

ca 6-1144

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

SECOND GENERAL COUNCIL

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN ALLIANCE,

CONVENED AT PHILADELPHIA, SEPTEMBER, 1880.

PRINTED BY DIRECTION OF THE COUNCIL.

EDITED BY

JOHN B. DALES, D.D., AND R. M. PATTERSON, D.D.

J. C. McCURDY & CO.
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

PHILADELPHIA:
PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL COMPANY,
AND
J. C. McCURDY & CO.,
PHILADELPHIA, PA.,
CINCINNATI, O., CHICAGO, ILL., AND ST. LOUIS, MO.

BX
8907
A6A3
605389
1880

Copyright by
J. ELLIOTT CONDUCT.
1880.

~~~~~  
FERGUSON BROS. & CO.,  
PRINTERS AND ELECTROTYPERS,  
PHILADELPHIA.  
~~~~~

UV

scribed forms may become quite general. Such a call, should it seek by simple means to express and promote union in worship, might well be heard with attention, and answered by compliance. But should the proposed liturgy be so elaborate, as at all to diminish the relative importance now given to the announcement and exposition of *the truth*, from the central pulpit, in the studied discourse, by the ordained preacher, I trust that it will never become either the law or the custom of the Church. Above all, should the call spring out of, or seek to satisfy, a *prevalent æsthetic impulse*, I pray that it may be successfully resisted. For artistic worship is "poisonous honey" to Christians still weak and sick with sin. Only when, at the consummation of all things, the living Church shall itself be without "spot or wrinkle," may the outward temple safely be adorned with consummate beauty; as only then the voices of the people of God can unite in the consummate and immortal liturgy.

It was announced that the HON. S. M. BRECKINRIDGE, of St. Louis, who was on the programme to read a paper on "Ruling Elders," was unable to be present.

The REV. C. H. READ, D. D., of Richmond, Va., then read the following paper:

RULING ELDERS.

The office of Ruling Elders in the churches of Jesus Christ is the topic announced for consideration at this stage in the proceedings of this Council.

Condensation and brevity—as much as is consistent with *the topic in hand*—will need no apology.

A class of persons, known as "Ruling Elders," invested with *some kind of authority*, and exercising *some kind of power*, is constantly recognized in the *Holy Scriptures*, through all the ages, since the organization of the Church of God in the family of Abraham.

The precise mode of their appointment, and the precise nature and exercise of their official power, *from the beginning*, is not distinctly set forth; but *the office itself* is often and very clearly recognized.

An Eldership comes, at first, faintly into view in the divine records; then more and more distinctly it takes on dignity and power as these records advance, until we find Elders associated with almost every important act of government, a council, a sanhedrim, composed of Elders chosen from the different tribes of Israel; and then, a body of men ordained to office in all the regularly organized churches of Jesus Christ. Scriptural and patristic proofs to these points can hardly be necessary in this immediate presence; but such proof may be of use when the utterances of this Council may come to be reported throughout the land and world.

First, then, and always first in all matters of Christian faith and order, we have to do with the testimony of the word of God.

Passing by earlier references in the Scriptures to Elders (the purpose being to give *specimen texts*, rather than to exhaust the testimony), we find in Leviticus iv. 13, and onward, as follows: "If the whole congregation of Israel sin through ignorance, and the thing be hid from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done somewhat against any of the commandments of the Lord, concerning things which should not be done, and are guilty; when the sin, which they have sinned against it, is known, then the congregation shall offer a young bullock for the sin, and shall bring him before the tabernacle of the congregation.

"And the Elders of the congregation shall lay their hands upon the head of the bullock before the Lord; and the bullock shall be killed before the Lord, and the priest that is anointed shall bring of the bullock's blood to the tabernacle of the congregation," etc., etc.

