

## Multiple Assemblies vs Single Assembly Church: what is the jurisdiction of Elders? [Part 2]

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Lagos, Nigeria. [June 22, 2020]

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### Introduction

This Part 2 is based on further discussions on the MOG WhatsApp Group after all initial articles were read/reviewed by the group members and even by few outsiders. It is arranged in four sections, namely:

- i. **Clarification of Misconceptions** [Pg 1-3] - to clear up misconceptions observed in discussions.
- ii. **Addressing Observations and Objections** [Pg 3-19] - in-depth response to the new objections and observations addressed on the MOG.
- iii. **Addressing Akpore's Rejoinder** [Pg 20-41] - response to statements in Bro. S.O. Akpore's written rejoinder to COA (Part 1).
- iv. **Addressing Sharp's Review of CO** [Pg 42-52] - response to the review of CO's initial article as published by Bro. Keith Sharp, an American preacher and elder.

### I. Clarification of Misconceptions

Many do not really understand the concept of "City-church" as explained in Part 1 but deem it strange. Church from the Greek term 'Ekklessia' [Strong 1577] simply means 'assembly' (Acts 7:38; 19:32-41) With respect to the NT faith, church means "those called out via the gospel [to be Christ's disciples]" or 'a religious congregation.' We all agree that Jesus spoke of all those that would be in His kingdom in Mt 16:18, and term this as **"the universal church."** It refers to the saved throughout the universe for all time. This phrase is familiar in the brotherhood, and **nobody says** 'universal church' is an unscriptural term or strange concept. However, Christians in the scriptures are also described based on their geographical location especially all the saints in a city. This is what some people today refer to as a local church in the NT. That **is what we term the City-church**. For instance, if YOU have ever used the phrase '*the church which was at Jerusalem*' (Acts 8:1) or '*the church which was in Jerusalem*' (Acts 11:22) or simply used the short phrase '**Jerusalem church**' then YOU are familiar with the '**City-church**' concept since Jerusalem  $\equiv$  city and you are referring to the body of Christians or church in this particular city.

Curiously, many today refer to each of several regular gatherings of Christians for worship at any venue in a city as "a local church" and **think of it as** "an autonomous congregation." This notion, which is based on recent human tradition, makes it difficult for such persons to understand us clearly. Such assert that: **"A local church is known by meeting and worshipping together regularly in a particular place or location. And it is sacrosanct that the elders must be from within or among the local church."** Thus, if a town has four congregations or assemblies meeting in four distinct houses/halls, each is seen as a separate [local] church to ordain its own eldership, pursue its own work and generally operate independently of others.

We consider a regular located gathering of Christians for worship as "an assembly or a congregation or a house-church (whether or not, it meets in a home or a purpose built hall)." Where and when several assemblies exist in a city (settlement), we see all the members in these assemblies as constituting one body: **the City-church**. The whole church may or may not regularly come together into one place. Whether the City-church do meet in one venue and how frequent is up to them but each assembly

constitutes a cell/cluster/congregation/house-church. However, if there is only one assembly or house/hall church in a city then it is simultaneously the City-church. **We wish to emphasize the following:**

1. **Every group of worshippers is a congregation.** However, not every congregation is necessarily an autonomous church. The totality of Christians in all congregations [assemblies] within a named locality constitutes a City-church, the autonomous local church or body of Christ in that settlement.
2. **Inspiration identifies a local/autonomous church relative to its geographical location [city/town/village]** e.g. the church at Jerusalem; one of the churches of Judea, the church of Ephesus; one of the churches of Asia and the church in Antioch; one of the churches of Galatia, etc. It is the specific place(s) of assembling of the City-church that are identified with an individual's name e.g. Mary's house, Aquila's house, school of Tyrannus, etc.
3. The NT refers to the elders of the City-church e.g. “the elders of **the church** at Jerusalem,” “the elders of **the church** of Ephesus,” in Acts 15:4 & 20:17 respectively. A typical assembly is NOT ‘Aquila’s church’ or ‘the church of Aquila’ ...it is simply “**the church (of Ephesus segment) that meets in Aquila’s house.**” There was nothing like ‘the elders of the church that meets in Aquila's house’ or ‘the elders of the many that gathered in Mary's house,’ or ‘the elders of the church which is in Nymphas' house’ or ‘the elders of the church in Philemon's house,’ etc. simply because **a typical house-church is a segment (part or whole) of the City-church.** Paul wrote epistles unto City-churches NOT to house-churches because the City-church is the whole church for all in any locality.
4. During the first century, in a typical city, as the number of disciples increased with evangelism, the single assembly would give way unto multiple assemblies but the believers still functioned as one body under a common local leadership, not as autonomous congregations having distinct presbyteries. Usage of multiple assemblies or only one assembly was an expediency depending on the population of saints, the ease of transporting themselves, the safety of congregating as one if under persecution, etc.
5. The assertion of some that in the first century, each city had only one assembly is an assumption invalidated by the inspired documentation about Jerusalem, Rome, etc. The Jews typically chased believers from the synagogues and there were no specially built church halls in the first century. In many cities, the Christians met from house to house, resulting in multiple assemblies. Each house-church was an assembly that worshipped and broke bread on the first day of the week. In any city, elders were appointed as shepherds or overseers over **all the flock** irrespective of whether there were many house-churches (assemblies) or only one. Since the church/body is **one** (united in faith, mind and purpose) in a locality, its leadership is termed the Presbytery or “Council of Elders.” [For example, the elders of the church in Derbe were amongst those who recommended and commissioned Timothy for mission work with Paul -Acts 14:20-23; 16:1-3, 1 Tim 4:14, 2 Tim 1:6.]
6. Splitting the body of Christ in a city into autonomous churches is **separation, irrespective of whether it is occasioned by a disagreement or by an agreement of the Christians involved.** Such action is injurious to the kingdom of Christ and **is NOT authorized in the NT scriptures.** Establishing another congregation in a city could be creation of a cell of the City-church or creation of another autonomous church; the former is a spread of the body while the latter is a division.
7. No congregation is absolutely autonomous since Christians are subjects of Christ’s kingdom. Relative autonomy of churches is at the City-church level (Rev 1:11-3:18) NOT at the house-church level. For a cell to suddenly declare autonomy from a local church or move a motion for its independence is instigating division in the one body in that settlement. It depicts rebellion, dissention or ambition

hence such practice should not be encouraged. Those who champion such independence are displaying the attitude of Diotrephes. They should only be disregarded and left alone after exhortations fail to convince them that they are heretic. Just as a house-church ought not to proclaim independence from a City-church leadership [presbytery], so should a City-church not proclaim independence from the universal church leadership [Christ via His apostles & their writings]

8. The book of Revelation was written towards the end of the first century. The Lord opted to use John the beloved apostle in communicating with “the leadership of each City-church” that He mentioned in Asia. Christ did NOT appear unto a host of a house-church to deliver a message in each City-church. Neither did He appear unto a presbytery to deliver a message unto churches in other cities. Ordinarily such persons lacked the jurisdiction to be a global envoy and commissioning a new apostle was not expedient when miraculous gifts were about to cease.

## II. Addressing Observations and Objections

**Ob:** The Book of Revelation is written in a very unique way -Rev 1:1. It's an apocryphal. Except one want to assume that the Angel of each is the elder for each of seven churches. Then how are you going to explain the angel in Rev 1:1 that revealed all visions to John which congregation is he from? The Book Revelation is not written to explain church leadership; it was never the purpose of the Book.

**Ans:** The immediate and total context of Rev 1:1 shows a spiritual creature was showing John an apostle, many things in symbolic manner. John could NOT have been commanded to write a letter unto heavenly beings such as angel Gabriel or angel Michael, they know more than humans and are with Christ above.

1. Christ said unto the angel of the church of Ephesus (2:2-5): *“I know thy works, ...and for my name's sake hast laboured, ...thou hast left thy first love ...Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent...”* Unto the angel of the church in Smyrna (2:8-10): *“I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) ...be thou faithful unto death...”* Unto the angel of the church in Pergamos (2:12-13): *“...thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you...”*

### **Does Rev 2-3 teach that heavenly angels, spiritual invisible creatures:**

- a) Were the actual recipients of inspired epistles NOT church leaders (Elders and Evangelists)?
- b) Are to be blamed for a church's lapses or praised for its good efforts?
- c) Labour to bear Christ's name or preach the gospel and sometimes abandon it?
- d) Can REPENT from their FALLEN state?
- e) Go through tribulation, poverty or are rich?
- f) Could be martyred like Antipas, so should be faithful unto death, do angels DIE?
- g) Could sometimes be *lukewarm*, indifferent to the conflict between light and darkness?

An honest answer to the above queries should help one discern who *‘the angel of the church’* was!

2. The words ‘angel’ and ‘messenger’ are both translated from the same Greek term [ἄγγελος – Thayer's Greek Lexicon 32 ‘Aggelos’ means envoy, “one who is sent.” It could refer to a human herald or a heavenly spirit which waits on God, doing a task assigned by the Lord.]  
‘The **angel** of the church of a city’ is simply ‘the **messenger** of that church’ and corresponds to the servant-leaders serving the body of Christ in that community. These were the elders and/or preachers (Heb 13:17, **2 Cor 8:23**, **Phil 2:25**) who should *acknowledge that the writings of an apostle are the commandments of the Lord* and ensure obedience at the assemblies.

3. The Lord said to John in Rev 1:11, *“I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and **send it unto the seven churches** which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.”*

The respective local church leaders can address the issues that Christ raised about each City-church; heavenly angelic beings do not give sermon/teaching/counselling in the assembly of the saints. While the book of Revelation may not be ‘written to explain church leadership,’ it does allude to it. That was the reason it was sent unto churches and would be carefully studied by each leadership to exhort their members. It is not the spiritual, invisible angels who are warned about the book’s content but humanity; *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”*

**Ob:** Apart from the church that met in Philemon’s house, what else do we know about house-churches?

**Ans:** It is obvious that the church in Aquila and Priscilla’s house was one of several assemblies in Rome or in Ephesus. In Part 1 (COA Pg 6-7), we exhaustively treated the issue of Philemon and the church in his house. Let us now examine the case of **Nymphas**. We have to consider ALL possibilities and analyze.

**Colossians 4:13** *For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.*

*14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.*

*15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.*

*16 And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.*

1. If Nymphas was resident in a city that was **neither** mentioned nor alluded to in the passage then the location of the church in his house was unidentified and remains unknown! However, Paul and the Colossians knew where exactly the house of Nymphas was located. For us, deducing where the house-church was situated is crucial to ascertaining if it was autonomous.

2. If Nymphas was resident in Hierapolis then the church in his house could have been:

- a. A cell of that City-church **because** Paul earlier referred to *“them of Hierapolis”* (4:13) but went ahead to mention Nymphas and his house-church separately in vs 15. He did NOT expressly state: ‘the church in Hierapolis which meets in Nymphas’ house.’
- b. The City-church **if** *“them of Hierapolis”* REFERS exclusively to *“Nymphas and the church which is in his house.”* There is no scriptural proof that the church in Nymphas’ house was one of several autonomous churches in Hierapolis, the NT does not give explicit details about the leadership of Christians in that city.

3. If Nymphas was resident in Laodicea then the church in his house would be a cell. This is because in vs 16, Paul acknowledged ONE body in Laodicea: **“the church of the Laodiceans.”** Vs 15 shows that church consist of *“the brethren which are in Laodicea.”* However, three entities are saluted in Vs 16; Laodicean brethren, Nymphas and the house-church he hosts. The salute herein would be superfluous or tautology if the brethren (church) in Laodicea is also the house-church hosted by Nymphas. Thus, Paul would be greeting Nymphas and the church [of Laodicea cluster that meets] in his house. This is very likely since

‘Nymphas’ was mentioned ALONGSIDE WITH ‘Laodicea’ in vs 15. This is glaring in **Young’s Literal Translation**: “*Salute ye those in Laodicea –brethren and Nymphas and the assembly in his house.*” If the assembly at Nymphas’ house was one of several self-ruling congregations in the city of Laodicea then inspired Paul would have referred to ‘the churchES of the Laodiceans’ in vs 16. However, there is no inspired evidence that there were independent churches in Laodicea. Christ addressed “**the church of the Laodiceans**” (Rev 3:14) as one of the autonomous churches in the province of Asia Minor (Rev 1:11).

4. If Nymphas was resident in Colosse then the church in his house was NOT the Colossian church, it must be a cell. This is because:

- a. Paul generally greeted “*the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse*” at the beginning of his epistle and conveyed the greeting of Luke and Demas **to same** in 4:14.
- b. Paul was NOT directly greeting Nymphas and his house-church in 4:15 but was sending another entity to do so.
- c. The Colossians were requested to salute Nymphas and his house assembly not themselves. This would be akin to Rm 16 where Paul requested the Roman saints to salute Aquila & Priscilla and the church in their house. [Such distinctive greeting shows that a saluted house-church with its host were a segment, and NOT the entirety of the saints in a city. The house owner was specifically singled out as a fellow worker, which Paul knew personally or by reputation.]

The fourth option is less likely because the wording of vs 15 associate Nymphas more unto Laodicea than elsewhere, AND after mentioning Nymphas, even vs 16 is essentially about Laodicea. Colosse could be more viable if verse 15 read: “*Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea. Salute Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.*” Repetitive use of ‘salute’ would have indicated separate locations between the Laodiceans and Nymphas, as could be inferred between Rufus and Asyncritus in Rm 16:13-14. We have thus established that irrespective of the city where it was located, the most likely scenario is that **the church in Nymphas house was a cell of a City-church**. Since “them of Laodicea” was “the church of the Laodiceans”, it follows that “them of Hierapolis” was another church just as “ye” [Colossians].

**Ob:** You cannot talk about “the church at Colosse” since this phrase is not found in the scriptures. There might have been several autonomous churches in Colosse as well as Rome. The epistle to each says “to the saints” not “to the church.”

**Ans:** The Christians in Colosse were Christ’s called out ones, which received a common letter from an inspired apostle. The fact is the letter to Colosse (1:2) was addressed to ‘*the saints.*’ Use of definite article ‘**the**’ before ‘saints’ shows they were grouped together and recognized as an entity. Specifically, the Colossian saints (3:9-15) were instructed to relate honestly with one another in one body. Recall that Paul likewise wrote: “*to the saints which are at Ephesus*” in Eph 1:1. He did not explicitly address it ‘*to the church at Ephesus*’ but implied that. It is an inevitable conclusion because inspiration stated that ‘**the saints**’ in Ephesus “*are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit*” (2:2). They were urged to “*keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling*” (4:3-4). They constituted one church since Acts 20:17 states; “*And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.*” Even Jesus mentioned “*the church of Ephesus*” in Rev 2:2. Thus, it is reasonable to hold that the saints in the city of Colosse were a church.



We teach new converts that the church is the kingdom on earth (Col 1:13) so how could the Colossians not be a church? Their situation is akin to the saints in Rome (1:7) who were informed about being in the kingdom not for carnal meals (14:17). The Colossian saints were a church as well as the Roman saints.

**Ob:** Was it the universal church that Paul was persecuting or the local church?

**Ans:** Saul [Paul] persecuted both. As noted, at the beginning the Jerusalem church was both the universal church [on earth] and a local church since it was located in a city. With the dispersion of saints and establishment of churches in Samaria, Judea, etc. Jerusalem became only a local church while its members and saints in other City-churches belonged to the universal church. Saul persecuted these wherever he could find them. He was authorized via letters by the high priest to go to Damascus and other places *“that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.”* He admitted later that *“...I persecuted them even unto **strange** cities....”* -Acts 26:11 He was against and injurious unto any and every Christian individual or local assembly; his vehemence was widespread and impactful until Jesus intervened! His passion and talent were subsequently re-directed to advance the gospel of Christ universally, more than any other individual did.

**Ob:** Acts 9:31 and I Peter 5 were not properly addressed. In addition, to me, those passages are key on that subject. And they seem contradictory to the City-church concept. If it is said that the Bible speaks of one church in each city based on the passages that mentions one church in each city, to be consistent, one should also teach that elders should be appointed over regions since Acts 9:31 didn't mention cities but regions with a singular church. And this is where I Peter comes in... I Peter mentions elders *“among you.”* And Peter was not even written to a church. Shall the recipient appoint elders over the regions?

**Ans:** There is no reason to conflate issues or make unnecessary inference. Acts 9:31 implies the [affected parts of the] (universal) church had rest throughout Judaea, Galilee and Samaria after the conversion of Saul. The persecuted, which got rest, was not just a local church or a regional church but was the disciples across multiple provinces. You knew that Peter ‘did not write to a church’ in a formal sense of an organized group. Inspiration has not commanded that elders be appointed over a multi-provincial group, why assume such must be ordained? The Holy Spirit is clear in the command of Titus 1:5 that an Evangelist should *“appoint elders in every city.”* The epistle of 1<sup>st</sup> Peter was written unto saints *“scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.”* These were Christians dwelling in multiple provinces. Peter an apostle, exhorted *“the elders among”* them for he was also an elder. Nothing in his epistle indicates that the elders addressed were appointed **to function over the respective provinces or over the provinces collectively**. Since the elders were AMONG [in the midst of] saints in the named provinces, it is most reasonable to believe those elders were appointed in every city in each province. This conclusion is consistent with other passages on eldership; there is no need to assume otherwise.

**Ob:** One congregation, due to small size or government control, can serve two cities. Gusau and Sokoto congregations are serving more than one LGA each in their respective states because of government's control. If Gusau ordains elders, won't they serve all the brethren in the two or more LGA? According to your interpretation, it would be wrong for those elders to oversee saints outside their city.

**Ans:** The saints who identify/associate with Gusau City-church or Sokoto City-church while living in the neighbouring cities ought to get together to fellowship in their own locality. Legally, Christians can meet

in a public place or in homes in each city/settlement. If the state government is trampling on their rights, they need to appeal for reason to prevail even if it means approaching the court to enforce their fundamental human rights. The elders of the church where one has membership should oversee the person. Our main argument is that Christians who desire to create new autonomous churches in that state should do so in localities different from Gusau and Sokoto cities.

**Ob:** Why did the Holy Spirit not mention appointing elders over cities to Timothy when he was given the qualifications for the eldership?

