

Zion Assembly



Church of God

MINUTES

4th Annual General Assembly

THEME:

“A Peculiar People”

**August 8-12, 2007
Cleveland, TN**

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Wade H. Phillips
Presiding Bishop

Welcome Delegates!

We have looked forward for several months now with thrilling anticipation to this great Assembly gathering. It is Zion Assembly's annual reunion, a time in which our people rejoice to see and visit with one another; to experience the sweet fellowship of "brethren of like precious faith;" to hear the plain teaching and preaching of the pure Word of God; to hear directly from God through the Spirit and to witness His power descend upon His church.

Memories of great Assemblies in the past come to mind. Multitudes have on occasion—especially during those early Assemblies—witnessed the presence of angels and phenomenal appearances of "fire" and "holy mists." Thousands were miraculously healed and delivered in those great meetings. O how we long to see and hear again the extraordinary manifestations of His glory and power—to witness the reappearance of that "cloud by day and fire by night" in the hearts and actions of God's people. Nothing less will mold Zion Assembly into "A Peculiar People" in these last days.

These "divine visitations" are within our reach in this generation, if we are willing to consecrate ourselves in the Spirit and to lay aside "every weight," submitting all to God in holy reverence. Do we love one another with "a pure heart fervently"—and God supremely? Do we desire to go deeper into God, to witness again the sweeping glory of His power and love? Then "what doth hinder?" Certainly God is the same today as He was then and He still desires to bless His people "in heavenly places in Christ Jesus!"

During these few days together, let us listen to "hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." We have come together in this holy convocation for this very purpose. We are Christ's *ekklesia*—His church—authorized and anointed to act for Him in this world, to "bind and loose on earth" what He has "bound and loosed in heaven." This is serious business, and should be performed only in holy reverence. Every trace of the "flesh" should be eradicated, and must be, if we will see His shekinah glory!

Put all you can into this Assembly while you are here, and get all you can out of it. We want to go back to our fields of labor on fire for God, refreshed, and equipped for the great task that He has assigned to us. "Now the God of patience and consolation [comfort] grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 15:6).

The Fourth Annual General Assembly

Zion Assembly Church of God
August 8-12, 2007

ADMINISTRATION

Presiding Bishop/Moderator	Wade H. Phillips
Superintendent of Operations	E. A. McDonald
Chief Clerk	Julia Massey (Brenda Reitler, Rita Goodman, Billie Smith, Shirley Kimble, Helen Little, Molly Hayward)
Chief Usher	Buddy Quillen (Milford Kimble, Jack Little, J. J. Davis, Sam Mnday, Trevor Graves, C. R. Gregory, Jerry Tingler, Lee Brown, Dave Ashley, Jim Hayward, Ed Reitler, Bruce Wilcox)
Chief Registrar	Marie Crook (Shanda Gross, Heather Melton, Angela Reid, Katie Busbee)

ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Chairman.....	William Crook
Secretary.....	Zachary Snyder
Members.....	A.B. White Ricky Graves Joshua Amara Ron Massey Danny Ramirez (Alternates) C. R. Gregory Ray Dickson
Video.....	Scott Neill
Sound Equipment.....	Alan Miller
Photography.....	Julie Steele

Greetings!



E.A. McDonald
Superintendent of Operations

The administration for this General Assembly wishes to extend a hearty welcome to each delegate. We trust that you will be spiritually enriched during this week of worship, fellowship, and business. The following instructions are given to help make your stay a more pleasant and enjoyable experience.

Once again United Christian Fellowship has graciously provided their facilities for the 4th Annual General Assembly of Zion Assembly Church of God. Let us show our appreciation and respect by properly caring for the property and equipment they have provided. Personnel have been appointed to address any problem that may arise during this Assembly. Please consult with these authorized persons to make any adjustment or change in the facility or equipment. Ushers will be stationed in each session at entrances inside the auditorium. If you have a need or encounter a problem please report it to one of the ushers.

A nursery has been provided for your convenience. It is located down the east hallway. Children should not be left alone in the nursery or anywhere in the facility. Parents are encouraged to have their children sit with them in the auditorium during worship services. Maintaining order and discipline in the house of God is always becoming to the saints. Let us show diligence to be prompt and ready to worship, so that each session will be on schedule and edifying. Those on the program are encouraged to be prepared and ready to fulfill their appointed part in the service.

As we enter this sacred time together, we trust that you will feel the love of God and the love of one another. May your stay be pleasant and enjoyable, and, when you depart, may you be able to say, "It was good for us to be here."

Pre-Assembly Programs

Assembly Business Committee

(9:00 a.m., Tuesday, August 7, 2007)

Ministers' Meeting

(9:00 a.m., Wednesday, August 8, 2007)

Ministers' Luncheon

(12:30 p.m., Wednesday, August 8, 2007))

Assembly Program

Wednesday

6:00 p.m. Worship—Zachary & Kari Snyder, IN

Special Song—Darlene Miller, TN

Official Opening of the Assembly—Presiding Bishop

Welcome—Ricky & Sherry Graves, MS

Appointment of Assembly Business Committee

Special Singing—Jim Melton, OH, Zachary & Kari
Snyder, IN

Assembly Expense offering

Message—E. A. McDonald, TN

Invitation

Thursday

9:00 a.m. Worship—Buddy & Jeannie Quillen, MD

Special Singing—Molly Hayward, MD, John &

Wanda Stamper, VA, Billy & Margaret Terrell

Message—“*A Peculiar People---An Holy Nation*”

C. R. Gregory, KY

General Treasurer's Report

Presiding Bishop's Report

Special Song—Reginaldo Duarte, CA

Other Reports:

Managing Editor—*Voice of Zion*—Joseph Steele

Youth & Evangelism Report—Zachary Snyder

(Assistant Presiding Bishop & Sunday School)

Thursday

1:00 p.m. Musical Prelude

Reports from Around the World

(Overseers, have your region organized and ready to march on time. Turn in written reports to the presiding bishop following your march.)

United States

Mideast Region—Ron Massey, Overseer

Indiana Maryland Virginia
Kentucky Ohio West Virginia

Southeast Region—E. A. McDonald, Overseer

Florida North Carolina Tennessee
Georgia South Carolina

Southcentral Region—Ricky Graves, Overseer

Alabama Louisiana Nebraska Arkansas
Mississippi
Kansas Missouri

Western Region—A. B. White, Overseer

California Utah
Oregon Washington

Northwest Region & Southwest Region—

Comments by Wade H. Phillips

East Africa—Joshua Amara, Overseer

Kenya Tanzania Uganda

Central America & Other Areas

Comments by Wade H. Phillips

—Supper Break—

Thursday

7:40 p.m. Worship—Southeast Region

Assembly Expense offering

Special Singing—Trevor Graves, MS, James Kent,
SC, Billy Terrell

Message—“*A Peculiar People—Showing Forth
His Praises*”—Miguel Garcia, CA

Invitation & Altar Service

Friday

9:00 p.m. Worship—Greenville, SC

Special Song—Eddie & Faye Davis, SC

Ladies Retreat Report—Norie Garavito, CA

Camp Reports:

Mideast—Ron Massey

Southeast—Cliff & Becky Kelton

Western—Pete & Francis Sarry

School of Ministry Program—Ricky Graves

Special Song—Juan Lopez, CA

Message—“*A Peculiar People—Delivered From
Divine Wrath*”—Bill Solomon, CA

[Note: Kids’ Konvention will be conducted today:
10:15–11:45 a.m. and 2:00–3:30 p.m.]

—Lunch Break—

Friday

1:35 p.m. Special Songs—Jim & Heather Melton, OH

Voice of Zion Program

Special Singing—Brenda Whitlock, MS

Message and Report—Danny Ramirez, Field
Secretary

Special Singing—California & Mississippi Youth,
Brenda Whitlock, MS

Ordination Service

[**Note:** Ministers and their companions should be seated in the front of the auditorium near the rostrum in preparation for the ordination service.]

—Supper Break—

Friday

6:00 p.m. Worship—Mideast Region

Special Songs—Trevor Graves, MS, Nichols
family, AL

Assembly Expense Offering

Message—“*Wisdom Crieth Out*”—Kenneth
Merritt, TN

Special Song—Trevor Graves, MS

Praise Reports—Sandra Moore, SC, Efrain
Hernandez, NE, Jim Parker, CA

Special Singing—Marie Crook, TN, Darlene Miller,
TN, Brenda Whitlock, MS

Message—“*Confess Your Faults One to Another*”—
Bruce Wilcox, TN

Saturday

7:50 a.m. Morning Prayer Service—Miguel Garcia, CA

Special Singing—Michael George, SC, April
Trotter, SC

Message—“*A Peculiar People—Ruled From
Above*”—Rocky Dalton, VA

Recognition of Special Guest

Special Singing—Zion’s Melodies, AL, Brenda
Whitlock, MS, School of Ministry Choir

Presiding Bishop’s Annual Address

—Lunch Break—

Saturday

2:15 p.m. Worship—Southeast Region
Praise Reports—Ray Dickson, TN, Wanda
Stamper, VA, Roger Barber
Special Song—Bayou Girls, AL

Assembly Business Committee Report

—Supper Break—

Saturday

6:30 p.m. Worship—Bayou La Batre, AL
Sunday School Program—Jeannie Quillen
Special Singing—Brenda Whitlock, MS, James
Kent, SC
Youth Program—Zachary Snyder

Sunday

9:00 a.m. Worship—Western Region
Children's Ministries—Cheryl McDonald
Mission Program—Eunice Gregory
Special Singing—Assembly Choir, Lee Brown,
WV, Zion's Melodies, AL
Message—*"A Peculiar People—Zealous of Good
Works"*—Joshua Amara, Kenya
Special Song—Zachary Snyder, IN
Appointments
Consecration Service
Special Song—Darlene Miller, TN

Business Sessions

General Treasurer's Report August 9, 2007

FUNDS RECEIVED

TITHE FUND	\$132,406.50
VOICE OF ZION-SUBSCRIPTIONS	9,073.02
ORGHANAGE	16,486.99
EXPENSE	8,954.46
MISSIONS	40,943.86
BUILDING FUND	33,050.35
SCHOOL OF MINISTRY	11,964.50
OVERSEER	6,214.81
YOUTH	3,384.72
WORLD MISSIONS	40,550.84
OTHER	6,515.89
TOTAL FUNDS RECEIVED	\$309,545.94

Assembly Business Committee Report

Adopted by the General Assembly

August 11, 2007

We, the Assembly Business Committee for Zion Assembly Church of God, after prayerful and careful consideration, make the following recommendations to the General Assembly for your consideration and approval:

SECTION I:

ADDITIONS TO ABSTRACT OF FAITH

Gambling (“Gaming”)—Due to the increase of lotteries and other forms of gambling, we feel that we should make it clear that Zion Assembly Church of God is opposed to gambling in any form. Gambling brings with it a negative effect on society, is immoral and encourages greed (Exodus 20:17; 1 Timothy 6:9, 10) This sin is associated with wasting time, money, and possessions. It also carries with it the stigma of greed and covetousness (see Exodus 20:17; Psalm 10:3; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; Ephesians 5:5; 1 Timothy 6:9, 10; Hebrews 13:5). Gambling of any kind (lotteries, casinos, sports betting, video poker, (slot) machines, on-line gambling, bingo, etc.) is denounced in principle throughout Scripture. It is also addictive, leads to increased crime, and often destroys marriages and homes.

The Rapture and Pre-Millennial Second Coming of Jesus—Christ is coming again in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (Matthew 24:27, 28). “The dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; see also 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52).

All who are “caught up” in the first resurrection (traditionally called the “rapture”) will attend the marriage supper of the lamb (Revelation 19:7-9). Christ will then return to earth (the Second Coming) and reign with the saints for a thousand years (vv. 4, 6; see also Zechariah 14:4, 5; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; Jude 14, 15; Revelation 5:10; 19:11-21).

SECTION II:

ORDINATION OF MINISTERS

It has come to the attention of this committee that many of our licensed ministers (especially female evangelists) are having difficulties ministering in certain areas, such as prisons and hospitals, due to the fact that they are currently licensed as “ministers.” It is our recommendation that we change the terminology from its current “Minister” to “Ordained Minister,” to assist these faithful individuals in their work for Christ and His church. This, of course, is only a measure to give our ministry recognition before the world. The term “ordination” here signifies licensing, not ordination in our traditional sense of eldership (bishops and deacons).

SECTION III:

LAY MINISTRY

We recommend that General Headquarters develop a universal licensing certificate and identification card to be distributed to the Regional Offices to be available for the purpose of certifying Lay Ministers. This will give uniformity throughout the church universally. We further recommend that a universal reporting system be established for Lay Ministers to present to his/her local church at every quarterly conference.

SECTION IV:

APPOINTMENT OF REGIONAL TREASURERS AND REGIONAL FINANCE COMMITTEES

We recommend that each region establish and appoint both a Regional Treasurer and a Regional Finance Committee, and that the 4th Sunday Regional Overseer’s offering be sent directly to the Regional Treasurer with his/her report. This recommendation, if passed in this General Assembly, should be implemented in this upcoming August monthly report.

