

The MAJOR POINTS of the LORD'S RECOVERY TODAY

by Witness Lee

The Lord's recovery is the recovery of the divine truths as revealed in the holy Scriptures, the holy Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16). The truths as revealed in the Scriptures have been lost, missed, misunderstood, misinterpreted, and wrongly taught throughout the ages. Hence, there is the need of the Lord's recovery. In the age of the early apostles, in the age of the church fathers, in the age of the church councils, in the age of Catholicism with the papal system, and in the age of the Protestant practice, the Lord has always recovered some of the lost, missed, misunderstood, misinterpreted, and wrongly taught truths through some of His saints who loved Him and His holy Word. Among the major items in the Lord's recovery, some points are more crucial than others. In this article we want to see the crucial points of the major items of the Lord's recovery today.

The Divine Revelation concerning the Triune God

The first crucial point of the major items of the Lord's recovery today is the divine revelation concerning the Triune God. Among Christians the truth concerning the Triune God has been lost, missed, misunderstood, misinterpreted, and wrongly taught. Thus, there is the need to recover this truth.

According to the entire revelation of the sixty-six books of the Bible, the Divine Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—is for God's dispensing, that is, for the distribution of God into His chosen people. God's desire with His strong intention is to dispense Himself into His chosen people as their life, as their life supply, and as their everything. To carry out this dispensing He needs to be triune. (See "Axioms of the Trinity," *Affirmation & Critique* I.1 (January 1996): 6-11.)

The Father as the origin is the fountain; the Son as the expression is the spring; and the Spirit as the transmission is the flow. The Spirit as the flow is the reaching, the application, of the Triune God for the distribution of

Himself into His chosen people. A fountain is the origin, the source, of a stream, or river; a spring is the emergence, the expression, of the fountain; and the stream or river is the flow. In Jeremiah 2:13 God refers to Himself as the fountain of living waters; in John 4:14 Christ is the spring of water that gushes up in the believers into eternal life; and in Revelation 22:1 the Spirit is the flow, the river of water of life. The Father is the fountain, the source, and the Son is the spring as the course to express the source. This course, this spring, issues in a flow, which is the Spirit as the reaching, the application, of the Triune God. This shows that God is triune to dispense, or distribute, Himself into His chosen people. (See "The Divine Dispensing for the Divine Economy," *Affirmation & Critique* I.2 (April 1996): 17-26.)

Second Corinthians 13:14 says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Here three things are mentioned: grace, love, and fellowship. This sets forth the reason why God is triune; it is thus that He can dispense Himself into us, work Himself into us for us to enjoy, and be our all. The love of God, that is, the love of the Father, is the source. The grace of Christ, that is, the grace of the Son, is the flowing out of the love of the Father. And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is the flowing into us of the grace of the Son with the love of the Father for us to enjoy. This is for our experience and enjoyment of the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. The love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit are not three different things but three stages of one thing for us to possess and enjoy. Likewise, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are not three separate Gods but three stages of one God for us to possess and enjoy. Second Corinthians 13:14 is strong proof that the Divine Trinity is not for the doctrinal understanding of systematic theology but for the dispensing, the distributing, of God Himself into His chosen people. (See "The Subjective God: The Trinity in Christian Experience," *Affirmation & Critique* II.1 (January 1997): 28-43.)

We must be clear that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit coexist simultaneously from eternity to eternity. Undoubtedly, the Father is God (1 Pet. 1:2; Eph. 1:17), the Son is God (Heb. 1:8; John 1:1; Rom. 9:5), and the Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4). They are not three Gods, but one. The Scriptures tell us clearly and definitely that God is only one (1 Cor. 8:4; Isa. 45:5; Psa. 86:10), yet He is also three—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. He is the Triune God. (See “A Biblical Overview of the Triune God,” *Affirmation & Critique* I.1 (January 1996): 23-31.)

