Petru Loga

THE CHURCH

THE BODY OF CHRIST

"I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."
(Matthew 16:18)

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"And he is the head of the body, the church." (Colossians 1:18)

"Now ye are the body of Christ,
and members in particular."
(1 Corinthians 12:27)

"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places **might be known by the church** the manifold wisdom of God." (Ephesians 3:9, 10)

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The Church Today

For very many of us, the Church of Christ no longer has the purpose given to it by God. It is easy to observe how we have taken over from one another the idea that what is generically called *"the Church"* is the place where people with common religious interests gather.

We have been taught to believe that it is the place where people sing, pray, take part in a religious programme and socialize a little after the programme is over, and then each one goes off to his own personal concerns and interests. Thus, for many, the Church has come to be merely a place for finding the peace of soul that is lost during the week because of a busy way of life.

The great majority of the members are in the position of spectators at these religious programmes, their service consisting of being present/sitting in the pew and contributing a certain sum of money for the needs of the congregation. A very small number of the members have the task of putting on *this programme*.

Thus, we have been convinced that, after the new birth, God is somewhere far away and does not get much involved in man's life. And it is more or less at this first part that most of us remain. We went to church, we had our seat, we confessed our sins, we were baptized, we sang, we upheld the teachings of the church we belong to, being convinced that in this way we would enter the Kingdom of God.

So, within these congregations, the ordinary member is a mere consumer; he has nothing to do, attendance at the congregation being his only duty. In most large congregations, the members know one another only by sight.

Because of these teachings, many of those on the membership list no longer come to these programmes, and the buildings are rather empty at certain worship services. In many congregations there are major differences between the membership list and those who actually come to the worship programmes. So it has come about that we believe it is normal for there to be many in the congregation who do not attend the meetings for months or for years and yet remain on the membership list.

Through what we see today almost everywhere, we observe that Satan has succeeded in distorting the role of the Church, the significance of the Body of Christ. Through the false teaching that "salvation comes down only to the forgiveness of sins" (a teaching that lies at the foundation of the great religious organizations), he has deceived man into thinking that there is no need for discipleship, nor for the school of Christ.

Most of us have been taught that God has done everything for us, that through faith in the sacrifice of the cross we obtain salvation, which consists in the forgiveness of sins. We have been taught that one cannot come to perfection of character, that no one can add anything to the work of salvation done on the cross.

Through this false teaching he has sought to abolish discipleship and the importance of the school of Christ (of the Church), deceiving man into thinking that these are not part of the plan of salvation. Satan has worked hard so that the role of the Body of Christ in the work of the growth and perfecting of the saints should not be understood.

The doctrine according to which salvation comes down only to the forgiveness of sins has brought many to the point of no longer giving importance to the Body of Christ. The eyes of those who have received this teaching have been closed to the role of the Church, and they have come to no longer see the need for the Body of Christ and for members to whom they should be closely knit.

In this situation are found both those who are on the membership list in congregations that come down only to worship programmes, and those who have chosen to live their life of faith on their own. *(And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field. Ezekiel 34:5)*

These situations, the one and the other, are very dangerous, because they are in fact a rejection of the work of Christ concerning the growth/edification of the members in the Church/in His Body. (... 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, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. Ephesians 5:25-27; 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. Ephesians 2:21-22)

On the foundation of this false teaching, Satan has succeeded in deceiving man that "the Church" comes down only to worship/preaching in buildings fitted out with preaching halls, through which man is given only a religious education.

We can easily note that this teaching has made discipleship to Christ non-existent in the religious movements of today, and almost no one believes any longer that he must live as a disciple in order to come to the measure of the stature of his Teacher.

Whoever wants to look more closely will be able to observe that Satan, like a great merchant, has made every effort to create a great religious empire with which to keep people in darkness, so that man may not know the truth about the Church of Christ.

Thus, he has positioned in every country religious organizations (like supermarket chains) that offer man only **religious programmes,** and he has succeeded in catching billions of people in this trap. None of them has discipleship implemented in its doctrine, discipleship whose sole aim is coming to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

If we look at these religious movements, we easily see how well Satan has

succeeded in deceiving mankind, all of them practising the institutionalized system of worship. From Catholics, Orthodox and Lutherans to the neo-Protestant movements, all follow the same pattern of organization, with buildings constructed especially for worship and preaching.

Thus, the Church has turned into a mere centre of religious education, thereby losing its true purpose, and it no longer represents the place intended for the growth and perfecting of the saints, a place where the principalities and powers admire the manifold wisdom of God manifested through the Church. According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ, as Ephesians 3:10-11 tells us

In the first place, Satan has worked at replacing the spiritual fathers/ shepherds who have the task of raising their children (disciples). They have been replaced with pastors/leaders in preaching, with ministers devoted only to worship programmes, who have as their task only religious education and keeping the flock scattered, by no means the raising of children. (the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. John 10:12)

Thus, whoever wishes to live the life of discipleship in practice, which presupposes an infant (child) - father relationship, will find himself in the ridiculous situation of not finding any spiritual father.

This happens because today, in these religious organizations, spiritual fathers, such as the apostle Paul was for Timothy, Titus, Onesimus, as indeed for many others, are altogether lacking; they have been replaced with pastor-preachers, committee members, youth leaders... (see Paul's epistles to Timothy, Titus, Philemon)

For those who accept the pattern of the church with religious programmes, the real Church, in which the members are closely knit to one another and which in their totality make up the Body of Christ, remains a great mystery. For those who stay with this pattern, the Church described in Holy Scripture has no practical application. (This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning ... the church. Ephesians 5:32)

The question each of us must ask himself is: What mystery does the Church hide? For whom is it a mystery? Is it a mystery for us too?

