

The Church, One Body

A Community Made Up of Individuals

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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The concept of a hive mind runs throughout science fiction. I do not know how many of you are science fiction fans, but if you do watch science fiction on the big screen or the little screen, or read it, you will find this concept of a hive mind fairly frequently in those things.

The list of sci-fi authors that use the concept of a hive mind—actually it is almost a trope these days that you almost have to have it in something somewhere—reads like the who's who of sci-fi authors, anybody from Robert Heinlein to Arthur C. Clarke to Isaac Asimov and even the writers of Star Trek (the Borg, you will remember, had a hive mind).

One of the ones who took this the furthest though was Orson Scott Card who wrote *Ender's Game*. Many of you may have read the book or seen the movie. There is not just *Ender's Game* but there is *Speaker for the Dead*, and several others after that, sequels that also employ the idea of a hive mind. Anyway, Orson Scott Card came up with an enemy for the human race called the Formics. It is a race of intelligent insectoids of some sort. Anyway, this race of intelligent insectoids were all telepathically linked in a hive mind to a very powerful queen insect who controlled all these Formics, and they were searching for a new place to live and they just happened to pick earth. So there were great battles and such as in *Ender's Game*.

So please, if you will, turn to Proverbs 6 and we will pull out a famous passage here from the work of Solomon. We will read verses 6 through 8 just to get ourselves up and running. I have gone to this scripture because it mentions ants.

Proverbs 6:6-8 Go to the ant, you sluggard! [This is the real reason I am going here.] Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest.

That is all we need. I just want you to be thinking of what Solomon here is talking about in terms of an ant. But, notice, first of all, he tells us to observe the ant and consider how the ant lives—what it does, how it acts and reacts—and also hear the fact that the ant seemingly has no captain, no commander, no one telling her what to do, no overseer, no ruler. She does what she needs to do, gets it done, and provides for the rest of the nest.

These science-fiction authors that we have talked about base their fictional hive minds on ants, or bees, or some other insect that employs hive behavior. It is not just insects; it is other creatures as well. You have seen the swallows in the air as they all flit about. There is a whole flock of them and they seem to move all as one like they have one mind, and there is one “person” or one bird brain directing all of them to go where they go. And it looks like a bird brain because they seem to be just going here and going there for no apparent reason! But there are schools of fish that act the same way. There are even mammals, believe it or not, that employ hive behavior.

But the thing about the hive behavior is that they all act and react as one. They all react and act for the benefit of the entire nest (hive, colony, whatever it is, you name it). The individual, which is often called a worker, lives and dies for the survival of the entire hive. It seems to have no individuality of

its own but it has instincts to do for the good of the hive. So its own individual needs and desires seem to take an extreme backseat (if there are any at all), and it just gives its life for the rest of the hive (or the nest) so that the hive's or the swarm's needs and interests are seemingly its only priorities. Its priorities are not itself; it is the rest of its fellow ants or bees.

Even though it seems like its own individual needs are not met, they actually are. But they are met by doing what is necessary for the hive or the nest. So when it does what it is doing, like going out collecting food (nectar) and bringing it back to the hive, its own needs are met. And when it does this, that, and the other thing (protecting the hive or whatever), its needs are met. It is protected. So, by doing what the hive needs, its own needs are met and surpassed. It gets a benefit from it.

I am going to call it a swarm mind rather than hive mind because that is where recent research is going on this—that they are calling it a swarm mind instead of a hive mind. I think they are trying to take the scientific and biological ideas out of science fiction—because hive mind has become entrenched in science fiction—and they want everybody to understand science fact.

Early on, it was thought (like the Formic queen insect, whatever she was) that queen bees or queen ants had some sort of controlling link over all the members of the swarm, or the hive, or the nest. But recent research, specifically bee research, has shown that, instead, the queen is not in control of the swarm. In fact, the swarm controls her. She is a member of the hive just like all the rest. The only significant thing that she does, that other ants or bees do not do, is that obviously she lays the eggs and of course she grows larger and so she has the strength and the ability to do that.

But she also secretes certain pheromones and each one of the worker bees or worker ants are marked by these particular pheromones. Those pheromones then identify each individual worker ant or worker bee as belonging to that particular swarm which has one queen. So that is really all she does. She marks each of the other creatures and she lays eggs.

And all the rest—the members of the swarm—do for her or they control her one way or another. They actually regulate how many eggs she lays because there is only so much food to go around and they are the ones collecting the food. So they can tell her to stop somehow. I do not know how it is done (maybe they stop feeding her) but she has to stop because there is not enough food to go around for another round of eggs as it were. They are the ones who decide to go to a new location and they are also the ones that actually choose the location of the new hive. She does not do anything other than lay eggs, basically.