The Father is eternal (Isa. 9:6), the Son is eternal (Heb. 1:12; 7:3), the Spirit is eternal (Heb. 9:14), and they coexist simultaneously. John 14:16-17 says, “And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever, even the Spirit of reality.” In these two verses the Son says that He will pray to the Father that the Father may send the Spirit. Hence, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit exist together at the same time. In Ephesians 3:14-17 Paul prays that the Father would grant us to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into our inner man, that Christ may make His home in our hearts. In this passage we have the Father, the Spirit, and Christ the Son, showing again that all three exist together at the same time. We have already mentioned 2 Corinthians 13:14, which speaks of the grace of Christ the Son, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, showing the coexistence of the three of the Divine Trinity.

The relationship among the Father, the Son, and the Spirit is not only that they simultaneously coexist but also that they mutually indwell one another. The Father exists in the Son and the Spirit; the Son exists in the Father and the Spirit; and the Spirit exists in the Father and the Son. This mutual indwelling among the three of the Godhead is called *coinherence*. In John 14:10-11 the Lord Jesus said,

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; but if not, believe because of the works themselves.

Here we have not only the coexistence of the Father and the Son but also their coinherence. The three of the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—are both coexistent and coinherent.

The essential Trinity refers to the essence of the Triune God for His existence. In His essence, God is one, the one unique God (Isa.

45:18; 1 Cor. 8:6). In the essential Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit coexist and coinhere at the same time and in the same way with no succession. There is no first, second, or third.

Essentially, God is one, but economically He is three—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). In God’s plan, God’s administrative arrangement, God’s economy, the Father takes the first step, the Son takes the second step, and the Spirit takes the third step. The Father purposed (Eph. 1:4-6), the Son accomplished (vv. 7-12), and the Spirit applies what the Son accomplished according to the Father’s purpose (vv. 13-14). This is a successive procedure or a succession in God’s economy to carry out His eternal purpose. Whereas the essential Trinity refers to the essence of the Triune God for His existence, the economical Trinity refers to His plan for His move. There is the need of the existence of the Divine Trinity, and there is also the need of the plan of the Divine Trinity. (See “The Divine Economy,” *Affirmation & Critique* IV.1 (January 1999): 3-12.)

The Father accomplished the first step of His plan, His economy, by working to choose and predestinate us, but He did this in Christ the Son (vv. 4-5) and with the Spirit. After this plan was made, the Son came to accomplish this plan, but He did this with the Father (John 8:29; 16:32) and by the Spirit (Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:18, 20; 12:28). Now that the Son has accomplished all that the Father has planned, the Spirit comes in the third step to apply all that He accomplished, but He does this as the Son and with the Father (John 14:26; 15:26; 1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17). In this way, while the divine economy of the Divine Trinity is being carried out, the divine existence of the Divine Trinity, His eternal coexistence and coinherence, remains intact and is not jeopardized. (See “The Divine Trinity in the Divine Economy,” *Affirmation & Critique* IV.2 (April 1999): 37-44.)

Among the three of the Divine Trinity, there is distinction but no separation. The Father is distinct from the Son, the Son is distinct from the Spirit, and the Spirit is distinct from the Son and the Father. But we cannot say that they are separate, because they coinhere, that is, they

live within one another. In their coexistence the three of the Godhead are distinct, but their coinherence makes them one. They coexist in their coinherence, so they are distinct but not separate.

We need to see that the God who is dispensing Himself into us is triune.

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According to the New Testament, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all in us (Eph. 4:6; Col. 1:27; John 14:17). Although the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all in us, in our experience we sense that there is just One in us. This One who dwells in us is the Triune God.

The Lord charged us to baptize the nations “into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). There is one name for the Divine Trinity. The name is the sum total of the Divine Being, equivalent to His person. To baptize people into the name of the Triune God is to immerse them into all that the Triune God is. Once we believe into Christ and are baptized into the person of the Divine Trinity, we should daily enjoy the Triune God by participating in the love of God the Father, in the grace of Christ the Son, and in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14). Eventually, we will enjoy the Divine Trinity in His divine dispensing to the fullest in eternity. Revelation 22:1 says that the river of water of life proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. This depicts how the Triune God—God, the Lamb, and the Spirit (symbolized by the water of life)—dispenses Himself into His redeemed people under His headship (implied in the authority of the throne) for eternity.

