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Mutual Edification of the One-Man System-- Which?

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Mutual Edification

or the

One-Man System --- Which?

**An Effort to Free the Church from a Growing
"One-Man" System Among Us, and from
Luke-warmness, Cold-heartedness,
Covetousness, Worldliness,
Selfishness, Etc.**

Introduction.—When you say that we have a great subject before us, you speak aright; but God has given us the means to accomplish the purity of his Church. **The panacea, or "Cure-all," for the ills of man is to be found in a reverential study of God's word.** It is that which makes the Christian and the Church strong; it is that which purifies the Church as a whole; it is that which purifies the individual follower of Christ.

The world is to be saved from the calamities which threaten it, not by peace leagues, but by the gospel of Christ; not by political parties, but by the Church. The followers of Jesus are the salt of the earth, but if they have lost their savor by not being in communication with Him through studying his Word and praying to Him, the world will not be salted. Christ is the vine, and his disciples are branches; but if the branches are cut loose from Him through neglect of prayer and reading of his Word, they must die. Christ and his Word are the water of life; and as temporal water cleanses the physical system, so the word of Christ, if properly read, will carry away the impurities of the human mind and life. If Christians will not learn to study God's word with reverence and with diligence, they will never amount to much in the Kingdom of Christ. Lukewarmness, cold-heartedness, covetousness, worldliness, selfishness, hobbyism, factionism, and all other evils among Christians come through a neglect of daily and reverential prayer and study of God's word. **And this reverential study of God's word is discouraged, directly or indirectly, by the kingdom**

of the clergy, whose lowest servant is the "preacher-pastor", the "settled minister", and whose highest officer is the pope. When, then, we show how to get rid of these usurpers, and show how to establish a scriptural bishopric, or eldership, that will teach and develop the people of God, we are getting at the foundation, to a great extent, of the purity and peace and advancement of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

God's Means of Teaching His Word Through Mutual Edification Meetings "When the Whole Church be Gathered Together."—The government of the apostolic Church was very simple. Outside of the inspired men, whose work was general, there were simply bishops, also called elders, of whom there was a plurality in each church. Evangelists were simply preachers of the good news, going wherever they could do good. (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1; Acts 14: 23; 20: 17, 28.) When an evangelist gathered together a band of disciples in a new field, he was to heed Paul's exhortation to the evangelist Timothy, "The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also." 2 Tim. 2: 2. It was the business of the evangelist to look after the little band till he, or some one whom he had appointed with the approval of that band, had developed men who would be qualified to become bishops, or elders; then the church was to be put into their hands. The bishops are to teach the flock, and to oversee it by keeping out "wolves", developing the talent, etc. When Peter exhorts the elders not to serve the flock for filthy lucre (1 Peter 5: 2), it seems that they received some remuneration in those days. The highest position which one can occupy in the true Church of Christ is that of one of several bishops over one church.

That the church at Corinth had mutual edification—that is, edification in the same meeting by one person and then by another and another, etc.—is evident to any one reading 1 Cor. 12-14th chapters. "When the whole church be come together" (which would correspond to our Lord's day morning meetings), the edification was not by one man only, but several. But brethren then had the same disposition to exalt themselves that many have today. The gift of tongues seemed to give the possessor more prominence than did any other of the miraculous gifts, and so brethren were more interested in that, and were desir-

ing it. But Paul shows them that all the gifts were necessary, even the humblest; just as different members of the human body have different work yet are all necessary to the perfect working of that body. He concludes the twelfth chapter by telling them that he would show them a more excellent way of obtaining prominence among the brethren (that seems to be the idea), and then he gives them in the thirteenth chapter that wonderful discourse on Charity,—or love. By exercising true love toward one another they were doing something more excellent than speaking with tongues, etc., for these miraculous gifts were to pass away, but Love—never. In the fourteenth chapter Paul continues the same subject, and regulates in details the speaking among the brethren at the time “when the whole church be come together”. “How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.”

From the teaching in the twelfth and fourteenth chapters of 1 Corinthians, the following truths are self-evident:

1. The church at Corinth did not have one-man edification in the meetings mentioned, once a month, twice a month, or weekly. Several brethren, and not one alone, edified the church in their most important meetings. In other words, there was a mutual edification among the members.

2. This mutual edification was in their most important meeting, and evidently corresponded to our Lord's day morning meeting, for it was “when the whole church be come together.”

3. This mutual edification in their meetings was a regular something, for Paul is regulating their meetings “when the whole church be come together.” Now as Paul started this church with its mutual edification in its most important meeting, and as he now upholds and regulates the members in it, and as Paul taught the same fundamental truths everywhere,—he evidently taught mutual edification among the churches in their meetings “when the whole church be come together”—which is evidently our Lord's day morning meetings.

4. When Paul stopped and preached at Troas, the details of the meeting outside of his preaching are not

given, and hence we cannot say what else was done or not done; yet, granting that he occupied all the time, that was an exception and not the rule, as is seen by details in 1 Cor. 12-14th chapters. To take up this one sermon of Paul (an incidental sermon at that) as authority for having one man occupy all the time Lord's day morning, and to have the same preacher (or different preachers) occupy all that time continuously for months and years—is to make the rule the exception, and the exception the rule; and is, in fact, to turn the Divine system upside down.

5. If the divinely-sanctioned example of the disciples at Troas, in meeting "upon the first day of the week to break bread," comes to us with the force of a command to meet every first day of the week (as churches of Christ teach); then the divinely-sanctioned example of mutual edification of the disciples at Corinth in their most important meeting—the one "when the whole church be come together"—comes likewise with the force of a command that we should have mutual edification meetings "when the whole church be come together."

Let us uphold or resurrect these mutual edification meetings as God gave them.

God's Means of Teaching His Word Through the Home.—Besides the teaching which was to be done when the brethren were assembled, the Lord ordained that there should be instruction in the home. "And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." One of the great sources of evil has always been the neglect of fathers to try to carry out what Paul here commands them to do. When "fathers" awakened to their duty, we may look for great things.

So here we have the Divine system of carrying God's word down through the ages—the evangelists are to preach the Gospel and make believers; they are to develop teachers among the faithful men who shall be able to teach others; among those taught by the bishops and evangelists will be fathers and mothers, and they are to teach their children. And, through this word of God which is taught, men and women will be purified from evil and prepared for eternal union with God.

Origin and Development of the Clergy in General.—The first step away from the scriptural eldership was

to call the most prominent and active and talented elder "the bishop," and to continue to call the other elders "presbyters" (which is only the Greek word for "elders"). This "bishop" was much the same as "the pastor," "the minister," as many have him today. The word "pastor" means "shepherd," and the elders are the scriptural pastors of the flock of God. The denominations generally have an officer whom they call "the pastor," who preaches every Sunday morning and night, looks after the flock privately, preaches the funerals and marries the couples in the congregation; and he has more influence than has any one else in that church. Some professed loyal churches have a preacher to preach practically every Sunday morning and night, look after the flock privately, preach funerals and marry couples; and he has more influence in the church than have the Elders. If a division in the church should arise, he would carry as many of the people with him as would the avowed officer called "the pastor" among the denominations. As a "pastor" is a "shepherd"; and as a "shepherd" is one who feeds, and as the preacher does practically all the feeding of the church—the preacher is the shepherd, and hence the pastor. If not, why not? There is about the same difference in all practical work and results between the denominational "pastor" and "our minister" as there is between tweedle-dee and tweedle-dum. He certainly has "the mark of the beast." A preacher (call him what you please) who, month after month and year after year, does the work of the Elders and other members of the church, is a usurper of the work of the bishops and others, whether with or without their consent. If a church does not have bishops, the evangelist who started it (or some other evangelist whom the brethren think qualified) should develop the talent in the church so that they will have qualified bishops in the course of time, or will have men who are qualified in teaching ability at least.