The office of the Elders of the congregation, as here brought into view, while it was in some respects subordinate to that of "*the priest*," *ordained as such*, was a prominent and important one: they represented the people, officially: they placed *their hands* upon the head of the bullock about to be slain, as if by way of representation and confession of the public sin; and then the *priest proper* offered the blood of the slain animal before the Lord. Of course none but *duly selected and authorized persons* could or would have performed this most solemn office; and it is reasonable to assume that these Elders of the congregation of Israel had been duly chosen and invested with *this solemn, public, and representative office*. The function of this office before God, and in behalf of the people, implies a dignity and solemnity of investiture.

In Numbers xi. 16, and onward, we meet with the specified number of seventy Elders, recognized by God himself as men in official station in Israel, thus: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the Elders of Israel, *whom thou knowest to be the Elders of the people and officers over them*, and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. And I will come down and talk with thee there; and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee and will put it upon them; and *they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone.*"

In the 24th and 25th verses the record proceeds thus: "And Moses went out" (that is, from the immediate presence of the Lord), "and told the people the words of the Lord, and gathered the seventy men of the Elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle." "And the Lord came down in a cloud and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him and gave it to the seventy Elders; and it came to pass that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied and did not cease." It is observable that here the Lord himself speaks of *the official character* of the Elders of the people of

Israel as men whom Moses knew to be "*the Elders of the people and officers over them.*" Thus, while we may not discover any original positive command or formula of ordination for Elders in the Old Testament, yet, here, we have *the office and the men* particularly mentioned. In Deut. xxv. 7-9, we find the accredited Elders of Israel sitting in the gate of the city and adjudicating an important case of morals which was referred to them, and uniting in a decision in the premises.

In Deut. xxix. 10, we find the people of Israel gathered before the Lord, to enter into a solemn covenant, and the Elders are there in prominent place; thus, in the words of Moses, "Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord, your God; your captains of your tribes, your Elders and your officers, . . . that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day." Again, in Deut. xxxi. 28, Moses, conscious that his end on earth was near at hand, and inspired of God to utter solemn counsels to the people of Israel, issued the call, "Gather unto me all the Elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them."

When Samuel, the prophet, was sent of God to Bethlehem to anoint a king in place of Saul, the Elders of the town trembled at his approach, and went forth to meet him, and to inquire his errand (1 Sam. xvi. 4). King David, after a successful battle with the Amalekites, sent the spoils of victory to the Elders of Judah. (1 Sam. xxx. 6.)

In 1 Kings xxv. 7, 8, we find the king of Israel consulting with the Elders upon a question of State policy, and following their advice in the premises. In 2 Kings vi. 32, we find the prophet Elisha seated with the Elders in consultation with them. In Ezra x. 8, we find the Elders consulting with the princes of Judah, in matters of highest importance. In the book of Ezekiel viii. 1, we find the prophet Ezekiel seated in his own house, and the Elders of Judah gathered to him. In Joel i. 14, in the arrangements for a solemn public fast, the Elders are mentioned as gathered, and taking charge of the proceedings.

Not to extend citations of this sort from the Old Testament Scriptures, it is manifest that an order of men known as Elders of the congregation of Israel, had existed from the organization of the Church of God in its Mosaic economy and administration. The form of their appointment is not distinctly set forth; but that they did not assume to themselves this distinction, and arrogate this office, its honors and responsibilities, is obvious.

The number of "seventy elders," as expressly mentioned, shows that it must have been by some rule inclusive and exclusive that they were separated and appointed to the office, and that they were so invested with public authority as to command respect. Their advisory counsel was sought and respected by prophets, princes and kings,

and had weight in matters of highest importance to the Church and State in the then mixed form of Church and State government.

