

# **Scriptural Justification and Summary of the Vision for the City Church**

**from Doug Perry**

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**[www.FellowshipOfTheMartyrs.com](http://www.FellowshipOfTheMartyrs.com)**

**[fotm@fellowshipofthemartyrs.com](mailto:fotm@fellowshipofthemartyrs.com)**

Verses quoted from King James Version unless otherwise noted.

Other quotes from Watchman Nee's "The Normal Christian Church Life".

# When?

For me, this ride started in earnest on November 23, 2004. I can see that He has been preparing the way for a long, long time, but that was the day that I prayed for wisdom and to see through the eyes of Jesus – and He lit me up. Very soon after, it was made clear to me, in an even more tangible way than I knew before, that all the structures and systems that we have in place in “the church” are not at all what He had in mind. They are not working and it is obvious from their fruit.

As far as I could see, none of the denominations held Truth, even though each said that they did. None of the “movements” that have come and gone (or still linger) have been unstoppable, so none of them were purely from God. It seems obvious that “we all see through a glass darkly” but it seems that different people see through different parts less darkly than others. (I Corinthians 13:12) If the Body was truly ONE, then maybe we'd get a clearer look through that glass. As long as we're fractured, then we can't put all the puzzle pieces together. Without the picture on the lid of the box, there's no way to know where everything goes. And nobody seems to know what we did with the box.

I knew that I could trust no man to explain to me what God wanted. I'd tried that before – we've all tried that – and it isn't working. I needed to hear it straight from God. I wanted to see through the glass less darkly. And He says that if we pray for wisdom He will give liberally and without reproach. (James 1:5) Even if we used it wrong last time, He'll keep giving us wisdom as long as we keep asking. So I've never stopped.

The Lord Himself developed this intensive “curriculum of study” and began sending teachers and putting me through individual study and group study and even laboratory work to learn for myself what is the right Way and what the “church” should really look like. There was no plan of my own in this, He was entirely in charge – and it's only after the fact that I can get a sense of the cohesive, programmatic nature of what He did! There were miracles and divine appointments and amazing teaching moments that I couldn't possibly write about here. He is a good Dad and a great Teacher. There is no other like Him and no other that I want to learn from – or that I can trust fully. The Word of God says that the Holy Spirit will be our teacher – and He's not kidding. If you ask and believe, He'll teach you.

I prayed to see through the eyes of Jesus and I believe that the “church” in America, by any measure of Man, is clearly in chaos. There is no growth, just transfers from small churches to mega-churches. There is rampant fraud and debt and mismanagement. Only a tiny percentage of our revenue is being spent on the poor and hungry and lost. There are now 37,000+ denominations inside the Christian church. We're losing the youth and over a million people a year are dropping out of the institutional system we've built (according to Barna). We're spending just 0.1% of our budgets on reaching the most unreached. Divorce rates are higher inside the “church” than without. We are way off mission by every measure. (See Appendix C) Not to mention that “culture” is absorbing us.

Jesus prayed that we would be One as He and the Father are One. (John 17) That was the last prayer He prayed before being crucified and the only prayer of Jesus that I can find that the Father hasn't answered. We are about as far from ONE as we can get. If we really love Him, then maybe it's time we all prayed that prayer in agreement with Jesus and really meant it. But how could it ever possibly happen?

Our division within the Body of Christ is in direct disobedience to the commands of God and the clear instruction of scripture. The Lord showed us the model and it's all right there in the Bible. A return to that model under His headship IS possible and it's urgent that we try. This book will present some things you may never have heard before, but you will likely yearn for a return to this, since it is the way we were designed all along. You can be sure that the Holy Spirit in us yearns for a return to true community and oneness!

The short of it is that I believe He has made it clear that the “New Wineskin” that we're all looking for so that He can pour out His “New Wine” is the City Church. He needs to transform us by the RE-new-ing of our minds. That means rebooted – set back to the defaults. The way it was in the beginning before the viruses corrupted it. We need to get back to PRE-Denominational – there is no such thing as Non-Denominational, all you've done is make up your own.

And the only thing that I can find in the Word of God, and the thing that the Lord has pounded into me over and over and over and He is preparing all over the world, is the City Church – One Body in each municipality.

That doesn't mean that they all meet together in one building. That certainly doesn't mean that there is one Super Pastor or Apostle that has autocratic authority over the whole town! God forbid! What it means is that the Body of Christ in each town is considered by God to be one body whether we like it or not – that is HIS geography and structural design and the smallest allowable subdivision of the “church”. The Greek word that was translated as “church” is “ekklesia” and it literally means “the called out ones”. It never infers a closed circle or a building or some other membership requirements! It has everything to do with being one of His and nothing to do with joining a separate “congregation”. (In fact, that same word is used in Acts 19:32 to refer to the assembled riotous mob of Christian-haters! But at least they were all in unity.) This is important because I'm going to replace “church” with the proper Greek word as often as necessary so that we can set aside our baggage that's mixed up with that term.

A lot of folks may not like this, but I can't find any other way around it. I'm going to give my best shot at explaining all of this and pray hard that you will hear the voice of God and He will write the important parts on your heart and everything that isn't pure will fall harmless to the ground. If I'm right about this, then we're in big trouble and we need to act NOW! If I'm wrong, then you can go back to what you were doing and see if you can get that to work for you. If I'm wrong, then I've given up everything – I mean everything – for a lie, I'm hurting the Body, I'm grieving God, I'm pretty much toast and I'm probably going to crash and burn any time now. So if you think I'm wrong, don't worry too much about it, God will surely straighten me out Himself very soon – one way or the other.

So I'm just going to dive in here and say what I think needs saying so that maybe together we can turn this ride around. Wouldn't that be nice?

**Dear Lord Jesus, thanks for what You have taught me. In this time, for whoever is reading this, please bind up anything of the enemy – or even of themselves – that would prevent them from hearing Truth and nothing but Truth. I take full responsibility for anything here that isn't pure. Put it and all the consequences of it on my head and no other. Please forgive us all for having gone our own way. Please show us how to restore all that was lost. Please pour out the Gift of Repentance on your people so that we can be broken and contrite vessels useful for Your purposes. We're sorry, Lord, for all the man-made stuff we've mixed in with the perfection and beauty of Your wisdom. We're really sorry. Please wash us clean and teach us how to be One as You and the Father are One. Whatever it takes, Lord. Please give us wisdom and teach us fear of the Lord. Please light all the Lampstands. In the mighty Name of Jesus and by His shed blood we pray these things. Amen.**

# What is it? What is a City Church?

I know this might get a little detailed and you might be tempted to skim over some of these without paying too much attention, but if you're really seeking TRUTH, please stay with me here. I want to lead with the Word of God, so you can see it for yourself, as He explained it to me.

**Biblically, the “church” or “ekklesia” is only one of three choices.**

**1) Either it is the Body of Christ universal – that consists of all of those who have “been called out”:**

*[1Cr 15:9](#) For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted **the church** {ekklesia} of God.*

*[Eph 5:27](#) That he might present it to himself a glorious **church**, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

LOTS more example of this one. I'm not going to spend time on that. That one should be obvious.

These below are the only two instances of the word “ekklesia” in the Gospels:

*[Mat 16:18](#) And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build **my church** {ekklesia}; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

*[Mat 18:17](#) And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell [it] unto **the church** {ekklesia}; but if he neglect to hear **the church** {ekklesia}, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*

Those in Matthew are both from the mouth of Jesus – one referring to the universal church – His Body – and the other to the local assembly (you surely can't tell anything to the whole universal assembly). All the other “ekklesia” uses are in Acts and the epistles (and again from the mouth of Jesus in Revelation).

**2) Or it consists of those who are called out that live in a particular municipality:**

*[Act 8:1](#) And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against **the church which was at Jerusalem**; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.*

*[Act 11:22](#) Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of **the church which was in Jerusalem**: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.*

*[Act 13:1](#) Now there were in **the church that was at Antioch** certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.*

*[Act 15:4](#) And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of **the church**, and [of] the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. **{This is Jerusalem.}***

*[Act 15:22](#) Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with **the whole church**, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; [namely], Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: **{This is Jerusalem.}***

*[Act 20:17](#) And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of **the church. {of Ephesus.}***

*[Rom 16:1](#) I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of **the church which is at Cenchrea: {a suburb city of Corinth}***

*[1Cr 11:18](#) For first of all, when ye come together in **the church**, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. **{Corinth}***

*[1Cr 1:2](#) Unto **the church of God which is at Corinth**, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called [to be] saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:*

*[2Cr 1:1](#) Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy [our] brother, unto **the church of God which is at Corinth**, with all the saints which are in all Achaia: **{Achaia is a region, not a city.}***

*[Col 4:16](#) And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in **the church of the Laodiceans**; and that ye likewise read the [epistle] from Laodicea.*

*[2Th 1:1](#) Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto **the church of the Thessalonians** in God our Father and the*

Lord Jesus Christ:

[Rev 2:1](#) Unto the angel of **the church of Ephesus** write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; **{Note: these in Revelation are all Jesus talking.}**

[Rev 2:8](#) And unto the angel of **the church in Smyrna** write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

[Rev 2:12](#) And to the angel of **the church in Pergamos** write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

[Rev 3:1](#) And unto the angel of **the church in Sardis** write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

[Rev 3:7](#) And to the angel of **the church in Philadelphia** write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

[Rev 3:14](#) And unto the angel of **the church of the Laodiceans** write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

### 3) The third option is the segment of the local church that might be meeting in a particular place:

[Rom 16:5](#) Likewise [greet] the **church** {assembly} that is in {Greek: kata} their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ. **{Remember, Achaia is a region.}**

[1Cr 16:19](#) The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the **church** {assembly} that is in {kata} their house.

[Col 4:15](#) Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the **church** {assembly} which is in {kata} his house.

[Phm 1:2](#) And to [our] beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the **church in** {kata} thy house:

(The literal translations translate “church” in these contexts as “assembly” – as even the King James does in Acts 19:12 when it refers to a riotous mob – which wants nothing to do with Jesus, but at least they’re in one accord!)

The word “kata” is Strong’s Concordance Greek number 2596 and you can read more about how it is translated [here](#) (or go to [www.BlueLetterBible.com](http://www.BlueLetterBible.com) ) The short of it is that that word – kata – is not as simple as just “which is in.” It’s translated dozens of different ways throughout the Bible and has a sense of increasing or starting, not just sitting there. So these passages may mean that the City Church sprang from the assembly that started in their house. I’m not a Greek scholar, but I know that this particular word is not as clear-cut as to make the translation absolutely sure. Work it out yourself.

Even if it is translated correctly and means that the ekklesia was meeting in their house, that doesn’t infer that it was ALL of the ekklesia in that town or that it’s OK to divide up into unconnected home groups – and the clear words of Jesus are to either the Universal Church or the City Church.

These four listed above are all the references that I can find to anything smaller than a city and in these there is no implication that this assembly is a self-contained unit, but only that SOME of the ekklesia of that town are meeting in these particular houses. It’s clear that there are far more references to the church universal and to the city church.

These handful of verses are often used to justify the “house church” movement that wants to return to the apostolic roots of the church – but they miss that these aren’t the ONLY places that the ekklesia was meeting – they also met in Solomon’s porch and in rented spaces and in the School of Tyrannus. (Acts 5:12, Acts 28:30, Acts 19:9) God is a lot more creative than just to use homes. If you make meeting in homes an idol, then all you’ve got is the programmatized system we already have, but with much smaller buildings. Jesus often met in the open air and by the wells and in the streets and even in the synagogues – AND in homes. And He preached repentance to whole cities.

[Luk 4:43](#) And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other **cities** also: for therefore am I sent.

[Mat 10:23](#) But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the **cities** of Israel, till the Son of man be come.

He wants whole CITIES to repent!

[Mat 11:20](#) Then began he to upbraid the **cities** wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:

*Luke 10:13 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.*

What I'm trying to show is that we need to disconnect the word "church" from all of the baggage that we have attached to it by our systems and structures. You're going to have to set aside for a moment what you think "church" looks like or always has been and focus on what it SHOULD be in God's economy.

Here is further evidence that the City Church is the thing. There is no regional church in the Bible. There is no structure or leader that has oversight or control beyond one city. There are no denominations or national headquarters. Here are verses where the Word refers to multiples of churches {ekklesias}:

[2Cr 1:1](#) Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy [our] brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with **all the saints which are in all Achaia**: {Achaia is a region, not a city. Thus ALL the saints there are greeted, not the singular "church" of Achaia.}

[1Cr 16:19](#) The **churches of Asia** salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. {Asia is a region with multiple city churches.}

[Act 9:31](#) Then had **the churches** rest throughout all **Judaea and Galilee and Samaria**, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied. {Judaea, Galilee and Samaria are regions with multiple city churches}

[Act 15:41](#) And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the **churches**. {Both are regions with multiple city churches}

[Act 16:4](#) And as they went through **the cities**, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. [Act 16:5](#) And so were the **churches** established in the faith, and increased in number daily. {They went through the CITIES delivering the message and thus the CHURCHES grew.}

[Rom 16:4](#) Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all **the churches of the Gentiles**. {This is a reference to the cities outside of Israel that are primarily populated by Gentiles. There were no ekklesias that were JUST for Gentiles and excluded Jewish Christians – that would have been against everything they were teaching! (1 Corin 12:12-14, etc.) This is a reference to the cities of the Gentiles in which there were assemblies.}

[1Cr 14:33](#) For God is not [the author] of confusion, but of peace, as in all **churches** of the saints.

[1Cr 16:1](#) Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to **the churches of Galatia**, even so do ye. {Galatia is a region with multiple city churches.}

[1Cr 16:19](#) The **churches of Asia** salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. {Asia is a region with multiple city churches.}

[2Cr 8:1](#) Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the **churches of Macedonia**; {Macedonia is a region with multiple city churches.}

[2Cr 8:18](#) And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise [is] in the gospel throughout all the **churches**;

[2Cr 8:19](#) And not [that] only, but who was also chosen of the **churches** to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and [declaration of] your ready mind:

[2Cr 8:23](#) Whether [any do enquire] of Titus, [he is] my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren [be enquired of, they are] the messengers of the **churches**, [and] the glory of Christ.

[2Cr 8:24](#) Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the **churches**, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

[2Cr 11:28](#) Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the **churches**.

[2Cr 12:13](#) For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other **churches**, except [it be] that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong. {Message to the church of Corinth.}

[Gal 1:2](#) And all the brethren which are with me, unto the **churches of Galatia**: {Galatia is a region.}

[Gal 1:22](#) And was unknown by face unto the **churches of Judaea** which were in Christ: {Judaea is a region.}

*1Th 2:14 For ye, brethren, became followers of **the churches of God which in Judaea** are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they [have] of the Jews: {Judaea is a region.}*

*2Th 1:4 So that we ourselves glory in you in **the churches of God** for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:*

*Rev 1:4 John to **the seven churches which are in Asia**: Grace [be] unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; {Asia is a region.}*

There are those that say the Church is one and is purely spiritual and is already one body and doesn't need to be restored. Fine, in the spiritual realms, the Body is one. True enough. But in the "natural" - in this world - they are plural - churches. You can't just say the "Church" is one body and then explain away all of those verses where the Word of God refers to them as being more than one. It is both. In the spirit we are one, but in the natural, we are one body per city. That is the smallest division the Lord allows. That is the only thing I can find in the Word. The problems we have are not with the ethereal, spiritual, universal Body. All the problems that we have are a result of disobedience and rebellion in the Body of Christ that manifests in the "natural." If we can touch it, we can mess it up!

Considered differently, in ALL of these verses that refer to "churches" - not ONCE, not a single time in the Word of God is there a reference to the "churches in Jerusalem" or the "churches in Rome" or the "churches in Corinth". It's just not in there. Not ever. One town, one ekklesia. Period.

The Lord had already explained all of this to me before we ever found Watchman Nee, but I'm quoting him here because many recognize that he was a great pillar of the Church and already did so much work on this nearly 90 years ago. Here is a quote from Chapter 4 of Watchman Nee's book "The Normal Christian Church Life." (Chapters 4 and 5 are included in Appendix A here, but I would encourage you to read his entire book. It's available free on the FOTM website or at [www.MinistryBooks.org](http://www.MinistryBooks.org) .)

**Watchman Nee, Chapter 4** {**Bold** emphases are mine.}

The seven churches in Asia, referred to in the book of Revelation, comprised the church in Ephesus, the church in Smyrna, the church in Pergamos, the church in Thyatira, the church in Sardis, the church in Philadelphia, and the church in Laodicea. They were seven churches, not one. Each was distinct from the others on the ground of the difference of locality. It was only because the believers did not reside in one place that they did not belong to one church. There were seven different churches simply because the believers lived in seven different places. Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea are clearly all the names of places. Not only were the seven churches in Asia founded on the basis of locality, but all the churches mentioned in Scripture were founded on the same basis. Throughout the Word of God we can find no name attached to a church save the name of a place, for example, the church in Jerusalem, the church in Lystra, the church in Derbe, the church in Colosse, the church in Troas, the church in Thessalonica, the church in Antioch. **This fact cannot be overemphasized, that in Scripture no other name but the name of a locality is ever connected with a church, and division of the church into churches is solely on the ground of difference of locality.**

Can't you see that if there were ever supposed to be multiple churches in one town, somebody at some point in the Word would have mentioned it? Paul would have greeted the churches in Rome or some other city. But he didn't - not once.

That's because the assembly of those that live in one town are supposed to be One Body. That doesn't mean they all meet in one place, but that they are all under Christ's headship and working together. So, Biblically speaking, in God's eyes, for as long as there have been Christians in your town, there has been a "Church of Your Town."

# What it's NOT. What the City Church isn't.

It's ultimately about Pride, isn't it? Surely that's how we got to 37,000+ denominations. (See Appendix C.) That just CAN'T have been God's desire for us, can it? Is THIS mess what Jesus prayed for in the Garden of Gethsemane? (John 17) No. His plan is for one body in one town. His plan does not include giant autocratic networks managed by some regional or national leadership – whether by a board or by a “pope” or even by a democratic vote.

## **Watchman Nee, Chapter 4**

“We have just seen that the boundary of a church cannot be narrower than the locality to which it belongs. **On the other hand, its boundary cannot be wider than the locality.** In the Word of God we never read of the church in Macedonia, or the church in Galatia, or the church in Judea, or the church in Galilee. Why? Because Macedonia and Galilee are provinces, and Judea and Galatia are districts. A province is not a scriptural unit of locality; neither is a district. Both include a number of units; therefore, they include a number of separate churches and do not constitute one church. **A provincial church or a district church is not according to Scripture, since it does not divide on the ground of locality, but combines a number of localities.** It is because all scriptural churches are local churches that there is no mention of state churches, provincial churches, or district churches in the Word of God.

**It was not God's plan to unite the churches of different places into one church, but to have a separate church in each place.** There were as many churches as there were places.

“He passed through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches” (Acts 15:41). Again the reference is not to one single church, because Syria and Cilicia were vast districts, each comprising a number of different places. It is permissible in political circles to unite many different places into a district and call it Syria or Cilicia, but God does not unite the believers in a number of different places and call them the church in Syria, or the church in Cilicia. There may be unions or mergers in the commercial or political world, **but God sanctions no combinations among the churches.** Each separate place must have a separate church.

**God sanctions no division of the church within any one locality, and He sanctions no denominational combination of the churches in a number of localities.** In Scripture there is always one church in one place, never several churches in one place, nor one church in several places. God does not recognize any fellowship of His children on a basis narrower, or wider, than that of a locality.

Nanking and Soochow are as truly separate units as Nanking and Glasgow are. In the division of churches the question of country or province does not arise; it is all a question of cities. Two cities of the same country, or the same province, have no closer relationship than two cities of different countries or different provinces. God's intention is that a church in any one locality should be a unit, and in their relationship one to the other the different churches must preserve their local character.

**When God's people throughout the earth really see the local character of the churches, then they will appreciate their oneness in Christ as never before. The churches of God are local, intensely local. If any factor enters in to destroy their local character, then they cease to be scriptural churches.**

Do you understand the damage that is done when men come together to build larger and larger systems? Do you see that the power plays and the money and the politics increase exponentially as a system of Man incorporates ten or a hundred or ten thousand congregations? Whether you acknowledge it or not, whether you name it that or not, you eventually end up with a pope and a board of cardinals. You end up with aristocracy that controls and manages and passes it down to those they deem worthy. You end up at the Tower of Babel again – building something that isn't of God – and the Lord has to split you up again. Isn't that what He's done with all of our denominations? Are there any that haven't split? Can dissension, division, faction, selfish ambition, envy, lust, pride, greed be anything other than the acts of the sinful nature that keep us from inheriting the Kingdom of God? (Galatians 5:19-21) How do you split a denomination or a congregation without at least SOME of those being in play?

The point is that the system we have built is built on the wrong foundation all the way down the line. There was never supposed to be a separate priest class that dominated all the sheep. We are all priests and kings and each is the temple of God. The Holy Spirit is to be our teacher – not any dogma or doctrine of Man. Those men who insist the



most that it is THEIR responsibility to guide us into all truth are probably the ones that hear God's voice the least. (John 16:13-15, Ezekiel 34)

Hear me, there is NO hierarchical, autocratic, administrative, or other structure in the Word of God that extends beyond a single city. Except the universal Body of Christ as a totality that is under His headship, there is no conglomeration of churches. If there had been a "Bishop of Asia Minor" then the letters given to the Apostle John in the book of Revelation could have been addressed to him. But there wasn't and there's not supposed to be. Yes, those things did come into place later, but there is no scriptural justification for any such thing and it should be obvious by the fruit of them over the last 1900 or so years that they are NOT from God!

Can't you see the wisdom of God in all this? If the City Church is the biggest AND smallest allowable unit of the church, then heresy is limited, global or regional control by one person is eliminated, love of money is minimized, the massive inertia of a giant organization is eliminated, they can respond to local needs and crises much better, wholesale persecution and elimination of Christians is much harder – and many more. We'll cover that more later.

The City Church is also not about a "ministerial association" where all the denominational pastors get together. By its very nature, that is just an effort at politeness, but not a representative governing body for the Body in that town. There are too many Christians that are no longer in the institutional churches. There are too many pastors that will not even socialize with other pastors. If we had to call up all the troops for war and we put an announcement in all the "institutional church" bulletins, who many of the true warriors would we reach? Half?