**Ans:** Timothy was asked to “*abide still at Ephesus*” (1 Tim 1:3) unlike Titus who had to an Island of many cities to transverse (Tit 1:5). A careful reading of Acts 19:1-8, 9-22; 20:17-31 & 1 Tim 1:3; 4:11-12; 5:17-20 indicates that there were elders in the church of Ephesus before Timothy’s arrival. Nevertheless, Timothy would know the qualifications for eldership are applicable in every City-church since he knew that inspired Paul taught the same things everywhere (1 Cor. 4:17)

**Ob:** How many times did the word “church” appear in the epistle to Titus? Why are you saying 1:5 is about elders for a City-church? James 5:14 says if any is sick among us “*let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him...*,” not call for the elders of the city.

**Ans:** That the word ‘church’ does not [expressly] occur in the epistle to Titus does not mean it is not implied. The aged men, aged women, young women, young men and servants whom Titus was to teach sound doctrine in Chapter 2 were those already in the Lord’s church. Unbelievers are to be taught about the life, death, burial and resurrection of Christ for repentance unto remission of sins and be added unto the church to be saved. Chapter 3 vs 1, 8 & 14 allude to saints with pronouns “*them, they & ours.*” Paul and Titus were ministers of righteousness in Christ’s kingdom. Titus was in Crete to preach to the lost as well as teach the saved. Recall Acts 15:36

*And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit **our brethren in every city** where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.*

This shows that the church exists in each city wherein the gospel was preached and obeyed to produce brethren. Paul left Titus behind in Crete to organize the brethren. Hence “every city” implies each city wherein is a church in Crete Island. It is not about appointing ‘chiefs for each city’ or ‘civil/secular elders in every city.’ He had no business doing that since the kingdom of Christ is not of this world but spiritual. [The civil or Mosaic elders of the city of Jerusalem were in place (Lk 22:66) **before and after** (Acts 25:15) the Jerusalem church ordained its own spiritual presbytery. The elders in Jerusalem church were NOT ceremonial. While the apostles provided guidance and law universally, the elders provided leadership/spiritual mentorship/development for the local church. In Acts 15, the delegates from Antioch church wanted to find out if indeed the Jerusalem church sent those Judaizers to teach circumcision, the finding was ‘No.’ The apostles as inspired men over the universal church, gave a ruling on the doctrinal controversy which was then circulated to all believing Gentiles.]

Titus 1:5 is about setting forth elders in the body of Christ within a city. It provides authorization on appointing elders in a City-church. A sick brother in Ephesus would call for the elders of the church of Ephesus while a sick sister in Jerusalem could call for the elders of the church in Jerusalem. She would not call for the elders of the city (Sanhedrin) but would call for ‘*the elders of the church in the city.*’

**Ob:** Does NOT the Bible use the word ‘city or city of the living God’ to refer to church in other passages of the scriptures?

**Ans:** Heb 11:16; 13:14 & Rev 21:2; 22:19 allude to the [universal] church as a heavenly city.

Heb 12:22-23 - *But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto **the city** of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To **the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven**, and to God the Judge of all, and to **the spirits of just men made perfect**.*

The Hebrews writer is making comparisons between the OT/Mosaic era [the fearfulness of not being able to get closer to the mountain or generally approach God freely] with the NT/Christian era [wherein each should “*come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*”] In gathering and organizationally, the passage alludes to spirits NOT flesh and blood; it does NOT teach that we should appoint global elders or a General Overseer. [Jesus is the One ruling universally, unto whom all have come, the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of our souls]

**Ob:** Tit 1:5 never said appoint elders **over** every city but “in every city.” City means ‘church’ -Acts 14:23

**Ans:** To appoint elders ‘in every city’ is equivalent to appoint elders ‘in every church,’ and means to ordain a presbytery in each City-church.

**Acts 20:** 17 *And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called **the elders of the church**....*

28. *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, **over** the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

If the Elders are OVER “the church” And ‘city = church’ as you aver Then the elders are OVER the city! Inspiration calls them **Overseers** because they are appointed OVER the church to SEE to its affairs.

1 Thessalonians 5:12. *And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and **are OVER you** in the Lord, and admonish you.*

Hebrews 13:17 *Obey them that have the **rule OVER you**, and submit yourselves: **for they watch for your souls**, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*

Who are the persons who watch and RULE OVER brethren?

**1 Peter 5:1** ***The elders** which are **among you** I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:*

2 *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the **OVERsight** thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;*

3 *Neither as being lords over God`s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.*

4 *And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

**1 Timothy 3:1** *...If a man desire the office of a **bishop**... 5 (For if a man know not how to **rule** his own house, how shall he **take care of the church of God**?)... 5:17 Let **the elders that rule** well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.*

The elders appointed in a city [church] are **over** the city [church] in the sense that they superintend the citizens of Christ’s kingdom residing in that city, and **rule** in matters of opinion.



**Ob:** Those who want to make City-church a doctrine because of command and example must also make upper room communion a doctrine because it also has command and example. Can anyone disprove upper room was not commanded and exemplified? Night observance of the Lord's Supper was done but we don't emphasize it today like we're doing to one congregation per city. City is incidental in appointing elders in every city/church.

**Ans:** It is ignorance or outright falsehood that would make anyone assert that 'use upper room' or 'ensure night observance' is in the inspired COMMAND delivered unto **us** for the Lord's Supper. It is easy to inspect any command to distinguish its essentials from incidentals. This could be done in several ways. Firstly, by examining the statement of the command for keywords. [Note the respective divine and human elements that could signify immutable/variable items, the specifics and generics in it] Secondly, by scrutinizing how the early church under the inspired apostles implemented the command. Thirdly, by noting that any supposedly required item cannot obviate or contradict gospel truth/principles. Table 1 lists the command and exemplification of the Communion and Eldership unto the churches of the Gentiles.

Table 1: Command/Example for Communion and Eldership

Command	Example
<b>Communion</b> (akin to Mt 26:26-29, Mk 22:13-25, Lk 22:16-20) <b>1 Corinthians 11:23</b> <i>For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: 24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, <b>Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.</b> 25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, <b>This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.</b> 26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.</i>	<b>Acts 20:7</b> <i>And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. 8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.</i>
Command	Example
<b>Eldership</b> <b>Titus 1:5</b> <i>For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:</i>	<b>Acts 14: 20</b> <i>...and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. 21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, 22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. 23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.</i>

In Communion the essentials are:

YE - plurality of disciples for sharing/mutual proclamation of the memorial not an individual to eat alone.

EAT BREAD - unleavened bread

DRINK CUP - drink the fruit of the vine

In Eldership the essentials are:

THOU APPOINT - The evangelist ordains or sets forth/designate

ELDERS - a plurality of qualified men to serve as overseers

CITY - The 'one body of saints' (church) in 'each designated human settlement' (city/town/village)

The command instructing **us** to observe the Communion does **not** mandate that we use an upper room. The command is simply "*ye eat this bread and drink this cup.*" In fact, we know *true worship* is **not** based on location (Jn 4:20-24) viz mountain, upper room, etc. Likewise, "*eat at night*" is not stated in the command unlike the precept for Jewish Passover (Exo 12:6-11, Num 9:1-12, Deut 16:4). However, city is an intrinsic element MENTIONED in the command for Eldership in Tit 1:5. It is not an incidental for every church in which elders are to be ordained **MUST** necessarily be located in a human settlement.

**Ob:** This is the same argument of "one cup" theology. The one-cup group opined that the scriptures say Jesus took **the cup**. Therefore it must be one cup.

**Ans:** Our theology is sound and unlike the "one cup" argument. The City-church concept was proved from several perspectives and is backed by command, example and necessary inference. Those who assert and contend that the apostles used 'one container' during Communion **cannot** be right.

**Luke 22** gives the sequence of what transpired.

16. *For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*
17. *And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:*
18. *For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.*
19. *And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.*
20. *Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.*

Christ gave them '**the cup**' [container with fruit of the vine or wine] and asked them to **divide it**. AFTERWARDS they ate the blessed unleavened bread, before they drank the DIVIDED fruit of the vine, which He likewise gave thanks for. They **MUST HAVE** divided and safely stored of the content of Christ's cup into something personal and intact [individual cups/containers]. That is the only way they could then proceed to eat the bread BEFORE drinking the divided portions! **Or would anyone posit that they divided and stored wine in their cheeks first WITHOUT swallowing it before eating the bread?** Practically, that is not feasible. Besides, Christ had to see the wine each was going to drink when he blessed the cup. Religious custom as well as general societal etiquette requires one to give thanks over a visible item shared for consumption NOT pray after the material has disappeared into the mouth.

**Ob:** In Titus 1:5 'every city' is a figure of speech representing every congregation. It is just like 'preach to all creatures' in Mark 16:15-16 where 'all creatures' is only referring to human beings. Animals are part of creatures but are not included in the plan of salvation.

**Ans:** In Mk 16:15-16, 'every creature' does NOT refer to 'every animate thing' but rather to 'every living being that can hear, believe and respond to the gospel in obedience or disobedience.' It therefore refers to typical human adults irrespective of race, language, social status, etc. It excludes beasts, fishes, birds, reptiles, insects, mollusks, microbes, or human infants, imbeciles, etc.

In Titus 1:5, the phrase is clear and not ambiguous. To obtain what depicts the original text rather than a paraphrase or interpreted text, consult Greek manuscripts and **Young's Literal Translation** [<https://biblehub.com/titus/1-5.htm>] - *“For this cause left I thee in Crete, that the things lacking thou mayest arrange, and mayest set down in every city elders, as I did appoint to thee.”*

**Ob:** The word ‘city’ in Titus 1:5 is figurative in a sense, it is called **METONYMY**. Where one name stands for another, or one word for another. Titus was not commanded to ordain elders in every city where there were people, but in every church in the city. Metonymy is the use of a single characteristic or part of an object, concept or phenomenon to identify the entire object, concept, phenomenon or a related object. “City” is used as a metonymy for church just as “cup” is used for the wine, cross for death, meat/bread for all food, man for human being, etc. Since the text didn't say appoint elders in every city with church, then Acts 14:23 should be taken as the metonym. As example, consider this: Paul going to Jerusalem (a city) to worship (Acts 24: 11) and his going to the temple (a building, location) to worship (21: 26-29) is the same thing. Jerusalem was a metonymy for temple.

**Ans:** Let us start by examining your example before taking a closer look at **metonymy**.

If “Jerusalem/city” was merely figurative, did Paul go to any temple [of a god/idol] and NOT actually travel to Jerusalem? **No! He did visit the city** of Jerusalem and **THE ONLY TEMPLE** therein.

Acts 21:17, 27-29 *And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. ...And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)*

YOUR argument that “city” **represents** “church” in Titus 1:5 **actually provides the simplest proof for our position** if you would be honest enough to admit the meaning of **metonymy** as used in the verse!

**Dictionary** defines ‘Metonymy’ to be *“the use of the name of one thing for that of another of which it is an attribute or with which it is associated.”* Hence, in Tit 1:5, inspiration signifies that city is the attribute of church that most appropriately represents church in that context; city is the physical/literal container of church in organizational structure just as cup is the physical/literal container of wine in Communion.

**The entity in which elders should be ordained is the church contained in the city** - **“the City-church.”**

Titus 1:5 **MEANS** appoint elders among *“our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord.”* This installs the leadership (presbytery) in **one body of disciples to create one autonomous church in each city** regardless of whether saints worship in several houses or one. It is exemplified by the elders of **the church at Jerusalem** (Acts 15:4) & the elders of **the church of Ephesus** (Acts 20:17, 20, 28)

Titus 1:5 **DOES NOT MEAN** appoint elders ‘in every church in the city’ (in each house where disciples assemble in the city). By changing **“in every city”** to **“in every church in the city,”** you have *perverted* the objective from ‘ordaining elders per **city(church)** [singular]’ to ‘ordaining elders **in churches** [plural] **per city.**’ This would install distinct leaderships in multiple bodies of disciples to create autonomous churches in each city. There is no example of what you proclaim or practice in the New Testament.

The analogy in Table 2 shows that every city as **metonymy** refers to every City-church not every house-church (hall) in each city.

*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? -1 Corinthians 10:16 KJV*  
*For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee - Titus 1:5 KJV*

Table 2: Blessing the cup contrasted with appointing elders

Bless the cup in Communion	Ordain elders in every city
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “The cup” stands for wine because it is associated with the fruit of the vine as its container.</li> <li>○ “The cup” means ALL THE JUICE of the grapefruit.</li> <li>○ It is immaterial whether the wine is in one literal/physical container or many.</li> <li>○ Give blessing (prayer of thanksgiving) over ALL THE WINE <u>not a distinct prayer</u> on each of the containers (goblets) in the trays used for serving the saints.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ City stands for church because it is associated with the redeemed of Christ dwelling in that locality.</li> <li>○ City means ALL THE SAINTS in a geographical locality.</li> <li>○ It is immaterial whether the saints meet in one place or at several places within a city.</li> <li>○ Ordain presbytery (council of elders) over ALL THE FLOCK <u>not a distinct presbytery</u> on each of the folds (congregations) in the buildings within the city used for edifying the saints.</li> </ul>
Similarities	
Bless The Cup/Wine Container(s) of wine <b>The cup of blessing which we bless - it does NOT matter whether there is one container (goblet) or multiple containers (goblets) during Communion; One prayer is uttered for the wine/cup.</b>	Ordain elders City/Church Assembly hall(s) of saints <b>Ordain elders in every city - it does not matter whether there is one assembly hall (congregation) or multiple assembly halls (congregations) within city; One presbytery is appointed for the church/city.</b>

Earlier, we inferred that the apostles used multiple containers at the Last Supper hence disciples could do likewise at the Lord’s Supper. Christians drink “the cup” whether they use one container or multiple containers for the wine. It is incontrovertible that a first century local church (e.g. Jerusalem church) met in one place or in several homes i.e. worshipped in single or multiple assemblies. It is “one church/body” whether saints assemble in one place or in multiple houses within a city. Multiple cups relatively seem convenient, hygienic, etc. just as multiple assemblies relatively seem proximate, close-knit, etc. Neither concept forbids its alternative [the usage of one container or one assembly]. **The number of places for assembling or number of containers for serving the communion wine is a matter of choice** (opinion) not imposition for the worshippers in a locality. Is the oneness of the local church to function in unity as one body in its locality without factionalizing into autonomous groups a matter of doctrine or of opinion?

**Ob:** We don’t need to border our heads over geography. We are not looking for a city made with hands. Our city is a holy priesthood, a peculiar people, the house of God. 1Pet.2:5,9; 1Tim.3:15. Trying to

measure towns and cities is going carnal. Preach the word freely and plant the Church all over the world. You are arguing that elders are appointed to oversee a geographical space called a city.

**Ans:** The foolishness of God is wiser than men. **Inspiration deliberately tag every local church with a city and organize it at that level.** Ours is to recognize and abide with this irrespective of how society structures a city. The Holy Spirit is somehow concerned with geography and so should we while we dwell on earth! Scripturally, the **earthly territory** of a local church is associated with its host city though its **spiritual territory** extends to wherever its impact reaches e.g. every place its members are ‘living out/proclaiming’ the gospel, directing prayers, sending benevolence, epistles, etc.

[For example, “the church of Ephesus” was located in the city of Ephesus; its members were Christians dwelling in Ephesus. Those who abide (even if such *sometimes* leave town *briefly*) retain membership status while those who relocate would become members of a new local church once accepted into the gathering of disciples at their new locality. That is the NT pattern; modern deviations should not propel anyone to contend otherwise. Phoebe remained a member of the church at Cenchrea while visiting Rome (Rm 16:1). When Aquila and Priscilla relocated from Corinth/Ephesus, their membership in such local church ceased but a new one was activated at the church of their new city of residence.]

Paul warned the Ephesian elders to watch ALL the flock over which they were made overseers. Likewise, Peter instructs elders to shepherd the flock among them. Since elders are appointed in a city to oversee the brethren and lead in collective decision-making, this establishes the presbytery’s scope and implies autonomy for the church at that settlement. We do NOT argue that elders are appointed to oversee a geographical space. Rather, we affirm that elders are ordained to oversee the Christians associated with a geographical space because the saints constitute the church at a located/named city. **That is why Paul did NOT charge the Ephesian Presbytery to watch the flock in Philippi and Jesus did NOT address the Ephesian leadership (angel) about issues of Laodicea!** Both the Lord and his inspired apostles are aware of naming, geography, house addressing, etc. Unto Ananias in Damascus, the Lord said: “...go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus...” – Acts 9:11. Christ furnished Ananias with necessary and sufficient information to locate the exact place Saul was. Shepherds should be adequately equipped to identify, watch or reach the sheep in their jurisdiction today. As a church leader, do you not have the addresses of your members and visit them?

Tit 1:5 was demonstrated when Paul & Barnabas ‘appointed elders in every church,’ that is ordained elders in the cities of Derbe, Lystra, Iconum and Antioch of Pisidia. This shows that for church-pastorate we **cannot** ignore its city scope. Indeed, inspiration elsewhere describes the church as a household (Gal 6:10), as a house (1 Tim 3:15) and as a nation (1 Pet 2:9). Yet when it comes to installing a presbytery (council of elders), the Holy Spirit did NOT instruct that elders be ordained ‘in every household’ or ‘in every house’ or ‘in every nation.’ Neither in every street nor region nor province. He deliberately says elders should be “appointed in every city.”

Titus 1:5 indicates that the relevant geographical extent of church organizationally is city [*defines local church leadership*]. That is why inspiration mentions elders of the church of Ephesus or at Jerusalem. The jurisdiction of the presbytery is citywide. It is not how big a church building is that matters, a City-church **may** operate multiple cells for people to easily congregate and worship in any area without much stress.



**Ob:** How will city elders operate? How do we ensure a General Overseer does not emerge in each city? Autonomy is day-to-day administration. City-church eldership cannot manage a citywide congregation because of the day-to-day administration. For example Benin and Ibadan. Even if the preachers are 5 with 10 elders. At the end of the day the Church will be settling Elders to elders disputes or preacher to preachers disputes in this same Church since they are not in the same place. Imagine one takes a decision in the house fellowship in Bodija and another one is angry at Apata for such a decision without agreement. Imagine the population of Ibadan at 3million.

**Ans:** Elders will consult one another and meet regularly before taking or implementing important decisions. None should lord things over his colleagues, there is nothing like Senior Pastor or General Overseer among elders in the NT. The qualifications show they are to be mature men, not brawlers or persons greedy for power or lucre. Elders want to serve as examples and be saved so will serve well unless an Evangelist appoints wrong persons. However, sound preachers will have dissensions with false preachers as Paul & Barnabas did with Judaizers, and true Shepherds will resist grievous wolves.