But we find, by reading history, that gradually, in the development of the great apostasy, the larger churches assumed authority over the smaller churches. till by the sixth or seventh century the church of Rome (and, hence, the bishop of Rome) had assumed authority over practically the entire Christian world. And through the Dark Ages the Pope of Rome had al-

most absolute authority over the bodies and souls of men.

It is a saddening historical fact that when the reformers came out of Rome they brought the plan of a clergy along with them. Protestants protested against the claims of Rome, yet established councils, synods, general assemblies, associations, conferences, etc., which were little popes themselves, with the difference that the authority was invested in several men instead of one man (as in the papacy). "Preachers' meetings" among professed loyal disciples are a long step in the same direction. When the people have a preacher, priest, pastor, or minister to do reading and teaching of the Bible which they should do themselves, then apostasy has begun.

Development of the one-man "preacher-pastor" system in "the Christian Church".—About a century ago Alexander Campbell arose and lifted his voice against "the kingdom of the clergy". He did a great work in leading many people away from the ecclesiasticism of that day, and to the simplicity that is in Christ in church work and worship and government. But Bro. Campbell planted the seeds of another clergy when he laid the foundation of Bethany College. His college might have been just a trifle different from the ordinary theological seminary of that day which molded the minds of the candidates for the ministry, but in principle it was the same. Other colleges of like nature soon sprang up in the brotherhood, and out of these human organizations went many talented men who preached vigorously for a few years, and then became "settled ministers"—holding a protracted meeting or two a year for awhile, then leaving off all such meetings and becoming full-fledged pastors and usurpers of the bishops. In the Christian Church the bishops are figure-heads, compared with what the Bible teaches they should be, and "the pastor" (a character unknown in the New Testament) is the predominant factor in almost every church.

More than forty years ago, a plain, sensible, far-seeing brother said to Daniel Sommer in Baltimore, Md., "When Alexander Campbell should have been establishing some means to develop scriptural elders in the churches, he established Bethany College which is developing another clergy. The next reformer will have to be born with a broad-axe on his shoulder to

chop the pulpits from the churches." Was not the brother right? The Christian Church, or digressives, of today have as much of a clergy as have any of the denominations. And through this clergy the people have neglected to study God's word as they should, and so are now being led into infidelity at a high rate of speed. And Bethany College and her daughters are to blame for it to a great extent.

These pastors of the digressives have met in missionary conventions, etc., and made laws centralizing power and authority until now, with a majority of churches under delegate system to the societies, and societies practically merged into one, and with a few men over the one, they have a little ecclesiasticism—a little papacy—with a few men controlling all, in the very religious movement started to destroy ecclesiasticism. And brethren in the South (especially) who have opposed instrumental music, etc., yet have upheld "Bible colleges", have "the pastor" now almost as much as the old digressives have. So beware of "the pastor", "the minister", who does practically all the "feeding" of the flock, the first usurper of a plurality of bishops over each church; and beware of the theological seminary, "Bible school" or college,—for they are all nurseries of "the pastor"!

There was a wrong principle implanted almost at the beginning of this movement which has caused it to go to pieces as it has. The people have spent time, money and energy developing preachers, but have spent little of either in developing elders, or bishops, to teach the churches, or in encouraging mutual edification as taught in 1 Cor. 14. A wrong principle adopted may seem to bring success at the time, but in the end it brings disaster. To have a talented preacher do the work of the elders may draw crowds for awhile, but it weakens the eldership, and thus weakens the church; and in the end will be a disaster, as in the case of the digressives. To get all Christians to read God's word and meditate thereon, and to get them to "edify one another", is the hope of the Church, and the preacher system discourages that by permitting churches to hire some one to do that for them.

What Alexander Campbell Thought of the Monthly, etc., Preaching System.—In a discourse by Alexander Campbell, at an annual state meeting, in Harrodsburg,

Ky., 1853, as appears in the Millennial Harbinger for that year, he spoke the following:

Preaching the gospel and teaching the converts, are as distinct and distinguishable employments as enlisting an army and training it, or as creating a school and teaching it. **Unhappily for the church and the world, this distinction, if at all conceded as legitimate, is obliterated or annulled in almost all protestant Christendom.** The public heralds of Christianity, acting as missionaries or evangelists, and the elders or pastors [pastor is here synonymous with "elder",—D. A. S.] of Christian churches are indiscriminately denominated preachers or ministers; and, whether addressing the church or the world, they are alike **preaching** or ministering some things they call Gospel. * * * They seem to have never learned the difference between preaching and teaching. * * * Yet we are informed that the apostles, daily in the temple and from house to house, ceased not to **teach and preach** Jesus Christ. They **preached** Christ to the world, and they taught his Gospel and its institutions to the churches which they had gathered, or to the households they had converted. The commission itself, as reported by Matthew, explicitly and fully lays out their work, * * * in the following words: "All authority in heaven and earth is given to me; Go ye, therefore and convert, or make, disciples out of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and behold, I am with you always, or all the days, to the end of the world, or to the conclusion of this age." * * * They were to convert the nations by preaching to them the Gospel, and baptizing them that believed it. They were then to create schools or colleges; [the connection shows he means churches.—D.A.S.] in other words, they were to institute communities, erect house or habitations for God, * * * through the Holy Spirit, who was to become the guest of these new habitations of God, and his permanent residence on earth. * * * These schools were to be filled with none but baptized believers. * * * Each school was to have its college of elders or bishops, who were to **teach, educate and direct all the disciples or members of the churches, and preside over them by their intelligence, their wisdom and their virtue.** The preacher is a mere solicitor of pupils. The field of his labor is the world—the whole world. In preaching he does no more than set forth the sovereign claims of the great Apostle and Teacher sent from God. * * * When he succeeds in this, his appropriate mission and commission, and consummates his work by immersing them, soul, body and spirit into the name of their dignities and the honors of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, his peculiar mission as an evangelist, or preacher of the Gospel, **expres.** The church in a given locality is formed. He hands to it its charter, the books of the Gospel, and only adds; observe all the institutions, commandments, precepts or ordinances instituted in this book of the new and everlasting Constitution. **He sets in order the house of God.** * * * They select, by their suffrage, pastors, or bishops, as public functionaries, and their own deacons, or ministers of finance and of mercy. These elders or seniors in the faith are ordained to **teach, instruct and preside over all its affairs, domestic and foreign.** The church is then and there **organized.**

The new constitution is then handed to them, as their supreme law, and every one for himself devotes his mind and his heart to its study and practice. * * * Every church resembled a parish school, with its pupils, teachers, books and tables. **Edification, or building up Christians in their most holy faith and hope, is the approximate business of the church.** This is the special work and duty of its pastors [bishops.—D.A.S.] and teachers. The apostles ordained that pastors and teachers should devote themselves to this work as their special calling and ordination; while Timothy and Titus were employed by them in distinct provinces of the church, in setting things in order. * * *

But how are these things to be done in decency and in order? * * * This is an important inquiry. * * * In the first place, then, it is quite a different work from preaching the Word to the world to convert the world. For that work a preacher or an evangelist is commissioned. For this, an accomplished **episcopacy, or eldership, must be** instituted, according to the apostolic direction, and with the prescribed qualifications. The church members must punctually attend. . . . They should carry with them, or have in their pews, the Holy Bible, and attend to all the readings, teachings and exhortations of the eldership, book in hand. . . . The lesson for the day should be known before and studied through the week. . . .

