

Chapter VI

THE CHURCH OF JESUS

We must confine our search to the four gospels of the New Testament to find this church, for it is only there that we find Jesus. Well, if you insist, I will give you also the first eleven verses of Acts, but no more. Now, will you be surprised if I tell you that such a church cannot be found there?

It is true, if we confine our quest to an entity described by the New Testament Greek, *ekklesia*, that there is no such church in the gospels. I have described above how the word is not to be found in the gospels except on two occasions described in Matthew only. In one of these Jesus was plainly designating the synagogue, perhaps also in the other, although I prefer to believe the other reference was to the assembly of the saints at the last day.

What's in this word, church? In so far as the Truth is concerned, not much. So let's drop it from our discussion except as necessary to the title of this chapter, and look for that which we intend the word to convey . . . to the fellowship of his disciples. Yes, the gospels definitely describe the fellowship of his disciples, and Jesus, while using different terms, definitely and clearly describes it. So, what we are going to do in this chapter is to examine the salient features of this fellowship of disciples under the same headings as in the previous two chapters. I list them here yet again as a reminder.

1. Size
2. Divisions
3. Doctrine
4. Administration
5. Adjudication
6. Recruitment
7. Worship and ritual
8. Relation to the world
9. Life

What are the characteristics of these salient features of the fellowship of Jesus' disciples as described in the gospels?

1. Size

The fellowship of his disciples was very small when Jesus left the world. There were the eleven apostles, plus a few others that are named in the gospels, persons such as Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Luke tells us that there were "about a hundred and twenty" in the company of disciples when they came together to select a replacement for Judas. We can take leave to question this number, since it is conveniently rounded off to 10×12 . This figure may therefore be only a symbolic one indicating 10 disciples for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. The number would not have changed much when the Day of Pentecost came and the Holy Spirit fell upon them. It is then that we are told that they baptized "about three thousand souls." We can also question this figure, which is also a convenient multiple of twelve.

Yet there was a time, during the days of his ministry, when Jesus' followers numbered in the thousands. His miracles of feeding succored as many as five thousand men besides women and children. But the crowds did not come because they were interested in what he was saying, at least not many of them. He later rebuked them, saying:

Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves." (John 6:26)

Indeed, the multitude were impressed so much by his miracle of feeding that they were convinced that:

PAUL: THE STRANGER

This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world!" (John 6:14)

Then they sought to take him by force to make him king, but Jesus withdrew again to the hills by himself. (John 6:15)

What happened? Jesus came to bring the kingdom; he had been proclaiming all along that it was very near. Here it was! But Jesus avoided the draft only to go off by himself to pray.

During his triumphal entry into Jerusalem there was a large crowd, called by Luke "the whole multitude of his disciples" surrounding him, following and going before and saying,

Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest! (Luke 19:38)

What happened?

If we go back to his first sermon, delivered in the home synagogue at Nazareth, we see a congregation of many persons who were powerfully swayed by the wisdom of this native son. But shortly afterward they were dragging him outside and trying to kill him.

What happened?

Every time Jesus was on the verge of assembling a great multitude of disciples, he turned away from them or they from him so that after his crucifixion there were only about a hundred faithful ones. And you noted above, of course, how these people were set to make him their King. Didn't Jesus come to bring this very kingdom?

What happened?

Jesus wanted them. He wanted them every one. He loved them and would have gladly received them into his kingdom. Near the beginning, he proclaimed that the fields of Israel were white unto harvest. The multitudes of people were there; the King was there.

What happened?

After Jesus told his disciples that they must eat his flesh and drink his blood, there was an immediate falling away. This was predictable because this was one of the most offensive things he could have said to Jews. John informs us of the result:

After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him. Jesus said to the twelve, "Will you also go away?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life and we have believed and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John 6:66-70)

What can be happening here? Every time he is about to have a real impact on society, to really bring the kingdom, he shoots himself in the foot! And in the above quotation it seems that he was not at all concerned to keep even the twelve, for he immediately branded one of them a traitor. Later, after Jesus had given a sort of confirmation talk to the twelve, he added,

I have said all this to keep you from falling away. (John 16:1)

But then he continued, on the way out to the Mount of Olives that fateful night,

You will all fall away because of me this night; for it is written, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered." But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee. (Matthew 26:31,32)

THE CHURCH OF JESUS

Brash Peter, of course, denied that anything could cause him to fall away . . . but he did.

What happened?