SECTION V:

EMERGENCY FUND FOR MINISTERS AND LOCAL CHURCHES

We recommend that each member of the church contribute at least \$5.00 per year to an Emergency Fund that would be used to assist ministers and local churches in the event of an unforeseen emergency. Non-members may also contribute. Requests for emergency help would be directed to the General Treasurer, who would then consult with the Presiding Bishop and the General Finance Committee to disperse the funds for emergencies. All Emergency Funds will be received and sent to the General Treasurer with the Local Treasurer's monthly report within the period of January 1–December 31st. Until new report books are printed and distributed, these funds should be listed in the section called "other" and marked as "Emergency Fund."

SECTION VI:

AUTHORIZING GENERAL TREASURER TO ESTABLISH A LINE OF CREDIT

We recommend that the General Assembly authorize the General Treasurer to establish a line of credit with First National Bank to meet urgent financial deadlines with the intent of repaying within a 3–6 month period. This line of credit will not exceed \$25,000.00. Any amount that exceeds this cap will require special approval of the General Trustees (ex.: Headquarters' property in Guatemala).

SECTION VII:

RESTORING RESPECT OF THE MINISTRY/MEMBERSHIP

This committee feels that a brief statement should be made concerning the restoration of respect among our ministers and members in Zion Assembly Church of God. The Scriptures teach that ministers are

gifts of God to the church, and therefore should be highly respected and honored (1 Corinthians 12:28). We are aware that respect is gained through godly living and sincere service. Therefore, we also encourage the ministers to be examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:1-6).

SECTION VIII:

GENERAL FINANCIAL SYSTEM

We recommend that we continue to operate the same financial system for this upcoming Assembly year. We also recommend that funds be transferred between accounts to bring all funds into a positive balance.

Presiding Bishop's Annual Address

August 11th, 2007

Introduction

This is the fourth time that this General Assembly has convened since the church took its stand against the “falling away” under the former administration and government, and reorganized itself under the present administration on April 20, 2004. On that memorable day in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, eighty-three courageous men and women stepped out by faith and committed themselves again to be the “City of God, the Zion of the Holy One;” and thereupon they denounced and purged the corruptions that had infiltrated and infected the church under the recent past administrations. In the three years and three months since that historic event, God has graciously favored us; there has been a manifest increase in His “government and peace”: 106 churches and missions have been organized in 18 states and 7 countries, 115 ministers have united with Zion Assembly, and 2,542 members have been added to the fold. It is worth noting also that more than 5,000 now attend our worship services on a regular basis.

In the past twelve months alone, 18 churches and 19 missions have been organized in 7 states and 6 countries, and 37 ministers have reaffirmed their covenant and united with the church, or have been called by the Lord and set forth by the church. In addition to this, new field work has been done in Uganda and South Africa by Bishop Amara, Brother Jacinto Noriega has been working with a congregation in the Philippines, and communications have been established with several ministers in ten other countries.

While these numbers are yet comparatively small, yet they reveal an extraordinary increase in just three years. They represent a 3000% increase in membership, and a 1000% increase in ministry. If we continue at this pace in the next three years, the church will have 75,000 members, 4,000 ministers, and 150,000 attending our churches on a regular basis. Is this possible? It certainly is. Jesus restored the church in His day with just 12 members; and in a year or so it had grown to about 120; then in one day (while the church was still less than three years old) its membership jumped to 3,120. Then in a little while 5,000 more were added. But whether we exceed 75,000 members in the next few years or not, there are definite indications on the horizon (according to the reports that we are receiving) that large numbers will be flowing into church in the next few months and

years. For all of these increases and accomplishments, both now and in the future, we give God the glory and praise: for it is His church and “God giveth the increase.”

I mention here numerical growth in a positive way for three reasons: 1) our divine purpose is to win souls and to enlarge the church; 2) it will take an ever-increasing number of ministers and members to reach the world with the full Gospel (the statisticians tell us there are now almost 6½ billion souls in the world), and 3) with numerical growth will come the finances to evangelize the world and to purchase the necessary equipment and materials needed to build up and perfect the church. Then, as long as we are motivated by the right spirit and right reasons, it is all right to have numbers in mind: for every soul gained diminishes Satan’s kingdom and enlarges God’s.

Section I

Stay the Course

Make no mistake, this work will not go forward, nor will we accomplish our divine and prophetic purpose, without a battle. We will have to be determined to stay the course. The enemy does not like Zion Assembly Church of God! We are a threat to his plan and purpose in these last days: for he knows that we intend to withstand him, and he sees our potential. Yes, he knows our intention, because he reads the *Voice of Zion* and has read our *Abstract of Faith*—and he has heard some of you preach. He does not want this good work to get strong and gain momentum, for he knows we have the potential to rescue millions of perishing souls and to establish them in truth and the power of the Gospel. He knows that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against [God’s church],” so he will do everything in his scheming power to cause confusion and discouragement!

The circumstances that brought about this restoration in which we are now engaged are not unlike those in the time of Nehemiah’s restoration. The City of God laid waste, and the remnant of God’s people was in “great affliction and reproach.” Then God put it in the heart of Nehemiah to restore the city. He “sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.” It is not said that Nehemiah had any special vision from God to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city. God did not appear to him in a whirlwind or in a cloud or pillar of fire or burning bush. The Scripture just alludes to the fact that Nehemiah loved the City of God and the faith of his fathers. What is made explicit is that “God had put in [his] heart” the spirit and the burden and the determination to restore the city, and that “the good hand

of [his] God was upon [him].” This proved to be the invincible power that enabled Nehemiah and the people of God to forge ahead against all the fierce and malicious opposition of Sanballet, Tobiah, and Geshem, the Arabian, until the work was finished. The people said, “Let us rise up and build.” And “So they strengthened their hands for [that] good work.” We have had our “Sanballets,” “Tobiahs,” and “Arabians” in this present restoration of the church. Like those great restorers in Nehemiah’s day, we have been “mocked,” “laughed to scorn,” “despised,” and scandalized. Some of our opposition said this work would not last a year; others said, in effect, “What do these feeble Jews?” “Will they make an end in a day?” They did everything in their power in the beginning to stop this restoration from getting off the ground. They lied, schemed, scandalized, twisted our words and intentions, cut off our support, robbed us of our buildings, and forbade us to preach in their pulpits. We experienced the same things that our forefathers did in their day (in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), that Jesus and the apostles did in their day, and the prophets in their days. But here we are three years and three months later, solidly fortified, and 3,000% stronger than we started on April 20, 2004; and now poised “like a mighty army” to penetrate deeper into the enemy’s territory, and violently determined to forge ahead until the enemy is completely vanquished and the final victory is won!

On the gridiron, on the diamond,
in the ring, or on the court,
It’s when the game is hardest,
That you get your finest sport!
There’s no joy in easy battles,
And no victory in the game,
That is won without a struggle,
And in life, it’s just the same!
It is when the going gets heavy,
And the pull is all uphill,
And you have to work to conquer,
That you get your finest thrill!

It is said that the word tri-umph is just a “try” with some “umph” in it. How did the snail reach the ark? It just kept going. Some years ago I asked one of our ladies, who made quilts to raise funds for missions, how she had made such an elaborate and beautiful quilt. She said, “One stitch at a time.” That’s how our mission in Zion Assembly is going to be accomplished. You just start and keep going. Remember, a thousand mile

journey begins with one step.

A hundred times I've cried,
I can't go on! I can't go on!
And a hundred times
I hushed my cries, and I've gone on.
My answer, if you ask me how,
May seem presumptuously odd,
But I think what kept keeping on
When I could not, was God.

You may rest assured that if you keep the Holy Ghost, you will keep going because He keeps going. Your flesh may want to quit, but the Holy Ghost in you will pick you up and carry you forward. He won't quit! And He won't let you quit!

Go On!

One step won't take you very far;
You've got to keep on walking;
One word won't tell folks who you are;
You've got to keep on talking;
One inch won't make you very tall;
You've got to keep on growing;
One deed won't do it all;
You've got to keep on going.

Stumbling or falling down doesn't make you a failure; it's staying down that counts you out. The Scripture says, "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again." Look, getting to third base means nothing, if you don't cross home plate and score! You might as well have struck out in the beginning. I heard of a poor man who had worked hard and became wealthy. When asked to what he attributed his success, he said, "I started from scratch and kept on scratching."

Two Frogs

Two frogs fell into a can of cream,
Or so I've heard it told.
The sides of the can were slippery and steep
And the cream was deep and cold.
Oh what's the use crooked the first frog
There's no help around.

So “Good-bye,” he said,
And threw up his feet, and drowned.
But the second frog made of sterner stuff,
Dog paddled in surprise.
And while he wiped his creamy face,
And dried his creamy eyes.
I’ll swim around at least, he said,
For it won’t help the world,
If one more frog was dead.
And so he kicked and swam, and swam and kicked,
And swam and kicked, and kicked and swam,
and kicked and kicked, and swam and swam,
Not once did he stop to mutter!
But kicked and kicked and swam and kicked,
Then all of sudden, he hopped out
The cream had turned to butter!

What saith the apostle Paul to these things: “If God be for us, who can be against us?” Nothing can stop this great work in which we are now engaged from going forward and fulfilling its noble purpose—except our own lack of faith and determination. “Who” can stop us, says the apostle, “shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...Nay,” he declares, “in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Again he says, “I can do all things through him that strengtheneth me!” And again, “fight the good fight of faith.” And still again he admonishes us to run this race, “that ye may obtain [the prize or victory].”

Somebody has said, “When you’ve come to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on!” In any case, don’t quit. Stay the course.

Section II

“Church of Love”

The Secret of Theocratic Government

We have mentioned our expectations of substantial numerical growth in the next few months and years. Yet from the beginning of this restoration, we have emphasized not so much quantity, but quality. We

have magnified the value of an “increase in peace” and spiritual graces and power. What we have aimed at mostly in Zion Assembly is the restoration of holiness and brotherly love and kindness, for these characteristics represent the authentic fellowship of the New Covenant church. We desire the “real thing”—genuine fellowship with God and one another. The beloved apostle declared, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life...that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us, That we have seen and heard declare we... that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. These things write we... That your joy might be full. This then is the message... God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin... And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk, even as he walked... He that saith he is in the light... loveth his brother... and there is none occasion of stumbling in him (1 John 1:1-2:10).

This is the message that our forefathers and foremothers rediscovered in the Bible and passed on to us. Like them, we are again endeavoring to restore the Love of God in the church. We want this divine attribute to be the preeminent expression of Zion Assembly: for it to permeate the personality of our fellowship through and through. The driving passion of our pioneer fathers and mothers was to restore and build the “Church of Love.” They understood that this was the “lost link” the Protestant reformers had left out in their attempt to restore the church in the sixteen century. The reformers had built creedal fellowships, instead of spiritually dynamic churches animated by the Holy Ghost. R. G. Spurling’s main theme in his remarkable little book, *The Lost Link*, is the restoration of the visible church on the basis of LOVE. He points out that, in contrast with the church in the Old Testament (that was established on an outward law), Jesus is building His new Zion on an inward law; that is, on the basis that the Holy Ghost now engrafts and burns into our hearts the two great commandments—to love God and to love one another—with His mighty baptismal fire! He wrote, “Therefore, we see that love is the law upon which the Church [is] based, written by the Holy Ghost. Read once more,

‘He that loveth another has fulfilled the law of Christ.’”

Spurling was able to best express his inspiration in the form of poems, two of which seem fitting here:

Behold on Zion’s wall I see
A number very great,
Arrayed like princes on their chair,
In garments long and fine.

I wonder as upon this band,
I cast my wandering eyes.
Each in their different churches stand,
And ask not other nigh.

I wonder as along their lines,
Their fences I behold,
Which seems to stop their love,
From reaching all the fold.

I wonder as upon their wall,
Their mother’s name I see;
It almost makes my soul to shrink,
Her name is mystery.

Behold in God’s own Word
The law of love is found,
Which if applied instead of creeds
These fences would go down.

The Lord of life from glory came,
To make our minds and hearts the same;
His gospel, law and government
Unto his children He has sent.

No more the Gentile and the Jew,
But one new man made of the two;
The lines of strife no more to lay,
But to walk in love from day to day.

The law of love he did command,
That by it we should understand,

And by it all His children know,
For out of it no strife can grow.

Alas, where is this law today,
From which the Church has gone astray?
The law of Christ they have denied,
By human laws they are supplied.

Will Christians close their eyes and ears
Against the light that now appears,
Yet still to bow to human laws,
Which God will burn like useless straws?

O, brethren, for the sake of Christ,
Leave off these laws that gender strife,
Be by His Spirit ever led,
He is the church's only Head.

A. J. Tomlinson agreed with Spurling, and together these great men of God set out by faith to restore the church on the basis of DIVINE LOVE. Bishop Tomlinson wrote a whole chapter on “Abounding Love” in his *The Last Great Conflict*. This was the prevailing spirit in the church in the early Assemblies, in spite of the fact that the delegates did not always fully agree on every point of doctrine. The General Overseer was able to write in his annual address in 1915:

Love has dominated every Assembly. This all prevailing force seems to be increasing with each passing year. It has often been said, Behold how they love each other! I know not where this dynamic force will end. Jesus said, ‘By this shall all men that ye are my disciples, if you have love one to another.’ We need not expect it to cease until this gospel of the kingdom has flown around the world to every clime and nation—to every tongue and people, and all men know that we are followers of the lowly Nazarene.