We have said—1st. That the church cannot be vigorous, healthful and influential for good, by any **itinerant ministry.** Such is that of the Methodists, the Baptists, and some of the Christian churches. **Some of our brethren have fallen into this custom. And we now have, even in Kentucky, one evangelist for four churches, who pay him for his services according to four independent contracts—the four odd Lord's days in the year being reserved for his own special benefit.** * * * **Apostate Christendom—alias Sectarian Christendom—after the dicta of the Greek and Roman schools, has long been doling out its minute portions of a metaphysical theology, which, like crystals of ice—not so pure indeed, but quite as chilling—have frozen the genial current of life divine, and filled the world with a death-like chill, occasionally succeeded with a burning zeal for something called orthodoxy.** * * * We, then, **teach Christ to edify and perfect the church.** For the perfection of the church, the doctrine of Christ is perfect and developed. **The Lord's day, the Lord's supper celebrated; the Holy Scriptures read and discoursed upon, accompanied with SOCIAL prayer and praise; exhortations, reproofs, admonitions, as occasion demands, are tendered. AND AN ELDERSHIP AND A DIACONATE ARE FOR THESE VERY PURPOSES ORDAINED.** * * * But this result one cannot expect from a monthly visit of an evangelist, who, for the time being, converts your church into a missionary field, addresses a promiscuous assembly, convened to hear a **TEXTUARY** speech. * * * If Methuselah were to live again his nine hundred and sixty nine years, and to spend them all in one community, under the **textuary** system of the best Protestant sanctuary among us, listening to him as our auditors do in Protestant churches, could he say: **I understand the volume?** * * * No science nor art is taught in schools of science or in schools of art, useful or ornamental, as the Christian Scriptures or the Christian doctrine—the Christian faith, piety and morality, are taught in the pulpits and in the sermons of modern Christendom. * * * Ever learning, but never able to arrive at a

knowledge of the Christian text-book, seems to be the doom and destiny of every community that lives and dies under the textuary theologies of the nineteenth century.

Alexander Campbell was sixty-five years old when he spoke the sentiments quoted above. We may not agree with him in every distinction which he makes, though in some of them he does not have the chance to give details. But here are a few of the things which evidently follow from his speech:

1. He believed that the work of an evangelist, or preacher, was to preach the Gospel to the world, make believers, start the Church out with scriptural elders and deacons, and then go to other fields. If the preacher "sets in order the house of God", as Bro. Campbell said, he must have the material to put over the brethren, as elders; and if they have none, he has to develop them according to the scripture, "The things which thou hast learned of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also." 2 Tim. 2: 2.

2. Bro. Campbell did not believe that God ordained imported preachers to take charge of the meetings when the Lord's Supper is observed, as an established practice, at least; but that "the Holy Scriptures, read and discoursed upon, accompanied with **SOCIAL prayer and praise; exhortations, reproofs, admonitions, as occasion demands, are tendered; and an eldership, and a diaconate, ARE FOR THESE VERY PURPOSES ORDAINED.**"

3. Bro. Campbell was opposed to the monthly preaching system, and shows that some churches of the Restoration were borrowing it from the denominations.

4. If he was opposed to the monthly system of having an evangelist visit a church and do work of the elders who "are for these very purposes ordained," he would likewise be opposed to the semi-monthly system, and the weekly system, of having an evangelist do the work of elders who "are for these very purposes ordained."

5. And, in addition, he was opposed to the textuary method of preaching, which is so prevalent. Of course, a man may find a passage of Scripture which contains a great subject, and he may be able to unfold it by going through the Bible; but too often textuary sermons contain little edification. If a man speaks to a body of believers, let him do more expository preach-

ing, by taking a chapter or part of a chapter, or even a short book, and have people look on their own copies of the Scriptures while he reads and expounds the word of God. Bro. Campbell often spoke on a whole book. In this way the people get the Word through the eye as well as the ear, and they know what they are getting. Let us have more of such. So exhorted Bro. Campbell himself, and while we deplore his mistakes in other respects we should consider with care what he said that was in harmony with the Bible.

What Benjamin Franklin Thought of Continuous Monthly, Semi-Monthly and Weekly Preaching by One Man at One Place.—Some men talk as if this were a new and strange doctrine—viz: that the elders should “feed” the Church and should have the brethren help in **mutual edification** in the meeting “when the whole church be come together”, and that the preacher should go to new and weak fields. I wish to show in this article that Benjamin Franklin, the founder of the American Christian Review, now the Apostolic Review, and the author of “Gospel Preacher” Vols. 1 and 2 (of which Vol. 1 has reached the 35th edition) held practically the same view that I have been teaching. Here is what we find in the “Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin”, written 45 years ago by Joseph Franklin, a son of Benjamin Franklin, and sanctioned by Headington, a co-worker with Franklin on the Review, for many years:

“The plan of preaching ‘once a month’ at each of four churches, dates back to about the time of Benjamin Franklin’s residence at New Lisbon (about 1845). **He never could fairly adjust himself to the plan, although he sometimes made such engagements.** Still later in his life, when he undertook to give all his time to one church, he was continually dissatisfied with the arrangements, and was never at home except in protracted meetings. Still he never raised any objections to that plan of work when others chose to adopt it. Some of the results (perhaps not necessary consequences) he did deplore, and he lamented that these results had not been foreseen, that they might have been avoided.

“The ordinary monthly visit at the first, as now, comprehended a meeting on Saturday night and two on Sunday. For these regular visits preachers did not always, at the first, receive a stipulated amount; but, where it was promised, the price ranged from seventy-five to one hundred dollars per annum. If occasion seemed to call for it, the preacher was expected, for the same amount, to stay and ‘protract’ the meetings for a week.

“Very gradually, but very steadily, the churches learned to

rely on these monthly visits for their spiritual edification. Very gradually, and very steadily, they learned to feel more interest in these monthly meetings than in the acts of devotion and worship which might be observed on any Lord's day. Very gradually, **the preachers left off their efforts to develop the talent in the churches to which they ministered, and finally adopted the habit of merely delivering their three sermons and then going home.** Occasionally they roused themselves in a spasmodic effort 'to set in order the things that were wanting', and preached a sermon or two on the ancient order of worship—the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers'. The brethren would indluge in a little pleasantry about how their preacher had 'hauled them over the coals', and then people and preachers would lapse into the old routine again. Today hundreds of churches never meet unless they have a preacher present to discourse to them.

"A plan which suffers churches to fall into such helplessness is in some way deficient. Some are inclined to urge more frequent visits, or a stationed preacher, as the remedy. But how will it help the matter to have a preacher present every Lord's day who never calls for a prayer, a thanksgiving, or an exhortation from any member of the congregation?"

