

THE MOVE OF THE SPIRIT IN THE EXPRESSION, FUNCTION, AND INCREASE OF THE BODY IN ACTS

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In *The Normal Christian Church Life*, considered by many as a scriptural blueprint for the administrative arrangement of the church in both its universal and local aspects, Watchman Nee delineates, in the final section of the final chapter, his understanding of the church in the context of its identification in Ephesians as the Body of Christ (1:23; 4:12): “the church, which is His Body,’ includes the churches, the ministry, and the work. The churches are the Body expressed locally, the ministry is the Body in function, and the work is the Body seeking increase” (187). The Body that Nee associates with local expressions of the church, with organic function, and with work related to increase and spread is vividly portrayed in the book of Acts. The Body and the Spirit are linked in Ephesians 4:4, which speaks of one Body and one Spirit; the Spirit is the enlivening essence of the move of the Body that is revealed in the book of Acts. Throughout the book all the details and events related to the churches, the ministry, and the work reveal a coinhering move of the Body with the consummated Spirit for the organic enlargement and corporate propagation of the resurrected Christ.¹

The Organic Body and the Consummated Spirit in Acts

The Body revealed in Acts is an organic Body, the Body of Christ enlivened with the divine life of the Triune God in Christ; it is not merely a doctrinal metaphor. It is the organic enlargement of the resurrected Christ. The believers, who received the ministry of the propagating witnesses in Acts, were added to the church daily (2:41, 47), but this addition was an addition to the Lord Himself, not to membership rolls of organizational, religious entities: “Believers were all the more being added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women” (5:14), and “a considerable number was added to the Lord” (11:24). Saul realized the organic reality of the Body during his conversion experience when the Lord revealed Himself as a corporate “Me.” When the Lord questioned Saul about his persecuting, He asked, “Why are you persecuting Me?” Saul, in response, asked, “Who are You, Lord?” (9:4-5). Then the Lord identified Himself as being one with the believers who had been added to Him and who were being persecuted by Saul, saying, “I am Jesus, whom you persecute” (v. 5). The persecution of the believers was the persecution of Jesus because they were organically joined to Him through the impartation of the divine life in Christ through the Spirit: “He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit” (1 Cor. 6:17). The vision of the organic, corporate Christ that Saul received became the content of his ministry, a ministry that bore witness to the things he had seen and heard at the moment of his conversion and throughout his subsequent ministry (Acts 22:15).²

The Body revealed in Acts was created on the cross through the reconciling death of Christ, and it was regenerated and enlivened through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (Eph. 2:16; 1 Pet. 1:3). The Body is the fulfillment of the economic process of Jesus Christ, which process includes incarnation, human living, death, resurrection,