Restoring the City Church doesn't mean having a city-wide Christmas concert or a pastors prayer breakfast every couple of months. It means repenting for going your own way, repenting for not having been one body all along. It means getting under Christ's headship and no other. And it will require something different and it will manifest differently in every city. More on that under the "How" section.

One of the errors that has done great damage to the reputation and desirability of the City Church is a certain current group that is intent on "restoring" the role of the Apostles and Prophets, but they describe it in terms of a tiny handful of men sitting in authority OVER all the local city churches and directing their actions. That's just TOO close to a One World Government and Church for comfort! It's likely that any strategy about autocratic control under any headship other than Jesus' is dangerously likely to be coopted. Since a one world government and church is predicted in Revelation - and the leaders aren't on our team - this should be strongly resisted.

Clearly, the city churches MUST remain independent and should fight at ALL costs the imposition of outside autocratic authority models. This is another great defense against a (coming) One-World Church, since the towns are autonomous bodies with no outside dependencies for programs or processes or funds or leadership. They can't be co-opted and they can't have their resources siphoned off to some central command and control structure with leaders that aren't truly accountable to anyone. The error of C. Peter Wagner and others is not that they want to unite the body of Christ, it's that they misunderstand the nature of authority and hierarchy and servanthood within the Church of God. (And that they think they can have that much authority without it wrecking their heads.)

The true prophets and apostles called by God don't need restoring. They are out there doing as they're told without drawing too much attention to themselves. They are known by their deeds, not by their titles or their bank accounts or their big ministry budgets. And they know enough to not want autocratic control over anything. The real ones are servants at heart and know that absolute power corrupts absolutely. They don't even trust themselves, only Jesus.

Just so we're very clear, in case you missed it or I was being too subtle. I'm convinced that according to the Word of God, taking the names of Men and dividing up into factions is a heresy. Promoting factions and dissensions and teaching people that it's OK to marginalize or ignore other parts of the Body is one of the acts of the sinful nature that will keep you (and your sheep) from inheriting the kingdom of heaven. Sugarcoat it and all it a "denomination" if you like, but you're a sect and, ultimately, a cult. You cannot walk in His power while you're doing stuff like that. The Word of God says that if you have something against your brother, you should leave your sacrifice at the altar and go settle it first. (Matt. 5:23-24) It says that if you take Communion unworthily and have unforgiveness in your heart and aren't rightly discerning the Lord's body you will get sick and die. (I Corin. 11:27-30) We have people in the congregations all over America that are sick and dying and no sign of the Lord healing them on any large scale. Maybe it's because we're taking Communion unworthily. How do you split a congregation or a denomination and not be still holding something against a brother? Can that be rightly discerning the Lord's body? Could that be it? Is that

why people are getting supernaturally healed in Africa and India, but not here? Because Deuteronomy 28 says that if we don't carefully obey the Lord our God in our time of prosperity all the diseases of Egypt will stick to us and nobody will heal us. Wasting diseases and boils and blindness and confusion of mind – and it even says that the Lord will INVENT new diseases to torture us for having gone our own way. (Like AIDS and Ebola and Smallpox and bird flu and mad cow and ...) Go read it! He even says that just as it pleased Him to see us prosper it will please Him to see us destroyed!! I don't think we're teaching that in Sunday School!

If you don't think God is irritated about what we've done to the Body of Christ, then you must think that God changes and what used to irritate Him doesn't irritate Him anymore. Because when His children were being rebellious in Hosea and Jeremiah and Ezekiel and other places, He had no problem at all whacking them with a big stick and turning them over to their own depraved minds. I'm pretty sure that's what He's done with us. We wanted to go our own way, so He let us. We wanted to set a king over us, so He let us. And we deserve everything we've gotten and more. But there is one chance to turn this around. He gave us a simple, one-step recipe to restore it all – REPENT. To all the city churches in Revelation 2 and 3 that were criticized, the solution is the same – repent. And you better mean it. And the more of you that do it, the better.

But even one man is enough to get Him to turn. (Ezekiel 22)

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And I need to mention this, just because it affects our own backyard here. About 20 years ago (1981) there was a man here in Kansas City that had a big calling on him to bring revival and to restore the Body – by means of the city church. I don't doubt that his call was genuine, there are too many confirmations of it. I don't doubt that God told him to restore the true church outside of the denominational walls. (In fact, I can find evidence of God raising up men to do just that in Kansas City going back nearly 200 years!)

But I do question how well he was hearing God and interpreting what he was hearing. This particular man's vision of the city church was to get fifty “Spirit-filled” congregations reporting to HIM and that would be the restored Church of Kansas City. That defies the clear indication of scripture that the city church already IS and consists of ALL who have Jesus. There is no need to BUILD one, just to tune up the one that's been there all along!

His model was autocratic and top-down in nature with him as the head. Which defies the clear indication of scripture that the elders are to be servants of all, not popes. And, when pastors of particular congregations didn't want to knuckle under and join the big move of God, the “prophets” from this ministry would go and publicly preach disaster on them and their congregations. Which is just manipulation and control – and ultimately witchcraft.

I grew up in the Baptist church in Kansas City during that time and never even heard of the guy until the Fall of 2004. Evidently, nobody bothered to consider that maybe the Baptists were also part of the Body of Christ and they should maybe include us in the big move of God. The short of the story is that this particular city church movement (and ministry) fizzled rather dramatically and publicly and hurt a lot of people in the process. There are still pastors in town that were SUBSTANTIALLY injured and have a knee-jerk reaction now to any discussion of a city church. If God gives you a really big job to do that will potentially affect MILLIONS of people – and you make it about YOU and your conferences and DVD's – The Lord's going to turn you over to your own depraved mind and you won't even know He did it. Now all that remains is a very large prayer network, which is just ONE of the four things the angel supposedly told him to do. And, you can pretty much trace all of the excesses and goofy “Charismania” manifestations that have afflicted the church in the last twenty years back to that time in Kansas City when it all imploded.

I'm familiar with several people that were raised up after that to do the same job in Kansas City. Some wouldn't give up their money or their job or their “self”. The eye of the Lord ranges to and fro seeking those who will obey. And if His eye lands on you, then He'll test you – and if you fail, He'll move on to the next guy. I suspect that there have been hundreds and hundreds of people just in Kansas City that God has tried to call to do this over the years.

But even if you can keep it together under all the trials and tests and spiritual warfare, if the timing isn't right, it's never going to work anyway. Well, I think now is the time.

Just because someone has tried before and failed, doesn't mean it can't be done. Just because someone that was a heretic in other ways spoke about a city church, doesn't mean it's not the right thing to do. Just because Benny Hinn wears a suit to preach and takes up an offering, doesn't mean those things are automatically wrong. Does it?

# Who is part of the City Church?

Everybody that has the Holy Spirit in them and lives in that town is part of the Body. Period. You don't have to "join" something or be a "member" or take some class. You're either part of the Body of Christ or you're not. Any effort to divide or eliminate people or refuse fellowship to those who are His is divisive and outside of the bounds of scripture.

## Watchman Nee, Chapter 4

What then is right? **All exclusiveness is wrong. All inclusiveness (of true children of God) is right.** Denominations are not scriptural, and we ought to have no part in them, but if we adopt an attitude of criticism and think, "They are denominational; I am undenominational. They belong to sects; I belong to Christ alone"—such differentiating is definitely sectarian.

Yes, praise God I am of Christ, but my fellowship is not merely with those who **say**, "I am of Christ," but with all who **are** of Christ. What is of vital importance is not the confession, but the fact. Although these other believers say they are of Paul, of Cephas, and of Apollos, yet in fact they are of Christ. I do not so much mind what they say, but I very much mind what they are. I do not inquire whether they are denominational or undenominational, sectarian or unsectarian; I only inquire, "Are they of Christ?" **If they are of Christ, then they are my brethren.**

To say, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Cephas," is obviously sectarian; but to say, "I am of Christ," is sectarian too, though less obviously so. The confession, "I am of Christ," is good as a confession, but it is not an adequate basis for forming a separate church, since it excludes some of the children of God in a given locality by including only a certain section who say, "I am of Christ." **That every believer belongs to Christ is a fact, whether that fact be declared or not; and to differentiate between those who proclaim it and those who do not, is condemned by God as carnal.** It is the **fact** that matters, not the **declaration** of it. The sphere of a church in any place does not merely include those in that place who say, "I am of Christ," but all in that place who **are** of Christ. It extends over the entire area of the locality, and includes the **entire** number of the Christians in the locality.

To take one's stand as belonging to Christ alone is perfectly right, but to divide between Christians who take that stand and Christians who do not, is altogether wrong. To brand as sectarian those who say, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Cephas," and feel spiritually superior as we separate ourselves from them and have fellowship only with those who say, "I am of Christ," makes us guilty of the very sin we condemn in others. If we make non-sectarianism the basis of our fellowship, then we are dividing the church on a ground other than the one ordained of God, and thereby we form another sect. The scriptural ground for a church is a locality and not non-sectarianism. Any fellowship that is not as wide as the locality is sectarian. **All Christians who live in the same place as I do, are in the same church as I am, and I dare exclude none. I acknowledge as my brother, and as a fellow member of my church, every child of God who lives in my locality.**

We should all be absolutely committed to this! I'm not calling people to leave their denominations in order to be a part of the Body of Christ. That's just goofy! Either you are or you aren't already a part of the Body of Christ. What building you happen to visit on Sunday morning is irrelevant. We CANNOT continue to divide the Body of Christ, even by an insistence that only those who agree with us about THAT can be a part of what we're doing! Some of the people that tried to restore the City Churches in the past fell into this trap – "we're the true church and you're not." It just denies the reality of the situation. **I'll keep saying it – if the Holy Spirit is in you and the Holy Spirit is in me, then we're just ONE and that's all there is to it!** Now we need to figure out how to act like it.

But how do we know if the Holy Spirit is in someone? How do we know if we're supposed to be one with them?

## Watchman Nee, Chapter 5

The Spirit who dwells in the heart of every believer is one Spirit; therefore, He makes all those in whom He dwells to be one, even as He Himself is one. **Christians may differ from one another in innumerable ways, but all Christians of all ages, with their countless differences, have this one fundamental likeness—the Spirit of God dwells in every one of them.** This is the secret of the oneness of believers,

and this is the secret of their separation from the world. The reason for Christian unity and for Christian separation is one.

It is this inherent unity that makes all believers one, and it is this inherent unity that accounts for the impossibility of division between believers, except for geographical reasons. **Those who do not have this are outsiders; those who have it are our brethren. If you have the Spirit of Christ and I have the Spirit of Christ, then we both belong to the same Church.** Paul besought all believers to endeavor “to **keep** the oneness of the Spirit” (Eph. 4:3); he did not exhort us to **have** the oneness, but merely to **keep** it. We have it already, for obviously we cannot keep what we do not have. God has never told us to become one with other believers; we already are one. Therefore, **we do not need to create oneness; we only need to maintain it.**

We cannot **make** this oneness, since by the Spirit we **are** one in Christ, and we cannot break it, because it is an eternal fact in Christ; but we can destroy the **effects** of it, so that its expression in the Church is lost. **Alas! that we have not only failed to preserve this precious oneness, but have actually so destroyed the fruits of it, that there is little outward trace of oneness among the children of God.** ”

Did you get that? We were supposed to KEEP the Oneness. What are you doing in your current situation or congregation that actively works to assure the KEEPING of the Oneness of the Spirit amongst the believers in your city? How much are you reaching out? How much are you forgiving and overlooking so that peace can reign?

Are we not the most hypersensitive, error-seekers on the planet? Even the slightest hint of a difference of opinion, and we call it heresy, throw up our hands and split off. We might even split a church because we didn't like the way a business meeting went. Or take sides in a personnel dispute and allow it to split the Body.

If it weren't so devastatingly painful to millions and insulting to God, it would almost be funny how we think so much of ourselves that we can just do our own thing and tell the rest of the Body to go take a flying leap.

#### **Watchman Nee, Chapter 5**

“How are we going to determine who are our brothers and our fellow members in the Church of God? Not by inquiring if they hold the same doctrinal views that we hold, or have had the same spiritual experiences; nor by seeing if their customs, manner of living, interests, and preferences tally with ours. We merely inquire, Are they indwelt by the Spirit of God or not? **We cannot insist on oneness of opinions, or oneness of experience, or any other oneness among believers, except the oneness of the Spirit.** That oneness there can be, and always must be, among the children of God. All who have this oneness are in the Church.

In your travels has it not sometimes happened that on a boat or train you have met a stranger, and after only a few moments of conversation you have found a pure love for him welling up in your heart? That spontaneous outgoing of love was because of the one Spirit dwelling in both hearts. Such inner spiritual oneness transcends all social, racial, and national differences.

How can we know whether or not a person has this oneness of the Spirit? In the verse immediately following Paul's exhortation to keep the oneness of the Spirit, he explains what those have in common who possess this oneness. **We cannot expect believers to be alike in everything, but there are seven things which all true believers share, and by the existence or absence of these we can know whether or not a person has the oneness of the Spirit.** Many other things are of great importance, but these seven are vital. They are indispensable to spiritual fellowship, and they are at once the minimum and the maximum requirements that can be made of any person who professes to be a fellow believer.

#### **SEVEN FACTORS IN SPIRITUAL ONENESS**

“**One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all**” (Eph. 4:4-6). A person is constituted a member of the Church on the ground that he possesses the oneness of the Spirit, and that will result in his being one with all believers on the above seven points. They are the seven elements in the oneness of the Spirit, which is the common heritage of all the children of God. In drawing a line of demarcation between those who belong to the Church and those who do not, we must require **nothing** beyond these seven lest we exclude any who belong to the family of God; and we dare not require anything

less, lest we include any who do not belong to the divine family. **All in whom these seven are found belong to the Church; all who lack any of them do not belong to the Church.**

**(1) ONE BODY.** The question of oneness begins with the question of membership of the Body of Christ. The sphere of our fellowship is the sphere of the Body. Those who are outside that sphere have no spiritual relationship with us, but those who are inside that sphere are **all** in fellowship with us. We cannot make any choice of fellowship in the Body, accepting some members and rejecting others. We are all part of the one Body, and nothing can possibly separate us from it, or from one another. Anyone who has received Christ belongs to the Body, and he and we are one. **If we do not wish to extend fellowship to anyone, we must first make sure that he does not belong to the Body; if he does, we have no reason to reject him** (unless for such disciplinary reasons as are clearly laid down in the Word of God).

**(2) ONE SPIRIT.** If anyone seeks fellowship with us, however he may differ from us in experience or outlook, provided he has the same Spirit as we have, he is entitled to be received as a brother. **If he has received the Spirit of Christ, and we have received the Spirit of Christ, then we are one in the Lord, and nothing must divide us.**

**(3) ONE HOPE.** This hope, which is common to all the children of God, is not a general hope, but the hope of our calling, that is, the hope of our calling as Christians. What is our hope as Christians? We hope to be with the Lord forever in glory. There is not a single soul who is truly the Lord's in whose heart there is not this hope, for to have Christ in us is to have "the hope of glory" in us (Col. 1:27). If anyone claims to be the Lord's, but has no hope of heaven or glory, his is a mere empty profession. **All who share this one hope are one, and since we have the hope of being together in glory for all eternity, how can we be divided in time? If we are going to share the same future, shall we not gladly share the same present?**

**(4) ONE LORD.** There is only one Lord, the Lord Jesus, and all who recognize that God has made Jesus of Nazareth to be both Lord and Christ are one in Him. **If anyone confesses Jesus to be Lord, then his Lord is our Lord, and since we serve the same Lord, nothing whatever can separate us.**

**(5) ONE FAITH.** The faith here spoken of is the faith—not our beliefs in regard to the interpretation of Scripture, but the faith through which we have been saved, which is the common possession of all believers; that is, the faith that Jesus is the Son of God (who died for the salvation of sinners and lives again to give life to the dead). Anyone who lacks this vital faith does not belong to the Lord, but all who possess it are the Lord's. **The children of God may follow many different lines of scriptural interpretation, but in regard to this fundamental faith they are one.** Those who lack this faith have no part in the family of God, but all who possess it we recognize as our brothers in the Lord.

**(6) ONE BAPTISM.** Is it by immersion or by sprinkling? Is it single or triune? There are various forms of baptism accepted by the children of God, so if we make the form of baptism the dividing line between those who belong to the church and those who do not, we shall exclude many true believers from our fellowship. There are children of God who even believe that a material baptism is not necessary, but since they are the children of God, we dare not on that account exclude them from our fellowship. What then is the significance of the one baptism mentioned in this passage? Paul throws light on the subject in his first letter to the Corinthians. "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul?" (1:13). **The emphasis is not on the form of baptism, but on the name into which we are baptized.** The first question is not whether you are sprinkled or immersed, dipped once or three times, baptized literally or spiritually; the important point is this: Into whose name have you been baptized? If you are baptized into the name of the Lord, that is your qualification for church membership. **If anyone is baptized into the name of the Lord, I welcome him as my brother, whatever the manner of his baptism.** By this we do not imply that it is of no consequence whether we are sprinkled or immersed, or whether our baptism is spiritual or literal. The Word of God teaches that baptism is literal, and is by immersion, but the point here is that the **manner** of baptism is not the ground of our fellowship, but the **name** into which we are baptized. All who are baptized into the name of the Lord are one in Him.

**(7) ONE GOD.** Do we believe in the same personal, supernatural God as our Father? If so, then we belong to one family, and there is no adequate reason for our being divided.

The above seven points are the seven factors in that divine oneness which is the possession of all the members of the divine family, and **they constitute the only test of Christian profession**. They are the possession of every true Christian, no matter to what place or period he belongs. Like a sevenfold cord the oneness of the Spirit binds all the believers throughout the world; and however diverse their character or circumstances, provided they have these seven expressions of an inner oneness, then nothing can possibly separate them.

**If we impose any conditions of fellowship beyond these seven—which are but the outcome of the one spiritual life, then we are guilty of sectarianism, for we are making a division between those who are manifestly children of God.** If we apply any test but these seven, such as baptism by immersion, or certain interpretations of prophecy, or a special line of holiness teaching, or a so-called Pentecostal experience, or the resigning from any denominational church—then we are imposing conditions other than those stipulated in the Word of God. All who have these seven points in common with us are our brothers, whatever their spiritual experience, or doctrinal views, or so-called church relationships. Our oneness is not based on our appreciation of the truth of our oneness, nor on our coming out from all that would contradict our oneness, but upon the actual fact of our oneness, which is made real in our experience by the indwelling Spirit of Christ.

So, there you have it. Can you tell me where that's not scriptural? Can you show me where the Word of God says it's okay to disfellowship people over differences on secondary issues? In fact, didn't the Word say to not get caught up in useless quarrels and senseless disputes? (See references below.) I'm pretty sure.

So if the church consists of those who are called out – the ekklesia – in the local city or town, and all who have the Holy Spirit in them are a part of it, then how well are we manifesting that oneness in our cities? Is there ANY city in America where truly, the Lord is in charge and the Body in that town is under His headship? Surely the enemy has worked hard to make sure that even in the smallest towns in America there are usually two or three or more congregations of different denominations that refuse to talk to each other.

If there is a war between Good and Evil, who benefits most if the Christians refuse to work together? If there is a war between Good and Evil, whose strategy to divide and conquer is working the best? Ours or theirs?

*1 Timothy 6:20-21 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.*

*2 Timothy 2:14 Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.*

*Titus 1:10-11 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision: whose mouth must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.*

*Titus 3:9-11 But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is a heretic after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.*

*James 1:26-27 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*

*Colossians 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ.*

*1 Timothy 1:3-5 As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in the faith: so do. Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some have swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.*

*Mark 7:6-8 He answered and said unto them, Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, this people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.*

## Who it's NOT.

This isn't about the real estate. It's not about the actual city itself. And it's not about the members of the "world" in that city. This is about those who are a part of the Body of Christ and live in a particular city or town.

But what about the people that live outside of city limits? Well, in Jesus' day there pretty much wasn't anybody that didn't assign their allegiance to a particular city. They might have been farmers outside the city, but when an enemy approached, they all went inside the walls and defended the town. In America in our day, it's not so clean-cut.

What we learned as we began to apply these things in Liberty, Missouri is that the Lord assigns His forces across the battle lines from those of the enemy. At one point, the Lord asked us to drive around the town seven times on seven Sunday mornings. We got out a map and began to figure the best way to drive around city limits, but the Lord stopped us and had us drive the circumference of the school district instead. In our case, that included a couple other little towns like Missouri City and Mosby and Roosterville. (Yeah, really, that's a real town.)

I asked the Lord about why the school district instead of just city limits. Didn't those towns have their own city church? Weren't they autonomous? The answer was clear. If you put a spiritual hedge of protection (or sphere) around Liberty and then go out Monday morning and bus in drug dealers and witches and all kinds of other problems from the neighboring towns into your schools, your shield is going to be useless. The Lord wanted us to line up our forces across from the system of Man (satan) that could do the most damage. And, think about it, which has more impact on the lives of a city in the long run – the city government or the school district? So in Liberty, it means that we are sister cities with those other towns because we share a system of Man that impacts our children. That doesn't mean the elders of Missouri City have to obey the elders of Liberty because their kids go to Liberty schools. It means we have to work together on that particular issue because we share a common interest there. But Missouri City is autonomous and self-directing and may choose not to be a part of anything that Liberty does. That's just fine, but Liberty still has primary responsibility for the spiritual protection and warfare over the school district.

Liberty is also the county seat and may need to coordinate with all the other city churches on county-wide prayer initiatives and other things. There may also be a time when all the city churches in the metropolitan Kansas City area or all of Missouri come together to conference or pray or repent for a wider area or coordinate resources on some other issue. But that doesn't mean that the elders from any one city get to tell the elders from any other city what to do. God will raise up the leaders in each city and appoint and anoint them himself. They don't need to be called or recruited or transferred from some other city. If God sees there is a need in a particular city that's under His headship – He will meet it. He will send or raise up all the pastors and teachers and evangelists and prophets and apostles that are needed to serve the Body in that town. And it will probably sometimes be someone really unlikely – because God always uses the foolish things to confound the wise.

I've met lots of the true elders in cities all over the country. And they are rarely (if ever) the pastors of the denominational congregations in town. But they're the most humble, and the best servants and most amazing lovers of people that you've ever met. That's what God looks for in an elder, not the number of degrees on the wall in their office. Whoever has the biggest cup of Jesus with the least "self" left in it are probably the ones that are the most dangerous to satan.

