

Serious Studies On The New Testament Church

By L. D. Gibson

Preface

One of the greatest pleasures of my ministry is to see some of the old Baptist books reprinted. Here is a book that is not well known, but it is one that every Baptist should read.

Bro. L. D. Gibson, who is now in glory, is father to Lenna, Lenore and Helen Gibson. Lenore was a member at Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church, Chesapeake, Ohio, while I was pastor. Her husband, Wilmot Snell, was a deacon at that time. Both she and her husband are in heaven. While I was pastor at Mt. Pleasant, we reprinted this booklet (1982), and now I am thankful to be able to reprint it again. I have received permission from Helen Gibson Miley to reprint the book.

We hope that the 2000 edition will be a help to many people. This project is made possible by individual donations to First Baptist Publications, a mission project of First Baptist Church; P. O. Box 201; Harrison, Ohio, where I have been pastor since 1982.

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Before beginning this article, I spent many hours studying the etymology of the word Ekklesia. Experience has taught me the importance of having the right word in the right place.

Many years ago I prepared a program for The Ohio Baptist Association. On that program was this subject, "The immanence of God and the transcendence of God" by Prof. W. T. Napier of Huntington, W. Va. When I gave the program to the printer, I said, "I would like to call your attention to the spelling of the word immanence." I said, "Please spell it just as it is in the manuscript." He assured me that his man never made a mistake and one glance at the subject he would know the right word.

A short time thereafter I called at the shop for the programs. When they gave me the programs there was one of the programs on the outside of the package for inspection. I looked for the word immanence and to my surprise and disappointment the word was spelled imminence.

When I lifted my eyes from the program the man said, "Anything wrong?" I replied, "Yes, you did the very thing that I told you not to do." He said, "Brother, it s your mistake there is no such word in the English language." He picked up a dictionary and said, "You should consult authority before you use words that you know nothing about." I said, "Do you have an unabridged dictionary?" He replied, "Yes sir." I said, "Let me have it; and if I can t find the word immanence, I will plead guilty to your implied charge of stupidity.

He brought the dictionary and I turned to the word immanence and said, "Take a look at that word and compare it with my manuscript." He said, "It s our mistake, but it doesn't hurt the program for not one person out of a thousand would know any difference." I said, "I can think of a score or more of persons who will likely attend that meeting who will know the difference and out of deference to them I demand a correction." He reprinted the programs without extra charge.

I have given you this bit of my experience to impress upon your mind the importance of selecting the proper words in the discussion of any subject. Now let us look at the word ekklesia, and I quote from the late Boyce Taylor. "Before we go further in the study of Revelation it will be well for us to get clearly in mind our reasons for saying that Ekklesia never means anything but an organized assembly."

Every man s interpretation of Revelation depends on what he means by the word ekklesia or church. If he starts wrong by perverting the words of the Lord Jesus and making His ekklesia mean a universal, invisible, unorganized, and unassembling body, then his whole exposition of Revelation will be heretical and will drip with ambiguity. He lays a heretical foundation and his building will be hay, wood, and stubble. So we want to go patiently into what the New Testament means by the word ekklesia or church. We maintain that in every place where it is found in the New Testament, whether used of Israel in the wilderness or of the church of the first-born in Heaven or the citizens of Ephesus or of a New Testament Church, it always and everywhere refers to an organized assembly. We think we have good and sufficient reasons for maintaining that position. Our readers will have to be the jury to render the verdict as to whether our logic will hold. If you care to go more fully into this study, get a copy of Jesse B. Thomas book, "THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM."

Our first reason for contending that the ekklesia never means anything but an organized and assembled church is that the Lord Jesus, who is the author of the Book of Revelation, uses the word ekklesia 20 times in Revelation; and every time He uses it, He refers to a local organized and assembling church. Seven times He uses it in the singular in naming the seven churches of Asia. Thirteen times He uses it in the plural in referring to the seven churches and their successors. Whenever He spoke of a larger group than a local church, He always used it in the plural.

B. H. Carroll, for many years a teacher in Baylor University and later the organizer of the Southwestern Theological Seminary, in a newspaper controversy with W. J. McClothlin as to the meaning of the word ekklesia, says, "The proposed new sense of the word Ekklesia destroys the

essential ideas of the old word, namely, organization and assembly, and would leave Christ without an institution, an official business body on this earth."

