

Original Communications.

OF RULING ELDERS SERVING FOR A TERM OF YEARS.

The election of ruling elders to serve as for a term of years, is a question now agitating the Church to a considerable extent; it is not a new subject of discussion, but has occupied the attention of Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assemblies frequently. Although it is impossible to find an utterance in favor of a limited term of service in the records of our General Assembly, and our Form of Government declares that the office of ruling elder is perpetual, and the usage in a majority of the churches in this country, and probably of all in Great Britain, is to elect for life, and no elder can lay aside his ordination, neither can any deprive him of it. It should not be forgotten that, in the First Book of Discipline of the Scotch Church, drawn up by John Knox and others, it was provided that the election of elders should take place every year. (SECT. VII.) It will not be improper to examine this subject again; there may be advantages in the limited term which were not observed, or may not have existed in former times, but which the present condition and form of government of our own country, make more apparent now. "Ruling elders are, properly, the representatives of the people, chosen by them for the purpose of exercising government and discipline, in conjunction with pastors or ministers," says the form of government. Now, it is a fact that, in many churches, the elders do not represent the people, nor have they been chosen by those composing the majority of the church members. This is more frequently the case in the large cities of this country, where the entire character of a neighborhood may be changed in a few years; that which was a suburban district may become a manufacturing one, and that in which the church was the centre of a wealthy and refined population, may be in a short time surrounded by warehouses, stores and offices, or the outlying missionary church, made up of those in humbler walks of life, may become the centre of a finely improved district. All have noticed these changes taking place about them. In any case, the elders, to properly represent the people, should be chosen by those forming the existing church membership. Sometimes, for the want of proper men, those but indifferently qualified are chosen—men wanting in intelligence or position in society, and, when those better qualified in every respect, become members of the church, no opportunity may remain to make use of them in this important office. Again: the character of men, as well as of congregations, change. A man, from no fault of his own, may find his position in society, and in the esteem of the brethren, much changed. It is impossible for a church to take a lively interest in a representative, who, when once chosen, is ever after placed over them, and beyond their reach, unless some flagrant or outrageous act place him under ecclesiastical censure. Many churches are seriously injured for want of an opportunity to introduce new and more acceptable persons into the session, and the perpetuity of many organizations is jeopardized for the want of such succession in office. The members of a session are not always the parties that would be selected, if the congregation were left to a free choice, but are frequently selected by the pastor or session, without regard to the wishes of the people. True, they are invited to acquiesce, by a vote, by voice, by ballot, or by rising, there being no uniformity of practice; men are thus frequently thrust upon a congregation, who are not acceptable, and who would be resisted in any other than church connection, yet such are, according to the usages of the church, to remain the representatives of a people who never really selected them.

It is objected to the term of years, that the frequent elections would keep up a constant excitement, and might lead to misunderstanding and difficulties. Such, however, is not likely to be the case. If the elders were acceptable, there would be no change, the congregation simply expressing their approbation by re-electing such persons; but, if not acceptable, others, better qualified, could be selected. It cannot be urged that church meetings are, of necessity, more disorderly than other like gatherings, nor that church members are more apt to quarrel; but the difficulty is found, in the fact that there are, in almost every congregation, those who imagine themselves peculiarly fitted to manage and direct the affairs of the church, and suppose the mass of the members incapable of understanding their wants; therefore, attempts are frequently made to manage matters, and, in order to do so, means are resorted to, which excite indignation, and create those disturbances complained of, in church business meetings. Let these managers take their places, as simply members of the congregation, let them seek a fair and honest expression of the will of the people, and all trouble at church elections and business meetings will be at an end, and many sensitive persons, whose valuable counsel and influence is now lost to the Church, would be induced to attend, and take an interest in the proceedings.

Although the records of our Church do not encourage the limited term, there has been a constant yielding in the decisions of the Assembly. In 1835, the Assembly declared that the election of ruling elders for a term of years, was irregular, and ought in future to be abandoned. In

1849, they believed that the evils of a change would far outweigh those of the present system. In 1852, the Assembly would discourage the adoption of the principle in our Church, from respect to the plain meaning of our rule; but nothing in this resolution is intended to disturb the relations of those churches which have adopted the principle of a limited period in the service of elders.

