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# RESTORATION QUARTERLY

STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN SCHOLARSHIP

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## Special Issue on the Church

### The Editor

The churches of Christ have a great message for Christendom. They are carrying on the great plea of the 19th century Restoration of Stone, Scott, the Campbells, *et al.*, for the unity of the church through the restoration of the New Testament church.

The present Quarterly is not a full and systematic discussion of that idea, but it presents studies tending to support the validity of the plea. Especially does it deal with some basic questions about the origin of the church and the possibility of identifying the essential features of the apostolic church. It presents material to show how the church became apostate through the centuries and to point the way toward restoring the original church.

We believe that the Gospel of Christ is not an ideology, arising out of the concepts of the environment of the first century, but that it was founded by a saviour Jesus Christ, who conceived of himself as the founder of the church and of that church as the fulfillment of the expectations of the Old Covenant. The early apostolic church was the product of the representatives chosen by Jesus for the very work of establishing and building up that church. Its essential unity as the saved body of Christ constituted of baptized believers in whom the Spirit dwells is the main feature of the apostolic epistles and its final triumph the prediction of the apocalypse.

It is not obscurantism to believe that the New Testament is God's word. To be sure, that Testament was developed in the church, but through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Since these Scriptures are our Divine witness to the truth, they ought to be considered the final and complete revelation of God with respect to the church which is His body. They are the complete and final source of authority for the people of God.

Once this is accepted, there is a recognizable pattern of doctrine, organization, worship, and fellowship for the church.

The plea of the 19th century Reformers was that by restoring each local congregation to that original the unity which was the "essential, intentional, and constitutional" condition of the original church could be achieved. They recognized that to achieve this denominational creeds, names, organizations must be abandoned, since such control mechanisms of denominationalism are what stand in the way of unity. The pioneer work such as the O'Kelly-Elias Smith-Abner Jones (Christian Connection) movement; the Barton Stone work of Kentucky; and the Campbell movement of Pa.-Va.-Ohio of the late 18th and early 19th centuries needs to be studied anew. The O'Kelly-Jones movement first adopted a platform of

non-denominational Christianity with Christ as the only head of the church; the name Christian as the only name; and the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice. The Stone churches withdrew from Presbyterianism because they could not agree upon credal statements and formed their own synod only to dissolve it that they might "sink into union with the Body of Christ at large." The Campbellian churches joined the Mahoning Association only in turn to lead these churches to dissolve their association and leave themselves as free and independent churches of Christ. The step from there to the union and fellowship of parts of all these groups was only a short one; it consisted of the recognition that a common belief and practice made fellowship possible.

Present churches of Christ (including some million and a half in many countries of the world) are the rightful heirs of this work. They still insist, in spite of some difficulty in their own midst of recognizing the limitations of the pattern, that they are living proof that undenominational congregations of New Testament Christians are possible in an age of divided sects.

The editor regrets that a timely article by Pat Harrell on the Anabaptists, an early Protestant group with a plea for a return to the N. T. pattern, had to be omitted for lack of space. It will appear in a subsequent issue. Also an article on Jesus and the Church by the editor had to be omitted and will appear in a later number.

## Background—

### The Associations of the Graeco-Roman World

R. L. Johnston, Jr.

The church came into being in a climate of clubs and associations. "Probably no age, not even our own," writes Samuel Dill concerning the early Roman Empire, "ever felt a greater craving for some form of social life, wider than the family, and narrower than the State."<sup>1</sup> This feeling had been developing among the Greeks and Romans and even in the Hellenistic kingdoms, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia, over a long period of time. The beginning among the Greeks was very early. Gaius in his *Digesta* (XLVII. 22.4) quotes a law of Solon which recognized voluntary associations as legal and made their regulations binding upon their members where there was no violation of the laws of the State. Thucydides writes of political associations, apparently vicious, self-seeking and violent, in connection with revolutionary activities during the Peloponnesian Wars (III.82). Later he mentions similar organizations as instruments in the overthrow of the Athenian democracy (VIII. 54.4, 65). The records, almost entirely epigraphical, of societies of the Greeks date from the fourth century B.C. when inscriptions of associations of *orgeones* restricted to citizens appear in Athens.<sup>2</sup> The name suggests an urgency or excitement which must be associated here with religious feeling. Later in the same century, associations of *thiasotai*, members of a religious guild, are seen. These were mainly for aliens, at times becoming national clubs for the worship of national deities. Although they were primarily religious in character, they were secondarily social organizations as well.<sup>3</sup> In the middle of the third century, an increased emphasis on the social and economic aspects of life led to the formation of clubs of *eranistai*. The term denotes the participants in a common meal to which each person contributed his share. The association is still of a religious nature, but worship is subordinate to social and economic interests.<sup>4</sup> At length the religious element is virtually dropped and *synodoi* or synods, according to Tod "purely secular" in character, are found in Athens.<sup>5</sup> It is generally felt that the religious character of the societies remained at least incidentally a part of their make-up.

Among the Romans the *sodalitia*, associations for religious and social comradeship, and *collegia*, colleagueships, are reported to have existed at least as early as Numa. Plutarch attributes the formation of the trade guilds to that legendary king:

Of his other political measures, that which is most admired is his division of the populace according to their trades. . . . His division was according to their trades, and consisted of the

musicians, the goldsmiths, the builders, the dyers, the shoemakers, the carriers, the coppersmiths, and the potters.<sup>6</sup>

The evidence for the associations among the Romans as among the Greeks is to be found in inscriptions of which there are many. "The bulk of the evidence belongs to times later than Cæsar, Cicero, and Virgil, but conditions," according to Showerman, "were different only in degree, and not greatly different in that."<sup>7</sup> Societies under the early Republic enjoyed complete freedom. They could be limited, of course, but the only early example of such limitation is the outlawing of the associations of the Bacchanals, worshippers of Dionysus, in 186 B.C. on grounds of immorality. Even then the worship of Dionysus under official supervision was permitted.<sup>8</sup> In the later Republic the societies, now considered to be dangerous to public peace, were repressed by law in 64 B.C., but were revived again for political reasons in 58 B.C.<sup>9</sup> Julius and Augustus abolished the right of association except for societies of ancient standing and those of religious character, together with the burial societies.<sup>10</sup> The latter became a cover under which many kinds of associations existed. Generally, however, in the period of the Empire associations were regarded as politically dangerous. For example, Trajan denied a request of Pliny that an association of firemen be formed to guard Nicomedia against fire, writing, "Whatever title we give them, and whatever our object in giving it, men who are banded together for a common end will all the same become a political association before long."<sup>11</sup> Mary Johnston observes that "Government opposition to Christianity was due in large part to the fear that Christian organizations were, or might become, political in character."<sup>12</sup>

The tendency toward the formation of associations in the Hellenistic kingdoms is most marked in Egypt. They existed among foreigners in Pre-Ptolemaic times but attained prominence and importance under the Ptolemies. Self-governing *poleis*, cities, were organized "by the will and decision of the king" for the foreigners where they lived in groups. Those not so organized were encouraged to form *koina*, private associations, possessing a certain degree of self-government. There were also *gymnasia* or schools with gymnasia associations privileged by the king to own property such as money, buildings, furniture and land. For these, Rostovtzeff observes, "the gymnasia were not only schools. They were also the centre of their own intellectual and creative activities, which were essentially Greek. The gymnasium played in their lives the part of a permanent clubhouse: it was their main social centre."<sup>13</sup> "In the *chora* the Greeks lived, not in cities, but scattered over native towns and villages. It was natural, in these circumstances, that they should create for themselves various substitutes for city life, among which were the private religious and social associations."<sup>14</sup> There is less information about such organizations in the kingdoms of Syria,

Mesopotamia, and Palestine. Only the gymnasia are known to have existed there. In these lands, however, the Greeks lived in cities with full rights of citizenship.<sup>15</sup>

These ancient associations extended throughout the entire Greek and Roman world and cover a period of seven centuries from the fourth century B.C. to the third century A.D. Yet they were almost entirely local.<sup>16</sup> A few extended over an island or a province: only one, the Dionysiac Artists of which the actor members were continually moving about, became a culture-wide organization with headquarters in Rome and affiliated branches throughout the Empire.<sup>17</sup> "The Christian communities were exceptional in the closeness of their interrelation with each other. The membership of the majority of the collegia, even of those which were primarily religious, was purely local."<sup>18</sup>

The development of the associations is attributed to religious, social and economic needs. Tod points out that during the classical period a man belonged to a phratry, a deme, a tribe, and a state. Each of these had its meetings and festivals which satisfied his religious aspirations to a certain extent and gave him opportunity for fellowship. Inasmuch as he had a sense of belonging, there was no need for voluntary associations. With the growth of the empires, however, and the cosmopolitanism which accompanied it, men lost their political ideals and their civic enthusiasm: there was created a need for the fellowship and sense of mutuality which the clubs could offer.<sup>19</sup> Of the Roman Empire Dill observes, "In the blank wilderness, created by a universal despotism, the craving for sympathy and mutual succour inspired a great social movement, which legislation was powerless to check."<sup>20</sup> But the desire for religious fellowship and common worship contributed even more to the development of voluntary societies.<sup>21</sup> Illustrative of the fulfillment of this need are the mystery religions, especially the Eleusinia. "The assurance of the hope of the Eleusinian votary was obtained by the feeling of friendship and mystic sympathy, established by the mystic contact, with . . . the power of life after death," says one author.<sup>22</sup> Another writer asserts that "the whole system of mysteries endured to the very end of pagan times, for the deeper meaning of its symbolism offered a certain satisfaction even to the religious requirements of the educated, which they failed to find in the empty forms of ordinary worship."<sup>23</sup> A third aspect of the development of societies, at least in the case of the guilds, was that of economic need. Tod believes that the guilds developed when the head of the family began to accept apprentices and teach them the secrets of his trade for money.<sup>24</sup> Of these factors the latter is the least significant and the weightiest is the matter of religious need.

Just as the societies developed as the result of religious and social need, so were their purposes and their functions religious and social.

Nor were the two sharply distinguished. Even the trade guilds existed primarily for religious and social purposes. "The trade guilds of antiquity were primarily, or even exclusively, religious and social, and did not normally seek to regulate or modify the conditions under which industry was carried on."<sup>25</sup> The unions of tradesmen, in which nearly every trade was represented, did not have purposes which characterize modern labor organizations. Though some societies were named after their localities and others were named after some person prominent in connection with them, many had names which indicate their prevailing religious character, for example the *Apollonistai*, the *Dionysistai* or the *Heracleistai*. Still others showed a religious nature by prefixing the epithet "holy" or "most holy" to the name of the association.<sup>26</sup> Some associations existed for the purpose, whether it was primary or an additional advantage, of providing proper burial and commemoration for their members. In this connection Halliday writes:

Characteristic are the burial clubs, the primary function of which was to provide members at death with a decent funeral, rescuing them from the common pit into which the bodies of the destitute were cast, and at the same time to afford the living members periodic opportunities for social reunion. At these meetings of the living the memory of the dead was kept alive, a form of vicarious immortality to which pagan sentiment attached a pathetic importance.<sup>27</sup>

But most important in the daily lives of the members was the social aspect of the clubs. "In truth, the great object of association among these humble people appears to have been . . . the cheerfulness of intercourse, the promotion of fellowship and good will, the relief of the dullness of humdrum lives."<sup>28</sup> The chief function of all guilds was the common dinner, and Reid observes that "the 'calendar of dinners' (*ordo cenarum*) was a serious document in every college."<sup>29</sup>

The benefits which the societies offered to their members were very real ones. First of all there was the experience of common worship ranging from the libations before the common meal to participation in the secret rituals of the mysteries. Next, and perhaps most satisfying, was the occasion for social intercourse. The monthly dinners, the holy days observed and the various anniversaries kept by the society were occasions of fellowship and mutuality very important to its members. Moreover, social distinctions were forgotten for the most part, and a man might attain prominence and hold office in his association. "Thus the socially down-trodden might experience a certain social importance, and this, however lowly might be the company in which it was exercised, gratified a need of self-respect. Here was the real social merit of these institutions."<sup>30</sup> Many associations provided burial benefits for their members. These might consist in cash payments to defer funeral expenses, in conducting the details of the funeral through a committee appointed for that purpose, or in actually providing the place of burial in an as-

sociation columbarium. In addition to these, certain societies enjoyed specific privileges. The Association of Worshipers of the Muses in Alexandria enjoyed exemption from public burdens, board and lodging at public expense and a certain stipend.<sup>31</sup> Military clubs were strictly forbidden, but the restrictions were relaxed in the cases of officers and of highly skilled corps. These were burial clubs, but their primary benefit was insurance against the principal risks and occasions of expenditure for soldiers.<sup>32</sup> The Koinon of Greeks in Asia was granted military exemption, freedom from public burdens and other immunities at the request of Anthony.<sup>33</sup> Benevolences appear to have been rare. The tailors at Thyatira, however, provided lodging places for strangers in the name of the Cæsars.<sup>34</sup> Halliday notes that "Charitable funds of this kind were a creation of the Christian communities and as Tertullian rightly claims, a real difference distinguishes the common funds of Christian from those of pagan societies."<sup>35</sup>

Into such an environment, then, came the new church, not so much a stranger as one might suppose. Its meetings were called by a name used by other religious associations to designate their meetings. The custom of mutual contribution to the treasuries of societies had prepared the people for a similar contribution to the church. It is possible that the institution of patronage, one of the chief sources of support for the various associations, found its expression among the wealthy of the church as well. This would not have been intended to purchase the regard and support of members of the church as the patronage of the associations sought to buy their influence, but a Philemon would find in the custom a suggestion for liberality and open his home to a church and his resources to the poor. The common meal corresponded to the *agape* or love feast of Christians. The organization of a church was not greatly different from that of an association. In fact, Hatch believes that the concentration of the power of the eldership into the hands of a single bishop grew out of the management of the funds of the church in very much the same way that the funds of the associations were managed.<sup>36</sup> As a religious association, therefore, the church was acceptable to men throughout the Empire.

Several factors influenced its acceptance among those who had manifested in their history a readiness to receive new religions through their associations before they were accepted officially by the state. First of all the church offered men an opportunity to give expression to their religious instincts in a highly moral way and with a hope superior even to that of the mysteries. Secondly, there was the social aspect: the church was open, as the associations had been, to all classes of society. The faith alone was the basis for association, however, and the church was broader in this respect than the Greek and Roman societies before it had been. Men

found fellowship, sympathy and mutuality within the church regardless of their social stations. But most important is the awareness of significance which came to men through Christianity. This was not a significance gained through office holding and the recognition of one's fellows, but a significance in the eyes of God, a reason for being that gave purpose to life. In these ways the needs which caused men to band themselves together in associations found their fulfillment in the new church.

<sup>1</sup>Samuel Dill, *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius* (London: Macmillan and Co. Limited, 1919), p. 267.

<sup>2</sup>Marcus N. Tod, *Sidelights on Greek History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1932), p. 74.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>*Life of Numa*, XVII.

<sup>7</sup>Grant Showerman, *Rome and the Romans* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931), p. 245.

<sup>8</sup>A. E. R. Boak, *A History of Rome to 565 A.D.* (fourth edition; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), p. 167.

<sup>9</sup>Dill, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 254-255.

<sup>11</sup>Pliny, *Letters*, X.34.

<sup>12</sup>Mary Johnston, *The Private Life of the Romans*, (New York: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1932), p. 346, footnote 1.

<sup>13</sup>M. Rostovtzeff, *The Social & Economic History of the Hellenistic World* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1941), II, 1059.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1064.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, *passim*.

<sup>16</sup>Tod, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

<sup>17</sup>W. R. Halliday, *The Pagan Background of Early Christianity* (Liverpool: The University Press of Liverpool, Ltd., 1925), p. 59.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>19</sup>Tod, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-74.

<sup>20</sup>Dill, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

<sup>21</sup>Tod, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>22</sup>L. R. Farnell and H. J. Rose, "Mystery," *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* (14th ed.), XVI, 48.

<sup>23</sup>Oskar Seyffert, "Mysteries," *Dictionary of Classical Antiquities* (Revised and edited by Henry Nettleship and J. E. Sandys; New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1956), p. 410.

<sup>24</sup>Tod, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 75-77.

<sup>27</sup>Halliday, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

<sup>28</sup>Dill, *op. cit.*, pp. 266-267.

<sup>29</sup>James S. Reid, *The Municipalities of the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1913), pp. 517-518.

<sup>30</sup>Halliday, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-62.

<sup>31</sup>Rostovtzeff, *op. cit.*, III, 1596.

<sup>32</sup>Dill, *op. cit.*, pp. 283-284.

<sup>33</sup>Rostovtzeff, *op. cit.*, II, 1005-1006.

<sup>34</sup>Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 518.

<sup>35</sup>Halliday, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>36</sup>Edwin Hatch, *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches* (London: Rivingtons, 1882), pp. 36ff.

# The Jewish Background of the Church

Jack P. Lewis

The Jewish background of the church will be considered in this paper firstly from lexical contributions; secondly from the contributions of selected doctrinal concepts; and thirdly from the contributions of institutions.

## I. The Lexical Background of *Ekklesia*.<sup>1</sup>

Already prior to the choice of the word *ekklesia*, or its equivalent in Aramaic, by Jesus to designate his people (Mt. 16:18; 18:17),<sup>2</sup> the word which to the Greek connoted an assembly regardless of its purpose,<sup>3</sup> had a religious history. The LXX translators had chosen *ekklesia* primarily to render *qahal* in about one hundred cases. The choice is probably due to the tendency of the translators to choose a Greek word with a like sound and etymology to the Hebrew word.<sup>4</sup> Neither *qahal* nor *ekklesia* occur in the plural in the O. T. except for Ps. 25[26]12 and 67[68]26 where *ekklesia* is plural. Only in four instances does *ekklesia* render another word than *qahal*: 1 Sam. 19:20; Neh. 5:7; Ps. 26:12; 68:27; but in the latter three of these it renders a word from the same root as *qahal*.

However the LXX translators did not feel the need of absolute uniformity in the rendering of a word, therefore *qahal* is at times also rendered *sunagogue*. This is particularly observable in the first four books of Moses where *ekklesia* was not used by them at all. In sixteen instances in the later books of the Bible *sunagogue* renders *qahal*.

