BAPTIST HISTORY AND CHURCH SUCCESSION

THE NON-PROTESTANT BAPTIST

The Nature, Continuity, and Heritage of Christ's Church

WM. F. BEKGAARD

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The Non-Protestant Baptist

Wm. F. Bekgaard

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the Glory of God and to the memory of all those throughout the darkest of times who joyfully gave their lives for His testimony. Of whom it may be truly said that they are of these:

> ". . . and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and *in* dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith . . ." Heb. 11:35-39.

Foreword

I am immensely interested in seeing Brother William Bekgaard's book entitled *The Nonprotestant Baptists* sent to the printers. In my opinion he has done all those who seek the truth about church succession an inestimable service. His writing style is to be admired. His research is broad and deep. His communication skills are to be admired.

As I normally state, there is but one book that I endorse as a perfect book and that is the Bible. However, I give to Brother Bekgaard's work my wholehearted endorsement. I know that it will be used to keep alive and perpetuate these vital truths concerning our Lord's promises to His true church.

John E. Penn

Pastor of North Bryant Baptist Church
Retired Instructor Church History and Hermeneutics at Missionary Baptist Seminary and Institute of Little Rock Arkansas.
Th D, BA, MTh, BTh.

I have been a student of New Testament Church History for over 60 years and have taught in two Seminaries for over 15 years with Baptist History as one of my main courses. If I was still teaching this book would be one of my required reading. The format of the book approaches the history of the Lord's churches from a different perspective and opens up a valuable and much needed view of the churches of the past.

Brother Wm. Bekgaard has done a fantastic job putting together his work on "The Non-protestant Baptists." It is concise, to the point and covers a large range of subjects without being

"Wordy." When it comes out in print it will be of great help to Landmark Baptist. I have read it with great interest and know that many others will likewise be blessed.

Luther D. (Doug) Perdue

L. D. Perdue has founded two seminaries and has served on the History and Archives committees for the State of California and the American Baptist Association.

Preface

"*To destroy a people you must first sever their roots.*" Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

Some time ago I was teaching Baptist history in our church. While I always had a love and deep appreciation of the history and heritage of the Baptist, I hadn't made a critical study on the subject. I had read *The Trail of Blood* by Carroll and the works of men such as Armitage, D. B. Ray, John Christian, Orchard, and S. F. Ford. In the course of our lessons I wanted to bring out more on the Anabaptist than I had at hand. I searched the internet and constantly found sites which placed the origin of the Anabaptists in 1525 with the Swiss Brethren. In my library I have a book entitled *The Anabaptist Story*, by William Estep, with a decal stating *Commemorating the 450th Anniversary of Anabaptism*. It is from this book that much of the material on internet about the Anabaptists is drawn. I knew this was wrong and was saddened that such an error was being accepted without challenge. I thought, "Someone should have a rebuttal web site to give the alternative view of the Anabaptists." Whenever I have these thoughts I often have a small voice (figuratively) saying, "Why don't you do it?" No, God doesn't orally speak to me.

So I began to read, and read, and read. I talked with others who also had a compassion for our history. They recommended material, gave, and loaned me their books. I noted the references and footnotes to the works of other authors and decided to research as many of them for myself as I could. I went on a buying binge. I found many rare books, some of which were unknown by my fellow companions of history. For some of the works I could only find portions of the manuscripts. *The History of the English Baptist* by Ivimey is one example. My research took over three years.

At the outset it was never my intention to repeat the efforts of the historians, but rather to glean from them. It was always in my mind that the subject was the issue of Church Succession. I had to omit much valuable material on points such as the martyrs, secular governments and politics, and the development of aberrations of doctrines and practices. I found stories of horror and beauty. I discovered in many cases not only what people did but why they did it. Many questions were being answered and more were arising. I found some things were not as I had believed. I had to change opinions and beliefs about certain churches. If any study is to be of

merit it must be based on the truth of the evidence, and I have tried to remain faithful to the facts. An example of this is the Paulicians in their *The Key of Truth*. In much of the history written by Baptists the Paulicians are highly regarded and given great esteem in the lineage of the Church. But I found their origin in all probability was not apostolic, but much later. Moreover, they denied the deity of Christ and believed that He, as a man, was of lower stature than John the Baptist. I found no evidence contrary to this position. Truth is not always pleasant, but it needs to be respected and given its rightful place.

To address church succession we must begin with the foundation of the nature of the church. If the church is misunderstood, then succession is like a wild weed and can go in any number of directions. For this reason the larger part of this work is on the nature of the church. I have investigated, as far as I could, to know and understand all the positions of the church. Using scripture and reason I evaluated each position and the claims made of the church. I took many positions to their logical conclusions and tested them against biblical truths. It is not my intention to belittle or misrepresent those whose positions are different from mine.

Jesus created His church in the first century and set the pattern of the propagation of the church when He gave it the great commission. The church was to go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them with the authority of the trinity, and teaching them to observe all things which He has commanded. The process of the expansion of the church is given in Acts and exhibited in the epistles. The Jerusalem church begat other churches, and those churches begat churches. There is no hint that Christ ever had it mind to duplicate his work and re-create His church in different times and places. When God first created, He rested when the work was done and set in place that like kind would beget after its own kind. So it is with the church. Moreover, no evidence exists, nor is it even implied, that the establishing of succeeding New Testament churches was ever through the means of self-creation, or self-constitution. The very concept of self creation in science is thoroughly dismissed. By command and example the church has an unbroken descent, succession, and ancestry from the original chartered church.

In expressing my sentiment of this book I here paraphrase the thoughts of Ivimey when he wrote of his volumes. — "This writer does not expect to disarm criticism, but it is hoped that this work will awaken the attention of the Baptist Ministers and churches to imitate the piety, simplicity, and zeal of their progenitors; who contended 'earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.' Let them ever remember that the principles they profess are those for which Baptists were imprisoned, ridiculed and publicly scorned, suffered loss of possessions, and many others who lost their lives." I realize that many, if not most, folks don't have much interest about the church. If a church pleases them they are quite content with where they are and what they are doing. But if this book stirs the soul to study and grow in the Lord I deem it a success.

I wish to knowledge and thank the many people who have given encouragement and contribution for this book. Especially I want to thank my wife, Alberta, for her hours of assistance and encouragement. In fear of omitting the names of those who have my gratitude, I just say thank you all.

Wm. F. Bekgaard
Carson, California
August, 2008

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[Author Robert Robinson. *The History of Baptism*]

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Introduction

Church Succession: Myth, Invention, or Fact?

In this discussion of church succession the term church is used in the generic sense, meaning the aggregate church composed of visible, independent bodies of Christ existing in specific locations. Succession is an array of churches coming one after another in a series, each being an extension of a predecessor. The original church is the Jerusalem church and from her all other New Testament churches have their lineage. This succession is the propagation of like kind. The churches were replicas of one another but without exact uniformity. They had unity of doctrine, morality and prescribed practices according to the commands of Christ. When heresy or immorality permanently infected churches they ceased to be churches of Christ. In the formula defining a denomination, the church of the New Testament is a denomination body. A denomination is a group of religious congregations united under a common faith (the New Testament) and name (Christian) and organized under a single administrative and legal hierarchy (Jesus Christ).

Opposition to Church Succession

Today the Protestant denominations, including a large segment of Baptists, mostly receive this principle of succession with either ridicule or indignation and scoff at such a proposal of an unbroken church lineage. They adamantly reject the notion that Christ founded a denomination. They argue that church succession cannot be historically confirmed and that any attempt to do so will only result in embarrassment. They hold the sentiment that any ancestry, pedigree, descent, heritage, or parentage of local churches now existing of the New Testament Apostolic Church is a ***myth***. They present two arguments for this position: first, that if there ever was a succession it was broken, and second, that local churches came into existence by the means of impromptu gatherings of saints organizing themselves into churches. These critics have no other concept of the "True," or "Real" church as being anything other than Universal, and Invisible, consisting of all the saved. To them it is a fool's errand to attempt to uncover any consistent survival of a "denominational" church with perpetuity. For a short time Calvin did hold the succession view but later abandoned it. Catholics claim this church succession for themselves, but with a different definition of the Church as existing only in a singular universal organization.

A second common criticism is that this doctrine is an ***invention*** of J. R. Graves and J. M. Pendleton in the mid-nineteenth century. J. R. Graves wrote in his introduction of *Old Landmarkism* the following: "The name of Old Landmarkers came in this way. In 1854 J. M. Pendleton, of Kentucky, wrote an essay upon this question at my special request, viz.: 'Ought Baptists to recognize Pedobaptist preachers as gospel ministers?' which I brought out in tract

form, and gave it the title, 'An Old Landmark Reset.' This calm discussion, which had an immense circulation in the South, was reviewed by many of the leading theologian writers, North and South. They, by way of reproach, called all Baptists 'Old Landmarkers' who accepted his conclusions, and the impression was sought to be made that Brother Pendleton and myself were aiming at dividing the denomination and starting a new sect." Thus many critics of Landmarkism place the birth of the doctrine of Church Succession with these two men, and prior to them the doctrine did not exist. Moreover, they assert that this was the subsequent creation of the church being defined as Local, Visible and not Universal, Invisible.

Church Succession an Ancient Belief

The following discussion is not meant to either validate or contest the claims of those who assert succession but rather to demonstrate that the idea of succession is not of recent invention.

> "The Church, having received this preaching and this faith [of the Apostles], although scattered throughout the whole world, yet, as if occupying but one house, carefully preserves it. She also believes these points [of doctrine] just as if she had but one soul, and one and the same heart, and she proclaims them, and teaches them, and hands them down, with perfect harmony, as if she possessed only one mouth . . . For the churches which have been planted in Germany do not believe or hand down anything different, nor do those in Spain, nor those in Gaul, nor those in the East, nor those in Egypt, nor those in Libya, nor those which have been established in the central regions of the world." Irenaeus of Lyons 175 - 185

This status of the church lasted until the mid-fourth century when Novatian broke with the church at Rome, and then in the early fifth century the Donatists broke from the Carthage church and were condemned by the Catholic Church and Augustine. A large number of churches, but not the majority, were falling into heretical doctrines and vicious practices, but even they had a physical church succession. Both the Catholics and the dissenters judged that the other had ceased to be true churches of Christ, and that by their abandoning the purity of the gospel their succession had ended.

The Novatian churches, the Donatist churches, the Montanist churches, and the Roman church all could prove their succession from the first century church. Succession was a key argument of Tertullian and Irenaeus of the second century when they assailed the heretics of their day.

The first notable establishment of a protestant church occurred through the efforts of Peter Waldo in the middle to the end of the twelfth century. Prior to this, several unsuccessful attempts were made to reform the Catholic Church.

Throughout ecclesiastical history there have existed churches which declared a succession with the apostolic church of the New Testament. Some of these are the two groups of the Waldenses, the Albigenses, the Bogomils, the churches of Britain later known as the Welsh churches, the churches of Spain until the end of the thirteenth century, and churches in Bohemia. This list also includes churches of central Europe such as Germany, Poland, and France, and other groups as the Paulicians, and, for a time, the reformation era churches as the Swiss Brethren and the Mennonites. Also included are men as Luther, Zwingli, and later Spurgeon. All these believed at one time that a church lineage did exist, and most of them claimed it for themselves. Robinson called Church Succession the holy grail of the Protestants; they never found it.

Of course, churches which believed in their own succession did not all hold the same view of the nature of the church or the same beliefs. Nor did they formulate succession into a doctrinal position. Succession was commonly accepted, and hence, there was no need to emphasize it.

By the end of the second century the church had spread throughout nearly all the regions of Europe: today's France, Germany, the British Isles, parts of Asia, the coastal regions of the Mediterranean, which includes Greece, Italy, Egypt, the North African coast, Spain, and the Balkan States.

A disastrous fate of many of these early churches fell into three categories. Many of them became ruined churches, departing from the teachings of the gospel in doctrine, practice, and purity. Some simply fell into obscurity, and more were persecuted out of existence. But a great number survived and propagated other successive churches.

An example of this is the church in Spain. Many historians believe the gospel was first preached in Spain in the first century (possibly by the apostle Paul), and churches were established at that time. They were isolated from the controversies, persecutions and the early apostasies involving: first, the preeminence of the Church at Rome, second, the mandated imperial code of uniformity, third, the hierarchy of bishops and their dictatorial power and fourth, the influence of such men as Augustine. When the Roman Church was empowered with the secular sword of Roman Emperors, it began to turn its attention on Spain. However, the influence and power of the Roman Church was weak in this country, for the rulers and princes vigilantly guarded their independence and freedom from foreign domination. For centuries intrigue and conspiracies instigated by Catholic priests plagued this country. Spain was not a unified nation at this time and consisted in several states of monarchs all with a common thought of independence of Spain in general. As long as there was no dominant state church Christians, Moors (Muslims), Jews and Catholics enjoyed religious freedom. No persecutions for religious beliefs are found prior to the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church as the supreme all-

powerful State Church. It is true that some Catholic priests were imprisoned and put to death during this time. But the reason was for crimes of sedition and plotting the overthrow of the governments, not for religious beliefs.

In those peaceful centuries the Spanish churches flourished greatly. They spread into the Pyrenees Mountains. There they were called Vaudois, meaning of the mountains. Vaudois is the same name as the Waldenses of the Valleys of Piedmont. The Pyrenees churches were later known as Waldenses and they spread into France; the city of Albi is best known for having them. The Albigenses had Waldensian roots. When, at the end of the 1400's the Roman Catholic Church finally gained control and unified Spain, the great Spanish Inquisition immediately began. Jews, Moors, and Christians all suffered equally. The Moors retreated to North Africa, and the Christian Churches were either extinguished by murder, forced recanting, or by flight into the Pyrenees. Eventually, they were driven out of these mountains and spread into France, Germany, and the Lowland countries of Holland and Belgium in Western Europe. All through this time the common epitaph of derision was the name Anabaptist. By the time of the reformation, the number of Anabaptist churches existed in the thousands, from Britain to Bohemia and beyond.

With some variance, this same story is repeated with other churches in their respective countries. The Paulicians of Armenia experienced much the same as the Spanish churches, except their persecutions were from the pagan secular Emperors and Empresses. Tens of thousands of them were deported to Greece and the Balkans. While the Paulicians are highly suspect with their doctrine of "Adoptionism" (the belief that Jesus was born a man and at His baptism became the Son of God, Christ) they nevertheless exemplify the persecution and spread of variously known groups of churches.

The reformation brought out the best and the worst in men. But the deed was done.

Many saw this as a great opportunity to "re-establish" the New Testament church. Many churches, which already existed in maturity, came to the forefront. These were called Anabaptists. It must be acknowledged that not all Anabaptists were the same. However, it can be said they all had the same vision of liberty, separation of church and state, and a strict adherence to the word of God only. Modern authors have the tendency of grouping all Anabaptists into the same church society. This is far from the truth. This inaccuracy, intentional or not, obscures and denies the uniqueness and antiquity of the Anabaptist churches. For example, the Munster Rebellion is blamed on the Anabaptists, and indeed they were called Anabaptist. But the Munster Anabaptists were not of the older Anabaptists. They were a radical splinter group of Lutheranism. Furthermore, Anabaptist was a common name given to all which the State Established Churches deemed to be heretical and dangerous. Initially, it was term of ridicule given because they re-baptized those coming to them with the baptism of corrupt

churches. This demeaning epitaph can be proven to exist as far back as to the Donatists of the fourth and fifth centuries.

During the reformation Anabaptists held widely diverse opinions. There were those of the ancient Anabaptists and the Neo-Anabaptists. The most prominent new Anabaptists were the Swiss Brethren. They were formed in 1525 in protest against Zwingli and his keeping to the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church. The history of the Swiss Brethren is well recorded, it might be said over-recorded. Many, especially the Mennonites, credit them as the founders of the Anabaptists. (William Estep is terribly guilty of this in his *The Anabaptist Story* which in 1975 was sold under the banner of *Commemorating the 450th Anniversary of Anabaptism*.) This is a tragic error, for it attempts, and has succeeded in the minds of many, to rob thousands of churches in Europe of their heritage and deny their right of antiquity. The ancient Anabaptist churches superseded in age and number the revised (not revived) 1525 Anabaptist movement.

Dr. Harold Bender* wrote in his *The Anabaptist Vision* (copyright 1944) the following in speaking of the Anabaptists. "Ludwig Keller finds Anabaptists throughout the pre-Reformation period in the guise of Waldenses and other similar groups whom he chooses to call 'the old-evangelical brotherhood,' and for whom he posits a continuity from the earlier Baptist historians (and certain Mennonites) who rejoice to find in the Anabaptists the missing link which keeps them in the apostolic succession the true church back through the Waldenses, Bogomils, Cathari, Paulicians, and Donatist, to Pentecost." Dr. Bender added to this, "However, there is another line of interpretation, now almost 100 years old, which is being increasingly accepted and which is probably destined to dominate the field. It is the one which holds that Anabaptism is the culmination of the Reformation, the fulfillment of the original vision of Luther and Zwingli, and thus makes it a consistent evangelical Protestantism seeking to recreate without compromise the original New Testament Church, the vision of Christ and the apostles."(pgs.12, 13) Mosheim, however disagrees with this assessment, and wrote under the title of *The reformation and its development*: "all Christians, if we except Roman Catholics, Socinians, Quakers and Anabaptists, may claim a place among the members of the Reformed Church."

*Dr. Bender, 1897 – 1962, was a prominent person in the Mennonite Church, having been Dean of Goshen College, chairman of the Historical and research Committee, and president of the Mennonite World Conference in 1952.

Two important facts come to light in Dr. Bender's discussion of the Anabaptists, first there initially existed a belief of church succession (which has no foundation to Graves or Pendleton in the mid nineteenth century), and second, his accurate prediction that this belief would be abandoned, and the Anabaptists would be relegated to protestant status with the original vision of Luther and Zwingli.

Also in Bender's book he gives the "essential and distinguishing characteristic of the church" as being a local visible body of Christ. He makes no mention of a universal invisible church, but that the church is local in content and has the aim of bringing together all the true believers out of the great degenerated national churches into a true Christian Church. (pgs. 13, 14)

It is believed that the Swiss Brethren in 1527, just two years after their formation, created the Schleitheim Confession. It contains seven articles. A careful reading of this confession discloses a belief in the local church (Art. 2 and 3) and closed/close communion (Art. 3). Why is this noteworthy? Because it shows that these positions are not an invention of nineteenth century Baptists.

Baptism and the Church

In the third and fourth centuries when the Novatian, Cathari, and Donatist churches re-baptized ex-Catholics who came to them, the Rome church was up in arms. Augustine argued vehemently against the Donatists re-baptizing, and he eventually established the doctrine of persecution to enforce uniformity. Why all the concern? Because all churches involved knew that by re-baptizing it was a condemnation against the Roman Church, the Catholics. These dissident churches proclaimed that no longer were catholic churches sound or pure, but they had become "Synagogues of Satan." These separatists' churches were called Anabaptists, re-Baptizers. However, those called Anabaptists maintained that they were not re-baptizing but baptizing anew.

Church succession was a great concern for many Reformers and Protestants. They were disturbed over the matter of authority to properly administer baptism.

The Catholics challenged the Reformed Pedobaptist Churches their right to baptize or baptize anew, since their own baptism came from the Catholics. The Catholics argued that since they (all Protestants) had Catholic baptism, then by their doctrinal statements they condemned their own baptism and made it invalid, and thus had unlawful baptism. The debate arose; can a person legitimately baptize others when he himself is not baptized? But if their baptism was valid then Catholic baptism is valid as well, and they had no grounds to re-baptize. At the heart of this debate was succession by the means of the rite of baptism. All Reformers and Protestants had, in some degree, a succession from the Catholic Church through its baptism.

The second generation of reformers fared no better. Many of them, in particular the General and Particular Baptists of London, also recognized this problem.[1] Their question came down to this, "Can an un-baptized person baptize others?" John Smyth of the General Baptists went with others to the Mennonites in Holland to receive their baptism. They never accepted Smyth or baptized him because of his "radical theology." The record is that he baptized himself and then

others. The Particular Baptists who were in agreement with the Dutch churches in Calvinism thought to receive their baptism and authority from them. But in the end they took another course; one person of their group was elected to baptize another who, in turn, baptized him, and they proceeded to baptize in general.[2]

The authority to baptize rests squarely on the issue of succession. Today this question no longer exists among universal churches due to their redefining the nature of the church. Very few denominations hold to the notion that authority is necessary and allow that any "believer" may rightly baptize. This removes that portion of the Great Commission out of the church and delivers it into the hands of any individual who wishes to claim this right for himself. Thus baptism is no longer a "church" ordinance and becomes quite meaningless.

Footnote on the General and Particular Baptist of Britain

[1] The same concern of baptismal authority worried the founders of the Particular Baptists of London. The General Baptists began with John Smyth who was reported to have had self-administered baptism. This is also true of the founders of the Swiss Brethren, also called Anabaptists. Thomas Crosby in his The History of the English Baptists Volume I, devoted 13 pages on this subject of baptismal authority. Here is an excerpt of what he quoted from a Pedobaptist criticism:

> "That when the Anabaptists (The reformed London Baptists) had framed so many devices to deny all infants baptism, they were confounded in themselves, what to do, to begin baptizing in their way of baptizing adult persons only - but one John Smith - being more desperately wicked (as he was called by his adversaries) baptized himself, and then he baptized others, and from this man the English Anabaptists have successively received their new administration of baptism on men and women only." (These people were the General London Baptists) [pg. 95]

Then Crosby wrote:

[2] "This difficulty did not a little perplex them; and they were divided in their options how to act in this matter, so as not to be guilty of any disorder of self-contradiction. Some indeed were of opinion, that the first administrator should baptize himself, and then proceed to the baptizing of others. Others were for sending to those foreign Protestants that had used immersion for some time, that so they might receive it from them. And others again thought it necessary to baptism, that the administrator be himself baptized, at least in an extraordinary case; but that whoever saw such a reformation necessary, might from the authority of Scripture lawfully begin it." (These people were of the Particular London Baptists) [pg. 97]

Here was their problem, they believed "a man cannot baptize others into a church, himself being out of the church, or being no member."

Smyth supposed true baptism was lost for some time, through the disuse of it, and thus was necessary there should be two persons who must unite in the revival of it, in order to begin the administration thereof. And, that the first administrator be a member of some church, who they shall call and empower him to administer it to others. However others held this view, "That first they formed a church of their opinion in the point of baptism; then the church appoint two of these ministers to begin the administration of it, by baptizing each other; after this one, or both these, baptize the rest."

Oddly enough Crosby said, ". . . this is no blemish on the English Baptists; who neither approved of any such method, nor did they receive their baptism from him (John Smyth)." This gives evidence of three branches of English Baptists. He goes on, "The former of these was, to send over to the foreign Anabaptists (in Holland), who descended from the ancient Waldenses in France and Germany, that so one or more might become proper administrators of it to others. Some thought this the best way, and acted accordingly." [pg. 99, 100] These Waldenses most likely were not the Valdous of the Valleys of Piedmont, but rather the Valdous of the Pyrenees, also called Albigenses. What they were seeking were churches with Apostolic succession and were satisfied that they had found them. This group sent Mr. Richard Blount who understood the Dutch language. He was warmly received by the church there and was baptized by them. Upon his return he baptized Mr. Samuel Blacklock, a minister, and these two baptized the rest of their company, 53 in total. Strangely enough the succession they sought existed in their own country with the Welsh Baptists. I find no connection of these men, Blount or Blacklock, with either the London General Baptists or the Particular Baptists. This indicates a third Baptists group.

But the greatest number of the English Baptists looked upon this as needless trouble, that an un-baptized person might justifiably baptize, and so begin a reformation. They reasoned that since none had baptized John the Baptist before he baptized others, they had this same right (the justification of the un-baptized baptizing). This was the opinion and practice of Spilsbury, the co-founder of the Particular Baptist, who denied having received his baptism from John Smyth.

End Footnotes

A Dead Church?

Let us suppose for a moment that the church which Jesus built did cease, not leaving a succession of churches. Two questions begged to be answered. First, when did it die? Second, how did it meet its death? What would it take to remove the church from the world?

Of all the men writing of the cessation of the church, there is not one who tells us when this happened. At what point in history could the church not be found? The Church of Latter Day Saints, through Joseph Smith's testimony, declares that the church had died in the dark ages and that God had directed Smith to rebuild His church (which incidentally began with Smith's authority to baptize). Joseph Smith is not alone in this opinion; for many of the reformers believed the same thing and that they also had the same mission of rebuilding the lost church. Many pastors and preachers today are on a quest of leading people to recapture what had assumedly been lost of the church. But sane and reasonable people should not just mindlessly accept what they preach but ask these men when was it lost? Give us the day, the year, or the century when you say the church died! Prove to us what you claim. They cannot answer, for they have no answer. It is just a presumed fact which must be true without debate. If it cannot be established when the church ceased, then why should it be believed that it ever ceased at all?

The second question is just as vital as the first: How did the church die? We are not speaking of one church or a cluster of churches, but of every church which was an extension from the first church of Jerusalem. For the first twelve centuries it was never questioned that churches were anything but successions of the first church. Never was it asked of any church if they had a lineage to Jerusalem; it was just accepted.

As mentioned the fate of these early churches fell into four categories. Many of them became ruined churches, departing from the teachings of the gospel in doctrine and practice and purity. Some simply fell into obscurity, and more were persecuted out of existence. But a great number survived and propagated other successive churches. When persecutions assaulted the faithful churches, just as it did to the Jerusalem church, they were scattered and went everywhere preaching the gospel. Can it be thought that Christians who would gladly suffer torture and death would not continue to live according to their faith and teach and propagate their beliefs and their churches? This was a great complaint of the Inquisitors that the more heretics they killed, the more the heretics grew and expanded.

It must be kept in mind that we are not talking about an insignificant number of churches but of churches numbering in the thousands, if not tens of thousands. Neither are we talking about churches existing in small pockets, but living throughout the known world at that time. Whenever the Roman Catholic Church took it upon itself to hold inquisitions and crusades, they never found a lack of heretics to persecute. Further, we see no evidence that the church succumbed to corruption, for there were many throughout the centuries that were called Cathari, *Pure*. Whenever the Catholic Church turned away from the doctrines which had been formerly practiced and accepted as scriptural, there were always those who held to the old way and refused these innovations and inventions. These were faithful ones who stayed the course, adhering to word of God only. The church did not fall into obscurity and die a slow death of

neglect. History shows them as fervent Disciples of Christ as they stood for the truth, died for the truth, and propagated the truth. The church may have been obscure at times in different countries, but when they were known, it was discovered that they had always been there.

Whatever reason which may be given for the death of the Lord's Church, it does not hold up to examination in the light of history. As J. M. Carroll wrote, the continued existence of the church is a record written in blood.

If the time and cause of death of the church cannot be determined then why should it be believed that it had died at all? Where is the dead body of the church? Where is its grave? Let those who claim this death prove it or stop pontificating.

The Validation: Matthew 16:18

It is not by the historians that the proof of church succession is established. Although, there is firm evidence of churches having a succession from the apostolic churches to this day. But opinion does not establish a fact. The proof is in the words spoken by Christ in Matthew 16:18, "*the gates of hell shall not prevail against it* (His Church)." What more is to be needed to be said? Faith in God's word accepts it as truth. These "gates of hell" are the portals of death, and death will not conquer. It is clear that Jesus is speaking of His Church and of its continual unbroken survival till the day of His return.

There are two things, either of which, if Satan can accomplish, will destroy the testimony of God and make Him fallible. These are the annihilation of the descendants of Abraham or the Church. Both are called the elect of God. God has committed Himself through promises, covenants, and prophecies of their indestructibility. The first attempt to destroy Israel is found in Esther 3:6, when Haman sought the death of all Jews. But by God's providential intercession Israel survived. The Church has been assailed in every century through the means of persecutions, apostasies, pollutions of immorality, and impurities of all sorts. But Israel and the Church are still standing, perhaps battered and scarred and still under attack, but they stand. In the past the Church itself was molested, but today the very meaning and concept of the church is attacked and refuted. What could not be killed is now denied as ever existing.

The Integrity of Christ at Issue

How could it be possible that Christ spoke in His omniscience and yet not know that the gates of hell *would* prevail against His Church? Or how can it be explained that Christ with His omnipotence would be powerless and not prevent the gates of hell prevailing against His Church, bringing His wife, His Church, to her death as claimed by the believers of church apostasy?

Christ *has* kept His integrity. He *has* preserved His Church. From the moment He spoke these words till today His Church lives. This church is not a mystical, vague, unseen body, but one that is real and tangible in this world. Whenever it gathers, Christ is there. This body, this little flock, this house of God, this bride of Christ is the sole property of Jesus. It rests securely in the hands of God and is absolutely dependent upon Him. It survives by the providential care of God, the intercession of Christ, and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 1

The Church Defined and Its Nature

Gresham Machen correctly observed that the validity of any system of thought is best evaluated by pursuing the logic of it relentlessly to its ultimate conclusion.

Machen, Gresham: quoted by J. I. Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, London, InterVarsity Press, 1958, p.26.

The Term Ekklesia

"The *ekklesia* was the lawful assembly in a free Greek city of all those possessed of the rights of citizenship, for the transaction of public affairs. That they were summoned is expressed in the latter part of the word (*klesis* → *kaleo*: call); that they were summoned out (*ek*: out) of the whole population, a select portion of it, including neither the populace, nor strangers, nor yet those who had forfeited their civic rights, is expressed in the first." (Richard C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*.)

