

Our Contributors.

WOULD THE COUNTRY STAND THEM?

BY KNOXIAN.

For the next seven weeks the air will be filled with comments on our public men. Common-place comment will at times rise to the high level of first class criticism, and at times sink down past personalities and abuse to the low plain of political blackguardism. Part of the comment will be truth, part half truth—the worst kind of a lie—and part will be unblushing, brazen falsehood. Here and there amidst the dust and din a voice will be heard denouncing politics and politicians. The owner of the voice will always be sure to say that he takes no interest in politics and that he considers all politicians a bad lot.

Now it might occur to some one to ask if this country would stand much better politician than those we have. Is it possible to govern Canada by as clean methods as those by which a high class merchant or other business man conducts his business. May it not be possible that our government with all its faults is just as good as a majority of the people would support. It is easy to say we ought to have better government, but that is about as sensible as saying a stream ought to be purer than the fountain from which it flows.

Moses was a good man, a great leader and wise legislator. Supposing Moses were to rise from his unknown grave and stand for a Canadian constituency what would be his chances for election. In some constituencies he would not have the ghost of a chance. We doubt very much if he could secure election in any. If the people actually wanted the highest kind of patriot, leader and legislator Moses should have his choice of constituencies and be elected by acclamation. Would he have any such choice or be elected in any such way? The chances are a million to one that in no constituency in Canada—not even in North Oxford—would the great legislator poll a sufficient number of votes to save his deposit.

Daniel was a high class statesman. He was Prime Minister of a mighty empire of one hundred and twenty provinces. There are only seven Provinces in this Dominion. Daniel gave the Empire clean government. His bitterest enemies said: "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." His accounts were straight. There was neither boodle nor bribery during his Premiership. How long could Daniel hold office as Premier of this Dominion? We doubt very much if he could find a constituency in all Canada. The whole tribe of boodlers would go dead against him. Being a total abstainer he would have to fight against the liquor interest. Not being a Patron he could not get the Patron vote if there happened to be a Patron in the field. It is pretty hard to say just how the Tories and Grats and McCarthys would look on the candidature of a man like Daniel. Most likely they would say he was a very good man, but not a practical politician suited to the exigencies of Canadian political life.

We imagine we see a score of readers look up and mutter something about irreverence. Talk right out please, and say it is irreverent to speak of statesmen like Moses and Daniel in connection with Canadian politics. That is exactly what we want you to say. Now we have you in the very corner we want to have you in. Why does it seem to you like irreverence to connect the name of a legislator of the character of Moses, and the name of a premier like Daniel with the government of Canada? Were they not good men, wise rulers, great leaders, high class statesmen? Is it because Moses was such a good man that you cannot bear to think of him in connection with the public life of Canada? Then so

much the worse for Canada. Is it because Daniel was such a pure, honest, lofty statesman that you feel shocked to hear his name mentioned in connection with the Premiership of this country? Then so much the worse for the premiership. A good citizen might be proud and grateful for such a Premier as Daniel, but you are shocked to hear his name mentioned in connection with the office. Why?

Nobody would be shocked if the name of the political trimmer, Pilate, were mentioned in connection with our political life. Nobody would say it was irreverent to name Felix as a candidate.

Why feel hurt at the names of Daniel and Moses and take kindly to such names as Pilate and Felix. Is there any better way of making an estimate of the political morality of the country than by asking what the electors would think of such statesmen as Moses and Daniel? Perhaps our politicians are quite as good men as the country will stand.

THE ELDER MODERATOR QUESTION.

BY A NEW TESTAMENT ELDER.