You corrected stated: “Titus was not commanded to ordain elders in every city where there were people.”

**So why are you concerned with the population of the literal city instead of the church therein?** A cabinet of less than 50 persons governs a typical state with millions of people. What gives you the impression that godly elders cannot successfully rule a big City-church today? Most churches do not meet daily and deacons will assist the elders. In this age of automobiles, good road networks, mobile phones, video meetings, etc. the Presbytery in a big city can easily arrive at mutual decisions. **As cities grow, so does the resources at our disposal to facilitate the work of the church.** Elders cannot stay put in one place but should distribute in fellowship across clusters, watching over souls and feeding all the flock. We have a guide in Acts 12:17 where we see Peter and James as leaders respectively with various clusters, as well as Acts 15:4, 22 where all the leaders were present with the whole church.

Using a central neutral venue (church building whether built or rented) for records and meetings is okay provided NO CELL is hosted there [so it will not be misconstrued as headquarters]. Copies of files can also be kept in the various cells, in elders’ homes and now be saved/backup in the cloud e.g. in website & email. The council meetings could take place in the church building and/or be rotated across cells with a different person moderating on each occasion. Just as we rotate moderation at assembly “business meeting,” so should the Presbytery do. All elders are equal even if few seem to be pillars. Hence, none must be made a permanent Chairman no matter how educated, eloquent, wealthy, influential or spiritual.

**Ob:** Jerusalem Church May not be the true model local congregation because the apostles were there and even appointed men to serve tables without elders. Contributions were brought to the apostles’ feet including the one from other congregations during famine for distribution to members. Acts 4:34-35. You cannot use most of the event in the early stages of church as Bible doctrine on church leadership

**Ans:** The Jerusalem church is the true model local congregation! That they appointed men to serve tables before elders were ordained is analogous to using committees today before elders are appointed. That they took contributions to apostles’ feet corresponds to giving sacrificially into purse managed by leaders today. That they accepted ‘from other congregations during famine for distribution to members’ is akin to receiving assistance from others today as seen with disasters, health challenges, etc. Tit 1:5 is a command for us to obey while Acts exemplified how the Jerusalem church applied it, we are without excuse.

**Ob:** Can the City-church and cells be meeting/worshipping **separately** at the same time?

**Ans:** When the City-church meets and worships, it means all the members of the cells are present in one place or assembly. For instance pre-pandemic, when CoC Iwaya gathers in their hall. Right now during pandemic, the members constitute cells, which are meeting and worshipping in selected homes as clusters. Few CoC Iwaya members gather in different houses and worship together to pray, sing, give, break bread & share admonition. Since the individuals are not omnipresent, it follows that the cells in homes and the whole congregation (that typically uses the hall) **cannot** assembly at the same time in different places. However, when all members of Iwaya CoC are inside their hall, the cells are somehow present and the City-church is also present BUT pre-eminence is given to the whole rather than its cells. Just like when we get to heaven, the members of house-churches/City-churches would be there but that IDENTITY would not really matter; it would simply be the Universal Church.

**Note** that both the City-church (e.g. Iwaya CoC) and its cells can worship alternately or sequentially. For example, before pandemic, the cells meet as house fellowships for prayer at certain times while the whole church meets at other times for Communion and other things. Likewise, after Covid-19 pandemic, God willing, the City-church may meet on the first Sunday of the month while cells may meet on other Sundays of a month. It all depends on whatever their preference is based on expediency.

**Ob:** When an area grows and sizeable number of members live far apart, it is **wiser** they form a new autonomous congregation. It is a matter of opinion.

**Ans:** We addressed the call for a split of a big church on Pg 23 of Part 1. A growing church in any settlement may have **one or more** assemblies coordinated by a common, **expandable** leadership. The opinion that area or population increase makes it wise to create autonomous churches in a city is divisive. New congregations should be cells of the existing City-church. Old and new cells are integrated as one and function together in a way that cannot be matched by split-induced autonomous churches.

Asserting the church must split into autonomous bodies creates both spiritual and other problems such as:

- Which group shall retain the church building?
- Will church funds and materials be divided in a mutually acceptable manner?
- Which individuals shall go and which ones shall remain?
- Will the exercise not create long-term discord amidst brethren or trauma for the weak in faith?

**Ob:** My town has only one congregation since 2011 when we established it. Many at one end of the town have refused baptism due to distance. The preacher too is unable to cover the whole town. To walk down to the Church on Sunday morning or weekdays from other extremes is almost impossible because of the distance. We are considering establishing another congregation at the other end to reach the people in those areas. This my small town is bigger than Ephesus at the time of Paul yet it is not called a city.

**Ans:** It is the wrong knowledge of autonomy that is jeopardizing souls and affecting the growth of the church in your town. Had it been we all have the right knowledge that all Christians in your town should function together as one body, the preacher would have started another cluster in that far place in the town. Wherein, they are still one body.

The result would be that, the first cluster that was started in 2011, will see to the growth of the new cluster since they are one. Even the preacher(s) working with these clusters will be well supported. Teacher(s) from first congregation could also assist in the new one.

**The following will be the effects:**

- The evangelists will be free to do their work without the fear of losing their seat if they go to develop another cluster. Since, it is just one body in that town.
- There would be teamwork for the Evangelists working in a particular City-church, instead of one-man system that we have been running.
- Massive growth will be witnessed by the church since nobody will be “going to Jerusalem to worship.” We know some members of Ajegunle church living as far as Badagry axis. We also know a member of Palmgrove church living in Ota axis. With the knowledge/practice of the City-church, everything will fall to normalcy. There will be easy and quick start of new clusters, no member will complain of debilitating distance to the assembly venue.
- Even the eldership of the City-church will see to the welfare of the church. They may register the City-church with the government and serve as **the local** Board of Trustees (BOT), instead of the anti-scriptural **National** Board of Trustees, which is imposed on brethren.
- Project, lectureship, open-air and training of teachers and preachers can be easily facilitated.

**Havoc the autonomous church(es) per city has done so far:**

- It has denominated the church into different bodies because we are not seeing ourselves as one.
- There are few assemblies as each focuses on itself trying to grow in one spot rather than creating cells. This has retarded the growth of the church both physically, materially and spiritually.
- Members sometimes absent from the church due to a lack of transportation or transport fares. Someone travelling from Ota to Palmgrove for worship will be emotionally unbalanced in the service having pass through stress of hold up across the road link from Ogun state to Lagos state.
- Benevolence and support of other congregations is gradually going into extinction. This is because virtually each autonomous congregation is busy building/maintaining cathedral with their money. Sometimes, when an appeal for help is made unto a congregation in the same city, such as on land, preacher support, etc. the matter is kept in view indefinitely because of their own project. However, if the City-church functions as one with multiple cells, everyone will see the need to handle projects collectively. The leaders will ensure that no cell lacks and there will be prompt attention to assist the weaker cells in an effort to promote equality rather than rivalry.
- One man-Mopol preacher system has been the other of the day. Even where some teachers are willing to be preachers, some ‘presiding preacher’ do not allow it, for selfish personal interest.

Deliberately creating multiple autonomous churches in a city seems borne out of selfish interest. We must therefore repent and return to the New Testament pattern.

**Ob:** Some street in Benin today are bigger than the ancient city of Benin when the kingdom of Benin was founded 900AD up till when the kingdom collapsed in 1897. You cannot therefore have a city Church for Benin today because of size and administration. The city of New York cannot be compared with the city of Ikeja: if one “City-church” can serve Ikeja and its towns, such may not work in New York City without a diocese/cathedral to control cell churches in the Bronx, Manhattan, Staten Island, Queens, and Brooklyn. The population of Brooklyn alone is more than Bayelsa state.

**Ans:** If you cannot have a City-church in Benin today why preach there since according to you, size and population is now an impediment to obeying the word of truth? The model used in Jerusalem without

Diocese can work in Benin, Ikeja, New York as well as anywhere. To reject a NT command because of *presumption* that city size and population now nullifies inspired truth is preposterous. You support having an unbiblical National BOT of few men over the church throughout the Country of Nigeria but believe there should not be a Biblical presbytery over a mere City-church. How unfortunate!

**Ob:** Church growth is same principle of a man leaving his parents and going to form another family. Autonomous in management but one in purpose and name.

**Ans:** With little in-depth reasoning, even your analogy actually rebuts your position. Ideally, when a man leaves his parents to go form another family, he moves out of the parents' house to signify leaving their dominion or jurisdiction. He relocates to avoid friction between the two new households and for outsiders not to conflate the two entities. Only one husband is the head of a home, an intending husband in that family ought to move out from the house to avoid confusing people about identities and jurisdictions. Only occasional visits will follow. Similarly, with church growth or desire to start a new local/autonomous congregation, the initiator(s) should relocate to a different locality or settlement. It should not be in the same area e.g. to create COC Ikeja-2 in Ikeja city! The proper thing is to go to a land without a COC to preach/bear Christ's name, establish a unique identity and area of influence. Occasionally the new church in another city/town/village may visit the other or cooperate with them.

**Ob:** I believe the advocacy could have been a good exercise if it was only focused on fighting against mushroom churches, since **we can't find the instruction or command that says: There shall not be two churches in a city.**

**Ans:** We are encouraging scriptural management of the church by advocating for City-church with multiple assemblies. Those whom you have indoctrinated that multiple autonomous churches may exist in a city believe they have a right to create a new one anytime or anywhere that they feel like. For consistency, you should not fight mushroom churches since **you can't find the instruction or command that says: There shall be a limit to the number of autonomous churches in a street in a city.**

Christians establish authority by '**what is commanded in scripture**' NOT by '*what is not prohibited.*' At sober moments, we all point out this truth unto others e.g. when we teach denominations that observing the Lord's Supper is the ONLY memorial feast for Christians. This is despite the fact that they aver "there is no command that say: There shall not be celebration of Easter, Christmas, etc." The implication of not respecting the inspired command to ordain elders in every city, or appointing common presbytery as Jerusalem Church did, is that you encourage everyone to start their own autonomous churches; when it mushrooms or go viral do not complain!

- Why fight 'mushroom churches' since you believe any group of Christians in a city may declare their own independence and organize themselves as an autonomous church?
- Is it that as a Preacher, you do NOT want such group to come near your home or assembly hall or for many such groups to declare their independence from your congregation?
- Would that not be self-centeredness and protection of your personal interest?

Many ministers are in a dilemma during this pandemic about justifying house-churches for members to worship in, as not all can gather at the church building. Such Evangelists/Elders are in a fix because they

have traditionally taught that an “autonomous church is known by meeting regularly in a place, in particular by partaking of the Lord’s Supper during worship.” Consequently:

- Some assert that worshipping in clusters and breaking bread at home on Sunday is a wrong thing to do ordinarily but permissible under Corona lockdown.
- Some forbid Christians from breaking bread in clusters at home on Sunday and decreed such activity must be suspended until after Corona-induced restrictions are removed.
- Some have studied diligently to understand that it is scriptural that a segment of the church meet in a member’s house, these worship and break bread at home on Sunday.

We plead with brethren to continue to study this matter with an open mind. **A Preacher need NOT be afraid of losing control or paycheck if this scriptural concept should be widely adopted.** It will actually lead to blessings and growth for both individuals and the Lord's church, as it did in the first century. No need to fear changes, in Nigeria majority have been practicing City-church and just some need few adjustments! A sizeable number of the Lord’s church in our land are named after settlements (city /town/village) e.g. CoC Ikeja, CoC Abaranje, etc. During this pandemic, such are now worshipping as house-churches or cells, and breaking bread as in the first century. The cells/clusters/congregations in homes are still part of the one body coordinated by the same church leadership. When their halls are re-opened after lockdown, the whole church would come together into one place!

[However, during this Covid-19 pandemic, some COCs are having problems because of past indoctrination. Few clusters are not giving report especially about collection (money); such are claiming autonomy! The chicken is coming home to roost...]

In any locality, where pre-pandemic, there existed multiple autonomous assemblies; such congregations need to realize they ought to function as one with *a common leadership* (Elders & Deacons and/or Preachers & Teachers). They should prayerfully work towards it immediately.

**Ob:** In my locality, the church has been meeting in house fellowships before the pandemic. We only increased the centers since there was no movement. (Wherever the Church meets regardless of the number of meeting points or sections is the same Church) The leaders created those meeting centers and they report to the leadership. They are not autonomous congregations. Note that the leaders also belong to some of the centers. So none is reporting to a particular center as central authority. This is why their collection is paid into one purse (bank account). Why do you call them house-Churches, you mean there can be many Churches in one Church. We don’t have eleven Churches. They will only become Churches when they decide to become a congregation separate from us. That you have several meeting points alone does not make them Churches. One of our centers has actually decided to become a congregation and we have started to arrange for them to become a full-fledged (autonomous) congregation. The Lord’s Church must spread; I cannot be an impediment to that.

**Ans:** If you really understand that it is “one church,” whose leadership is over its members whether they gather in one hall or meet as cells in different places today, ***what exactly are you arguing about since?*** However, your house fellowships have not been taking Communion in homes on Sunday, which they do now! Centers report to the leaders because the church meets in many houses, such report may be openly via church WhatsApp Group or privately via email or phone call by someone from a meeting center. None is exempted, even the center in which the preacher or any competent teacher is, reports to the other



leaders. Since each meeting center is a gathering of Christians in worship, it is an Ekkléssia, assembly, or congregation and is therefore a house-Church. Why? Simply because *it is [a segment of] the church that meets in a member's house*. As to whether “many churches are in one church,” when the whole church meets, do zones give report? The members of the house-Churches make up the whole church and vice versa. The known leaders continue to administer the church and the clusters (house-churches). After all, they send information, edification materials, etc. to members, guide the general decision-making on issues, manage the funds, etc.

For any cell/cluster to signify a desire for independence is inappropriate UNLESS they are moving outside the locality of the local church. If every cell should declare itself autonomous or propose such where would the whole church be? With your doctrine, any cell can actually express a whimsical desire to be autonomous **whenever** they FEEL LIKE.

[Whosoever is coordinating or instigating them is their visionary leader irrespective of their social or spiritual backgrounds. They do not have to be rich or mature to commence. Do not assume they lack any necessary thing to proceed on their quest because they can obtain it if determined. They could meet in a home for starters or contribute funds to rent a hall. They could procure their own Communion items, tracts, etc. or have it donated to them. They could download free sermons/lessons from the Internet and/or persuade any (fairly) knowledgeable brother to join them as teacher or preacher. They could obtain assistance from other churches to ameliorate their financial challenges e.g. in caring for their needy.]

Scripturally, disciples do not proclaim independence from their leaders and local church; it will be direct violation of inspired commands such as:

*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. - Hebrews 13:17*

*But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. -1 Corinthians 12:20-25*

**Only *ignorant* church leaders will commend arbitrary declaration of *independence* by some members (cell) to remain in same *locality* to create multiple autonomous churches, such misconstrue division for growth.**

### III. Addressing Akpore's Rejoinder

Bro. Sunday Akporehome AKPORE made in-line commentary/remarks in our pdf article and sent it back to us as an MS Word rejoinder. This was via WhatsApp on May 29, 2020. Below, we address his statements, quoted exactly the way he highlighted his remarks in Yellow.

**Ob Pg 1A2:** “**City church** (all the Christians in a known city or unique administrative land area).” The clause “...unique administrative land area” is a misleading term. A village is not a city, but it is surely a unique administrative area because it usually has a traditional head/community leaders with council or CDC. Unless, by “unique administrative land area” you mean as designed by the constitution. In that case, city would be ruled out. Even some part of a city can be a unique administrative area: some parts (LGAs) of Lagos are unique administrative units. Also, what constitute a “unique administrative land area?” In Nigeria this would be the federation, states, FCT, and local councils. Some local councils have more than one town that can equivalent cities in some places: Eti-Osa LGA has VI, Lekki, and Ikoyi. Ikeja LGA has Ikeja, Opebi, Ogba, etc.

**Ans:** The total context of our article (COA) shows “city or unique administrative area” means city or town or village, and we showed their interchangeability in scripture and civil terms on Pg 1, 18. We mentioned LGAs and States in contradistinction to a city and did NOT advocate for church administration on those basis.

**Ob:** If there is city church, why not state church? Zamfara has just one congregation in Gusau which serves brethren even in other LGA. So why don't we call that Zamfara (state) church of Christ? If there is city church, why not state church? Zamfara has just one congregation in Gusau which serves brethren even in other LGA. So why don't we call that Zamfara (state) church of Christ? In case you may want to argue that there was nothing like state church in the NT, you should know that city and state are different concepts: city is socio-geographical concept while state is a politico-administrative concept. CoF COURSE, a city can be a politico-administrative area. London (mayoral), Lagos (State), etc, are politico-administrative areas which have become cities.

**Ans:** The NT is the standard, not Gusau. One may view church from several perspectives (house, city, state, region, national, etc.) but it is overseen by appointed elders only at the city level. Do brethren across Zamfara State agree with the erroneous notion that Gusau “*is the place where men ought to worship*”? -Jn 4:20-24. In other cities of Zamfara where brethren reside, congregations should be established.

Since each city of the state has mosques then such can also have a church-hall. If the state government bars only Christians from assembling in a city, it would be violating the Constitution (which guarantees freedom of religion, of movement, of association, etc.) and the saints could legally challenge such action.

**Ob Pg 2A2:** “When some passengers on a bus, boat or plane who are strangers to one another, as Christians decide to sing/pray at the start of their journey, they constitute ‘a church’ during that activity.” This definition of ecclesia seems suspicious to me. I understand the **assembled church** to be part of or whole congregation meeting either officially or for corporate worship. Hence, a cell meeting which is part of a congregation is also a church, just as a committee is, in a representative form, a church. Two members of my congregation going to marriage who decided to pray before embarking on their journey does not, to me, constitute an assembled church.

**Ans:** Such passengers being Christians were “called out by the gospel.” When one of such draw others’ attention to worship and they agree to participate, they are for that moment, **an assembly**. Having gathered in Christ’s name for praise/prayer they constitute a congregation. If they get to their destination, they can decide to continue to meet regularly in one place and change from ad-hoc to local Ekklessia.