Our Lord Himself uses the word 23 times: once in Matthew 16; twice in Matthew 18; and 20 times in Revelation. These 23 instances settle the meaning of the word. Back in the days when T. T. Eaton was the editor of the Western Recorder, in discussing with the "invisiblisticists" the meaning of the word ekklesia in Matthew 16:18, he gives the seven reasons for saying the church Jesus built was a local church:

- (1) That is the meaning of the word Ekklesia.
- (2) That is Christ's universal usage of the word.
- (3) That is the only meaning that would have been understood by the Apostles.
- (4) This is the only church recognized in the New Testament.
- (5) That is the only kind of church to which the promise has been fulfilled.
- (6) That is the only kind of church adapted to human nature.
- (7) That is the only kind that is suited to preach a pure gospel.

Professor H. E. Dana of the Fort Worth Seminary in his book, CHRIST'S EKKLESIA, page 23, says: "There were in the classical use of their terms four elements pertinent to its New Testament meaning:

- (1) The assembly was local.
- (2) It was autonomous.
- (3) It pre-supposed definite qualifications.
- (4) It was conducted on democratic principles."

Probably the Rotherham translation of the Scriptures is one of the best and most accurate of all the versions. In the appendix on page 268, in giving his reasons why he uniformly translates the word ekklesia by the word assembly he says: "It is well known that the Greek word for "church" is ecclesia and that ecclesia is strictly and fully called-out-assembly." The very fact that Mr. Rotherham uniformly translates the word ekklesia "assembly" throughout the New Testament is the very strongest proof possible that he thought the word ekklesia meant only an "organized and assembling" body.

Ramsay, in "St. Paul the Traveller," says on page 124: The term ekklesia originally implied "the assembled constituted a self-governing body like a free city."

Harnack, in his "History of Dogma," says the Catholic idea of the church sprang up in the third century. Eusebius, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Hieronymus, and Cyprian all speak of "Holy Churches" and never of the Catholic or universal church. On page 83 of Volume 3, Harnack says: "No thought of the desperate idea of the invisible church.

This would probably have brought about a lapse from pure Christianity. It is neither Biblical nor Scriptural but is a desperate idea born in the brain of a heretic and swallowed by Scofield in our

day to decoy Baptists into the camp of the enemies of the only true churches, built and preserved by the Lord Jesus Himself."

Joseph Cross, in his book, *COALS FROM THE ALTAR*, says this: "We hear much of the invisible church as contradistinguished from the church visible." Of an invisible church in this world I know nothing; the Word of God says nothing; nor can anything of the kind exist, except in the brain of a heretic.

The church is a body; but what sort of a body is that which can neither be seen nor identified? A body is an organism occupying space and having a definite locality. Roy D. Mason, in his book, *THE CHURCH THAT JESUS BUILT*,

says something like this: (I quote from memory) "A mere aggregation is not a body, there must be organization as well. A heap of heads, hands, feet, and other members would not make a body. They must be united in a system each in its proper place and pervaded by a common life. So a collection of bricks and board would not be a house. This material must be built up together in artistic order, adapted to utility. So a mass of roots, trunks, and branches would not be a vine or a tree: the several parts must be developed according to the laws of nature from the same seed and nourished by the same sap."

Bishop Hart, one of the publishers of the Wescott and Hort Greek Testament, whose scholarship and ability certainly cannot be called in question, confesses the "necessity of finding some other than etymological, grammatical, or historical grounds" on which to prove the universal church. That means it cannot be proved by the word *ekklesia* nor by the grammatical construction of New Testament days. Where does Mr. Hart say then that the idea of an universal church came from?

He says the idea of an universal church came away from this side of the New Testament from the theology of uninspired men. Note what he says: He says that the idea of an universal church is not "the proper original of *Ekklesia*:" that it is not traceable to "current usage" that the word *ekklesia* is always limited by Paul himself to a local organization which has a "corresponding unity of its own, ... each is a body of Christ and a sanctuary of God." By each he means each local church. Again he says: Paul uniformly speaks of the individual church "as the body of Christ," (I Cor. 12:27) "a virgin," (II Cor. 11:2) "a temple," (I Cor. 3:16); and in Eph. 2:2 he refers to the church as "a holy temple." All the references are from Hart's *Christian Ekklesia*. Mr. Hart's testimony that Paul's use of the *ekklesia* in Ephesians and Colossians is to the local church at Ephesus and Colosse is especially convincing because Scofield and all the balance of the "universal heretics" go to Ephesians and Colossians to substantiate their heretical teaching. Jesse B. Thomas, in the book, *CHURCH AND KINGDOM*, calls attention to the fact that in John 2:19-21 Jesus calls His own body a temple: this involved both local and visible tangibility. II Peter 1:16; I John 1:1. So building in Matthew 16:18. All these allusions, according to Mr. Thomas, point irresistibly to a concrete organism. In Eph. 2:21 (RV) the local church as a building and "fitly joined and compacted as a body." The first in 2:21 and the latter in 4:16. Alexander Campbell, in *Christian Baptist*, page 214: "*Ekklesia* literally signifies an assembly called out from others and is used among the Greeks, particularly the Athenians, for their popular

assemblies, summoned by their chief magistrates and in which none but citizens had a right to sit.