The meaning of the word can be found in every Greek lexicon/dictionary. Some provide more details than others. This term is of the Greek secular usage for a group of qualified citizens of a municipality called to assemble for the purpose of transacting some civic duty or business. When the business was concluded the assembly or body, *ekklesia*, disbanded and no longer continued. No individual member of the *ekklesia* was legally authorized to conduct any business or affairs apart from the whole. Naturally, this secular meaning cannot be anything but a local/visible assembly. When the members of the *ekklesia* were dismissed they dispersed into the general population of the country. The *ekklesia* was not the kingdom, but was a portion of the kingdom with the authority to carry out the affairs of the nation, keeping within the limitations of the laws of that nation. The entire citizenry did not legally have this right.

When B. H. Carroll was asked the question, "Was not ecclesia in the New Testament used in a new, special and sacred sense?" He replied, "The Pedobaptists tried hard and long to make this same argument in the baptismal controversy. Their contention then was that though *Baptizo* meant to dip or immerse in classic Greek, yet in the Bible it was used in a new and sacred sense. The scholarship of the world rebuked them. Words are signs or ideas. To mean anything they must be understood according to the common acceptation in the minds of those addressed. I know of no more dangerous method of interpretation than the assumption that a word must be taken to mean something different from its real meaning. Revelation in that case ceases to be revelation. We are at sea without helm, or compass, or guiding star." He further stated, "Some terms or descriptions commonly applied to the church by writers and speakers are not only extra-Scriptural, that is, purely human and post-apostolic, but may be so used as to become either misleading or positively unscriptural." This is sound hermeneutics.

The Church

Today there are three commonly held positions on the nature of the church among "Christian" denominations. Briefly, each of the three fall into one of the following groups: Catholic, Protestant/Reformers (and those who have chosen to align themselves with them), and the Baptists who deny any historical association with Protestants, Reformers or the Catholics.

The expressions used in defining the church of the New Testament are: Universal, Local, Visible, and Invisible. They are always used in pairs. Local and Invisible are mutually exclusive and cannot be coupled. Nor can Visible and Invisible be joined. But the term Universal is not as clear as it might seem at first glance. Normally, Universal and Local are mutually exclusive, but not always. It depends on how the term Universal is used. Three concepts historically have been determined on the term Universal Church. For the Catholics, Universal is applied to the Church meaning "One Singular Church" (one denomination containing both saved and lost) incorporating all in a given territory (diocese) and it is visible (it assembles). For the Protestants, Universal also means "One Singular Church" (non-denominational) existing throughout the world and heaven, but it is invisible (mystical-never assembles). For both of them, the Church contains all the saved but with different emphasis on where they are. Then there is the misunderstood ancient usage that is rarely used today. This last type of Universal (Catholic) church was used prominently by Christians in the second and third centuries, and later by the Waldenses and Paulicians, which they took as the Church existing throughout the world (universally) in multiple Local Churches (all of one faith and order), which assembles and thus is visible. (See footnotes on catholic)

Aberrations of the Catholic, Universal philosophy of the Church

Two interrelated consequences developed from the Universal proposition of the Church. They were the policies of Persecution and something called "Uniformality." These two policies were pursued with ever growing zeal and fervor, even to the point of fanatic passion void of any human decency. Theirs was a dedication to the cause of their religion, which led them to many perversions and cruelties. This is the danger when any cause supplants the righteous virtue of the Gospel, even if it is labeled the "Cause of Christ!"

Uniformity fosters intolerance: the greater the uniformity, the greater the intolerance. All challenges against the prevailing church's creeds and dogmas are viewed as a threat. Thus followed the insatiable drive for uniformity. If universality was ever to be established, it had to come by the authority of the Princes and Emperors of the State and enforcement through the power of the magistrates. This was the "god of Uniformity" on whose altar all liberty was to be forfeited and sacrifices made of dissidents. The god of unity and conformity was the true god of the State. To be otherwise than that of the official church was treason. Abuse and death was the sentence. It had the aim of putting into repression every man, woman, and child.

> "It is an awful historical fact, a fact written in indelible characters with the blood of thousands, that all denominations of Christians, who have enforced the necessity of uniformity in religion by the sword of the magistrate, have been all guilty of the dreadful crime of persecuting the followers of Jesus. Regardless of the divine precept, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart," they have imitated the worst spirit ever manifested by the apostles of Christ, when they said, "Lord, shall we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, as Elias did?" [Luke 9:51] And they have done this as Christians, thinking to do God service; and professedly out of regard to divine authority. When the magistrate has been on the side of any who held this principle, they have found no difficulty in proving the divine right of their form of church government. Thus the Papists pleaded the divine right of Popery, and the universality of the church of Rome. – The English Reformers, who objected to this, soon pleaded for the divine right of Episcopacy, and the universality of the church of England. – Many of the Puritans, who dissented on account of these sentiments, no sooner overthrew Episcopacy, but they pleaded for the divine right of the Presbytery, and the universality of their provincial assemblies (ref. the persecutions of the Massachusetts's Bay Colony). And the Independents, who had fled to the wilds of America because they would form churches not subject to external control and influence, were found in their turn pleading the divine right of Independency, and the universality of their authority in the province where their churches existed." *A History of the English Baptists,* Joseph Ivimey 1811.

But never can the accusation of persecution and the denial of religious and secular freedom be laid against the Baptist. Many, with good evidence, believe that the First Amendment of the Constitution of The United States is due to the Baptist.

Edward Hutchinson in his 1676, "*A Treatise concerning the Covenant and Baptism*" wrote of the Baptists:

> "Nor is it less observable, that whereas other reformations have been carried on by the secular arm, and the countenance and allowance of the magistrate, as in Luther's time by several German princes; the protestant reformation in England by King Edward, Queen Elizabeth, &c.; and the Presbyterian reformation by a parliament, committed of estates, and assembly of divines, besides the favour and assistance of great personages; you (Baptists) have had none of these to take you by the hand; but your progress was against the impetuous current of human opposition, and attended with such external discouragements as bespeak your embracing this despised truth to be an effect of heart-sincerity, void of all mercenary considerations. Yea, how active has the accuser of the brethren been to represent you in such frightful figures, exposing you by that mischievous artifice to popular odium and the lash of the

> magistracy; insomuch that the name of an Anabaptist was crime enough, which doubtless was a heavy obstacle in the way of many pious souls!"
>
> "Is it to be wondered at, if these absurd notions, so popish and antiscriptural, should have a tendency to encrease the number of Baptists, who had both reason and scripture to plead for their sentiments? But such daring innovators, who presumed to rend the seamless coat of Christ, and refused to worship the idol of uniformity which the reformers had set up, were not to be tolerated in a Christian commonwealth."

The Churches with apostolic succession certainly desired a degree of agreement and commonality of doctrine, practices, and purpose among themselves. But the principle doctrine of individual freedom and accountability and their refusal to make themselves the judge over others has allowed tolerance in these areas. If the state of affairs developed to such a crisis where they could no longer fellowship, they simply withdrew and acknowledged the rights of others to their beliefs without coercion.

Notes on Catholic

Robinson commented on the initial use of the term *catholic*, "There was among primitive Christians a uniform belief that Jesus was the Christ, and a perfect harmony of affection. When congregations multiplied so that they became too numerous to assemble in one place they parted into separate companies, and so again and again, but there was no schism; on the contrary all held a common union, and a member of one company was a member of all. If any person removed from one place to reside at another, he received a letter of attestation, which was given and taken as proof, and this custom very prudently precluded the intrusion of impostors. In this manner was framed a catholick (sic) or universal church. One company never pretended to inspect the affairs of another, nor was there any dominion or shadow of dominion over the consciences of any individuals. Overt acts were the only objects of censure, and censure was nothing but voting a man out of the community." *Ecclesiastical Researches*, The Church of Rome, Pg. 123.

Tertullian at the time of the rise of the term *catholic* wrote (approx. 211 A.D.) of the simple association of churches: "communication of peace, the appellation of brotherhood, the token of hospitality, and the tradition of a single creed." Irenaeus of Lyons (175-185) wrote: "The Church, having received (from the Apostles) this preaching and this faith, although scattered throughout the whole world, yet, as if occupying but one house, carefully preserves it. She also believes these points (of doctrine) just as if she had but one soul, and one and the same heart, and she proclaims them, and teaches them, and hands them down, with perfect harmony, as if she possessed only one mouth. For, although the languages of the world are dissimilar, yet the import of the tradition is one and the same. For the churches which have been planted in Germany do not believe or hand down anything different, nor do those in Spain, nor those in Gaul, nor those in the East, nor those in Egypt, nor those in Libya, nor those which have been

established in the central regions of the world." (Book I: Chapter X. - *Unity of the Faith of the Church Throughout the Whole World*.)

Catholic was not in the mind of the second and third century churches to be that of a formal Association of Churches. Nor were associations viewed as a necessity. No conformity to specific creeds was imposed on the churches at this time; they abided in unity but not in uniformity and existed independently. *Catholic* to them meant the church was universal as widespread (churches worldwide); it did not take the meaning of a single universal body composed of all churches until the fourth century. This was due to the influence of Constantine.

Alexis Munston wrote that the catholic [universal] church concept existed from the first century and references this to I Peter and James when they addressed their epistles to Christians dispersed. He says: "It is meant by the Catholic Church the whole body of Christians of that time – Christians who were apostolic. Now the Vaudois (the Waldenses of the Piedmonts), in their most ancient works, written in the Romance tongue, at a date when there existed schismatic sects which have now disappeared, speak of themselves as being in union with the Catholic Church, and condemn those who separate from it, but at the same time the doctrines which they set forth in their works are only those of the primitive Catholic Church (the original catholic concept), and not at all those of later Catholicism. The successive corruptions which gradually constituted it, were everywhere introduced by small degrees, and did not for a long time reach the threshold of their secluded valleys. When they did become known there, the Vaudois boldly stood up against that variety of invented things, which they called a horrible heresy, and unhesitatingly pointed them out as the cause why the Church of Rome had departed from the primitive faith. They no longer gave to popery the name of the Catholic Church, but speak of it as the Roman Church; and then also they openly separated from it, because it was no longer the primitive church, such as theirs had been left to them by their fathers, but a corrupt church, delighting in vain superstition." (*The Israel of the Alps*)

Part I
The Universal Visible Church

Chapter 2 The Church Defined and Its Nature

This position, although not the most ancient, is that of the Roman Catholic Church. By the very name "Catholic" the nature of the church in their view is defined. The word "catholic" is derived from the Greek *kata* (meaning "according to") and *holos* (meaning "the entirety"); the combination means "according to the entirety" and fits into the language as "Church of the Society." This "Society" includes all in a given locality, in other words, all people living under their dominion or jurisdiction are members of the church regardless of their spiritual condition. It is Universal and Visible. A Catholic doctrine concerning the church is that they alone constitute the New Testament church, and all who are not a part of them have no redemption, salvation, and are eternally damned. In addition, they claim that they possess the "Keys to the Kingdom," based on Matt. 16:18, which they interpret as Jesus delivering the church into the hands of Peter, their first pope.[1] Finally, salvation is only possible by the seven Sacraments of the Church: ordination, confirmation, matrimony, extreme unction, penance, baptism, and the Eucharist. The Roman Catholic Church is the Kingdom of God and by marriage to the state it is a kingdom of the world. This has the effect of institutional salvation, and only by allegiance and obedience to the Catholic Church and its canons of law is there forgiveness of sins and entrance into heaven.

[1] The footnote to this verse in the Douay Version states: "So that by the plain course of the words, Peter is declared to be the rock, upon which the Church was to be built: Christ himself being both the principal foundation and the founder of the same."

Salvation only in the Church

In the Catholic Encyclopedia under the heading "Church" Part VI "The Necessary Means of Salvation," we read the following: "Incorporation with the Church (Catholic) can alone unite us to the family of the second Adam, and alone can engraft us into the true Vine." Further, "In the order of Divine Providence, salvation is given to man in the Church: membership in the Church Triumphant (the Church in Heaven) is given through membership in the **Church Militant** (the Church on Earth-my emphasis).[2] Sanctifying grace, the title to salvation, is peculiarly the grace of those who are united to Christ in the Church: it is the birthright of the children of God." They then quote Origen: "Let no man deceive himself. Outside this house (outside their Church) none is saved" and then St. Cyprian: "He cannot have God for his father, who has not the Church for his mother."

[2] Catholicism has the church existing in three different forms: The Church Triumphant, all those saved now in heaven; The Church Suffering, those destined to heaven but who are still in the cleansing fires of

purgatory; and The Church Militant, the visible church on earth conquering through force and violence if necessary. (These are neither idle terms nor idle threats.)

Their stance is that since only Roman Catholics can be saved then the church is universal, i.e. contains all the saved on earth. The fact that she also holds the lost within her bosom is of no concern; purgatory is the filtering agent. Since *they* are visible, that is, they assemble and conduct business, *the church* is visible by nature. Because of their belief that they are the one and only true church, whatever can be said about them constitutes the nature of the church. Thus, there is only the singular Church and not plural churches.

But why? Why did this doctrinal position of the "Church" come about? The answer lies with two men, Constantine and Augustine. Augustine is well considered as the Father of Catholicism. His writings are the basis for many of the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, and Reformers such as Zwingli, Luther, and Calvin. It is Constantine who really framed the Catholic Church, and brought it to its deplorable condition, "The Fallen Church."

State-Church

By the time Constantine became Emperor of the Roman Empire it was in a state of rapid erosion. It was figuratively coming apart at the seams. He had to do something to hold it together and increase its (and his) strength and power. On the eve of the Battle of the Milvian Bridge Constantine had a dream to place the sign of a cross on the shields of his soldiers. The more fanciful version is that Constantine saw a strange phenomenon in the sky: a cross of light and the words "by this sign you will be victor," (some say, "in this sign conquer") and Christ appeared and instructed him to place the heavenly sign on the battle standards of his army. Regardless of which story is true, the battle was a vital victory, and he attributed his victory to the power of "the God of the Christians." This set in motion the course of the union of the "church" and the Empire.

The matrimony was not that of love or religion, but purely political. Constantine saw that by making Christianity a part, or rather the official state religion of the Empire, it would solidify both his status and the government's. By entrusting some government functions to the Christian clergy he actually made the church an agency of the imperial government. In the years 325-337 Constantine continued his support of the church even more vigorously than before, both by generous gifts of money and by specific legislation. In the Eastern Orthodox churches Constantine is regarded a saint; he shares a feast day, May 21, with his mother, and additionally has a feast day of his own, September 3.

The effects of this union were immediate and disastrous. There now existed no difference between the church and the state. They, in effect, became one. This resulted in the development

that local and independent churches were considered as treasonous and subversive to the government and could not be tolerated. It had the result of destroying all semblance of church discipline, for the church now by its nature being equal to the citizenship of the state contained both un-regenerated and regenerated. There was no requirement of repentance for admission into the state church, for it included all within the state. This made it truly a "Universal," Catholic Church.

The Catholic Encyclopedia under State Church Article IV states: "The essential idea of such union is a condition of affairs where a State recognizes its natural and supernatural relation to the Church, professes the Faith, and practices the worship of the Church, protects it, enacts no laws to its hurt, while, in case of necessity and at its instance taking all just and requisite civil measures to forward the Divinely appointed purpose of the Church – in so far as all these make for the State's own essential purpose, the temporal happiness of its citizens." All hope of checks and balances disappear under such governments. The state is the servant of the church and ultimately gives its obedience to the head of that church. This theme of guardianship is found in the ancient and current title of the English monarchy as: "Defender of the Faith."

In July 1884, a Cuban archbishop declared in the Spanish Cortes that "the rights of the Roman pontiff, including the rights of temporal power over the States, were inalienable and cannot be restricted; and were before superior to the so-called new rights of cosmopolitan revolution and the barbarous law of force." (Armitage XIL)

Church Discipline Sacrificed for Unity

Once church discipline was cast aside the conditions of the church began a downward spiral of decadence from which there was no return, for to exclude anyone from the church meant that they would have to be excluded from the state. This developed a problem, which later plagued the Reformers. The early answer was that excommunication had to be in the form of execution. The only ground of this type of discipline was not over morality, but rather that of doctrine. Doctrine is divisive; it is the same cry of ecumenicalism today, that it disrupts harmony and unity. All who disagreed with the universal doctrine were labeled "heretics." Quickly the Roman clergy was taken over by men who were given to the most carnal lusts of the flesh. Augustine, in his persecution against the Donatists, justified killings and confiscation of properties by this charge of rebellion against the Church and Empire. The heretics refused to be controlled by Rome; they insisted on purity in the church, hence the nickname of Cathar, a word meaning "cleansed." In the Catholic Church there was no difference between the church and the world in morals and godly (or godless) conduct; they both behaved the same.

Verduin wrote, "When Constantine came into the Church, he did not check his imperial equipment at the door. No indeed, he came in with all the accoutrements that pertained to the secular regime. He was not just a Roman who had learned to bow to Christ; he had been *pontifex maximus* hitherto, the High Priest of the Roman State religion, and he entered the Church with

the understanding that he would be *pontifex maximus* there too. And just as his sword had flashed in defense of the old religion so would it now flash in defense of the new." [3]— pg. 42. The Vicar of Christ, the pope, is today's *pontifex maximus*. No longer was Christ the head of this church, but Constantine and later the pontiff. This replacing of Christ over that body meant that no longer was the Word of God the rule of authority. Scripture was now simply a source to justify the commandments of men, and not the source of righteousness and holiness. Augustine wrote, "The issue between us and the Donatists is about the question where the body is to be located, that is, what and where is the Church?" And joined with that is the question, whose word has the final say on the matters of faith? Where is The Rule of faith and conduct, with the pope or with Christ?

Once this marriage took place the two bodies became one flesh. You cannot separate the two. To this day the Roman Empire lives on in the Roman Catholic Church. They have never divorced. They both have the same love; power over men, wealth, carnal gratification, adoration, pompous fineries, pageantry, ceremonies, and yes, sadly, brutality. The implication of the Roman Empire still in existence is a tremendous concern for The Great Tribulation Period.

Such became the Roman Catholic Church. Thus is the birth of the Universal, Visible Church. However, not all churches fell in with the Catholic Church.[4] There were those who refused the hierarchy of the clergy. They remained steadfast for church independence, but now independence took on the additional meaning of separation from both the *new* church and the state, for the church-state denies all forms of democracy and freedom of conscience. Forced religion is the backbone of Catholicism. To them, the dissenters, the nature of the church was local, visible, as they had always understood it from the days of the New Testament era. They brought about nothing new, but reaffirmed what already existed from the days of Christ. They refused to accept the baptism administered by those they considered as morally and spiritually ruined. Hence, they re-baptized those coming to them with Catholic baptism. This practice produced the epithet "anabaptist."

[3] Leonard Verduin, "*The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*" ISBN 1-57978-935-8

[4] Montanus (135 – 160 A. D.) separated himself from the following practices: (1) Bishop rule and the elevation of the title of Bishop; (2) the false doctrine of baptismal regeneration; (3) the churches conforming to the customs of the world; and (4) those that had become criminally lax in Christian discipline. It is from Montanus that the Montanists derived their name. Tertullian later became an outstanding leader among them. This was the first major split among the churches. This split was away from doctrines and practices rather than from any particular group of churches.

The Early Reformers, Luther and Zwingli

Luther's break from the Roman Catholic Church was only partial. He preserved much of his Catholicism in his movement of reformation. This included infant baptism, baptismal regeneration, salvation in the church (now his), confession of sins to men for absolution, and the

Mass. But the most heinous tradition he retained was that of state-church union. When it was eventually offered to Luther, a man on the run, it must have seemed as a godsend. Now he could have protection from the sentence of death placed upon him by the Roman Catholic Church. Now *he* had the State militant sword at his side.

Just as the Catholic Church had done, he followed in step. Those who initially flocked to him, believing in him to restore the pure gospel, were soon disappointed. The cry of "scripture only" soon changed. When they saw the union of Luther and the State they understood there was not going to be a sweeping away of the old dictatorial demands of loyalty, obedience, and unity with this new church society. The Anabaptists had sent an envoy to Luther to learn of his intentions. They returned to their churches and proclaimed, "We have as much to fear from Luther as we have from the Catholics." The exodus from Luther happened in earnest. Now Luther had more "heretics" than just the Anabaptists. The answer: use the sword;[5] and use it he did. By control of the magistrates he had many put to death, banished, property confiscated, etc. Innocent blood was on the sword and on his hands.

[5] A footnote about the Sword. These men, these churches, and those who later followed their example now believed they had two swords for the furtherance of "Christianity;" the Sword of the Spirit (the Word of God), and the Militant Sword of the State. As a justification of this they point to Peter in the Garden when he proclaimed, "here are two swords," (Luke 22:38). Little use was made of the first sword, but the second, the militant, was wielded without mercy!

Why was it all so horribly wrong? What was at the heart of the problem? Luther just could not bring himself to let go of the precept of "Christendom," which is the church embracing the whole society within its territorial realm. When it came to the Church he was every bit catholic as the Catholics. Those who left Luther could not stand for his concept of the church. For them, the Church was a society within a society, a body of regenerated, born-again Christians within the greater community of men. There was no one singular, universal church, but churches. They believed in the "Local Visible Church."

Zwingli, who was contemporary with Luther, was a leader of the Swiss Reformation. His story runs much along the same lines as Luther's. Under his reformation, Zurich became a theocracy ruled by Zwingli and the "Christian" magistrate.

A radical group called Anabaptists challenged Zwingli's rule. In a debate held before the ruling secular body of Zurich, the Anabaptist's challenge lost. On January 2, 1525, Zwingli then promptly banished the Anabaptists from those Swiss cantons which were under his control (A canton is a political-religious division of a country. Today, Switzerland has 22 cantons.). Fifteen days later Zwingli had the city council of Zurich order all un-baptized children to be presented for baptism within eight days. This gave rise to a set of dissenters on January 21 of that same year. They were to become known as the Swiss Brethren. They were also called Anabaptists.

They, along with other dissenters, came under the sword of Zwingli and suffered persecution, cruelties, and death.

As mentioned, Zwingli's record was pretty much a parallel of Luther's history, but with an odd twist at the end. Zwingli gained control over six of the eleven Swiss cantons. In 1529 the hostility between the cantons flared into open civil war. On October 10, 1531, Zwingli, acting as chaplain and standard-bearer for the Protestant forces, was wounded at Kappel am Albis and later put to death by the victorious Catholic troops of the Forest Cantons. After Zwingli's death the Reformation made no further headway in Switzerland; the country is still half Catholic, half Protestant.

It is clear that Zwingli held to the universal church dogma. Just as with the Catholic Church, Luther and all other later state-churches, Zwingli's reign with state church authority granted no freedom of religion, thought, or liberty of will for the individual. These were dangerous, treasonous heresies.

The dissenters held widely different theological views on doctrines and practices, but they all had this one thing in common: a desire of freedom. They simply wanted to worship God in their own way in peace, to congregate in peace, to read their Bibles in peace, do evangelism in peace, and to preach in peace. These were not possible with the Universal Church!

None of this could have been possible without the rise of "Bishop" rule in the second century,[6] and later, in 250 A. D., the occurrence of the elevation of church leaders according to position, with "higher" Bishops presiding over other churches. The offices of Archbishops, Archdeacons, Elders, Priests, and Presbyters were now seen in the churches. Confederations were soon formed; first in Greece and then spread throughout the Roman Empire (No resemblance to present associations). This lust for power and prestige led to the hierarchy being set in motion. With the passage of time this drift of heresy became anchored in the churches that tolerated this error. It was simply one small step to unify these segments into the whole, thus bringing about the emergence of the Catholic (Universal) Church, making *all* churches into one. Meanwhile, the Montanists, Novatians, and Donatists stood firm against these practices, which were leading the churches into paganism and carnality.

[6] Bishop rule was not yet extended to being overlords of other churches but rather the dictatorial rule of the Bishop over the local church. They were claiming for themselves to be the unchallenged authority in the church. This was to the exclusion of the Holy Spirit leadership in the church. They elevated the office and title of bishop to usurp Christ as the head of the Church. The clergy became ambitious for power and trampled upon the independence of the churches. Members were expected to give their allegiance and to subjugate themselves to their Bishop.

Chapter 3

The Church Defined and Its Nature
Part II

The Universal Invisible Church

Introduction to the Doctrine

This is a doctrine recently developed by the Reformers and Protestants. Many today who choose to be of the Protestants hold this same view. Chafer in his *Systematic Theology* states, "… [T]he invisible concept of the church is a Reformation doctrine newly arrived at by them." When the *first* reformers made their break from the Catholic Church they carried with them their love and devotion to State-Church union. They failed to shake off the old way of viewing the church and held it to be Catholic, which is Universal.

The Necessity of Two Churches

The second generation of reformers, disgusted by the establishment of more cruel "Catholic" churches, broke away and felt they had to redefine the church. This they did with a Universal Invisible Church design. They made this church to contain *all the redeemed* of God. However, who exactly are *all the redeemed* is in dispute. Some say all saints from Adam, and others say only those of the New Testament era beginning at the Day of Pentecost. A few go to the extreme of including the children/infants of "those who profess the true religion."

But that concept alone fails in the examination of New Testament scripture. Thus, they were forced to concede the addition of a second definition or form of the church. This is their variance with the Catholics. They assert that the REAL church is the universal, singular, invisible Church. The phenomenon of local visible churches is simply a visible manifestation of the invisible. That is, churches are a microcosm of the whole. Some identify it as a *type* of the real. Thus, the Universal Invisible Church doctrine is nearly always coupled to a second aspect of the church, as local visible. Hence, there are two churches.

Further, they maintain that the church is never spoken of in the New Testament in the institutional, denominational, sense. By their theory it is taught that the true church can and has expressed itself in many bodies, but no one can claim to be exclusively the church, not even in the New Testament. However, the Protestants are split on this issue in practice, for many denominations claim that they are the true church even while teaching the true church is Universal Invisible.

There is a consistency among many of their theologians when defining the church. They emphatically state that the Universal Invisible Church is the TRUE Church, or REAL Church. Many keep to the pattern of capitalizing church, when speaking of "The Church" (singular) and using lower case for churches (plural). It is their way of glorifying the one and slighting the other. Some, however, believe that the local church is as valid as the universal church, and thus there is just one church, which is found in two aspects. With this view they assert that both churches began with, what they call, the baptism **by** the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4, and I Cor. 12:13).

Another phenomenon is their dealing with the Greek word *ekklesia*. *Ekklesia* is the exclusive word used in the New Testament translated into English as "church." And while they make much of the "being called out" they persistently evade the "assembling." The image is that of people being called out and wandering in a fog. Since there is no real earthly church there is nothing for them to acceptably attach themselves.

When did this doctrine begin?

The first concrete evidence of this doctrine of the Universal Invisible Church is found in the writings of John Calvin in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (year 1535: book 4, chapter 1, Article 7). In the same article Calvin also makes clear that there is a second church, visible before man.

> "The judgment which ought to be formed concerning the visible Church which comes under our observation, must, I think, be sufficiently clear from what has been said. I have observed that the Scriptures speak of the Church in two ways. Sometimes when they speak of the Church they mean the Church as it really is before God…. In this case it not only comprehends the saints who dwell on the earth, but all the elect who have existed from the beginning of the world. Hence, as it is necessary to believe the invisible Church…"

There are other statements of faith made prior to Calvin, which infer a belief in the Universal Invisible Church, but these are vague and ambiguous. However, even these occur after the advent of Luther and the Reformation of 1517.

The Anabaptists, Paulicians, and the Waldenses in their principles of beliefs before the reformation show that they knew only the local visible church. When we say Anabaptists it is meant those existing prior to the sixteenth century. Great care needs to be exercised when referring to the Anabaptists, for the name given by the clergy of the State Churches, both Catholic and Protestant, became a catch-all term given to "heretics" of all sorts.

What prompted this new church definition?

Since this doctrine is a product of the Reformation, we ask the question, "Why?" What caused this church position to come about? Prior to the reformers only two views existed, that of the Catholic Church (Universal Visible) and their rival churches (Local Visible). Something in the reformation prompted this new doctrine. Something made it essential that a new view of the church had to be defined. A necessity gave birth to the doctrine. In order to understand this we must examine the Reformation.

The Reformation

Four doctrines of the early reformers held consistent with that of the Catholic Church. They were the State-Church evil, mass, baptism of infants, and baptismal regeneration. Both of the powerhouses of the reformation, Luther and Zwingli, initially came preaching *Sola Scriptura* "Scripture only," and freedom of religious conscience. But that preaching rapidly and radically changed when civil authority and power was offered to them. When they accepted the union of their "Church" with the State it corrupted them to such a degree that they became every bit as tyrannical as the Romans.

When freedom-loving men heard the initial declarations of Luther and Zwingli for the emancipation of man, many flocked to them. The Anabaptists, Waldenses, Brethren, and others gave them their welcomed support. Even Catholics, disgusted with the horrors of their own Church, looked to them to champion human rights. However, when these two armed with the sword of secular authority they bloodied it on the innocent; many became disillusioned and rebelled against them.

The Wedge of Institutional Salvation and Infant Baptism

Just as Rome had declared that salvation lay only within their church and its sacraments, the Reformers followed suit. To justify this and enforce it, they had to keep the Universal Visible Church doctrine. Salvation was only in the State-Church.

The next evil was that of baptismal regeneration. Only those who have the authority to baptize could administer baptism. That authority could only be held by the "Church" (whichever of the three happened to be speaking at the time).