So science had it all backwards. Years ago they thought that the queen was controlling everything. But that is not the way it is. Notice how that jives with Proverbs 6 where there is no captain, ruler, or overseer. They all just know what to do and then they collectively do what is right for the hive (or the swarm).

Now the process bees use to choose a new hive is a fascinating thing and they are just learning about this. It has only been known for a few years (probably as many as you can count on one hand) and that is thanks to probably the foremost bee researcher in the United States, a man named Thomas Seeley of Cornell University. He thinks of the hive as a kind of super-organism meaning that each individual does its part and the whole benefits. And they act as one, yet act in unity. Now this is seen very easily in the search for the swarm's new hive.

What is really interesting about it is the cooperative decision-making that they go through to choose this new location. What they do, after searching a 30-square mile area (that is a six-by-five mile block you could say—a lot of ground to cover), these scout bees bring information back to the hive about dozens of potential sites that the swarm could actually go to. They bring it back to the swarm for the swarm to consider about what they will do. Because there is not just one scout going out, they have got many scouts going out looking for all these places (a dead tree or a tree that is split and it is just right for what they need).

By the way, they need about an area that you could put 10 gallons of milk in, and they also need an area that is going to be insulated in the winter but ventilated in the summer, and they also need a place where the hole to get into this location is just big enough for a couple of bees to pass by and no more because they do not want to have to protect the larger hole where a predator can come in.

So there are those four criteria that are necessary and many others. I just named the big four: 1) that they have to have the size; 2) they have to have the insulation in the winter; 3) the ventilation in the summer; and 4) the size of the hole to get in and out.

But they come back with *many* potential sites. When they come back, they actually build a dance floor in the entrance of their hives. The first part of the hive is actually a dance floor. It is a communal meeting place. You could call it the town center if you want. But when the bee comes back to the hive, the scout, having seen a really good place to go for the rest of the swarm, will dance. They call it a waggle. She marches up and down this dance floor (usually a fairly straight line) and wags her abdomen the whole way. She just goes up and down, wags and wags and wags, so everybody can see that she has found a place that is good. So, by doing this, they express their preferences for this site.

They come back and say: “Hey, I found a log that will work, with a hole. It's big enough and it looks like it will work in the winter and the summer.” So she wags. She is buzzing all the time letting everybody know “Hey, I’ve found one,” and the direction she buzzes and the amount of buzz gives the other bees an idea of how far away it is and in what direction. It is really amazing. And, through a dynamic negotiation process, bees have a lot more going for them than you think. They go through this dynamic negotiating process; they have a dance-off, believe it or not, because other scouts are coming in and they are doing the same dances. And the bees choose which one they think is the better based on the scouts’ recommendation, through the dance.

You know, when you go into a bar and there are competing ideas, there is usually a fist fight. Well, they do not fight; they head-butt each other. Certain ones that support this particular side will head-butt these other ones that have just come in with a good idea and it shuts them up. And so they go through this process where they negotiate this. Over time, usually a short amount of time (you will be surprised), a collective decision is reached. Believe it or not, Thomas Seeley, having seen this dozens and dozens of times, says that 80 percent of time the bees choose the optimal nesting site. Their process works 80 percent of the time.

Now Seeley has discovered a few principles that bees utilize to make these smart decisions, particularly about finding a new place. Maybe you can use it on your next home. I do not know. But I want to give you three of these principles. They are interesting and you can think of them in terms of your own decision-making processes and the processes of decision-making in the church.

Remember I said they have a dance-off about which location they are going to go to. Well, the first principle that Seeley has come up with is the *principle of enthusiasm*. We would call it, probably, 'zeal.' Because when the scout comes back from looking for a hive site and it is ideal—she knows that she has gone in there; she has seen the size; she has seen that there is a little bit of a breeze through there; she knows there is going to be insulation for the winter time and the hole is just the right size for getting in and out—she will zoom back (miles back sometimes) to the hive where they are at the time. And knowing that this is a super-fantastic site (you know, this is “beachfront property” for the swarm), she comes back and she will dance with all she has got (I think I am thinking *Flashdance* right now. “She’s a maniac out on the floor.”)

But she will dance, wagging just energetically with all she has got, two hundred times or more up and down their little dance floor that they have got there (the town hall dance floor) and she will impress bees that they will think, “Wow, this scout really has found a great place. We’re going to love it.” And so she attracts a lot of bees to her cause because they trust her judgment that this is a really good spot for them.

Yet, if she comes back and she has found a place that is maybe on the other side of the track—it is a little old and needs some work; it might work for them but it is kind of mediocre—she will do her dance but she will not be enthusiastic about it and she is surely not going to do two hundred laps (that is just not the way), and the bees figure out that, “Hey, her dance wasn’t as good as this other bee’s dance” and so they will headbutt her to stop because they know her place just did not come up to snuff.