*Sunagogue* was also used by the LXX to render *'edah* which means an assembly regardless of its nature. However, there are some instances in which it seems clearly to designate a religious community.<sup>5</sup>

For all practical purposes, no clear distinction is to be made for the early period between *qahal* and *'edah* or *ekklesia* and *sunagogue*. The people of the Old Testament may be known by either term (cf. Acts 7:38). The Christian people may use either of the Gk. terms as a self-designation.<sup>6</sup> About the middle of the first century A.D., both *qahal* and *'edah* ceased to be used and *Kenneset* takes their place. This term, which does not occur in the O.T., also means a congregation.<sup>7</sup> In due time the Greek Jews came to prefer *sunagogue* and *ekklesia* came to be used less frequently. Burton suggests that *ekklesia* was rejected by Jews because of a desire to distinguish Jewish from secular assemblies. Then in turn Christians, wishing to distinguish themselves from Jewish assemblies, came to reject *sunagogue*.<sup>8</sup> This may have happened, but evidence to establish or disprove is lacking.

Looking more closely, we learn that *qahal* used by itself in the O.T. means an actual assembly or meeting of some kind, which need by no means be a religious assembly.<sup>9</sup> *Qahal* is, however at times, used in connection with a religious assembly. The clearest instances are Deut. 4:10; 9:10; 10:4; and 18:16.

Further defined in a genitive construction, a *qahal* may be of the sons of Israel (Num. 14:5); of Israel (Lev. 16:17; Deut. 31:30; Josh. 8:35; 1 Kings 8:14, 55; 8:22; 12:3; 1 Chron. 13:2; 2 Chron. 6:3, 12, 13); of people (Gen. 28:3; 48:4; Jer. 26:17; Ezek. 23:24; 32:3; Ps. 107:32); of nations (Jer. 50:9; Gen. 35:11); of evil doers (Ps. 26:5); of Judah (2 Chron. 30:25; 2 Chron. 20:5); of people of God (Judges 20:2); a holy congregation (Ps. 89:6); an assembly of faithful (Ps. 149:1); of the dead (Prov. 21:16); of exiles (Ezra 10:8). Or it may be an assembly of the congregation of Israel, in which case *'edah* and *qahal* are both used (Ex. 12:6; Num. 14:5). There are also other uses with personal pronouns, not religious in character.

The phrase *qahal adonai* or its equivalent occurs in seven passages in the O.T. in contexts which designate the religious community of Israel (Num. 16:3; 20:4; 1 Chron. 28:8; Deut. 23:1-9 (6 cases); Neh. 13:1; Lam. 1:10; Micah 2:5). A problem immediately presents itself whether *qahal* thus qualified retains its ordinary meaning of an assembly in which case only a service of worship would be spoken of, or whether it designates the people of God as a whole whether assembled or not. Does *qahal* ever mean a community even though not assembled as we have seen is true of *'edah*? If not, then these passages may antecede such an idea as that of 1 Cor. 11:18 where "church" seems to refer to a worship service; however they would not explain other aspects of the N.T. idea, for no one would contend that the *ekklesia* goes out of existence when the meeting breaks up.<sup>10</sup>

One is tempted to find in the phrase *qahal adonai* the antecedent of the phrase *ekklesia Kuriou* (cf. Acts 20:28; however note that LXX has *sunagogue* in the relevant O.T. passage, Ps. 73[74].2) or the phrase *ekklesia Theou* which occurs nine times in the N.T. But when he turns to the LXX, he discovers that two of the O.T. passages (Num. 16:3; 20:4) are rendered *sunagogue Kuriou*. It is not likely that they would have suggested the phrase to the N.T. writers. While it is true that *ekklesia* is used in the other passages, one is still faced with the question: Do they mean a community, or do they merely mean an assembly?

We are not helped a great deal in this problem by a study of Jewish materials around the N.T. period. The Qumran community used *qahal* very sparingly in the non-Biblical materials that have thus far been published. An examination of the relevant passages reveals that they classify themselves into the familiar groups of O.T. usage,

showing that for this community the word had not assumed a distinctive technical meaning:

1. There are the non-religious usages: The military opposition to the wars of the children of Light is so designated that the congregation of the human is contrasted with the divine (I Q. M. 1:10). There is the throng of Gog (I Q. M. 11:16); the hosts of opposition (I Q. M. 15:10); the hordes of heathen gathered for extermination (I Q. M. 14:5; cf. use in Ezekiel for enemy armies); and the hordes of the wicked (I Q. Thanksgiving Song 2:12).

2. A religious gathering for worship seems indicated in the passage "where men foregather, I will call thee blessed." (I Q. Thanksgiving Song 2:30).

3. There is a doubtful case in the Manual of Discipline (7:20) where *qahal* is stricken out and *msqh* is written above the line.

4. This leaves only two cases demanding more careful consideration: "Assembly of God (*Qehal el*)" is the name on the sixth banner along with names "armies of God" and the "called of God" on the other banners (I Q. M. 4:10). The unclean man may not enter the "congregation of El" (I Q. Sam. 2:4); we assume *elh* is an error for *el*). Closely related to these are cases previously known from the *Cairo Damascus Covenant*: "When the trumpets of the congregation sound" (CDC. 11:22); and a man who profanes the Sabbath shall not come into the congregation for seven years (CDC. 12:6; cf. 15:17; and perhaps 14:18 where the text is defective). In these materials one is still faced with the problem of whether these are worship assemblies or standing designations for the general community. Is there any ground for thinking that an Israel within Israel is intended?

The Greek Jewish writers do not reflect that it had become customary in pre-Christian times to speak dogmatically of the "Church of Israel." Such usage is not to be found in either Philo or Josephus.<sup>11</sup> One reads of a Jewish group, "The assembly," in Jerusalem (I Macc. 14:19), but in other books in the Apocrypha *ekklesia* is clearly used for gatherings other than for worship. Ben Sira used the word twelve times. A few times it is for a group of worshippers (50:13, 20); but elsewhere it is for other gatherings (eg. 26:5; 38:33). It is possible, but not certain that the congregation which declares alms (31:11) may refer to more than to one particular meeting. Of more interest, however, is the phrase "in the congregation" (21:17; 38:33); "in the congregation of the Most High" (24:2) which might well describe a worship meeting to be compared to "in the church" (1 Cor. 11:18).<sup>12</sup>

We conclude then, that *ekklesia* in Judaism may well refer to assemblies for worship and other purposes, but as a designation for a standing community the evidence is not forthcoming. This concept is a contribution of Christianity.

## II. Religious Concepts Forming the Jewish Background of the Church:

The church arose from the bosom of first century Judaism. Its earliest members were Jews. In common with that Judaism the church retained a belief in the one God (cf. Rom. 9:1-6; 3:29); in the O.T. Scriptures (I Cor. 9:10; 10:1ff; 15:3; Rom. 15:4); and in the Messiah. But these and many well known items as well as details of typology we pass over for the present to note only a few important concepts that lie back of the doctrine of the church.

### A. The People of God (Cf. Judg. 5:11).<sup>18</sup>

The doctrine of election in the O.T. serves to explain the paradox that the God and creator of the universe can have a chosen people (Deut. 10:14). Out of all the peoples of the earth, God has chosen (*bahar*) Israel as his own. Two stages are observable in the choice. First he chose Abraham (Neh. 9:7; Ps. 105:5-10, 43); but he has also chosen Israel out of Egypt (Deut. 4:20; Ez. 20:5; Hos. 11:1) to be a special people (Deut. 7:6; 14:2).

The fact of the choice is continuously affirmed, especially in those sections of the Bible dealing with the exile when despair threatened as the people wailed: "We are clean cut off"; or in sections where others said they had been cut off (Isa. 41:8; 44:1, 2; 49:7; Jer. 33:24; cf. Deut. 7:6). The election is set forth in such figures as marriage (Hos. 1-3; Jer. 2:1-7; Ez. 16; 23; Isa. 50:1; 54:5); and in the Father and son relationship (Ex. 4:22; Hos. 11:1). Israel had become God's portion, the apple of His eye (Deut. 32:8ff).

The basis upon which the choice had been made gave the O.T. writers more difficulty. It is denied that Israel was chosen because of her numbers or greatness (Deut. 7:7, 8). Nor was it because of her goodness or merit (Deut. 9:4, 5). The most clear answer is that God chose Israel because God loved the fathers (Deut. 10:15; 4:37); or to keep His promise made to the fathers (Deut. 7:8; 9:5). Elsewhere God chose them for His own sake or the sake of His name (Ps. 106:8); or that he loved Israel with no reason given (Deut. 7:7). God did not choose Israel because he needed her. He was free to reject her (Num. 14:12; Ex. 32:14).

Despite the fact that the choice was not conditioned on past merit, there were conditions for Israel to meet if she were to continue in God's choice. She must choose God (Joshua 24:14-24); she must love God (Deut. 6:5); and she must obey and keep the covenant (Ex. 19:4-6; Deut. 8:6-11). The O.T. does not know the idea of the Apocrypha that the world was created for Israel (Ass. Mos. 1:12; cf. Hermas, *Vis.* 2:4:1). Hers was a place of responsibility. She only had been known of God; and for this reason, in her unfaithfulness, her sin must be visited upon her (Amos 3:2).

The writers of the N.T. adopt the idea of a chosen people from the O.T., but deny that this position is dependent on the flesh. "The

kingdom is taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth fruits thereof (Matt. 21:43)." Israel after the flesh is contrasted with the Israel of God (1 Cor. 10:18; Gal. 6:16). Natural branches were broken off (Rom. 11:17ff). There are those who say they are Jews, but are not (Rev. 2:9; 3:9).

All that Israel had from God, the church has through Christ. They are the sojourners of the dispersion (1 Pet. 1:1); the twelve tribes of the dispersion (Jas. 1:1). The titles of privilege are theirs: a chosen race (1 Pet. 2:9; Isa. 43:20, 21; cf. II Bar. 48.20; IV Ezra 5:23); a royal priesthood (Ex. 19:6; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; a holy nation (Deut. 7:6). For this reason its members are called "saints": Rom. 1:7; 12:13; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 9:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:12; Phile. 5; 1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Thess. 1:10; c. Eph. 2:19; 5:26f; Acts 20:32. The root of the idea is from Ex. 19:6; Deut. 7:6; Ps. 89:7; 106:16; Dan. 7:18; Ps. Sol. 17:18); God's own people (Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6; 1 Pet. 2:9); the flock of God (1 Pet. 5:2); the household of God (1 Pet. 4:17); People of God (Rom. 9:25f); children of God (Rom. 8:16f, 21; 9:7); Sons of God (Gal. 4:6; 2 Cor. 6:18; Rom. 8:14; 19, 29; 9:26). The church is the new Israel, the legitimate heir of the promises of the O.T. (Gal. 6:15-17).<sup>14</sup>

#### B. Covenant:<sup>15</sup>

The word *berith* occurs in the O.T. both for relationships between men and men and for those between God and man. God made covenants in the time of Noah (Gen. 9:8-17) and Abraham (Gen. 17:1-14; Gal. 3:15). But the major covenant is that one made with His chosen at Sinai (cf. Rom. 9:4; Eph. 2:12; Deut. 4:23; 1 Kings 8:21). A *berith* is an agreement made between two parties in which each are mutually bound. The fact that the LXX chose *diatheke* (which may also designate a disposition of property by a will) in 257 times, rather than *suntheke*, should not hide the role of the two parties. A covenant is validated by a ceremony (Gen. 15; Jer. 34:10f). That at Sinai is validated by sprinkling blood on the people and the book (Ex. 24:7). The people agree and respond to the covenant (Deut. 7:7-10). Reduced to its simplest terms, the covenant said, "You shall be to me a people, and I will be God to you" (Ex. 6:7; Lev. 26:12; Deut. 29:12; Jer. 7:23). This gives the world the concept of a people bound together by a common religion rather than by national solidarities or government.<sup>16</sup>

The prophets indict the people for having broken the covenant. In such cases God was no longer bound. The covenant not only had its promises, but also its threats (Jer. 11:6-10). In a sense, in the exile, God renounced the covenant (cf. CDC. 1:1-2:2).

But just at this dark hour, Jeremiah introduced into the picture the idea of a new covenant to be made (Jer. 31:31; Isa. 61:8; Ez. 16:60-63). The Qumran sect, just prior to the Christian period, thought of themselves as the heirs of this new covenant (I Q. S. 1:8, 16, etc.). They were rebuilding the fallen tabernacle of David

(CDC. 7:16ff; cf. 20:13). In reality, however, their new covenant was merely a reaffirmation and reestablishment of the former covenant made at Sinai. It is at precisely this point that they were different from the early church.<sup>17</sup>

The N.T. writers envisioned the church as the heir of the new covenant promise. The cup is the New Covenant in Christ's blood (1 Cor. 11:25; Matt. 26:28). By this blood it is ratified (Heb. 9). Apostles are ministers of a new covenant—a dispensation of the spirit in contrast to that one stone (2 Cor. 3:3ff). The Epistle to the Hebrews twice quotes Jer. 31:31 as fulfilled in Christ. (Heb. 8:8-11; 10:16, 17). The church had not broken faith with God. It was the true heir of the covenant. The new is essentially different from the old in that it is written on the heart; men possess knowledge of divine things; and God is merciful toward sins.

### C. The Remnant.<sup>18</sup>

The idea that only a small portion of the nation may be faithful to God, already to be seen in the Elijah story, is further developed in the prophets. This remnant may be that small portion that escapes the chastisements God sends on the nation as a whole—the legs and piece of an ear saved from the lion (Amos 3:12); or the brand plucked from burning (Amos 4:11). It is this group that is implied in the often used phrase: “the saved remnant”; for it is left over after the calamity (Isa. 6:13; 1:9; Micah 2:12ff; 5:7ff; Ez. 9:8). It may be no more than the few comparable to a few berries in the uppermost bough (Isa. 17:6).

It is particularly in Isaiah that the doctrine is elaborated (Is. 1:9; 4:3; 7:3; 8:18; 10:20ff; 17:4ff; 28:5; 37:31f). Isaiah named his son, “A Remnant Shall Return” (Isa. 7:3). It would seem that Isaiah and his disciples formed that remnant in his day (Isa. 8:16-17). The remnant would repent, return to God, and survive the coming calamity (Is. 10:20-24). It forms the seed of the new community (Isa. 8:16-18). It may be looked upon as a purified and holy group (Isa. 4:3-5).

The remnant idea may also take the form of a “saving remnant”—the one man who would save Jerusalem (Jer. 5:1); or the ten who could save Sodom (Gen. 18:32). Considered in the light of O.T. events, the remnant is to be gathered out of exile (Jer. 32:3f). Jeremiah had already identified the exiles with the good figs—the hope of the nation—in his parable (Jer. 24:1). When this group has been brought out of their graves (the exile), then they will know that God has spoken (Ez. 37:12-14); thus they carry a knowledge of God's will to a coming generation (cf. Isa. 8:16f). The term remnant is applied to the post exilic community by Haggai and Ezra (Hag. 1:12; 2:2; Ezra 9:8, 15).

The tendency in later writings is to make the survivors a righteous group. The wicked of the nation have been destroyed (Mal. 3:16, 17; 4:1-2). This idea is particularly carried forward in apocryphal literature (Ps. Sol. 17:23ff; I Enoch 62:7-8; 14-16). The Damascus sect felt themselves to be that remnant (CDC. 1:5; 3:13).<sup>19</sup>

The remnant idea makes it possible in the N.T. to distinguish between Israel and the righteous portion of it (Rom. 9:6). To establish this doctrine, Paul appeals to Isa. 10:22 (cf. Rom. 9:27) and to Isa. 1:9 (cf. Rom. 9:29). In these passages from Paul the remnant is made up of those few Jews who believe (Rom. 11:4ff). Does Paul identify the church, irrespective of nationality, with the remnant? Justin Martyr clearly made this identification (Dial. 32; 120), and called the church "Israel" (Dial. 135). Paul's phrase, "He is a Jew who is one inwardly" (Rom. 2:28); and "born according to the spirit" (Gal. 4:29); and "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16) would seem to make such an identification.<sup>20</sup> Thus the church is continuous with True Israel, but different from disobedient Israel. It is the faithful community to whom the promise has been given.

#### D. The Mission of Israel.<sup>21</sup>

Israel was chosen to be the vehicle through which all nations might be blessed in Abraham (Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). Her choice was an election to service, especially to love and worship God (Ex. 4:22; Deut. 7:9-16).

In the later books of the O.T. the ideal is held forth that God should be king over all the earth (Zech. 14:9); and that his worship should be over all the earth (Mal. 1:11). But it is in Isaiah that we see the mission of Israel most clearly. She is to be a "light to the nations" (Isa. 42:6; 49:6). She is a witness to the accomplishment of the prophecies of God; whereas idols have no witnesses that they can do either good or evil (Isa. 44:8). Through Israel nations come to know God (Isa. 45:6). Israel was to set forth God's praise (Isa. 44:1, 2; 49:6-7). She makes God's salvation known to the ends of the earth (Is. 49:3-9; 42:6-7).

These ideas of universalism are carried forward in the non-canonical literature. God's name will be great in every place of Israel and among the Gentiles (T. Dan. 6:7; cf. T. Levi 2:11; T. Sim. 6:5; T. Naph. 4:5;). The Son of Man is to be a light to the Gentiles (I Enoch 10:21; 48:4).

We are not surprised then, when Paul lists as first of the advantages of the Jews that they were entrusted with the oracles of God (Rom. 3:2); on the other hand, it is just this work of missionary endeavour that is assigned to the church in the N.T. God's manifold wisdom is to be made known through the church (Eph. 3:10). She is a light to the world (Matt. 5:14). The church has considered itself bound to go into all the world (Matt. 28:18-20).

### III. Institutions:

#### A. The Temple.<sup>22</sup>

The temple and its predecessor the tabernacle furnish the church with imagery to explain the sacrifice of Jesus and the spiritual service to be offered God by Christians. However, it is in imagery rather than in specific details of organization or worship that the temple stands in the background of the church. The temple was the place where God caused his name to dwell (Deut. 12:11; Ezra 6:12). It was the symbol of God in the midst of his people. In its courts the early meetings of the church were held (Acts 2:46; 3:1, 11; 5:12).

The church as a spiritual house, possessing the spirit, is a temple where God is glorified and truly served. It has its foundation; it is built of living stones; it is a habitation of God in the spirit (Eph. 2:19-22; cf. 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 2 Cor. 6:16). The service of the Christian is a spiritual sacrifice (1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:15f).

#### B. Synagogue.<sup>23</sup>

Side by side with the temple in the first century stood the synagogue with its religious instruction and its worship without sacrifice. Every sizeable Jewish village had its synagogue where men met to read the Bible, pray, and listen to a sermon. In these gatherings the Apostles found a hearing for their preaching, especially outside of Palestine (Acts 13:14; 14:1; 17:1; 18:4). Early Christian worship shows more similarities to synagogue worship than to temple worship.

