

fession. Recollect, we say, that the scriptures are to be their own interpreters, according to the common rules of interpreting other writings.

A Church of Christ is a society of disciples professing to believe on the Son of God, voluntarily submitting to his authority and guidance, having all of them in their baptism, expressed their faith in him and allegiance to him, and stately meeting together in one place, to walk in all his commandments and ordinances. This society with its bishop or bishops, and deacon or deacons, as the case may require, is perfectly independent of any tribunal on earth called ecclesiastical. It knows nothing of superior or inferior church judicatories, and acknowledges no laws, no canons, nor government other than that of the Monarch of the Universe and his laws. This church, having now committed unto it the oracles of God, is adequate to all the purposes of illumination and reformation which entered into the design of its founder, having the Record, or testimony of God in it; and it becomes the duty and high privilege of every member of it to be a preacher of the gospel.

I need not tell you that I do not mean to say that every man and woman that believes the gospel is to commence travelling about or to leave their homes and neighbourhoods, or employment, to act as public preachers. But the young women are to declare to their coevals and acquaintance—the elder women to theirs—the young men and elder men to theirs, the glad-tidings; and to shew them the evidence on which their faith rests. This, followed up by a virtuous and godly life, is the most powerful mean left on earth to illuminate and reform the world. In the meantime the bishop of the church, in their weekly meetings, *teaches* the religion in its sublime and glorious doctrine and bearings, and thus the members are still educating or building up in the most holy faith; and thus the church, in all its members, “speaking the truth in love, *grows up into HIM* in all things, who is the **HEAD**, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, *maketh increase of the body*, unto the edifying of itself in love.” When the bishop rests from his labors, the church, of which he had the *oversight*, by his labors, and by the opportunity afforded all the members of exercising their faculties of communication and inquiry in the public assembly, finds within itself others educated and qualified to be appointed to the same good work. The church of the living God is thus independent of theological schools and colleges for its existence, enlargement, comfort, and perfection; for it is itself put in possession of all the means of its growth in grace and knowledge, if these means be wisely used.

The spread of the gospel, the multiplication of the number of the faithful in the apostolic age, is, in a great measure, attributable to the great company of them that declared the faith. The whole church of Jerusalem became preachers in a very short time. We are told (Acts viii.) that there was a great persecution against the congregation [that