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THE ELDER AND THE DEACON IN SCRIPTURE.

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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 BEST METHOD OF CULTIVATING THE GRACE OF LIBERALITY AND GATHERING THE OFFERINGS OF THE PEOPLE.*

BY T. S. MCPHEETERS, LL. D.

The subject that I shall attempt to treat has to do entirely with the benevolences of the church, and has nothing to do with the current expenses, such as pastor's salary, sexton, heat, etc. It is important that this should be borne in mind. Under the head of benevolences I would place the causes of the General Assembly, the work of the synod, the poor of our own church, and such other causes as become the Almoner of God. I will deal first with methods of cultivating the grace of liberality, and under this head would offer the following suggestions:

First. Attempt to awaken in the minds of the people the fact that we are the stewards of God. "We are not our own, but are bought with a price." This position exalts all work, and makes each feel that giving is as much an act of worship as praying. Until this spirit has been aroused, we may not hope for the best results. Without this spirit, giving is a matter of sentiment and impulse; so that unless these feelings are appealed to, we give nothing. When a man feels day by day, as he is engaged in his ordinary avocation, no matter how humble that avocation may be, that the great Maker of the Universe has honored him with a stewardship, and that if he will discharge that stewardship faithfully he will be rewarded the same as he who has done some great thing; new impulse is given to work; he will then pursue his avocation, not for the accumulation of wealth, not for his own personal advancement, but for wealth and personal advancement that he may with these things honor God. Money acquired in this spirit, though it may be a great fortune, will be a great blessing; while the man who works that he may have money for money's sake, though he amass a great fortune, will

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have been moved by the lowest aspirations and his ambition will be one unworthy a man. Were this spirit of stewardship engendered in the hearts of the Christian Church, and taught by that church to the people, honoring and exalting, as it does, labor, and bring, as it does, responsibility to capital, many of the questions now agitating the country as to the relationship of capital to labor would be solved.

Second. Train the people to give regularly and systematically. The scriptural way is once a week; thus the amount is never large, and can therefore be more readily spared. Again, those who do not use system, always think they give much more than they really do. I remember soliciting a gift from a gentleman; and as I pressed the matter, he said that I was the fifth man that had solicited him that day. Upon which I remarked, that if he had given the others no more than he had given me, he was no poorer. Had I not made this remark, but left him, so given is the human mind to self praise, I doubt not that this gentleman, as he laid upon his couch at night, would have congratulated himself upon his great liberality, saying that the whole community seemed to be depending upon him. This illustrates the experience of many who do not give systematically. They exalt the times when they have felt liberal, until they seem to be occasions when they have been liberal. By systematic giving the people will learn to realize how little they really have given, and will therefore be led to give more liberally. Another advantage is in the case of small givers; they discover how large a sum, comparatively, they are really giving, when a small sum is set apart regularly. Without system, the small givers would feel that the sum they could give was too insignificant to have any bearing on the cause.

Third. Have all the people give, no matter how small the sum. Teach them the power of littles. I know a church that gives \$3,500 to benevolences, more than half of which, yes, two-thirds of which, come from those who give 25 cents and less per Sunday. If there be families in the church, have all the members give. This is far better than to allow one member to give all; it interests a larger number in the cause, and interest in the cause will lead to larger giving in the future. Children and young people trained to systematic benevolence in their youth, will

practice it in their old age; and if they can be led to see and know what is being accomplished with the money given, an interest in the church and its work will spring up in their hearts; and when they shall have grown to be men and women, taking the places of their fathers and mothers, it will be easy for them to give of their substance.

Fourth. Keep the people posted in regard to the causes towards which they are contributing by circulating among them literature from the committees of the General Assembly, from the Evangelistic Committee; also by clear and detailed reports of their own liberality. In this way they will be led to a deeper interest and larger giving.

Fifth. Urge the people to give a fixed proportion. I do not feel competent to discuss the great question that has been before our church for a year past (tithing), except to say that if the Jews, under the Law, gave a tenth, that I do not see how we, under Grace, could be willing to give less. Any person who practices systematic giving, must necessarily have some fixed proportion; otherwise there would be no system, and they would be unable to tell what they should give. Malachi iii. 10, says: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house; and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." In the face of this verse, I don't believe that we would do wrong if we gave the Lord a tenth; and my experience has been, that those who are objecting to the tithing system are the ones who give much less than a tenth. William Thaw, of Pittsburg, who recently died leaving vast estates, I am told by a friend of mine who knew him personally, gave away for many years \$1,000 per day; and whether at home or in his railroad office, he never allowed a worthy cause to appeal to him without responding. William E. Dodge, of New York, whose memory is precious to the Christian Church, was more than a tithe-giver for many years. Colgate, the great soap man, when on his way as a lad to New York, was asked by an acquaintance what he proposed to do. He said: "I have my mind made up on two points—first, to make soap in which I will put sixteen ounces to the pound, and, second, give a tenth of all that the Lord shall honor me with." He grew to be a man of great wealth, and is