The synagogue had its organization with apostles, servants, and elders. Some analogy may be seen between these and the organization of early churches. However, those who would entirely derive the organization of the early church from the synagogue are faced with the need of explaining why the church dropped the other officials known to the synagogue.

#### Conclusions:

To note the background of the church is not at all to affirm that the disciples aimed at being only a sect within Judaism; nor is it to affirm that there were no vital differences between the early church and the synagogue. Judaism is not the foundation of the church. The rock of the church is Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). The Jew is the son of the covenant and it is to be hoped he will recognize it (Acts 3:24-26; 2:39), for despite the Lord's threat (Matt. 21:43), there is still an opportunity to be a partaker of the promises. Only later is there a turning to the Gentiles.

From the beginning the church differed from Judaism in that it believed the prophecies were fulfilled. The new age had dawned. The Messiah had come, and that Messiah was Jesus. A man to be on the inside must confess Jesus as Lord and be baptized. But despite its independence, it is the O.T. promises in their various im-

plications and ramifications that furnish the thought patterns in which the church is presented to us.

<sup>1</sup>This paper borrows heavily from the studies: K. L. Schmidt, "The Church" in *Bible Key Words from Gerhard Kittel's Theologische Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, J. R. Coates, tr. 75 pp., 1951; J. Y. Campbell, "The Origin of the Christian use of the Word 'Ekklesia,'" *JTS.*, 49 (1948), 130-142.; and George Johnston, *The Church in the New Testament*, 1943, 156 pp.

<sup>2</sup>While it is agreed that Jesus spoke Aramaic, the word which he used is uncertain. It may well have been *kenishta* which is the Aramaic form of *kenneset*, meaning "assembly." This Aramaic word also stands for both *qahal* and *'edah*. For the argument defending the authenticity of the passage, see R. N. Flew, *Jesus and His Church*, 1951.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Acts 18.41; *ekklesia* is not a standing body, but each gathering is a different *ekklesia*.

<sup>4</sup>*Qahal* comes from a root which means to assemble; as *ekklesia* comes from *ekkaleo* which has the related meaning "to summons out." *Qahal* does not imply "called out of the world," nor has it been established that *ekklesia* has this meaning in the N.T. See K. L. Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 31; F. J. A. Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*, 1897, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup>Nu. 27.17; 31.16; Josh. 22.16-17; See R. H. Charles, *Apoc. and Pseud. II*, 802; F. Cross, *The Ancient Library At Qumran*, p. 57 for the Cairo Damascus Covenant and the Dead Sea Sect; and cf. G. Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 37 notes.

<sup>6</sup>Christian gatherings are called *sunagogue* in Jas. 2.2 (but cf. 5.14); for the verb form see Heb. 10.25; II Thess. 2.1). Christians of Transjordan called both their meeting and meeting place *sunagogue* (Epiphanius, *Haer.* 30.18.2). Other Christian examples are found in Ignatius *To Polycarp*, 4.2; *Hermas, Mand.* 11.9; 13.14; Justin, *Dial.* 63.5; Dionysius of Alexander (Euseb. *H.E.* 7.9.2; 11.1ff); and Clement of Alex. *Strom.* 6.34.3. The earliest Christian inscription has the phrase "*sunagogue* of the Marcionites," see E. C. Blackman, *Marcion and His Influence*, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup>George Johnston, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>8</sup>E. De Witt Burton, *Galatians* (ICC), pp. 417-420.

<sup>9</sup>The term is applied to the band of Korah (Num. 16.3); the company that complained against Moses (Nu. 20.4); the company of Simeon and Levi (Gen. 49.6); a company of evil doers (Ps. 26.5); a band of any sort (but not of Israel) fourteen times in Ezekiel; a military gathering (I Ch. 13.1).

<sup>10</sup>J. Y. Campbell, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-142, insists that *qahal adonai* is only a service of worship.

<sup>11</sup>See G. Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 39, as opposed to E. R. Goodenough, *By Light Light*, p. 390.

<sup>12</sup>J. Y. Campbell, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-142.

<sup>13</sup>Studies on this subject are: H. H. Rowley, *The Biblical Doctrine of Election*: H. W. Robinson, *Inspiration and Revelation in the O.T.*, pp. 148-159. G. A. Danell, "The Idea of God's People in the Bible," in A. Fridrichsen, *The Root of the Vine*, pp. 23-26; and C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments*, 1951, 96pp.

<sup>14</sup>The Jewish reply to this claim is surveyed by B. W. Helfgott, *The Doctrine of Election in Tannaitic Literature*, 1954, 209 pp.

<sup>15</sup>L. Koehler, *O.T. Theology*, 1953, pp. 60-74; E. Jacob, *Theology of the O.T.*, 1958, pp. 209-217.

<sup>16</sup>R. L. Hicks, "The Jewish Background of the N.T. Doctrine of the Church," *Anglican Theol. Review*, 30 (1948), pp. 107-117.

<sup>17</sup>T. H. Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scriptures*, 1956, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup>G. A. Dannels, *op. cit.*, pp. 26, 32ff; E. Jacobs, *op. cit.*, pp. 323-324.

<sup>19</sup>T. H. Gaster, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>20</sup>G. Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>21</sup>E. Jacobs, *op. cit.*, pp. 217-223.

<sup>22</sup>R. L. Hicks, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-117.

<sup>23</sup>On Synagogue Worship and organization see, W. O. E. Oesterley and G. H. Box, *The Religion and Worship of the Synagogue* and G. F. Moore, *Judaism*, I, 281ff.

# Ekklesia: A Word Study

Roy Bowen Ward

## INTRODUCTION

Following the earthly ministry of Jesus, there arose an institution<sup>1</sup> in response to his person and his mission. This institution was a community of persons who sustained a certain relationship to Jesus Christ, and it existed by virtue of that relationship. The most common term used to describe this institution was *ekklesia*, which we translate, *church*.

To determine why this particular Greek word came to be chosen and how it was used is the purpose of this article. We shall attempt to see the history of the *ekklesia* and what it meant to the mind of Greeks and Jews across the Mediterranean world of the first cent., A.D., when this term was first applied to the new institution of Jesus Christ. We shall attempt to see the significance of this term and parallel expressions as they are used in the N.T. And we shall attempt to follow some developments in the understanding of this term in the history of the primitive church.<sup>2</sup>

## GREEK BACKGROUND.

The most common classical usage of *ekklesia* and its cognates was as a political term, meaning an assembly of citizens. In the Greek city-state the citizens were called forth by the trumpet of the *kerux* (herald) summoning them to the *ekklesia* (assembly). The *ekklesia* was the ultimate power in the constitutional government of the Greek city-state, whether it was a monarchy, oligarchy, or democracy. Of the general assembly of the citizens in or before the time of Dracon (codified laws in 621 B.C.) nothing is really known—though the people must have had some power. Later Aristotle applied *ekklesiai* to the Homeric assemblies of the people.<sup>3</sup> Most of our references to the use of this word concern the *ekklesiai* of Athens.<sup>4</sup>

The *ekklesia* in Athens enjoyed a long life from 508 B.C. until the early fourth century, A.D., in the time of Diocletian. But only from 508 to 322 B.C. was it a strictly democratic institution. In this time it was the general meeting of the people—all Athenian citizens could attend, excluding only aliens, females, and those disenfranchised (*atimoi*). What portion of the citizens actually attended we do not know, though Gomme suggests that 6,000 was perhaps one-seventh of the total in 431.<sup>5</sup> A specially appointed council, the *Boule*, summoned the *ekklesia* and prepared its agenda. By law the *ekklesia* had to be summoned at least four times each 36 or 37 days, that is, forty times each year. One of each four meetings was more important than the others, this one being called the *ekklesia kuria*. The president of the *ekklesia* was a particular member of the *Boule* who

could serve as president at only one *ekklesia* in his lifetime. Any citizen might speak in debate and initiate amendments or administrative motions. Voting was normally by show of hands, a simple majority deciding most issues.<sup>6</sup>

It should be noted that in ordinary usage, *ekklesia* meant the assembly, and not the body of people involved. The *Boule* existed even when it was not actually in session, but there was a new *ekklesia* every time they assembled.<sup>7</sup> The *demos* (people) assembled in an *ekklesia*, but when they acted, it was said to be the action of the *demos*, not the *ekklesia*.<sup>8</sup>

Further, it should be noted that the principal meaning of *ekklesia* is simply, "assembly." Lexicographers give as the primary meaning, "assembly duly summoned."<sup>9</sup> But it is doubtful that in usage "duly summoned" was remembered. At Athens the extraordinary assemblies were called *sugkletei*, in distinction to the ordinary *ekklēsiai* which met on fixed days.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that in classical usage *ekklesia* was, among Greek words for assembly, the most inclusive word in existence.<sup>11</sup> *Ekklesia*, being derived from the verb *ek-kaleo*, "to call out or forth," has often been interpreted as an exclusive term, connecting its etymological meaning with the Biblical doctrine that Christians are those "called out of the world by God."<sup>12</sup> However, F. J. A. Hort, in his classic work, *The Christian Ecclesia*, reminds us that in usage this exclusive meaning—a calling out from a larger group does—not have support.

There is no foundation for the widely spread notion that *ekklesia* means a people or a number of individual men called out of the world or mankind. . . . the compound verb *ekkaleo* is never so used, and *ekklesia* never occurs in a context which suggests this supposed sense to have been present in the writer's mind.<sup>13</sup>

In usage *ek-kaleo* meant only, "to call forth," and not, as this interpretation would require, "to call out from a larger group." *Ekklesia*, in turn, meant only "that which is called forth, an assembly." As Campbell comments, "as so often, etymology proves to be here misleading rather than helpful."<sup>14</sup>

In the Hellenistic period *ekklesia* retained its usual, classical meaning of an assembly of citizens. The *ekklesia* continued to be held in Athens, though not as the democratic institution it had once been, and the term is found in other settings with the same meaning.<sup>15</sup>

There are indications that in this period the term may have developed a certain quasi-technical significance, though this does not rule out widespread non-technical usage as simply an assembly. Deissman has pointed out that the Latin-speaking people of the West borrowed the term *ekklesia*, rather than translate it. This was not due to a scarcity of Latin words for assembly—*contio* and *comitia* were often translated into Greek by *ekklesia*. As examples Deissman cites

the letter of Pliny the Younger (61/62-113 A.D.) to Trajan in which the Latinized term, *ecclesia*, is used,<sup>16</sup> and the bilingual inscription of the year 103/104 A.D. at Ephesus where *ekklēsia* in the Greek half becomes *ecclesia* in the Latin half.<sup>17</sup> Deissman concludes, "There must have been some special reason for borrowing the Greek word, and it lay doubtless in the subtle feeling that Latin possessed no word exactly equivalent to the Greek *ekklēsia*."<sup>18</sup> The reason may have been that a certain dignity had attached itself to this word due to its political context.

Finally we must note that *ekklēsia* was never used in the Greek world as the *title* of a religious group. About the beginning of the first century, B.C., it is found used in connection with a society of Tyrian merchants and shipowners in Delos which worshipped Heracles.<sup>19</sup> But here it is used only in its classical sense: the assembly or meeting of the society. It was fitting that the term should be used since these societies were modelled on that of the city-state.

#### JEWISH BACKGROUND.

*Ekklesia* occurs 80 times in the canonical books of the Septuagint translation (LXX) of the Old Testament, and where the Hebrew original is available for comparison,<sup>20</sup> it always translates *qahal* or words from the same root.<sup>21</sup>

Two important Hebrew words were used in the Old Testament to denote a gathering or assembly: *qahal* and *'edah*. But when applied to Israel, *'edah* came to indicate the society itself, whether assembled or not. In particular, *'edah* is used of the children of Israel, whether assembled or not, during its journeying from Egypt to Canaan.<sup>22</sup> Thus *'edah* assumes quasi-technical status as the People of God, but *qahal* continues to denote only the actual assembly or meeting.

Though *ekklēsia* is nearly always a translation of *qahal*, on the other hand, *qahal* is also translated by other Greek words, especially by *sunagoge*. In 35 passages *sunagoge* stands for *qahal*, 19 of these passages being in the first four books where *ekklēsia* is never used. But though *sunagoge* does translate *qahal* in certain passages, it is usually the LXX translation of *'edah*.

It is often asserted that the LXX added to the word *ekklēsia* a religious connotation, the People of God, because of the association with the *qahal*, and especially with the *qahal YHWH* (the assembly of the LORD). Thus Johnson writes, "Knowledge of the LXX is vital for understanding its New Testament meaning. . . . It signifies the people met for religious ends, especially worship. . . ." <sup>23</sup> Schmidt states,

That the *ekklēsia* is the People of God, the Congregation of God, becomes clear first through the addition of *kuriou: ekklēsia kuriou = qahal YHWH* . . . In the rest *ekklēsia* without the addition is the Congregation of God . . . it must be regarded as a technical term.<sup>24</sup>

J. Y. Campbell has taken exception to this idea: "It might therefore be expected that in the Septuagint *ekklēsia* would acquire a

specifically religious connotation, but of this there is, in fact, no evidence whatever."<sup>25</sup>

The critical point concerns the meaning of *qahal YHWH*, and the consequent acceptance of the position that *qahal* used alone stands for this full phrase. There are only five O.T. passages where *qahal YHWH* is used. The first two cases—Num. 16:3 and 20:4—may be discussed because the LXX translates these by *sunagoge*. In Deut. 23:2-4, 9, *qahal YHWH* is repeated five times, each time being translated by *ekklēsia kuriou*. But here the context indicates that the phrase refers to an actual meeting, the assembly, not to the people itself.<sup>26</sup> In 1 Chron. 28:8 the *qahal YHWH* refers to an actual assembly at Jerusalem. In Hebrew this phrase is in apposition to "all Israel," but the reading in the LXX omits "Israel" and reads: "Now therefore before all the assembly of the LORD and in the hearing of God." In Micah 2:5 again there is no indication that it is more than the actual assembly to which the phrase refers; the expression *en ekklēsiai* is quite classical.<sup>27</sup>

If the Hebrew reading in 1 Chron. 28:8 is correct so that *qahal YHWH* is in apposition to Israel, then there may be a development in its meaning toward the People of God; yet the LXX does not understand it this way, omitting Israel and leaving *ekklēsia* in its classical usage: the actual assembly. The scarcity of this phrase, *qahal YHWH*, the fact that it is not used of such significant assemblies as that which gathered at Sinai as described in Exodus, and the fact that where it is used an actual assembly can be pointed to diminishes the probable technical significance commonly alleged to it. Thus, even if the word, *qahal*, stood for the full phrase, it would still not add anything new to our understanding of the word nor its LXX counterpart, *ekklēsia*. Furthermore, if *ekklēsia* had come to mean, People of God, or Israel of God, through the Hebrew *qahal*, it is difficult to understand why N.T. writers do not use it as evidence when trying to prove that Christians are the People of God; Paul does not use it in Rom. 1-15, nor does Peter in 1 Pet. 2:4-10. There is no good evidence in the O.T. to show that *qahal* or *ekklēsia* ever meant anything other than the actual assembly, be it a religious assembly (as in most cases), the assembly gathered when David slew Goliath, an assembly of prophets, etc.<sup>28</sup>

In the non-canonical LXX books the usage of *ekklēsia* is generally the same. An exception can be noted in certain of the twelve passages in Ecclesiasticus where *ekklēsia* is used.<sup>29</sup> Campbell comments:

But in Ben Sira's book there is at least a suggestion that successive meetings of the same group of people are really the same *ekklēsia*, not *ekklēsiai*. . . . But if *ekklēsia* is on the way to signify a regular meeting of a religious kind, there is still nothing to suggest that it has come to mean (as *sunagoge* did) the body of people who meet regularly in one particular place.<sup>30</sup>

Philo (fl. A.D. 39) uses *ekklēsia* 30 times: five as in classical Greek, and 25 in LXX quotations, especially from Deut. 23. He

sometimes qualifies *ekklēsia* by an adjective: *theia*<sup>31</sup> or *hiera*;<sup>32</sup> and he also uses it with the genitives *theou*<sup>33</sup> and *kurion*.<sup>34</sup> In these passages there is still no evidence that the word alone (without descriptive adjectives or genitives) has a distinct religious connotation. On occasions he uses *sullogos* interchangeably with *ekklēsia*, and he modifies this word by *hieros*.<sup>35</sup> There is one passage where Philo might have used *ekklēsia* in a technical sense. "For when the whole multitude came together with harmonious oneness to give thanks for their migration, He no longer called them a multitude or a nation or a people but a 'congregation'."<sup>36</sup> Aucher's Latin translation has *Ecclēsiam*.<sup>37</sup> But unfortunately all this is based on an Armenian version, and there is no real clue as to whether Philo used *ekklēsia* or *sunagoge* or another word.<sup>38</sup> Philo's usage must be seen in the light of his own conception of the ideal state,<sup>39</sup> and therefore it is questionable as to whether he can be of major importance in the understanding of the common usage.

Josephus (37-c. 100 A.D.) uses *ekklēsia* 48 times, all according to strict classical usage. 18 of these passages may represent LXX allusions, and in nine cases he substitutes *ekklēsia* for *sunagoge*. Hort reminds us, "Josephus's ostentatious classicalism deprives us of the information which a better Jew in his position might have afforded us."<sup>40</sup>

*Conclusion.* In the light of this study of the existing evidence concerning the pre-Christian history of *ekklēsia*, the following may be noted: (1) *Ekklesia* meant an assembly. (2) It was familiar both to Gentiles by political usage and to Greek-speaking Jews through the LXX. (3) Its Greek history associated with it a certain dignity, with possible ideals of freedom and equal-membership playing a part. (4) It could be used of a religious assembly—Pagan or Jewish—but it did not become the title of any religious group, Pagan or Jewish, (5) Negatively, no evidence is found that in usage it meant "the called out"—despite etymology—nor that it came to mean "the People of God," nor that, in general, it was applied to any other than an individual assembly (though *Ecclesiasticus* shows a new trend: several assemblies being called the same *ekklēsia*).

#### NEW TESTAMENT USAGE.

*Ekklesia* occurs 114 times in the New Testament,<sup>41</sup> being found in Matt., Acts, Rom., 1 Cor., 2 Cor., Gal., Eph., Phil., Col., 1 Thess., 2 Thess., 1 Tim., Phile., Heb., James, 3 John, and Rev.<sup>42</sup>

Its use, however, is somewhat different from that which we have seen generally in the pre-Christian history. Although *ekklēsia* sometimes denotes merely an actual assembly, for the most part there is a real sense in which the *ekklēsia* exists whether assembled or not. This is not a development which can be detected prior to Christian history, and the charge is probably to be explained strictly as a Christian phenomenon.

