

A. There were elders who ruled, and elders who taught and ruled, as your passage proves. But why do you assume that the elders ordained by Paul and Barnabas were the "ruling elders only?" They were teaching elders in Ephesus. (Acts xx. 17-28.) The Cretan elders were to be able "to exhort and convince the gainsayers." (Titus i. 9.) An elder or bishop was to be "apt to teach." (1 Tim. iii. 2.) Peter and John call themselves elders. The Plymouth idea of elders is quite unscriptural.

Q. But all the officers mentioned in Eph. iv. 11 are passed away?

A. No; the extraordinary officers are, yet their epistles remain to us. The apostles thus remain in the church. 1. This very church of Ephesus had only elders or bishops when Paul met them at Miletus (Acts xx. 17-28)—and no other class of officers. Thirty years after the epistle was written there was an "angel" or presiding minister at Ephesus. (Rev. ii. 1.) 2. Your argument proves too much, for it proves that "prophets" and "teachers" are gone too; and yet you hold that all God's people are prophets and teachers. Let us calmly consider the point. You hold that all are alike passed away. Carry out your principle. In 1 Cor. xii. 8-10, your favourite proof-text, we read—"To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another, the gift of healing by the same Spirit; to another, the work of miracles; to another, prophecy." Now, all these are passed away, or none. But it is admitted that the "working of miracles" and "gifts of healing" are passed away; therefore the "word of wisdom," "the word of knowledge," and "faith" itself, are passed away. Your passage proves too much, and therefore proves nothing. 3. Peter says the elders were "to feed the flock of God—until when? Till the Chief Shepherd should appear." (1 Peter v. 4.) 4. Show us a single plain command of Scripture for setting aside the ministry. 5. Is it not a fact that ministry in our sense continued onward from apostolic days? In the days of John the last of the apostles—there were angels or presiding ministers in the seven churches of Asia. This was about the year 95 or 96, A.D. The epistle of Paul to Ephesus was written between 63 and 65, A.D. Clement the companion of Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, blames them for ejecting certain ministers.

Q. But you have no authority for ordination. The apostles ordained elders, but you have no right to ordain them.

A. Timothy was ordained by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, or eldership, who were uninspired or ordinary officers. (1 Tim. iv. 14.) 2. If the apostles, and those whom they deputed, were the only persons who ordained elders, and if ordination has passed away with them, then, as the apostles, and those whom they deputed, are the only persons known to have baptized converts, the ordinance of baptism is also passed away with them. Baptism and ordination thus stand or fall together. But baptism remains; therefore ordination remains.

Q. But Paul speaks of all prophesying in 1 Cor. xiv. 31.

A. 1. You have just told us that the apostles have passed away leading us to suppose that there are none now to occupy their place. Inspired men have ceased. The special gifts of the Spirit have ceased. Yet you have the boldness to refer to this chapter of miraculous gifts—*gifts that have admittedly passed away* as well as the apostles—to justify your Plymouth idea of every man's right to preach! Surely, according to your argument about apostles and elders having passed away, without leaving any successors in the Church—they having been miraculously and specially guided by the Spirit—the *Corinthian prophets can have no successors either*. Your argument, if effectual against our ministry, is equally effectual against your own. 2. It is admitted that Paul spoke of a separate ministry in his first epistle to Timothy (iii.) Yet this epistle was written *six years* after his 1st epistle to the Corinthians. Is it not significant that the brethren—the most sectarian and divisive and quarrelsome sect in Christendom—should found their ideas of ministry upon the practice of a Church like that of Corinth, which was remarkable for precisely these three qualities? There was even a party "of Christ" at Corinth, like the "one assembly of God in London" founded by Mr. Darby.

Q. But if there were elders at Corinth why did not Paul write to them? He wrote to the "saints." (1 Cor. i. 1.)

A. I ask, why did he not write to the elders in his epistle to the Hebrews? For (Heb. xiii. 7-17) he said, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken to you the word of God; whose faith follow." Also, "Obey them who have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls as they that must give account." There is not a word of elders in the epistles to the Galatians; yet Peter—(compare 1 Peter i. 1 with Peter v. 1)—says there were elders among them. Again, why, did Christ write to the angels of the Seven Churches, and not to the Churches themselves? There were prophesying in the Thessalonian Church, where there were elders. (1 Thess. v. 12.) There were elders at Ephesus, and yet Paul does not write to them in his epistle.

Q. But surely all those Christians whom Paul mentions by name as "fellow-labourers" were really preachers?

A. I answer—1. This proves nothing against us. 2. It is evident from the case of Prisca and other godly women who laboured with the apostle—(Phil. iv. 3)—that there were many labourers in a private way, as women were not allowed to speak in the church. The word "fellow-labourer," applied to a male, cannot therefore imply public ministry.