The Church - The Body of Christ

In order to understand the eternal plan made by God concerning Christ and His Church, we will have to examine carefully what Scripture says about it.

God's plan for the newborn is to raise him, to perfect him, to make him like Christ. And He does this through His Word, through the Holy Spirit and with the help of the members who are in the Body of Christ. This plan was made in eternity in Christ

Jesus. (according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 3:11)

God's plan concerning the Body of Christ has in view our growth and our coming to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ! (And he gave some, ... prophets; ... pastors and teachers; **for the perfecting of the saints, ... till we all come ... unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.** Ephesians 4:11-13)

If we pay attention, we can easily observe that no man who turns to God has the Fruit of the Spirit from the beginning, namely longsuffering, meekness, love... These qualities must be obtained through God's work with man. In this work we have at our disposal the Word of Scripture, which works with us, the Holy Spirit, who in His turn works, and the **Church**, which is **the Body of Christ.**

Christ is the Head of the body, the Church

To understand better what the role of the Church is in our growth and perfecting, we will point out a few verses from the Holy Word that show God's involvement in the Church, which is the Body of Christ.

1. "I will build my church ..."(Matthew 16:18)

2. "And he is the head of the body, the church."(Colossians 1:18)

3. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." (1 Corinthians 12:27)

4. "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church."(Ephesians 5:29)

5. "who now rejoice in my sufferings for you ... for his body's sake, which is the church." (Colossians 1:24)

The Church is identified as being the body of Christ. He is the Head of the body, and the people born of the seed of God are the members. (And he is the head of the body, the church. Colossians 1:18; Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. 1 Corinthians 12:27)

God composes the Body of Christ, its way of functioning being similar to that of the human body. (God hath tempered the body together. 1 Corinthians 12:24) He puts into the Body of Christ only members that have life from above/ born-again people. (And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. Acts 2:47)

He begins His work with us and, if we remain in obedience, He will bring it to completion. (being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:6)

He has promised that He will be with us always, that He will not leave us for a moment. He will take us by the hand and will go with us to the end of the road.

(and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. Matthew 28:20; for he hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Hebrews 13:5)

Scripture shows us the relationship/bond that must exist between the members of the Church of Christ/His Body:

– They are closely knit to one another. (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. Ephesians 4:16)

In the Body of Christ, we bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

– They do not live for themselves. (For none of us liveth to himself. Romans 14:7)

– They are members one of another. (so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Romans 12:5)

– Each one seeks the profit of others. (But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 1 Corinthians 12:7; Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. 1 Corinthians 10:24) – They care for one another. (God hath tempered the body together ... that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 1 Corinthians 12:24, 25)

– They are subject to one another. (submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Ephesians 5:21)

– In humility each one esteems the other better than himself. (in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Philippians 2:3)

– They bear one another's burdens. (Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2)

– The greatest are the servants of all. (But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. Matthew 23:11)

– They watch over one another. (And let us consider one another. Hebrews 10:24)

– They watch that no one is worldly/they do not tolerate evil. (lest there be any fornicator, or profane person. Hebrews 12:16)

– They love one another after the pattern of Christ. (That ye love one another, as I have loved you. John 15:12) Only in the Church can we experience these relationships, which are essential for our growth until we all come to the state of a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:13)

Questions:

– Are we in a Body that is closely knit and fitly joined together? (Ephesians 4:16)

– Are we in the Body/Family for the profit of the other members? (1 Corinthians 10:24)

– To whom are we closely knit, whose burdens do we bear? (Galatians 6:2)

– Do we live in submission to Christ and to the other members? (Ephesians 5:21)

– Do we watch over one another, so that there is no one worldly among us? (Hebrews 12:16)

The School of Christ

Holy Scripture describes the Church of Christ as a family, with infants, children and fathers, where we live in a close bond with one another and grow so that we come to be like the Lord. (I write unto you, *fathers,* because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, *young men,* because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, *little children,* because ye have known the Father. 1 John 2:13)

Christ is the head of this Family of the Church and cherishes it. (For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church; Ephesians 5:29)

He does not abandon His newborn ones and will not leave them to grow up without help. The one born of God is placed in the family and in the school of Christ, to grow as a disciple until he comes to the stature of a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of His fulness. (And he gave some, ... prophets; ... pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, ... till we all come ... unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature ... of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-13)

The Church, or the Body of Christ, is the most efficient factory that could ever exist. Its sole purpose is to bring man to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

The principalities and powers in heavenly places, when they look at the life of the Church, see how great the wisdom of God is. (to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 3:10, 11)

In the Church we learn self-denial, humility, godliness; we learn to offer ourselves as bondservants of Christ; we learn to live in righteousness, as He lived.

In His family we are taught and helped to live as He lived, because only in this way will His character traits be imprinted on us, namely longsuffering,

goodness, meekness, love... and this can be done only in His school or workshop, which is the Church. (He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. 1 John 2:6)

On a closer look, we can easily observe that all the things that pertain to man's salvation, from the new birth until we come to the stature of a perfect man, are amazingly similar to the things we also meet in this short life on earth.

When a child comes into the world, we witness its birth, which is very similar to the new birth into the Kingdom of God. (For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. 1 Corinthians 4:15-16)

The natural infant cannot choose the family in which he will grow up; those from whom he was born will be his family. For his growth, the natural infant is fed with his mother's milk. Everything is absolutely new for the newborn child. He takes in everything he sees and hears from his parents.

