

The Grace Proclamator and Promulgator (USPS Standard Mail Permit Number 876) is published monthly (subscription free) by the Central Baptist Church, PO Box 876, Grenada, MS. Postage paid at Grenada, MS 38902.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Grace Proclamator and Promulgator PO Box 876, Grenada, MS 38902-0876

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The Grace Proclamator and Promulgator

To testify the gospel of the grace of God.. Acts 20:24

Published as a mission project of
Central Baptist Church Grenada, Mississippi

March 2022

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THE MEANING OF THE WORD “CHURCH”

GEORGE W. MCDANIEL

The original word *ecclesia*, translated “church,” occurs three times in Matthew, twenty-three times in the Acts, sixty-two times in Paul’s letters, twice in Hebrews, once in James, three times in the third epistle of John, and twenty times in Revelation. Jesus did not coin this word—*ecclesia*. He found it in common use, as John the Baptist did proselyte baptism, and employed what was at hand.

Among the Greeks, *ecclesia* was the assembly of the citizens of a free city-state gathered by a herald blowing a horn through the streets of a town. In this sense, the word is used once in the New Testament (Acts 19:39). The town clerk advised Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen to submit the case of Paul and his companions to the Greek *ecclesia*.

Among the Hebrews, *ecclesia* was the congregation of Israel assembled before the Tabernacle in the wilderness by the blowing of a silver trumpet. In this sense the word is used twice in the New Testament (Acts 7:38; Heb. 2:12). Stephen, rehearsing the history of Israel, says Christ was in the *ecclesia* in the wilderness. The writer to the Hebrews quotes a typic-prophetic Psalm by David where the sense is “congregation” (Psalm 22:20). Israel in the land of Canaan is never called a church.

Both with the Greeks and the Jews the word denoted an assembly of the people, not of a committee or council.

Among the early Christians *ecclesia* conveyed the same general idea of “called out” and, in addition, “collected unto Christ.” As there were three general usages of the word, viz.: the Greek, the Hebrew, and the Christian, so, in the Christian usage there were three ideas, viz.: an institution, a particular congregation, and the redeemed of all time.

For centuries controversy has raged around the meaning of “church” in the New Testament. The views of many Christians upon this subject are hazy and contradictory. That keen intellect, Frederick W. Robertson, was so warped by Episcopal predilection, and was under such traditional bias that he said: “When the Baptists or the Independents, or any other sectarians, unite themselves with men holding the same faith and entertaining the same opinions, there may be a *sect*, a *combination*, a *persuasion*, but a *church* there cannot be.” One may not dogmatize where there is such wide divergence among good and scholarly brethren. However, a threefold meaning of *ecclesia* is the one which most commends itself to my thinking and to which, after much study and with the present light, I subscribe.

The table in the appendix of this book contains every New Testament passage where *ecclesia* is used with a *Christian* meaning and indicates my interpretation of the three conceptions. The student is referred to that table.

Be it noted that the Jewish congregation, or assembly, is referred to in Acts 7:38 and Heb. 2:12; an unlawful assembly, in Acts 19:32, 41; a lawful assembly, in Acts 19:39. Hence, those five instances of *ecclesia* are omitted from the appended list. Acts 2:47 is omitted because the word *ecclesia* does not appear in the best texts. *Ecclesia* occurs, then, one hundred and fourteen times in the New Testament and one hundred and nine times it has a Christian significance. As to the classification: Acts 9: 31 is listed as local, meaning the Jerusalem church which had been scattered abroad by the persecution of Saul of Tarsus. The two-fold classification in Ephesians is not arbitrary but harmonizes with Paul’s unmistakable practice in Colossians where he used “church” both in a general and a particular sense. Our Lord set the precedent for such a style of writing by passing almost imperceptibly from a discussion of the destruction of Jerusalem to

102. Hear what the Spirit says to the churches (Rev. 2:29) Local
103. The church in Sardis (Rev. 3:1) Local
104. Hear what the Spirit says to the churches (Rev. 3:6).....Local
105. The church in Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7) Local
106. Hear what the Spirit says to the churches (Rev. 3:13) Local
107. The church in Laodicea (Rev. 3:14) Local
108. Hear what the Spirit says to the churches (Rev. 3:22) Local
109. Testify to you these things in the churches (Rev. 22:16).....Local
From “The Churches of the New Testament” Chapter XII