The practice of baptizing infants began with the Roman Catholic Church. Their reasoning is reported to be that since baptism saves, then it would be wrong to deny baptism, salvation, to infants. Thus, we are expected to believe that out of the goodness of their hearts and compassionate motives they insist, nay demand, even to the point of brutal coercion, that they baptize all babies. This is a deception. It is not the eternal soul of that infant which concerns them; it is about initiating that person into their ranks. To illustrate this point these baptisms are "christenings." Christenings are literally the "Christ-ing" of a person, bringing them into Christ,

making them to be "Christian." From their viewpoint it is quite clear that they are adding them to their church. They are christening them to be Catholics, or Lutherans, or whatever. In a Statement on the "Effects of Baptism" the Catholic Encyclopedia reads: "This sacrament is the door of the Church of Christ (The Roman Catholic Church)." Pius IX., in a letter, August 7, 1873, to William King of Prussia, he claimed that everyone who had been baptized belonged in some way or other to the pope. (Armitage XIL.)

This same doctrinal scheme of infant baptism was the methodology of the Reformers.

There is no mistaking this fact of baptismal admission. We ask, why did the dissenters of the Catholic Church refuse, even on the pain of a cruel death, to have their children baptized by the Catholics, and later the Reformers? They knew full well this baptism meant nothing, that it was ineffectual for any kind of grace of God. Was it just on principle that they refuse their demands? No! It was for much more. They all, Catholics, Reformers, and dissenters knew what was at stake: that to be baptized at their hands would place them in their church, forever under their control. Infant baptism is the act of domination.

Because of their brutality, cruel tortures, confiscation of property, banishment, murdering, and abuse against innocent men, women, and children, the people revolted against them. They abhorred what they were witnessing. This led to the second generation of Reformation. Before this rebellion Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin had their struggle against only the Catholics. Now they faced new opponents of their own making. They were not about to renounce their State-Church nor their doctrine of Universal Visible Church, which fabricated them as the one and only true Church. They were stuck with what they had created, and their domination over men was being challenged, and little by little it was all slipping away. They were in a quandary.

John Calvin

When John Calvin came upon the scene with his reformation he experienced the same problem of Luther and Zwingli over the church issue. Calvin apparently picked up where Zwingli left off in Switzerland. He assumed the reigns of the State-Church institution with his radical ideas. But he quickly found, as Luther and Zwingli did, that the people, both Christian and secular, were dissatisfied with the "Church-State," and especially their vicious persecutions. He saw the rebellion and exodus from Luther by those who were becoming the second generation of Reformers. At the core of the erosion was the Universal Church doctrine. Calvin and the others could not admit that they were not the "true" church, or that Local Churches are the true, for to do so would raise the question, "Why then are you the State-Church?" So Calvin, a brilliant man in his own right, put forth another definition of the church. It did not replace the first but was in conjunction with it. That new doctrine was that the church in one sense is Universal Invisible.

To placate the dissidents he formulated the Universal Invisible Church. After all, Calvin

could reason, we are all in the true Church before God, so why should we have division among the churches here on earth? The emphasis is on unity and peace within the church. Naturally, that meant unity with him. When unity is paramount doctrine is cast aside. This new policy still limited the church to the singular on earth, it still held in force the concept of State-Church. It gave the sense of broadmindedness, toleration, and a false feeling of softening the hard lines. It seemed a perfect solution, which changed nothing.

John Knox

John Knox, a disciple of Calvin, carried this doctrine to Scotland and had it incorporated into the Scottish Confession of Faith. Chapter 16: Of the Kirk. "….which kirk is Catholic that is, universal because it contains the elect of all ages. This kirk is invisible, known only to God, who alone knows whom he has chosen, and comprehends as well (as said is) the elect that are departed (commonly called the kirk triumphant), as those that yet live and fight against sin and Satan as shall live hereafter." Here is a portion of their statement on baptism: "We confess and acknowledge that baptism appertains as well to the infants of the faithful, as unto those that be of age and discretion. And so **we damn the error of the Anabaptists**, who deny baptism to appertain to children before that they have faith and understanding." (Chapter 23: To Whom the Sacraments Appertain) [Emphasis mine]

The Scriptural Proof of the Doctrine?

Thiessen only gives two verses for his claim of Universal sense of the church, 1 Peter 1:3, 22-25; and 1 Cor. 12:13. His 1 Peter scriptures reveal nothing of the nature of the church, but concerns salvation. His second reference, (1 Cor. 12:13) is predicated on the mistranslation of the verse in the Authorized King James Version. This is discussed in greater detail in the article "Church Origin / Pentecost or before?" But for now, the second word "by" is incorrect, the word is "in," thus making it read "For in one spirit . . ." The assumption of "spirit" meaning the Holy Spirit is not required in either place of this verse. To make it so shows presumption.

Schofield also uses 1 Cor. 12:13 as the text proof.

Broadbent gives John 3:16 as justification of this position.

Calvin, who began it all, and many others give no scripture, but use sophistry for their conclusions.

John Knox refers to Eph. 2:19; 4:5; II Tim. 2:19; John 13:18.

The Easton Bible Dictionary gives these verses to support the Universal Invisible Church under Point 2 of what is the sense of Church in the New Testament: "It denotes the whole body

of the redeemed, all those whom the Father has given to Christ, the invisible catholic church (Eph 5: 23, 25, 27, 29; Heb 12: 23)."

If one chooses to interpret these verses as speaking of an invisible catholic church he is at liberty to do so, but these verses do NOT establish nor prove that fact (see section on Metaphors). To say that they do is inconsistent with the context of the subject. In fact, these verses speak either of salvation or the local church visibly assembled. They contain no evidence to indicate all the saved are in the church.

Scripture cannot sustain the justification for the Universal Invisible Church. The concept simply does not exist. It is readily apparent that there are times when the church is spoken of in its generic sense, such as when Paul confessed that he persecuted the church. The generic usage has the singular noun church standing in place of churches, plural. Technically, this is a figure of speech called a synecdoche, which is the substitution of a part of something for the whole or of the whole for the part.

Assertions and Conclusions Drawn from the Universal Invisible Church Doctrine

Since the believers of the Universal Invisible Church considered the church in two senses, universal and local, it is relevant to give the following sampling of their teachings related to these two churches. To be fair it must be said that not all Universalists believe or teach all of these points.

Universal - Invisible Church assertions concerning the church in general

<u>The Church is not a denomination</u>.

- Chafer: It is peculiarly advantageous for the student to become clear in his mind on this fact that the true church is not to be confused with any membership of earth.
- Sectarianism is sin.
- No visible church (denomination) on earth can claim to be the True church.
- The church is not confined to any particular country or outward organization.
- The church existence does not depend on forms, ceremonies, or doctrines.

<u>The Church is a pure society.</u>

- This is the only church, which possesses true sanctity. Its members are all holy.
- It contains only the regenerated of Christ.
- This is in contrast with any visible earthly church, which contains a mixture of "Tares and Wheat."
- They are not merely holy by profession, holy in name, and holy in the judgment of charity; they are all holy in act, and deed, and reality, and life, and truth. They are all more or less conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. No unholy man belongs to this church.

The Church has perfect unity.

- There are no divisions or schisms within it.
- It contains no sectarianism.
- Its members are entirely agreed on all the weightier matters of religion.
- Its members are all taught by one Spirit.

The Manner and Date of the Founding

- The universal or true church is not the product of man's efforts.
- It was not "organized," but "born." That is, the new birth is **the first condition** in the founding of this church.
- **The second** is the baptisms of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). Dispensationally, this baptism occurred on the day of Pentecost.

The Membership of the Church

- The new birth places a person in the churches, both the Universal and Local.
- In the Apostolic period (first century) the church contained all the saved (regenerated).
- The New Testament knows of no member of the church who is un-regenerated, so also it knows of no regenerated person who is not a member of a local church.

This is the Church to which the scriptural titles of present honor and privilege, and the promises of future glory, especially belong.

- This is the body of Christ.
- This is the flock of Christ.
- This is the household of faith and the family of God.
- This is God's building, God's foundation, and the temple of the Holy Ghost.
- This is the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.

The Universal Church advocates state that it is the only church which is truly apostolic. It is built on the foundation laid by the Apostles, and holds the doctrines, which they preached. The two grand objects at which its members aim are apostolic faith and apostolic practice. This is the only True and Real Church! This is the church which does the work of Christ upon earth. This church will continue through all ages to the end of the world. It can never be destroyed. It is an "everlasting kingdom." This is the only church, which is certain to endure unto the end.

Samples of assertions made by "Universalists" concerning the Local Visible Church.

- The local church is simply a gathering.
- A local church is constituted when *any* group of believers in one locality assembles.
- The local church is a self-developing body; the Great Commission was for the church to build herself up.

- Thiessen wrote (pg.414), "The local church sprang up in a most simple way. At first there was no organization, but merely a simple bond of love, fellowship, and cooperation. Gradually, however the earlier loose arrangement was superseded by a close organization. Man was active in organizing the local church, though the new life in Christ Jesus and the new relationship between people who believed in Christ, no doubt, gave impetus to the idea."
- "We prefer to speak of the organization of churches, rather than of the church. It is not possible to prove that the relation between the local churches was more than a loose one in apostolic times, and it is doubtful whether the Scriptures contemplate rigid denominational organizations." Thiessen.
- Christ is taken out of the local church as its founder.
- It is not a divine institution, but a congregation of saints organized by their own volition.

P. T. Forsyth used a metaphor saying that the local church is the outcropping of the church composed of all true believers.

The local church is simply a fellowship in which all within become brothers or sisters.

The *ekklesia* exists from Pentecost to the final coming (*parousia*). The *ekklesia* is bounded — it has a beginning and an end. The *ekklesia* is limited.

The local church did such things as decide policy, as in the matter of circumcision. But it had no fixed creeds, no liturgy, no permanent pastors, and no New Testament in concrete form. It was a combination of unity and diversity in the matter of its beliefs.

This church was never conceived as an institution. In the local church beliefs were birthed. There will always be an institutionalizing, but the organization must stay at the service of the event which birthed it.

Moltmann, has said, "There is only a church if and as long as Jesus of Nazareth is believed and acknowledged to be the Christ of God."

Why do so many insist on this Doctrine?

If it is admitted that the church is local and visible only and these churches constitute the "Real," and "True" church, then there is a limitation, a restriction on who are in them. The implications of such a definition become unthinkable to them. It would mean that they are excluded from being in the Bride of Christ, that they are not the Ground and Pillar of the Truth, that they are not the "Church of the Living God," the house of God. It would mean that they have no authority to administer baptism or the Lord's Supper, that the Great Commission is not given to them, and thus they are not able to make disciples or teach men to observe all which Christ has commanded. Nor are they the body of Christ. Nor can they lay claim to the promises

of Christ given to the *overcomers* in His churches as mentioned in the Revelation message to the seven churches of Asia.

Moreover, if it is admitted that the church is local and visible, then the statement of Jesus in Matt. 16:18 "…. the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" is the testimony of Jesus Christ Himself that what He built has continuity to this very day; it never ceased to exist.

The alternative to their view is not acceptable to them! This concession would make them wrong and take away their legitimacy. Why? Because they are Protestants. They know they have neither any heritage to claim nor any doctrinal claim to be of the churches of the New Testament. They are not about to "unchurch" themselves!

All of the men who founded their new churches had opportunity to embrace the Church which Jesus built, but they did not. They preferred their own doctrinal systems of beliefs. The cry was raised to re-establish the apostolic church, but it was right in their midst, and they rejected it. This same opportunity is still available, but they deny even the very existence of that one and only True Church.

Chapter 4

The Church Defined and Its Nature
Part III

The Local Visible Church

Of the three definitions of the church this is the most ancient. It is clear that the inspired writers and Christ Himself addressed the church as a local, visible assembly. The Paulicians, Montanists, Cathari, Donatists, Waldenses, Albigenses, the Welsh, the Bogomils and Monrovians all held to one view of the church as local and visible. Historically this was the prevalent view of the church.

The Church as Defined by this Doctrine

This definition of the church excludes any reference to a Catholic or Universal Church interpretation. It is unique in several aspects. By this doctrine there is no singular great church. It is the only model of the church. It does not look to a universal church, visible or invisible, to define it. It is the singular primary church definition without any secondary mystical body giving it impetus or a system of belief.

This nature of the New Testament church exists in the plural, churches. The local visible church view requires no second nature, or two types of churches, to accommodate the language of the New Testament. Thus, only the local church is the Real or True Church. It is not an appendage or an image of the so-called "real" mystical church.

The local, visible church is also unique in that it makes individual churches to be independent from one another. As separate bodies of Christ, they are each complete entities. However, they are interrelated by their mutual bond of love, doctrines, and passion for Christ as their exclusive head. Each is directly responsible and accountable to Christ only.

They are further unique in that they do not recognize baptisms by fallen or man made churches. These they refer to as sham baptisms. They also practice "Closed" communion, members only of that particular church may partake of the Lord's Supper.

While not entirely unique to them, they repudiate any form of earthly hierarchy, either internal or external. All members are equal, although higher esteem is given to elders. Their form of government is purely democratic. They hold that the true and only leadership of the church is the Holy Spirit as He moves the body of the church.

They are unique in that they abhor the idea of any religious union with civil authority. They have historically held to the proposition of liberty for all to learn of the Bible and freedom to

interpret for themselves without coercion or threat. They have never persecuted or victimized others, even their enemies. They leave all judgment to God in these matters.

Perhaps the greatest distinction of this doctrine of the church is that only God founded it. No man, no group of men, no earthly organization instituted or built the church of the Living God. It began during the days of the earthly ministry of Christ and has never ceased to exist. All those who have come afterward are not the church of the New Testament.

What does the New Testament require of the Nature of the Church?

Each of the proponents of the three views of the church insists that their definition of the nature of the church represents the True and Real Church. They all conflict; there can only be one which correctly portrays the true and real nature of the church. Those who make a dichotomy (a division of the whole) of the church still maintain only one True and Real Church. These are those who believe in the universal invisible church. For them to resort to two natures of the church (invisible and visible) is not honest to their position. If a visible assembly is not the true church of Christ, then it is no church at all. It cannot be both! There is only one nature of the church. So what does scripture have to say?

I Corinthian Chapter 12: 25, 26 – Fellowship

These two verses give very specific instruction as to how members of the church are to treat one another. If one member suffers all suffer with it, or one member rejoices all members rejoice with it. The purpose is clear: so that there should be no schism in the body. This cannot possibly happen unless the church is a local assembly. If the church's membership is all the saved (a universal church) there is no possible way for this to take place. Many, if not most, saved people do not belong to any church. The only model of the church, which is able to accommodate these instructions, is the local church, a local body.

I Corinthian Chapter 5 - Discipline

In this chapter Paul gives the details of excluding a member from the church. In this instance the grounds of exclusion is that of immoral behavior. Paul makes it clear that the Corinthian Church is "not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." The eating is with regard to partaking of the Lord's Supper. Some object to this interpretation and say it means not to eat common meals with them. Consider, if they could not dine with them in common meals how could they possibly dine with them at the Lord's Table? The fact of the matter is that if any member is refused the Lord's Supper by a church they are no longer a part of that church. Exclusion can only be done by a local church. No mystical church has ever excluded any member. Exclusion of course is church discipline to maintain the purity of the church.

KJV I Tim. 3: 15 - Beliefs

"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

Contrary to the King James the definite article is not used before "house," or "church." However, it is used before "truth." A better reading of this verse would be: "… that you may learn how you ought to behave yourself in a house of God, which is an assembly (*ekklesia*) of Living God, ground and pillar of the truth."

The admonishment for Timothy is for him to know how he is to conduct himself in church. The context makes clear that Paul is *not* saying how Timothy is to live his life as a Christian in a universal, invisible church.

Three things are detailed about the church: It is the house of God, the church of the Living God, and the depository of the truth.

This church (*ekklesia*) is the pillar and ground of "the truth" and not "a truth." No mystical invisible church is the ground and pillar of truth. When "the truth" is specified it is definite, and all encompassing. It is contained in the congregations of God, and not in the hands of all, some, or a few saved people disassociated with one another. There are very few doctrines which all of the saved are agreed; in reality, they mostly oppose one another. Jesus told his disciples that the Holy Spirit would come upon the church and lead it into all truth. He did not promise this to every saved person, only to that specific body assembled in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. It is the local assemblies of God, which have the unique indwelling of the Holy Spirit making them the ground of the truth.

Think on this: If the "real" church consists of all the saved, and it only is the pillar and ground of the truth, what is the truth of such a church? What are the doctrines, the teachings, the practices, the discipline, the ordinances, the government, and offices of that church? Would these things be made to accommodate every belief held by the individuals of that church, or some of their beliefs, or none of their beliefs? Any universal church is, by necessity, a church of universal doctrines. In the case of the Protestants there is no unity of faith in this. This is not the pillar and ground of The Truth! It is chaos. This verse requires the nature of the church to be local and visible!

Revelation Chapters 1-3 Churches in Jeopardy

The book of Revelation was written to seven churches of Asia and not addressed to a singular "The Church," which is in seven locations. They are called seven candlesticks, plural, and Christ walks among these churches. These are local multiple bodies of Christ, and they are real and

true. Seven times there is an admonition to "Hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches," not what the Spirit says to the church, which is what we would expect if the church were only in the Singular Universal Church.

The church in Ephesus was a church in crisis and the message to them was "Repent or else." The "or else" was that they would lose their candlestick and no longer have the illuminating light of God. They would cease to be a church of the living God, the ground and pillar of the truth. (The church in Laodicea was also in jeopardy.)

What was wrong with the Ephesian church? Jesus commended them for their works and patience. They labored for His name's sake, but He called them a fallen church. He had this against them: they had left their first love. Regardless of what their first love may have been, the accusation against them is so serious that they were in great jeopardy as a church. They were given the warning, and now it was up to them to hear and heed, for if they would not repent, and would not hear Jesus, what else was to be done to such a group but to cut them off. This was insubordination in the house of God. Lose their salvation? Certainly not. Cast them out of the universal church containing all the saved? Not unless you believe in maintaining salvation by works or a system of beliefs. It matters not how many saved people are in this church, but rather that as a body they are in compliance with the will of God.

This demonstrates a required qualification for a congregation to be His church. Throughout history many churches have come and gone. None of the New Testament era churches that we know of are in existence today. Some churches have been persecuted to death, and others have fallen by their own hands by not committing themselves to preserve the great privilege into which they were called.

This episode of the Ephesians requires the nature of the church to be local and visible!

Distinctions of this Doctrine

As previously stated, this position of the local church is believed to be the original and only view of the New Testament church as put forth personally by Jesus Christ. The New Testament bears out the testimony that there is indeed a real and true church. It is **always** found to be visible, and in specific locations except when it is spoken of in the generic (singular). This is the church which Jesus founded. It began when He began to call out unto Himself disciples to follow Him and unite with Him. He called men, assembled them, and gave them a commission of work to be done. He gave it His authority to carry out His commands and ordinances. He placed in His church the offices of pastor and deacon. All of this was divinely appointed. This church, these local bodies of Christ have their origin with Christ.

The Apostolic Church gives no evidence as being mystical or securely kept intact by any individual person or a dominating supreme church.

This doctrine of the church as local, visible is the only one which precisely answers to all instances of the church in the New Testament. It requires nothing to be added to it or adjusted to accommodate what the Holy Spirit has said about it or its functional proceedings. This was the view of the church from Christ, the apostles, and those who were a part of it. The context, syntax, vocabulary, and figures used all speak of the church as a local, visible assembly, a congregation of disciples.

We have made much of the Greek term "*ekklesia*." The word means a called-out body, which assembles for some specific purpose. Any body which assembles is visible! The "Catholic," universal body never assembles. The protestant universal church says it is called out but goes no further in its constitution. The Roman Catholic Church claims that it assembles, but in no way can it justify that it is called out since it embraces all it can amass. Only the local visible church doctrine is consistent with the inspired language of the Holy Spirit. Most assuredly, God could have chosen another word if He did not intend this definition of the church. He could have used synagogue or simple assembly but He did not. Why? By observation we come to understand He built something new and very different, which was based upon highly qualified requirements to be apart of it; He wanted only disciples.

Nowhere in the New Testament is the word *ekklesia* used to represent an invisible organization. If for no other reason, this is true because of the very meaning of the word. In those cases where *ekklesia* is in the singular with the definite article, it is still not forced to be universal. When "The Church" is present some call this a generic term usage. If this generic explanation seems somewhat vague or arbitrary, there is a better clarification, which is sustained by good hermeneutics. It is the figure of speech called a synecdoche, which is the substitution of a part for the whole or the whole for the part. (John 12: 19 The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, **the world** is gone after him.) In this case it is the singular part "The church" stands for the whole, "all churches." The rush to the conclusion that "The church" is now an entirely new concept for *ekklesia* is uncalled for and is forced upon the language.

Where is The Church?
On Earth (visible), in Heaven (invisible), or Both (universal)?

Never is it suggested that the church or any part of it is in Heaven. The burden of proof of this is upon those who make the claim. They offer no such proof, it is all opinion based on what they prefer the church to be and not what it truly is. Certainly members of His church die and are in the presence of the Lord, but their labor is over. The church continues here, on earth, passing from one generation to another. The dead do not take the church to heaven. The Great Commission is not carried out in heaven but among the living. Some use the term "Church

Triumphant" for the church in Heaven, and "Church Suffering" (or as the Roman Catholics have it, "Church Militant") for the church here on earth. These terms are nowhere to be found in the language of the Holy Spirit but are creature-originated.

To say that the **True Church** does not exist on earth, but only in some mystical spiritual realm, is to negate the words of Jesus and the inspired writers.

1. Christ made it clear that the church is built on Him, and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matt 16:18). What He made was on earth.
2. His Great Commission was given to an earthly church.
3. We ask also what did Jesus mean in Matt. 18:17, when He said "tell it to the church," and "hear the church" if there was no church physically present with them?
4. If the nature of the church is all the saved (universal) why then were the Jews shocked when God made it clear to them that He added Gentiles to it? It just will not do to say that the Jews believed that Gentiles could not or were not ever saved. The largest revival in the Bible took place with Gentiles. Jonah preached to the enormous city of Nineveh, and all, from King to peasant, repented and were saved. Jesus found great faith among Gentiles such as the Roman centurion. Salvation is not of the Mosaic Covenant nor of the Church Covenant, it is with the Adamic Covenant. Salvation is not within the church.
5. Rev. 1:4, 11, 20. Jesus specifically addressed seven churches located in Asia. Seven times Christ warns, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Again in Rev. 22:16, "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches."
6. It has already been brought out that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth. If the church is not on earth as visible and local then the sure footing of the truth is lost. No man, pastor, pope, academy, councils or otherwise, is the ground and pillar of the truth.
7. And, lastly, the words of Paul, II Thess. 1:4, "So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God."

On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit did not come on all the saved on earth. He came to those to whom He was specifically promised, Christ's Church (already in existence), John 16:13. This Comforter, this Spirit of Truth, came upon that small group called to assemble in Jerusalem. It was this group and those later added to them, which were guided in all truth and were taught by the Holy Spirit.

If the Real True Church is invisible then any visible church must be false or a sham, and guilty of usurping that which does not pertain to it. This is a slanderous charge against the local church.

Assertions and Conclusions Drawn from the Local Visible Church Doctrine

Those who oppose the local church as being the Real Church boldly insist that the church of the New Testament is not a denomination. They assert that the first century church was a non-denominational gathering of believers. Chafer in his opposition against denominationalism stated that sectarianism is a sin. This sin is the sin of dividing the Body of Christ.[1] As seen, many consider the local Apostolic Churches as a happenstance meeting of saved people who formed themselves into groups having only salvation as their common ground of unity. J. Vernon McGee stated that the only denomination God ever made was Israel of the Old Testament.

[1] Novatian in the fourth century was condemned on this same charge when he separated from the Catholic Church of Rome over the issue of church impurity.

Is this true? Were the churches of the New Testament not denominations? Does this accurately portray the local churches of the New Testament? We test this claim by first understanding what a denomination really is.

Webster's definition of denomination: "A class, or society of individuals, called by the same name; a sect; as a denomination of Christians." Other definitions of denomination also include: "a group of religious congregations having its own organization and a distinctive faith:" "a name or designation given to a class, group, or type:" "a large group of religious congregations united under a common faith and name and organized under a single administrative and legal hierarchy."

The churches of the New Testament were a class and society of individuals called *Christians*. They were a religious group of congregations having their own organization, distinctive faith, and beliefs. They were a group of independent, autonomous congregations united by bonds of love, doctrine, mutual interests, and support. They were all organized under the single administration of Jesus Christ, and its hierarchy is the Holy Spirit. The New Testament church of Jesus Christ is precisely a denomination.

This is the church which Jesus divinely established. It assembled, functioned, was persecuted and did no harm to any man. The love of good for one another and their fellow man set them apart from all other societies.

To this local church was given the commands and commission of God. The ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper were placed in it. Gifts and special offices were placed in it. It has organization; it judged, practiced discipline, ordained men, sent missionaries, and had been given a charter of purpose by God. It had the leadership of the Holy Spirit; it had a divine message, the gospel; it had a specific faith. Within this church were the disciples of Christ, disciples like no others before them. These were men and women totally committed to Christ in their love, devotion and obedience. This is the True and Real Church.

Why then with all this evidence do men refute the idea that the true church is a denomination? The reasoning behind this is that a denomination makes it exclusive, restrictive, and disharmonious to the unity of general "Christianity." This is precisely correct. The very idea that the apostolic church is a denomination is criticized as being bigoted and narrow-minded. Those who hold this position are considered as unloving and unchristian, for they refuse the Lord's Supper to those apart from the membership of that local church. They refuse to acknowledge any baptisms as "scriptural," other than of their own denomination. They believe their faith to be the correct one.

For the church to be truly non-denominational and be universal it cannot be dogmatic. If the church is not allowed to be divisive then it cannot have any doctrines which would disrupt the unity of fellowship with all the saved. The fact is, there are very few, if any beliefs on which all the saved can agree. The most basic and essential doctrine of salvation is not agreed upon, for some believe in baptismal regeneration and others believe that faith does not save but salvation is in church sacraments. Not even the issue of morality and sin can be defined. The alternative is that the Church must, by necessity of the universalist view, contain every doctrine which every saved person believes, no matter how outlandish they may be. The Universalists say the members of this imperceptible church are entirely agreed on all the weightier matters of religion. What are the weightier matters of religion? Who comes forth to tell us what the agreement is? This is chaos. Is this what Jesus intended or built?

The Church is THE pillar and ground of THE truth. It has only one system of beliefs. It does not shape itself to accommodate the beliefs of men or "political correctness" of the day. Men must be conformed to the truth of God. But, if truth is not found in the church which Jesus built, then it cannot be found at all. The Gospel of Christ is in His church; it is THE TRUTH.

Chapter 5

The Practical Importance of the Church Defines the Church

If it can be established what the church truly is, and not what it is suppose to be, this will define the nature of the church. In order to do this, certain premises have to be established, and this is where we begin.

When examining doctrine, fundamental principles of biblical interpretation must be applied. These principles are premises drawn directly from scripture and sound reasoning. Whatever is set forth as truth must satisfy the following: (1) It must be in harmony with and cannot contradict the language, (2) It must be in harmony with the whole counsel of God's Word, (3) It must have practical value or worthiness, and (4) It must be realistic to life's situation.

Is God frivolous?

Has God commanded without rationale? Has He spoken or acted frivolously without reason? Or do His covenants, commandments and doctrines serve a purpose? All that God has said and done is for the good of creation, man in particular, and for His own glorification. Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 in His reply to Satan, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," Matthew 4:4. Again in II Timothy 3:16, 17, Paul stated, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." All His words are profitable and with purpose.

His words are meant to produce blessings and benefits for His creation. Moreover, His words carry warnings against the foolishness of ignoring Him. They are to influence our conduct, attitude, and reasoning. Thus, what He has spoken has significant merit in practical ways. His commandments produce blessings and benefits for men if they yield themselves to them.

Consider Psalm 19:7-11. "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward."

All doctrines must possess an inherent value.

Because of the conflict between the doctrines of man and God, the worthiness of every doctrine is to be examined. Any doctrines found to be without merit or prove to be harmful are not from God and should be abandoned. Doctrines need to be practical in the sense that their conclusions can actually be performed and do not propose some abnormality apart from realism. At best, the commands and doctrines of men are useless; at worst, they destroy what God has given and greatly injure the spirit and soul of men. A major test of the validity of any doctrine is to valuate its practicality and worthiness. If it be that a doctrine is not practicable or carries with it no value or worth, then it should be viewed with suspicion and skepticism. If it does not reflect reason or purpose, it must be challenged as to why it should be considered at all. Furthermore, all doctrines need to be carried out to their logical conclusions and such conclusions examined for their soundness.

With these premises of doctrinal soundness we test the two prominent doctrines of the nature of the Church. But first, a review of the two doctrinal positions of the Church.

Consider the two definitions of the church. One is that the church contains all the redeemed. It is still debated whether this means only those alive or both the living and dead. This church is only in the singular (church) and not in the plural (churches). It is called universal on the ground that the church exists everywhere and is not in any one location. It is invisible and mystical in nature. This church is the aggregate of all the saved. This is believed to be the only real or true church. Local churches are not real or true, but copies or a pretense of the real church. A very important feature of this church is that it never congregates, it never conducts any business, and it does nothing at all.

The second interpretation of the church is that it is local in nature, and that there are churches in the plural existing in specific locations. This makes the church visible; it physically assembles and carries out functions. With this view, only the local church is real and true, and the universal church does not exist.