"The deficiency is in the work of preachers on their regular visits. A monthly visit and three or four public discourses is an easy way of things, both to the preacher and to the congregation, but it is a very inefficient way. There ought to be some additional meetings, such as Bible-classes, singing and prayer meetings, etc., under the faithful guidance of the elders of the church, calling forth and exercising the talents of the membership. Let the preacher add his faithful entreaties and expostulations until the membership feel their responsibility, and agree to meet regularly on the first day of the week for worship. On their undertaking to meet regularly, they will need an especial oversight that they do not at once lapse into a mere formality. Instruction and encouragement, faithfully and judiciously extended to them in this crisis, is of more consequence than the minister's sermons. The character of their songs and music; why they should sing at all; the nature and spirit of prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving; how to read the Scriptures and study them to profit in the public assembly, etc., are subjects on which abundance of instruction should be ministered. A more difficult and delicate work does not appertain to the edification of churches, than that of teaching them how to hold profitable meetings among themselves—how **'to edify one another'**.

"In the early day of which we are now writing, the preachers understood full well how to convert sinners. They were adepts in the art of controverting sectarianism, and were never better pleased than when engaged in a contest on sectarian creeds and names, on baptism or Universalism. **But they were not so apt in the edification of saints, and especially in showing the disciples how to edify themselves.** A generation has not greatly improved the ministry in this respect. This remark, however, does not apply to the earliest preachers of the Reformation. We have already seen that Samuel Rogers, in the Deer Creek church, had nearly the whole congregation at work at the first, and developed eight preachers out of their

number. The same was true of his cotemporaries. The lapse was in the second generation. The recovery is a thing of the future.

“Benjamin Franklin saw this error of the past before he died, and frequently expressed his regret that he had not come to see the matter in a clearer light thirty years ago, in time to have given his influence to remedy the evil. In his last days he was of the opinion that the instructions of Paul to the church in Corinth (1 Cor. 11th to 14th chapters, inclusive), had been greatly undervalued, and that neglect of that instruction, and the routine work of monthly appointments, had together laid the foundation upon which the pastoral system has been built. He regarded the ‘pastorate’ as an unscriptural office, and constantly made war upon it. But he did not regard an engagement between a church and a preacher for preaching once a month, or twice a month, or every Lord’s day, as necessarily involving the exercise of the pastoral function. He made such engagements himself as late as 1854. To the last year of his life he heartily co-operated with the church at Anderson, Ind., where he then held membership, in securing the regular services of a preacher. But he held that the preacher had no executive authority; that, on the contrary, the executive authority was lodged in the bishops or elders, of the church. The preacher, he maintained, did not ‘have charge of the church’, but the church had charge of him.”

There are several important truths found in this bit of history, and I beg your close attention to the steps of apostasy which led to the digressive Christian Church, and to the application to ourselves of these truths.

Conclusions From the Facts Above

1: The churches of the first generation of this religious movement did not have monthly, semi-monthly or weekly preaching. “The earliest preachers of the Reformation” tried to show “the disciples how to edify themselves”. “Samuel Rogers, in the Deer Creek church, had nearly the whole congregation at work at the first, and developed eight preachers out of their number. The same was true of his cotemporaries.” So this is not some new thing hatched up by D. A. Sommer or any one else today.

2. “The lapse was in the second generation”. The second generation began about the time Franklin began to preach, and it was about this time that preaching “once a month” began among the disciples. The preachers of this second generation were “adepts in the art of controverting sectarianism” like many preachers today, who preach first principles nearly altogether; and, like many today, those preachers “were not as apt in the edification of saints, and especially in

showing the disciples how to edify themselves."

3. "Very gradually, but very steadily, the churches [of this "lapsing" generation] learned to rely on these monthly visits for their spiritual edification," and many churches of Christ today are doing the same thing.

4. "Very gradually, and very steadily, they [the disciples of this "lapsing" generation] learned to feel more interest in these monthly meetings than in the acts of devotion and worship which might be observed on any Lord's day"; and many professed members of the Church of Christ today are worse than they were.

5. "Very gradually, the preachers **left off** their efforts to develop the talent in the churches to which they ministered, and finally adopted the habit of **merely** delivering their three sermons [it's only two now] and then going home." How like this "lapsing" generation, as Joseph Franklin called it, is the present generation in the Church of Christ, for very few preachers are putting forth any serious effort in the churches they visit to develop the talent so that the churches can stand alone.

6. It was in the last part of the second and in the third generation that the division came over instrumental music and societies, and brethren brought with them from the "lapsing" (backsliding) second and third generation (not the first) the once-a-month and twice-a-month preaching system.

7. "A plan which suffers churches to fall into such helplessness is in some way deficient. Some are inclined to urge more frequent visits, or a stationed preacher, as a remedy." That is a picture of some churches today. They cry, "We need more preaching, more preaching"; when what they really need is to be put to work.

8. More than forty years ago, these biographers said, "Today hundreds of churches never meet unless they have a preacher present to discourse to them." **Thus was the pastor system gradually evolved out of the "once-a-month" preaching, and it is rapidly drifting into that among many professed loyal churches today.**

9. These preacher-pastors then began to have "preachers' meetings".

10. And the "preachers' meetings" called for conventions.

11. And the conventions called for societies.

12. And the societies today are tearing our digressive brethren to pieces, and leading them farther and farther into apostasy.

13. Benjamin Franklin was not an inspired man, yet all grades of disciples show their respect to him, as is evidenced by the many copies of his books of sermons which the Christian Standard and Christian Evangelist order from the Review office, and from the words of eulogy of him often found in the Gospel Advocate. He did not see the drift of things in the prime of his life and even partially practiced this unscriptural system; but he saw it before he died, and his mature judgment founded on the word of God and great experience is not to be despised. Here it is: "**In his last days he was of the opinion that the instruction of Paul to the church in Corinth (1 Cor. 12th to 14th inclusive) had been greatly undervalued, and that neglect of that instruction, and the routine work of monthly appointments, had together laid the foundation upon which the pastoral system has been built. He regarded the 'pastorate' as an unscriptural office, and constantly made war upon it.**"

14. So according to Benjamin Franklin, not D. A. Sommer merely, and according to the history, those who rely on the monthly, semi-monthly and weekly sermon for their spiritual public edification are on the well-trod road to greater apostasy and to Rome.

Development of the One-Man System in the South.—What Bethany College and her daughters have done for the Christian Church, Nashville Bible School (now David Lipscomb School) and her daughters are doing in the South among the new digressives. The churches there generally have one man to preach for them continuously Sunday morning and evening, year after year, when they can support him, and thus they are rapidly building a clergy. This itself would be sufficient argument against these schools regardless of the fact that they are unscriptural in being human organizations established by Christians to teach the Bible—a work of the Church—while Paul commands us to give glory to God "**in the Church**".

Development of the One-Man System Among the Professed Faithful Brethren in the North.—Let us go back for a few moments to see how the old digressives in the North and the new digressives in the South have influenced those of us who have contended against all

human organizations to do work of the Church.

