

# MACEDONIAN CALL

"Come Over Into Macedonia and Help Us." (Acts 16: 9.)

INDIANAPOLIS, IND., April, 1928.

## Is "the Church of Christ" "Slipping"?

The Church of Christ is like the Christian life--an ideal something, which we can not attain in its perfection. A real Church and a real Christian are those which are always struggling to reach the ideal. But the sin of mankind is to drift. Paul warned the Hebrews to give heed to the things they had learned lest they drift away from them. The seven churches of Asia had all practically drifted away from what they were at the beginning. Christ knew the frailty of men, and he gave the Lord's Supper to be observed on the first day of the week, to remind them of their great redemption and to keep them from drifting. But regardless of all the Lord's precautions, we will drift.

Religious movements run well for a little while, then drift away from their original course. Can any one point to a religious movement fifty years old, which does not have a progressive and conservative element? A century ago a movement started to restore the apostolic Church, but the old digressives arose, then the new digressives (the Bible college people), and now many are crying for preaching all the time. We are evidently taking the course of history.

Many churches are drifting into the world. This is evident from the following clipping from a Long Beach, Calif., paper, concerning the Church of Christ where Bro. Morris belongs:

"The several Pioneer Clubs in the city are carrying on fine individual programs and are serving in every way that they can. Public leaders and interested boys are combining to push the Pioneer idea along in many ways. The American Eagles' Pioneer Club of the First Unitarian Church is coming along in fine shape. Ben Taylor, leader, is working hard with the boys and is getting some fine results. A good basketball team has been organized and promises trouble for its opponents. The Lindberg Club of the Church of Christ has been steadily growing since its start last fall. The Rev. W. H. Holy, leader, has developed a good group. The Lindbergs will also have a basketball team, and are entered in league E of the Y. M. C. A."

Now I don't see how this "Church of Christ" could have this club without having an organization. So here this "Church of Christ" in Long Beach has a mongrel institution, a cross between the Church and the world. Isn't this "Church of Christ" "slipping"?

And I wonder--if the young men of this "church of Christ", where Bro. Morris belongs, play pool at the Y. M. C. A., with which this clipping says they are in league! I wonder if they announce Sunday mornings at the Bible school, whether their team defeated the Unitarians' team, etc.! Or, did the whole church go to the game, so that they did not need to take the trouble to do such! I wonder if Brethren Morris and Settle attend the games!

Now this "club of the Church of Christ" could not have been established without the endorsement of the elders; for if there is one claim above another which Bro. Morris and his paper, and another paper (the past few years) have contended for, it is that elders are absolute rulers in the congregations. So Brethren Morris and Settle must not raise a protest against this illegitimate club which this church has begotten in its spiritual adultery. "Say, brethren, where are we going, anyway?"

Some of us have suffered much reproach because we helped fight the "Preaching Each Lord's Day" at Long Beach, and other departures from the Book, and now those who were not there, are beginning to see what spirit there is in that city. Instead of squelching plain preaching and writing, as some are trying to do, it seems that only the strongest and most pointed kind of preaching is going to save the Church. Don't you think, brethren, that something is headed like the N. C. to try to check this spirit of apostasy and

worldliness which is spreading. I say "spreading", for I have information that about the same kind of a club is being established elsewhere, under the influence of this Long Beach system. Brethren, if we are in a boat and drifting towards the falls, shutting our eyes will not keep us from going over the falls. We must pull for the shore. If the brethren will furnish the material and stamps and names of those who should know these things, I will do what I can to help you reach the shore.

