

Giving an Answer (I Peter 3:15) The "House Church Movement"

Answer the following false positions on the back of this paper:

1. ¹"There is nothing to rule out the possibility that the role of elders in the early church might well have encompassed more than one level of involvement—even simultaneously. Perhaps there were elders shepherding the disciples in each house, depending upon their size and makeup. ²And perhaps elder oversight may have been exercised throughout a group of house churches which collectively comprised a larger, recognizable congregation. ³More thought-provoking for us, of course, is the third possibility -- that elders in individual house churches might also have come together as a group of city-wide elders to discuss matters of importance to the entire community of believer" (Page 178).

⁴"The most universally-overlooked feature of the Lord's Supper as practiced in the primitive house church is that – from all appearances – it was observed in conjunction with a fellowship meal. That is, a normal, ordinary meal with the usual variety of food. However, unlike normal, ordinary meals, this combined table fellowship and memorial was shared among the disciples for the special purpose of strengthening, not just their physical bodies, but their common bond in the spiritual body of Christ... From its very inception, therefore, the Lord's Supper was an integral part of a real meal (pages 145-146)" (F. Lagard Smith; *Radical Restoration*; pages 178; 145-146).

2. ⁵"Titus 1:5, plus other references to appointing Elders is always "in every City". I do not believe that Elders can lead more than one Church. Many of the early Christians were forced to meet in small groups (not multiple congregations). I've stood in the catacombs which held 10-20 people about 10-20 meters apart. Recommend that you visit them if you have not already done so" (Frank Shipp; Member and Class Teacher at Eastridge "A Church of Christ" on Pendleton Road in El Paso, TX; Email to Brian A. Yeager; Thursday April 27, 2006).

3. ⁶"When believers came together in each others houses as churches ⁷their corporate worship and sharing together was completely spontaneous with no one leading from the front. All present are free to take part without the controlling presence of anyone 'leading' the proceedings" (Beresford Job; http://www.house-church.org/what_main.htm; June 2004).

4. "WFR [*White's Ferry Road - B.A.Y.*] House Churches: One of the goals of any Christian is to show the heart of the Lord Jesus in everyday life, not just at a church building for a few minutes one or two times a week. At WFR, one of the best ways we have found to experience that "home-style, heart-felt living", is to practice it in our homes!

⁸Every Sunday night there are 20 house churches, including our teen groups, that meet from Rocky Branch to Calhoun to , and several stops in between. There are also many small groups that meet during the week. One of our goals here at WFR is to find Acts 2:41-47 actually happening in every neighborhood around Ouachita Parish" (White's Ferry Road Church of Christ in West Monroe, LA; <http://www.wfrchurch.org>).

Answering these errors...

1. While the whole first quote is false, we'll break it into four parts. First off, and a point that will be repeated, there were to be elders in every church (**Acts 14:23**). The word "church", in the aforementioned verse, is translated from the Greek word "ekklēsia" (Strong's number 1577) which in that passage means: "a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly" (*Thayer's Greek – English Lexicon of the New Testament*; pages 195-196). Therefore, for every locally assembly there were to be elders for that local assembly. When a congregation met in a home, it was an assembly in a home, not part of an assembly in a home (**Romans 16:5**).
2. We know that a group of "house churches" could not make up a local congregation, for a local congregation is to assemble together INTO ONE PLACE (**I Corinthians 11:20** and **I Corinthians 14:23**).
3. We also know that oversight of an eldership extended only to the group that was among them (**I Peter 5:1-3**). Thus, there were no city-wide elderships. This is Roman Catholicism to the core.
4. The Lord's Supper is NOT a common meal and to turn it into a common meal is to violate the truth (**I Corinthians 11:18-34**).
5. Like most who meet at "A Church of Christ" on Pendleton Road here in El Paso, they speak before they know what they're talking about. Again, as in point one, the elders were to be appointed in every church [assembly] (**Acts 14:23**). See point one also to see Frank's error in thinking multiple groups meeting in one city makes up one local congregation, though he denies that he is what he believes, it is what he is ignorantly saying. If a congregation of twenty met in a catacomb, then they were to have their own elders. Again, see **Acts 14:23** and **I Peter 5:1-3** along with the discussion points we've already had.
6. We must realize that some whole congregations met in homes (**I Corinthians 16:19**, **Colossians 4:15**, and **Philemon v.2**). However, not all congregations met in a home (**Acts 2:46**, **Acts 5:42**, **Acts 20:7**, and **I Corinthians 11:22; 34**).
7. Of course, with the house church movement we'll see relaxed worship, a lack of reverence, formality, and decency. These are errors (**Hebrews 12:28** and **I Corinthians 14:40**).
8. If they were truly trying to practice Acts 2:41-47, why are not doing it "together" as that text says (**Acts 2:44**)? Not that White's Ferry Road has scriptural elders, but how can they oversee a divided assembly (**Acts 20:28-31** and **Hebrews 13:17**)? The point of the local church is to come together (**Acts 14:27**, **Acts 20:7**, **I Corinthians 11:33**, **I Thessalonians 5:11**, and **Hebrews 10:24-25**), not to disperse.