

# GRACE GAZETTE

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*Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.*

*Hebrews 12:12-13*

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## MR POTATO HEAD GOES TO CHURCH

*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.----- Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*  
*I Corinthians 12:12, 27*

When I was a young child, we used to play a game called "Mr. Potato Head". Each player was given a real potato and then each one took a turn with the "spinner" which pointed to various plastic game pieces (eyes, ears, noses, etc) which had stems that were then inserted into the potato in order to make a completed "Mr Potato Head." The first person to finish "Mr. Potato Head" by adding all of the necessary parts was the winner.

In this game, the potato was the body (and the head; all in one) to which the individual parts were added. The thought occurred to me that this is the exact view that many people have of what the church is. A body to which parts are added. Yet the scripture indicates that the body does not exist without its parts and the parts of the body are that of which the body consists.

Many consider that the "church" (which is synonymous with "the body" see Col. 1:24) is an organization with a hierarchical structure onto which various members are added. When they read that CHRIST said "*I will build my church*", they envision the establishment of a denomination or organization which came into existence at that point in time and is perpetuated by direct generation from that particular organization as subsequent "congregations" are formed according to that particular model.

This concept is quite appealing to the flesh and from a pragmatic view point seems quite plausible and, I might add, reasonable. In fact many gyrations of history are produced by many to prove that their particular "order" or "sect" is indeed the "one true church" which they now perpetuate and guard against all who might try to usurp their position and postulate their own historical gyrations which supposedly prove their pedigree outstrips the other. The sands of time are stained with the blood of multitudes who dared to question these established pedigrees and some who were more than willing to take up the sword to defend their own.

Men love religion almost as much as they do their supposed "free will". And the more exclusive they can make it the better they like it, even to the point of their exclusivity being the "inclusion" of all "faiths". This is the ultimate exclusivity because such thought exists to exalt men as able to determine their own fate and find god wherever they desire. No doctrine is more despised by them than the "*preaching of the cross*" and the NARROW PATH to ETERNAL LIFE. The natural man despises the TRUTH in its very essence but will (at the same time) embrace the most narrow and the most broad paths as long as they vindicate themselves and their own pet doctrines.

The church of JESUS CHRIST is that body for which HE died in order to redeem. HE died for that body as a whole and not as a consideration of its individual parts even though it is clear that the body is made up of its individual parts and does not exist otherwise. HE did not die for the mouth, nor did HE die for the hand, but rather for the body.

It is in this concept that the necessity and value of "brotherly love" is demonstrated and manifested. The saints of GOD are part and parcel of one another and cannot and must not be divided but rather

cleave to one another. Even as Paul writes, *"so also is CHRIST". "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."* (1John 4:20-21)

Is this not what our LORD had in mind when HE said, *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."* (John 13:35)? And what Paul had reference to when he declared, *"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another."* (Rom 12:10) Should it not be a source of shame to us when divisions and strife exist among the saints of GOD? Should not our striving be to "bear one another's burdens" rather than rejoicing in how sectarian we can be?

As Dorothy said in the Wizard of Oz, "we're a long way from Kansas." Here in the twenty first century, we are indeed a long way from the ideal spoken of by Paul and our LORD. Yet we must embrace this concept or else reject the very teachings that are at the core of the faith once delivered to the saints. It is impossible for us to tell who the saints of GOD are in the broadest sense, yet the LORD has put us together in local assemblies, with those we can both see and touch, with this very mandate, to *"love one another"* even as CHRIST has loved us.(see John 13:34; 15:12,17; Rom.13:8; Gal.5:13) If we don't love those we have seen, how could we possibly love those whom we have not.

The body of CHRIST has one HEAD. *"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body."* (Eph 5:23) This is a very simple and straightforward truth, yet there are many who ignore it by appointing gifted men to positions of dominance and there is no shortage of those willing to take those appointments. Well did Paul instruct those who were "elders" to lead by example rather than decree. *"Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock."* (1Pet 5:3) There is no scriptural example of churches being known by who their elders are or how eloquent they might be in preaching the glorious truth of the gospel. (see I Cor.1:12,13; 3:3-7) Yet the practice is so commonplace in the present time that most never even give it a minute's thought and those who question it are considered eccentric or even worse; troublemakers or heretics. How did we get there?

The body of CHRIST is interdependent on that which is supplied by every part. *"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."* (Eph 4:15-16) In fact, the *"work of the ministry"* spoken of in Eph.4:12 is not the practice of "preaching" but rather the result of it in a healthy church. If a church is not ministering one to the other then it is not functioning as described in the New Testament.

The body of CHRIST is the sum of its parts, with each one being exactly what GOD ordained it to be. *"For the body is not one member, but many."* (1Cor 12:14) There are no "important" parts or "unimportant" parts, neither is there a "spectator section" in this body. *"If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him."* (1Cor 2:15-18)

The body of CHRIST does not exist simply for the purpose of exercising its mouth. Rather the whole body is put on display in order to manifest the love of CHRIST for HIS people as HE works in them both to will and to do of HIS good pleasure. HE takes great delight in HIS body which is *"the fullness of him that filleth all in all."* (Eph 1:23) *"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."* (Eph 3:10)

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