**Ob Pg 2-3A2:** “...city” refers to human settlement with administratively defined boundaries.” This definition is subjective and obviously formulated to drive the assumption of the promoters of this doctrine. City is primarily a social construct just as neighbourhood or vicinity. Your neighbourhood could be your street, part of a town, the whole town, etc. While some cities like London, New York, etc, have administratively defined boundaries as mayoral cities, **most** cities the world over are simply large, important towns without any form of defined administrative boundaries. In Nigeria, the constitutionally recognised administrative areas are the federation, states, FCT, and the LGAs. Any other administrative areas are either tribal or unofficial. The city of Lagos encompasses the following administrative areas: Lagos Island, Lagos Mainland, Eti-Osa, Apapa, etc and important towns. The map below corroborates it.

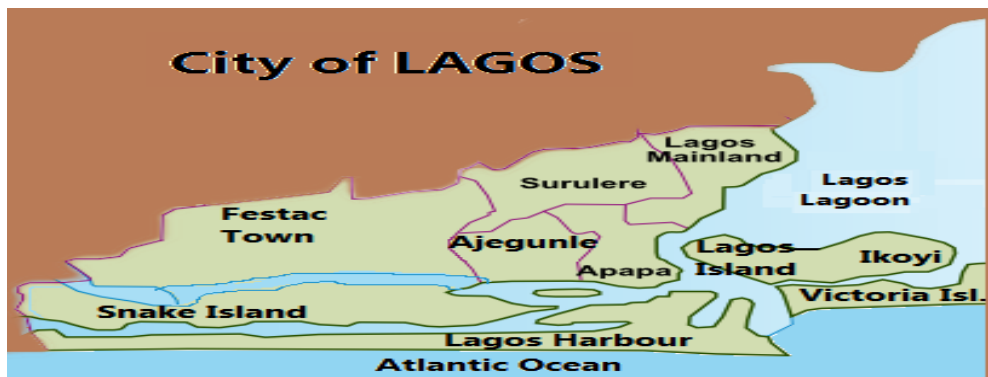


Fig. 1. Map of Lagos City. Source: <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lagos>

**Ans:** Your Street is in a city so do not muddle up terms such as neighbourhood by claiming city is equivalent to street, scope of vicinity may vary. If A2 bothered to check the links provided in COA (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City> & <https://biblehub.com/topical/c/city.htm>), he would know that the so-called subjective definition was extracted. While the LGAs, States and the FG are administrative units, the Nigerian Constitution nevertheless acknowledges the existence of cities and their traditional rulers. The 1999 Constitution (as amended) states: “*the headquarters of the Governor of each state shall be known as the Capital City of that state...*” It also recognizes communities and “*the traditional association of the community.*” Cities are not only administered across LGAs but also informally via recognized traditional systems by host communities. That is why a traditional ruler e.g. Oba of Ikeja, Oba of Benin, etc. is given a ‘staff of office’ by the state Governor, and receives regular emolument.

A2 provided a poor Map of Lagos. Those familiar with the state knows neither its prominent cities (Ikeja, Epe, Lekki, etc.) not LGAs (e.g. Eti-Osa, Shomolu, Kosofe, etc.) are displayed in his Fig. 1

**Ob Pg 4A2:** “Hence, it becomes difficult to enforce discipline on an erring member of the other group since they must not infringe on the autonomy of the other congregation. They can either accept a disfellowship letter sent by the other group or fail to recognize it.” Is this an assumption (which could be

correct or incorrect) or fact (backed by research with primary sources)? Kindly provide evidence that our present practice of autonomy militate against enforcing discipline across board, not just in isolated cases.

**Ans:** This is not just a theory but a fact that is well known. A2 is familiar with several disfellowship cases that have been discussed on the MOG platform as to their propriety. In some cases, ministers in ‘victim’s’ city have taken different positions with some ready to receive him into their autonomous congregation.

**Ob Pg 4A2:** Can you categorically say that the concept of City-church will remove evangelists from church administration? In congregations with elders, are the evangelists now fully into mission work? While I believe that evangelists should spend most of their time in the field, I see no evidence to conclude that single assembly church is the reason many of us have become church administrators or that the “restoration” of multiple assemblies City-church will be the panacea. But I dey wait shaa!

**Ans:** Above was A2’s reaction to our statement that: “Unfortunately in our era, most Preachers are too engrossed in managing churches and teaching.” One wonders what gave him the impression that City-church would ‘remove Evangelists from church administration.’ We simply implied they would have more time for their primary assignment. On Pg 17, we affirmed that after appointing elders: “The church when stabilized could regularly sponsor some of the Preachers on ground, to go on preaching mission in virgin land.” Some is NOT ‘all’ so we never suggested Preachers would be irrelevant in such scenario, see 1 Tim 5:17-22. Few ministers will remain, as teachers would be groomed in cells (2 Tim 2:2). Paul did not deem it necessary to stay with Timothy in Ephesus with matured brethren but left for Macedonia.

**Ob Pg 5A2:** a) There were at least two households converted in **Philippi** and these might have constituted one or two assemblies (Acts 16:14-15, 32-33, 39-40). They however made up one City-church (Phil 1:1).

“...these might have constituted one or two assemblies.” By using the modal verb **might**, you only indicated the **possibility** that such may have existed, but **you are not sure** because you do not have the evidence. If many can congregate in the house of Mary, mother of John-Mark (Acts 12. 12) because of the size of the Jerusalem church, why can’t more than two families meet either in Lydia’s or the jailor’s house considering that the Philippian church just began? Or is Lydia going to be the head of the cell in her house? Sirs, there is no textual warrant, either in Acts 16 or the book of Philippians, that the church in Philippi met in multiple assembly points. Unless you want to do eisegexesis.

**Ans:** We used “might” for the possibility of multiple assemblies NOT affirmation since nobody knows the size of the households or each abode. The point, which A2 ignored, is the fact that they met for worship at home(s) not a church building or synagogue in Philippi. Though the church started with two households, by the time Paul wrote them an Epistle, there were many people therein so the possibility of multiple meeting venues is high. Regardless, we know it was one church with one presbytery –Phil 1:1.

**Ob Pg 5A2:** This section (Acts 18 and 19) is clear that a church met at the home of Aquila and Priscilla during Paul’s **second missionary journey**. But did it say those he converted **during his third missionary journey** met separately? Is it not possible that all the Ephesian saints worship at Aquila’s house, then some of them (mostly the adult males) participated in his **daily** lectures with believers and unbelievers present at Tyrannus hall? Why should Paul take women and children along to a public hall for **daily** lecture? Such is rarely possible in ancient societies.

**Ans:** A2 is bold to make assumptions now! From all indications, the 12 men were UNAWARE of the church in Aquila's house and it could have remained so for longer e.g. if both were on extreme ends of the city. The text does NOT say Paul took them over to Aquila's place to form one congregation. Since these 12 men were separated from the opposing Jews to have **daily meeting** involving study and evangelism, they congregated regularly at the school of Tyrannus and thus, constituted an assembly.

**Ob Pg 6A2:** I Cor.16:19. [The apostle specifically mentioned that Christian couple since they were previously in Corinth (Acts 18:1-3) and well known to the Corinthians.]

The churches of the Roman Province of Asia (Minor) would include Ephesus and any other congregation established at that time. We have no hint of any, though. It is very probable Paul mentioned only the church (which may not be known to the Corinthians save the hosts) that met in the house of Aquila and Priscilla because it was the only gathering of saints in Ephesus, not a cell of a larger church. If there were other assemblies of the Ephesian church, then Paul did not include their salutation to the Corinthian church.

**Ans:** A2 who accused us of using "might" about Philippi is now using "very **probable**" about Asia! He alone must be allowed to deal in probability! How dare he assert when inspiration affirms? He wrote: "we have no hint of any other congregation in Asia Minor" whereas Paul wrote '*the churches of Asia salute you.*' What other hint does one need other than the explicit fact stated by the inspired apostle that there was a plurality of churches in Asia at that time?

If there was only one church in Asia at Ephesus, Paul could simply have written: 'the church in Asia at Ephesus greets you' or '**the church in Asia** greets you.' Instead, the apostle wrote: "*The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.*"

This is a deliberate effort to indicate that:

- (a) Many churches existed then in Asia,
- (b) A congregation meets in Aquila and Priscilla's home at Ephesus
- (c) He was communicating felicitations from the couple whom the Corinthians were familiar with.

The salutation of all other assemblies in Ephesus/Asia is embedded in the phrase: '*The churches of Asia salute you.*' As for Aquila and Priscilla, the phrase "*the church that is in their house*" suggests that there could be another congregation outside their house in the city. [Recall that this couple later returned to Rome where their new house was just one of several house-churches (Rm 16:3-15). By their relocation, the church of Ephesus would have died if their previous home were the only meeting point and not a cell.]

A city has one church in the Lord's sight as evident in Rev 1-3. For instance, if Jesus were to write letters to some churches in:

- South-West region of Nigeria, he would address the letters "to COC Ikeja (city), COC Abaranje, COC Iwaya, etc. though each of these cities only has one church some with house fellowship."
- North-West region of Nigeria, he would address the letters "to COC Sokoto (city), COC Gusau, COC Birnin Kebbi, etc. since each of these cities only has one church most without house fellowship."



Furthermore, **during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, a typical church worship as cells in homes not in its building.** I could write a letter to the Yenagoa church and conclude it with: *“The churches of Lagos salute you. Elijah and his wife salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.”*

By that, I send greetings in my epistle posted to Akpore for circulation to the saints in Yenagoa. Being salutation from the various brethren in the cities of the state (Lagos  $\equiv$  Asia) and in particular from (Elijah & his wife  $\equiv$  Aquila & Priscilla) and the church (cell of Owode-Elede church  $\equiv$  segment of all the flock in Ephesus) in their house.

Mentioning the church in Elijah’s house does not necessarily imply it is the only church in Lagos. I merely emphasized it simply because Elijah is a Preacher who once lived in the same South-south geopolitical zone as the Yenagoa saints and is somewhat known to many outside Lagos (e.g. via MOG WhatsApp Group, his ministration around Benin, etc.) Likewise, Paul mentioned the church in Aquila’s house because the brother was a fellow worker in the gospel, had lived in Corinth and was known to many Corinthians. It is speculative for anyone to affirm that Elijah is my host in Lagos or that Aquila was Paul’s host in Ephesus in the latter missionary journey, neither epistle indicate so!

**Even before Covid-19 or lockdown,** Chidi could visit Lagos and write unto the brethren at his base that: *“The churches of Lagos salute you. Asaolu salute you much in the Lord, with the church that meets in his campus.”*

That would not imply that Asaolu’s congregation is the only one in Lagos or even in Akoka area of Lagos, it simply means an assembly of Christians regularly worship at his campus. Chidi could be mentioning him since many know Asaolu via his writings (religious book, website articles and posts on WhatsApp Groups like MOG, etc.)

**Ob Pg 6-7A2:** “...there could have been more than one assembly point in Corinth” is a speculation, not even a probability supported by internal or external evidence.

If “*If therefore the whole church be come together into one place...*” (1 Cor 14:23) is talking about coming together to “speak in tongues.” If the whole church would need to come together to speak in tongues, what would be the purpose of meeting separately as clusters of cells? Also, since “*Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. <sup>34</sup> But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment*” (1Cor. 11. 18-21, 33) means that the Corinthian saints came together in one place to eat the Lord’s Supper, it makes it clear that the Corinthian church did not operate cells which functions as house churches. If such exist, the Corinthian saints did not eat the memorial meal there nor speak tongues there. I may add, did not give their collection there. It would then not be different from our usual house fellowships.

Why should the church later start meeting in one house? No sirs, Romans 16. 23 is categorical that the whole Corinthian church had always operated single assembly; conjectures and assumptions should not be placed side by side with probability supported by clear evidence or with obvious facts.

**Ans:** A2’s view that it was mere speculation that there could have been more than one assembly in Corinth is dismissive without considering the evidence presented. We showed in the last paragraph on Pg 18 (COA) that Aquila, Priscilla and Paul would have constituted the first house-church in Corinth. Subsequent to Paul’s preaching at the synagogue, some Jews and Greeks were converted. After antagonists blasphemed, Paul left the synagogue “*and entered into a certain man’s house, named Justus.*”

Many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and Jesus spoke unto Paul in a vision: “...*I have much people in this city.*” Later, the apostle, Aquila and Priscilla left the city but the church continued to meet and did not die. That shows there was another house church aside that initial one in Aquila’s home.

That Paul later wrote them: “*If therefore the whole church be come together into one place...*” indicates that there might be times the church meet as cells. Akpore once argued about Ephesus (Pg 14A) that: “**We cannot assume that all converts (Aquila and Priscilla as case) did not relocate.**” We disavow such claim that ALL Christians relocated from Ephesus in the first century since that implies the church there became extinct! However, SOME may have relocated in Corinth for Gaius to host the whole Corinthian church by the time Paul wrote unto the Roman saints. Even if Gaius had always hosted the whole Corinthian church, **from when many were converted in the synagogue** rather than also meeting in the houses of Jews (Aquila or Justus) as cells, it was still one local church of God at Corinth.

**A crucial point**, which A2 failed to discern, is that there is no INDICATION OR PROOF in scripture that there were multiple autonomous churches in Corinth or any other city in the first century. Whether a NT locality had a single assembly or multiple assemblies, the church there was one, having one presbytery. **Those who assert: “in the first century, there was only one congregation in each city,” do NOT promote or practice it!** Why are they creating multiple autonomous congregations in each city?

**Ob Pg 7A2:** e) The church in **Colosse** may be another example of the multiple assembly structure. We note that Paul wrote to this church and wrote to Philemon who scholars believe was resident therein.

“...may be...” is an indication you are not stating what was typical then. You believe it is possible, but you can’t be categorical because the evidence is not substantial.

Some possibilities from both passages, given the presumption that Philemon was a Colossian are:

“Some possibilities...” means one or none may be correct. Can you establish doctrine on conjecture2?

**Ans:** On Pg 6-7 of COA, we quoted relevant scripture about Colosse/Philemon and listed ALL POSSIBILITIES of what could have been the situation. A2 chastises us for “conjecture.” Did he thereafter use the NT to establish a doctrine of autonomous churches or a single assembly in Colosse? **No, Akpore merely posited POSSIBILITY, his BELIEF and others’ SUGGESTION!**

He wrote on Pg 8A2 [emphasis ours]:

**It is possible** to write a general letter to a church and a special letter to an individual there, especially its leader(s). Paul wrote to the Ephesian church (general letter) and still wrote to Timothy (special letter) who was serving there.

**I believe** the same thing applies in the case of Colossian and Philemon. **It is possible** the whole Colossian church met in the home of Philemon. This is evidenced by the fact that Paul acknowledged “*hearing*” of Philemon’s “*love and faith...toward...all the saints*” in Colossi, and how he has refreshed “*the hearts of the saints*”.

Similarly, the inclusion of “Apphia” (female) and Archippus (male) have even **made some scholars to suggest** that they are the wife (Apphia) and son (Archippus, also the minister) of Philemon.

**He that judged us but does what he condemns should carefully reflect on Mt 7:1-5, Rm 2:1.** Moreover, A2 did NOT really consider our entire argument. He repeated the first possibility we listed on Colosse, Philemon and the church in his house. A2 ignored the other two options we stated, and the reasons we gave to establish the invalidity of the multiple autonomous assemblies’ scenario. Sure Paul

wrote Philemon, “*Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast... and toward all saints; ... because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee.*” That simply acknowledges Philemon’s love unto all Christians and his care to THE particular Christians that Paul alluded to earlier -the church in his house!

**Ob Pg 8A2:** There is no reason to think that some churches in other cities aside Jerusalem were not structured as house cells.

**Provide substantive evidence other local Christian communities in the NT had cellular churches.**

The fact is that in the first century, congregations of the same city did not claim autonomy in respect to one another. House-churches within the same city altogether functioned as one church, and so had significant impacts on the society.

One, it is not a fact that there were “congregations” in each city. You people have upgraded a probability to fact. Why will a small area with few believers have two or more congregations? Can you people prove that Paul established congregations with more than 200 members?

**Ans:** If you pontificate to knowing the population of each congregation established by Paul, you might as well publish it. The fact that there were no cathedrals in the NT but Christians met in private homes, is the indication that a typical church was meeting as single or multiple congregations in each community or city. This truth is clearly documented with respect to the **Jerusalem church, which had a common eldership over all clusters; it suffices as irrefutable proof unto any honest heart.**

**Ob Pg 8A2:** Two, there are historico-cultural and socio-political reasons why a church in a Greek city would exist as one even if its members met in cells: Greek cities are designed to function as one whether they are small or big. Until the attempt of Philip of Macedon and the success of his son Alexander, each Greek city-state exists as an autonomous political and cultural entity: each had its own god (though recognising others), government, market, amphitheatre, etc. Neither the Holy Spirit nor Paul instituted it. Hence, it is natural for a church there to function as one, even though it may meet in multiple places.

**Ans:** Jerusalem was NOT a Greek city and the church there was ‘Peterine NOT Pauline.’ The uniformity in first century Church-practices was not based on Greek culture. The apostles taught an inspired truth of ordaining elders for God’s people in each city; this NT exercise was **presaged** in the OT as noted in COA Pg 15.

**Ob Pg 9A2:** 1. All the Christian assemblies in Jerusalem were “*the church* [not churches] *in Jerusalem*” (Acts 11:22).

**Since you people define church as any assembly of Christians, house fellowships will qualify as Christian assemblies of one congregation.**

**Ans:** Any gathering of Christians for worship or service unto the Lord is an “assembled church” or congregation. However, when it comes to leadership in structural organization, officers operate only at the universal or city level. Elders are over the entirety of Christians in a city/town/village while only Christ and His apostles are over all the Christians in the world. **The church** in a city refers to all the Christians therein though they congregate in different venues as various cells.

**Ob Pg 9A2:** . Paul wrote, “*as the body is one, and hath many members... Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*” (12:12, 27)

You people have now graduated your assumption of multiple house churches in Corinth to fact. Did anyone argued that all the saints in Corinth do not constitute one church? And why are you people forcing multiple cells-one church in Corinth into our throats without evidence of the existence of such? The division condemned by Paul was heresies (meaning different opinion), not forming the formation of independent groups.