Martin Luther warned us not to approach the matter of the Divine Trinity by our natural reasoning. He said that those who approach this matter with confidence in their own mental power are “the teachers of God, not His pupils.” No human being can explain the Divine Trinity adequately. We should simply accept and say Amen to whatever is recorded in the pure Word of God. We can only present the divine facts from the New Testament concerning this great truth so that we may be impressed that the Triune God is dispensing Himself into our being. Instead of exercising our mentality too much to try to figure out the Triune God, we should exercise our spirit to experience and enjoy the marvelous dispensing of the Triune God as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit within us.

The Divine Revelation concerning Christ

The second major item of the Lord’s recovery is the recovery of the divine revelation concerning Christ. In eternity, Christ was the Word of God and God Himself. He was not only the Word of God, but He was also God Himself. John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The Word was not only with God, but the Word was God. In time, Christ as the Word of God

became flesh to be a man and to tabernacle among men (v. 14), full of grace (God for men to receive as their enjoyment) and reality (God to be realized by men as their reality). Hence, Christ is both the complete God and the perfect man, the Triune God and the tripartite man, possessing the divine nature and the human nature as well, to be the embodiment of the fullness of the Godhead (Col. 2:9).

Christ is the all-inclusive and all-extensive One. According to Ephesians 1:23, Christ is the One who fills all in all; hence, He is all-extensive. As the all-extensive One, surely He is all-inclusive. This all-inclusive, all-extensive Christ is the only begotten Son of God from eternity (John 3:16; 17:24), and the firstborn Son of God from His resurrection in humanity (Rom. 8:29; Acts 13:33). Christ as the Son of God has two statuses: the only begotten Son of God and the firstborn Son of God. Most Christians have no realization concerning this, and some may even say that this is heresy. However, this is not heresy, for it is clearly mentioned in John 3:16, which says that Christ is the only begotten Son of God, and in Romans 8:29, which says that He is God’s firstborn Son among many brothers. As the Son given, Christ is called “the Father of Eternity” (Isa. 9:6); hence, He is one with the Father (John 10:30; 14:8-10). We can say that Christ is both the Father and the Son because He is all-inclusive. If He were only the Son and not the Father, He would not be all-inclusive. (See “Christ is Everything,” *Affirmation & Critique* II.2 (April 1997): 4-17.)

In His resurrection Christ became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). He is not only the Son and the Father; eventually, He became the life-giving Spirit as well. Hence, He is the Spirit and the Lord Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17-18). In 1964 shortly after I came to the United States, a dear friend warned me, saying that although this kind of teaching is in the Bible, Christianity would not accept it. So he advised me to put this teaching aside. In response, I told this brother that since this teaching is in the Bible, he should give me the liberty to speak this matter as the Lord had led me to do. I told him that if I could not speak on Christ as the Spirit, I would have nothing to speak. Now, twenty-six years later, it is common to hear the saints in the

Lord’s recovery speak of Christ being the Spirit. In the Lord’s table meetings, many of the saints praise the Lord not only for dying for us on the cross and resurrecting from the dead, but also for being the life-giving Spirit who indwells us. If we could praise the Lord only for dying for us on the cross, for resurrecting, and

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for now being seated in the heavens, our feeling would not be so sweet, for Christ would be far away from us. But, hallelujah, today the crucified and resurrected One has become a life-giving Spirit indwelling us! No one can deny this. This is an important item in the New Testament. It is also a major item in the Lord's recovery. (See "The Second 'Becoming' of Christ," *Affirmation & Critique* I.4 (October 1996): 10-22.)

In His resurrection and ascension, Christ became both the Lord of all and the Christ of God (Acts 2:36; Rev. 11:15). He became the Lord of us, and He became the Christ of God to carry out God's economy. He is the Christ of God, the anointed One of God to carry out God's economy.

Christ is the Firstborn of all creation and the Firstborn of the resurrection from the dead. God has two creations, the old creation and the new creation. The old creation came into being by God's creating work. Colossians 1:15 says that Christ is the Firstborn of the old creation. The second creation, God's new creation, came into being by and in resurrection. According to Colossians 1:18, Christ is the Firstborn of the resurrection from among the dead. Thus, Christ is the Firstborn of both creations. (See "Christ the Firstborn," *Affirmation & Critique* II.2 (April 1997): 30-38.)

