

**BAHRAIN REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH**  
*The Regenerate Church Membership*

**October 11, 2024**

**Preliminary**

Note: There is an identifiable membership in the local church which is part of New Testament order.

- The mandates of the church require a regenerate membership
- This is contrary to the practice of loose attendance as the church's membership  
[1689 BCF: xxvi. 6] – “The members of these churches are saints by calling, visibly manifesting and evidencing (in and by their profession and walking) their obedience unto that call of Christ;<sup>a</sup> and do willingly consent to walk together, according to the appointment of Christ; giving up themselves to the Lord and one to another, by the will of God, in professed subjection to the ordinances of the gospel.<sup>b</sup>”
- (a) Mt 28:18-20; Act 14:22-23; Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2, 13-17; 1 Thes 1:1, 2-10; Act 2:37-42; 4:4; 5:13-14
- (b) Acts 2:41-42; 5:13-14; 2 Cor. 9:13

**1. An assumption of Regenerate Membership**

Issue: We live today in a generation where many churches do not even believe in any church membership at all.

- There is no clear distinction between those who are members and those who are not.
- Disorder in the church is often due to the dominance of the unregenerate

Answers:

- (a) The local church as a distinct group that could be numbered... Act 1:15; 2:41, 42, 46-47; 4:4

Note: This church in Jerusalem was a distinct group that can be numbered.

- They must have had a definite membership that people knew who to count in and who not to.
- Terminology of ‘joining’ being ‘joined’ in the church:  
Acts 5:13; 9:26 = to join = Gk: κολλᾶσθαι (*kollasthai*)... from κολλᾶ (*kolla*) = glue (to stick by glue)  
Eph 2:21; 4:16 = συναρμολογουμένη (*synarmologoumenē*) = Strong's Definition: *organize compactly*

- (b) The local church as a distinct group that could be called to select her officers and representatives.

Acts 6:1-6 = The Apostles called the congregation of disciples to select its officers.

Note: It was the whole congregation that selected the officers based upon the qualifications given by the Apostles.

Point: This implies that the church must have had a definite membership, or confusion would arise as to who were to take part in this church's business... cf. Acts 15:22

- (c) The local church as a distinct group that can carry out church's discipline upon those who are part of it.

Matthew 18:16-18 = Only those who are part of the church are to be disciplined by the church; and it is the whole church that is to undertake the work of discipline.

1 Cor 5:9-13 = Only those who are members of the church can be put out of the church.

Point: Unless there is church's membership, it would be impossible to follow the Scriptural teachings on church discipline. [more on Church discipline study]

- (d) The Scripture portrays the church as a distinct group that is under the charge of elders.

Hebrew 13:17 = *Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning...*

cf. 1 Pt 5:1-4 = *shepherd the flock of God that is among you*

Note: Elders do have the responsibility to care for the souls of those under their charge (church members only); and they must give an account of each of them to God...

Issue: One of the reasons why elders in many churches do not really feel a responsibility for each individual under their charge is because there is no definite church's membership.

Point: The common idea today is that for as long as you are take part in the gatherings of the church, then automatically, you become a part of it, is clearly unscriptural, and will lead to confusion and chaos.

**2. The Biblical Basis for Regenerate Membership**

Note: Only the Reformed Baptist insist that only believers ought to become members of the church... cf. RCC; Episcopalians; Presbyterian, Other Evangelical Churches

- (a) Regenerate membership is clearly the pattern set by the church during the apostolic era.

- Acts 2:41, 47 = Those who received Peter's message (gospel) and subsequently were baptized... not those who received the word plus their children who still did not receive the word.

- (b) The imageries used in the Bible for the church clearly indicates a regenerate membership.

