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THE SABBATH AND MODERN CIVILIZATION.

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RECENTLY the writer was requested to answer the following question: "Has modern civilization modified the works of necessity and mercy mentioned in the Westminster Standards in connection with the Sabbath?"

It will be seen at once that this is a difficult question, and one about which intelligent and conscientious Christians are not at all agreed. Many seem to think a great modification of such works has been brought about, in the providence of God, by the changed circumstances in which men now find themselves. They plead the necessities of modern civilization: the necessities of commerce, now carried on on so vast a scale, and constantly involving so great interests, and demanding in its exchanges so much promptness and dispatch; the necessities of labor in ministering adequately and seasonably to the numerous and pressing wants of millions of our people crowded together in our great cities; the necessities of the railway, postal and telegraphic service in preserving communication, often admitting no delay, between the different parts of our widely extended country; the necessities of refreshment and recreation, after toil during the week more exacting and exhausting than any to which men were ever before subjected. These alleged necessities seem to have made the impression on them that the Sabbath law of the Scriptures has become unsuitable for this age; that it is impossible to observe it with the strictness there enjoined; that it is unreasonable to suppose we are expected to do it; that the strict observance there required and these necessities, which often can-

HOW AN ELDER MAY HELP HIS PASTOR.

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It is not our purpose at this time to discuss the theory of the eldership, nor to set forth formally the duties and functions of this important office, but rather to give some practical hints for the benefit of those who may be anxious to discharge the duties of the office aright.

Of course the ultimate aim of the elder is not that of merely helping his pastor, since there are duties resting upon him having no special relation to the pastor, and which would exist even if he had no pastor, but we have purposely chosen to narrow the question, and make it as concrete as possible. On one occasion the question was put to a class in Sunday-school, "Who is the Head of the church?" and the questioner was startled by the prompt reply, "Mr. ——," naming the pastor of the church. While the pastor is not "the Head of the church" in this sense, yet he is practically the leader of that portion of the Lord's host, and to help him is to advance that cause. We recur, then, to the question, How may an elder help his pastor?

(1) By keeping in touch with him. Paul's experience when he wrote to the Philippians, "I have no man likeminded who will naturally care for your state," is a very common one among ministers. Not that there are not godly men and women in the flock to which he ministers, but there is no one to whom he can unbosom himself, perfectly surely of being understood and finding sympathy. Too often he is the victim of a splendid isolation, and feels that he is standing alone, so far as human fellowship is concerned, and hence when he chances to meet a fellow-minister, he feels like a boy out of school. What a source of strength it would be to a minister to know that he is not alone, and that these elders are as keenly interested as he is, and watch and appreciate every move upon his part! It is their work as well as his, and it is their duty to interest themselves in it, and not simply turn it over to him. Even our Saviour craved human

fellowship and sympathy, and it is pathetic to hear him saying to those dull and stupid disciples, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with me," and to hear his sorrowful reproach, "What! could ye not watch with me one hour?" So, too, when he sent his disciples to preach, he sent them two by two, knowing full well the strength that comes from fellowship. On the day of Pentecost, Peter "stood up with the eleven," and while he was the spokesman, there were eleven good and true men behind him, and it was not the sermon of Simon Peter, but of the twelve. It is worthy of note that in his evangelistic work Paul invariably took companions along with him, and the idea of engaging in this work single-handed never seemed to have occurred to him. On one occasion, in an emergency, he was left at Athens alone, and it is about the only place where his work seemed to have been practically a failure. From Athens he went to Corinth, where for a while he had no fellow-worker, and seemed to accomplish but little, but we are told that "when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was constrained by the Word." The coming of these companions and helpers enabled him to preach as he had never done before. Whatever theory of the eldership may be adopted, there is no law forbidding the giving of moral support to the pastor by the elders. While a seminary student, the writer served a little backwoods church, and vividly recalls the picture of a godly old elder, who was accustomed to take his seat just in front of the pulpit, and almost within arm's length of the preacher, and nodded (not in sleep) approval as the sermon progressed. Whatever doubts the preacher may have had as to the correctness of the positions taken, he had the assurance that the old elder was with him, and it was worth a great deal. While an unconventional thing, of course, would it not thrill and inspire many a preacher to have his session take their seats with him in the pulpit, and thereby say, "Now, then, go ahead and speak it out, for we are with you"!

(2) By sharing his counsels. The session is the minister's cabinet, his advisers in matters concerning the work of the church. They are not simply to approve what he proposes, but to *counsel* as well. To this end it is incumbent upon the elder to acquaint himself thoroughly with the work to be done, and the best methods by which it may be accomplished. Here is

an opportunity for a division of labor. Let the elder look about him and see what kind of work he can do to the best advantage. One may not be qualified to take the portfolio of the secretary of state, and yet he might be able to manage the finances admirably, and while the elder should not ignore any part of the work of the church, it behooves him to find his special work and become an expert in it. By so doing he will cease to be a figurehead and become a valuable helper.

We honestly believe that one of the most potent causes of the failure of so many churches is the fact that they are "one-horse churches." They are "run" by one man, the pastor, and however gifted he may be, human nature is too weak, and men are too one-sided for monarchical rule. Besides this, it is not God's plan to place this tremendous responsibility upon the shoulders of one man. He has ordained that it should be shared by many, and when it is shifted upon one it is not surprising that failure is the result.