In the pioneer days, many of the preachers were men who were not college graduates. Many of them worked on their farms and went out Lord's days and preached wherever they could get a hearing. They sacrificed much and did a great work, for they established many churches. But many of the churches met only when they were there to preach to them and it seems that little or no effort was put forth to develop for the churches bishops who could teach to edification. No doubt exhortations were given publicly and privately to that end, yet there was no system of any kind to develop them. Great efforts, however, were put forth to develop other preachers. And the next generation which wished to preach was sent to the "Bible colleges" for development. Paul said to Timothy, a young preacher, "**The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also**" (2 Tim. 2: 2); these early preachers did not generally try to develop teachers who would be able to teach in the local assemblies, but tried still to develop preachers. Here has been the weakness of this whole religious movement. The preachers have not obeyed as they should what Paul here said. By merely preaching to people we cannot commit God's word to others so that they will be able to teach others. We must have some kind of Bible study, drill work, reading, etc., in which to show them how, and get them at it.

As the churches grew in numbers and wealth they longed for cultured men to entertain them, and so they often hired the young men fresh from the "Bible colleges", many of whom were intending to be mere professional preachers. These young men were not inclined to do the work of evangelists, and so preached regularly for the churches; and, in course of time, what elders the churches had were pushed into the background, and these striplings from college, often with high ideas of themselves and their authority, took charge of affairs. This system, of course, was developed through many years, just as it takes all apostasies a long time to mature.

This failure of preachers to commit what they knew of God's word to faithful men who would be able to teach others also, has been disastrous to this religious movement. As a rule, the churches were led by weak

elders. When the young preachers from the "Bible colleges", and the fastidious women of the churches, began to introduce instrumental music, societies, suppers, etc., into the affairs of the church, the bishops were not sufficiently developed to stop such worldliness and heresy. They had not attended to their duty of keeping the church clean by discipline; and so, when the question of innovations was brought up, the innovators brought in the old backsliders and other reprobates, many of whom had not been to the services for years, and their vote counted as much as that of an elder who had been at every service for a quarter of a century. **If we had only had a strong eldership from the beginning of this religious movement, this digressionism would have had a hard time, for most of the elders were opposed to these innovations.**

We who claim to be faithful to the New Testament in doctrinal matters have been influenced more than we think by the sects and our digressive brethren in this clergy system. The system of mere monthly preaching has been handed down to us and has become firmly established among us, and churches have been satisfied to hold a meeting once a year and have mere preaching once a month the rest of the time, having weak "social meetings" with few attendants and often with little real edification because the preachers had not developed bishops who were able to teach others to their real benefit.

As most of the churches had poor leaders, the members longed for more preaching, and so would take almost any man who came along who said he was a preacher of the Church of Christ. Some of these so-called "preachers" were renegades, and others were hobbyists with peculiar notions through which they wished to distinguish themselves. Many have been the evils which have come into the churches because we have not had a strong eldership, and we have not had a strong eldership because the preachers have not committed what they knew of the Bible to faithful men who would be able to teach others. **The preachers in some instances spent nearly all their time in destructive work and very little in constructive work,—denouncing the sects more than developing the church.**

One who is acquainted with the brotherhood can see that there is now a steady drift toward the one-man "preacher-pastor" system. Some churches, which for

years had preaching only once a month, are now having preaching twice a month; and some churches, which have been having it twice a month, are now having it about **all the time**. Some churches are yet a little afraid to make the move to have more regular preaching, yet there are very many people in many of the churches who would like to have it all the time; and, as many bishops cater to the worldly-minded to try to hold them, there are evidences that they are drifting into the one-man "preacher-pastor" system. I know churches which have had preaching twice a month for years; and yet, though they have hundreds of members, they have no material for the eldership. Yes, and many in the church are demanding preaching **all the time**, and they practically have it now. Why is it that at the end of years of work with a church, by talented preachers, there are still no men for the eldership? The only answer we can give is that **the preacher has not been trying to commit what he knew of the Bible to faithful men who would be able to teach others**. He has been spending his time entertaining the brethren with sermonettes. He has been making himself an indispensable quantity instead of making the church so that it could edify itself. He has **been** working himself into the service of the church rather than out of it.

This system, of having mere regular preaching year after year, is certainly a wrong system—bringing many evils with it. It is a systematic weakening of the eldership. When we admit that it is all right for an outside preacher to do one-fourth of the work of the bishops month after month, and year after year, as we do when we endorse the **monthly preaching as now carried on**, we have admitted the principle of the pastorate, and cannot **consistently** denounce the preacher for doing the work of the bishops **all the time**, year after year. Brethren, we have opened the door for the pastor to put his foot into the church, when we practice **continuously monthly preaching**, and he is now edging his whole person in, perhaps unconsciously.

Remember that I am not talking about regularly visiting a place to preach to the world and to **commit what one has learned to faithful men who shall be able to teach others**, but about mere regular preaching to the church. If a preacher will go to a place regularly or irregularly, and commit what he has learned to oth-

ers so that they will be able to teach others, after a few months the members ought to be able to take care of themselves some, and the preacher should thus show them how. Several times he should go back again and help them more to make their meetings edifying and interesting. If we would develop a church as we should when we visit it once a month, at the end of two or three years, at the most, it ought to be able to do its own edifying, and this money spent on the monthly preaching could be used to support him in work in new fields. We ought to spend two or three days with them each time we go, and **have them** recite on lessons which we assign them the month before. **It should be the aim of the preacher to work his way OUT of the service of the church instead of INTO IT.** If, at the end of my year's labor with a church once or twice a month, it needs me as much as it did at the beginning, it is evident that I am doing the work of a PASTOR and not that of an EVANGELIST.

Some Preachers Try to Defend This "One-Man" System.—Some preachers and many of the other brethren argue for this system of mere regular preaching to the church. Because there is a nice crowd when the preacher is there, they think they are doing a great thing. Here is one of the hooks on which the devil is catching many people. Every one knows that it is not the size of a man's body which makes him strong but the working of all the parts, and that fat is not strength. We ought to know also that it is not the size of an audience when a preacher is present which makes a strong church, but the continued activity in church work of those who belong to it. And the best way to develop brethren in the public work is to commit what we have learned to faithful men, have them get up and recite on those things, show them how to do it to edification, and thus make them so that they will be able to teach others. Some preachers talk about developing the talent by merely preaching to them, but this has been tried through a hundred years of our history and you see the evil results. There is no developing of teachers by mere preaching, though once in awhile one may be stirred to develop himself some. If teachers in the public schools would try to develop your children by merely lecturing to them, you would demand that they be dismissed. Let us show as much sense in religion.

Another argument offered in favor of regular and continuous preaching is that many of the brothers and sisters wish it. But if they wished a choir or a soloist, should we likewise grant them such? **The leaders of a church must not cater to the worldly-minded and mentally-lazy among them.** They should give them what they need and not what they merely wish.