Don't let titles get you all puffed up. To be an "elder," all you have to be is a four year old in a room full of three year olds. Paul went into a town and found those who were slightly more mature than the others, set them in place as servants to all and came back in a couple years to see if they were still standing. I'm just sure that it wasn't about degrees, but about spiritual maturity, faithfulness, holiness, sacrifice and a humble, servant's heart.

# Why? Why restore the City Churches?

So, Biblically speaking, in God's eyes, as long as there have been Christians in your town, there has been a "Church of YourTown."

So how is it doing?

That's the question the Lord asked me and I took a long, hard look around my town – Liberty, Missouri – and had to come to the conclusion that as one body we really, really stunk. We have a town with about 28,000 people and 40+ congregations – not including house churches or any other groupings that are hard to find. We have pastors that hate each other. We have some groups that refuse to fellowship with any other group – under ANY circumstances. We have people going hungry and homeless. We have heresies running rampant. We have a ministerial association that doesn't even represent everybody and is basically useless. (I'm sorry, if you're on it and you're reading this. You just are. People are lost and hungry and naked and you're doing pretty much diddly compared to the resources at your disposal and the expectations of our Lord. I love ya, but you're just not trying hard enough.)

Have you read Galatians 5:19-21?

*Gal 5:19-21 19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are [these]; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told [you] in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (KJV)*

Some of those words are outside of our normal vocabulary, so let me give you that in the Amplified Version:

*Gal 5:19-21 19 Now the doings (practices) of the flesh are clear (obvious): they are immorality, impurity, indecency, 20 Idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger (ill temper), selfishness, divisions (dissensions), party spirit (factions, sects with peculiar opinions, heresies), 21 Envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you beforehand, just as I did previously, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Got any of those inside the body of Christ in your town? Yep. Us, too. That can't be good, can it? How can we expect to inherit all that God has for us, how can we expect to walk in the power of God, when we're full of THAT kind of stuff?! You can't. You're in direct disobedience to God and the curses of Deuteronomy 28 will cling to you – and they are. Our people aren't getting healed, our children are being given over to foreign nations (and demons) and we are sowing much and reaping very little.

Hmmm... I thought that if we were His and we were obeying nothing could stand against us? I thought He would lift us up above all nations and we'd be the head and not the tail? So, how come we look like the tail? Must be because we're not really obeying. I can't come to any other conclusion.

How about these:

*Proverbs 6:16-19 These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.*

Let's try those one at a time:

- 1) **A proud look** – to raise or increase or extol self, to presumptuously promote or set up. Yep. We're sure doing that in the congregations of America.
- 2) **A lying tongue** – speaking vain, false or deceitful things. Yep. Lots of vanity. And if we're telling people that we don't have to be one with all the rest of the body, then we're lying to them all. Probably so that we don't have to share our stuff or be uncomfortable in any way.
- 3) **Hands that shed innocent blood** – taking those who have no fault and forcing error and sin upon them. Just like the Pharisees in Matt. 23, we travel to the world to make a single convert and then make them twice the denominational son of hell that we are. Read Matt. 23 and see if we're not doing every single thing in there. Jesus spoke seven woes on them. And I think we deserve every one.



- 4) **A heart that deviseth wicked imaginations** – this speaks to the emotions of the heart and the soulish nature and how we use our feelings to generate programs and systems and processes that feel good and vainly accomplish our own purposes. If God is to direct all of our paths, but we are directing our own, then anything we do devise are wicked imaginations and schemes of our own.
- 5) **Feet that are swift in running to mischief** – Are we not the most error-sensitive, heresy hunters on the planet? Are we not constantly searching for some reason to excommunicate or eliminate someone from our fellowship? The Hebrew meaning of that word “mischief” means calamity. That we are always jumping from the frying pan into the fire. Is not the “system” that we have built in America on fire?
- 6) **A false witness that speaketh lies** – this seems like a duplicate of the lying tongue, but God not only hates the tongue, he hates the person who allows themselves to speak lies. He puts it here twice for emphasis and to show the premium that He places on Truth. And the truth is that we are way outside of the model of harmony that He set for us.
- 7) **One who sows discord amongst the brethren** – How can we have gotten to 37,000+ denominations without being experts at that one?! Can there be any doubt about our guilt? Can there be any question about how God feels about what we've done?

Why the City Church? Because it's the only thing you can find in the Word of God. Because it's the only thing Jesus established. Because it's the only thing that will work. Because it pleases God. (Also see Appendix B)

Still not buying it?

You're kidding!/? After all of this, you're still holding out on me? Well, I'll keep trying.

How about this? The city church is the only thing that has a chance to withstand widespread persecution. I certainly see some really deep wisdom here as it applies to the possibility of persecution in a given locality. Since local leaders, local funds, and local assets are used, it is much harder to eliminate Christianity widely in one blow. This kind of “compartmentalization” not only limits the chances of accumulation of assets and control by one individual, but it makes it very hard for any enemy to actively stamp out the work of the Church. When wide-spread persecution of Christians comes to America (which it WILL as soon as enough Christians are acting like Jesus), the local city church model will provide lots of redundant systems and leadership and people that can take the reigns at a moments notice and even shift between localities if necessary. A state-run church can be co-opted. A few mega denominational leaders can be assassinated or bribed or threatened. Giant infrastructures can be destroyed or incorporated into a One World Church. But local assets, controlled by local leaders, led by God are VERY hard to stamp out.

If there is a war, which is harder to target? One Pentagon where all leadership and command and control is centralized – or thousands of self-contained, self-directed, self-supporting cell groups spread all over the world? And even in your particular town, which will the enemies of God have an easier time eliminating? The institutional churches with their big buildings and the pastor's name on the sign out front? Or the small groups that meet in homes and businesses and underground if necessary? It would NEVER even occur to the house church Christians in China to make a pictorial directory or report to the government how much money they've giving to a church!! If persecution comes to America, we're really going to regret that we made it so easy for them to round us all up! A local church model could effectively avoid many of these.

There is also a Biblical imperative to go to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and unto the ends of the earth. But if you're ignoring Jerusalem, why do you think you're qualified to go to the ends of the earth? Take care of your own home first! Are there hungry and naked and oppressed in your own town? Are there even people inside the local Body that are bleeding all over and we're ignoring them? How much budget are we spending on ourselves or sending overseas while we show the “world” in our own towns that we don't care about them? A local City Church model would bring the focus back to healing the local area first and bringing repentance and unity and harmony to the Body and to the local community, THEN we can go out and accomplish His purposes in the power of His might. Until then, we cannot inherit the Kingdom of God as He would like it to manifest on the earth right now.

This model also is ideal for general emergency management. If a natural disaster comes to a city, if the Body of Christ in that town is really talking to each other well and communicating about needs and available resources, there is probably nothing they can't do. Very high on God's priority list is the creation and application of an internet portal

that connects the Body of Christ in each town to itself and to all the other local churches. (I'm aware of several redundant people that have been commissioned by God to do this and are racing to get it built.) If there is a war between good and evil, shouldn't we have some kind of central communication network that's accessible to all? Yep. God designed it and it's in the process of being built right now.

#### **Watchman Nee, Chapter 4**

"There is a beautiful balance in the teaching of God's Word regarding the relationship between the various churches. On the one hand, they are totally independent of one another in matters relating to responsibility, government, and organization. On the other hand, they are to learn from one another and to keep pace with one another. But in everything it is essential to have both the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the pattern in God's Holy Word."

Imagine if there had been a communication network across the whole of the Body of Christ in place before the hurricane hit Mississippi. The Church in New Orleans (and every other town in the Gulf) could have sent out an alert across the internet to every other town and made requests for shelter and supplies and volunteers and there could have been national and global coordination and communication with no loss or duplication of resources. If we were not divided, then each local church could inventory their assets and pray and seek God on how they were to help. Those with much could share with each as they had a need.

The life of the first century Christians described in Acts 2:42-47 is to be the same kind of relationship as that of the local churches with each other. Ultimately it's a one-on-one relationship with Christ, but we are known by our love and self-sacrifice for each other. Each town with true community. Each connected to every other community, but each reporting directly to God. Full participation and efficient delivery of resources and skills. The world would be transformed in a matter of months if the Christians actually started working together seamlessly! That's the goal. Not about authority or control, all about love and being under His headship. And He is NOT a God of confusion – we made this mess ourselves!

The local city church model also minimized the spread of heresy inside the larger Body. If a city or town goes their own way and error is rampant (as it was in Corinth), then the other cities can stem the flow of it into their own cities. We are to test and approve, after all. As with Corinth or Sardis or Laodecia, they can be in big trouble with God and it not effect Philadelphia or Smyrna or Jerusalem. But in our current model, if (for example) the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville goes rogue, it will affect the ministry and effectiveness of tens of thousands of congregations all over the country (and the world). We are seeing it with Rome and the Episcopalians and the Lutherans and all other monoliths of man. Administrative decisions are handed down from a handful of "Cardinals" that have massive repercussions across a huge public. The media eats that up and it embarrasses the Body of Christ. But who cares if this or that little town decides something dopey that only affects a few people? That's not likely to make the news.

Additionally, if a pillar of fire descends on a denominational "church" it will likely take about 12 seconds for that denomination to send out press releases gloating about how this proves that they were the right ones all along. If a pillar of fire descends on a whole town, no one will be able to claim it and bottle it and try to sell it. God is just NOT going to allow anyone to individually promote and package what's coming. The Body of Christ in a whole town working together will make it very difficult for any single congregation, leader or denomination to take the credit for any miracles, signs, wonders or other blessings.

I can't find any other model that will work. I can't find any other model that fits with the Word of God. I can't find any other model that shows as much divine wisdom and would have minimized all the problems that we're now seeing. In fact, it should be clear that pretty much as soon as the Roman empire could, they outlawed house churches, established temples, set up a priest class and began demanding sacrifices. As quickly as they could, they took the Word of God away from the people so no one could even double check what they were doing against the Bible. Even now, many in the priest class will tell the laity that question them that they shouldn't be reading their Bibles because it's "over their head" or they couldn't understand it anyway without a seminary degree.

The Reformation worked in reforming some of the errors that the Roman church had established as doctrine and tradition, but it didn't actually change the fundamental structure. There remained a firmly entrenched priest class with temple worship and a willingness to kill anyone that disagreed with the leadership. We don't really talk much about how many people Martin Luther burned at the stake because they were against infant baptism (or some other thing).

(Did you know that about him?) The system didn't really get rebooted back to the defaults, they just put a patch on it. Why do it? Because it's the only thing that has EVER worked. All the Great Awakenings were about whole cities. Whether Finney or Etter or Wesley or the Salvation Army, the great moves of God involved whole towns. Not just the congregation at the intersection of Main and Broadway. The places in the world where major revivals are breaking out and cities are being changed (and economies and even ecologies!) are all about a move across the whole of the Body in that place, not just this or that denomination. Cali, Columbia changed when the Body repented. Fiji is changing because the Body repented.

Want to see how pretty it might be if the Body came together and repented and God swooped into action? Watch this video about what happened in Manchester, Kentucky when the Body came together on the drug issue (and I wonder what might happen if they came together on ALL the issues, not just this one thing!) - <http://the700club.com/cbnnews/cwn/112206moremuslims.aspx> .

Yet another major benefit is that it forces us to not just BE One Body, but also to STAY One Body. There is no escape. If you don't like what is happening in the Body in your town, then either fix it or move out to another town. You don't get to split off and start your own thing just because you didn't get your way on the color of the new carpet. God hates divorce and that's what we do when we divide one body.

How else will we be able to practice those things in 2 Peter 1:5-8 (faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love) and have them in increasing measure if we don't have difficult situations and people to deal with? How are we going to practice peace and forbearance and longsuffering (Romans 2:4, Ephesians 4:2, 2 Timothy 3:10-12) if we are never in situations that require longsuffering? If we keep looking for calm, peaceful congregations with no conflict and no "rubbing" on each other, then we're going to continue to be spiritual weaklings that never have any resistance training to build our Jesus muscles.

How else are we going to show the fruits of the Spirit if we don't have difficult situations to endure?

*Galatians 5:22-26 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.*

Did you get that? How many verses do you need to read to see that if we are provoking each other and desirous of vain glory then maybe we are NOT walking in the Spirit. That can't be good!

*Colossians 3:12-15 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*

Exactly how many is seventy times seven? Is that how many times we forgave each other before we decided to split the church? Why do we need to be one body? Because we should have been one body all along, but we went our own way. Because we're grieving God and torturing the Body of Christ. His physical body was tortured for twenty-four hours. But His spiritual body has been undergoing endless torture for nearly 1800 years. We've been hacking His body up into smaller and smaller bits and watching it bleed – and putting a sign over this blood mess that proudly proclaims, "Behold the King of the Jews." The "world" knows this is whacked. We might as well just admit it. This can't possibly be about Jesus and what HE wants. It must be about us and what WE want.

Why do we need to do this? Because it's the right thing and it's long overdue. Because it's what the Lord wants. And, frankly, because it's coming whether you like it or not and if you fight against it, you'll just find yourself fighting against God.

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### **MUSICAL INTERLUDE - Sing along if you know it. Ask a kid to sing it for you if you don't.**

This is my commandment that you love one another that your joy may be full. That your joy may be full.  
That your joy may be full. This is my commandment that you love one another that your joy may be full.

## Why not? Why not do this?

Well, in short, because you like your structures just the way they are and you think everything is fine. Or you think it might cost you control or prestige or you might be uncomfortable having to get along with people you have previously marginalized and even ridiculed. Probably because you're the church of Laodecia (Rev. 3:14-22) and you're supernaturally blind and you think you're rich when you're really wretched, naked and poor.

My experience is that just about everybody that went to seminary hates this idea – and pretty much everybody that didn't got to seminary (or depends on the structures for their living) harmonizes with it right away. The laity don't understand how we got this many denominations. The laity doesn't understand the issues that divide us. The laity doesn't even understand what their OWN denomination believes most of the time!! The laity don't even have a sense of how bad things really are because we've sugar coated everything and tried to dumb them down. The laity don't understand why we need 40+ competing congregations in one little town of 28,000 people.

Why else wouldn't you like this idea? Maybe because you HAVE to lean on your own understanding because you don't believe that God still talks to people. You don't think it's really possible that God Himself would raise up leaders and teach them and anoint them and meet all your needs. You have to rely on the work of your own hands and the systems and plans that you make, because you don't want to wait on the Lord.

I told a pastor that I was hearing from the Lord that big things were coming for Liberty, Missouri. He said, "What do you mean you're hearing from the Lord? God doesn't talk to people!" Wow. When did that start? The bad guys get to talk to their headquarters! That just makes no sense. God used to talk to people in the Bible very clearly. When did He change? The argument seems to be that when the Bible was finished being written, then "that which was perfect was come" and we didn't need to hear the voice of God anymore. (1 Corin. 13) So this is what is perfect?! This giant mess that we have is what it looks like to stop seeing through a glass darkly? Tongues and prophecy have ceased? Well, what about knowledge? Did it pass away? Dude, you can't pick and choose to just end the ones that suit you! And if it all ceased, then why are we encouraged in the last verse BEFORE 1 Corinthians 13 and the first verse AFTER to seek prophecy and the greater gifts? I just don't get it. We're supposed to be His sheep and know His voice, but He doesn't speak anymore? We have the Holy Spirit – a third of the Godhead – living in us, but He doesn't have anything to say?

And if God doesn't talk to people anymore, then where does it say in the Word of God that Pastor Bob was supposed to go into the ministry? If he got a "call" to the ministry, then where did it come from? Did he just decide being a pastor was easier than being a plumber? Or did God speak to him? And if God spoke to him, then why can't I hear God? Only people with the right schooling can hear God? You can only hear God about that ONE thing? Where is that in the Bible? It seems to me that the uneducated had a much easier time receiving Jesus. He Himself said that if you don't receive the kingdom of heaven with faith as a little child, then you can't get it. I don't think they have "Faith like a Child" classes in seminary.

Why would you not want to go along with this? Maybe because you don't think it's possible for us to all get along and hear God and be under His headship. But whether you're going to help or not, if Jesus is in you, then we're still one Body with you and we're going to pray for oneness to manifest somehow in our towns whether you like it or not.

How about this?

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name,  
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.*

So ... we gonna have denominations in heaven? Don't think so. Maybe we better knock it off now. Are we really forgiving those who trespass against us? Is that how we got so many sects and factions? Whose kingdom and power and glory is it? God's or the senior pastor's? The Pope's? Whose kingdom is this? I'm serious here. If it's HIS, then maybe HE should be in charge and we should stop with the demographic studies and consultants and marketing experts and just ASK HIM what to do!!

If His name is so holy and hallowed, maybe we ought to stop using it in vain and tying it to the work of our own hands. Either start meaning it all the way or stop saying the Lord's Prayer. Stop taking communion if you're holding something against a brother – ANY brother. Please? If you do it wrong, you're just going to get sick and die.

# How? How do we restore a City Church?

What is it going to take to make this work?

## **Watchman Nee, Chapter 5**

It was **never** God's purpose that a number of churches in different places should be combined under any denomination or organization, but rather that each one should be independent of the other. Their responsibilities were to be independent and their government likewise. When our Lord sent messages to His children in Asia, He did not address them as "the church in Asia," but "the seven churches which are in Asia." His rebuke of Ephesus could not be applied to Smyrna, because Smyrna was independent of Ephesus. The confusion in Pergamos could not be laid to the charge of Philadelphia, because Philadelphia was independent of Pergamos. And the pride of Laodicea could not be attributed to Sardis, because Sardis was independent of Laodicea. Each church stood on its own merits and bore its own responsibility. Since God's children lived in seven different cities, they consequently belonged to seven different churches. And since each was independent of the other, each had its own special commendation, or exhortation, or rebuke.

And not only were there these seven churches on earth; there were seven lampstands representing them in heaven. In the Old Testament there was only one lampstand with seven different branches, but in the New Testament there were seven distinct lampstands. Had the New Testament representation been the same as the Old, then believers in the seven Asiatic churches might have united to form one church; but there are now seven separate lampstands, each upon its own base, so that the Lord is able to walk "in the midst of the seven golden lampstands" (Rev. 2:1). Therefore, though all churches stand under the authority of the one Head and express the life of the one Body (for they are all made of gold), still they are not united by any outward organization, but each stands on its own base, bearing its own responsibility, maintaining its local independence. "

That leads right into the Lampstands and the need for one. In November of 2004, the Lord showed me a vision of complete blackness over America, with little, black tendrils of nastiness spreading out all over the world. I could FEEL the wrath of God at what we were doing to His children and it changed me forever. Later He began to talk to me about the City Church and what it was and how it should be.

He led me to Revelation 2 and 3 and the messages from Jesus to the seven City Churches in Asia Minor. In the very first one – the message to the Church in Ephesus – the Lord tells them that they've lost their first love and threatens to take away their Lampstand if they don't go back to it. Their first love has to be Jesus. So He's telling them to get back to Him and stop going their own way, or else.

Please note that there are not JUST seven golden lampstands. There are clearly other city churches in existence at the time of the writing of the book of Revelation. For example, the church in Jerusalem, the church in Antioch, the church in Corinth and others are not listed. Certainly the Lord had His reasons for choosing these seven, but it should be clear that there were others at the time and that each local city church in divine order has a Lampstand.

But what IS a Lampstand? In Rev. 2, the Lord threatens the church in Ephesus that they are at risk of losing their Lampstand if they don't repent and change their ways. So what would happen if a city church lost its Lampstand? Does that mean the Holy Spirit leaves the town? Surely not. Does that mean there are no more Christians there? Surely not. Does that mean they stop gathering and fellowshiping? No. It means the Body of Christ in that town is not really under Christ's headship anymore. They're on their own. They lose the "Seal of Approval" and their access to the really big lights that push back the darkness in a huge way. What's the fastest way to lose your Lampstand? Allowing division inside the Body and grieve God. Even though Laodicea is asleep and Sardis is dead, the Lord doesn't threaten to take away their Lampstand. They may be in error, they may be useless, they may be allowing heresy, but at least they're all in it together! The Lord simply urges the overcomers in that city to stand firm.

Consider it this way, "the prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16) But the prayer of a slightly-righteous man probably availeth practically nothing. It's hard to tell whose team a semi-obedient man is even on!

Likewise, the prayer of a righteous city or town availeth a WHOLE LOT. In fact, if you look at the Great Awakenings (which were always focused on towns) and other examples, when a town comes together, repents and seeks God, it

doesn't just change lives, it can change economies and crime rates, affects the course of wars and can even alter ecologies! But the prayer of a slightly-righteous town availeth practically nothing. In fact, it might even be hard to tell whose side they were on.

The Lord gave me a little word picture that might help explain it.

Imagine that in the middle of each town the Lord started a bonfire. In the beginning of that town, there was just one church. They were one body and they were seeking Him only. The fire is refining and purifying and powerful. Nothing can stand against it. It blazes brightly and pushes back all the darkness. The angel of the city (the Star in Revelation) blows on the fire and helps keep it burning.

But one day, one of the little flames in the fire decided that he wanted to see what was out there beyond the communal bonfire, so he wandered off on his own. Maybe he even talked some others into going with him. Eventually some others started to drift off too, to investigate what was beyond. They took their own little candles and went their own way. Eventually everyone leaves the bonfire and there is nothing left but a pile of ash in the spot where God's bonfire used to be. The little flames may collect into little fires of their own – sometimes 20 or 100 or maybe even 10,000 all in one place. But the star of the city is not going to help. None of their little flames can compare to the raw power of what used to be when all the little flames were together in harmony. They have their own little candles, and they might get enough of them together to create quite a little flame, but it's NOTHING like what it used to be or what it could be. Some of them are extinguished by the darkness, some die out alone, some die in large groups, some turn into strange fire. It's a LOT easier for the darkness to pick them off when they're not all together. In fact, it's the siren song of the darkness that lured them away from the bonfire in the first place – so that this would happen.

The Star waits in the original ashpile, whispering to the little flames to come back. The Lord seeks even ONE man that will stand in the gap for the city. If even ONE of the little flames goes back to the original ash pile and repents and stands there defiantly burning as brightly as he can, insisting that he will not be moved – then the Star will blow on his flame and start calling others back. The Star will send help from any source possible. The Star is HIGHLY motivated to make this work, so all kinds of resources will be available to those who commit to stand in the place of unity where God originally planted them. Nothing can stand against them when they are where God planted them. Only when they step outside the fire ring and go their own way can the enemy pick them off.