Christ is the One who is worthy to open the seven seals of God concerning God's administration in the whole universe according to God's economy (Rev. 5:2-5). He is the only One who is worthy to open the sealed secret of God's economy. Christ is the Head of the Body (Col. 1:18), and He is also the Body of the corporate Christ (1 Cor. 12:12). This means that He is both the Head and the Body. Thus, Christ is all the members of the new man (Col. 3:10-11). The new man is Christ. Christ is all-inclusive.

Christ is the God-allotted portion of the believers (1:12) as their life and life supply today (3:4) and their glory in the future. Colossians 1:27 says that Christ in us is the hope of glory. As our God-allotted portion, Christ is our life today, and He will be our glory in the future. Christ is the foundation stone (1 Cor. 3:11; Isa. 28:16), the cornerstone (Eph. 2:20), and the topstone (Zech. 4:7) of God's building. Christ is resurrection, life, power, wisdom: righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and the reality of all positive things (John 11:25; 14:6; 1 Cor. 1:24, 30; Col. 2:16-17; Gal. 3:27; John 10:9; 1 Cor. 10:3-4). Colossians 2:16-17 says that eating, drinking, holidays, the Sabbath, and new moons all are shadows,

and that the body of these shadows is Christ. According to Galatians 3:27, Christ is our clothing; that is, we wear Him. In John 10:9, Christ is our door; through Him we go out of the religious fold and enter into the rich pasture. In 1 Corinthians 10:3-4, Christ is our spiritual food and our spiritual drink; He is also the spiritual rock that follows us. He is the reality of all positive things.

According to Ephesians 3:8, Christ's riches are unsearchable. Christ gives the Spirit not by measure (John 3:34). Because He is all-inclusive and all-extensive, Christ is also immeasurable. The grace of Christ is sufficient for us (2 Cor. 12:9). All of the above items concerning Christ are included in the Lord's recovery. Nearly all of them have been lost, missed, or put aside by Christianity. (See "The All-inclusive Christ in First Corinthians," *Affirmation & Critique* II.2 (April 1997): 18-29.)

The Divine Revelation concerning the Spirit

The Spirit is the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:6), the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:9), the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7), the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9), the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19), and the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2). Although I was in Christianity for years, I never heard anyone speak concerning the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of Jesus Christ. However, the Spirit of Jesus is mentioned clearly in Acts 16:7, the Spirit of Christ is spoken of in Romans 8:9, and the Spirit of Jesus Christ is mentioned in Philippians 1:19. By reading these three books, we can see that today the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of God, has become something further: He is the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Not only so, He is also the Spirit of life.

The Spirit is also the compound Spirit as the anointing ointment (2 Cor. 1:21; 1 John 2:20, 27; cf. Exo. 30:23-26). The word *anointed* is used by the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:21, and the word *anointing* is used by the apostle John in 1 John 2:20 and 27. This word is taken from Exodus 30:23-26 which speaks concerning the compound anointing ointment. That ointment was not merely olive oil, but was compounded of olive oil as the base and four kinds of spices. The four spices were ground into powder and then

compounded with olive oil to make an ointment. This ointment was for anointing the tabernacle, the altar, and all their furnishings and utensils.

I became familiar with this through the writings of the Brethren. In Exodus 30 the Scofield Reference Bible has a note telling us that the

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compound ointment is a type of the Holy Spirit. However, it does not go on to tell us that this ointment is a compound with oil as the base and with another four spices as elements for compounding. I myself spent much time over a period of more than fifty years to study this matter. Through my study I found out that the oil signifies the Spirit of God and that each of the four spices typifies Christ with His death and resurrection. The first spice, myrrh, typifies the precious death of Christ; the second, cinnamon, typifies the sweetness and effectiveness of Christ's death; the third, calamus, typifies the precious resurrection of Christ; and the fourth, cassia, typifies the power of Christ's resurrection. These ingredients have been compounded with the Spirit of God to become an ointment. This is the compound Spirit as the anointing ointment. The Spirit today is the compound Spirit, who is compounded with God the Spirit and with Christ's humanity, with Christ's death and the effectiveness of Christ's death, and with Christ's resurrection and the power of Christ's resurrection. All these are now in the one Spirit. Eventually, this compound Spirit is referred to in the Bible as *the Spirit* (John 7:39; Rev. 22:17). (See "The Compound Spirit," *Affirmation & Critique* II.1 (January 1997): 15-27.)