So the enthusiasm that she generates in her dance translates into attention. Bees notice when a bee comes back and she is just all excited and going up and down and shaking her thing. So this enthusiastic scout will not only inspire other bees to think, “Wow, we’ve got a good one here on the line.” it will inspire other scouts to go out and check out the location that she has telegraphed to them with her dance.

They go out there and they look, and they say: “Hey, she was right. This is a great place. The swarm can be here for years. It’ll be wonderful.” So they come back and do the same wildly enthusiastic dance on the dance floor that she did. And pretty soon more and more bees are jumping on the bandwagon, as it were, saying that, “This is a really good site and we ought to go there.”

Then, after a wave or two of these scouts coming back “There’s an ideal site out there,” they make their decision. They get enough bees to say, “Yes” and they go. The time between their making the decision and actually flying out in a swarm is just a short time. Once they have made the decision, they are gone as soon as they can round up the kids and the queen.

The second principle that Seeley found is flexibility. We can maybe call this (once you hear this, you will understand why) ‘truth in advertising,’ or ‘honest judgment.’ So once a scout finds a site, she travels back and forth from this site to the hive. Each time she comes back, she dances to win over the scouts (obviously). That is what she is supposed to do: She is supposed to win over other scouts and win over other bees.

But what they found is that the number of dance repetitions declines until she stops dancing altogether. Even the most enthusiastic of scouts will do this—that you go out once, great place, come back, do her two hundred laps and get everybody excited about it; she leaves again, goes to look at it again, comes back, maybe this time she only does one hundred and ninety five; then she goes and

comes back and she does maybe a hundred and fifty. And they count all these things to figure out what is going on and they find out that, over time, as long as this dynamic negotiation is going on, the number of repetitions and waggles that she does eventually declines and that happens whether she finds a good place or whether she finds a mediocre place. But she will not press her argument the same way with the same vigor each time she comes back.

Seeley found that honeybees that visit good sites (we are talking the whole range of good from optimal down to pretty good) keep dancing for more trips than honeybees that visit mediocre sites. So the bees somehow can count and figure out whether the bee is actually telling the truth about it because, in each of the trips, the amount of laps they do on the floor gets shorter and shorter. But they can tell, if they keep it up to a fairly high number even while declining, that this bee has a pretty good site.

But the other ones that come back, that have mediocre sites, quickly decline and then they are only doing one or two laps, and finally they get headbutted and then they stop. So what this does (they call it the decaying dance of the honeybee) it allows a swarm to avoid getting stuck in a bad decision.

When a mediocre site has attracted a lot of scouts, a single scout returning from a better site can cause the hive to change its collective mind on a dime. They will not allow them to get stopped because the whole crowd has gone for this candidate's site. But if the other candidate comes in with a better site, they will dump this candidate and go to the other candidate because they figured out that this was a better place. It is better for the whole swarm to go to the better place even though the popular decision was to go to the other one. But, unlike our own politics, they actually *do what is best for the entire nation of bees*. They will drop the bad candidate just like that and go to the better candidate with the better site. Oh, that we had that in America!

A third principle is decisiveness. I have already mentioned it just a little bit and I have mentioned the headbutting and the ramming that they do. Scouts will purposefully ram one another head-on while deciding on a new hive location. What they do is they headbutt scouts coming from other locations, causing the rammed bee to stop wagging. As more scouts dance for a popular site, they also, by headbutting, drive down the number of dancers for other sites. So there is a lot going on within the bee hive while they are trying to decide—the strong-arming and headbutting and doing those things that people do.

But what they are trying to do is drive down the number of dancers for bad sites. They do not want the colony to be swayed to go to a bad site. Their wiser heads prevail. They send out their thugs and they headbutt a little bit to get them to shut up about their bad sites. “We don't need that for the hive, we want good sites, and so we are going to shut down these bad ideas and make them go away.” So only the good sites will be available to vote on, as it were.

But once a minimum (they call it a quorum) of fifteen bees are dancing for the same location—they will get all excited just like the scout that came back (usually they are all scouts that come back and say “Hey, we've been there, we've seen it, we're all dancing for this one location that fits the swarm perfectly”)—they start to headbutt one another because they have made the decision: Time to stop dancing on the dance floor and get to work because the swarm needs to fly. Once they reach the required quorum, “Voting is over. Let's go.”

They are very decisive. This holds contention down. It does not keep the contention going on and on and on until they pick a candidate. They work it all out, so that the decision-making process does not

drag on interminably, and they make a decision. This is very much like submission to a decision that is done in the church where maybe you were for another one, but the decision has been made, and now you just submit to the decision and move forward. That is what the hive does. Now socio-biologists are still trying to figure out how this translates to human behavior and decision making and they think that it may. But who knows?