Dr. Witherspoon, in a valuable tract entitled "An Appeal to the Baptized Children of the Church (issued by the Presbyterian Committee of Publication, Richmond), has the following paragraphs in the line of this argument, which are worthy of insertion: "We hear but little of these Elders during the lifetime of Abraham, as we hear but little of the constitution of the Church; but afterward they appear as distinctly recognized officers of the house of God. Thus when Moses was sent as the deliverer of God's people from the bondage of Egypt, he was directed (Ex. iii. 16) to go and gather the Elders of Israel together, and deliver his message to them as the divinely appointed rulers of the congregation. When he was sent to demand of Pharaoh the release of the children of Israel, he was instructed to take with him (Ex. iii. 18) the Elders of Israel, as the representatives of the chosen people. When in the wilderness, Moses received the law from the hands of Jehovah on Mount Sinai, he delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, and to the Elders (Deut. iii. 9), as the spiritual rulers of God's people. And so in every instance in which any authority is exercised, or any discipline administered, we find these Elders referred to as the rulers in the Church. They are sometimes called 'the Elders,' sometimes 'the Elders of Israel,' sometimes 'the Elders of the people;' but they appear on every page of the history of the Jewish Church, as its divinely appointed and recognized rulers. . . . It is sometimes asserted that these Elders were only civil rulers, and not ecclesiastical; that they were officers of the State, and not of the Church; that in the Jewish commonwealth the priests had the exclusive authority in spiritual matters, and the Elders in secular matters. But so far is this from being the case, that, as we shall soon see, the priests themselves ruled not as priests, but as Elders; and in every act of government were associated with 'the Elders of the people,' while the Council of the Seventy, or the *Sanhedrim*, as it was afterwards called, was composed entirely of Elders chosen from the different tribes of Israel.

"It is true," continues Dr. Witherspoon, "that these Elders had many civil duties to perform, because at that time the Church and State were temporarily united. But their functions as civil officers, resulting from this temporary connection, were only incidental and temporary. Their highest functions were spiritual. They were eminently ecclesiastical rulers."

The Synagogue System.—From the differences of opinion among the early writers and learned men, there may be reasonable doubts as to the exact time when the synagogue system of order and worship was established among the Jews; but that it existed at the time of our Lord's advent, and had then been in existence for a considerable time, admits of no reasonable doubt.

Dr. Miller—of venerable memory, aforesaid Professor of Church History at Princeton—in his comprehensive "Essay on the Warrant,

Nature, and Duties of the Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church," has the following paragraph: "Whatever might have been its origin" (that is, of the synagogue), "nothing can be more certain than that, from the earliest notices we have of the institution, and through its whole history, its leading officers consisted of a bench of Elders, who were appointed to bear rule in the congregation; who formed a kind of consistory or ecclesiastical judicatory, to receive applicants for admission into the Church; to watch over the people, as well in reference to their morals, as their obedience to ceremonial and ecclesiastical order; to administer discipline when necessary; and, in short, as the representatives of the Church or congregation, to act in their name and behalf; to 'bind' and 'loose;' and to see that everything was 'done decently and in order.'"

Dr. Miller adds: "The number of the Elders in each synagogue^c was not governed by any absolute rule. In large cities, according to certain Jewish authorities, the number was frequently very large. But even in the smallest synagogues, we are assured that there were never less than three, that the judicatory might never be equally divided."

Such were the arrangements for maintaining purity and order in the synagogues, or parish churches, of the old economy, anterior to the advent of the Messiah.

"It would seem to be impossible for any one to contemplate this statement, so amply supported by all sound authority, without recognizing a striking likeness to the arrangements afterwards adopted in the New Testament Church."

To the proof and elucidation of this likeness, the testimony of Bishop Burnet has been cited (see "Observations on the First and Second Canons," Glasgow edition, 1673, pp. 82-85), as follows: "Among the Jews," says Bishop Burnet, "he who was the chief of the synagogue was called *Chazan Hakeneseth*, that is, the Bishop of the congregation, and *Sheliach Tsibbor*, the angel of the Church. And the Christian Church being modelled as near the form of the synagogue as could be, as they retained many of the rites, so the form of their government was continued, and the names remained the same." And, again, "In the synagogues there was, first, one that was called the Bishop of the congregation; next, the three orderers and judges of everything about the synagogue, who were called *Tsekenim*, and by the Greeks, *Presbuteroi*, or *Gerontes*. These ordered and determined everything that concerned the synagogue or the persons in it. Next to them were the three *Parnassim*, or deacons, whose charge was to gather the collections of the rich and distribute them to the poor.