The Spirit is also the life-giving Spirit (2 Cor. 3:6). We should not forget that today the life-giving Spirit is a compound Spirit. As the life-giving Spirit, the Spirit is also the indwelling Spirit (Rom. 8:11). In Revelation 1:4, 4:5, and 5:6, the Spirit is revealed as the sevenfold Spirit. In these verses the one Spirit of God is called "the seven Spirits." However, here we do not have seven separate Spirits; rather, we have one Spirit who is sevenfold—one sevenfold Spirit. (See "The Seven Spirits," *Affirmation & Critique* I.4 (October 1996): 28-44.) Eventually, the Spirit in all of the above aspects is simply *the Spirit* as the consummated Spirit to be the consummation of the processed Triune God (John 7:39; Rev. 22:17). In this Spirit we have God, Christ, man, Christ's death, Christ's resurrection, the power of Christ's death, and the fragrance of Christ's resurrection. In all of today's Christianity, it would be difficult to find one person who has any knowledge of these things. This is the recovery of the divine revelation concerning the Spirit. (See "The Processed and Consummated Triune God," *Affirmation & Critique* I.2 (April 1996): 4-16.)

The Divine Revelation concerning the Eternal Life

Many Christians hold the concept that eternal life is a blessing given to the believers, in which they merely go to a heavenly mansion to enjoy a better life. When I was in Christianity, no one

told me that eternal life is not a blessing, but that it is simply life. In our physical body we have a biological life (*bios*), and in our soul we have a psychological life (*psuche*). We had these two kinds of life before we were saved. But when we were saved, we received another life, the eternal life (*zoe*).

The eternal life is the life that is not only everlasting but eternal both in time and in nature (John 3:16, 36; 1 John 1:2). This life is unlimited both in time and in nature; hence, it is eternal. The eternal life is the uncreated life of God (Eph. 4:18), the indestructible life (Heb. 7:16), and the incorruptible life (2 Tim. 1:10). Concerning the definition of the eternal life, I received much help through the writings of Watchman Nee, Mary McDonough, Ruth Paxson, and T. Austin-Sparks. Through their writings I came to know that to be regenerated is simply to receive God into us as our life, to receive a life that is divine, a life other than our human life. The eternal life is the life that is in the Son of God and that is the Son of God (1 John 5:11-12; 1:2; John 14:6). This life is not only in the Son of God, but it is the Son of God Himself. The eternal life is the life with which the believers are regenerated and which becomes the believers' life (Col. 3:4), making the believers the children of God (John 1:12-13) and the members of Christ (Eph. 5:30). In 1 Timothy 6:12 the apostle Paul charged us to lay hold on this eternal life.

The New Testament teaches us that the eternal life has three stages, and these three stages are in three ages—the present age, the church age; the coming age, the kingdom age; and the eternal age, in the new heaven and the new earth with the New Jerusalem as the center. In the first age, the church age, we receive the eternal life. Thus, it becomes our life, and we enjoy this life and live by it. In the church age it is a matter of receiving the eternal life, but in the next age, the age of the kingdom, the eternal life is not for people to receive, but for people to enter into. In Matthew 25:46, those among the nations who are judged by the Lord Jesus to be "sheep" will enter into eternal life in the kingdom age. Thus, in the coming age the eternal life will become a sphere for people to enter into. In that age the eternal life will be given as a reward. In this age the eternal life is for us to receive as a free gift (Rom. 6:23), but in

the coming age the eternal life will be for us to enter into, not as a free gift but as a reward. This reward will be given to both the overcoming believers and to the "sheep" in Matthew 25 who paid a price to take care of Christ's brothers during the great tribulation. Then, in the eternal age, that is, in the new heaven and the new

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earth with the New Jerusalem as the center, the eternal life will eventually be the consummated gift for all God's redeemed people to manifest the Triune God for eternity.

