

the church of **GOD**

*what it is
and what it is not ...*

THE CHURCH OF GOD

WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT IS NOT

What Is the Church?

The words *church* and *churches* occur in the New Testament 112 times, translated from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which would have been more correctly rendered “congregation.” Thus we would have read, “*the congregation of God,*” “*the congregation of the firstborn,*” ^{Heb. 12:23} etc., denoting its divine Founder and Owner. And, “*the congregation that was at Antioch,*” ^{Acts 13:1} “*the congregation of God which is at Corinth,*” ^{1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1} “*the congregations of Asia,*” ^{1 Cor. 16:19} “*the congregations of Galatia,*” ^{v.1; Gal. 1:2} etc., denoting the different geographical locations of the congregations of God. But whether we use the word *church*, as in common use, or *congregation*, the more correct appellation, we should only attach such meaning to it as agrees with the Word of God. To use a Bible word out of its biblical meaning is perverting the Bible.

What then is the Bible definition of the church?

Answer: “*And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.*” ^{Eph. 1:22-23} “*And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*” ^{Col. 1:18} “*Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church.*” ^{v.24}

The church is the body of Christ. And being the body of Christ, it necessarily includes all His members. Therefore to call an earthly building the church is ridiculous, and to call an organized division the church is subverting the truth. No sect contains all the body of Christ, therefore, no sect is the church of God. Then as honest men, who expect to be judged by the Word of God, let us never call anything the church but the body of Christ; that is, all the saved, either universally, or in any given locality.

Who Is the Founder of the Church?

We are told that Abraham *“looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”* Heb. 11:10 And in the next chapter, the apostle Paul says to the converted Hebrews, *“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”* 12:22-24

That city—*“whose builder and maker is God”*—we have come unto in the gospel dispensation, and it is *“the church of the firstborn.”* Christ, who was *“God... manifest in the flesh,”* 1 Tim. 3:16 is the founder, builder, and maker of the church. *“For this man [Christ Jesus] was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.”* Heb. 3:3-4 *“Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”* Acts 20:28 *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church... holy and without blemish.”* Eph. 5:25-27 *“Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* Matt. 16:18

When Was the Church Built?

The last text cited above speaks of her building as then in the future. Now read 1 Cor. 3:9: *“Ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building.”* *“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”* Eph. 2:20-22

“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” 1 Pet. 2:5

In A.D. 32 Christ said, *“I will build my church.”* ^{Matt. 16:18} In A.D. 59, and later, the apostles said, *“Ye are God’s building,”* *“are built up a spiritual house.”* So the church was built between those dates.

It is true that the church was begun under the labors of John the Baptist, Jesus, and His apostles, before the day of Pentecost (Luke 16:16). Many believed and entered the kingdom then, and constituted material for the church. But the coming of the Holy Spirit was the point of time when the church was really built, and set in order, as seen in 1 Cor. 12:6,11-13,18,24. The church is defined as *“his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”* ^{Eph. 1:23} The church proper then did not exist until the fullness of Christ came, which was on the day of Pentecost. Then it was fully set up, and *“fitly joined together and compacted.”* ^{4:16}

Since that was the time of the founding of the church of God, it follows that every religious body that has since come into existence is not the church of God, but a daughter of confusion, born out of due season. This includes Catholicism and all the Protestant sects.

Who Is the Foundation of the Church?

“Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.” ^{Isa. 28:16}

“For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God?” ^{Psa. 18:31}

“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” ^{1 Cor. 3:11}

“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.” ^{Eph. 2:20-21}

In the last text we see that the apostles were foundation stones. If we were required to interpret the “rock” in Matt. 16:18 as applying to Peter,* there is yet nothing in such an applica-

*A more harmonious interpretation is that the “rock” of which Jesus is speaking is Peter’s confession of Christ, revealed to him only by the Father (v.16-17). See also John 6:44,65; Rom. 10:9; 1 John 4:2,15.

tion of the text that conflicts with the scriptures. The apostles all being foundations, of course Peter was one of them. Jesus would not have singled Peter out here because he had any pre-eminence over the rest, but because in conversing with him, his name, *Cephas* (a stone), called out the assertion. For evidence that all twelve were foundations, see Rev. 21:14.