"The term Elder was generally given to all their judges, but chiefly to those of the great Sanhedrim: so we have it in Matt. xvi. 21; Mark viii. 31; xiv. 43; and xv. 1; and in Acts xxviii. 14-16."

Bishop Burnet sums up the matter thus: "From all which it seems well grounded and rational to assume that the first constitution of the Christian Church was taken from the model of the synagogue, in

which these Elders were separated, for the discharge of their employments, by the imposition of hands, as all Jewish writers do clearly testify."

To the same point, substantially, Dr. Lightfoot—an Episcopal divine, eminent for his oriental and rabbinical learning—bears testimony as follows (see Lightfoot's works, vol. 1, p. 308; vol. 2, pp. 138 and 755): "The service and worship of the temple being abolished, as being ceremonial, God transplanted the worship and public adoration of God used in the synagogues, which were moral, into the Christian Church; namely, the public ministry, public prayers, reading God's word, and preaching, etc. Hence, the names of the ministers of the gospel were the very same—the angel of the Church, and the Bishop, which belonged to the ministers in the synagogues. There was in every Synagogue a bench of three. This bench consisted of three Elders, rightly and by imposition of hands preferred to the eldership. There were also three deacons, or almoners, on which was the care of the poor."

The New Testament Church, as to its principal features, was not after the pattern of the Temple, but after the model of the Jewish Synagogue. This type and formation of the New Testament or apostolic Church, would seem to be patent to every attentive reader of the gospel writings and the Epistles.

It would seem to be a fact hardly open to doubt, that the office of Ruling Elder is a prominent feature in the New Testament Christian Church; and (as Dr. Miller has it) "that it occupied, in substance, the same place in the days of the apostles, it now occupies in our truly primitive and scriptural Church." Augustus Neander, for thirty-eight years Professor in the University of Berlin, a profound scholar, whose works are widely and highly esteemed by students of ecclesiastical history; of Jewish lineage—a Lutheran minister, thoroughly acquainted with Christian history, and with no sectarian bias in favor of distinctive Presbyterianism—having shown that "the government of the primitive Church was not monarchical or prelatical, but dictated throughout by a spirit of mutual love, counsel, and prayer," expresses himself thus: "We may suppose that when anything could be found in the way of Church forms, which was consistent with this spirit, it would be willingly appropriated by the Christian community. Now there happened to be in the Jewish synagogue a system of government of this nature; not monarchical but rather aristocratical,—or *a government of the most venerable and excellent.*

"A council of *Elders, Presbuteroi*, conducted all the affairs of that body. It seemed most natural that Christianity, developing itself from the Jewish religion, should take this form of government. This form must also have appeared natural and appropriate to the Roman citizens, since their nation had, from the earliest times, been to some extent under the control of a *Senate*, composed of *Senators* or *Elders*. Where the Church was placed under a council of Elders, they did not always happen to be the oldest in reference to years; but the term expres-

sive of age here was, as in the Latin, *Senatus*, and in the Greek *Gerousia*, expressive of worth or merit. Besides the common name of these overseers of the Church, to wit, *Presbyteroi*, there were many other names given, according to the peculiar situation occupied by the individual, or rather his particular field of labor, as *poimenes*, shepherds; *эгουменоι*, leaders; *προεσβιτες των αδελφων*, rulers of the brethren; and *Episcopoi*, overseers." (See Kirchengeschichte, vol. I, p. 283-285.)

