



November 20, 2005

## *The Organic Church*

The term “organic” most often conveys to our minds an image of foods that are grown in a specific environment. Another way that the word organic can be used would be to describe the nature of an organism that distinguishes it from things that are non-organic. In art, organic forms are those that do not have a distinct geometry or regularity to them. In the speaking of the church and the members, the term organic can be thought of in these ways as well.

First the “organic” church is one that consists of various “organs” or members who, working collectively, bring the body to life. Paul uses precisely this same analogy in his address to the Corinthians. ***“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. ... For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.”*** (1 Cor 12.12,14-18). The church should be understood as a living organism, and should act as one. When the life begins to drain from a body the organs begin to fail and some shut down. Death approaches if there is no regeneration to instill new life in the body. This problem is noted throughout the New Testament and there are passages that warn us about losing our vitality in a spiritual sense. Paul states, ***“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”*** (Gal 6.9). Christ, in his address to the Laodiceans, warns them about their spiritual state. ***“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”*** (Rev 3.14-16).

A congregation of God’s people can become complacent and stop working. As this happens there may be a lack of cooperation, lack of reliance on others to help and, possibly the worst of all, a lack of teaching those who are lost. In this sense the organs cease to function, the spiritual blood stops moving through the group and there is only a continual waning of the ability to accomplish anything. How is this countered?

Some things that we can do to keep the local body strong is to remember that we have all been redeemed with the same blood that Christ shed on the cross. Remembering this we also know that while we may not have the same abilities, all of the things that we do are important to the local work. Paul states that we need to recognize and appreciate this fact. ***“That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.”*** (1 Cor 12.25). Without this, and a dedication to doing what we are able to do for the sake of others, organic life becomes organic death. We call that compost.

TLC