In 1900 Bro. A. M. Morris, in the Octographic Review, now the Apostolic Review, of which he was then one of the editors, wrote things which ought to be reprinted just now. This clipping is different from the one quoted from him in the January No. of M. C.:

"The business of the gospel preacher is TO DEVELOP THE TALENTS OF THE FLOCK, 'set in order the things that are wanting', and to instruct and arouse the members that the congregation will be a powerful factor in the world's salvation. There is manifestly a fault in the preacher, who does all the preaching, praying, reading, of the Scriptures, talking at the Lord's table, baptizing, once in a month in any given community, AND DOES NOT DEVELOP THE CHURCH SO THAT IT CAN HOLD INTENSELY INTERESTING AND PROFITABLE MEETINGS ON THE FOLLOWING LORD'S DAYS. . . We preachers must know our place, and when called to assist a congregation in a protracted meeting, should spend at least half the time showing the brethren how to make their own meetings most edifying and profitable, and be satisfied with no success that does not leave the Elders, deacons and teachers better qualified to do the mighty work which is intrusted to them. . . Were we able to preach with the eloquence of Apollos and exhort like Barnabas, pray like Paul, the work would effervesce like a dream and disappear like a morning cloud, if we failed to bring the bishops and deacons FORWARD, and teach the teachers, and so develop the membership that it could work with intelligent direction in the Lord's appointed ways thereafter."

Some object to the expression "one-fourth pastor". All right, brethren, we shall leave off that expression. It is not a question of mere words, it is a question of practice. The evil which Bro. Morris condemned in this quotation is exactly the evil which I have been condemning, call it what you say. If we fail to bring forth the bishops and teachers, Bro. Morris says the preacher is at fault. Let us set about remedying the fault. But we are sorry that Bro. Morris has changed from this position, and has brought so much confusion through the change.

A religious paper should certainly keep out of its columns mere local church troubles. But there are troubles which have to do with the Church as a whole which need to be discussed. When the church in St. Louis first introduced an organ about seventy-five years ago, it was in a sense a local trouble, yet it was also of great concern to the whole brotherhood, and was discussed by the whole, for it was contrary to the established principles of the brotherhood. And so when churches have preaching all the time, or have Lindberg clubs, etc., or advocate principles which are the foundation of the pastor system, it needs to be brought to the attention of the brotherhood.

Because a man advocates mutual edifying strong, his opposers then charge him with being inconsistent if he ever preaches Sunday morning. Paul preached at Troas, but that was no established practice nor systematic relieving of the elders and other members. Let us preachers visit a place once a month, twice a month, or if necessary all the time, but see that we do what Paul says--commit what we know to faithful men who shall be able to teach others. How many preachers today who visit a place once a month are making an effort to develop the public talent of the brethren, as Paul commanded and as Bro. Morris exhorted? Let the reader think of his home congregation.

Some say, "NO, NO, NO, I don't believe in the pastor"; and yet advocate the principles, and partly put them in practice, by which the pastor system of the Christian Church was introduced. In writing on this very question, when it is under investigation, why should a man say that "the elders are the ones to rule . . . take the oversight", and yet not show also that they are to "feed"? If I can cut out part

of those qualifications in order to suit my reasoning, why hasn't the sectarian the same right to say, "Except a man be born of the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God", leaving off the "water" to suit his case?

While speaking of "feeding", let us remember that the Greek lexicons give "feed" as the first and root meaning of the Greek word poimaino. It is translated thus in the New Testament: feed cattle, Luke 17: 7; Feed, John 21: 16; Acts 20: 28; 1 Cor. 9: 7; 1 Pet. 5: 2; Jude 12; Rev. 7: 17; rule, Matt. 2: 6 (margin, feed); Rev. 2: 27; 12: 5; 19: 15. The last three places in Revelation refer to Christ's ruling "with a rod of iron", which is possibly a contrast to the shepherd's rod. Liddell and Scott, considered the greatest of Greek lexicographers, give this as the first meaning of the noun form, poimoi: "herdsman, especially a shepherd, (opposed to the lord or owner)". In other words, the first use of the word was to actual "feeding" a flock. This definition, coupled with the fact that elders are to be "apt to teach" and able to "exhort and to convince locusts the gainsayers", shows that they have an actual work to perform. Another great work of shepherds was to lead the sheep where they could feed themselves, and that is what the elders do when they have the members teach among themselves. The great purpose I have in this discussion is to help make the elders better qualified to do their work, evangelists better qualified to do their work (not the elders' work), and other members better qualified to do their work, though of course the work of each may overlap somewhat. Trying to hire someone else to do our work is an evident sign of spiritual decay.