The hypothesis of J. Y. Campbell may well be true: "The probability is that at first they used it [*ekklesia*] as an obvious name for those simple 'meetings' which were the most conspicuous distinctive feature in the life of the early Church . . ."43 The next step was the application of the term to the body of people habitually meeting together. Early Christians could have used *sunagoge*; James 2:2 seems to indicate that some did. Even Ignatius and Hermas later used it to denote the gathering of the church,<sup>44</sup> and Epiphanius states that the Ebionite Christians used *sunagoge* instead of *ekklesia*.<sup>45</sup> But *sunagoge* had by the first century, A.D., assumed too much of a technical status, denoting the religious assemblies of the Jews, these Jews themselves, and the places where they assembled. But *ekklesia* was not tied down to any group, much less to a religious group. Though used in the LXX, it was not distinctively Jewish; it was a term meaningful to Jew and Gentile alike. And, if Campbell's hypothesis is correct, then the primary use of *ekklesia* was local, its universal usage being secondary.

*Acts.* *Ekklesia* is used 23 times by the author of Acts. In two instances (19:32, 40) it refers to the mob of people at Ephesus. In this passage it is also used to refer to the assembly which met regularly (*ennomoi*) at Ephesus (19:39). Once *ekklesia* is used in the speech of Stephen (7:38) to designate the children of Israel gathered at Sinai, echoing perhaps Deut. 9:10 where the LXX has *ekklesia*.

In the remaining passages *ekklesia* refers in some sense to the institution of Jesus Christ. It comes closest to its classical usage in 14:27 where the assembly is actually gathered at Antioch to hear Paul and Barnabas. In the rest, *ekklesia* means more than the actual assembly; it is also the people who assemble. Thus "great fear came upon the whole church" in Jerusalem (5:11); there is a "great persecution of the church in Jerusalem" (8:1) and "Saul was laying waste the church, entering in house to house" (8:3).

In every case, with one possible exception, *ekklesia* is explicitly or implicitly used in a local sense: it is the assembly (assembled or not) at Jerusalem (11:22; 12:1, 5; 15:4, 22), at Antioch (11:26; 13:1; 14:27; 15:3), at Cæsarea (18:22), and at Ephesus (20:17, 28). This local use is emphasized by the use of the plural, *ekklesiai*, when referring to churches in a larger area: in Syria and Cilicia (15:41) and in areas of Asia Minor (16:4). The one possible exception to the local use is the statement in 9:31: "So then the Church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, having been strengthened." But even here there is good textual evidence for the plural, rather than the singular.<sup>46</sup>

In this possible exception (and a textual variant of 15:41 which has the singular) there is the beginning of another development in the meaning of *ekklesia*: the universal usage. If the singular read-

ing is correct, and *ekklesia* is used in a universal sense, then we have the local and universal usage here side by side (as also in Paul). But Schmidt rightly points out that there is no indication that the *ekklesia* is divided into *ekklesiai*, or vice versa. "It is rather that if the *ekklesia* is found in a certain place, even through the mention of *ekklesiai* by the side of it, it can not be affected by this."<sup>47</sup> Thus, in this development, *ekklesia* can mean any portion of Christians: from a local group to those in a larger geographical area, and, by extension, to those throughout the world.

*Pauline Epistles.* *Ekklesia* is used 62 times in the Pauline epistles.

In Paul's first letter to Corinth he uses *ekklesia* several times according to common usage, denoting an actual assembly: "For first when you have come together in an assembly, I hear there are divisions among you" (11:18; see also 14:19, 28, 35). But in most cases the reference is to the institution, assembled or not; *ekklesia* has become a technical term.

The *ekklesia* is often local: the church at Cenchreæ (Rom. 16:1), at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1), at Laodicea (Col. 4:16), and at Thessalonica (1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1). When speaking of a larger geographical area Paul uses the plural: the churches of Asia (1 Cor. 16:19), of Galatia (1 Cor. 16:1; Gal. 1:1), of Macedonia (2 Cor. 8:1), of Judea (Gal. 1:22; 1 Thess. 2:14). Paul also uses *ekklesia* of smaller groups, such as the household church of Prisca and Aquila in Rome (Rom. 16:5), that of the same couple in Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:19), that of Nympha in Laodicea (Col. 4:15) and that of Philemon in Colosse (Phile. 2). These can evidently be called *ekklesia*, even while calling the total group in the city *ekklesia*.

Only once did the author of Acts add a descriptive genitive to *ekklesia*, and that (in reference to the church at Ephesus) was a quotation from the Psalms: "the church of the Lord" (Acts 20:28). But Paul often adds a descriptive genitive, usually *tou theou* (of God). Twice he adds *ton Christou* (of Christ), once *ton ethnon* (of the Gentiles), and once *ton hagion* (of the saints). The salutations of the Thessalonian correspondence are particularly descriptive: "to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and in our Lord Jesus Christ." Even when Paul does not use a descriptive genitive, it is usually to be understood, in accordance with Paul's doctrine of the *ekklesia* (see *infra*). It should be noted that *tou theou* is used with the singular, *ekklesia*, in reference to a local church. Paul addresses "the church of God which is at Corinth" (1 Cor. 1:2). Paul does not mean that the church of God is limited to Corinth, nor does he say, "the church of God, that *part* of which is at Corinth." As Schmidt rightly points out, "the Church is not primarily an accumulation of individual congregations of the whole community, but every congregation of the whole community, however small, represents the Church."<sup>48</sup>

It is in Paul's letters to the Ephesians and Colossians that *ekklesia* receives its fullest doctrinal expression, and at the same time is removed the furthest from the classical usage. Already *ekklesia* has been used to designate the people, whether assembled or not. But in most cases the use was still local; these people could and were actually assembling. But in Eph. and Col. *ekklesia* is used of the people without respect to the possibility of actually assembling.

*Ekklesia* was already a technical term for the institution of Jesus Christ. But the term itself was rather neutral—not particularly expressive of the doctrine concerning that institution. Especially here in Eph. and Col. *ekklesia* is grounded into the doctrine of the institution and made to carry in itself the doctrinal implications. Paul's device for accomplishing this is the use of two important parallel terms, *some* (body) and *gune* (wife). By these terms Paul clearly shows the intrinsic connection of Jesus Christ and his institution (*ekklesia*)—it is like head and body (Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:24), like husband and wife (Eph. 5:21-33). In these terms Christ and the *ekklesia* become almost identified. Christ is the head of the body, but the body is not just a rump—it is “the fullness (*pleroma*) of him who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:22). Christ and *ekklesia* are like husband and wife, but he adds, “the two shall become *one flesh*” (Eph. 5:31).

Here one does not need to add *tou Christou* to *ekklesia*, for in the term itself must now be included Christ as an essential connotation. Again the comments of Schmidt are well stated:

... the *ekklesia* as the *soma Christou* is not a mere association of men . . . Definitive is the communion with Christ. To sharpen this point one could say: A single man can and must be the *ekklesia*, if he has communion with Christ.<sup>49</sup>

This being so, the classical meaning of “assembly,” “gathering” has been superseded by the more dynamic, Pauline definition: *ekklesia* = body of Christ, or even, Christ himself!

This usage of *ekklesia* in Eph. and Col., although non-local and related emphatically to Jesus Christ, does not remove it from reality. There is no “invisible” *ekklesia* here, as distinguished from the “visible” one. That Paul calls this institution “holy,” etc. (Eph. 5:27), does not remove it from reality; those who compose the *ekklesia* are exhorted to be “holy” (Rom. 12:1; etc.) and are, indeed, called “holy” (*hagioi*: saints—Rom. 1:7; etc.). In Eph. 3:10 mention is made of the mission of the *ekklesia*, but this is a real and earthly mission.

*Other N. T. Books.* In the other N.T. books, excluding the gospels, *ekklesia* is used 26 times. It is found 20 times in the Revelation, always in the local sense, referring to the seven churches of Asia. James and III John also use it in a local sense (Jas. 5:14; III John 6, 9, 10.). Once in Hebrews (2:12) it is used in a quotation from Psa. 22:22 where *ekklesia* simply stands for *qahal*. The only passage where *ekklesia* stands for a heavenly institution is in Heb.

12:23. But here it is probably not used according to its N.T. technical usage, but simply in its common meaning: an actual assembly. It is here coupled with *paneguris*, which the RSV translates, "festal gathering."

*Gospels.* *Ekklesia* by name is found in only one of the four gospels, Matthew, and in only two passages in that gospel (16:18; 18:17). This argument from statistics is often the first argument put forward in attempts to disassociate Jesus from the *ekklesia*. However, this question involves not only the word *ekklesia* but also the thing itself. Recent scholarship<sup>50</sup> has shown the *ekklesia* (without name) to be an integral part of the teaching of Jesus.<sup>51</sup> The question remains as to why *ekklesia* by name is scarcely used in the gospels. This term seems to be generally reserved for the time after the resurrection-ascension of Jesus as the Christ. Note, for instance, that in Luke-Acts *ekklesia* never occurs until after the events of Pentecost. There is an understanding that *ekklesia* is, strictly speaking, a post-resurrection institution.

Matt. 18:17. The two occasions of *ekklesia* in this passage must be understood in its common usage: an actual assembly (so translated in RSV). And that assembly is, no doubt, present rather than future, Jewish rather than Christian. Hort states, "The actual precept is hardly intelligible if the *ekklesia* meant is not the Jewish community, apparently the Jewish local community, to which the injured person and the offender both belonged."<sup>52</sup> But Hort also says, "The principle holds good in a manner for all time,"<sup>53</sup> and thus this passage found application in the church.<sup>54</sup>

Matt. 16:18. Although many problems have been raised concerning this passage,<sup>55</sup> the scope of this study limits us to the question of the usage of *ekklesia* as it here stands, and to the question of what precisely did it mean. The problem is a perplexing one, if our survey of the pre-Christian history of *ekklesia* is correct. If *ekklesia* meant only an actual assembly up until Christian usage converted it into a technical, religious term, then the statement here: "Upon this rock I will build my 'meeting' (*ekklesia*)" does not make much sense.

(1) There are several possibilities that Jesus spoke Greek, using this Greek word, (*ekklesia*), and that it did have a significant meaning.

(a) It is possible that *ekklesia* had attained a religious connotation prior to this time in some may not traceable in the sources we have. This word might have been capable of meaning assembly in a more universal sense, with religious overtones: the People of God. If such is true, *ekklesia* fits well the context: "I will build my People of God, i.e., the new Israel."

This view is, of course, the prevalent consensus of most commentators: that *ekklesia* had a religious connotation. But they seek evi-

dence for this view from the LXX, where a closer investigation reveals no such evidence. The development, if true, must lie elsewhere.

But it is difficult to support even this hypothesis in the face of the failure of N.T. writers to employ this term in proving that this new institution is the People of God, the new Israel. If it had developed this connotation in a Jewish *milieu*, surely Paul and Peter would have used it (Rom. 1-15; 1 Pet. 2:4-10). Usage in Acts and elsewhere also stands against this view.

(b) A second possibility is that Jesus himself gave to the term *ekkleisia* its new significance, either on this occasion, or elsewhere in his ministry. A definition of *ekkleisia* in Messianic terms would give it the depth of meaning expected in this passage. The juxtaposition of *ekkleisia* and *basileia* in the following verse might suggest that such a definition was made by Jesus. However, this hypothesis is weak in that this definition is nowhere to be found, either here or in any passage in the gospels. Would such an important definition be omitted? Usage in Acts and elsewhere oppose this view also.

(c) A third possibility is that in using *ekkleisia*, Jesus used a synonym for *sunagoge*, using it in antithesis to this Jewish institution of his day, and borrowing by association the connotations of *sunagoge*. *Sunagoge* would fit this passage well, since it was a technical term denoting the Congregation of God. It even referred to the building where the Congregation met, and the figure of "building" would be quite aptly associated with *sunagoge*. But Jesus could not use *sunagoge* because of its Jewish limitations.<sup>56</sup> Then he used a synonym in the way that he might have used *sunagoge*, and the connotations would thus be transferred to *ekkleisia*. This hypothesis is possible, but probably is a bit too clever to be true!

(2) If we dismiss these hypotheses, we are left with one other possibility which seems, indeed, more convincing. This possibility is that Jesus did not say, "*ekkleisia*," but rather the equivalent in the Aramaic language.<sup>57</sup>

The possible Aramaic equivalents include: *gehala*, '*edhta*', *ciburra*, and *kenishta*'. With all four of these words is associated the idea of the People of God. '*edhata*' may be ruled out since it does not occur in the Targums. Of the other three, the most common term was *kenishta*': gathering, assembly, place of meeting (synagogue); this term was also applied to the Great Synagogue.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, the Sinaitic Syriac version (3rd century, A.D.) uses *kenushta*' regularly for *ekkleisia* and *sunagoge* (though Matt. 16:18 is not extant in this version), and the Palestinian Syriac version (*Evangeliarium Hierosolymitanum*—no precise date) also uses *kenushta* for both Greek words. Of this latter version Schmidt, following E. Nestle, states, "The dialect of *Evangeliarium Hierosolymitanum* differs considerably from the ordinary Syriac, and it possibly stands relatively close to the language of Jesus and his disciples."<sup>59</sup> Schmidt, McNeil,<sup>60</sup> etc., therefore prefer *kenishta*' as the original.

Whether it was *kenishta'* or one of the other available words, it would be meaningful here in this passage. Each would convey the idea of the People of God, an idea fully in keeping with the figure of "building,"<sup>61</sup> and each would be a term with Messianic overtones, in keeping with the *basileia* in the following verse. When Matthew later recorded his gospel in Greek, *ekklesia* would be the natural and only possible translation of the Aramaic. *Sunagoge* would have been eliminated as being a limited, Jewish term. But by Matthew's time *ekklesia* was the technical, religious term in usage to designate what Jesus earlier promised to build. For Matthew's readers *ekklesia* was natural and meaningful.

#### APOSTOLIC FATHERS.

*Ekklesia* in Matt. 16:18, in Paul's doctrinal expositions, etc., is used in a general or universal sense. Elsewhere the majority of instances are of local usage. This local usage continues in the literature of the Apostolic Fathers. I Clement is a letter from the *ekklesia* of God sojourning at Rome to the *ekklesia* of God sojourning at Corinth. Ignatius begins his letters in a similar way, as also Polycarp, and the Martyrdom of Polycarp from the church in Smyrna. *Didache*<sup>62</sup> and the *Shepherd of Hermas*<sup>63</sup> also know this local use.

There is, however, an increasing tendency to use *ekklesia* in referring to the church universal. This is explicit when Ignatius adds to *ekklesia* the adjective, *katholike*<sup>64</sup> (general or universal<sup>65</sup>), which later becomes a technical term: the Catholic Church. The universal idea is even more emphatic in the Martyrdom of Polycarp where the universal *ekklesia* is in the *oikoumene* (the whole habitable world, i.e., ecumenical).<sup>66</sup>

The *ekklesia* appears in the visions of the *Shepherd of Hermas* as a holy, ancient Lady,<sup>67</sup> and as a Tower.<sup>68</sup> This Church is cleansed and purified, and after the wicked are cast out, she is one body, one understanding, one mind, one faith, one love. This unity of the church is found in Ignatius where God, Christ, and Church form a single entity,<sup>69</sup> which is in connection with the church officers: "without these [deacons, bishop, presbyters] it is not called a church."<sup>70</sup>

II Clement, so-called, describes the *ekklesia* as pre-existent, the "*ekklesia* of life," spiritual, but made flesh—as the Logos.<sup>71</sup> Though the words have a Pauline sound, the tendency here is better described as a Gnostic development<sup>72</sup> or the Semitic belief of the pre-existence of certain things, such as the tabernacle.<sup>73</sup>

#### SUMMARY.

The pre-Christian history of the *ekklesia*<sup>74</sup> presented the new institution of Jesus Christ with an easily adaptable word to describe that institution. At first it was a neutral term, devoid of any special doctrinal significance. But this word which meant "assembly" now included the people who assembled, whether actually in an as-

sembly or not. This assembly was something real; thus the first and most common usage was of a local church, i.e., where there was actually an assembling of the people. This usage is typical of Acts, of much of the Pauline epistles, of the general epistles, of the Revelation to John, and of many of the passages in the Apostolic Fathers. It had become in most of these passages the technical term to designate this new institution.

Alongside of this usage there developed a wider, non-local use. The church, after spreading out from Jerusalem, was still in all these places that one and the same institution of Jesus Christ. But the Greek word *ekklesia* did not readily lend itself to this non-local usage. Thus we often have the plural, *ekklesiai*, when speaking of a larger geographic area. But, perhaps in order to emphasize the oneness of these *ekklesiai*, the singular, *ekklesia*, came to be used. In this usage the idea of assembly was no longer prominent. In Eph. and Col. we have this non-local usage. The difference of usage by Paul in Eph. and Col. as contrasted with his other letters must be explained as a grounding of this term *ekklesia* (which had become the technical term for the institution) in the basic doctrines of the Faith (especially in Christology), which were already integral parts of the concept of the church.

The concept of the church began with Jesus Christ, though he may not have used the Greek word, *ekklesia*. When *ekklesia* was used, it became what it was because of Jesus Christ; for it became the technical term of that institution which assembled in his name, and which was composed of people who sustained a certain relationship to him, i.e., people "in Christ."

#### APPENDIX: ETYMOLOGY OF "CHURCH."

Most scholars are agreed that "church" is derived from the Greek *kuriakon*, an adjective (of the Lord). This adjective is used in the N.T. with *deipnon* (Lord's Supper—1 Cor. 11:20) and *hemera* (Lord's Day—Rev. 1:10). It was also used with *doma* (the Lord's house) in the early church, and from the third century, at least, it began to be used substantively as the *place* of worship.<sup>75</sup> From this usage it passed into the Gothic languages through the barbaric invasions, probably as *kirika*. From this comes the English *church*, the Scottish *kirk*, the German *Kirche*, and other modern language derivations, including Slavonic forms.<sup>76</sup> *Ekklesia* lies behind such modern terms for church as the French *eglise*, the Spanish *iglesia*, the Portuguese *igreja*, etc. English words from this root include *Ecclesiastes*, *ecclesiastical*, etc.