By inherent power it may be applied to any body of men called out and assembled in one place. If it ever loses the idea of calling out and assembling, it loses its principal features and its primitive use. David Lipscombe in "Gospel Advocate," October 28, 1926: "There is not the shadow of any universal church in the New Testament, nor is there the representation of a tangible church or one that can be reached and associated with, save the local church."

Again in the some article, Mr. Lipscombe says: "Just so, when speaking of things common to all churches, we say the church is the body of Christ, not meaning that all the churches are consolidated to make one body, but that each and every church is the body of Christ in its locality and what is common to all is affirmed of the church as of one body. This style of speech is common. This can be its only meaning.

There is no development of the church of Christ in the world save in the local church. Paul uses this same general language, of the church being the body of Christ, to the church at Corinth that he does to Colossians, Ephesians and others: "Ye are the body of Christ and members in particular." The church at Rome, the church at Ephesus, at Colosse, each was just as much "the body of Christ and members in particular," as the church at Corinth.

The church at Jerusalem was a complete body of Christ before another church was established. It lost none of its completeness when other churches were planted. And every other church was as complete within itself as was this church at Jerusalem. Each church was in itself a complete body of Christ, without any reference to any other church, or churches, in existence. God has given to us the local church as the only manifestation of His body. It is the only body ordained or recognized by God as acceptable to Him. It is the "pillar and support of the truth." It is "the body of Christ."

The body of which He is the Head. "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth according to the effectual working in the measure of every part maketh increase of the body into the edifying of itself in love."

The New Testament Ekklesia The Greek word for church in the New Testament is "ekklesia." Ekklesia is the only word in the New Testament that is translated church. The word Ekklesia occurs 115 times in the New Testament. Three times it has reference to a political meeting of the citizens of Ephesus. It is translated assembly in those three instances in Acts 19:32, 39, and 41. These three instances of the word Ekklesia establish very clearly two things about the meaning of the word. The Greek Ekklesia in the city of Ephesus was an organized body and an assembling body. In the whole 115 times it occurs in the New Testament, it is never used one time with any other meaning than of an assembly that assembles and that is organized.

As George W. McDaniel well says: "Among the Greeks, ekklesia was the assembly of the citizens of the free city-state gathered by a herald's blowing of a horn through the streets of a town. It is of the citizens of Ephesus that it is thus used in Acts. Two things were clear; namely, the citizens were organized and gathered. The word ekklesia is used once in Acts 7:38 of the congregation of Israel assembled before the tabernacle in the wilderness by the blowing of a

silver trumpet. Again, two things are made clear; namely, the ekklesia was organized and gathered.

The word ekklesia is used once in Hebrews 12:23. "The church of the Firstborn." As used in that passage it has the some essentials. When there spoken of, they are assembled and organized. These expressions all show that they will be assembled when thus spoken of: "Are come unto Mount Zion;" "unto the city of the living God;" "unto the heavenly Jerusalem;" unto "an innumerable company of angels;" "which are written in heaven;" "to the spirits of just men made perfect;" "and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant." All these things show that this church was gathered in Heaven. That they were organized as well as assembled is proven by the fact that the names of this assembly are written in Heaven; both essentials are there organized and assembled.

These are the instances found in the New Testament where the word ekklesia refers to some gatherings except a local Baptist Church. In every one of them, whether of the citizens of a Greek city, or the gathering of ancient Israel before the tabernacle, or of the gathering of the church of the Firstborn in Heaven, it had the same two essentials included, namely, organization and assembly. In every other instance of its use in the New Testament the word ekklesia refers to a local Baptist Church. One of the established rules of the interpretation of God's Word, in Greek as of all other languages, is that if the ordinary meaning of the word will make sense, even in a doubtful passage, then its ordinary meaning is the correct meaning. Therefore, we maintain that in all the other 110 passages where the word ekklesia is found in the New Testament, it will not only make good sense and not contradict other Scriptures, but it will harmonize the whole New Testament with itself and that no other meaning of the word ekklesia was ever dreamed of until the third century or from A. D. 267 on.

Now let us face some facts. The interpretation of the Book of Revelation depends more upon a clear and accurate interpretation of the meaning of ekklesia than every thing else put together. If the church Jesus built and called "My church" and promised perpetuity to is composed of all saved and is an invisible church, and the Book of Revelation is a history of an institution that cannot be seen, and cannot meet, and has no ordinances, and nobody knows who is in it, or how or when they get in, and whether they can never get out; then every statement made by the Master about making the identity of the church clear and plain is false.