It is argued by some preachers that not all of them can engage in this Bible reading, drill work, etc., that we have different talents, ear-marks, etc. Can't every preacher commit what he has learned to faithful men who shall be able to teach others? If he can't, it is about time for him to begin to obey what Paul commanded Timothy to do, or else admit that he is not doing his full duty. One preacher may be able to preach to the world better than another preacher can, but should the less-qualified neglect to do the best he can? One may be able to develop members better than may another, but should the less-qualified preacher refuse to develop the best he can? **The trouble with nearly all of us is that we have never made any effort to do this—in other words, we have neglected the work of trying to develop teachers.** I do not know of one preacher out of ten who has made much effort to develop such teachers. But I do know a preacher over seventy years old who is drilling churches on chapters which he reads in their hearing, and who is pleased with the results. The younger preachers can do the same if they are not too lazy to study. Some preachers have studied the Bible and books of sermons (perhaps sectarian) to get enough sermons for a protracted meeting, and they are too indifferent to study the Bible more. Many preachers have studied the Bible merely to tear down sectarianism. What is needed now is for every preacher to study the Bible to build up the Church, and the best way to do that is to develop the talent of the Church by committing what we have learned to faithful men who shall be able to teach others. **It is constructive work which the Church needs today far more than the destructive work.** Yet this constructive work is intended to destroy the pastorating/system.

Some preachers think to escape the pastor system by having the imported preacher put into the eldership, and then when this preacher does all the preaching it is the eldership which is doing it! But after a few

years the people will wish a change of "elders" and this "elder" will then go somewhere else and be put into the eldership, and the brethren will have to send for another "elder" to come and teach them. You may call this man an "elder" or "bishop" if you wish to, but **the fact is that he is simply a PASTOR in disguise.** We must not try to "whip the devil around the bush".

It will not do for an evangelist to preach every Lord's day **morning** and night to one church, and try to soothe his conscience by preaching Lord's day afternoon at a mission point and holding one or two mission meetings a year, and try thus to make himself believe that he is not a pastor. He is the same character with his nails and teeth filed a little. The digressive pastors did that very thing for awhile, and some of them are still doing it.

The argument for this one-man system has been thrown at me about like thus: "Paul was a stayer—he was! No running around here and there for him. He stayed a year and a half at Corinth, and three years at Ephesus. And if Paul could do that and not be a pastor, we can do the same and not be such." But what was Paul doing at Corinth? There was no church there when he went, and he converted people and confirmed them, continuing at the same time to convert still others. When he left, there was a strong church there, even though they were young in the Faith. Whom did he leave as "minister" of that church to discourse to them every Lord's day? 1 Cor. 12th and 14th chapters show that he left there a system of mutual edification for the members to engage in when "the whole church is come together" (1 Cor. 14: 23), which would correspond to our Lord's day morning meetings. "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying." 1 Cor. 14: 26. Though these were inspired gifts, the whole chapter shows a mutual edification—an edification by one member, then another and another, etc. If a preacher would go to a **new** field, as Paul did at Corinth, and would stay a year and six months, and would then **leave**, as Paul did, and would leave a system of mutual edification as Paul did—no one would call such a man a "pastor". Paul's stay at Corinth proves the

opposite of what the defenders of the one-man system try to make themselves think it does.

The use of Paul's stay at Ephesus for three years, as an argument for a preacher's staying a dozen years at one place and doing practically all the preaching, is just as illogical and irreverential. Ephesus was a **new** field, and the result of the three years' preaching and disputing was that "all Asia" heard the word of the Lord. Bishops, not some imported preacher called "the minister", were appointed to "feed" that church at Ephesus, and to "oversee" it, for Paul says to the elders, "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops [**overseers**] to feed the church of the Lord. . . . **Watch** ye!" (Acts 20:17,28, R.V.) If a preacher would go to a **new** field, as Paul did at Ephesus, and stay three years, and preach and work so that all that region would hear the word of God, and then would **leave**, as Paul did, and would leave a system there where elders, not an imported preacher, would "feed" and "oversee" the church—no one would call him a "pastor".

He that would use Paul's stay of a year and a half at Corinth, a **new** field, where he **left** a church which practiced mutual edification in its most important meeting (the one when "the whole church was come together"); or he that would use Paul's stay of three years at Ephesus, a **new** field, where "all Asia" heard the Word, and an eldership was **left** which was to "feed", "oversee", "watch" the church—I say, he that would use such as a precedent for a preacher's **staying** a dozen years or more for an **old** church, and establishing a one-man preaching system in its most important meeting (the one when "the whole church is come together"), making it necessary for an imported preacher to take his place when he left—has thrown all reason to the winds, and has trampled under foot God's teaching by precept and example.

There is no use in such men trying to escape the fact that they are endorsing or practicing the "pastor" system. The word "pastor" means "shepherd", and a shepherd was one who led the flock where the food was, and who looked after the sheep. The word of God is the food for Christians; and if a preacher who gives the word of God every Sunday morning and night to a church, and who visits among the members to try to

look after them, is not a shepherd (yes, practically **the** shepherd), a "pastor",—what is he? The fact that he is supposed to be under the elders does not alter the case, for in all denominations there is a board of some kind which calls the pastor and dismisses him, and "under" which he is supposed to work. Formally, the pastor, minister, is under the board, but in reality he rules; in the Church of Christ, an all-time preacher for a church may seem to be "under" the elders, but if he does practically all the teaching, he in reality rules the church. This is exactly the way in which the pastor system grew up among the digressives. At first, many of their preachers did the work of, but opposed the name, "pastor", but now they have no scruples. The final outcome has been that now they have a few men who are controlling the United Society, which includes all their organizations, and they have an ecclesiasticism—the thing which Alexander Campbell opposed so vigorously. **Have we forgotten this lesson so soon, or are we "fools and slow of heart"?**

The argument that we should put forward the best talent—the wisest, holiest and most eloquent among us—has an element of truth in it, as many errors have; **yet, strange to say, it was that very argument which led to Roman Catholicism.** One trouble is that we do not always know who are the wisest and holiest, though we may be able to tell who is the most eloquent; and the eloquent man is apt to be like Aaron, and lead the people astray the first chance he gets. We do not know the ambitions of men's hearts, and it is that which does the most harm to the cause of Christ. The only thing we can do is to develop all the brethren, and keep from centralizing power into the hands of one man. To have a man preach all the time for a church because he has given many years to that work, and neglect other preachers or other brethren, is a most dangerous principle to follow! With the same reasoning, if we have an elder that is pre-eminent above the other elders in talents, we should put him forward and neglect others!! The big preachers then, would get bigger, and the little ones would get littler; and the big elders would get bigger, and the little ones littler. The church, too, with the greatest missionary zeal, money, talented men at the head, etc., should assume a protecting care over others, and not try to make them independent; and after awhile we would have the metro-

politan form of church government developed, toward which there is a tendency in certain quarters today.