<sup>75</sup>This term is used advisedly, though criticized by Emil Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church* (Translation by H. Knight, London: Lutterworth Press, 1952), p. 10, etc.

<sup>76</sup>For an important bibliography see O. Linton, *Das Problem der Urkirche in der neueren Forschung* (Uppsala Universitets Arsskrift, 1932); for more recent additions to this bibliography see W. Arndt

and F. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957).

<sup>3</sup>*Politics* 1285a 11.

<sup>4</sup>See references in Thuc., Herod., Aristoph., Plato., Arist., and in inscriptions and other non-literary sources.

<sup>5</sup>A. W. Gomme, "Ecclesia," *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, p. 304.

<sup>6</sup>For further discussions see short article by Gomme, *op. cit.*, pp. 303, 304; and fuller presentations in C. G. Brandis, "Ekklesia," *Pauly's Real-Encyclopaedie der classischen altertumswissenschaft*, revised by Wissowa, (1905), vol. 5, cols. 2163-2200; R. Whiston and W. Wayte, "Ecclesia," *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquity*, vol. 1, pp. 697-703.

<sup>7</sup>See Thuc. 3.46: *en tei proterai ekklesiai* (in the earlier assembly); inscription in Dittenberger, *Sylogae Inscriptionum Graecarum*, vol. 3, p. 101: *en tei deuterai ton ekklesion* (in the second of the assemblies).

<sup>8</sup>See the prescription of an Athenian assembly in Dittenberger, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 512: *prosetaxen ho demos* . . . (the people commanded); vol. 1, p. 731: *psephisma tou demos* (the vote of the people).

<sup>9</sup>Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Jones-McKenzie edition), *s.v.*

<sup>10</sup>See Aristotle, *Politics*, 1275b 8.

<sup>11</sup>See E. L. Hicks, "On Some Political Terms Employed in the New Testament," *Classical Review*, 1 (1887), p. 43. Moulton and Milligan cite as a non-literary example of the "inclusive" use of *ekklēsia* the assembly at Apamea: *agomenes pandemou ekklesias* (being gathered in the assembly of all the people). *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, *s.v.*

<sup>12</sup>This doctrine is substantiated apart from etymology by such passages as: John 15:19; 17:6; etc., and by those passages dealing with "calling," "election," etc.

<sup>13</sup>F. J. A. Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1898), p. 5.

<sup>14</sup>J. Y. Campbell, "The Origin and Meaning of the Christian Use of the Word EKKLESIA," *Journal of Theological Studies*, 49 (1948), p. 131.

<sup>15</sup>The historian Polybius (c. 202-120 B.C.) tells of an *ekklēsia* in Sparta, which was the gathering of the people to hear Machatas. *History*, iv. 34.6.

Plutarch (c.46-c.120 A.D.) uses this term to describe the assemblies before which Tiberias stood. *Tiberias Gracchus*, 14-16.

Lucian (c.115-200 A.D.), in his parody, *Parliament of the Gods*, calls this meeting a *sumposium* and a *sunedrion*. But when the official motion is presented, the meeting is then called an *ekklēsia enonoma* and the decree follows the formula of fourth cent. Athens. 1, 3, 14.

<sup>16</sup>Epistle x. 111. *bule et ecclesia consentiente*.

<sup>17</sup>*hina tithentai kat' ekklesian en to theatro epi ton baseon/ita ut [omn]i[e]cclesia supra bases ponerentur*.

<sup>18</sup>A. Deissmann, *Light From the Ancient East* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1927), p. 113.

<sup>19</sup>*Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum*, 2271. See discussion in F. Poland, *Geschichte des griechischen Vereinwesens* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1909), p. 332.

<sup>20</sup>I Sam. 19:20 - *lahaqah*; Neh. 5:7 - *qehilah*; Psa. 26:12 - *maqhelim*; Psa. 67:26 - *maqhiloth*. "In the case of *lahaqah* it is the same radicals in another sequence; either here it is supposed to be a derived word from *qahal*, or else it is possibly a case of dittography,

occurring here so close to *laqahath*." K. L. Schmidt, "*Kaleo . . .*" *Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 3, pp. 530, 531. See English translation by J. R. Coates in *Bible Key Words* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1951).

<sup>21</sup>In three instances no Hebrew word stands behind the use of *ekklesia* in the LXX: Deut. 4:10; I Chr. 28:2; II Chr. 10:3.

<sup>22</sup>Five-sixths of the total occurrences of *'edhah* in the O.T. are in the four books of Ex., Lev., Num., and Jos.—more than one-half are in the book of Num. alone.

<sup>23</sup>G. Johnston, *The Doctrine of the Church in the New Testament* (Cambridge: University Press, 1943), pp. 36, 37.

<sup>24</sup>Schmidt, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 531.

<sup>25</sup>Campbell, *op. cit.*, pp. 132, 133.

<sup>26</sup>In Neh. 13:1 the phrase *qahal 'elohim* occurs, but this is a reference to the assembly in Deut. 23.

<sup>27</sup>Lam. 1:10 may be a further reference, *ekklesia sou* here probably referring to the assembly in Deut. 23.

<sup>28</sup>The most recent discussion of the *qahal YHWH* is to be found in Johan D. W. Kritzinger, *Qahal Jahwe. Wat dit is en wie daaraan mag behoort* (Acad. Proefschrift, Kampen: Kok, 1957), and in the review of this work by L. Rost in *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, (1958), pp. 266, 267.

The summary of Kritzinger's work is written in English. In summarizing chapter 1, paragraph 3: The use and meaning of *qahal (YHWH)* in the O.T., he states: "*Qahal* primarily means 'gathering' or 'assembly.' This general meaning is found throughout the O.T." (p. 152) He cites one text where *qahal* is used as a technical term for the cult-assembly, but this text—Num. 15:15—is one that is translated by *sunagoge*, not *ekklesia*.

<sup>29</sup>Ecclesiasticus 15:15; 21:17; 23:24; 24:2; 26:5; 31:11; 33:19; 38:33; 39:10; 44:15; 50:13, 20.

<sup>30</sup>Campbell, *op. cit.*, pp. 137, 138.

<sup>31</sup>*De Confusione Linguarum*, 144.

<sup>32</sup>*Quod Deusimmutabilis sit*, 111; *De Migratione Abrahami*, 69; *De Somniis*, ii, 184, 187.

<sup>33</sup>*Legum Allegoria*, iii, 8.

<sup>34</sup>*De Ebrietate*, 213.

<sup>35</sup>*Legum Allegoria*, iii, 81; *De Somniis*, ii, 184; *De Specialibus Legibus*, i, 325.

<sup>36</sup>*Quaestiones et Solutiones in Exodum*, 1.10, translated by Ralph Marcus in the Loeb Classical Library, supplement to Philo series, vol. 2, pp. 19, 20.

<sup>37</sup>Philo Judaeus, *Paralipomena Armena* (Armenian text and Latin translation by P. Aucher, 1826), p. 456.

<sup>38</sup>The word in question is *zhoghov*. Although the Armenian language has a word derived from *ekklesia*—*ekeghetsi*—here this word is related to *zhoghvoort*, the usual translation of *sunagoge*! Aucher's Latin translation is here misleading as far as indicating what Greek word stood originally in the text. See M. Bedrossian, *New Dictionary—Armenian-English* (Venice: S. Lazarus Armenian Academy, 1875-79), s.v.

<sup>39</sup>See H. A. Wolfson, *Philo* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1947), vol. 2, chap. 13, especially pp. 374-395.

<sup>40</sup>Hort, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>41</sup>Acts 2:47 may be another example of the use of *ekklesia*, but

textual evidence is not strong for it. K. Lake and H. Cadbury, in *The Beginnings of Christianity* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1933), vol. 4., p. 30, argue for *epi to auto*, to which the Western text added *en tei ekklesiai*. The Antiochian text then dropped *en*, moved *epi to auto* to the next sentence, and read, "added to the church . . ." Whether *ekklesia* is present in name or not, the thing itself is—the corporation of the saved. *Ekklesia* is supported by D. Pesh, P, S, 462. *Epi to auto* is supported by B, Aleph, A, C, 81, Vg, Sah, etc.

<sup>42</sup>The ten books in which *ekklesia* is not found do not present great problems. Schmidt's comment is sound: "That it is missing in 1 J and 2 J should not be very surprising since, indeed, it appears in 3 J. Likewise it is not in 2 Tm and Tt, while it appears in 1 Tm. When so small a letter as Jd does not have the word, we must here reckon it with the accident of statistics. On the other hand the non-appearance of the word in 1 Pt and 2 Pt is extra-ordinary. But since in 1 Pt, in a special, emphatic way, the essence and meaning of the O.T. community is spoken of directly, with the use of O.T. expressions, thus the question emerges whether it is the thing or the word that is missing," *op. cit.*, vol. 31, p. 505. This last comment is true also of Mark, Luke and John.

<sup>43</sup>Campbell, *op. cit.*, pp. 141, 142.

<sup>44</sup>To Polycarp 4:2 - *puknoteron sunagogai ginesthosan* (Let the "gatherings" be more frequent); Mandate 11:9, 13, 14 - *eis sunagogen andron dikaiou* (into the "assembly" of the righteous men).

<sup>45</sup>Against Heresies xxx. 18 - *sunagogen de outoi kalousi ten heautou ekklesian, kai ouchi ekklesian* (and these call their church a synagogue, and not an *ekklesia*).

<sup>46</sup>The support for *ekklesiai* is to be found in the Antiochian text, which may preserve the Western text which is somewhat defective here. The plural is supported by H, L, P, S.

<sup>47</sup>Schmidt, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 506.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 508.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 515.

<sup>50</sup>See R. Newton Flew, *Jesus and His Church* (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1938); Schmidt, *op. cit.*; Johnston, *op. cit.*; Anders Nygren, *Christ and His Church* (translation by Carlsten, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956); and various works connected with the ecumenical movement.

<sup>51</sup>Such indications are to be found in his teaching concerning discipleship, which is certainly a preparation for the founding of the *ekklesia*. There are synonyms, such as *poimne* (flock) in Matt. 26: 31 and John 10:1 (cf. I Cor. 9:7); *poimnion* (little flock) in Luke 12:32 (cf. Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5:2f.); etc. The Gospel according to John, though never using *ekklesia* by name, obviously speaks of the church; especially note the similarity of the vine and the branches in John 15:1 with the Pauline doctrine of the *ekklesia*. See C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1955), p. 393, etc.; also see O. Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* (translation by Todd and Torrance, London: SCM Press, 1953), pp. 37ff.

And certainly Jesus taught about and preached the Kingdom of God. When the modern antithesis between Kingdom and church is removed, the *ekklesia* is seen as a realization of this teaching. This is not to say that *ekklesia* exhausts the meaning of *basileia tou theou* (the sovereignty or reign of God). Flew states: "The *Basileia* creates a community, and uses a community as an instrument. Those who enter the *Basileia* are in the Ecclesia; the Ecclesia lives beneath the Kingly Rule of God, acknowledges it, proclaims it, and looks for its final manifestation; but the Ecclesia is not itself the *Basileia*." *op. cit.*, p. 126.

<sup>52</sup>Hort, *op. cit.*, p. 10. There are Jewish parallels to this passage, such as that in the recently discovered Manual of Discipline (vi.1) from Qumran.

<sup>53</sup>*Idem.*

<sup>54</sup>Didache 15 (2nd cent. A.D.) seems to allude to this passage; the Apostolic Constitution, 38 (4th cent. A.D.) quotes it in direct application to the church.

<sup>55</sup>Questions are raised as to the genuineness of this statement as coming from Jesus, the possibility of a different context other than the Caesarea Philippi scene, the relationship of the church and Peter, the possibility of successors to Peter and this promise, etc. See Cullmann, *Peter* (translation by F. V. Filson, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953) and other references.

<sup>56</sup>Other possible words (*laos* - people; *sunedrion* - council; etc.) were likewise limited in general by Jewish usage.

<sup>57</sup>That Jesus himself spoke Aramaic is suggested by the fact that this was the common language of Palestinian Jews of his day. Metzger states, "In common with his Palestinian contemporaries Jesus undoubtedly spoke Aramaic as his mother tongue, but being a Galilean he very likely was able to use Greek as well. One would expect that most of his teaching to the common people of Palestine would be given in Aramaic." "The Language of the New Testament," *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 7, p. 52. This is substantiated by the Aramaic words preserved in our Greek gospels: *talitha cumi* (Mark 5: 41), *ephphata* (Mark 7:34) *abba* (Mark 14:36), and *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani* (Mark 15:34; cf. Matt. 27:46). Metzger further points to the fact that several sayings of Jesus, when translated into Aramaic, involve puns—an unlikely circumstance unless the puns were original. One such pun is to be found in this passage—the play on "rock." See the discussion by Metzger, *ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>58</sup>See references in Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Talmud*, s.v.

<sup>59</sup>Schmidt, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 529.

<sup>60</sup>A. H. McNeil, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1915), *ad loc.* Note the discussion in Johnston, *op. cit.*, pp. 37ff, 48ff.

<sup>61</sup>See Cullman, *Peter*, p. 188, and references.

<sup>62</sup>9.4.

<sup>63</sup>Vision ii.2.6; ii.4.3; iii.9.7.

<sup>64</sup>To the Smyrneans, 8.1.

<sup>65</sup>Schmidt takes this to mean "one and only" here, rather than "universal," *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 536.

<sup>66</sup>8.1 - *pases tes kata ten oikoumenen katholikes ekklesias* (all the universal church throughout the whole world); also 19.2.

<sup>67</sup>Vision i.1.6; ii.4.1; iv.1.3; etc.

<sup>68</sup>Vision iii.3.3; Sim. ix.1.2; ix.13.1; etc.

<sup>69</sup>To the Philadelphians, 3.2.

<sup>70</sup>To the Trallians, 3.1 - *choris touton ekklesia ou kaleitai.*

<sup>71</sup>14.1ff.

<sup>72</sup>See Schmidt, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 537.

<sup>73</sup>See Wolfson, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 182f.

<sup>74</sup>See *supra*, p. 10.

<sup>75</sup>Cf. *Apostolic Constitutions* II. 59; an edict of Maximinus (303-313 A.D.) in Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, ix. 10; canon 15 of the Council of Ancyra (314); canon 5 of the Council of Neo-Caesarea (314-323); canon 28 of the council of Laodicea.

<sup>76</sup>See article "Church," *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles* (edited by J. H. Murray, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893), vol. 2, pp. 402, 406.

# DOCTRINAL

## The Identity of the New Testament Church

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W. B. Barton

This paper will deal with the question of the Identity of the New Testament Church. This is an important question; upon it the Restoration Plea depends. If there were no such thing as the church in those times with certain identifying characteristics, then it becomes absurd, of course, to suggest that the solution to the disunity in the Christian world today would be a return to those most primitive times. It has in fact even been suggested by one that such a return is impossible for this very reason. It is generally conceded among certain theologians of our time that there was such a variation among the differing congregations of the first century that it would be impossible to find any *distinctive* form of the church. That, in fact, such a *form* not only is impossible to discern in the texts that have come down to us, but that such a *form* was never intended to exist.

Of course, we must first of all understand what we will mean by a "form" throughout this paper. Ordinarily in theological treatises on the subject of the church, *form* usually deals with the outward organization of the church, whether it is episcopal, presbyterian, congregational and that sort of thing. However, it is possible that one of the reasons why the true nature of the church is not perceived is that we do not make proper distinctions. One of the grandest themes to be found in the epistles of Paul the Apostle is the concept of *soma Christou* (the body of Christ). By this phrase this holy writer meant, not simply the physical body that was crucified nor that glorified body which was raised from the tomb on that most auspicious Sunday morning, but *the church* as well. In the mind of the Apostle Paul when he thought of the church of which he was privileged to be a member and in which he functioned as an apostle and an ambassador of Jesus Christ the Savior, he thought of it as a group of people so intimately related together in one spirit and sharing one faith, the faith of Jesus Christ, that he sets forth the figure of *the body of Christ* as that most adequate to depict this grand relationship. Christ himself was *the head*, the church is the body of Christ. This is an important figure and I think it is central for an understanding of what we want to really mean when we speak of the *form* of the New Testament church. It is a most important theme if we are to understand what the diversities among the churches of the first century meant, if there is to be any historical ground to our belief in the existence of the first century church.

It goes without saying that the earliest church on record was not an *amorphus body*. There were apostles present<sup>1</sup> and when a difficulty arose over the distribution of the goods held in common by the members of the congregation a board of seven men was appointed to look after this material business, in order that the apostles might spend their time with the preaching and teaching of the word.<sup>2</sup> We see from this that a practical need dictated the appointment of this board. It was certainly the *church* or the *body of Christ* before the seven men were appointed. There is good evidence that wherever the apostles established a church in Judea or elsewhere the members were especially blessed with charismata, spiritual gifts, and yet, apparently it was possible for a church to exist without these. When Philip went up to Samaria, a saved assembly of people resulted from his preaching, who had no spiritual gifts until the apostles came from Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup> When the Apostle Paul and Barnabas in their first missionary journey preached in Asia Minor, churches of the Lord existed before they were organized under the rule of local elders. Notice the text tells us "they ordained them elders in every church,"<sup>4</sup> on this way back. It is possible, therefore, for us to conclude that the church could exist in the New Testament times without the presence of elders. There is also some indication that an evangelist was not absolutely necessary for the existence of the church. However, the presence of Titus in Crete made possible the setting in order of things that were wanting, such as the ordaining of elders and deacons.<sup>5</sup> But the church in Crete apparently existed before it was ruled over by elders. These few points are enough to establish that essentially *the church does not consist in outward forms* alone, though necessary these may be for its proper functioning.

We must, therefore, make a distinction between what is the *essential form* of a thing and its *accidental forms*. The *essential form* has to do with what makes a thing, whatever it might be, to be just what it is and not some other; whereas the *accidental forms* depend on what is essential for their existence. For example, it seems that every single kind of being must have some essential nature which distinguishes it from every other kind of being and without which it just simply would not be what it is at all. The old definition of man as "a featherless biped" misses the point. These are accidental characteristics of man. A man may lose one leg and still be a man. In defining a man the ancients knew that you had to take into account his *essential nature* and so they said that "man is a rational animal," for this distinguishes him from all the other members of the animal kingdom. Man is *rational*, this is his essential characteristic, all other things you say about a man depend on this essential nature. All definition has been based on this recognition and there is no reason why such a distinction cannot be used when we speak of religious matters. If we identify the church by *some accidental form* and make this the distinguishing characteristic then it

is as much to say that the church cannot possibly exist without it, yet this, as we have seen from the few examples noted above, is just simply not true.