On the Continent, and particularly in Holland, the office of ruling elder is for a term of years. Almost all the churches in the Brooklyn Presbytery have adopted this plan, and many others, also, scattered all over the country. So far as the experience of ruling elders thus elected has been ascertained, they are well satisfied, and would be loth to be placed in the old position of a fixture, which, no matter how objectionable, a church must submit to, and cannot get rid of, unless by a process apt to be lengthy and disagreeable, as provided in Form Gov., xiii., 7.

EXPECTATIONS OF A MESSIAH.
BY REV. V. D. COLLINS.

It is a great mistake to suppose that only in Judea was the anticipation of a divine being cherished. Buddhism, and Tanism, and Brahminism are all based on the idea of an incarnation of Divinity, wedding humanity to heaven. Plato, after visiting Egypt, and drawing knowledge from all available sources, confessed that he looked for a divine Teacher.

Tacitus, a learned Roman historian, informs us that, throughout the whole East, it was the general expectation, that about the time of the reign of Cæsar Augustus, a king was to appear in Judea, who should rule over the whole world, from the Pillars of Hercules to the Ganges of India.

This was a very natural expectation of the times, and ardently taught by the Jews to the surrounding nations. Wherever they went, they dropped the seeds of this great prophetic truth into the hearts of men. While Jacob and Moses taught it in Egypt, and Daniel in Babylon, it was inculcated by writings, by ceremonies, and by speech, wherever a Jew came in contact with heathen nations. From the time of the Babylonian captivity, some 607 years before Christ, the Jews were scattered eastward throughout all the provinces of the great Persian monarchy, as we learn from the Book of Esther, where, in one place, Haman informs the King, that there was a certain race (referring to the Jews) scattered abroad and dispersed among the people, in all the provinces of his kingdom, governed secretly by different laws from those of his kingdom, neither would they keep the King's laws.

In Persia, the Jews made many converts to the religion of their fathers; and they scattered far and wide the expectation of this *roah*, which should spring forth, from Jesse, at Bethlehem, which should be an ensign of the people, and to which the Gentiles should look for truth and salvation.

After the return of the Jews to the Holy Land, from their captivity, they rapidly increased, Judea being too small as a field of enterprise, or, providentially, by the force of circumstances, many of the Jews emigrated to different parts of Asia, Africa, and Europe;—wherever, in fact, the eagles of Rome flew, and even beyond, the Jews went, and everywhere made converts to the Hebrew Faith—*believing in a covenant, invisible God, and a promised Teacher, Saviour, and King.*

Agrippa, in an oration to the Jews, delivered before their final dispersion, and, of course, before the destruction of Jerusalem, declared, "There is not a nation upon earth where some of your countrymen are not to be found. If you, who are in Judea, rebel against the authority of Rome, all of your race that reside in other places, will be destroyed, and thus every great city of the world will be filled with blood."

Philo, in one of his orations, declares, "The Jews are dispersed throughout all the world. They dwell in most of the flourishing cities of Asia and Europe,—in the islands of the sea, and on the continents." And even Cicero, in one of his masterly orations in defense of a Jew at Rome, declared, that "the gold which the Jews sent to their temple at Jerusalem, was forwarded from Italy and from all the provinces of the vast Roman Empire." This heathen testimony accords with the account given in the Acts of the Apostles, regarding the representatives of many nations—gathered at Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost. "There were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven, Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers of Mesopotamia, and in Judea and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians."

There never was, in the history of the world, a more generally received anticipation,—extending from the banks of the Tiber and the groves of Greece, to the Indian Ganges and the plains of China, than that which awaited the birth of Christ in Judea. There is nothing like it in modern times, except a somewhat similar expectation of Christendom, and of some heathen nations, in regard to the second advent of Christ, and the consequent overthrow of false religions. This modern expectation, like the ancient one, is vague, conflicting, but general, among thoughtful men. During the last ten years such start-

ling political events have transpired, such barriers have been broken down for the advancement of Truth, and such rapid communications opened among the nations, that a large class of minds would not be at all amazed, or even surprised, if Christ should, any day, reappear bodily, on this earth, as the rightful Sovereign and Saviour of mankind.