In the end of my last article on this question I referred to objections that have been urged against the appointment of Elder Moderators, and that might be urged against the illogical and unscriptural discrimination against such appointments, which have been so general in the past. Some of the former I shall state and answer, and some of the latter I shall state, and leave for some one else to answer from Scripture or reason, if possible, before I vote to censure the Presbyteries that have ventured to depart from the use and wont of the Church, in this matter. It has been objected against the appointment of Elder-Moderators—

(1.) That "the office of Moderator involves the exercise of functions belonging exclusively to the ministry, e.g., the offering of the ordination prayer, with the laying on of hands." This is not admitted. Ordination is an act of Presbytery, of which elders are equally members with ministers. The Moderator in such a case is but the executive officer, or spokesman of the Presbytery, and might as appropriately be a ruling as a teaching elder. But though it were granted, it were a simple matter on such occasions for the Elder-Moderator to request a ministerial brother to officiate, *pro tempore*. Who ever heard of an objection to a zealous and efficient elder laboring in word and doctrine, on occasion, which is a far more distinctively ministerial function than merely presiding in session or Presbytery.

(2.) "Ruling elders have no right to administer sentences of suspension, etc." Why not? The ministerial Moderator has the right only because he is Moderator. It is not a personal but an official act. Any other view is of the essence of prelacy, against which Presbyterianism is a scriptural and perpetual protest.

(3.) "If elders were appointed Moderators there would be differences of opinion as to what they might do and what not, leading to discussion and possibly unseemly divisions." But if elders have a right to the office they have a right to do in it whatever they are qualified to do, and Presbyteries would not be apt to appoint any to the office about whose qualifications for their duties there was any doubt, as is sometimes done now, under the rule of "ministers only, and they by rotation," so as to preserve the parity of Presbyters, overlooking the fact that ruling elders are New Testament Presbyters, or then they have no place by right in Presbytery.

(4.) "Moderators in conducting and giving official authority to proceedings need the highest qualifications and experience." Granted, but this principle logically followed would rule out a great many ministers as ineligible, and would result in the appointment, as permanent Moderators, of the most highly qualified and experienced ministers.

Along this line we should not have to go far before we should find a fully-fledged Presbyterian Bishop. Moderators of Synods would be Arch-bishops. The Moderator of the General Assembly, Primate—a sort of petty Presbyterian Pope.

(5.) "It would lead to unseemly emulation and rivalry between elders and ministers." Surely not! But, if so, what must be the feelings of the elders under the rule that excludes them. And, perhaps after all, it might not be a disadvantage if some of elders were somewhat more ambitious of "purchasing to themselves a good degree," and some of the ministers somewhat less like Diotrephes of old.

(6.) Dr Hodge says: "This new doctrine must, either in virtue of its making elders bishops and ministers, and yet setting the pastor up as their official superior, issue in prelacy; or, in virtue of making both elders and ministers in the same sense Presbyters and representatives of the people, issue in congregational independency." But, the so-called "new"—but scriptural—doctrine does not set up the minister as the official superior of the elders. That is just what the opposite doctrine, and the present almost universal practice of the Church, does. Both ministers and elders are now, as a matter of fact, representatives of the people, and in precisely the same sense; as both are called to office by the people, and both have precisely equal authority over the people and equal authority to speak for them, though it must be admitted that ministers sometimes arrogate to themselves powers and privileges to which their position gives them no scriptural claim.

Allow me now, very briefly, in conclusion, to state some objections to the theory of Church government which holds that there are two orders of elders, the one, higher than the other, whose ordination is different, and who alone are entitled, regardless of natural or acquired qualifications, to preside in the courts of the Church.

Those who hold this theory may be fairly asked to point out the passage of scripture, which, by a correct exegesis, supports it. It cannot be done. Your correspondent Mr. Calder, quotes many authorities for the present practise of the Church, and cites many passages of Scripture, but not one of them enunciates the principle, or formulates the doctrine, of the official superiority of one class of elders. The theory is of the essence of Prelacy, which has never failed to foster natural pride and ambition, and to corrupt the Church.

The policy of discrimination is illogical and inconsistent, in that it permits and encourages elders to preach, without special instruction, and even without license, while it forbids them to preside, even in a meeting of Session—the local Presbytery—for the transaction of even routine business, which is surely far less responsible work than preaching.