Whether all of them come back or just a few, when ANYONE comes back and repents and sets their face like flint and refuses to be moved ever again, the city will start to turn. The original bonfire will start to burn brightly and the Lampstand will be lit again. They will have access to the nuclear powerplants in the sky instead of just their own little candles. When the Body of Christ goes in repentance and unity and brokenness to accomplish a task that the Lord directed, nothing can stand against them. They will inherit His promises as soon as they stop going their own way and repent.

Why do we hear stories about some little missionary girl who went to some Pacific island where the Gospel had never been preached and astounding miracles follow her all over? But nothing like that happens when she's back in England? Why are headhunters and cannibals being healed and raised from the dead and miraculous financial provision for every need shows up, but she can never do it elsewhere? Because on that little island she is the ENTIRETY of the Body of Christ and she is there at His direction and under His headship and the Body is One. Just like Paul when he went into an unreached city, she IS the Lampstand. But as soon as another ministry shows up, or her converts split off and start their own brand of "church" and they refuse fellowship with each other and it becomes divisive, revivals stops. Every single time. (How many historical examples do you want?)

If the relit Lampstands mean access to the really BIG weapons of war, then it is VERY much is the enemy's best interest to keep us from having access to those weapons – from seeing the problem and doing something about it. That's why the Body of Christ in EVERY town in America has been methodically and systematically divided up into little pieces. And we fell for it. If we're going to keep praying "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" then maybe we ought to start being One Body – you know, like we will be in heaven.

So it seems to me that the entire focus of EVERY town should be, "What is it going to take to get our Lampstand back?" We believe that God has shown us the formula for that. We believe that the Church of Liberty, Missouri has a

Lampstand and that others around the country are being lit now. More on that below.

Let me try this from a different direction. The Apostles received the Holy Spirit in John 20:22 when Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." They had already been out in pairs healing people and casting out demons. Nobody can convince me that you can do that without the Holy Spirit in you! Then, just before Jesus' ascension to the Father, He charged them with the Great Commission to go take the Gospel into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and unto the ends of the world. But He also told them NOT to go do it until the Holy Spirit came to them. Huh? They already had the Holy Spirit. But this isn't the redemptive aspects of the Holy Spirit, this is the empowering of the Holy Spirit. They had some in there, but they weren't fully baptized, submerged, dunked, swamped, lit up by the Holy Spirit yet. Even though they had been with Him, even though they had been commissioned to go, they were NOT allowed to go until the tongues of fire descended upon them.

The Bible always speaks in spirals, multiple applications of the same process on increasing populations or situations. Hosea applies to the Israel at the time, Israel in the future, America, me, the Church, etc. The Sermon on the Mount applies to me, my family, my city, my country, the Bride, etc. It's a Living Word and its mysteries are endless (and require the Holy Spirit to unlock them). And I want you to see that this instruction to stay in Jerusalem until the fire came has application to the City Church as well. The model that we have is that the Apostles stayed and were all together praying and seeking God until Pentecost when the tongues of fire fell on them and lit them up. Peter goes from being a guy that denied Christ three times just fifty days before, to being a determined, fearless leader and public speaker whose first (fully extemporaneous) sermon brings 3,000 people to repentance. He's interrogated and whipped and praises Jesus – and gets filled with the Holy Spirit again (Acts 4:31)! Before this, even a little servant girl made him deny Christ three times! Now he's making so much sense that none of the religious leaders can argue with him!

Here's the point. If the Body of Christ in your town doesn't have a Lampstand, then **stay in your Jerusalem** and pray together and seek His face until the tongues of fire light it up. DO NOT go into Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth when your own fire isn't lit. I would highly recommend that EVERY local body that doesn't have a lit Lampstand stop immediately doing or sending or funding anything elsewhere until you have cried out to the Lord sufficiently that His fire has fallen and you can then go in His authority according to His ways. Whatever you do without a Lampstand is going to be in your own power and not fully in His. It might have positive effects, but NOTHING like it will when you're fully inside His will and under His headship and operating as One Body!

It's like a bullseye. Don't go trying to fix someplace else when your own home is out of order. Start in the center and work your way out. In my case, He didn't let me leave Liberty for over a year and half until the Lampstand was lit. I know others that have been alone on their face weeping for their city for DECADES without leaving. We pulled back all support of native missionaries in India, all outside focus and kept all of our attention on the local Body. When it had achieved a "critical mass" and it lit up, the Lord released me to go out wider and help others.

There is nothing more important – or more empowering – than having a Lampstand behind you that certifies that you are His and have His firepower behind you. Without it, you are just going to have your own little candles to light your way and push back the darkness. Please hear me. Look at the Biblical model before us. Don't go trying to fulfill the Great Commission until you've fulfilled Isaiah 58 at home. Only THEN will your light rise in the darkness and He'll be your rear guard and when you call He will answer.

## Final Summary and Action Plan

The Body of Christ in each town IS one body, whether you like it or not. The whole point is to KEEP the oneness and not do things that divide it up into pieces. If there are no believers in a town, a new church should be planted on the basis of oneness and stay that way at all costs. If there are Christians there and the town is already divided, someone can still come in and begin a work of unity that can restore it.

In America it's highly likely that every locality already has or has had a church planted. It's not a matter of introducing Christianity to a new field as much as restoring the local ekklesia to oneness. So is it even possible? How would a person or group go about doing it? How do you get a Lampstand?

We believe that there is an action plan set forth in the Bible for just such a situation as this. In fact, we see the nation of Israel repeatedly go through this cycle in the book of Judges and throughout the Old Testament. (See II Chron. 7:14) For the purposes of this discussion, I'd like to focus on the book of Joel. You have to remember that our weapons of war are spiritual, not carnal. Far more happens by prayer than by structures or systems or cheap talk.

In the first twelve verses of Chapter 1 we see a description of and lamenting for the land that has been devastated. Particularly verse 4: (NIV)

*What the locust swarm has left the great locusts have eaten;  
what the great locusts have left the young locusts have eaten;  
what the young locusts have left other locusts have eaten.*

These are the ultimate consumers. They have devoured everything that is useful and left nothing behind.

Then the solution is proposed in verse 13 and 14:

*Put on sackcloth, O priests, and mourn; wail, you who minister before the altar.  
Come, spend the night in sackcloth, you who minister before my God;  
for the grain offerings and drink offerings are withheld from the house of your God.  
Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly.  
Summon the elders and all who live in the land  
to the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD.*

Then in verses 15 through 20, the situation is described again, particularly in 16-18:

*Has not the food been cut off before our very eyes—  
joy and gladness from the house of our God?  
The seeds are shriveled beneath the clods.  
The storehouses are in ruins, the granaries have been broken down, for the grain has dried up.  
How the cattle moan! The herds mill about because they have no pasture; even the flocks of sheep are suffering.*

That's as good a picture of the church in America as I can find. There may be milk, but very little meat. The people are hungry, the churches are in debt. The money and resources leave faster than they come in. Whatever seed is planted is wasted in the ground. Any growth we see is transfer growth as the herds mill about seeking green pasture and can find none. People will fly across the country and even move their families if they sense a real move of God. They'll latch onto any Jesus fad or manifestation that comes along because they are so desperately hungry.

Then again in chapter 2 is the same recommended solution shown:

*12 "Even now," declares the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning."  
13 Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.  
14 Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing—  
grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God.  
15 Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly.  
16 Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber.*



*17 Let the priests, who minister before the LORD, weep between the temple porch and the altar. Let them say, "Spare your people, O LORD. Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"*

Then, if you do these things, the Lord shows how He will respond:

*18 Then the LORD will be jealous for his land and take pity on his people.*

*19 The LORD will reply to them: "I am sending you grain, new wine and oil, enough to satisfy you fully; never again will I make you an object of scorn to the nations."*

And in the verses following, there are some other amazing promises and expressions of His mercy and loving kindness. This is the stuff that happens when you come together and relight your Lampstands.

But it boils down to this, when the land is desolate and there is no food, when the people mill around from place to place seeking anything edible and find none, when enemies seem to be closing in on every side, you need to:

- 1. Declare a Holy Fast.**
- 2. Call a Sacred (consecrated) Assembly and summon the Elders.**
- 3. Repent and weep and mourn before the altar.**

Then He will turn.

So, what's a "Holy Fast"? That's in Isaiah 58. The kind of fast the Lord wants; that you break the chains, lift the yokes, free the captives, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, take in the poor wanderer, **don't turn away from your own flesh and blood, stop the malicious talk and the pointing finger** and **THEN** He will turn and good stuff starts happening. You take it to the Lord and have Him show you what application that might have to your own situation. These also happen to overlap with Matthew 25:31-46 (which is kind of like the final exam). Basically practice extravagant giving to the poor - the poor in spirit and the poor in money. And stop pointing fingers!!

So, what's a "Sacred Assembly"? That would be those people who are walking in holiness and are consecrated before the Lord. That doesn't necessarily mean the pastors of all the churches. There's no guarantee they're walking in holiness just because they went to seminary. Ultimately, we're going to have to let God call the meeting because we don't know who is and who isn't consecrated at any given moment. How many need to be there? Don't know. Who are the Elders? Don't know. Just commit to Him that you want to call one and He'll tell you how and arrange to have all the right people there. This is VERY important to Him and He doesn't mind helping.

So how do we repent for a town? Can an individual or a small number actually repent on behalf of others? Shouldn't we just repent for our own sins?

There are LOTS of Biblical examples of people offering to take on the sins of others - the greatest of which is Jesus. But there are others like Daniel and David and Moses and Paul.

These verses in Ezekiel 22 are particularly relevant:

*30 "I looked for a **man** among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none. 31 So I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger, bringing down on their own heads all they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD."*

Here we not only see that God shows the possibility that one man could save a town, but that God is actually actively seeking one! In fact, we also see that if someone doesn't show up, God's going to have to flatten the place because of their sinfulness! Remember, this is spoken against the children of God and Jerusalem, not some foreign nation!

Consider that even ONE person can stand in the gap for a town and repent on it's behalf. But you better be personally cleaned out and you better REALLY mean it and you better be armored up and know how to keep your cup full of Jesus. Take a look at Exodus 32:31-32:

*31 So Moses went back to the LORD and said, "Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. 32 But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written."*

Or Romans 9:2-4a where Paul offers himself for his Jewish brothers:

*2 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off*

*from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, 4 the people of Israel.*

Clearly, as the ultimate Apostle, this is the model that Jesus set forth for us when He offered Himself as the scapegoat for all the sins of everyone for all time.

We believe intercession and repentance is required to restore a divided body. Preferably lots of people, but even one will do if they are sanctified before the Lord and willing to stand in the gap for the rest of the Body. Are you willing to pray the prayer of Paul and Moses? Even that you would be blotted out of the Book if only they would be forgiven and the Body would be One again? You better have a lot of Jesus in you to pray THAT prayer!

Who are the Elders? Not necessarily the pastors of the institutional churches, there could be all kinds of people in town that hear God a lot better and are better intercessors. It will be different in every town and the Lord will have to lead you to them. But if you start doing "Jesus-looking" things – like extravagant giving to the poor and broken – everyone that knows Jesus really well will probably come running to help. That's our experience anyway.

In John 17:20-26, Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane that we would be one as He and the Father are one. God loves His Son desperately, and yet that ONE prayer has remained unanswered – His final death wish right before the Cross. Maybe because not enough of us are praying it in agreement with Jesus. Can there be anything more urgent or more important than the restoration of the Body of Christ? Maybe we should all hit our knees and repent for the mess we've made and start praying that one prayer with Jesus until God answers it.

And when the Body of Christ begins to assert itself in your town, the spiritual weapons of war will be turned first against the other Christians so as to bring them into obedience, THEN you can turn them against the rest of the town. And you need to expect that whoever goes back to the original ash pile will be persecuted. I'm not kidding. The enemy of our souls really, REALLY doesn't want this to happen! Be ready to be treated like Jesus was treated.

Set yourselves to the task of getting a Lampstand in your town. Commit everything to it. If there is anything standing in the way between you and God, get it out of the pipeline so you can hear Him really well and He can direct your paths. Surely there is nothing higher on His list right now than to have a pure spotless Bride - individually, locally and universally.

How do you do it in your town? Beats me. There's no formula here. I've seen it happen a bunch of different ways, usually just a handful of people praying the really hard prayers and laying everything down. God has people in place all over the country in preparation for this. I do think that there is something about the Lampstands that requires you to light it from an already lit Lampstand. The Lord lit the one in Jerusalem on Pentecost. Jerusalem split up and sent people out, including Antioch. Antioch sent Paul out to Ephesus to light theirs the first time.

As of this writing (January 26, 2007), I believe that there are eight Lampstands lit in America. Two years ago there were none – complete blackness. That doesn't mean that a whole town is under His headship, but I know that there are pockets of flame that are burning. As they grow and take over their towns it will be more and more manifest that God is doing something really amazing. In these towns the elders are being raised up and trained and prepared to help share their fire with other cities and towns. For the last three months the Lord has had me driving over 14,000 miles to 32 states to see what He is doing, to pray for cities, to help light Lampstands from the flame in Liberty, to break strongholds, to receive from and impart to leaders all over. And other stuff I can't even get my head around (like following Lewis and Clark's trail 200 years later for some reason).

This isn't about me, but I know that somehow it takes a Lampstand to light a Lampstand. I'm not sure that has to happen in person. It may be enough to read this, receive it and use the flame that's burning in us to relight the one in your own city or town. I hope so.

He'll show you how and guide your steps. And when you get a Lampstand, hold on! The ride gets REALLY crazy!

May the Lord grant you wisdom and discernment. May the wiles of the enemy be as cobwebs before your advance. May the help come and may they be mighty. May the Lord teach you to rest, even as He advances onto the battlefield. May the fire of God descend on the Body of Christ in your city. Amen.

If we can help or advise in any way, let us know.

[fotm@fellowshipofthemartyrs.com](mailto:fotm@fellowshipofthemartyrs.com) – [www.FellowshipOfTheMartyrs.com](http://www.FellowshipOfTheMartyrs.com)

## Appendix A

### Watchman Nee's "The Normal Christian Church Life" – Chapters 4 and 5

Read the entire book here - [http://www.fellowshipofthemartyrs.com/pdf/normal%20christian%20church\\_all.pdf](http://www.fellowshipofthemartyrs.com/pdf/normal%20christian%20church_all.pdf)

Again, please read the whole book by Watchman Nee – for that matter, read ALL the books by Watchman Nee! He makes more sense than just about anybody we can find. Never heard of him? Probably because Satan doesn't want you to. Plenty of fluffy books about Chicken Soup and prosperity gospel in the Christian bookstores, but it's hard to find the books by guys like Tozer and Spurgeon and Nee and Chambers and Wigglesworth and Yun and others that actually know how to push back the darkness! Yet more evidence that there is a war between good and evil and we're letting evil get the better of us!

## CHAPTER FOUR – THE CHURCHES FOUNDED BY THE APOSTLES

### THE CHURCH AND THE CHURCHES

The Word of God teaches us that the Church is one. Why then did the apostles found separate churches in each of the places they visited? If the Church is the Body of Christ, it cannot but be one. Then how does it come about that we speak of churches?

The word "church" means "the called-out ones." The term is used twice in the Gospels, once in Matthew 16:18 and once in Matthew 18:17, and we meet it quite frequently in the Acts and the Epistles. In the Gospels the word is used on both occasions by our Lord, but it is employed in a somewhat different sense each time.

"You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). What church is this? Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, and our Lord declared that He would build His Church upon this confession—the confession that as to His Person He is the Son of God, and as to His work He is the Christ of God. This Church comprises all the saved, without reference to time or space, that is, all who in the purpose of God are redeemed by virtue of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus, and are born again by the operation of His Spirit. This is the Church universal, the Church of God, the Body of Christ.

"And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church" (Matt. 18:17). The word "church" is used here in quite a different sense from the sense in Matthew 16:18. The sphere of the church referred to here is clearly not as wide as the sphere of the Church mentioned in the previous passage. The Church there is a Church that knows nothing of time or place, but the church here is obviously limited both to time and place, for it is one that can hear you speak. The Church mentioned in chapter sixteen includes all the children of God in every locality, while the church mentioned in chapter eighteen includes only the children of God living in one locality; and it is because it is limited to one place that it is possible for you to tell your difficulties to the believers of whom it is composed. Obviously the church here is local, not universal, for no one could speak at one time to all the children of God throughout the universe. It is only possible to speak at one time to the believers living in one place.

We have clearly two different aspects of the Church before us—the Church and the churches, the universal Church and the local churches. The Church is invisible; the churches are visible. The Church has no organization; the churches are organized. The Church is spiritual; the churches are spiritual and yet physical. The Church is purely an organism; the churches are an organism, yet at the same time they are organized, which is seen by the fact that elders and deacons hold office there.<sup>1</sup>

All Church difficulties arise in connection with the local churches, not with the universal Church. The latter is invisible and spiritual, therefore beyond the reach of man, while the former is visible and organized, therefore still liable to be touched by human hands. The heavenly Church is so far removed from the world that it is possible to remain unaffected by it, but the earthly churches are so close to us, that if problems arise there we feel them acutely. The invisible church does not test our obedience to God, but the visible churches test us severely by facing us with issues on the intensely practical plane of our earthly life.

## THE BASIS OF THE CHURCHES

In the Word of God we find “the church of God” spoken of in the singular (1 Cor. 10:32), but we find the same Word referring to the “churches of God” in the plural (1 Thes. 2:14). How has this unity become a plurality? How has the Church which is essentially one become many? The Church of God has been divided into the churches of God on the one ground of difference of locality.<sup>1</sup> Locality is the only scriptural basis for the division of the Church into churches.

The seven churches in Asia, referred to in the book of Revelation, comprised the church in Ephesus, the church in Smyrna, the church in Pergamos, the church in Thyatira, the church in Sardis, the church in Philadelphia, and the church in Laodicea. They were seven churches, not one. Each was distinct from the others on the ground of the difference of locality. It was only because the believers did not reside in one place that they did not belong to one church. There were seven different churches simply because the believers lived in seven different places. Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea are clearly all the names of places. Not only were the seven churches in Asia founded on the basis of locality, but all the churches mentioned in Scripture were founded on the same basis. Throughout the Word of God we can find no name attached to a church save the name of a place, for example, the church in Jerusalem, the church in Lystra, the church in Derbe, the church in Colosse, the church in Troas, the church in Thessalonica, the church in Antioch. This fact cannot be overemphasized, that in Scripture no other name but the name of a locality is ever connected with a church, and division of the church into churches is solely on the ground of difference of locality.

Spiritually the Church of God is one; therefore, it cannot be divided—but physically its members are scattered throughout the earth; therefore, they cannot possibly live in one place.<sup>2</sup> Yet it is essential that there be a physical gathering together of believers. It is not enough that they be present “in the spirit”; they must also be present “in the flesh.” Now a church is composed of all “the called-out ones assembled” in one place for worship, prayer, fellowship, and ministry. This assembling together is absolutely essential to the life of a church. Without it, there may be believers scattered throughout the area, but there is really no church. The Church exists because of the existence of its members, and it does not require that they meet in a physical way; but it is essential to the very existence of a church that its members gather together in a physical way. It is in this latter sense that the word “church” is used in 1 Corinthians 14. The phrase “in the church” (vv. 19, 23, 28) means “in the church meetings.” A church is a church assembled. These believers are not separated from other believers in any respect but that of their dwelling places. As long as they continue in the flesh, they will be limited by space, and this physical limitation, which in the very nature of things makes it impossible for God’s people to meet in one place, is the only basis sanctioned by God for the forming of separate churches. Christians belong to different churches for the sole reason that they live in different places. That division is merely external. In reality the church as the Body of Christ cannot be divided; therefore, even when the Word of God refers to the different assemblies of His people, the places named vary, but it is still “the church” in every one of these places, such as “the church in Ephesus,” “the church in Smyrna,” “the church in Pergamos.”

In the New Testament there is one method and one alone of dividing the Church into churches, and that God-ordained method is division on the basis of locality. All other methods are man-made, not God-given. May the Spirit of God engrave this truth deeply on our hearts, that the only reason for the division of God’s children into different churches is because of the different places in which they live.

What is a New Testament church? It is not a building, a gospel hall, a preaching center, a mission, a work, an organization, a system, a denomination, or a sect. People may apply the term “church” to any of the above; nevertheless they are not churches. A New Testament church is the meeting together for worship, prayer, fellowship, and mutual edification, of all the people of God in a given locality, on the ground that they are Christians in the same locality. The Church is the Body of Christ; a church is a miniature Body of Christ. All the believers in a locality form the church in that locality, and in a small way they ought to show forth what the Church should show forth. They are the Body of Christ in that locality, so they have to learn how to come under the headship of the Lord, and how to manifest oneness among all the members, guarding carefully against schism and division.

## THE BOUNDARY OF A LOCALITY

We have seen that all the churches in Scripture are local churches, but the question naturally arises, What is a scriptural locality? If we note what places are mentioned in God’s Word in connection with the founding of churches,

then we shall be able to determine what the extent of a place must be to justify its being regarded as a unit for the forming of a church. In Scripture the localities which determine the boundary of a church are neither countries, nor provinces, nor districts. Nowhere do we read of a national church, or a provincial church, or of a district church. We read of the church in Ephesus, the church in Rome, the church in Jerusalem, the church in Corinth, the church in Philippi, and the church in Iconium. Now what kind of places are Ephesus, Rome, Jerusalem, Corinth, Philippi, and Iconium? They are neither countries, nor provinces, nor districts, but simply places of convenient size for people to live together in a certain measure of safety and sociability. In modern language we should call them cities. That cities were the boundaries of churches in the apostolic days is evident from the fact that on the one hand Paul and Barnabas “appointed elders for them in every church” (Acts 14:23), and on the other hand Paul instructed Titus to “appoint elders in every city” (Titus 1:5).

In the Word of God we see no church that extends beyond the area of a city, nor do we find any church which does not cover the entire area. A city is the scriptural unit of locality. From Genesis and Joshua we learn that cities in olden days were the places where people grouped together to live; they were also the smallest unit of civil administration, and each possessed an independent name. Any place is qualified to be a unit for the founding of a church which is a place where people group together to live, a place with an independent name, and a place which is the smallest political unit. Such a place is a scriptural city and is the boundary of a local church. Large cities such as Rome and Jerusalem are only units, while small cities such as Iconium and Troas are likewise units. Apart from such places where people live a community life, there is no scriptural unit of the churches of God.