There is a vague, but universal expectation with the Jews, now scattered among all nations, as they were, to some extent, two thousand years ago, that the Messiah is yet to come on the earth to redeem Israel and to reign as their King.

Their wealth being easily convertible into ready money, the Jews, as a race, could easily and quickly make their way to the Holy Land. This, of course, is but stating the opinion of some; but it is a remarkable fact of the times, that more Jews visited Palestine last year, than during any former year since their loss of the country. As a race without nationality, but Israelites by faith, their hearts ever turn toward the ancient Land and the City of the Great King. For hours have I sat with the Jews at their Weeping Place along the western wall of their ancient temple in Jerusalem, and heard them, with true, tearful sorrow, cry, "How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! All that pass by clap their hands at her. They hiss and wag their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, 'Is this the city that men call the perfection of beauty—the joy of the whole earth?' Wherefore dost thou forget us forever, and forsake so long time? Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old." This in the language of Jeremiah, do they pray in Jerusalem, and the advent of their Messiah. There is no great fact in history more remarkable than the unbelieving, and yet believing Jew, returning to the Holy City to prove, not only the continuity of race and religion, but to mingle his dust with that of the ancient worthies.

LESSONS ON PAUL, NO. 4.

[Prepared weekly for the American Presbyterian.]

THE CONVERSION.

Acts 8: 3, 9: 1, 13, 22; 4-16, 23: 1, 26: 9-15.

1. Was Saul a member of the Sanhedrim?
2. Meaning of "I gave my voice against them?"
3. Meaning of "haling?"
4. Mention distinct acts of his persecution in Jerusalem.
5. Meaning of "breathing out?"
6. What was the worst act of all? Acts 26: 11.
7. Had his reputation as a persecutor extended beyond Jerusalem?
8. Did he think in his heart he was right?
9. May a man be conscientiously cruel and wicked?
10. Did Saul ever regret his conscientious persecution? Galatians 1: 13.
11. Is it a duty to have a right conscience?
12. While Saul is persecuting where are Philip and Peter and John?
13. Did Saul go to more than one strange city?
14. What authority would the chief Priest have in Damascus?
15. How far was Damascus?
16. How would he travel? Through what gate would he pass?
17. What fount would he take?
18. Had our Saviour passed here?
19. Would Saul get glimpses of the Mediterranean Sea on the West?
20. What long valley and river on the East?
21. What lake or sea on his route?
22. Would he cross the Jordan above or below it?
23. After crossing, what kind of country did he find?
24. Who had passed through here 900 years before, on a very different errand, going from Damascus?
25. Describe Damascus.
26. How many accounts are there of Saul's conversion?
27. Who gives these accounts and which is most complete?
28. What time of day did the conversion take place?
29. Is it probable that Saul could be deceived?
30. What was the effect on the man with him?
31. "Stood speechless" 9: 7—"All fallen to earth" ch. 26: 14 how reconciled?
32. Hearing a voice" ch. 9: 7—"Heard not a voice" 22: 9, how reconciled?
33. How was Saul persecuting Jesus himself? Matt. 25: 40.
34. Meaning of "kick against the pricks?"
35. Why did Saul now tremble?
36. Did Saul see Jesus?
37. Was the conversion now or when he is said to pray at Damascus?
38. What does his question show as to the surrender of himself?
39. How long a time is necessary to be converted?
40. Why was Saul alone in Damascus?
41. How did Ananias feel about going to him?
42. What kind of man was Ananias?
43. What reason is given why he should go?
44. What Christian virtue did it require to go?
45. What was Saul doing and thinking before Ananias came?
46. Had Saul been accustomed before to pray?
47. Was it easy for Saul to become a Christian?
48. What sacrifices did he make?
49. Can a sinner now become a Christian without making sacrifice?
50. May a sinner expect a miracle to convert him?
51. What may he reasonably expect?
52. When is the time to begin?

"Tell me what you know," said Goethe; "I have guesses enough of my own."

MORE MISSIONARY BOXES—THE S. S. CHILDREN TAKING PART.