Remember we are speaking here of the size of the fellowship of disciples, and how it was that Jesus seemed to be doing everything contrary to his intention to bring the kingdom to Israel. The fact is, Jesus knew from the very beginning that the fellowship of his disciples must be few. We know his response when he was asked, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?"

Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. (Luke 13:24)

In the Sermon on the Mount he stated most clearly,

Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few. (Matthew 7:13,14)

Near the end, when Jesus looked upon the beloved city, he wept, saying,

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate. (Matthew 23:37,38)

Then we read this from Luke:

And when he drew near and saw the city he wept over it saying, "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hid from your eyes. For the days shall come upon you, when your enemies will cast up a bank about you and surround you, and hem you in on every side, and dash you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation. (Luke 19:41-44)

It appeared that at one point, Jesus could have had that city with all its multitudes, and he truly wanted them – witness his tears over the doomed municipality – but there was a problem – it was a lack of knowledge and of willingness to learn. Every time he sought to inform them, his words only offended them. They did not know the time of their visitation, they did not know the way of peace, and they were unwilling to learn.

And most significantly, Jesus refused to compromise the integrity of his gospel one whit for the sake of persuading a single soul.

What happened?

Here is what happened: Whenever Jesus saw the multitudes coming to him, he could see that they came from motives that were not the least compatible with his "way of peace." He taught them; he sought to persuade them; he performed his wonderful miracles before them, but they refused to hear, to really hear him. The only way he could get their attention was to offend them with words so shocking they could not fail to hear. When they turned away, it was to their condemnation. Finally, they killed him in a vain effort to silence those words.

Size? The Fellowship of Jesus' Disciples was always very small; the multitudes were never a part of it. There were many times when even the durability of his closest disciples could hardly survive all the offenses. He knows what is in men; he knows our love of life, and he is under no delusion as to the numbers of sheep that will assemble before him on the last day. He knew, he knows, and he thus informs us, that the Fellowship of His Disciples in the world will always be very, very small. It was very small when he ascended into heaven; if we can believe him, as I am persuaded

PAUL: THE STRANGER

we can, it is yet a very small number today.

Paul made the cost of discipleship very low: "the free gift". But Jesus made it mountainous:

If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple So, therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:26-33)

Can we begin to understand why the numbers are few in this categorization? Paul put only Jesus on the cross to pay the price of salvation. Jesus puts every disciple on a cross! What a contradiction!

And the kingdom? He knew that it did not depend in the least on the multitudes. He would, by himself and alone on a cross, bring it irreversibly into the world! And this while the few faithful disciples slept as he agonized in Gethsemane!

We can say without hesitation that the key word to describe the size of the Fellowship of Jesus' Disciples is "little." Jesus designated it his "little flock." (Luke 12:32)

I do not mean that it was small only because it was in its beginnings; no, it could have been huge even then. It was small because his sieve was very fine, and only the few could penetrate it. Furthermore, Jesus' expectation was that it must always remain small, "few" must always be the appropriate key word to describe its numbers, while "little" describes its size..

The way is hard and the gate is narrow that leads to life, and few there be that find it.

2. Divisions

Whenever Jesus made a statement in Truth, I take it that the Truth is eternal and the statement is true forever. Therefore there have never been, are not now, and will never be divisions within his Fellowship of Disciples. This must be, since he said clearly,

And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd. (John 10:16)

This was a focus of his prayer to the Father shortly before the end:

I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me. (John 17:20-23)

The Lord Jesus made this one of his most earnest prayers, that his small band of disciple in the world should be perfectly one.

What is the key to this unity? How is it that the disciples, though few, are nevertheless from every nation and yet they are perfectly united? Understand clearly that we are not speaking here of unity as a goal, for Jesus has plainly stated that there shall be one flock and one shepherd. This unity is not goal, it is reality. There are at least three things to be listed as the keys to unity; they are love, the shepherd, and the word.

Everyone understands that love is a binding force that draws persons together. When it is the love of God that infuses the heart, it overcomes all divisions. I think that everyone will agree on

THE CHURCH OF JESUS

this or at least give lip service to it. Nevertheless, among the millions of churchmen throughout the world, all agreeing that love is the force that binds, there is no unity, but a great plethora of division. Obviously then, it is one thing to speak of the love of God and the love of the Fellowship of Disciples in the world – yet something else altogether to really experience it so as to produce the perfect unity for which Jesus prayed. It is too easy to give lip service to love without actually putting it to work.