**Ans:** We gave evidence [Part 1 Pg 5, item d] that in Corinth, that since Christians worship together, a house-church **inadvertently existed** in Aquila's house before Paul was received into the house of Justus to preach. The reason the differences of opinion in Corinth was promptly called to order by the apostle, was to prevent it degenerating further such that the factions would not be able to remain together (Amos 3:3). If not curbed, the differences in mind/judgment could easily lead to differences in values/expectations/name/leadership or create autonomous groups in that city, leading to multiple churches or a thoroughly divided body.

**Ob Pg 9A2:** the saints in Thessalonica were not addressed as "churches" but rather as "*the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father*" -1 Thess 1:1, 2 Thess 1:1

Were there multiple assemblies of Christians in Thessalonica? Were the population of Christians there so large that they couldn't meet in one place? Unless you prove the number of Christians there was large and it warrant them meeting in cells, this line of argument would be nothing more than opinion.

**Ans:** All the individual saints and households of Christians in Thessalonica were one church whether or not they met in one or multiple assemblies. The point is autonomous churches were not in Thessalonica.

**Ob Pg 9-10A2:** 3. In His revelation unto John the beloved apostle, Jesus mentioned one church per city though he mentioned seven churches in the region of Asia. **Christ acknowledged all the saints in a city as one church affiliated with a messenger irrespective of the number of assemblies in that city.**

**"...irrespective of the number of assemblies in that city."** Provide evidences that at least one of these churches functioned as multiple cells' congregation.

There is no grammatical nor contextual nor historical warrant to make this text teach "cell(s) of Christians of the City-church of Pergamos." Almost all our city (single-assembly) congregations of today have within them those who hold different views on some subjects. In a typical city church of Christ, there will be people from different church traditions (moderate drinking versus teetotaler, sisters asking question versus no question, social dancing versus no social dancing, sisters wearing trousers versus no wearing trousers, conditional immortality versus eternal fire, pro-Bible schools versus anti-Bible schools, etc) who, if not well managed, will form factions within that single assembly church and cause problems for the leadership.

**Ans:** A2 chastised us for stating that: "A typical church of the 1st century was a network of cell (home group) churches." He was NOT SATISFIED with the Jerusalem example but requested us to "Provide substantive evidence..." How come he now avers that "In a **typical** city church of Christ, **there will be** people from different church traditions..." without 'providing substantive evidence'? If only he would keep to his own standard!

In the first century, there were not so many teachers; groomed or gifted saints within and some itinerant ministers functioned. Where did these teach the church, was it in a big cathedral in a city? No, it was in

home settings. Those who denied the incarnation or for financial gain, desired to be teachers of the law went about subverting houses. Hence, Christians are warned not to ‘receive such or bid him Godspeed.’

**On Pergamos**, Jesus did not talk of “some who hold different views” to suggest He refers to individual opinions in the church. Rather Christ said: “*them that hold the doctrine of Balaam... who taught... to eat... and to commit...*” which indicates He referred to a sect with its own deceptive teaching and licentious practices within the Pergamos church. This would be certain cluster meeting in some house(s).

**Ob Pg 11A2:** c) Each assembly in a city is *not independent* but is rather a part of the church in that city.

Can a church of 150 members in a local government meet in a single assembly?

Can this same church appoint elders and deacons?

Can this church bar another congregation from coming to its LGA to plant a congregation?

**Ans:** We are NOT discussing LGA but city, which was shown to mean city/town/village from scripture and contemporary times. We distinguished between city and LGA on Pg 18 of Part 1 and expect a rejoinder to stick to the context of discussion. That said, any City-church could appoint elders regardless of its size once a plurality of qualified men desire the work of a bishop.

Once a local church is aware that a congregation exists in an area targeted for evangelism, it should cooperate with the other church by allowing the new converts to attend the existing assembly or to be its cell rather than create a new autonomous church. The apostles e.g. Paul did NOT create new autonomous churches where brethren exist but longed to strengthen such and convert more people to be added unto them -Rm 1:9-13, Col 2:1-2. He preferred to preach in ‘unchurched places’ -Rm 15:20-23, 2 Cor 10:13-16

**Ob Pg 12-13A2:** In contrast, a multiple assembly church would take the Church closer to both members and prospects. The talents in the assembly will be discovered, nurtured and fully utilized for the glory of God. Each group of Christians will flourish as they evangelize their locality. The ready-made talents will get busier and express themselves better. Good leaders will naturally emerge. Deeper relationships amongst members will blossom. Individuals will experience emotional fulfilment as they connect at a different level with one another. More human, financial, material and other resources would be pooled at the leaders’ feet to advance the cause of Christ. A City-church of all members of assemblies, as one body would be much more impactful than each individual assembly in a city acting independently. The book of Acts testifies to the effectiveness of a multiple-assemblies church with proper leadership. “*Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith*” -Acts 6:7. Luke reported this just a few years from the beginning of the church.

What you people have written above is not a hypothesis, but assumption **since you did not provide evidences to support your claims.** I did “Church Growth” in Bible School, and will tell you that it is far complex than just one church functioning as cells. Win Arn, co-founder of the American Church Growth Movement and author of *Church Growth Principles, The Master Plan for Making Disciples, Church Growth: State of Art, How to Grow Your Church, Growth: A New Vision for the Sunday School, Church Growth Ratio Book*, based on his research concluded that “it is impossible to have real fellowship within a group which exceeds sixty to seventy-five” persons (Davenport, *The Bible says Grow*, 1978: 21).



Seventeen autonomous Baptist churches (they are also congregationally organised like us) are among the fastest growing churches in the US: <https://outreach100.com/fastest-growing-churches-in-america>.

Dunamis International Church, Abuja, reputed to have the world's largest church auditorium <https://pmnewsnigeria.com/2018/11/26/photos-worlds-largest-church-auditorium/>, which can sit 100,000 worshippers.



How many assemblies a given community of believers operates is a minor factor in church growth; the Presbyterian, etc, which uses the diocesan/multicellular assembly formats are not growing like the Jehovah's Witnesses and Baptists who use the autonomous, unicellular assembly formats like churches of Christ. The Pentecostals are not multicellular; they are hierarchal like the Catholic Church.

**Ans:** Interesting that while dismissing our remark as “assumption” A2 went on to corroborate it! Firstly, we cited scriptural evidence of growth in the multi-assembly Jerusalem church as recorded by Luke. Secondly, Win Arn **whom A2 cited alludes to our view** that “deeper relationships amongst members will blossom.” His research finding recommends that multiple clusters not exceeding seventy-five Christians per cell is better than a single assembly of greater population. The reported growth of the 17 Baptist churches focuses on numerical growth only, what of the spiritual aspect and fellowship within? It nevertheless shows that even today, thousands of religious people can be under the same leadership in a locality. Or do you suggest each Baptist church be split into autonomous churches? What has the size of Dunamis Auditorium got to do with the church leadership structure under discourse? The Catholic and some others groups can build a bigger cathedral if that is a priority. That picture merely demonstrates that if they so desire, a City-church may build a big hall for the whole church to come together into one place.

**Ob Pg 13A2:** Note that **this is not an advocacy for statewide or regional eldership or church headquarters as some misconstrue to accuse us**. Regions are made up of cities and since all the Christians in each city constitute a church, each region is made up of churches e.g. “The churches of Galatia” (I Cor.16:1).

“Regions are made up of cities...” Regions and cities are mutually exclusive terms: region is mostly geographical (Savannah, Niger Delta regions) and geo-political (Lagos Metropolis), while city is mostly

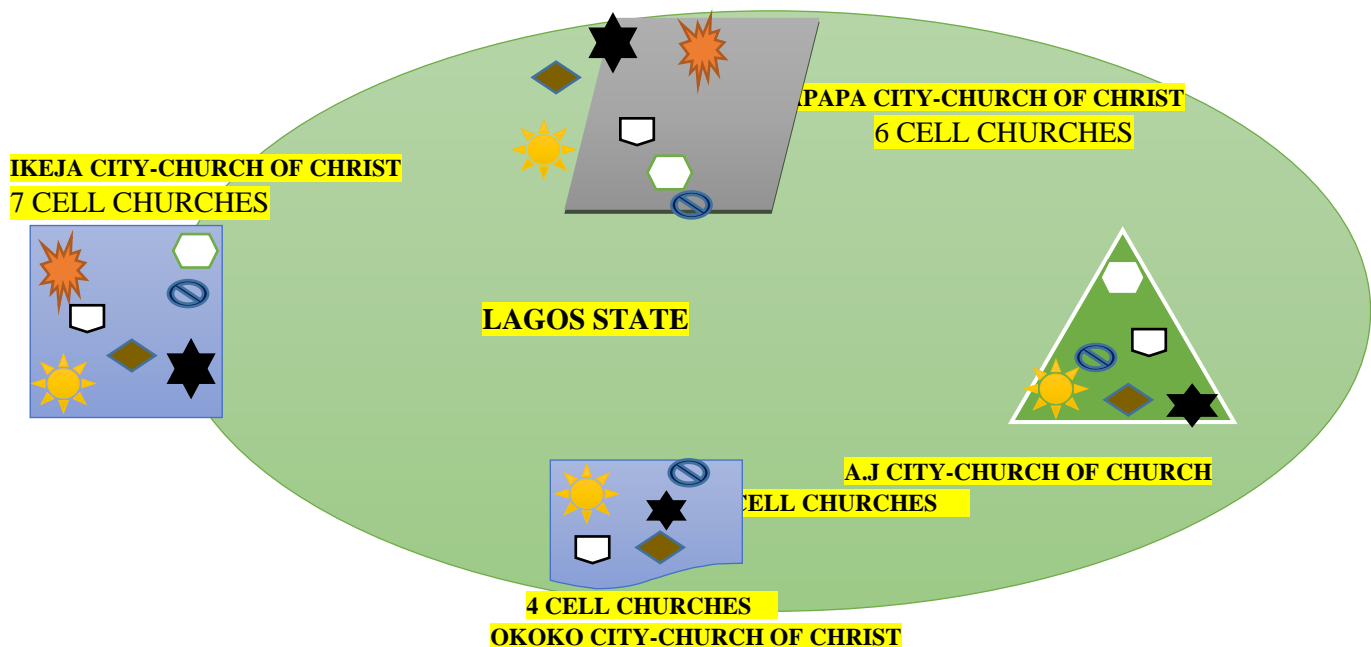
an abstract concept used in various contexts. A city can rightly be called a region: Lagos, London, etc, are both cities and regions. In the same vein, a region can have just one city: Jerusalem was most likely the only city in the region of Judea then. In fact, the term “city” is a very fluid concept. Lagos (from Ikoyi to Festac) is rightly called a city (<https://lagosstate.gov.ng/about-lagos/>); but also Ikeja, Victoria Island, Ajegunle, Surulere, etc, can be rightly called cities. Therefore, we should not formulate definitions because we want our argument to be accepted.

**Ans:** No need to keep alluding to issues outside the context of discussion. No matter what region is, we are NOT advocating for elders over a region or state or province but over each city/town/village (with HCF acknowledgement as explained earlier).

**Ob Pg 15A2:**

#### APPLICATION OF MODEL/INTERPRETATION:

EVANGELIST M.O.G JOHN MINISTERING IN LAGOS STATE AND ALL ITS AUTONOMOUS CITY-CHURCHES WITH THEIR CELL CHURCHES UNTIL ELDERS ARE DESIGNATED



#### Explanation:

- Evangelists today, like Titus then, will minister over states/regions, equivalent of Roman provinces then. Lagos as a case.
- Each state/region would normally have several cities. Lagos, for this study, has 5 cities.
- Each city can have as many as five cells spread across its length. That will make Lagos state to have 25 house churches.
- The evangelist will then appoint elders over each City-church who will oversee the cell churches.
- For this to be achieved, the evangelist would have to teach and train the men in each of the 25 cellular churches.
- If he visits each cell church weekly, it will take him SIX MONTHS to visit all. Na wen him go take train dem finish?
- Will each house church have its own evangelism, education, benevolence committees?

- Will each house church maintain its own account or will the account be opened in the name of the City-church?
- Will there be cellular secretaries or one secretary? Where will records be kept?
- Will the address of the city church be rotating among the cells?
- Where will the elders/leaders be holding their formal meetings?
- If the above five questions means having a designated place, would that not make that place akin to cathedral or diocesan church?

Are we saying we collapse all the congregations in each of these five cities to become five City-churches? Please, you people should consider what you guys are advocating as a “thus saith the Lord.”

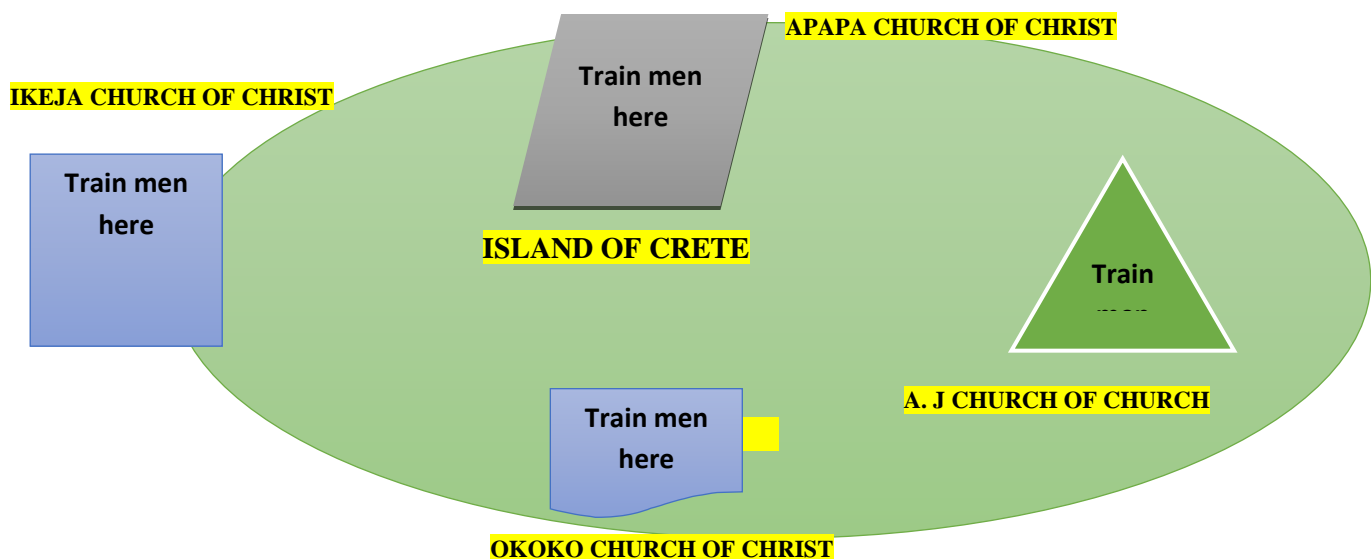
**Ans:** A2 stated that “Evangelists today...” but assumes there is ONLY one Titus in Lagos today, how convenient! Even Titus was not the only one who went to Crete then to work. Paul left **Titus** behind as the contact person amidst those who remained and others coming - “When I shall send **Artemas** unto thee, or **Tychicus**, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter. Bring **Zenas** the lawyer and **Apollos** on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them.” -Tit 3:12-13

Why should one person do all the work now when there are possibly more people and preachers in Lagos than was in Crete then? It is **ironic** anyone could perceive Titus training and organizing **many** City-churches in Crete but will not accept that qualified men may handle just **one** City-church today! Presbytery operations: meetings, financials, records keeping, etc. are addressed earlier on Pg. 14 and in item 6, Pg 17 of Part 1. On whether we are asking congregations in every city to collapse into a City-church, do you not believe in correcting flaws to ensure we align with NT command & examples? Repentance is all about change of mind and conduct to do God’s will and is for sinners and saints alike.

**Ob Pg 16-17A2:**

APPLICATION OF SECOND MODEL/INTERPRETATION:

EVANGELIST M.O.G JOHN MINISTERING IN LAGOS AND ALL ITS AUTONOMOUS CHURCHES UNTIL ELDERS ARE DESIGNATED



**Explanation:**

- Evangelists today, like Titus then, will minister over states/regions, equivalent of Roman provinces then. Lagos as a case.
- Each state/region would normally have several cities. Lagos, for this study, has 5 cities.
- Though house fellowships, cell/house churches are biblical, such will be left to the discretion of each congregation. Evangelists will meet each of the five autonomous churches in their central meeting place.
- The evangelist will then appoint elders over each autonomous church (Forming cell churches or existence of other autonomous churches in the same city does not automatically equates sin).
- For this to be achieved, the evangelist would have to teach and train the men in each of the five churches.
- If he visits each church weekly, it will take him FIVE WEEKS to visit all. He could spend two months with each.
- Will each house church have its own evangelism, education, benevolence committees?
- Will each house church maintain its own account or will the account be opened in the name of the City-church?
- Will there be cellular secretaries or one secretary? Where will records be kept?
- Will the address of the city church be rotating among the cells?
- Where will the elders/leaders be holding their formal meetings?
- If the above five questions means having a designated place, would that not make that place akin to cathedral or diocesan church?

**Ans:** Where is the scriptural authority to form other autonomous churches in the same city in the first place? Since your Model assumes management of cell/house-churches “will be left to the **discretion of each** congregation,” why ask us about the details of how they will do it? Please leave it to THEIR discretion as we have always stated!

**Ob Pg 17A2:** 2. Let all the Christians in a city or town or village; be recognized as **the church** in that locale irrespective of the number of meeting points for services i.e. congregations/assemblies.

This is recipe for confusion: cities usually have towns in them. If Ikeja is taken as a city, Ogba, Opebi, Oregun, Agidingbi, Ojodu, etc, are towns in it. Each of these towns has its own traditional government and community administration. Obviously, we are the ones, not the construct created by the social setting we find ourselves, who should agree on what area may constitute an autonomous Christian community wherein several all Christian assemblies will still be regarded as part of the area church.

You people should be consistent. Why city or town or village again? I thought the goal is to have one church over a city (comprising villages and towns) as a single ecclesiastical community. As it stands, your point 2 is just restating what we are currently practicing: all the saints in FESTAC Town (with their cells/fellowship) recognised themselves as one church just as all the saints in Satellite Town (with their cells/house fellowship) regard themselves as one church. Yet, both are in the same Amuwo Odofin LGA.

