

**WHAT IS THE MEANING**



**OF THE ONE BODY?**

*“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4:4-6).*

*“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ ... Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually” (1 Cor. 12:12,27).*

The Word of God says, “There is one body” (Eph. 4:4), not two or three – only one. That “one body” is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:23). That is, every true Christian is to Christ what a man’s foot, hand, etc., is to that man (1 Cor. 12:12,27). Nowhere in Scripture do we find the idea of different denominations, or any other body. The only thing found there is *the one body of Christ*, formed by the “one Spirit” of God. The relationship therefore of all true Christians is that of fellow-members of the *one body* of Christ – a divine relationship entered into at conversion by the Spirit’s baptism, and consummated in the glory of heaven, to which the Church is destined.

Christians assuming any other relationship than this with one another, associating themselves together on any other principle than this, are therefore sectarian. They form another tie than that which God has formed, and by which He binds all His children of this dispensation together.

But the members of that *one body* are scattered all over the earth. They cannot assemble together in one place. They therefore assemble in any locality convenient to those who live in that locality. There may be “two or three,” or two or three hundred or thousand. Christ, the Savior and Head of the Church, has pledged Himself to be present in the midst of those assembled like this (Mt. 18:20). He is their Cen-

ter of assembling, as the Ark of old was the gathering-center of Israel.

He is also the attractive Object of all their hearts – every one rejoicing in the presence, by faith, of the Lord Jesus. These local churches, or assemblies, are just like the persons who compose them: “one body in Christ, and individually members of one another” (Rom. 12:5). If new converts are received in one locality, they are received there on behalf of the whole Church of God universal, and thus introduced into her fellowship – her *fellowship*, notice, not her *membership* – for they were already made members by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. If someone moves where he is unknown, a letter of commendation gives him full access to all privileges everywhere. If one walks in evil and is put under discipline in one place, he is under discipline in the whole Church universal until he repents.

All these local assemblies are, for their doctrine and their practice, primarily responsible to the Lord, just as “Christ is the head of the Church” (Eph. 5:23). If any of them falls into evil doctrine or practice, He may visit them with judgment, as in I Corinthians 11:26-32. He may even take away its candlestick altogether, as threatened in Revelation 2:5.

They are also responsible to one another, for all are “individually members of one another” (Rom. 12:5). No local assembly can act for itself alone. Its actions affect all others, bind all others,

and render all others responsible with it. It must therefore, when questioned, be open in the fullest way to investigation, as it is accountable to all the rest. The sense of this responsibility toward one another produces wholesome care in all that is done in each place.

But someone may say, “This is all very true, and sound doctrine, and in accord with all Scripture. But Christendom is full of divisions and parties, not subject to each other, which in turn abound with persons who are in no way subject to Scripture or to the Lord.” What then are you going to do? Walk separately from them, and by Scriptural teaching and godly labor after the fashion of the apostles, form a fellowship on the principle of the whole Church of God, to practice among themselves what the whole Church should practice. It may be small and weak, and cause opposition and contempt, as in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, when they were building afresh upon the old foundations; but it will please God. The mere attempt will please Him. He will bless faithful labor; and when the Lord returns He will manifest that every “living stone” which had been set on the old foundations had been set in a place of special blessing – blessing for eternity.

– P. J. L.

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**Grace & Truth** • 210 Chestnut Street, Danville, IL 61832  
**or** • P.O. Box 4902, Kaduna Junction P.O., Kaduna, Nigeria  
Email: [tracts@gtpress.org](mailto:tracts@gtpress.org) / Web: [www.gtpress.org](http://www.gtpress.org)

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