Sadly, Bishop Tomlinson’s prediction was interrupted a few years later when some of the brethren allowed their love to wane and Satan to fill the vacuum with contention and confusion. This spirit of contention led in 1919 to an open division in the church, with some reorganizing under another name in Chattanooga. But it soon became obvious that a deeper problem remained in the main body of the fellowship, particularly with some in the highest leadership positions, and this worked like an evil leaven until envy and malice infected a large number of pastors; and the

pastors passed on the disease to their members. This resulted finally in an ugly disruption in 1923, with a great many being “carried away with the dissimulation.”

In that atmosphere of contention and discord, the truth also suffered. An ancient philosopher has written that, “In quarreling the truth is always lost.” Certainly this was the case in 1923. Where burning love once prevailed in the church as a “dynamic force” for good, envy and malice entered, and with these works of the flesh “every evil work of darkness” then appeared.

Now we could cite any number of things to blame for the divisions—doctrinal differences, financial issues, centralized government, hunger for authority and position, etc.—but it is clear that the fundamental problem was the gradual dissipation of charismatic graces and fervent love for one another! The preeminent attribute of grace—LOVE—was no longer prized and cultivated; and where it evaporated, and to the degree that it evaporated, the works of the flesh—envy, gossip, slander, evil suspicions, false accusations, etc.—filled the vacuum. Yes, the spirit of murder—hatred!—took its toll and did its evil work.

In reflecting on the disruption in 1923, we can hardly escape from reflecting also on the controversies and struggles that led to our revolution in April 2004, which resulted in the organization of Zion Assembly. Certainly we could site doctrinal corruptions and power struggles as major contributions to the unhappy state of the church in the 1990s. Several fundamental pillars of faith were corrupted, and many sacred landmarks of our tradition were removed. It is not that a few things did not need to be qualified or modified, but, instead of modifications and qualifications, suggestions were made and steps taken to change significant doctrines (like the institutions of marriage and the church itself). In order to change these, the governmental structure and decision-making processes of the church were “high-jacked.” A spirit of lordship swept over the executive leadership, and changes were forced through the church by intimidation and coercion. This strange spirit that crept into the church, with the rapid and revolutionary changes, created a state of confusion, and gave Satan an advantage.

Still, nothing was more devastating than the gradual dissipation of heartfelt worship for God and sincere love for one another. And to the degree that love disappeared, the works of the flesh filled the vacuum. The question that raises itself here is: Will we imbibe the lessons to be learned from these historical experiences? It is possible that we can prevent this calamity from happening again? Even if we cannot prevent some from backsliding and apostatizing, and being swallowed up by

Satan, is it possible that we can prevent a disruption in the church? It always helps, of course, if a troublemaker is marked and disciplined, and excluded if he refuses to hear wise and sound counsel (Matthew 18:15-20; Romans 16:17). The wise man wrote: “Cast out the scorner (or mocker), and contention (fighting and quarrels) shall go out; yea, strife and reproach (insults) shall cease” (Proverbs 22:10). Yet, notwithstanding the need at times for the administration of Gospel discipline, this alone will leave the church merely in a negative posture and disposition, and usually with a harsh and legalistic spirit. Then, love must be the active and prevailing power in the church: for “love,” says the enlightened apostle, “is the bond of perfectness.” See, love modifies our spirits; creates a gentleness in the church, with kindness and forbearance between brethren. It crucifies big egos, rules out pride, generates humility, and creates an atmosphere of mutual respect and forbearance between brethren. DIVINE LOVE then is the secret power of theocratic government! We may be sure that no free system can prevent divisions, if love is not the ruling spirit and power of the system.

Certainly, the ministers and members of Zion Assembly cannot be held together merely by our Abstract of Faith. If this were possible, you may be sure that this fellowship is no more than another denomination or man-made organization, or worse yet, a form of totalitarianism. Solomon observed that, “Hatred stirreth up strifes” and “separates close friends,” but “love covereth all sins” (Proverbs 10:12; 17:9). Love then is the key to the life and unity of the church. The apostle Paul declared that every spiritual gift and Pentecostal manifestation is inferior to the superlative power of love. “For love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not . . . vaunted not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never fails (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). The apostle therefore admonished the church: “Put on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also ye are called in one body” (Colossians 3:12-15).

Yes, we are committed in Zion Assembly to hold up doctrinal truth, and to restore the order and discipline of the church, but our motive in everything we do must be driven by the love of God. In fact, love is the essence of the doctrine of Christ. It qualifies and modifies everything

else. Without it holiness turns into harshness, and doctrine into legalism. This was Spurling's and Tomlinson's unique perspective on the faith. They very much insisted that biblical standards and corporate disciplines be the norm for the church (there was not even a hint of compromise in them), but they knew the ministers and members could not properly understand nor measure up to the high standards of truth and holiness except through consecration and genuine spirituality. True spirituality produces love, and love alone is able to fulfill the law of God. Yet, on the other hand, love produces and encourages spirituality. So there is a reciprocity between love and truth.

There is a little song that many of us grew up with in the church. It is simple, yet profound:

Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so,
Little ones to Him belong, they are weak but He is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves me, Yes, Jesus loves me.
Yes, Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so.

This is the spirit and power of the New Covenant. Love inspires and encourages us to do what we do for the benefit of our brother, and the edification of the whole body of Christ. In fact, this attitude and disposition is indispensable to please God and to invoke His divine favor on what we are doing: for this is the Spirit of Christ! The apostle Paul cried out, "For the love of Christ constraineth us." Love has within it the controlling and compelling power of the Gospel. The discipline of the church flows from it. This is why my prayerful wish is that the name, Zion Assembly Church of God, will become synonymous and interchangeable with the name "Church of Love." I wouldn't care if our churches put it as a sub-title on their road signs, marquis, and letterheads. But, most of all, I would that it become the preeminent manifestation between us as brethren! Certainly we will not go forward and accomplish Christ's purpose for the church without DIVINE LOVE being the real energy of our motives and actions. Even discipline must be administered purely in the spirit of love and for the good of the person being disciplined, and for the good of the church as a whole; else it will not accomplish the will of God, and the church will have failed to have executed the Father's will "in earth, as it is in heaven."

Now let me hasten to add here that DIVINE LOVE is not this mushy sentimentalism that some mistake for love; it is not a weak-kneed, anemic emotionalism. It does not have the slightest hint in it of compromise: for truth is truth if no one believes it, and error is error if

everyone believes it! Love and truth are of the same substance. God is love, and Christ is truth, and the Holy Ghost is the “Spirit of truth.” And these Three are One! Our first love then must be the love of truth! A union based merely on sentiment is just a human corporation, a mere business or arrangement made by man; certainly not God’s church. You can put a sign over your house of worship that says “Church of God,” but that doesn’t make it so. There are thousands of these kinds of churches in the land today. But God’s church is the “pillar and ground of the truth.” This is how it is distinguished and identified. Look, if one church says you can divorce and remarry and remain justified, and another says God’s Word forbids it, both cannot be right, and both cannot be the “pillar and ground of the truth.” One must be right and the other wrong. Divorce and remarriage is either adultery or it is not! Either Jesus said it is adultery or He did not. But one says Jesus makes exceptions; the other says He cannot contradict Himself. Both cannot be right. And thus one of these churches at least cannot be God’s church. The same is true with the doctrine of entire sanctification. One teaches that it cannot be attained in this life, and that the civil war between the old man and new man is never settled until you get to heaven; the other teaches that sanctification is an instantaneous and definite work wrought in the heart by faith, and attained presently in this life for the glory of God. Now these are precisely opposite views and contradictory doctrines. Then one must be wrong and the other right. It cannot be both ways. One must be teaching falsely and the other truly. And the one teaching sanctification falsely cannot be God’s church!

Now, how is it that some make the following simple, if not asinine, statement: “Can’t we just all get along and love one another?” Certainly this is at least a mere sentimental statement, because the man or woman who loves, loves first of all God’s Words. He or she lives with the motto, “Better be divided by truth, than united by error.” Our union and unity is in Christ—and His teachings! Jesus said, “If any man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:23). And again, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” When I was in a seminary a few years ago, one man said, “Brethern, it is Christ plus nothing!” And every PhD student in the room said, “Amen!” Everyone except me, that is. And when they noticed I did not consent, the professor questioned my reason. I replied, “Because the declaration has a subtle deceit in it. It signifies actually “Christ minus His teachings.” Yes, it is Christ plus nothing, if by Christ we mean also His teachings—all of them! Jesus said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.” And “Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in

this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” (Mark 13:31).

DIVINE LOVE is therefore always in harmony with the words of Christ. And the true ministers of God preach and teach God’s words. Jesus said, “For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God.”

We see then that Divine Love is strong, powerful, wise, bold, just, and consistent with Christ’s words. It acts sometimes in a way that is called “tough love,” because it seeks always for the ultimate good of the individual and the church. This is why our heavenly Father allows us sometimes to suffer, and why He sometimes chastens us. Hear the inspired writer: “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son who he receiveth” (Hebrews 12:6). In fact, the Lord corrects us because we are sons, and He “delights” in us because we desire down deep to please Him (Proverbs 3:11). So the wise man admonishes us not to become “weary of his correction.”

The Harmony between Love and Discipline The Church is God’s Government in the Earth

The church is God’s visible government in the earth. His instrument to execute His order and discipline among His people (Matthew 18:15-20). This is certainly a high calling and an awesome responsibility. The church must sometimes chasten its ministers and members because she is our mother (Galatians 4:27-31). But in order to fulfill our role as a divine instrument in correction, we must become one with the Lord in spirit and in truth (6:1), to allow the Spirit of God to engraft the “mind of Christ” in us, so that we can think and feel like God. And this is possible only if we die to ourselves. The apostle Paul said, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (2:20).

Certainly our interest in Zion Assembly has been nobler than merely to create another man-made denomination: for this could serve only to clutter up further the religious landscape of this generation. Rather, we have laid our hands on the Bible and reaffirmed our vow to walk according to God’s Word; but, more so, we have committed ourselves to return to prayer and consecrated devotion in the Holy Ghost, so that the Spirit may again “shed abroad in our hearts the love of God.” Anyone can subscribe to a creed—to a mere declaration of faith, to a particular list of articles and doctrines. Anyone can form a religious organization! Even sinners and devils do this. But the “church of God” is born of the Spirit of the Lord, of His love and power. The apostle Paul experienced birth pains, like a

woman in travail, in order to give birth (or rebirth) to the church at Galatia (4:19). The true church is born of God, not of man! It is a “habitation of God through the Spirit.” She is “the body of Christ.” Her ministers and members walk in the light as He is the light, and keep His commandments! Those who do not obey Him are not sincerely a part of the true essence of the church, the heavenly Jerusalem, the eternal Zion of the Lord. As the apostle put it; “he is a Jew which is one inwardly...of the heart, the spirit, and not of the letter; whose praise is not of men but of God” (Romans 2:29). Owning a piano does not make one a musician. Turtle soup with no turtle in it is not really turtle soup at all. Calling it turtle soup doesn’t make it turtle soup. It has been said if a thing looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then you can pretty much figure it is a duck. My point is that we are seeking to become “the real thing,” so that what we look like and what we claim is what we are!

Again, make no mistake, this noble vision will not be realized without fierce opposition from our enemy! We may be sure that until we are “caught up” to meet the Lord in the air, there will be a few who will unite with the church under false pretenses, either not having been truly born again, or else not sincerely subscribing to the church’s government and teachings—and especially not in harmony with the spirit of the church. Even the New Testament church under the guidance of the apostles incorporated a few men and women like these into her fold. On the other hand, we are warned that some will unite with the church in good faith, then later backslide or fall away. Yes, even under Jesus’ care, one fell into perdition and another denied Him three times. One of these was restored and the other was not! Let us not be surprised, then, especially to the point that we would allow these defections to throw us off course, if one here or there among our ranks gets puffed up with pride and the independent spirit and goes astray. A Judas or Benedict Arnold will surely show up now and again and try to disturb the peace of the church and discourage the sheep. But this is why Christ instituted government and discipline in the church. Divinely-inspired government and discipline gives stability and safety, and encourages peace and unity. One or two here and there may have to be excluded so that the whole body is not leavened with their contentions and corrupt ideas.

You might ask, then, “If the unregenerate can be added to the church, are they truly members of the church?” I answer, “They are in a temporal sense, just as much as the backslider is. But if they do not repent, they will be removed sometime before the church is perfected and ‘caught up’ to meet the great King!” The apostles call these kinds, “false brethren”—men and women who have “crept into the church unaware

[slipped into, intruded into, the church secretly]” (Galatians 2:4; Jude 4). Bishop Dorlan Queener (of Church of God fame) explained this unnatural situation in this way: “If I stick a thorn in my hand, the thorn is in me but not of me”—which is to say, it is in one’s body but not a natural part of his body. It is actually foreign to his body, an alien intrusion! But still, for the moment at least, it is in his body.

Was Judas a member of the church? I answer, “He was; just as much so as the fornicator in 1 Corinthian 5” (who, by the way, was later restored). Apostate Judas was in fact an ordained bishop and apostle. But apostates and backsliders are like dead branches on a tree: they are a part of the visible tree, but they have lost their internal connection—the life and sap of the Vine. They are in the church (for the time being) but not in the kingdom of God. These will eventually fall off the Vine under their own dead weight, or else be “cut off” by the husbandmen (the pastors and congregations).