The meaning of the word ekklesia (church) as used in the New Testament: Since words are tools with which we work, every writer should have some knowledge of etymology. It is impossible for truth and error to dwell together without conflict. How can two walk together except they be agreed? They cannot, for they will be trying to pull each other down. Do you think the intrepid Paul would have kept silent in a day like this, when error is stealthily stalking through the land? He did not give place to the Judaisers, "No, not for an hour." And when Peter swayed and swerved from the true doctrine of grace, he did not fail to set Peter on an insipient path of doctrinal rectitude.

Christian courage is always better than cowardly compromise. How can an honest man be silent,

or a silent man be honest? Men talk with inexcusable ignorance about an invisible church. We hear statements like these: "If one is born again, he is already in the church; I don't care whether his name is on any church roll or not." "The only true church includes all the saved, and that church is invisible." "There is only one church and no one gets into it except he is born again." Let me remind you that there are no such expressions found in the Bible, yet they would have you believe that they are on every page of Holy Writ. Baptists by the thousands are being swept into this maelstrom of a false ecclesiology; and their interest in the program of their own church has drifted to zero; and their lives have become a liability to the cause they profess to represent. Vacant store buildings, tents, and garages are being utilized to accommodate the new religious sects that are springing up, each claiming membership in this universal, invisible church. Denominationalism is denounced, and yet each new sect is trying to start another. Every one of these religious cults adopts the same shibboleth. They all teach there is but one true church, but they do not hesitate to call their particular sect a church, with full authority from Heaven to administer the ordinances. If there is but "one true church," and that the universal, invisible church, then it logically follows that all others are false and man made. The local churches are being discarded and thrown on the scrap-heap of oblivion. About the only excuse for their existence is to further the interest of the "Big Church." Why should anyone be loyal to a local church if he believes there is no Scriptural support for such an institution?

Many Baptists, deeply imbued with the universal church idea, refuse to give of their means or time to support their local church. And many are forsaking the assembly of themselves together in their own churches. According to their teaching, there is no real visible church the visible organizations being the inventions of men, and may be set aside when they see fit. The "Big universal church," it is claimed, is "known only to the eye of God" and embraces within its folds everyone who claims to be born again. They say the local churches are only "branches" of the invisible church. Said Jesus: "By their fruit ye shall know them" (Matt. 7 :20). "Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?" Here, Jesus is teaching that the nature of a tree is determined by the fruit it bears. Apply this law to spiritual things and make your deductions accordingly. Furthermore, they tell us that the invisible universal church is spiritual and there is a oneness that characterizes it everywhere.

This unity can be discerned only by what is seen on the outside. Looking upon this vast concern, what do we see? What is the effect, or fruit, produced? Where this teaching, and thinking, is dominant in the sentiment and thinking of people, there are more religious sects than in communities where people have not been swayed by such teaching.

There has to be some explanation and excuse made for all these sects with their diverse teachings, and the universal church is their alibi. It is argued by some that it doesn't make any difference what one believes just so his heart is right. One should worship God in his own way, and if he prefers to be a Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, or something else, that is the road he should travel to Heaven. But he must be sure he is in the invisible church.

The advocates of the universal church are not agreed as to when it started. Some go back to Adam, others to Abraham, others to John the Baptist. Some say it originated during the personal

ministry of Jesus, while others are sure it had its "birth" on the first Pentecost after Christ's resurrection.

They are not agreed as to its membership. Some say it includes the saints of all ages, others say it includes none but the elect, while others claim none are in it except the saints after Pentecost. It is passing strange in the face of all this confusion, that it is claimed that the oneness that Jesus prayed for is realized in the universal church. But Jesus prayed for a oneness that would convince the world that He was the anointed of the Father (John 17:21). What is there in an invisible church that would cause the world to see Jesus? It is the local church that the world sees and persecutes.

It is the visible, local church that preaches the gospel, administers the ordinances, and executes the whole commission of Christ. The work of the commission requires visibility visible preachers, visible auditors, visible ordinances, and visible offerings. Everything in the tabernacle was to be made, and was made, according to a divinely furnished pattern; and God was no less concerned about the building of His church. There was to be no deviation from the divine law then, and there is to be none now.

Man's wisdom has not supplanted the "Wisdom from above" in any case. When baptism was instituted by the Lord, He Himself gave us the pattern in His burial in the waters of Jordan. A simple ordinance to keep before the people His burial and resurrection as well as the believer's death to sin, burial from the old life, and resurrection to walk in newness of life, a symbolism which Christ said fulfilled all righteousness.