So it is with the one who is born again: he is in a family with spiritual fathers (the Body of Christ, which is the Church), who feed him with spiritual milk, as an infant. (... could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but ... even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat. 1 Corinthians 3:1-2)

He takes in everything he sees and hears from his spiritual fathers. (as ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children... 1 Thessalonians 2:11)

A little later, the natural child is enrolled in school and then, after a time, graduates from it... In this world we cannot conceive that you could become a doctor without going through medical school and without teachers.

The same must happen with the spiritual child. You cannot come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ without being a disciple in His school. (he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school... Acts 19:9)

God causes us to be born again, gives us the Holy Spirit to guide us, and places us in His school, where we have spiritual fathers and teachers, to raise us according to the standard of His Kingdom.

He has given us everything we need to be able to come to the stature for which we were created. (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. Ephesians 4:16)

This school of disciples has a single aim: that the disciple should come to be like the Teacher. **We must all go through** this school, whose final aim is the forming of the image of His Son in us. (The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master. Luke 6:40)

The Son of God was sent by the heavenly Father to earth to establish the Church, which is the Body of Christ. He is the founder of the school of disciples, of the Church, which He cherishes. (I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16:18; For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. Ephesians 5:29)

The Lord Jesus made disciples, then sent them into all the world, so that they in their turn would make other disciples and enrol in the school of Christ whoever wishes to enter this school. (Go ye therefore, and teach all nations ... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. Matthew 28:19-20)

We can take as an example the disciples of the Lord, but above all the apostle Paul. He put his whole life at the service of the Church of Christ.

He made disciples, whom he taught in order to present them before God perfect in Christ. (warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. Colossians 1:28-29)

Only in His school can the relationships between the disciples be adjusted until maturity and full unity in all things are reached, a unity that will also be found in His eternal Kingdom. (that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. John 17:21)

Man must be put through manifold trials, so that in the course of the school he may acquire the character traits of the Lord Jesus, in order to be found worthy to dwell with God and with all those who have graduated from this school of disciples and who have His traits imprinted on their character.

We will take longsuffering as an example. How can we come to have it imprinted on our character?

To begin with, we will learn and take in the Lord's teaching on non-resistance; then, when trials come upon us, we put it into practice, following in the footsteps of our spiritual fathers, who in their turn follow in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus. (And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Matthew 5:40-41)

No member can grow on its own outside the body!

Every one of us must go through this school of patience, which does its work fully, because only in this way is the perfection of our character reached. (My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, **that ye may be perfect** and entire, wanting nothing. James 1:2-4)

The Role of the Members in the Body of Christ

The Church is seen by God as a family, as a school of disciples, but also as a body in which those born of Him are the members of the Body of Christ, this being similar to the human body, which, as we all know, is made up of many members closely knit together. (from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted. Ephesians 4:16)

God places the members in the Body of Christ in a way similar to how He placed them in the human body: the heart in its place, the pancreas in its place, the nail in its place, each with its functions. (But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 1 Corinthians 12:18)

God does not put any member to grow outside the body, because, separated from the body, it can have neither life nor growth. Let us take as an example the kidneys, which cannot have life outside the body. They are in the body, closely knit to other members, from which they receive and to which they pass on in turn.

As regards the human body, it is quite simple. The life of a member is strictly bound up with the life of the body. There are no living members that live on their own outside the body.

So it is with the members of the body of Christ. No member can grow on its own, outside the body of Christ. Whoever thinks that he can grow without the body and still come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ deceives himself. (Let no man beguile you of your reward ... 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. Colossians 2:19)

The body of man, as indeed the Body of Christ, was made in such a way that every part of the body is useful to another part of the body; no member lives only for itself. (For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we ... are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Romans 12:4, 5; For none of us liveth to himself. Romans 14:7)

The members of the Body of Christ care for one another; each one lives for the profit of the others. (God hath tempered the body together ... that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; 1 Corinthians 12:24-26)

In the Body of Christ we are closely knit to the members next to us, which in their turn are knit to other members, which in their turn are also closely knit to other members, and so the whole body is closely knit, fitly joined together. (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. Ephesians 4:16)

A very important thing to mention is that God composes the body; He places the members in the body as He wills. It is not we who choose where to be in the body; the Lord does this.

He knows what each one needs and also knows what each one can give. He will place each of us in such a way that we receive everything necessary for growth and for coming to the stature of Christ. (But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 1 Corinthians 12:18)

If we are infants, He will not place us only next to infants, but will put us next to older brothers/spiritual fathers, through whom we will be counselled and helped to put off lying, stealing, anger, backbiting, the use of unprofitable words... (And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are ... filled with all knowledge, **able also to admonish one another.** Romans 15:14)

In this body, closely knit to other members, we learn to put on longsuffering, goodness... to walk in holiness; we learn to forgive, to love, or in other words, we learn to walk after the new things, which are the things of the Spirit.

1. For this purpose, the Lord places **spiritual fathers** in His Family, to whom He entrusts children, so that they may raise them and guard them from **ravening wolves.** (Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you ... to feed the church of God. Acts 20:28)

2. They are set to be the servants of the infants, of the children. They must care for them with an attitude of service, so that all may come to the stature of a perfect man. No one may be left out. (But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. Matthew 23:11)

Just as natural parents care for all the needs of their children, so too the spiritual fathers/elders will care for all the spiritual needs of the children entrusted to them. (even as a nurse cherisheth her children. 1 Thessalonians 2:7)

3. They will enrol them as disciples in the school of Christ and will teach them in all things, so that they come to the stature of Christ. (teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. Matthew 28:20) They watch/take care that they grow up healthy. (And let us consider one another. Hebrews 10:24)

4. They will give them work and will help them put the Lord's teachings into practice, to use them in everyday life, so that they come to discern good from evil. (even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Hebrews 5:14) In the Family/Church, the children will learn to give up lying, guile, anger... to renounce the old things, the things of the world. (Colossians 3:8-15)

Following/imitating the example of the fathers who pass victoriously

through trials, the children too will learn to pass through the trials of faith. (Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. Philippians 3:17)

Those who are fathers to us will oversee how we apply the Lord's teaching in everyday life. When our rights or what is ours are taken from us, we must follow their example and the Lord's, and live as He lived.