Continuing to use freely the published thoughts and language of others, when they are deemed pertinent and better than my own,—the following extracts from the writings of Archbishop Whately, of Dublin, eminent for learning, integrity, and piety, are in point, and worthy of reproduction. (See his work, "The Kingdom of Christ Delineated;" edition of Carter & Brothers, New York, 1864, p. 29.) "It appears highly probable—I might say morally certain—that wherever a Jewish synagogue existed, that was brought, the whole or the chief part of it, to embrace the gospel, the apostles did not there so much form a Christian Church (or congregation, *ecclesia*), as make an existing congregation Christian, by introducing the Christian sacraments and worship, and establishing whatever regulations were necessary for the newly adopted faith, leaving the machinery, if I may so speak, of government unchanged; the rulers of synagogues, elders, and other officers, whether spiritual, or ecclesiastical, or both, being already provided in the existing constitutions. . . . It is likely that several of the earliest Christian Churches did originate in this way; that is, that they were *converted synagogues*, which became Christian Churches as soon as the members, or the main part of the members, acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah. . . . And when they founded a Church in any of those cities in which (and such were probably a very large majority) there was no Jewish synagogue that received the gospel, it is likely that they would conform, in a great measure, to the same model."

The development of the Jewish synagogue principles, and the formation of the primitive Christian Churches having been thus summarily sketched, it is now in point to consider—

The Direct Testimony of the New Testament Writings Respecting the Office and Duties of Ruling Elders in the Christian Church.—Consulting the New Testament, we first find ample corroboration of the points submitted, to wit: the existence of an order of men, acknowledged repeatedly as Elders among the Jews in their various cities and synagogues, ordering and judging in civil and ecclesiastical affairs. The testimony bearing upon these points is so abundant and clear, that it is quite unnecessary to cite proof-texts.

Dr. Witherspoon has fairly and clearly stated the case thus: "When our Saviour appeared, he found in every city of the Jews a synagogue with its bench of Elders, its ordinances of worship, and its provisions for the poor, as we have them in our congregations at the present day. When he went from city to city, he entered into their synagogues on the Sabbath day, and taught the people. He instructed

his disciples to submit questions of discipline to the Church—that is, to those officers who were its representatives. It is true that these Church sessions, if I may so call them, did not recognize, in most instances, the authority of our Saviour—‘He came to his own, and his own received him not.’ The Elders joined with the Scribes and the Priests in putting him to death. But, after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, there were many of these Jewish congregations in which great numbers were converted to Christianity, so that the congregation was, in faith, no longer Jewish but Christian. The Elders of the Synagogue became the Elders of the Christian Church.”

In the missionary journeyings and labors of the Apostles for the extension of the Church of Christ in its New Testament form—as they went everywhere preaching the gospel of the kingdom and founding churches—they “ordained them Elders in every church” (Acts xiv. 23).

When a contribution was made by the disciples for the relief of their brethren in Judea, in view of a severe drought (as in Acts xi. 30), this charity was “sent to the Elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.”

When Paul and Barnabas found hindrance in their missionary work from Judaizing teachers troubling the minds of Gentile converts about external rites, such as circumcision and the like, it was “determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain others of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the Apostles and Elders about this question.” “When they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the Church, and of the Apostles, and Elders,” etc.

And when these questions came to be entertained in solemn council, the record is, that “the Apostles and Elders came together for to consider of this matter.” And in answer to this formal reference and appeal for a decision in so important a case, the record runs thus: “Then pleased it the Apostles and Elders with the whole Church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas. . . . And they wrote letters by them after this manner: The Apostles, and Elders, and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles, in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia,” etc. (Acts xv. 4-26).

When Paul and Timotheus “went through the Churches” in missionary visitation, “they delivered them the decrees that were ordained of the Apostles and Elders which were at Jerusalem; and so were the Churches established in the faith” (Acts xvi. 4, 5).