The most glaring fault of the universal church is that it fulfills no useful purpose. Since it never meets and remains invisible, it offers nothing of merit or benefit for either the saved or the lost. It preaches nothing, holds no agreed creed of belief, it practices nothing, never baptizes, never partakes of the Lord's Supper, offers no intimate fellowship, and cannot administer discipline or any other services as required in the New Testament church. This doctrine is useless, for it accomplishes nothing and has no merit of personal value for the child of God. If it be argued that Christians (who are a part of the Universal church) perform these acts and assemble, let it be recalled that by their own definition, no individual or assembly constitute a church.

We now test the two church views to see how well they comply with the requirements of the church.

Compliance to assemble

The command of Hebrews 10: 25 admonishes against forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. The invisible church is contrary to this command since it never assembles. What could possibly be meant in this verse other than assembling in a church? But according to the Universalists this is to assemble in an artificial, man-made church which has no divine command or authority to assemble. So the question must be asked, what is the meaning of assembling in Hebrews 10: 25? It cannot be answered by the Universalist. Actually, this doctrine of the church gives a ready-made excuse for not attending church at all since they are all in the wrong.

Practical or Impractical?

The Great Commission (Matthew 28: 19, 20)

Three commands are given to the church in this commission: make disciples, baptize them and teach them. A mystical body can do none of these things. It cannot make disciples (the making of disciples is a step beyond that of being saved), it does not baptize, nor does it teach. This commission is an authoritative order, granting the church authority to act in a capacity to perform this charge. Some may argue that individuals act as agents of the universal church to perform this commission on behalf of the church. The question naturally follows; when and by what authority were they commissioned or appointed as agents of the church? From where did such an authoritative charge of this function come, and who granted it? There is no definitive answer for this. Only the local church is able to fulfill this responsibility.

Discipline

Discipline is the guardian of the church. Without discipline the church is highly susceptible of falling into immorality, misconduct, and divisions of sects and doctrines. Does not this describe the state of the church if it contains all the saved? Are *all* Christians pure in their morality? Do they *all* conduct themselves in an orderly fashion, keeping the commands of Christ? Are they unified in their beliefs and fellowship? Or are there divisions of doctrines and sectarianism among them?

In truth, Christians are far more apart than they are in agreement in unity or purpose.

Consider these verses dealing with the matter and subjects of discipline in the first century.

Wicked Persons

I Cor 5: 11-13. "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not

ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

The Disorderly

II Thess 3: 6. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us."

The Insubordinate

Matt 18: 17. "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

The Discordant

Titus 3: 10. "A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject;"
Rom. 16: 17. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."
I Cor 1: 10. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

Discipline maintains the purity of the church. These first century faults of church brethren have never ceased. They still exist among Christians. Churches still need to exercise discipline or become unchaste and carnal. Only the local church is capable of exercising discipline on its members. It is impossible for the universal church to perform this requirement charged to the church.

If it be argued that local churches under the definition of the universal church can exercise discipline, then let it be recalled that the local church is a pretense church and is not a true church. By their doctrine the local church is only a society of self-gathered people who have instituted their own by-laws to govern their own social order. Thus, if a person is disciplined by one such group he or she can justly challenge that groups right to discipline him and challenge their authority for such action. This artificial church would have to concede that their authority is self-appointed for their own assembly, exclusively. So there would be no binding or releasing in heaven as stated in Matthew 16:19. Thus the sinning person merely finds himself excluded from that particular group and is free to find another imitation church without any sense that he is under discipline from God's appointed authority. This is makes for a lame and flimsy doctrine of discipline and has no practical value for the child of God.

Church discipline has a great practical value for the wayward child of God. By church discipline the lesson is taught that ungodly conduct is not tolerated but is openly disapproved. But the universal church makes no such statement; it gives no benefit for the child of God for their correction. This discipline goes beyond that of mere peer pressure, for it excludes from the

company of saints those who are troublesome and disobedient. This makes a powerful statement. Only the local church is able to provide this unique service of edification, the building up and restoration of those in broken fellowship with the Lord.

Worthy or Unworthy Church?

Under this heading the issue of fellowship is cardinal. There is only a restricted and shallow fellowship within the universal church apart from having a common salvation. The members of the universal church are almost all unknown to one another. How can they have fellowship with those they know not of, even though they might live next door? In Amos 3:3 the question is asked, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" There were many disciples who walked away from Christ because His sayings were hard. Was there fellowship with those departed disciples and the ones who remained with Christ? It is doubtful.

Fellowship spoken of in the church extends far beyond that of simply having the common bond of being saved! The fellowship found in I Corinthians 12:25-27, speaks of an intimate knowledge and tender care within the membership of a Church.

Ephesians 4:16 "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 unto the edifying of itself in love." The fellowship within the church places every member not only in close proximity but in actual contact. Peter said that the Church is made of living stones fitted and framed together, and in unison they are dedicated to the same purpose and commitment. They harmonize together, they watch over one another, they look upon the things of others, and they consider the edification of their brethren as a higher priority than their own goods, welfare, and self interests. Not only do they love (*agape*) but also are friends (*philo*) of each other. They esteem others better than themselves. This is the fellowship of the New Testament church! Can this possibly exist in a mystical body of Christ that is intangible and is not identifiable, even to itself? No, in the matter of fellowship the universal church is of no practical value. Only the Local Church can satisfy this practical need of the Children of God.

Performable?

The interpretation of the church as universal makes it incapable to perform acts necessary of the church. The universal church cannot perform the actions of giving comfort, fellowship, council or guidance for the child of God. Since this invisible church never assembles, none can attend its service. Where then is the house of God? Just as the Old Testament temple was the visible manifestation of the presence of God among men so it is with the church today.

The basic commands given to the church such as the great commission and church discipline are impractical in the mystical church. The fact that the church is the pillar and ground

of the truth is unattainable in a church which is guilty of never teaching or teaching all things. The mystical church offers no stability for the saved since its doctrines and practices are uncertain or contradictory.

The church was meant to be a provocation to the world. It stands visibly in contradiction of the righteousness of the world and portrays the righteousness of God. It condemns the world by example of holiness and purity. It is seen and very often persecuted by the world which hates it. No individual, unidentified Christian can provoke such a response. It is the church visible which is attacked.

The True Church

In perspective we see the grievous consequence of the universal church theory. The universal invisible church has no worthy value to it. It is a useless doctrine and serves no practical purpose. This version of the church accomplishes nothing good; it does not edify nor brings forth blessings or benefits to anyone. Negatively, this doctrine destroys and tears down the authority and legitimacy of the New Testament church. What God expects of His church, the universal church doctrine has made impossible. This version of the church is not benign; it is counter-productive to the commands and work of the church as seen in the whole counsel of God. This church is not the real or true church; it is an invention of men which negates the duty of submission to the commands of Christ. It presents a false church and stands in contradiction to the real church.

This invisible church theory makes the very concept of the church to be useless and impotent. This doctrine loudly proclaims that all local churches are not of God's making but only exist through the efforts of man. Moreover, because local churches are false they run counter to the purposes which Christ intended for His church. It is impossible for the church to be both universal and local or to be invisible and visible; it must be one or the other. For the carnal Christian this theory is very comfortable as it relieves them of the responsibility and accountability to God's commands. It would be an unusual Christian, indeed, who would deny the enormous benefits of the local church to the world and the child of God. Yet, they say God did not make a local church, and consequently, men had to take it upon themselves to establish a local church to secure these wonderful advantages. Did God fail? Did God miscalculate? Did God really not want the companionship, encouragement, and mutual support for His children as found in local churches? Or could it be that the doctrine of the universal church is contrived and groundless? Who has failed, God or the theologians?

The universal church doctrine collapses under the weight of scriptural evidence. God has left us His house as the invited residence of the Disciples of Christ to congregate, assemble, and work out His commands. The solitary nature of the church is local and visible; it cannot exist in any other form!

Chapter 6

The Inauguration of the Church

The Beginning of the *Ekklesia* of Christ

The question of when the New Testament church began is of no little importance, for the argument involves these details: *what* was established, *when* was it established, *how* was it established, and *who* explicitly built it. Was the church established as a universal entity, or a local body, or as both? Was the church established during Christ's earthly ministry prior to His death, or later on the day of Pentecost? Was the church established by the building process of calling out disciples, assembling them as a unit, and training them or by a decree of creation upon a gathering of about 120 persons? Did Christ personally establish the church or the Holy Spirit? Did God make many churches throughout the centuries or just the one with the capability of propagation?

Our task is to examine these two positions: Pentecost or prior to Pentecost. Let us make an analysis of them in the light of the Word of God. For clarity, the following outline is provided.

Chapter Outline:

Part I

- **The View of the Inauguration of the Church on the Day of Pentecost**
  1. Asserted by the Promise of Christ in Matt. 16:18
  2. Asserted by the Necessity of the Death of Christ
  3. Asserted by the Necessity of the Baptism of The Holy Spirit

Part II

- **A refutation of the Pentecost view**
  1. Matthew 16:18, 19
     A) The Rock
     B) "Will Build"
     a) The Future: Punctiliar or Durative?
     b) Build: *oikodomeso*
  2. Church: Ekklesia - Matthew 18:17, 18
  3. The Day of Pentecost - Acts 2:1-4
  4. I Corinthians 12:13
  5. The Blood of Christ

Part III

- **Summation**

Part I

The Day of Pentecost View of the Origin of the Church

(Those who hold to the view of the inauguration of the church on the day of Pentecost will be referred to as Pentecostals. This is without any reference to the denomination of the same name.)

The most popular opinion of the inauguration of the church is that it began on the day of Pentecost. This is primarily based upon two scriptural references, Matt. 16:18, and Acts 2:1-4: a third, I Cor. 12:13, is also used as collaborating evidence. It must be kept in mind that the mainstream of those who hold this view also believe that the church contains all the saved and is an invisible institution. This opinion of the beginning of the church and its universal invisible nature is a Protestant-held position, first proposed by Calvin in the early 16th century (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Volume 4).

The following are typical representations of the opinions put forth that Christ did not institute His church during His earthly life. There may be other existing arguments, but hopefully these should adequately cover this view.

Asserted by the Promise of Christ in Matt. 16:18

KJV Matthew 16:18. "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Discussion of this passage addresses the time of founding, on whom the church is built, the meaning of *ekklesia*, and the word "build" (*oikodomeso*).

The word build is a verb in the future tense. The only possible translation and meaning is "will build." No argument can be made that it has already been built or was in existence at this time. Jesus is clearly stating that at a future date He would institute the founding of His church. During His life He laid the groundwork for the church, but it did not come into functional existence until the day of Pentecost.

Presented in His statement that He will build His *ekklesia* is the foundation of a truth that what He was going to make was something entirely new. It was to be something never before seen. This was not a rebuilding of Israel into His *ekklesia*, which would be a reformation of Israel, but something quite apart from Israel. This is the message to the disciples that an entirely new entity was to come. Radmacher[1] wrote:

> "Although previously the word always was used of the simple concept of assembly, now in Matt 16:18 it is characterized by the new content which Jesus gave it as over against form other kind of *ekklesia*. Thus, Jesus seems to be saying: 'You are familiar with the *ekklesia* of Israel in the Old Testament. But I am going to build an *ekklesia* that will be characterized by the content which I shall give it.' The contrast then would seem to extend to a spiritual ekklesia of the Old Testament. Thus

Robertson[2] says that ekklesia came to be applied to an '*unassembled assembly*.'" [My emphasis]

[1] Earl D. Radmacher, The Nature of the Church, Western Baptist Press Portland, Oregon 1972, pg. 205

[2] A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, I, 132-33

The word *oikodomeso* in this passage means nothing more than to build, to initiate a construction. It does not carry with it the idea of building up, edifying, or enlarging in this passage. This idea of a pre-existing building being built up is to be rejected for the following three reasons. First, the context reveals that Christ is speaking of His future program, a future church. Second, this future *ekklesia* is not "I am building" but "I will build." Third, the use of *oikodomeso* by Matthew is significant, Bowman[3] writes:

"….one should note that Peter uses *oikodomeo* to express the idea of "building up" but the word is used only after the church had started at Pentecost (I Peter 2:5). Therefore, it cannot be held that *oikodomeo* in Matthew 16:18 has the idea of enlargement. Why use a future tense for a finished fact."

[3] H. E. Bowman, thesis *The Doctrine of the Church in the North American Baptist Association*, pg. 21

Proven by the necessity of the Death of Christ

This proof is clearly substantiated by Acts 20: 28. Here Paul states that the blood of Christ had purchased the flock, the church of God. The existence of the body of Christ could not be possible prior to His death and ascension. Chafer[4] states:

"There could be no church in the world - constituted as she is and distinctive in all her features – until Christ's death; for her relation to that death is not a mere anticipation, but is based wholly on his finished work and she must be purified by His precious blood."

[4] Lewis S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, IV, 45

Proven by the Necessity of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The following is quoted from Radmacher, *The Nature of the Church*, pages 210, 211.

- The chief argument for the beginning of the church on the day of Pentecost relates to the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

- Van Oosterzee[5] declares, "It dates from the first Christian Pentecost, and is in the full sense of the word a creation of the Holy Ghost." Brunner[6] agrees: "the outpouring of the Holy Ghost and the existence of the Ekkelsia are so closely connected that they may be actually identified."
- In I Cor. 12:13 Paul explains that entrance into the body of Christ is dependent upon the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This event had not yet occurred in John 7:39.
- Nash[7] states that Acts 2:2 pinpoints the actual founding of the church when the Holy Spirit sat (*kathidzo*) upon each one of them. Thayer[8] defines this term *kathidzo* as "to have fixed ones abode, i.e., to sojourn, settle, settle down."
- Since the church is the body of Christ (Col. 1:18, 24), the church could not have begun until Pentecost, and it had to begin on that day.
- The precise event which inaugurated the church was the advent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost at which time those persons who were tarrying in the upper chamber at Jerusalem waiting for the promise of the Father were baptized by the Holy Spirit and became members of the church.

[5] J. J. Van Osterzee, *Christian Dogmatics*, I, 295.
[6] E. Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church*, pg. 161
[7] C. A. Nash, *The Book of Acts* (Unpublished)
[8] J. H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, pg. 314

Theissen wrote in his *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (pg. 409, 410) on the founding of the church, as both local and universal, the following:

> "Paul expresses it (the church founding) succinctly when he says, "By one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks" (I Cor. 12:13). By the body he meant the church (vs. 28: Eph. 1:22, 23); and whether we translate the Greek preposition (*ies*) "into" or "unto" it is clear that the baptism of the Spirit makes the believers into the church. I Cor. 12:13 refers to the baptism as a past experience. Thus, it is evident that the baptism of the Spirit occurred on the day of Pentecost and that the church was founded on that day."

Part II
Rebuttal to the Pentecostal Church Origin

In replying to the Pentecostal view of the founding of the Church, it seems best to analyze the appropriate Scriptures in the order in which they occur. In the discussions of these passages, rebuttal is presented against the assertions and conclusions drawn by the Pentecost proponents.

Matthew 16:18,19

KJV Matthew 16:18, 19. "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

The Rock

The question on whom the church is built is easily answered by examining the term "rock." Here Jesus renamed Simon, calling him Peter. "Peter" is the Greek word "*Petros*" meaning a piece of rock or a moveable rock. But the rock which the church is built upon is "*Petra*" a solid, massive, unmovable rock such as bedrock. Jesus did not say to Peter, "upon you I will build My church," but "upon this rock" indicating another foundation. Jesus is that other rock and foundation, and He built the church upon Himself. The use of the personal possessive pronoun makes clear the ownership of the church; it is His Church, exclusively. This does not indicate the Holy Spirit as the rock.

Will Build

The Future: Punctiliar or Durative?

The phrase "will build" is in the future tense, indicating that from that time Christ would build His church. Is this future work a punctiliar action (action as a point) or durative, linear action (action which is continuous or incomplete)? Here are two examples of the future tense verb showing a continuous action: KJV Matt. 13:43. "Then shall the righteous *shine* forth as the sun . . . and Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Is this shining of the righteous only momentary or will they continue to shine once they begin to radiate? Does Christ give rest only at one point in time? Or is it not rather true that His rest is continuously given? The point is that there are possibilities of future actions. Grammar alone may not necessarily determine the kind of action, but the immediate context and scriptural harmony often does.

It is assumed by the Pentecostal position that the building of the church by Christ will be punctiliar, a one-time event, never to be repeated or advancing. As they see it, Christ only built one church (universal invisible), and it had but one beginning. Thus, their conclusion is that the "will build" in our text verse is a punctiliar action, once for all. They cannot or will not concede any on-going building processes of the church in this verse. By their subsequent statements they reveal their doctrinal position of the church consisting of all the saved and they emphasize I Cor. 12:13 (the baptism of the Holy Spirit) as their proof of this doctrine. Thus it becomes clear why, for their cause, the church by necessity had to have begun on the day of Pentecost. For to them Pentecost is that act of the church being baptized by the Holy Spirit.

Build: *Oikodomeso*

Our argument is not over the future tense of build, but it is the significance of build. *Build* is used with such meanings as to "build up," "edify," "strengthen," "advance" and "enlarging." To adamantly deny the possibility of these meanings verges on prejudice, preconception and closed-mindedness. These verbs are viable meanings of the word *oikodomeo.*[9] The English "edify" and its forms are translated only from either the noun *oikodome* or verb *oikodomeo*.

[9] Cremer, *Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek*, pgs. 448, 449

The argument for a Pentecostal church beginning is often seen in circular reasoning. It runs thus:
(Assertion) - "Since Matt.16:18 is the church founded in the future then
(Conclusion) - it began on the day of Pentecost."
(Assertion) - "Since the church began on the day of Pentecost then
(Conclusion) - Matt. 16:18 means a future founding of the church."

Bowman wrote: Since Peter (I Peter 2:5) states the Church is building up after Pentecost, "it cannot be in Matthew 16:18 has the idea of enlargement."[10] This opinion of Bowman is inclusive in this verse. He goes on; I Peter 2:5 gives no proof of the applied meaning of *oikodosemo* in Matthew. He gives no reason why Peter and Matthew are not compatible in the usage of building the church.

[10] H. E. Bowman, thesis *The Doctrine of the Church in the North American Baptist Association*, pg. 21

There is an important consequence in this word "build." Did Jesus cause to build (create) His church and then end His involvement with it? Or did He leave the founding and administration of the church to the Holy Spirit and contribute nothing more to it? Or was He indicating His involvement in the affairs and well being of His church throughout all centuries? What He said in Matt 16:18 was a promise to His disciples, which projected involving them and Himself in His church. Certainly Jesus is constantly and deeply involved in His churches. See Rev. Chapters 2, 3 where He repeated to all seven churches, "I know thy works." The interpretation of build to edify, build-up, or strengthen can be clearly demonstrated, such as in I Peter 2:5. The meaning to initiate as opposed to edify cannot be conclusively demonstrated, but inferred only. So, is it best to interpret by inference or by clear precedent?

Church: Ekklesia

It is on this point that the Pentecostals present conflicting double meanings. There is absolutely no precedent set in the New Testament where the word *ekklesia* is convincingly used in any other way than its common usage. The generic use of *ekklesia* is not proof of any secondary meaning of the word. It verges on absurdity to say that the church is an *unassembled assembly*. To assert that Jesus was speaking of an invisible universal, never-assembled called-

out assembly (*ekklesia*) would have made no sense to His disciples. Unless Christ explained this new meaning to them they would have had a contradictory understanding of what He said. Not only would they have been confused about the nature of the church but also to all those after them. Nowhere is it ever explained that *ekklesia* is now put to use with an entirely new meaning. Not simply a new meaning, but a meaning in opposition, and contrary, to the very word used. We must allow only for scripture, not the theology of men, to interpret scripture. Scripture never redefines *ekklesia*; neither has it presented two entities with the single designation of *church*.

Matthew 18:17, 18

KJV Matthew 18:17, 18. "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Matt.18:17, Jesus instructs the disciples that if they cannot resolve a personal conflict then bring it before the church, and have the church judge the matter. Here the church is specifically mentioned as existing before Pentecost. This admonition is not future but in the present.

Robertson (*Word Pictures*) wrote on this verse:

> "The church (the ekklesia). The local body, not the general as in Mt 16:18. The problem here is whether Jesus has in mind an actual body of believers already in existence or is speaking prophetically of the local churches that would be organized later (as in Acts)."

This problem for Robertson (and all Pentecostals) is resolved simply by continuing to read the next verses in these two texts (Matt. 16:19 & Matt. 18:18). Observe carefully here. First, both churches in Matt. 16:18, and 18:17, are identical. Here is how we can tell. The phrase: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." is found verbatim in both passages. In Matthew 16:19 the binding and loosing is in the context of the church being given the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Consistency in the usage of the church with identical authority on two different occasions makes them identical. Robertson and others see a local body in one passage and the general, universal body in the other passage. This cannot be, for by what means could a *universal invisible* "body" ever bind or loose in Matt. 16? This binding and loosing involves judicial processes by the whole body and the consequential action taken by it. Only a local church can accomplish such work.

Oddly enough, Chafer never addresses Matt. 16:19 or Matt. 18:17, 18. Schofield places the *keys* and authority in Matt 16 into the hands and power of individuals.[11] Schofield ignores the Matt. 18 church reference. Thiessen identifies Matt. 18 with the local church, and specifically

identifies the subject to be the church administering church discipline.[12] Thiessen wrote (pg. 421):

> Each church elected its own officers and delegates (Acts 1:23, 26; 6:1-6; 15:2, 3). Each church had the power to carry out its own church discipline (Matt 18:17, 18; I Cor. 5:13; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14, 15). The church together with its officers rendered decisions (Acts 15:22), received delegates (Acts 15:4), sent out solicitors (2 Cor. 8:19), and missionaries (Acts 13:2, 3).

[11] Scofield Reference Bible

[12] H. C. Theissen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, pgs. 416,421

Two facts come to the forefront. First, the nature of the church is local. Second, the church existed before Pentecost, during the earthly life of Christ. The *keys* were not delivered into the hands of individuals to make heaven-bounded decisions. Which of us would trust any man to determine matters of such magnitude? History has shown to us the horrors of corruption when men have claimed this power for themselves. The keys are placed in His local churches with the ability to meet, hear, deliberate, and render decisions, which are bound in Heaven.

The Day of Pentecost: Acts 2:1-4

What exactly happened on this day? Did the Holy Spirit baptize the church, or an un-constituted group of redeemed individuals? Actually neither, for the Holy Spirit baptized no one on that auspicious occasion. To say that the Holy Spirit did the baptizing means that He was the agent performing or administering baptism. This He did not do. The church was baptized, immersed *in* the Holy Spirit. He was the element into which the church was baptized. Neither were they baptized by fire but rather in fire. The sound from heaven filled the house, this sound was the physically manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit. He filled the entire house which they occupied.

This agrees exactly with the prophecies given by John the Baptist. In all four gospels this is mentioned by John (Matt. 3:11: Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16 and John 1:8). John never used "by" or "with," but "in" (*en*) the Holy Spirit that the baptism would occur. This also agrees with the mainstay passage of I Cor. 12:13, where it should read "*in* one spirit" and not *by* one spirit we are all baptized.

Jesus promised His church that after His death He would send them the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth. Once He came, He was to be their Comforter (the one walking beside), their guide into all truth (John 14:16; 15:26; 16:13, 15), and the testifier of Christ. He was to reveal to them the things He receives from Jesus after His glorification. He was sent by both the Father and Christ (John 15:26).

When He came He perpetually took up His abode in the church; teaching them, grounding them, leading them in the affairs of the Kingdom, and inspiring individuals within her to pen the New Testament. His manifestation on the day of Pentecost was not only for the benefit of the church but also for those apart from the church. It was the divine substantiating evidence of what the disciples were proclaiming to the world was true. As the glory of God had been with Israel, so now is the glory of God abiding in His church among men. This church, His house, is seen in the same fashion as the tabernacle of the Old Testament with the confirmed evidence of Moses' testimony, that it was there that God abides with men. The miracle on that day and in subsequent days was also corroborating evidence that God was with the church; there, in that assembly, God is present. The Jewish temple was no longer the center of worship and service. The proof was given on that day. This power, this leadership, this confirmation from God did not inaugurate the church, but came upon the already existing church. These were the final stages in the fashioning of the church. It was already in existence but was, in a sense, not fully functional without these additions.

I Corinthians 12:13

This verse is the tip of an inverted pyramid of the doctrine of the universal invisible church. It would be expected that a doctrine, which is so contrary to the plain sense of the words and context of the church, would have a broad base from which it is built. But not so, this is the only conclusive text verse that the universalist puts forth. But, upon closer examination of I Cor. 12:13, it is found to be a mistranslation.

KJV I Corinthians 12:13. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

The second word of the King James translation has it as "by." This is incorrect; the word is Greek *en*. *en* is the primary preposition "in;" it has no other meaning. This would make it to read: "For *in* one spirit….." However, for the sake of those who challenge this meaning in this passage and insist on "by," we investigate further.

Rotherham[13] notes on this verse: "For *Baptizein* with *en* of element, see Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 1:26, 31, 33; Acts 1:5; 11:16. In every case where *en* is used it is clearly meant 'in' and not 'by.' Some say that because the word *en* is grammatically coupled with Spirit, which is in the dative case, it can be translated as 'by.' But this does not agree with the verses which also use the dative and are not translated 'by,' but rather as 'with' or 'in.' In Luke 3:16 John said: 'I indeed water (dative) baptize,' here water, in the dative case, demands the preposition 'in.' John is the baptizer and not water. Consider Mark 1:8, 'I indeed have baptized you with (*en*) water: but he shall baptize you with (*en*) the Holy Ghost.' The juxtaposition of the two baptisms is to show the contrasts between the two, both relate to the persons doing the baptisms and the media which they use. The first case is John doing the baptizing in the media of water. The second

case is Christ doing the baptizing in the media of the Holy Spirit. It is not the water baptizing nor is it the Holy Spirit baptizing."

[13] Rotherham, *The Emphasized Bible* Kregel Publications

(Purchased by) The Blood of Christ

Acts 20:28

KJV Acts 20:28. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

The following is a recount of statements previously quoted as a proof for the necessity of the church existence after Calvary.

> "This proof is clearly substantiated by Acts 20:28. Here Paul states that the blood of Christ had purchased the Flock, the Church of God. The existence of the Body of Christ could not be possible prior to His death and ascension."
> Chafer: "There could be no Church in the world – constituted as she is and distinctive in all her features – until Christ's death; for her relation to that death is not a mere anticipation, but is based wholly on his finished work and she must be purified by His precious blood.'"

This conjecture is based upon the supposition that the church could not exist by the anticipation of the blood of Christ, but only after Calvary. If this supposition and conclusion is correct, then what shall be said of salvation? Both the church and God's redemption are made possible only by His blood. To presume that prior to Christ's death the church could not exist is to conclude salvation could not exist, for the same price is paid for both. Salvation certainly existed in anticipation of the blood of Christ. The logic is faulty.

The blood of Christ not only purchased the church, but also washes men from their sins (Rev 1:5), gives eternal redemption (I Peter 1:18,19), sanctifies men (Heb. 13:12), justifies men (Rom. 5:9), and reconciles men unto God (Rom. 5:10). Indeed, in order for all this to be done, the blood sacrifice had to be accomplished. But the question is: could these things exist in anticipation of the blood? Could they have existed prior to and then be consummated by His blood? To deny this is to deny salvation for all who died before the death of Christ. And yet, we know Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David et. al. were justified before God by their faith in the promises of God of a future Messiah (Matt. 8:11).

The salvation of God is in anticipation of His redemptive work. KJV Rev.13:8 "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Christ stood as slain from the time of the

creation. This decision, this commitment, this provision for man's sin was made before the need of it ever occurred.

By the fact that salvation existed in anticipation of the Blood, how can it be asserted that the existence of the church *cannot* be in anticipation? What Christ purchased was the fruit of His labor among men, making them His disciples and assembling them. In truth, what He purchased was already in existence, just as He consummated salvation, which had already been granted unto the redeemed.

Part III
Summary

The **time** of the founding of the church gives evidence of what the nature of the church is and what it is not. Moreover, the time either establishes or denies the assertion of the rights of men to create churches, and then claim of the validity of these subsequent "churches." It either allows or denies congregations to justifiably call themselves the pillar and ground of the truth, the bride of Christ, and the house of God with the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. Finally, it establishes who in this world has been given the divine authority for the ordinances and judgment in the affairs of the kingdom.

The **manner** in which the church was founded also defines the nature of the church. If it be supposed that the church began on the day of Pentecost, it still does not fit the pattern of a universal church. When the Holy Spirit came upon the church it was a local visible body, which assembled in one room of one house. He did not come upon all the saved upon the earth. Without exception, those who believe in the universal church all agree that the universal church is "the Real and True Church," and the Local church is merely an imitation of the real. But yet, there is no record or indication that anyone saved apart from that small group in Jerusalem had any knowledge of what happened that day. Were the "120" the only saved at that time? Did the Holy Spirit only manifest Himself in such power and great demonstration to a very small portion of all the saved, and the rest were without any such testimony or knowledge that they had just been constituted into the Lord's church? Could they have known who the others were that are now also joined together with them in the body of Christ and the house of God? If, on the other hand, the church existed during the earthly life of Christ, it is clearly a local visible assembly. Only those who persisted as disciples of Christ and followed Him constituted His church. These disciples were well known to one another and fellowshipped together. His church is clearly, visibly identified in the world. There is no unassembled assembly.