One brother does not see such mutual edification in 1 Cor. 12-14. Neither did Benjamin, the founder of the Review, through most of his life. He drifted along with that pastor system, and one year himself preached all the time for a church. He went along with it, and near the end of his life helped find a preacher for his home church, thinking, I suppose, that it was his duty to try to get as loyal a man as possible there. But regarding the failure of the brotherhood to develop the talents of the brethren, his biographer says this with many other things, "Benjamin Franklin saw this error 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. 12-14th chapters,) had been greatly undervalued."

The same brother "believes" in a "some" amount of preaching, but that is simply a word of one's own interpretation. His idea runs thus: "If a preacher employed by a church all his time "scouts around the community, and stirs up an interest to such an extent that numbers are present every Lord's day, who's going to say that some young man, or old man for that matter, who is not able to rightly divide the Word [which is also a matter of mere judgment] ought to take the place of that preacher?" And again, "If there be a preacher present a number of Lord's days following, right in succession though they be, the elders will 'feed the flock' through them." With this teaching, the bars have been laid flat, and the Roman cattle can come over and tramp down the Lord's vineyard.

Some say, "But why make a hobby of mutual edification?" A sectarian preacher once said to a preacher of the Church of Christ, "Why do you say so much about baptism?" The other replied, "Baptism has its rightful place in the plan of redemption, and is thus important, but you have taken it out of its rightful place and do not preach what the Bible says on it, and so we have to do our preaching on it and yours too. If you will preach on it like the Lord says, we will not have to say so much." If all the preachers will preach on the command, "Edify one another", as they should, a few of us would not have to say so much.

Some have tried to say that the last M. C. is a result of family trouble. This is not so. I have nothing against any one in the world

except as he has departed from the simplicity in Christ, or is trying to hinder the work of those satisfied with the Word. The Review was made out legally in my name and would have belonged to me after the death of the former publisher by paying its debts, etc., and was begged again and again by her to take the paper. One of the last things she said to me ~~that~~ was that the greatest disappointment of her life was that I would not take the paper. But why didn't I? There are several reasons. This spirit of catering to the world, and of giving up principles for which the Review has fought, (which is only partly manifested in what I have criticized), with which I should have been compelled to wrestle almost daily in certain ones, gives an inkling of a reason why I didn't take the Review. That many others think this is not a family affair is evident from the following letters of commendation received since the January No. of the A. C. went out:

\*A great friend of the Review under its former management says, "I was so glad to receive what you had to say about 'Are Some Writers of the Review Slipping?' I saw these things and tried to make them out. So glad to have it clearly explained. I saw them in the same light explained here, and had hoped these things would not be noticed by some I had donated the Review to; and all others too I had hoped would escape seeing them."

\*An elder writes, "I am pleased to know that you stand for the same things that the Review has stood for UNTIL the last two or so years. . . . I visited Bro. ----- (an elder in another church), last week, and he does not like the stand the Review has taken at all. No feels the same as I do."

\*A preacher writes, "Your last A. C. sure was good, as is the Back-to-Bible Helper."

\*Another preacher, "Your last publication to my mind is the only cure for spiritual Israel. A complete return to the plain Christian life. . . I know the faithful brethren will endorse the last . . ."

\*Another elder, "The M. C. I want to get into the hands of overseers as much as possible."

\*A leader in a church (he may be an elder now, for they were talking of making him such, "Your M. C. and Religious Pope are sure good.")

\*Another preacher, "I'm pleased to say it is what it will take to save the Church, if it's ever saved. The preachers who come out strong and actually show up the present conditions in the Church, will not wax fat, neither treasure up wealth, except in heaven."

\*"I have your literature. . . I have read both and heartily agree with your sentiments as therein expressed. So few, oh so few, it seems, are satisfied with the written Word, as their guide." (This man speaks from experience, and the one following, for the pastor system of preaching all the time has been introduced into their church where they belonged.)

\*I want to say I am pleased to learn that you are one of the very few that is still walking in the old paths."