For us Christians, though, it just expands our amazement at the intricate design that God put in His creation and we are just scratching the surface of these amazing things that God instilled into the animal kingdom for us to learn from, like it says “Go to the ant, you sluggard, and consider her ways.” It is amazing what is out there for us to learn from.

But it may also give us another example, from nature, of the biblical principle of many living and working in unity and cooperation toward a common goal. That was the whole point of the bees swarming to a new location. They had to work in unity. Even though there were different opinions—different locations they could go to—they all, in unity, figured out the best location for them and they made the decision to go as one. Even though there are many individuals, and many individuals had input on it, they all made the decision as one. That is the sort of thing that the church should exemplify because we are one body. Even though we are individuals, we are *one church*.

So on this Day of Pentecost, which focuses on the firstfruits of God, it should be helpful for us to review the scriptural metaphors for the church once again so that we can recommit ourselves to working in unity toward the Kingdom of God. But it is Pentecost, so let us touch base with the day and go back to Leviticus 23. We are going to extract this principle even from what is given to us there in the list of the holy days in Leviticus 23. It is not necessarily right out there, but we can see it with a little explanation. We will read verses 15-21 to get the flavor of this Day of Pentecost.

Leviticus 23:15-21 And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed [so here we are]. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath [yesterday was the Sabbath, the seventh one from the wave sheaf offering; so here we are today, keeping the day of Pentecost]; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord. You shall bring from your habitations two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the Lord. And you shall offer with the bread seven lambs of the first year, without blemish, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be as a burnt offering to the Lord, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the Lord. Then you shall sacrifice one kid of the goats as a sin offering, and two male lambs of the first year as a sacrifice of peace offering. The priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the Lord, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the Lord for the priest. And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you [Okay, I am proclaiming this is a holy convocation to you]. You shall do no customary work on it. It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.

There we have the instructions for the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost. We know that each festival has its own unique qualities. They are separate and individual because they are different parts of the plan of God. We have understood that for a long time. You look at this and it is just kind of strange what we have got here—Atonement. It is not even a feast—it is a fast—but that is one of the unique things about Atonement. There is Tabernacles and you have temporary dwellings in there when you keep

the Feast of Tabernacles. Of course, the Feast of Unleavened Bread: You eat unleavened bread and that is kind of strange too. They all have some unique qualities to them.

Pentecost is equally different. It has a couple of, some might say, strange features (maybe 'unusual' would be a better word).

1. The first is that it does not fall on a set date. You have to count it either by weeks or by days, and it comes out on the fiftieth day. None of the other times have to be counted. They are appointed times where there is this so many days of this month and you keep it on that day every year.
2. The second thing that makes this an unusual day is its centerpiece offering along with several animals. We saw how many animals were sacrificed on this day. But with these animals were two loaves of bread made of fine flour, baked with leaven. They were waved along with some of the animal offerings before the Lord—made holy before Him, set apart—and then they were given to the priests. That is what it says there at the end of verse 20: “they shall be holy to the Lord for the priests.” So this is an unusual thing.

First of all, normally, a grain offering was not made with leaven at all. Leaven symbolizes corruption. We learned that in the Days of Unleavened Bread. But this offering of these two wave loaves contained leaven, which give us an indication that it represents something that is corrupted but has been made holy. It has had the sin baked right out of it and it is then made holy before God and given to the priest for his use. But the Jews tells us that these wave loaves (or the grain that was taken to make the wave loaves) went through quite a bit.

Now notice, first of all, that it was made from new wheat. We can say this is kind of like the idea of the new creation. It means it had just been taken out of the fields. It was not old wheat that had been stored. So it was made with wheat that was very fresh. But it just did not go from there into bread. It says the priests (that is the Levites who made this) beat it, trod it, and ground it into fine flour. Then they ground it again, they ground it again, they ground it again, and it went through twelve different sieves in order to be the finest flour that they could make. And then the leaven was added and they would probably add salt to it as well (Were not these offerings made with salt?). And then they were baked. Interesting symbolism if you think about it.

When we understand that the loaves represent the firstfruits of God's children, we see a great deal of symbolism in this process. As in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares in Matthew 13, God sows wheat in His fields which He harvests at the first resurrection. The loaves, here in Leviticus 23, illustrate another view of their preparation for use. They have to be beaten, trodden down, ground, sifted, leavened, salted, and baked—by going through all manner of experiences (trauma, hardship, temptations, trials, tests, sufferings, and persecutions)—to finally produce a finished, completed product.