Also in the Family they will learn to do good, kindness, mercy... taking part in various works together with their fathers, by visiting the orphan and the widow, by caring for elderly sisters and brothers who are in need. And this can range from small things, such as shopping, cooking, cleaning, to care at the bedside. (naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me. Matthew 25:36)

It is good to understand the difference between education and being raised under parental authority. Through preaching we receive only teaching, not parental upbringing.

We can see how great the difference is when we look at an orphan child and at a child who has parents. Both the one and the other receive an education. But with the child who has parents, besides education, they will be there beside him to build his character. They will encourage him in good things and correct him in what he does wrong. With the orphan child, on the other hand, if he does wrong things, there will be no one beside him to correct him.

We must understand clearly that we will not be able to grow so as to come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ if we do not have spiritual fathers. In Paul's epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon, we find their author to be an example of a spiritual father. (For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. 1 Corinthians 4:15)

Submission Just as in a natural family, in order to come to the stature of a perfect man, the children must be subject to their parents in all things. (Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. 1 Peter 5:5)

Reading these epistles, one can see the relationship that existed between Paul and his dearly beloved children. Even though Timothy and Titus had the stature of a perfect man, they received commands and charges from their spiritual father. (For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee. Titus 1:5; This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, ... that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; holding faith... 1 Timothy 1:18,19)

The model of submission that we must follow is given to us by the Lord Jesus.

He did nothing of Himself; He was subject without departing from the Father's word. (I can of mine own self do nothing. John 5:30; He that saith he abideth in

him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. 1 John 2:6)

Submission is described to us by Scripture as full obedience, without turning aside to the right hand or to the left. (according to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee, to the right hand, nor to the left. Deuteronomy 17:11)

We will be able to take on the traits of Christ only if we obey those who have the rule over us in all things. (Obey them that have the rule over you, **and submit yourselves**: for they watch for your souls. Hebrews 13:17; And he gave some, ... prophets; ... pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints. Ephesians 4:11, 12)

It is the fathers who correct and use the rod for the children who do wrong. (preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 2 Timothy 4:2)

To understand how grave insubordination is, we will point out its consequences. In ancient times the punishment for insubordination/disobedience towards those deemed worthy to lead the people was physical death. (And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the LORD thy God, ... even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel. And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously. Deuteronomy 17:12, 13; see the rebellion of Korah and his company.)

In the Church of Christ things are very similar. If any of the members of the body dares, out of pride, not to obey those whom the Lord has deemed worthy to shepherd the flock, he will have to bear the consequence of being removed from the body of Christ. (And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee **as an heathen man and a publican.** Matthew 18:17)

As for the relationship we may have with a heathen, Scripture shows it to us through the words spoken by the apostle Peter in the house of the centurion Cornelius. (... it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one **of another nation**. Acts 10:28)

Through the statement "let him be unto thee as an heathen man", the Lord Jesus commands us to break off every tie and to isolate the one who has disregarded the authority ordained by God, in order to avoid the contamination of the members with the sin of rebellion/of disregarding the authority of the Church. **(For they will turn away thy son from following me ...;** Deuteronomy 7:4)

In the Body of Christ submission is obligatory, being strictly necessary for us in the process of growth; it is the only way in which one can come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:13)

We advise the reader not to wish **to be on his own**, or to be in a congregation

that practises only worship and preaching, to be solitary, like an orphan child, and so to avoid the Body of Christ, which is fitly joined together and closely knit.

Let us flee from the congregation that does not practise care and submission, that has no spiritual fathers. There is the work of Satan, with which he has deceived the religious world; there is not the Body of Christ.

Let us desire to be in a body where the whole Word of Christ can be fulfilled, where each member gives its part so as to come to the stature for which we were created, so that the image of Christ may be imprinted in us.

Questions:

– Do we have spiritual fathers who care for us and teach us until Christ is formed in us? Or are we just an ordinary member/an orphan child?

– If we have spiritual fathers, do they teach us not to resist the one who does us evil, not to love the world, not to do undeclared work, to pay our taxes... ?

– Do they check whether we put these things into practice; are we rebuked if we have not done them?

– Do they watch over us, so that nothing bad happens to us, so that we do not fall into sin? (1 Peter 5:2)

– Do we give double honour to our spiritual fathers; are we subject to them? (1 Timothy 5:17)

The Purity of the Body of Christ

Both in the past and today, the camp of God/the Body of Christ must be clean, because there the Lord has His dwelling. (He/Satan hath nothing in me. John 14:30; the LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, ... therefore shall thy camp **be holy**: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee. Deuteronomy 23:14; without the camp shall ye put them; that they defile not their camps, **in the midst whereof I dwell.** Numbers 5:3)

God, who is the architect and builder of the Body/Church, has set laws of functioning in the body in such a way as to keep it undefiled. Christ cherishes this body, because it is His Body! (For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. Ephesians 5:29, 30)

If a member of the Body of Christ falls sick/becomes defiled through lack of watchfulness and falling into temptation, the Lord Jesus takes care/takes part together with the members of His Body in the healing of the sick member.

