

Original Contributions.

"Ordained Elders."

Editor Christian Herald:

In the HERALD of Nov. 16th you make some statements and draw some conclusions with regard to "Elders and Bishops," which need attention.

1. You say, "We have long refrained from saying that of which we were fully convinced with reference to the proper designation of the ruling officers of the church. Custom is hard to overcome and prejudice is also on the side of custom, so that he who would indicate a different course of action, as better than that usually followed, has both custom and prejudice to meet." Happily true. For custom and prejudice are safe guards, and serve to hold the practice until we can see whether it is right.

2. You say, "Our proposition is that the ruling officers of the church are uniformly called Bishops in the New Testament and never Elders as an official title. Neither are the two terms used interchangeably, but each carries a separate meaning."

I do not like to differ from my brethren, especially when those brethren are editors, but then I am so constituted that I must speak out when I think a teaching is wrong, even though it be taught by my brother who is an editor. Let us see, then, if your proposition harmonizes with Acts 20: 17, 28, which reads: "From Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the *elders* of the church. And when they were come to him he said to them, (Italics mine) Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit has made you *overseers* (Bishops) to feed the church of God." My understanding of this is that the same persons denominated "*Elders*" (*presbuteroi*) in verse 17, are called *overseers* or Bishops (*episkopoi*) in verse 28, and that upon these same persons whom he called to him Paul enjoins to feed (be shepherds or pastors to) the church of God. The latter is true because *poimainein* "to feed" is the cognate verb of *poimen* a shepherd or pastor. John 10: 11; Eph. 4: 11; 1 Peter 2: 25. In this last Scripture both words *episkopos* and *poimen* are applied to Jesus—"the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." It seems plain, therefore, that while the words "Bishop,"

"Elder," and "Pastor" contain each a distinct idea, the Holy Spirit used each of the words to designate the same persons. It

seems to me that your proposition and Acts 20: 17, do not agree, for while these persons were called Bishops, you say they were not called, "never called *Elders*, as an official title." Well then when Paul called the Elders of the church

to him, you understand that he called the *old men*, for you say the term "*Elders*" is not used as an official title. Furthermore it could not be said that he called "the old men" (Elders) unless he called all of them, hence your interpretation would have Paul assemble a mighty host, judging from the great number of Christians at Ephesus at that time. Not only so, but you have it stated in verse 28 that these same persons were Bishops before Paul called them to him. This is certain from the word used "*etheto*,"

"the Holy Spirit has made you Bishops," (Aorist tense referring to a definite time past). They were officers when Paul sent for them (all for whom he sent) for he speaks of them as *Bishops*. Then, since the Bishops were those who came, and you admit they were officers of the church, and since he sent for the "*Elders*," you must see that Paul used the term "*Elders*" to designate the officers of the church, and this is just what I understand by using the term "*Elders*" as an official title. You have thought carefully on this Scripture, no doubt, for you say you have been long convinced, but will you think again and tell your readers why the officers of the church, *Bishops*, should come to Paul when he sent for "the *Elders*," if, as you say, the term "*Elders*" is *never used* in the New Testament as an official title? The brethren at Ephesus must have understood that "the *Elders*" meant the "*Bishops*," ruling officers, or they would not have come when Paul sent for "the *Elders*," unless it could have been that they came by accident among the other "old men." But against this last supposition the context stands firmly. For the same persons that came to him, and to whom he gave the charge, he said, were Bishops, were such before they came, and came at his call, when he called "the

Elders." If, even on your supposition, that the term "*Elders*" is never used as an official title, the Bishops came along with the other old men, still we have no account of those other "old men," for Paul

addressed and gave charge to the *Bishops* alone, verse 28; and these persons to whom he gave charge, and whom he addressed were those who came to him when he sent for "the *Elders*."

In the New Testament use of these words, if Paul had sent for the "*Pastors*" of the church the Bishops would have come; for the Scripture quoted shows that "*Elders*," "*Bishops*," and "*Pastors*," are all applied to the same class of persons.

It is granted, so far as I know, universally, that the officers of the church were, in the New Testament times, chosen out of the number of those older in the faith, *not novices*, as you say; and I grant that the term "*Elders*" may be used unofficially to mean simply older in faith, and hence include Bishops and Deacons, but then this is far from proof that the term "*Elders*" is never used officially in the New Testament.

3. You say, "In Acts 14: 23, 'And when they had ordained them Elders in every church,' &c., the term 'Elders' includes Bishops and Deacons." (How did you learn this, my brother?) and you say further: "That is, they ordained Elders to the offices of Bishops and Deacons. Paul uses the term Elders in the same manner precisely in Titus 1: 5. In Acts 20: 17, we are told that Paul sent to Ephesus and called the Elders of the church. By this we understand that he called the officers of the church who were all Elders, or old in the faith, and gave them his parting words." Yes he did; but then when they came he did not say the part of you Elders, who were made Bishops, feed the flock, and the part of you Elders who were made Deacons minister to the temporal wants: but he said all that came to him were made Bishops. This is certain from what is said, viz: he called the Elders and said to them, "Take heed to yourselves, and all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you Bishops," not Bishops and Deacons. He called all of them *Bishops*. You seem to think that "ordain Elders in every church" would not mean anything unless you add to it thus: "Ordained Elders to be Bishops and Deacons. To ordain means to choose or constitute by show of hands, and, as some claim, it involves the ceremony of imposing hands in prayer. Well, no matter, whatever, it means the result of the

choosing by vote, or setting apart by laying on of hands, is *Elders*. They were "the older in the faith, not novices," before, truly, for this is a qualification, but the result reached by ordination, is called "*Elders*." This we know because no more is stated. We could say "we chose or ordained a Governor," and if we said no more, everybody would know that the gentleman was Governor, and that the word "Governor" is used officially. If we mean more we must say more. We could say, "We ordained or elected the Governor President," and when we say it, we mean that the result is something different from Governor. When the Scriptures say "ordain Elders," and, after they are ordained, call them Bishops, this only shows that "Elder" and "Bishops" are both titles for the same persons, just as we elect a Governor, and then call him the "Chief Executive of the State." It is to be hoped that neither custom nor prejudice will preclude a candid consideration of this subject, and that we will always be free to call "Bible things by Bible names."

Fraternally,
O. A. CARR.

Columbia, Mo., Dec. 5, 1882

GOSPEL SUCCESS.

Reported by our correspondents and gleaned from our exchanges.

OREGON.

NORTH YAMHILL, Dec. 16.—Ed. Christian Herald: One week ago last Monday evening we closed a series of meetings of about two weeks duration. I should have reported before only from the fact that I was called away on other business. The result of the meeting was not so great as we had hoped for, yet good was done. The church was revived, the congregation increased and 3 persons professed the Savior, 2 of which were baptized and added to the church. It has been said that this is a hard field of labor for the servants of the Master. This in some respects may be true, but when we are told (I am comparatively a new comer) by those competent to judge that it is much better than it used to be we feel to thank God and take courage. Certain it is we have a few as good and earnest brethren and sisters here as can be found elsewhere, and by the faithful co-operation of these and the blessing of him who has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you, we expect to move on to conquer and to conquest. May the good Lord help not only the membership here but throughout the State to bring all their tithes into the storehouse of the Lord and prove him if he will not pour us out a blessing that there shall not be room to receive it. Our next appointment is at Carlton, commencing at 2 o'clock p. m. Saturday before and holding over fourth Lord's day of present month.—G. R. Edmunds.