to-day followed by worthy sons. A gentleman in our city, though naturally a close man, by the power of God's grace, when he entered into business for himself, put the Lord's name upon his books as a partner; and every year, when those books were balanced, the Lord's account got its tenth, and at the end of a long lifetime, when he had given away tens of thousands of dollars, he testified that the chiefest joy that he had in looking back over his life, was the money that he had been permitted to give the Lord. He to-day is followed by a worthy son, walking along in the path of his honored father. Cases without number could be cited of those who, believing the promise in Malachi, have been honored by God with wealth, and by their fellowmen with love, who have blessed the world and made it better. Now, this verse in Malachi may have been intended for the Jews; but these individual cases that I have cited show that it works pretty well with Christians. If you have any doubt on the subject, try it. A noble lady connected with my own church, who is a tithe giver, as her income is received, a tenth is separated and put apart; and when a worthy cause is presented, and she feels that her Master would be honored by its advancement, it is easy to give, because the money is there, instead of having to be taken away from her ordinary bank account. She remarked to me that, by having the amount set apart, it was as easy to give as if she were disposing of another's money, and the only thing to be considered, did Christ desire her to give. Dr. Houston, secretary of our Foreign Missionary Committee, during the time he was missionary to China, returned to America for a short period on account of his health. He accepted a country charge in Kentucky during that time. This church was greatly perplexed in collecting funds for its current expenses and the benevolences. They were paying him \$700 per year. Finally, he made them a proposition, that if ten of them would tithe, he would not ask for any salary and would accept simply that which the elders gave to him. This was agreed on; so, as the farmers brought hay, wheat, oats or what not, to town, one-tenth of it was sold, and the proceeds given to the treasurer of the church. The women, as they sold their butter, eggs, cheese, etc., gave a tenth to the church; and, lo at the end of the year Dr. Houston received \$800, the committees of the Assembly more than ever before, and all bore witness to the fact that financially the church had never enjoyed

as pleasant a year. This is the case of a small church in a country community.

Sixth. Avoid constant solicitations. How often the congregation chafes under constant appeals, so that both pastor and officers hesitate to make them. This can be done by settling the whole matter at the beginning of the year by the card system, that will be suggested later on. When once the people learn that undue solicitations will not occur, they more readily contribute to their full ability. I fear that too many of our ministers fail to impress upon their congregations the privilege and the blessings that flow from systematic giving, and, therefore, whatever money they get, is given in response to appeals. If ministers could have it brought strongly home to them that, by exalting the blessedness of giving, and the promises to those who do give, and the duty of all to give, and would so train their people, then their own needs would be more promptly met, the causes of the Assembly more liberally responded to, and the people themselves would be estopped from their complaining.

Seventh. Try to lead the people to feel that it is more blessed to give than to receive. This is the keynote of the Gospel. The arithmetic of the Gospel is: Give, and you have; keep, and you have not. This spirit destroys covetousness, and has no place for the love of money. This spirit can be brought about only by exalting in the minds of the people the proposition previously set forth at length, that we are the stewards of God, children of the King, and that whatever we do, whether we eat or drink, that we can do it in His name and for His glory. I now come to the second division:

BEST METHODS OF GATHERING THE OFFERINGS OF THE PEOPLE.

I will treat this objectively. The following card will explain what I mean:

BENEVOLENT OFFERINGS OF THE
GRAND AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
St. Louis, Mo.

The total of the sums apportioned here must equal the total offerings of the year.

\$.....	1. Home Missions. (Sustentation.)
\$.....	To supplement the small salaries paid many of our devoted ministers.
\$.....	2. Foreign Missions.
\$.....	To send missionaries to foreign lands to preach the Gospel.
\$.....	3. Education.
\$.....	To aid young men in their preparation to preach the Gospel of Christ.
\$.....	4. Publication.
\$.....	To provide Sabbath School Libraries and good books, tracts and lesson helps for our people, and general distribution.
\$.....	5. Invalid Fund.
\$.....	For disabled Ministers, and for the widows and children of deceased ministers.
\$.....	6. Fund for Colored People.
\$.....	To educate colored men for the ministry and sustain colored ministers as missionaries among their own race.
\$.....	7. Evangelistic.
\$.....	To support evangelists in destitute fields in other States than our own.
\$.....	8. Sabbath School Fund.
\$.....	To defray the expenses of our mission schools.
\$.....	9. Deacon's Fund.
\$.....	For the support of the poor of our own church.
\$.....	10. Church Erection.
\$.....	To aid weak congregations in erecting church buildings.
\$.....	11. Synodical Evangelistic Fund.
\$.....	For evangelistic work in the Synod of Missouri.
\$.....	12. American Bible Society.
\$.....	For any object of your choice.
\$.....	13. General Fund.
\$.....	14. General Fund.
\$.....	Total for year 52 weeks.