Note: The church is referred to in the Scripture as a flock of sheep

- Pastors/elders are exhorted to shepherd the flock of God... 1 Pet 5:2; Act 2:28

John 10:16 = *And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd*

***Reformation Point: Church reforms begin with ensuring a membership of true sheep of Christ***

(c) Figure of being 'members of one another'

Rom 12:5 = *so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

Eph 2:19 = *you are no longer strangers and aliens... fellow citizens with the saints... members of the household of God... cf. Eph 5:30*

1 Cor 12:12-27 = one body with many members

(d) The explicit apostolic directive not to include unbelievers in the local church.

Note: The 2 Cor 6:14-18 is often used to support the position that believers should only marry unbelievers and that they should not enter into business partnership with unbelievers. However, those are just secondary applications of this text.

➤ The primary reference in this text is membership in the church.

➤ v.16 = not "*we are the temples (plural)*" but "*we are the temple (singular)*"

Point: The text refers to the separation of true disciples of God (regenerate members) from those who are not.

### 3. The Implementation of Regenerate Membership

Question: If the biblical teaching of regenerate membership is to be implemented, what must a church do?

Answers:

(a) The church must stick to the 'faithful biblical method of evangelism'... not in a modern day method of evangelism often called as "Easy-Believism" or "Easy-Prayerism".

➤ This practice is filling the church with so many false converts.

(b) Preach repentance and faith that can lead them to follow the ordinance of baptism...

➤ Mat 3:7f = John the Baptist did not just baptize anyone who professes faith without visible fruits of repentance...

➤ The church in Jerusalem did not just receive Paul into membership until they were convinced that his profession was credible... Cf. Apostle Paul = Acts 9:26-28

Point: The members of local churches must be disciples of Christ who are joined to those churches by baptism...

Mt 28:18-20; Act 14:22-23; 1 Cor 1:2, 13-17; 1 Thess 1:1, 2-10; Act 2:37-42; 4:4; 5:13-14

[Sam Waldron, *1689 BCF*, loc. 331] – "Discipleship, baptism and church membership are intimately connected in the Great Commission. Discipleship, therefore, demands baptism, church membership and submission to the elder/teachers of the church. Church membership presupposes and demands discipleship manifesting itself in obedience to the Lord — obedience manifested specifically in the acts of baptism and submission to the Word in the teaching ministry of the church. Baptism is not to be divorced from discipleship and church membership.

Case: But what about the 3,000 added into the church at Jerusalem the day they were converted?

Texts: Acts 2:14ff; 37-41

Note: They were all been baptized

Background: For a Jew to profess faith in Christ will automatically mean severe persecutions.

Point: So to merely profess faith in Christ was enough credible proof of genuine repentance and faith.

➤ Also, it is a day of Pentecost!

### 4. The Importance of Regenerate Membership

Note: We are to submit in this command because that is the will of Christ (as the church's Head) for the church

➤ Maintaining regenerate church membership is essential for the survival of a church... there is chaos and confusions by not following it.

Picture: To *yoke* together two different animals, like a horse and cow, would be disastrous.

➤ The more unbelievers will get into the church, the church will increasingly become the world and, thus, worldly... cf. Rev 3:16 = *I will spit you out of my mouth.*

Implication(s):

Note: The baptized disciples who leave one local church for another ought not to be and ought not to expect to be gullibly or automatically received by another local church.

[Waldron, *ibid.*] – "They ought willingly to provide that church and its elders with proof of their discipleship by verbally relating their experience of Christ, letters of recommendation from their former church and their manifest good conduct and submission to the Lord and his church (Acts 9:26-30; Jude 4; Rev. 2:2, 14-15)"

Considerations:

(a) Regenerate membership must not erode into unquestioning acceptance of a mere profession of faith

Beware: Leniency in admission that foregoes any inquiry on genuineness of conversion

Point: There are *basics* of the gospel that Christians are expected to know and confess to be admitted as a member of the church... Gal 2:16

(b) Regenerate membership does not require the maximum of spiritual experience or knowledge

Beware: Stringency in admission that requires maturity in knowledge of Christian living

Point: There is a minimum in the expression of one's gospel confession and repentance