The church existing prior to Pentecost is unmistakably the property and creation of Christ and of no human agency. There is no institution apart from what Jesus built which may claim to be His church. When individual churches fell into apostasy they lost their standing as His body. When men, seeking reformation built their churches, those churches remained as they were founded, the work of man and not Christ. The absurd notion that the church of Jesus Christ died

out is contrary to the words of Christ; "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." What Jesus built, He declared would survive until the day of His coming and is caught up to be with Him.

To teach otherwise is to blaspheme against Christ's own words, whether intentionally or unintentionally.

While He was on earth, Jesus taught and led His church. They were grounded in the truth. But to keep that assurance they needed constant supervision and correction. This necessitated the continuous presence of the Holy Spirit in the church as the leader, teacher, and inspirer of the truth. With the Holy Spirit administering discipline to the church and individuals within her, she is thus able to be presented to Christ as a chaste virgin, holy, without blemish. None of this is true of a mystical, invisible, unassembled assembly. Apart from the common salvation of all the redeemed, there is chaos in doctrine, practice, discipline, tolerance, and compromise among them. Throughout history redeemed men[14] have persecuted, even unto death and torture, both saved and lost people because of doctrinal issues. It is buffoonery to say all the saved are the ground and pillar of the truth, the church of the Living God.

[14] John Calvin is one such example. He is lauded as one of the great Christians of all time by a vast number of theologians.

The ordinances of the church, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, were given to the church while Jesus lived. No other group of persons or individuals received the command or authority to observe and administer them. The "Great Commission" was given to the eleven disciples who stood in place of the church. It was a limitless commission to be discharged throughout the world, among all nations, for all seasons. The context of this commission is to make disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them the commands of Christ and obedience to them. Many organizations in the world today attempt to usurp this commission, but it cannot be done. Most churches today make disciples not of Christ but for some cause. Jesus never made disciples for any cause, but made disciples of Himself. His disciples are to follow the person and not peripheral issues of the person. Further, His church is composed of these disciples. His church is not about ideological agendas but devoted to the service, worship, and glorification of the person, God. She follows Him as her Head, Lord, and Master. When this is lost and a cause becomes "the leader" and devotion is given to the cause, it can no longer make men disciples of Christ or teach them.

The Church Moving On From Pentecost

The Pentecostal event cannot be understated in its importance to the growth and welfare of the church. The benefit is not only for the church but also for the entire world. It is thought by many that evangelism began with the church, but this is not true to history. Since the time the Old Testament Hebrew text was translated into Greek, called the Septuagint, the Jews were very committed to "evangelism." The words of Christ are often overlooked when He said to the

Scribes and Pharisees, "you compass sea and land to make one proselyte" (Matt. 23:15). They were very zealous in their "missionary" work. Unfortunately, their message of penance and "law" salvation kept men in bondage to sin and sealed their fate to hell.

The Gospel of Christ spread rapidly in the first few centuries. This included the phenomenal growth of the church. Churches quickly arose throughout the known world. Unfortunately, a number of churches apostatized just as quickly. The problems which Paul and John addressed reveal the pressure on the churches to revert to the law and to deny that Christ was Lord. Both moral and doctrinal failures became evident. The rebukes Jesus gave to His churches in Rev. 2, 3 also exposed serious errors of men usurping His authority and their coldness to Him. Because of the lack of vigilant discipline, heresies and immorality destroyed many churches. Worse yet, it gave birth to a new denomination of the church. In a little over four hundred years churches began to persecute churches. This caused an often-repeated pattern of the Lord's churches rejecting and separating themselves from fallen churches.

These facts do not apply to the aggregate redeemed, but to individual assemblies of Christ. As churches took a stand for the truth they suffered for it. Many were driven into hiding in remote regions of the Roman Empire. Some, as in the case of the Waldenses, the Bogomils, churches in Spain and the Welsh, etc., survived for centuries with the same system of faith as the church of Jerusalem. Many others were persecuted out of existence. By the churches, and not individuals, were the doctrines and practices (repentance, salvation, baptism, the Lord's Supper, discipline, faithfulness, purity, and love) of the New Testament held sacred and preserved. They safeguarded, taught, loved, and committed to memory the Word of God. The miracle of God's Word is that it has survived. None of this could have been possible without the advent of the Holy Spirit upon the church on the day of Pentecost.

Chapter 7

The Anabaptists and Baptists

It is a well-accepted opinion that the modern Baptists have their roots in the old Anabaptists of Europe. This opinion includes the Mennonites and Dutch Baptists who played a part in the history of the English Baptists. Protestant Baptists claim that all Baptists today are descendants from either the Particular or General Baptists of England (both of whom are Reformers). So we ask: who were the Anabaptists? No serious student of Baptist history will fail to discover that there are many who assert that the Anabaptists originated during the Reformation period. If this assertion is true then that would make the Baptists to be in the class of the Protestants. Thus, there is a need to investigate the Anabaptists and any connection with the Baptists.

This study is in two parts. The first is a discourse on the Anabaptist, and the second is a Protestant claim for the Anabaptists.

Part One:
Anabaptism

The bulk of the following material was written by Robert Robinson in his book, *The History of Baptism*, first published in 1790's Cambridge, England, and later the American republish in 1817, Boston. You may find this material to be tedious and difficult reading due to the style of writing of the eighteenth century English. But with patience and concentration, the reading of Robinson will be rewarded with a depth of knowledge of the features and history of the Anabaptists and the Baptists. You may need to read sentences several times to get the full force of the details discussed, I urge you take the effort.

The History of Baptism, Chapter XXXIV, Of Anabaptism
Robert Robinson

It is not a little diverting to see with what perfect self-complacence many authors have given the world histories of the Anabaptists. Indiscriminately, without definition of terms, or any distinction of times, places, persons, or circumstances, without suspecting any thing to be false, or proving any thing to be true, they roll the narration rapidly along, and conclude without giving the reader any information. There is not a plainer tale in the world than that of the Anabaptists, yet there is not a tale more confused in the telling. According to some, who have done the Anabaptists the honor of writing their history, without knowing any thing certain of the matter, it ought to be reported at the end of a doleful tale about heresy, and sedition, that the first Anabaptist of record is the apostle Paul. It is strictly true, as Paul re-baptized certain disciples in Ephesus he reflects perfectly what is an Anabaptist. One page of criticism is of more worth than a whole volume of declamation, and the critical accuracy of the history of Anabaptists is nothing

in the world but a failed narration of distinct facts. To mix all these facts into one general history is to create a chaos.

An Anabaptist is one, who is re-baptized or re-baptizes: but if it be granted that baptism may be administered wrong, what possible reason can be given for why it should not be re-administered right? Certainly something is essential to baptism; if that something be omitted in an administration, the act is not a baptism but a fiction, and consequently reason requires that the fiction be superseded by conferring the essence. The little boy Athanasius, when he was twelve years of age, at play dipped his play-fellows in the sea, and it was adjudged by the bishop and his councilors a valid baptism, because it appeared on inquiry, he had previously asked the usual questions, the boys had made the proper answers, and he had pronounced as he dipped them the same words, which he had heard the bishop pronounce when he baptized Catechumens. Had any of these parts been omitted, the baptism would have been thought invalid and the children must have been re-baptized, or rather they must have been baptized, for the first would have been adjudged no baptism, but the mere sport of boys who knew not what they were about. The bishop of the church did not hold a council of bishops on the question of Anabaptism, but on the fact before them, whether the boys had been baptized, or not, and when it was determined they had, nobody thought of re-baptizing them. If it had been determined they had not, would any accurate writer have called them Anabaptists for being afterward regularly baptized by the bishop? Here then lies the whole mystery of Anabaptism. Nobody holds, or ever did hold, at least in this part of the world, a repetition of baptism:[1] but different Christians in the same ages have thought differently of what makes the essence of baptism, as a narration of facts will prove.

[1] There are a limited number of churches today who will re-baptize those returning in penance to their membership after exclusion.

Different Kinds of Persons Called Anabaptists

There are in general six sorts of Christians who have, been called Anabaptists, as different from one another as can well be imagined. The first placed the essence of baptism in the virtue of the person baptized: the second placed it in the form of words pronounced in the administration: the third in the virtue of the administrator: the fourth in the consent of the person baptized: the fifth in dipping: and the sixth in both a profession of faith and an immersion. (Another sort of Anabaptists can be added in our modern times, that re-baptism is performed because at the time of the first baptism the candidate did not possess their system of beliefs.)

I. The first class is very large and extremely respectable. It was about the close of the second, or the beginning of the third century, that Tertullian began to complain of the corruption of baptism, and he wrote a book in the Greek language, against the administering of it to immoral persons.[2] After his death, Agrippinus, bishop of the church at Carthage, and many neighboring bishops, agreed to reject the vague baptisms administered, they knew not how or by

whom, on account of the immorality of the people who had been baptized, and to re-baptize all such as should come over from those communities to join their churches. A few years after, Cyprian and seventy-one neighboring Bishops renewed this agreement. Then Firmilian, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, and a great many bishops of Galatia, Cilicia, Phrygia, and other parts of Asia, determined, for the same reason, to re-baptize. Dionysius and his followers in Egypt, the Acephali, Novatus of Rome, Novatian of Carthage, all the Novatian churches, Donatus and his numberless followers, called after him Donatists, all rejected the baptism administered by those who have since been called Catholics, whom they reputed heretics, and whose churches they called habitations of impurity, and all such as came from those churches to them, they re-baptized. All these, and they were very numerous, considered the moral integrity and good faith of the person baptized, the very essence of baptism, and if a professor of Christianity were an unholy man, they adjudged his baptism like his profession, vain and invalid, and himself not a weak believer of Christianity, but a mere unprincipled Pagan. These rigid moralists, however, did not count themselves Anabaptists, for they thought there was but one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and that their own.

[2] Tertullialu de baptismo. Cap. xv.

II. The second class consists of such as place the essence of baptism in the form of words pronounced by the administrator, or, to speak more correctly, in a belief of that concerning the nature of God, which the form of words was supposed to express. In the year three-hundred and twenty-five, the council of Nice was held under the direction of the Emperor Constantine the Great. In this council the Trinitarian Christians got themselves established, and it was decreed that such as should come over to the established church from the congregations of the Novatians or Puritans, should be admitted by the laying on of hands: but that such as should come from the Paulicians both men and women, should be re-baptized. Commentators assign a very true reason for this distinction. The Nicene council held the doctrine of the Trinity as did the Puritans, and both expressed their faith in the Trinity by administering baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: but the Paulicians, who denied the Trinity, and affirmed that Jesus was a mere man, omitted this form. Their baptism, therefore, the Catholics rejected as trivial and of no value. The Arians for the same reason rejected the baptism of the Catholics, and they also re-baptized such as came from them to join their societies. Anabaptism, as it is called, at that time, was thought by all parties necessary to the purity of their churches: yet, in their own opinions they did not re-baptize: but supposing what was essential to baptism to have been omitted, they administered it rightly, as they thought, for the first and only time.

III. The third division comprehends all such as placed the essence of baptism in the virtue or competency of the administrator. If this be an error, as it should seem, it is one of the most specious, and therefore one of the most popular and pardonable mistakes in the Christian world. To see a bad man perform the most solemn rites of religion, to see him perform them with carelessness, or it may be with contempt, is to behold a spectacle shocking to the most vulgar eye, the cause, naturally, of prejudice and infidelity in the people. It was on this account that

many of the ancient Bohemian Brethren re-baptized, and were denominated by the priests, whose services they disowned, Anabaptists. The truth is, the brethren estimated baptizing as they did praying, and as they thought a vicious priest did not pray because he chanted, so they supposed he did not baptize because he administered the form rightly. They complained that their parish priest administered baptism laughing, and in a manner so profane, that it had more the air of a ludicrous comedy than of a religious institute. Bishop Bossuet properly enough observes, this re-baptizing was an open declaration, that in the opinion of the Brethren the Catholic Church had lost Baptism. This was precisely their meaning. They did not pretend to re-baptize: but supposing what was done in the church to be no baptism, they baptized, as they thought, properly.

IV. The fourth class consists of such as think a personal profession of the Christian religion essential to baptism. This was the opinion of Socinus, as it is of the Baptist churches in Holland and Germany. In what light so ever Christianity be represented, whether as a law to be obeyed, a declaration to be believed, or a covenant to be acceded to, it should seem, there is no such thing as reconciling either with allowed ideas of justice and propriety without admitting, that the consent of both parties is of the very essence of the transaction. The forcing of a Jew or Pagan to be baptized without his consent is now-a-days considered as an unwarrantable and unprofitable act of violence: but the baptism of a babe, who may when he grows up to manhood be an idiot or a madman, or what is worse, an infidel and a persecutor, doth not shock any body. So wonderful is the tyranny of custom! Christians of this class consider the baptism of an infant as they would consider his signature of a deed, if, while at the breast his guardian had guided a pen in his little hand, and had made him set his name. Such a deed, and such a baptism, for the very same reasons, they hold null and void, and consequently baptize people on their own profession of faith. They do not imagine they re-baptize, though others call them Anabaptists.

V. The fifth class places the essence of baptism in dipping in water, and had a person been sprinkled ever so decently in any period of life, they would not therefore think him baptized, because, in their opinion, to baptize is to dip, and nothing else. The Greek Church does not hold sprinkling to be baptism, yet the Greeks ought not to be called Anabaptists. A man holds every part of baptism indifferent is, if he repeats it in any way, on his own principles, an Anabaptist: but he, who holds any thing essential to baptism, must necessarily determine that there is no baptism where that essential is omitted. Dipping is that essential with the Greeks.

VI. In the last class are included the churches of the British Baptists, and those of Poland, Lithuania, Transylvania, America, and many more, which, however diversified in speculation and the practice of positive rites, all hold that dipping in water and a personal profession of faith and repentance are essential to baptism. On the first of these principles they disallow sprinkling: on the last they reject infants. Not one of these churches holds two baptisms: not one of them ever repeats baptism. If it be said, they dip in mature age, those who had been sprinkled or dipped in infancy, they reply, sprinkling is not baptizing, and dipping a rational being without his

consent is not baptism. They strenuously decry a repetition of baptism, and when any one calls them Anabaptists, they always understand it as the language either of ignorance or malice.

The Difficulty of Writing an History of a People So Diversified

There is, it should seem, something so very inoffensive in itself, and so perfectly indifferent to society, in a man's being re-baptized, that, if baptism were repeated every month, as the administration of the Lord's supper is, no serious consequences, except to the person himself, could follow. It must, therefore, at first sight, appear as a singular phenomenon, in the history of this people, that they should be described by many celebrated writers as a dangerous set of men, justly forbidden in one state, banished from another, burnt in a third, drowned in a fourth, and allowed to live in any only as a favor. There must be something more[3] than baptism in this affair.

[3] Many writers have given themselves over to the trouble of informing the world what this something more is. Robinson gives a clearer account of the objections a little later under the heading of Anabaptistical Errors.

It is not an easy thing to write the history of a body of people, especially of such a body as this. Natives of all ages, and all countries, with education and without it, rude and refined, living in different habits and customs, subjects of different governments, here protected, and there plundered and driven to madness, having for ages no local legal settlement, entertaining different notions of government, learning, and religion itself, divided in opinion about every speculation of theology, as all other denominations are, of different languages, and without any common standard of belief, agreeing in nothing, except three or four articles necessarily connected with adult baptism: How is it possible to give a true account of all these people under one general name of Anabaptists? Their history must be divided and subdivided, and it must be shown wherein they differ, and in what they agree. Two or three such confused writers have misled many other writers, much wiser and better than themselves. Some were in other respects men of learning and merit: but utter strangers to the general history, which they pretended to give. It is diverting to see historians on the continent quote an obscure scribbler in England in evidence of what was done an hundred and fifty years before, within a few miles of the places where these foreign historians themselves lived.

All Baptists, However Diversified, Agree In Holding What Are Called Anabaptistical Errors

Leaving all such writers to suffer or to enjoy their own reveries, and private piques, at their own discretion, it is proper to go on to opponents worth answering, for it must be allowed, English Anabaptism is connected with what are called anabaptistical errors; and it would be a vain undertaking to attempt to deny or disprove facts, which no less than five respectable classes of men have always objected against them. Every writer, who knew what he was about, from the days of the Donatists and the Acephali, to the present time, has directed his main force against

these anabaptistical errors, in comparison with which re-baptizing is not worth a moment's attention. The baptism of an adult is of no consequence at all but as it is connected with these errors: and if these errors be disproved, adult baptism falls of itself. It is therefore absolutely necessary to give a sketch of this heart of the history of the Baptists.

History is a monument erected for posterity and sacred to truth, and a reverential awe for what appears to be true ought to be considered as a sufficient apology for any man's stating a case differently from what it may appear to others. Several respectable bodies of men have taxed the Baptists with holding many dangerous errors. These errors are properly reducible to five heads, and from these as from so many springs, all other small articles like rivulets proceed. Some Baptists, too hastily it should seem, have disowned these errors in the gross, but it is impossible to disprove the existence of them; on the contrary, they are the bases and bonds of their societies. Here it is that their history becomes of consequence; for if the practice of re-baptizing naturally and necessarily includes these errors, the baptism of an adult is not such a futile unconnected thing as some have imagined, and there is great reason to expect objections against it.

A few outlines shall suffice, and two previous remarks are necessary to them. It was said, some time ago, that the established church in the council of Nice ordered some to be re-baptized: but they soon after discovered that the baptism of adults was connected with some other articles dangerous to their system: they therefore forbade re-baptizing, and have held it in abhorrence ever since. So extremely cautious has the Catholic Church been in this affair, that infant baptism, performed by any body, was allowed valid, and the infant deserted by its parents, and found in the street, the priest was directed to dip the child with these words. "Peter, I do not intend to re-baptize thee: but if thou hast not been baptized, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen." It is to be observed, 2dly, that it is not the mode of baptism, dipping or sprinkling, that hath excited the resentment of the opponents of the Baptists, for such as baptized adults by sprinkling have been as much involved in the scandal of holding anabaptistical errors as others, who practice dipping. It is the baptism of an adult precisely, that forms the grand objection, and this it is which is connected with the errors charged upon Anabaptism. As these errors cannot be denied in regard to such Baptists; let five opponents state their objections themselves.

Magistracy

The first is a statesman, who, in behalf of emperors, kings, princes, barons, burgomasters, and civil rulers of every description, objects, that the Anabaptists affirm "a Christian ought not to execute the offices of, magistrates, an error teeming with sedition." It would be trifling to reply, Adult baptism hath no connection with the subject of government. It has a close connection with it. An infant is baptized by ORDER of authority: but if when he grows up he be re-baptized, he practically rejects the order, and the power from which it proceeded, and consequently the baptism of an adult is connected with government, and the baptized, disowns all government in

this matter of conscience, except his own. This man will not baptize his son, and a person brought up without baptism, is left in a condition of freedom to dispose of himself as he thinks right. Such a state implies liberty to examine religion, to reason about it, to reject or to embrace it by being baptized into what belief and profession a man judges proper. There is, therefore, an inseparable union between adult baptism and civil liberty, and in this great principle all Baptists everywhere agree. The old Donatists used to say, "What have we to do with the Emperor? What business hath the Emperor with our religion? What have bishops to do at court?" When in any age Baptists appear in despotic governments, they are seen, struggling for liberty, and the end of the struggle is burning, banishment, or freedom. They cannot live in tyrannical states, and free countries are the only places to seek for them, for their whole public religion is impracticable without freedom. They differ as other denominations do, about the best means of obtaining and preserving liberty. The English Baptists approve of a limited monarchy, the Dutch of a republic, the Poles of a government nearly aristocratical. The English Baptists think, it is lawful for the members of their churches to execute the office of a magistrate, provided it be not clogged with religious tests. The Dutch, the Swiss, and the Moravian Baptists, execute no offices, take no oaths, bear no arms, shed no human blood, and in civil cases resist not government. The old German Baptists fought for liberty, so did many in Oliver's army here in England, and the only principle, in which they all agree, is, that the civil magistrate hath no right to give or enforce law in matters of religion and conscience. Whether this be an anabaptistical error, or a first principle of good government, must be left with the Miltons, and the Lockes, and Montesquies, and Beccarias to determine.

Learning

The second opponent appears in behalf of the intellects, and he affirms: It is an anabaptistical error to prefer illiteracy before learning, and set aside the latter as destructive of religion. Various are the sentiments, which Baptists entertain on this subject: but it must be granted, there is one general principle, in which they all agree, and which is necessarily connected with a personal profession of believing the truth of the Christian religion. An infant asks no questions, he may therefore be baptized into a profession of believing any thing. They [Anabaptists] will require proof of every article, and consequently both they and their teachers ask what translates a revealed religion into a secret; what was the original character of Christianity, simplicity or obscurity; what keeps a religion intended for everybody a secret from anybody? The Baptists are compelled by the very constitution of their churches to simplify the gospel, to strip it of false ornaments, and to render it intelligible to youth and poor plain men and women, by proving it the most easy, the most evident, the most artless, and therefore the only popular and practicable religion in the world. In a course of experiments they found, that Pagan literature had perverted the gospel, that Christianity was not a learned science, that the world had been imposed on by an unprofitable much learning, and ought to be disabused. They differ very much in their application of this doctrine: but the general principle runs through all their history, and is most remarkable in their schools and colleges, where literature is best understood, as their university at Racow in Poland hath proved. The Baptists are not alone in refusing Plato and other Pagans the

honor of expounding the inspired writers. The Jews forbade the tutors of their children to instruct them in Pagan literature. The Baptists, as their history proves, hold all branches of science in a just and proper esteem.

Clerical Authority

The third is a deputy from the clergy, and he complains: That the one anabaptistical error of rejecting all clerical authority is the cause of a thousand heresies, schisms, divisions, and scandals. There is a great variety of opinions among the Baptists on this subject: but, as before, there is one general principle in which they all agree, from which their variety proceeds, and which, it cannot be denied, is a foundation of truth, on which the charge is founded. By requiring every individual to judge for himself, as a qualification for communion with them, by giving each the holy scripture as the only and sufficient rule of faith and practice, by holding themselves all competent to judge of the nature and evidences of the gospel, by affirming that they are accountable only to God for the use they make of their reason, and that every man, who has a talent is obliged to make use of it, they reduce a priest to a mere tutor, and so effectually subvert all clerical authority. Various as they are, they all unite here. The Moravian Baptists had no regularly ordained ministers, the order was not known among them, and any who could, even women gave instruction. The American Baptists elect teachers of their own, and regularly install them in office, as they call it: but they refuse to pay taxes to support other ministers, and they urge the great principle of the American struggle.[4] The Polish Baptists ordained in their synods. The English and Dutch Baptists elect their own teachers, and when they please dismiss them. In some congregations the people ordain, in others the people elect, and neighboring ministers ordain by laying on hands and prayer. Some support their teachers by a free and plentiful subscription; others are too poor to do so, and their teachers support themselves by agriculture or trade: but all reduce the minister to a mere teacher, and allow him no authority over any man's conscience, either alone or in, connection with other ministers. It is true, having no masters, and no notion of a power lodged any where to compel uniformity, they part into innumerable societies of different faith and practice. Some are Socinians, others Arians, some Trinitarians, others Arminians, others Calvinists: and others, as the Moravians, and most of the ancient Baptists, place religion in virtue more than in faith [in a system of beliefs]. All of them reject canon law, and place councils, synods, convocations, kirk (church) sessions, and all such tribunals, along with a history of the inquisition.

To this article therefore they plead guilty; and having persevered for ages in this error, repentance is hid from their eyes.

[4] This American struggle was the rejection of state supported bishops in many of the early colonies.

Enthusiasm[5]

[5] Enthusiasm in this context is the unreasonable and irrational adherence to a doctrinal position or practice without any collaborative scriptural evidence to support such beliefs. It is coupled with fanaticism and superstition, both of which arise from blind and passionate zeal.

The fourth is a philosopher, a close connected reasoner, He says, The anabaptistical error of the influence of the Spirit is a source of enthusiasm. Be it for a moment admitted, that the Baptists are enthusiasts, but that they are willing to be taught the reason and soundness of things, and for this cause to examine the wisdom attending the baptism of a new born infant. Is it the conveyance of holiness into water? Is it the washing away of original sin? Is it the price of a contract? Is it a wise man putting questions to a baby at the breast, who can neither hear, see, speak, or think? Is it the conveyance of spirit, and grace, and new birth? The baptism of a believer, embracing Christianity because he has examined and approved of it, is the first step of the Baptist churches, and a perfectly philosophical one it is. However, this objection deserves a direct answer.

I. Let it be observed, that if any Baptists be enthusiasts, they derive it not from baptism, which proceeds on a cool, rational, deliberate exercise of thought, and is regulated by an express command of scripture, the authenticity of which all Christians allow: but from some other notions, which they were previously taught in the Pedobaptist school, and which produce more enthusiasts in other communities than in theirs, and particularly in the church of Rome.

II. The Baptists publicly disavow enthusiasm by making the written word of God the sole rule of their faith and practice, and most think, the doctrine of divine influence without the written word was the parent, and is the nurse of Popery.

Purity of Churches

The last, but not the least respectable complainant is a representative of the people, who affirms, that the great anabaptistical error, on which their whole economy is built, is chimerical (a wildly fanciful imagination) and cruel, that is, that the Christian church ought to consist of only wise and virtuous persons. It is truly said, this is the article, from which all their other principles and practices precede. It is for the sake of this that adult baptism is practiced, and it is to preserve this that infants, who at best are doubtful characters, are excluded.

This charge is of considerable magnitude, for it includes many articles: it is objected by many writers of great and deserved character, and it is confessed by the modern Baptists, to be what their opponents affirm, the true source of all the peculiarities that are to be found in the religious doctrine and discipline of the Waldenses, the Wickliffites, the Hussites, the Baptists, and many more, who, before the dawn of the reformation, held the same principle, and were remarkable for the same peculiarities. These are nearly the words of Dr. Mosheim. It would not be fair to pass over this article lightly.

I. Baptists oppose four things. First, they deny the fact, that infants derive any religious benefit from baptism. Next, they affirm, on the contrary, that a great injury is done them by it, because they grow up in a prejudice that they are Christians, and therefore never examine what Christianity is. They add, thirdly, that the ordinances of Christianity are not theirs but, they are entrusted by the divine Legislator (Christ) with the use of them, and they ought not to dispose of them without a direction from him, and they say he hath not given them any order in Scripture to administer the ordinances of his religion to infants. Moreover they observe that, though this sort of people are eager to profess to believe both for themselves and their children, yet there is great reason from their lives to doubt their sincerity.

II. A second class which ought to be heard on the same side, consists of all such as officiate in this lucrative business, and the number is greater than it appears at first. In all Catholic countries a great number, beside the clergy, have an interest direct in the baptism of infants, as venders of wax tapers (candles), oil, salt, and all other articles of daily use in this ceremony. All these complain of the Baptists for attempting to set aside a practice which they say does the children no harm, and does them a deal of good: to which the Baptists reply, religion ought not to be made a trade; such parents, whatever they may pretend about Jesus Christ and the creed, and faith, and regeneration, only mean to train up their children to trade in religion as they do: but argument would be ill directed here, for prejudice in favor of gainful offices is a thing of course.

III. The eloquence of the pulpit, like that of the bar, is sometimes the chaste ornament of truth, at other times the mere enameling of error, inlaying fiction with glowing colors, to give that a gloss, which would otherwise be beheld with disgust. Roman Catholics argue for the baptism of infants from the authority of the church, which is good logic, though bad divinity. A man who holds himself bound by canon law, reasons consequentially when he says, I baptize infants because such a canon orders me to do so. This man's business is to defend not infant-baptism, but canon law. It is not he, it is the Protestant, who denies human authority over conscience, and who affirms the sufficiency of scripture, he (the Protestant) is driven to the necessity of inventing scripture arguments, for in vain he affects to be eloquent among Protestants without them. It is to be presumed, if there were any one chapter professedly on this subject (infant baptism), that chapter would be quoted; but as there is no such chapter, arguments must be taken from detached sentences, and figures of speech, and allusions. Protestants have discovered great genius in inventing arguments. Really the Baptists ought to be forgiven for not having a taste for this sort of eloquence: yea, they ought to be applauded for preferring argument before elocution.

The Catholic Church and the Baptists seem to be at the greatest variance in religion. No. It is not so in regard to baptism. The dispute is short, and soon over, for both sides reason justly. The Catholic produces a written order, called a canon law, as a reason to baptize infants. The Baptist denies the competence of every human tribunal to make religious law: and the dispute is at an end. Protestants who seem to agree with the Baptists in many things urge scripture for infant baptism: but the Baptists do not allow that scripture so much as mentions the subject.

A General Notion of a Baptist Church

The fact is this. Let the impartial judge. The Baptists form precisely such an idea of a Christian Church as that ornament of this country, the late Mr. Locke did. His words are these: "A church I take to be a voluntary society of men, joining themselves together of their own accord, in order to the publick (sic) worshipping of God, in such a manner as they judge acceptable to him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls. I say, it is a free and voluntary society. No body is born a member of any church; otherwise the religion of parents would descend unto children, by the same right of inheritance as their temporal estates, and every one would hold his faith by the same tenure he does his lands; than which nothing can be imagined more absurd. Thus, therefore, that matter stands. No man by nature is bound unto any particular church or sect, but every one joins himself voluntarily to that society in which he believes he has found that profession and worship which is truly acceptable to God. The hope of salvation, as it was the only cause of his entrance into that communion, so it can be the only reason of his stay there. For if afterwards he discover any thing either erroneous in the doctrine, or incongruous in the worship of that society to which he has joined himself, why should it not be as free for him to go out as it was to enter? No member of a religious society can be tied with any other bonds but what proceed from the certain expectation of eternal life. A church then is a society of members voluntarily uniting to this end."

