

Israel was not. It belonged to the office of priest though it was not sacerdotal in its nature; so under this dispensation it is an official act and belongs exclusively to those who fill the office of the gospel ministry to pronounce it upon the people. But are we not all "Kings and priests unto God?" yes, "A royal priesthood," not, however, to offer propitiatory sacrifices, but "spiritual sacrifices," the sacrifices of their bodies, souls, affections, prayers, praises and alms. All this does not include any of the functions of the office of the Gospel ministry and to use this passage as proof that the functions of this office are invested in the people is to wrest it from its connection and use it for a purpose for which it was never given. And I hold the doctrine stated in the Confession of Faith in relation to the proper dispensing of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's supper to be founded upon and agreeable to the word of God, namely, that "*neither of which may be dispensed by any but a minister of the word lawfully ordained.*" Chap. xxvii., Sec. 4. The same assembly that laid down this doctrine which is subscribed by all our ministers and elders has, also in their form of government and in defining the functions of the office of the Gospel ministry, stated that one of these is "to bless the people from God, Numbers vi. 23, 24, 25, 26, Compared with Rev. i. 4, when the same blessings, and persons from whom they come, are expressly mentioned, Is. lxvi. 21, where under the names of priests and Levites to be continued under the Gospel, are meant evangelical pastors who, therefore, are by office to bless the people." The people have rights and privileges, but the functions of the ministerial office have not been invested in them. To hold that all are "Kings and priests unto God" as that any of them who choose may exercise the functions of the Gospel ministry is the doctrine of the Plymouth Brethren for they hold that all Christians have the right of ministry.

4. Further, it seems to follow from its nature and design that it ought not to be used on all occasions and every where when even Christians are convened for any purpose other than the worship of God. It seems to me to be an abuse of it to use it for the purpose of closing meetings of committees, or of societies and still more so when used for closing socials and concerts. The more its use is limited to the assemblies of God's people convened for His worship the better. I always feel reluctant to use it on any other occasion and often when I have been asked to pronounce it at the close of the meeting of some society or committee or unimportant occasion, I have offered instead thereof a short prayer. This I consider to be far more appropriate on such occasions.

5. I still, I remark it ought to be regarded as a solemn act of religious worship. "It was a most reverential ceremony" says a writer, "for the Jewish high-priest, when he officially pronounced the blessing of Jehovah, in His name, upon the people, and for the people, when they stood to receive that blessing. No solemnity of the Jewish ritual could excel that of publicly blessing and being blessed in the name of the Lord. No profounder reverence for God could be felt or expressed than that of the ancient Patriarch, when he commended his children and friends to Him, and with glowing confidence in His holy and faithful covenant, pronounced His blessing on them. And when can a Christian minister or a Christian assembly ever have a frame of more intense and worshipful devotion, than while pronouncing and receiving the blessing of the Lord? Whenever in the course of public worship it may occur, it is one of the most solemn and expressive parts of our reverential service, and may be one of the most acceptable and useful." This should teach us how it should be pronounced and received. With what reverence and solemnity on the part of the minister, ministering for God, should he pronounce it, and on the other hand what respect and reverence should the people manifest when they stand up to receive it? Too often is it hurriedly and apparently indifferently, if not carelessly pronounced, and too often it is thoughtlessly and undevoutly received, coming as it does in the order of service at the close, there is too often manifested an uneasiness to retire, or preparation is being made to leave the place of meeting while the benediction is being pronounced. But if it is a means of grace and one in the proper use of which we may obtain special blessings surely it should be attended upon with great reverence and attention, with expectation of receiving the blessing it is intended to convey to the faithful. The Jewish

benediction was an eminent means of grace to the Hebrews." When the priest blessed the people in the name of the Lord, the Lord blessed them. "They shall put my name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them." When the congregation, by a public and united act of reception, took thus upon themselves the name of the Lord and solemnly owned Him as their God, He took them into closer union with Himself, by the quickened working of the Spirit within them. When a Christian congregation observes the ordinance of Baptism, in relation to one of their members, they express a public recognition of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, as their God, and receive, through the sacraments, not only for the member baptized, but for all the faithful present, a quickened spiritual operation which they would not otherwise enjoy. The same is true of the observance of the other sacrament and of all other exercises of pious faith, not distinctly sacramental, contribute, according to their measure, to the same end of spiritual edification, and in the same way. And certainly, not one of the least non-sacramental means of enlivening the spiritual operation in the heart of the Church, may be the devout use of this Christian and apostolic benediction.

PRESBYTERIANISM.

