

**THE**

**LOCAL, VISIBLE**

**EKKLESIA**

**BY**

**DR. J. P. BOYCE**

**Charleston: SMITH & WHILDEN, 229 KING STREET.**

**1857**

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Several years, ago, in the mid- 1970s, I purchased J. A. Broadus' **Biography of James P. Boyce**. In it, I found out about Dr. Boyce's work on ekklesia. Dr. Broadus referred to it as an unpublished work. I understood that to mean this work was never published in any form, not simply unpublished in a separate form. Soon thereafter I made arrangements with Dr. Ronald Deering, Curator at the Boyce Memorial Library at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, in Louisville, Ky., to try and find Dr. Boyce's unpublished work on ekkleia. Dr. Deering was very kind and helpful and gave me freedom to go through all the known works of Boyce, including all his estate papers. There were boxes and boxes of these. Brother Larry Burton, of Louisville, helped me in this investigation. After we looked for many, many hours, still we found nothing.

I had the set of *The Christian Review* in my personal library. After I sold these, I kept my notes on the important items in each volume. A few months ago, I ordered this work from The Historical Archives of The Southern Baptist Convention. When this work came back to me, I noted it briefly, and then put it aside. I knew it was a very good and important work which, to my knowledge, had never been published as a separate work. In the process of time, while gathering materials for a proposed www site on Christology, I noted some remarks from Dr. Boyce's Abstract of Theology in which he touches on the Church in the atonement, and sets forth his views of the two fold usage of the term church. Basically, he understood the term in the same way that Dr. J. M. Pendleton did, no invisible church.

This discovery started me thinking about this old work on ekklesia. As I reread it, I noted that it was almost on the same plan and level of Boyce's great work on Theology. Therefore, by the inward evidence, I concluded that this was the great work Dr. Broadus mentioned, and called an unpublished work on Ekklesia. I had tried to locate it in its handwritten form.

In this work, there are some points I wish to note:

1. Dr. Boyce refers to a better Greek Text in several places. It is regretted that he and many of those dear brethren, in that age, followed the Bible Revision movement. They were a part of **The Bible Union**. That movement wanted to set aside the Textus Receptus and hold to the Egyptians Texts, or what became later known as the Westcott-Hort Texts. In no way to we agree that these Gnostic texts are the better texts. I feel that if Dr. Boyce were living today, he would not reject the TR in favor of the Gnostic Texts. In his days, these texts were not fully known as they are now. In no way do I agree that the Gnostic Texts are better Greek Texts than the text family known as the Textus Receptus is.
2. Dr. Boyce quotes several authorities defining ekklesia. Most of them are correct in their definitions. At one point, dealing with the unorganized multitude in Acts 19, Dr. Boyce disagrees with the conclusions of the writer he quotes and seems to make the ekklesia a part of the unorganized mod. I differ on this and do not. I feel a better reading from the T R shows that the unorganized mod was separate from the ekklesia, but that if the ekklesia continued as it was, it would be called a part of the unorganized mob.

Often times the editors of **The Christian Review** felt it was necessary to differ with Dr. Boyce. These differences are found in various footnotes.

Dr. Boyce maintained almost word for word the concepts of John Spilsbury and the first generation of Particular Baptists. He says ekklesia refers either to the **particular church or churches** or the **general church**. He does not use the term general church, but universal church. He does not know about any **invisible church**. The **general church** is made up of the sum total of members of the **visible gospel churches**. To be a member of the universal church or general church, one must first become a member of the gospel church. I am amused by the way the northern, liberal editors of *The Christian Review* differed from his concepts. They made footnotes and don't want their readers to believe they hold to the views of

the writer. Of course not, they were invisible churchites. One important point I noted was this, Dr. Boyce held the same views on conversion that John Spilsbury and the others held, that is, when one is converted, it is more than having faith in Christ Jesus, it is into the true and visible order of Christ Jesus. The Christian Review editors denied this concept of conversion. The work is very well organized, scholarly, with many Greek and Hebrew words. His conclusions are, all the figurative usages for the ekklesia support the visible church concept only. I hope you enjoy this great work from the past. Dr. Boyce truly was a giant in his thoughts and knowledge as well as in his spirituality.

From One who has been given a Reason to Hope He is In that True Faith and Order of Jesus Christ; A Debtor to Mercy!

**THE**  
**CHRISTIAN REVIEW**

**VOLUME XXII**

**Editors.**

**FRANKLIN WILSON; GEORGE B. TAYLOR.**

**Assistant Editors.**

**WILLIAM R. WILLIAMS, D. D.**

**L. W. SEELEY; J. H. KENDRICK.**

**BALTIMORE: TRACT HOUSE, 73 WEST FAYETTE STREET.**

**NEW YORK: SHELDON, BLAKEMAN & CO., 115 NASSAU STREET.**

**Charleston: SMITH & WHILDEN, 229 KING STREET.**

**BOSTON: WILLIAM HEATH, 79 CORNHILL.**

**1857.**

## ART. VI.—IMPORT OF EKKLESIA (CHURCH)

No branch of Christian Theology have more books been written than on that of Church Polity; and yet it is remarkable that even in the best of these but little attempt has been made to exhibit the true *meaning of the word* which is used throughout the New Testament to designate the body in question. Most writers seem either to take it for granted that it has the meanings assigned it, or else they are content to infer this from the passages in which it occurs. A thorough investigation into the origin and import of the word itself, I am persuaded, is not to be found in the English language. And yet such an investigation, any one will see, must go far to settle the question, as to the nature of the true Church of Christ,—a question which must be settled before the Savior's prayer can be answered, and His disciples "all become one, as he and, the Father are one." Such an investigation is here attempted.

### MEANING OF THE ENGLISH WORD "CHURCH."

The word "Church," as it occurs in our current English literature, is used in a variety of senses. Webster assigns it no less than nine distinct meanings'. Some of these, however, are very unusual, if not entirely fanciful. The *following* are its ordinary meanings:

1. It is used of a *building* consecrated to religious worship. This is its entomological and most usual signification, being derived from the Greek word *kuriakos* which means, "pertaining to a lord or master," as in the expressions, "Lord's Supper," and "Lord's Day," 1 Cor. xi: 20, Rev. i: 10. Afterwards, in the writing of the Greek Fathers, the neuter form of the adjective with the article— thus, -was used substantively to mean the Lord's house, or a place of worship.\* From this was derived the Anglo-Saxon *circe*, and the German *Kirche*, whence our word Church was formed. The earliest uses of the word are in this sense, as denoting the house or place of worship.