How do we do that? How do we put this love to work?

This brings us to the shepherd. When he said, "so there shall be one flock, one shepherd," he was telling us how to put love to work to create a unity of the flock.

We can only be united if we have the same shepherd! The sad fact is that the many Christians throughout the world, divided from one another on so many different grounds, yet earnestly contend for Jesus as their shepherd. So, there must be something amiss with this contention. If Jesus were truly their shepherd, they would be united!

We can get a clue here as to what it is amiss when we see that almost every denomination of Christians also profess other shepherds. The very word pastor is Latin for shepherd. So, everywhere there is a pastor, there is a shepherd, and the members of his flock listen to him regularly. They rationalize this situation by defining the pastor as an "under shepherd" while claiming Jesus for their chief shepherd. This cannot be true, however, because if Jesus were truly their chief shepherd, they would be united, perfectly one!

Can the problem here be the under shepherds? Yes, but why? Clearly, the problem is in the numbers. Jesus said there should be only one shepherd to tend the one flock. The flock is few in numbers; the shepherd, one in number! Can you hear him?

This brings us to the third key to unity, the word of Jesus. Do you note, in John 10:16 above, how it works? "I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice." This is the final explanation for the unity of the little flock. They love the Lord, they look to him as their one and only shepherd, and they heed his voice.

We can claim to love, and it may be authentic within the bounds of its limitations. We can claim Jesus for our chief shepherd, and that may be the real intention of our hearts. But the simple fact is that the churchmen and churchwomen don't listen to this shepherd – they are too busy listening to other shepherds, to the stranger and others. The sheep of the little flock, however, are deaf to the strange shepherd. How do I know? Because my shepherd said it, and I have listened.

A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers. (John 10:5)

The unity that exists in Jesus comes from having only one shepherd, from heeding only one voice, and from manifesting love for him by listening to that voice and abiding by it. He said:

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. (John 14:15)

Here is how it works:

If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. (John 14:23)

Isn't that simple? Not one complicated thing about it! There is, of course, another player in this, the Holy Spirit. We must yield to him, and:

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that

PAUL: THE STRANGER

are to come. (John 16:13)

But this does not complicate the situation in any way, because the Spirit and the Word of Jesus are one. They come together, they abide together, and within them there is always a unity. Jesus explained it this way:

It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are Spirit and life. (John 6:63)

I conclude that one can neither separate the Spirit from the Word of Jesus, nor the Word from the Spirit. If you have received his words and abide by them (the evidence that they are received) you have received the Spirit. There is no other way to receive the Spirit. Conversely, you have not received the Spirit if you have not received the Word. I must emphasize again at this point that the Word here consists in its entirety in the words that Jesus uttered in the world. Jesus went on to explain it this way:

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (John 16:13,14)

Therefore we know the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, will speak to us whatever he hears, but he only hears the words of Jesus, because, "he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

We must conclude, then, that the fellowship of disciples in Jesus are and have always been united in one, and thus will they ever be. The bond of their unity is love for the Lord, which, when truly present, opens their hearts to the words of the One True Shepherd through the work of the Holy Spirit, and they become perfectly one. They never need to seek unity among themselves. They are one!

There is only one key word that can properly describe this salient feature of the fellowship of disciples of Jesus: none. They are not divided. There are no divisions to separate them; never have been, are not now, and never will be!

3. Doctrine

What is the source of doctrine in this small, undivided Fellowship of Disciples? Haven't we answered that question already? If hearing and receiving the words of Jesus explains why they are so few, and also why they are not divided, the very same words must also be the source of all true doctrine. True, the Holy Spirit administers the words, but the Holy Spirit is not the source:

For he will not speak on his own authority. (John 16:13), and

He will take what is mine and declare it to you. (John 15:15), and

If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. (John 8:31,32)

All sound doctrine comes then only through abiding in the words of Jesus of Nazareth, which explains why the Fellowship of his Disciples is perfectly one. They agree in all things because they listen to one and the same shepherd. To repeat once more, these words of Jesus are the words spoken by Jesus of Nazareth, the words that issued from the mouth of that one historical person long ago. We find them only in the gospels of the New Testament. They are not in Paul's epistles, nor those of James, John, or Peter. They are not in the Acts or the Revelation. (Oops! I

THE CHURCH OF JESUS

gave you the first eleven verses of Acts, didn't I?)

