The House Church Movement

I. There is a difference between churches that meet in houses and "house churches."
   1. Many of the early churches met in homes (Rom 16:5; 1Co 16:19; Col 4:15; Phm 1:2).
      A. There are advantages to meeting in a house.
         i. It's more personal.
         ii. It can be more welcoming.
         iii. It's cheaper.
      B. A church meeting in a house is fundamentally no different than a church meeting in
         its own dedicated building.
      C. The difference is only in size and atmosphere, but not in substance.
   2. Most "house churches" are not churches.
      A. Most "house churches" are organized by some unbaptized, unordained guy with a
         bright idea.
      B. If a church is not constituted by a validly ordained pastor, then it is merely a Meetup
         group and not a church.
         i. The only way a man can be a validly ordained minister is to have been
            ordained by a validly ordained minister (1Ti 4:14; 2Ti 1:6; Tit 1:5; 2Ti
            2:2).
            a. The Holy Ghost makes a man a pastor (Act 13:2 c/w Act 26:16 c/w
               Eph 3:7; Act 20:28).
            b. No man takes this honour unto himself (Heb 5:4).
         ii. Ordained ministers (Act 21:8 c/w Eph 4:11) start churches (Act 8:5,12 c/w
             Act 9:31).
         iii. Ordained ministers add members to churches through baptism (Act 2:41-
             42,47).
         iv. Ordained ministers ordain other men as ministers and send them to oversee
             churches (Act 14:23; 1Ti 1:3; Tit 1:5).
      v. If a "house church" was not started by an ordained minister, then it's not a
         church.

II. Many "house church" advocates despise the "institutional church."
   1. Jesus built a church, not a "small group."
   2. Jesus' church is an "institutional church."
      A. Jesus built His church (Mat 16:18).
      B. Build v. - 4. fig. a. With reference to immaterial objects: To construct, frame, raise,
         by gradual means (anything that is compared to an edifice, as a philosophical system,
         a literary work, a reputation, an empire). Often with up. In religious use,
         after N.T., to build up (the Church, an individual) = to edify (also absol.). to build
         up (any one's health, strength, etc.): to establish it by gradual means.
      C. Institutional adj. - 1. a. Of, pertaining to, or originated by institution; having the
         character or function of an institution; furnished with institutions, organized.
      D. Institution - 1. a. The action of instituting or establishing; setting on foot or in
         operation; foundation; ordainment; the fact of being instituted.
      E. Institute v. - 1. trans. a. To set up, establish, found, ordain; to introduce, bring into
         use or practice.
F. Jesus set up, established, and founded His church; therefore Jesus instituted His church; therefore Jesus' church is an institutional church.

3. Their problem is that most of the "institutional churches" that they despise are not churches.
   A. The Catholic Church is not the church of Jesus Christ.
   B. The Protestant churches are not the churches of Jesus Christ.
      i. They came out of the Catholic church and are her harlot daughters (Rev 17:5; Eze 16:44).
      ii. A clean thing can't come out of an unclean thing (Job 14:4).
   C. Nondenominational churches and community churches are not the churches of Jesus Christ because they were started by some Protestant guy with a bright idea, not an ordained minister of Jesus Christ.

III. Most "house churches" don't have Biblical church government.
    1. Most "house churches" don't have a pastor in authority over them.
       A. "There are no sanctuaries to buy and maintain, and frequently there are no pastoral salaries to sustain." (House Church, Wikipedia, 4/26/17)
       B. "Those of us in a house church do not have a single pastor leading a congregation. We believe there is safety in plurality of leadership." (The Growing House-Church Movement, Ministry Today, 10/31/2000)
       C. "All the functions normally associated with a sanctuary (communion, baptism, healing prayers, Bible study) are conducted in the homes by laypeople." (The Growing House-Church Movement, Ministry Today, 10/31/2000)
    2. Lay people should not be baptizing or serving communion; only ordained ministers are authorized to perform these ordinances.
       A. Only ordained ministers can baptize.
          i. Jesus commissioned His ordained ministers to baptize (Mar 3:14 c/w Mat 28:16-20).
          ii. All the examples of baptism in the Bible were done by ordained ministers (See sermon: Basic Bible Doctrine (Part 12) - Baptism (Part 1)).
       B. Only ordained ministers can serve communion.
          i. A pastor is the steward of God who supervises the service of His table (Tit 1:7).
          ii. Steward n. - 1. a. An official who controls the domestic affairs of a household, supervising the service of his master's table, directing the domestics, and regulating household expenditure; a major-domo.
          iii. The Lord's Table is the communion table (1Co 10:16,21).
          iv. Consider the example of the Old Testament: only the priests and the Levites performed the ordinances of the tabernacle and temple.
          v. The same pattern is continued under the New Testament.
    3. Many "house church" adherents have a problem with pastoral authority.
       A. God has ordained that a pastor has the authority over the local church (Heb 13:7,17).
       B. Pastors are supposed to "preach the word" (2Ti 4:2).
          i. Paul "preached" long sermons during church services (Act 20:7).
          ii. "House church" worship services are more like informal Bible studies where everyone has their say.
       C. Pastors are supposed to rebuke and reprove the brethren (1Ti 5:20; Tit 2:15).
4. "House church" advocates need to ask themselves by what authority they start "churches," baptize people, serve communion, etc.

IV. People who attend "house churches" instead of real churches (which could meet in houses or other buildings) have forsaken the assembling of the church (Heb 10:25).
   1. Those who refuse to be baptized by an ordained pastor and added to a local church have rejected the counsel of God against themselves (Luk 7:29-30 c/w M at 21:31-32).
   2. Even worse than "house church" adherents are individual "Christians" who think that they don't need to be a member of a church or to meet with other Christians for public worship.
   3. If a man doesn't assemble himself with a church when he can he is not a Christian (Act 11:26).
   4. The "house church" movement is an attack on the true church of Jesus Christ and on pastoral authority.