The following are examples:—"The kyng gef ys men grete giftes, and let arere *chirches* up, that the Schrewes adown caste."—R. Gloucester, A. 1). 1297. " For the commons, upon festival days, where they shoulden go to *church* to serve God, then gon they to taverns."—Sir John Mandeville, A. D. 1360. "She was a worthy woman, housbands at the *chirche* dore she had five."—Chaucer, 1390. " Thou hast done sinne, whether in other men's houses, or in thine own, in field, in *chirche*," &c.—Chaucer. Although as early as Wickliffe's time it had acquired the sense of a *religious assembly or congregation*, ((for he uses it in this sense in his version of the New Testament,) the fact that it is hardly ever used in this sense in the versions that followed Wickliffe's, previous to that of King James, but is employed by them not as the translation of ekklesia, but in the phrase "robbers of churches" (Acts 19: 37), by which they render "posilous," literally robbers of *temples*,—shows that it continued for a long time to be used almost exclusively in its primitive and etymological signification. It would have been well for the world and the cause of religion had it always been restricted to this use, and never employed as the translation of ekklesia.

2. It is used of a religious society or congregation, meeting stately at one place:—the *container* for the *contained*; as "cup " is used for its contents (1. Cor. xi: 26—<sup>1</sup>27), and "house" for its inmates.

• See Scapala's Greek Lex., Liddell and Scott's, the Ency. Americana, Webster's large Dictionary, Crowell's Ch. Mem. Man., p. 33, Coleman's Ch. Antiq., p. 177. Schaff's Hist. Ap. Church, p. 7.

3. It is implied to a collective body of individual churches forming one ecclesiastical government, nearly synonymous with *denomination*; as the Church of England, the Presbyterian, the Episcopal, the Methodist Church. As the Baptist denomination is not thus one government or a unit, as are the others mentioned, it is not proper to speak of it as "the Baptist Church." This phrase necessarily conveys a false idea.

4. The word Church is used of the entire body of the professors of Christianity, taken as a class, and in distinct-ion from these who make no such profession. This we distinguish between "the Church" and "the world "

Now if the word be indefinite in its signification, it is manifest that to know its meaning as an English

word, in common English literature, will by no means enable us to determine what it means as employed in our New Testament Scriptures.

In our common version the word occurs one hundred and fifteen times—exclusive of the one example in Acts **xix**: 37, already referred to;—and in every instance it is used as the translation of the same Greek word, which is *ekklesia*.

It is the meaning of this word, then, that we are concerned to know, and which is to determine the meaning of the word 'Church' as employed in our common version. How then is the true import of this word to be ascertained? The sources of evidence are the following: First, the meaning of the word in classic Greek, and in the Septuagint, or in other words, its meaning previous to, and at the of its employment by the sacred writers. Second, the testimony of the Greek lexicons or the New Testament. Third, an examination of all the passages of Scripture in which the word is used. And fourth, the descriptions and explanations given by the sacred writers, of the *ekklesia*.

### THE MEANING OF THE WORD IN CLASSIC GREEK AND IN THE SEPTUAGINT.

The New Testament writers did not coin the word, *but* they found it already in common use, as a word having a distinct and definite meaning in Greek books, and in the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures—the Septuagint. It is obvious that they must have used it in the same general sense, as conveying, the same leading idea, as in previous and common use; otherwise it would either have conveyed no idea to their readers or a wrong one. It is of the utmost importance, therefore, to doctrine what is its classical meaning, and what modifications of this word were effected by its use in the Septuagint.

The word *ekklesia*, is formed from the two words, *ek*, *out of*, and *kalioo*, *to call*; and hence it literally signifies *the called out*. Steplianus, and Scapula, define it, "an assembly called out, an assemblage, also the place of an assemblage." Donnegan, "an assembly of the people at Athens, convoked by heralds; also the place of assembly." Liddell and Scott, "an assembly of the citizens, summoned by the criers, the legislative assembly."

Eschenburg, in his "Manual of Classical Literature," page 509, thus describes the legislative assemblies here referred to:

"Assembling of the people—*ekklesia*—were very frequent at Athens, and had an important influence. In these the acts of the senate were canvassed, laws were proposed and approved or rejected, magistrates appointed, war declared, and the like. 1 The place where they met was either the market place,—*agape*,—or a broad space near the mountain called the *Pnyx*, or the theatre of Bacchus. The ordinary assemblies—*ekklesiai kuriai*—were held monthly on established days; the extraordinary—*ekklesia sugklrtoi*—were called on during pressing and important emergencies. The people voted by stretching forth their hands—*xipotonia*,—and sometimes by a mode of balloting, in which beans and stones were cast into vessels prepared for the purpose."

Similar assemblies called by the same name, *ekklesiai*, were, held in Sparta. See page 517. In this sense the word is often used by Demosthenes, as where he speaks of "the treaty ratified in the *ekklesia*," and of "an extraordinary *ekklesia* called by the officers," and of the proceedings of the *ekklesia*."\*

Some of the later authorities, as Liddell and Scott even, restrict the word, as found in classic Greek, to this meaning alone. To the same effect is the statement of the learned Trench, "*ekklesia*," he says, "as all

• See *Champing's Demos. on the Crown*, pp. 8, 10, 19, &c.

know, was the lawful assembly in a free Greek city of all those possessed of the rights of citizenship, for the transaction of public affairs." An able article in favor of the same view, was publish in volume twentieth (July No.) of this Review. But while this was doubtless the original and more usual signification of the word, it certainly was used to designate *any popular assembly*, any gathering or meeting of persons, formally or informally, for business purposes. In this sense Xenophon uses it, when in his *Anabasis* he says that Clearchus, one of the generals of Cyrus, "called together an *assembly—ekklesia*—of his soldiers." \* It

certainly has no reference here to "the legislative assembly at Athens," or of "the qualified citizens " of any of " the free cities of Greece," but means simply, an assembly, as it usually does when used, as here, *without the article*. Lucian also *uses* the word in the general sense of an assembly, for he employs it to designate *the assemblies of the gods*, as when he makes it a part of the office of Mercury to call together, or " summon to the assemblies "—**tais ekklesiai xr puttein**.\*

In this general sense Luke, we think, employs the word in two out of; the three instances of its occurrence in the 19th chapter of Acts. . In each of these places, it is rendered in our common version "assembly," viz. in verses, 32, 39, 41. In verses 32 and 41, it is applied to the promiscuous assemblage who had come together into the theatre at Ephesus, at the outcry and alarm given by Demetrius and his fellow-craftsman. See verse 29. The word *ekklesia* is here used interchangeably with *ton otmon* "the people," in verse 30; with *tou oxlou*, "the multitude," in verse 33 ; and with **tris sustprchrs tantes**, " this concourse," in verse 40. These terms have different shades of meaning, but they all refer to the same thing, and are designed only to give variety to the narrative, and to describe the subject under different points of view.

• See Xenophon's Anabasis, Book I. Chapter 3. Cleveland's ed., p. 9. t Lucian's Dialogues. 8. " Mercury and Maias."