**Ans:** You acknowledged on Pg 5A that city could be termed town/village and gave example of Bethlehem & Bethsaida. Remember that? It was not confusing to the saints of the first century. It was stated **repeatedly** that we are mostly practicing the City-church concept except for few places that have two or three COCs per settlement. Such places need to adjust and few did on their own some years ago. **What we have NOT been practicing (pre-Covid-19) is the breaking of bread in cells.** Will many occasionally do so after the pandemic or turn around to repudiate it after extoling it during lockdown?

**Ob Pg 17A2:** 5. The men ordained as Elders will rotate themselves around the clusters as Peter was doing in Acts 12:12, 17 and not stay put to serve just one assembly or where he emanated from.

The points outlined above are just too simplistic to address a complex issue. Are you advocating that one eldership (say 15 men) should lead all the cells (say 15) in a local council area? Is it any different from one eldership (say 15) leading all the congregations (say 10) in Ojo LGA?

**Ans:** We are not discussing LGAs so we wonder why you keep bringing that up! It was simplistic for the Jerusalem church leaders to manage their City-church and will be for those willing to emulate them today. Autonomous churches do not appoint elders at the same time but cells would benefit at the same time.

**Ob Pg 18A2: Administrators and scholars recognize three types of cities in Nigeria – ‘city, town and village.’** See [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Nigerian\\_cities\\_by\\_population](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Nigerian_cities_by_population)

Truth is, there is no official, government definition of what constitutes cities in Nigeria. It is scholars and professionals, using various different parameters, which define cities. Wikipedia lists the following 83 settlements as cities in Nigeria:

**Ans:** So there are no professionals in government? You should visit appropriate Ministries and government agencies like that of Environment, Urban Planning, etc. to confirm that part of their job includes to maintain, classify and develop cities.

**Ob Pg 19A2:** The National Boundary Commission, for those who know, doesn’t create cities or towns. It defines and delineate boundaries. It can create boundary between communities (Warri and Effurun, two cities) or administrative areas (Bayelsa and Rivers, two states). The Commission has nothing to do with formation or description of what constitutes a city. Human settlements (villages, towns, cities) form through interactions of various sociological indices: commerce, settlement patterns, political activities, etc.

**Ans:** Who wrote that the National Boundary Commission (NBC) create cities or you just cannot resist the temptation to deflect and counter imaginary arguments? On Pg 19 of Part 1, we quoted what is on the NBC website about how they define and delineate boundaries between states, LGAs and communities.

**Ob Pg 19A2:** The distinction being made between elders and cities as ‘divine versus social’ construct is an unwarranted accusation of intellectual myopia against the Holy Spirit as if He did not know what He was doing. He knows everything about each city whether past, present or future. God created the settlement that man named Eden. *“And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.”* - Acts 17:26 The Bible makes it clear that the Lord knows the difference between a house, a street, a city, a region, a province, a nation and the world...

There is difference between “foreknown” and “ordained.” The Holy Spirit knew that Judas will betray Jesus, but he did not ordain it; Judas acted out of his own free will. God knew there will be president, democracy, emperors, republicanism, but he didn’t ordain anyone. He only ordained human government. Where divinity is to be conferred on a city (old and new Jerusalem) or system of government (Davidic monarchy), the Bible is always explicit and categorical about that. Likewise, because the Holy Spirit knew the provinces and cities created by the Romans and Greeks doesn’t mean he palmed a divine imprimatur on them. They were man-made, had no divine bearing, and variables with time and place.



Hence, to use the Holy Spirit's recognition of the existence of a thing doesn't make such thing to be divine.

**Ans:** The cited passage shows that God determined the bounds of where men may live but allows men to occupy and build as they wish at different times. He recognizes human cities from ancient times, He did so in Rev 1-3 by calling each church by its geographical location and will continue to do so until the end of the world. It is **the church** in every city that is divine. God never commanded the building of the Jerusalem temple but endorsed it when conceived by king David and left execution to Solomon who was given the divine blueprint for its layout. God uses human constructs in His relationship with humanity.

**Ob Pg 20A2:**

***Are churches of Christ obeying these Commands and apostolic examples?***

	Ordinance	Commanded	Apostolic Examples	Compliance?		Reason		
				Yes	No	C	O	D
<b>1</b>	<b>Upper room communion</b>	<b>Luke 22. 12</b>	<b>Acts 20. 8</b>					
	<b>Feet washing</b>	<b>John 13. 5-2</b>	<b>1Tim. 5. 10</b>					
	<b>Anointing with oil</b>	<b>Matt. 6. 17</b>	<b>Luke 7. 46; Js. 5. 14</b>					
	<b>Lifting up holy hands</b>	<b>1Tim. 2. 8</b>						
	<b>Laying of hands</b>	<b>1Tim. 5. 22</b>	<b>Acts 13. 3; 1Tim. 4. 14</b>					

**Illustration 2: table of**

**Legend: C = Cultural; O = Opinion; D = Doctrinal**

**Ans:** Is the query and illustration by Akpore supposed to establish that COCs do not obey several NT "Commands and Examples"? Is this meant to justify the view that modern disciples need not bother about obeying the command in Tit 1:5 that is exemplified in Acts 14:23? We shall examine each of the passages he cited in Table 3 below. We question the claim on whether a referenced text is a Command or an Example that must be adopted verbatim. One needs to rightly divide the word of truth so as not to arrive at inaccurate conclusions -2 Tim 2:15. A fundamental principle of literary text interpretation for proper understanding is to recognize, "*who is speaking, unto whom, what such says, and under what context.*" Failure to apply this basic principle is responsible for a lot of religious confusion in the world. Bible teachers owe it a duty to themselves and unto their audience to take heed unto their doctrine -1 Tim 4:16

Table 3: Examining purported Commands and Examples

Ordinance	Upper room communion
Command?	Luke 22:10 <i>And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. 11 And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? 12 And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.</i>
Apostolic Example?	Acts 20:7 <i>And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. 8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered</i>

	<i>together.</i>
Remark	Jesus in foreknowledge merely informed His disciples about the venue that they would obtain. To misconstrue that as a command for all perpetually is surprising. The Last Supper took place in the Guest Room that by ancient building construction, is customarily located in the attic -Mk 18:12, see also 1 Kg 17:9,19,23 & 2 Kg 4:10-11. While Paul addressed the brethren in an upper chamber at Troas, the fact that it was specifically mentioned as the third floor (Acts 20:9) was relevant to Eutychus' fall not to the Communion per se. True worship is independent of location or geography but dependent on our sincerity and devotion to the word of God as His spiritual children -Jn 4:20-24.
<b>Ordinance</b>	<b>Feet washing</b>
Command?	John 13:5 <i>After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. ...12 So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? 13 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.</i>
Apostolic Example?	1 Timothy 5:9 <i>Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, 10 Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.</i>
Remark	Jesus simply gave a lesson in serving others in humility. Firstly, the said command was to the apostles NOT to disciples generally and it was NOT recorded as an ordinance, which the early church practiced in worship or after the Lord's Supper. Secondly, the widow referenced is NOT an example! That is simply a <i>hypothetical case</i> that such ought to be reputable for good deeds of hospitality and caring for visitors. Feet washing was and remains a means of expressing that in the sandy Middle East when sandals are worn. It is a private thing not a COC affair, some individuals help visitors clean their feet today when the opportunity avails.
<b>Ordinance</b>	<b>Anointing with oil</b>
Command?	Matthew 6:17 <i>But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face</i>
Apostolic Example?	Luke 7:46 <i>My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.</i> James 5:14 <i>Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord</i>
Remark	Why lump disparate passages together? Mt 6:17 is for an individual who fasts and is not directed at COCs. The first purported example deal with another washing Christ's feet in hospitality at an invited luncheon or dinner not a person fasting anointing his own head. The second deals with caring for the sick by others, not someone fasting and anointing himself.
<b>Ordinance</b>	<b>Lifting up holy hands</b>
Command?	1 Timothy 2:8 <i>I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.</i>
Apostolic Example?	[A2 listed no text]
Remark	That this could also have figurative connotation aside literal is evident in what it is <b>without</b> ;

	invisible attributes of “wrath and doubting.” God alone discerns “holy hands.” In prayer, several postures are authorized and acceptable, in the NT e.g. lift hands in prayer (Lk 24:50, Heb 12:12-13), bow knees in worship (Phil 2:9-10, Eph 3:14-16), etc. Individuals and COCs are free to adopt any decent and comfortable posture deemed expedient at any given time.
<b>Ordinance</b>	<b>Laying of hands</b>
Command?	1 Timothy 5:22 <i>Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.</i>
Apostolic Example?	Acts 13:3 <i>And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.</i> 1 Timothy 4:14 <i>Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.</i>
Remark	The alleged command says DO NOT lay hands suddenly; it does NOT command that we lay hands at all! Yet, laying of hands was and remains one of several public signs of leader(s) giving a blessing (Gen 48:14, Mk 10:13-16) or designating someone for divine service (Num 27:22, Acts 6:6). It is NOT exclusive but was common while commissioning ministers since it was often accompanied by impartation of spiritual gifts (Deut 34:9, Acts 6:5-6; 8:6, 17-19). Laying of hands could have waned since there are no more apostles to impart spiritual gifts.

Whoever is dissatisfied with our Remarks need not contend that divine commands should be disregarded. What such ought to do is to begin to obey every perceived command and plead with others to do likewise! Since cities still exist and elders are needed to oversee the church, Tit 1:5 & Acts 14:23 remain valid. Both passages are about divine church organization and not mere human socio-cultural relationship.

**Ob Pg 21A2:** In NT times, cities were more of tribal areas; today that sense is completely lost. For some people to say this is irrelevant, it shows how shallow their knowledge of New Testament is. Ephesus then cannot grow to include the nearby town; each will exist as two separate cities because city is more than mere geographical area; it was historico-cultural to them. Accusing me of using excuse to disobey Titus 1.5 is plain ridiculous.

It is strange that the people building a doctrine on the concept of city are the one saying what constitutes a city then and know is irrelevant So New York and .

**Ans:** Our shallow knowledge accepts that tribalism is not vaunted in the NT -Col 3:11. There were cities before, during and after the NT was written. During MOG discussions, Akpore stated, “If any person or group of persons want to materialise City-church, I'll like to take part and contribute my concept of it. Though as a matter of practical theology, not matter of doctrine.” On Pg 17A2 he wrote, “**Though house fellowships, cell/house churches are biblical, such will be left to the discretion of each congregation.**” **How could someone admit that City-church/house-churches is scriptural, contend it is not necessary today because cities now are different from cities in the first century YET be willing to contribute to its materialization?**

Christians live in cities today just as in the first century. Even if the word ‘city/town/village’ is no longer used in the world and a new term is used to represent ‘basic human settlement,’ e.g. “Jango” then Bible translations will begin to read “*ordain elders in every Jango.*” Preachers would still be obligated to obey!

Forgetting that there are also small cities now and big cities in the first century, A2 avers ordaining presbytery in City-church is no longer binding because we now live in a modern world. Recall that **some substituted sprinkling for immersion** claiming that we now live in a modern world! God commands we dip the penitent in a body of water but modernists break the water into sprinkles and randomly apply to the penitent not totally covering him. Likewise, God commands that we ordain elders in the City-church. However, modernists break the one body of disciples into autonomous churches and ‘haphazardly ordain elders in fractional parts’ rather than appoint the presbytery in the city for all the disciples at once.

**Ob Pg 22A2:** So plural men and women means adults in a house church? How then do you explain “...so that if he found **any** who were of the Way, whether **men** or **women**, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem” (Acts 9:2) and “I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both **men** and **women**...” (Acts 22:4)? Does it mean Paul only arrests Christians in multiples? Was Stephen not among the plural men Paul arrested? One of you, during our discussion on “Elder’s Children” argued (correctly) that **children** also stand for **child**. And why should plural “men and women” not stand for both depending on whom he found in the house?

Let us read the verse again: “As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering **every** house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.” The text says Paul went to “every house.” Nothing here suggests house church. Let us remain with the context.

**Ans:** A2 did **not** address the three points given for why Acts 8:3 shows Saul arrested men and women in house churches. His queries simply show that Saul may have arrested a man and/or woman occupant on some occasions (e.g. if Saul got there as the visiting worshippers dispersed/escaped). It does NOT FORECLOSE that adults of both sexes were also arrested. Just as majority of older Christian men, aspiring to eldership could have more than one faithful child. Stephen was not arrested in a house but in the open *amongst the people* (Acts 6:8-9) while reasoning with the Jews.

Since you agreed that the Jerusalem church met in houses, you should know where Saul would seek for Christians to arrest.

**Ob Pg 22A2:** I don’t like answering illustrations, but I do when they are wrongly used to arrive at wrong conclusions. Semantically, “*the military fights in Borno*” can mean both conclusion you draw and the former is most correct because the military is one. The Air Force component of *Operation Lafiya Dole* depends on the Mobility Commands headquartered in Yenagoa for movement of troops and equipment. It is the Nigerian Military that is fighting in Northeast. And the insurgency is not in all part of the Northeast, yet there are military presence in villages or hamlets where a single shot has not been fired. In contradistinction, there are military personnel in the war theatre (but not in combat) who have not and will never fire a shot until they leave there. Yet, there contribution is vital to the success of the war. If not for God-knows-what reason, the COAS has no business been in Borno state to command effectively. Information is conducted by Defence HQ in Abuja, not Maiduguri. Signals can operate anywhere. In fact, “...*the military in Borno fights*...” may even be wrong as it could give the wrong impression that the military lacks the capacity to fight without being in Borno. If needs be, the military can launch missiles from 82 Div Enugu or WNC, Apapa straight into Sambisa Forest. After all, Iran was able to launch missiles to US bases in Iraq even though Iran was outside the theatre of war.

**Ans:** A2 merely restated our point that the military fights in Borno is fitting and the correct description.

**Ob Pg 22-23A2:** I sincerely don't understand what you people mean by saying this: "Acts 9:26-31 says the (universal) church had rest in the named provinces." Is to win argument or what? Paul did not persecute the universal church because it had, by then, probably reached Africa and Asia (Acts 2. 8-11; 8. 27ff). So how can some people be reading the universal church had rest into the text when it was never persecuted in the first place?

There was at least a church in Damascus in the **province of Syria** (9. 19) before the event of Acts 9. 31. So, how could only the "City-churches" in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria comprise the universal church? The Greek text was specific ("**the** church in..."): it was the church in those provinces who alone experienced persecution then. When did we start defining the church along such lines? The simple understanding of the text is that the all the churches in those provinces are one church (probably due to linkage to Jerusalem), and they enjoyed peace at the cessation of that persecution.

**Ans:** Saul did not have to persecute every Christian on earth before it is admitted that he was persecuting *the universal church not just one local church*. Acts 9:2; 22:4 states his mission was to persecute **any** who is of "**this way**." The phrase "this way" **refers to** the universal church; specific provinces were mentioned because they were directly affected by Saul's hostility. We both defined church as universal or local [city] or assembled but you now argue for a "multi-provincial church." The text does **not** say the saints in three provinces "are one church (probably due to linkage to Jerusalem)," rather it grouped them together because they mutually had rest after having experienced persecution together.

**Ob Pg 23A2:** Whether local or universal, the body [church] edifies itself (Eph 4:16) via the input of each member (1 Cor 14:26, Rm 14:19, 1 Thess 5:11) not just through the leadership.

I recall John Oboroh pleading us severally in this platform to desist from using scriptures to contradict each other to prove a point instead of explaining each scripture and highlighting their complementarity.

The "edifying" (oi)kodomoume/nh, oikodomoumene) in Acts 9. 31 is **verbal**, present **passive** participle. Passive voice in Greek, as in English, means that the object (church) the verb qualifies is **the receiver of the action of the verb**, not the giver (active voice) or doing it for itself (middle voice). I did parse the passage before hoping it would clear doubt.

The cognate word in Ephesian 4. 16 is in its **nominative (noun)** form oi)kodomh\n (oikodomeen), nominative feminine singular accusative. Even here, the church (collective) is in the accusative case (direct object) meaning it is receiving edification from its various parts. As far as the Greek language is concerned, the church in Act was edified by an external agent (either its leaders or Christ or the Holy Spirit) and the church in Ephesians was edified by its members, not its leaders or Christ or the Holy Spirit.

**Ans:** You posit that the church "throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria" did NOT edify itself but received edification from outside.

- Pg 23A2 "is **the receiver of the action of the verb**, not the giver (active voice) or doing it for itself (middle voice)."
- Pg 8A "...is edified by one leadership (the participle which edified them)... the leadership of the Apostles"

Kindly state if the apostles in Jerusalem were NOT within Judaea **and if they were NOT members of** "the church in those provinces," which was persecuted. **If** the ones that edified that church were the apostles **then** their membership in same church shows that the church edified itself! What your Greek



grammar points to is that the edification of the church (through its members such as the apostles) did not originate in man but in the comforting words of the Holy Spirit.

**Ob Pg 23A2:** Church does NOT refer to “all congregations in several cities.” Church refers to all Christians in any place or a specific place. Not assemblies but individuals are called out, converted, baptized and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.

When I said the “church” Paul was persecuting was the individual saints/households, you people countered that Paul “must have accosted house churches not just random family houses...”, now you people are arguing that the same persecuted “church” which later had rest “refers to all Christian in any place or a specific place. Not assemblies but individuals...” This is not consistency. Contextually and grammatically, “church” (singular) in 9. 31 refers to all the churches and saints in the provinces, cities, towns, and villages in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, whether assembled or not. I won’t look for dogma to make it mean something else.

**Ans:** That tri-provincial church did not assemble physically. Point is that church consists of individuals as members (baptized men and women) be it house-church, City-church or universal church. This was stated in response to your claim on Pg 8A that ‘Acts 9. 31 makes it clear that church can referring to all the congregations in several cities.’ That was a subtle effort to deflect from the city context of Tit 1:5.

**Ob Pg 24A2:** How about appointing additional qualified men as elders where such appointee(s) from an existing or new cell, coordinate that cell aside also serving the whole church and guiding new deacons?...

This, to me, is a matter of opinion. There are denominations with 30,000 members existing as city churches meeting every Sunday in one auditorium, but week days as cells. Even if they meet exclusively as cells, I **feel** they are too big for the elders to know all the members. How many elders will shepherd such number? Even if the church has 300 elders, it would still not meet the scriptural expectation of each elder knowing each the whole sheep (cf. Jn. 10. 3: “*the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out*”). At best, this system will distribute the elders as single pastors over cells.