Questions will naturally arise concerning large cities such as London. Are they counted as one unit-locality, or more than one? London is clearly not a city in the scriptural sense of the term, and it cannot therefore be regarded as a unit. Even people living in London talk about going “into the city,” or “into town,” which reveals the fact that, in their thinking, London and “the city” are not synonymous. The political and postal authorities, as well as the man on the street, regard London as more than one unit. They divide it respectively into boroughs and postal districts. What they regard as an administrative unit, we may well regard as a church unit.

As to country-places which could not technically be termed cities, they may also be regarded as unit-localities. It is said of our Lord, when on earth, that He went out into the cities and villages (Luke 13:22), from which we see that country-places, as well as towns, are considered to be separate units.

This division of churches according to locality is a demonstration of the marvelous wisdom of God. Had God ordained that the Church be divided into churches with the country as their boundary, then in the event of one country being vanquished and absorbed by another, the church would have to change its sphere. Were a province to mark the limit of a church, the sphere of the churches would be frequently altered because of the frequent change of provincial boundary. The same holds true in respect of a district. The most stable of all political units is a village, a town, or a city. Governments, dynasties, and countries may change, but cities are seldom affected by any political change. There are cities that have passed from one country to another and still have their original name, and there are cities in existence today that have retained the same name for centuries. So we see the divine wisdom in decreeing that a locality should fix the boundary of a church.

Since the limits of a locality mark the limits of a church, then no church can be narrower than a locality, and none wider. The Word of God recognizes only two churches, the universal Church and the local churches; there is no third church whose sphere is narrower than the local, or else wider than the local and yet narrower than the universal Church. A local church admits of no possible division, and it admits of no possible extension. You cannot narrow its sphere by dividing it into several smaller churches, nor can you widen its sphere by linking several local churches together. Any church smaller than a local church is not a scriptural church, and any church larger than a local church, and yet smaller than the universal Church, is not a scriptural church either.

## **NOT NARROWER THAN A LOCALITY**

We read in 1 Corinthians 1:2 of “the church of God which is in Corinth.” Corinth was a unit-locality, and the church in Corinth, a unit-church. When discord crept in and its members were on the point of splitting the church into four different factions, Paul wrote, rebuking them: “Each of you says, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ....Are you not men of flesh?” (1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4). Had these people formed four different groups, they would

have been sects, not churches, for Corinth was a city, and that is the smallest unit which warrants the forming of a church. The church of God in Corinth could not cover a lesser area than the whole city, nor could it comprise a lesser number of Christians than all the Christians who lived there. This is Paul's definition of the church in Corinth—"to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints" (1:2). To form a church in an area smaller than a unit-locality is to form it on a smaller basis than a scriptural unit, and it follows that it cannot be a scriptural church. Any group of believers less than all the believers in a place is not qualified to be a separate church. The unit of the church must correspond with the unit of the locality. A church must cover the same area as the locality in which it is found. If a church is smaller than a locality, then it is not a scriptural church; it is a sect.

To say, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Cephas," is obviously sectarian; but to say, "I am of Christ," is sectarian too, though less obviously so. The confession, "I am of Christ," is good as a confession, but it is not an adequate basis for forming a separate church, since it excludes some of the children of God in a given locality by including only a certain section who say, "I am of Christ." That every believer belongs to Christ is a fact, whether that fact be declared or not; and to differentiate between those who proclaim it and those who do not, is condemned by God as carnal. It is the fact that matters, not the declaration of it. The sphere of a church in any place does not merely include those in that place who say, "I am of Christ," but all in that place who are of Christ. It extends over the entire area of the locality, and includes the entire number of the Christians in the locality.

To take one's stand as belonging to Christ alone is perfectly right, but to divide between Christians who take that stand and Christians who do not, is altogether wrong. To brand as sectarian those who say, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Cephas," and feel spiritually superior as we separate ourselves from them and have fellowship only with those who say, "I am of Christ," makes us guilty of the very sin we condemn in others. If we make non-sectarianism the basis of our fellowship, then we are dividing the church on a ground other than the one ordained of God, and thereby we form another sect. The scriptural ground for a church is a locality and not non-sectarianism. Any fellowship that is not as wide as the locality is sectarian. All Christians who live in the same place as I do, are in the same church as I am, and I dare exclude none. I acknowledge as my brother, and as a fellow member of my church, every child of God who lives in my locality.

There were a great number of believers in Jerusalem. We read of a multitude who turned to the Lord; yet they are all referred to as the church in Jerusalem, not the churches in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was a single place; therefore, it could only be counted as a single unit for the founding of a single church. You cannot divide the church unless you can divide the place. If there is only one locality, there can only be one church. In Corinth there was only the church in Corinth; in Hankow there is only the church in Hankow. We do not read of the churches in Jerusalem, or the churches in Ephesus, or the churches in Corinth. Each of these was counted as only one place; therefore, it was permissible to have only one church in each. As long as Jerusalem, Ephesus, and Corinth remain unit-localities, just so long do they remain unit-churches. If a locality is indivisible, then the church formed in that locality is indivisible.

## **NOT WIDER THAN A LOCALITY**

We have just seen that the boundary of a church cannot be narrower than the locality to which it belongs. On the other hand, its boundary cannot be wider than the locality. In the Word of God we never read of the church in Macedonia, or the church in Galatia, or the church in Judea, or the church in Galilee. Why? Because Macedonia and Galilee are provinces, and Judea and Galatia are districts. A province is not a scriptural unit of locality; neither is a district. Both include a number of units; therefore, they include a number of separate churches and do not constitute one church. A provincial church or a district church is not according to Scripture, since it does not divide on the ground of locality, but combines a number of localities. It is because all scriptural churches are local churches that there is no mention of state churches, provincial churches, or district churches in the Word of God.

"Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria" (Acts 9:31, KJV). The Holy Spirit did not speak here of the church, but of the churches. Because there were a number of localities, there were also a number of churches. It was not God's plan to unite the churches of different places into one church, but to have a separate church in each place. There were as many churches as there were places.

"He passed through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches" (Acts 15:41). Again the reference is not to one single church, because Syria and Cilicia were vast districts, each comprising a number of different places. It is permissible in political circles to unite many different places into a district and call it Syria or Cilicia, but God does not unite the

believers in a number of different places and call them the church in Syria, or the church in Cilicia. There may be unions or mergers in the commercial or political world, but God sanctions no combinations among the churches. Each separate place must have a separate church.

“All the churches of the Gentiles” (Rom. 16:4). The churches of God were not formed on national lines but on local lines; therefore, there is no mention of the church of the Gentiles, but of the churches of the Gentiles.

“The churches of Asia greet you” (1 Cor. 16:19). “The churches of Macedonia” (2 Cor. 8:1). “The churches of Galatia” (Gal. 1:2). “I was still unknown by face to the churches of Judea, which are in Christ” (Gal. 1:22). Asia, Macedonia, Galatia, and Judea were all areas comprising more than one locality-unit; therefore, the Word of God refers to the churches in these areas. A church according to the divine thought is always a church in one locality; any other kind of church is a product of the human mind.

God sanctions no division of the church within any one locality, and He sanctions no denominational combination of the churches in a number of localities. In Scripture there is always one church in one place, never several churches in one place, nor one church in several places. God does not recognize any fellowship of His children on a basis narrower, or wider, than that of a locality.

Nanking is a city, and so is Soochow. Because each is a separate unit, each therefore has a separate church. The two places are both in the same country, and even in the same province, but because they are two separate cities, they must form two separate churches. Politically Glasgow and Nanking do not belong to the same province, or even the same country; yet the relationship between Nanking and Soochow is exactly the same as between Nanking and Glasgow. Nanking and Soochow are as truly separate units as Nanking and Glasgow are. In the division of churches the question of country or province does not arise; it is all a question of cities. Two cities of the same country, or the same province, have no closer relationship than two cities of different countries or different provinces. God’s intention is that a church in any one locality should be a unit, and in their relationship one to the other the different churches must preserve their local character.

When God’s people throughout the earth really see the local character of the churches, then they will appreciate their oneness in Christ as never before. The churches of God are local, intensely local. If any factor enters in to destroy their local character, then they cease to be scriptural churches.

## **THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE CHURCHES**

It was never God’s purpose that a number of churches in different places should be combined under any denomination or organization, but rather that each one should be independent of the other. Their responsibilities were to be independent and their government likewise. When our Lord sent messages to His children in Asia, He did not address them as “the church in Asia,” but “the seven churches which are in Asia.” His rebuke of Ephesus could not be applied to Smyrna, because Smyrna was independent of Ephesus. The confusion in Pergamos could not be laid to the charge of Philadelphia, because Philadelphia was independent of Pergamos. And the pride of Laodicea could not be attributed to Sardis, because Sardis was independent of Laodicea. Each church stood on its own merits and bore its own responsibility. Since God’s children lived in seven different cities, they consequently belonged to seven different churches. And since each was independent of the other, each had its own special commendation, or exhortation, or rebuke.

And not only were there these seven churches on earth; there were seven lampstands representing them in heaven. In the Old Testament there was only one lampstand with seven different branches, but in the New Testament there were seven distinct lampstands. Had the New Testament representation been the same as the Old, then believers in the seven Asiatic churches might have united to form one church; but there are now seven separate lampstands, each upon its own base, so that the Lord is able to walk “in the midst of the seven golden lampstands” (Rev. 2:1). Therefore, though all churches stand under the authority of the one Head and express the life of the one Body (for they are all made of gold), still they are not united by any outward organization, but each stands on its own base, bearing its own responsibility, maintaining its local independence.

## **AMONG THE CHURCHES**

This does not imply that the different local churches have nothing to do with one another, and that each can simply do

as it pleases without considering the rest, for the ground of a church is the ground of the Body. Although they are unit-churches in outward management, still their inner life is one, and the Lord has made their members the members of one Body. There is no outward organization forming them into one big combined unit, but there is a strong inward bond uniting them in the Lord. They have a oneness of life which knows nothing of the bounds of locality, and which leads the separate churches to uniform action despite the absence of all outward organization. In organization the churches are totally independent of one another, but in life they are one, and consequently interdependent. If one church receives revelation, the others should seek to profit by it. If one is in difficulty, the others should come to its aid. But while the churches minister one to the other, they should always preserve their independence of government and responsibility.

On the one hand, each church is directly under the authority of the Lord and responsible to Him alone; on the other hand, each must listen not only to His direct speaking, but to His speaking through the others. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches," is our Lord's injunction to all (Rev. 2 and 3). In the introduction of His letters to the seven churches we find our Lord addressing the angel of each church, but at their close we find that His message to one particular church was also a message to all the churches. From this it is clear that what one church ought to do, all the churches ought to do. The responsibility of the churches is individual, but their actions should be uniform. This balance of truth ought to be carefully preserved.

We find the same teaching in the Epistles. "Because of this I have sent Timothy to you...who will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church" (1 Cor. 4:17). What Paul has taught "everywhere in every church," the Corinthians are called upon to lay to heart. There is not one kind of instruction for Corinth, and another kind of instruction for another place. What the apostles have been teaching to some of the churches, the believers in other churches must also note. And that applies to commandments as well as to matters of doctrine. "As the Lord has apportioned to each one...so let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches" (1 Cor. 7:17). The Lord could never give a command to one church which in any way contradicted His command to another church. His requirements for one group of His children were His requirements for all His children. "But if anyone seems to be contentious, we do not have such a custom of being so, neither the churches of God" (1 Cor. 11:16). The church in Corinth was apt to strike out on individual lines. All the other churches were going on together with the Lord. It was only Corinth that was out of step; therefore, Paul sought to bring it into line with the others. Today, alas! it is not just one church that has departed from God's way, but the majority of the so-called churches. It is a tragedy that today an injunction to follow "all the churches" would lead, not into, but away from, the will of God!

"Now concerning the collection for the saints, just as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also do" (1 Cor. 16:1). Paul is saying in effect, "Although you are independent of other churches, yet you must not disregard their example." A willingness to help one another, and to learn from one another, should mark the relationship between the various churches. What the more mature churches have learned from the Lord, the less experienced should be ready to learn from them. "For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus," wrote Paul to the Thessalonians (1 Thes. 2:14). The church in Thessalonica was younger than the churches in Judea; therefore, it was only fitting that they should learn from them.

There is a beautiful balance in the teaching of God's Word regarding the relationship between the various churches. On the one hand, they are totally independent of one another in matters relating to responsibility, government, and organization. On the other hand, they are to learn from one another and to keep pace with one another. But in everything it is essential to have both the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the pattern in God's Holy Word.

## **THE HIGHEST COURT**

Since there is a spiritual relatedness between the various local churches, no one church may strike out on an individualistic line, and taking advantage of its independence, decide things after its own good pleasure. Each must rather cultivate a relationship with the other churches, seeking their sympathy and working with their spiritual good in view. On the other hand, since each is totally independent of the other, the decision of a church in any locality is absolutely final. There is no higher court of appeal; the local court is the supreme court. There is no organization to whose control it must submit, nor is there any organization over which it exercises control. It has neither superiors nor



subordinates. If any one is received or refused by a local church, its judgment in the matter must be regarded as absolutely decisive. Even should the decision be wrong, all that can be done is to appeal for a reconsideration of the case. The local church is the highest church authority. If other churches object to its decisions, all they can do is resort to persuasion and exhortation. There is no alternative course, because the relationship which exists between the churches is purely spiritual, not official.

If a brother who has been disciplined in Nanking moves to Soochow, and there proves himself to be innocent of the charge brought against him, then Soochow has full authority to receive him, despite the judgment of Nanking. Soochow is responsible for its actions to God, not to Nanking. Soochow is an independent church, and has therefore full authority to act as it thinks best. But because there is a spiritual relationship with Nanking, it is well for the brother in question not to be received before Nanking's mistake in judgment is pointed out to Nanking. If Nanking's relationship with the Lord is right, then it will pay attention to what Soochow has to say. But if it refuses to do so, Soochow cannot press anything against Nanking, because Nanking as a local church is directly responsible to the Lord alone, and has full authority to decide and act independently of Soochow. If the churches are spiritual, there will be no difficulty in their relationship one with the other. But if they are not, and difficulties should arise, we must not seek to solve them by interfering in any way with their independence, for it is ordained by an all-wise God.

The organization of no one church is superior to another, nor is its authority greater. Many Christians regard Jerusalem as the mother-church, possessing supreme authority, but such a conception has its source in the human mind, not in the divine Word. Every church is locally governed and is directly responsible to God, not to any other church or organization. A local church is the highest Christian institution on earth. There is none above it to whom appeal can be made. A local church is the lowest scriptural unit, but it is also the highest scriptural organization. Scripture warrants no centralization in Rome which could give Rome authority over other local churches. This is God's safeguard against any infringement of the rights of His Son. Christ is the Head of the Church, and there is no other head in heaven or on earth.

There must be a spiritual relatedness among the churches if the testimony of the Body is to be preserved, but there must at the same time be an absolute independence of government if the testimony of the Head is to be maintained. Each church is under the immediate control of Christ, and is directly responsible to Him alone.

Then why, when a question arose concerning circumcision, did Paul and Barnabas go to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders there? Because those who were responsible for the erroneous teaching in Antioch had come from Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the place where this problem originated; therefore, it was to Jerusalem the apostles went to have it settled. If a boy were caught in mischief, we would report his misdeeds to his father. In going to Jerusalem Paul and Barnabas were bringing the case to those who had control of the brethren who had created trouble, and once they brought the matter to the responsible source, a speedy settlement was effected. The elders in question were not the elders in Jerusalem, but the elders of Jerusalem; and the apostles were not the apostles of Jerusalem, but the apostles in Jerusalem. The former were the representatives of the church; the latter, the representatives of the work. Paul and Barnabas referred the matter to the apostles and elders, because the apostles had been responsible for teaching in the churches, and the elders for any decision made regarding local matters. When the apostles and elders both repudiated responsibility concerning the teaching propagated by these troublesome brethren from Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas on their later visits to different places were able to show to the churches there "the decrees to keep which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem" (Acts 16:4). We must not infer from this that the elders of Jerusalem had any authority over other churches, but merely that they, as well as the apostles, repudiated the teaching of those who had gone out from them. Besides, in Jerusalem some of the apostles occupied the double office of elder and apostle.

## **HOW TO PRESERVE THE LOCAL CHARACTER OF THE CHURCHES**

Since the churches of God are local, we must be careful to preserve their local character, their local sphere, and their local boundary. Once a church loses these, it ceases to be a scriptural church. Two things call for special attention if the local nature of a church is to be safeguarded.

In the first place, no apostle must exercise control in any official capacity over a church. That is contrary to God's order, and destroys its local nature by putting the imprint of an extra-local minister upon it. No apostle has the authority to establish a private church in any place. The church belongs to the locality, not to the worker. When

people are saved by the instrumentality of any man, they belong to the church in the place where they live, not to the man through whom they were saved, nor to the organization he represents. If one or more churches are founded by a certain apostle, and that apostle exercises authority over them as belonging in a special sense to him or to his society, then those churches become sects, for they do not separate themselves from other Christians (saved through the instrumentality of other apostles) on the ground of difference of locality, but on the ground of the difference of instrumentality of salvation. Thus apostles become the heads of different denominations, and their sphere the sphere of their respective denominations, while the churches over which they exercise control become sects, each bearing the particular characteristic of its leader instead of the characteristic of a local church.

The Epistle to the Corinthians throws light on this subject. There was division among the believers in Corinth simply because they failed to realize the local character of the church and sought to make different apostles—Paul, Apollos, and Cephas—the ground of their fellowship. Had they understood the divinely-ordained basis for the division of the Church, they could never have said, “I belong to Paul,” or “I belong to Apollos,” or “I belong to Cephas,” for, despite their especial love for certain leaders, they would have realized that they belonged not to any one of them, but to the church in the locality in which they lived.

No worker may exercise control over a church or attach to it his name or the name of the society he represents. The divine disapproval will always rest on “the church of Paul,” or “the church of Apollos,” or “the church of Cephas.” In the history of the Church it has frequently happened that when God has given special light or experience to any individual, that individual has stressed the particular truth revealed or experienced, and gathered round him people who appreciated his teaching, with the result that the leader, or the truth he emphasized, has become the ground of fellowship. Thus sects have multiplied. If God’s people could only see that the object of all ministry is the founding of local churches and not the grouping of Christians around any particular individual, or truth, or experience, or under any particular organization, then the forming of sects would be avoided. We who serve the Lord must be willing to let go our hold upon all those to whom we have ministered, and let all the fruits of our ministry pass into local churches governed entirely by local men. We must be scrupulously careful not to let the coloring of our personality destroy the local character of the church, and we must always serve the church, never control it. An apostle is servant of all and master of none. No church belongs to the worker; it belongs to the locality. Had it been clearly seen by the men who have been used of God throughout the history of the Church that all the churches of God belong to their respective localities, and not to any worker or organization used in their founding, then we should not have so many different denominations today.

Another thing is essential for the preservation of the local character of the church—its sphere must not become wider than the sphere of a locality. The current method of linking up companies of believers in different places who hold the same doctrinal views, and forming them into a church, has no scriptural foundation. The same applies to the custom of regarding any mission as a center, linking together all those saved or helped by them to constitute a “church” of that mission. Such so-called churches are really sects, because they are confined by the bounds of a particular creed, or a particular mission, not by and within the bounds of locality.

The reason God does not sanction the establishing of churches which combine companies of believers in different places is that the divinely-ordained basis for the forming of churches is thereby destroyed. Any “church” formed with a mission as its center is bound to be other than local, because wherever there is a center, there is also a sphere; and if the center of the church is a mission, then obviously its sphere is not the scriptural sphere of locality but the sphere of the mission. It clearly lacks the characteristic of a church, and can only be regarded as a sect. In the purpose of God, Jesus Christ is the center of all the churches, and the locality is their sphere.

Whenever a special leader, or a specific doctrine, or some experience, or creed, or organization, becomes a center for drawing together the believers of different places, then because the center of such a church federation is other than Christ, it follows that its sphere will be other than local. And whenever the divinely-appointed sphere of locality is displaced by a sphere of human invention, there the divine approval cannot rest. The believers within such a sphere may truly love the Lord, but they have another center apart from Him, and it is only natural that the second center becomes the controlling one. It is contrary to human nature to stress what we have in common with others; we always emphasize what is ours in particular. Christ is the common center of all the churches, but any company of believers that has a leader, a doctrine, an experience, a creed, or an organization as their center of fellowship, will find that that center becomes the center, and it is that center by which they determine who belongs to them and who does not. The

center always determines the sphere, and the second center creates a sphere which divides those who attach themselves to it from those who do not.

Anything that becomes a center to unite believers of different places will create a sphere which includes all believers who attach themselves to that center and excludes all who do not. This dividing line will destroy the God-appointed boundary of locality, and consequently destroy the very nature of the churches of God. Therefore, the children of God must see to it that they have no center of union apart from Christ, because any extra-local union of believers around a center other than the Lord enlarges the sphere of fellowship beyond the sphere of locality, and thus the specific characteristic of the churches of God is lost. There are no other churches in Scripture but local churches!

## **THE BENEFITS OF INDEPENDENCE**

The divine method of making locality the boundary line between the different churches has various obvious advantages:

(1) If each church is locally governed, and all authority is in the hands of the local elders, there is no scope for an able and ambitious false prophet to display his organizing genius by forming the different companies of believers into one vast federation, and then satisfy his ambition by constituting himself its head. Rome could never sway the power it does today had the churches of God maintained their local ground. Where churches are not affiliated, and where local authority is in the hands of local elders, a pope is an impossibility. Where there are only local churches, there can be no Roman Church. It is the federation of different companies of believers that has brought such evils as dabbling in politics into the Church of God. There is power in a federated "church," but it is carnal power, not spiritual. God's thought for His Church is that she should be like a mustard seed on earth, full of vitality, yet scarcely noticed. It is federation that has brought the Church of today to the state of Thyatira. The failure of Protestantism is that it has substituted organized churches—State and Dissenting—for the Church of Rome, instead of returning to the divinely-ordained local churches.

(2) Further, if the churches retain their local character, the spread of heresy and error will be avoided, for if a church is local, heresy and error will be local too. Rome is a splendid illustration of the reverse side of this truth. The prevalence of Romish error is because of Romish federation. The sphere of the federated churches is vast; consequently the error is widespread. It is a comparatively simple matter to quarantine error in a local church, but to isolate error in a vast federation of churches is quite another proposition.