I J̄esus have sent min̄ angel to testify unto you
these things in the churches... R̄ev. 22:16a

...upon this rock I will build my church; and the
gates of hell shall not prevail against it...
Mt. 16:18b

(McDaniel—continued from page 11)

they do, (1) by bearing witness to the historic truths , of the New Testament; (2) by the proclamation of the gospel among all nations; (3) by the exhibition and inculcation of the principles of Christianity. Not all members of local churches are in the kingdom. Only the really saved are under Christ’s rulership. All members of the kingdom will ultimately be members of the church in glory. Not all members of the kingdom are members of local churches. All the saved are not affiliated with the churches, though they ought to be. “Be baptized” is a command for the individual, an act which must be done both by an outward as well as an inward obedience. It is obligatory upon every believer. Jesus’ way of saying converted people would unite with a church was that “Men do not light a lamp and put it under the bushel, but on the lamp-stand; and it shines to all that are in the house.” The lamp-stand is the church. “The seven lamp-stands are the seven churches.”

From “The Churches of the New Testament” Chapter I

65. Christ is the head of the church (Eph. 5:23)	Institution
66. The church is subjected to Christ (Eph. 5:24)	Institution
67. Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25)	Institution
68. Present to himself the church (Eph. 5:27).....	In Glory
69. Even as Christ the church (Eph. 5:29).....	Institution
70. Speaking of Christ and of the church (Eph. 5:32).....	Institution
71. Persecuting the church (Phil. 3:6)	Local
72. No church communicated with me (Phil. 4:15).....	Local
73. The head of the body, the church (Col. 1:18)	Institution
74. Sake of his body, which is the church (Col. 1:24)	Institution
75. The church in their house (Col. 4:15).....	Local
76. The church of the Laodiceans (Col. 4:16)	Local
77. The church of the Thessalonians (I Thess. 1:1).....	Local
78. The churches of God which are in Judaea (I Thess. 2:14).....	Local
79. The church of the Thessalonians (II Thess. 1:1)	Local
80. Glory in you in the churches of God (II Thess. 1:4)	Local
81. How shall he take care of the church of God (I Tim. 3:5)	Local
82. The church of the living God (I Tim. 3:15)	Institution
83. Let not the church be burdened (I Tim. 5:16)	Local
84. The church in thy house (Phil. 2).....	Local
85. Church of the first-born (Heb. 12:23).....	In Glory
86. Let him call for the elders of the church (Jas. 5:14)	Local
87. Testified to thy love before the church (III John 6)	Local
88. I wrote somewhat to the churches (III John 9).....	Local
89. Casts them out of the church (III John 10).....	Local
90. John to the seven churches (Rev. 1:4).....	Local
91. Send to the seven churches (Rev. 1:11).....	Local
92. The seven stars of angels of the seven churches (Rev. 1:20).....	Local
93. The seven lamp-stands are the seven churches (Rev. 1:20)	Local
94. The church in Ephesus (Rev. 2:1).....	Local
95. Hear what the Spirit says to the Churches (Rev. 2:7)	Local
96. The church in Smyrna (Rev. 2:8)	Local
97. Hear what the Spirit says to the churches (Rev. 2:11)	Local
98. The church in Pergamum (Rev. 2:12).....	Local
99. Hear what the Spirit says to the churches (Rev. 2:17)	Local
100. The church in Thyatira (Rev. 2:18).....	Local
101. All the churches shall know (Rev. 2:23)	Local

a discussion of His second coming and the end of the world (Luke 21:20-28). The classified summary of Christian usages is (1) As an institution, fourteen. (2) As a local congregation, ninety-three. (3) As all the redeemed, two.

Consider, somewhat in detail, the three Christian significations of the term “church.” First: an *institution*, “Upon this rock I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18). Jesus never built but one thing after He quit the carpenter’s shop in Nazareth. That was His church. The emphatic word is the pronoun “my” which distinguishes Christ’s church from the Greek and Hebrew assemblies. Adjectives are never used in the New Testament to define “church.” Universal, invisible, spiritual, catholic, are human, not inspired, appellatives. This divine institution depends in a very important sense upon man confessing. Not merely upon the man Peter, as held by Romanists, nor upon the confession alone, as held by some Protestants ; but upon the man who confessed the essential deity of Jesus. This confession was an exercise of the heart rather than of the intellect. As the Scripture saith: “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” We *confess* Christ; we *profess* a religion. It was not Peter’s mere intellectual perception of the Christ which our Lord commended. What Peter did and what he said was under the illumination of the Holy Spirit. “Flesh and blood did not reveal it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven,” was Jesus’ way of saying that divine power worked on Peter enabling him to make the good confession. “No man can say Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit” (I Cor. 12:3). The church as an institution has always been composed of frail human material like Peter who, by the Holy Spirit, acknowledged Jesus to be the unique Son of God. To this institution and its representatives was committed the authority to announce the terms, or conditions, upon which God would forgive sins. The same power conferred on Peter was conferred upon the ten apostles in John 20:23, and upon the whole church in Matt. 18:18.