We know all this. We have gone over this time and time again. That is not my point necessarily. But I did want you to see that the grain went through this process of life (let us say the process we go through our lives in which we are made into the kind of grain that we need to be) to be part of this loaf of bread.

But notice that the priest and the Levites (or whoever it was that made this) did not have to prepare and bake 144,000 loaves. Did you ever think about that? If this was going to represent the firstfruits

of God, which we understand to be the 144,000, why did not they make 144,000 loaves? No, there were just two. Now we have traditionally surmised that these two loaves represent the firstfruits before the incarnation of Christ and the church Jesus built through the apostles: Those who looked forward to the coming of Christ and those who look back on His life, death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven.

So those whom God has worked with over the last 2000 years (we are going to single ourselves down to the second loaf) are seen in His eyes, in this offering, as a single loaf of bread—just one loaf—not even as little individual grains of wheat or little bits of flour. All of that is in the background. What we see—what is waved before Him for His acceptance—is not the grains. It is the bread. It is the loaf that has been finished that has been all ground down, put together into a loaf, and baked as one thing. So they are waved and they are accepted as a whole loaf.

Interesting, is it not, that this Day of Pentecost talks about the firstfruits but then it puts us all into one loaf or two loaves (one loaf for us as a church). And then there is a tension in Scripture between these two states of being. We are individuals. Each one of you, as we heard in the sermonette today, is unique. No one is like you. You have all been individually called out by God and put through individual tests and trials and brought to this place where you are sitting here right now. But you are also members of a collective (I am using the term in its most basic sense that it is a cooperative unit, or an organization that cooperates). So you have this tension between individuality, which we all have and God allows us to express. But you also have this very important idea of us all being one— one loaf, one body, one bread, however you want to put it. We are all in this together like a hive, like a swarm, like a nest.

We are all judged each according to our works individually. You are not going to be judged by the things that the person next to you have done. You are all going to be brought before the judgment seat of Christ. Let us go to II Corinthians 5 just to get this idea in here.

II Corinthians 5:9-10 [Paul says:] Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

So we are all going to be judged as individuals. We are not going to be saved because we are in a particular group, or in a particular corporation, or that we are following a particular leader. We are going to be saved according to what we have done. God has given us grace as individuals and we will be judged individually. But, on the other hand, our cooperation and unity within the collective as it were—within the swarm, within the hive, within the church—will be a factor in our judgment. It is not just what we do as individuals; it is also how we harmonize with the church. It is not just our individual skills and talents, but are we a team player? Are we part of everyone else who is a part of Christ?

We often forget that in this nation because we are a nation of individuals. We are a nation who has thrived on individuality. “Pull yourself up by your bootstraps. You don’t need anyone to help you. You’re going to do it yourself.” Our kids say, “I want to do it myself” and we teach it to them because that is how we are. I know my Beth. Beth tells me (I am not telling on Beth), “You’ve got to tell your boys out there to help you on your projects,” whatever it is. So I am out there doing some

landscaping or doing some woodworking in the garage, or whatever, and it is kind of like “Well, they’ve got their stuff to do.” They are busy playing their video games or whatever. You have got to show them because they need to know how to do these things.

And inside my mind (I dare not say it out aloud) I am saying, “If they’re not around, I can probably get this done a whole lot faster.” Not to say that they are not skilled or anything, but you have got to take the time to tell them why you are doing this and that and I have gotten a little better at it. But it is just like I have developed my own system—my own way of doing things—and if I do it my own way, I will just get it done. I have to work with and struggle with my individuality because that is just how I am built. I am a loner, I guess. I like doing things on my own. But that is something that I need to overcome.

But we all have something like that in us where we have not been born into and raised into the kind of community that the Bible often portrays: the more hive-like or swarm-like village community, as it were, where people thought of themselves less as individuals and more as members of something (whether it was a family, a tribe, or community). I am not saying that is the best way, but I am showing that there are both these ways of struggling in the Bible and we are supposed to be good at both of them. We are supposed to be individually holy and righteous and good, and we are also supposed to be, as a community, holy and righteous and good and do all those things in harmony with one another and move forward toward the Kingdom of God together.

So there is this struggle, a tension, between these two ways of doing things—doing things as an individual and doing things as a community. Because the church is, like Thomas Seeley said, a super-organism. We will see that more little bit later in one of these analogies. But we are supposed to be individuals functioning for the good of the whole and not just individuals functioning for the good of the individual (which is how we do it in America). So God has called us as individuals and that is a wonderful thing that He knows who we are as an individual in our singular state. But He also has called us to be part of the body of Christ and that is a super-organism of the church.

Let us go and see another one of these metaphors and that is back in chapter 10 of the book of John, a common one that Jesus used throughout His ministry. If you know your chapters, this is the Good Shepherd chapter. Obviously we are talking about a flock. We will read the first five verses and then we will do some hop, skipping, and jumping down through the passage here.