Yet, Christ is the all-underlying foundation. The apostles, being first chosen and inspired to give us the New Testament, were foundation stones occupying a connecting position between Christ, the Rock, and the rest of the building. *Christ is then the only Rock. "Other foundation can no man lay."* Only one structure can stand on one foundation. Christ built His church on Himself. All later organizations are without Christ as their foundation, and must perish.

Who Is the Head of the Church?

God *"hath put all things under his feet, and gave him [Christ] to be the head over all things to the church."* Eph. 1:22

"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." 4:15-16

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing." 5:23-24

"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." Col. 1:18

"Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." 2:18-19

The head of an institution is its lawmaker.

“For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.” Isa. 33:22

“There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.” Jas. 4:12

All organisms that make their own laws, creeds, disciplines, and systems of co-operation, do not hold the Head—Christ. Their law-making synods and general conferences ignore the divine Lawgiver, usurp the place of Christ, and sit in the stead of God, and are not Christ’s church, which is subject to Him.

Again, there is one head; hence, there can be but one body.

What Is the Door of the Church?

“Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. . . . I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” John 10:7,9

“I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.” Rev. 3:8

“For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” Eph. 2:18

In these scriptures we see clearly that Christ is the door of the church, and salvation the mode of induction, and that it is a door that stands open continually, and no man can shut.

Christ is not the door of any sect, therefore no sect is the church of God. The experience of salvation does not constitute a person a member of any sect on earth; therefore they are not the church of God. All sects have doors—a manner of admitting members—that are open and shut by men, hence are unlike the church of God, which no man can open and shut. They are therefore not His church.

Who Takes Members into the Church?

“And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” Acts 2:46-47

“But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.” ^{1 Cor. 12:18}

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” ^{v.13}

Here, the setting of the members into the body, or adding to the church, is ascribed to God, to Christ, and to the Spirit. Of course, they are one, the triune God.

But God never takes men into a sect. Therefore no sect is His church.

Who Are Members of the Church?

If, as we have seen, salvation is the process of entering the church, it follows that no one is in the church who does not have salvation. The church is one *“family in heaven and earth,”* ^{Eph. 3:15} named from the Father. This family is *“the household of God.”* ^{2:19}

Therefore it follows that only the sons of God, such as are born of the Spirit, are in the church. And we are told that *“He that committeth sin is of the devil,”* and *“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.... In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil”* ^{1 John 3:8-10}—namely, in the fact that children of the devil commit sin, and the children of God do not. The holy apostle repeats the fact with emphasis: *“We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.”* ^{5:18}

There are no sinners in the church. But all sects are more or less filled with sinners. Hence, no sect is the church of God.

Who Organizes the Church?

The word *organize* is not in the scriptures. It is defined in the dictionary as follows: “To furnish with organs; to arrange in parts; to form in due order.”

God’s church is furnished with organs, arranged in parts, in due order; hence, is an organic structure. But who is the organizer of the same? Who furnishes it with organs?

Answer: *“For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith*

by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” ^{1 Cor. 12:8-11}

“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” ^{v.27-28}

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” ^{Acts 20:28}

“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” ^{2 Cor. 3:5-6}

“He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” ^{Eph. 4:10-13}

These are sufficient to prove that God furnishes His church with all its organs, namely with all necessary gifts of the Spirit, and officers. The foregoing scriptures cover the first two definitions of the word organize. But who forms the parts in due order? *“But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.... For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.”* ^{1 Cor. 12:18,24-25}

Other scriptures also show the harmonizing of the body of Christ, by the hand of God and through the Spirit. But those given above are sufficient. One thing, however, we mention, and that is, the laying on of hands by the elders in ordaining elders, etc.

(Heb. 6:2; 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:22). That this pertains to the organization of the church, we freely allow. But it is never called “organizing the church.” God ordains by way of qualifying and choosing, and His ministers ordain in the sense of recognizing the divine call, and dedicating thereunto. This order is clearly seen in Acts 13:1-4.

