
The True Church

By John A. Pinkston

Recently, the Pope issued a statement that reverberated very negatively throughout the Protestant world. The statement was a reiteration of previous papal dogma that the Catholic Church was and still is the only true Church of Jesus Christ. He went on to say that all of the Protestant spin-off churches are nothing more than religious communities acting under the guise of their denominational names. In fact, he said that ministers of these organizations are not really ordained men who are able to administer the church's sacraments.

This proclamation made by the pope has temporarily stirred a fair amount of controversy among the Protestant denominations. His statement was surprising, in view of the fact that the previous pope and several Protestant leaders, such as Billy Graham and others, have been working to unify the church under a single banner. This same type of exclusivity found its way into some of the splinter groups from the now defunct Worldwide Church of God. In fact, this writer has heard it said that many of these small groups are just “playing church.” When one believes their organization is the only true church, to the exclusion of all others, it can only be considered one of the most self-righteous, arrogant and incorrect statements made by any church leader or church member.

In the course of this article, we will consider just what the true Church of God truly is.

When Christ was speaking to Peter and the other disciples, He said that He would build His Church – singular, rather than many churches. (Matthew 16:18) Before you misunderstand that I am trying to make the case that we might



be that one true Church of God, please continue reading this article so that you can clearly see where we stand and the policy of the Congregation of God Seventh Day.

What is a Church?

When most people use the word “church,” they are thinking of an assembly hall where a group of people come together for worship. Typically, it is viewed as a building with a steeple adorning the top and a large cross somewhere inside or outside of the building. The term “church” seems to imply a building rather than its occupants.

This is one of the main reasons why we chose our name “The Congregation of God” in 1992, rather than “The Church of God.” A congregation denotes people more than a building. However, can we say there is only one congregation that represents the true Church of God? The answer is “absolutely not.” In fact, a church is neither a building, nor a corporate organization!

Not an Organization

If the true church of God is not an organization, then just what is it? Actually, the true church of God is like a living organism, which is made up of many parts. Paul defines for us that the organism of God's church is very much like that of the human body, which is composed of many parts. Paul begins to deal with what this organism looks like and how it works in I Corinthians 12:4-5. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord."

In these two verses, Paul indicates that there are many different parts to the organism or, if you prefer, "groups," who are separated by different administrations and, yes, different ways of accomplishing the Work of God. The fact is no one organization has the right to force another organization or group of people to comply with a specific set of rules that are unique to their particular operation. In I Corinthians 12:6, Paul states there are different operations. "And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." Another example would be the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3.

There is no evidence that Paul served at the pleasure or beneath the

ministry of the church in Jerusalem. In fact, he only appeared in Jerusalem two times. Notice that all of these different organizations, with different talents, worked together under the guidance of Jesus Christ to accomplish His Work. In verse 7, Paul gives us the key that binds all of the groups together and that is *God's Holy Spirit*. I have said, on previous occasions, that the church is very much like a spoked wagon wheel; the center part or the axle is Jesus Christ and God the Father; each of us, or each individual group, is a spoke which radiates out toward the outer rim, which represents God Holy Spirit, keeping the organism in place.

In this particular chapter of I Corinthians, Paul lists several of the individual ingredients that can be displayed by either individuals or collectively in separate organizations within the overall organism of the church. He listed wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, working miracles, prophecies, discerning spirits and other necessary gifts to allow the organism to function as a unified, complete body. In fact, Paul makes the connection between the church organism and the human body over the next several verses.

Identifying Marks

Believe it or not, the organizations that make the total organism of God's Church will all have similar identifying marks. Just as children, in a given family, will have features favoring both their mother and father, the organisms of God's Church will have features that favor Jesus Christ, God the Father and His Word, the Bible. There are several identifying marks that will help us locate God's true people.

First, the church will be extended spiritual powers which will be obvious in any group of true followers. Notice Matthew 16:19. "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

The keys to the Kingdom of God are found in the lifestyle that God prescribes for His people, as defined by the Ten Commandments, and the assurance that their faith and trust in Jesus Christ will qualify them to receive power now to accomplish feats far beyond that of a human organization, and ultimately to be granted Godly power in the coming Kingdom of God.