"Things never so indifferent in their own nature when they are brought into the church and worship of God, are removed out of the magistrates' jurisdiction: because in that use they have no connection at all with civil affairs. The only business of the church is the salvation of souls: and it no ways concerns the commonwealth, or any member of it, that this, or the other ceremony be there made use of. Neither the use, nor the omission of any ceremonies, in those religious assemblies, does either advantage or prejudice the life liberty, or estate of any man. For example: Let it be granted, that the washing of an infant with water is in itself an indifferent thing. Let it be granted also, that if the magistrate understand such washing to be profitable to the curing or preventing of any disease that children are subject unto, and esteem the matter weighty enough to be taken care of by a law, in that case he may order it to be done. But will any one therefore say, that the magistrate has the same right to ordain, by law, that all children shall be baptized by priests, in the sacred font, in order to the purification of their souls? The extreme difference of these two cases is visible to every one at first sight. Or let us apply the last case to the child of a Jew, and the thing will speak for itself. For what hinders but a Christian magistrate may have subjects that are Jews? Now if we acknowledge that such an injury may not be done unto a Jew, as to compel him, against his own opinion, to practice in his religion a thing that is in its nature indifferent; how can we maintain that any thing of this kind may be done to a Christian?"

The leading idea of this great man in his description of a church is the maxim, from which Mosheim truly says all peculiarities of the Baptists proceed: but that it deserves to be considered,

as he hath been pleased to call it, a visionary illusion of enthusiasm, an erroneous, and chimerical notion, productive of seditious, tumultuous, and desperate attempts, equally pernicious to the cause of religion and the civil interests of mankind, are positions, which a Briton who understands liberty will not suffer a German ecclesiastick to affirm without contradiction. There is no hazard in saying Mr. Locke understood liberty, and a British Baptist day-laborer understands it better than the learned Dr. Mosheim. This one principle, which includes the four mentioned before, is so far from deserving to be called an enthusiastical anabaptistical error, that it is a sober first truth of civil and religious liberty, and as such hath been supported by the ablest of politicians and the best of Christians, and by many of both, who never had any knowledge of the Baptists. The freedom of religion from the control of the magistrate: the simplicity and perfection of revelation without the aid of scholastical theology: the absolute exemption of all mankind from the dominion of their clergy: the sufficiency of reason to judge of revelation: are all included in the voluntary baptism of an adult, and in the maxim, "that the visible church, which Christ hath established upon earth, is an assembly of true and real saints, and ought therefore to be inaccessible to the wicked, and exempt from all institutions of human authority. It is this maxim with its contents, and not re-baptizing that hath occasioned most of the persecutions of this party of Christians. Such re-baptizers as did not hold these sentiments, as the council of Nice for example, have been caressed and not persecuted: and such as practiced no baptism at all, as the people called Quakers, or infant-baptism, as the English Independents, but have held these sentiments, have drunk deep for the same reasons of the same bitter cup.

From what has been said, it appears that an history of the Baptists is a history of the five important articles, in which they always have constitutionally differed from all established churches of every form. These are, as has been observed: a love of civil liberty in opposition to magistratical dominion: an affirmation of the sufficiency and simplicity of revelation in opposition to scholastical theology: a zeal for self government in opposition to clerical authority: a requisition of the reasonable service of a personal profession of Christianity rising out of a man's own convictions, in opposition to the practice of force on babes, the whole of which they deem enthusiasm: and the indispensable necessity of virtue in every individual member of a Christian church in distinction from all speculative creeds, all rights and ceremonies, and all parochial divisions. A mere statement of these five points is sufficient to excite a presumption that in all countries, where Catholick Christianity was established by law, the Baptists must have had a great number of enemies, who had an interest, an inclination, and a power to render them odious. The theory is too well confirmed by historical facts.

Part Two:

The Protestant Claim for the Anabaptists

Here is the story of the *Protestant* Anabaptists as told by their writers. (William Estep: *The Anabaptist Story*, Harold Bender: *The Anabaptist Vision*, and a number of Mennonite web sites)

~~ It begins in 1524 with four men who were to play a prominent part in the formation of a new "Anabaptist" group. These men were, Felix Manz a catholic priest, Balthasar Hubmaier a disciple of Luther and a Lutheran preacher, Conrad Grebel a disciple of Zwingli, and George Blaurock a married ex-Catholic priest. These men had looked to Zwingli of Zurich, Switzerland, to be a champion of believers' baptism and for the abolition of Mass and images in the church. Initially, Zwingli embraced these reforms but later turned from them. In the eyes of his followers he had become a false prophet. So they became dissenters of Zwingli and the council of Zurich.

"On January 17, 1525, the city council of Zurich ordered all unbaptized children to be presented for baptism within eight days. The dissenters, distressed at this edict, met on the evening of January 21, 1525, at a house belonging to Felix Manz's mother. According to an eyewitness account the following occurred. 'After they had prayer, George Blaurock (the married ex-priest) implored Conrad Grebel for God's sake to baptize him with the true Christian baptism upon his faith and knowledge. And when he had knelt down with such a request and desire, Conrad baptized him, since at that time there was no ordained minister to perform such work.' After his baptism by Grebel, Blaurock proceeded to baptize all the others (15) present. The newly baptized then pledged themselves as true disciples of Christ to live lives separated from the world and to teach the gospel and hold the faith." (From this, it is declared Anabaptism was born, the birth of the Anabaptists.)

With this first baptism, the earliest church of the Swiss Brethren was constituted.

"The following week these men held open revival meetings and led prayer meetings in private homes. Those who experienced regeneration were baptized by affusion (sprinkling or pouring)." – [*There are accounts where they later practiced immersion*]. They also administered the Lord's Supper in these homes.

"Through these faithful acts, the dissenters formed themselves into a separated community, a 'gathered church' of 'genuine believers.' By their opponents they were nicknamed 'Anabaptists,' or rebaptizers. (Today they are called Swiss Brethren.) But this title was both inaccurate and prejudicial, since they recognized but one baptism, that for adults only, and so denied the validity of their baptism in infancy. They called themselves simply 'brothers' and 'sisters.'"

Here are some of their beliefs. However, at what time in their existence these beliefs were embraced it is not told. Nor is it clear which Anabaptists held these beliefs. Since the position is taken that all Anabaptists were of the Swiss Brethren, no effort is given to distinguish between them and others or the doctrines of each body.

"They maintained that a life of saintliness must be the test of true faith, discipleship, and the spiritual rebirth. The true church of God is made up not of all professed Christians, who have entered upon church membership through baptism in infancy, but only of all convinced believers, who have received baptism as adults in full consciousness of faith and who now display in their lives the palpable fruits of faith. They refused to have any part in inclusive state-churches. Thus, they were the first to practice separation of church and state. They took the position of freedom of worship and belief (or the refusal of it) of individuals. One of their ministers, Hubmaier, baptized more than three hundred men out of a milk pail (*using a ladle*). Foot washing was engaged in by the newly baptized."

"They are reported to have grown rapidly and expanded into Germany, Moravia, and throughout the high valleys of the Alps (apparently only in Switzerland and not Italy)."

"On February 24, 1527 there was held a synod of Swiss Brethren at Schleitheim. From this synod came the drafting of the "Schleitheim Confession." This confession affirmed believers' baptism, that the church is regarded as composed of only of local associations of baptized regenerated Christians, united as the body of Christ by the common observance of the Lord's Supper; its sole weapon is excommunication (the ban), and absolute rejection of all "self-indulgence of the flesh." The forms of worship of the Roman, Lutheran, and Zwinglian churches are explicitly repudiated as unchristian. The duties of the pastor - who is now regarded as a settled minister rather than an itinerant evangelist - are clearly defined: his chief responsibility is to read the Scriptures and to teach and admonish in their light; he leads in prayer; and he presides at the Supper, in which connection he disciplines and bans in the name of the church."

The Swiss Brethren migrated into Germany and from there spread into Holland. In about 1535 Menno Simons, a Dutch Catholic priest, met these Brethren and was converted to their doctrine. From Menno came the Mennonites. The assertion of today's Mennonites is that their beginning was in the Swiss Alps when the Swiss Brethren, called Anabaptists, separated from Zwingli and founded a new sect. (Thus they conclude that they are the original Anabaptists.) ~~

* The preceding accounts were taken primarily from the book, *The Anabaptist Story*, by William R. Estep. Many others have picked up on his position of the origin of the Anabaptists.

At this junction we leave off the story of *this* group of people called "Anabaptist." It must be observed that the leaders of the Swiss Brethren were courageous, dedicated, zealous, and fearless. Many were put to death cruelly, and others suffered in daily persecutions. If any Protestants were to be praised, it would be due them. They were heroic in what they believed.

But our argument is not against these people. It is against the claim of many modern writers when they say, the Swiss Brethren, and they alone were the Anabaptists existing during the sixteenth century and that there were no other Anabaptists before them. The statement that on that night on January 21, 1525, was the birth of the Anabaptists is terribly inaccurate. It may have been the birth of a new group, which was labeled Anabaptists, but it was **not** the birth of the Anabaptists. Ever since the third century churches were re-baptizing and carried the name Anabaptists. If the point were pressed even the Apostle Paul was an Anabaptist since he "re-baptized" a group of believers in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7). It is to be seen that in every century, in many parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa churches were called Anabaptists.

What is at the heart of this false proposal is the failure to distinguish the Anabaptists. This same failure is seen in the false proposals of the Waldenses. The Swiss Brethren called Anabaptists was a Reformation church. So it is important for all to distinguish between the Ancient Anabaptists and the Reformation Anabaptists. Their doctrines, on which they agree on some points, were not entirely similar. Their practices were certainly different; such as foot washing and the power of excommunication given to pastors. Absolutely, their historical lineage is different. The ancient Anabaptists preceded the Swiss Brethren Anabaptists by over twelve hundred years.

There was interaction between these Swiss Anabaptists and the older Anabaptists on a friendly basis. At some point they had contact with the Waldenses of the Alps. There was much they had in common, and there was no threat of mistreatment from either group. The Swiss seemed to be very receptive to the truth of the Bible, and accounts are that they appreciated any who opened the Scriptures to them. They appear as children in the faith but mature in their dedication even unto martyrdom. It can be seen that many came more into line with the doctrines of the older Anabaptists in that they altered their baptisms to immersion and some left off foot washing. Originally they had no position on the constitution of the church, but that also changed. So theirs was an evolving, growing, and developing system of faith. Other Anabaptists were fully developed in their cardinal beliefs and practices since they had them from the first century.

If one reads carefully the works of these modern authors, a rather remarkable fact comes into play. Many seem to cautiously avoid naming the Anabaptist churches as being well known as Albigenses and Waldenses. Others only briefly mention them as existing before 1525 and gloss over their history. It can be seen that the Lutheran Historian Mosheim, plus an array of Catholic documents, maintained that they existed in every century and in vast numbers. This fact is not mentioned by these writers and why it is not mentioned is a mystery. It is as though they wish to conceal evidence and make themselves the exclusive Anabaptists of all ages.

Another point to observe is the number and locations in which the Anabaptists were found in the 1500's. If it is true they had their beginning in 1525 with 15 persons, then it would be

miraculous that in so short of time, they covered practically all of Europe in huge numbers. The following is an excerpt from the history of the German and Dutch Baptist:

> "It is highly possible, that the gospel was preached in the area of Germany from the apostolic times. It is absolutely certain that the Goths professed Christianity several centuries before their kings became Catholics. The Catholics all through this early period called them **Anabaptist**, **Heretics**, and not Christians.
>
> The wilds and forests of Germany would prove asylums to dissenters through the rise and assumption of the Catholic Church. That Germany was inhabited by persons of this description is evident, and that such persons must have been very active in disseminating the truth becomes plain, since it is recorded that the Baptist itinerant preachers, could in their travels pass, during the ninth century, through the whole German empire, and lodge every night at the house of one of their friends. It is very probable these traveling ministers were **Paulicians** or **Paterines** from Bulgaria or Italy.
>
> The **Waldenses** and the **Albigenses** took refuge in Germany when they were driven out of their countries because of persecutions. In the 11th century, a Dutch man, Walter Lollard, came to Germany and embraced the **Anabaptist** views and his followers were called the **Lollards**, in 1315. His association was with the **Albigenses**. In 1320 Walter Lollard was apprehended and burnt. The **Lollards** spread into England and became very prominent there.
>
> In 1457 a great number of **Waldenses** were discovered by inquisitors in the diocese of Eiston in Germany, and were put to death. Trithemius, living at this time, wrote that Germany was full of Waldenses prior to the Reformation by Luther; for he mentions it as a well known fact that so numerous were they, that in traveling from Cologne to Milan, the whole extent of Germany, they could lodge every night with persons of their own profession, and that it was a custom among them to affix certain private marks to their signs and gates whereby they might be known to each other.
>
> Mosheim asserts, "before the rise of Luther or Calvin, there lay concealed, in almost all the countries of Europe, particularly in Bohemia, Moravia, Switzerland, and Germany, many persons, who adhered tenaciously to the doctrine of the **Dutch Baptists**, which the **Waldenses** had maintained."

These **German Baptists** were also known as **Picards**. The Emperor of Germany at the time of the **Picards** concurred that their views and practice were nearer to apostolic precedent than any other religious sect. Their bitterest enemies, who were eyewitnesses of their actions, said that they resembled the ancient **Donatist**.

In the early 1500's the state of the priesthood of the Catholic Church was that of tyrants, and they lived rioting in luxury wrung from their respective peasants. The ignorance of the priests was extreme. Numbers of them could not read, and few had ever seen a Bible. Many, on oath, declared they knew not that there was a New Testament.

The **Picards** in their conduct in re-baptizing awakened the anger of the Catholic priesthood. Consequently, in 1510, the clergy and bishops prevailed upon the Sovereign to use means equal to the danger, whereupon, an edict was made, that all the **Picards**, without distinction of sex, age or quality should be slain. The threatening aspect of affairs in Germany suggested to the **Picards** the necessity of emigrating, and Mosheim asserts, "…that the **German Baptists** passed in Shoals into Holland and the Netherlands, and in the course of time, amalgamated with the **Dutch Baptists**."

Mosheim also stated, "[T]here were certain sects and doctors against whom the zeal, vigilance and severity of Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists were united. The objects of their common aversion were the **Anabaptists**."

At Zurich, in 1522, (three years prior to the founding of the Swiss Brethren) the senate warned the people to desist from the practice of re-baptizing. When the warnings failed they took monetary measures against the re-baptizers, a fine of a silver mark was set upon all such as should suffer themselves to be re-baptized, or should withhold baptism from their children. (It had been death to refuse baptism, and now it was death to be baptized; such is the condition of a state religion.) When the fines failed, they took stronger measures and decreed that all persons who professed **Anabaptism** or harbored the professors of the doctrine should be punished with death by drowning.

When Prince Frederick, in 1532, conferred privileges on the German Protestants, he excluded the **Baptists**. In 1533, a reward of 12 guilders was promised to any person who should apprehend an **Anabaptistical** teacher.

In 1555 a council was held at Augsburg and a peace treaty was signed between the Catholics and the Lutherans. In this treaty it was agreed that neither party would persecute the other. The **Baptists** were ignored in the terms of the treaty and were not granted any rights by the governments. Both the Lutherans and Catholics freely persecuted the **Baptists** without any restraint.

In the better known work, "A History of The Baptists," by Armitage, pg. 149, quotes Professor Ypeig, Chaplain to the King of Holland who prepared a History of the Netherlands Reformed Church, for the Government to have a record of principles.

> "We have now seen that the Baptists who in former times were called Anabaptist, and at a later period Mennonites, were originally Waldenses, who, in the history of

> the Church, even from the most ancient times, have received such a well deserved homage. On this account the Baptists may be considered, as of old, the only religious community which has continued from the times of the Apostles; as Christian Society which has kept pure through all ages the evangelical doctrines of religion. The uncorrupted inward and outward condition of the Baptist community afford proof of the truth contested by the Romish Church, of the great necessity of reformation of religion such as that which took place in the sixteenth century, and also a refutation of the erroneous notion of the Roman Catholics that their denomination is the most ancient."

Ypeig places the antiquity of the Anabaptists to be older than the Roman Catholic Church.

The claim that the birth of the Anabaptists came with the Swiss Brethren is false. Also the claim that all who are called Anabaptist or Baptist are of their stock is false. Those who hold the view that Baptists are Protestants need to be aware of the distinctive characteristics of the Anabaptists. It must be realized that all who were called Anabaptists were not the same, as Robinson has demonstrated. It is an embarrassment to make universal claims of all Anabaptists as the modernists have labeled them. The title of Anabaptist may have been applied to the Swiss Brethren for that is what they did. However, all that the Anabaptists were does not apply to them, and they should be more properly called the Swiss Brethren.

As Robinson has taught us there are a variety of Anabaptists. Sporadically, groups of churches arose who were given many names by their enemies, but the name Anabaptist was common. That, however, does not make them all the same. There has existed from the days of Novatian and Donatus of the third and fourth centuries churches called Anabaptists and Cathari. These churches reflected the founding truths of the New Testament and stood in opposition to the corruptions and heresies of fallen churches. Other churches which held to the same principles and doctrines as the Novatians and Donatists have existed throughout the centuries. They also were called Anabaptists and Cathari. Some had direct links with these churches and others had parallel histories. Nevertheless, the heritage of the Anabaptists churches with this lineage is not of human invention or origin. To deny their very existence is a cruel attack on people who, for fourteen centuries, suffered every kind of persecution and yet remained faithful witnesses of Christ. This fact should never be hidden by deceit and deception but should be clearly proclaimed and never denied.

Chapter 8

The Search for Doctrine and the Role of Associations

Part I
Doctrine

Church succession without the succession of New Testament doctrine is meaningless. Churches are defined and identified by those doctrines which are essential to their beliefs and practices. If churches form for themselves new beliefs and creeds and forsake the teachings of Christ and the Apostles, they become a new type of church apart from what Jesus began. These new churches only have a lineage dating from the time of their creation or apostasy. In order for New Testament churches to have lineage, they must be in doctrinal conformity with the first church of Jerusalem, for that is the prototype.

Researching the doctrines and policies of the ancient churches (which were never a part of the Catholic Church) from the second to the sixteenth centuries is a daunting task. Often we are met with long periods of silence. The records given to us by historians are varied, incomplete and at times contradictory. However, there still remains enough evidence to give a general idea of what churches believed and practiced.

Two sources of the beliefs of churches come, first, from what they had said about themselves and second, from the testimony of those apart from them. While the first source is considered the most accurate, the second, although not always factual, gives witness from observation. Both require a careful examination for authenticity and accuracy. This calls for an open mind, caution, and certain amount of skepticism.

Self testimonies of churches are usually presented as a declaration of faith. It may be in the form of statements of belief, catechisms, creeds and canons issued from a council or synod, from covenants, and from their tracts. Some declarations come from accepted persons with recognized authority to speak on behalf of their churches; these would be such as a Pope's papal bulls of the Roman Catholic Church and Donatus of Carthage. Finally, there are the personal testimonies and writings of men and women identified with specific churches. This last group would include the testimonies of martyrs, writers such as the authors of the Waldensian poem, *The Noble Lesson*, the Paulician book, *The Key of Truth*; and the writings of prominent men as Augustine and Tertullian.

Inserted here is an example of how a source of the beliefs of the Waldenses has come to us from their enemies. It was declared by the priests of the inquisition that the Waldenses were decadent and licentious in that they did not observe marriage. Now there is a seed of some truth in their accusation, but the whole truth is that they rejected the "Sacrament" of marriage. Marriage being of the seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church necessary for salvation. They

did not reject marriage but the Sacrament of marriage as well as the rest of the Sacraments. The same kind of charge was levied against them that they did not observe communion.

The first record we have of any type of confession of is the Apostles' Creed, sometimes called "The Old Roman Creed." It was written in the second century and has undergone several revisions since then. This miscalled "The Apostle's creed," in its earliest historic form says: "I believe in the holy church." Later forms say: "I believe in the holy catholic (universal) church." Then later: "in the holy catholic and apostolic church." Still being incremented from other creeds it became: "The holy Roman catholic and apostolic church." This creed initially was to emphasize the true Humanity of Christ, including His material body, since that was the point that the heretics of the time (Gnostics, Marcionites, and later Manicheans) denied. As this creed changed we can see the development of new doctrine. The Nicene Creed was composed in the fourth century, and a comparison of it with the Apostles' Creed gives a record of changes and departures from the first faith.

At the beginning we see that creeds were made initially in reaction to changes being made to established New Testament beliefs. Their nature was a defense of The Faith, in opposition to these changes. However, later creeds were made to assert *the changes* and not to defend historical beliefs. These creeds were championing a departure from that which was commonly believed, traditionally accepted, and practiced as truth. Up until the Reformation creeds were made to foster and advance changes in doctrine and policies made by both the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches.

There is a phenomenon that the whole of dissenting churches "never put forth an authorized expression of their principles and practices in the form of a creed." (Armitage) There existed no need for churches to state beliefs which were obvious to all. Arguably, the first confirmable Confession of Faith made by apostolic churches was the New Hampshire Confession in 1833. Some may assert that the Schleitheim Confession, 1527, is an Anabaptist confession, but those Anabaptists were Reformers known as the Swiss Brethren and were not of the ancient Anabaptists. This lack of confessions and creeds of the Anabaptists may trouble some. However, this much is certain that all of their beliefs came from the following four points: **1** The sovereign and absolute headship of Christ in His Churches; **2** The exclusive authority of the Scriptures, as containing His law for their direction in all things; **3** The supernatural regeneration of each Christian forming the churches; and **4** The liberty and responsibility to God, of each individual conscience.

If we try to understand why the dissenting churches did not sense the need to publish their beliefs perhaps we can understand what those beliefs were. If the early churches were asked what they believed would they have offered anything other than scriptures as their creed? Or would they offer any other defense of their faith than the New Testament? Heretics and heresies needed to produce and elevate a supplemental documents to sustain their beliefs. The Bible was their confession of faith, and there was no need to add any further. Later, because of the abuse of

creeds, it seems that there was a genuine prejudice against authoritative creeds as inadequate substitutes for the Scriptures and as dangerous limitations upon the Spirit's leadership in interpreting the Scriptures.[1] We may have many questions for them concerning their opinions on certain doctrines and practices on which they were silent, but many of these things were not issues in their day. Examples of this would be homosexuality, women in the clergy, speaking in tongues, and points of prophecy, all of which concern us today. These things are rarely, if at all, mentioned by them. Why? Was it because they held no stand on these questions, or is it more likely that they were not issues needing to be addressed? Where they were silent is not proof of approval or an absence of opinion. The most reasonable and rational conclusion as to what were the beliefs of the Apostolic, Anabaptist churches is that they were the same as the first church in Jerusalem. They never declared anything different.

[1] Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*.

The Waldenses wrote, "When Papists ask us, where our religion was before Luther? We generally answer, in the Bible; and we answer well. But to gratify their taste for Traditions and human authority, we may add to this answer, and in the vallies (sic) of Piedmont." (Armitage)

Here is a reference of the Albigenses found in Mosheim's writings, XI century, chapter V. "We find that even their enemies acknowledged the sincerity of their piety; but they were blackened by accusations which were evidently false; and that the opinions for which they were punished differed widely from the Manichaean system. They looked with contempt upon all external worship (rituals), rejected all rites and ceremonies, and even the Christian sacraments, as destitute of any, even the least spiritual efficacy or virtue." Why repeat the bible for a confession, it is already before all.

In 1030 it was remarked of them by Mosheim, "They maintained, in general, according to their own confession, that the whole of religion consisted in the study of practical piety, and in a course of action conformable to the divine laws, and treated all external modes of worship with the utmost contempt. Their particular tenets may be reduced to the followings heads:

(*Note the following points are in the third person.*)

1. They rejected baptisms, and in a more especial manner, the baptism of infants, as a ceremony which was essential to salvation.
2. They rejected, for the same reason, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.
3. They denied that that the churches (church buildings) were endowed with a greater degree of sanctity than private houses, or that they were more adapted to the worship of God than any other place.
4. They affirmed that the altars were to be considered in no other light than as heaps of stones, and were therefore unworthy of any marks of veneration or regard.
5. They disapproved of the use of incense and consecrated oil in services of a religious nature.

6. They looked upon the use of bells in the churches, as an intolerable superstition.

7. They denied that the establishment of bishops, presbyters, deacons, and other ecclesiastical dignities was of divine institution, and went so far as to maintain that the appointment of stated ministers in the church was entirely needless (in order to preserve churches as lawful bodies of Christ).

8. They affirmed that the institution of funeral rites was an effect of sacerdotal avarice, and that it was a matter of indifference whether the dead were buried in church yards, or in the fields.

9. They looked upon those voluntary punishments, called *penance*, which were so generally practiced in this century, as unprofitable and absurd.

10. They denied that the sins of departed spirits could be, in any measure, atoned for by the celebration of *masses*, the distribution of alms to the poor, or a *vicarious penance*; and they treated, of consequence, the doctrine of *purgatory* as a ridiculous fable.

11. They considered marriage as a pernicious institution, and absurdly condemned, without distinction, all connubial bonds. (This article is scarcely credible, at least as it is here expressed. These churches did not reject marriage, but the sacrament of marriage as necessary for salvation, and may have held that to remain unmarried was in high esteem. I Cor. 7: 32, 33)

12. They looked upon a certain sort of veneration and worship as due to the *apostles* and *martyrs*, from which, however, they excluded such as were only *confessors*, in the which class they comprehended the *saints*, who had not suffered death for the cause of Christ, and whose bodies, in their esteem, had nothing more sacred that any other human carcass.

13. They declared the use of instrumental music in the churches, and other religious assemblies, superstitious and unlawful.

14. They denied that the cross on which Christ suffered was in any respect more sacred than other kinds of wood, and, of consequence, refused to pay to it the smallest degree of religious worship.

15. They not only refused all acts of adoration to the images of Christ, and of the saints, but were also for having them removed out of churches.

16. They were shocked at the subordination and distinctions that were established among the clergy, and at the different degrees of authority that were conferred upon the different members of that sacred body."

These Albigenses were also known as Waldenses and Paulicians and connected with the Bogomils. They were called Mystics, fanatics and odious. In Italy they were called Paterini and Cathari. "This pernicious sect adhered obstinately to their principles, and hence they were at length condemned to be burnt alive. A like set of men proceeded in vast numbers out of Italy in the following ages, spread like an inundation through all the European provinces, and were known in Germany under the name of the Brethren of the free spirit, while they were distinguished in other countries by the appellation of *Beghards*." (Mosheim)

Part II

The Association

In the second century there existed a loose association of churches. They were quite different from associations of today. We would consider them more of fellowships than any kind of organization. Initially, churches or their leaders gathered together for the comfort of mutual support and encouragement. The main concern of these fellowship-associations was the common interest of benevolence for individuals and churches that were destitute or under persecution. These needs were made known, and a resolve was made by individual churches to alleviate their misery. —Robinson

At some point these fellowships began to conduct business. Likely it was decided expedient for the churches send funds to these meetings and allow the association to make decisions of distribution as it saw fit. (This was the first piece of business made by the London Association 1698.) This was the beginning of the formal organizing of their fellowship and the appointment of officers. Records show that it became a prestigious matter of being an officer of the association and men began to elevate themselves and assert supremacy. This was connected with the rise of the office of archbishop. Pastors impressed with the idea of an umbrella of strength of associations led their churches to take oaths of allegiance and loyalty to the association. The number of these organizations grew and expanded. Bishops of the greater associations ruled over the lesser. A hierarchy was born and this developed into the Catholic Churches; in the west the Roman Catholic and in the east the Greek, both struggling for supremacy over the other. What had been reserved exclusively to Christ as the Head of His body was slowly and inextricably being usurped. A union was forming and not that of unity but of uniformity. This can be seen in the treatment of Novatian and his followers as they were charged and condemned for dividing the body of Christ, for only one church in Rome was acceptable. Later they were condemned for re-baptizing those who came from the Catholics adding to the charge of causing ecclesiastical disharmony.

At the time of the development of authority by a ruling body, churches quickly began to lose their sovereignty and no longer were independent but a part of what was to become a monstrous super church. Except in the East, Rome was considered as the seat of the truest and purest orthodoxy. It was granted that this church and especially its bishops had a special, unique, and sometimes secret mystical knowledge imparted to them from both Paul and Peter, the first pastors. They held in high esteem not only the succession of their church but also in the lineage of ordination of their bishops. The East also used this same method of determining their Patriarchs, through the question of whose line of ordination did they have; what bishop ordained you and who ordained him?

This mega catholic association, if it can be called that now, was the conduit through which Constantine made his pact with “Christians.” It should not be believed for a moment that the Catholic Church had its shroud over all churches. Churches such as the Donatists refused the yoke of Rome and its hierarchy. They separated from and rejected Rome. They stood for freedom of conscience and hated the union with Constantine, complaining, “What has the

Empire to do with Christ or His church?" In Spain, Gaul, and Britton Catholicism struggled for over a millennium to achieve its domination.

All associations are man-made without any rightful claim of divine origin. If they limit their role to assisting the spread of the gospel, edifying churches and Christians, they serve a very useful purpose. But if associations overstep this function and assume authority of any kind over churches, they become a danger. Many have asserted themselves as masters over the conscience of churches for self determination. Unfortunately, men are seemingly too quick to forget that it is the church which is the pillar and ground of the truth and not associations, or pastors. We have the lesson before us.