Succession of authority down through a course of ecclesiastical lords is all a superstitious delusion; a dragon power. Those whom God saves, baptizes with power, and commissions by the Holy Spirit have the only ecclesiastical authority instituted of God; this comes direct from heaven, and not through any imaginary line of predecessors.

Voting for officers only belongs to Babylon formality, where God is not present to work “*all in all,*” ^{1 Cor. 12:6} by the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He wills.

The church, then, is organized by the Lord, who sets all the members in the body as it pleases Him, and distributes the gifts and callings by His own wisdom to all the members of the body. Men may organize a human compact, but never the divine body of Christ, which is the church. Thus said the Lord: “*And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them.*” ^{Isa. 44:7}

This is to the point. God Himself “*appointed the ancient people*” to their several places in the body, and who will now presume to take upon himself the prerogative of the Almighty? “*Every man is brutish by his knowledge; every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. They are vanity, the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish. The portion of Jacob is not like them; for he is the former of all things: and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: the LORD of hosts is his name.*” ^{Jer. 51:17-19}

The sect-founders are confounded because their structures “have no breath”—no life. They call them churches, but it “*is falsehood,*” the work of error. But God, “*the former of all things,*” has a true church, the primitive church that Jesus bought with His own blood, and built before the rise of the first sect of the apostasy.

He that builds a house organizes the same. But if other men were to come and saw the same house into four parts, and wedge each apart from the others, such work would be *disorganizing* the building, and destroying the same. Just so if God, by the pure Word and Spirit, should fully save, say four hundred souls in one city, He would organize and temper all together in one body. But should four preachers, representing as many sects, each form his schismatic organism there of equal members, each would have the impudence to report to his conference that he had organized a church there of one hundred members. Yet the facts would be that they, like the parties cleaving the house asunder, would really *disorganize and disintegrate* the church.

Thus, we see that the organizing sects, the work of men, is the disorganizing of the church, which is built of God. Therefore, since the church is organized by the Lord, it follows that so-called churches, organized by men, lack the authentic seal of God. They are not His church, but unscriptural schisms.

How Many Churches Does God Have?

Every description of the divine church shows its oneness: *“Other sheep [Gentiles] I have, which are not of this fold [the Jews]; them also I must bring... and there shall be one fold [church], and one shepherd.”* John 10:16

We have seen that Christ is *“the head of the body, the church.”* Col. 1:18 Therefore, as there is but one head, there can be but one body.

“For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” Rom. 12:4-5

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.... But now are they many members, yet but one body.” 1 Cor. 12:12-13,20

“For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in

his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.” Eph. 2:14-16

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” 4:4-6

“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.” Col. 3:15

These scriptures prove positively that there is but one true church, just as there is but one God, one true God. Since we are called of Christ into one body, the call to join various bodies must be of the antichrist.

Again, the church sustains the same relation to Christ that a wife does to her husband.

“And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.” Hos. 2:19-20

“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” Rom. 7:4

“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” 2 Cor. 11:2

“He that hath the bride is the bridegroom.” John 3:29

“For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.” Isa. 54:5

The idea of Christ having more than one wife (church) is repugnant to the Bible, and a slander on the Son of God.

“Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.” Eph. 3:15

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” 2:19

From these and other scriptures, we see the church is God’s family, or household. And, since a man can have only one family,

it follows that God has but one church. It would be an awful reflection on the holiness of God to have many wives and separate rival families, and they of the “nude and lewd” character Bishop Foster ascribes to the modern sects. Therefore the multiplicity of sects, falsely called churches, are not God’s church.

But Does the Bible Speak of More Than One Church?