Thankfully this illustration of the Vine and branches breaks down in the true reality between Christ and the church. What I mean by this is that, in Christ, backslidden and apostate members may be restored to life again by the Spirit, and be “grafted in again” into the Vine (as in the cases of Peter and the fornicator in the church at Corinth) This demonstrates the regenerative power of the Spirit. It is miraculous, not natural. It is like Aaron’s rod that budded—a dead stick brought to life again by the power of God!

Now the church is the instrument through which the Lord is able to “graft them in again.” God is the source of grace and reconciliation, the church is His instrument! This subject is of such vast importance that I felt impressed by the Spirit to address it in a separate section here under the title Shepherding Ministries.

Section III **Shepherding Ministries**

For the reasons mentioned above, we reinstated in our very first General Assembly the Shepherding Ministries in the church. This ministry has been called in times past the “Watchers Over Tens” and more recently the “Assembly Band Movement” or “ABM.” But whatever name we have attached to it, it has served the same purpose: namely, to get the whole church involved in the pastoral spirit and work. Cain’s question, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” is answered by Christ, both in word and action. Jesus is the great Shepherd! His life was spent tending to and keeping the sheep. Shepherding Ministries then encourages the pastors to passionately

shepherd the flock of God, and to enlist and organize others to assist the pastors to look after the sheep, in the same way that the overseers and pastors assist the “Chief Shepherd” to pastor the whole flock of God. This attitude should be the very heartthrob of the church; in fact, nothing is more natural to genuine spirituality than being our brother’s keeper.

Our business is salvation—spiritual restoration and reconciliation. God has deposited in the church the “ministry of reconciliation” and the “word of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). The purpose of Shepherding Ministries is therefore three-fold: 1) to cultivate a “keeping spirit” among our ministers and members, and this in order “that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Colossians 1:28) (Someone has said that “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”) 2) to restore backsliders; and 3) to evangelize the lost.

Jesus’ prayer and expectation is that we should “bring forth fruit, and that [our] fruit should remain” (John 15; 16). He taught us this principle further in a parable, saying, “If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that one sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish” (Matthew 18:12-14). This is the spirit and work of the church: not only to evangelize the lost, but to keep the sheep, and to teach them and lead them into perfection—into spiritual purity and maturity in Christ, through prayer, worship, and the instruction of the Word of God (1 Corinthians 2:4-8, 12-15; Ephesians 4: 11-16; 5:26; 2:21, 22). In fact, one of the most effective means to encourage spirituality in the sheep is to keep them involved in the worship and ministry of the church.

To give more emphasis to this, I will be appointing in this Assembly an international director for Shepherding Ministries. The director of this ministry will not only encourage the pastoral principles of Christ and the apostles mentioned above, but create an awareness of the dignity that Christ has placed upon the ministry—upon the overseers, pastors, and evangelists—to teach us once again to “esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake” (1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13; 1 Timothy 5:1, 17-20; Hebrews 13:7, 17). This will include keeping us aware of the material needs of our ministers and our responsibility to meet their needs. Of course, the ministers also will be encouraged and challenged to live up to the high standards of their offices and to fulfill them (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1:5-9). I will come back to this subject in a moment.

Section IV
Restoring Respect for Church Government
Standing Together As One Man
The Spirit of Theocracy

In stressing ministerial leadership and government in the church, A. J. Tomlinson said in his annual address in 1912:

This is probably the most important part of the church work, and should be guarded the most carefully. In the ministry is vested the very life of the church. A straight ministry, a straight church; a crooked ministry, a crooked church; an unwise ministry, an unwise church. Like priest, like people. A stream can never flow higher than its source. A church can never advance higher than its ministry.

These words of the former General Overseer seem appropriate here because the circumstances were then in the church about as they are now with us in Zion Assembly, that is, in numerical size, organizational development, and social standing. He anticipated that because they had advanced enough in numbers, and with some “slight popularity” in society, that they would soon become a serious threat to Satan and the social structure around them. He emphasized the need, therefore, for the church to get prepared for battle by developing and fortifying the government and discipline of the church.

I see this same need facing the church at this present time, and more so; for we are moving rapidly into the final stages of the very last days. Even as I deliver this address, the major players in the final acts of prophetic history are moving into place (whether consciously or unconsciously). The beast, false prophet, harlot church, Gog and Magog (Russia) and her allies (Turkey, Syria, Iran, Sudan, Libya, et al.), China’s great army of 200 million in the East, and the restoration of the Roman Empire (modern Europe) are all in the making and preparing to fulfill their designated roles in the up-coming apocalypse. Everything is lining up according to prophecy. Watching the evening news is like reading the prophetic books of Ezekiel, Daniel and Revelation. The Roman Church has been laying the groundwork since Vatican Council II to fulfill her role in these last days. She has in her eye the dominance of Europe—and the world through her European platform. Certainly this is one of the reasons that Pope Joseph Ratzinger chose the name Benedict XVI for his papacy.

Babylon and Jerusalem are making news practically everyday, just as the prophetic Word predicts they will in the very last days. The “two witnesses” (the two prophets of God) are waiting in the wings to fulfill their roles in this great drama. The spirit of antichrist is already prevalent in the world. All of these players on the world scene are on a prophetic schedule they cannot resist. They are bound to fulfill their prophetic appointments. The great apocalyptic confrontation between good and evil is near on the horizon!

Now we believe that God has raised up Zion Assembly to fulfill the church’s important role in these last days, before it is “caught up” to meet the Lord in the air, before the world players mentioned above receive their full power and effect. Jesus said, “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached into all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come.” But are we ready to fulfill this great commission?—to stand up and maneuver our way through the great principalities and powers that will oppose the extension of the Gospel in our hands? Are we able at this time to set our hands to the plow and accomplish this task? I must admit I don’t think we are quite ready. Here is one important reason why I say this. Our task will take every one of us working in harmony as one body to accomplish our mission; everyone fulfilling his gift for the up-building of the church. Yet some, by their own admission, have not fully recovered from the failures and betrayals of the recent past administrations in the church (in our former fellowship). What I mean by this is: many have become so disillusioned with leadership in general, until they have not yet regained their confidence in the church and its government; and so they have not thrown themselves completely into the work with full force; or else they hold back from cooperating with the administration of the church and its objectives. I know how this situation has come about, and to some degree I am sympathetic with it; yet we must see that this is not a wise and healthy state of things. We need to see the enemy in this, and “get over it!” Satan does not want the church to become a powerful unified force—a “terrible as an army with banners”—with its officers in place, and every man drilled and trained in the discipline of spiritual warfare, and working together as “one man.” He fears greatly a church that is unified, organized, and disciplined under Christ, with His divinely authorized overseers and pastors standing at their posts of duty, and every man zealously performing according to his appointment and assignment.

Many ask, “Why are there so many denominations and churches? Why are Christians divided?” Here is the primary reason. It is the result of an old satanic strategy: divide and conquer. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Satan knows that Christians divided cannot defeat him and

overturn his purposes in the earth. He knows that Christ set His church in order to defeat him and his armies (Revelation 12:7-17; 19:14-20)! He understands that a private or individual Christian is nearly powerless against his great army and arsenal. O yes, an individual Christian may be able to resist him to some degree on a personal level, and for his own benefit, and perhaps for the benefit (to some degree) of a few others; but he cannot by himself overturn Satan's designs and schemes in this world. He cannot by himself (nor can thousands of unorganized and scattered Christians) turn the tide of Satan's avalanche of paganism in Asia, or the idolatry in Latin America; nor can unorganized and divided Christians evangelize the millions of lost and helpless souls in Africa, or lift up "the voice" in Europe, or restore the vision of the church in America that has the ability to unify all of God's sheep and to shake the whole world. No, a thousand times, no! It will take the ministers and saints united together in God's church, empowered by the dynamics of His kingdom, "seeing eye to eye" and "lifting up the voice together" (Isaiah 52:8), standing shoulder to shoulder, to overturn the onslaught of Satan in this world! Unity is a powerful and beautiful thing! David saw unity among brethren as a "good and pleasant" thing (Psalms 133:1), but also as a necessary thing to defeat his enemies (2 Samuel 10:7-19).

There is an old adage that seems to hold true: "Some men love government as long as they are the governors." They love to give orders, but struggle to follow orders. There is also another old saying: "Those who do not follow well do not lead well." It takes a good follower to make a good leader. Men (and women) who have power and position are never satisfied until they attain the "chief seats in the synagogue." Sadly, they aspire more for position than for service. They fail to heed the apostle Peter's admonition: "be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5-6; see also James 4:6-10). The apostle Paul admonishes us in inspired wisdom, saying, "But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk" (1 Corinthians 7:17). The apostle's general rule here is applicable to our present concern: we need to "abide in our own calling": for God hath bestowed various gifts of administration and ministries in the church (12:4-6). Listen to the apostle: "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that... helps, governments..." (v. 28). Then he continues to emphasize that not all have the same office and position in the Lord's work. Office and position are appointed by the Lord and the church.

Jesus illustrated a wonderful principle in Luke 14:7-11, that, if heeded and followed, would enable Zion Assembly to fulfill her call to

be “the light of the world.” In this illustration, He counsels us to have a frame of mind to seek the lowest seat in the house, and let God be the one to exalt us to a higher seat or position in due time. In this way, the leaders will be admired and praised by those around them, because they will know the leaders did not seek their positions. He is even clearer on this point in Mark 10:42-45, saying, “Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister...”

Three things are worth noting here: first, these words of Jesus came as a response to James’ and John’s misguided ambitions to occupy the highest positions in the church and kingdom. The thing displeased Jesus, and also the other apostles. Secondly, Jesus acknowledges that someone has to have the final word in making executive decisions. There must be a chief among the elders (Matthew 20:27; Luke 22:24-27); otherwise, chaos and confusion result, and finally anarchy. God has appointed an administrative order in the government of the church; and, it seems, that the nature of the order requires one to be “chief” or “first among equals” (for anything that has two heads we call a freak!) Thirdly, the spirit of the leader makes all the difference between theocracy and worldly government. In theocracy there is only one Lord and Master (John 13:13); that is, Christ is the Head of the church and over the church; the chief administrator, on the other hand, is in the church as one among us. This is true at every level of the church. And this is why the practice of footwashing is so important; for it keeps us reminded of the uniqueness of our fellowship as God’s church. We are all servants; there are no “lords” among us! A “chief” is not a lord. We should never lead “as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:3).

The apostle Paul acknowledges the burden of administrative government and responsibility in 2 Corinthians 1-2:11. Sometimes discipline is necessary, but it should be administered always with tears and tender affections. In the particular case in the church at Corinth, the fornicator referred to in 1 Corinthians 5 had repented and needed to be forgiven and received back into the fellowship of the church. But the church had become rigid and hard because this man had scandalized them. The apostle thus reminds them of the tenderness of Christ and his readiness to forgive, and therefore that they should mimic Christ’s spirit and actions in order to properly represent Him as His ambassadors. Again, the apostle acknowledges that ministers do not have “dominion over our faith, but are

helpers of our joy.” Yet ministers—particularly elders (overseers, bishops, pastors)—are ordained by the Holy Ghost and duly set forth by the church to exercise authority and to fulfill their responsibility in overseeing and feeding the flock of God, and maintaining order and discipline. And this in order to keep the church on course to fulfill its mission in the world.

It is a true saying that there can be no government without trust. Distrust of leadership was in fact one of the major reasons for the “falling away” after Bishop Milton Tomlinson resigned the office of general overseer in April 1990. In fact, many foolish and unbiblical things were incorporated into the church after he stepped down, because of a spirit of distrust. While I can understand the background and reasoning behind the distrust (for, being in general leadership positions between 1982-2004, and in most of the presbytery and general staff meetings, I saw and heard firsthand the arrogant and illogical “reasons” advanced to justify the changes), yet I can see just as clearly now, that if we do not get over this distrust of leadership and timidity of government, we will not be able to go forward with full effect and bring forth more impressive results for the Lord. It is true that the office of general overseer before 1990 was too powerful, endowed with powers and duties that were unwise and that exceeded Scriptural bounds; but, in an effort to modify the office, some overreacted and insisted on leveling the position so that the person occupying the office could not excel in leadership through the personal gifts and anointing the Lord has bestowed upon him. In this way, the prerogative of the Lord in leadership was taken and theocracy was stifled. So the “baby was thrown out with the bathwater!”

Now brethren this greatly pleased our adversary. He knows very well how important leadership is, the same as Bishop Tomlinson knew in his day, as stated in his comments above. Divinely appointed and anointed leaders are gifts of God to the church. Our Lord calls the ministers “angels,” and the inspired prophet said, “How beautiful are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace...That publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!” The apostle Paul estimates that elders who rule well are worthy of “double honor.” So, it is clear, according to God’s design and purpose, the church will not go forward with His full blessings and favor without duly acknowledging and appointing these ministers to fit in their proper places in the government and administration of the church, and encouraging the church to follow them. After all, we are not a democracy; nor a hodge-podge of independent and autonomous local congregations. Rather we are one unified body worldwide, under a centralized government and polity—a government and polity we believe is consistent with, and a continuation of, the pattern of the church in the

New Testament, established by Christ and the apostles (cf: Acts 1:14-22; 15-16:5).