In spite of the risks of abuse, associations have accomplished much good. For the purpose of this study we are indebted to the New Hampshire Association for its confession of faith. Not until the early nineteenth century do we find individual churches publishing *authoritative* confessions of their faith. Associations and such like organizations were the early catalyst for bringing forth published Doctrines of Faith.

Chapter 9

Church Perpetuity and The Baptists

Who are the Baptists? Some say they are Protestants of the Reformation period. To this they place their origin with the Particular and General Baptists of London (both of which are Reformed churches). Others attribute their lineage to the ancient Anabaptists and predate the Reformation movement. Can their origin be definitely set in time? With these questions in mind we proceed with this study.

BAPTIST

The Name

Perhaps the best place to begin is with the name *Baptist*. Many believe that Baptist is a derivative of Anabaptist, with the *Ana* being dropped. This is the simplistic explanation, which may have some truth to it; however, there is another explanation which seems more plausible to the origin of this name. There is a journal called *The Broadmead Records* which sheds light on the Baptist name. This book is the history of a Baptist church in Bristol, England, 1640-1687. Here are excerpts taken from the founding of this church:

> "And at that juncture of time (1640) the providence of God brought to this city one Mr. Canne, a *baptized* man; it was that Mr. Canne that made notes and references upon the bible. He was a man very eminent in his day for godliness, and for reformation in religion, having great understanding in the way of the Lord. Like unto Aquila, he taught them the way of the Lord more perfectly, and settled them in church order, and showed them the difference betwixt the Church of Christ and antichrist, and left with them a printed book treating of the same, and divers printed papers to that purpose.[1] So that by this instrument, Mr. Canne, the Lord did confirm and settle them; showing them how they should join together, and take in members. . . . (There was) obstruction by a very godly great woman, that dwelt in that place, who was somewhat severe in the profession of what she knew, hearing that he was a *baptized* man, by them called an Anabaptist, which was to some sufficient cause of prejudice; (she shut them out of the place she had allowed them to meet)."

[1] He (Mr. Canne) calls himself "Pastor of the ancient English church in Amsterdam," in 1634, when he printed "A Necessity of Separation from the Church of England," which, probably, is the book here referred to. Between that date and 1640 he must have become a Baptist, as stated in the text. He returned shortly after his visit to Bristol to Amsterdam, where he published "Syon's (Zion's) Prerogative Royal, to prove that every particular congregation hath from Christ absolute and entire power to exercise

in and of herself every ordinance of God, and is an independent body, not standing under any other ecclesiastical authority out of itself."—Amsterdam, 1641, 12mo. pp. 64.

In these records reference is also made of *Baptized* churches. The logical connection of baptized men and baptized churches to Anabaptists is a simple one. Anabaptists were well known for their strenuous position of baptism and re-baptizing, and insisted that theirs was true baptism and all others false. People thus called them the baptized church or the baptized people; which may have been a term of ridicule. Here we have a bridge between those called The Baptized, the Anabaptists, and the Baptists. I leave it to your judgment of the etymology of the Baptist name.

Its Origin

The next question is when did the Baptist name come into use? This question is far more difficult than the first, and the answer may never be found. As we have observed when this question is asked the common answer is the Baptist name began with the General Baptists of London in 1611, 1612. But not being satisfied with that answer we ask where they got the name. Was it in use before them, and did they simply adopt it? It happens that Baptists in England and on the Continent existed at least a century before the 1600's,[2] and the General Baptists accepted this name.

[2] See Robinson, Ecclesiastical Researches, chapter 13, Bohemia.

The earliest documented usage of *Baptist* that I have been able to find comes from the Council of St. Gall instigated by Zwingli. It was to rid themselves of the "Dippers." The edict is as follows:

> "In order that the dangerous, wicked, turbulent and seditious sect of the *Baptists* may be eradicated, we have thus decreed: If any one is suspected of rebaptism, he is to be warned by the magistracy to leave the territory under penalty of the designated punishment. Every person is obliged to report those favorable to rebaptism. Whoever shall not comply with this ordinance is liable to punishment according to the sentence of the magistracy. Teachers of rebaptism, baptizing preachers, and leaders of hedge meetings are to be drowned. . . . Foreign *Baptists* are to be driven out; if the return they shall incur the same penalty. No one is allowed to secede from the (Zwinglian) church and to absent himself from the Holy Supper." Dated September 9, 1527.[3]

[3] A history of the Baptists, Vol. 1, John Christian, page 121.

A second edict was put forth three years later on March 26, 1530:

> "All who adhere to or favor the false sect of the *Baptists*, and who attend hedge-meetings, shall suffer the most severe punishments. *Baptist* leaders, their followers, and protectors shall be drowned without mercy."[4]

[4] Ibid

In the study of the church, both Baptist and Protestant historians used the name Baptist rather freely. So freely in fact, that it is difficult to determine how precise they are in their detailed accounts. A number of notable men have applied the name to groups of churches existing in Europe two centuries before Luther. While we Baptists may relish in these accounts, we are not provided with the reason why they were known as Baptists. Were they indeed called Baptists in their day, or did the historians simply assign the name because they resembled the Baptists of the 1600's? We are not disputing their usage of Baptist, but desire supporting evidence. Some have applied the name to those who were certainly not *Baptistic*. Research leaves us with uncertainty as to when the name began. However, we know this: it is very old, and it cannot be claimed that any man or group of men founded the Baptist Church.

As a footnote to the above we notice a trend of writers who identify ancient churches as being Baptists because they were of "Like Faith and Order" of Baptists today. For this they have been accused of arrogance and brash presumptuousness. While we would not use words so brutal it is indeed not a prudent practice. This type of approach sets the model of the church to be that of current Baptists and attempts to make the ancient churches conform to this model. The question is not how well they conform to Baptists but rather how well do the Baptists conform to them, and in this they measure well.

Antiquity of the Baptists

Robinson commented that succession with the apostolic churches was the holy grail of the Reformation churches. Having a physical lineage from the first century is only one part of succession. Succession must also include doctrine, practices, policies, and morality. As observers of history we can see the church entering into the Dark Ages and then emerging one hundred years before the Reformation. In the centuries between, the church lay hidden, but evidence of it is seen in the blood of martyrs, in the testimonies of its enemies, and in the names and titles given to it. When the church emerged from that period it was just as glorious as from the beginning. Protestants insist that the greatest corruption of the church was in this age. In doing so they are fraudulently identifying the church with the Roman Catholic Church. But for the true church of Jesus Christ it never shined so bright, sublime and beautiful than in this age.

Two prominent names of the Dark Age dissenters were the Albigenses and the Waldenses. Their records are stellar. Can any single lineage of a church be established? No, the records were methodically destroyed by the Roman Catholic Church. Samuel Morland in his *The Churches of the Valley of Piedmont* wrote that by the time he entered the valleys the Inquisitors

had destroyed practically every document they uncovered of the Waldenses. Few records survived. This was a policy long established and faithfully practiced by the Catholics.

The Albigenses and Waldenses were alike in all the essentials of Faith and Order. They had many contacts together through the centuries. Because of destroyed records it is impossible with what is left to us to give a church by church (a chain link) lineage. However, if we think of the Albigensian and Waldensian churches as a species of Churches and Christians, we don't need to see the microcosm of the individuals but the movement and life of the whole. These churches are historically identified with the apostolic churches; the Waldenses and the Bogomils made this claim of themselves, and others concur. And always the name Anabaptist was associated with them.

The essentials of Faith and Order of the Lord's churches were those which they confessed from the Holy Scriptures. They rejected all human advancements of theology and the adoption of paganism, superstition, and philosophy. Their form of church government and clergy followed exactly the pattern set in the New Testament. They had unity without uniformity. We may view with disappointment that they put forth no opinion on issues about which we feel so warmly today. This should serve to instruct us that perhaps we have over-burdened our Confessions of Faith with non-essentials. But in our defense the churches today face many more complicated theological aberrations than they. It would be rare to find an exact counterpart among them with our confessions, but in essence we Baptists are of the same fabric of beliefs. This is the heritage which has come to us. We are apostolic.

Again to repeat the words of Ypeig and Dermount in their History of the Netherlands's Reformed Church when they said: [5]

> "We have now seen that the Baptists who in former times were called Anabaptists, and at a later time period Mennonites, were originally Waldenses, who, in the history of the Church, even from the most ancient times, have received such a well-deserved homage. On this account the Baptist may be considered, as of old, the only religious community which has continued from the times of the Apostles; as a Christian Society which has kept pure through all ages the evangelical doctrines of religion. The uncorrupted inward and outward condition of the Baptist community affords proof of the truth contested by the Romanish Church, of the great necessity of a reformation of religion such as that which took place in the sixteenth century, and also a refutation of the erroneous notion of the Roman Catholics that their

[5] Armitage, chapter XI, The Baptist Copy of the Apostolic Churches denomination is the most ancient."

The distinguishing principles of the first churches and the Baptists may be stated thus:

I. That the inspired Scriptures contain the full and supreme authority of Christ in all that relates to Christian faith and practice, whether in doctrine, ordinance, the ordering of a holy life, or in the administering of church government.

II. That a Christian church must be made up only of persons who are morally regenerated; and that it is not a simple voluntary association, but a body of men called out of the world about them, by Christ's special authority, to be a people peculiar to Himself.

III. That they maintain Baptism and the Lord's Supper after the Apostolic appointment both as regarding in their relations among themselves as ordinances, and to other great Gospel teachings.

IV. That they earnestly oppose all connection of the Church with the State, and all distinctions made by the State among its citizens, on the ground of religion.

> "It is enough to show that what Christ's churches were in the days of the Apostles, that the Baptist churches of to-day find themselves. The truths held by them have never died since Christ gave them, and in the exact proportion that any people have maintained these truths they have been true Baptists of the world. A Baptist church is a congregation, and not a denomination of congregations, and find it in what nook we may, if it can trace its doctrines to the Apostles it is an Apostolic Church." (Armitage)

Those who have never been willing to understand the Baptists or their values argue for a reformation origin. Of all the historians specifically devoted to the study of the Baptists none have given their origin. If a date was possible it most assuredly would have been assigned. What we are left with is not so much as the Baptists themselves but rather the name Baptist. And that name is elusive as it is traced back in time blending itself with those of the Anabaptist, Waldenses and Albigenses. It is ancient with no definite origin.

Addendum 1

The Church Defended

A Critical Exposition of the New Testament Church

Why the Church at all?

A question of Covenants and Religion

God's Covenants

God had given the plan and promise of Salvation in the **Adamic** Covenant. The promise of a Redeemer being born of the woman was enough for men to trust in a provided righteousness of God. This trust, this faith, secured for men eternal life, and set aside God's judgment against them. Why go any further? What more was called for? Were not men who were saved now free to worship God as they saw fit? Apparently not. We observe in Genesis a simple form of religion being practiced. The Sabbath was kept, and animal sacrifices were made. As Jesus instructed, the Sabbath was made for the good of man and beast. The sacrifices served to teach men of the redemptive work of God, illustrating the way of salvation. The religion of men at this time was very sparse. It did, however, require men to worship and glorify God.

The salvation of God put men once again into the kingdom of God, religion did not.

The covenant God established with **Abraham** was made with a family. Nearly this entire covenant was in the future. This covenant set forth a new religion. What was new? The sign of this covenant was circumcision. Tithing is first seen in Abraham. The system of the Patriarchs is explicitly given in this covenant. A more systematic method of worship was set in place, and it was exclusive to one family. One very important point about this covenant is that it is unconditional. It cannot be lost or negated, for there were no terms attached to it.

The **Mosaic** Covenant contained a highly structured form of religion. It was also given to a relatively few people, the progeny of Abraham. The law of this covenant exposed the sinfulness of man and his lack of ability for any righteousness of his own. It taught men of the sacrificial offering of God on their behalf. It foreshadowed the coming Anointed One of Israel: the Messiah, and promised King. This covenant was conditional and was to be kept precisely as God had instructed. To disobey the terms of this covenant was to provoke God's judgment. However, for those who did keep the covenant, special promises of reward and blessing were theirs: they would be a peculiar treasure unto God above all people, and unto Him a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. This Covenant set the framework for the arrival of Christ.

The Work of Christ.

When the Son of God came He performed many vital tasks. He perfectly fulfilled the Law of Moses and the prophecies about Him and His life. A drastic turning point was reached at His appearance. His suffering on the Cross (Col. 2:14) ended the **Mosaic** Covenant. Further, the sacrifice for the redemption of all men was made by His bloody death. This fulfilled the **Adamic** Covenant. His message to His people, the Jews, was to repent and receive the Kingdom of God. He told them that the Kingdom was in their midst and was being offered to them. This was not the restoration of the greatness of the kingdom of Israel, which they had enjoyed under David. Rather it was the establishing of God's Kingdom with a new Covenant, with them as a blessing and the spiritual center for all nations of the world. The fulfillment of the many long-awaited promises of the **Abrahamic** Covenant was laid before them.

Filling the Gap of Unbelief

God knew they would reject His offer. While Christ was on earth He had established His church in preparation for their rejection. This church became the recipient of a new covenant, to include all nations, Jew and Gentile. It was not the "New Covenant" which God intended for Israel, but another, unique in one sense but yet still Abrahamic. It was to fill the gap between Israel's national unbelief and their subsequent repentance and return to Him. This is in no wise meant to minimize the importance of the church and relegate it to an afterthought on the part of God. It had always been in His mind to build His church (Acts 15:14-18). Romans 11:17-27 gives the accounting of the church. Because of Israel's unbelief they have been broken off and the "Nations" are grafted into their place. This will only last "until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in," and Israel shall be saved, their sins taken away, and are grafted back in. Moreover, Paul strenuously warns the church at Rome that they stand by The Faith (the definite article is before faith), but if they fall and do not continue in His goodness, they also will be cut off. This they are to fear. If Israel lost the Covenant through unbelief, so also will churches lose their Church Covenant if they become unfaithful. The loss is not salvation, but the loss as a church, a body of Christ.

When Christ returns, Israel repents in great bitterness and sorrow and is nationally saved (Zechariah 12). At that same moment, the church is caught up to meet Him in the air. The end of the gap of unbelief is at His coming; Daniel's seventieth week ends, the days of Jacob's trouble are over. This concludes the existence of the church on earth as she was initially purposed. But is that the termination of the church? Absolutely not. This church of Jesus Christ becomes His Bride, to rule and reign with Him in the millennium and the following eternal age. These are the overcomers of the New Testament. The *ekklesia* continues on, not as before to be tested, tried, suffering, and persecuted, but now as a glorified immortal body delighting in the joy of her Lord, Master, and Husband.

This answers the question as to why there is the church. God did not leave a void of how He was to be worshipped after the termination of the Mosaic Covenant. He made an interim covenant, but this time open to all nationalities. However, the entrance into this covenant is not

by circumcision but through faith, faithfulness, and baptism. This covenant is superior in every way to the old.

The Church Covenant

If we are to understand the Church Covenant we must first grasp elements of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. Without this understanding we seem to merely have some vague idea that God built His church and has promised to give it a glorious conclusion as the Bride of Christ, ruling by His side. By this lack of preciseness we blunder through the heart and intent of the church, making it what it isn't and confusing what it is.

So we revisit these two covenants. God's promise to Abraham was the greatness of his progeny and the vastness of the land to be given to him and his seed. This is a covenant of inheritance and not salvation. However, specified in this covenant was the lineage of the birth of the Son of God, the Anointed One of Israel. The children of Abraham are the "apple of His (God's) eye." By design God chose the Israelites as His elect for whom all future covenants were meant. Thus the Mosaic Covenant was given as God remembered His promise to Abraham.

The Mosaic Covenant served several functions. It formed an enormous family into a nation. By this covenant the oracles of God were committed unto them. They were to render to God His fruits of praise, devotion, love, obedience, honor and glory. The covenant told them how and where to do this. This covenant was limited to both a specified people (not universal), for a specified duration, existing only until the advent of Christ. At that time a "New Covenant" was meant to be established with Israel. But this new covenant had to be received by faith and not just by the merits of birth. Jesus was to be their Lord, they were to be His peculiar treasure, they were to be a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation of God above all people. All this was possible because they were beneficiaries of Abraham's inheritance. Because of unbelief Israel was broken off. As a nation they lost the blessed covenanted position. Now the Church is regarded as Spiritual Israel. Abraham, the father of the faithful, is now the father of us all through faith and grace. (Rom. 4:16).

The Church Grafted into Abraham

As mentioned, the Mosaic Covenant had a limited life span. It was God's intention to replace that Covenant with another. It is simply called a "New Covenant." This New Covenant was to bring in the millennium age, but it has been put on hold until that which is determined shall be accomplished. Thus the Church has been grafted into the place from which present Israel has been removed. This we have seen in Romans 11:17-27. The graft has been made into the root and stock of the "good olive tree."

This good olive tree of Romans 11, with its roots firmly fixed upon God and its fatness of abundant richness of blessings and grace, is Abraham. Or more specifically, it is God's Covenant with Abraham. Because Israel refused to hear and obey God (the two critical requirements of Faith) they were not spared. Jesus intentionally confronted the very center of their religious culture, the chief priests and elders in the temple, to bring matters to a head. There He gave the parables of the "Two Sons" and "The Vineyard." By their own mouth they condemned themselves, thus Jesus gave His judgment: "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43). They were spiritually severed from the root and stock of Abraham their father. From the point of the crucifixion they were nationally set apart from God's dealings.

Even more to the point is Galatians.

Gal. 3:6-9. "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham".

Also in this context is, "The just shall live by faith." verse 11.

Paul gives his scriptural proof from the Prophets.

Rom 10:19-21. "But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."

It must not be assumed that the national promises of the Abrahamic Covenant belong to the church. The vast land grant, which we call the "Promised Land," has not reverted to the Gentiles. The day will come when Christ will sit on the Jewish throne of David. The seat of His kingdom is Jerusalem, the capital of Israel. None of this involves Gentiles. The nations are to come annually to worship before Him. This all belongs to the natural seed of Abraham. However, the church will share in these as the Bride of Christ, with Christ seated on David's throne; all made possible by the Abrahamic connection in this age.

The Mystery

Ephesians 2:11 - 3:12.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians reminding them of what they once were and what they had now become. How they had once stood before God has been recast into a new relationship. Some change has occurred and they have been dramatically altered from what they had been.

In the revelation of this mystery it is understood that this truth applies not just to the Ephesians but to all Gentiles and Jews. Prior to this time Gentiles were separated from the innermost circle of God's promises given to the Israelites. They were foreigners, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, afar off from the household of God. The "middle wall of partition" vividly established this.

The middle wall of partition is a clear reference to the wall or barrier that separated the outer court of the Gentiles from the inner courts of the Jews on the temple grounds. If any Gentile crossed this barrier the temple guards would have killed them. To this day Greek inscriptions can still be read on the stones of this wall, giving a warning of the risk of life. (Biblical Archaeology Review)

Jesus, by His life and death, fulfilled the law and took it out of the way; He abolished the Old Testament Law and Covenant, which was the source of "the enmity." And now a New Covenant is established in Christ with the two (Jew and Gentile) made into one new "man." This is the uniting of those who had been at such odds to be one in His covenant; now to be at peace. Jesus reconciled both unto God in one "body." This was not simply the Gentiles being added to the Jews, but that together they are now equally established in His church. Nor is it an existing "body" into which Gentiles are brought, but a new "body" created, which Jew and Gentile alike are introduced (The Nature of The Church, Radmacher. pg. 199).

This mystery was hid in God from the beginning of the world, "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." Here is the mystery explained: "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." Fellowheirs are co-inheritors, both inheriting together in the same body.

So we have the bridge from the Abrahamic attachment to the new beginning.

A New Beginning

Acts 15: 14. "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name"

A. T. Roberson in his word pictures had this to say about this verse.

> "*To take from the Gentiles a people for his name*. Bengel calls this a chosen people out of the Gentiles. This is what is really involved in what took place at Cesarea at the

> hands of Peter and the campaign of Barnabas and Paul from Antioch. But such a claim of God's purpose called for proof from Scripture to convince Jews, and this is precisely what James undertakes to give. This new Israel from among the Gentiles is one of Paul's great doctrines as set forth in Gal. 3; Rom. 9-11."

While we do not concede to Roberson as an authority of the doctrine of the Church his comments are very well placed and accurate.

A theme consistently recurring in the N.T.

What Israel was intended to be, the church became. Now, today, the Church is called the House of God, a peculiar treasure unto God above all people, a kingdom of priests, "an holy nation." To Israel was given the oracles of God; they now reside in the church. Through Israel the glory of God was to be rendered; now it is by the church. The prescribed method of worship was with Israel, now it is in the church. Israel had the priesthood, now it is in the church. Israel was the administrative authority of the Kingdom of God, now it is in the church. Israel only could administer the ordinances, now only the church can administer the ordinances. The promise to Israel was that she would never perish, now also the church has this same promise. Israel had the abiding presence of God, now is Christ in the midst of His church. The list goes on. All these things are in an institution, named "church," and not in general "Christianity" or the Kingdom of God as a whole. Just as Israel and the Temple were physical visible entities, so also is the church.

Which Model?

Concerning the church it must be asked: Is this a model of all the saved? Does the above picture a church existing in the Old Testament? Is Israel the church? The answer to these questions is, No. When speaking of the church as existing prior to the Second Coming of Christ, it is to be found on earth, but it did not exist prior to His first coming. The Church Covenant no more contains all the saved than did the Mosaic Covenant, or the Abrahamic Covenant. Faithfulness, obedience, loyalty, dedication to Jesus is required of those who would be in the church. In short, only disciples of Christ will attain to its membership.

Addendum 2

Church Metaphors

This addendum addresses the metaphors used in conjunction with the church, so it is prudent to begin with a review of the metaphor as a figure of speech and of its usage.

Topics under consideration:

- Metaphors Defined
- Usage of Metaphors
- Purpose of Metaphors
- What we hope to gain from the Church Metaphors
- Church Metaphors Used
- The Church as The House of God
- Foundation of The House
- The House as a Building
- The Building Material of The House
- Essentials of The House of God
- The Flock
- The Body of Christ
- The Bride of Christ

Metaphors Defined

Metaphors are a figure of speech which involves making comparisons. Technically, the metaphor is a comparison in which one thing *is*, *acts like*, or *represents another* in which the two are basically unalike. The key is the verb "is." A metaphor asserts that one thing *is like* another thing. The metaphor is a "Comparison by Representation." It is one noun representing another noun. But we are cautioned in the use of these nouns. It is wrong to say that a metaphor may be applied allegorically. Bernard Ramm wrote, "Whenever a figure is used its literal meaning is precisely that meaning determined by grammatical studies of figures. Hence figurative interpretation does not pertain to the spiritual or mystical sense of Scripture, but to the literal sense." To illustrate this when the church is called a flock, a body, a house, or a temple these are all literal; a literal flock, a literal body, a literal house, and a literal temple. But that does not mean that the church is a literal, body, flock, or temple, but rather that in some way these literal things are representative of, or they compare in some point or points with the church.

Confused? Perhaps this next paragraph should help clarify.

As an example let us consider the church called the temple of God. Is the church a literal temple, a stone building adorned with wood and precious metals? No, it is not. But in some way a temple compares with the church. The Old Testament temple was the designated place of

worship. The temple stood as the accepted place of sacrifice and service to God. It was holy. It was built after His design. God designated the servants of the temple, the priests and high priest. It was a physical, visible building of divine origin. All these points compare with the church.

Usage of Metaphors

As a rule, there is a phenomenon of consistency of metaphors in scripture. When a metaphor is repeatedly compared with the same object its point(s) of representation is consistent. So whatever meaning is ascribed to a metaphor it will hold constant in every occurrence of its use for that same object. If it does not, then we need to reevaluate our interpretation of it. For example, leaven is considered by many to represent evil, corruption, sinfulness, etc. But there is nothing about leaven itself which is wicked or immoral; in/of itself it is benign. It was used in the Wave Offering on the day of Pentecost (Lev. 23:17), which denies the interpretation that leaven *always* represents evil. What then can we say about leaven and its representation? Leaven is an influencing agent. Given time, leaven will spread throughout any batter in which it is present. The better interpretation of the metaphor leaven is to beware of the *influence* of sin and false doctrine. This holds consistent. Also it needs to be made clear that when a noun is used as a metaphor it is not always called upon to be a metaphor, such as in the case of leaven in the Wave Offering.

Purpose of Metaphors

The metaphor stirs the mind to understand in what way(s) the representation or comparison is made. As with all figures of speech metaphors can add vividness and make abstract ideas more concrete. They attract attention and encourage reflection; many times they abbreviate the idea and put into simple terms complex notions. Thus they say much with few words. Some regard metaphors as a language of convenience to help in our understanding.

What we hope to gain from the Church Metaphors

The object of this study is definitive answers. What we seek are not possibilities of interpretations, but a definite model, which represents the nature of the church. Let the conclusions be clearly demonstrated, without any prejudicial-preconceived ideas, but grounded on the merit of The Word of God alone. One of the most frustrating statements is that of, "Yes, *but* -" and the arguments drift off to texts which are open to various interpretations. If the point is proven and verified by two or more scriptures, it needs not to be proven in all correlated scriptures. Nor does it need to be defended by endless rhetoric. If an answer is given, it will be consistent, accept it, believe it, and move on.

Church Metaphors Used

The Flock

The flock metaphor is used in Luke 12:32, Matt. 16:31, Acts 20:28-30, and I Peter 5:1-3.

In Luke it is Christ calling His disciples "little flock." This is the precedent of the flock metaphor and is applied to that small body of men following Him. The next occurrence is Matt. 26:31, "Then saith Jesus unto them, 'All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.'" Here Jesus quotes Zechariah 13:7. The context of this verse is the setting of the inauguration of the "Lord's Supper" within the church (vs. 26-30).

In Acts 20:28-30, Paul admonishes the elders of Ephesus to be on guard and mindful of both themselves and the flock, over which they had been made bishops. The warning was that grievous wolves (also a metaphor for greedy, cruel and destructive men) would attack the flock, and even out of their own membership men would arise and pervert the Word of God and draw, from the Disciples of Christ, disciples unto themselves. The prevention of such ruin was for them to feed the church, teach them. Plainly the intention is for pastors to be watching over the welfare of their congregations and tending to their spiritual needs.

The same theme is in I Peter 5:1-3. The command Peter gave to the elders is the same which he received many years prior by Jesus. Jesus had challenged Peter three times as to the sincerity of his love and told him to "feed my sheep/lambs" (John 21:15-17). Verse 2: "Feed the flock of God which is among you …" these Elders are to nourish their congregations teaching them the Word of God. Verse 3: "being ensamples to the flock." They are to live godly lives setting the example of Christian morals and conduct. While this does not definitively define the nature of flock/church, it does however picture a local body of Christ.

All four of the "flock" passages are explicit references to a particular gathering of people. Moreover, they indicate the church as the object of this metaphor. There is nothing in these verses to suggest any dualistic nature of the church. The church is exemplified to be local and visible in each context. Has anyone seen an invisible flock? The point of comparison of the flock to the church or similitude between the two is their restricted visibility. Restricted, because a flock does not contain all the sheep in the world, and visible, because a flock is just simply visible. Some would change the meaning of "flock" and have the church define flock. They see the church all-inclusive and unseen and thus attempt to make a flock all-inclusive and unseen. The church is not used as a metaphor for a flock. Recall the rule of metaphors: "Whenever a figure is used its literal meaning is precisely that meaning determined by grammatical studies of figures. Hence, figurative interpretation does not pertain to the spiritual or mystical sense of Scripture, but to the literal sense."

The Body of Christ

There are five verses relevant to the body of Christ: Rom. 12:5; I Cor. 12:12, 27; Eph. 4:12, 16.

NKJ Romans 12:5. "so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another."

In this verse if all the redeemed are in one body we would expect to see the definite article (the) before *one*, making it to read, "so we, being many, are *the* one body of Christ." But, it is not there! This does not prove, but suggests, local bodies as opposed to a singular universal body. However, the conclusion of the verse demonstrates a personal attachment of the bodily members. This cannot be the circumstance of a disjointed un-assembled body.

KJV I Corinthians 12:12. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ."

The context addresses the unity of the body, having many members but of one body. Careful observance of this verse shows that it is a simile. *As* the body (church) is one, *so* also is (the body of) Christ is one. The subject is not about the body of Christ, or of the church as His body, but the unity of the Corinthian Church.

KJV 1 Corinthians 12:27. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

Few translations have this verse correct. The definite article, "the" is not in the Greek text. Literally it is, "ye are a body of Christ." Most translators have supplied "the" without italicizing it to indicate what they have done. This is un-principled. The Corinthian Church was *a* body, one of many, and as individuals they were component parts of that particular local body. Context also presents them as abiding in intimate contact with one another, also indicating a local body.

KJV Ephesians 4:12, 16. (12) "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:" (16) "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 unto the edifying of itself in love."

Rotherham translates verse 16 as: "Out of whom all the body – Fitly framing itself together, and connecting itself, through means of every joint of supply, by way of energizing in the measure of each single part – Secureth the growing of the body, unto an upbuilding of itself in love."

These two verses are correlated. Verse 12 does contain the definite article before body and is translated correctly. However, context again addresses a local body. Here is why. The term "joint" has the meaning "every bond, connection or ligament." The thought is that every joint is

bonded or connected together and that they mutually supply or answer to the need of each part, enabling the whole to increase in its growth by edification in love. The fact that each joint is connected pictures the "fitly joined together" and the compactness of the body. This is not indicative of a loose, disjointed, scattered and separated body, which is the character of a universal unassembled body.