John 10:1-5 Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.

John 10:9 I am the door [Jesus says]. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

So He is talking about an individual sheep here, going in and out and being saved, entering by Him.

John 10:11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

Now we are finding that this shepherd (in other places he is called the head) does what he can for the good of the rest of the sheep. Let us go down to verse 14. He repeats it.

John 10:14-16 I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

So even though He has disparate groups here and there, He is going to bring them all into one flock—He considers them one flock—and they only have one shepherd, the good shepherd (the “great shepherd of the sheep,” as Paul puts it). They are all one. Even though they are individual sheep and maybe in individual folds, they are all one flock to Him.

John 10:26 But you do not believe [He is speaking to the Jews here], because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.

They are an entirely different flock. They do not get what He tells His flock. They do not follow Him when He speaks. They are showing, by the way they are, that they are not of His flock. They are not doing things in unison. They are not zigging (they are zagging) when He is zigging whereas all the rest of the sheep that are His are zigging (who always do what He does). Verse 27.

John 10:27-28 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand [part of the assurance that Martin was talking about yesterday].

So here we see another metaphor of a flock. In Luke 12:32, He calls it a little flock. It is not very large. In fact, the Greek that Luke uses in that verse there, particularly the word ‘little flock,’ is a double diminutive showing how tiny this flock is (as compared to the great bulk of humanity, of course). It is not very many people.

Now there is no doubt that a flock is made up of many individual sheep. If you look at the next issue of the Forerunner coming out, you will see a picture of a flock of sheep on the cover. You will see there is individual sheep. There is a ewe and then a lamb, another ewe and then another lamb. I do not know if there are any rams in there, but I think they are all ewes and lambs. But there are multiple sheep and they have one shepherd leading them.

When the shepherd gives the signal (or whatever he does to get them to move), they move and they follow him. And when he goes up the hill, they go up the hill. And when he goes over the crest of the hill, they go over the crest of the hill. And when he finally gets them to water, they go to the water. They do whatever he does and they all go with him as individuals but as a flock. They are together. They just follow him and do the things that he leads them to do. They follow as one.

Maybe a stubborn sheep here and there or a sheep with an odd peculiarity, but, as a whole, sheep have one of the strongest flock or herd mentalities in all of animal-dom. They are like a hive or a swarm, but they are mammals and they do everything as a flock. They are a lot like people. That is why God uses them so often as a metaphor of us. They are dumb and they get themselves into trouble. But they will follow a good leader whose voice they trust. And there are lots of other things that have been brought out about sheep and shepherds that could go in here.

But we can see the same idea here as in the loaf, as in the hive, that they are individual components of it but they are all supposed to act as one in what we would call a super-organism.

Let us go to another one in I Corinthians chapter 3. I do not want to get bogged down in one thing or another because there are several here. There are actually two here that we are going to get in succession. The first one is in verses 5 through 9.

I Corinthians 3:5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?

So he is talking about the ministry here specifically, but we can see the larger metaphor here.

I Corinthians 3:6-7 [He says:] I planted [Paul planted], Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. [Now there is the big point he is trying to make.] So then neither he who plants is anything [that was Paul], nor he who waters [Apollos], but God who gives the increase [He is everything].

If you plant a seed in the ground and you water it and God does not do anything, it does not sprout, it does not come up. So ‘Hooray!’ for the man who planted and ‘Hooray!’ for the man who watered, but ‘Wow yay!’ for God because He was the One that made everything work. It was His purpose, His power. He did it all.

I Corinthians 3:8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one [they are equals and they both have a job to do and they did it], and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

So the one who waters will be judged upon how well he watered, the one who planted will be judged on how well he planted. They are not going to be judged on the seed, whether that seed grows up (because that seed is another entity who will be judged by how well he grew). So, after the planting and after the watering, it is up to the individual seed—the plant—and God (mostly God, but the seed has a say in the matter in the metaphor). But he is showing here that the ministry does its job and the ministry will be judged and rewarded according to the job it has done in doing the job it has been given to do. Okay, that is fine. Verse 9:

I Corinthians 3:9 For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field . . .

That is the metaphor. The church is a field—a field of wheat that has been planted with seed—that a minister has planted and maybe another minister has watered. But the productivity of the whole field is on God. He is the One that gives the increase.

So here we have a metaphor of a field. Now a field is also a large singular entity. It is made up of seeds or plants that had been put into it. We see this image in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares and a couple of others in Matthew chapter 13. It just shows that each seed is sown in a field and it grows up to be a plant, and God allows it (in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares) to grow up until the harvest and then it is reaped. The purpose of the plant is to produce fruit (produce more wheat as it were—a crop).