But this pattern has been changed to include sprinkling and pouring, and has been spiritualized into the baptism in the Spirit. Now we are told "real baptism" is unreal. Thus the symbolism is destroyed by man. The Lord's Supper has been taken from the local church where it belongs and its privileges extended so as to allow all who desire it to partake. Where the universal church idea prevails, we find the greatest number believing in "open communion." The first effort to destroy the original pattern was when men began a vast visible concern which afterwards developed into the Roman and Greek Catholic organizations.

When the "Big Church" was sufficiently established, it began to martyr the followers of Christ. It was then that New Testament churches began to hide in the mighty Alps and in the valleys of Piedmont, where they had a refuge. It was then that people began to come out of the "big church" and form sects of their own, but were careful not to get very far from the "mother church," the Catholic. They brought with them many of her principles and practices, and it is these unscriptural things that divide the Christian forces today.

Now since history repeats itself, and is repeating itself, great organizations, I mean great in numbers, are rising so much so as to be positively dangerous to the church of Christ. Such organizations are made a test of fellowship. Its leaders give you certain rigid formulas, and you must repeat after them as follows: "A million more in '54." According to this modern movement, people should come out of the churches of God (I Cor. 1:2); (II Cor. 1:1); but this is no call for

individuals to come out of the churches, but for the churches to separate from certain individuals.

This is plural and not singular: "Ye are the temple of God." "Be ye separate sayeth the Lord." Paul did not ask the Corinthian Christians to come out of their church, but he did exhort the church to exercise discipline (I Cor. 5:13). Now if those who advocate the theory that the universal church is the only "real and true church" will answer a few questions, we should be able to find our way out of this mess.

If this invisible something is the "real church," then its whereabouts should be easily located. Who would be better qualified to make such a discovery than its advocates? God said, "Answer a fool according to his folly lest he be wise in his own conceit." So in keeping with this command, I want to propound the following questions: Was the church Paul persecuted the invisible church? If so, how and where did he find it?

Is the universal church visible or invisible? If it is invisible, how may we know it exists? If visible, what are its distinguishing characteristics that we may recognize it? How many kinds of churches did Jesus establish? Did He establish both the universal church and local churches? If so, write Scripture to prove that point.

Was the Great Commission given to the local church or to the universal church? If given to the universal church, how does it execute it? Does it decide matters by vote or otherwise? If by vote, when was such a vote taken? If otherwise, state when, where, and how. If the commission was given to the local church, what is the function of the universal church? If it was given to the universal church, what is the function of the local church? If the commission was given to the universal church, how does it make disciples?

Does it have a unified method of evangelism? If not, would not its work be confusing? Do some make disciples of unconscious babies, others make them of believers only, others make them by water baptism, and still others make them by a routine of "good works?" If the commission was given to the universal church, then how does it baptize? Does it practice immersion, sprinkling, and pouring, or does it use all three?

Does it allow its members to choose what kind they want? If the commission was given to the universal church, then how does it execute the teaching office? Does it endorse the teaching of all the sects claiming membership in it, or does it have a system of its own?

If it can endorse the teaching of all, then would there not be a confusion in the "body." "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints" (I Cor. 14:33). When did the universal church have a meeting and transact business? The Greek word ecclesia means a called-out assembly; when did the universal church assemble? If it cannot and does not assemble, then why call it a church? If all Christians belong to the universal church, then are they one inwardly? If so, and certainly this is claimed for it by its advocates, then why are they not one outwardly, since the world can only look upon the outward appearance?

Is the universal church the body of Christ? If so, are the religious denominations "branches" of

that body? Does the universal church have any way to express itself except through its branches? if there is unity in the body, then why the conflict in the branches? Is it not reasonable to suppose that there is conflict in the body similar to that in the branches?

Matt. 16:18 reads as follows: "Upon this rock I will build my church," from which it is argued Christ couldn't have meant the local congregation. He must have included all His people. This is the first time the word ecclesia occurs in the New Testament. The word ecclesia, which is translated church, was well understood by the people generally in the time of Christ. Concerning the language, Dr. A. T. Robertson says: "The Koine means the language common to the people everywhere, not merely the language of the common people, it was the means of communication throughout the Roman Empire." Business contracts, wills, deeds, correspondence, anything, and everything that made up the life of the people at that time all these were written in the Koine. If we could know what the people would understand by the word ecclesia, it would not be difficult to know what Jesus meant in His first use of it. Certainly He would not have put into it a meaning foreign to its common use without an explanation; and, in the absence of such explanation, we may reasonably suppose that He used it in its plain and primary sense.

Happily, we have a good key to its meaning in Matthew 18:17. Jesus again uses the word but in a sense easily understood. What it means in one passage it means in the other. If in Matt. 16:18, the ecclesia means the universal church, and if this is the kind of church Christ promised to "build;" isn't it passing strange that He never again referred to the kind of church He promised to build, but always spoke of His church as a local congregation? Did He change His mind and not build the kind of church He promised? If so, where is the proof?