If we have this view, we will be able to understand a number of verses in the Gospels. In the Gospels the Lord told people both to enter into eternal life and to receive eternal life. In Matthew 19:17 the Lord told the young man to enter into eternal life, but in John, especially in chapter three, He spoke of receiving eternal life. We have received eternal life as a gift, but whether or not we will enter into eternal life as a reward in the future remains to be determined. We may receive the eternal life without doing any work, as a free gift, but to enter into the eternal life requires us to do the proper works, to have the proper virtues, and to pay a price. If we are not clear concerning this, we may feel that the New Testament contradicts itself by saying, on the one hand, that we can receive the eternal life as a free gift, and, on the other hand, that we must pay a price to enter into it. We need to be clear that in the present age, eternal life is a gift given for us to receive, but in the coming age, eternal life will be a reward to recompense us for the price that we have paid for the Lord's sake. Then, in the eternal age, the receiving and the entering will become one. It is by this eternal life and in this eternal life that the believers have been brought forth. The eternal life is crucial for the producing of the believers and for the building up of the organic Body of Christ.

The Divine Revelation concerning the Believers

The believers are tripartite beings of spirit, soul, and body (1 Thes. 5:23). The believers are redeemed, justified, and reconciled to God in Christ (Rom. 3:24; 5:10). We have not only been saved; we have been redeemed, justified, and reconciled to God in Christ. The believers have been baptized into the Triune God to have an organic union with the processed Triune God (Matt. 28:19). In his *Word Studies in the New Testament*, M. R. Vincent, writing on Matthew 28:19, said, "Baptizing into the name of the Holy Trinity implies a spiritual and mystical union with Him." Such a thought, such a revelation, has been lost in Christianity. Baptism is to baptize us into the Triune God that we may have an organic union with the processed Triune God. (See "The Human Spirit in the Experience of the Triune God," *Affirmation & Critique* I.2 (April 1996): 38-46. Also see "The Believers' Union with the Triune God in His Organic Salvation," *Affirmation & Critique* I.3 (July 1996): 3-12.)

The believers are tripartite beings of spirit, soul, and body. The believers, who have been redeemed, justified, and reconciled to God in Christ, have been baptized into the Triune God to have an organic union with the processed Triune God.



The believers are regenerated in their spirit by the Spirit (John 3:5-6) with the divine life, which is Christ (Col. 3:4), to be the children of God (John 1:12-13), having the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), and to be the members of Christ (Rom. 12:5) in the union of the divine life. Regeneration takes place in our spirit. It is carried out by the Spirit with the divine life, and it makes us, first, the children of God, and then, the members of Christ.

The believers have been crucified with Christ, being terminated in their old man (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:6). The believers have Christ living in them as the pneumatic Christ, the Spirit, indwelling them (8:11). The believers have been sanctified positionally by the blood of Christ (Heb. 13:12) and are being sanctified dispositionally by the Spirit (Rom. 15:16; 6:19, 22), that they may be renewed, transformed in their soul (12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18), conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God (Rom. 8:29), and glorified (redeemed) in their body (v. 23) in the glory of the processed Triune God (vv. 30, 17-18). Although the believers have been regenerated in their spirit, their soul and body remain old. Thus, the believers need to be renewed, transformed in their soul, conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God, and glorified in their body in the glory of the processed Triune God. The believers are tripartite beings composed of spirit, soul, and body. First, their spirit is regenerated, then their soul is transformed, and finally, their body will be glorified. Thus the believers' whole being will be saturated with God's splendid life. God's life is a life of splendor, and that splendor is the glory of the divine life. When we are permeated, saturated, and soaked with the splendor of the divine life, we will be in glory. The believers are saturated with the dispensing of the divine Trinity in their tripartite being (vv. 5-11), so that they are mingled with the processed Triune God. The believers are joined to the Lord as one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). (See "The Mingled Spirit," *Affirmation & Critique* II.4 (October 1997): 39-46.)

The Divine Revelation concerning the Church

The sixth item of the Lord's recovery is the recovery of the divine revelation concerning the church. The church is the church of God (10:32), chosen and predestinated by God the Father (Eph. 1:3-6), redeemed by God the Son (vv. 7-12), and sealed by God the Spirit (vv. 13-14). The church is the Body of Christ, the fullness of the One who fills all in all (v. 23), as His expression, united organically to the resurrected, ascended, and transmitting Head (vv. 19-22). The

church is the fullness of Christ, and it is also the fullness of the processed Triune God (3:14-19), filled with the riches of Christ and with the immeasurable Christ (vv. 8, 17-19). The church is filled with Christ Himself and with the riches of Christ. Such a church is the fullness of the processed Triune God.