\*Another elder, I like your stand you are taking against everything that is not in accord with the teaching of the New Testament, and would be glad if you could visit these parts some time in the future." Others may wish such kind of preaching. Let us know, and we shall try to put you in touch with preachers who are not afraid to condemn the evils of the day. If you are only a few, or wish to try to start up a new congregation, write us your prospects. We may be able to help you.

\*Another leader, "I like the tone of the pure gospel you are standing firm on. I want to help hold up ~~another~~ faithful teachers that will preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

\*Helper and M. C. for January at hand, and read with I hope a great deal of profit. I would like to have a copy of Mutual Edification. You will find 10 cents herein." Send for that tract, brethren. You need it, and it's free. Send to D. A. Sommer, 918 Congress Ave., Indianapolis, Ind. Write your letter NOW.

\*I am sure interested in them (Helper and M. C.) I think it a grand thing, and could be the means of getting the true facts of the gospel into the minds of the people. Something must be done. Wish I could help more, and pray that they may be a great success in turning people back to the Bible."

\*"Bro. Sommer, I can see that the Review isn't as strong for certain principles as it used to be when I first came into the Church, about nine years ago. I am very sorry, too. I surely believe you are right in what you say concerning mutual edification and the pastor system.

I remember reading your articles on mutual edification five or six years ago. I understood them, and when I saw that some did not, I was surprised, for they were so plain." (Here the writer tells of a certain church which has a big crowd when they have preaching, and have very few at "social meetings". Absolutely no effort put forth by the preacher for years, to help make the meetings more edifying!)

\*This writer is old enough to remember how the pastor of the Christian Church came in, "The preachers and elders do seem to interfere with each other. It was always so. When I was twelve and thirteen years of age, I remember how some in the church would set up the elders. It would run that way awhile. Then a preacher would come along, and a lot of them would want him to stay and run things. He would stay awhile, and the elders' crowd would work him out, and would have the elders again. And that is the way it went. But it was just the old Nick. For they proved to be people that wanted this old world and not the word of God. Put hope and trust in God, and pray, and let's stand by the Word of God."

\*Another leader, "Well, we note your admonitions in the last M. J. and censures, that seem to be warranted; especially when we consider that for some time [yes, for fifteen or twenty years] you have been warning Christians against the evils of the pastor system, and showing them the evil results of it also. . . I think your paper fine, and from the trend of things it seems we will need-----"

\*Here is another one who has written much for the Review, but describes a condition nearby, where a church has been practically turned over to an imported preacher. "Some are very much dissatisfied with the way the church is going in -----, and they do not favor -----(the preacher)'s ways. It is too bad that Christians cannot be satisfied with the Lord's arrangements for the growth and development of the members of the one Body, but want a preacher to shoulder most of the responsibility. Too many professed disciples are carried away with the things of this present world to the extent that they overlook or willing ignore Paul in Rom. 12: 1, 2, and 1 John 2: 15, 17, and fail to be zealously affected always in a good thing."

\*Just these few lines this evening to let you know that I think your M. J. is O. K., and that you are striking closer to God's Word than the other fellows are. I have received the M. J. for some time, and the last one impressed me the most--about duties of elders. I know from experience that elders are more often just a figurehead in most congregations--too much preaching indeed. I would appreciate getting your tract on mutual edification." Yes, brethren, send for it.

\*This from a man well along in life, who has preached considerable, and belongs to a church which had preaching twice a month, then all the time (which is the usual way it runs), "Your M. J. for January at hand and read carefully. Your arguments therein are unanswerable and I for one stand with you. The congregation here is dying a slow death from the 'pastor system' superinduced by 'bossism'. --- (a preacher) with his pastor system notions and continued bossism, has driven the little congregation here on the rocks of destruction. Up to about 7 years ago, this congregation could edify itself in love. Eph. 4: 16, for we had much material which was fully capable of speaking the things that were for peace, and things whereby one may edify one another, Rom. 14: 19, until the pastor, or one-man-doing-all-the-teaching craze hit it, and then it slowly began to go to nothing. This pastor system begets laziness, and no lazy man, or set of men, can get anywhere by just listening to the expressed ideals of one man. During -----(the preacher's) supervision here, and especially within the past three years, he has never been instrumental in educating a single person that could edify intelligently. And when he had done all the mischief he could in such a course, he dropped quietly into the background and shoved -----(another preacher) to take his place by preaching for the few each Lord's day. . . . Like you I think some of the writers of the Review are 'slipping' . . . I think your course is right, and at no distant date you will be instrumental in saving many congregations from ruin."