Here is proof that He meant by the phrase "My Church" the name of His institution which is always a local congregation. Thomas T. Eaton, DD, LLD, says: "That he should speak twenty-one times about the church he did not promise to build, and never made the slightest allusion to the church he did promise to build, is simply incredible."

Christ promised perpetuity to His church that it as an institution would never perish from the earth; that in all generations there would be groups of His followers that He would recognize as churches; and they would carry on His work.

The great commission was given to such an institution and was followed by the promise, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." "All the days" means every day till the consummation of the age.

Here are some Scriptures used to support the universal church idea: I Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13; Phil. 3:6. How could Paul persecute an invisible church? "Invisible" means "not visible," "not capable of being seen."

Paul's persecuting did not extend beyond the Jerusalem church (Acts 8:1; Acts 9). The Revised Version renders Acts 9:31 "church." And this was the church at Jerusalem whose members had

been scattered by persecution.

The Body Of The Church

The most plausible argument the universal church advocates advance is that based upon passages containing the word "body." But in this they confuse the things figured, and leave their readers bewildered.

They argue; "if the body is the church and Christ is its head, then there must be but one body for the one head. There could not be one head for many bodies. For two or more bodies to be united to one head would be a monstrosity. Hence the one Head requires one body. And this body is the universal church." Let us make our thinking clear by distinguishing between the kinds of bodies mentioned. Paul uses the word body 78 times in his writings, and in every case the primary meaning is the human physical body. This should always be kept in mind. The word "body" has but one primary meaning, if we substitute any other meaning, we are certain it wrests the Scriptures. When the word occurs we should look upon it as a natural organized substance; unless there is weighty reason for a figurative meaning, the real thing is a material body with each member in its place. If there be a heap of hands, arms, legs, head, feet, and all other parts of a body, would that be a body? Not unless these parts were organized and functioning. This human body must have its own physical head or it would be a monstrosity.

Paul makes figurative application of the word body, and we must be careful in our interpretation of this figurative language. The Bible makes large use of figurative language.

For instance, Christ is called a Rock, a Lamb, a Vine, Shepherd, etc. But this does not mean that a lion is a lamb, or a rock is a vine. The redeemed are called a "City," but no one would think of interpreting this literally. Some dominant characteristics in each resemble the redeemed. Certain things of the human body are figuratively applied to a local church, but that does not mean the local church is a literal body, with hands, head, eyes, and feet. Some go so far as to say that the church is not an organization. There can be no New Testament church without its members being organized together.

In I Cor. 1:2, Paul is teaching the completeness and cooperation of the local church life that should be at that place. A body cannot be complete without its own head, and to make Christ the real head of a real spiritual body is unthinkable. Christ was seen eleven times after His resurrection: three times after His ascension. He will be wearing the same body when He returns to the earth for His saints.

This body He will wear throughout eternity. If the spiritual body is real and Christ is the real head, then there would be a real body without its own head. Such twisting of figurative language leaves a mutilated body. The head of the physical body does not primarily picture Christ as the Head of His Church. Another figure does that.

"The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church" (Eph. 5:23). Does

this mean the husband is the real head of the wife? If so, then the wife is headless. The husband is not the physical body of the wife, else it would take the whole husband to make a head for his wife. Since woman was second in creation and first in transgression, the husband takes first place, and is in authority, rulership, control; and the wife takes second place (Gen. 1:27; 2:18; 22:1; I Tim. 2:8-15; I Cor. 11:8,9). Here the headship of the husband is meant. So of Christ and His church. He is head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:23), and from this it is argued He could not be the head of numerous bodies. In Col. 2:10, it is said, "He is the head of all principality and power" which means that he is the head of every rule and authority.

In I Cor. 11:3 we read that "the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man." Now if Christ can be the "head of every man" then, why can He not be head of every local church without the relationship being a monstrosity. Do all women have to be united into one woman before the man can be the head? Do all men have to be made into one big universal man before Christ means He is the Ruler, the Lord of His church? Likewise, all the local churches do not have to be merged into one big universal church for Christ to be their head. In I Cor. 12:13, we read: "By one spirit we are all baptized into one body."

This text is used as a pretext to teach Holy Spirit baptism and that one is made a member of the universal invisible church. By that transaction they teach that at Pentecost the church had its birth when the Holy Spirit came and formed the one body, the church, by uniting the members to Christ, the head. Not a word is said about the church being formed on the day of Pentecost. The Church Was Built, Not Born!

This was subsequent to the disciples regeneration and, hence unlike the modern theory, that in regeneration one is baptized with the Holy Spirit, and united to Christ the Head. I suppose that is where the Holiness get their idea of a second blessing. If this passage does not teach what they claim for it, then it leaves them without a foot to stand on.