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In 1 Tim. v. 17, there are two classes of elders spoken of; the elders that rule and the elders that also labour in word and doctrine. Dr. Whittaker, a learned Episcopalian, and several other writers of the Church of England, admit that this passage refers to two sorts of elders, ruling and teaching. In 1 Pet. v. 1, Peter speaks of himself as an elder, when addressing the elders of the churches, because the higher office includes the lower. In John xviii. 36, our Lord speaks of His Church as His spiritual kingdom, and it is evident from His word that as King of Zion He has appointed a government for His Church, distinct from the civil magistrate, who is to rule merely over civil society. In the New Testament the term church is used to denote the Christians that assemble in any given place; the Christians of a city, though meeting in many places; the Christians of a province or country; and finally the Christians of the whole world, or the universal Church of Christ. Col. iv. 15; Acts xi. 22; Acts vii. 38; 1 Cor. xii. 28; Eph. v. 25. The Apostles speak of a government as existing in this spiritual kingdom of Christ, and as being appointed by Him. 1 Cor. xii. 28; Eph. iv. 7-12; pastors, teachers, helps, governments, as well as the extraordinary offices of apostles, prophets and evangelists for the planting of the Church. By a careful comparison of these and other passages it becomes evident that there ought to be elders whose special duty is to rule—as well as pastors who both teach and rule—in every Christian church. The sacred historian in describing the planting of churches in many lands by the apostles and evangelists, tells in Acts xiv. 23, according to the literal rendering of the original, that they appointed or chose them by suffrage, or by the whole members voting for them by the uplifted right hand, elders in every Church; "and having prayed they commended them to the Lord on whom they believed." Paul and Barnabas had been preaching the Gospel at various places and made converts in these places, and now they organize them into congregations or churches. And how did they do this? By appointing over them men of their own choice as elders of the two classes specified in the text.

(1) It is evident from this that a plurality of elders was appointed for every church by apostolic authority, which implies that it was by the authority of the Head of the Church, for it was He that "set" or appointed all these offices. He was forty days with the Apostles after His resurrection, giving them instruction concerning their whole work, the doctrines they were to teach and the government they were to set up in His Church. In Acts xx. 7, we are told that Paul sent for "the elders of the Church" of Ephesus—this shows that there were several elders in that church. In Titus i. 5, Paul says that he left Titus in Crete to appoint elders in every city—not one but many elders. In James v. 14, the sick are directed to call for the elders of the Church, not for one elder, proving that there was a plurality of elders in every congregation. Now all these elders could not have been pastors in every Church. The churches were generally so small that they did not need more than one pastor, and

there was for a time but one church in each place, yet several elders, showing that this was the Scriptural order. This is also proved by the distinction made between pastors and elders in Rom. xii. 4-8, and 1 Cor. xii. 28. There are here three permanent offices in the Church recognized, teachers or pastors, governments or elders, and helps or deacons—to attend to the financial affairs of the Church. (2) The same principle may be argued from the necessity of the case. If Christ's Church is to be taught well there must be pastors or teachers. If this were not the case the churches would soon fall to pieces, and professors would soon fall away from their professions of faith in Christ. Those who deny a regular pastorate are enabled to keep together, simply because they reside in a Christian atmosphere, under the influence of regular Christian churches. But let these be set aside, and soon either the necessity of appointing a class of men set apart to superintend the work would appear, or the cause would fall to pieces altogether. God, who is wiser than man, has set or appointed men to teach in His Church. So also if Christ's Church is to be ruled well there ought to be men set apart for the purpose. The necessity of rulers has been found in all human societies. Many, however, have a very inadequate idea of the importance of ruling well God's house. Ministers entering on their work often think only of the great work of preaching, and that they should devote all their care and strength to this work. They often shrink from the work of ruling and discipline in Christ's house. But when God blesses cases of discipline to the highest spiritual benefit of the parties concerned, then the minister of Christ gets his eyes opened to see that if preaching be an ordinance of Christ, so also is church discipline, or ruling in and over Christ's house. (This was the case with the devoted McChesney.) They are then led to feel deeply that both are of God, the two keys which Christ has committed to His Church—the key of doctrine, by which we unlock the treasures of the Word, and the key of discipline, by which we open or shut the sealing ordinances of Christianity. Both are Christ's gifts to the Church and neither can be resigned without sin.

That Church will flourish best that is ruled best as well as that in which Christ is held forth as the only and all-sufficient Saviour of sinners. The minister cannot rule the Church well alone. If he is to succeed well in his work he must devote a great part of his time to study, prayer and meditation. According to the excellent McChesney the great fault of this generation is that they wish ministers to be far too much in public, constantly visiting; and they think it an easy matter to expound the Word of God and preach the Gospel. So it might be, if, like some leaders of the people, ministers never got beyond the A B C of Christianity, and never showed their people how to go on to perfection in knowledge and in Christian attainment. The people find fault with the minister if he is not very often at their house, while at the same time he is very likely giving far more time than he ought to visiting, to the hindrance of his special work. Mr. Moody told the ministers in Toronto that they should not visit any, that Mr. Spurgeon, the greatest pastor of the age, does not visit any. He has 350 visitors, men and women, who report to him weekly. A minister's chief duty is to give himself to reading or to the study of the Divine oracles and works illustrative of the Bible, as Paul directed Timothy to do—that he might bring forth out of them "things new and old," that his "lips may keep knowledge," and that he may ascertain what is really the mind of the Spirit in the Word, and set forth that and not his own views or notions as is done by too many so-called teachers of the people. This is the Scriptural rule for preaching as it was done by Ezra (Neh. v. 8), and by the Apostles. If this is to be done properly it requires much time for study. The mornings, at least, should be held sacred for study, if the afternoons, or four or five of them be given to visiting the sick, etc. Presbyterian ministers have always been noted for the thorough study, and full and Scriptural exposition of the Word. Only thus can we follow the example of the greatest of human preachers, the Apostle Paul, in "dividing all the counsel of God," and in "rightly dividing the word of truth," and in giving to each and all such portions of spiritual food as they require. If, therefore, the Church is to be ruled well, the ministers must be assisted by the ruling elders whom God has set apart for this purpose to lighten his burden and to aid the pastor in his work, even as elders were appointed