**Ans:** If men alone were 5,000 in Acts 4:4 then by 5:14 & 6:7 the whole assembly had MULTIPLIED and could even be over 30,000. To you it is a matter of opinion but to us it is a matter of faith that the church be one and not divided into autonomous bodies in any settlement. In Jn 10:1-3 that you partly quoted, Jesus talks of “**the** shepherd.” Though Jesus told Peter “...*feed my sheep*” after His resurrection (Jn 21:16), it does NOT inherently suggest that Peter alone is to do the work **or that Peter must know every convert in the universal church**. Do you imply that mild amnesia or lack of a super memory would disqualify a person from the eldership? Would each elder have personally known the thousands of church members in Jerusalem? Such nevertheless could feed and exercise watch over all via his teaching, writings and exemplary life though he physically interact with some at any given time. Acts 20:28 & 1 Pet 5:1-4 shows that shepherding all the flock is a shared yet collective work for the presbytery, NOT a solo responsibility in the City-church. Why do you think inspiration requires a PLURALITY of Elders?

**Ob Pg 24A2:** “Yes, one body with one leadership per city.”

Since you people argued that the Holy Spirit both know and sanction the existing social structures of city, it is plausible to argue that the same Holy Spirit sanctioned the social institution of slavery. Why argue that it was abolished in principle? Can’t inspiration condemn it outright rather than abolishing it in

principle? You people are just entangling yourself. Social systems are transient, and can never form part of divine laws **unless** inspiration provide guidelines for their existence. Eldership existed as part of culture, but, when adopted, it was given new meaning. Ditto baptism, Lord's Supper, music, etc. These practices existed hitherto in cultures before been adapted into Christianity and given spiritual meanings guidelines. As for city, there is no divine meaning attached to it. It is still in the hands of humans and human institutions to create and define what constitute a city.

**Ans:** Divinity decides if it would adapt/adopt a social construct and if it would discard it. Bread is a social construct but God left out leaven when he adopted it. Man sang a song before God commanded that we sing, in the OT God accepted instrumental music. Therefore to argue that God would not make a manmade concept binding in spiritual matters is ridiculous. City has existed since the time of Cain and will subsist until the end of the world. Eldership existed before Mosaic Law and NT imbibed a part of it. City is adopted social construct in the NT but the bishops ordained therein are for saints not sinners. Since God associates local church with a city, the City-church and presbytery are not transient either.

**Ob Pg 24A2:** Una do well o! Una quote part of my definition to change the meaning so as to establish inconsistencies in my argument. Doo! This is my complete definition: *“Church, from ecclesia, simply means a separated group of people. The NT used ecclesia in three senses when referring to saints in a collective sense. One, it means all the saints all over the world: the universal church (Eph. 3. 20-21). Wherever a Christian resides, the universal church is there.”* The first sentence was the common, secular definition. I introduced the second, theological part by saying “The NT used ecclesia in...” With this clear, full definition, una select parts of the secular and religious definitions to establish contradictions in my positions. Is this mistake or deliberate?

Even when I pointed out that unbelievers likely attended that lecture, you people still are insisting it was a church in worship.

**Ans:** Firstly, your full definition of church on Pg 5A mentions ONLY the universal church, the assembled church and the local church (citing Jerusalem/Antioch). Into **which of these three** do you categorize “the church throughout Judaea and Galilee and Samaria”?

Secondly, you did NOT identify any part of your definition of church as secular and inadmissible in your religious article.

We simply showed that in Ephesus, the disciples separated from the synagogue unto Paul at the school of Tyrannus were meeting **daily** for spiritual study. [Does daily not include the first day of the week?] They constituted a cell of the City-church since some other Christians, were meeting in the house of Aquila. That unbelievers likely attended their lectures is not an issue, do not we like to have such attend our Bible study today?

**Ob Pg 25A2:** So na which congregation be “Men of God Preach the Word” Whatsapp group since na God word we dey reason here?

**Ans:** MOG could be described as a virtual ‘assembled church’ based on your 2<sup>nd</sup> definition Pg 5A or our 3<sup>rd</sup> definition on Pg 1, Part 1. Its members are invited preachers & teachers within City-churches in Nigeria. MOG is hosted on the WhatsApp server and accessed via the Internet. Only those members, which “feel like,” participate on ad-hoc basis in its activities, it **does not** fellowship with congregations. It is just another interactive Group on social media as many others.

**Ob Pg 25-26A2:** ...If an assembly practices something as a matter of opinion without insisting that others must practice as they, then there is no cause for alarm. Otherwise, after repeated attempts at discussion and debates in search of harmony, it could be obvious which one is in error. The only justifiable rationale for *autonomous churches that are aware of each other* in a city would be where only one assembly is a faithful church obeying Rm 16:17, while the others are being admonished to obey 2 Tim 2:19.

I laugh at simplistic answers like this. There are issues where two congregations can disagree on and still be in fellowship, with none transgressing God's law: church wedding, cross-over, etc. However, these group of brethren cannot exist as one congregation. The persistent disagreement over many topics here and outside are witnessed against this naïve solution to union (not unity) of believers in a given locality. Unless, of course, some of us have set ourselves as experts whose position on every theological or biblical subject are always the orthodox ones.

**Ans:** We implied that disagreeable congregations can exist as cells in matters of opinion but could have to separate and be autonomous when there are irreconcilable differences in matters of faith. The examples you provided, "church wedding, cross-over, etc." are based on opinion not on commands found in the scriptures. Disciples coexist irrespective of quibbles over things not perceived as the pillars of unity. Even the 'persistent disagreement over many topics' on MOG does not mean members are not united on the fundamentals/essentials of the faith.

The inspired apostle unto Gentiles states, "*examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.*" We ought to work out our salvation, not only watch and pray. It is evident in the NT that a local church is the City-church and that the elders appointed are over all the brethren in a city. **When and why was this altered?** We study the scriptures without dogmatism, and are not ashamed to renounce human tradition. If some have set themselves as experts on every theological subject, we caution such that 'historico-grammatical analyses' should not be used as a ruse to "*make void the word of God.*" Truth admitted should not be resisted; for a matter to be a matter of 'practical theology' [expediency], it must first be lawful. If there is no theological warrant cum cultural shift to modify application of a precept, it abides immutably. Since God is specific that church elders have citywide scope in the NT, we must humbly accept so and obey it.

#### IV. Addressing Sharp's Review of CO

**Ob:** The two brethren make broad, unsubstantiated accusations about Christians and congregations. Just as in the first century, both local churches and individual Christians vary from dead to vibrant (Revelation 2:8-9; 3:1; 1 Timothy 1:18-20; Philippians 2:19-23). I will not bother to either defend or attack my brethren but will examine the arguments the brothers employ to defend their five basic theses.

**Ans:** We have edited few generalized statements in the article (CO), which you reviewed. We re-wrote and expanded it as COA or Part 1 of this material. [The original article was a draft meant for a WhatsApp Group discussion; the authors promised to write a fuller version after that discussion and did. The nuances expressed in a work should not becloud one from separating the wheat from the chaff. Some, including Brother Asaolu sifted that article, grasped the truth therein and embraced it.]

**Ob:** Some congregations today are different in matters of faith from those we read about in the New Testament; some are not. Certainly there are unfaithful brethren and congregations, but it is blatantly unfair to lump all together as alike. This is the kind of harsh judgmentalism the Master condemned (Matthew 7:1-5).

**Ans:** Indeed but common trends may be highlighted especially amidst one's audience and environment.

**Ob:** I am an elder in the local church where I preach, thus the blanket charges they make about modern elders are directed at me. They are blatantly false. We prayerfully shepherd the members and seek to save them (Hebrews 13:17). We do not "lord it over the flock" (1 Peter 5:3) but seek their input and approval on important decisions. Nonetheless elders rule the local church (1 Timothy 5:17), and to rule is to make decisions others are obligated to follow (Exodus 18:21-26; cf. 1 Kings 20:40).

**Ans:** Noted, what you aver is an ideal many should equally practice.

**Ob:** The basic error of these brethren is their contention that **"Each church of the 1st century was a network of cell (home group) churches."**

**Ans:** What we meant and actually aver is that Christians typically met in homes back then for fellowship and worship, not in purpose-built structures. A new church in any city would commence meeting in one venue [often a private house] and the brethren may grow in number to use multiple assembly venues [houses] for services in the same city but would still remain one church with a common leadership.

**Ob:** They cite passages that show there were groups of people meeting in their homes from within the same congregation. But a group of Christians within a local church, even if they meet for spiritual reasons, does not comprise a church within a church. If two or three disciples within a local church meet to resolve differences, they are not the church or a church (Matthew 18:15-17). This truth negates all the arguments these brethren use to defend their belief that several house churches should comprise one city-wide church shepherded by one eldership.

**Ans:** Interesting that you NEVER defined the word "church" [Ekkléssia] in your review! If you did, it would obviously negate your assertions. We understand the difference between two/three and 'the church' and know that the body (church) has many members. That was why we cited 1 Cor 12:12 and **did NOT** cite Mt 18:17.

**Ob:** They cite passages that do not begin to say what they assert. There is no evidence there were multiple churches in Jerusalem (Acts 11:22; 15:4, 22-23), Ephesus (Acts 20:17), Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:2), Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 1:1), Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, or Laodicea (Revelation 1:11).

**Ans:** There was one church NOT churches in Jerusalem regardless of the number of places they assembled. **Our view is that ONE church existed per city in the NT** [whether or not the saints therein worshipped in multiple houses]. Why create autonomous churches in a city today unlike the NT pattern?

**Ob:** They cite verses that demonstrate some cities had more than one congregation, even as we have today. But they did not cite a passage which proves that these various congregations comprised a city-wide congregation shepherded by one eldership. They appeal to no such passage, because no such biblical verse exists (1 Peter 4:11; 2 John 9-11).

**Ans:** A congregation is a group of worshippers and is NOT necessarily autonomous. Please let that **sink** in. How could YOU have missed passages cited such as:

- Acts 12:12-17 that shows various congregations of the City-church of Jerusalem praying at different houses? Acts 15:4; 21:17-18 that refers to “*the whole church ...the brethren ...all the elders*” in Jerusalem? Thus, cells made up the church in Jerusalem, how come that is no longer practiced now?
- Acts 18:24-27, 1 Cor 16:19 which shows that at Ephesus, a church was meeting at Aquila’s house while Acts 19:1-10 shows that some disciples he was unaware of were converted, which then met DAILY with Paul for study and evangelism in the school of Tyrannus? Acts 20:17-28 wherein Paul sent for and addressed “*the elders of THE church*” of Ephesus showing the assemblies constituted one church under a common eldership?

**We challenge anyone to provide ONE NT passage that clearly mentions multiple elderships for various autonomous churches in the same city!**

**Ob:** They cite passages demonstrating one set of elders to a city (Acts 14:21-23; Titus 1:5), but give no proof whatsoever that these cities had multiple churches.

**Ans:** We did prove our claim that there was ONLY ONE body per city with a common leadership irrespective of whether the Christians assembled as one congregation or multiple congregations in various locations within a city. It is YOUR DUTY to prove your position by showing from the NT that there were multiple autonomous churches with separate elderships in any city.

**Ob:** The work of a preacher is not limited to trying to save the lost. Rather, evangelists are also to edify Christians (Acts 20:20, 32), guard and defend the faith (2 Timothy 4:3-5), teach the faithful to teach others (2 Timothy 2:2), and set the congregation in order (Titus 1:5). Their work is not limited to pulpit preaching but includes house to house teaching and whatever other methods are available (Acts 20:20).

No, preachers are not restricted to one congregation, but they may certainly work with a congregation. The apostle Paul began the church at Corinth (Acts 18:8), but Apollos later went there and watered what Paul had planted (Acts 18:24-28; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:6). Philip the evangelist worked with the brethren in Caesarea for at least twenty years (Acts 8:40; 21:8). When I lived in Upstate New York, I often preached to three congregations and taught home Bible studies in various locations. I know faithful African preachers who do the same.



**Ans:** Of course.

**Ob:** Congregational autonomy has little to do with making discipline of sinful members more difficult. In our mobile society, a sinful member can just go to a congregation in another city if they will accept him, and some do. The same is true in Nigeria. Regardless, congregational autonomy is the New Testament pattern (1 Peter 5:1-2), and we must follow it (2 Timothy 1:13).

**Ans:** 1 Pet 5:1-2 was not written to a congregation but to brethren in several provinces. “Elders among you” means the elders in each of the City-churches of those provinces. The New Testament does NOT have a pattern of ‘congregational autonomy’ UNLESS *congregation* is construed as each City-church. In the NT one cannot switch congregations within a city if disfellowshipped, such is purged out -1 Cor 5:5-7

**Ob:** The authors of this study cite passages devoid of explanation or argumentation to try to substantiate their claim that the church in Jerusalem was composed of “different cell churches across the city.” This is the basic error of the house church movement and adds a fourth meaning to the New Testament word “church.”

**Ans:** Those that regularly gather for worship in selected homes were cells [house churches], which altogether constituted THE church in the city of Jerusalem. Just define ‘church’ from the Greek.

**Ob:** The word “church” is used in the New Testament to denote the universal assembly of people called out of the world into fellowship with God (Matthew 16:18), the local congregation (1 Corinthians 1:2), and the public, worship assembly of the local congregation (1 Corinthians 11:18). It is never used scripturally to denote a group within the local church.

**Ans:** Please see Acts 9:31 & 19:32-41 for “assembly/churches,” and check the Greek words so translated. Is the local church a group within the universal church? Could the church in Aquila’s house have been a group within the church in Rome? You listed 1 Cor 1:2 as a local congregation, what does it say? “*Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints...*” The Christians in Corinth constituted the church of God in that city because they were called to be saints [holy ones], and have been invited by the gospel from the world into of Christ’s kingdom. They did not become “the church” when gathered in a house but came together “as a church” (physical assembly) at such moment. What you call “the worship assembly of the local congregation” is simply saints gathered in a venue at a particular time to worship; it could be the whole or a part of the City-church.

For instance, in a city; sisters meet at a home: 1 Main Street on Wed between 6-7pm for Bible Study, brothers meet at a home: 10 Moore Street on Wed between 7-8pm for Bible Study, and the Church runs a worship service for all on Sunday 9am-12pm at a rented hall pending the erection of its own building. This yields three congregations or assemblies per week of a City-church under one common leadership. Yet each gathering is ‘a church in session’ or “assembled church” since it is a program/event designed by the whole church and executed by a segment thereof. In Acts 21:5, an observer at the seashore who enquires, “Who are those who knelt to pray?” would be informed, “that is the church of Christ.” 1 Cor 11:18 ‘*as a church*’, 14:19 ‘*in the church*’ connotes “with some saints in a capacity of the body of Christ, for a spiritual purpose” NOT necessarily “amidst the whole church.” A person who prophesies edifies the church (1 Cor 14:4). Did sisters stop prophesying altogether or lost the gift of prophecy after Paul wrote vs 34-38 or did they thereafter exercise their gift to saints in gatherings where brothers were absent? If

after Paul's epistle, a Corinthian sister prophesied in a sisters' class, **she would have scripturally edified a [segment of the local] church NOT the [whole] church.**

**Ob:** Nor is there any New Testament authority for groups smaller than the local church to assemble to eat the Lord's Supper. Writing to the "church of God at Corinth" (1 Corinthians 1:2), Paul directed them to eat the Lord's Supper "when you come together as a church" (1 Corinthians 11:17-18), "when you come together in one place" (verses 20, 33). The only New Testament example of Christians observing the Lord's Supper was when the disciples at Troas "came together" and "were gathered together" (Acts 20:7-8).

**Ans:** No one disputes that the disciples in Troas came together to break bread. It is authorized for disciples to meet as an assembly ["as a church" -1 Cor 11:18] to break bread.

For expediency, many Christians are meeting in small groups (with family/neighbours) during the lockdown occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic. Since they are constrained from getting to a church building to meet with all others as they customarily do, spiritual leaders of the local church also guide such via visits/technological tools. [Akin to coordination of early Christians in private homes by local church leaders via visits/epistles since there were no church buildings for all to gather in many cities].

These recent small groups (cells) constitute congregations. It is immaterial whether **such cell of the City-church** is temporary; the important thing is their worship. They gather in Christ's name, praise the Lord, edify one another, proclaim the Lord's death via Communion, give and may assist the needy in their midst, preach to those around them, etc. **Are you against the establishment of new congregations [house-churches] or would deny these the right to assemble and serve their God?**

Some aver the whole [local] church must gather in one place for the Lord's Supper to demonstrate that Christians are in one accord. Really? Are the brethren not in one accord when they organize or conduct different edification programs for various segments of the church in distinct classrooms or venues? Being in 'one accord' does not necessarily mean gathering together as some interpret. While 'one accord' may be used to describe physical coordination of a group, it does not mean that in every context. Notice the employment of the phrase in Acts 2:1; 2:46 and Phil 2:2. Did the instruction to the Philippians mean that they should perpetually remain physically together in one place, and not go home to eat, rest or work? If 'one accord' means being physically together in every context, then the following are the implications:

1. The church in Jerusalem did not pray for Peter's release in one accord (Acts.12:17).
2. The early church ceased to be in one accord after Act 8.
3. Whenever a church has Zonal fellowships, they are not in one accord.
4. Whenever few brethren are absent in a program, the church is not in one accord.
5. In fact, once the assembly disperses, they are no longer in one accord!

Since the foregoing are illogical, the only valid interpretation of '**one accord**' is that the City-church coordinated themselves well as *one body having the same mind, the same judgment, one faith, one hope, one Lord, being united under same local leadership* irrespective of whether all met in one place or not.

Indeed the Corinthians were reminded on what it entails to come together to break bread.

- Could they possibly come together "as a church" in multiple places?

[Many translations and Greek manuscripts do not contain the phrase “in one place” in 1 Cor 11: 20, 33 but simply state “...when you come together...”]

- **Are all the Christians in a city recognized as a local church**, and must ALL assemble in one place to partake of the Communion?

Consider a city with 450 Christians pre-Covid-19. In God’s sight, the local church has 450 baptized members. Assuming these formed 3 congregations that worship at three different locations (halls) across town, averaging 150 per assembly, **is it okay?** When due to limitations on public gathering occasioned by Covid-19, the Christians rearranged themselves and worship in 75 homes based on proximity averaging 6 per assembly, **is it still okay** or has it suddenly become sinful? If using 75 assemblies is sinful then so was the original 3 and so was the Jerusalem church in Acts 12:12, 17.