The House of God

Metaphorically the church is called the House of God. It is not a literal house of God, but is named as His house. God has said that He lives in no house (Acts 7:17-50). But, His church is His dwelling in the sense of His domicile. The church is not a literal building but is conveniently expressed in that term to illustrate the essence of the church being built up and comprised of building material, living stones (also a metaphor).

There are four passages which clarify the house of God: Hebrews 3:3, 6, I Peter 4:17, and I Timothy 3:15.

KJV Hebrews 3:3. "For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house." 3:6 "But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

These verses declare several important features of the metaphor "house." First, is that the owner of the house is Christ, and in verse 3 it is seen that Jesus is the builder of His house (Re. Matt. 16:18). Second, is the declaration *we* are His house. Our interest is, who are the *we*. Does this include all the saved, and thus all the redeemed are in the house of Christ? Or is it more restrictive in its constitution? The answer is given by the conditional "if." The *we* are those who "hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." It is a great leap of supposition and contrary to reality to say that this is the condition of all saved. Only those who satisfy the conditions given are in His house.

KJV I Peter 4:17. "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

The implication of this verse is that those who obey the gospel of God comprise the house of God. Many conveniently misuse the term "gospel." Those who have only a limited vision of the gospel see it as the salvation message and nothing more. But the gospel extends far beyond that of simply salvation: it is the whole council of God. Those disobedient to the gospel are disobedient to God Himself. To be saved is only the initial act of obedience to the gospel; it is merely the inaugural act of submission to the will of God. But the true disciple, has a total commitment to render a lifetime of submissive obedience to God. The judgment begins with the disciples of Christ in His church.

KJV I Timothy 3:15. “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

These words from Paul to Timothy give the house of God two critical identifications: first, it is "The Church of The Living God" and second, that it is "the pillar and ground of the truth." As the pillar and ground of the truth, the church of God, the house of God must contain the truth. **It is** the repository of the truth.

I. Timothy was to know how to behave himself within the assembly of God. This is where Christian conduct is learned. We don’t first learn how to conduct ourselves in the world or in the economy of all the saved and then carry over those principles into the church. It is within the local church we are taught how to behave in the church and the world.

II. Paul here speaks of the church as already existing as the caretaker of the oracles of God. This is even before the New Testament record had been completed. Can it seriously be believed that some universal, imperceptible body is the ground of the truth? This truth, this gospel, this “Word of God,” was first given to local assemblies through men associated with them.

III. By the virtue of the church being the pillar and ground of the truth, the church defines itself. If the church has presented itself as universal and invisible, then it cannot be a local, visible assembly. This would be a contradiction of terms. Nowhere does the church present itself with this nature or distinction of universality. It is through the efforts of men attempting to prove what they believe, that what they are convinced must be true, that this universal definition is asserted to be the teaching of the church. They have it that the *unreal* local church defines itself in scripture as really being a universal church. The apostolic church in the New Testament is consistent in representing itself as local visible, and it gives no evidence of any dichotomy of the nature of the church.

The Construction of the House of God

There is a natural progression of thought and revelation with the metaphors used of the building, or constructing, of the “House of God.” The metaphors of the building begin with its foundation, then the materials of the building. The construction materials are living stones. Within the temple is the New Testament priesthood. There is a thread or a cord, which logically leads one to another, binding them together. This House is also called a habitation and a holy temple.

Each of these metaphors contains features which present evidence of the nature of the church. So we learn from the indications, examine the conclusions, and see if they give a definitive answer to the nature of the church.

Materials of the Church

The figures **rock**, **foundation** and **stones** are architectural terms used in the design and construction of the building. Together these make up the **temple** and the literal New Testament royal **priesthood**—The Church.

The Foundation

There are two Greek words, which translate into English "foundation." They are *katabole* and *themelios*. *Katabole* is the act of founding, or laying a foundation, *themelios* is the foundation itself. I Cor. 3:11 states that Christ the foundation, and Eph. 2:20 has the apostles and prophets as the foundation. Both passages use *themelios*. Christ was the original foundation, but the apostles were added, since it was through them that the church received its instructions until "The Word" was completed. Everything the church did was based upon the teachings of Christ and the apostles as they were taught by Christ. One passage considers the founding stone, or cornerstone, while others view the entire foundation. Christ, as the chief cornerstone, is presented as a keystone, which builders first lay. From this stone all other measurements and "truing" is referenced; it set the standard for the building. In these verses, it is on this foundation the church, not the Kingdom of God, is being built.

It becomes apparent that the foundation is the teachings of Christ and the doctrines of the New Testament. All which God builds on this foundation are built on these principles. All men are admonished to build carefully on this foundation, for every work will be tried. The worthless shall be consumed as by fire, and only those works which conform to the truth shall remain. This is not a picture of a foundation upon which a universal "believe all and accept all" church shall be built!

The Building

Paul used the analogy of a building in Eph. 2:21-22.

The American Standard Version reads: "In whom each several building (margin reads: 'Gk. every building') fitly framed together groweth into a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye (Ephesians) also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit."

This reading shows that Paul envisioned the separate churches to be complete buildings in themselves, "fitly framed together," not a solitary, immense, mystical building. Not to be overlooked is the fact that this building is a (one of many) habitation, dwelling place, of God though the Spirit. The building is also a (one of many) Holy Temple.

The Building Material — Stones

The church is spoken of in two unique ways. First, it is a housing of both God and the saints, who are also named as priests of God. Second, is the element of the construction of the building itself, made of living stones. This is addressed in I Peter 2:5-7.

KJV I Peter 2:5. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

Here we have the direct connection of the building to a house with a strong correlation to a temple.

This word "stone" is from the Greek *lithos*. It is commonly used for a rock which has been worked or that some workmanship has been made on it. The idea is that a stone has been fashioned into something unique or useful for some purpose, hence, it has a value attached to it by the merit of the work and effort put into it. Rare stones become precious jewels by the craftsmen hands.

Jesus is called the chief corner stone, the head of the corner (I Peter 2:6- 7). Jehovah, Himself, has laid this corner stone, called precious and tried and a sure foundation (Isaiah 28:16). As mentioned in the foundation topic, when constructing a building a corner stone is carefully and precisely set in place. All measurements are made from this point of reference. Everything constructed is "trued" to this corner stone. The walls are made straight and level to this stone. Without this stone the construction would be flawed, weak, and even dangerous. All the stones used in the building process are shaped to fitly form together in their place of the building. This calls for exactness and presents uniqueness with unity. These living stones are God's people who have or are undergoing God's crucible of discipline. Unfortunately, not all of the saved have submitted themselves to this purging and cannot fit into this building.

Summary of the House of God

To properly understand the whole truth of God in this covenanted era, one must have a proper understanding of the church. The church is the basis (ground) of the truth. Neither of the two "ordinances" of the church can be correctly understood or practiced apart from the church context. To not understand the church is to fail to understand the principle of the practice and doctrine of church discipline. Failure of knowing the church is a failure of knowing the Bride of Christ. Only by understanding the church can its membership be determined, and thus it can be known who are the royal priesthood of I Peter. Point is: if the foundation of the truth is wrong all else built upon it is faulty, imperfect, and perilous.

There is no universal, invisible church. What many theologians call universal invisible is, in fact, the Kingdom of God. Within the Kingdom of God is the church of God. Today His church, within His kingdom, is the body of authority. Only "She" may baptize, administer the Lord's Supper, and offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Only to her was given

the Great Commission, and by the virtue of her being the pillar of the truth is she able make disciples and to teach the redeemed to observe all things which Christ has commanded. Only to her are offered the conditional promises, beyond salvation (see Rev. 2-3) by Christ. Only within her are the disciples and overcomers. If this offends, it is the offense of the Word of God. Jesus said His doctrine would divide even those of the same household. Salvation alone does not divide. Salvation is a secret and private state, and unless it is publicly declared no others know of it. Only the public commitment and walk of obedience to Christ causes division. The universal invisible doctrine will keep no one out of Heaven, but it does rob every child of God of an inheritance, which God has prepared for those who love Him to the extent that they keep His words.

It is absurd to say that the church was just a happenstance gathering of redeemed people who came together on their own. The building and house of God is orderly, sophisticated, purposely, and divinely designed. This is not representative of a universal or invisible church, which is a varied array of individuals without discipline in doctrine, obedience, function or faith.

The Bride of Christ

The term "**Bride of Christ**" is *not* a metaphor of the church; it is *a title* of the church. Thus it requires a different approach of study and application. This is important, for it distinguishes the church *as* **the** wife (actual), and not that *she* is merely *compared* to a wife.

The terms "Bride" and "Wife" are used interchangeably in the Bible and in Jewish culture. Both terms are used of the church and her relation to Christ. But are these terms used as metaphors, a figure of speech, or in the literal sense? Paul uses "wife" seemingly in the metaphoric sense (Eph. 5:23-32, and II Cor. 11:2), while John in Revelation speaks of a literal wife and bride of the Lamb, Christ (Rev. 19:7-8; 21:9). If we apply the rule of consistency (where a term cannot be both metaphoric and literal) then the terms in this case are literal and not metaphoric. This is important, for it distinguishes the church as the wife (actual), as opposed to merely being compared to a wife.

Revelation 21:9 makes it conclusive that the bride and wife are synonymous.

Paul in his Ephesian letter is the first to present a clear reference of the church as the wife of Christ (5:22-32). However, this reference alone does not offer conclusive evidence signifying the nature of the church or the bride. Nevertheless, she is portrayed as embodying a very unique group of people. There exists between her and Christ a special, tender loving relationship. Her distinguishing attribute is her submissiveness and loyalty to her Bridegroom. This does not reflect the "situation of life" for all the saved, and excludes those redeemed who are yet carnal in their nature. To learn more of the nature of this bride we move on to Rev 19:7- 8.

Rev. 19:7, announces the wedding of the Lamb and His Bride. For this occasion His wife has made herself ready. She has completed the requirements needed for her wedding to take place. The bride herself has prepared herself and not another on her behalf.

Verse 8 continues describing the wedding scene. The wife of Christ is given a wedding garment made of fine linen, bright and pure. The bride adorns herself in this garment for her marriage. The presenting of the fine garment is conferred, almost mandated, by the righteous acts of the saints. This is a fulfillment of the promise to the overcomers given in the message to the Church of Sardis (Rev. 3:5). The saints are determined by their actions, which they have done. These are not saints by the virtue of bestowed sanctification from another, but by self-determination they have sanctified themselves. The righteous acts are their own deeds. The bride is composed of these saints. The fine linen is given in recognition and reward of their acts of righteousness. It is by their merit of works they have earned this. This was not given solely by grace but in response to their deserving it. This is not a salvation garment granted to all who have called upon Christ for salvation. This bride is made up of the faithful ones who comprise the church of God.

There is absolutely no sense at all that this bride is of any universal nature. The qualifying virtue is not salvation but faithfulness exhibited after salvation. Indeed, the church is the Bride of Christ. What the Bride is the church is. Neither consists of all the redeemed.

Addendum 3

A 1575 Confession of Faith by Two Baptist Martyrs

This account is found in the addendum of *The Broadmead Records* 1640 – 1687.

The following Confession was written while Terwoort and Peters were in the Marshalsea, "for the witness of Jesus Christ," to remove the many slanderous accusations which were circulated concerning their faith. It is probable that this confession was delivered either in whole or in part at their first examination. They revised and signed it on the eve of their martyrdom. It is given in its entirety, as it throws much light on the general orthodoxy of the Baptists at that period.

This is the Confession of our belief in God, our heavenly Father. Terwoort and Peters.

1. We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, as it is written. Gen. 1:1, in whom Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and all the prophets believed. Heb. 11.

2. We believe in Jesus Christ, the only Son of the Father, who was in the beginning with God. John 1:1. And when the time was fulfilled, Micah 5: 2, I John 1: 1, 2, which God had promised, Gal. 5:4. 4, the Word was made flesh. Gen. 3: 15, Isa. 7: 14, John 1: 14, and born of the seed of David, Rom. 1: 3, of the undefiled Virgin Mary, being betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the seed of David, Matt. 1: 18, Luke 1 and 2 blessed among women, Luke 1: 28. We believe that this true Son of God, with many signs and wonders which he did, announced to us the word of his Father, John 15: 24. And after this, was betrayed into the hands of the Jews crucified under Pontius Pilate, died, and was buried. Matt. 27: 1, Mark 15: 1, Luke 23: 1, John 28.

3. We believe that this same Jesus Christ is truly God and man and for our sins voluntarily laid down his life, Isa. 53: 7. When we were his enemies, he suffered a bitter death for us, Rom. 5: 8 that they who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life John 3: 6.

4. We believe also that this our Savior has risen from the dead Matt. 28: 6, Mark 16: 6, Luke 24: 6, John 20: 9, as he had foretold. Matt. 17: 9, Mark 9: 9, Luke 9: 22, and sits at the right hand of his Father, Mark 16: Acts 7: 55.

5. We believe in the Holy Ghost, John 15: 26, as it is written, I John 5: 7, saying. There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.

6. We believe also in the communion of saints, I John 1: 3, whose prayers avail much for us, James 5: 16. We believe also in the holy church, of which are they who believe in Jesus Christ,

baptized by one spirit into one body, as Paul says, I Cor. 12: 13. And Jesus Christ is the head thereof, that is, of the holy church, as it is written Eph. 5: 23, and Col. 1: 18. We believe that this holy church has power to open and to shut, to loose and to bind; and whatsoever they loose on earth is loosed in heaven. Matt. 16: 19, and whatsoever they bind on earth is bound in heaven. We believe also that God has ordained in his holy church, apostles, prophets, and teachers, I Cor. 12: 28, bishops, and deacons, I Tim. 3: 2, 8.

7. We believe and confess also baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, as the Lord Jesus Christ has commanded and ordained, Matt. 28: 19; and was practiced by the apostles. Acts 2: 38, 41; and as they have written thereof Rom. 6: 3, I Cor. 12: 13, Gal. 3: 27, Eph. 4: 5, and I Pet. 3: 21. We believe that they who are baptized, are members of the body of Jesus Christ, and of the holy church.

8. Of the holy supper of Jesus Christ, we believe and confess even as Christ has taught; as it is written. Matt. 26: 26, And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said. Take eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave, thanks, and gave it to them, saying. Drink ye, all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Mark 14: 24; this do in remembrance of me, Luke 22: 19. We believe as Paul testifies, saying, The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? I Cor. 10: 16. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day, John 6: 54.

9. We confess and believe that marriage is an ordinance of God, as we read. Gen. 2: 24. One man and one woman joining together in the name of the Lord in the holy church. I Cor. 7: 2. For this cause shall a man, leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one, flesh. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. Matt. 19: 5, 6. For marriage is honourable to all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge, Heb. 13: 4.

10. We believe and confess that magistrates are set and ordained of God, Wisd. 6: 4, Sirach 17: 18, Rom. 13: 1, to punish the evil, and to protect the good; which magistracy we from our hearts desire to obey, as it is written in the first of Peter, 2: 13, Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the, Lord's sake. For he beareth not the sword in vain, Rom. 13: 4. And Paul teaches us that we should offer up for all, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks for all kings and magistrates; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires that all men, should be saved, I Tim. 2: 1, 2, 3, 4. He further teaches us to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, and to be ready to every good work. Pet. 3: 1. Therefore we pray your majesty kindly to understand aright our meaning; which is, that we do not despise the eminent, noble, and gracious queen, and her wise councils, but esteem them as worthy of all honor, to whom we desire to be obedient in all things that we may. For we confess with Paul, as above, that she is

God's servant, and that if we resist this power, we resist the ordinance of God; for rulers are not a terror to good works but to the evil. Therefore we confess to be due unto her, and are ready to give, tribute, custom, honor, and fear, as Christ himself has taught us, saying. Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and God the things that are God's. Since, therefore, she is a servant God, we will kindly pray her majesty, that it would please her to show pity to us poor prisoners, even as our Father in heaven is pitiful Luke 6: 36. We likewise do not approve of those who resist the magistrates; but confess and declare with our whole heart that we must be obedient and subject unto them, as we have here set down.

11. Further, if any should ask us, why we will not swear an oath? We answer, that we have not liberty in our consciences to do this, since it is written in Matt. 5: 33, that Christ said, Ye have heard that it hath been, said of them of old time. Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shall perform unto the Lord thine oaths; but I say unto, you. Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shall thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be. Yea, yea; Nay, nay! for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. Thus also the apostle James teaches in the fifth chapter, saying. Above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea he yea; and your nay, nay. For these reasons we will not, we dare not, swear.

12. We believe in the resurrection of the dead, as it is written, Isaiah 26: 19, John 11: 25, Dan. 12: 2, John 15: 25, in the first epistle to the Corinthians, 15: 22, I Thess. 4: 16. That we shall rise from the dead in our own bodies. Job 19: 25, Isaiah 26: 19, I Cor. 15. When the Lord shall come in the clouds with his angels, then shall each one be judged according to his works; Matt. 25: 34, Rom. 2: 6.

13. We believe all that is contained both in the Old and in the New Testaments.

And now we poor prisoners humbly pray, that wherein we may have misbehaved towards her majesty or her subjects, it may be forgiven, that mercy may be shown to us even as our Father in heaven is merciful; for we are a poor and lowly people, of little knowledge and understanding, and it is our sorrow that we are not able to write more courteously. Therefore we pray your highness, that your majesty will receive graciously this our simple confession. We commend your royal majesty to the Lord; Acts 20: 32. The Lord be with you and us. Amen.

In our prison in London, the 21st of July, in the year of our Lord, 1575.

By me, HENDRIK TERWOORT.

By me, JAN PIETERS.

These men never received the mercy they pleaded for, but were executed.

Appendix 1

Ancient Churches of the Second Century

What you are about to read is unedited and not formally organized, but it is put forth as the records have come down to us today. We stand as observers of the progression of truth and error. In this century the seeds of error were planted; they sprouted and produced the most terrible, wretched fruit of man's carnal nature. What was meant to ennoble man was made into a pitiless religion seething with every crime imaginable.

The historian Armitage wrote, "At the close of the First Century, Christianity strands in its ideal beauty, fresh from Christ, full of new life given by the Holy Spirit, and in the pure mold which inspired Apostles had formed, without one defect from the touch of human governments. It looked like a frail craft tossed on a stormy sea, though freighted with all the wealth of heaven, it was the first beam from the Morning Star, making its way out of infinite solitudes as fleetly and softly as the Dove of Jordan. Jesus had come in the Augustan Age, had uttered every word which man needed to hear, and finished every deed needed for his salvation. Yet this new scepter, swayed over the human spirit, was never to be broken. The century opened with the cries of the Bethlehem babe, and closed with the Man of Sorrows on his throne, in the heaven of heavens. To the Far East he had become the Day-spring, to the far West the Rising Sun." Thus was the beginning of Christianity and the Church.

Armitage also observed: (pgs 118-9, Vol. 1)

> "When our Lord appropriated this secular word (ecclesia) to a sacred body, he threw no sacred meaning into the term itself, but retained it in its common application. The popular 'Ecclesia,' in a free Greek city, was formed of those who were selected or called out, under the laws of citizenship for the transaction of public business. Those qualified voters were convoked by the common criers, and formed the legal assembly for deliberation and decision in civic affairs, and their solemn decisions were binding. Of all the Greek terms which designated a calm and deliberative convocation, this was the most appropriate to characterize a body of Christians, charged by their Master with concerns of vast moment. Other words would have carried with them the idea of a crowd, of a show, or of a purely governmental assembly, such as the Senate; having other elements than that merely of a properly organized assembly."
>
> "Consequently, when Jesus is called the Founder, the Head, the Redeemer of his 'Ecclesia,' it is clearly meant, that what he is to one Christian congregation he is to

> all such congregations, the same severally and collectively. Exactly the same collective figure is used of a single Christian assembly, which is made up of many individuals. It 'is one body,' putting the one for many, because each congregation is 'the flock,' the 'family,' the 'household' of Christ, and what is true of each such assembly is equally true of all. It follows, then, that the New Testament nowhere speaks of the 'Universal,' 'Catholic,' or 'Invisible Church,' as indicating a merely ideal existence, separated from a real and local body. There can be no distinction between the (universal) Church and the members who constitute the Church. Such a generalization is mere ideality, incapable of organization under laws, doctrines, ordinances, and discipline. No man can be a member of such a body, because it can assume no responsibility either to God or man; it can have no representation, and no man can be a member of an assembly, which it is impossible to represent. Everywhere, the Scripture 'Ecclesia' is a tangible body, numbering so many by count, properly local and organized, and each congregation is as absolutely a Church as if there were not another on earth. But as there are more than one, and each is his 'body,' his 'flock;' his Church is made up of every congregation, because he is equally the 'Head,' and 'Shepard' in each."

At the beginning the name Christian was first attached to the Church. Those who knew them called them Christian Assemblies. Soon the term catholic was used as an adjective of the Church. We understand the term as universal, but in what sense did they apply the word? Certainly it was not in the sense which is used today in the Roman Church. It is hardly likely they meant it to indicate a singular body of Christ with all the redeemed in it, for there is no indication that they thought of the Church as being anything other than local, independent multiple bodies. Even if they had thought of the Church as a singular invisible assembly, why would they feel the need to identify themselves as such? There was in the early centuries no competition of denominations, which would cause an identification to distinguish it from others. They were all very much the same. Robinson explains the term catholic in his chapter of the Rome Church. (See Ecclesiastical Researches Rome Church Pg. 123). "There was among primitive Christians an uniform belief that Jesus was the Christ, and a perfect harmony of affection. When congregations multiplied so that they became too numerous to assemble in one place they parted into separate companies, and to again and again, but there was no schism; on the contrary all held a common union, and a member of one company was a member of all. If any person removed from one place to reside at another, he received a letter of attestation, which was given and taken as proof, and this custom very prudently precluded the intrusion of impostors. In this manner was framed a catholic or universal church. One company never pretended to inspect the affairs of another, nor was there any dominion or shadow of dominion over the consciences of any individuals. Overt acts were the only objects of censure, and censure was nothing but voting a man out of the community." By the time of Novatian in the third century "catholic" was in common usage with the first association of Roman Catholicism.

Montantists

The first known "collective body" of churches was the Montanists. However the Montanists called themselves "Spirituals," to set themselves apart from lax churches, which they denounced as carnal. This occurred at the close of the second century, and into the third century.

In the second century two heresies were gaining a strong foothold: baptismal regeneration (salvation by baptism), and the elevation or veneration of the office of Bishop. This new doctrine was gaining more and more acceptance among the churches. Where baptism was once an outward sign of salvation it now became the "seal" of salvation. The making of the sign of the cross was added to baptismal ceremonies, and it became a habit of general use. The increased power of the bishops at this time was limited to the local congregation and not yet over territories.

A more serious problem was not that of doctrine, but of the failure of churches to exercise discipline. Where discipline is kept and correctly applied, neither heresies nor usurping bishops would be allowed to continue. Nor would tolerance of misconduct of members be accepted. More and more churches were turning a blind eye to immorality among their members. The love of many waxed cold, their religion became nominal, and corruption began to creep into both doctrine and practice. This toleration of sin led to the unavoidable result of churches falling into impurity. It appears that in pursuit of increasing their influence in the world and the Roman Empire, they felt that an increase in their numbers would make them a factor to be respected rather than persecuted. Hence, the demand for true repentance and loyalty to Christ was eased.

Armitage estimated that at the opening of this century, from two to three hundred churches had been gathered, some of them thousands of miles apart (Armitage, vol. 1, pg. 155). Robinson estimated there were approximately one thousand. These churches were full of missionary energy. By A. D. 180 the gospel had reached all the provinces of the Empire, from Britain to the Tigris, and from the Danube to the Libyan Desert, in many cases including the learned and rich (pg 167).

Toward the close of this century bishops of churches in Greece and Asia began to meet in the Spring and Autumn to frame canons for general observance. They began to speak of the Lord's Supper as an "offering," a "sacrifice," of the Table an "altar," and the administrator as a "priest."

The conditions are as follows. At this time every church was independent, free from all interference of external ecclesiastical influences or domination. These churches had fellowship through one bond only, that of mutual love. However, because of heresies and impurity infesting many churches, men such as Montanus and Tertullian took a public stance against them and their

adopted errors. There existed a tragic invasion of Paganism, Judaism, superstition, human philosophy, and heretical Christianity into the bodies of Christ. Both Montanus and Tertullian came to reject the baptism of these questionable churches, and thus, they practice re-baptizing. By this they were the first recorded "Anabaptist." It seems that initially only two churches were involved, the church at Carthage and the church at Phrygia. Other churches rapidly identified with them to varying degrees. Tertullian and his small group eventually aligned themselves with the Montanists.

A word of caution needs to be expressed against coming to hasty, unwarranted conclusions. First, it should not be assumed that all churches at that time belonged to either one of these two groups; they did not. Many stood apart from them, guarding their independence. The second error to avoid is to conclude that all in either camp were in total agreement, or there was a uniformity of belief without variance.

Tertullian and a minority of people withdrew from the church at Carthage. As the corruptions which were steadily undermining the standing of the churches increased, Tertullian denied to them the claim of being true Christian Churches. He appealed for equality among presbyters or elders against the growing arrogance of the metropolitan pastors. He pled for the purity of the church and the rejection of all un-regenerated persons. He joined the now numerous sect of the Montanists and finally proclaimed with them that the one immersion "can relate only to us who know and call on the true God and Christ. The heretics have not this God and Christ. These words, therefore, can not be applied to them, and as they do not rightly administer the ordinance, their baptism is the same as none." [-S. F. Ford, pgs 90, 91]

There were problems with Montanus and his immediate followers. Around the year 170, he (Montanus) began to proclaim to his fellow believers that he was a prophet – that, indeed, he was the mouthpiece of that Spirit which the Lord had promised to the church as the one who would "Teach . . . all things" and "guide you into all truth." He pushed the doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit so far, as to claim that men and women are as directly under special inspiration of the Spirit as were the Apostles themselves. For this reason women as well as men were pastors in the Montanists Churches.

Others have given opinion that these charges are probably overstatements based on misinterpreted facts. Montanus never claimed to be the Holy Spirit but rather a proclaimer of the truth. However, the substance of the charge of ecstasy, of women teachers and pastors, and apostolic prophesying is a matter of record.

Even though there were these irregularities with Montanus it does not hold that all the churches, which identified with his name, accepted them. This can be seen by the addition of Tertullian to the Montanists. He held none of the faults of Montanus. The joining was not with

the man Montanus and his personal conduct, but rather what he opposed and stood in favor of. At no time has it been thought that either Montanus or Tertullian were creating a New Church, but they took their position to keep pure what had been received from the Apostolic Church.

The reasons for the movement are described as follows:

> "The enthusiasm for a life of holiness and separation from the world no longer swayed the minds. The issue before the church was should the church take the decisive step into the world; conform to its customs, and acknowledge as far as possible its authorities? Or ought she, on the other hand, to remain a society of religious devotees, separated and shut out from the world? Many churches opted for the world. But believers of the old school protested in the name of the Gospel against such secular (anti-spiritual) Churches. There in Phrygia, the cry for a strict Christian life was reinforced by the belief in a new and final outpouring of the Spirit . . . Such is, in brief, the position occupied by Montanism in the history of the ancient church." (*The Church an Exhaustive Study*. Clover 173,174)

The cry from the Montanists was that sinners must be excluded from the church that, as the pure bride of Christ, she might prepare to receive the bridegroom. They held that the pure local Church, to the exclusion of all others, was the bride of Christ. They saw neither a universal church nor a universal bride.

The Montanist churches were widely scattered, and some say they lasted until the eighth century. Further, it is believed that they eventually came into contact with the Paulicians. Moreover, it is believed that the Novatians and Donatists churches had Montanists churches within their ranks.

Thus is seen the reason and the need for the first major split in the church. In truth, the split was away from the doctrines and principles of the New Testament, rather than from any group; it was the secularly inclined churches departing from Godly principles, which caused the rift (Clover 174). These liberal churches were the splinter group away from the mainstream orthodox churches.

The membership of the "Secular Church" increased dramatically, and within a few centuries it was in the majority of Christianity. This was not unexpected since demands for moral conduct were eased, and sin was becoming ever more accepted. This led to the infiltration of unconverted and uncommitted men, who were exposed in their hypocrisy in the following Pagan persecutions. Consider the attractiveness of such a church. To gain membership only a token confession of faith was asked with little evidence of repentance, and lo, baptism was granted by which eternal life was given. No serious demand was made of holiness and only the grossest of

sins would exclude one from the church. Not even the insistence of abandoning of paganism and loyalty to Christ was made. The sinner could now have his cake and eat it, too. It can be seen, that to such un-regenerated men, they had all religious bases covered.

Appendix 2

Bibliography

I suppose bibliography is not technically correct for this is a list of reference material. Not all these books have been quoted as references in this work. However, in my research I found these books and pamphlets useful, and history students might appreciate this listing. Some authors are not sympathetic to the Baptists, and many do not support church succession, but contain good historical records.

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

Were Baptists born out of the Protestant Reformation, or do their roots reach deeper into the history of New Testament churches? Wm. F. Bekgaard examines that question through a wide-ranging study of Scripture, church identity, baptism, succession, historical testimony, and dissenting movements.

Beginning with the nature and definition of the church, this volume evaluates universal-visible, universal-invisible, and local-visible views before tracing Baptist and Anabaptist history. Bekgaard weighs competing claims, challenges familiar assumptions, and repeatedly returns to biblical evidence.

Written for readers who value both doctrinal conviction and historical inquiry, this work presents a substantial defense of the continuity and distinct identity of New Testament Baptists.

WM. F. BEKGAARD

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