Q. But we are all teachers now: we are a holy priesthood?

A. So were the Jews—"Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests." (Exod. xix. 6.) The Jewish princes taught. (2 Chron. xvii. 7-9; see Mal. iii. 16.) Yet there was a settled ministry among the Jews.

Q. But Paul in 2nd Timothy gave up the idea of ministry which he had enforced in 1st Timothy, on account of the errors to which it had led?

A. Where is your proof? This is one of your baseless fancies. It is an insult to the Holy Ghost to say such a thing. Paul refers to ministry most pointedly in 2 Tim. ii. 2.

Q. But we object to a man-made ministry?

A. So do we. The Holy Ghost must first give a man the call; then the people recognise his gifts, and the elders together ratify the popular choice. If the Holy Ghost appoints the ministry among the Brethren, how is it that they have false teachers, for they are separated from each other by doctrines? Plymouthism is a thing of perpetual schisms. And who are to decide upon false teaching? The people!—and they, forsooth, can set aside the man that is taught by the Holy Ghost!

Q. Who can gainsay a minister whom the Lord sends?

A. Of course, no one, if the minister is known to be such. But how is he to be known?

Q. Every man in the assembly has a right to speak?

A. He has or he has not. If he has, and talks heresy or in a way distasteful to the assembly, would he be silenced or not? If not, would there not be a confusion as well as connivance at heresy? If he would be silenced, you have the intervention of men, and you gainsay ministers who are sent by the Lord! Thus you have the concurrence of the assembly established, and this is tantamount to appointment or ordination.

Q. But you deny the presidency of the Holy Ghost?

A. It is not easy to understand what you mean. We know that Christ promised to be in the midst of his people when they are gathered in his name, although he nowhere says he is to be their president or pastor; but there is no passage of Scripture where the Holy Ghost is said to be the president of the assemblies, or that he is present in any other sense than he is in the hearts of the believers. But what do you make of the presidency of the Spirit when members preach heresy? Does any other member dare to take the seat of presidency and call them to order? Your idea of ministry is wholly unscriptural, fosters self-conceit, leads to endless confusion, and breeds perpetual schisms.

SUPPORT OF THE MINISTRY.

Q. Do the Brethren not object to a fixed support given to the ministry?

A. Yes. 1. But Paul clearly settles the question of support. "They who preach the Gospel are to live by the Gospel." (1 Cor. ix. 14; 1 Tim. v. 17, 18; Gal. vi. 6.) 2. Plymouth teachers do not object to receive support, if it comes privately and in no stipulated proportion, as if, like Elijah, they were fed directly by Providence. But the ordinary mode of supporting the ministry is proved to be both Scriptural and reasonable. Christ says:—"The labourer is worthy of his hire"—a certain specified sum paid publicly—not whatever his employer pleases to give him. "Whosoever a warfare at any time at his own charges?" The soldier is paid publicly a fixed sum. "Who planteth a vineyard and eateth not of the fruit thereof?" (1 Cor. ix.) Often the vinekeepers farmed out their vineyards at a certain fixed sum.

Q. But the ministry should not be supported except by believers? The Jewish law was: "Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore or the price of a dog into the House of the Lord thy God?" (Deut. xxi. 18.)

A. This was a command for Jews; but follow it out. Do the Brethren mean to say that none but converted Jews contributed to the support of the tabernacle? All Jews had to give something; but on Plymouth principles they must all have been converted. Did Ezra object to a heathen king beautifying the house of the Lord? (Ezra vii. 11-28.) Are you quite sure that that Corinthian donation which Paul pled for on behalf of the Christians of Judea did not come—at least some part of it—from those errorists and sectaries whom he so severely condemns, some of whom even denied the resurrection. (1 Cor. xv.)

THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

Q. What is the Plymouth doctrine on this subject?

A. That the Christian Sabbath is not of Divine authority, and that all the seven days are equally secular or equally sacred.

Q. Is not the Sabbath an exclusively Jewish institution?

A. Not at all. It existed before the giving of the law. It is mentioned in the 16th chapter of Exodus. The Decalogue is in the 20th chapter. What did the Lord mean when he said: "How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?" (Exod. xvi. 28.) The existence of the Sabbath is here pre-supposed.

Q. When was it instituted?

A. In Paradise: "And the Lord blessed the seventh day and sanctified it."—Gen. ii. 3.

Q. But this does not say that man is to observe it: it is merely that God blessed it.

A. What else does it say? Why was it sanctified, except for man? In the fourth commandment man is enjoined to rest on the Sabbath, because God blessed and hallowed it. (Exod. xx. 11.) The words "hallowed" and "sanctified" in the two places are the renderings of the same Hebrew word. Hence the word in Exodus determines the meaning of the word in Genesis.