Please indicate how you wish the sum total of your offerings for the year divided, by marking above against the names of such objects as you may select the amount you wish to give.

All undesignated contributions will be added to the General Fund, which will be appropriated by vote of the Committee.

If, at any time during the year, you desire to make a special offering, it may be put in your envelope with a line indicating the object to which it is to be sent, and it will be forwarded by the Treasurer.

\$.01	DIRECTIONS.
.02	Please mark with an X in the column on the left, the sum you are willing to pledge as a weekly offering to the Lord for the year, using a blank space if you select a sum not mentioned.
.03	Write your name and residence at the bottom of this card, and return it by mail to the Treasurer this week, or deposit it in the collection basket next Sunday.
.05	A package of small envelopes will then be furnished you (one for each week). The number on the envelope will correspond to your number on the Treasurer's book.
.10	Each Lord's day enclose the amount of your weekly offering in the envelope bearing that date, seal it, and put it in the collection basket.
.15	In case of absence for one or more Sundays, enclose the whole amount due with the next offering that is made, and destroy the envelopes that have not been used.
.20	This pledge is between you and the Lord, is wholly voluntary, and may at any time be withdrawn by giving notice to the Treasurer.
.25	For method of distributing the whole amount given, see reverse of this card.
.30	Name
.50	Residence
.75	
1.00	
2.00	
3.00	
5.00	
10.00	
15.00	
20.00	
25.00	

On one side of this card you see amounts varying from one cent to ten dollars, on the other side you see the various causes of the Assembly, Synod and local Church, together with a space called "general fund." Now the plan is, in December, to distribute these cards to every individual, man, woman and child in the congregation, requesting them to indicate on the side of the card where the money is, by cross-mark, what amount they are willing to give weekly; then have them turn over the card, and, having multiplied their weekly offering by 52, divide the sum obtained among the various causes indicated upon the card. Thus, if one were to give 10 cents per Sunday, they would divide \$5.20. The cards so distributed, after being filled out and signed, are returned to the treasurer of the church, and to each one is sent 52 envelopes, one for each Sabbath of the year, into which their weekly offerings are placed. If you only have preaching once a month, as the family have these cards at their home, nothing prevents them from putting into the envelope each week the amount, and when Sunday comes on which they have preaching, take to church the four envelopes. The book-keeping connected with this plan will be treated by another gentleman, and therefore I shall not attempt to go into it, but will speak briefly on a few of the advantages of this system.

First. This way the people keep their own accounts and thus avoid trouble.

Second. When absent the giving goes on just the same. Under the old system, a good speech often got more than it ought, and a poor speech not what it ought. A bad Sunday does not affect the cause. To illustrate: Foreign Missions is presented once a year under the old system, and though you might be moved to give a large sum, you might not be able to do so, not having the money at hand just then; but under this system you could give a large sum, as it is divided through the whole year; and so with all the causes.

Third. It avoids constant solicitations (what a relief to some present). It prevents two or three bearing the burden which should be borne by all.

Fourth. No measuring of gifts; the whole matter between God and the individual. Moreover, small givers, whose gifts are too small to solicit, and who would be embarrassed by giving a small sum, are thus enabled to give.

Fifth. By a weekly offering, it is made part of our worship, and thus each week we are reminded of our stewardship, and of the honor God has placed upon us by making us stewards. Loss in this system is very small. Increase under this system has been 100 and 200 per cent., and givers have doubled and trebled. A church in 1874 that did not practice this gave \$479. This scheme was put into practice in 1875, and they gave \$1,686, and in 1876 \$2,397.97. The Grand Avenue Church increased its givers in one year from 62 to 192, and its benevolences from \$1,000 to \$2,500. Already it has been objected by some that they do not know how much they can give. Then, in such a case, let them give what they know they can, and afterward increase the amount if they prosper. This system needs the hearty support of the pastor.

All that has been said will avail nothing, unless the people are led into sympathy with the first part of this paper—namely, the best methods of cultivating the grace of liberality.

Our Church is just entering upon an extended scheme for church extension and church strengthening under its Synodical Committee. This work can be forwarded only through the gifts of the people; but to us has been committed by God and Church the collecting of these gifts. Therefore, the Church is looking to us to devise ways and means for the great work that it is undertaking. If we are faithful, untiring and zealous in our work, we may hope to see a great revolution within our borders in the next decade; and it is this thought that has prompted me largely in all that I have said and attempted to suggest as to methods and modes. But be sure that it is true, that if we can bring the people up to a spirit of liberality, we will very materially assist in developing a spirit of piety, and in this way we shall honor our Master and be a blessing to our beloved Church, and earn for ourselves the praise of all those who love Christ and His kingdom.