The word *church* frequently occurs in the plural form, but never in the sense of sects or denominations. When more than one church is spoken of, it is always the one church of the living God, in different localities:

“They returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch. . . . And when they had ordained them elders in every church. . . .” Acts 14:21,23

“And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.” Acts 15:41

“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.” Rom. 16:4

“...as I teach every where in every church.” 1 Cor. 4:17

“And so ordain I in all churches.” 7:17

“...as I have given order to the churches of Galatia.” 16:1

“The churches of Asia salute you.” v.19

“...throughout all the churches.” 2 Cor. 8:18

Thus we see that when churches are spoken of, they invariably denote the same church of God in several cities, or throughout one or more countries. But there is not the slightest intimation of more than one church in the same city. Speaking of the church in various geographical localities, the apostle says: “So ordain I in all churches.” “As I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye [Corinthians].” It can easily be seen that if these New Testament “churches” were different sects, as we have today, one bishop could not give orders to them all. Bishop Simpson of the Methodist Episcopal sect cannot issue orders over the United Brethren, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and other sects. He has no jurisdiction over them. So we see a vast difference between Bible churches and sect divisions. The former are all one in Christ. The latter are independent and separate schisms.

Several sects exist in the same town, but God only has one

church in the same place. Hence we read: “the church that was at Antioch” Acts 13:1; “the church of God which is at Corinth” 1 Cor. 1:2; “the church of the Thessalonians” 1 Th. 1:1; “...unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.” Rev. 1:11 Thus we see there was only one church in one city. Seven sects can now be addressed in one town of no great size. But when messages were sent to seven churches in Asia, seven different cities had to be addressed.

All the saved of God in any place constitute His church in that place. Then it follows that a plurality of separate bodies in the same place are not God’s church, but babel confusion.

Does the Bible Teach the Unity of All Believers?

Yes:

“Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name.” John 17:11-12

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.” v.20-23

“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” 1 Cor. 1:10

“Ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” Gal. 3:28

“Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.” Phil. 1:27

“Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.” 2:2

“Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Rom. 15:5-6

“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.” Acts 4:32

Can anybody look upon this bright picture and not see an awful contrast between it and the dark picture of the present-day sect confusion? Do the members of the different sects have the same care one for another? Behold, they are not of one mind, nor of one judgment; they are not one in name, nor creed, nor body; they are not of one heart, nor of one soul, nor of one spirit, nor yet of one faith; they have not one mouth, nor do they speak the same things. They are never one, except it be in opposing Bible salvation. As God confounded the babel-builders, and they all became divided and of different tongues, so He has sent His thunderbolts of wrath upon Rome, *“the mother of harlots,”* Rev. 17:5 and has knocked off several hundred Protestant fragments, each one of which speaks the peculiar dialect of its creed.

The church, compared with a human body, is required to have but one mouth, which means perfect harmony in all her teaching. If we were to agree that the multiplicity of sects are the church, then a human monstrosity, having several hundred mouths, and every mouth speaking contrary to every other mouth, would be necessary to symbolize it. As the body of Christ has but one mouth and speaks the same things, it is very evident that the jargon confusion of sect tongues does not represent His body, and is not His church.

What Is the Basis of Union?

1. *“...all one in Christ Jesus.”* Gal. 3:28

“So we, being many, are one body in Christ.” Rom. 12:5

As it is here stated, there is but one body in Christ; it necessarily follows that the many separate sect bodies are not in Christ. As we are all one in Christ Jesus, to join anything else but Christ incurs the sin of sectism.

2. *“Holy Father, keep through [Greek, in] thine own name those*

whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.... I kept them in thy name.” ^{John 17:11-12} Here the church was named by “*the mouth of the Lord*” as had been predicted in Isa. 62:2. Eph. 3:15, as correctly rendered from the Greek by the Emphatic Diaglott and other versions, reads thus: “*From whom the whole family in the heavens, and on earth is named.*”

The name of the church was given by the mouth of the Lord, and was derived from God, His Father. The apostles respected the prayer of Christ, and kept the church in God’s name.

“*Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*” ^{Acts 20:28}

“...*the church of God which is at Corinth.*” ^{1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1}

“*Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.*” ^{1 Cor. 10:32}

“*Despise ye the church of God?*” ^{11:22}

“*I persecuted the church of God.*” ^{15:9; Gal. 1:13}

“*For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus.*” ^{1 Th. 2:14}

“*We ourselves glory in you in the churches of God.*” ^{2 Th. 1:4}

“*If a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?*” ^{1 Tim. 3:5}

“*These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*” ^{1 Tim. 3:14-15}

Here are twelve instances of the title, “church of God.” This corresponds with the Savior’s prayer, and is the only proper appellation. But as there was but the one church, the qualifying part of the name was not needed in every instance. Hence, for convenience, they usually said, “*the church,*” or “*the church at —*”; some certain place.