If the sick member does not accept being cared for, in the end it must be removed. One of the reasons for the removal is that the sick one will, by his life,

contaminate/influence and urge to sin the one to whom he is closely knit. (looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled. Hebrews 12:15; **For they will turn away thy son from following me ...;** Deuteronomy 7:4)

The Lord Jesus does not let sin dwell in His Body; that is why He commands His members to watch that there be no one worldly among them. The sin/infection of one member also infects the members to which it is closely knit. (lest there be any fornicator, or profane person. Hebrews 12:16; Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven. 1 Corinthians 5:6, 7;)

That is why we are commanded that, when we notice a sin, we must go to our brother and restore him in the spirit of meekness, to correct him, and if he does not listen, he must be handed over to the Church. (Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. ... but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Matthew 18:15, 17)

Perhaps many will say: how can the one who sits next to us on the same pew at the worship service contaminate us, when he has almost no connection with us, when we do not know what he does?

If this happens, that we are not knit to one another, then it is clear that we are in a dispersed/scattered flock, in which Satan has done his work.

There one cannot speak of submission, rebuke, correction..., where one cannot speak of the Body of Christ, which was designed to function closely knit.

Every soul is responsible before God for letting evil in and tolerating it in the Body of Christ. If each member is closely knit to another member, then it is easy to understand that when one falls sick, it will also affect the other one to which it is knit.

If a member falls sick with the disease of slander/evil-speaking and is not rebuked and disciplined/corrected, it will also contaminate those to whom it is closely knit. (Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. 1 Corinthians 15:33)

If, through lack of watchfulness, the members of the body of Christ come to tolerate sin, in the end the Church comes to be separated from Christ. (I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Revelation 3:15, 16; And I will kill her children with death. Revelation 2:23)

When the command in Matthew 18:15 is ignored, sin multiplies, the body falls sick and, if no measures are taken for its healing, in the end it will die. (Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Ecclesiastes 8:11)

The Church in Thyatira

At the moment when this Church was visited, it was in a situation in which sin had entered the congregation and was tolerated. The Church allowed a **"woman who called herself a prophetess"** to teach heresies and to seduce the bondservants of the Lord. (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. 2 Peter 2:1)

One can see the Lord's care for the members of His body: first of all for Jezebel, who was given time to repent. (And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Revelation 2:21)

Even though the Church was praised for many things, the Lord rebukes it for this sin of indifference, of tolerating sin. (I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because **thou sufferest that woman Jezebel,** which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants. Revelation 2:19, 20)

The Church was guilty of disregarding the teaching of the Lord, which tells us that a woman is not permitted to teach others, and the teaching which tells us to watch and to have no company with anyone who, although he calls himself a brother... (lest there be any fornicator, or profane person. Hebrews 12:15,16; But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. 1 Timothy 2:12)

This leaven of sin which was tolerated in the Church was going to leaven the whole lump, that is, the death of the flock. (Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 1 Corinthians 5:6; And I will kill her children with death. Revelation 2:23)

If the Church, in its majority, comes to allow sin, what must the few do who still want to remain faithful to the Lord? Can they still remain in this Church and live according to the law of the Body of Christ, where every joint makes its contribution? Does the Lord teach them to remain together with those who live in sin?

If we pay attention to the written Word and do not pass over it, it gives us the answer to these questions. When sin is tolerated, the Lord Jesus has commands for the members that want to remain in obedience to Him.

Thus, so that they remain clean, uncontaminated by the disease of sin, the Lord separates them from uncleanness, commanding them to come out from among them. (Wherefore "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, And touch not the unclean thing... 2 Corinthians 6:17; For men shall be lovers of their own selves, ... unholy, ... false accusers, ... having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: **from such turn away.** 2 Timothy 3:2-5)

We warn those who agree to remain in congregations where sin is tolerated

not to deceive themselves, perhaps by taking the example of the five Churches in Revelation, from which we might suppose that iniquity can dwell together with righteousness.

The Lord tells us that Satan has nothing in Him. The Lord cannot allow sin in His body, but in His mercy, before removing/cutting it off from the vine, He first tries to heal the sick member.

We will point out only a few sins which, if they are tolerated, will bring death to the congregation: disregarding the authorities by breaking the tax laws, e.g. undeclared work, disregarding the traffic laws, love of the things of the world, tolerating the worldly...

Slander/evil-speaking, a sin so widespread today in many congregations, is in the eyes of the Lord just as grave as fornication and drunkenness. The Lord asks us to have no company with those who practise it, even if they call themselves brothers. (But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be ... **a railer**, or a drunkard ...; with such an one no not to eat. 1 Corinthians 5:11)

Another sin, which is overlooked today but is just as grave, and for which we must withdraw from those who call themselves brothers, is **love of self;** brothers who do not live for the profit of the other members. (This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves ... having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. 2 Timothy 3:1-5)

Questions:

– How much time per day/ week do you set aside for yourself, and how much time do you set aside for the spiritual profit of others? 5%, 10% ... Have I learned to live for the profit of others?

– Can the Lord be with me if I do not withdraw from those who practise slander/ evil-speaking, from those who promote love of self?

The Scattered Flock

The Builder of the Body is the Lord Jesus. (I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16:18; ...but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." Ephesians 5:29)

The Lord has set laws of functioning in His body to keep it clean, closely knit and fitly joined together. They are laws specific to the body, by which the members relate to one another. (that there should be no schism in the body; but that the

members should have the same care one for another. 1 Corinthians 12:25; Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2)

The activity of Satan is to find tricks by which these laws are not put into practice, which will produce the scattering of the flock. (... the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. John 10:12)

Satan knows that the member/child on its own cannot survive if it is not closely knit in the Body/Family. (And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field. Ezekiel 34:5) So his major attack is that the members should not be closely knit to one another, a thing that can in the end produce the death of the member.