That this centralizing of the teaching of a church into the hands of one man—the best talent, the wisest, holiest, most eloquent, etc.—is the essence of the apostasy which led to Roman Catholicism, I prove from Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," chapter 15, where he describes the apostolic church and the gradual departures which led to Romanism:

The public functions of religion were solely intrusted to the established ministers of the church, the bishops and the presbyters; two appellations which, in their first origin, appear to have distinguished the same office and the same order of persons. . . . In proportion to the respective numbers of the faithful, a larger or smaller number of these episcopal presbyters guided each infant congregation with equal authority and with united counsels. But the most perfect equality of freedom requires the directing hand of a superior magistrate; and the order of public deliberations soon introduces the office of president [one man.—D.A.S.], invested at least with the authority of collecting the sentiments, and of executing the resolutions, of the assembly. A regard for the public tranquility, which would so frequently have been interrupted by annual or by occasional elections, induced the primitive Christians to constitute an honorable and perpetual magistracy, and to choose one of the wisest and most holy among their presbyters to execute, during his life, the duties of their ecclesiastical governor [one man.—D.A.S.] It was under these circumstances that the lofty title of Bishop began to raise itself above the humble appellation of presbyter, and while the latter remained the most natural distinction for the members of every Christian senate, the former was appropriated to the dignity of its new president [minister, pastor.—D.A.S.] . . . The same causes which at first had destroyed the equality of the presbyters introduced among the bishops a pre-eminence of rank, and from thence a superiority of jurisdiction. As often as in the spring and autumn they met in provincial synod, the difference of personal merit and reputation was very sensibly felt among the members of the assembly, and the multitude was governed by the wisdom and eloquence of the few. . . . It was easy to see that Rome must enjoy the respect, and would soon claim the obedience, of the provinces. * * * The progress of the ecclesiastical authority gave birth to the memorable distinction of the laity and the clergy.

It was by neglecting the less eloquent and less wise and less noted ones among the teachers, and by concentrating things in the hands of "the wisest and most holy", and those who had "personal merit and reputation" and "wisdom and eloquence", which led to the episcopal, the metropolitan, the patriarchal and finally the papal system; and it is astonishing that preachers and elders today, with papal, Protestant and the digres-

sive and new-digressive history before them, will lunge forward toward spiritual Babylon!

If I had my membership with a church where the elders would not feed, oversee and watch the flock, as Paul commands in Acts 20: 28, and where they would not tolerate mutual edification in the meeting when "the whole church is come together", but continually put the teaching into the hands of one man, thus disregarding 1 Cor. 12th and 14th chapters, I would do all I could (in the proper spirit) to lead the elders and others in the way of God's word; but if I could not do so, I WOULD SEVER MY CONNECTION FROM THE CONGREGATION AS ONE WHICH HAD DEPARTED FROM THE WORD OF GOD AND WHICH HAD ADOPTED ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS OF HERESIES, AND I WOULD START IN TO BUILD A TRUE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

How to Develop a God-given Eldership and to Stir the Members to Read God's Word.—But the serious question is, "How can we stop this drifting into the pastor system, and how can we build a scriptural Eldership through which the word of God can be infused into the Body of Christ and thus save the Church from the calamities which threaten it?" If all preachers will try with all their hearts to carry out Paul's instructions to Timothy, a great change will be made among the churches. He said, "**The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also.**" 2 Tim 2: 2. Here is a command of an inspired preacher to a young evangelist which most of us preachers today have neglected. We have not tried to develop teachers in the churches, but have merely preached to the brethren and to the world.

In this matter of developing teachers it takes something more than merely telling the brethren what to do—we must show them how and get them at it. If your boy knows little or nothing of farm work, you do not simply tell him to go and plow; but you take him with you, show him how, and then have him take the plow, and follow him for awhile till you see that he understands how. So in the Church of God—we must show them how to develop themselves, and then stay with them for awhile and oversee them as they try to edify one another, as Paul commanded.

The protracted Bible Readings have helped much to

impart Bible knowledge to many preachers and some others; but they do not reach the great mass of the Elders and prospective Elders. Probably three-fourths of our active preachers have attended from one to half a dozen Bible Readings, but not one Elder in a dozen, perhaps not one in twenty-five, has the opportunity of attending. The Readings are held mostly in rich centers, and the same centers at that. The preachers feel they should go, but Elders and prospective Elders as a whole cannot go. The result is that preachers are being developed, and Elders and prospective Elders are neglected, in that they are not reached by the protracted Bible Readings as now conducted. The protracted Bible Readings are giving a lop-sided development in the Church, for they are not reaching the Elders as a class — and Elders we need now more than preachers, scriptural Elders who can indeed feed and oversee and watch the flock. If a one-sided development is continued, it means disaster in the future!

In the winter season, when the farmers have not so much to do, let the preacher who is supposed to spend one-fourth of his time with a rural church really spend that much time with it, and let the brethren support him well. Let him assign the brethren lessons in the Old and New Testaments to read, and let them come together for a week in the daytime or night (which ever is the more convenient), or both, and spend several hours each day in reading or reciting or drilling, on the things which have been studied, in much the same manner as history is learned in our public schools. Then let the preacher assign lessons for the next month when he comes back, and the brethren can study the lessons in the three weeks which intervene. If this were done for several months through the winter, a great amount of Bible knowledge could be obtained by those who wish it. Of course, in these degenerate days, this is easier said than done; but if we cannot get a church to develop itself when we aid it, then it may do it good to turn away from it.

The problem of the city church is a little different. The chief work there is in getting together those who have belonged elsewhere. Much private work must be done. If a city preacher could hold a Bible Reading or Bible drill, two or three nights each week, to commit what he has learned to faithful men who shall be able to teach others, and then look up people and ap-

point others to look up careless ones, and thus show them all how to do the work; and would arrange to use the best of the talent Lord's day morning, he himself preaching to the world Lord's day nights, perhaps, and at some near-by mission or weak church Lord's day mornings—he would soon have a church which would take care of itself **all the time**, and which could help him build up elsewhere at the same time; but if, after a year's work, he is needed there as much as at first, it is evident that he is not developing bishops, but is developing himself into "a pastor." The Scriptures show that the bishops should teach, oversee and guard the flock, and it should be the aim of every preacher to develop such a bishopric in every church. No matter how great the crowds with your "pastor," the church is getting weaker all the time!

If a preacher had four regular points and would go to them even in the middle of the week, and would spend an hour or two each night in having them recite lessons he had assigned the month before, and would continue these few days' Bible reading or drill each month through the entire year, a wonderful advancement would be made in the course of the year.

A goodly number of preaching brethren now, when they hold protracted meetings, spend part of each evening in Bible drill, with good results. If all the preachers would do this, in several years' time it would have a great influence on the people. There is a great indifference concerning the study of God's word, and we must use every scriptural means to arouse the people. **It is the preacher's business to try with all his might to arouse an interest in Bible study when there is none, and not merely to satisfy an interest already there.** When the protracted meeting with the Bible drill is closed, the preacher would do well to help the Elders assign lessons for the members to study on, and by which the younger men in the church can be developed. And then by visiting them now and then, and drilling them more, and giving more suggestions, teachers are bound to be developed in the course of time.

A good way to disseminate knowledge is by expository preaching. Let a preacher take a chapter, or part of a chapter, and have the brethren take their Bibles and follow him as he explains the text and gives the meaning, as Ezra did of old. Then when the brethren

go home they can re-read the chapter and many of the things said will come back to them.

I know a preacher who, in order to stir interest in the study of the Bible, told the brethren each night as he read an introductory chapter that he wished them to listen attentively to what was read as he intended to ask them questions on it when he was through. In that way he caused them to listen attentively to what was read (a thing which they do not generally do). After awhile some of them wished him to announce the chapter the night before so that they could read it outside the assembly! That was good, and worthy of imitation! Let us try all these means to get the people to read the Bible, for if they will not read and study it **they will surely die spiritually**. The nice little flowery sermon to the brethren has been a failure in the way of stirring the people to read God's Book; and the sooner we get rid of it, and of those preachers who are determined to feed the brethren on such, the better it will be for the cause of Christ. If, after we have tried diligently in several ways, to get the brethren at any place to study God's word and to develop themselves, they will not do it, it is evident that they are dead, and there is no use wasting our time nursing "dead bodies".

