

"There is One Body"

Since there is, then, but *one* body, why should not this truth be manifested among believers? We know there has been utter failure to keep the unity of the Spirit. If we look at Christendom today, what do we see? The saints manifested as *one body, all of one heart and one soul?* This is how it was in the first bright days of the Church's history. Alas! it is not so now. Instead of one body, we see many bodies, each with its own name, and system of doctrine, and government. Surely this is a great dishonor to Christ, the Head of the Church which is His body. Though the Church be the *one* body of Christ, never to be sundered from its Head, nor the members from one another, the world sees it as a large number of bodies, all independent of each other, and all calling themselves churches. This is a practical denial of the one body. It is telling the world there are *many* bodies, while the Word of God says, "There is one body"—*many* churches while the Word speaks of "the church which is His body." Is it not plain that these so-called churches put things in a wrong light before the world? Do they not give a false testimony as to what the Church is? It cannot be denied.

True, the Word speaks of churches, but never in the sense of sects as seen in Christendom. There were the churches of Galatia, and the churches of Asia, but these were simply the local gatherings in those countries. The local assembly was a representation of the whole Church in that it set forth the unity of the body in the locality where it was gathered. It was the assembly of the saints in any given place, gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus. Hence we do not read of more than one assembly in any city, or in any locality not too large for all the saints to meet together. In every city and in every locality the saints were

seen as *one body*.

At the Lord's supper, too, this unity was manifested. "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we *being many* are one bread, one body; for we are all partakers of that *one* bread." But is this the order of things in Christendom now? Do the saints meet together on common ground? Do they meet on the principle of the "one body and one Spirit"? Do they partake together of the "one loaf"? Is it not common to see several different assemblies gathered in buildings within a stone's throw of each other? Is this a manifestation of the oneness of the body of Christ? They claim to meet in the name of the Lord. But how comes it, then, that they are thus divided? Will they dare to claim the sanction of that name for their divisions? Where is the authority in God's Word to meet as Methodists, Presbyterians, or Baptists? No authority can be found for organizing such bodies, nor for membership in them. They have their foundation in man's will, not in the Word of God. Will the members of these bodies claim that they meet together as "members of Christ," or "of His body"? If so, why are they not *one* body? "Is Christ divided?" Or has He *many* bodies? Surely all this is a complete reversal of His authority, and a practical denial of the truth.

Are we to be satisfied with this? Are we simply to go on with the current, heedless of *what* the truth is? God forbid. We want a "Thus saith the Lord." We want something to which we can honestly attach the name of the Lord. We want the sanction of His name for *what* we do, and *how* we do it. But where is the authority for joining this sect or that? It is said, "We must join *some church*." I ask, by what authority? And I ask, *which* will you join? The church of your individual choice? But who gave the right to *choose* among churches?

The simple fact is, all this is condemned in the Word of God. In the Word, we find that believers are "members of Christ," "members of His body," "members one of another." And this is the only membership found there. Why should we seek any other? Is not this enough? The Church is not a voluntary association that men can join or leave at will, as is the case in the sects. "The Lord added to the church

daily such as should be saved." "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." Thus the Lord sets the members in the body by the Holy Ghost. They are set there by divine power, and this is the divine organization of the Church of God. *We need no other. The Church exists by the mighty operation of God through the Spirit, and as the fruit of redemption; and believers simply confess their membership by meeting together according to the Word of God.*

Let us remember, then, that *the Church exists as a divine organization*, and our minds will be relieved from all thought of joining this or that. But is there no responsibility? Assuredly there is. As members of Christ whom God has set in the Church, our responsibility is to follow the directions given to such in the Word of God. We read, for instance, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Heb. 10:25. Now if the saints meet together—not as members of this or that sect, but simply as believers, or members of Christ—and exhort one another, that is simply obedience to the Word of God. It is not organizing a church, nor is there any need for anything of the kind. All that is needed is obedience. Christ says: "Where two or three are gathered together in [unto] My name, there am I in the midst of them." Gathering together thus, then, is the responsibility of the saints, and when gathered thus, *He is in the midst*, to be owned as Head and Lord, and to give His sanction to what is done in His name.

We find also (Acts 20:7) that on the first day of the week "the disciples came together to break bread." 1 Corinthians 11 also shows that this was their regular custom. It was obedience to the word, "This do in remembrance of Me." Again, in 1 Corinthians 14, we find prayer, praise, blessing, thanksgiving, prophesying, and so forth, among the saints when gathered together in assembly. All this is simple enough. They were gathered unto the name of the Lord. They broke bread on the first day of the week. And in their assemblies there was prayer and worship, and ministering of the Word for edification of the saints. We see, too, that all this was under the direction of the Word and Spirit of God.

Worship and ministry are both by the Spirit. And He directs all in the assembly, as the Leader and power for worship. Nowhere in the Word does man ever appear as leader in the assembly of the saints. The Spirit of God uses man there, but He is sovereign and can use whom He will. To introduce a man there as leader is to displace the Holy Ghost. It was seeing this solemn fact, that led the writer of this paper to give up his position as a clergyman in one of the sects. Dear reader, do you hold such a position among God's people? If so, pause and consider. Where is your commission? Do you hold it from the Head? Can you put your finger upon it in the Word of God? Perhaps you say the Holy Ghost can use one man as well as ten. Surely we cannot limit His power. He *may* use one, or He may use *ten*. But who will dare to dictate to Him, and say it *must be one*? He must have liberty to use whom He will, and if any man takes the place of leader, a slight is put upon the Holy Ghost, and His liberty is taken away. I know that God may still work in sovereign grace, and especially where the slight is through ignorance. He can work sovereignly amid all the confusion that has come in, but that only shows His long-suffering patience and grace; it does not sanction the confusion. What God wants is obedience, and that, too, is the way of blessing for His people. Men may plead expediency, and think they can accomplish greater things in service to the Lord, but this the Lord does not ask at our hand. He wants only obedience. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." May the Lord lead all the saints to seek only obedience to His Word and will, leaving the consequences to Him.

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