

tioned in the New Testament. On the other hand, the Church of Scotland and the American churches, at least, declare the office of minister and elder to be distinct and, in practice, they sharply define their respective functions: They have different qualifications; they are chosen by different bodies; elders are ordained by a minister, and ministers by the Presbytery. Elders cannot take part in the ordination of ministers, nor can they administer the sacraments. As a rule it is not competent for elders to preside in any of the ecclesiastical Courts.

The term "*Ruling Elder*" is equally applicable to the whole bench of elders who, with the moderator, collectively exercise discipline when required, by admonition, suspension from church privileges, or excommunication, as the case may be; and they restore to privileges. The duties of the Session as further defined in the Canadian book of Polity, is "to receive applicants for admission into the church; to grant certificates of membership to members leaving the congregation; to care for the religious instruction of the young, including the oversight of Sabbath Schools; to determine the hours and order of public worship; to appoint the time of the dispensation of the Lord's Supper, and make provision for it; to appoint congregational fasts or thanksgivings; to appoint the times and modes of making special collections, and where there are no deacons, to provide for the necessities of the poor; to call congregational meetings; to examine and judge of the qualifications of persons elected to the eldership and the deaconship; to receive and judge of petitions from the members; to transmit papers to the Presbytery; and in general, to superintend the religious interests of the congregation." Individually, "each elder should keep a list of the communicants and adherents residing within his district. He should cultivate special acquaintance with them, visiting, counseling, encouraging or warning them as may be required." The term *Representative Elder* applies properly to one elected annually by the Session to represent it in the Presbytery and Synod. It is improperly applied to the other members of the Session who are not in the strict sense of the word *representatives* of the laity—else they would require to go back periodically to their constituents for re-election, whereas the *Ruling Elder* is a life appointment. An exception to this rule, however, is found in the practice of the Church in the United States (North) where provision was made in 1875 for the election of elders for a limited term, when any particular congregation by a vote of its members in full communion prefer so to do. But even here the *office* is held to be perpetual, though the exercise of its functions may cease. The elder whose term of office has expired is, in effect, an elder

emeritus. He has no longer a seat in the Session, but may by appointment of the Session or Presbytery become a member of any of the courts above the Session.

The subject of the eldership was introduced to the notice of the Second General Council at Philadelphia by a paper read by the Rev. C. H. Read, D.D., of Richmond, Va. In the course of the discussion which followed, Principal MacVicar, of the Presbyterian College, Montreal, said:—"It appears to me quite evident that as Presbyterians we are inconsistent in the position which we hold in relation to what are called *Ruling Elders*. First of all, in arguments we are accustomed to establish, triumphantly, as we think, that Presbyters and Bishops—the *Episcopoi* and the *Presbyteroi* are identical. Then we turn round with amazing facility and inconsistency, and strip certain of these *Presbyteroi* of the power of the *Episcopoi*, and refuse to allow them to exercise the functions of the Bishop. To my mind, at least, the evidence upon which we make the distinction between the two classes of elders, Teaching and Ruling, is insufficient." The whole question is one worth looking into, and forasmuch as the Council appointed a committee to obtain information in regard to the election and nomination of *Ruling Elders* in the various branches of the Presbyterian Church, and the functions and duties pertaining to the office, and to report to the next meeting, it is likely that the attention of the churches will be directed to this subject in a way that may tend to secure greater *efficiency*: those who are called to the important and honourable office of the eldership. In the meantime we must not lose sight of the fact that *there is* an order of office-bearers in the Church, rightly or wrongly called "elders." In the Presbyterian Church in Canada there are *four thousand four hundred and ten* elders. Such a body of men, imbued with the spirit of their office, recognizing their high responsibilities, instructed and qualified to discharge with *fidelity* the duties expected of them, may, and ought to be a power in the Church.

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