The writer already referred to contends that the word *ekklesia* is used here in its " primary Grecian sense," as denoting " (the assembly of the qualified citizens called together;" and that "it was not the *oxlos*. nor the *drmos*, nor the *plithos*, which the presiding officer—' the town-clerk'—addressed and dismissed, but the *ekklesia*., which was included within, yet distinct from them all."\* We dissent from this view, first, because there is no intimation in the narrative of the convocation or assembling of this body—the legislative *ekklesia*—on the occasion referred to; *secondly*, because the address of the "town-clerk" seems intended for the assembly at large, and not for the *ekklesia*, as forming a part of it. His language is, " Ye men of Athens," &c. Although this expression might have included only the members of the *legislative Ekklesia*, it is not natural thus to restrict it, unless the context requires us to do this. On the other hand the context seems plainly to forbid this restriction. For it will be observed, that in verses 35 and 36., the " town-clerk" remonstrates with his auditors (the persons whom he addresses) for their boisterous cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," and in verse 37, for having brought out "those, men"—" Gaius and Aristarchus—Paul's companions in travel"—whilst they had done nothing to merit their indignation. However, it was *the populace*, and not *the ekklesia*, or any of its members as such, that had done these things. For in verses 33 and 34 it is said, that " Alexander would have made his defense unto the *people*, but when they (that is, " *the people*") knew that he was a Jew, all (that is, all *the people*) with one voice, about the space of two hours, cried out," &c. Here it is manifest that it was the citizens generally, and not the portion of them composing the *legislative Ekklesia* only, that raised the cry. And these, too, it is equally evident, were the persons that in verse 29, are said to have "caught Gaius, and Aristarchus, and rushed withone accord into the theatre;" and *thirdly*, the allusion of the town-clerk in verse 39, to "*the lawful assembly*"—*te entomo ekklesia* it should be rendered, in allusion to the legislative assembly or *Ekklesia* of the free cities of Greece, shows that the body here addressed by the town clerk, and designated as "*ekklesia*," was the promiscuous assembly there convened. Had this functionary intended to intimate that it was an irregular *meeting of the legislative Ekklesia* that he was addressing, he would have omitted *the article* in designating that body, and have spoken of it not as *the lawful assembly*, but a lawful assembly.

\* Christian Review, vol. 20, p. 437.

The authorities and examples given are sufficient to prove that *ekklesia*, in classic Greek, meant, at the time of its employment by the New Testament writers, first, a legislative assembly of qualified citizens; and secondarily, any assembly called together or convening for purposes of business. In either case, it involved at least these particulars:

1. A collection of individuals *taken out* of and distinguished from the general mass.
2. Such a collection consisting of persons capable of personal deliberation—rational agents.
3. Such a collection *united* by common interests and mutual co-operation.
4. Such a collection accomplishing its purposes by the exercise of *popular rights*, or the participation of each individual in the affairs of the whole body.

Whatever may have been. its "consecration" or appropriation by the sacred writers, it is fair to suppose that the word was used by: them of a body *characterized by these particulars; for* those are essential to its meaning; and hence, to use it in a different sense Would have been to render it unintelligible for popular use,

But here it is of importance to inquire what influence, if any, was exerted upon its meaning by its use in *the & Septuagint—the* Greek version of the Old Testament, from which the writers of the New sometimes quote.

In this the word occurs *seventy-six* times in the Canonical **Books, and in every instance as the translation of the same** Hebrew word, which is  $\text{קָהַל}$ ? or some other equivalent derivative of the verb  $\text{קָהַל}$ ?. In only *five* instances is it used as the translation of these other derivatives. In all the other examples it stands as the equivalent of  $\text{קָהַל}$ ?. The verb  $\text{קָהַל}$ ? means, according to Gesenius, " *to call, to call together, to convoke, to assemble,*" and is thus the exact equivalent of the Greek *kalioo*, the root, and the principal of the two words, from which *ekklesia* is derived. The noun  $\text{קָהַל}$ ? is therefore, etymologically, *the* almost exact equivalent of *ekklesia* and is accordingly defined by Gesenius, 1. *a coming together, an assembling ; 2. an assembly, congregation, convocation, (a) Specially of the assembly or convocation of the people of Israel for any cause; mostly for religious purposes. (b) In a wider sense, of any assembly or multitude of men.*"

From a careful comparison of all the passages in the Septuagint, in which the word *ekklesia*, occurs, I can discover but *three* applications of the word, viz :

1. It is used to mean *an assembly or collection of persons for any purpose*; as in Psa. 26 : 6, where it occurs in the expression, "the *congregation of* evil doers," that is, " the wicked." In the same sense is it used in Ps. 89: 5, rendered in our common version, "the *congregation of* the saints," but which, according to Gesenius and Alexander, should be " holy ones," that is, "angels"—the reference here being to the heavenly world.\* In 1 Samuel 19 : 20, it is rendered "company," that is, of the prophets.
2. It is used of *the common or; political assemblies* of the Jewish people, as in Judges 21: 8, where it is rendered "assembly," and in 1 Chron. 29: 3, where it is rendered "congregation."
3. It is used of the *religious assemblies* of the Israelites, as in Deut. 18: 16, where it is rendered "assembly," and in 2 Chron. 1: 3, 5, where it is rendered "congregation."

The word *ekklesia*, then, like its Hebrew equivalent, has a definite and restricted sense throughout the *Septuagint*. *It is never wed of the Jewish nation, or of a family*. To express these ideas, the word *sunagoge* is employed, as the translation of " which, unlike *p*, means, among other things according to Gesenius, " *community, family, household.*" It. is a significant fact, that *ekklesia*, is never used to translate *this word*. The authors of the Septuagint understood its meaning too well to apply it to any but *conscious, rational, and responsible agents*—those capable of being " *called out*. As *sunagoge* from *an* and *ayo*, " *to lead Or gather together,*" may be applied both to active and passive agents or subjects, it was appropriately lately used in the more general and comprehensive sense in which we find it throughout the Septuagint. The chief difference between *ekklesia*, and *sunagogue*, as their respective etymologies indicate, is, that the first is used only of *active* agents, while the latter is used both of active and *passive* agents.\*

•See "Alexander on the Psalms,"— vol. 2 p. 278

It will be seen, therefore, that the meaning of *ekklesia*, in the Septuagint,, does not diner materially from the meaning it has in Classic Greek. The chief difference is, that in the Septuagint it is used of a *religious* assembly, as well as of other convocations ; and this, without altering its meaning, brings it nearer to its New Testament application. Moreover, in the Septuagint, it is applied to a particular congregation or assembly of worshippers, and also to *the whole class of* such worshippers, considered as constituting one. body; as in Deut. 23: 1-3, 31: 30; for although this formed but one assembly, still it embraced the aggregate of all the true worshippers all who professed the true religion at that time. If, then, the New Testament Writers intended or expected to be understood by their readers, they must have used the word in a sense which accorded with one or more of these, its established meanings.