There are some preachers who are so situated that they cannot go out from home and be gone weeks and months, preaching to the world and committing what they know to faithful men who shall be able to teach others. Perhaps they have families that need their attention. But they can visit places regularly and develop them. They can have these readings and drills with the churches they visit, and develop Elders and others. But if they continue merely to preach to the brethren, and are as much needed at the end of a year as at the beginning (and in most places they are needed more), it is evident that such preachers are not trying to develop teachers, as Paul commanded Timothy to do. Unlike Paul at Corinth and Ephesus, **they are working their way INTO the service of the church rather than OUT of it**. They are weakening the Eldership and developing themselves into another clergy. **The aim of every preacher should be to develop the churches he works for so that they will be able to take care of themselves, AND THEN TO HAVE THEM SUPPORT**

HIM OUT IN WEAK PLACES AND IN NEW FIELDS.

But it is often hard to get men to take hold of public work. They say they are not informed enough, and plead timidity, especially in public prayer. If they would have family devotions in the home, as God commands, they would not say that. God commanded the Jewish fathers to talk of His word as they sat in their homes, as they arose in the morning, as they lay down at night and as they walked by the way; and Paul says, "Ye fathers . . . bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." This is as much of a command as to repent and be baptized, and fathers who are wilfully neglecting what God here commands cannot be pleasing to Him. Preachers should impress this lesson with all the force of their being! If fathers would do it, they would have to learn Bible stories to tell to their children, they would have to read to them, they would listen to the children recite Bible stories, they would pray—in short there would be a development for the father which would help much to qualify him for use in the public services of the church. There are only two Divine institutions—the Family and the Church; and what the Church needs is the development of the heads of these two centers of Bible knowledge—fathers in the home, and Elders in the Church. Preachers should be developed to go to new places and to develop the weak churches.

The result of all this development will be that the brethren as a whole will become more interested in God's word, the source of all that is good. Those who take a part publicly (and all the sound, sensible men should) will have to study to do so. Men, women and children will all have to study to take part in the drill work. Fathers and mothers should take up the work in their homes and drill the members of the family there. The Water of Life thus passing so freely through the minds of the brethren will to a great extent carry off the impurities of worldliness, luke-warmness, cold-heartedness, selfishness, factionism and hobbyism. Every Christian will wish to talk about the things uppermost on his mind, and that will be the gospel of Christ; and, like the apostolic Christians, they will go everywhere preaching the Word. Young people will marry, move off where there is no apostolic church, and will call back to the mother church, "Come over into

Macedonia and help us"; and we will send a preacher over, for we will have plenty of talent and money (not having used our money to hire "a pastor" to do work which we are doing ourselves), and new churches will be established. And demands for missionary societies, aid societies, "Bible colleges", etc., to help the poor, teach the Bible or preach the Gospel will have passed entirely away, for God's plan will be seen to be the best of all.

But I would not have you believe that there are no obstacles to this work of the Lord. As long as time endures, preachers and Elders and others will not wish to submit to the Divine will. Paul said to the Ephesian elders, "After my departure grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them." Preachers from the outside and Elders from the inside of the local church will cause trouble. Hobbyists and contentious persons may arise, etc. But, if the brethren are developed in general, there will be a greater number from whom to select well-balanced Elders, and these men will be able to cope with the situation. Hobbyists and heretics often get an advantage because no one is developed sufficiently to stand against them. Every sound, sensible man should be pushed to the front, and thus be trained to lead the army against the enemy.

A Parting Word.—Brethren, we are living in a degenerating age, and something must be done quickly to save the Church. Old institutions are crumbling. Protestantism is going rapidly to pieces. Yes, and the true Church of Christ is in great danger! I have talked with many preachers in many parts of the country, and think I am informed. I know many churches which are merely struggling along. Very few additions are being made to the Church, and very many of the professed Christians have lost interest. There are some, however, who are perhaps more alive than they have ever been before, and it is to them that I now talk. **There are great opportunities before the Church if we will do real constructive work.**

Don't think that you can save the Church by having a preacher discourse to you twice a month or all the time. You may seem to gain interest for awhile by such procedure, but you are developing a **one-half** or a **full-fledged "pastor,"** and are weakening the God-given

bishopric; and a church with a weak Eldership will sooner or later go to pieces or into digressionism! Sermonettes will not make a strong church—only the developing of all the Christians will do that, and the sermonette will do little to that end. Too long have we had the idea that numbers mean strength. A large ingathering means strength only when those added are developed; and if they are not developed, it means weakness and final decay. **If the preacher you have working with you will not try to have Bible Readings, drills, or something of the kind to develop you, dismiss him and get some preacher who will!**

The sermonettes of the denominations are not able to save them from going to pieces, and they will not save us. The diligent study of God's word by the members generally is the only thing which will save the Church from the disaster which threatens it; and mere preaching to Christians will not do much to further that study. Many preachers have had to go to secular work to support their families, and what we have must not be doing the work of the bishops. The preachers must hurry from place to place to try to show the remnant how to take care of themselves and to save themselves from the wreck of the age. If we cannot get the brethren generally to read the Bible, the Cause is lost! Strong, intelligent, active, watchful bishops in every church, are what is needed in this critical age, and it is the business of the preacher to help make them by committing what he knows of God's word to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also. The kingdom of the clergy has to a certain extent led to this weakness in the religious world, and every vestige of it in the Church of Christ should be destroyed and a God-given bishopric established!

Because the preachers did not develop teachers to guide the flock, the bishops were weak in Bible knowledge; because the bishops were weak in Bible knowledge, the members were weak in it, too; and because the members were weak in Bible knowledge and development, they became indifferent, covetous, worldly-minded, factious and cold-hearted; and because they were thus, the church went down or into digressionism, and the members were LOST—all because the preachers did not commit the stimulating, purifying and life-giving Word to "faithful men who shall be able to teach others also."

Brother, read this entire essay again, for it contains vital truths!

Since writing the above, I have run across another clipping from Alexander Campbell which confirms in substance practically every important position in this tract. Read it closely.

"If, indeed, teachers cannot be prepared for want of time to study, why do they [preachers] make a monopoly of teaching: for by attending to Paul's instructions to the churches at Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, and others, it will be seen that teaching is a thing not to be restricted to an individual of an assembly, but that every man in an assembled body of Christians, possessing in a greater or less degree the gifts for teaching or exhortation, should not be obstructed, but allowed opportunity to exercise the same. But this is not permitted where one man engrosses all, and drinks up too, the resources of the congregation, which ought to be appropriated to the use of the poor, as Paul enjoins. 'Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God has prospered him'; that is, to form a 'collection for the saints' in want. It will be said that inferior teachers must exercise their gifts at other times, and not when the whole church is assembled. I answer that the scripture knows nothing of such plan. The gifts of the saints ought to be exercised in love for edification of the whole body; but how can this be done except when they are come together?"—Christian Baptist, p. 28.

Thus we have Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Campbell and the Apostle Paul (see 1 Cor. 14) with us in this matter of Mutual Edification in the assembly "when the whole church be come together."

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