The duly ordained ministry will be given the right and authority to bind and loose things on this earth. An example is that a properly ordained



Building Does Not have to boast a huge edifice to be a True Church

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minister is able to bind a marriage and, in some cases, loose a marriage, as well as bind other decisions that are reached, which meet the overall teaching of the Bible and do not, in any way, violate any Biblical tenet.

This means that people can come together and make certain decisions affecting the administration of a particular Work of God, and God will accept their decision so long as it does not violate any scripture. This would include organizations that have certain strong beliefs in some ideas that cannot be easily defined in the scripture, such as where some groups hold to a different calendar standard which may affect the celebration of certain holy days. Some sincerely reject any concept of a postponement as it relates to the annual holy days. This is a subject that is highly divisive and, yet, we believe should not be judged if any organization chooses to ignore or accept postponements.

The real problem over the past several years has been that, when a group zeros in on a belief they firmly believe is closer to what the Bible teaches, if others don't see it that way, one or both of the groups condemn those who have a differing view. We must be careful NOT to judge other groups based upon our set of rules. (II Corinthians 10:12) "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." Of course, I am not speaking of errors in teachings that can easily be disproved in the scriptures.

There are many other such administrative differences which, unfortunately, serve to separate God's people and have given rise to many disgruntled splinter groups.

Deceivers

Jesus Christ warned his disciples in Matthew 24 that deceivers would be coming with the intent of disrupting and removing many from the spiritual organism called God's Church. Notice Matthew 24:4-5, "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many."

Truly, these deceivers appear to be ministers of Jesus Christ and, in many cases, much of what they say appears to be true. However, in time they will manifest themselves regarding their true agenda and what they are all about. Unfortunately, this happens far too often as people continue to separate themselves into smaller and smaller groups. Notice what Christ said about these men in Matthew 7:15-16. "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"

Christ goes on to say that, just because a man claims to be a minister of God and also claims that his group is solidly following God and, even though they seem to be working miracles, Christ gives this mind-shattering answer to those would-be church leaders. (Matthew 7:21-23) "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

God's people are like sheep and can be easily herded by a charismatic,

righteous-seeming leader. However, I have noticed over the years that, if you give these false leaders enough time, eventually their true intentions and agenda will be revealed which is to separate as many people as possible from the true body of Christ and to encourage those who follow them to idolize them as if they were speaking on behalf of God and literally the Words of God. Whenever a pseudo-religious leader states that God is speaking directly and audibly to him and him only, this is an individual who has an agenda other than leading people to God and Jesus Christ. I use the description "pseudo-religious" because a true minister of Jesus Christ would NEVER make that statement.

Many televangelists use this tactic in order to raise more funds and have a much larger following. I have noticed on several religion television programs the speakers claim that God had spoken to them audibly the night before telling them to do "this or that." However, when you look clearly at what they teach and what they represent, this should raise a warning flag concerning that individual. Notice Peter's admonition in II Peter 1:20-21, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

Peter points out that prophecy and the understanding of scripture is not the purview of a single individual, but God will spread this knowledge among several of his leaders, independent of one another. When this happens, it is easy to see how God is inspiring what is being taught.

Whenever someone comes your way claiming that God has revealed to him, and only to him, some spiritual knowledge, this is a person that clearly

is not hearing the words of God. If, in fact, he heard audible voices, the chances are he is hearing the voices of demonic spirits trying to divert him and his group away from Jesus Christ. Given enough time, it will become evident where all of this will lead. Notice again what God says about a prophet, and this would include a religious leader, and his claim that God spoke directly to him. (Deuteronomy 18:20-22) "But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him."

Over the years, I have heard many religious leaders making claims about events in prophecy that would occur at such and such a time only to see that their prophecy was wrong.

Surprisingly, most of their followers have ignored such basic mistakes and continue supporting and believing in that individual rather than paying attention to what God says about one who makes such a claim. The world is filled with false prophets. Satan's aim is directed at the organism of Jesus Christ's Church in an effort to infiltrate it with men who appear to be ministers/leaders of Jesus Christ, but who are, in

fact, under the influence of human or spiritual powers other than Jesus Christ.

Everything we need to know concerning the word of Jesus is found in the Bible which is His Living Word for us today. By studying and praying and fasting, Christ will reveal to us through His scripture everything we need to know to accomplish His Work and to qualify for His salvation in the First Resurrection.