Divinely appointed leadership does not mean that some mistakes won't be made (Peter, James, John, Paul, and A.J. Tomlinson made some!): for the church's leaders and finite and stand by grace. Nevertheless (aside from compromising any moral or spiritual principles that may be detrimental to our spirituality), unless we are willing to cooperate with and obey our leaders, and support them in their executive decisions, we will injure the church as a whole, and ourselves and our families as individual parts of the body. It reminds me of the man that "cut off his nose to spite his face." You can't injure the whole church without also injuring yourself and your loved ones.

Theocratic government in the church is instrumental. God rules through gifted and anointed men and women. He delights in this system in the same way that He delighted to choose men to write His Word. The inspired writers were not passive; rather God used their human personalities and individual peculiarities to transmit His infallible Word. Theocratic government then is an awesome responsibility. As leaders, we should serve with humility and respect, and the members follow with humility and respect. Now, if an occasion arises in which a minister or member (or local congregation) feels that he or she has been treated unfairly, or that the good of the church is not being served, the ranking overseer then may be consulted. And if need be a presbytery counsel may be called with the Presiding Bishop. In this way everything can be resolved decently and in proper order. Otherwise, "every man [will do] what is right in his own eyes" and the churches will act independently, both of which are unscriptural and a step towards a "falling away." You see, then, to reject this form of government is to displease the Lord: for God designed it! It is theocratic.

Here is the challenge before us, brethren; we see what's coming upon us in the world, and what we are called to do. But how can we accomplish our mission, unless we rise up as "one man" in unity to fulfill our role as God's church! Hear Jesus: "For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter watch" (Mark 13:34). I suppose this is one of the passages that inspired A. J. Tomlinson to coin his famous slogan: "A work for every man, and for every man a worker." Jesus' word picture here is of the house of God, with the servants (the overseer and pastors) occupying their offices with authority, and the workers assigned to their respective tasks, all working together in one government and discipline for the honor and edification

of the church. All are appointed to work, and some authorized to rule. Listen to the mighty apostle: “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversity of tongues” (1 Corinthians 12:27, 28). Here the church is illustrated and compared to the human body, with each member designed to fit in the body by the wisdom of God. “And so hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him” (v. 18). This whole chapter is written to show the unity in diversity in the body of Christ. Every member is different (one is an eye, another an ear, another a foot, etc.), but all appointed to fit together in one functioning body, so the body may glorify the Lord and serve His purpose.

What was it that so impressed the Queen of Sheba with God’s house under the rule of King Solomon? Yes, it was primarily Solomon’s anointed wisdom and the marvel of the great Temple on Mount Zion that he built. But it was probably more so the order, discipline, and joyful spirit of his ministers and the servants of the house. Every minister and servant filled his place in a reverent manner, with gravity and serious devotion. This piety and order in the house were in fact the proof of Solomon’s wisdom. Listen to the queen’s praise: “It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and my eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceeded the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men, happy are thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom” (1 Kings 10:6-8). It was the atmosphere of piety and devotion to the Lord that filled the house that so impressed this regent queen from the south. Never had she seen so much piety with so much greatness. And forthwith she blessed the Lord, and acknowledged God’s love for Israel. Clearly she was convinced that Israel was “a peculiar people” unto the Lord.

It is well-trained and disciplined armies that win battles and conquer their enemies—dedicated soldiers who act together as “one man,” who respond to commands and carry out orders. Victories come only through soldiers drilled in discipline and prepared to suffer hardships; valiant men and women who will march on without retreating or surrendering to the enemy in the face of difficult circumstances; who are determined to “keep on the firing line” and to conquer in the name of their glorious Captain! Make no mistake, our noble purpose will not be accomplished except through “a peculiar people” who have their sights set on a goal—a prophetic vision of the bride of Christ in her wedding garments (Ephesians 5:27; Revelation 19:7)—a people who have a flame of “violence” in their

eyes, a holy determination to advance against all opposition until that vision is realized (Matthew 11:12; Luke 16:16; Revelation 19:14-21).

This is our aim in this present restoration of the church. Clearly our work is cut out for us. In order to fulfill our noble objective, we must reinstate the beautiful and effective infrastructure in the church that once propelled it forward with such great force and effect in the first half of the twentieth century. Not every program was perfect, of course, and some things frankly were more of a hindrance than a help. But who can deny that the government and organization of the church in those days were anything less than superb and effective. The church was a marvel even to her critics. What great things were accomplished by so few men and women, most of whom were economically poor and ill equipped and for the most part social outcasts! They may have been The Disinherited of the earth, but they were also the “heritage of the Lord.”

How was so much accomplished by such a people? The answer is a prophetic vision, inspiration, a profound sense of mission, commitment, organization, order and discipline—and love! You may be sure that if we succeed to reinstitute this biblical infrastructure in the church, and catch again the vision and inspiration of the church as an “army terrible with banners,” with every soldier committed to do his/her part in this great last days campaign, then we will again “turn the world upside down” for Christ.

The auxiliaries or support ministers in the church have been understood to be consistent with the “helps and governments” that God has set in the church (1 Corinthians 12: 28). These work like “joints and bands” in the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:16; Colossians 2:19), that “fitly frame and knit together” the members for mutual edification, and coordinate them in the prosecution and advancement of the work. Our aim, like that of Bishop A. J. Tomlinson, is to encourage every minister and member to become active workers in the church through the support ministries. We must not waste precious energy and money, nor spend our resources on frivolous and foolish things—things that do not count for eternity. Jesus admonished the church to “lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.” Wouldn’t it be wonderful to have a quiet church, with all the ministers and members working together like bees in a beehive making honey for the Lord. Nothing could be more attractive to sinners and “other sheep,” and nothing could further our cause more quickly, than this! Millions right now are looking for this kind of a church.

Some groundwork has already been laid in restoring the infrastructure in the church. But it seems the time has come to make some

major advances in this direction. Accordingly, appointments will be made in this Assembly to advance the work of the Sunday School, Shepherding Ministries, Women's Ministries, and World Missions, in addition to the Youth and Children's Ministries, Evangelism, Voice of Zion, and School of Ministry. I have recommended also to the Assembly Business Committee that some proposals be brought before this Assembly that will give leadership and support to these ministries at the regional level. Then when the regional overseers begin to appoint state overseers (in harmony with the counsel of the presiding bishop), the infrastructure of the various ministries and positions will already be established and in place, and the work can advance smoothly and in order.

May the Lord help us to work together to advance His work, and to fulfill the church's mission in the world.

Section V

A Peculiar People

The word "peculiar" is used six times in our English Bible, four times in the Old Testament and two in the New. In these six references, five of them refer to the relationship between God and His covenant people. It is noteworthy, however, that the term "peculiar people" or "peculiar treasure" does not refer in the Old Testament to political or fleshly Israel, but rather to the "church in the wilderness" (that is, to "Israel" in her role as God's church). Accordingly, the first time it is used is in Exodus 19:5, on the occasion of the church being set in order by covenant under God's revealed Word at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:7-9; Deuteronomy 14:2). This outstanding event therefore marked the beginning of the church. On the two occasions that the term is used in the New Testament, it has reference to the same church, which was restored by Christ with the twelve apostles under the terms of the new covenant (Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9). Obviously the "twelve" apostles were purposely designed and chosen by the Lord to correspond to the "twelve" patriarchs in the Old Testament, and this to illustrate the continuity and affinity between the church in the Old Testament and the church in the New: for there is only "one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are 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" (Ephesians 4:4-6). The "twenty-four elders" repeatedly mentioned in the book of Revelation (4:4, 10; 5:8, 14; 11:16; 19:4) are represented apparently in the elders of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles in the New Testament. Together they may represent the one church of God in both Old and New Testaments (cf: Ephesians

2:14-22; Revelation 21:12-14).

It is worthy of note that a change took place from the concept of a “family” under Abraham, to that of a national corporation or assembly under Moses. In other words, at Mount Sinai the descendants of Abraham were incorporated under the law of the Lord, and became a church. The divine principles for this “church in the wilderness” were clearly revealed from heaven by God himself, not legislated from below by man; which is to say, the laws that regulated and guided God’s people were not derived from a religious council; nor were they tainted by any kind of social influence. They were in fact inscribed in stone by the “finger of God,” and thereafter God’s Word was written by “holy men” under the infallible guidance of His Spirit. So the covenant response was: “all that the Lord hath spoken we will do” (Exodus 19:5-8; 24:3-4).

Further, this church was guided and directed by special manifestations and influences of the Spirit on her wilderness journey toward her prophetic destiny. Thus, whether under the direct influence of the Spirit, or the indirect influence of the Spirit through the Word of God and God-ordained leadership, these “called-out” people were espoused to God. They became His betrothed bride (cf. Jeremiah 2:2; Ezekiel 16:8; John 3:29; 2 Corinthians 11:2-3; Revelation 19:7); and in times of backsliding and apostasy, a remnant always remained faithful to effect a restoration and to perpetuate the espousal (Isaiah 10:20-21; Amos 9:11-12; Zechariah 8:12; Micah 2:2; 7:8; Acts 15:15-17; Romans 11:5).

Now observe, this “church in the wilderness”—formed by covenant at Mount Sinai—became clearly visible and identifiable by the laws and practices that were corporately observed by the people. These peculiar laws governed the thoughts and actions of the people and separated them as a nation from all the other nations of the world. Now this is what we are after again in this present restoration of the church in Zion Assembly. We are seeking for a faith that is revealed from heaven, not a man-handled religion! Yes, we need the manifest approval of the Holy Ghost to endorse us as God’s church, but the Word of God and the Holy Ghost always agree. In fact, the Holy Ghost inspired the Word to be written! The Holy Ghost is always consistent with truth, and the truth with the Holy Ghost. I remember when I was serving as the overseer of Canada, a large church came open and it was my responsibility to appoint a pastor. While I was seeking the Lord for the right man, four persons came to me in the course of a week and told me the Holy Ghost revealed to them the person. What was a little odd to me was how the Holy Ghost revealed to each one a different man. I asked each one how the Holy Ghost disclosed this special knowledge to him/her. One said in a dream, another in a vision, another through a deep

and unmistakable impression, and the other said that God had flashed the minister's name in her mind. That one was especially interesting to me, since I knew this particular minister did not tithe, had a bad credit record, and was generally unreliable in church work.

I could offer here many similar situations in my experience as a church administrator that show plainly contradictions between sound biblical teachings and the pretentious manifestations of some claiming authority in the Spirit. The point is, the Bible gives the qualifications for the office of a bishop or pastor. The Holy Ghost is not going to direct the overseer to appoint someone who is dishonest, or a deceiver, or a pedophile.

But this raises an interesting point. Does the Holy Ghost always directly reveal the perfect will of God? The answer is plain in the history and narrative of the Bible—no! The ministers are themselves gifts to the church, anointed to govern the church according to the teachings and principles of the Scriptures. God gives the church—under the anointed supervision of the overseers and pastors—the ability to discern and judge in these matters, although the Spirit may at times directly intercede in behalf of some appointments and important moral decisions. This brings us to another peculiarity: to the government of the “church in the wilderness.” It was peculiar because it too was designed and ordained by God Himself. We call it “theocratic government” because God was the head of it, and those under Him in government were either directly or indirectly appointed by Him. This is why we say an apostasy took place in Israel when they began to clamor for a king “like all nations” (1 Samuel 8:5), and particularly because God finally turned them over to their self-willed desires (Hosea 13:9-11). At that point, a human king ruled over them instead of God. And they suffered the consequences!

Israel was peculiar because they had “one God (Yahweh/Jehovah)” and they were “one people,” betrothed to Him as a bride. All the other nations had many gods and idols, but Israel had one true God and they knew His revealed Will, for it was written in stone and in sacred scrolls, and His shekinah presence often appeared among them! God's revealed will in Scripture governed their form of worship, their speech, their annual celebrations, their interactions between one another, and their actions with foreigners. There were laws to govern property, money lending, judicial courts, lying, cheating, bribery, penalties, widowhood, military service, marriage, intimate relationships between husband and wife, eating habits, and on and on. They, therefore, ate different than other people, talked different from other people, worshipped different from other people, and in general, acted different from other people.

The “church in the wilderness” not only acted peculiar, worshipped peculiar, and had a peculiar government, they looked peculiar; they dressed peculiar. Men were forbidden to wear the clothing of a woman, and women were forbidden to wear the clothing of a man (Deuteronomy 22:5). Neither were they to wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woolen and linen together” (v. 11). The purpose of these regulations, among other considerations, was to distinguish them as a “peculiar people” from all other peoples in the world. They were not to follow the customs and traditions of the pagan world around them, so that, upon first glance, it might be said, “There goes an Israelite.” Then what we learn from this is that God desires to govern every aspect of our lives as a corporate body of people; so, therefore, we should not be afraid to be different. Moreover, we should all “walk by the same rule,” “have the same judgment,” and “mind the same thing”: for we are together called to be “a peculiar people.”

Yes, many of the laws under the Old Testament have changed; for the Old laws were a “schoolmaster to bring us to Christ” and were thus fulfilled in Christ; but there are still divine laws, which the apostle denominates as the “law of Christ!” Now the law of Christ is stricter than the Old ceremonial law because it goes to the very heart of moral and spiritual purity. It transforms the believer into the image of Christ—and conversely, Christ’s perfect image is grafted into the heart and life of the believer. The consecrated believer then desires to walk like Christ, talk like Christ, and look like Christ.

