

THE Union Seminary Magazine

VOL. XVIII

APRIL—MAY, 1907

No. 4

THE ELDER AND THE DEACON IN SCRIPTURE.

By REV. T. R. ENGLISH, D. D.

The most primitive form of government known to man is that in which authority is exercised by those superior in age and wisdom, "elders;" and the first who filled this office was Adam, the natural head and ruler of his house. Traces of this primitive custom are still to be seen in the names applied to rulers at the present time, such as, "senators," "alderman," etc.

The term "elder," as an official title, occurs first in Genesis 1. 7, where mention is made of "the elders of Egypt." At the time of the Exodus we find "the elders of Israel" exercising authority over that people, nor was the institution by any means confined to that people, as we find mention also of the elders of Moab and Midian, (Num. xxii. 4, 7). From this time on to the close of the Old Testament, we find constant mention made of these "elders of Israel," and, besides these, each tribe and city and village seems to have had its own elders, who exercised a local and subordinate authority.

These elders were primarily civil rulers, as is manifest by their functions, but they had also their religious and ecclesiastical functions as well. When the synagogue made its appearance after the Exile, we find that each synagogue had its bench of elders, and while they apparently still exercised certain civil functions, it is evident that they were primarily ecclesiastical rulers. They are referred to in the New Testament as "the rulers of the synagogue" (Mark v. 22; Acts xiii. 15; Cf. also, Luke vii. 41), and also as "the elders of the Jews" (Luke vii. 3). Apparently, there was one of their number who acted as pre-

THE LECTURES ON DIDACTIC AND POLEMIC THEOLOGY BY DR. C. R. VAUGHAN.

BY REV. THOMAS C. JOHNSON, D. D.

At the close of his service in the chair of Didactic and Polemic Theology in Union Seminary, quite a number of the members of his classes went to Dr. Vaughan with expressions of gratification at the help they had received at his hands, and requested that he would put the lectures which he had delivered to them in a shape which would make them of permanent value. The condition of his arm, long affected with Scrivener's paralysis, made it uncertain whether any such promise could be fulfilled; and led him to decline to pledge himself to meet their wish. But, after some months, under the initiative of his pastor, the Rev. Dr. Campbell, of Roanoke, members of his classes clubbed together means and made him a present of a good typewriter. Thereupon he set himself to the task of meeting the wishes of his old students with reference to the preparation of his lectures for publication. The result is seventy-four elaborately prepared lectures, ready for the printers' hand.

The author states the objects aimed at in this work as follows:

"It is not intended for a scientific treatise on theology. My career as a teacher of the science was altogether too short to admit of such a scheme. Ten years of continuous service would have been the minimum period for such an attempt. The present work is simply designed to put into another form the controlling effort of my oral teaching to my classes. Instead of a scientific treatise, this scheme of instruction simply designs to be a *vade mecum* to students of books of a higher "grade." It aims to simplify, as far as my abilities would permit, the meaning of Christian doctrine. My effort as a teacher was to take the least prepared of the students, along with the better prepared. Technicalities are discarded, after explaining them; and the most lucid explanations adopted, from the foundation facts to the ultimate logical development of the subject. The satisfaction of my students was too often and too earnestly expressed to leave

me in doubt of my accomplishment of my design. A subsidiary design, in case the providence of God should order its appearance, was to furnish the working pastor of the church with clear, untechnical statements which would effectively aid their weekly preparation for the pulpit, without the more or less embarrassing technical terminology. Such a plan of statement would also be of service to intelligent but busy laymen of all classes, teachers in Sunday-schools and Bible classes, and thoughtful readers, male and female. It is not intended to compete with the noble work upon which as a text-book it is based. While occasionally differing from conclusions and modes of exposition in the text, no presumptuous thought of competing with the best intellect of his day, backed by thirty years of the most energetic practical training in his own chosen walk, ever entered into the head of one who was distinguished by the invaluable friendship of that grand old Christian thinker. On the contrary, this exposition waits on the nobler treatise to assist in showing its great merits, and recommends the interminable use of it in our theological schools. Entering life together, with strong personal affections, the direction of the Divine Providence led one of the friends into high position, with its strong stimuli to exertion, and undisturbed by evil health: it led the other into the narrower and inconspicuous occupation of a pastoral ministry, with its incompetent opportunities for special development. . . . Rivalry in science under "such circumstances, was out of all question." This work aims at the humbler preparation already defined."