To make it blunt, anyone claiming that he, and only he, heard God telling him to do specific things is, in my opinion, a charlatan and NOT a man of God. And I make this statement based upon the authority of the scriptures I have just shown you out of your own Bible.

One of the biggest problems that has existed in the church for many years has been "man worship," whereby people would flock to a man because of his personality and the perception that he was, or is, the only true representative of God on this earth. This can happen, even though the man may not even be alive to receive such adulation from his followers. This is one of the purest forms of idolatry which, if not checked by the people themselves, will lead an unsuspecting group away from Jesus Christ and into the sin of idolatry.

Signs of God's Church

Now, let's talk about identifying signs of the groups that make up the true Church of God. There are several identifying marks which immediately eliminate or identify the different groups

that are part of the overall organism of God's Church.

(1) The first most obvious sign is that God's true followers will celebrate the Sabbath and all of the Annual Holy Days. If you are not familiar with the Holy Days, order our booklet, *God's Annual Holy Days for Christians*.

(2) The true church will teach that its followers must live by the Ten Commandments and they must be the guiding principle for the basic operation of the group. As Christ told the young rich man that he must keep the Ten Commandments in order to qualify for eternal life in Matthew 19:17. Any group that teaches that the law of God and especially the Ten Commandments have been done away and are not necessary for the believer to follow, is truly a false church. This, of course, includes the fact that the 4th commandment requires God's people to observe and keep the Sabbath Day holy. Churches that claim that salvation is strictly by grace, without obedience to Jesus Christ, are not true churches of God.

(3) The true church of God will center its teachings upon the words of the Bible, which are actually the words of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:20 tells us that our foundation for everything we believe comes from the words of Christ, which are in the Old and New Testaments. (Ephesians 2:20-21) "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ

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"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 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."

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Jesus Christ is the headmaster of His church and He reports its activities to our Father God.

(4) The true church of God will have an active outreach program by which they are doing their most diligent effort, with what they have available, to accomplish one of the major goals set forth by Jesus Christ for His followers. (Matthew 24:4) “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”

We recognize that as an individually, small operation as we are, we are very limited in our capability to make our voice heard except in a very small way. However, as God extends financial resources, we are committed to expanding the Outreach. We also believe that God has extended to us a certain measure of understanding prophecies as they relate to the end time and we believe it is our responsibility to spread that information as far and wide as our financial resources will allow. Part of our responsibility is to warn our nation of the upcoming disasters which Christ speaks of in Matthew 24:15 which will usher in the final three and one-half years of man’s rule on this earth and the Great Tribulation.

As I listen to many of the self-appointed prophets speaking on television, and in other religious organizations, it becomes painfully obvious that most of these people are speaking from their own intellect and either have little understanding or knowledge of what the Bible actually teaches about prophecy.

Recently, I was watching a prominent minister interviewed who is considered to be one of the foremost authorities on Biblical prophecy. I was absolutely startled at how little knowledge he had concerning prophecy. This is just another example of a false prophet leading people astray and, at the

same time, building a huge war chest of money to support his activities.

Before 2000, many so-called prophets were claiming that, in the year 2000, Jesus Christ would return. I immediately knew that they were either liars or speaking out of total ignorance because there are many prophecies that have yet to be fulfilled, starting especially with Matthew 24:15, before the end of this age comes.

(5) The church of God will not deny Christ. There are many groups who claim that the God of the Old Testament was the Father and, as a result, He should be called by some Hebrew name which supposedly identifies him as the Father. It is truly amazing that people who claim to understand Hebrew and Greek intricacies of the Bible fail to read John 1, indicating that the God of the Old Testament was not the Father, but, in fact, the one who became Jesus Christ. Paul alludes to the same fact in Hebrews 1:1-2, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;”

Notice that it said in the latter days that he would speak to us by His Son and His Son, Jesus Christ, is the one who wrote these words. It also indicated “by whom also he made the worlds.” By saying that the God of the Old Testament was not Jesus Christ is actually a form of denying the divinity and God-ship of Christ.

