

A TALE OF TWO CHURCHES

It's taking place before our eyes, yet no one seems to see it--the slow death of official Christendom and the quiet resurrection of the authentic Body of Christ.

The death of Christendom is not a pretty sight. All the experts are frantically trying to revive this giant religious complexity that drains the life of all who draw near. There are merged churches, mega churches, house churches, emerging churches, community churches, miracle churches, cell churches, apostolic churches, New Testament churches, healing churches, universal churches, catholic churches, orthodox churches.

Even the most "successful" churches of Christendom are working against the clock. The atmosphere of a hard, cynical world is seeping into them. And all the human ingenuity in the world is insufficient to renew them. Like the empires of the past, the hour always arrives, when they collapse into the dust of history.

Christendom is not the Church. Christendom is the tomb out of which the Body of Christ rises. Out of these very dying churches, God is raising up the Body of Christ, which has been here all along. The Shepherd is gathering his sheep into one Fold. And he is doing it without our help.

***I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me,
as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and
I lay down my life for the sheep.***

***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***

One flock. One Shepherd. The Shepherd alone has the power to gather this Flock. Will his One Flock emerge as a gigantic super-church? Will they meet in sports arenas and football stadiums? Hardly. Like their Master, the members of this one flock will be low-profile. Like their Master, their names will be hidden in God.

They will meet wherever the Shepherd chooses to gather them---sometimes in twos and threes, sometimes in thousands. These people have one thing in common: every one is crucified with Christ; it is no longer they who live, but Christ who lives in them.

These people think with the mind of Christ, which is the mind of a servant. They are focused on one thing: doing the Father's will wherever he puts them to serve.

THE REVERSE HIERARCHY

The Body of Christ which is rising out of the tomb of Christendom functions through a reverse hierarchy, as the Lord Jesus commands.

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

These words of our Master are not suggestions, they are commands, commands which have been ignored by Christendom for 20 centuries. But the Body of Christ has always understood and practiced those commands. And now as the Body of Christ emerges from Christendom, these commands continue to be heeded and obeyed.

In the Body of Christ there are no professionals. There are no officials. There are men and women who manifest the authority of heaven simply by their integrity, their simple submission to the Master and to one another.

MAMMON DETHRONED

In Christendom, while Jesus has always been proclaimed as Lord, the real master has been Mammon. Money has been essential to the life of Christendom. Money builds churches, money buys air time. Money stands behind every new kingdom Christendom builds. Fund-raising has replaced seeking first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.

But the Body of Christ which is rising out of the ashes of Christendom, is careful to serve only one Master: God. Money is no longer master but servant. The Body of Christ handles money with its eyes on heaven.

"He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much.

If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?

No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

Luke 16

THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT IS THE POWER OF THE CROSS

Who can deny that the Holy Spirit has been given great prominence in Christendom? Tongues, healing, prophecy, signs and wonders, are all found in Christendom's "spiritual toolbox." What's missing is the essential link between spiritual power and the cross of Jesus.

Indeed, the power of the Lord Jesus at work in this world is the power of his resurrection. But this power is only present when it rises out of his crucifixion. When we seek to exercise spiritual power in the name of our Lord without being crucified with him, we lose touch with heaven's power. Whatever power we have comes from a dangerous source.

When I came to you, brethren, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in much fear

***and trembling;
and my speech and my message were not in
plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of
the Spirit and of power,
that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men
but in the power of God.***

1 Corinthians 2

The only redemptive power on this earth is “Jesus Christ, and him crucified”---the power of the cross. The power of the Holy Spirit is only found in the power of the cross.

In the Body of Christ, the Holy Spirit releases the power of the cross by causing the death of Jesus to work in us, so that the resurrection life of Jesus can flow out of us.

The power of the cross negates our pompous egos. The power of the cross sets us free from our vain past, takes our vain agendas down into the grave, again and again and again.

THE BODY HAS ONLY ONE HEAD.

***Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow
up in every way into him who is the head, into
Christ,
from whom the whole body, joined and knit
together by every joint with which it is supplied,
when each part is working properly, makes bodily
growth and upbuilds itself in love.***

Ephesians 4

The Body of Christ has many members, but only one Head, many servants, but only one Master. If we are part of the Body, we are joined, first to the Head, then to each other. Each of us is responsible to maintain a living, direct connection with the Lord Jesus himself.

Any man or woman who presumes to come between the member and the Head is a false prophet. Any person who says, "Trust me, I will take responsibility for this thing I am telling you to do," is a false prophet.

Each member is directly joined to the Head, just as each branch is directly joined to the Vine. The Vine can only supply life to the branch if the connection is strong and clean. Likewise, the Head can only sustain the member if the connection is strong and clean.

We can ask other believers to pray for us, but we can never expect another believer to do our praying for us. In the Body of Christ everyone is a priest, but there are no clergy.

SO WHERE DO WE FIT?

As the Body of Christ rises out of the tomb of Christendom, the Shepherd is causing his voice to be heard with fresh power.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand."

John 10

If we hear his voice and follow him, we find ourselves part of this mysterious resurrection. We are truly part of the Body of Christ that is rising out of the shadows of Christendom....

.....If we hear the Shepherd's voice, and follow him.