(3) The greatest advantage of having locality as the boundary of the churches is that it precludes all possibility of sects. You may have your special doctrines and I mine, but as long as we are out to maintain the scriptural character of the churches by making locality the only dividing line between them, then it is impossible for us to establish any church for the propagation of our particular beliefs. As long as a church preserves its local character, it is protected against denominationalism, but as soon as it loses that, it is veering in the direction of sectarianism. A believer is sectarian when he belongs to anyone or anything apart from the Lord and the locality. Sects and denominations can only be established when the local character of the church is destroyed.

In the wisdom of God He has decreed that all His churches be local. This is the divine method of safeguarding them against sects. Obviously, it can only protect the Church against sectarianism in expression. It is still possible for a sectarian spirit to exist in a non-sectarian church, and only the Spirit of God can deal with that. May we all learn to walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh, so that both in outward expression and inward condition the churches of God may be well-pleasing to Him.

## CHAPTER FIVE – THE BASIS OF UNION AND DIVISION

### THE FORMING OF LOCAL CHURCHES

In the previous chapter we observed that the word “church” was only mentioned twice in the Gospels. It is used frequently in the Acts, but we are never explicitly told there how a church was formed. The second chapter speaks of the salvation of about three thousand men, and the fourth chapter of a further five thousand, but nothing whatever is said about these believers forming a church. Without a single word of explanation they are referred to in the following chapter as the church—“And great fear came upon the whole church” (5:11). Here the Scriptures call the children of God “the church,” without even mentioning how the church came into being. In Acts 8:1, immediately after the death of Stephen, the word is again used, and the connection in this case is clearer than before. “There occurred in that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem.” From this passage it is obvious that the believers in Jerusalem are the church in Jerusalem. So we know now what the church is. It consists of all the saved ones in a given locality.

Later on, in the course of the apostles’ first missionary tour, many people were saved in different places through the preaching of the gospel. Nothing is mentioned about their being formed into churches, but in Acts 14:23, it is said of Paul and Barnabas that “they had appointed elders for them in every church.” The groups of believers in these different places are called churches, without any explanation whatever as to how they came to be churches. They were groups of believers, so they simply were churches. Whenever a number of people in any place were saved, they spontaneously became the church in that place. Without introduction or explanation of any kind, the Word of God presents such a group of believers to us as a church. The scriptural method of founding a church is simply by preaching the gospel; nothing further is necessary, or even permissible. If people hear the gospel and receive the Lord as their Savior, then they are a church; there is no need of any further procedure in order to become a church.

If in a given place anyone believes on the Lord, as a matter of course he is a constituent of the church in that place; there is no further step necessary in order to make him a constituent. No subsequent joining is required of him. Provided he belongs to the Lord, he already belongs to the church in that locality; and since he already belongs to the church, his belonging cannot be made subject to any condition. If, before recognizing a believer as a member of the church, we insist that he join us, or that he resign his connection elsewhere, then “our church” is decidedly not one of the churches of God. If we impose any conditions of membership upon a believer in the locality, we are immediately in an unscriptural position, because his being a member of the local church is conditioned only by his being a believer in the locality. All the saved ones who belong to the place in which we live belong to the same church as we do. I mean by the church a scriptural church, and not a man-made organization. A local church is a church which comprises all the children of God in a given locality.

Let us note well that the ground of our receiving anyone into the church is that the Lord has already received that one. “Him who is weak in faith receive...for God has received him” (Rom. 14:1, 3). “Therefore receive one another, as Christ also received you” (15:7). Our receiving anyone is merely our recognition that the Lord has already received him. Our receiving him does not make him a member of the church; rather, it is that we receive him because he is already a member. If he is the Lord’s, he is in the church. If he is not the Lord’s, he is not in the church. If we demand anything beyond his reception by the Lord before admitting him to fellowship, then we are not a church at all, but only a sect.

### WITHIN AND WITHOUT THE CIRCLE

In any place where the gospel has been proclaimed and people have believed on the Lord, they are the church in that place, and they are our brethren. In the days of the apostles the question of belonging or not belonging to a church was simple in the extreme. But things are not so simple in our days, for the question has been complicated by many so-called churches that exclude those who should be in the church, and include those who should be outside. What sort of a person can be rightly considered a constituent of the church? What is the minimum requirement we can

insist upon for admission to church fellowship? Unless the qualifications for church membership are clearly defined, there will always be the danger of excluding from the church those who truly belong to it and including those who do not.

Before we proceed to discover who really belongs to a local church and who does not, let us first inquire who belongs to the universal Church and who does not, since the condition of membership in a church is essentially the same as in the Church. When we know what kind of persons belong to the Church, then we know also what kind of persons belong to a church.

How can we know who is a Christian and who is not? "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him" (Rom. 8:9). According to the Word of God, every person in whose heart Christ dwells by His Spirit is a true Christian. Christians may differ from one another in a thousand respects, but in this fundamental matter there is no difference between them: one and all have the Spirit of Christ dwelling within them. If we wish to know who belongs to the Lord, then we only need to discover whether he has the Spirit of Christ or not. Whoever has the Spirit of Christ is inside the Church circle, and whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ is outside the circle. A participant of the Spirit of God is an essential part of the Church of God; a non-participant of the Spirit of God has no part in the Church. In the Church universal this is true; in the church local this is also true. "Test yourselves whether you are in the faith; prove yourselves. Or do you not realize about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are disapproved?" (2 Cor. 13:5). There is a subjective line of demarcation between the Church and the world; all within that line are saved, and all without that line are lost. This line of demarcation is the indwelling Spirit of Christ.

## **THE ONENESS OF THE SPIRIT**

The Church of God includes a vast number of believers, living at different times, and scattered in different places throughout the earth. How has it come about that all have been united into one universal Church? With such differences in age, social position, education, background, outlook, and temperament, how could all these people become one church? What is the secret of the oneness of the saints? By what means has Christianity caused these people, with their thousand differences, to become truly one? It is not that, having a grand convention and agreeing to be one, Christians become united. Christian unity is no human product; its origin is purely divine. This mighty mysterious oneness is planted in the hearts of all believers the moment they receive the Lord. It is "the oneness of the Spirit" (Eph. 4:3).

The Spirit who dwells in the heart of every believer is one Spirit; therefore, He makes all those in whom He dwells to be one, even as He Himself is one. Christians may differ from one another in innumerable ways, but all Christians of all ages, with their countless differences, have this one fundamental likeness—the Spirit of God dwells in every one of them. This is the secret of the oneness of believers, and this is the secret of their separation from the world. The reason for Christian unity and for Christian separation is one.

It is this inherent unity that makes all believers one, and it is this inherent unity that accounts for the impossibility of division between believers, except for geographical reasons. Those who do not have this are outsiders; those who have it are our brethren. If you have the Spirit of Christ and I have the Spirit of Christ, then we both belong to the same Church. There is no need to be united; we are united by the one Spirit who dwells in us both. Paul besought all believers to endeavor "to keep the oneness of the Spirit" (Eph. 4:3); he did not exhort us to have the oneness, but merely to keep it. We have it already, for obviously we cannot keep what we do not have. God has never told us to become one with other believers; we already are one. Therefore, we do not need to create oneness; we only need to maintain it.

We cannot make this oneness, since by the Spirit we are one in Christ, and we cannot break it, because it is an eternal fact in Christ; but we can destroy the effects of it, so that its expression in the Church is lost. Alas! that we have not only failed to preserve this precious oneness, but have actually so destroyed the fruits of it, that there is little outward trace of oneness among the children of God.

How are we going to determine who are our brothers and our fellow members in the Church of God? Not by inquiring if they hold the same doctrinal views that we hold, or have had the same spiritual experiences; nor by seeing if their customs, manner of living, interests, and preferences tally with ours. We merely inquire, Are they indwelt by the Spirit of God or not? We cannot insist on oneness of opinions, or oneness of experience, or any other oneness among

believers, except the oneness of the Spirit. That oneness there can be, and always must be, among the children of God. All who have this oneness are in the Church.

In your travels has it not sometimes happened that on a boat or train you have met a stranger, and after only a few moments of conversation you have found a pure love for him welling up in your heart? That spontaneous outgoing of love was because of the one Spirit dwelling in both hearts. Such inner spiritual oneness transcends all social, racial, and national differences.

How can we know whether or not a person has this oneness of the Spirit? In the verse immediately following Paul's exhortation to keep the oneness of the Spirit, he explains what those have in common who possess this oneness. We cannot expect believers to be alike in everything, but there are seven things which all true believers share, and by the existence or absence of these we can know whether or not a person has the oneness of the Spirit. Many other things are of great importance, but these seven are vital. They are indispensable to spiritual fellowship, and they are at once the minimum and the maximum requirements that can be made of any person who professes to be a fellow believer.

## **SEVEN FACTORS IN SPIRITUAL ONENESS**

“One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:4-6). A person is constituted a member of the Church on the ground that he possesses the oneness of the Spirit, and that will result in his being one with all believers on the above seven points. They are the seven elements in the oneness of the Spirit, which is the common heritage of all the children of God. In drawing a line of demarcation between those who belong to the Church and those who do not, we must require nothing beyond these seven lest we exclude any who belong to the family of God; and we dare not require anything less, lest we include any who do not belong to the divine family. All in whom these seven are found belong to the Church; all who lack any of them do not belong to the Church.

(1) ONE BODY. The question of oneness begins with the question of membership of the Body of Christ. The sphere of our fellowship is the sphere of the Body. Those who are outside that sphere have no spiritual relationship with us, but those who are inside that sphere are all in fellowship with us. We cannot make any choice of fellowship in the Body, accepting some members and rejecting others. We are all part of the one Body, and nothing can possibly separate us from it, or from one another. Anyone who has received Christ belongs to the Body, and he and we are one. If we do not wish to extend fellowship to anyone, we must first make sure that he does not belong to the Body; if he does, we have no reason to reject him (unless for such disciplinary reasons as are clearly laid down in the Word of God).

(2) ONE SPIRIT. If anyone seeks fellowship with us, however he may differ from us in experience or outlook, provided he has the same Spirit as we have, he is entitled to be received as a brother. If he has received the Spirit of Christ, and we have received the Spirit of Christ, then we are one in the Lord, and nothing must divide us.

(3) ONE HOPE. This hope, which is common to all the children of God, is not a general hope, but the hope of our calling, that is, the hope of our calling as Christians. What is our hope as Christians? We hope to be with the Lord forever in glory. There is not a single soul who is truly the Lord's in whose heart there is not this hope, for to have Christ in us is to have “the hope of glory” in us (Col. 1:27). If anyone claims to be the Lord's, but has no hope of heaven or glory, his is a mere empty profession. All who share this one hope are one, and since we have the hope of being together in glory for all eternity, how can we be divided in time? If we are going to share the same future, shall we not gladly share the same present?

(4) ONE LORD. There is only one Lord, the Lord Jesus, and all who recognize that God has made Jesus of Nazareth to be both Lord and Christ are one in Him. If anyone confesses Jesus to be Lord, then his Lord is our Lord, and since we serve the same Lord, nothing whatever can separate us.

(5) ONE FAITH. The faith here spoken of is the faith—not our beliefs in regard to the interpretation of Scripture, but the faith through which we have been saved, which is the common possession of all believers; that is, the faith that Jesus is the Son of God (who died for the salvation of sinners and lives again to give life to the dead). Anyone who lacks this vital faith does not belong to the Lord, but all who possess it are the Lord's. The children of God may follow many different lines of scriptural interpretation, but in regard to this fundamental faith they are one. Those who lack

this faith have no part in the family of God, but all who possess it we recognize as our brothers in the Lord.

(6) ONE BAPTISM. Is it by immersion or by sprinkling? Is it single or triune? There are various forms of baptism accepted by the children of God, so if we make the form of baptism the dividing line between those who belong to the church and those who do not, we shall exclude many true believers from our fellowship. There are children of God who even believe that a material baptism is not necessary, but since they are the children of God, we dare not on that account exclude them from our fellowship. What then is the significance of the one baptism mentioned in this passage? Paul throws light on the subject in his first letter to the Corinthians. "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul?" (1:13). The emphasis is not on the form of baptism, but on the name into which we are baptized. The first question is not whether you are sprinkled or immersed, dipped once or three times, baptized literally or spiritually; the important point is this: Into whose name have you been baptized? If you are baptized into the name of the Lord, that is your qualification for church membership. If anyone is baptized into the name of the Lord, I welcome him as my brother, whatever the manner of his baptism. By this we do not imply that it is of no consequence whether we are sprinkled or immersed, or whether our baptism is spiritual or literal. The Word of God teaches that baptism is literal, and is by immersion, but the point here is that the manner of baptism is not the ground of our fellowship, but the name into which we are baptized. All who are baptized into the name of the Lord are one in Him.

(7) ONE GOD. Do we believe in the same personal, supernatural God as our Father? If so, then we belong to one family, and there is no adequate reason for our being divided.

The above seven points are the seven factors in that divine oneness which is the possession of all the members of the divine family, and they constitute the only test of Christian profession. They are the possession of every true Christian, no matter to what place or period he belongs. Like a sevenfold cord the oneness of the Spirit binds all the believers throughout the world; and however diverse their character or circumstances, provided they have these seven expressions of an inner oneness, then nothing can possibly separate them.

If we impose any conditions of fellowship beyond these seven—which are but the outcome of the one spiritual life, then we are guilty of sectarianism, for we are making a division between those who are manifestly children of God. If we apply any test but these seven, such as baptism by immersion, or certain interpretations of prophecy, or a special line of holiness teaching, or a so-called Pentecostal experience, or the resigning from any denominational church—then we are imposing conditions other than those stipulated in the Word of God. All who have these seven points in common with us are our brothers, whatever their spiritual experience, or doctrinal views, or so-called church relationships. Our oneness is not based on our appreciation of the truth of our oneness, nor on our coming out from all that would contradict our oneness, but upon the actual fact of our oneness, which is made real in our experience by the indwelling Spirit of Christ.

## **LOCAL CHURCHES**

Now what is true of the universal Church is also true of a local church. The universal Church comprises all those who have the oneness of the Spirit. The local church comprises all those who, in a given locality, have the oneness of the Spirit. The Church of God and the churches of God do not differ in nature, but only in extent. The former consists of all throughout the universe who are indwelt by the Spirit of God; the latter consists of all in one locality who are indwelt by the Spirit.

Anyone wishing to belong to a church in a given locality must answer two requirements—he must be a child of God, and he must live in that particular locality. Membership in the Church of God is conditioned only by being a child of God, but membership in a church of God is conditioned, firstly, by being a child of God and, secondly, by living in a given locality.

In nature the Church is indivisible as God Himself is indivisible. Therefore, the division of the Church into churches is not a division in nature, life, or essence, but only in government, organization, and management. Because the earthly church is composed of a vast number of individuals, a measure of organization is indispensable. It is a physical impossibility for all the people of God, scattered throughout the world, to live and meet in one place; and it is for that reason alone that the Church of God has been divided into churches.

We must realize clearly that the nature of all the local churches is the same throughout the whole earth. It is not that

the constituents of one local church are of one kind, and the constituents of another local church are of another kind. In nature there is no difference whatever. The only difference is in the localities that determine their respective boundaries. The Church is indivisible; therefore, in nature the churches are indivisible too. It is only in outward sphere that there is any possibility of dividing them. Physical limitations make geographical divisions inevitable, but the spiritual oneness of believers overcomes all barriers of space.

Locality is the divinely-appointed ground for the division of the Church, because it is the only inevitable division. Every barrier between all believers in the world is avoidable, except this one. As long as believers remain in the flesh they cannot exist apart from their dwelling places; therefore, the churches which consist of such believers cannot but be restricted by their dwellings. Geographical distinctions are natural, not arbitrary, and it is simply because the physical limitations of the children of God make geographical divisions inevitable, that God has ordained that His Church be divided into churches on the ground of locality. Such division is scriptural, and all other divisions are carnal. Any division of the children of God other than geographical implies not merely a division of sphere, but a division of nature. Local division is the only division which does not touch the life of the Church.

Most believers of today are so utterly blind to the scriptural basis of a church that if one asks another, "To what church do you belong?" The first thought of the one questioned is of the specific line of teaching he approves of, or the group of people with whom he has special fellowship, or how his group of Christians is different from others, or perhaps the name that particular group bears, or the form of organization they have adopted—in short, anything but the place in which he lives. Few would answer that question with, "I belong to the church in Ephesus," or "I belong to the church in Shanghai," or "I belong to the church in Los Angeles." It is our being in Christ that separates us from the world, and it is our being in a given locality that separates us from other believers. It is only because we reside in a different place from them that we belong to a different church. The only reason I do not belong to the same church as other believers is that I do not live in the same place as they do. If I wish to be in the same church, then I must change my residence to the same place. If, on the other hand, I wish to be in a different church from others in my locality, then the only solution to my problem is to move to a different locality. Difference of locality is the only justification for division among believers.

## **SEVEN FORBIDDEN GROUNDS OF DIVISION**

On the positive side we have just seen the ground on which God has ordained that His Church be divided. Now, on the negative side, we shall see on what ground the Church ought not to be divided.

(1) SPIRITUAL LEADERS. "Now I mean this, that each of you says, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ" (1 Cor. 1:12). Here Paul points out the carnality of the Corinthian believers in attempting to divide the church of God in Corinth, which, by the divine ordering, was indivisible, being already the smallest scriptural unit upon which any church could be established. They sought to divide the church on the ground of a few leaders who had been specially used of God in their midst. Cephas was a zealous minister of the gospel, Paul was a man who had suffered much for his Lord's sake, and Apollos was one whom God certainly used in His service, but though all three had been indisputably owned of God in Corinth, God could never permit the church there to make them a ground of division. He ordained that His Church be divided on the basis of localities, not of persons. It was all right to have a church in Corinth and a church in Ephesus, and quite all right to have several churches in Galatia and a number in Macedonia, for difference of locality justified division into these various churches. It was also all right for the believers to esteem those leaders whom God had used among them, but it would have been quite wrong to divide the churches according to the respective leaders by whom they had been helped.

Paul, Cephas, and Apollos were true-hearted servants of God who allowed no party-spirit to separate them; it was their followers who were responsible for the separation. Hero worship is a tendency of human nature, which delights to show preference for those who appeal to its tastes. Because so many of God's children know little or nothing of the power of the cross to deal with the flesh, this tendency to worship a man has expressed itself frequently in the Church of God, and much havoc has been wrought in consequence. It is in keeping with God's will that we should learn from spiritual men and profit by their leadership, but it is altogether contrary to His will that we should divide the Church according to the men we admire. The only scriptural basis for the forming of a church is difference of locality, not difference of leaders.

(2) INSTRUMENTS OF SALVATION. Spiritual leaders are no adequate reason for dividing the Church; neither are



the instruments used of God in our salvation. Some of the Corinthian believers proclaimed themselves to be “of Cephas,” others “of Paul,” others “of Apollos.” They traced the beginning of their spiritual history to these men, and so thought they belonged to them. It is both natural and common for persons saved through the instrumentality of a worker, or a society, to consider themselves as belonging to such a worker or society. It is likewise both natural and common for an individual, or a mission, through whose means people have been saved, to consider the saved ones as belonging to them. It is natural, but not spiritual. It is common, but nevertheless, contrary to God’s will. Alas! that so many of God’s servants have not yet realized that they are servants of the local church, not masters of a private “church.” Churches are divided on the ground of geography, not on the ground of the instruments of our salvation.

(3) NON-SECTARIANISM. Some Christians think they know better than to say, “I am of Cephas,” or “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos.” They say, “I am of Christ.” Such Christians despise the others as sectarian, and on that ground start another community. Their attitude is—“You are sectarian; I am non-sectarian. You are hero worshippers; we worship the Lord alone.”

But God’s Word condemns not only those who say, “I am of Cephas,” “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos.” It just as definitely and just as clearly denounces those who say, “I am of Christ.” It is not wrong to consider oneself as belonging only to Christ; it is right and even essential. Nor is it wrong to repudiate all schism among the children of God; it is highly commendable. God does not condemn this class of Christians for either of these two things; He condemns them for the very sin they condemn in others—their sectarianism. As a protest against division among the children of God, many believers seek to divide those who do not divide from those who do, and never dream that they themselves are divisive! Their ground of division may be more plausible than that of others who divide on the ground of doctrinal differences, or personal preference for certain leaders, but the fact remains that they are dividing the children of God. Even while they repudiate schism elsewhere, they are schismatic themselves.

When you say, “I am of Christ,” do you mean to say others are not? It is perfectly legitimate for you to say, “I am of Christ,” if your remark merely implies to whom you belong; but if it implies, “I am not sectarian; I stand quite differently from you sectarians,” then it is making a difference between you and other Christians. The very thought of distinguishing between the children of God has its springs in the carnal nature of man, and is sectarian. If we look on other believers as sectarian and consider ourselves to be non-sectarian, we are immediately differentiating between God’s people and thereby manifesting a divisive spirit even in the very act of condemning division. No matter by what means we distinguish between the members of God’s family—even if it be on the pretext of Christ Himself—we are guilty of schism in the Body.

What then is right? All exclusiveness is wrong. All inclusiveness (of true children of God) is right. Denominations are not scriptural, and we ought to have no part in them, but if we adopt an attitude of criticism and think, “They are denominational; I am undenominational. They belong to sects; I belong to Christ alone”—such differentiating is definitely sectarian.

Yes, praise God I am of Christ, but my fellowship is not merely with those who say, “I am of Christ,” but with all who are of Christ. What is of vital importance is not the confession, but the fact. Although these other believers say they are of Paul, of Cephas, and of Apollos, yet in fact they are of Christ. I do not so much mind what they say, but I very much mind what they are. I do not inquire whether they are denominational or undenominational, sectarian or unsectarian; I only inquire, “Are they of Christ?” If they are of Christ, then they are my brethren.

Our personal standing should be undenominational, but the basis of our fellowship is not undenominationalism. We ourselves should be non-sectarian, but we dare not insist on non-sectarianism as a condition of fellowship. Our only ground of fellowship is Christ. Our fellowship must be with all the believers in a locality, not merely with all the unsectarian believers in that locality. They may make denominational differences, but we must not make undenominational requirements. We dare not differentiate between ourselves and them, because they differentiate between themselves and others. They are the children of God, and because they make distinctions between themselves and other children of God, they do not on that account cease to be the children of God. Their denominationalism or sectarianism will mean that severe limitations are imposed upon the Lord as to His purpose and mind for them, and this will mean that they will never go beyond a certain measure of spiritual growth and fullness. Blessing there may be, but fullness of divine purpose never.