First, I would have you observe that the word with is in neither the Greek nor the English. The Authorized Version has "by one Spirit." While the Revised Version has "in one Spirit." I Cor. 12:13, the text means "in one spirit of unity, fellowship, faith, hope, love and equality, were we all immersed into one body, the church at Corinth."

Spirit baptism is not in the text, but men have used it as a pretext and twisted it to support a theory. No Baptist will long continue to cooperate except with the Lord Jesus and through His body, the local church.

What sayeth the Scriptures? "Hath put all things under His feet and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all things." Jesus is the head of the body.

The body is the local church (I Cor. 12:27). It may be readily seen that one who belongs to a church system that does not allow equality of rights and privileges to all its members and ministers would prefer that this passage (I Cor. 12:13) means anything but its plain meaning; but

Baptists profess to believe in the equal rights of all church members and should not set aside this passage because others try to twist it.

In the year 1630, Baptists declared in articles of faith that "by baptism we are received into the holy congregation of God's people" Pillars of Orthodoxy, page 215. In this passage (I Cor. 12:13) "water" must be interpreted literally, because there is nothing in its textual relation that requires a different construction. Hence water baptism is meant and "the body," hence, means the church. That the passage means this, the following will show.

Always give preference to the primary meaning of words unless there is weighty reason for a secondary meaning. Baptism always means a literal act unless its contextual setting shows differently. In the text under consideration, there is nothing in the context justifying anything but its primary meaning. Hence water baptism is meant. To find Spirit baptism in this text is to distort language by giving words a figurative meaning that does not belong to them. All authority of the local church heads up in Christ, and that is what headship means. No pope, bishop, priest, or any other individual has any authority to "Lord it over God's heritage."

Of every local Baptist church it may be truly said, "To his own master he standeth or falleth." (Rom. 14:4). It is clear that only those who have been Scripturally baptized belong to a New Testament Church, and this may be the reason for some people taking so much interest in some other kind of church and despising it as some do, but the fact remains that "body" in I Cor. 12:13 is a local church and the baptism mentioned is water baptism.

The whole 12th chapter of I Corinthians is so manifestly social in its drift and statements that it would be incongruous to extend any part of it beyond local conditions. The New Testament church is an independent, separate, local and tangible congregation. The Scriptures plainly teach such. Even those who teach the universal church theory are compelled to execute their plans, programs, and purposes through a local body, thus showing that the invisible church theory is not workable. There was a local church in Ephesus. Paul's letter was addressed to the "saints which are at Ephesus" (4:1). This was a real, visible congregation. Paul called together the "elders" of the Ephesian church (Acts 20:17).

What was the position of John the Baptist dispensationally? To which of these does John belong? Did his preaching and baptism belong under the law? If so, where do we find a record of it in the Old Testament? Perhaps the Jews knew more about their law than any other nation knew about theirs. Moses wrote the moral, civic, and religious laws; and these were read and explained in the home, the synagogue, along the way, and were written upon the gate and door posts. Men, women, and children were gathered into assemblies when the law was read and explained to them (Deut. 6:6-9; 11:20; 31:9-13). If John's ministry belonged under the Jewish law, someone would have discovered it. There is no such record in the Old Testament. When this Baptist preacher began his ministry, there was great excitement; the teachers of the law did not understand it. They were astonished beyond measure. John's ministry was one of the most important epochs in human history, and yet it was neither mentioned in, nor enjoined by, Jewish law. If John's ministry was not under Jewish law, then the baptism of Jesus was not under Jewish

law. Therefore, his baptism was not an initiatory rite inducting Him into His priestly office. Lev. 8:1-36 states the legal requirements for the initiation of a priest into his office. The Scriptures gives detailed description of the items of procedure. More than twenty items are in that ritual, and heavy penalty was exacted on those who violated them (Deut. 27:26). Jesus observed none of this ritual in His baptism. Both Jesus and John ignored "all the precepts of this law" in the baptism of Jesus and yet escaped the curse. He received His Father's approval (Matt. 3:17). Would the Father be well pleased with the Son if that Son ignored every jot and tittle of the law? If John inducted Christ into his office of high priest, what kind of high priesthood would it be? It could be nothing more than a Jewish office, and Christ would be no more than another Jewish priest. Therefore, He could be nothing more than a type of the Messianic priesthood and not the expected Messiah.

But there is something more to consider. No one could function as high priest unless he belonged to the tribe of Levi. We know that our Lord sprang from the tribe of Judah of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. "If he were on earth he would not be a priest." He was "on earth" when He was baptized, but was not a Jewish priest. Christ was a priest after the order of Melchisedec (Heb. 7 :17) and did not belong to the Levitical priesthood. What desperate straits men are in when they are willing to destroy the Saviourhood and Lordship of Christ rather than accept His baptism as Christian baptism!