Then, there are others who claim that Jesus Christ was Michael of the Old Testament, which is pure heresy. Michael was a created being – a cherub, angel, as were Lucifer and Gabriel. John 1 plainly tells us that He was the creator of all of these things and that He was, from the very beginning, Jesus and not a creation of God. To say that Jesus Christ was a creation of God is blasphemy and indicates a total lack of knowledge of the Bible teachings. This teaching chips away at the credibility of Jesus Christ as well as the Bible itself. Anyone making this a centerpiece or part of their religious teaching is in error and does not focus

on Jesus Christ and who He was, is and will always be.

Finally a false prophet will usually be in charge of a false congregation. The problem is that his followers do not possess the spiritual ability to spot the flawed and are blinded by a charismatic, spiritual essence which is a good definition of the wolf dressed in sheep’s clothing. The followers of the true church of Jesus Christ will be studying the Bible daily to make sure they are not deceived and that they can spot a deceiver very quickly.

I am constantly barraged with articles and ideas from individuals who claim that they have been granted some special understanding and that they alone have the truth!

When you know what the Bible teaches and you remain close to Jesus Christ in spirit, it is easy to spot the deceivers. However, if you are swayed by idolizing an individual, you may be setting yourself up for a blinding mishap. Jesus Christ plainly says that you will know them by their fruits and that also applies to God’s True organizations. You will know them by their fruits and the love and the outreach they have toward other people. Notice the warning Paul gave us concerning these people in II Corinthians 11:13-15, “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”

In conclusion, if a person or a group does not meet all of these criteria, then they are not part of the Body of Christ. If they do meet these criteria, then their administration and how they operate their church is totally their business and their responsibility to Jesus Christ. No other group has any authority to make judgments or condemnations concerning how they choose to administer their group. In the end, it will be Christ who makes the final judgments about all who are truly qualified to be in that Resurrection just before the Return of Jesus Christ. □



SPOTLIGHT ON THE NEWS

American Dollar under Attack

The American dollar has received bad news in recent days from several quarters of the world. The first bit of bad news comes from one of the major oil producing nations. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is moving away from the dollar as their medium of exchange for pricing their crude oil. According to the Bloomberg Report, the UAE may be the next Middle Eastern country to stop pegging its exchange rate with the U.S. dollar and begin trading in other currencies which are more stable. The currency that they are considering is the European Union currency, the Euro dollar.

Several other nations are severing their ties with the U.S. dollar as their medium of pricing, such as Iran and Venezuela which have been joined recently by Syria and Kuwait who switched their currency peg away from the U.S. dollar on May 20.

The UAE, which includes Dubai, was recently rejected by congress when they moved to take over several of the U.S. port facilities. The actions of the U.S Congress against the UAE may have contributed to the UAE moving away from the U.S. dollar as a peg for their currency.

The current chairman of the Federal Reserve, Ben Bernake, continues to claim that inflation in the U.S. is extremely low, but the dollar continues to tumble in relation to other foreign currency. At the present, the dollar is only worth about 80 cents compared to the Euro dollar. This explains why global commodities continue to rise as measured in U.S. dollars.

By turning away from U.S. dollars, these nations are not just hurting the international value of the dollar, they are also undermining the dollar's political power as the world's reserve currency. These financial threats are not reported by the American media.

China Threatens the U.S. Dollar

The U.S. Congress is considering legislation directed against the Chinese government and its marketing practices. Essentially, the Democrat-controlled Congress, in an effort to appease their union backers, are trying to establish new quotas and laws which will adversely affect China-U.S. trade. As a result, the Chinese government has begun a concentrated campaign of economic threats against the U.S., hinting that it may liquidate its vast holdings of U.S. treasuries if Washington imposes trade sanctions to force a re-evaluation of the Chinese currency.

Two officials of the Chinese Communist Party have given interviews in recent days, warning for the first time that Beijing may use its \$133 trillion of foreign reserves as the political weapon to counter pressures from the U.S. Congress.

Shifts in Chinese policy are often announced through key think tanks and Chinese academics. This approach by the Chinese government is referred to as "the nuclear option." It would also cause a spike in U.S. bond yields, hammering the U.S. housing market and perhaps tipping the economy into recession or depression. It is estimated that China holds over \$900 billion in a mix of U.S. bonds.