We have before us interesting letters from two missionaries, one in Indiana and one in Illinois, to whom boxes had been sent by the ladies of Clinton street Church. In preparing the box for the former missionary, the Sabbath-school children took a part. Very appropriately, therefore, the reply of the Missionary contained special reference to this portion of the donors. We quote from the letter.

DEAR CHILDREN OF THE SABBATH SCHOOL!

We are glad to learn that your hearts and hands have had a liberal share in the work of preparing our missionary box. We suppose you designed it for a Christmas present, and as such, we receive it yet, although we did not get it home until three days after New Year's. We live thirteen miles from Wabash, our nearest point to the railroad, and heard from the box in time to go for it, the next day after New Year's; but we did not know what kind of a thing the missionary box was going to be. It being pretty good sleighing, we went in a cutter, and expected to store away the missionary box under the seat of our small cutter. But lo! and behold! your bounty was not even to be carried in, any way in any such conveyance. We were astounded at the size of the box, disappointed that we could not take it home and see what it contained, and yet, above and beyond the vexation and disappointment, we were greatly pleased to find that we had under-estimated rather than over-estimated your generosity. But our astonishment and pleasure were still more complete, when we opened the box and discovered the many nice and rich presents which it contained. Thanks many thanks, dear children for your Christmas presents to the family of the Home Missionary. The Lord Jesus says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." We are glad to see Sabbath-school children investing so early and so largely in this superior kind of blessedness. Would that all were disposed to show by their actions that they believe the Lord spoke the truth when he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." And now, dear children, let us see if we cannot learn a useful lesson from the missionary box. You all expect the missionary and his family to be thankful for this Christmas present, don't you? Yes, you expect us not only to be thankful, but to express our thanks. You would think it strange enough, if we did not tell you that we thank you. You would think it rude, and perhaps you would even be sorry that you sent us such nice presents, if we should neglect to give expression to our thanks.

Now Christmas day is the day on which the Saviour of sinners is supposed to have been born; the day on which God made his royal Christmas present to a sinful world. Shall we not then express our thanks to him for the gift of his dear Son? Would it be less rude to neglect to thank God for his Christmas present, than it would be to neglect to thank our earthly friends for their presents? I hope my dear children that you all are indeed truly thankful to God for his Christmas gift, and that none of you will be so rude towards Him as to neglect to tell Him so. And I hope, moreover, that you will give Him in return your grateful loving hearts. Yours respectfully and thankfully,

FROM OUR LETTER BAG.

A Home Missionary in Iowa writes:

"Please send me one-half dozen copies (if possible) of—. I enclose \$— as subscription to begin with: I am just appointed to this field, and have met with a stray copy of your paper which I appreciate very highly indeed, and will work in order that it may have a large circulation here. No family should be without it. I consider one copy of it is calculated to do more good than hundreds of the diluted sermons of the present day. May the Most High prosper you in your good work and labor of love."

A brother in the Central West, sending a remittance, adds the following Postscript:

P. S. "I thank you, my dear Bro., for the course you have from the beginning pursued with the AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN on the Re-union question, on questions involving moral principles in the Government,—in fact, on every question that can affect in the least the cause of the Master, your course has been that which every lover of truth and righteousness must approve. We may not, in every minutia agree, but in the main questions involved, I feel that I can give my hearty approval to every editorial during the last three years. What then can I do more than to bid you 'God's speed.' Go on my brother, and may God bless you in your good work."

Another in N. E. Pennsylvania says: "I need not assure you of my warm attachment to the AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN. It is the most prized of any paper I take, notwithstanding I receive about ten in all, four of them religious papers."

A layman in New Jersey, complaining of difficulty in getting his paper, writes, thus emphatically expressing himself:

"Since writing as above, I have no word from you and no paper. Please see to it at once, for my family would rather do with two meals a day than be without the PRESBYTERIAN."