So we come quickly to the key word that is the source of doctrine for the fellowship of the disciples of Jesus: it is Jesus. He is their only teacher and guide. He is the only source of doctrine and it comes directly from him through his word, and the aid of the Holy Spirit.

4. Administration

What is the source of authority in the Fellowship of Disciples of Jesus, and how does it flow? This is an easy question to answer if we are truly open to the words of Jesus, for he gives us a simple, concise, and straightforward answer:

For I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has bidden me. (John 12:49,50)

The reason, of course, that the words of Jesus can be the basis or unity in the fellowship, as I explained above, is that they are so simple and clear that there is no room for disputes about their meaning. So, here, Jesus tells us that the Father is the source of his authority, and the words he speaks he received from the Father.

Now, the key to administration is found particularly in how that authority flows. Jesus stated that he is both Lord and Master (teacher):

You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. (John 13:13,14)

Furthermore, he also said:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (Matthew 28:18)

Therefore we know that the path of authority moves directly from the Father to the Son, Jesus. Where does it go from there? This is the key question in all of this, for if the authority moves from Jesus to the Pope (Holy Father), or the Patriarch (ruling Father), or the Pastor (shepherd), or the Bishop, or even the congregation, then we have a confused situation because there are many of these all claiming to be in the direct line of authority. There will furthermore be divisions among us, for some of us will be listening to one channel, some to another, and these channels seldom speak the same things. That is why they are different, divided channels. Again, let us go to the voice of Jesus:

But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brethren. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called masters, for you have one master, the Christ. He who is greatest among you shall be your servant; whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. (Matthew 23:8-12)

You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you, but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. (Mark 10:42-44)

Do you hear him? The disciples have only one master, the Christ. They do not exercise authority over one another, but each one submits himself or herself to the other. Now, this is a fact,

PAUL: THE STRANGER

because the Lord said it. We can conclude with full assurance that wherever authority comes through one of the disciples to others, or through many disciples to others, there is not the Fellowship of the Disciples of Jesus, because it doesn't work that way.

Then how does it get to the disciples? Mustn't it be channeled through one or more of them? If you are now asking this question, you haven't really heard him, have you? Look at his words. All authority is his. He is the only Teacher and Master. He is the only Lord. God is the only Father. Therefore, the flow of authority in the Fellowship of Disciples must be directly from Jesus to each individual disciple. There can be no intermediate channels through which authority flows to the individuals.

The key word here then, that best defines the source and flow of all authority to the Fellowship of Disciples must be Jesus. There can be no other links in the chain of authority. Jesus is himself the sole administrator of his Fellowship of Disciples and the flow goes directly to each individual. There are really two key words to consider here: the source is Jesus and the flow is direct. But we will specify only Jesus because we require a single word.

5. Adjudication

Who decides? When there is a dispute within the Fellowship, the Word of Jesus must decide, for he is the sole source of authority. There is no chain, either descending or ascending, between him and the disciples.

But the varieties of disputes are limitless in number and, simple as is the Word of Jesus, there will be times when it is not immediately obvious how his Word applies. One disciple may see it one way, another disciple another way, and so they cannot agree. Jesus knew these possibilities, of course, and he provided a simple rule for deciding every case where there is disagreement among the disciples. It is this:

- (1) If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. (Matthew 18:15)
- (2) But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. (Matthew 18:16)
- (3) If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the assembly. (Matthew 18:17)
- (4) If he refuses to listen even to the assembly, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector (Publican). (Matthew 18:17)

This simple, four-step procedure is the rule for the adjudication of all disputes within the Fellowship of Disciples. There is no one person in charge, no single individual who is to direct the outcome. The Lord Jesus is and remains the only authority as the Fellowship of Disciples follows his rule for adjudication of disputes. Within the authority of his Holy Word and under the guidance of his Holy Spirit, and immersed in his Holy Fellowship, moved by his perfect love, every effort is made to save the offending and abstinent party. But he must be excluded if the four steps cannot reach him. He does not listen to the words of Jesus, Jesus is not his Lord, and he must be confronted with this reality.

Jesus is by this means the sole adjudicator. So, the key word here is, again, Jesus.

6. Recruiting

There are three things that we must put foremost in our minds as we consider the subject of

THE CHURCH OF JESUS

recruitment in the Fellowship of Disciples as they appear in the gospels:

- 1) Jesus sends his disciples out into the world to be his witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)
- 2) We are to make disciples of all nations, so that they will "observe all that I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19:20)
- 3) This will be done in accord with his command, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. (Mark 16:15) This is, of course, the true and only gospel of the Kingdom as delivered by Jesus, which springs from the application of his Great Principle.