The Romanist doctrine of a universal church endowed with the power of binding and loosing is absent from the scriptures. Indeed, the word *catholicos* is not found in the New Testament, nor in the Septuagint—the Greek Old Testament. In post apostolic times *catholicos* was inserted in the titles of certain books; for example, “The First General Epis-

tle of Peter.” Peter would never have given that heading to his letter for in the first two verses he specifically confines his message to: (1) the Jews; (2) the elect Jews; (3) the elect Jews of the dispersion; (4) the elect Jews of the dispersion in four provinces of Asia Minor. It is anything else than a catholic epistle. The error is of a similar nature as the man-made titles “Saint Matthew,” etc. God providentially preserved the text against these Romanist errors. Those versed in New Testament nomenclature never speak of the apostles as saints, except as all believers are called to be saints. The “Catholic church” is not a biblical term, nor does it appear in the earliest form of the Apostles’ Creed.

Jesus had in mind an institution when He said: “Tell it to the church . . . If he will not hear the church,” (Matt. 18:17f). The presidency of the United States is an institution established in Article II, Section I of the Constitution before there was a president. There have been twenty-eight presidents but only one presidency, as an institution. Perhaps a more apt analogy is the jury system. Amendment VI to the Federal Constitution provides for trial by jury in all criminal prosecutions. The accused is guaranteed a speedy and public trial by an impartial jury. That is to say; this amendment established the jury system as an institution just as Jesus established His church as an institution. In practical application the jury as an institution finds expression in a local jury which tries the accused. Likewise, the church as an institution takes concrete shape in a local congregation in a given community.

The figure of a building was used for the church as an institution. A building is never called a local church in the New Testament, though such usage is now current. Looked at as an institution figured by a building, the fundamentals are: (1) Christ is the designer. He designs it for Kingdom purposes; (2) He is the architect. He specifies the material which goes into the building. (3) He is the builder. He selects the material which fits into the specifications. (4) He is the foundation. Other foundation can no man lay. (5) He is the owner. “My church” is the title to ownership. (6) He is the occupant. He inhabits the building by the Holy Spirit. The figure of an organism was used for the church as an institution. Looked at as an institution, figured by an organism, the thoughts are: (1) Christ is the head. His rulership is exercised through his only vicar, the Holy Spirit. The as-

29. As I teach everywhere in every church (I Cor. 4:17)	Local
30. Who are of no esteem in the church (I Cor. 6:4)	Local
31. So I ordain in all the church (I Cor. 7:17)	Local
32. Either to Jews or Greeks, or to the church of God (I Cor. 10:32)	Local
33. No such custom, nor the churches of God (I Cor. 11:16)	Local
34. When ye come together in the church (I Cor. 11:18)	Local
35. Despise ye the church of God (I Cor. 11:22)	Local
36. God set some in the church (I Cor. 12:28)	Local
37. He that prophesies builds up the church (I Cor. 14:4)	Local
38. That the church may receive upbuilding (I Cor. 14:5)	Local
39. To the upbuilding of the church (I Cor. 14:12)	Local
40. In church I had rather speak five words (I Cor. 14:19)	Local
41. If therefore the whole church is assembled together (I Cor. 14:23)	Local
42. Let him keep silence in church (I Cor. 14:28)	Local
43. As in all the churches of the saints (I Cor. 14:33)	Local
44. Let your women keep silence in the churches (I Cor. 14:34)	Local
45. Shameful for a woman to speak in church (I Cor. 14:35)	Local
46. Persecuted the church of God (I Cor. 15:9)	Local
47. As I directed the churches of Galatia (I Cor. 16:1)	Local
48. The churches of Asia salute you (I Cor. 16:19)	Local
49. The church that is in their house (I Cor. 16:19)	Local
50. The church of God which is in Corinth (II Cor. 1:1)	Local
51. The churches of Macedonia (II Cor. 8:1)	Local
52. Throughout all the churches (II Cor. 8:18)	Local
53. Appointed by the churches (II Cor. 8:19)	Local
54. Messengers of the churches (II Cor. 8:23)	Local
55. Show toward them before the churches (II Cor. 8:24)	Local
56. Robbed other churches (II Cor. 11:8)	Local
57. Anxiety of all the churches (II Cor. 11:28)	Local
58. Inferior to the rest of the churches (II Cor. 12:13)	Local
59. To the churches of Galatia (Gal. 1:2)	Local
60. Persecuted the church of God (Gal. 1:13)	Local
61. The Churches of Judaea (Gal. 1:22)	Local
62. Head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22)	Institution
63. Made known through the church (Eph. 3:10)	Institution
64. To him be the glory in the church (Eph. 3:21)	Institution

