We know that ministers are subject to the same frailties and imperfections with other men. We know, too, that a love of preeminence and power is not only natural to them in common with others: but that this principle, very early after the days of the apostles, began to manifest itself as the reigning sin of ecclesiastics, and produced, first prelacy, and afterwards Popery, which has so long and so ignobly enslaved the Church of Christ. Does not