## THE TESTIMONY OF THE GREEK LEXICONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The testimony or statement of a lexicon is only the opinion of an individual critic, and is of very little importance apart from the examples and proof texts, going to sustain the statements and definitions given. It is the actual usage of a language in the employment of any word, that is to determine the meaning of that word, and not the mere opinions and declarations of men, however learned they may be. In fact, it is not so much learning as common sense that is concerned in such a decision. The learning serves only to find out the examples of the occurrence of any word ; common sense must decide, in view of the context and scope of the passage, what its meaning must be. It is not every learned man that has the common sense or judgment necessary to make a sound and reliable critic. Still, as scholars who are supposed to have devoted more than ordinary attention to such studies, the lexicographers in question ought to be heard. The following is the substance of their testimony as to the meaning of *ekklesia*, In the New Testament.

### • The word *synagogue* is used even of *beasts*, *Judg. 14:8. Ps. 68: 31.*

Scapula defines it, " the universal assembly called to life eternal, who profess the true religion of Christ; also particular assemblies into which this universal assembly is distributed also applied to a particular family, or to those in it who profess Christ—and to a synod or presbytery, that is, a college of elders." Stephanus gives substantially the same definition, Greenfield field, "any public assembly, a congregation, a Christian assembly, a Church." Wahl, "an assembly, that is, a multitude of citizens called out and assembled ill a convenient public place. In the Jewish sense, a multitude assembled in a sacred convention—a society. In the Christian sense, a multitude of men called out and assembled by authority of Jesus, through his public criers the apostles, for the worship. of the true God—a sacred assembly, a society of Christians; used in a general sense, and of particular assemblies of Christians." Robinson, "a convocation, assembly, congregation. (1.) Properly of persons legally called out or Summoned, Acts *xix.*: 31), and hence also of a tumultuous assembly not legal.—Acts 19: 32—41. In the Jewish sense, congregation, assembly, of the people for worship. (2.) In the Christian sense, an assembly, that is, of Christians. Hence the Church, the Christian Church, (1) a particular Church, (2) the Church universal." These examples embody the opinions of all the leading lexicographers on the subject. And it will be seen that they all agree in the following particulars :

1. That the word means primarily any assembly of individuals.
2. That the word is used in this general sense in the New Testament.
3. That in accordance with this meaning it is applied to individual congregations of Christians.
4. That it is used also in a general sense to denote the aggregate of all such congregations, or the sum total of all who profess the true religion.

A few of the early lexicographers, as Scapula and Stephanus, assign it additional meanings, as "a synod," "a family," "a college of elders;" these, however, are meanings so foreign from the primary and ordinary signification of the word, a and so uncalled for by the necessities of interpretation, that they are now by the best authorities entirely exploded.

This much then we may regard as settled, so far as the lexicons can settle it,—that wherever *ekklesia* occurs in the New Testament in a religious or Christian sense, it refers either to an individual congregation or society of Christians, or to the entire body of professing Christians, taken as a whole. This definition certainly carries great plausibility with it, from the fact that it makes the meaning of the word in the New Testament to agree in substance with its meanings in the classics and in the Septuagint. It makes the sacred writers to have written as to be understood by the readers.

## THE USE OF THE WORD THROUGHOUT THE NEW TESTAMENT.

In determining the meaning of the word from the examples of its use in the New Testament, we are to keep in mind its established meanings as a word in common use at the time of its employment by the sacred writers: and from these meanings we must not in substance depart, unless imperatively required to do this by the plain necessities of the case. According to a fundamental law of interpretation, and a rule of common sense, we must presume that the New Testament writers used the word in its ordinary signification, until it

is plainly shown in any case that they did not.

The word *ekklesia* has in the New Testament two applications—a general and a special one. In its general application it refers to *any assembly* of persons, whether for secular or religion purposes; in its special application it refers to a *Christian* organization of some kind.

In its general application the word occurs but *five* times in the whole New Testament. Three of these, as already shown, are in Acts xix: 32, 39, •II, where in our common version it is rendered "assembly," referring in, verses 32 and 41 to the tumultuous gathering of the populace at Ephesus, and in verse 39 to the "lawful" or legislative assembly, common to the free cities of Greece. In Acts vii:38 it occurs in the statement, "This is he (Moses) that was in *the Church* *ekklesia*, in the wilderness, with the Angel who spoke to him in the Mount Sinai." Here it means, according to Professor Hackett, Bloomfield and others, "the *assembly* of the Hebrews' congregated at Sinai at the time of the promulgation of the law,"—as described in Exodus xix : 17. It does not mean the Jewish *nation*, but a portion of them—the male adults—"called out" and assembled by Divine command for the reception of the Ten Commandments. The other example is in Hebrews ii: 12, "In the midst of the *Church* will I sing praise unto thee." This is a quotation from Psalms xxii: 22, where the Septuagint also has *ekklesia*. By "the Church" here is meant, as Stuart and Alexander explain it, an assembly or *congregation* for public worship. The Apostle is treating of Christ's incarnation—His brotherhood with His disciples;—and quotes the passage from the Psalms to show that the doctrine is recognized in the Old Testament. "The implication is," saying Professor Stuart, " that he who sings praise in the midst of the assembly must be like them, and one of their number."\*

In the remaining examples of its use the word is employed one hundred and ten times in its special application to a *Christian* assembly or organization. It has been shown by clear and declarative lire examples, that the word signified at the time of its employment by the New Testament writers, *first*, a legislative assembly of citizens *called out*, or selected from the general mass; *secondly*, any popular assembly called or gathered together for business purposes; and *thirdly*, an assembly or con congregation meeting together *for religious worship*. In this last sense it had two applications, as designating, 1. any congregation of worshippers among the Jews; and 2. the aggregate of all that thus met for religious worship: *the whole body* of these; as in Deut. xxiii: 1, 3, xxxi: 30. And these are the only meanings that the word had. Bearing this in mind, we shall be prepared to determine its meaning in any place where it occurs in the New Testament.

The first example of its use is in Matt. xvi:18 —" upon this rock I will build my church." Our Lord calls the *ekklesia* here "*my church*," and by the expression "*I will build*," shows in what sense it was to be his. "Build" *is* here, of course, used figuratively, for gathering and uniting men or believers to himself as the promised Messiah. Our Lord was addressing his disciples in the character of the Messiah, and by his " church" would be naturally understood by them to denote the body of His followers, the subjects of the New Dispensation, just as the *ekklesia* of the Jews constituted the true subjects of the Old Dispensation, The word, then, seems evidently used in allusion to the *ekklesia* of the Septuagint, and in the same sense substantially, that is, as meaning *congregation*. And the assurance which Christ gives, that "the gates of hell"—or more properly of *hades*, that is of death or the underworld—"shall not prevail against it,"—this congregation—shows that it was not his church considered as a *single assembly or organization* that he

**\*Stuart on Hebrews, page 317.**

meant, but his church as embracing *the collective body of his follower*. *No single church or congregation* of that day has been proof against "the gates of hades"—not one has been perpetual; but the order of things which Christ established, and *the body of his followers as organized into separate congregations* for the carrying out of that order,—this *ekklesia*, His congregation in this sense—has been perpetual; there has been no age when this church of Christ has ceased to exist, or when " the gates of hell prevailed against it," and there never will be, to the end of time.