Outward dress is important then for two reasons: first of all, because God is concerned about our outward appearance; secondly, because it forms part of our witness for Christ: for the world judges by the outward appearance of things (1 Samuel 16:7). Our outward appearance is what first strikes sinners and nominal Christians. They make their initial impressions of us (and of who and what we represent) according to our outward appearance. If we dress neatly, and with modesty, wholesomeness, and dignity, it will honor the Lord whom we represent. If we dress gaudy, indecently, or irreverently it will reproach Him.

Mary had a mini skirt
So bright, and clean, and airy
And though it didn’t show a speck of dirt
It surely did show Mary.

Let me hasten here to say, it is true that actions speak louder than words and in most cases louder than how we dress. (This is a common argument

that some make in order to excuse the way they dress). Yet it is difficult for me to separate dress from actions. It seems to me that our outward appearance is one of our actions. Then if our behavior and actions are not consistent with the character of Christ, our “modest” dress will be seen for what it really is: a hypocritical pretense. We would then be like the “whited sepulchers” to which Jesus referred (Matthew 23:27), “which indeed appear beautiful outward, but within are full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.” In the fourth century before Christ, Diogenes, the Greek cynic, prided himself that he was not part of the worldly system around him, and lived in isolation in the garbage dump near Athens. One day, it is said, that Alexander the Great passed by the city dump, and Diogenes seized the opportunity to proclaim to him the virtues of his anti-social and “hippie” philosophy. Whereupon, Alexander said, “Diogenes, I can see your pride through the holes in your pants.”

It is a self-contradiction to be proud to be humble. Jesus admonished the Pharisees to “cleanse first that which is inside the cup and platter, that the outside of them may also be clean.” Both Jesus and the apostles contrasted outward adornment with the inner graces of the heart and spirit (1 Timothy 2:9, 10; 1 Peter 3:3-5). Clearly their primary interest was to cultivate within the church “a meek and quiet spirit”: for this is “in the sight of God of great price.” Nothing, in fact, is much more repulsive than religious leaders who insist on a rigid outward dress code, yet their churches lack joy and serenity, and their ministers and members are idle, gossipy, slanderous, busy-bodies, talebearers, in a word, everything but “meek and quiet.”

We see then that our peculiarity should come from God Himself, not from ourselves. We embody and live out what He has ordained and inspired in us, for we are His intimate bride—“flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone.” We are declared to be His “queen” and, remarkably, we are called to share His throne (Psalm 45:9-14; Revelation 1:6; 2:26, 27). Then we may be sure that we will seem strange to the world, for God is strange to the world. We may expect also to be marginalized, ostracized, and criticized, even as our Lord was. Worldly people know—they sense—that we are not of their world—not one of them, and that we are not carried by the same current that controls and forms them and their world. We are admonished by the apostles not to “conform to this world,” nor to “fashion ourselves according to the spirit of this age.” Rather, we are governed by a higher power, a purer and nobler Spirit. We are not of this world: we do not love the world, or the things of the world. Our citizenship is in heaven; for we are “born again” of the “incorruptible word of God.” Therefore our spiritual DNA is different; it is designed to “pattern us after things in

heaven,” not after the fashions and traditions of men, which Satan uses to blur the image and holiness of God in us.

Our aim in this restoration is to cultivate and deepen within our ministers and members the graces of Christ. We are endeavoring to “adorn the hidden man of the heart” (1 Peter 3:4), so that the brightness of Christ will shine through us to the glory of His grace and power (Isaiah 60:1-5). We are seeking to be “clothed with the garments of salvation” and “covered with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as the bride adorneth herself with her jewels” (61:10). And this so the on-looking world “shall see and acknowledge that [we] are the seed which the Lord hath blessed” (v. 9). Observe, as we pass from the Old Testament to the New, inward graces replace outward adornment. Sanctified believers themselves become God’s “jewels” (Malachi 3:17). His glory now shines in and out through His people—His “peculiar treasure.” Wisdom, knowledge, and discretion, says King Solomon, shall be “an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck” (Proverbs 1:9). What is important is that the world see “Christ in you the hope of glory.” The prophet declared, “[God] will beautify the meek with salvation” (Psalm 149:4). This is the reason we discourage outward, superficial adornment: for it is difficult to see a pure and radiant Christ through layers of cosmetics, false eyelashes, painted lips, and gold, pearls, and expensive attire. Clearly the church no more needs to adorn herself with jewels than our Lord—our Royal Bridegroom—needs to deck Himself with ornaments! The type is fulfilled, the shadow is past; we should now live in the glory and power of the risen Christ! What we are after is countenances that shine with His radiance and beauty. We are seeking to be beautified with His holiness!

The vivid contrasts between the bride of Christ in Revelation 19:7 and the great Harlot in 17:3-5 magnifies this point. The great Harlot is “arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls,” whereas the bride of Christ is arrayed in “fine linen, clean and white.” The further descriptions between these two women make it abundantly clear that the Harlot’s loud and extravagant dress depicts her inner rebellion and defiance of God’s rule, whereas the modest and plain dress of the church depicts her meekness and desire to please her Lord. See here, one is beautified with plainness and holiness, the other is degraded with gold and jewels and loud and gaudy colors. The point is that the inner nature and spirit of each woman is manifested by her outward dress and behavior. Now this does not mean that every woman that wears jewelry and loud dress is a harlot, but this is in general the harlot’s fashion and attire; so the Christian should be careful not to fashion herself or himself

like the harlots, but rather “like the holy women of old” (1 Peter 3:3-5), in a way that “becometh women professing godliness” (1 Timothy 2:9, 10). What seems perfectly clear in both Old and New Testaments is that we should not pattern ourselves after the styles and fashions of this world, nor after ministers and religious organizations influenced by the world. Our discipline and practices should be derived directly from God and His Word through prayer. Our peculiarity—our uniqueness—should come off the altar. This includes our government, discipline, practices, sermons, manner of worship, music, doctrine, methods in ministry, and dress styles. In a word, our objective is to be like Christ, and, if we are like Him, we will not be like the world. We will not look like the world, talk like the world, nor behave like the world!

Now if we succeed at this, we will develop our own culture and be “a peculiar culture” within the larger culture of the world around us. We must not then be afraid to be different; in fact, we should desire it: for our Lord was different, and we are His body. This is the only way to truly and purely glorify the Lord, and to be His “peculiar people.” For He has chosen us to bear His name in this world. We are the “City of God, the Zion of the Holy One.”

See here: if we will obey and trust Him, He has promised that He would make us the “head and not the tail” (Deuteronomy 28:13, 44). He will raise us up and exalt us for His own “name’s sake.” We are promised His blessings and prosperity—and that we will grow materially and spiritually. This will be God’s reward and gift to us; it will be accomplished by His power and grace. We do not boast, then, that we are a great people within ourselves: for we do not pretend to be the most intelligent, talented, and gifted people in the world. Rather, we desire to be the most anointed and divinely favored people in the world. We desire to be a people “set apart,” a people that perfectly please the Lord in all things. “We are what we are by the grace of God!” This alone is our boast. Our objective is to be presented to Christ “a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” And this so that we may be made worthy to dwell in “the house of the Lord forever,” in the glory of the Father.

International & Regional Appointments

Administrative:

Assistant Presiding Bishop.....	E. A. McDonald
Field Secretary.....	Danny Ramirez
World Missions Secretary.....	Joshua Amara
General Treasurer.....	E. A. McDonald
General Shepherding Ministries.....	Rocky Dalton
General Sunday School Director.....	Todd McDonald
General Youth Director.....	Scott Neill
Evangelism/ <i>Voice of Zion</i> Booster.....	Zachary Snyder
Women's Ministries.....	Jeannie Quillen
Children's Ministries.....	Cheryl McDonald
Public Relations.....	E. A. McDonald
International Office Secretary.....	Marie Crook
Editor-in-Chief--- <i>Voice of Zion</i>	Wade H. Phillips
<i>Voice of Zion</i> Layout.....	Marie Crook

Regional Overseers:

United States

Western Region.....	A. B. White
Northwest Region.....	Gary Larsen
Mideast Region.....	Ron Massey
Southeast Region.....	E. A. McDonald
Southcentral Region.....	Ricky Graves
Southwestern Region.....	Joseph Steele

East Africa	Joshua Amara
England	Joshua Amara
Central America	Ricardo Valenzuela

Mission Representatives:

Mexico.....	Alejandro Garcia
Caribbean Islands.....	Wade H. Phillips
Philippines.....	Jacinto Norreiga

Committees

Assembly Business.....	William Crook, Chairman Ron Massey Zachary Snyder Reginaldo Duarte Ricky Graves A. B. White Joshua Amara (Alternates) C. R. Gregory Ray Dickson
International Properties.....	Wade H. Phillips, Chairman E. A. McDonald Joseph Steele William Crook Charles Fields Reginaldo Duarte Gene Tingler
Construction.....	Wade H. Phillips, Chairman E. A. McDonald C. R. Gregory Clifford Kelton Ricky Graves Sam Monday Jack Little
Trustees.....	Wade H. Phillips E.A. McDonald Joseph Steele Gene Tingler William Crook Charles Fields A.B. White

Ministers

Bishops

Amara, Joshua
Butts, Harold
Chavez, Ricardo Venezuela
Cook, Claxton
Crook, William
Dalton, Rocky
Fields, Charles
Graves, Ricky
Jones, William
Kelton, Clifford
McDonald, E.A.

McDonald, Todd
Melton, James
Merritt, Kenneth
Neill, Scott
Onyango, Patrick
Phillips, Wade H.
Reed, Harold
Steele, Joseph
Webster, Daniel
White, A. B.

Deacons

Ashley, Dave
Carasco, Sam
Davis, Clyde
Dickson, Ray
Dorris, Earl
Johnson, Richard
Llaneza, Robert
Mapambano, Stivin
Monday, Sam
Moore, Luther
Moore, Wayne
Odoyo, Alfanyo

Okoth, Elisha
Oombo, James Opany
Onwaga, Joash Odongo
Onyango, Patrick
Reid, William
Reitler, Edward
Sanders, Ray
Tingler, Phillip
Villers, Tom
Were, George
Whitlock, Sidney

Male Evangelists

Alanya, Michael
Aluodo, Richard

Norton, John
Noreiga, Jacinto

Barker, Charles D.
Brown, Tom
Bryant, Kerry
Davis, John J.
Duarte, Reginaldo
Garcia, Miguel
Garcia, Vicente
Gibson, Dewey
Gomba, David, N.
Graves, Trevor
Gregory, Cleatus R.
Haleluya, Martin
Jackson, Carl
Joaka, Juma
Jorika, Moses
Larsen, Gary L.
Linn, Earl
Lopez Juan
Masese, Antonius Mingira
Mchura, Joseph
McKee, Donald
Mita, George
Moses, Jorika
Moses, Jorika
Noreiga, Jacinto

Ocholo, Patrick
Ochudho, Alex
Odhiambo, Tom
Odongo, Michael
Ogira, Ezra Ochollo
Okello, Nabii Joseph
Ooka, Agnes
Ooka, Daniel Chama
Opiyo, Lucus
Osewe, Bernard
Otiengo, Francis
Otiengo, Peter
Oyando, Eucabet
Parker, James
Perdue, Gary
Quillen, Joseph
Rajoro, Peter
Ramirez, Dani
Reid, Adam
Reid, Waldo
Solomon, George W.
Stonell, Raymond
Snyder, Zachary
Tingler, Jerry
Wilcox, Bruce

Female Evangelists

Atieno, Monica
Clardy, Dorothy
Davis, Andrea Faye
Ferre, Linda
Joselyn, Treva
Kimble, Shirley
McKee, Ofelia

Periera, Rebeca
Quillen, Jeannie
Rivera, Barbara
Romo, Reina
Stephenson, Tina
Williams, Linda

Churches & Pastors

United States

Adolphus, KY.....	C.R. Gregory
Anaheim, CA.....	Juan Avila
Bakersfield, CA.....	Juan Lopez
Barberton, OH.....	James Melton
Bayou La Batre, AL.....	Charles Fields
Butte, MT.....	Gary Perdue
Caledonia, MS.....	Ricky Graves
Chestnut Hills, TN.....	Todd McDonald
Cleveland, TN.....	E. A. McDonald
Dallas, OR.....	Kerry Bryant
Ft. Oglethorpe, GA.....	Harold Reed
Fresno, CA.....	James Parker
Fries, VA.....	Rocky E. Dalton
Glendora, CA.....	Reginaldo Durat�
Goshen, IN.....	Jim Webster
Greenville, SC.....	Scott E. Neill
Hartsville, TN.....	William Crook
Herminston, OR.....	Brian Norquist
Hesperia, CA.....	Danny Ramirez
Jacksboro (Clinton), TN.....	Ray Dickson
Little Bingamon, WV.....	Tom Brown
Lompoc, CA.....	Pete Sarry
Madera, CA.....	Reina Romo
Murphy, NC.....	Joseph Steele
Okolona, MS.....	Billy Ray Terrell
Pulaski, TN.....	Clifford Kelton
Rialto, CA.....	Danny Ramirez
Roanoke, VA.....	William Jones
Salisbury, MD.....	Buddy Quillen
Santa Ana, CA.....	Luis Mazariego
San Jose, CA.....	Barbara Rivera
Sheridan, WY.....	Gary Larsen
Taylors, SC.....	Raymond Stonell
Vallejo, CA.....	George Solomon

Van Nuys, CA.....	Miguel Garcia
Ware Shoals, SC.....	Andrea Faye Davis
Wilmington (Leland), NC.....	Robert Llana

Missions

Columbia, SC.....	Wanda Busbee
Sharon, WV.....	Ron Massey
Flintville, TN.....	Roger Barbour
Gainesville, MO.....	Jerry Tingler
Kosciusko, MS.....	Bill Summerlin
Little Rock, CA.....	Rebecca Pereira
Mendota, CA.....	James Parker
Milton, WV.....	Shirley Kimble
Saticoy, CA.....	Jose Lozano

International Churches

Nation	Churches	Missions
England	2	
Guatemala	3	2
Kenya	32	9
Mexico	1	
Nicaragua	1	
Tanzania	11	5

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ABSTRACT OF FAITH

Note: The following was read before the entire Assembly on September 26, 2004, and was accepted by unanimous agreement.