But that is the same purpose as the whole field. The whole field is there to produce a crop—to produce fruit. So the purpose of the individual and the purpose of the whole field—the whole super-organism—are the same: To produce something (fruit) for God for harvest.

We are all in this together as one but we are all individuals. So, in our own individual work, we are growing and producing fruit. And when we do that and everybody else is doing that, we all produce fruit for God—something that He can use then for His purposes. I said there were two here in I Corinthians 3. Let us start at the end of verse 9.

I Corinthians 3:9 . . . you are God's building.

Right in the middle of the verse, he goes and mixes his metaphors. But now he is talking about God's building.

I Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.

So he is actually moving away from 'God gives the increase' idea and he has moved in to another idea, which the building metaphor works a little better for.

I Corinthians 3:11-17 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear [manifest]; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is [sounds like grain being baked, does it not?]. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

This one is a bit more serious than the other one in this chapter but it is an interesting one. The ministry, instead of being planters and waterers, now take on the imagery of builders—construction workers—and the members of the church, instead of being plants or seeds, are now individual parts of the building. Whether you are stone, brick, wood, marble, or metal of some sort, or cloth (whatever you would put in the making of a building), that is what the ministry has to work with. The important part here, as in God giving the increase in the field metaphor we just saw, is that Christ is the foundation of the building and we build on Him. That is the important part.

Now the judgment again contains an element of judgment and reward just like the first one did. It was talking about the element of judgment and reward for the ministry. Here is another one, and it is not only the ministry that has to be careful how they build on it, but also the members have to be careful how they build on the foundation that has been laid—because the tests and the trials will reveal how well it has been built. It is mostly, I think, to the ministry here but it is also to the church because we all have a part in the building. It is not just the ministers that build the church; we all have a say. Remember the bees and the hive in choosing a location: It was not just the scouts that had a say in moving the whole nest to another place, but *everybody* was involved.

So we have this final admonition from Paul in these last two verses here in the chapter to say “Hey, this isn’t just any old building. This is the Temple of God that you’re building. This is the Temple where Christ lives that you are building.” And I know, any one of you who have worked construction, you would know that you will take a whole lot more care if what you were building was really wonderful—some place that was going to be like a temple, like a centerpiece (like, let us say, you were building something like the White House or some structure that was going to be used for really important purposes). You would take extra care that everything would be perfect and done right.

So that is what Paul is admonishing the ministry and the membership here. Remember at all times what you are working on. You are working on God’s Temple, what *He* will dwell in. You are working on building the Body of Christ (or, in another metaphor, you are working on building the bride of Christ). So every act that you make in adding on to this Temple has to be a good one, has to be as perfect as you can make it. Because fire is going to come. You know that. No one has gone through this Christian life without fire—without trials and temptations, without things upsetting the apple cart—and you have to deal with it. And the fire of those trials is going to reveal whether you have done a good job and you are part of the building.

Now he says you will be saved through it because salvation is by grace, not on how well you build. He says you will be saved through it. But do you not want to see that your work lasts and endures—that it did some good, that it is going to be helping others? So make it a good work. Build your part of the building with extra care because you are building the Temple of God. So, he says, build holiness. This is essentially what it comes down to in the end. “For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.” If the Temple is holy and you are a part of the Temple, you are holy; and you have to show that you belong there, by being holy. As Paul said in another place, “walk worthy of the calling by which you are called.”

Ephesians chapter 2, if you will, just for a moment. Similar metaphor.

Ephesians 2:19-22 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building [everybody], being fitted [joined] together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

It says very much the same thing as was said there in I Corinthians 3:16-17.

Let us go along to another one, this one in Hebrews chapter 3. It is a similar metaphor. It also uses the metaphor of a house but there is a little bit of a twist on it.

Hebrews 3:1-6 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses [meaning Christ], inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant,

for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

Now, you could say, this is just like the other one there in I Corinthians 3. But it is a little bit different. God's house here, that he is talking about, is that the metaphor focuses not on the building materials like Paul did, but on the people who inhabit the house—a household, a family as it were. But it is not just the family. The idea of a household in that age was a lot different than ours. We think of mother, father, and two kids as the house. But this is much broader. The house is a family, yes; it is not only the current family but it is the whole dynasty, the whole line. The whole genealogy of the family is included in this as well as the members of the household that may not even be part of the family by blood.

Notice Moses. Moses was a servant in the house. He was not *the* son or even *a* son. In this particular analogy, he was a servant who, in those days, was a part of a household. So it is all, in whatever function that they have, who inhabit that house and have to work for the profit and the good—the efficiency—of the whole household.