TABLE SHOWING CHRISTIAN MEANING OF ECCLESIA

GEORGE W. MCDANIEL

The following table contains every New Testament passage where ecclesia is used with a Christian meaning, and indicates my interpretation of the three conceptions:

1. On this rock I will build my church (Matt. 16:18).....	Institution
2. If he refuses to hear, tell it to the church (Matt. 18:17)	Institution
3. If he neglect to hear the church (Matt. 18:17)	Institution
4. Great fear came on the whole church (Acts 5:11).....	Local
5. A great persecution against the church (Acts 8:1).....	Local
6. Saul laid waste the church (Acts 8:3).....	Local
7. The church throughout all Judaea, Galilee, Samaria (Acts 9:31)..	Local
8. Report came to the ears of the church (Acts 11:22)	Local
9. Came together in the church (Acts 11:26).....	Local
10. Put forth his hands to harm some of the church (Acts 12:1).....	Local
11. Prayer was earnestly made by the church (Acts 12:5).....	Local
12. In the church that was there (Acts 13:1).....	Local
13. Appointed elders for them in every church (Acts 14:23)	Local
14. When they had assembled the church (Acts 14:27)	Local
15. Having been sent forward by the church (Acts 15:3)	Local
16. Having been welcomed by the church (Acts 15:4).....	Local
17. The apostles, the elders, with the whole church (Acts 15:22)	Local
18. Confirming the churches (Acts 15:41)	Local
19. The churches were strengthened in the faith (Acts 16:5).....	Local
20. Went up and saluted the church (Acts 18:22).....	Local
21. Called the elders of the church (Acts 20:17)	Local
22. Shepherd the church of God (Acts 20:28)	Local
23. The church which is at Cenchraea (Rom. 16:1).....	Local
24. All the churches of the Gentiles (Rom. 16:4).....	Local
25. The church that is in their house (Rom. 16:5)	Local
26. All the churches of Christ salute you (Rom 16:16)	Local
27. Gaius my host, and of the whole church, salutes you (Rom 16:23).....	Local
28. The church of God which is in Corinth (I Cor. 1:2).....	Local

sumption by a mere man of this sovereignty is blasphemy. (2) The church is Christ's body. That body is vitally connected with the head and draws its life from that source. Cut off the head and the body is dead. (3) Christ is also "head over all things to the church." He exercises all power in the universe in behalf of the church. (4) The church expresses Christ's fullness. As Christ conveys the conception of God's nature, so the church conveys the conception of Christ's love, authority, power, glory.

We now pass on to the second significance of the term "church": a *particular congregation*. This is the predominant use in the New Testament. It means the regenerate persons in a locality who unite themselves voluntarily together, in conformity with Christ's laws, for establishing His kingdom in the earth. Membership in a church is not hereditary, like membership in a family or state, but is optional.

The earliest churches probably met in private homes. The Lord's Supper was observed in these house-churches (Acts 2:46). The primitive church met in the house of Mary, mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12); and in the house of James, brother of Jesus (Acts 21:18). Paul sent salutations to at least three house-churches: to the church meeting in the house of Aquila and Priscilla (Rom. 16:5); to that meeting in the house of Nymphas (Col. 4:15); to that meeting in the house of Philemon at Colosse (Phil. 2). Gaius was "host of the whole church (Rom. 16:23)." Possibly three other house-churches are referred to in Rom. 16:14, 15 and I Cor. 16:15. It was perfectly natural for congregations to meet in private houses. Many a church in modern times has begun in a private dwelling. The First Baptist Church of Richmond was constituted in 1780 with fourteen members who met "in the house of one Franklin" at the northeast corner of Carrington and Pink Streets. Numerous other examples could be cited.

