

individual group was like a family in a great city. Each congregation of disciples had the privilege of enjoying the society of all, and of associating with the whole fraternity, and of cooperating for their virtual upbuilding, with as many as were interested in the same enterprise. Yet each family or church had the right to transact its own affairs and interests without interrupting or being interrupted by any other congregation. These churches had each one its own elders, who had been selected and ordained by fasting, and prayers, and the laying on of the hands of the minister, or evangelist. On this point hinges all my argument for the high executive authority of the church.

As we accept the sacred authority or privilege conferred upon elders by ordination to rule one congregation, we hold the church together by sacred law. Wherever this sacredness is rejected the spirit of disorganization and division rules. But the objector cannot see that ordination can be of any benefit. He thinks he can act as bishop or deacon as well by an agreement with the church as by being ordained.

The government of the family and of the church both have the same divine author, and sacredness belongs to the one as well as to the other. But what father would think of ordering the estate and honor and happiness of his family without a marriage ceremony recorded. Every such family is in imminent danger of disrepute, alienation and abandonment, as the history of the world abundantly proves. Wherever there is a low estimate of the sacred law that governs, there is as surely a low appreciation of sacred love. To lose sight therefore of the necessity of law, or to stagger off from the conscientious sacred obligation to the law of either domestic or church relationship is fatally dangerous to as many as practice it. And to undertake to amend or make better that which God has given to us perfect, is simply to introduce that much human error into the law of sacred relationships. Eph. 5: 23 says, "For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church," &c. Here are the two nearest relationships on earth. The husband takes the side of every danger and generalship in the protection of the object of his love. So Christ gave himself for the

church, and his perfect law for its governments to secure the perpetual love of the church to himself, and to save his church from the danger or certainty of apostasy, by making rules for its own government.

The apostles of Christ were supernatural men, and had the authority directly from Christ to disciple the people and organize the church and then subject themselves to the government of the church. See the apostles receiving ordination of the church at Antioch, Acts 13 chapter, to give church authority or sacred authority to their preaching, or ministration of the gospel of Christ to all the world. The Holy Spirit said do this, therefore it was right that the inspired apostles should acknowledge the high sacred authority that Christ had given to the church. The church at Antioch by the authority of the Holy Spirit ordained the apostles by fasting and prayer and the laying on of the hand of the ruling elders of that church, and sent them to preach the gospel and to organize other churches. And this they did by making the sacred tour round, and ordaining elders in every church, Acts 14: 23. It is the duty and privilege of the church, then, through its acting elders to ordain the minister and send him to preach, not "call him." Who can find where one apostolic preacher ordained another preacher? We have just shown that the church ordained the preachers, and the preacher ordains the elders in the organization of new congregations. Who will be kind enough to show us an exception to this rule?

When the decrees for the relief of the Gentile converts were to go out they were ordained by the apostles and acting elders at Jerusalem, a statement of which was spread upon the sacred record, to be read for all time, Acts 16: 4. Thus showing that the sacred privilege of executive power was acknowledged by the apostles to be lodged in the church of Christ. There were acting elders in every church, or city, Acts 14: 23, Tit. 1: 5, Acts 20: 17, who were neither apostles nor evangelists, but elders to rule the one church as a loving father rules over his own house. See the weeping apostle in Acts 20: 28 admonishing the acting elders of the church at Ephesus to feed the church over which the Holy Spirit had made them overseers, commending them to God, and his word, and the word of the Lord Jesus as the

rule by which to live themselves, and by which the church is to be fed and ruled by the elders of that church.

The Savior said of the finality of a church decision, if the trespassing brother will not hear you nor those you take with you, "Tell it unto the church, but if he neglect to hear the church let him be unto thee as an heather man, and a publican," Matt. 18: 17.

The church being the highest executive authority its decision is an end of controversy. The minister should have nothing to do with the executive business of the church; therefore the "Law of the Spirit" provided for elders in every church to attend to all the executive work.

But the minister thinks it is too bad for him to have to organize a church to rule him—that he ought to rule the congregation that he organizes. So thought the Papacy. But will any truly converted preacher argue that because he is a minister and his services had been accepted by parties in the forming of a new family organization, that he is, therefore, at liberty ever thereafter to stick his face against their windows at night, as his right to see and know of the affairs of that family, because he solemnized the marriage? I am afraid if he does somebody will say he is a "busybody in other men's matters." That Christ has a church on the earth, but few religious people deny. But without that church is to be governed by a theological Sanhedrin, or by a one man power, in a preacher, bishop, or pope, or whether the church in the full enjoyment of divine love for the Savior has Scriptural right to select bishops and deacons, as ruling elders in each church, not with authority of masters, but with zeal and diligence of faithful and loving servants of Christ and his church, is a question that needs to be well settled. As long as the church gives strict adherence to Christ and his law the prosperity and happiness was enjoyed. The only rulers were the elders of each local society. The only rule of church government was the word of the Lord. The New Testament Scriptures, which Mosheim says was read before the middle of the second century, in every Christian Society throughout the world. But when the ministry became captiously ambitious for clerical supremacy, corrupt in heart and impure in purpose, an extra

dignity was formed in the church by investing the bishop of Rome and his successors with the title of Prince of Bishops. Then began the perverted or modern proverb "Like priest like people."

The opinions and speculations of men without wisdom or inspiration were listened to in the church in place of the gospel. The people allowed those foreign and strange speculations of an unholy bishop to be read and taught and adopted by the church in place of the pure word of God, which alone had been read as the only rule of church government.

When the churches accepted the authority and government of an apostate bishop in place of their own ruling elders it was a fatal departure from the right way of the Lord to as many as fell into it. And in this way the church fell under the iron hail of an inexorable ministerial madness for supremacy and having left all loyalty to Christ there followed in place of Christian love and fellowship one of the most cruel and unhumanly bloody persecutions that has ever befallen our unfortunate race.

When the right to rule was first taken from the elders by the ministry, it ruined the purity and usefulness of both ministry and church, and leaves the family of Christ to-day in division and weakness, by hearing an uninspired minister in place of Christ, and being governed by a human law in place of the law of Christ. And this condition must continue until the right to rule is returned to the elders of each local congregation. Then you will see a prosperous church, a happy membership and a contented and zealous ministry. Then it may be said like Christians like preachers. As in the days of Hosea, where the wickedness of the people led the priests astray, it was "Like people like priest." But in the apostasy from Christ the priest led the people astray.

It is a joy to see our church bringing the ministry to Scriptural terms and holding it to the government of the church according to the law of Christ. The ministers from the apostles to the present are all natural men and have no sacred privileges or authority but that they have received from the church. The church cannot confer a greater religious privilege or authority than it possesses; therefore no minister since the apostles has received from any source a religious authority