We hear a babel cry, “There is nothing in the name.” It is a false assertion. In the Bible, as shown above, God is honored as the maker and owner of the church. Would an appellation that does not indicate whether God, man, or the devil founded and owns the church do equal honor to God? Let it also be known there is enough in false names to divide and confuse the family

of God. Therefore Christ prayed the Father to keep them in His name, *“That they may be one, even as we are.”* ^{John 17:22} Therefore all persons that join themselves to any other name, are guilty of the sin of division.

3. *“I have given them thy word.”* ^{v.14} This said Christ in His prayer for our perfect oneness. To impose any other creed, or subscribe to any other, is to make and join divisions, and is a sin against Christ and His body, the church.

It is claimed that the organized divisions are necessary to convert the world. But Jesus prayed that all His disciples should be one as He and the Father are, *“that the world may believe.”* ^{v.21}

O ye sectarians, thus saith God: *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.”* ^{Isa. 55:8}

What Is the Bond of Union?

Answer: Love.

“Above all these things put on charity [love], which is the bond of perfectness.” ^{Col. 3:14}

“That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.” ^{Col. 2:2}

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” ^{Rom. 8:35-39}

What Experience Perfects Us in Oneness?

Answer: Entire sanctification, or perfection.

In connection with His prayer for oneness, the Savior prayed the Father to sanctify the disciples and all that would believe on Him through their word, which included us. *“And the glory which*

thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." John 17:22-23

Sanctification, perfection, and the glory of Christ all relate to the same experience, and this makes God's children one. "*For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.*" Heb. 2:11

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Eph. 4:11-13

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Pet. 1:18-19

The salvation of the Lord, which qualifies us for heaven, makes us one on earth. A religion of divisions will deceive the soul. The chief object of God's ministers is to "perfect the saints." The blood of Christ not only purifies from "*all sin*" and "*all unrighteousness*," but also sweeps away all erroneous doctrines. The Comforter guides into all truth, which involves the removal of all error. It is true that cleansing from error is not as instantaneous as from sin. But the pure in heart have perfect fellowship, even though all previously educated errors have not yet disappeared.

There is therefore no real cause of division but sin. Therefore to cry against sects and divisions without first being wholly sanctified, and then leading people into this precious paradise of holy love, is nothing but confusion mocking confusion; Satan buffeting Satan, as the devil flogged the sons of Sceva.

All efforts of union but that of God's holiness is like pounding cold, crooked pieces of iron against each other to make them fit together. The more blows, the more crooks and differences. Put them into a furnace of white heat, and they will lose their cold, stiff, crooked individuality, and flow into one mass. That

is God's way of uniting His people, in the fire of the Holy Spirit. All tinkering up platforms of union is wasted time. Each effort has only molded another sect calf for the people to worship and wrangle over. Freedom from sin knits together in love. But all merely strapped-up unions are bundles bound together to be burned. Bible salvation is all that is needed. This obtained, both union of heart and soul, and harmony in outward worship and life, will follow as a result or fruit of the Spirit. When baptized by one Spirit into the one body (1 Cor. 12:13), and made to drink in the one divine Spirit in His fullness, there will be no trouble to worship God in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). For all such know the truth, and the truth makes them free (8:32).

On the plane of Bible holiness, no outward observances are made a test, in fact nothing is made a test of fellowship. For holy men *"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."* ^{7:24} *"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."* ^{1 John 1:7} Fellowship is of the Spirit (Phil. 2:1), and exists where heart-purity exists. It is the conscious blending of hearts filled with the same Holy Spirit.

One may have been led into all truth, the other not. This does not interrupt fellowship. Nevertheless, it is the duty of those who *"know the truth,"* ^{John 8:32} that they in meekness instruct others who do not. Ignorance of some truth does not destroy fellowship, but resisting the truth does, because it forfeits salvation. We must not sanction people's errors, but if saved, show our love and fellowship to them, so long as they do not manifest evidence that their wrong doctrines have become willful, or that they have in some way lost salvation. If so, the fellowship ends, but love and kindness still continue in faithful efforts for their salvation.