All believers living in the same locality belong to the same church. This is an unchanging principle. We dare not alter

“all the believers in a locality” to “all the undenominational believers in a locality.” If we make undenominationalism or unsectarianism the boundary of our church, instead of locality, then we lose our local standing as a church and become a sect. It is not a denominational church, nor an interdenominational church, nor even an undenominational church we are after, but a local church. The difference between a local church and an undenominational church is as vast as the difference between heaven and earth. A local church is undenominational, but an undenominational church is denominational. “The church in Corinth” is scriptural, but “the church of all those who say, ‘I am of Christ’ in Corinth” is unscriptural. Our work is positive and constructive, not negative and destructive. We are out to establish churches, not to destroy denominations. Human nature is prone to go to extremes; it is so easy for us either to be undenominational ourselves and demand undenominationalism of others, or else to tolerate denominationalism in others and gradually become denominational ourselves. We ourselves must be undenominational, but we must not demand undenominationalism of other Christians as the basis of our fellowship.

Therefore, if we come to a place where Christ is not named, we must preach the gospel, win men to the Lord, and found a local church. If we come to a place where there are already Christians, but on various grounds these believers separate themselves into denominational “churches,” our task is just the same as in the other place—we must preach the gospel, lead men to the Lord, and form them into a church on the scriptural ground of locality. All the while we must maintain an attitude of inclusiveness, not exclusiveness, towards those believers who are in different sects, for they, as we, are children of God, and they live in the same locality; therefore, they belong to the same church as we do. For ourselves, we cannot join any sect or remain in one, for our church connection can only be on local ground, but in regard to others we must not make leaving a sect the condition of fellowship with those believers who are in a sect. That will make undenominationalism our church ground, instead of locality. Let us be clear on this point, that an undenominational church is not a local church. There is a vast difference between the two. A local church is undenominational, and it is positive and inclusive; but an undenominational church is not a local church, and it is negative and exclusive.

Let us be clear as to our position. We are not out to establish undenominational churches, but local churches. We are seeking to do a positive work. If believers can be led to see what a local church is—the expression of the Body of Christ in a locality—they will certainly not remain in any sect. On the other hand, it is possible for them to see all the evils of sectarianism, and leave them, without knowing what a local church is. We must help those, to whom God has been pleased to use us, to understand clearly the truth regarding local churches, and not to lay emphasis on the question of denominations. They must realize that whenever they use the term “we” in relation to the children of God, they must include all the children of God, not merely those who are meeting with them. If when we say “our brethren,” we do not include all the children of God, but only those who continually meet with us, then we are schismatic.

I do not condone sectarianism, and I do not believe we should belong to any sect, but it is not our business to get people to leave them. If we make it our chief concern to lead people to a real knowledge of the Lord and the power of His cross, then they will gladly abandon themselves to Him, and will learn to walk in the Spirit, repudiating the things of the flesh. We shall find there will be no need to stress the question of denominations, for the Spirit Himself will enlighten them. If a believer has not learned the way of the cross and the walk in the Spirit, what is gained by his coming out of a sect?

(4) DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCES. In the Greek the word rendered “heresies” in Galatians 5:20 [KJV] does not necessarily convey the thought of error, but rather of division on the ground of doctrine. The Interlinear New Testament translates it as “sects,” while Darby in his New Translation renders it “schools of opinion.” The whole thought here is not of the difference between truth and error, but of division based upon doctrine. My teaching may be right or it may be wrong, but if I make it a cause of division, then I am guilty of the “heresy” spoken of here.

God forbids any division on doctrinal grounds. Some believe that rapture is pre-tribulation; others, that it is post-tribulation. Some believe that all the saints will enter the kingdom; others believe that only a section will enter. Some believe that baptism is by immersion; others, that is by sprinkling. Some believe that supernatural manifestations are a necessary accompaniment to the baptism in the Holy Spirit, while others do not. None of these doctrinal views constitute a scriptural basis for separating the children of God. Though some may be right and others wrong, God does not sanction any division on account of difference as to such beliefs.<sup>1</sup> If a group of believers split off from a local church in their zeal for certain teaching according to the Word of God, the new “church” they establish may have more scriptural teaching, but it could never be a scriptural church. To bring error into a church is carnal, but to divide

a church on account of error may also be carnal. It is carnality that so often destroys the oneness of the church in any place.

If we wish to maintain a scriptural position, then we must see to it that the churches we found in various places only represent localities, not doctrines. If our “church” is not separated from other children of God on the ground of locality alone, but stands for the propagation of some particular doctrine, then we are decidedly a sect, however true to the Word of God our teaching may be. The purpose of God is that a church should represent the children of God in a locality, not represent some specific truth there. A church of God in any place comprises all the children of God in that place, not merely those who hold the same doctrinal views.

Should we arrive at a place where a church has already been established on clear local ground, and discover that its members hold views which we consider unscriptural, or that they consider the views we hold as unscriptural, if we then refuse to recognize them as the church of God in that locality and withdraw from fellowship, we are divisive. The question is not whether they agree with our presentation of truth, but whether they are standing on clear church ground.

If our hearts are set to preserve the local character of the churches of God, we cannot fail to come up against problems in our work. Unless the cross operates mightily, what endless possibilities of friction there will be if we include in one church all the believers in the locality with all their varying views. How the flesh would like just to include those holding the same views, and to exclude all whose views differ from ours. To have constant and close association with people whose interpretation of Scripture does not tally with ours, is hard for the flesh, but good for the spirit. God does not use division to solve the problem; He uses the cross. He would have us submit to the cross, so that through the very difficulties of the situation, the meekness and patience and love of Christ may be deeply wrought into our lives. Under the circumstances, if we do not know the cross, we shall probably argue, lose our temper, and finally go our own way. We may have right views, but God is giving us an opportunity to display a right attitude; we may believe aright, but God is testing us to see if we love aright. It is easy to have a mind well stored with scriptural teaching, and a heart devoid of true love. Those who differ from us will be a means in God’s hand to test whether we have spiritual experience, or only scriptural knowledge, to test whether the truths we proclaim are a matter of life to us, or mere theory.

Romans 14 shows us how to deal with those whose views differ from ours. What would we do if in our church there were vegetarians and Sabbatarians? Why, we should consider it almost intolerable if in the same church some of the believers kept the Lord’s Day and others the Sabbath, and some ate meat freely, while others were strict vegetarians. That was exactly the situation Paul was facing. Let us note his conclusions. “Now him who is weak in faith receive, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his considerations” (v. 1). “Who are you who judge another’s household servant? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will be made to stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand” (v. 4). “Therefore let us judge one another no longer, but rather judge this: not to put a stumbling block or cause of falling before your brother” (v. 13). Oh, for Christian tolerance! Oh, for largeness of heart! Alas! that many of God’s children are so zealous for their pet doctrines that they immediately label as heretics, and treat accordingly, all whose interpretation of Scripture differs from theirs. God would have us walk in love toward all who hold views contrary to those views that are dear to us (v. 15).

This does not mean that all the members of a church can hold whatever views they please, but it does mean that the solution to the problem of doctrinal differences does not lie in forming separate parties according to the different views held, but in walking in love toward those whose outlook differs from ours. By patient teaching we may yet be able to help all to “the oneness of the faith” (Eph. 4:13). As we wait patiently on the Lord, He may grant grace to the others to change their views, or He may grant us grace to see that we are not such good teachers as we thought we were. Nothing so tests the spirituality of a teacher as opposition to his teaching.

The teachers must learn humility, but so must all the other believers. When they recognize their position in the Body, they will know that it is not given to everyone to determine matters of doctrine. They must learn to submit to those who have been equipped of God for the specific ministry of teaching His people. Spiritual gifts and spiritual experience are necessary for spiritual teaching; consequently not everyone can teach.

“Make my joy full, that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing, doing nothing by way of selfish ambition nor by way of vainglory, but in lowliness of mind considering one another more

excellent than yourselves; not regarding each his own virtues, but each the virtues of others also” (Phil. 2:2-4). When the churches have laid to heart what Paul wrote to the church in Philippi, then it will be perfectly possible to have only one church in one locality with no friction whatever among its many members.

(5) RACIAL DIFFERENCES. “For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). Jews have always had the strongest racial prejudice of all peoples. They regarded other nations as unclean, and were forbidden even to eat with them; but Paul made it very clear, in writing to the Corinthians, that in the Church both Jew and Gentile are one. All distinctions in Adam have been done away with in Christ. A racial “church” has no recognition in the Word of God. Church membership is determined by place of residence, not by race.

Today in the large cosmopolitan cities of the world there are churches for the whites and churches for the blacks, churches for the Europeans and churches for the Asiatics. These have originated through failure to understand that the boundary of a church is a city. God does not permit any division of His children on the ground of difference of color, custom, or manner of living. No matter to what race they belong, if they belong to the same locality, they belong to the same church. God has placed believers of different races in one locality, so that, by transcending all external differences, they might in one church show forth the one life and the one Spirit of His Son. All that comes to us by nature is overcome by grace. All that was ours in Adam has been ruled out in Christ. The whole matter hinges here—are all carnal differences done away with in Christ, or is there still a place for the flesh in the Church? Are our resources in Christ sufficient to overcome all natural barriers? Let us remember that the church in any locality includes all the believers living there and excludes all who live elsewhere.

(6) NATIONAL DIFFERENCES. Jews and Gentiles represent national as well as racial distinctions, but in the Church of God there is neither Jew nor Greek. There is no racial distinction there, and there is no national distinction either. All believers living in one place, no matter what their nationality, belong to the one church. In the natural realm there is a difference between Chinese, French, British, and Americans, but in the spiritual realm there is none. If a Chinese believer lives in Nanking, he belongs to the church in Nanking. If a French believer lives in Nanking, he also belongs to the church in Nanking. The same holds good for Britishers, Americans, and all other nationalities, provided they are born again. The Word of God recognizes the church in Rome, the church in Ephesus, and the church in Thessalonica, but it does not recognize the Jewish church, or the Chinese church, or the Anglican church. The reason the names of cities appear in Scripture in connection with the churches of God is that the difference of dwelling place is the only difference recognized by God among His children. Their life is essentially one, and is therefore indivisible, but the place in which that life is lived cannot but vary as long as they remain in the flesh.

Since the churches are all local, if a believer—whatever his nationality—moves from one place to another, he immediately becomes a member of the church in the latter place, and has no church connection in the place of his former residence. You cannot live in one place and be a member of the church in another. There is no extraterritoriality in connection with the churches of God. As soon as you exceed the city limit, you exceed the church limit. If a Chinese brother moves from Nanking to Hankow, he becomes a member of the church in Hankow. In like manner, a British brother coming from London to Hankow immediately becomes a member of the church in Hankow. A change of residence necessarily involves a change of church, whereas naturalization has no effect on church membership.

Our fellow workers who have gone from China to the South Sea Islands must be careful not to form an Overseas Chinese church there. It is possible to have an Overseas Chinese Chamber of Commerce, or an Overseas Chinese College, or an Overseas Chinese Club. Anything you like can be Overseas Chinese, but not a church. A church is always local! If you go to any city in a foreign land, then it follows as a matter of course that you belong to the church in that city. There is nothing Chinese about the churches of God.

How glorious it would be if the saved in every city could overlook all natural differences and only consider their spiritual oneness. “We are the believers in Christ in such-and-such a place” is the finest confession a company of Christians can make. Whether Christ is in you or not, determines whether or not you belong to the Church; where you live determines the particular church to which you belong. The question put by God to the world is, “Do they belong to Christ?” The question put by God to believers is, “Where do they live?” Not nationality but locality is the question raised. The churches of God are built on city ground, not on national ground.

The usual conception of an indigenous church, while quite right in some respects, is fundamentally wrong at the most vital point. Since the divine method of dividing the Church is according to locality, not nationality, then all differentiation between Christian and heathen countries is contrary to God's thought. The Church of God knows neither Jew nor Greek; therefore, it knows neither native nor foreigner, neither heathen country nor Christian country. The Scriptures differentiate between cities, not between countries, heathen and Christian. So if we would be in full accord with the mind of God, we must make no difference whatever between the Chinese and foreign church, between Chinese and foreign workers, or between Chinese and foreign funds.

The thought of the indigenous church is that the natives of a country should be self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating, while the thought of God is that the believers in a city—whether native or foreign—should be self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. Take, for instance, Peking. The theory of the indigenous church distinguishes between Chinese and foreigners in Peking, whereas the Word of God distinguishes between the believers in Peking—whether Chinese or foreign—and the believers in other cities. That is why in Scripture we read of the churches of the Gentiles, but never of the church of the Gentiles. The attempt to form all Chinese believers into one church shows a lack of understanding in regard to the divine basis of forming churches.

On the one hand, there is no church of the Gentiles in Scripture; on the other hand, we read of "the church of the Thessalonians." It is suggestive that this is the only expression of its kind used in the New Testament. The Word does not speak of the church of the Greeks (a race, or nation), but of the church of the Thessalonians (a city). There is no such thing in the thought of God as the church of the Chinese, but there is such a thing as the church of the Pekinese. Scripture knows nothing of the church of the French, but it does recognize the church of the Parisians. A clear apprehension of the divine basis of church formation—according to the difference of cities and not of countries—will save us from the misconception of the indigenous church. There should be no distinction whatever between Chinese and foreign Christians, between Chinese and foreign workers, or between Chinese and foreign money in any given locality.

(7) SOCIAL DISTINCTIONS. In Paul's day, from a social point of view, there was a great gulf fixed between a free man and a slave; yet they worshipped side by side in the same church. In our day, if a rickshaw coolie and the president of our republic both belong to Christ and live in the same place, then they belong to the same church. There may be a mission for rickshaw coolies, but there can never be a church for rickshaw coolies. Social distinctions are no adequate basis for forming a separate church. In the Church of God there "cannot be slave nor free man."

In Scripture we have at least seven definite things referred to which are forbidden by God as reasons for dividing His Church. As a matter of fact these seven points are only typical of all other reasons the human mind may devise for dividing the Church of God. The two millenniums of Church history are a sad record of human inventions to destroy the Church's oneness.

## **OVERCOMERS**

The sphere of the church is local, and the local church should on no account be divided. The question naturally arises, if the spiritual life of a local (not denominational) church is very low, can a few of the more spiritual members not gather together and form another assembly? The answer from the Word of God is emphatically, No! God's Word only warrants the establishment of churches on local ground. Even lack of spirituality is no adequate reason for dividing the church. Should local methods, government, and organization be far from ideal, that still constitutes no reason for division. Even wrong teaching (2 John 9 excepted) is no ground for those who know better to form a separate church. We must lay it to heart that the difference of locality is the only ground for dividing the Church of God. No other ground is scriptural.

We who live in the same locality cannot but belong to the same church. This is something from which there is no escape. If I am dissatisfied with the local church, the only thing I can do is to change my locality; then automatically I change my church. We can leave a denomination, but we can never leave a church. To leave a sect is justifiable, but to leave a church—whether on account of unspirituality, wrong doctrine, or bad organization—is utterly unjustifiable. If you leave the local church and form a separate assembly, you may have greater spirituality, purer teaching, and better government; but you have no church; you have only a sect.

In the second and third chapters of Revelation we see seven different churches in seven different localities. Only two

were not rebuked but actually praised by the Lord. The other five were all definitely censured. Spiritually those five were in a sad state. They were weak, defeated churches; but they were churches for all that, not sects. Spiritually they were wrong, but positionally they were right; therefore, God only commanded those in them to be overcomers. The Lord said not a word about leaving the church. A local church is a church which you cannot leave; you must remain in it. If you are more spiritual than the other members, then you should use your spiritual influence and your authority in prayer to revive that church. If the church does not respond, you have only two alternatives; you must either remain there, keeping yourself undefiled, or else you must change your dwelling place. But this does not apply to a sect. It is futile to seek by a wrong application of these two chapters to keep Spirit-taught believers within a sect, for the seven churches referred to are local churches, not sectarian "churches." However weak they may have been, they were still on the scriptural ground of the Body in the locality. The Word of God has never authorized anyone to leave a church. All groups of believers who base their fellowship on other ground than that of locality are sects, even though they may term themselves churches. It is all right to leave a sect, but it is never right to leave a local church. If you leave a local church, you do so without the authority of the Lord, and you become guilty of the sin of schism in the Body.

What a tragedy it is when a few spiritual members leave a local church, and form another assembly, simply because the other members are weak and immature. Those stronger members should remain in that church as overcomers, seeking to help their weaker brothers and sisters, and claiming the situation there for the Lord. Oh, how prone we are to despise the believers we consider inferior to us, and how we delight to associate with those whose fellowship we find specially congenial. Pride of heart, and a selfish enjoyment in spiritual things, causes us to overlook the fact that a church in any given place should consist of all the children of God in that place; so we narrow down Christian fellowship and make selection among the children of God. This is sectarianism, and it is a grief of heart to the Lord.

## Appendix B

### The Body of Christ? You better hope not!

from Doug Perry, [www.FellowshipOfTheMartyrs.com](http://www.FellowshipOfTheMartyrs.com)

As I've been looking intently at the state of the Church, I've grown more and more frustrated that hardly anybody seems to be really aware of the problems and the need for repentance. I struggle with what to make of that. Perhaps people think the 37,000+ denominations we have now are a good thing. Perhaps the fraud and waste and division and selfish ambition are just part of the human condition and can't be helped (although he says he's coming for a Bride without wrinkle or blemish and I think those are blemishes.) Perhaps no one ever told them how much this is hurting Jesus. I hope that this helps with that. In fact, I hope it sears an indelible burn mark on your conscience that makes you cry in pain every day. That's probably what it's going to take to get this turned around.

The Romans and the Pharisees conspired together to crucify Jesus. They didn't just crucify him, they spit on him and beat him and whipped him until his bones showed. And then the Lamb of God bled all the way through Jerusalem and they nailed him to a cross naked and hung him up in front of everyone. The Bible says he was unrecognizable as a man – much less recognizable as Jesus. They put a sign over his bloodied, broken, humiliated body sarcastically declaring him King of the Jews. They fought over who would get his clothes. They stabbed him in the side to be sure he was dead, then buried him in a cave.

We have all heard of the pain and suffering he endured, not just physically, but the sin that he carried must have been an unbelievable burden. The spiritual warfare and temptation to get him to back down and call up ten thousand angels to avenge him must have been horrific. None of us can even imagine what he went through in those last twenty-four hours.

How could the Pharisees and the Romans be so cruel? How could anybody inflict that kind of blood-thirsty, heartless damage on another human being – much less the Son of God?! What kind of monsters must they have been to so torture and degrade a person? What kind of evil spirits must have possessed them in that hour that they could do such a vile thing to an innocent man?

Everything that happens in our “natural” world has a spiritual counterpart. The human body of Christ was raised from the dead and abides with the Father. But I Corinthians 12:27 and Ephesians 4:12 and other places say that the Church is the Body of Christ. Do you know what that means? It means that WE are the spiritual Body of Christ and that's just as real to Jesus as was his physical body. And it means that we are meaner and more heartless and more possessed by evil than the Romans or the Pharisees could ever be.

You see, we have been hitting the Body of Christ with a cat-of-nine-tails daily for about eighteen hundred years (give or take). We have been hacking and slicing and shredding his flesh for generations. We have been fighting over his clothes and spitting on him since the first Christians started dying off. We have left a trail of his blood all over the world. And not in a good way.

To slice the Body of Christ up into 37,000+ denominations, we've basically had to run his flesh through a food processor. We've hacked off toes and then cloned them so we'd have a whole barn full of toes that refuse to reconnect with the rest of his body. We've ripped and shredded his flesh and stolen it from each other like a pack of hungry hyenas eating a fresh kill. Because he is Christ and he is SO much better than we could ever be, he has mostly taken it quietly like a sheep led to the slaughter. He has resisted the constant urge to call up 10,000 angels and avenge what we've done to his body. And it's a good thing too, because we should be FLATTENED by now for how much pain we've caused him. We've ignored those in need and focused on our own agendas. We've introduced malignant cancers and poisons and all kinds of disgusting stuff into his body.

When he came in the flesh, Jesus endured a few people beating him and a few people spitting on him. But it was pretty much all over in 24 hours. But in the spirit, we have been beating him mercilessly for hundreds of years. Under our own power, there is no sign on the horizon that the “church” system we've built is going to stop doing it either.

We refuse to connect up to the central nervous system and get commands from the brain. We refuse to coordinate our efforts with all the other body parts, so the whole Body just lays there and twitches in pain. Some parts look like they're getting somewhere, but it's more like the illusion of rigor mortise, than actual progress. Without ALL the pieces taking commands from the Head, we're just spinning our wheels and he bleeds more and more every day and the people we were supposed to reach out to are dying.

If you think that this is just figurative and it isn't causing Jesus pain, then you surely don't really understand the nature of his love for us and his desire for his body to be whole. He prayed in John 17 that we would be one body because, if not, THIS is the result. In essence, he prayed that the cup of suffering on his physical body would be taken away if possible AND he prayed that the cup of suffering on his spiritual body would be taken away if possible. Neither was. He is crying every day and has been for centuries. And the Father is fuming.

He has been enduring daily torture of a scale none of us can imagine. We have inflicted far more pain than the Pharisees and Romans could have ever even imagined. The physical body has limits of what it can endure, but Christ's spiritual body evidently has no limits on how much it can be tortured. Worse yet, the Pharisees and Romans hated him and didn't believe in him – but we claim to know that he is the Son of God and say that we love him, and yet, we're the ones doing the real damage. And we continue getting together in our little boxes every week and singing song of praise to Jesus and taking communion with a straight face while we're collectively desecrating and defiling his body.

I can tell you this, if I were the Father and I loved my only son Jesus with all that I am, at some point I'm going to FORCE the torture of his body to stop. If they won't start being one body, I'm going to get their attention by whatever means necessary. If I have to, I'll send earthquakes, tsunamis, wars, plagues, famines ... whatever. If they keep on singing and dancing and being completely oblivious and asleep, I'll even kill two-thirds of the planet if that's what it takes for them to knock it off and start being one body. That's pretty much what the book of Revelation predicts is coming – and we deserve it.

And if I were you I wouldn't count on a “rapture” getting you out before the suffering starts. Since the Church was supposed to take the light to the world and it's REALLY dark out there, I'm pretty sure that the sad state of things is our fault. We're the ones that knew better, we're the ones that have been butchering the body of Christ for centuries. I don't see any reason why we should get out of the consequences of what we've done. He's going to spank us really hard and we have it coming. Don't think you're going to avoid suffering, you're not.