The general scope of the passage confirms this interpretation. In reply to Christ's inquiry, Peter, speaking for the other apostles as well as for himself, uttered his noble confession—" Thou art the Christ"—that is, the Messiah— "he Son of the living God." After which our Lord says, "And I say also unto thee,"—that is, "As *you* have made this confession, I, on my part declare, that thou art Peter," (or Rock), "and upon this

rock I will build, (or more properly build up) my church," &c. This is plainly an example of *Paronomasia*; but in what sense was Christ's ekklesia or congregation built upon Peter? Not upon his person— not upon the man—but upon his preaching, as was literally the fact on the day of Pentecost, and which was evidently the fulfillment of the promise here made to him by Christ. Through Peter's preaching in one day " there were added unto them," that is to the ekklesia, the congregation, "about three thousand souls." The church, as the organized company of Christ's disciples, was in existence at the time of his uttering this promise, and was only to be built up upon Peter. For similar examples of the use of *aixodomino* in the sense of *to build up*, see 1 Cor. iii: 9, 10, 1 Peter ii: 5, Acts ix: 31.

It is worthy of note, then, that the first use of the word *ekklesia* is in its enlarged sense, meaning "the church universal," and that this "church universal" consists only of those who make a regular and Scriptural profession of their faith in Christ as His disciples, and are thereby united to his authorized companies or congregations of disciples.

The next occurrence of the word is in Matt. xviii: 17, where our Lord is giving directions for the disposal of private offences between brethren. In case the offender refuses to hear the " two or three" that have been called in as assistants, the other party is then to " tell it unto the church," "and if he neglect to hear the church," he adds, " let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Here "the church" is spoken of as a definite organization or society, having ultimate Jurisdiction in certain transactions. Every rule of criticism requires us to understand the word *ekklesia* here in its restricted sense, as meaning a local assembly on congregation of Christians. It is wholly gratuitous; to suppose that the word here means the elder ship, or the deacon ship, or any part of a church, as the representative of the whole church. At the time the words were uttered there was no such thing as the eldership or deaconship for the church was in its infancy, and as yet incomplete in its organization—and if there had been, no reader would ever have understood the word *ekklesia* to indicate these, far it had never been used in such a sense.

In these two examples, which are the only ones that occur in the Gospels, we have illustrations of the two, and the only two meanings which the word has throughout the New Testament, when used in its sacred sense. In every place where the word occurs, it means either particular Local congregation of professed Christians, or the whole body of the professed disciples of Christ—that is, the aggregate not of the churches, but of the membership of all the local churches. Men are added to the "church universal" by becoming members of the "local churches."\* No man can be a member of the church universal, who is not a member of a regular, local gospel church—a church built upon the model of those established by Christ and His apostles, according to the specific terms of his commission to his apostles, Matthew xxviii:19,20. \*

**\*It may perhaps be in place to remark—once for all—that the author of each article is to be considered personally responsible for the sentiments he expresses, and that the Editors disclaim all responsibility, except the general one, that every discussion admitted into the pages of the Review shall be such as seems to them, scholar-like, dignified, and upon the whole tending to promote the elucidation of truth,—(Editors.)**

The church universal is not an organized body, or a body so constituted as to form and exercise the functions of one ecclesiastical government. This suggests an important rule by which we may generally ascertain whether the word "church"—*ekklesia*—as it occurs in the New Testament, refers to a single congregation of Christians, or to the general congregation, "the church universal." When the church is spoken of as discharging the functions that belong properly to an organized body—as of assembling together, exercising discipline, appointing officers, sending forth messengers, it is, in such cases; always a

**\*While such is the view which the laws of language and the principles of interpretation, as we understand them, compel us to take—namely, that "the church universal" is simply the aggregate of the membership of all the local churches at any given period and that the term *ekklesia* therefore, had essentially the same application, whether used in its enlarged or in its restricted sense, in the one case referring to a totality, and in the other to a part or parts of that totality—we would not be understood as holding, that there are no true believers out of the church. One the**

contrary, believing as we do that faith and conversion must precede membership in the church, it is a legitimate inference from our view, that persons may be truly converted and yet never become members of the church. As there may be and are false believers and unconverted persons in the church, so there may be and are multitudes of converted persons who are not in the church. The church, as the body of Christ, is an external, visible organization, and the condition or medium of admission must, in the nature of things, be in part external also. The leading design of baptism was to serve as a part of this condition. "We are all baptized into one body"- I Cor. 12:13. The person who was casting out devils in Christ's name, and whom the disciples had forbidden, because he followed not with them, was doubtless a true believer, though from some cause he had not entered the fold of Christ. When our Lord prays that those who should hereafter believe in him might be one, as he and the Father are one, he teaches that men may and do become believers without being ecclesiastically united with each other. When Paul speaks of "the church of God which he has purchased with his own blood," he alludes to the local congregation at Ephesus,- Acts xx:17, 28. It is not to be inferred from this, that no other congregations or believers were thus "purchased." And so when the same apostle, Eph. v: 25, says that "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it," he does not exclude Christians of other ages from being the subjects of Christ's love and redemption. These and similar passages only assert the special regard of the Father and Son for the church. In other places they are represented as loving and providing for the salvation of all men, and especially of all believers.--I Tim. 4:10. To be a true believer, therefore, will ensure one's salvation: and yet this does not prove that one can be saved as well out of the church as in it, or that the term church-ekklesia-is applicable to believers simply, or to any but the members of the local congregations of any given age.

a particular local congregation that is meant. This twofold application, in the Scriptures, of the word ekklesia, accords very nearly with a similar application of the word family, as commonly used by us. This word, like the word "church," is properly used in only two senses, that is, of a single family, and of the whole race of man. And so, too, when we speak of the "human family," or of family in its general sense, we do not think of it as an organized body, or as a body made up of separate individual families united into one, but as a class or order of beings, made up of individuals belonging to the several single families.