The aim of our enemy is that they should live scattered, dispersed, each with his own concerns, and he works in various ways so that people come to have only a form of godliness, a form that gives them the impression that they have life from above. (For men shall be lovers of their own selves ... having a form of godliness. 2 Timothy 3:2, 5)

The Lord Jesus tells us that ravening wolves will enter the flock and will not spare the flock, their activity being that of scattering/dispersing. (For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock; Acts 20:29; ...the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. John 10:12)

The devil seeks to destroy the purpose of the Body through them. We are warned to beware of them, for they are very dangerous, being dressed in sheep's clothing. (Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Matthew 7:15)

We find them everywhere: they are leaders of denominations, of large churches, preachers, professors of theology... who work to maintain a certain system of organization, which consists only of worship programmes and which constitutes the foundation of the scattered flock; a system that puts worship in the foreground and not the care of the sheep. (... neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, ... neither have ye sought that which was lost. Ezekiel 34:4)

This system of organization, with religious schools/institutions, trains and licenses ministers, professionals in **worship/preaching.** Then these ministers, through the positions they occupy, are constrained to give teachings that maintain this way of organization, the effect being the scattered flock. (For I have not sent them, saith the LORD, yet they prophesy a lie in my name; that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish Jeremiah 27:15)

Through the implementation of this system, the work of caring for/shepherding the flock has been replaced with the work of worship. In this way the involvement of the Spirit in the work of shepherding/caring for the sheep is blocked. (Take heed therefore ... to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath

made you overseers, to feed the church. Acts 20:28) So it has come about that in most congregations today, brothers like the apostle **Peter (who was a fisherman),** who meet the criteria in **Titus chapter 1** but have no theological studies, are no longer considered suitable for this task.

Through this institutionalized pattern of organization, Satan has deceived many into thinking that it is not necessary for the members to live by the law of Christ. (Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil **the law of Christ.** Galatians 6:2)

If we ask for an answer to some questions that may arise concerning our service in the Church, and also so as to lull our conscience to sleep, these teachers/specialists in scattered flocks will invite us to take part in all kinds of **projects/imitations of service,** which may seem good, but they will never call us to care for one another and to bear one another's burdens.

Such activities counterfeit **the way of caring** to which we are called, which is in fact the only one that keeps the body closely knit. (that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 1 Corinthians 12:25)

In this way, Satan prevents us from understanding that we must have a spiritual family life, similar to the natural family, where we must all take part in a concrete way in the care of the members of the Family/the members of the Body.

The aim of our enemy is that we should not be closely knit to one another, so that the disease of sin with which we are afflicted is not seen (e.g. the worldly way of life, the filth of the internet...), so that no one cares for us with a view to our being healed.

He does everything he can so that our relationships are not close but only superficial, so that we do not come to know one another's problems. In this way the practice of **the laws of the fitly joined body,** such as **watchfulness, rebuke, discipline, submission...** is reduced almost to zero.

We must understand that any attempt on our part to replace the real life of the Body with various activities, such as worship programmes, social programmes, youth meetings, picnic outings, choir... will give us only a form of godliness. (For men shall be lovers of their own selves ... having a form of godliness. 2 Timothy 3:2, 5)

If we look around us, the wicked one has done his work well. In most churches today, people are scattered, coming only to a religious programme. Each one lives for himself, concerned only with his own personal problems, without any interest in living for the profit of others. Whoever looks more closely will easily see that almost everywhere the phenomenon of the scattered flock is manifest...

Today one cannot say that the Church is closely knit, fitly joined together. If a member suffers from a spiritual disease, no member/or almost none is interested in knowing its disease, and none suffers with it/cares for it.

With the help of this template of organization and worship, Satan has dealt a deathblow to many people. The way of organizing, with only worship programmes 2-3 times a week, was conceived in such a way that it would not cross anyone's mind that the members must take real part in the life of the Body, by bearing the burdens of the others.

It can easily be seen that where this pattern, based on worship programmes, is implemented, there are multitudes of souls/members who are only consumers of these programmes, for whom no one cares, of whom no one asks an account.

Against this background of a scattered flock, it has come about that many do not understand the importance of the Body of Christ, allowing themselves to be absent from the congregation for months or years, a great part of them having gone off to various parts of the world in search of the things of the earth.

Nevertheless, they remain on the membership list, without being sought out or asked where they are. *(...my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.* Ezekiel 34:6)

This happens because most of us disregard the Word of the Lord, which asks us to watch over one another and not to forsake the Body of Christ. (and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is. Hebrews 10:24, 25)

Another trick by which work is done on the foundation of the scattered flock is the promotion of the teaching that says that in the Body of Christ/the Church the tares dwell together with the wheat, light together with darkness; a teaching that is widespread today and has caught on with multitudes of people.

Through this counterfeit teaching the teaching of the Lord is disregarded, which says that the children of light cannot be together with the children of darkness, as is also the teaching of the Lord Jesus, which says that the tares are sown in the field, which is the world. The field is the world; it is not the Body of Christ!

In the body of Christ there are no tares; in His body there are no dead members. **(the field is the world.** Matthew 13:38; and what communion hath light with darkness? ... or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 2 Corinthians 6:14, 15)

Even though the teaching of Scripture warns that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump, most have chosen to disregard this truth.

The fruit of this teaching is the toleration of sin; the leaven that leavens the whole lump/the death of the flock. (Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 1 Corinthians 5:6) By the acceptance of this teaching, brotherly submission, rebuke and discipline become pointless.