The church is the counterpart of Christ, as Eve was to Adam (Gen. 2:21-23), as His increase (John 3:29-30), a glorious church, holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:27). The church is the new man created in Christ, through His cross, with the Jewish and Gentile believers (2:14-16). The church is the mingling of the processed Triune God with the believers (4:3-6), being built up as the organic Body of Christ by the gifted members (every joint of the rich supply) and by each functioning part through the growth in life (vv. 11-13, 15-16). The church as the organic Body of Christ is built up by two categories of persons: first, the gifted persons, who are the joints of the rich supply, and second, each functioning part. We should have and we do have these two kinds of persons among us. In the building up of the Body of Christ, the gifted persons perfect the saints that the saints may do the work of the New Testament ministry, that is, that they may build up the Body of Christ.

The church is the house of God (2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15), the habitation of God in our spirit (Eph. 2:22). The church is the kingdom of God today, the reality of the kingdom of the heavens. In Matthew 16:18 the Lord said, "On this rock I will build My church." Then, in verse 19 He said, "I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of the heavens." This shows us that today the proper church life is the reality of the kingdom of the heavens. The church exists universally as the unique universal church (Eph. 1:22-23), but it is expressed locally as many local churches (Rev. 1:4, 11). This is all according to the arrangement of God's eternal economy (Eph. 3:9-11; 1:9-11).

The Recovery of the Church Ground

Following the above main items of the Lord's recovery, I would like to add two more items, that is, the recovery of the church ground and the recovery of the practice of the local churches. The word *ground* that we use in reference to the church ground does not carry the denotation of a foundation, like the foundation of a building; it bears the denotation of a site, like the site on which the foundation of a building is laid. According to the divine revelation of the New Testament, the

church ground is constituted of three crucial elements, as follows:

The first element of the constitution of the church ground is the unique oneness of the universal Body of Christ, which is called "the oneness of the Spirit" (4:3). This is the oneness that the Lord prayed for in John 17. It is a oneness of the mingling of the processed Triune God with all the believers in Christ. This oneness is in the name of the Father (vv. 6, 11), denoting the Father's person, in which is the Father's life. This oneness is even in the Triune God through sanctification by His holy word as the truth (vv. 14-21). This oneness is ultimately in the divine glory for the expression of the Triune God (vv. 22-24). Such a oneness was imparted into the spirit of all the believers in Christ, in their regeneration by the Spirit of life with Christ as the divine life; this oneness has become the basic element of the church ground.

The second element of the church ground is the unique ground of the locality in which a local church is established and exists. The New Testament presents us a clear picture that all the local churches, as the expression of the universal church—the universal Body of Christ—are located in their respective cities. Hence, we see the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), the church in Antioch (13:1), the church in Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1), the church in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2), and the seven churches in Asia in seven respective cities (Rev. 1:4, 11). Every city as the boundary in which a church exists is the local ground of that church. Such a unique ground of locality preserves the church from being divided by many different matters as different grounds in the way that divisive denominations such as the Baptists, the Presbyterians, the Lutherans, the Methodists, and the Episcopalians are divided.

The third element of the church ground is the reality of the Spirit of oneness, expressing the unique oneness of the universal Body of Christ on the unique ground of locality of a local church. Briefly, the third element of the church ground is the reality of the Spirit, who is the living reality of the Divine Trinity (1 John 5:6; John 16:13). It is by this Spirit that the oneness of the Body of Christ becomes real and living. It is also through this Spirit that the ground of locality is applied in life and not in legality. And it is by this Spirit that the genuine ground of the church is linked with the Triune God (Eph. 4:3-6).

The above-defined ground of the church keeps, in practicality, the genuine oneness of the church both locally and universally (v. 3),

It is by the Spirit that the oneness of the Body of Christ becomes real and living.

It is also through the Spirit that the ground of locality is applied in life and not in legality.