Such we are to presume to be the meanings of the word in the New Testament. Any other application would have been entirely arbitrary, and can be admitted only when it has been shown that the other applications are in any case altogether impossible. Whoever asserts that the word is used in any other sense, assumes the burden of proof. The presumption! is against him; and this can be set aside only by positive and adequate evidence. The following are all the places—twenty in number—where the word means "the church universal." Matt. xvi: 18; Rom. xvi: 23; 1 Cor. x: 32, xii: 28, xv: 9; Gal. i:13; Eph. i: 22, iii: 10, 21; v: 23, 24, 25, 27, 27., 32; Phil. iii: 6; Col, i: 18,24; 1 Tim. iii: 15; Heb. xii: 23. In all these passages it will be seen that the word denotes a *class* of persons distinguished by their relation to, Christ as his professed followers. Thus, when Paul calls Gaius the "host" not of himself only, but "of the whole church," he means not a any one congregation, but the Christian brotherhood generally. So when he says, "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to *the church* of God," it is manifest that he speaks of "the church" as he does of the Jews and Gentiles, viz. as a *class*. When the same Apostle says that God "set in *the church*" "apostles, prophets, workers of miracles," &c., he evidently alludes not to any local congregation of Christians, for these extra-ordinary *offices did* not appertain to local societies or congregations, but they were "set" in the church at large- the collective body of Christ's disciples. In several places Paul speaks of his having "persecuted *the church*." But it was the professed disciples, the members *generally of the local congregations* that he persecuted. When Christ is said to be "the head of *the church*," and the church "the body of Christ," both senses of the word are included—that is, *subjection to Christ* is predicated of the local congregation and of the entire body of Christ's disciples; and this subjection is open and *visible*. When it is said, "Christ loved *the church*," it is plainly "the church" in the general

sense that is meant. <sup>1</sup> " *The Church of God,*" which Paul calls " the house of God," and • the pillar and ground of the truth," may be applicable to a local congregation, but it seems to refer rather to the followers of Christ, generally, as a whole. "The *church of the first born*" mentioned in Heb. xii: 23, and to which the Hebrew Christians are described as having "come," is evidently used in contradistinction to the Jewish *ekklesia,* " *the congregation of pious Israelites,* which embraced the whole body of the true subjects of that economy. See, as before, Deut. xxiii: 1-; 31:30. Paul is contrasting the Jewish and Christian dispensations, and showing the superiority of the latter over the former; and he describes the subjects of this dispensation — the collective body of Christ's disciples on earth—as "the church of the first born, which are written in heaven' They are called " the first-born," because, says Stuart, " primogeniture, among the Hebrews, conferred distinguished rights and privileges?"—and these are the peculiar portion of Christians ; and they are said to be " written," or enrolled " in heaven," to mark their heavenly citizenship, and the nature of their true blessedness. According to the best editions of the Greek text, the term *panagrus*—"general assembly"—is connected not with *ekklesia,*—but with ageless, angels— and hence the passage should read, " but ye are come to the general assembly, of angels, to the church of the firstborn," &c.

**\*See Tittman' Gr. Text, by Robinson, Bloomfield, Stuart on Hebrews; Olshausen and Ebrard on Heb. Revision of Hebrews for Am. Bible Union.**

The following are the places—ninety in all—where the word " is used of a particular congregation of Christians. Matt. 18; 17; Acts 2; 47; 5: 11; 8: 1,3; 9: 31; II: 22, 26; 12 : 1 5; 13: 1; 14: 23, 27; 15 : 3, 4, 22, 41; 16: 5; 18:22; 20: 17, 28; Rom. 16; 1, 4,5, 16; 1 Cor. 1 : 2, 4; 17;6: 4:7: 17; II: 16, 18, 22; 14: 4, 5, 12, 19, 23, 28, 33, 34,35; 16: 1, 19; 2 Cor. 1:1; 8: 1, 18, 19, 23, 24: 11: 8, 28; 12: 1 ; Gal. 1: 2, 22;. Phil. 4: 15; Col. 4: 15, 16; 1 Thess, I: I; 2: 14; 2Thess. 1: 1,4; 1 Tim. 3:5 5: 16; Philem. 2 James 3: 14; 3 John 6: 9, 10; Rev. 1: 4, 11, 20; 2: 1,7, 8, II, 12, 17, 18, 23, 29; 3: 1, 6, 7,13, 14; 22:16. In all these cases it will be seen that the distinctive idea is that of a definite and local society or congregation, organized under one distinct, independent, and popular government. Thus when our Lord, in Matt. xviii: 17, directs the offended brother to " tell it to the *church,*" he plainly designates such a body, as already shown. And so when it is said, Acts ii: 47 " the Lord added to the *church* daily," the allusion is to a definite, local body, which was the first local church—that at Jerusalem. And the method or rule of augmentation is definitely stated, when it is said in verse 41, " then *they that gladly received his word were baptized,* and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand a souls." So, too, when Luke tells us, Acts 14 : 27, that Paul *and* Barnabus "gathered the church together" at Antioch, a local assembly is plainly meant. The use of the plural number, which is very frequent, precludes all doubt as to the word meaning, in such cases, a local congregation. The sacred writers *always* use the plural when they hare occasion to speak of a plurality of a single church; as " the *churches* of Asia," "the *churches of Macedonia,*" "the *churches of Galatia,*" &c. The word church—*ekklesia*—in the *singular number,* is never once used to designate an association or confederacy of churches' contiguous to each other, as in a city or province. This supposed application of the word, is contended for by some, on the supposition that in the larger, cities, where churches were formed, as Jerusalem, Corinth, Thessalonica, &c., there must have been more single congregations than one, and yet in each case we find that the body of Christian believers, in each of these cities, is designated by the word " *church.*" This is specially urged in reference to the city of Jerusalem, where, on the day of Pentecost, three thousand were added to the church, and where other and frequent accessions were made, till the number of believers was "about five thousand." And from other accessions it is supposed that there wore in Jerusalem at one time, "not less than ten thousand believers." "Now, in what place," it is asked, "could such a mass of individuals form a single congregation?" And the alleged difficulty is yet increased by supposing that the number of spectators drawn to those meetings, by curiosity and other motives, would at least be equal to the number of disciples, so as to form, with them, the numerous multitude of twenty thousand persons Now all this difficulty arises from overlooking several obvious facts. In the *first* place, the sacred historian expressly tells us, Acts v: 12, that " they," the church, or body of the disciples, "*were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.*" If Luke tells the truth, the question is settled ; for he declares that they (*did* all meet