But, on the other hand, this is not to argue that those forms which are merely accidental to it are not important for its *proper functioning*. They may well be. "A rose by any other name might smell as sweet," but it's not likely that we would identify a thing as a rose if it smelled like vinegar and looked like a pineapple. Here the ancients made one further distinction that's worth remembering between *the property* of a thing and *its accident*. They chose to call that a *property* that seemed to *follow of necessity* from the understanding of the essential nature of a subject. That "man has a nervous system" refers to such a property. This they called a *generic property*. They further divided property into *specific* and *individual*. The statement, "man is a tool-making animal," refers to a *specific property*. That Alexander Campbell was born on Sept. 12, 1788 or June, 1786, County Antrim, Ireland, refers to an *individual property*. While a property is an attribute which is peculiar to a subject it is not obviously a part of its very essence. And so for this reason, we wouldn't ordinarily include this in the definition of the thing. But notice that it is commensurate with the subject itself so that the subject just can't be thought of as functioning properly without these kinds of properties. An *accident*, on the other hand, is an attribute which has *no necessary connection* with the understanding of the essential nature of a thing. In other words, it is not included in the essence of the thing. It is an attribute which may or may not belong to a subject. When we say "a man is virtuous," for instance, it isn't essential to the nature of man to so be, for there are so few virtuous men. This is an accident. Let us then for convenience divide what we have been calling accidental forms into properties and accidents. By making this distinction, perhaps, along with recognizing that every single being has an essential form in which both properties and accidents inhere we will be better able to understand the essential nature or form of the church, its essential properties necessary for it to function adequately and what are mere accidents which it may and may not have. After all, such a distinction is merely using our heads to understand anything and these distinctions can be found in any good textbook on logic.

It will help us see the inadequacy of such a statement as the following: "The New Testament says nothing about the form this church should assume in human society in which it exists. We are not told in which way the church should be the same or different from other groups and associations. In matters of church order we find great variations between the different communities mentioned."<sup>6</sup> This quote is taken from one of the outstanding Protestant theologians and probably represents the opinion of many. He has followed the lead of Karl Holl, who seemingly based his conclusions on

the fact that the Jerusalem churches and the churches established by Paul were very different in some respects. This has led a man like Garrison to suggest that there was no church in New Testament times that can be restored.<sup>7</sup> Since such considerations do strike at the very heart of the great Restoration Plea, it is necessary that we take account of them and make a careful study of the relevant texts.

First of all, let us admit that there were variations and differences in the churches of New Testament times. There can be little doubt that the organization of the church with the exception of the apostles was something that grew gradually, perhaps as need arose. And it may well be that the church in Jerusalem and most of the Jewish churches were not entirely organized in the same way as the churches the apostle Paul established. There is certainly some indication that in Jerusalem they honored men in a way calling them "pillars" which the Apostle Paul was not inclined to do. However, we do know that they had elders in the Jerusalem church, for when the controversy over "circumcision" and "eating of meats" arose they were present along with the brethren and the apostles in that first great conference in Jerusalem to determine these important issues.

But before we take account of these apparent differences between the churches let us first seek for what they had in common, that which set them apart from the synagogue of the Jews, from the pagan mystery cults, from the various associations of the Roman world, that which set them apart and enabled Paul to refer to the church as "the body of Christ." In this way, perhaps, we will best be able to understand the differences and divergencies that seemingly arise. It must be admitted, first of all, that the focal point of these early Christian communities, be they Jewish or Gentile was faith in Jesus Christ as the divine son of the living God. That confession which is recorded in Matthew 16:18 became normative for every believer. This distinguished him from the pagans. This distinguished him from the rest of the Jewish community, if he were a Jew. When Cæsar would strike at the very heart of the gospel message, it was with a counter-confession that Cæsar, not Christ, was Lord. Perhaps the most primitive form of this confession is preserved in Acts 8:37 where Philip baptized the eunuch from Ethiopia after he had made the statement, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."<sup>8</sup> A Christian was one who believed this formula and who had on the basis of it submitted to the commandments of Christ. The divinity and lordship of Jesus of Nazareth was the focal point. This all Christians had in common.

Just as the Word that became flesh, the God-man, had both a divine and a human nature, so his church, which is *his body*, is made up on the human side of men and women who have believed and obeyed the gospel. But there is the divine side also to the church.

Christ is specifically called its head. It is also a Spirit-filled body, "for by one Spirit," said the Apostle Paul, "were you all baptized into one body and were all made to partake of the same spirit."<sup>9</sup> The human side is Spirit filled, filled with the Divine Spirit which is granted unto those who submit to Jesus Christ.

But there were differences between the churches that Paul established and the churches in Judea, especially at Jerusalem. Certainly the attitude of leading brethren in Jerusalem was never that entirely compatible with what we find expressed in Paul's epistles concerning such things as eating of meats, circumcision, keeping the law. One of the earliest controversies in the church was over this very point. And though it was officially solved in favor of the gospel as the Apostle Paul preached it, this Judaizing spirit plainly continued to exist. But this should cause no great concern among Christians today, for the Apostle Paul is the Apostle to the Gentile world. Clearly the Apostle himself makes a distinction between the ministry of Peter and himself.<sup>10</sup> If we do discern differences between the Jewish communities and the Gentile churches, this is no reason for despair. We will follow the Apostle to the Gentiles. If we make this kind of distinction, which certainly we are obliged to do if we follow the teaching of the New Testament concerning the church, then the divergencies which are recognizable in the New Testament church do not really affect the unity and organization of that branch of Christianity which most concerns us. There can be no doubt that those churches which Paul established and those which were directly influenced by him had many characteristics in common.

I think, however, we make a mistake when we suggest that the church of New Testament times was not organized on a basis larger than the local congregation, for it is clear that the Apostle Paul was concerned directly with each congregation he had established and was looked to as the final arbiter of all questions. The New Testament church was apostolic in its organization. The apostles were the final authority. Today they still are in those *words* which they have left concerning the life and order of the church of Christ. They still judge spiritual Israel.<sup>11</sup> Each local congregation, however, was organized separately and had its own *elders* and apparently its own *deacons* when men were qualified to meet the requirements of these high offices.<sup>12</sup> Paul elaborates with great clarity on the formal properties of the New Testament church in Ephesians and 1 Corinthians. These passages read as follows: "And he gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some shepherds and teachers with a view to the perfecting of the saints, for work of the service, for building up of the body of Christ."<sup>13</sup> "And certain did God set in the assembly (ecclesia) first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then works of power, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, kinds of tongues."<sup>14</sup> Paul's address to the Ephesian elders as recorded by Luke makes it certain that the pastors or shep-

herds referred to in Ephesians 4:11 are overseers, episkopos. "Take heed therefore to yourselves and to all the flock wherein the Holy Spirit set you overseers to *shepherd* the assembly of God."<sup>15</sup> That the episkopos was the same person as the presbuteras, that elders and pastors were the same can, of course, easily be established. There is, however, no indication in Paul's writings that he recognized an episcopal organization of the church where one bishop overruled elders under him. Although deacons are not mentioned in the passages we noticed above, there were deacons in all of the churches that were set in order according to the will of Christ. These offices must be considered a part of his church and we must consider these from the standpoint of the church as the body, essential properties, those kinds of properties that are due to a thing before it can properly fulfill its function. Although the church may exist without them, it cannot bring about the perfecting of the saints without them. Yet there are many *accidental forms* involved in the order of the church: how the church carries on its mission program, where the church meets, what time of day, the exact order of service, the education of the members in the Scriptures, the benevolent work and the way it is to be conducted. All of these would seem to flow out of the order of the church that we have reviewed and therefore are subject to the needs of time and place. To bind a certain way of carrying on the general commandment to go preach the gospel to every creature would be illogical. To bind a certain method of appointment of elders and their ordination might also be considered in this category of what is merely accidental. To bind mere *custom* on the church would be the same sort of mistake. Customs change, man's way of doing things progresses. But we notice all of this only to emphasize the fact that it is possible for the reader to identify the church of the Lord by its form in New Testament times.

If we are to believe the New Testament that Christ chose Paul as his ambassador to the Gentile world then why is it not possible to restore the church along the lines as set forth in the writings concerning Paul as recorded in Acts and the epistles of Paul? Of course, some of the divergencies in the churches must be seen from the standpoint of the *growth* of the church. It would be absurd to expect the first assembly as we discover it on that great Pentecost to look and act just like the churches did fifty years later when they had been organized under the inspired direction of the holy Apostles. By making a descriptive analysis of the epistles of Paul it is a very simple thing to reconstruct the order of those churches which he established and nurtured by his apostolic authority.

Divergencies can be explained as due to the progressive revelation of the will of Christ, the head, the needs of the church as they arose, the first century being no doubt normative in this respect for every generation. But they are also due to the fact that the gospel was first preached to the Jews and then to the Gentiles and some of the

Jews apparently were not willing to accept fully the implication of this gospel which must be preached to all the world. It was not the purpose of this paper to discuss in detail the various aspects of the form of the New Testament church but only to indicate that such can be done and that the New Testament church can be identified. Let us notice further, then, with respect to those churches established by the Apostle Paul which we have concluded must be normative for us today since the most of us fall within that branch of the human race known as Gentile. Paul makes no difference between priesthood and laity. All the members of every congregation are called saints. Each saint is privileged to approach the throne of God without a mediation of anyone. They had a consciousness of being different from the old Jewish synagogue and in fact considered themselves no longer under the law, but under grace. Each member had received the earnest of the spirit and some, or perhaps most, had received miraculous powers whereby they could speak in tongues they had not learned, could heal and manifest unusual powers. However, in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul seems to indicate that such special powers were to cease with time, likening the church in its growth to the growth of the child to manhood, when it no longer needed the pedagogical supports of childhood. But there is no indication throughout the writings of Paul that the basic organization of the church was ever to be changed and he emphasized over and over again the church as the body of Christ. Christ is its head, there is room for no other.

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<sup>1</sup>Acts 2:42, 43

<sup>2</sup>Acts 6:1-6

<sup>3</sup>Acts 8:14-16

<sup>4</sup>Acts 14:23

<sup>5</sup>Titus 5:1-16

<sup>6</sup>Eduard Schweizer, "Unity and diversity in the New Testament Teaching Regarding the church," *Theology Today*, January, 1957.

<sup>7</sup>W. E. Garrison, *Religion Follows the Frontier* (New York: Harpers, 1931).

<sup>8</sup>Regardless of whether we accept this as to be found in the original text or not, it does represent a very ancient form of the confession of all who would become members of Christ's ecclesia.

<sup>9</sup>1 Cor. 12:13

<sup>10</sup>Gal. 2:7, 8

<sup>11</sup>Luke 22:30

<sup>12</sup>1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-16

<sup>13</sup>Eph. 4:11-12

<sup>14</sup>1 Cor. 12:28

<sup>15</sup>Acts 20:28

Note: For more on the subject of "definition," see: H.W.B. Joseph, *Introduction to Logic*, Oxford U. Press, 1942, Chap. IV, pp. 66-110

Noelai Hartman, *Logic*, pp. 47-50

Aristotle's *Topics*, a, iv; 101-b-17 to 25; viii

# The Unity of the Church in Paul

Abraham J. Malherbe

The modern ecumenical discussion has revived interest in the study of the unity of the early church. This discussion is frequently characterized by a misunderstanding which equates diversity with disunity. One extreme view holds that there was no real unity in the primitive church; that, on the contrary, diversity was its main characteristic.<sup>1</sup> This means, then, that the New Testament could not be the authority for measures toward unity. A more moderate, but quite similar view is that which recognizes some diversity in the New Testament, and draws a negative lesson from it, viz., since there were differences within the Apostolic church, they can be allowed to exist in the "coming great church."<sup>2</sup> A more positive approach, but one that is somewhat overstated, emphasizes the unity in the New Testament to the extent that the lessons which could be learned from the exhortation to unity, are lost.<sup>3</sup> An approach which begins in a more promising manner is that represented by John Knox.<sup>4</sup> In attempting a solution, all the tools of modern scholarship are used in analyzing the situation in the New Testament with regard to the unity of the church. After the problems have been laid bare, however, difficulty is experienced in finding a solution for them, for there would be a lack of an authority. The New Testament itself is not considered a suitable criterion, for it is regarded as the product of a disunited church. In the final analysis, this approach ends in a weak vote for the episcopate, for "the episcopate is the historically developed means and symbol of the unity and continuity of the church."<sup>5</sup>

A more realistic approach is to recognize the diversity which exists, and not to confuse it with disunity which is condemned by the New Testament writers, especially by Paul. Paul's writings reveal a deep concern for the unity of the church. We should beware, however, of regarding the concept of unity as the creation of Paul. Jesus Himself was the father of the idea. The idea of unity is implicit in Matthew 16:18, and in His view of Himself as the Shepherd (John 10:16), and as the Vine (John 15). It is clear in the High-priestly Prayer (John 17:11ff., 20 ff.). As a founder of churches, the problem of unity was continually in the foreground in Paul's thinking. He thus speaks of the unity, not only of the local churches, but also of the universal church. The theme of unity is more emphasized in his later epistles, for, as time passed, the disruptive forces appeared in the churches and needed his attention.

The chief factors of unity for Paul are "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:5). These factors are also mentioned in connection with the church's unity in the other two epistles which deal

especially with this problem. Thus in 1 Cor. 1, Paul is concerned with the person of Christ, with baptism, and with the message that he preached, to which faith was the response. Also in Col. 2:6-12 it is the person of Christ whom one puts on by baptism as an act of faith that is opposed to the beguiling philosophies.

#### A. ONE LORD

It is recognized today that the church cannot be separated from the person of Christ. This is particularly clear in Paul's thinking. "The Pauline Ecclesiology is fundamentally nothing other than a Christology, even as the Christology of the Apostle coincides with his soteriology."<sup>6</sup> This becomes clear in Paul's treatment of situations like the one in Corinth. His aim in 1 Cor. 1:10-17 is doubtless of a practical character, to do away with the cleavage in the congregation. "The remarkable thing, however, is that Paul argues in this occasional question from the point of view of principle, basing his proofs on the unity between Christ and the church."<sup>7</sup> Christ is the representative of the new People of God, the church, and there is an identity of representation between Him and the church. In this relationship lies the motivation for the unity of the church.

This unity between Christ and His church is most obvious in Ephesians and Colossians. In these epistles the *ekklesia* is for the first time spoken of in the sense of the one universal *ekklesia*. This concept of universality comes less "from the actual circumstances of the actual Christian communities than from a development of thoughts respecting the place and office of the Son of God: His leadership was felt to involve the unity of all those who were united in Him."<sup>8</sup> The one church is not made up of many churches, but of believers who become partakers of Christ's body. "The One Ecclesia includes all members of all partial Ecclesiae; but its relations to them are all direct, not mediate. . . . The unity of the universal Ecclesia as (Paul) contemplated it . . . is a truth of theology and religion, not a fact of what we call ecclesiastical politics."<sup>9</sup>

The oneness between Jesus and the church is expressed in different figures which are used to describe the church. Although the primary relationship of unity is between Jesus and the church, it will be seen that this unity results in a very real and practical oneness of the members of the church. Particularly relevant in this respect are the metaphors of the church as body, building, and bride.

#### THE BODY

Paul frequently speaks of the church as the body of Christ. The use of the metaphor of the body was common in the time of Paul, and the debate continues unabated as to the origin of Paul's usage. Among English writers there is a tendency to see Greek and Latin paganism as the background against which Paul uses it.<sup>10</sup> Two streams of thought, Stoicism and Gnosticism, employed it. Among even the earliest Stoics, the *kosmos* was regarded as a "living being" of which God was the head.<sup>11</sup> Among the later Stoics, the universe

as a whole, of which men form a part, was thought of as a body,<sup>12</sup> with men the members of this great body.<sup>13</sup> In the same period the Empire came to be thought of as a body of which the ruler was the head.<sup>14</sup> As the result of this unity, if one part of the body was injured, the injury was considered to have been sustained by the whole body.<sup>15</sup>

German scholars generally see more likelihood in Gnosticism as being an influencing factor.<sup>16</sup> Following the *religionsgeschichtliche* approach, the Primal Man myths of Iranian and Persian thought are considered to be the source of the metaphor of the body. Fascinating though the speculations of the Heavenly Man may be, however, no literary or even conceptual dependence of Paul on the Gnostic myths has been proven. The weakness of the *religionsgeschichtliche* approach is its methodology. Propounders of the theory do not study each of the Gnostic systems in detail, but construct a pan-Gnostic system without regard to geographical, temporal or source relationships.<sup>17</sup> This mystical and mythical system, whose most mythical element seems to be its very existence, is then regarded as having had an insidious effect on everything in the ancient world. The existence of Gnostic systems as early as the New Testament period is to be seriously doubted.<sup>18</sup> That there were certain Gnostic tendencies which were making inroads into Christianity and had to be combated, is clear from the Johannine and Pauline epistles. To regard these motifs as systems which influenced Paul and John, however, requires more courage than could be inspired by a judicial evaluation of the evidence at hand.

In his tendentious work,<sup>19</sup> W. D. Davies has tried to show that Paul's use of the metaphor goes back to Rabbinic usage. The Rabbis conceived of a unity of mankind in Adam. Their doctrine implied that the physical body of Adam and its very method of formation symbolized the real oneness of mankind. Although we might agree that Paul's anthropology is more Hebrew than Greek,<sup>20</sup> there is nothing in the Rabbinic usage which requires us to look to it as the origin of Paul's usage. There is no evidence that "the body of Adam" was used to designate mankind. Neither does Paul anywhere directly relate the phrase, "the Body of Christ" to the speculation of the First and Second Adam, as Davies implies.<sup>21</sup>

The most that can be done in this area of background study to Paul's usage is to regard his use of these terms as possible points of contact in conception and terminology, and especially the latter. This is certainly possible in the cases where the terminology has been proved to have been current in Paul's time.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, if one is to grant Paul at least as much originality as the Stoics or Gnostics or Rabbis, there is no reason why he should not independently have used the same terminology for the same reason that it occurred to them, viz., its suitability to express what he had in mind.

Paul speaks of the church as the body of Christ especially in the letters which emphasize the unity of the church. It thus appears in 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4; and Col. 3. Compare also Rom. 12:3-8, which is at the beginning of the section (chs. 12-15) in Romans, which contain repeated exhortations to mutual consideration and brotherly love. The main point that the metaphor conveys, so far as it concerns the idea of unity, is the necessity of harmony in the practical local situations in the churches. For this harmony to exist, it is necessary that the members of the body have mutual respect for each other (Rom. 12:3), and that there be a recognition of their interdependence (1 Cor. 12:14-26). Particularly in the discharging of their offices in the local work of the congregation are members to realize that they are part of the one body and are to act accordingly (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11).