And it is by the Spirit that the genuine ground of the church is linked with the Triune God.



without any division. This is the only way to avoid today's situation of division and confusion among the members of Christ.

The above-defined ground of the church is also the base of the genuine and proper fellowship of all the believers, which is called "the fellowship of the apostles" in the divine revelation (Acts 2:42), a fellowship that is with the Triune God and with all the members of Christ (1 John 1:1-3). This is the unique fellowship of the Body of Christ locally and universally. Because of the many divisive grounds of today's Christianity, the fellowship among the members of Christ also is divided into many divisive fellowships. The way to be saved out of all these divisive fellowships is to take and keep the unique, genuine, and proper ground of the church. This is not a matter of doctrine and regulation; it is a spiritual fact and a practical necessity.

The Recovery of the Practice of the Local Churches

The church of God, as the living Body of Christ, needs the local churches for its existence and function. Without the local churches, the Body of Christ has no way to exist and to carry out its function in practicality. Actually, the local churches are the Body of Christ, and the Body of Christ is all the local churches. The local churches are the many expressions in many localities of the one Body of Christ. The local churches, being the existence of the Body of Christ for its function, are the many expressions of the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ may exist in the heavens, but to express itself, it must become the local churches. A local church is one that exists in a locality as a city, the jurisdiction of the church being within the boundary of the city. We have seen that all the local churches are located, respectively, in different cities. To locate a church in a city is practical and convenient for its administration and its function. The jurisdiction of a local church for its administration is within the boundary of the city in which it exists; but its work and testimony should not be limited or restricted by any boundary. For its administration, the jurisdiction of a local church is local; but the testimony of a local church through its work is both local and universal.

A local church is administrated by the eldership, composed of a group of elders (1 Tim. 3:1-5; 5:17) appointed by the gifted persons who have established the church (Acts 14:14, 23; Titus 1:5). A local church, being an organic expression of the Body of Christ as the organism of the Triune God, should not be administrated in any organizational way that makes it a worldly organization. It should be administrated by the eldership as an organic body, the components of which are all organic persons who have been regenerated by the living God with His divine life and who are living in and with that life (1 Tim.

3:1-4; Titus 1:5-9). Furthermore, its administration under its eldership should, in everything, be carried out in the organic way, not by any organizational method.

The administration of a local church should not be under the control of any high church. Among the local churches, there is no center; there is no high church or low church; there is no archbishop above the bishops and no bishop over the elders. All the local churches are on the same level, and all the elders, as the overseers, also are on the same level; and each eldership administrates only its own local church.

Among the local churches, there is no absolute autonomy in the administration of any local church, nor is there any federation among the churches. The business affairs of a local church are absolutely local, but all the other matters, especially its testimony for Christ and its fellowship, should be both local and universal, and should be the same and common among all the local churches. This is strongly proven by the seven local churches in Asia (Rev. 2—3). Although they differed from each other in their localities, in their situations, and in negative things, they, as the seven golden lampstands, were absolutely identical for the testimony of Christ. The seven lampstands are absolutely identical in nature, in shape, in appearance, and in function (Rev. 1:12-13). Thus on the one hand, the Lord treated them separately by writing an epistle to each one, respectively; on the other hand, He treated them corporately by addressing the seven epistles as one epistle to them all, and charging each one of them to hear what the Spirit said in all the seven epistles.

A local church is built up by the functioning of all its members with the perfecting of the gifted persons, such as the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers (Eph. 4:12). The gifted persons carry out their ministry in perfecting all the members of a local church in a locality, that all the members of that local church will be able to do what the gifted persons can do in the above-mentioned four items, for the building up of that local church, issuing in the building up of the universal Body of Christ. The gifted persons do not build up the church directly; rather, all the members who have been perfected by the gifted persons build up the church directly.

The building up of a local church is not only for its own building up locally (1 Cor. 14:3), but for the building up of the entire Body of Christ universally (Eph. 4:12). Actually, the building up of the local churches is the building up of the Body of Christ, because the local churches are the Body of Christ as its expression. Without the building up of the local churches, there is no other way that the Body of Christ can be practically built up. *These are the major points of the Lord's recovery today.* **AF**