Our only hope is to weep and repent and mourn before the altar. We need to apologize and mean it – and then we need to turn from our wicked ways and get under HIS headship. No more structures and systems and traditions of Man. If we don't start acting like One Body on our own, then the Father is going to kill off all the body parts that won't play nice together. Then He'll graft in bits that will appreciate it. Like prostitutes and drug dealers and homeless and the lost and kids with purple hair and hurting people that will defend his body to the death and refuse to listen to anyone but HIM.

Burn it into your brain. We ran the Body of Christ through a meat grinder. We sent people to seminary to learn how to slice the Body of Christ up into smaller and smaller pieces. We paid them to do it. We self-righteously took pleasure in splitting off from other people that had the Holy Spirit in them. We fought over his clothes. We placed a sign over his head that proclaimed proudly to the world that THIS beaten, bloody mess was an accurate representation of the King of the Kings. We are thieves and liars and murders of the first order.

There's just one simple standard. If the Holy Spirit is in me and the Holy Spirit is in you, then we're just One Body and we're going to have to figure out how to get along without killing each other. We've got to knock it off before it's too late.

Please? If you love Jesus, could you please stop torturing his body? Could you tell him you're willing to share in his sufferings and help bear this burden until this is over? Could you acknowledge your part in it, however small, and stop? Could you insist on harmony from now on? Could you ask the Father to let you feel the pain that Jesus feels? Could you ask the Father to let you see through His eyes? I know He wants to.

Please make it stop.

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# Appendix C

## Scary Stats and Facts

This is a compilation of the scariest, most embarrassing, most shocking statistics and information about the Church and its affairs. We don't quote anything haphazardly without having good documentation and sources. If you have stats that you think we need to hear, find the source material and email us.

(Mostly from World Christian Trends, William Carey Library, David Barrett & Todd Johnson. The summary and analysis of the annual Christian mega-census.)

### Assets of the Church

- US Christians control TRILLIONS in assets while at any given time 200,000,000 Brothers and Sisters starve.
- 78 countries each have Great Commission (evangelical) Christians whose cumulative personal incomes exceed US\$1 billion a year.

### Financial Fraud in the Church

- Annual church embezzlements by top custodians exceed the entire cost of all foreign missions worldwide. Emboldened by lax procedures, trusted church treasurers are embezzling from the Church \$5,500,000 PER DAY. That's \$16,000,000,000 per YEAR! That's Billion - with a "B"! {For reference: TOTAL Christian spending on foreign missions - \$15 Billion. God forgive us!} That's roughly 5% of total income.
- Criminal penalties against clergy in sexual abuse cases now exceed \$1 billion, causing a number of churches, dioceses, and even denominations to be forced into bankruptcy.
- Each year 600,000 full-time ordained workers (clergy, ministers, missionaries) reach retiring age; 150,000 then discover that their employers provide no old-age pensions.

### Wasteful Spending by the Church

- Most Christian bodies insist on full accountability to the last cent in finance {But not very well. See above.}, but ignore or even decry statistics about Christian workers and ministries.
- 95% of all church budgets in the US are spent on our own comforts and programs. Less than 1% is spent on evangelism to the most unreached.
- 40% of the church's entire global foreign mission resources are being deployed to just 10 oversaturated countries already possessing strong citizen-run home ministries.
- All costs of ministry divided by number of baptisms per year. Cost per baptism in India - \$9803 per person. Cost per baptism in the United States - \$1,550,000 per person.
- Every year the churches hold a megacensus costing \$1.1 billion, sending out 10 million questionnaires in 3,000 languages, which covers 180 major religious subjects.
- Christians spend more on the annual audits of their churches and agencies (\$810 million) than on all their workers in the non-Christian world.
- The total cost of Christian outreach averages \$330,000 for each and every newly baptized person. (USA \$1.55 Million, India \$9,800)
- Non-Christian countries have been found to have 227 million Bibles in place in their midst, more than needed to serve all Christians, but poorly distributed.
- 91% of all Christian outreach/evangelism does not target non-Christians but targets other Christians in World C {>95 Evangelized, >60% Christian} countries, cities, peoples, populations, or situations.
- Each year, 180 million Bibles and New Testaments are wasted - lost, destroyed, or disintegrated - due to incompetence, hostility, bad planning, or inadequate manufacture.
- Books primarily about Jesus in today's libraries number 175,000 different titles in 500 languages, increasing by 4 newly published every day. As in all scientific research, 70% of all new Christian books and published articles will never be quoted in print by their peers, ever.

### Missions and the Church

- Some 250 of the 300 largest international Christian organizations regularly mislead the Christian public by publishing demonstrably incorrect or falsified progress statistics.
- Christian triumphalism - not as pride in huge numbers, but as publicized self-congratulation - is rampant in most churches, agencies, and ministries.
- It costs Christians 700 times more money to baptize converts in rich World C countries (Switzerland) than in poor World A countries (Nepal).
- Percent of Christian resources in countries that are already more than 60% Christian - 99%. Percent spent in countries where less than half the people have EVER heard of Jesus - 1%.

- It is estimated that Christians worldwide spend around \$8 BILLION dollars PER YEAR going to the more than 500 conferences to TALK about missions. That's more than HALF the total spent DOING missions.
- Everywhere on Earth can now easily be targeted with at least 3 of the 45 varieties of effective evangelism.
- 818 unevangelized ethnolinguistic peoples have never been targeted by any Christian agencies ever.
- Over 20 centuries Christians have announced 1,500 global plans to evangelize the world; most failed; 250 plans focused on AD 2000 fell massively short of stated goals.
- Mainland China's Christians have thousands of trained workers poised to begin evangelizing the world de novo (all over again) soon after AD 2000.
- Regular listeners to Christian programs over secular or religious radio/TV stations rose from 22% of the world in 1980 to 30% in 2000.
- Out of 648 million Great Commission Christians, 70% have never been told about the world's 1.6 billion unevangelized individuals.
- The 3 least cost-effective countries over 1 million in population for Christian outreach are: Japan, Switzerland, Denmark.
- The 3 most cost-effective countries over 1 million in population for Christian outreach are: Mozambique, Ethiopia, Tanzania.
- Per hour of ministry, the 5 megapeoples most responsive to Christianity, Christ, and the gospel are: Khandeshi, Awadhi, Magadhi, Bai, Berar Marathi .
- Per hour of ministry, the 5 megapeoples least responsive to Christianity, Christ, and the gospel are: Swedish, Russian, Lithuanian, Polish, Georgian .

### **Denominations of the Church**

- Currently there are over 37,000 Christian denominations in the United States.
- A huge new Christian nonconfessional megabloc, the Independents/Postdenominationalists, is growing rapidly and numbers 19% of all Christians. These 386 million Independents in 220 countries have no interest in and no use for historic denominationalist Christianity.
- From only one million in AD 1900, Pentecostals/ Charismatics/Neocharismatics have mushroomed to 524 million affiliated (with unaffiliated believers, 602 million).

### **Growth of the Church**

- From only 3 million in AD 1500, evangelicals have grown to 648 million worldwide, 54% being Non-Whites.
- The country with the fastest Christian expansion ever is China, now at 10,000 new converts every day.

### **Persecution of the Church**

- More than 70% of all Christians now live in countries where they are experiencing persecution. In some cases EXTREME persecution.
- 14 million converted Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims have opted to remain within those religions in order to witness for Christ as active believers in Jesus as Lord.

### **Global Population Issues**

- Despite BILLIONS of dollars spent by dozens of denominations toward over a hundred major programs to fulfill the Great Commission by the year 2000, we didn't even keep up with population growth, much less reach the 2 billion unreached. Evidently no apologies are forthcoming for the giant waste of assets and broken promises.
- 124 million new souls begin life on Earth each year, but Christianity's 4,000 foreign mission agencies baptize only 4 million new persons a year.
- Since AD 1900, Christian urbanites have exploded from 100 million in 500 cities to 1,160 million in 5,000 cities.

### **Unreached Peoples**

- Out of 648 million Great Commission Christians, 70% have never been told about the world's 1.6 billion unevangelized individuals.
- There are still thousands of language groups who do not have a SINGLE page of the Bible in their language. 98.7% of people have access to scripture in 6,700 languages leaving 78 million in 6,800 languages with no access at all.
- The majority of the unreached people groups are in countries that are restricted access. Western missionaries may not even be able to get to them.
- Despite Christ's command to evangelize, 67% of all humans from AD 30 to the present day have never even heard of his name.
- 648 million Christians today (called Great Commission Christians) are active in Christ's world mission; 1,352 million Christians ignore this mission.
- Organized Christianity has total contact with 3,590 religions but no contact at all with 353 other religions and their over 500 million adherents.

## Micro-Lending Stats

- We can help a Brother or Sister start a business in India with a loan of as little as \$25.

## Martyrdom

- Over the last 20 centuries, and in all 238 countries, more than 70 million Christians have been martyred - killed, executed, murdered - for Christ.
- More Christians have been martyred in the last 100 years than all others years since AD 30 combined.

**Had Enough Yet? It gets worse!  
We're stuffing the Fattest and starving the Hungriest!**

## KEY:

**World A** are the 38 countries that are primarily unevangelized. <50% (1.6 Billion souls)

**World B** are the 59 countries evangelized by not converted. >50% but <60% Christian (2.9 billion souls)

**World C** are the 141 countries primarily or predominantly Christian already. >95% Evangelized and >60% Christian (2 billion souls)

## Broadcasting (radio/TV) per year - total spend \$5.8 Billion

World A - \$6 Million (0.01%)

World B - \$226 Million (3.9%)

World C - \$5,568 Million (96.0%)

## Finance (church/agency) per year - total spend \$270 Billion

World A - \$188 Million (0.01%)

World B - \$1,370 Million (5.1%)

World C - \$256,100 Million (94.8%)

## Foreign Missions Money per year - total spend \$15 Billion

World A - \$250 million (1.7%)

World B - \$1,750 million (11.7%)

World C - \$13,000 million (86.6%)

## Scripture distribution per year – total 4,600 million pieces

World A - 20 million (0.4%)

World B - 680 million (14.5%)

World C - 3,900 million (84.8%)

## Christian Books (copies) per year - total 3.5 billion pieces

World A - 4 million (0.1%)

World B - 346 million (9.9%)

World C - 3,150 million (90.0%)

*(Plus 11 other scales that all look about the same. Tracts, Scripture languages, Literature, Periodicals, Computers, Full-time workers, Computer users, Foreign Missionaries, Home Missionaries, Lay leadership. Barrett, Page 55.)*

## Page 80 - "Where should foreign missionaries work?"

**Canada** (total population 31,147,000)

- Unevangelized - 2.2%
- Evangelized but non-Christian - 18.3%
- Christian (of one sort or another) - 79.5% (self-described, includes Catholics)
- Evangelization percent - 97.8%
- Offers per person per year - 300+
- Cost effectiveness (Cost per baptism) \$1,189,000

**USA** (total population 278,357,00)

- Unevangelized - 1.5%
- Evangelized but non-Christian - 13.8%
- Christian (of one sort or another) - 84.7%
- Evangelization percent - 98.5%
- Offers per person per year - 200+
- Cost effectiveness (Cost per baptism) \$1,551,000

**Mexico** (total population 98,881,000)

- Unevangelized - 0.2%
- Evangelized but non-Christian - 3.5%
- Christian (of one sort or another) - 96.3%
- Evangelization percent - 99.8%
- Offers per person per year - 500+
- Cost effectiveness (Cost per baptism) \$147,100

**India** (total population 1,013,662,000)

- Unevangelized - 40.7%
- Evangelized but non-Christian - 53.1%
- Christian (of one sort or another) - 6.2%
- Evangelization percent - 59.3%
- Offers per person per year - < 10
- Cost effectiveness (Cost per baptism) \$9,800

**China** (total population 1,262,557,000)

- Unevangelized - 35.2%
- Evangelized but non-Christian - 57.7%
- Christian (of one sort or another) - 7.1%
- Evangelization percent - 64.8%
- Offers per person per year - < 20
- Cost effectiveness (Cost per baptism) \$15,800

**Indonesia** (total population 212,107,000)

- Unevangelized - 37.2%
- Evangelized but non-Christian - 49.7%
- Christian (of one sort or another) - 13.1%
- Evangelization percent - 62.8%
- Offers per person per year - 70
- Cost effectiveness (Cost per baptism) \$40,800

**Afghanistan** (total population 22,720,000)

- Unevangelized - 70.4%
- Evangelized but non-Christian - 29.6%
- Christian (of one sort or another) - 0.1%
- Evangelization percent - 29.7%
- Offers per person per year - 15
- Cost effectiveness (Cost per baptism) \$30,400

**Cambodia** (total population 11,168,000)

- Unevangelized - 50.9%
- Evangelized but non-Christian - 48.0%
- Christian (of one sort or another) - 1.1%
- Evangelization percent - 49.1%
- Offers per person per year - < 20
- Cost effectiveness (Cost per baptism) \$4,300

**Bangladesh** (total population 129,155,000)

- Unevangelized - 42.8%
- Evangelized but non-Christian - 56.5%
- Christian (of one sort or another) - 0.7%
- Evangelization percent - 57.2%
- Offers per person per year - < 20
- Cost effectiveness (Cost per baptism) \$7,200

**An AD 2001 reality check: 50 new facts and figures about trends and issues concerning empirical global Christianity today. (from Table 1-1 in World Christian Trends, William Carey Library, David Barrett & Todd Johnson.)**

# Appendix D

## Open Letter of Apology to The World

from Doug Perry, [www.FellowshipOfTheMartyrs.com](http://www.FellowshipOfTheMartyrs.com) – February 2005

*Please bear with me, this is long overdue and there's lots of ground to cover. I want to make sure that I get it all out. Not just for me, but because I think you need to hear it. Maybe there are other Christians out there as well that need to make apologies and will find courage here. I appreciate your time, I know it's valuable.*

### Dear Members of the World,

I'm just a guy, nobody really. Son of a preacher and missionary. Years and years of Vacation Bible Schools, summer camps, youth ski trips, puppet shows, revivals, choir trips - you name it. Even went to a Christian college and got a degree in religion. I ended up in the business world, but I spent two decades tithing, sitting on committees, teaching Sunday School, going to seminars and conferences, etc. I even met my wife in the single's class at church. I'm not a bad guy, I've been mostly behaving myself and everybody seems to like me. I do some good stuff here and there.

But lately I've been trying to understand Jesus more and stuff I never noticed before has really started to bug me. I've been taking a look around and I'm having a hard time making sense of what it is we've built here. So, it just seemed like, whether anybody else says it or not, I need to take responsibility for the part I played and say what I have to say.

Here we go ...

I know you think that Christians are a big bunch of hypocrites. We say we're more "religious" and we're going to heaven and you're not, and then we drive our big shiny cars with little fishies on the trunk and cut you off in traffic as we race by the homeless guy on the corner. We average just 2% of our money to church and charity, despite that we say the Bible is the word of God and **it** says we're supposed to give **everything**. On average, we buy just as many big screen TVs and bass boats and fur coats and makeup and baseball cards and online porn as anybody else. Maybe more. You've seen leader after leader end up in jail or court or a sex scandal of one sort or another.

Well ... you're right. We're guilty of all of it. We've done it all. And, I'm really sorry.

You see our cheesy TV shows and slick guys begging for money and you get that there's something seriously sneaky and wrong here. A high-pressure call for money so they can stay on the air? Were we supposed to use Jesus as just another form of entertainment? Who do we think we're kidding? Where's Jesus in all this? Aren't we supposed to rely on him? Isn't He going to meet our needs if we're inside His will?

What happened to sacrifice and suffering and helping the poor? I'm just sick about this. I mean, the church leaders, they're not all bad guys, there are lots and lots of really hard-working well-meaning folks who love and care and are meeting real needs in the community. Some of them understand and love Jesus - but I'm just real sure those pastors don't drive Bentley's, have multi-million dollar homes and their own lear jets! I mean, what "god" are we worshipping? Money? Ego? Power?

You see our massive shiny new buildings all over the place. Heck, maybe we even kicked you out of your house so we could expand our parking lots. You can't figure out why we need four different Christian churches on four corners of the same intersection. We've got playgrounds and bowling alleys and basketball leagues. We've got Starbucks coffee in the sanctuary. We've got orchestras and giant chandeliers and fountains out front. We've got bookstores full of "jesus junk" with every imaginable style and flavor of religious knick-knack. But where's Jesus? Is this what HE wanted?

Oh, sure, there are good folks all over and not every church is such a mess, but Christians are the ones that say we're supposed to be "One Body." So even the good ones are guilty of not putting a stop to it sooner. We were supposed to keep each other in line and not tolerate factions and dissensions and greed and idolatry and all this other bad stuff. Man, we really blew it! We've got 33,000 denominations and most of them won't talk to the other ones. We lose over \$5 million a day to fraud from "trusted" people inside the church! We spend 95% of all our money on our own comforts and programs and happy family fun time shows and we let 250 MILLION Christians in other countries live on the very edge of starvation. Not to mention the billion or so that have never even once heard of Jesus - or the homeless guy downtown we almost ran over when we cut you off.

We're as guilty as we can be. All of us. Nobody is exempt. We should have put a stop to it a lot sooner. But I can't apologize on behalf of anyone else. This is about me.

I know that you might have gone to church as a kid and stopped going as soon as you could. I know that you might even have been abused by somebody in the church! Maybe we got you all fired up and then just let you drift off like we didn't really care. Maybe you just don't fit our "profile." You might have piercings and purple hair or tattoos or been in jail -- and

somewhere inside you just know that even if you wanted to go to church one Sunday, it would not go well. I'm sorry for that. Jesus loves you. He always hung out with the most unexpected people. He had the biggest heart for the folks everybody else tried to ignore. What have we done? We've told you to put on a sweater and some loafers or you can't go to heaven. I just want to throw up.

Look, I know you're mad. And you have a right to be. We've done you wrong for a LONG time now. There's some things about Jesus that people need to hear, but we've buried a beautiful masterpiece under hundreds of layers of soft pink latex paint. If you have a Bible handy, look up Matthew 23. (If you don't, you can look it up here - [www.BibleGateway.com](http://www.BibleGateway.com) .)

Find it? Read it carefully, the Pharisees were the "religious" people of the day, the leaders of the faith. In this chapter Jesus SEVEN times says how pitiful and wretched and cursed they are for what they're doing to the people they're supposed to be leading. He even calls them "white washed tombs of dead mens bones" and a "brood of vipers"! I don't have time here, but read it and see if we're not doing EVERY single one of those things. Jesus can't possibly be happy about what we've done to you.

Sure, we like to kid ourselves and pretend everything is OK - but it's not. We're hated. Now, please understand, Jesus was hated, too. But that was because he said hard things and sometimes people don't like hearing the Truth. And he promised we would be hated if we were like him. But that's not why we're hated at the moment. We're hated right now because we're a giant pack of lying hypocrites that say one thing and do something else altogether. If we were hated because we were like Jesus, that would be one thing, but that's not it at all. You see right through our happy music and fluffy services and you can tell there's something desperately wrong here. We're no different than anybody else - except that we say we're better than you.

It was never supposed to be like this. Jesus asked us to care for the widows and orphans, to feed the hungry, care for the sick, visit those in prison, reach the lost. He wanted us to love our enemies and pray for them. He cared about human justice and suffering, the lost and lonely. But I don't think He would have marched on a picket line - He had His mind on much bigger problems. He wanted us to focus on the eternal things, not the everyday. He never once said to go into all the world and build big buildings and divide up into factions and buy Bentleys. Just the opposite! I get that you're mad at us and I think you have a right to be, but please understand, you're mad at what we've made under our own power, you're mad at "Churchianity." That's different than Christ and what he wanted. Don't be mad at Jesus! This mess wasn't His idea!

Look, I'm really sorry. I accept responsibility for my part in having hurt you. But I'm committing to you all, dear Members of the World, that I'm not going to do it any more. Not a single penny more. I'm not going to put my faith in "Churchianity" or any leader or program or TV show -- but in Christ Jesus and His salvation. That's when I was set free and began to see that God wants and expects more of us than this. And I'm not helping anybody that's not fully committed to the same thing.

It took centuries to build this monster, so it's not like it's going to just turn around overnight. But the times are changing and we're way overdue for something new. Big bad things are happening - like the tsunami in Asia - and I think more are coming. I don't want any more time to go by without having said this. I'm sorry for all the time and money I've wasted. But Jesus saves. Really. The church itself isn't even the point. Jesus is the real deal. He lived and He died for my sins and He rose again. He is who He said He was and He cares about me - and you. He's our only hope. We need places you can go that will only teach Jesus and will not be swayed or tempted or distracted by anything else. God willing, that's coming.

Please don't think all Christians are just posers. Some of them really mean it when they say they belong to Christ. The problem is mostly in the West where we're all comfy and complacent and seem to like it that way. The Christians in China and other places are deadly serious. There's no room for anything but Jesus when you're on the run from the government. They are dying every day for their faith and doing crazy hard things because they're absolutely committed to Christ. These are martyrs. People willing to crucify little pieces of themselves every day to be more like Christ. People willing to set aside everything they want, to do what Christ wants. People willing to rot in prison or take a beating or die if that's what it's going to take. People that act in pure love and never back down. I'm not worthy to tie their shoes. And there are some like that here, too, and I hope we can get a lot more people to start living that way. It's way overdue.

If you're talking to someone and they tell you they're a Christian, ask them if they're the kind of Christian that really means it all the time or the kind that just means it on Sunday. The Bible says we'll know them by their "fruits" - by the faith and purity and love in their deeds and words. When you find one that proves Christ is in them by how much they love you, ask them to tell you all about Jesus. If you know one of those fearless martyrs that speaks nothing but pure, clean, hard Truth - ask lots of questions. Truth is a lot more rare than you would think. But don't settle for soft, fluffy and comfortable anymore - that's not in the Bible.

As for me and my house, we're really sorry. From now on, we're going to serve the Lord, not "Churchianity." We're going to try to call together as many of those martyrs as we can and start doing what Christ wanted. If I run into you someday, please give me a chance to shake your hand and apologize in person. I'm going to try harder from now on, I promise. I think there are lots of others feeling the same way, so don't be surprised if you start hearing stuff like this more often.

Thanks for your time. I hope it helps.

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