That it is not possible for the church to fulfill its function as the body of Christ in a state of disunity, is clear from the fact that everything is to be done in love (Rom. 12:9ff.; 1 Cor. 12:31; 13:13; Eph. 4:15, 16). Indeed, it is love that binds everything together in perfect harmony (Col. 3:14). Only when these conditions exist, does the body of Christ experience the growth which is the purpose of its existence.<sup>23</sup> The practical situation is to exist for the members of the body to "attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood" (Eph. 4:12, 13). One enters the body in the act of baptism (1 Cor. 12:13). The continual effort to attain to the unity and maturity in Christ then involves the moral and religious life of the Christian (Col. 2:16-3:4). It also requires an adherence to Christian doctrine. In order for the body of Christ to grow, it is necessary to be faithful to the teaching which has Jesus at its centre, and which is necessary for unity with Him (Eph. 4:13-15; cf. Rom. 16:17, 18).

Paul thus makes it clear that there is no unity of the Body of Christ, unless there is a recognition of the centrality of Christ as to purpose and authority for the Body. These two factors are to be in evidence in the local situations to be of any value in the matter of the church.

### THE BUILDING

This metaphor is very closely related to that of the Body.<sup>24</sup> Paul uses the noun, *oikodome*, with the meaning of "building," only twice (1 Cor. 3:9; Eph. 2:21), but he frequently uses it of the process of building, instead of as referring to that which is built (2 Cor. 10:8; 12:19; 13:10; 1 Cor. 14:25).<sup>25</sup> Jesus Himself is the foundation, *themelios*, of this building (1 Cor. 3:11) and is also its chief cornerstone, *akrogoniatos*, upon which the whole house of God is built (Eph. 2:20).<sup>26</sup> In Him "the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:21).

As the structure is founded upon Christ, so the process of building also takes place by virtue of His authority. In writing of a situa-

tion where strife and disunity actually existed, Paul reiterates that the Lord had given him authority to build, and he therefore demands their respect (2 Cor. 10:8; cf. 2 Cor. 12:19; 13:10). His preaching he regarded as the laying of the foundation, for it embodied the message of Jesus (1 Cor. 3:9-11; cf. Rom. 15:20). It was the purpose of the whole Christian ministry to edify, "build up" the congregation (Eph. 4:12, 16), and this was particularly emphasized of the preaching of the prophets (1 Cor. 14:3). The metaphors of growth and building are mixed, yet the dominating thought is quite clear: The church, built on Christ, is to attain to perfection through Him. The metaphor, then, represents a picture of the church in which Jesus is the basis of its existence, as well as the factor which binds its members together. To be united with Christ is to be inextricably united with those who have also accepted Him.

### THE BRIDE

Paul, concerned with the falling away of the Corinthians as the result of false teaching, compares the church to the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:1-6).<sup>27</sup> Doctrinal error is the same as infidelity to Jesus. As her husband, He has authority over her, and she is to be subject to Him (Eph. 5:21-27). Because of His love for the church, shown by sanctifying her by giving Himself for her, and by nourishing and cherishing her, Christ and the church become one, for "a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one" (Eph. 5:25-32; Gen. 2:24). The concept of unity, as realized by love and subjection, is therefore in the forefront of Paul's thinking when he uses this metaphor.

### CONCLUSION.

It has been seen that the central position of Christ in the church has certain practical implications for Paul and that these are brought out by the metaphors which he uses for the church. Allegiance to the one Lord involves the unity in the fullest sense, of the structure, ministry, doctrine, edification, moral life, and ideals of the church. By virtue of being "in Christ," the believer is on the way to maturity. This is not attained through crass individualism or in isolation, or by one's own will, but is possible only insofar as one is partaker of and contributor to what Professor H. Wheeler Robinson has taught us to call the "corporate personality." Only when there is this solidarity between the aggregate of believers and their Lord, is there Christian unity.

### B. ONE FAITH

The One Lord makes the unity of the church both possible and necessary. The relationship that the believer sustains with Him is one of faith, and it is therefore natural that there is to be one faith. *Pistis*, "faith," is used by Paul to describe, subjectively, confidence in Christ (Rom. 10:9, 17), objectively, the body of doctrine that is to be believed (Rom. 1:5; Gal. 1:23; 1 Tim. 4:1); and by metonymy, the obedience of faith (Rom. 1:8; Tit. 2:10).<sup>28</sup>

Faith, in the subjective sense, comes from the preaching of the message of Christ (Rom. 10:8, 17) and results in a verbal confession (Rom. 10:10). Paul states that one cannot be brought to make this confession, except by the work of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3), and this is said in a context in which he emphasizes the unity of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4-11). The oneness of the Spirit therefore points to the oneness of the faith that is kindled in the believer. The object of this trust, moreover, is Christ Himself, particularly as He is announced in the preaching as the crucified and resurrected Lord.<sup>29</sup> Paul thought it was his work as a preacher and apostle to bear testimony to the fact that *all* men can be ransomed by the *one* mediator, who is between the *one* God and men (1 Tim. 2:5-7; cf. 2 Tim. 1:9-11). Accordingly, he uses *marturion*, "testimony," pre-eminently for the witness to the death and resurrection of the Lord.<sup>30</sup> For Paul there is only one gospel, the testimony that he bears (Gal. 1:8; 2 Thess. 1:8-10), and this is that Jesus Christ is Lord (2 Cor. 4:5). This preaching of His death and resurrection brings forth the confession that He is Lord (1 Cor. 12:3). To say that He is Lord, indeed, is to confess His resurrection (Rom. 10:9; Phil. 2:9-11). Faith, in the subjective sense, then, is kindled by one Spirit, has one Lord as its object, who is presented to men by preaching which has one theme, and is expressed in one confession.

The unity of the faith, understood in an objective sense, lay close to Paul's heart even at the beginning of his literary career, and it increased as the danger of apostasy increased.<sup>31</sup> Already in his first letters he feels the necessity of emphasizing that there is only one gospel (Gal. 1:6ff.), and to mention that he withstood Peter because he was not "straightforward about the truth of the gospel" (Gal. 2:14). He requires adherence to the doctrines which had been received from him (2 Thess. 2:15; cf. 3:6), and orders that failure to do so should cause disfellowship (2 Thess. 3:14). The Corinthians maintained the traditions which he had delivered to them (1 Cor. 11:2), but they are exhorted to agree, to be of the same mind and the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10). His prayer for the Romans is that they live in harmony with each other, in accord with Christ Jesus, so that they with one voice may glorify God (Rom. 15:5, 6). Dissensions and difficulties are regarded as the results of opposition to the doctrines that they had been taught (Rom. 16:17, 18).

In his prison epistles, Paul is still more interested in the unity of the church, particularly as it is related to doctrine. This "unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God" is the objective for which Christ instituted the various offices in the church, "so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine. . . ." (Eph. 4:11ff.). Concerning false doctrines, Paul admonishes the Colossians (Col. 2:4ff.) of the sufficiency of Christ in all spiritual matters. As they had received Christ, they were to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and

established in the faith, just as they had been taught (Col. 2:6, 7). They were to be on the watch against human wisdom with empty deceit (Col 2:8). In an attempt to nip the incipient division in the bud in Philippi, Paul wishes to hear that they "stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27). Again, he asks, "complete my joy by being of the same mind" (Phil. 2:2, 3), the disposition required being the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5).

More interesting yet are Paul's Pastoral Epistles. As the danger of digression increased, and the end of his life drew near, he was more concerned with the care for the "sound" or "good" doctrine. We hear of people whose faith had suffered shipwreck (1 Tim. 1:19); who depart from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1; 6:10); who oppose the truth (2 Tim. 3:8ff.); who upset the faith of others (2 Tim. 2:18). In these passages "faith" is used in the objective sense and is a synonym for the special expressions, "sound doctrine," "good doctrine." How strongly Paul felt about heretical teaching and teachers is illustrated by his description of them. The teaching is called "godless chatter" (1 Tim. 6:20) and is said to act like gangrene (2 Tim. 2:16f). The teachers of these doctrines are fierce wolves who speak perverse things (Acts 20:28ff.); they are dogs (Phil. 3:2) and have a corrupt mind and counterfeit faith (2 Tim. 3:8). They were to be treated accordingly. Some were delivered to Satan (1 Tim. 1:20), while others were to be rebuked (Titus 1:13) and to be taught, so that they could escape from the snare of the devil, after having been caught by him (2 Tim. 2:23ff.) After repeatedly admonishing a factious man, the man of God is not to have anything to do with him, for his actions will show that he is perverted and sinful (Titus 3:10ff.).

Subjective and objective faith are not unrelated or independent of each other. As the former is the acceptance of God's revelation in Christ, so the latter is the explication of that revelation and of the believer's relationship with Christ. This is brought out clearly in Paul's description of the causes of disunity in doctrine, and of his antidote to disunity. Dissensions are caused because the false teachers do not serve Christ, but have selfish motives (Rom. 16:17, 18). Anyone who does not agree with the teaching of Jesus is puffed up with conceit and knows nothing. He has a "morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, base suspicions" (1 Tim. 6:4). To oppose these men, Paul goes to the source of the trouble. He suggests that the mind of Christ will prevent dissensions (Phil. 2:5), that Christians who are troubled by speculations should continue to live in Him, "rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith" (Col. 2:6-8). Instead of taking part in controversies, the Lord's servant is to manifest the characteristics of his Master (2 Tim. 2:22-26).

In summary, then, there is a unity of "the faith" because there is one Lord. As He determines the content of the faith, so also does

He determine the believer's relationship with it. Allegiance to the faith is never mere fidelity to certain doctrines. It is a dedication to the Lord, which is reflected in adherence to His teachings. To dissent from the body of doctrine is therefore an indication of a lack of the proper personal relationship with Christ.

Paul's concept of the unity of the faith is reflected in his view of the ministries of the church. It is significant that he discusses the offices and functions of the ministry particularly in those epistles which deal pre-eminently with the problem of the unity of the church. In 1 Cor. 12 the plurality of the spiritual gifts and the accompanying tendencies toward disunity cease to be a problem when Paul emphasizes that they are the working of the *one* and the *same* Spirit (vs. 4-11). The various functions are to be performed harmoniously, since the ministers are members of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27, 28). The purpose of these gifts is to build up the body (1 Cor. 14:3, 27). Likewise, in Rom. 12:4-8, the figure of the body, with its connotation of oneness, is used again in describing the various functions. So also is it used in Eph. 4:11-16, where it is more explicitly stated that the purpose of the offices is the attainment of the unity of the faith (v. 13).<sup>32</sup>

### C. ONE BAPTISM

Paul mentions baptism in his discussion of the unity of the church, for it is the act by which man becomes one with Christ (Rom. 6:3, 4; Gal. 3:27). It fits in well with Paul's thinking in Eph. 4:4-6.<sup>33</sup> The response to the one Lord, is one of faith, which is outwardly expressed in the one baptism.<sup>34</sup> The believer puts Christ on in baptism (Gal. 3:27). This act also places him in a special relationship with other members of the body, for it is baptism that creates the unity of Christians (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28). This unity transcends differences as to nationality, social position, and sex.<sup>35</sup> A similar list is found in Col. 3:11, which does not explicitly refer to baptism, but whose main point is also that the differences were effaced by Christ. Verses 9, 10 of this section, however, have reminiscences of 2:11, 12; Gal. 3:27, which do refer to baptism. It is clear, then, that Paul conceives of baptism as the act by which man puts on Christ and at the same time becomes part of a group of believers who constitute a church of Christ.

While baptism in a sense creates the church as a unit, the other Christian ordinances occupy an equally prominent role in maintaining that unity.<sup>36</sup> Thus singing is mentioned in a context in which the keynote is harmony and mutual edification (Col. 3:12-17). It is probably significant that the command is to sing to one another (cf. Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). All things are to be done for edification (1 Cor. 14:26). The same is also true of prophesying (1 Cor. 14:3, 4).

The Lord's Supper, by its very nature, is more explicit.<sup>37</sup> The only passages in which Paul discusses the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 10, 11), are in a context in which his main point is the unity of

the church. Christ is here not merely the motivating power towards oneness, but, as in baptism, is the real basis of it. The participation in the blood and the body of Christ includes as a necessary consequence, unity among Christians, for, "since there is one loaf, we who are *many* are *one* body, for we all partake of the same loaf" (1 Cor. 10:17).<sup>88</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Our investigation has shown that for Paul the real reason for the unity of the church is Christ. Because there is only one Lord, there is also only one Faith, and one Baptism, which expresses faith.

<sup>1</sup>E. W. Parsons, *The Religion of the New Testament*, New York, 1939; E. F. Scott, *The Varieties of New Testament Religion*, New York, 1943.

<sup>2</sup>C. T. Craig, *The One Church - In the Light of the New Testament*, Nashville, 1951.

<sup>3</sup>Floyd V. Filson, *One Lord, One Faith*, Philadelphia, 1953; A. M. Hunter, *The Message of the New Testament*, Philadelphia, 1944.

<sup>4</sup>John Knox, *The Early Church and the Coming Great Church*, Nashville, 1955.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>6</sup>E. Percy, *Der Leib Christi: In den paulinischen Homologumena und Antilegomena*, Lund, 1942, p. 45. For a similar view among leaders of the Restoration Movement on the American frontier, see Roy Ward, "The Nineteenth Century Restoration Movement and the Plea for Unity," *Restoration Quarterly* II (1958), p. 82f.

In connection with the close relationship between Christology and the church, note the cosmic unity which is attained through Christ's resurrection (Eph. 1:16-23; Col. 1:15-20). The resurrection, the fact upon which the church is built, is also the act by which God made the kosmos subject for the church. In a similar manner, the division in the human race is overcome by the saving act of Christ (Eph. 2:11-22). For the figure of the *polis* in describing this unity, see K. L. Schmidt, *Die Polis in Kirche und Welt*, Basel, 1939.

<sup>7</sup>Stig Hanson, *The Unity of the Church in the New Testament*, Uppsala, 1946, p. 75.

<sup>8</sup>F. J. A. Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*, p. 148.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>10</sup>cf. W. L. Know, *St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles*, Cambridge, 1939, p. 161.

<sup>11</sup>J. von Arnim, *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta*, Leipzig, 1903-05, I, p. 153, 157, 110; III, 4.

<sup>12</sup>Epictetus, II, 10:3,4; Marcus Aurelius, *Meditationes* II, 1; Seneca, *De Ira* II, 31-36.

<sup>13</sup>Seneca, *Ep.* 95, 52.

<sup>14</sup>Seneca, *De Clementia*, I, 5, 1.

<sup>15</sup>Cicero, *Verr.* v. 67; *Pro Balbo* c. 13; cf. a similar interdependence in I Cor. 12.

<sup>16</sup>E. Kaesemann, *Leib und Leib Christi*, Tuebingen, 1933, pp. 59ff.; H. Schlier, *Theologisches Woerterbuch* III, pp. 675ff.; *Christus und die Kirche im Epheserbrief*, Tuebingen, 1930, pp. 42ff.; R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* I, New York, 1955, pp. 310ff.

<sup>17</sup>W. Bousset (*Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*, Goettingen, 1907) is the dean of the researchers in this field. He applies his method to Paul's relationship with Gnosticism in *Kyrios Christos* (3rd ed.), Goettingen

gen, 1926. For a criticism of his method, see H. H. Schaefer, *Urforn und Fortbildungen des manichaischen Systems*, pp. 73, 100.

<sup>16</sup>Cf. A. D. Nock's review of Hans Jonas' *Gnosis and spaetantiker Geist I*, in *Gnomon* XII (1936), p. 605; cf. also E. Haenchen, "Gab es eine vorchristliche Gnosis?", *Zeitschrift fuer Theologie und Kirche* 50 (1953), pp. 123-158.

<sup>17</sup>*Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, London, 1955, pp. 53-57.

<sup>20</sup>J. A. T. Robinson, *The Body*, London, 1952; Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* I, p. 190ff.

<sup>21</sup>E. Best, *One Body in Christ*, London, 1955, p. 92.

<sup>22</sup>That Paul used Stoic terminology on Mars Hill to express the Christian message in terms that his hearers could understand, for instance, is clear from Bertil Gaertner's definitive work, *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation*, Uppsala, 1955.

<sup>23</sup>The "growth" or "edification" of the church will be discussed below, under the discussion of the church as a building.

<sup>24</sup>cf. P. Bonnard, *Jesus-Christ edifiant son Eglise*, Neuchatel, 1928.

<sup>25</sup>Contra J. A. T. Robinson, *The Body*, p. 76, who states that every time Paul uses the term *oikodome*, he refers to the Body.

<sup>26</sup>For the difference between *themelios* and *akrogoniaios*, see V. Taylor, *The Names of Jesus*, pp. 93-99, and Jeremias in *Theologisches Woerterbuch* I, p. 792; IV, p. 278. *Themelios* would be the ordinary foundation, and *akrogoniaios* the top stone which holds the whole structure together.

<sup>27</sup>According to some researchers (Schlier, *Christus und die Kirche im Epheserbrief*; Bousset, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*, p. 267ff.) This is a Gnostic view that influenced Paul. However, it is more probable that Paul remembered Jesus' use of the figure of the bridegroom, e.g., Matt. 9:15; 25:1-13, and that he applied His emphasis on the indissolubility of the marriage relationship (Matt. 5:32; 19:4ff.) to the relationship between Christ and the church.

<sup>28</sup>For these different usages, see R. Milligan, *The Scheme of Redemption*, p. 479ff.; Burton, *Galatians* (I.C.C.), pp. 478-485; Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* I, pp. 314-324; Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*.

<sup>29</sup>Cf. I Cor. 1:23; 2:2-6; 15:1-3; Gal. 3:1; Rom. 10:8, 9. See C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development*, 1954, pp. 9-13.

<sup>30</sup>I Cor. 1:6; 2:1, 2; II Thess. 1:10; I Tim. 2:6; II Tim. 1:8. The only place (I Cor. 15:15) in which he uses the verb, *marturein*, of his preaching, is also used of the resurrection.

<sup>31</sup>For this section of the discussion of faith, see especially, P. I. Bratsiotis, "Paulus und die Einheit der Kirche," in *Studia Paulina*, Studies for Johannes de Zwaan, Haarlem, 1953, pp. 28-36.