If we look at the teaching of the old covenant, it is just as restrictive as that of the new covenant. (lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve

the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood. Deuteronomy 29:18)

Through this teaching destructive heresy is brought in by stealth, and the teaching of Scripture which tells us to watch, so that there be no one worldly in the body of Christ, is disregarded. (lest there be any ... profane person. Hebrews 12:16)

Questions:

– Can we belong to the Lord if we are members of a scattered congregation, where the law of Christ is disregarded and not kept? (Bear ye one another's burdens... Galatians 6:2)

– If we are absent from the congregation for a month, two... does anyone see that we are absent, does anyone look for us? Or does no one notice? (my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them." Ezekiel 34:6)

The Consequences of Disregarding the Teachings of Christ

In order not to let ourselves be deceived, it is necessary to examine what the signs are by which we can distinguish a *living Church, which Christ cherishes,* from a dead one, where Christ is not involved in the growth of its members. (For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. Ephesians 5:29)

It is of vital importance to know which congregation we are in, because our salvation will depend on this. Only in the Body of Christ is there real life, where we grow as disciples of Christ through that which every joint supplieth, until we come to the measure of the stature of His fulness.

Scripture warns us of the danger we are in and tells us to beware of people/congregations that claim to be with God but in reality are not. (Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing. Matthew 7:15)

It is necessary to check with great care whether the congregation we belong to has the characteristics of the Body of Christ or does not have them.

As regards the human body, it is quite simple. The life of a member is strictly bound up with the life of the body. We all know that when a man is dead, all the members of his body are dead.

There is no dead body with living members, nor a living body with dead members. If in a living body a member dies and is not removed in time, it will spread gangrene through the whole body. So it is with the spiritual body too. The

Church/the body where sin is tolerated has no life, because Christ does not tolerate filth in His body. (... hath nothing in me. John 14:30)

We warn against deceiving ourselves that we can remain in a dead congregation where sin is tolerated, so that we may be a light there, because there is no dead body with living members. A member is knit to other members, from which it must receive and to which it must pass on. If there were dead members in the body, what would they give to the living members, and the living ones to the dead members?

Scripture states very clearly that if anyone does not have the teaching of Christ, he is spiritually dead, that is, he has no life from God. Such a one may be a person or a congregation. It cannot have life, because life comes only from Christ. (Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. 2 John 1:9; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. John 5:21)

Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.

Do not be deceived! If in the Body of Christ (in the Church) a member dies and is not removed in time, it will spread gangrene through the whole body! (Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. 1 Corinthians 5:6; see the case of the church in Thyatira, where the Lord Jesus says that He will kill her children with death...)

The Teaching of Christ

One of the signs by which we can check whether the Church truly belongs to Christ is the doctrine/teaching that it accepts and practises.

When a Church does not have the teaching of Christ, it practically disregards Christ, refusing His lordship. (He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings. John 14:24; He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 1 John 2:4)

So it is extremely important to check whether the teachings of the Lord Jesus are ignored/disregarded and not kept/not practised.

These teachings are meant to contribute to the restoring of the image of God in us, so that we may dwell in eternity with the saints, with those who are like the image of His Son, people of the household of God. (Ephesians 2:19)

It is essential to understand that all the commandments of the Lord by which we must live are a faithful image of His character, of His way of being; they show us how He lived, they show us His ways. All, absolutely all of His commandments in fact represent Him.

That is why we cannot neglect any commandment, because the traits of the Lord are found in His commandments. In each of His teachings a trait of the Lord is hidden.

Just as in the human embryo all the traits of the one who is to be born are hidden, so the traits of the Lord Jesus are hidden in the seed of God. (The seed is the word of God. Luke 8:11)

The Holy Spirit uses these commandments and works with us to change us into the image of the Lord. (are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:18)

One of the examples is the Lord's teachings on non-resistance. (but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: ... And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. Matthew 5:39-40; Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. Luke 6:30)

Only by keeping these words, which teach us not to resist the one who does us evil, do longsuffering, goodness... bear fruit in us. These are the character traits of the new man, which are like those of the Lord. (The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; Slow to anger, and of great mercy. Psalm 145:8)

It can easily be seen that the Church/denomination which disregards Christ and does not abide in this teaching of His will give its consent to the enlistment of its members in institutions that practise resistance and the oath (e.g. the army, the police, the gendarmerie, security and protection, etc.), as well as to the obtaining of rights by using the means made available by the secular world. (e.g. obtaining rights through the courts in claims for buildings, land, etc.)

Reality shows us that many congregations belonging to various religious movements are in this situation today. Many are/or have been in lawsuits over their properties or their rights.

By these actions, they give their consent for their members to do the same when they have something to settle with their fellow men, and by this they encourage them to neglect the teachings of the Lord that lead to the forming of the image of Christ in man.

The Body of Christ

Another sign by which we can check whether the Church has Christ as its head are the teachings and the practice concerning the relationships of the members of the Body of Christ.

1. The Scattered Flock The congregation that disregards and does not practise the teaching of a body closely knit, fitly joined together, in which each member must have the role given it by God for the spiritual profit of the others, **does not have 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. Ephesians 4:16)

2. In such congregations, God has been set aside, not being allowed to compose the body and to set the members in the body as He wills. (But now hath

God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 1 Corinthians 12:18)

In these congregations the phenomenon of the scattered flock is manifest, where there are found many souls for whom no one cares, of whom no one asks an account, where submission, rebuke and discipline are not practised.

If the Church **does not watch and does not check** whether the members seek the profit of the other members, that congregation does not have Christ. (Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. 1 Corinthians 10:24)

Where there is a living Church, the members care for one another. (that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; 1 Corinthians 12:24-26)

You can run a test in your congregation: if a member suffers from a spiritual or a bodily disease, how many members care for it? No one, one/two, or all the members?