On the general subject of a "first-class" paper for the whole Church, an earnest brother and successful worker for our Church in Michigan, writes as follows:

"I believe there is no point more radical with our Church in the West, than a first-rate paper in the hands of all our members. This would save agencies for our Benevolent Boards almost entirely. It would indoctrinate the people. It would help the pastors in preaching, and would often bring glorious revivals, and in, and by this work, would make us homogeneous as a church. But how to put such a paper there, is a practical question that is worthy of the prayers and the study of the entire body. We have two papers, perhaps three, which claim to be first-class papers. I would give much to see one of these in the hands of every family, and member of our entire Church. Can the wealth, and enterprise of the N. S. Presbyterian church accomplish this thing in 1869? How can it be done? Do this, and we have saved to the Church and the cause of Christ millions of money, and the bone and sinew of a "muscular Christianity."

A brother on Long Island sending his subscription, writes:

"Please find enclosed \$2.50 for your paper this year. It has become indispensable to myself and family, and I wish it abundant prosperity. If your brother G. W. M. goes anywhere, insist on his writing to us all through your paper. — is good, but your brother is much better. Sometime when we meet you will perhaps tell me who "On the Wing" is. Without disparaging others, I will indicate my thought by saying you have not lately had a better article than Dr. Wiswell's "Church at Work." That's the vein for you and us all to work."

FOREIGN ITEMS.

EPISCOPACY IN AUSTRALIA.—A portion of the anti-ritual party in some part of Australia have formed what they designate a "Free Church of England," and have elected a bishop. He went through a form of consecration, took the oaths of supremacy, and on the following Sunday held a general ordination. In Sydney, New South Wales, the Episcopal Church is now independent of the State, and does not receive any State aid. Its clergy and laity are now busy in framing laws for its direction as a free Church. Six triers have been elected to act with the bishop in the trial of heretical or immoral clergymen. It was decided that parishes have the option of having their clergymen appointed by a board of nominators elected by the Synod (the name of the chief power among and over them,) or by such a board elected by themselves. It came out, in the way of statistics at the meeting of Synod, that the total income of the Diocese is about £50,000; and the stipends of the clergy \$21,412—a little less than one pound a head per annum for each attendant.

As usual the greatest services to the cause of civil and religious liberty in Spain, are being rendered by its foes. By violence and bloodshed they are stimulating the people and the provisional government in their purposes of reform, and hindering, if not utterly preventing, a conservative re-action in favor of Popery, which might naturally be expected to attend the restoration of monarchy. A Madrid telegram of January 27th, informed us that the Governor of Burgos was assassinated while carrying out some orders of the provisional government, confiscating libraries, archives, and works of art possessed by the churches, as the property of the State. This fanatical act induced the Provisional Government to declare the equality of all religious beliefs before the civil law. That decision was unanimous, and, it is believed, represents the sentiments of the great majority of each of the parties dividing the people. It also appears that a great excitement broke out against the Church party. The Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral of Burgos have been arrested; diplomatic relations with the Papal Nuncio have been broken off, and the people of Madrid have made violent demonstrations against him.

At a recent meeting for Spanish Evangelization, in New York, it was stated as a significant fact, that American books are sought after by the Spaniards more than those published in England. Thirty years ago it was impossible to get a box of books into any of the Spanish countries, but now the difficulties have been removed, and as the following letter will show:

MALAGA, Spain, Dec. 22, 1868.
To the Rev. Wm. A. HALLOCK, D.D., Sec. Am. Tract Society, N. Y.

DEAR SIR:—Through the intercession of the U. S. Minister, the Hon. J. P. Hale, a permit was procured for the admission of books of foreign imprint. Until the 14th inst., an ancient law forbidding importation of such books had never been violated. The concession was made to accommodate the books by your Society and the American Bible Society. It will be continued for all books from America. Your four cases will probably be on hand for distribution on Saturday. They will be taken up rapidly. A very much larger number is much needed.

HENRY C. HALL.
—The conflict in Austria between the clergy and the Government still continues. The Government shows no disposition to yield any of the ground it has taken up. The new laws, completing the recent Liberal legislation with regard to civil marriage are another step toward the complete separation of the Church from the State. The clergy keep up the hostility, and the Government replies by repressive measures. A Church-party paper, *The Friend of the People*, has been seized for publishing a letter from the Pope condemning the new institutions of the Empire. This rigorous act has produced a profound sensation, and is without precedent in the Hapsburg annals since the reign of the Emperor Joseph II.