Q. But Christ never alluded to it in His Sermon on the Mount?

A. Did he not? Surely it was included in that law which "he came not to destroy but to fulfil." He did not allude specifically to other commandments. But he did refer to the Sabbath again and again in his public teachings.

Q. But why have you altered the day from the seventh to the first day of the week?

A. This is a question for you to settle with the apostles. They made the change. It was a change predicted. (Psalm cxviii. 24.) The change did not affect the obligation of the Sabbath. They were inspired: therefore they must have known what was essential to the Sabbath law.

Q. But a moral law is unchangeable in its very nature?

A. The fourth commandment is both moral and positive. It admits, as Christ showed, of works of necessity and mercy: yet these are not specifically included in it. When the disciples rubbed the ears of corn on the Sabbath, Christ did not admit that they had broken the law, but maintained by reference to the Old Testament that *these exceptions were part of the law*. (Matt. xii. 1-5; 1 Sam. xxi. 6.)

(To be continued.)

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

REASONS WHY THE GOSPEL MINISTRY SHOULD BE LIBERALLY SUSTAINED.

While much has been heard of late of the failures of merchants, bankers, etc., many of which resulted from dishonest speculations, or profligacy, many ministers of Christ, who neither practise speculation nor indulgence in wasteful expenditure, have been permitted to suffer during the financial embarrassment through which the country is passing. Very many forget that if a minister's salary be not paid and promptly too, he must necessarily suffer, as in most cases it is barely sufficient to meet his current expenses. A double injustice is thus often done to the Gospel Ministry. During times of general prosperity and high prices, they receive no more salary than is barely sufficient to subsist upon, and are then scarcely able to pay their way, instead of being enabled like others who are industrious and economical to lay up something for the future. And when a period of financial embarrassment comes, those who are not under the guidance of scriptural principle, take advantage of the cry "hard times," and fail to pay the share of the promised salary of the minister, and thus cruelly inflict painful anxiety and suffering upon a class of men, who least of all deserve to suffer by causes to which they have perhaps contributed less than any other class of men. Many of those who thus fail to keep the most solemn obligation into which they have entered, do not materially curtail their expenses for matters of self-indulgence, but spend far more on tobacco, the dangerous excitement of the intoxicating cup,—or upon parties of pleasure, than they devote to the service of the Giver of all their mercies. Others who do not indulge in those wasteful habits—because they are too close and avaricious thus to spend their beloved money, take advantage of the crisis, quietly to save all they can, when it is the popular cry—and of course they begin with the cause of God.

Now before men begin to curtail expenses by withholding God's portion, they should consider that the source of all their prosperity is the blessing of the Lord, "it maketh rich and He addeth no sorrow"—and that the chief cause of financial difficulty, may be their already withholding from God that which of right belongs to Him. "God claims the silver and the gold, and cattle upon a thousand hills." Hag. ii. 8; and Ezekiel xvi.

We should remember that we hold all we possess of God, and for the advancement of His glory in the various ways most likely to attain that object—such as faithfully labouring to provide honourably for our households, and for the cause of God in its several departments—under the latter head we should place first the support of the gospel ministry in our own community or congregation. This we should do liberally if we expect a liberal return of blessing upon our basket and our store, upon our household and upon our souls. The divine mode of procedure in this matter is this—"them that honor me I will honor." May not therefore the avaricious spirit of many professing Christians during the year of plenty, in withholding from God a large proportion of what was his due, be the primary moral cause of the present financial crisis? What saith the scriptures with reference to this principle? "Is it time for you, O ye to dwell in ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?"—Now therefore saith the Lord, consider your ways ye have sown much and bring in little; ye looked for much and it came to little, and when ye brought it home I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts, because of mine house which is waste,—and ye run every man to his own house. Therefore the heaven, over you, is stayed from dew; and the earth is stayed from fruit"—Hag. i. 4, 6, 9, 10. Again in chap. ii.—God promises that from the day of the laying of the foundation of the temple—"from this day will I bless you." Now in this scripture, Israel are reminded that they did not perform their duty to God's cause. He withheld His blessing, which was the cause of their national calamities. The same principle is set forth in other passages of scripture, as Gen. xxiv. 35; Prov. xxviii. 20, 22; Ps. cxii. 1, 13; Phil. iv. 18, 19, Gal. vi. 6, 10; 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10, 17, 19. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth—there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty."—The divine blessing, and consequent prosperity is promised to those