To ignore fellowship simply because of some doctrinal error is bigotry. To agree to disagree, or to put on an equality truth and error, is babel confusion. To know the truth is our privilege; to teach the truth our duty; but to have fellowship with the pure and upright of heart is an involuntary and spontaneous fact.

Sects are the result of carnality. Nothing but perfect holiness

destroys carnality, and thus removes both sectism and its cause. The fire of God's love saves the soul, harmonizes all hearts that receive it, leads them into perfect and uniform obedience to all truth, and drives afar all who refuse to pass through its purging fire, and gain the plane of holy fellowship.

What Is a Sect?

In a little tract entitled "Sects," written by the founder of the Free Methodist sect, who signs his name *Rev. B. T. Roberts*, the following definition is given:

The word *sect* is from the Latin *secare*, to cut off, to separate. The word *section* is from the same root. Hence a section is a portion cut off, or separated from a body of which it forms a part. A sect of Christians is a part of the entire Christian body, separated from the rest by some peculiar doctrines or tenets which they hold exclusively, or to which they give especial prominence. This we believe is a fair definition of the word *sect*, as commonly used by those who know the meaning of the words which they use.

This we confess is a true definition and explanation of the word *sect*. But how any man of ordinary intelligence can thus correctly define sects as separate, cut-off portions from the body of Christ, by some exclusive party doctrines, and then turn around and say it is right to thus sever the general body of Christ into fragments, is a mystery of iniquity. It well demonstrates the fact that a heretic (i. e., sectarian) "*is subverted, and sinneth.*" Tit. 3:11 To justify and sanction such schisms from the general body is to sin against God, and utterly disregard His Word.

What Does the Bible Say of Sects?

"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he? And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them? They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoyce and are glad. Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous. Shall they

therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?” Hab. 1:13-17

“That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.” 1 Cor. 12:25 Sects and schisms mean the same thing.

“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” Rom. 16:17-18

“A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.” Tit. 3:10-11

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.” 2 Pet. 2:1-3

The words “damnable heresies” are rendered “destructive sects” in the German version.

“For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.” 1 Cor. 11:18-19 Here we see that heresies means the same as divisions. And in the margin the translators put it in plain English, “sects.” Paul declared the Corinthian brethren carnal, because they were inclined to schisms, saying, “I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos.” 3:1-4 In Gal. 5:20 the apostle classifies “heresies” (translated “sects” in the Emphatic Diaglott) with murders, and the whole catalog of “works of the flesh,” v.19 and declares “that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” v.21

God help man to flee out of heresies—sects—and be complete in Christ. Since God renounces sects, they cannot be His church.

Can We Observe the Ordinances Outside All Sects?

The New Testament clearly shows that Christ enacted certain ordinances; namely baptism (or in plain English, immersion), the washing of the saints' feet, and the Lord's supper. But we need join no sect to observe them. They do not belong to any sect on earth, but they are placed in the body of Christ for the exclusive observance of its members. Sectarians who do not discern the body of Christ are not even qualified for their observance (1 Cor. 11:27-29).

Can We Meet to Worship Without a Sect?

Is it so that God's children cannot meet to worship Him unless they meet in some sect name, some name other than the one Christ told us to meet in? Thank God, we find no difficulty in assembling together outside all sect names and enclosures. But sectarians are actually so blind that they think holy men cannot convene together to worship God and enjoy any means of grace unless they join some earthly craft; as though all grace were in the sect, and nothing in Christ.

Is the Church Visible Without a Sect Organization?

Another plea for sect idolatry is that the church is invisible, unless organized in sect order. This is another superstition of the dark age. The Holy Spirit, who organizes the church, is indeed invisible, but His organization is visible. As the invisible wind, which is a symbol of the Spirit, produces visible effects, so the church of God is a visible effect of His unseen power. Being composed of actual men and women, a city set upon a hill, the light thereof cannot be hid; as "*terrible as an army with banners,*" Song 6:4,10 she always was visible, and needed no sect-founder to make her such.

