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Tell Me More Of The Church

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I. Often times we are asked to define things.
   A. What is the Great Society?
   B. Is alcoholism a disease or sin?
   C. What is meant by planned parenthood?

II. I'm not surprised when one asks me "What is the church of Christ?"

A. How would you define it?

1. W.H. Griffith Thomas in "The Holy Spirit of God" page 169 "It is nothing less, it can be nothing more than the community of individual Christians."

2. Dr. Hort "The Church in its widest sense as the body of Christ is not the aggregate of particular churches but of individuals."

The Christian Ecclesia Pg. 168

3. Paul tells how we got there.
   I Cor. 12:13 "For by one Spirit are we...

B. The Holy Spirit greatly functions in the church.

1. Abides in the church.
   I Cor. 3:16 "Know ye not that ye are the temple..."
   I Cor. 6:19 "What? know ye not that your body..."
   a. We are temple, Spirit abides there.

2. Builds up church.
   a. As living stones--added to spiritual house.

3. Administers the church in:
   a. Worship.
      Phil. 3:3 "For we are the circumcision, we..."
   b. Witnessing.
Acts 1:8 "But ye shall receive power, after the Holy Ghost hath come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."  

Acts 8:29 "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to the chariot of this eunuch."  

d. Missionary.  
Acts 13:2 "As they ministered to the Lord and tofasting, they anointed Paul and Barnabas, and sent them on their journey."  

e. Fellowship.  
Phil. 2:1 "If there be therefore any comfort in Christ, if any solace in love, if any complacency in the Spirit, if any magnanimity and respect in Christ Jesus."  

f. New undertakings.  
Acts 16:6-7 "Now when they had gone through Thessalonica, they came to Philippi, which is the principal city of that part of Macedonia and of Europe."  

Rom. 8:14 "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."  

4. Unifies.  
Eph. 4:3 "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."  

C. Various metaphors show what the church is. Shall we see some that describe those who believe in Jesus.  

I John 5:1 "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and every one that loveth him hath begotten him who is the Son of God."  

I John 4:15 "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."  

1. It is regarded as a Body.  
Rom. 12:3-5 "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not only to me, but also unto you, a minis-tering, according to the grace given unto me, to be a minister of Jesus Christ, to the Gentiles, ministering by the word of his grace."  

I Cor. 12:12-13 "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 Jews or Gentiles, whether beati ned or uncircumcised, whether one or another; we are all one in the body of Christ."  

I Cor. 12:27 "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members one of another."  

Eph. 1:22 "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church."  

a. As head is to the body so is Christ to the church.  

b. They are organically connected.  

c. Church is an organism, not 2 parts in juxta position.  

d. He is our life.
e. He is our thought and purpose.
f. He is our power.
g. Him we obey—we need Him for life, sensation and volition.
h. He needs us for expression and activity.
i. Each Chr. is a member and supplies something
Eph. 4:16 From whom the whole body fitly
Col. 2:19 And not holding the Head, from
(1) We need each other for nourishment, growth, progress, fellowship.
(2) He didn't call us to the solitary life.
Eph. 3:18 May be able to comprehend with all the saints
j. He wants unity.
Eph. 2:14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one and all
Eph. 2:16 And that he might reconcile both
Eph. 2:18 For through him we both have
k. In the body are various gifts.

2. It is a building.
a. Foundation.
Eph. 2:20 And are built upon the foundation
b. Cornerstone—for coherence and stability of the structure.
Eph. 2:20 And are built upon the foundation
I Cor. 3:11 For other foundation can no man

c. Stones.
I Pet. 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built upon

d. Character of:
(1) A temple.
Eph. 2:21 In whom all the building fitly

e. It continuously grows.
Eph. 2:21 "In whom all the building fitly fitly fitly fitly fitly fitly...WHO...who...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...whole...
II. We conclude with these observations.

A. It is an organism rather than an organization.

B. It, Christianity as Newman said "Came into the world as an idea rather than an institution."

C. Man may belong to a visible church without belonging to that unseen—He can be united with outward society without being spiritually united with Christ.

D. Conversely if a man is a part of the invisible he is also a member of the visible church.

E. A man in Christ joins himself to other men.

l. Christian living alone and working apart from brethren is unknown in N.T.
POPULATION OUTPACES CHURCH GROWTH

Here is some information taken from Christianity Today that will be of interest to members of the Lord's church. The language is in denominational terminology but we are happy to see the fact that the Churches of Christ still are noted as the fastest growing religious group in our nation today. The plea for the restoration of New Testament Christianity is gaining momentum. May God help us to recognize our responsibility and go forward!

"Church growth is not quite keeping up with population growth, according to figures in the 1967 Yearbook of American Churches, published this month by the National Council of Churches.

"The data covers mainly calendar 1965, or denominations' fiscal years that ended in 1965. In this period 124,682,422 Americans belonged to some religious group, an increase of 1.4 million over the previous year. But in roughly the same period, the U.S. population grew by 2.5 million, to nearly 195 million. Church membership increased by 1.1%, while the general population grew by 1.3 percent.

"The rankings of major religious groupings were similar to those in the previous count:

Protestant 69,088,183
Roman Catholic 46,246,175
Jewish 5,600,000
Eastern Orthodox 3,172,163
Old and National Catholic 483,901
Buddhist 92,000

"The ranking of the largest non-Catholic communions also contained few surprises. The biggest numerical gains were posted by two conservative congregational groups, the Southern Baptist Convention and the Churches of Christ (the latter's figure, however, is a rough estimate at best). Large denominations losing membership over the year were, in order of losses: the American Baptist Convention, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, The American Lutheran Church, and the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ).

"More startling is the fact that three of the top fifteen groups have actually lost members since 1956, despite the huge population increase: the ABC, the Disciples, and the United Church of Christ.

"In 1956, the National Baptist Convention of America reported the same figure it gives in the 1967 Yearbook, highlighting again the fact that the volume is no more reliable than the 251 denominations that supply the data. Another problem with figures is that Roman Catholics and other groups tally baptized infants, while the rest count only confirmed or adult members.

1. Southern Baptist* 10,770,573
2. Methodist 10,331,574
3. National Baptist Inc. 5,500,000

(continued on next page)