So, in that day and age, it might have been a patriarch, a matriarch, sons and daughters, and all the maidservants and manservants. And it could have been a steward who was over the business aspects of the house. It could have been a teacher, a physician, various other employees, or slaves that were in the house. They were all part of the household. They all had their functions and they were all supposed to work for the benefit of the whole house. And Moses was faithful in what he did for the whole house, was he not? He did a great job guiding Israel through the wilderness and giving us the law and all the other things that he did. He was a faithful servant and his work (going back to Paul's other metaphor) stands today even though he was tested by fire.

So what we need to understand here is that we are individuals in this household. We are called sons and daughters. We are not servants necessarily, although we are. We may have different responsibilities in the body of Christ that make us servants. But we are really sons and daughters. But our inclusion in the Family, as he shows here in verse 6, is that we remain loyal. We remain faithful to the Heir, the Son who is the quintessence of faithfulness.

He is showing us how to do it. He is showing us all along how to be faithful. And we have to copy the faithfulness of Jesus Christ and the faithfulness, the loyalty, and the dedication of Moses to remain a part of this Family. Because that was the problem the Hebrews were having: They were beginning to slip away. They were not doing their jobs in the Family, in the household. They were allowing themselves to drift.

Just a note of interest. You might want to jot down I Timothy 3:14-15; Galatians 6:10; and Colossians 3:18-4 verse 1. These are all part of the metaphor of the household and almost all of the references to a household as the church speak to the proper conduct of members of God's house. And the one in Colossians chapter 3 talks about husbands, wives, children, master, servants. They were all part of the household at the time and they all had their responsibilities and they all needed to conduct themselves properly to remain as members in good standing of the household.

Let us get to the big one here. We will just go to Romans 12, which is a summary of what is found in I Corinthians 12:12-31 which we will not have time to get to. But I want you to see this. This is the body metaphor.

Romans 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you [that is all of you], not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly [to think objectively], as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

So Paul wants us here to think very soberly about where we have been put into the body of Christ and to think about how much faith you have, how much gifts and skills and talents that you think that you have received. And he wants you to think about it soberly because you have a part to play in the body of Christ.

Romans 12:4-5 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

So he is telling us to think soberly, to think humbly, to think subjectively about how best we can fulfill our roles in the church because we have been given a certain amount of faith, certain amount of talent, certain amount of gifts, and we need to be thinking very soberly about how we can best use them as an individual in a greater body.

So he goes on to talk about people having different functions. We all have faith of one kind or another, but we have been given different *measures* of faith in order to do different functions in the body. He goes on to talk about these gifts given by grace—about prophesying, about ministering, about teaching, about exhorting, about giving, about leading, about showing mercy and so forth—and this is expanded in I Corinthians chapter 12 to other functions. We have all been given the Spirit of God but we all have different skills and attributes and functions that God will use. So we need to figure out how to do it within the body and also we need to figure out how we can let other people do their jobs without our interference.

In the hive scouts do one thing, worker bees do another thing, the queen does her thing. They all have jobs and the one does not go and do the job of the other. That is how we have to function. We have to be able to function *coordinately but cooperatively*, without interfering with one another's function, because it is all being coordinated by the Head—Jesus Christ—through the Spirit. Remember it said the increase comes from God. He is the One that is supplying what is needed and working things out. We just have to keep our heads down and do the job that we have been given to do.

I will not go through I Corinthians 12:12-31. That could be a sermon all on its own. But I do want to make sure that you do understand one of the main points there is that we have been put into the body just as Christ pleased to put us into the body. Where and when and how are all up to Him. Now that we are where we are, He wants us to do the work that He has given us to do, with gladness and unity with everyone else. Because there should be no schism in the body, he says. If one rejoices, let us all rejoice. If one weeps, we can all weep with them and have compassion.

We better start learning how to get along because we are going to be together forever. We need, as the bride of Christ, to make sure that we are fitting spouse for Him. He does not argue with Himself. He does not hold grudges against Himself. He does not do things against Himself. Neither should the bride.

So let us end this sermon here in Revelation 14, speaking about the Lamb and the 144,000 who, it shows us here, are the firstfruits of God. Let us read the first five verses.

Revelation 14:1-5 Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth [it makes me think of the pheromone marking of the queen: No one outside the hive has that particular smell; here, it is a song; only those people that are part of this 144,000 have that identifying mark as it were]. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

God, here in Revelation chapter 14, shows us the culmination of the journey of the Pentecost loaf—of the little flock, of God's field, of God's building, of His household, of His Family, of the Body of Christ. These 144,000—firstfruits to God and to the Lamb—have overcome, at this point, and have now proclaimed victory. They are worthy to follow Christ, wherever He goes, for all eternity. And we need to take these metaphors, think on them, and rededicate ourselves to playing out our individual roles for the good of the whole church, in preparing the church for this glorious destiny.