INTRODUCTION

Zion Assembly Church of God is a Spirit-filled body of believers who have covenanted themselves together with God to accept and obey the teachings of Christ and His apostles (Exodus 19:3-6; John 14:6, 8; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:24-32). This commitment is firm, even in this present time of apostasy, when so many are “falling away” and “[departing] from the faith” (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Peter 2; 3:1-12; Jude 3-19).

The ministers and members of Zion Assembly have committed themselves to live and worship together in this “most holy faith,” to walk in truth, to “endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” “and to cultivate among themselves the graces of love and holiness.” They seek for the perfections of Christ in their fellowship, and by His grace and power to conform to the image of Jesus Christ so completely that when He appears they shall be like Him (Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:1-17; 1 John 3:32).

Besides this internal disposition to cultivated mutual love and care within the household of God, the ministers and members of Zion Assembly have committed themselves to labor for the unity of all believers, until all “see eye to eye,” “speak the same thing,” “walk by the same rule” (Isaiah 52:8; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 3:16). In this manner, they seek to carry forward the apostolic vision: “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). Zion Assembly has further obligated itself to publish and to proclaim the full gospel into all the world in obedience to Christ’s commission to the church (Matthew 28:19).

Church Membership

Membership in Zion Assembly Church of God is open to all believers whose testimony is evidenced by the fruit of the new birth, and who are willing to covenant themselves together with Christ and the church to walk in the light of the gospel. Candidates become members by

the following solemn obligation:

Will you sincerely promise in the presence of God and these witnesses, that you will accept this Bible as the Word of God, believe and practice its teachings rightly divided, with the New Testament as your rule of faith and practice, government and discipline, and agree to walk together as one body in the light of the gospel to the best of your knowledge and ability?

In response to this covenant formula, the candidate answers, “I will by the grace of God.” The minister then lays hands on the new member and offers prayer for divine guidance and strength; the congregation follows with an affectionate welcome, and extends the right hand of fellowship.

Prominent Teachings in the Scripture

Note: The following statements are not meant to form a creed, or to be thought of as an exhaustive statement of beliefs upon which the church is built. They are simply an abstract of some of the important and fundamental teachings and principles set forth in the Holy Scriptures, which form an essential part of the church’s Rule of Faith.

The Trinity—The Bible teaches that the one eternal God exists in three persons: namely the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three have distinct identities, yet they form one undivided Godhead, subsisting in the same nature (Romans 5:5; 15:16, 30; 2 Corinthians 1:20; 5:19; John 3:5; Ephesians 2:18; Titus 3:5). The Father is God (Ephesians 4:6), the Son is God (John 1:1-3; 10-1; Hebrews 1:8; Revelation 1:8), the Holy Spirit is God (John 14:17; 16:13; Acts 5:3; 1 Corinthians 2:10), yet there are not three gods, but one God (Deuteronomy 6:4). The three persons of the divine Trinity work together in perfect unity for the salvation of man (John 3:5; 6:44; 14:6, 16, 17; 2 Corinthians 5:19).

Jesus Christ—Jesus Christ is the “image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15), and God’s “only begotten Son” (John 3:16). Through Him, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received into glory, and now sits on the right hand of God to make intercession for us (Acts 7:55; 1 Timothy 3:16). Through Him alone do men have access unto the heavenly Father. It is through His sacrificial and atoning death on the cross that we are saved.

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). He is the spotless “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). He is also the head of the church and the savior of the body (Ephesians 5:23).

The Bible—The Holy Scriptures—both Old and New Testaments—reveal God and His will for man. They are inspired, inerrant, infallible, and unchangeable (2 Timothy 3:14-16; 2 Peter 1:16-21). The truths of the Scriptures are revealed by prophecy, type, precept, and example, illuminated through the power of the Holy Spirit. The teachings of the Bible, particularly in the light of the New Testament, are the Church’s final rule for faith, practice, government, and discipline (Acts 2:42; 2 Peter 3:1, 2). Walking in the light of God’s Word is the guiding principle and commitment of Zion Assembly Church of God. “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105).

The Church—The church is a visible body of believers formed and incorporated by covenant with God to keep His commandments (Exodus 19:5-8; 24:3-8; Psalm 119:57; John 14:15; 17:6, 8, 14; 1 Peter 2:9). It is theocratic in form and function, providing order and government through the Spirit and the Scriptures for God’s people (Isaiah 2:2-4; 9:7; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 12:28). The church is presently imperfect, spotted with backsliders and “false brethren” (1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 2:4; Jude 4). It is thus distinguished from the kingdom of God, the latter being the spiritual realm of all born again believers (John 3:3-8; Romans 14:17; Colossians 1:13). One is “born” into the kingdom; he/she is “added to the church” (John 3:3-8; Acts 2:47). The church will succeed to proclaim the gospel into all the world (Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16); will be perfected “with the washing of water by the word,” and will be presented to Christ glorious in holiness (Ephesians 5:26, 27). The General Assembly is the highest tribunal of authority in the church of the interpretation of the Scriptures (Acts 15; 16:4, 5). The purpose of the General Assembly is to promote unity and fellowship among the saints, to search the Scriptures for additional light and understanding, and to resolve differences in interpretations, which tend to be divisive among the ministers and churches. All matters of faith, government, and discipline are discussed before the entire body of the church assembled, and resolved in one accord with the manifest approval of the Spirit (vv. 12, 22, 28), based on the precedent: “For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.”

All male members in good standing have an active voice in the Assembly. Women are a vital part of the church's life and ministry. In matters dealing with church authority, however, they voice their opinions through their husbands and church elders (1 Corinthians 11:3, 7-9; 14:34-36; 1 Timothy 2:12; 3:1-17).

Salvific Work of Grace

Conviction is a revelation to man by the Holy Ghost of the righteous judgment of God. Through conviction, unregenerated souls see themselves as sinners before God, experience guilt, and realize their separation from Him who is holy, just and good (Isaiah 6:1; John 6:44; Acts 2:37, 38). True repentance can be made only through the work of the Spirit in conviction (John 16:7-15; 1 Corinthians 12:3; see also John 8:32; 14:6).

Repentance is the act of confessing one's sins before God, being willing to forsake them and to turn to Christ with all of one's heart, mind, soul, and strength. True repentance can be made only in the spirit of godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:9, 10). Repentance is manifested by certain fruit "meet for repentance" (Matthew 3:8; Romans 6:2). The act of repentance should be followed by water baptism [see below] (Mark 1:4, 5, 15; Luke 13, 3; Acts 3:19; 5:30, 31; 1 John 1:9). Repentance is a prerequisite experience for justification.

Justification is the state of being void of offense toward God. It is made possible through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. It is the act of God in forgiving the transgressions of a penitent sinner. Justification is the result of repentance and faith (Romans 8:1, 2; 3:23-26; 1 John 1:7). The genuinely justified person has "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:1, 2). Justification signifies the pardon (forgiveness) aspect of the new birth.

Regeneration is the act of God in creating new life in the heart of the believer through the Holy Ghost. It is a definite and instantaneous experience. Man is dead in sins and trespasses through Adam, and can be quickened or regenerated only through faith in Christ and His atoning sacrifice (Ephesians 2:1, 4, 5; Colossians 2:13, 14; John 5:24). Regeneration is the same as the new birth ("born again" experience).

Born Again is another term for the new birth. The result of this experience is a new creation, in which the believer becomes a child of God. It is through

this new birth that one becomes a part of the Kingdom of God (John 1:29). Jesus said: “Ye must be born again” (John 3:3-8; 1 Peter 1:23). The new birth is a prerequisite condition for the experience of sanctification.

Fruit of the Spirit is of divine origin. It is the very life of God poured into the heart of the regenerate believer. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (Galatians 5:22, 23). We are admonished in the Scripture to walk in the Spirit and not to fulfill the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 5:9; Philippians 1:11).

Divine Healing is provided for all in the atonement. Christ’s atoning sacrifice on the cross provides healing for the whole man, including his body. Divine healing is effected by faith without the aid of medicine or surgical skills. In cases where one is healed through the assistance of physicians, medicine, herbs, etc., God is still to be praised: for it is God who heals in any case. “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases” (Psalm 103:2, 3; Isaiah 53:4, 5; Matthew 8:17; 2 Peter 2:24; James 5:14-16).

Subsequent Grace

Sanctification is the second definite work of grace wrought in the regenerated heart by faith. In sanctification, the carnal nature is eradicated (“the old man is crucified”) so that the believer no longer has the inclination or propensity to sin; that is, in sanctification the desire to sin is removed (Hebrews 10:10; 13:12, 13; Romans 6:1-6; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2). Sanctification enables the believer to bring his/her body under subjection to Christ, and to live a life consistent with the spirit of holiness and in accordance with the Word of God. Sanctification is a prerequisite condition for the baptism with the Holy Ghost.

Holiness is the result of sanctification. It is a state of grace and purity in which perfect Christlikeness is desired and pursued (Matthew 5:48; 2 Corinthians 7:2). God has called us unto holiness (Thessalonians 4:7). “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15, 16). “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14; see also Luke 1:74, 75; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Titus 2:11, 12; Eph. 1:4; 4:13, 24). Paul expressed his desire to “present every man perfect in Christ

Jesus” (Colossians 1:28). Christ is returning for a church that is glorious in holiness: “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Ephesians 5:27; see also Psalm 45:9-13).

Practical Graces

Restitution is the act of restoring something wrongfully taken, or the satisfying of one whom otherwise has been wronged (Matthew 3:8; Luke 19:8, 9). This act alone does not save, but it gives evidence of a heart that has truly repented. Restitution glorifies the grace of God and supports the testimony of the believer. It also gives opportunity to reconcile with those who have been wronged. It is the fulfillment of the law of love (Romans 13:8). Some restitutions should be made only with great care and with pastoral guidance, in order to avoid further offense or injury.

Sabbath means rest. Observance of the Sabbath in the Old Testament (the seventh day) was instituted to point to the believer’s spiritual rest in Christ under the New Covenant. The Old Testament requirement to keep the Sabbath holy is now superseded by the commandment: “Be ye holy,” for in Christ the believer is enabled and required to live holy every day. Sunday is not the Sabbath, but is a day set aside by the church to give special attention to the worship of God and the fellowship of the saints (Hosea 2:11; Colossians 2:16, 17; Romans 14:5, 6; Hebrews 4:1-11).

Meats and Drinks—The prohibitions against certain meats and drinks in the Old Testament were not extended into the New Testament church. These ceremonial aspects of Mosaic legislation were “nailed to the cross” of Christ, and done away with in the covenant of grace (Colossians 2:13-17; Ephesians 2:15; Hebrews 9:8-11). What one eats and drinks (with the exception of intoxicating beverages) is now a matter of conscience, and does not violate the nature and principles of the kingdom of God (Romans 14:17). However, one should be mindful of the Scriptural injunction: “... whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (See also: Romans 14:2; 1 Corinthians 8:8; 1 Timothy 4:1-5).

Tithing And Giving—Tithing is the giving of one tenth of one’s increase to Christ, our High Priest. It began as a voluntary act with Abraham, was required under the Mosaic law, and carried forward by Christ as a discipline for the New Testament church (Matthew 23:23). Tithes are to be brought to the house of God and properly distributed by the ministers

having the charge of the treasury (Malachi 3:10). Freewill offerings are to be encouraged and regarded as a gift from the heart. Tithing and giving into the church are part of God's plan to finance His work through the church on earth. We are required in the Scriptures to be good stewards of that which God has entrusted in our care (See also: Genesis 14:18-20; Luke 11:42; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-9; Hebrews 7:1-21).

Swearing and Profanity—Taking an oath is contrary to the spirit of the New Testament. “But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation” (James 5:12). Jesus said, “But I say unto you, Swear not at all...But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Matthew 5:34, 37; see also Exodus 20:7). An affirmation of the truth is sufficient; it is acceptable even in secular courts. Similarly, the use of profanity reflects an impure heart and has no place in the life of a child of God (Matthew 15:18, 19; Philippians 1:27; 3:20; 1 Peter 1:15; 2 Peter 2:7; James 3:8-10).