Xia Bin, Finance Chief at the Development Finance Center, kicked off what appears to be the Chinese policy that Beijing's foreign reserves should be used as a "bargaining chip" in talking with the U.S. Mr. Bin stated that China does not want any harmful phenomena in the global financial order as a result of actions by U.S. or China. He Fan, an official of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, went even further, letting it be known that Beijing had the power to set off a dollar collapse if it chooses to do so. "China has accumulated a large sum of U.S. dollars, a big sum of which a considerable portion is in U.S. Treasury bonds, contributes a great deal to maintaining the position of the dollar as a reserve

currency. Russia, Switzerland and several other countries have reduced their dollar holdings. China is unlikely to follow suit as long as the Yuan's exchange rate is stable against the dollar. The Chinese Central Bank will be forced once the Yuan appreciated dramatically which might lead to a mass depreciation of the dollar," he told the Chinese Daily.

The threat plays into the presidential campaign of Hillary Clinton, who has called for restrictive legislation to prevent America from being "held hostage to economic decisions being made in Beijing, Shanghai, or Tokyo." According to Clinton, foreign control over 40% of the national debt has left America acutely vulnerable.

Simon Derrick, a currency strategist at the Bank of New York – Mellon, said the Chinese comments sent a message to the U.S. Senate as the capital here prepares legislation for the autumn session. "The words are alarming and un-ambiguous. This carries a clear political threat and could have serious consequences at a time when the credit markets are already afraid of contagion from the sub-prime troubles," he said.

The bill that the Chinese are concerned about is a bill drafted by a group of U.S. senators and backed by the Senate's Finance Committee, calls for trade tariffs against Chinese goods and retaliation for alleged currency manipulation. The Yuan has appreciated 9% against the dollar over the last two years under a crawling peg, but it has failed to harm the rise of Chinese trade surplus, which reached \$26.9 billion in June.

Credit Fears and Federal Reserve Action

The Federal Reserve had to take emergency action in early August when the Dow Jones fell sharply as a result of the collapse of global credit markets. It pumped \$24 billion into the U.S. banking system with the European Central Banks in response to the credit panic also by pumping \$130 billion into their banking system.

The credit crisis is coming as a result of "Sub-Prime Mortgage" loans. Several home loan companies who have made mortgage loans to unqualified people have recently gone out of business because of the uncollectability of these Sub-Prime mortgage loans. Several of these Sub-Prime Lending companies are located in the Atlanta area and one notified their 6500 employees suddenly on a Friday afternoon that their jobs were lost.

Editor's Comment: God has promised to break the power of our power (Lev. 26:19). One leg of that power is our economic system. The destruction of the U.S. economy and its system is on the horizon and yet most people ignore the warning signs and hope that it will just all blow away as a result of government intervention.

As the new congressional leaders look at more ways to spend more money and go deeper into debt, it becomes painfully obvious that we are spending money we do not have. Much of this debt is being financed by the Chinese Communists. While they are financing our debt, they are also taking away our prime manufacturing jobs. For the first time ever, foreign cars dominate car sales in America. This year, 51% of all cars sold in the U.S. are foreign makes.

New World Order Still on Track

Recently, it was announced that Africa is headed toward the establishment of a new region called the African Union. As the world moves toward political globalism, we now learn of a movement towards the African Union which is already established on a path of regional, economic integration with the expected end result of continental economic and political integration.

On July 11, 2000, at the Lome Summit in Togo, the states constituting the organization of the African Union, signed a declaration to form the 53-nation African Union.

The African Union is still in a formative state, but is already officially designated by an emblem, a flag and anthem, a central bank and a unified continental military force. The goal of the African Bank is to create an African single currency. African Union planners are currently calling the African continental currency "the gold Mandela."

The United Nations has strongly supported the African Union as a major solution for the war, poverty, famine and disease, which have plagued the continent for centuries.

Editor's Comment: In the Book of Daniel, it indicates that this New World government will finally come together, driven by economic pressures and international business interests. The driving force behind the regional unification of a new North American Union, European Union, and African Union is economic, political and military. All of these things must be in place before a new world ruler can be elected as the CEO of the world government. The Book of Daniel and Revelation both agree that this great end-time new world power will be broken down into ten world ruling regions.