together in *one place*. But, in the *second* place, the objector should have noticed that it is said, in Acts ii: 2, that the multitude assembled on the day of Pentecost, and from which the greater part of the Christian converts were gathered, was made up of men "out of every nation under heaven." Many of these, after their conversion, returned to their distant homes, which must have very much reduced the number of members that attended the meetings. Besides, it is not to be supposed that the whole number that remained could at any one time be present at a meeting. But should the number of disciples have become so large as to render it inconvenient for them to meet together ordinarily in one place, they might have divided into several meetings for purposes of worship and preaching, and yet all together form but one *ekklesia*, or organized society. If there had been a plurality of organized congregations, or churches, in a city where only one is spoken of, we can see no reason why the *plural, churches*," should not have been used to designate them. And *if a collection of separate churches* in a city might be called *a church*, why did not the sacred writers call *such* a collection in a *province, a church*, instead of being so particular in all such cases to, use *the plural* where more than one are alluded to?\* As a confirmation of this view and in order to remove an apparent difficulty, refer to Acts xi: 22, where it is said, "Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem, and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch." Here the same persons to whose ears the tidings came, that is, the brotherhood generally in the city, are said to have sent Barnabas; to do which, they must have assembled together in one place, for there is nothing said of their acting by representatives. It is shown, too, by this, that the body designated as "the church" consisted of only a part of the number that constituted its entire membership, for the "tidings" related to the doings of some of their number at Antioch. We are not to infer from this, that "the church" here means only a part of the church, but rather the acting membership, in contradistinction from its entire constituency. The legislature of any state is the body composed of all the representatives from such State; and because less than the whole number of these may be called a legislature, it does not follow that the *term, legislature, means apart* of such body, though it may designate the acting body in contradistinction from the entire membership. The use of the term "church" is parallel. In two places, namely, 1 Cor. xi: 18 and 22, the word *ekklesia*— is supposed, by some, to mean the place of worship. But there is here no necessity for departing from the uniform signification of the word. The phrase, "when ye come together in the *church*," is similar to that we use when we speak of the national representative "in Congress assembled."

**\*The case, after all, was not peculiar. The writer has the pastoral charge of a church (with a large colored membership) numbering more than three thousand members; and yet it is but one organized body. Like the church at Jerusalem, many of its members dwell at a distance, so that the attendance at any one time is rarely too large to be accommodated. Different portions, for advantage, may meet at separate places for worship, but still they all belong to one and the same *ekklesia*, or organic body.**

The best editions of the Greek text leave out the *article* here, and read it, "when ye come together in *church—in* assembly. The meaning is, "when ye meet together in a church capacity, as a church,"—which they always did when the Lord's Supper was to be administered, to which allusion is here made. In the question, "Have ye not houses to eat and drink in or despise ye the *church* of God?" we are not to place "house" and "church" in opposition; but the Apostle's argument, according to Dr. Rees, is this, "What can be the reason of the abuse? Is it because ye have not houses of your own in which to eat and drink? Or is it because ye despise *the Christian congregation* to which you belong?" "This," he adds, "is more in the style and spirit of the New Testament, than to speak of despising *stone walls*."\* "The circumstances of the apostolic church," says Olshausen, "were not yet of a nature that Christians could possess buildings which were exclusively *churches*." Such buildings did not exist till the close of the second century.

#### **DESCRIPTIONS OF THE EKKLESIA, AND THE QUALITIES ASCRIBED TO IT BY THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITER.**

The import of *ekklesia* will more fully appear by attending to the descriptions given of the organization, it

designates and the qualities ascribed to it by the New Testament writers. They describe the church at large and also the local congregation, as:

*A Temple*, Matt. xvi : 18, " On this rock I will *build up my church*." 1 Cor. iii: 16, 17, " Ye are the temple of God," &c. 2 Cor. vi: 16" The temple of the living God." Eph. ii: 20, 22, " An holy temple in the Lord." 1 Peter ii; 6, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house."

A Flock *Acts* xx: 28, "Take heed unto—all the flock— to *feed—poimainsin, to tend as a flock—the church of God,*" &c. Luke xii. 3 Fear not little flock." John x: 16, "There shall be one fold and one

**\*See Rees' Cyclopedia Article, "Church."**

**t See Coleman's Christian Antiquities, p. 179**

Shepherd." 1 Peter v : 2, 3, " Feed the flock of God," &c.

**The body of Christ**, Eph. i: 22 23, " Gave him (Christ) to be the head .over all things to the church, which is his body," &c. 1 Cor. xii: 27, " Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." Col. i: 18, "And he (Christ) is the head of the body, the church."

**The bride, "the Lamb's wife,"** Eph. v: 23, 25 "The husband is the head of the wife, *even as Christ is the head of the church.*" Rev. xxi: 9, "I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife Rev. xxii: 17, " The Spirit and the bride (that is, the church) say come."

Now these figurative representations plainly indicate *three things as essential qualities of the ekklesia, the church of Christ:*

*Ist.* That a single church is a local, independent society, incapable of combination and consolidation with other similar ones. A " temple" is such a structure.

2d. That its constituency or membership is such as to adapt it to the service of God, that *is*, they must be capable of obeying, and willing to obey the will of " the head." Hence they must all be adults, not infants; and spiritual believers in Christ, not unconverted persons; and they must be *outwardly* united to Christ by being " buried, with him by baptism : " and

3d, That the appropriate office and business of the church is not to rule, but to be ruled by Christ; not to make laws, but simply to execute the laws which He has already made. These representations accord with the general teachings of the New Testament.

*First*, The apostles teach us that the churches were *distinct and independent*, by addressing them as such, and speaking of them as distinct bodies. Thus, the church at Jerusalem, which may: be regarded as a model of all the other churches, is so described in Acts ii: 44, 46, " And all they that believed (which is only another expression for, the whole church") were together—and they continued, daily with one accord in the temple." The supposed instance of church confederacy , in the 15th chapter of Acts, is all imaginary. A delegation from the church at Antioch is sent to Jerusalem to consult "the apostles and elders." An answer is returned containing an authoritative injunction. This injunction they make—not use church or as a confederation of churches—a presbytery, synod, convention, or council—but *as inspired men*. Their language is, "It seemed good to *the Holy Ghost* and to us." Can any body of uninspired men, adopt this language? But there is here no confederation, for the delegates take no part in the council, which consists only of the apostles and the brethren in Jerusalem. Besides, the business was of a *legislative* character, related to law-making, with which the church, as a mere executive body, has nothing to do. It was business that inspired men alone could settle.

The Scriptures do not permit any church to devolve upon some of its members, or upon any other church or churches, the rights and duties that belong to it. Thus, each church chooses its own officers, Acts vi : 3. And these are only the agents of the church, and are responsible to it for the proper discharge of their duties.—1 John iv: 1, Rev. ii: 2, compared with verse 7. The only church officers known to the New

Testament, were the pastor (called also "bishop" and "elder"), and deacons." And these acted in matters of government and discipline only in co-operation with the whole church. This is evident from the fact, that the apostle addresses his Epistles not to the officers of the church, but to the church and officers together, Phil. i: 1 ; and that his instructions, which are to govern any church in the exercise of its discipline, are given not to the officers, nor to a part of the church, but to the whole church. This applies to cases of admitting members, excluding and restoring them. See Romans xiv: 1; 1 Corinthians v: 11,13; 2 Corinthians ii: 6, 8. The office of the pastor is to "take care of the church," that is, of a single congregation of believers; and to "feed," or tend, the flock of Christ.—1 Timothy iii: 5, Acts xx: 28. This he is to do by "declaring unto them the whole counsel of God." The business of the deacons is to "serve tables," or take charge of the secular interests of the church, and to take care of the poor.—Acts vi: 24.