The baptism of Jesus marked a new era and hence did not belong to the Jewish dispensation; neither did he belong to an intermediate dispensation. Mark says the ministry of John was "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1). Here, the Holy Spirit has designated the ministry of John as the actual beginning of the gospel dispensation. Luke says: "The law and the prophets were until John." Dr. Edward T. Tiscox says, "If it be asked when and where did Baptist history begin?" Without hesitation we reply, "They commenced with John the Baptist, or Jesus Christ the head of the church; and the first of their faith were his disciples, constituting the primitive church."

Sir Isaac Newton said: "Modern Baptists, formerly called Anabaptists, are the only people that never symbolized with the Papacy." Baptist Church Perpetuity, page 313.
Prof. John Clark Ridpath, Methodist, Historian, said: "I should not readily admit that there was a Baptist church as far back as A. D. 100.

Though without doubt there were Baptists then as all Christians were then Baptists." Alexander Campbell (founder of the Disciples church) says: "From the Apostolic age to the present time, the sentiments and the practices of Baptists have had a continued chain of advocates; and public monuments of their existence in every century can be produced." Prof. William Cecil Duncan, professor of Latin and Greek in the Methodist University of Louisiana, said: "They did not originate with the Reformation, for long before Luther lived, nay, long before the Roman Catholic Church herself was known, Baptists and Baptist churches existed and flourished in Europe, in Asia, and in Africa." Baptist Law of Continuity, pp. 43-44. So men refer to Acts 19:1 -7 as teaching that the baptism of John was not Christian; but there is nothing in the passage that would justify such a claim. When Paul reached Ephesus, he met some

men who had been immersed by some unnamed administrator. Paul examined them as to the Scriptural grounds for their baptism. Paul said, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you first believed?" and they answered: "We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." This was 26 years after John's death. It is not likely these men had ever seen John or heard him preach. Some came to Ephesus and preached but seemed to have been ignorant that the Holy Spirit had come to take up his abode in individual Christians and in New Testament churches. These men accepted what light was given them but were still left in ignorance as to the plan of salvation.

The Holy Spirit had a large part in the ministry of John (Matt. 3:11), and his auditors would not be ignorant of the Holy Spirit as these men were. John did not baptize all that requested baptism at his hands; they must meet definite requirements. They must repent, believe in Christ, and give evidence of a change in their lives (Matt. 3:1-12). He preached blood-atonement (John 1:29). The difficulty was not in John's baptism but in these men and the administrator. Jesus put to silence the religious leaders on this question of the authority of John's baptism (Matt. 21:25). Christ received no other baptism than that which John administered. The apostles received no other. In order to have Scriptural baptism you must have a Scriptural subject.

1. A saved person.
2. Scriptural authority, a New Testament Church.
3. A proper administrator, an ordained preacher.
4. Proper mode and design, immersion.

John was a man sent from God and sent to baptize (John 1:6-33). He was sent on a mission. Hence he was a missionary. John was called the Baptist (Matt. 3:1) hence he was a missionary Baptist. He was a preacher (Matt. 3:1). Christ was sent on a mission (John 17:18). He was baptized by "John the Baptist" (Matt. 3:13-17). Hence he was a missionary Baptist. Jesus traveled about 65 miles in order to receive baptism at the hands of a Baptist preacher. Therefore, He had Baptist baptism. God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit approved the Baptist baptism (Matt. 3:16,17).

The Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God by rejecting John's baptism (Luke 7:29). Many religionists do the same thing today. Out of the material prepared by the ministry of John, Jesus built the first local Baptist church. Calling it "My Church" (Matt. 16:18), He called out the twelve and ordained them that they might be with Him (Luke 6:12,13).

They were separated from others and gathered about Christ (Mark 3:13,14). This constituted an ecclesia, an assembly, a church. Paul refers to it as a church when he said: "God set some in the church, first apostles" (I Cor. 2:28). Christ, the founder of this church, was a missionary Baptist preacher; these apostles had been won to, and by, missionary Baptist doctrine and practice, and were set in the first missionary Baptist church by the Founder of it.

This church, as an institution, is promised continuity. Christ promised that the gates of Hell should not prevail against His church (Matt. 16:18). He said that after a process of private labor, an aggrieved brother should carry his case before the church (Matt. 18:13-17). If Christ's

institution ceased during any period after its establishment, then this instruction would be meaningless during that time.

Christ gave His great commission to that church and closes that command with the promise, "I am with you always even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:1 8-20). Literally this means every day until time closes.

THE END

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