We fulfill the task of recruiting new disciples when we carefully follow this plan. We must emphasize that it must truly be Jesus who sends us, that we must truly deliver to all nations all that he has commanded, which puts his words in the heart of the task. Further, it must be the true gospel according to Jesus that we teach, and it must be set forth in the same manner as Jesus himself set it forth, without compromise to enhance the numbers. The multitudes are going to be offended by it. The key word here is witnessing, or witness to keep it short. It is by preaching that his disciples are his witnesses. It is through their witness that they inform others to observe all he has commanded them, and by which they make other disciples.

7. Worship and Ritual

We will here search for evidence of the elements of worship defined in the prior two chapters. We list them here again for your convenience and then proceed to comment on each one.

- 1. Sacred music, including congregational, choral, and hymn singing.
- 2. Public, common prayer, including the Lord's Prayer
- 3. Eucharist or Lord's Supper
- 4. Collection of tithes and offerings
- 5. The sermon
- 6. The minister, often cloaked in "ministerial attire", specifically, a long robe

1) Sacred music, including congregational, choral, and hymn singing. This was an element in their worship together with Jesus, which we learn by reference to the accounts of the Lord's Supper, Matthew 26:30: "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

2) Public, common prayer, including the Lord's Prayer. There is no evidence that this was part of their common worship. They prayed individually, and Jesus prayed individually, in keeping with his command to pray in secret. (Matthew 6:5,6)

3) Eucharist or Lord's Supper. If Jesus' last meal with his disciples was a time of worship, then we must include this in the list of worship activities. However, there is much evidence that this was a common meal such as the Jews observed on the Passover, not intended to become a part of the worship of the Fellowship of Disciples. In support of this, we have the absence of any such observance in the New Testament Fellowship of Disciples.

They indeed observed a common meal or "love feast" when they came together, but we do not see this in the Fellowship of Disciples as it appears in the gospels, unless we specify such an event as the breakfast with the Lord by the seashore after the Resurrection. This was surely a

PAUL: THE STRANGER

special occasion so we cannot draw any firm conclusions.

4) Collection of Tithes and Offerings. There is no record of this, as an element of worship, in Jesus' Fellowship of Disciples.

5) The sermon. There were sermons, the most notable of which was the Sermon on the Mount. But this was not delivered at what we today would define as a service of worship. It was more like a political rally, as multitudes of people gathered to hear the speech of a man who would possibly become their king.

6) The minister cloaked in ministerial attire. There was certainly no such person in the Fellowship of Jesus' Disciples

I conclude that we cannot say anything for certain about the order of worship of the first Fellowship of Disciples. They did certain things that are elements of a modern worship service, but they are not defined as such. Jesus never specified what we must do in a common, or public worship service. There are certain things that he specified that we are not to do in public, specifically fasting, the giving of alms and prayer. We must also be careful to keep our motives pure when we practice any act of piety, lest we be doing it in order to be seen by men. (Matthew 6:1)

Jesus went to the synagogues, there to worship with his fellow Jews, and he seemed to assume that his disciples would continue this practice, else how could he prophesy that they would be thrown out of the synagogues? (John 16:2) The evidence in the gospels is that the elements of worship in the synagogues included alms giving, the reading of scripture, teaching, prayer, and prophesying and probably also the singing of hymns. It would seem, therefore, that the elements of worship that began to appear in the Acts and that are retained to this day in meetings for worship were carried over from the synagogue. Jesus may have assumed that they would be thus preserved, less those elements he proscribed. This would explain the absence of any specific order of worship from his lips.

There may be another explanation for this absence. Jesus said:

For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (Matthew 18:20)

He would be in their midst in that his words would be ruling in their hearts, and would therefore lead them in the performance of their worship. Could he have been relying on a spontaneous expression of worship in each gathering, apart from any formal order of the elements of worship? When he is always meeting with his disciples, it is completely unnecessary to have a prescribed order of worship. He will personally lead them in every instance!

Jesus did not prescribe the elements of worship. At the very least, we can conclude that this was not and is not important to him. If it were, he would surely have dealt with it. He did certainly proscribe specific elements that were a part of the synagogue service, and these must never be included when we meet together.