(3) By setting an example to the flock. Men are wonderfully like sheep, and "bell-wethers" in a church are very necessary. The word is preached most powerfully, and the path of duty made very plain, but the trouble is that no one will take the lead, and nothing is done. What a tremendous advantage it would be to a pastor to have a half dozen or so men who could always be counted upon to put into practice any duty that was made plain. For instance, he sets forth the duty of family worship, and here are these men who can be counted upon to erect family altars at once, if they have not already done so. What does the preaching of the pastor on this subject amount to if his associates in the care of the church negative it by open disregard?

Many an elder seeks comfort in the fact that scholars are not agreed as to the precise functions of the office; but no matter what theory may be adopted, it does not conflict with the clear and unmistakable duty of setting a godly example to the flock. Let him get in the lead and keep there! Something is wrong with the shepherd who is outstripped even by the weaklings of the flock, and something is badly wrong with the elder whose life is not cleaner, and purer, and more consecrated than that of those over whom he has been placed. Are you saying, What can I do to help? Be a godly, consistent man, ready for every

good word and work, and your pastor's heart will leap for joy, and he will preach as never before.

(4) By an active participation in the government and discipline of the church. It is a notorious fact that, for the most part, *ruling* elders do not *rule*. With rare exceptions, they content themselves with acquiescing in the measures proposed by the pastor, or occasionally objecting, excusing themselves on the ground that he knows more about it than they do. Well, if they do not take the trouble to study the situation, perhaps it is best for them to remain in the background, but the question then arises as to the propriety of occupying such a position.

The legislator who knows nothing of the questions under consideration had better follow the lead of others; but if he is not competent to handle such questions, what moral right has he to sit as a legislator?

More especially in the matter of judicial discipline is it incumbent upon the elder to come to the front. Coming as he does into closest contact with the people, no one has a better opportunity of noting irregularities in the conduct of members, and yet it is a notorious fact that the average elder, with reference to these matters, is blind and deaf and dumb, and if anything is done the pastor must be the doer of it. The result is that cases of discipline are rare, and when they do occur the odium rests upon the pastor, who can least afford to bear it.

What a relief it would be to the faithful pastor if his elders should say to him, "Give yourself to the ministry of the Word, and we will see to it that none walk disorderly"!

(5) By sharing the work of feeding the flock. We promised at the outset not to discuss the theory of the eldership, but we must pause here to express our settled conviction that *teaching* was one of the ordinary functions of the New Testament elder, but by a very natural process some devoted themselves more particularly to public instruction. The apostles were all upon the same footing upon the day of Pentecost, but Peter was the preacher on that occasion, as in many other instances.

To assert that the New Testament elder had no teaching functions seems to us to be in the very teeth of the plainest declarations of Scripture, unless we assume unwarrantably that the "elders" whom Paul addressed at Miletus were all "preachers of the Word," as well as those described in 1 Tim. iii. 1-7, and

also in Titus i. 5-9. By reason of changed circumstances, and the consequent necessity for special preparation, our church has wisely restricted the formal and authoritative proclamation of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments, to those who have been specially trained and fitted therefor. But because, for prudential reasons, the elder is not to stand in the pulpit from Sabbath to Sabbath, it by no means follows that he is relieved wholly from the duty of "feeding the flock." Because one is not qualified to be a college professor, it does not follow that he is debarred from all teaching whatsoever. An elder is supposed to have a deeper experience of the grace of God in his heart, a more intimate acquaintance with the Word of God, and a clearer understanding of the way of life, than others of the flock, and why should he not teach that which he knows? If he has not made this advancement, we fail to see why he has been placed in such a position. Why might he not seek out the ignorant and lost, and tell them of the Saviour he himself has found? Why not go after the non-church-goers, and bring them to the house of God? Why not pray with and counsel those in affliction? Does his ignorance of Hebrew and Greek debar him from warning the erring, and seeking to reclaim the prodigal? Is there any law forbidding him to share his store of spiritual things with the perishing around him? If it is incumbent upon the private Christian to do these things, how much more upon one called of God to "feed the flock"!

But the elder who has chanced to read thus far has doubtless been awaiting an opportunity of reminding us of the fact that, as a business man, and a busy man, he has *no time* for such work. Well, if he has no time that can be devoted to this work, then that settles it effectually, for it takes *time* to do anything that is worth doing. If he proposes to pass the elements at the communion table, or to sit in the session, even these things require time. Theoretically, the difference between the salaried minister and the unsalaried elder is not that one is to give the whole of his time to the duties of his office and the other *none*, but one is to give all and the other *a part*—such a part as can be given and yet provide for his daily wants. If one is unwilling to devote even a small portion of his time to the duties of this office, he certainly has no right to accept such an office.

One of the best elders we have ever known was a busy busi-

ness man, and yet he always found time to do a great deal of church work, and many a pastoral visit was paid by him in going to and from his business, catching men before they went to work, or dropping in to see them in the evening. It is our deliberate conviction that an unlettered elder, rich in his experience of the grace of God, and one who has been exercising his gifts as God has given him opportunity, is far better fitted for effective pastoral work than the fledgeling just emerging from the seminary, even though he may be a master of all the "ologies" in existence. If the question be, how an elder can prove an efficient helper, without putting forth any effort, or taking any time for it, the problem is beyond us, and we leave its solution for wiser heads; but if he is willing to exert himself, yea, and to deny himself, there is no lack of opportunity.