*Secondly:* The Scripture also plainly teach us, that a true church of Christ, is a company of converted persons, "a congregation of faithful men," baptized upon a profession of their faith in Christ. Such was the "model church" at Jerusalem, which we are told, (Acts, second chapter,) was composed of such as were first "*pricked in their hearts,*" or convicted for sin, who then "*repented,*" and having *gladly received the word,*" were then "*baptized*" and "*added*" to the church. And the whole church is described, in verse forty-four, as "all that *believed.*" This was an exact carrying out of Christ's command who instructed his apostles, Matthew xxviii: 19, "to teach—*mathetinsati, make disciples of—all* nations, baptizing them," and after thus bringing them into the church, then "teaching them to (observe all things that he had commanded them." "This embraces," says Dr. Bloomfield, a learned Episcopalian, "three particulars; 1. To disciple them or convert them to the faith; 2. To initiate them into the church by baptism; 3. To instruct them, when baptized, in the doctrines and duties of a Christian life." This commission, as Bloomfield and other Pedobaptist writers admit, gave the apostles no authority to admit into the church any but believers. Had Christ intended that infants also should be admitted, he would undoubtedly have given directions to this effect in his commission. It would then have been, "teach all nations, baptizing them *and their children.*" This addition to the command is practically made by all who admit infants to baptism and church membership. And with such the addition has almost entirely set aside the command, for with Pedobaptist churches generally the addition has become the rule, and the command itself the exception. Thus have they literally, as our Lord said, "made the commandment of God of none effect by their tradition." Matthew xv: 6. But on what grounds are infants admitted?—Not on the ground that they are believers, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," Not on the ground that they are holy beings, for they "are by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Not on the ground that they derive a title to the privileges of church membership from their natural descent their pious parentage, for this error was corrected as long ago as the time of John the Baptist, when he said to the unconverted Pharisees and Sadducees, who had applied for admission, by baptism, to the Messiah's kingdom, on the ground of their natural descent from Abraham, "Think not to say within yourselves, '*We have Abraham to our Father;*' for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham;" —the meaning of which is, "It is not to the natural descendants of the faithful that the covenant blessings are promised, but to those who are like him—his children—in respect to character, which a person may be who is not at all related to him by natural descent."—Matthew iii: 9. Compare Romans iv: 11: 18, where this thought is fully developed. Nor are infants to be admitted into the church because they are unholy, and in order to their conversion; because for the same reason unconverted *adults* ought to be admitted, which would at once nullify the very fundamental idea of the church, as the ekklesia, the "*called out,*" and directly violate the command of Christ to receive and baptize believers only.

The church is a voluntary society, and it is absurd to speak of any but voluntary agents being members of it. The Jewish *nation* was no church. It is nowhere called a church in the Scriptures. The only church there spoken of, as belonging to the Old Testament dispensation, was the "congregation" or "assembly" of adult worshippers. Infants were admitted not into the *church*, the ekklesia or congregation, but into the *nation* by the rite of circumcision, which was therefore a merely political or national, arrangement and institution, designed to *perpetuate the Jewish nation*, so that, and until the promised Messiah might in due time appear from among them. Even if the Christian Church, therefore, were modeled after the Jewish, it would thereby utterly exclude infants from its membership. But the Scriptures plainly teach, that the whole Jewish economy was superseded by the Christian, which is not a modification of that, but altogether a different thing, both in name and nature. "The law and the prophets (that is, the Jewish dispensation) were until John; since that time the kingdom of God (the Christian dispensation) is preached, and every man presses into it, Luke 16:16.

The Apostle says to the Christian brethren, at Corinth, 1 Corinthians xii: 27, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." Every member of a church, then, is a member of Christ's "body." And if so, is it not manifestly absurd to think of placing in that body, "members" that are incapable of understanding and obeying the will of "the head? Again, the members of a church all sustain to Christ the relation of branches to a vine. "I am the vine," he says, "and ye are the branches." But he declares that only *fruitful* branches—such persons as are obedient to his will—are allowed to remain even visibly united to him; for "every branch in me, he says, "that beareth not fruit he taketh away."—John xv : 1, 5. How improper, and in direct violation of these instructions, then, must it be, to introduce, recognize and retain in this relation to Christ, and as members of his church, *infants*, who are utterly incapable of bearing any fruit at all. No, a true church of Christ has no such carnal, impracticable materials, but its members, "as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ!"—1 Peter ii: 5.

*Thirdly:* So also is a church,—as the figure of a body in *its* relation to the head implies,—a merely *executive* body, charged with the duty, not of *making* laws but of obeying them. The head makes the laws for the body. And so the Scriptures represent Christ as the only law-giver, the only head of the Church. It would be a monstrosity for a body to have more than one head; and so is it for the Church to submit to *any* other authority than that of Christ, whether it is that of a king, a pope, a prelate, or the clergy. The members of the natural body, too, all occupy the same relation to the head. No one assumes the functions of the head, or *acts* for the rest, or delegates its powers and responsibilities to another; but all alike receive the biddings of the head) and act as a whole in obeying them, though each one has its appropriate office to perform. And such is the Church as described by the inspired penmen. They tell us it has "but one Master, *even* Christ," and that its members are "all brethren,"—Matthew xxiii : 8; that it is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, that is, upon the authority and *inspired teachings of these as set forth in the Sacred Scriptures.* And hence any "church" not built upon this foundation—that is, not conformed in its structure and operations to these instructions—fails to come within the definition here laid down of a true church of Christ.

Moreover, this foundation is *complete*; these instructions of the Head are all-sufficient; and hence it is said, that "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid." 1 Corinthians iii: 11. We need, then, no "apostolic succession." A succession of apostles is no more needed, and is no more practicable, than is a succession of mediators. Neither is needed because their work was complete, and because both, in effect, still live, and will live to the end of time. The Savior's work is of unwasting efficacy, and the labors of His inspired apostles are still dispensed through the written Word.

It is a singular fallacy to suppose, as some do, that the Church was left by Christ at liberty to make any changes or modifications in its organization and government that it might see fit to make. This would *be* for the Divine "Head" to suspend his authority and control, and permit and expect a society, a "body," of poor, erring, fallen, beings, to cease for a time to occupy the position of a "body," and to assume the discharge of the office of that infallible Head!—a body without a head—or a body both body and head at the same time!

Thus simple and unique was the organization of the primitive church. Such is the *ekklesia* of the New Testament. Let none presume, by altering His work, to be wiser than their Divine Master, who significantly says to his professed followers, "The servant is *not greater* than his lord." If ye know these things, *happy are ye if ye do them.*"

---

**FINISH**