

A DREAM.

By Rev. W. Edmund Smith

I had a dream. I was a delegate to the General Assembly of The Church of Holy Sacrifice. We had come to the election of our bishops who are elected quadrennially, with unlimited possibility of re-election. Our two superior officers, Dr. Gideon Meeker, the senior bishop, and Dr. Paul Good, the junior bishop, were men of splendid ability and sacrificial spirit.

But at this Assembly, instead of pushing about amongst the delegates with winsome smile and hearty handshake that would do credit to an ambitious politician, our bishops held themselves aloof, and from their serious countenances it was evident that they were engaged in much sober and reflective thought.

Just before the time came for the first ballot to be taken, Dr. Good arose and said: "I love you all and love most ardently 'The Church of Holy Sacrifice' which God has raised up to restore the simplicity and power of apostolic Christianity. You, brethren, have greatly honored me by exalting me to this the highest office in the Church. You took me, as it were, from the sheep-fold and made me a leader of the people; and for three successive quadrenniums you have renewed the honor. I have been given the honorary degree of D. D. five times, till I have come to feel something like a Dignified Despot, for it is remarkable how high office and letters to a man's name have a tendency to make him feel that he is above the ordinary. But God's grace has kept me in all these temptations, and thank God I am still in the experience of Perfect Love.

"But I have risen to tell you, dear brethren, that I am no more a candidate for this high office. For the good of my own soul and the general good of the church, I must decline to be a candidate. I do not know that you would re-elect me. Be that as it may, I am sure that I can get greater blessing by making clear the way for a man more competent and more worthy than I to take this high and holy office. We are told 'In honor preferring one another.' Brethren, this is little done in the churches, and if 'The Church of Holy Sacrifice' do not set the example, what is the good of all our profession of superior holiness and love? I can see the danger of selfish ambition creeping into my own heart and the spirit developing in our church. We know that a church always dies at the top, and the example set by the higher officers is contagious amongst those that are lower down.

"I thank you, brethren, for all your kindness and confidence. I have done my best to serve God and the interests of our beloved communion, but I now must change my relation. I have received and accepted a call from a church that worships in a hall in the city of Hanover. The need there of holiness is great, and the opportunity is full of promise. I go there to make good; to prove to myself, to God and the church that the call I received years ago when a boy to reach the gospel, has not been abrogated. I am to receive forty dollars a week and be my own janitor."

When Dr. Good sat down, a wave of

holy emotion swept the assembly and he buried his face in his hands and sobbed like a child. But we all felt that it was the weeping that came from a heart broken with the love of God. Someone started the grand old hymn:

"The Son of God goes forth to war, a kingly crown to gain;

His blood-red banners stream afar, who follows in his train!

Who best can drink that cup of woe triumphant over pain,

Who patient bears his cross below, he follows in his train."

The tide was running high when Dr. Meeker, the senior bishop, rose to address us. He said: "Brethren, I feel that this is a holy place and that this is a holy occasion. I am your senior bishop. You from time to time have renewed your confidence in me. I feel that God has been talking to my soul and I must tell you my inner convictions.

"This high office brings many temptations to pride and selfishness. I am sorry that I have so poorly exemplified the spirit of 'Holy Sacrifice' that called our church into existence. As we have grown in numbers and influence, social and financial, I think that I can discern a danger of the spirit of selfishness and worldly ambition creeping in amongst us.

"I want you to forgive me for unconsciously fostering and abetting that spirit. You have put the salary of this sacred office up to the point where it is a thing to be grasped at, and I have not protested. The average preacher in our church is getting about twenty dollars a week and I am drawing a hundred dollars a week and extra gifts that my wife receives. You see this high office brings the grist to mill. Many of those within and outside the church will give to me, a bishop, and will entertain me because I am a bishop, who forget the needs of the humble preacher. Thus I have the temptation to take all I can get. It is true that I have given most of my salary back to the benevolent interests of the church. I have not been keeping up a great endowment policy on my life or the life of my wife. I have not invested in real estate. The truth is I am still in debt to meet the pledges I have made to the enterprises of our church. But the feeling has gotten abroad that we are looking for the 'tall grass' and are getting too much money. I think I am getting too much myself, and this fact makes it hard for the poor preacher to see where the spirit of 'Holy Sacrifice' is being exemplified by us higher up. When I have gone to the different conferences, somebody has moved that 'a love offering' be taken for our bishop, and I have taken it, failing to suggest that we consider the needs of the preachers who are getting only enough to keep soul and body together, and perhaps had to borrow money to come to conference, while the wife was at home nursing a sick child. O! I feel that I have been thoughtless, and I now declare that I am not a candidate for re-election unless the salary be cut two thousand dollars a year, and you give your love offerings to the struggling preachers of your conferences.

"Brethren, I am fully convinced that

the only way we can avoid the rocks that have wrecked other spiritual movements that started out with just as much success and as high ideals as we possess, is by really making our church the 'Church of Holy Sacrifice.' I want to set the example. I want to be able to go amongst the churches and preach the glorious privilege of sacrifice. When I do this now on top of a five thousand dollar salary, I have seen the wife of the poor preacher look at me so questioningly that I have felt uncomfortable. And when I have gone to their humble home and have seen the real sacrifice there, knowing that her husband left the position of bricklayer that gave him ten dollars a day to take the pastorate of our church that promised him twenty dollars a week, and is often behind in that, I feel that I must be more of an example of this spirit of sacrifice we preach so much."

When Dr. Meeker sat down, old Brother Quick said: "Brethren, let us pray." All fell on their faces and the voice of Brother Quick was soon lost in the general outcry that welled from many hearts. The heavens seemed to open and tides of holy love flowed in. It was a veritable Pentecost. All seemed to be blessed except Dr. Wirepuller and Brother Moneybags, pastor and delegate from First Church, Porktown. Brother Moneybags was heard to whisper to his pastor: "I think this is a work of supererogation and all uncalled for." These growing salaries and all the prestige belong to the legitimate evolution of things, and it gives us business men and men of financial means a chance of doing something worth while for the church. If this thing continues I will find a place in another church where they really appreciate financial standing."

But the tide was on. The brethren had caught the vision. All strife was over and a wonderful spirit of love settled upon us. I said how sweet it would be to abide here forever. But suddenly I was aroused by a shake and heard my wife say: "Wake up! You are singing in your sleep." I awoke, but the memory of the dream abides. Is there a land where such dreams come true?

ENTER NOT INTO TEMPTATION.

A reckless man in a zoological garden one day seized a venomous serpent by the nape of the neck and held it up before his companions. The man thought he had the serpent wholly in his power. But it began to coil its long body about his arm and then slowly tighten its grasp till the man in agony was obliged to drop his hold of its neck. Quickly then it turned and bit him, and soon the man was dead.

He thought he was strong enough to play with the serpent, and then thrust it from him when wearied of the play. Many think they are strong enough to play with temptation of any sort, but they find sooner or later that the temptation has mastered them. "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation," said Christ. It is the entering into temptation which is to be guarded against."

If love be the motive power of the life, it will not be hard to go where love prompts.