

and, as it is said in the 23rd verse, "they (Paul and Barnabas) had ordained them Elders in every church." Again in the xx. chap. 28th verse, we read—"Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers" or Elders. The third is Paul writing to Titus, i. ch. 5th verse—"For this cause left I thee in crete that thou shouldest set in order things that are wanting, and ordain Elders in every city as I had appointed thee." Now Paul was inspired. Barnabas had been specially separated by the Spirit, and Titus was sent by an Apostle on a special mission. Timothy had a gift, (ii. Tim. 1st and 6th.) Only Apostles had power to bestow gifts. (See Acts, viii. chap. 17th, 20th and 21st verses.) Besides, the Apostle Paul says to Titus—"I had appointed thee" to appoint or "ordain Elders." Thus the conclusion is fairly drawn that only those the Holy Spirit inspired, or those appointed for the purpose by an inspired person, did appoint Elders, and men cannot alter the plan. Hence Paul could well say to the Elders at Ephesus—"The Holy Spirit has made you overseers." Therefore we have no means to appoint an Elder now scripturally.—no means to give one an official distinction among his Brethren in the church of Christ. He is "master and all ye are Brethren." It may be said there were Elders in the primitive church, so there were Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, (or as some say overseers,) and teachers; but Paul tells us these were "till we all come in the unity of the faith." They were extraordinary positions for extraordinary purposes and extraordinary times, and were to cease. If we follow up the inspired history it will be clearly seen that the office of Bishop was among those that were to cease. In the early churches, before God's word was fully revealed, spiritual gifts, or men having peculiar talents, were needed to direct the disciples, and the Holy Spirit could discern such men. Paul, an inspired man, or a Timothy, or a Titus, with spiritual gifts given by Paul, or some other Apostle could do the same. But after the disciples became more acquainted with the gospel plan of salvation, and had grown into settled communities after being scattered abroad. Peter says—(1st Peter, v. chap. 1st verse,)—"The Elders (old men) which are among you (disciples) I exhort, who also am an Elder, and so old in Christ's cause that I have been a witness of the

sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, (by election,) but willingly; not for filthy lucre, (no money for time spent,) but of a ready mind, (i. e. voluntarily, spontaneously.) Neither as being lords over (in margin overruling) God's heritage, but being examples to the flock, (not certainly by wandering about from house to house, tattlers, busybodies speaking things they ought not,) and when the chief shepherd shall appear ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away;" a much better reward than money, idleness, or such like things in this life. In the next verse (the 5th) he says, showing conclusively that it was old disciples he meant—"Likewise ye younger submit to the elder." Thus the old men in Christ were to take oversight, preside and see that things in the congregation were done decently and in order. In the chair the old man is just a brother—"all ye are brethren." He is submitted to as an old disciple who has thought much of God's word, and has had its precepts carefully stowed away in his mind, and consequently is able to speak of them, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. As Peter laid down the rule, there will be no envy about officers—no canvassing, as in the world, about elections creating discord and dissensions—no exercising authority over one another, but all under the authority of one Master, Christ, making unity, or in Paul's language, "all one." From such passages and arguments, it is clearly seen that Elders, as official persons, were only appointed by the Holy Spirit directly or by those appointed by Him to do so. The old men or old disciples are to preside or take the oversight of the congregations, and that is to be done without any expectation of pecuniary reward. If they visit, it must be done like any other christian would do it, that is as directed by James, i. chap. 27th verse, who says—"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this:—To visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction," not to get of their scanty store, but to give something more than to say put your trust in God; give me your means and I will talk and pray, which are correct in their place, but surely not the only things wanted by a poor widowed woman or a starving fatherless child. In this way will the church of the living God shew they are