<sup>32</sup>The Pastorals are explicit that, in the performance of the ministry, teachers should adhere to a standard, II Tim. 1:13, 14; 2:2, 15; 3:14-17; 4:2-4; Tit. 1:9.

<sup>33</sup>Hanson, *op. cit.*, p. 151, thinks that in Eph. 4:4-6 we have a paranesis of baptism, "or in any case a traditional formula in some way connected with baptism." For baptism and church unity in the Restoration Movement, see Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 84f.

<sup>34</sup>Baptism and faith are not two different things for Paul. Baptism is the action of faith, Gal. 3:26, 27; Col. 2:12 (cf. Mk. 16:16).

<sup>35</sup>Notice how the theme of unity is emphasized by Paul. "For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body" (I Cor. 12:13). "... you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:28).

<sup>36</sup>cf. Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, p. 26ff.

<sup>37</sup>For the problem of the Lord's Supper in the modern ecumenical discussion, see T. H. Mullin, "The Lord's Table and Unity of the Church," *Biblical Theology* 8 (1958) No. 1.

<sup>38</sup>Cf. *Didache* 9, 4 for the theme of unity in the Lord's Supper still present in the early church.

# HISTORICAL

## Ancient Concepts of the Church

William M. Green

In the New Testament the word "church" (Greek, *ekklesia*) is the regular term for the Christian community, whether referring to the whole body of believers or to a local congregation. The significance of the church, and its place in God's plan are most fully set forth in Paul's letters to the Ephesians and Colossians. There the church is said to be the body of which Christ is the head (Ephesians 1:22f.; Colossians 1:18, 24); it is sanctified and cleansed by him that it may be holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:26f.). The unity of the body is stressed: "There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:4f.). This statement agrees well with what Paul had written in his earlier letters: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all members . . . are one body, so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body . . . and were made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:12f.). "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ . . . for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:27f.)

For that church God provided a ministry: "And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ; till we all attain unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Ephesians 4:11-13). Of the offices named, those of apostles and prophets were recognized as temporary, while the work of pastors and teachers was entrusted to the bishops or elders of local congregations; these also had deacons to assist them. They were not specially designated as "priests," for this title was conferred on the whole Christian community (Revelation 1:6, etc.). They were not to "lord it over" the charge allotted to them, as the rulers of the Gentiles do (1 Peter 5:3; Matthew 20:25), but are to be examples to their flock. In fact, the common word for "ruler" (*archon*, often used for a ruler of a synagogue, of the Jews, of the Gentiles) is never used of any church official, although Christians are told to "Obey them that have the rule over you" (Hebrews 13:17; the phrase *tois hegoumenois hymon* means "your leaders"). The emphasis is upon teaching, concern for the flock, and exemplary life rather than upon rule and authority.

The second century witnessed the change from the church of the apostles and prophets to the church of bishops and synods, sometimes called the "ancient catholic church." The adjective "catholic,"

meaning "general" or universal," is first applied to the church by Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, who died for his faith in the reign of Trajan (98-117 A.D.) His letters, written to various churches, show especial concern about schism and heresy. Each church is exhorted to remain united under its bishop and its presbyters. No longer are these terms synonymous, as in the New Testament; a single bishop stands above the presbyters. To the church at Smyrna he writes: "Let no man do anything connected with the church without the bishop. . . . Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude also be; even as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic church" ch. 8, translated in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, I, 89f.). From the meaning "universal," the word "catholic" easily passes over to describe the "right" or "true" church. Thus the letter known as the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* (written about 155) is addressed "to all the congregations of the holy and catholic (i.e., universal) church in every place," and in the narrative Polycarp is said to be the bishop of "the catholic (i.e., true) church which is in Smyrna" (ANF, I, 39, 42).

After a bishop had been established in each city to maintain the unity of the church, or churches, under his rule, it remained quite possible for differences to arise between the bishops of different cities. A bishop might even give his support to a heresy. How, then, was the unity of the universal church to be maintained? A partial answer to this question was found in the second and third centuries by assemblies of bishops in various regions; these came to be called "provincial synods." The first of these seems to have been held in Asia Minor to deal with the movement launched some time after 150 by a Phrygian, Montanus. He and certain prophetesses were seized with a spirit of ecstasy, in which they proclaimed the imminent return of the Lord, who was to reign not in Jerusalem, but in a "New Jerusalem" in Phrygia. The movement spread, and gained followers in many places. A concerted resistance was evidently needed. Hence synods met in many regions, and at last the Montanists were driven out of the church and excommunicated (Eusebius, *Church History*, 5, 16, 10, translated in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, I, 232). Another series of synods was held before the end of the second century at the request of Victor, bishop of Rome, to settle the question of the date of Easter. This festival, as an annual celebration of Jesus' death and resurrection, had been the custom as early as the time of Polycarp (before 155), but with a difference between the churches of Asia and the church of Rome. The former kept the fourteenth of Nisan (of the Jewish calendar) as the day of the Lord's death, but Rome discarded the Jewish date and kept a Sunday as the anniversary of the resurrection. In the time of Victor (about 189-198) the presence of Asiatics in Rome who insisted on keeping their own customs made the question acute. So Victor summoned a synod of bishops in Rome, requesting Poly-crates of Ephesus and others to do the same in their regions. The

synods in Gaul, Pontus, Palestine, and Osrhoene were in agreement with Rome, but the bishops of Asia, led by Polycrates, announced their decision to abide by their ancient customs (Eusebius, *Church History*, 5, 23 f. NPNF 241 f.). Although Victor announced that all the Asiatic churches were excommunicated, he was rebuked for this by Irenæus, and the whole question remained unsolved. Evidently the Asiatic bishops were supreme in their own dioceses; provinces might be brought to unity by means of synods, but neither in Rome nor elsewhere was there an authority to enforce conformity upon a reluctant province.

In matters of essential doctrine, however, there was a general agreement among the churches throughout the world. The writings of the apostles and other inspired men of the first century were everywhere read in the churches, along with the Old Testament. Thus a "New Testament" was brought together as a necessary means of guarding the "deposit" of apostolic teaching, and a "canon" or list of inspired books was gradually completed. For the instruction of converts a creed, or summary of Christian belief, was drawn up to be memorized; this gradually took the form later known as the "Apostles' Creed." Thus upon the threefold basis of creed, canon, and episcopate rested the ancient catholic church.

The concept of this church is well defined by Irenæus. Born in Asia Minor and reared under the instruction of Polycarp, he migrated to Lyons, the chief city of central Gaul. There he was a presbyter before the persecution of 177, and later became bishop. His best known writing is the work *Against Heresies*. In refuting the Gnostic perversions of Christianity he points to the unity of the church throughout the world, and the unbroken succession of bishops in churches founded by the apostles. These bishops and their presbyters all Christians must obey, for the apostles gave them their own authority and the certain gift of truth (ANF, I, 330 f., 415, 497).

Tertullian, the African contemporary of Irenæus, insists on a similar defense of catholic doctrine. He would cut short the controversy with heretics by pointing to the churches which the apostles founded (such as Corinth, Philippi, Ephesus, Rome) as the depositories of the faith; they possess one tradition which is substantially the same everywhere. Each church has the creed, the canon of Scripture, and a succession of bishops; since the heretics have none of these, they do not deserve to be heard (*On Prescription against Heretics*, 32, 36. ANF, III, 258, 260). It had not as yet occurred to Tertullian that there might be a "falling away" in which the churches founded by apostles would depart from apostolic teaching. Later he came to admit this possibility. A puritan by temperament, Tertullian was alarmed by the worldliness which he saw in the church and turned to Montanism, which had a more rigorous discipline. He then writes in scorn of the Catholics, praising the Montanists as the only "spiritual" men.

The concept of the church which appears in the writings of Irenæus and Tertullian is further developed and clarified in the treatise of Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, *On the Unity of the Church*. Though it fills but nine pages in the translation of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (ANF, V, 421-429), it is commonly recognized as one of the most influential documents in the world. A schism had arisen in Carthage about the restoration of Christians who had denied the faith in the persecution of Decius in 250. The same question had led to a similar schism in Rome. With one, or both, of these questions in mind, Cyprian read his paper to the bishops assembled at the Council of Carthage in 251. More to be feared than persecution, he declares, is the craftiness of Satan, who has invented heresies and schisms by which he snatches men from the church. The unity of the church is established by Christ's words: "I say unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." To all the apostles he gives an equal power when he says: "Whosoever sins ye remit, they shall be remitted unto them," yet by beginning with Peter he sets forth the unity of his church. Paul also testifies to this unity by saying: "There is one body and one Spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism." The unity resides in the office of the bishop; the episcopate is a whole in which each bishop enjoys full possession. *Episcopatus unus est, cuius a singulis in solidum pars tenetur*; the language is that of a lawyer, indicating a joint ownership. As in a modern partnership, each partner has full capacity to act for all. Thus the unity of the church is secured, and as Cyprian adds, "no one can have God as his Father who does not have the church as his Mother."

Cyprian's theory of unity is clear. It resides in the unity of the bishops, each of whom is a successor of the apostles. Practically, their unity of action was achieved by councils, such as those which Cyprian called at Carthage. But not even the decision of a council impaired the rights of an individual bishop. Cyprian makes this clear in his address to the Seventh Council of Carthage (256), which discussed the rebaptism of heretics. Cyprian opened the council with these words: "It remains that upon this same matter each of us should bring forward what we think, judging no man, nor rejecting any one from the right of communion if he should think differently from us. For neither does any of us set himself up as bishop of bishops, nor by tyrannical terror does any compel his colleague to the necessity of obedience; since every bishop, according to the allowance of his liberty and power, has his own proper right of judgment, and can no more be judged by another than he himself can judge another. But let us all wait for the judgment of our Lord Jesus Christ" (ANF, V, 565).

This theory, however, leaves many problems unsettled. Much might be left to the liberty of individual bishops, but presumably there was a limit to such toleration beyond which a bishop would be marked for heresy and excommunicated. Furthermore, it pro-

vides no means by which unity may be achieved on an ecumenical, or world-wide, basis. This problem became acute when Stephen, bishop of Rome 254-257, intervened in opposition to Cyprian's position on rebaptism. Cyprian argued that Stephen can be wrong, even as Peter was when he was rebuked by Paul; Peter, however, did not make any arrogant claims on the basis of his primacy, but yielded to the truth which Paul asserted (*Epist.* 71,3. ANF, V, 377). Stephen held his ground, reasserted his claims as Peter's successor, and circulated a letter in which he announced the excommunication of those who practiced rebaptism. This aroused indignation in the East as well as the West. Firmilian of Cæsarea in Cappadocia informed Stephen that in excommunicating others he had only excommunicated himself (ANF, V, 396).

We have cited a passage from Cyprian in which he refers to the church as his "Mother." This metaphor first appears in the letter of the churches of Lyons and Vienne, describing the persecution they suffered in 177. There the church is represented as a virgin mother, sorrowing for her children who had denied the faith; then the courage of other martyrs restored the fallen to new courage: "And great joy came to their Virgin Mother: those whom she had brought forth dead through miscarriage, these were restored to her alive" (Eusebius, V, 1, 45; see J. C. Plumpe, *Mater Ecclesia*, 1943, 36). Tertullian used similar language in several passages, and from him Cyprian adopts and develops the idea. There are deep emotional overtones in the passages where Cyprian speaks of the joy and grief of the Mother Church as some of her children prove steadfast, others fail in the face of torture and death. Only through punitive discipline can the lapsed be gathered again into the bosom of the Mother Church. The church is the bride of Christ, to whom in lawful wedlock she bears her spiritual children. When some of the "confessors" who had suffered for Christ joined the faction of Novatian, Cyprian writes to induce them "to return to their Mother, that is, to the Catholic Church." (See passages cited in Plumpe, *op.cit.*, 81-108).

Another idea of major importance also reached its full development in Cyprian. This is the concept of the Christian ministry as a priesthood. Tertullian (about 200) first used the Latin word for "priest" (*sacerdos*) for the Christian bishop. At the same time he asserted the universal priesthood of all believers; the minister is a priest because he is the mouthpiece or representative of a priestly race. Cyprian goes further and takes the Old Testament passages which mention priests, as directly applying to the ministers of the church: they are entitled to honor, reverence, and obedience. On this point Lightfoot remarks: "As Cyprian crowned the edifice of episcopal power, so also he was the first to put forward without relief or disguise the sacerdotal assumptions; and so uncompromising was the tone in which he asserted them that nothing was left to his suc-

cessors but to enforce his principles and reiterate his language" (*St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, 258 f.).

With the rise of Constantine to power (306-337) the age of persecutions gave way to the age of the imperial church and the ecumenical councils. Constantine saw that the attempt to suppress Christianity by force had failed, hence reversed the policy of his pagan predecessors and sought to make the church a bulwark for his power. He had scarcely finished the wars which made him sole emperor (324) when he was confronted by a doctrinal controversy which threatened to destroy the unity of the church. Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria, had been excommunicated by a synod acting under the presidency of the bishop of that city. He left Egypt, to seek and find support elsewhere for his teaching. He insisted that the Father was prior to the Son, that the Son was not, but was created and made. When both sides called on Constantine to intervene he summoned a council of all the bishops to meet at Nicea in 325. When the bishops assembled, the Emperor took his seat on a throne before them and delivered an oration on peace and unity, then left them to their work. An attempt was made to draw up a formula for unity in simple and Scriptural terms, but at each step the Arians would offer their interpretation of the Scripture as a support of their special views. So it was decided to adopt a creed which should clearly embody the teaching accepted by the majority, along with "anathemas" to condemn the teaching of Arius. When this was done, the creed was signed by all the bishops except two. These, together with Arius, were condemned by the council, then banished to Illyricum by the Emperor.

It would seem that the Emperor's purpose was achieved, that the unity of the church was established by the Council and guaranteed by the police power of the State. But the friends of Arius were soon to undermine this achievement by discrediting their opponents, especially Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria. A number of councils were held, some amid scenes of great disorder, aiming to undo or to revise the work of Nicea. Only with the accession of Theodosius (379-395), called "the Great" for his services to the Catholic Church, was order reestablished. He deposed the Arian bishop of Constantinople, his capital city, and summoned a second ecumenical council to meet there in 381. To that council is generally ascribed the revised form of the "Nicene Creed" which has ever since been in use in both Eastern and Western Christendom.<sup>1</sup> This creed affirms belief "in one holy Catholic and apostolic Church." Thus one finds here what are commonly called the "four notes," or marks of the church: (1) it is *one*, as against the multitude of heresies; (2) it is *holy*, since it is the body of Christ; (3) it is *Catholic*, or universal in its extent; (4) it is *apostolic*, with a succession of bishops going back to the apostles.

The belief in "one holy Catholic and apostolic Church" was universally accepted, but schisms could still occur. The question then

was which party was the Catholic Church, and which the schism. The most famous and prolonged controversy of this sort took place in Africa. There, in the last great persecution (303-312) some of the clergy saved their lives by surrendering copies of the Scriptures, as ordered by the authorities. These were known as *traditores*, and (according to rigorist thinking) forever disqualified as priests or bishops. When Cecilian was consecrated bishop of Carthage in 311, the rigorists refused to accept him, on the ground that his consecrator had been a *traditor*. The schism thus begun lasted four centuries, deriving its name from the second and most famous schismatic bishop of Carthage, Donatus. When Augustine became bishop of Hippo in 395, he found himself involved in controversy with the Donatists. They professed to be the "one holy Catholic and apostolic" church, since they alone had a valid ministry, untainted with the sin of *traditio*. Their position became the more absurd as they themselves divided into factions: one Rogatus was the originator of a tiny schism in one village, yet he and his party made the same claim of catholicity as was made by the main body of Donatists. Nevertheless the Donatist movement spread to become a kind of national African revolt against the imperial church and against the wealthy Romanized population of Africa, and much violence resulted.

In his debates with the Donatists Augustine maintains, first, that the charges of *traditio* in the first place were unproven, and second, that if they had been true they did not justify the schism. The church can still fulfil its functions, even if its ministers are guilty of sin. The church on earth is a mixed body where tares grow with the wheat until God shall judge all and make the final separation. What, then, of the holiness of this mixed church? Here it was Tyconius, a Donatist, who gave Augustine his clue. He had spoken of a twofold division of the body of Christ. Augustine would correct him, and speak of "the true and the mixed body of the Lord, or the true and the counterfeit; because, not to speak of eternity, hypocrites cannot even now be said to be in him, although they seem to be in his church" (*On Christian Doctrine* 3, 32, 45. NPNF II, 569). The body of Christ is holy because of its relation to him, and only in that body can individuals attain holiness; yet they are not at present perfectly holy, else why should they pray each day for forgiveness of sins? The church is a mixed body which must await the last day for its perfection in holiness (See G. G. Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy*, 1950, 117).

The true body of the Lord is identical with what Augustine elsewhere calls "the City of God," for whose defense he wrote his greatest work. He explains that the human race is of two parts, "the one consisting of those who live according to man, the other of those who live according to God. And these we mystically call the two cities, are the two communities of men, of which the one is predestined to reign eternally with God, and the other to suffer eternal punishment with the devil" (*City of God*, 25, 1. NPNF II, 284).

The church that exists in this wicked world cannot be identical with the city of God, for in it there are many reprobate mingled with the good, as good and bad fish are mixed in a drag net, to be separated only in God's final judgment (*op.cit.*, 18, 49. NPNF II, 391). Yet we must not think of Augustine's distinction as equivalent to the modern notion of a visible and "invisible" church. For Augustine the church is a visible body, not yet purged of its unholy members, nor completed in its number, but entrusted with the gospel and the sacraments by which the elect are called to become citizens of the City of God. Angels, too, belong to that city, just as the angels of the Devil belong to his city. When thinking of the present age on earth, Augustine sometimes speaks of the City of God as identical with the church. Often it is afflicted and persecuted, but is still made strong and glorious by hope. It is "a city surpassingly glorious, whether we view it as it still lives by faith in this fleeting course of time, and sojourns as a stranger in the midst of the ungodly, or as it shall dwell in the fixed stability of its eternal seat, which it now with patience waits for, expecting . . . final victory and perfect peace."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 1950, 325. Kelly argues that "the council of Constantinople did in fact promulgate and give currency to the (revised Nicene) creed, but in doing so it did not conceive of itself as manufacturing a new creed."

<sup>2</sup>*City of God* 1, Preface. NPNF II, 1. For a summary of passages on the "city of God" and the "church" see J. E. C. Welldon's edition (1924), II, 647-651 and 686 f.)

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