Notwithstanding the exceedingly modest view which Dr. Vaughan takes of himself in this exposition of his purposes in preparing these lectures, they are the work of no mere servile expositor of Dabney's views. That might safely be inferred from the well-known character of the expositor. He is endowed with an irrepressible independence of thought and appetency and will. He is a bold, a vigorous, an "acute, a profound, and a powerful thinker." He "had long ago matured independent convictions." The careful reading of many of these lectures shows, indeed, that Vaughan and Dabney belonged to the same school of moderate Calvinists; and that, where Dabney's material presentation of a subject fully satisfied Vaughan, the latter devoted himself to the task of popularizing, as he could, the views set forth by the

older man; but it shows also that Dr. Vaughan is a free and an independent disciple, one spurred by his own original genius to the presentation, in his own way and from his own point of view, of truths common to him and to the Master, on whose work he comments. Hence the reader of these lectures feels in many instances, as in the eighth lecture, on the *Basis of Knowledge*, and in the twentieth, on the *Decrees of God*, that he is being treated to a brilliant, able and independent discussion of the subject, rather than to a commentary on the powerful discussion by Dr. Dabney. The reader of these lectures sees, too, that Dr. Vaughan does not hesitate to present new views; nor, on occasion, to attempt decided improvements on those presented by the great man whom he so admired and loved. He presents these improvements with the most marked deference to the name and memory of Dr. Dabney; but presents them with the assured confidence, clear-cut definitions and statements, and persuasive arguments of the masterful thinker.

Several instances of improvement on Dr. Dabney's presentations might be given. It will suffice to point to the lecture on "Predestination" and to that on "Imputation." Dr. Vaughan gives us a masterful discussion of Predestination, and surpasses Dabney—particularly in his treatment of the logical order of the several parts of the decree, the subject on which the supralapsarians and the sub-lapsarians were divided. He subjects the schemes of these parties, each to the most searching scrutiny, recognizes the elements of truth found in each contention; points out the defects in each, and then gives us his own scheme. It is the cleanest-cut, clearest and most satisfactory discussion of the subject which has fallen under our eyes. Certainly it is far ahead of the discussion of the same subject by Hodge, Shedd, or Dabney.

His chapter on "Imputation" is a master-piece. He espouses here the view of immediate imputation; and, in our judgment, he knifes effectually both the view of mediate imputation and the view that the distinction between Mediate and Immediate Imputation should never have been made.

The chapter on Imputation in Dr. Dabney's very able theology is perhaps the least convincingly argued "chapter in the whole book." The alert eye of the "commentator" remarked this fact, and the suggested fact that the thesis of the chapter is faulty.

Modestly, but confidently, he takes the desk of the master and acquits himself with the highest success.

The limits assigned us for this notice precludes further references and specifications; but as we have poured over these lectures, the conviction has grown upon us, that probably Providence has shut out Dr. Vaughan from other kinds of work and shut him up to this, that he might serve Him in the production of these theological lectures. Certainly some of these lectures should be published and widely read. In our judgment, the entire set of seventy-four lectures should be published. Their publication would be an honor to our whole communion. Constituting a volume fully as large as the work on which they are professedly a commentary, they are from the pen of a master in the art of expression. They are redolent of rich culture. They are able, some of them brilliant, discussions of their themes. They are infiltrated with a sincere piety of the most intelligent and thoroughgoing type. They could not fail of great usefulness, if published and circulated. They are of such excellence that it would be a ground of just reproach to the church of the present should it fail to secure their publication. Should our church of the present not publish them, and should they be condemned to lie for long years in some out-of-the-way corner of a library, and where only an occasional eye shall look upon them, it is hoped that, in an age more devoted to thoroughgoing thinking and sound philosophic presentation of truth, they will be resurrected and published abroad, even to the reproach and confusion of our time.

Whether they shall be published speedily depends largely on the interest now to be manifested by Dr. Vaughan's old students, his friends and admirers generally, and all who are interested to forward true theological science. Let those who wish them published and who wish to have copies of them, write to Dr. Vaughan himself, at Roanoke, or to the writer of this notice. If the interest shall appear adequate, further and, we hope, sufficient measures, shall then be undertaken, Providence favoring, to insure their publication. ✓