Again, we find Paul (accompanied on a missionary visitation by Sopater, Aristarchus, Gaius, Timotheus, Tychicus, and Trophimus) sending from Miletus to Ephesus, and calling “the Elders of the Church” to meet him and his companions, when he committed to these Elders, with solemnity, the care of the flock, thus: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God,

which he hath purchased with his own blood." This charge, be it observed, is committed to "the Elders of the Church," solemnly convened for the purpose (Acts xx. 17 and onward).

In 1 Timothy v. 7—in giving rules to promote the order, purity, and peace of the Churches—the apostle wrote thus: "Let the Elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in word and doctrine." The term "Elders" is here used, first, in a general sense and application, denoting those "that rule well;" and, second, in a special sense, as applied to those who not only "rule well," but who also "labor in word and doctrine."

Dr. Miller (before referred to) furnishes the following lucid statement and exposition: "The advocates of the office of Ruling Elder do not contend or believe that the function of ruling is confined to this class of officers. On the contrary, they suppose and teach that one class of Elders both rule and teach; while the other class rule only. Both, according to the doctrine of the Presbyterian Church, are *proestotes*; but one only 'labor in word and doctrine.' When, therefore, cases are found in the early records of the Church in which the presiding elder, or pastor, is styled *proestōa*, the fact is in perfect harmony with the usual argument from 1 Tim. v. 17; the import of which we maintain to be this: Let all the Elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honor, especially those of their number who, besides ruling—besides acting as *proestotes*—in common with the others, also labor in word and doctrine."

In his letter to Titus (i. 5 and onward,) Paul wrote thus: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain Elders in every city, as I had appointed thee;" and then follow the specifications of the proper qualifications of these Elders thus to be ordained: "For a Bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate, holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."

In his first epistle, Peter (addressing the Churches in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia) wrote as follows: "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 ensamples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

In Romans xii. 6-8, we find as follows: "Having then gifts, differing according to the grace given to us; whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplic-

ity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness." Again, in 1 Cor. xii. 28, thus: "God hath set some in the Church, first Apostles, secondarily Prophets, thirdly Teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments," etc. Obviously (as has been said), "in both of these passages there is a reference to the different offices and gifts bestowed on the Church by her divine King and Head," and, "in both of them, there is a plain designation of an office for ruling or government, distinct from that of teaching; and in both, also, this office evidently has a place assigned to it below that of pastors and teachers.

"Now this office, by whatever name it may be called, is substantially the same with that which Presbyterians distinguish by the title Ruling Elder."

Peter Martyr—an Italian Reformer of acknowledged ability—in his notes on 1 Cor. xii. 28, uses the following language: "Government: those who are honored with this function are such as were fitted for the work of government, and who knew how to conduct everything relating to discipline, righteously and prudently.

"For the Church of Christ had its government. And because a single pastor was not able to accomplish everything himself, there was joined with him, in the ancient Church, certain Elders, chosen from among the people, well informed and skilled in spiritual things, who formed a kind of parochial senate. These, with the pastor, deliberated on every great matter relating to the care and edification of the Church."

To the same effect, substantially, is the testimony of Clemens Romanus, and of Ignatius, both of whom lived towards the close of the first century of the Christian era.

Passing by numerous patristic authorities, bearing with cumulative force in support of these views concerning Ruling Elders in the primitive Christian Church—citations of whose words may be regarded as unnecessary, and might be tedious—it seems to be in place to speak of the eminent suitableness and value of such an office and order of men in the Christian Church.

The maintenance of proper order and discipline is all-important to the peace and purity of the Churches, and the honor of religion. Such order and discipline must evidently be conducted with wisdom, gentleness, skill and firmness. Haste, severity and partiality, in enforcing the very best principles, would defeat the ends of spiritual discipline. To *no one man* can the work of public instruction and exhortation, the work of visitation, inspection, counsel, warning and discipline be committed, in a church of average size, in town or country. It is simply an impossibility. And, if it were possible, it would not be desirable for *any one person*, unless infallibly inspired of God, and with divine credentials to this effect, to occupy such a position. Every pastor needs a bench of intelligent, devout, exemplary Elders.