Intoxicating Beverages and Drugs—“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1). The Scriptures teach against the consumption of alcohol or other intoxicating beverages because God has called us to perfect sobriety (1 Peter 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:6; Timothy 3:2; Titus 2:2). Believers are admonished not to “...give place to the devil.” So-called moderate or social drinking certainly gives place to the adversary and thus believers should totally abstain (Ephesians 4: 27; see also: Isaiah 28: 7; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:10; Galatians 5:21). Much of what is said about intoxicating beverages is true also of drugs. The use of drugs such as tobacco, marijuana, opium, cocaine, etc., impair the body and is not in keeping with the teachings and principles of Christ and the Scriptures. These things defile the body and are inconsistent with God's call to soberness (2 Corinthians 7:1; Isaiah 55:2; 1 Corinthians 10:31, 32; Ephesians 5:3-8; James 1:21). Drugs used for medical purposes should be taken only under the care and direction of a physician, and then only in good conscience.

Unequal Yoke—The Bible teaches against the children of God being unequally yoked with unbelievers. Binding ourselves with unbelievers in organizations and secret orders with an oath is contrary to the Spirit of Christ and the plain teaching in the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 6:14-17).

As the espoused bride of Christ, we have covenanted ourselves to give undivided loyalty to Christ. “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2; Jeremiah 50:5). Membership in organizations which require an oath of secrecy should be dissolved before becoming a member of the church. “Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing” (John 18:20).

Spirit Baptism and Spiritual Gifts

Baptism with the Holy Ghost is an instantaneous experience wrought in the life of the believer subsequent to entire sanctification. In this baptism, Christ is the agent; the Spirit is the element (Matthew 3:11). The baptism with the Spirit on the sanctified life is accompanied with speaking in tongues: “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:2-4; see also: 10:44-47; 19:1-6). The baptism with the spirit is a baptism of spiritual empowerment for service in the kingdom of God (Luke 24:49; John 15:26; Acts 1:8); it also enables one to minister effectively within the church for the self-edification of the body (1 Corinthians 12:12-28; Ephesians 4:11-16).

Speaking in Tongues always accompanies the baptism with the Holy Ghost. The believer speaks in “unknown tongues” as “the Spirit gives utterance” (Acts 2:4). “Unknown tongues” is distinguished from speaking by the gift of the Spirit in “divers tongues,” that is, in languages that are known to man (Acts 2:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10; 14:2). In either case (“unknown tongues” or languages known to man), the manifestation of tongues (and interpretations) is always consistent with the Word of God (1 Corinthians 14:26). The gift of tongues is a sign to unbelievers (vv. 14:21-23), but serve also for the self-edification of the believer (v. 4).

Gifts Of The Spirit—There are various gifts and operations of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). The gifts of the Spirit were in operation in the New Testament church, but thereafter the church began to “fall away,” and the manifestations of the spiritual gifts began to wane. After the apostasy in the fourth century, and the ensuing “dark ages” of Christian history, the manifestation of spiritual gifts (particularly tongues-speaking) were almost non-existent (manifested on occasion mainly among so-called

heretics and unorthodox Christians). In these last days (particularly since early in the twentieth century) God is again pouring out His Spirit “upon all flesh” according to prophecy, in order to fulfill His eternal purpose through the church (Joel 2:28-32; 3:16-18; Acts 2:38, 39).

Signs Following Believers—Signs in the New Testament were mainly for the purpose of confirming the Word of God and Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah. As believers went forth preaching the Word in Jesus’ name, the Lord worked with them and confirmed the Word with signs following (Mark 16:15-20). Miraculous signs follow believers in order to confirm the proclamation of the Word of God, to convict sinners, and to edify the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12-14).

Ordinances

Water Baptism is the act of being immersed in water by the minister of the gospel in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It is commanded by Christ and represents His death, burial and resurrection, which are experienced in the life of the believer (Romans 6:3-5). This ordinance has no power to wash away sin, but is the answer of a good conscience toward God (1 Peter 3:21). Water baptism is valid only when the candidate is actually born again (Matthew 28:19; Mark 1:8-10; 16:15, 16; John 3:22, 23; Acts 10:47, 48; 16:33). Water baptism is identified with spiritual regeneration; it is not the door into the church.

Lord’s Supper is a memorial meal, which calls to remembrance the sacrifice of Christ, who shed His blood for our sins. Jesus commanded that this sacred meal be observed “in remembrance of me” (1 Corinthians 11:24). The broken, unleavened bread represents His body; the fruit of the vine (unfermented grape juice) represents His blood. This sacred ordinance should be observed with holy reverence, only after careful self-examination (1 Corinthians 10: 16, 17; 11:23-30). It is the outward sign of Christ’s covenant with the church (Luke 22:20).

Feet Washing is an ordinance in the church. Following the institution of the Lord’s Supper, Christ girded himself with a towel, washed the disciples’ feet, and said: “If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet” (John 13:14). This ordinance is distinguished from the cultural practice of feet washing in the Middle East; it has spiritual significance and is commanded to be observed

by believers (1 Timothy 5:10). The purpose of feet washing is not fulfilled through charity and good works. It is to remind us that we have one Master and Lord, who is the head of the church, and we are all His servants, and servants of one another.

Divine Sanctities

Sanctity of Life—Human life is sacred because it is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Taking of innocent life is thus strictly forbidden in Scripture, including abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, genocide, and suicide (self-murder). “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13). Whosoever sheddeth innocent blood will not be held guiltless before God (Genesis 9:6; Numbers 35:30, 31; Romans 13:8-10; Revelation 21:8).

Sanctity of Marriage—Jesus said, “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder” (Matthew 19:4-6). Accordingly, marriage is between a male and female until death (Mark 10:2-12; Romans 7:2); as such it is a divine institution that should be held in the highest esteem among all men and women (Hebrews 13:4). Adultery, fornication, divorce and remarriage are sinful practices that violate the laws of God, and injure the home and family. Nevertheless, unfaithfulness (sexual relationships outside of marriage) is not grounds for divorce and remarriage, for “whosoever marrieth her which is put away committeth adultery” (Matthew 19:9). Therefore, those who remarry while their first companion is alive are not eligible for membership in the church (see Exodus 20:14, 17; Malachi 2:14-17; Matthew 5:32; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 6:15-20; 7:2, 3).

Sanctity of the Body—Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and we are admonished to glorify God in our body (1 Corinthians 6:20-21). “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy” (3:16-17). We are also admonished to present our bodies “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” (Romans 12:1), and “...whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31b). Incest, same sex unions, and all homosexual and lesbian relationships are strictly forbidden by the Scriptures. These practices are an abomination to God, though they may be sanctioned by a state or religious institution (Romans 1:24-28; Leviticus 18:22, 23; 20:10-

21). Practices such as “body piercing,” tattooing, mutilating and disfiguring the body are of pagan origin and contrary to the spirit of holiness and biblical principles. These practices should have no place in the lives of believers (Cf. Timothy 2:8-10; Romans 12:1, 2; Isaiah 3:16-22; 1 John 2:15-17).

Eschatology

The Rapture and Pre-Millennial Second Coming Of Jesus—Christ is coming again in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (Matthew 24:27, 28). “The dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; see also 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52). All who are caught up in the first resurrection will attend the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9). Christ will then return to earth and reign with the saints for a thousand years (vv. 4, 6; see also Zechariah 14:4, 5; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; Jude 14, 15; Revelation 5:10; 19:11-21).

Resurrection—There will be a resurrection for both the righteous and the wicked. The righteous will be raised at Christ’s first appearance in the clouds of glory. The resurrection of the wicked will occur after the thousand years reign of Christ on earth. “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15; see also Daniel 12: 2; Revelation 20: 4-6; John 5: 28, 29; 1 Corinthians 15:12-23, 41-58).

Eternal Life for the Righteous—The reward of the righteous is everlasting life in the presence of God. “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matthew 25:46; Luke 18:29, 30; John 10:28; Romans 6:22; 1 John 5:11-13).

Eternal Punishment for the Wicked—Those who reject or disregard the call to repentance and salvation are doomed to eternal damnation (John 3:15-21). In hell there is no escape, no liberation, no annihilation. Hell is the “the second death,” and is a place of eternal torment. “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8; see also: 20:10-15; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Jude 14:15; Matthew 25:46; Mark 3:29).

Principles for Practical Christian Living and Discipline

The following guidelines are explicitly revealed in the Scriptures, or else shown to be consistent with biblical teachings. They are brought to our attention to enhance our relationship with Christ and one another, and to encourage us to live in a way that will bring glory and honor to the name of Christ, and to support the witness of the church. We are admonished in the Scriptures: "...be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12b). Jesus instructs us: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Prayer—Jesus' admonition to "watch and pray" (Matthew 26:41a) has never been more urgent than today. We live in "perilous times," and Christ and the apostles warned that the times will only worsen as we approach our Lord's return. Therefore, daily prayers and family devotions should be a priority in every church home. Maintaining a prayerful attitude is a key to spirituality for every individual and local congregation. Again Jesus said, "...men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1a), and the apostle encouraged believers to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We are also enjoined to "...pray one for another..." (James 5:16a). Special prayers should be made for those in authority and for those who have given themselves in service to God and to the ministry of the Word (1 Timothy 2:1-3). Prayer is so essential to the life of the church that the church is called "the house of prayer" (Isaiah 56:7; Matthew 21:13).

Bible Study—Reading and studying the Scriptures are invaluable to the spiritual welfare of the child of God. Every member of the church is encouraged to be a faithful student of God's holy Word. Paul instructs us to "Study to shew thyself approved unto God..." (2 Tim 2:15a), for "the holy scriptures are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (3:15). Further, he says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (v.16). The importance of the Word of God is eloquently expressed by Psalmist: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." And again, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:105, 11).

Church Attendance and Worship—Worship and fellowship with believers of “like precious faith” is a vital part of the Christian life. Worship should be heartfelt in the Spirit, and in harmony with the Word of God (John 4:23b; Ephesians 5:19). Each member of the church is a part of the body of Christ, and thus the body will be hindered to the degree that one member fails to actively participate in its life and mission. Accordingly, members should actively support every function of the church, and participate as much as possible. The exhortation of the Hebrew writer is worthy of our careful attention: “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some; but exhorting one another: and so much more as we see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25). Children should be instructed at home, and taught by precept and example to respect the house of God. Ministers and their families should be examples in their lifestyles and conversations. “And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane” (Ezekiel 44:23a). A prayerful attitude creates an atmosphere conducive for worship and the ministry of God’s Word. Believers should therefore be prayerful as the minister delivers the message, lest Satan come and steal the Word of God from their hearts (Mark 4:4, 15). God’s love “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost” should fill the atmosphere of our worship services. Love should govern our every action and be shown to everyone without partiality (1 Corinthians 13). We should take special care to show love to visitors. Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

Walking Circumspectly—Children of God should “walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time for the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15,16). Living a consecrated life at home and abroad will give no place for anyone to justly think or speak of you as a hypocrite. Our manner of life and conversation should be holy in word and deed, as becoming to a child of God. As representatives of Christ in this world, and members of the Church of God, we should fashion ourselves with modesty and sobriety (Psalm 1:1-3; Philippians 1:27; Thessalonians 5:15-23).

Entertainment and Worldly Attractions—Christians should never participate in worldly attractions and entertainment where the principles of holiness may be compromised. Believers should participate in activities with unbelievers only with a guarded disposition, lest one becomes entangled or entrapped in the snares of Satan. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking

whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8; see also 2 Peter 2:19-22).

Illicit Relationships—Paul admonishes us to “give no place to the devil” (Ephesians 4:27). Forming too close an intimacy with the opposite sex, even if they are brothers and sisters in the Lord, creates an environment for temptation and gives opportunity for the “wiles of the devil.” Samson is a classic case of this unwise behavior, which led to his fall from grace (Judges 16); whereas Joseph wisely fled from a similar situation (Genesis 39). Paul perhaps had Joseph in mind when he exhorted, “Flee fornication” (1 Corinthians 6:18). The words of James, the Lord’s brother, also come to mind: “Lust when it is conceived bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death” (James 1:13-15). In view of these solemn admonitions, great care should be taken to avoid associations and situations, which could reflect upon one’s character and bring reproach upon Christ and the church.

Outward Adornment—Christians are ambassadors (representatives) for Christ in this present world (2 Corinthians 5:20). As such they should be careful to adorn themselves as befitting their Lord’s plainness and purity. Adorning oneself after a worldly fashion with facial paint, gold, pearls, costly apparel, etc. is inconsistent with the testimony of one professing a life separated unto God. “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel... But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Peter 3:1-6; see also 1 Timothy 2:8-10; Isaiah 3:16-24; 61:10).

Corporate and Self-Discipline—Self-examinations to evaluate one’s own faith and spirituality are healthy (1 Corinthians 11:28). Sincere concern for others is also good and to be encouraged. We are our brother’s keeper. Counsel should be given only in the spirit of love and with godly wisdom, and according to the rule of discipline outlined in the gospel (Matthew 18:15-20). (A harsh spirit of criticism is detrimental to the spiritual welfare of both the critic and the one receiving the criticism: Matthew 7:1-5; 2 Corinthians 2:1-11; Galatians 5:14, 15; Ephesians 4:30-32). Discipline should be administered only as a last resort, and always through prayerful counsel and with the ultimate good of the erring brother/sister in mind (1 Corinthians 5:1-7; Galatians 6:1-5).