Paul was not addressing disembodied spirits at Corinth when he said: "*Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*" 1 Cor. 12:27 Nor is it only the hidden man of the heart that belongs to the church; but "*Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?*" 6:15

Our physical bodies do not become invisible when God sets us

into the body of Christ, and remain so until a sect builder comes along and organizes us into visibility. Not only are the members of the true church visible, but so is the organization itself. Every gift and office that makes up the divine institution is visibly exercised in all the members, by all the members, by the invisible operation of God, “*who is above all, and through all, and in you all,*” Eph. 4:6 and who “*worketh all in all.*” 1 Cor. 12:6

In Coming Out of Sects, Must We Form Another?

We are very thankful to God that we can answer, **NO**. God forbid that any more of the harlots should be conceived in sin, and “*shapen in iniquity.*” Psa. 51:5 If that were so, sectism is a sin from which there would be no escape. But the voice from heaven says, “*Come out of her, my people.*” Rev. 18:4 So there is a way out of her, and “*it shall be called The way of holiness.*” Isa. 35:8

When a sinner is converted to God and born of the Spirit, he is thereby made a member of the church of God, but is in no sect at all. And since there is no command in the Bible to join any sect, he can obey all the Word and keep salvation, in the church, without ever joining a sect. So can every saint of God on the earth do the same.

Suppose any number of such disciples of Christ should, through false teaching, be led into a sect corporation and afterward discover the deception practiced upon them. Cannot they renounce the sect organization and come out of it, as the Word of God commands them, and remain only in the church, which is the body of Christ, as they were before they were decoyed into the sect? To deny this fact is simply perverse cant.

If men were to come out of sects and join themselves together, and make their own creed, they *would* be another sect. But the church of the living God is not thus produced. She is the result of men and women being saved in Jesus, and therefore joined together by the Lord in the “*bond of perfectness.*” Col. 3:14

The question is not, what system is most practical for all Christians to step upon as the basis of union, but rather, what foundation do all Christians actually and necessarily stand on? By abiding only in Christ, His body the church, we stand on the

foundation which includes all Christians in heaven and earth, and not a member of any sect or cut-off faction. If the Word of God had said, “We are all one in the Methodist body” (or any other human corporation), then Methodists would occupy the divinely appointed platform of union, and every other name and order would stand condemned for the sin of division. But the Word commands us to abide only in Christ, and declares us “*all one in Christ Jesus,*” Gal. 3:28 “*one body in Christ.*” Rom. 12:5 Therefore, by staying in Him only—in whom all Christians must abide, and in whom there are no sinners—we are joined to all saints, and separated from all sinners, and stand free before God of the great transgression of sectism.

What Is to Be Done?

And now therefore, since every intelligent reader of the Bible knows that Catholicism and the Protestant sects are not the church of God; that every sect corporation yokes together saints and sinners, which the Bible forbids; since the most bigoted confess that “the church [meaning the sect] will not save anybody”; and since Christ alone can save and keep us, and we are “*complete in him*” Col. 2:10—why not abandon the sect and abide only in Christ, and His body the church? Since there will be no sects in heaven, why cling to them on earth? Why insult the wisdom of Christ by the imputation that the church He founded is not practical, and some man has in these last days gotten up a better one, which you prefer?

In the name of Jesus Christ, whose Word will soon judge us, we beseech all men to escape from all sin and sinners, from all sect clans, and sectish bands, and take refuge in Jesus Christ, and His own church, which is “*the pillar and ground of the truth.*” 1 Tim. 3:15
Amen. —Daniel S. Warner

Church of God, thou spotless virgin,
Church of Christ, for whom He died,
Thou hast known no human founder,
Jesus bought thee for His bride.

Sanctified by God the Father,
Built by Jesus Christ the Son,
Tempered by the Holy Spirit,
Like the Holy Three in One.

God Himself has set the members
In His body all complete,
Organized by Jesus only,
Oh, the union, pure and sweet!

Far above this world's confusion,
Walking close by Jesus' side,
Leaning on His loving bosom,
Is the church, His chosen bride.

—Frances R. Havergal
arr. by Daniel S. Warner