

(as Timothy and Titus) in their stead to put in order the things wanting in the churches. But no man is now an Apostle—or has, received any special or divine authority or instruction—beyond what is revealed equally for the instruction and obedience of all churches; therefore for the pastor of one church, *to make it essential*, to go to another, to exercise authority in putting them in order, or to ordain other officers in other churches, as if he were in some sense an apostle, or the successor to the apostles, would be in my opinion as presumptuous as unscriptural.—But a christian should be able and willing to give a reason for all he does—not to dictate to others, but that they may test him by, and follow him as far as they find he follows the word of the Lord. Perhaps therefore the best answer I can make to your letter, and the clearest idea I can give you of the views on this subject, of the church I worship with, will be briefly to tell you the way which in a like case with yours, they deemed and followed as scriptural.

This Church being left some years ago without a pastor, and with none in their body at that time either willing, or qualified to take the office of pastor upon themselves—they determined to examine the New Testament prayerfully and considerately, how far it authorised them to act as a church and to worship God, in his stated ways and ordinances, without a regularly ordained minister. Without going into the detail or proof, it will be sufficient at this time to shew the result they came to. That they could find no intimation whatever in the Bible restricting or limiting any of the ordinances of the church to the presence, or absence of the Elders—so that in their providential and necessary absence they must cease to exist as a church, or omit or neglect any of the stated ordinances of the Lord. It seemed as clear from revelation as from the nature of the case, that churches must have existed and as such observed christian ordinances before Elders could be proved to be apt to teach, or be appointed as we read “in every Church,” Acts xiv. 23. Titus i. 5.—They learned also from the word, that whenever elders are referred to, in relation to the Churches, they are always referred to as being a plurality; never in one instance as a single elder in one church, still less one elder over many churches.—That to come together on the first day of the week—to remember the Lord in his own institution of the Supper, was apostolic custom, as revealed by divine statement and example.—That to exhort one another, was as literally and as plainly directed to the churches by the apostles, as it seems that they obeyed these precepts.—“Wherefore comfort one another with these words,” “comfort yourselves together and edify one another, *even as also ye do.*”—1 Thes. v.

The church therefore under the influence of the teaching of the word of God, continued, in the name and in the fear of the Lord, to assemble together on the first day of the week, to worship him in his instituted ways. They appointed three of the brethren, (thought to be most competent by the church) to preside in turn, to lead the

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