The case has been well and fairly stated, thus: "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 pre-eminence and of power is not only natural to them in common with others, but that this principle, very early in 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. . . . Such a mode of conducting the government of the Church, to say nothing of its unscriptural character, is, in the highest degree, unreasonable and dangerous.

“It can hardly fail to exert an influence of the most injurious character, both on the clergy and laity. It tends to nurture, in the former, a spirit of selfishness, pride and ambition; and, instead of ministers of holiness, love and mercy, to transform them into ecclesiastical tyrants. While its tendency with regard to the latter (the laity) is, gradually, to beget in them a blind, implicit submission to ecclesiastical dominion.”

Thus much for the scriptural and historical warrant for the office of Ruling Elders in the Churches of Christ. And now, in conclusion, a few words upon the specific duties of this office.

The teaching of the supremely authoritative word of God is not vague and uncertain upon this important point.

The Preaching Elder is a *Ruler* in the Church of Christ; and, in addition thereto, he preaches the gospel and administers the sacraments; whilst the more special duty of the Ruling Elder, as such, is to share with the pastor (who labors in word and doctrine) in spiritual inspection and government. He is one who is called to “rule well,” while he is not called, especially, to “labor in word and doctrine.”

The pastors of churches, with the other elders, form a *Church Session*, a judicial body, “by which all the spiritual interests of the congregation are to be watched over, regulated and authoritatively determined.”

Thus, as in the “Form of Government” recognized and adopted by many of us, the church session is charged with maintaining the spiritual government of the congregation; for which purpose they have power to inquire into the knowledge and Christian conduct of the members of the church; to call before them offenders and witnesses, being members of their own congregation; and to introduce other witnesses when it may be necessary to bring the process to issue, and when they can be procured to attend; to receive members into the church, to admonish, to rebuke, to suspend, or exclude from the sacraments those who are found to deserve censure; to concert the best measures for promoting the spiritual interests of the congregation; and to appoint delegates to the higher judicatories of the Church.

If the Scriptures were silent upon this point, it would be obvious that persons called to *this office* of the Eldership should be spiritually minded, devout, exemplary men; governing their households faithfully

in the fear of God ; living without reproach ; and commending the gospel to a witnessing world, in their conduct and conversation.

The teaching of the Scriptures is very explicit on this point : it was to "*the Elders of the churches,*" whom Paul called to meet him at Miletus, that he said, "Take heed, therefore, to yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

And in his first letter to Timothy, giving counsel to bishops and deacons in the churches, the apostle wrote thus : "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant ; . . . one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God ? . . . Moreover he must have a good report of them that are without, lest he fall into reproach and the condemnation of the devil."

A Ruling Elder and a body of Ruling Elders, chosen and ordained solemnly to this office-work, sympathizing with *the pastor* in his work and with *the people* in their spiritual interests, cares and besetments, and, above all, with the honor of Christ's name and cause in the world, "such a body of men may, and ought to be, a power in the world." Indeed they may, and ought ! And when the Ruling Elders, in the great Presbyterian family, shall everywhere awake to their high trust, and shall be suitably recognized and supported by the members of the churches in their duties, then may we expect to see our beloved Church arise and shine in the light and power of God.

After devotional services the Council adjourned until the evening at 7.30 o'clock.

FRIDAY, *September 24th*, 1880.

The Council was called to order at 7½ o'clock P. M., by the Hon. William Strong, LL. D., an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, President for the session. Prayer was offered by the Rev. Dr. Prime.

The PRESIDENT.—There has been a change in the programme, and the Rev. Dr. McLeod's place at this stage will be taken by the Rev. Dr. Graham, of London.

The REV. PROF. WILLIAM GRAHAM, D. D., therefore, delivered the following address on

THE DIVINE IN MEN'S LIVES.

No one regrets more than I do that Dr. Ormiston or Dr. McLeod, according to your arrangements, does not now fill this place. I