The congregation that is structured and organized in such a way that it asks of its members only their presence at worship 2-3 times a week does not have Christ as its head. Where the great majority of the members have only the role of consumers of religious programmes, that congregation is not Christ's.

Through this kind of organization the members are not asked to take part in the life of the body/family, that of being for the profit of the other members, and so love of self is promoted, where each one is taken up with his own concerns and personal interests.

3. Brotherly Submission Another sign by which we can check whether the Church has Christ as its head is the acceptance and practice of the teachings on brotherly submission. (Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account. Hebrews 13:17; Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. 1 Peter 5:5)

We can check: if the Church is Christ's, the members live in submission to Christ and to their spiritual fathers. (submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Ephesians 5:21)

If the Church is Christ's, it will practise the punishment of those who out of pride do not submit to those who have the rule over the congregation (but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican Matthew 18:17).

It can easily be seen that, where the phenomenon of the scattered flock exists, those who are in authority do not require submission. (submission is pointless, it cannot be practised).

4. The Purity of the Church Yet another sign by which we can check whether the Church has Christ as its head is the teachings on the purity of the Church.

Thus, the congregation that disregards and does not keep the teaching which says that we should watch that there be no one worldly practically disregards Christ and His body. (lest there be *any* fornicator, or profane person… looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God. Hebrews 12:15,16)

Likewise, one can check whether rebuke and discipline are disregarded, whether they are not put into practice. (Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, **go** and tell him his fault… but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an **heathen man.** Matthew 18:15, 17)

Check whether the Church you belong to promotes the teaching that says that in the Church/His Body there are both children of light/the wheat and children of darkness/the tares.

By this the teaching of the Lord is disregarded, which says that the children of light cannot be together with the children of darkness, and the clear teaching which says that the tares are sown in the field, which is the world, and certainly not the Church! (and what communion hath light with darkness? ... or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 2 Corinthians 6:14, 15; **the field is the world.** Matthew 13:38)

The fruit of this teaching is the toleration of sin, the leaven that makes the whole lump leaven/the death of the flock. (Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 1 Corinthians 5:6)

Questions for Personal Examination

If we are in a congregation where the great majority of the members have only the role of consumers of religious programmes, let us ask ourselves:

Did the Lord plan it to be only an establishment where parishioners gather, where most are only consumers/having no role, no task? Can we have life from Christ in a church where the members are not closely knit?

Can we have life in a congregation where the brothers do not care for one another/do not bear one another's burdens, where they do not fulfil the law of Christ? (Galatians 6:2) Is God involved in any way where His teachings are ignored and disregarded?

Can the body be alive if it does not receive commands from Christ? If the congregation does not submit to Christ, can there be living members in that body? Perhaps many of us say that God has children of His even in congregations that disregard the lordship of Christ. Can such a statement be argued from the Bible?

So that you can check whether your Church ignores and does not put into practice the teachings of the Lord, we will list some of them.

1. That ye resist not evil... (Matthew 5:39)

2. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat... (Matthew 5:40)

3. Bear ye one another's burdens. (Galatians 6:2)

4. lest **there be any...** profane person. (Hebrews 12:16)

5. Take heed **that ye despise not...** (Matthew 18:10) I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be ... **a railer.** (1 Corinthians 5:11)

6. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; ... for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. (1 Corinthians 14:34, 35) But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. (1 Timothy 2:12)

7. Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's. (Luke 20:25) With regard to this command, check whether undeclared work, software piracy, bribery... are tolerated.

If you find yourself in a scattered flock, which disregards the teachings of the Lord and tolerates the worldly, we urge you to examine yourself in the most serious way before the Lord. (See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Ephesians 5:15)

Step 1. Examine your life and enter into obedience to everything the Lord says, so that you are not destroyed. (him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, **shall be destroyed** from among the people. Acts 3:22, 23)

Step 2. Take heed to what the Lord says and do not join yourself to those who ignore His teachings, who disregard the teaching of Christ. (Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. ... If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed **is partaker of his evil deeds.** 2 John 1:9 - 11)

Trust in the Lord, who tells you that light cannot be together with darkness, and do not be unequally yoked. (Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and **what communion hath light with darkness?** 2 Corinthians 6:14)

Pay attention to the warning of the Lord and keep what He says: "Wherefore Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, **And touch not the unclean thing; And I will receive you,** And will be a Father unto you, And ye shall be my sons and daughters. (2 Corinthians 6:17, 18) Stop building together with those who also serve other gods! (Ezra 4:1-5)

Step 3. Fulfil the command: "Flee also youthful lusts: but **follow** righteousness, faith, charity, peace, **with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."** (2 Timothy 2:22) Seek people with a pure heart and the Lord will bring them across

your path! (for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth. Matthew 7:8; **And those that seek me early shall find me.** Proverbs 8:17) The Lord is faithful and will do His part. (I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Hebrews 13:5)

Flee from the scattered flock; do not look for congregations with religious programmes, but look for the Body of Christ, which is closely knit, fitly joined together; where He is Lord and where His teachings are kept. Only in His Body can one grow up healthy; here you are guarded from ravening wolves. (from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth... maketh increase of the body... Ephesians 4:16)

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Perhaps until today you, like many others, have had no involvement in the Church where you are a member, and you have not thought that every member is placed by God in the body to be of profit to the other members. (But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 1 Corinthians 12:7)

Probably it has seemed normal to you that in the Church only a small group of brothers should be involved. Perhaps it seems natural to you that in the congregation there should be many who do not attend the meetings for months or for years and yet remain on the membership list.

So as not to be deceived, today more than ever it is necessary to examine carefully what the Word of God tells us about the place we must have in the Church of Christ.