From these sentiments from these earnest brethren in many states see clearly this is not a personal quarrel. There is a wide-spread slipping from the original principles of this brotherhood and from the New Testament. And an effort has been made to squelch the autographs which show these things up in their true light. If we don't awaken and do something, the leaven will soon have gone through the whole lump. From what we have mentioned it seems that the faith-

ful brethren need something to warn them of slippings. The Review has done great good in the past and can do great good in the future, but the present policy of some of the writers seems to be to drift, in several things. This seems to be the idea too in the extracts we have given. But I am sure that our restrictions have already done good in checking, or restraining, certain movements and slippings. However, I will state it plainly that I believe many of the larger congregations will in a few years have preaching all the time, have practically the pastor system of the Christian Church. You may not endorse every little point we present in the M. C., yet I hope you will see the value and necessity of this checking work. One thing is sure: we shall never establish many new churches and help weak ones, if elders and others try to shift their work upon others. The burden of practically the whole of this essay is that we develop the church more, so that it can stand alone, and can help more in heeding the Macedonian Call that comes to our ears.

I am much encouraged to go on in this work. This present M. C. and Helper are paid for, for which I thank again the many brethren and sisters who have helped make it so. I donate all my work, which runs into days with each No. But the next No. is not paid for. Brethren are taking a hold of these tracts nicely, but there is room for improvement. One church took all the names of those interested in from the world, in the course of their protracted meeting, and expects to send a Helper to each one as it is issued. Good idea. Keep outsiders interested by sending them literature that is concise and to the point. But why not enlarge upon the idea, and send the Helper to every outsider in the community whom you think might be influenced for the right? The writing of the names, and the thinking and talking of the matter, would be fine exercise for the young people. It would give them something personally to do for the Church, and possibly help hold them to it. Also, brethren, send the names of all who, you think, would be benefitted by reading the M. C. and Helper (Christians, I mean), to D. A. Sommer, 918 Congress Ave., Indianapolis, Ind.

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THE PROTRACTED MEETING SONG-BOOK.--This book is taking with the people. Why shouldn't it? It is not composed of inferior songs which some ambitious song writer wishes to put forth, but of a hundred standard songs which millions have sung. One church sold the books to outsiders for ten cents. A new way to do missionary work, for the book contains a page of scripture warnings with each invitation song, and contains also two pages of scriptures on the Church which Christ built. People will keep the book for the songs, and will be continually confronted with scriptures they need, when they open the book. Send for a sample copy while it's on your mind. The book is suitable for all worship. Price 20 cents each in any quantity.

THE MIMEOGRAPHS.--Possibly when the warm weather comes our mimeograph will work better. Today the meter on it flipped to 100,000. That many impressions have been made since we bought the machine, and practically all that has been in behalf of the Church. In addition we have probably sent out fifty or sixty thousand Helpers. Not much, yet something. We have received many letters of commendation which we do not have space to print. Some have tried to stop this, and get literature all into their own hands. This is easily inferred from the way they write. Do you wish that? It is not very popular to contend against the modern trend toward apostasy and the world, and some intimate that we do this for gain. We surely would not have an idea for business, if such is the case, for the large churches do not wish me, because of my condemnation of their pastor system which they are nursing in infancy. We have lost many friends and much influence by our position, but we have not lost the truth if we are able to judge aright.

GETTING INTO SECTARIAN MEETING-HOUSES.--Many sectarian churches in the rural districts have been forsaken by their hireling pastors, and their members are anxious to have some preaching. Why not give it to them? Let us look around and get into every house we can, just as Paul went into the Jewish synagogues. Use wisdom, and try humbly to lead them to the light. We may be able to save a few that way. I think we are neglecting a great field.