Our key word here could therefore be spontaneous, but to shorten it and use one of Jesus own words, we will select free. His presence in the assembly will be manifest by, among other things, the absence of the things he has proscribed.

8. Relation to the world

There are two utterances of Jesus that define the relation of the Fellowship of Disciples to the world:

THE CHURCH OF JESUS

My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world. (John 18:36)

If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (John 15:18,19)

John 18:36 was spoken to Pilate in answer to the question, "Are you the king of the Jews?" (John 18:33) He gives, as the telling evidence, the statement that his kingship is not of this world and that his servants, his disciples, do not fight to deliver their king. The telling characteristic of the kingdoms of the world must be, then, that they do fight for their king, for their kingdom or for their country. I have shown elsewhere that the fundamentals of the world never change, so that it remains true that those kingships, or powers, that are of the world manifest that bond by fighting. We know therefore how to identify a state or any other body that is of the world: its servants fight! The servants of Jesus, his disciples, do not fight, not even to maintain his kingship, because it is not of the world. The statement of John 15:18,19 above then explains the whole: the disciples, like the kingship of Jesus, are not of the world. Furthermore, the not-of-ness of the disciples is not a friendly separation, because the world hates them, just as it hated Jesus and put him to death. Neither Jesus nor the disciples can maintain a friendship with the world, as separate entities, because the separation is of such nature as inevitably creates hostility. There can be no covenant of peace between the disciples and the world. James, the Lord's brother, wrote truly:

Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (James 4:4)

If the members of the little flock of disciples will not fight for their king, they surely will not fight for the nation of the world! Everywhere, therefore, we see that the example of the disciples is one of peace. Whatever must occur in the world around them, they, unlike Jerusalem, know and hold to the way of peace.

I do not mean that every pacifist is a disciple of Jesus. There are times when citizens of the state find that pacifism is the most effective way to fight for their "king" or state authority, or world goals. Gandhi and King are the prime examples of this. Even when "Christians" practice pacifism in the name of Christ but do it to gain a worldly objective, such as racial integration, etc., they do not bear witness to the kingdom of God. They fail to understand that the disciples of Jesus refuse to fight for a specific reason: his kingship is not of this world. Their treasure is not on the earth.

Jesus went to the heart of this non-relationship with the world when he responded to the question about giving tribute to Caesar:

But he perceived their craftiness, and said to them, "Show me a coin. Whose likeness and inscription has it?" They said, "Caesar's." He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. (Luke 20:23-25)

I have discussed this in detail elsewhere. Here let me only repeat that the obvious implication is that the bearing of an image is the mark of possession. It is so for coins, it is likewise so for human beings. We bear the image of God. We do not belong to Caesar! Therefore, the disciples of Jesus are not citizens of the state, not subject to the state nor bound to the state in any way whatsoever. They do not fight because his kingship is not of this world.

The state authority can never understand this, and will forever assume, mistakenly, that such a person, a disciple of Jesus, is some sort of threat to the state. This is one root of the inevitable hostility that exists between the kingdom of God and the nations of the world.

We look now for a key word to define the relation of the Fellowship of Disciples to the world. "Separate" is a good word, and it is certainly true. It does not go far enough to be adequate,

PAUL: THE STRANGER

however. A better word is alienated. Peter surely understood this, for we find him writing,

Beloved, I beseech you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul. (1 Peter 2:11)

But our Lord has a better one even than that. We find it in his saying,

If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. (John 8:36)

Therefore, let us select free as our key word here.

9. Life

The only correct attitude to life for the Fellowship of Disciples is forever enshrined in what I often refer to as The Great Principle. I cannot set it before you too often, so here it is once more:

He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. (John 12:25)

This explains why Jesus went to the cross; it explains why the Holy Martyrs went willingly to the wild beasts or to the flames. It is the only correct explanation for the pacifism of Jesus and his disciples. It is not that they despair of life. No, it is because of their supreme zest for the eternal life of the Father. They constantly remember the promise of their Lord, which in faith I deem to be true:

. . . whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. (John 11:26)

The keyword that most properly defines the attitude to life of the Fellowship of Disciples is, therefore, hate. The consuming nature of life in this world is such that it does not permit a neutral attitude. If we do not love it, we must hate it, for it truly works to destroy our souls. I would only state in closing that this hate does not mean to despise all things that pertain to life. Hate is the scorning of a bond, and it means that the Disciples of Jesus have broken the bond of love that bound them to life, and now are bonded to life eternal.