This, in the eyes of many, is the strongest objection to the elder-moderator, viz., that if an elder may be Moderator of Presbytery, why not of Session, and of Synod and General Assembly? Why not? Elders are chosen to rule, to exercise spiritual authority and jurisdiction, but by making a ministerial Moderator essential to a meeting of Session the elders in a congregation are, in the absence of a minister to preside, practically deposed, *pro tem*, because, having no personal authority, they can act officially only, and then only when met in Session. And thus, this honourable and scriptural office is made void in all our vacancies, through our traditional prelatic predilections and practice, practically paralyzing the Session. A Session without a Moderator is no Session, and one with an outsider and stranger, as Moderator *pro tem*, is practically worthless for the transaction of any but mere routine business.

What a reflection on our eldership such a rule is! An elder, however wise in counsel or ripe in judgment, may not preside, but a mere novice fresh from college, who may never have been at a meeting of Session in his life, who knows nothing of the elders,

and as little of the business to be done, must be brought, even if it be twenty or thirty miles, before a meeting can be held, practically depriving every elder in a vacancy of his office, except when the "clerical" Moderator is available.

The theory breaks down at every turn. It illogically insists on a permanent Clerical Moderator of the local Presbytery the Session while steadfastly resisting the appointment of a permanent Moderator of Presbytery, Synod, or Assembly.

Where in scripture is there a trace of the ministerial Moderator of the local or larger Presbytery? Mr. Calder's array of Scripture passages is very imposing, but any one who will refer to them will find them very disappointing, and utterly inconclusive. He surely doesn't think they settle the question! Doubtless when a local or district Presbytery met in the first days a Moderator was appointed, for men then had as good common-sense as now, and there was no need that there should be explicit command for the appointment of so necessary an officer, but that the Moderator was always one who labored in word and doctrine there is not a tittle of scriptural evidence. James doesn't say, "Is any such among you? Let him call for the minister and elders; or let him request the minister to call a meeting of Session," but, "Let him call for the elders of the Church." Paul doesn't send to the minister at Ephesus to call a meeting of his Session at Miletus, or to come to Miletus to meet him and bring his elders with him. There is no hint of clerical superiority or supremacy.

But enough! There is no practical danger to the Church in the appointment of elder-moderators, either in Session or Presbytery, Synod or Assembly, but great possible advantage. The less that is made of the office of elder, and the more reluctance than shown to confer upon elders the honor and authority that are their due, the less may be expected of them, in the line of their own proper work. The past policy of the Church suggests an answer to the question, so often asked, why so many of the elders of our Church are content to be mere perfunctory officials, whose principle functions are to agree with the minister in Session, and to pass the elements, in the observance of the Lord's Supper.

It is to be hoped that the Synod of Toronto and Kingston will follow the lead of the Synod of Hamilton and London, in referring the whole question of dealing with Presbyteries that have appointed elder-moderators to the General Assembly, and that the Assembly will be content to continue the lower courts in possession of their scriptural rights, from which they have not yet been debarred in Canada by any specific legislation.

SEEKING A CALL.—III.

BY WANDERER.

ON THE WAY TO PRESBYTERY.

The congregation of Loughope and Wainwell had been vacant for more than a year. During that time the good people had held a large number of excellent ministers, many of whom were without a charge and anxious for a settlement. Notwithstanding this fact the people imagined that no person would suit them except the Rev. Mr. G——, of the busy little town of M——. Mr. G—— had many things in his favor. He was quite young, recently married, and had been ordained and inducted in M—— less than six months previously. After due deliberation, therefore, in which the thoughts and feelings of the people of M—— were scarcely considered, a call was extended to the Rev. Mr. G—— and representatives were appointed to prosecute it before the Presbytery. On the morning of the day upon which Presbytery met, the representatives of the congregation were found occupying some half dozen seats in one corner of the car, discussing in a very happy mood the events of the past few months, all unconscious of the fact that there was "a call among them takin' notes."