Worshipping in 3 or 75 venues are alike! Both are simply convenient means of gathering, for Christians in various sections of the city at different periods. Ab initio, the saints ought to operate as a City-church with common leadership. If instead, they initially operated 3 autonomous churches, guess you would balk at 75 assemblies purporting it signals 75 independent churches?

- What if pre-Covid, some Christians are imprisoned in that city (e.g. in persecution -Acts 16:19-25), could such sing, pray and even break bread in jail if they have the opportunity on a Sunday?
- During severe persecution in Jerusalem, especially between when Peter was imprisoned and divinely rescued [Acts 12:18-19], would the whole church have met publicly in one place to break bread?

**Ob:** Acts 2:46 is not an example of disciples eating the Lord’s Supper. The phrase “breaking bread” is simply a Jewish idiom for eating a meal. The context determines whether it is a common meal or the Lord’s Supper. In Acts 20:7 the church gathered to break bread, that is, they ate the Lord’s Supper. But in Acts 20:11, the next day Paul by himself broke bread, that is, he ate a common meal. In Acts 2:46, the “breaking bread” involved disciples in one another’s homes eating “their food.” Thus, these were common meals eaten because they were hungry. The apostle Paul by inspiration forbade eating your “own supper” in conjunction with the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:22, 34). Eat the Lord’s Supper when all are invited to come together as the church (Acts 20:7-8; 1 Corinthians 11:17, 18, 20, 33). Eat your own meals as a function of the home (1 Corinthians 11:21-22, 34).

**Ans:** We agree that personal meals should be taken privately and not mixed up with the Lord’s Table at the assembly of the saints. At home, one can eat alone or dine with Christian associates in a social setting or be gathered with disciples as a church to observe the Lord’s Supper. It is a matter of the purpose of the gathering or meal and appropriately discerning what is being done at that moment.

*Acts 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

*43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.*

*44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;*

*45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.*

*46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,*

*47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

Actually, Acts 2:44-47 seems more like an explanation or expansion of the thought captured in vs 42. It could very well be the Communion referenced in vs 42 that is alluded to in vs 46. [More on this verse later.] In the early years of the church, the Communion was an actual meal of [unleavened] bread and wine not crumbs or tiny wafers with micro cups being licked as many practice now. When some in Corinth abused it, conflating it with personal meals, Paul made a distinction and corrected them. Nevertheless, this NT feast remains **a meal to be eaten** together ‘as a church.’

**Ob:** In Acts 12:17 “many were gathered together praying” in the home of Mary the mother of John Mark (verse 12), but “James and ... the brethren” were somewhere else. Neither group was called “the church.” It is true that verse five states, “Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.” The church is here spoken of distributively, that is, as each member functioned individually. They were constantly assembled, but they were constantly praying. Acts 8:3, 11:22, and 12:5 are also examples of the word “church” being used in the distributive sense.

**Ans:** Acts 12:12 “*many were gathered together praying*” **explains** vs 5 “*prayer was made without ceasing of the church,*” the passage is NOT talking of individuals functioning separately in prayer. Vs 5-17 teaches of the church functioning in clusters/cells; city-saints congregating in several distinct places for the same intercessory purpose. The cells used were not haphazard but familiar. Both Peter and the saints praying in Mary’s house KNEW the exact locations where others assembled, and who was where!

**Ob:** In Acts 11:22, “news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem.” One collective set of ears, or the members of the church distributively?

**Ans:** “Church” is a collective noun. “*Came to the ears of the church*” means the Jerusalem church [leadership] was informed; it was reported hence the brethren took collective action, not some individuals.

**Ob:** If Acts 8:3 is a reference to “house churches,” then every family in the church at Jerusalem was its own church. Acts 20:20 does not mention the church and records what Paul did in Ephesus rather than Jerusalem. Yes, Paul taught “house to house,” and so do I, but how that proves there were separate cell churches that together composed a city wide, church is beyond me.

**Ans:** During persecution, some families hosted worship services. COA Pg 21 expounds Acts 8:3. Despite his warrant, Saul could not invade any home unless he had some evidence that Christian(s) were there.

**Ob:** Yes, evangelists were sent out to preach to the lost (Acts 13:1-5; 14:26), but they also stayed in one place and worked with a local church (Acts 8:40; 21:8; 1 Timothy 1:3; Titus 1:5). I have made twenty-nine international preaching trips and visited eleven nations, but throughout that time, when not traveling, I was preaching to a local church in America.

**Ans:** Preachers should periodically preach in various towns. Many especially in Nigeria would not venture outside their cities for say, two straight months without fear of losing their monthly paycheck unless his congregation expressly approves it, and such approval is extremely rare.

**Ob:** Acts 6:3 is part of an example of the church choosing officers (verses 1-6). Yes, all members of the church participate in choosing their leaders, but elders rule, make decisions for, the congregation of which they are members (1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Peter 5:1-2).

**Ans:** Agreed but they do not have the final say on matters of faith, the Bible does.

**Ob:** The authors assert, “Today, each congregation functions as an autonomous institution with zonal fellowships as appendages.” I don’t even know what that means.

**Ans:** We meant that in modern times, many misconstrue any regular gathering of Christians at a particular venue as a “local church.” **It was NOT so in the NT.** Some today, typically describe a cluster of the Jerusalem church such as those praying [or studying] in Mary’s house as “house fellowship.” Many deem any religious group that meets regularly and takes the Lord’s Supper an autonomous congregation.

**Ob:** According to the New Testament, a local church is composed of saints who agree to work together (Acts 9:26-28), is sufficiently local (1 Corinthians 1:2; Romans 16:5), that its members assemble regularly (Acts 11:25-26; 20:7; Hebrews 10:24-25), it functions collectively, i.e., as a whole (1 Timothy 5:16; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2), and, when mature, is organized, with bishops (i.e., overseers, also called elders or pastors/shepherds (Philippians 1:1; Acts 20:17, 28), deacons (servants, 1 Timothy 3:8-13), and saints (members) working together as they have ability and opportunity (Romans 12:4-8). It may have fellowship with a preacher or preachers, who both preach to them and work in other places (Philippians 4:15-16).

**Ans:** 1 Cor 1:2 refers to the City-church of Corinth; **it was a local church because it was located in Corinth. It remained so for as long as Christians dwell in and regularly meet ANYWHERE within the city, for worship/service.** [By service, we mean those activities that glorify God including the works of edification, benevolence or evangelism.] The church that met at the house of Aquila and Priscilla was a cell or segment of the saints in Rome, it did NOT “function as a whole” and there is no scriptural evidence it was autonomous with a distinct eldership as the church at Philippi or Jerusalem or Ephesus. Likewise, the cluster that met in Mary’s house [Acts 12] was not an “autonomous or local church” which ordained its own elders or functioned independently of other saints in the city. Mary or any of the worshippers gathered in her home could change residence within the city or visit a different assembly on a Sunday yet they remained members of the same local church. Any group of persons called unto Christ to be His disciples is “a church,” such that meet regularly in a home is a house-church. Members of house-church(es) altogether constitute the City-church and ordain elders as “the church” in a locality.

Acts 9:26-28 cited shows it was the City-church of Jerusalem that Paul assayed to join. He was rebuffed by the scared disciples until the apostles accepted him based on the testimony of Barnabas. Acts 11:25-26 states that Paul and Barnabas assembled with the church in Antioch for a year and taught much people. **It does not give details of how that was done;** whether in a single class or dual classes, whether in a single location or two, whether always teaching at the same time or sequentially, whether all the people were taught exactly the same topics in the same way or in different ways (youth and adult lessons), etc.

Hebrews 10:24-25 *And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

This inspired text does NOT specify the time, when, how often or where the assembly must hold! It gives no legislation that the whole church must meet at a particular time for a specific period in a particular place at a specific frequency.



Sure, we know from other passages that we should meet regularly, at least on Sundays. We however also know that the building or place of meeting is a matter of convenience not requirement for true worship, the time to start or end a service is discretionary as agreed by the church so long we wait for one another during the agreed period. We know it is permissible not mandatory *‘if therefore the whole church come together into one place’* but authorized when clusters of saints gather at different places since *‘the church is many members not one’* yet *‘one body.’*

Heb 10:25 is about stirring up one another in love unto good deeds, sincerely getting together and caring for ourselves, not only for worship BUT FOR every good work! It is not about waving to each other every Sunday in a jiffy as we dismiss, after barely tolerating one another’s presence for a few hours and not really interacting outside the service all week.

**Ob:** Each local church is autonomous (independent, self-ruled (1 Peter 5:1-2; Acts 13:1-3). Certainly disciples may meet for Bible study, prayer, and singing of hymns in each other’s homes (Acts 12:17), but that doesn’t mean the disciples so gathered constitute a church within the citywide church or a “zonal fellowship.”

**Ans:** Firstly, define “church” from the original text, secondly what makes ‘a local church’ or ‘the church in a locality/city’? Thereafter, you might understand why some describe a cluster of saints meeting in a zone of a city as ‘zonal fellowship’ and why we regard such as ‘a house-church.’

**Ob:** Yes, in Acts 4:4 the church in Jerusalem came to number about 5000, but they were indeed, so far as is revealed, still meeting in the temple (Acts 2:46), and this continued even later (Acts 5:42). When the severe persecution began, these great numbers were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1). The first congregation of disciples met for public worship in the temple, because, as Jews they had access to it, and it was the only venue large enough to hold them. New Testament congregations met for worship in the temple (Acts 2:46; 5:12), an upper room (Acts 20:7-8), by a river side (Acts 16:13-14), in a school (Acts 19:9), and in private houses (Romans 16:5). They met wherever it was convenient to do so, and we do the same.

**Ans:** **Actually, it was the saints in a city that made up a ‘local church’ not their meeting place** (temple, upper room, riverside, private house, etc.) Modern worshippers need to acknowledge this truth.

*And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. ...And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) – Acts 2:46-47; 5:12-14*

The apostles were preaching to the people of Israel in the temple courts (Acts 3:1-26; 5:19-21). Persecution for the apostles started in Acts 4:1-23 with verbal warning. In Acts 5:17-40, it graduated to beatings and culminated into lynching, mass arrests and dispersion of the saints in Acts 8:1-4.

The Jerusalem church could NOT have publicly worshipped: praised Jesus and ate the Lord’s Supper in the temple, especially AFTER Acts 8. Firstly, the associates of the high priest [Sadducees] would NOT

tolerate it. Secondly, going by the dimensions of the temple patterned after what God described unto Solomon [1 Kings 7:23-26 and 2 Chronicles 4:2-5], it possibly could not have contained all the saints, [over five thousand men plus unspecified number of women and children] alongside the Judaizers.

Thank you for ADMITTING that a congregation worshipped “in a school (Acts 19:9).” We have tried to make many see that! While that was happening in Ephesus, a congregation was also meeting in Aquila’s house (1 Cor 16:19). There could have been more since many people believed (Acts 19:11-18). These cells constitute one body; THE church of Ephesus.

**Ob:** There is no proof whatsoever that the house of Lydia (Acts 16:14-15) and the jailor (Acts 16:32-33) composed two separate house churches. These are simply two separate conversion narratives. I have no idea by what logic these brethren read Acts 19:1-5, 18-20, and 1 Corinthians 16:19 and conclude there were multiple house churches composing one city church in Ephesus. They just assert their position and cite irrelevant passages without offering reasons for their assertion.

**Ans:** COA [Part 1] clarified CO. What we aver is that **one or more meeting points or assemblies** existed for Christians in NT cities but they always constitute one body with one leadership (eldership).

**Ob:** There appear to have been multiple congregations in Rome (Romans 16:5, 14-15), but there is no evidence they all composed one local church under one eldership.

**Ans:** In Paul’s epistle to Rome, the saints were actually addressed collectively despite worshipping in multiple house-churches. There is **no inspired proof** that the assemblies therein were autonomous congregations. In Rm 1:6, inspiration alluded to the Roman saints as ‘the called of Christ’ signifying they were also a church as others, which saluted them (Rm 16:16). Each saint was to function as a member of the body; they were all to be of the same mind and utter praise in one voice (accord) –Rm 12:4-8; 15:5-6.

**Ob:** There may have been a separate congregation meeting in the home of Nymphas (Colossians 4:15), but there is no evidence multiple house churches in Colosse were under one eldership.

**Ans:** The issue of Nymphas and the church that meets in his house has been examined in this article.

**Ob:** These brethren claim that building church buildings (which they associate with “cathedrals,” a prejudicial term) was the beginning of the apostasy that led to Roman Catholicism. They make the meeting place a matter of faith, whereas the Lord taught that where we worship is unimportant (John 4:23-24). They make one kind of meeting place, a private house, a matter of faith, whereas the church first met in the temple (Acts 2:46). They are actually guilty of the beginning of apostasy by placing elders over multiple churches, just as in the beginning of the first apostasy a bishop was placed over multiple churches.

**Ans:** No single phrase or sentence in our article makes the church building a matter of faith. We affirm that whether the saints in a city/town/village meet in one or more private homes/public halls/buildings **they constitute one body; THE CHURCH for that settlement** and should have a presbytery over them, *as the Jerusalem church*. It cannot be denied though that today, virtually every autonomous congregation in a multiple assemblies city commit resources into having its own cathedral. Their leaders can choose between integration, cooperation and competition. As stewards they will someday account for how well they invested in “the lively stones” [members] of the house of the living God [church].

**Ob:** They are historically mistaken in asserting that church owned meeting halls began with the Roman Emperor Constantine (ruled 306 A.D. to 337 A.D.).

*“Until about the close of the second century (199 A.D. – KS) the Christians held their worship mostly in private houses, or in desert places, at the graves of martyrs, and in the crypts of the catacombs....The first traces of special houses of worship occur in Tertullian (ca. 155 A.D. – 240 A.D. – KS), who speaks of going to church, and in his contemporary, Clement of Alexandria” (ca. 150 A.D. – 215 A.D. – KS) (Philip Schaff, **History of the Christian Church**. 2:199-200).*

**Ans:** Different historians or secular writers give different dates for the first church building. What seems unanimous is that the NT churches did not own purpose-built edifices. Even **Schaff, whom YOU cited negates YOUR application of Acts 2:46, corroborates our scriptural claim that in the first century “Christians held their worship mostly in private houses,”** and thus supports the conclusion that churches existed as a network of cells in a typical city.

**Ob:** The organization of ancient Israel proves nothing about the organization of the church of Christ (Deuteronomy 21:3; Judges 8:16; Ruth 4:2; cf. Galatians 4:9). Israel had, by divine appointment, various levels of judges (Exodus 18:13-24). Shall the church have various levels of elders? This is indeed how the apostasy began that led to Roman Catholicism.

**Ans:** The Old Testament was a shadow yet contained types of which the antitype is evident in the New Testament. We have NOT claimed that the church should have various levels of elders. We have simply affirmed that in the NT, elders are to BE APPOINTED for the church at the city level only.

**Ob:** A well ruled church will provide training for service for all its members (Ephesians 4:11-16; 2 Timothy 2:2), regardless of the size of the congregation. It might be wise to start another congregation in a city, but that gives no proof that one group of elders should shepherd multiple house churches.

**Ans:** Are you denying that the leadership of the Jerusalem church shepherded saints, which sometimes met as house-churches? Note, “it might be wise is” is your fallible opinion, what does the scriptures say?

**Ob:** Certainly we should all be concerned with reaching the lost with the gospel. If various groups within a local church meeting in their homes for evangelism helps, then use this method. But don’t call each of these study groups a church.

**Ans:** A plurality of worshipping Christians constitute a congregation, this is a fact you need to accept. As an assembly, such group could be a [segment of the] church that meets in someone’s house. Whether it has all member of the City-church present or not, literally and to observers it is ‘a church in session.’

**Ob:** Yes, white brethren sent the gospel to Nigeria in 1948 via a Bible correspondence course. But the House Church Movement also began among white brethren in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, although Anabaptists adopted the practice long ago. Regardless, “Test all things; hold fast what is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

**Ans:** We are interested in what Christians believed and practiced based on the inspired teachings of the apostles in the first century. Let us all re-examine that!

**REVIEW QUESTIONS** [Anyone interested in writing a Review/Rejoinder should first address these...]

1. In a locality (city/town/village), does the brethren assembling regularly, at different venues at same time OR at different times in same place necessarily create independent churches?

**Ans:**

2. For example, if in a city/town/village, the Christians in each street meet in a house for worship at 9am, are there as many autonomous congregations as streets?

**Ans:**

3. If instead they decide to meet in the city hall but schedule shift services with some meeting between 7am-9am and another batch meeting between 9:30am-11:30am, etc. are there as many autonomous congregations as batches?

**Ans:**

4. What if there was one church in that locality but due to government/health restrictions to limit public gathering during the Covid-19 pandemic, they had to meet in small groups in houses or in batches at the local hall, has multiple autonomous congregations been created simply because the whole church could NOT meet together at once in one place?

**Ans:**

5. Why are the City-churches of Ephesus, Colosse and Laodicea AUTONOMOUS: is it because they belong to different geographical cities or because they just “felt like declaring” independence relative to one another?

**Ans:**

6. Scripturally, is it obligatory that the Christians in a city function as one body/church (under one leadership) or are they authorized to separate into **autonomous** churches? (Please provide NT passages for your answer, if you cite an example it should be a case which inspiration established without you assuming or reading into the text)

**Ans:**

7. Inspiration used *city as a metonymy for church* in Titus 1:5 because the city contains the church just as the cup contains the wine. This established that city is associated with church and signifies the divinely recognized jurisdiction of the appointed eldership, **True or False?**

**Ans:**

8. Is it consistent/reasonable for someone to claim that in our era, the Christians in a **city** are too many to have a common “Council of Elders” while he simultaneously supports the existence of a ‘National Board of Trustees’ to superintend all the Christians in the **country**?

**Ans:**

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**Reference**

CO) McIntosh Chimeziri and Joseph Ogundare, April 2020. Multiple Assembly Churches VS Single Assembly Churches.

A) Sunday AkpoOghene Akpore, May 2020. City church analyses.

COA) McIntosh Chimeziri, Joseph Ogundare and Olumuyiwa Asaolu. May 2020. Multiple Assemblies vs Single Assembly Church What is the jurisdiction of Elders

A2) Sunday AkpoOghene Akpore, May 2020. Multiple Assemblies vs Single Assembly Church. rejoinder.