

ALIVE OR NOT AT ALL

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(Taken from the *Gospel Trumpet*, Dec. 1, 1884)

God's church on earth is nothing more or less than the continued manifestation of the life of Christ. Casting to the moles and bats all modern traditions, superstitions, and all dark age definitions of the church, we open the Bible and find that the church is the continued life and operation of Christ on earth. "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." 1 Cor. 12:12. Here is explicitly stated that all believers constitute one body, and that one body is Christ Himself, and in verses 27-28, this one Christ body, in which all are true Christians, is plainly called the church. In Eph. 1: 22-23, the church is set forth as the body of Christ. But Christ's body is Himself, just as our body is ourself; so the church is the continuation of Christ in the flesh. This idea is made very strong in Eph. 5: 30, "For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and His bones." Other scriptures concur in showing that Christ's church is Himself, His own body, flesh, and bones. Therefore, it follows conclusively, that no sect is the church of God, because no sect is the body of Christ, and no sect lives by the life of Christ. Every sect is minus some of the essential elements of the body of Christ, and every sect embodies within it many elements, and members that are not of Christ, hence are not identical with the church.

Now as separation of the body and spirit results in death, decomposition, and utter destruction of our body; so the church only exists as animated by Christ, its life. It does not, and can not, live by any other life than the life of Christ. Hence **it follows that where Christ does not live, animate, and govern, through the Holy Spirit, there God's church has no existence at all. There is no such thing as the church without the Spirit of Christ, its life.** "For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His." Rom. 8:9. Therefore in a town or community where no one possesses Christ, through the Eternal Spirit, there the church of God does not exist at all. It never exists apart from its life. There may be large meeting houses, eloquent preachers, and flourishing societies, and all the outward display of what is called religion, but the church is not there because Christ, its life, is not present. As a body is useless without life, and soon perishes in dissolution, so the church ceases to exist when "alienated from the life of God." **The church of God never exists as a dead body, for without Christ, who is its life, and with whom it is identical, it is not at all.**

Of course, we wish to be understood that by "the church," we mean God's church, the Christ body. For when we say the church does not exist in the absence of Christ through the Spirit, we must still admit that there may be, and are numerous churches without Christ. Churches, but not "*the church*," the divine body.

The word "*church*," does not necessarily, and exclusively refer to Christ's fold. It is from "*ekklesia*" in the Greek, and is said to be derived from "*ek*" (out of) and "*kaleo*" (to call). It therefore simply denotes a called-out assembly, or compact,

without indicating its character. In Acts 19: 32, 41, the word “assembly” is from this same Greek word “ekklesia.” But here it represents a confused rabble, called together by Demetrius a silversmith. In verse 39 we have an “ennomo ekklesia” – “lawful assembly.” Here then, we have in one chapter two different kinds of convocations, not congregations of God, yet both of them are represented by the same word from which we have the word “church.” Therefore, according to the generic latitude of the original word for church, we may apply it to an assembly or organism of any kind, good or bad, lawful or unlawful, religious or devilish. And where even sect forces “gather together against the Lord and His Christ,” to defend their craft, it were just as proper to call such a church (ekklesia) as it is for the inspired record to so designate that throng of shrine worshipers called together by the silversmith, to defend their craft. Just as there are “lords many, and gods many,” yet but “one Lord,” and “one God and Father of all.” So there are churches many, yet but “one fold,” “one body,” one church of the living God, “the mother of us all.” There is therefore no violence done to the Word of God to say, “Methodist Church,” “Adventist Church,” but to call any of these daughters of Rome “the church,” is an insult to Christ, and blasphemy before God. Because the word “ekklesia,” translated “church,” does not exclusively denote the divine congregation. It is usually qualified by other words, as the “church of God,” the “church of the Firstborn.” And when it is called “the church,” some such qualifications are understood from the connection. A church (sect) may therefore exist without Christ, but “the church” never. But since in common usage, the word “church” is always used in speaking of the Divine fold, we should never apply that term to the sects of man.

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. ... I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” John 15: 1-2, 5. Christ is the vine, and every individual believer in Him is a branch. Now the vine and its branches are all one, all of the same material, live by the same life, and bear the same fruit. So is Christ and the church identical. Now the several Christians of each locality, constitute the church there. If at any time a branch becomes unfruitful, it instantly dies, and Father takes it away. Should one after another loose their connection with the life-giving vine, they would suffer the same fate. And the last member of Christ in that place be severed from the vine and die, *the church* would have no existence in that place at all. These dead and severed branches may continue in a sect, which means cut off organizations, and carry on the outward forms, and profession, and thereby deceive the world, but with all that, *the church* is not there at all, for it is only composed of living members of the living Christ. **Therefore, while many a church (sect) is dead, *the church* is never dead. It is always ALIVE OR NOT AT ALL.** No branch can die while abiding in the vine, and in separation they loose both life and membership. Christ says, “I am the resurrection and the life.” He who is the church is the life of the church. Therefore, when the life disappears, the church disappears.

“Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, ... 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.*” Col. 2: 18,19. You see, that God’s church, being identical with “God manifest in the flesh,” only “increaseth with the increase of God.” The direct word for word rendering from the Greek in the Emphatic Diaglott is, “being compacted, grows the growth of the God.” This is still stronger – the church grows the growth of God. How is that? Why, remembering that the church in each place is composed of that number of individuals in whom God and Christ lives, the increase of the Church is simply an increase of the number of temples in whom dwelleth God. If there are ten men and women in one place in whom God lives, the church there is composed of ten members. Should five more renounce sin and the world, and be emptied of self and the devil, and let God take possession of them, there would be an addition of one third more God-temples in that place. And would not this be an “increase of God” in that community, and a decrease of sin and the devil? Certainly so. Well, this increase of God is the increase of the church. **And it is also enlarged by the sanctification, enlarging and increased infilling of these temples.**

Now contrast the above scriptural facts relative to the church of the living God with the sects of Babylon, and we see a striking difference. The church only exists in the life of Christ. They live and prosper independent of the life of Christ. They live chiefly by the animation of the sect spirit, the inspiration of party interests, and sectarian pride.

The church increases only with the increase of God. They increase by ensnaring unenlightened converts of the cross, and also by alluring to their folds, graceless sinners, and influentials of the world generally. An accession to the church, is an increase of God in that place, because “Christ is the door, and by Him if any man enter in he shall be saved.” And salvation takes sin out of the heart and brings God in. But the door that preachers open to their folds produces no such effects. Passing their thresholds does not remove sin out of the heart, nor bring God in. Hence sect increase is not the increase of God, but is often an increase of festivity, carousal, pride, bigotry, and idolatry.

But the church is identical with God and the life of Christ. Is it not invisible? Not at all. No more than the incarnate Christ was invisible. In Him “God was manifest in the flesh.” And we are “members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.” If it were only the souls of believers that constitute the body of Christ, the church, then it were invisible. But “*know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?*” Now that body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. “What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?” “Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” 1 Cor. 6: 13,15,19,20. “He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (verse 17). The above scriptures are very clear; our bodies are members of Christ, and our spirits are one with His Spirit. The above facts suggest two important things. First, God’s church embraces our bodies as well as our souls, hence is visible. Second, the church being identical with Christ, and yet including our bodies, proves that **our bodies** must be raised to a moral purity that is identical with Christ. **How could it be said that the**

church is Christ (nothing in it but the character and elements of Christ) and that our bodies are members of that church, unless our bodies are, with our souls, purified into the very nature and image of Christ, and actually pervaded with the very life and holiness of Christ? If anything remained in our whole being that was not the Christ nature, the church composed of such members would not all be Christ. But “all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.” 1 Cor. 12:12.

O wondrous truth! The whole body is composed of the moral substance of Christ, no anti-Christ material: all is Christ, and Christ is all, in all this body. It is created in Christ’s purity, stamped with His own likeness. It is composed of “His flesh, and of His bones,” and made strong in the strength of His might. It is pervaded and quickened by His life; inspired and quickened by His Spirit. It is flooded with His own perfect love, and with His own effulgent light. It is transported with “His joy,” and filled with His peace. The church partakes of His suffering, and receives of His glory. She shares with Him in death, and reigns with Him in life. Her members are all crucified with the Lord, and raised up with Him to sit in the heavenlies. The church is blessed with the “mind of Christ,” and Himself is made unto her wisdom. She is “made great” by Christ’s “gentleness,” and adorned in the beauty of His holiness. “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgement, for as He is so are we in this world.” 1 John 4:17. “Both He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one.” Heb. 2:11. Oh, the church is substantially the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, in spirit, nature and fruit. The same in kind and effect, only enlarged from the stature of the lovely Son of God, who walked in Galilee, to the triumphant Redeemer, whose steps drop fatness upon the breadth of the whole earth, and whose praise and dominion are from the rising to the setting of the Sun.

The church is Christ, therefore all its members must be “holy both in body and in spirit.” 1 Cor. 7:34. “But if the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall quicken your mortal bodies, by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.” Rom. 8:11. This language clearly alludes to the thorough work of entire sanctification. **The Spirit already dwelling in the justified soul, comes in His fullness, as the sanctifier, and quickens, spiritualizes, refines the mortal body into the same state of holiness that the soul is raised to; so that the “spirit, soul, and body are preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.”** 1 Thes. 5: 23,24.

The bodies of the Apostles were so holy, and so charged with the presence of God, that handkerchiefs taken from Paul’s body, and laid upon the sick were blessed in their immediate healing. Jeremiah 11: 15, describing the apostasy of the church, says, “The holy flesh has passed from thee.” **The church restored through the blood of Christ and His truth must be, and now is, holy even as He is holy, in soul, body, and spirit, and thus becomes one with the Holy Son of God, who is the life of the body.**