Qualifications for membership in the churches of the New Testament were well defined. Not all residents of a town could participate in the Greek assembly: the members must needs be freemen. Lineal requisites qualified for membership in the Jewish congregation: proselytes must needs be circumcised. A Christian church required faith and baptism in order to membership. It has been stated succinctly as faith-baptism. A New Testament *ecclesia* was not identical with the Jewish *ecclesia* and the

terms of admission were entirely different. The question of open church membership was not raised for the very simple reason that different denominations did not exist. Departure from the early inspired principles and polity is the source of that vexatious question. But one safe course is to be pursued—strict adherence to the divine order. This is not unbrotherly. A member of the Knights of Pythias is not eligible to membership among Masons by virtue of his membership in the Pythians, and vice versa. Every secret order has its own initiation. This is not to say they do not esteem and love the other orders. Members of one lodge pass to other similar lodges without a new initiation. So, with Baptists to-day.

The form of government of these local churches was congregational. One church having authority over another church, or one man, or group of men, exercising jurisdiction over a church, or a territory of several churches, is foreign to the New Testament. Those nearest Christ interpreted him as placing authority in the membership of the churches. Witness the nomination of Matthias by the “one hundred and twenty” (Acts 1:15-22); the choosing of the seven by “the multitude of the disciples” (Acts 6:2); the appointment of Barnabas as a committee by “the church which was in Jerusalem” (Acts 11:22); the setting apart of Barnabas and Saul by the church at Antioch (Acts 13:13); the election of the presbyters by the vote of the churches (Acts 14:23); the sending of Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem on the circumcision controversy by the church at Antioch (Acts 15:3); the sending of chosen men to Antioch “by the apostles and elders, with the whole church” (Acts 15: 22) ; the taking of apostles even to task and passing judgment on their conduct and the recognition by apostles of the supremacy of the local assembly (Acts 11:1-18); the abundant proofs of the congregation’s control of its own affairs in exercising discipline (I Cor. 5:4); and appointing a traveling representative with Paul (II Cor. 8:19).

From these scriptures it is evident that a particular assembly was self-governing. There was no apostolic hierarchy even when and where the inspired apostles were present. Jesus safe-guarded his churches against the peril of the episcopal form of government, viz., autocracy ; and against the peril of the presbyterian form of government, viz., oligarchy; by establishing a democratic form of government in which the government was of the

The third signification of the term “church” is: *the redeemed of all time*, “But ye are to come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, who are enrolled in heaven” (Heb. 12:22f.) All from Adam to Christ who were saved by faith in a coming Messiah, will be members of this church in glory. All from the days of John the Baptist to the second coming of Christ who are saved by faith in the Son of God will be members of this church in glory. All who have died in infancy, and all idiots, are saved by the merits of Christ’s death and will be members of this church in glory. This church will have no ordinances, no officers, no organization. The conditions of membership are regeneration, sanctification, glorification. It is future as distinguished from the present church, an institution focalizing and functioning in particular congregations. This church is to be the Lamb’s Bride. The marriage will take place at the end of time. When Christ’s redeeming work is finished, when all enemies are put under His feet, when death is destroyed, when the bodies of the saints are raised and re-inhabited by their justified spirits, then the glorious church as a beautiful bride, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish, will be presented to Jesus, the Groom (Eph. 5:27). The church as an institution then and there merges into the church in glory. That is in the future. How far we do not know. As we contemplate the wrinkles and blemishes of the churches of the present, the church in glory seems remote.

One other subject remains to be treated: *the distinction between kingdom and church*. Here there is much vague and confused thinking. It will aid in clarifying the situation to bear in mind that the idea contained in *basileia*, kingdom, is different from the idea contained in *ecclesia*. The kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of Christ are the same in the New Testament. They mean the domain over which Christ reigns and the sovereignty which He exercises in that domain. Sometimes kingdom means the territory, sometimes the reign, sometimes both. The kingdom is larger than the church as a local assembly or an institution. It is in existence now while the church in glory is in the future. In eternity the two may become one. A church is visible, the kingdom is invisible. Churches are organizations the mission of which is to enlarge the kingdom. This

(McDaniel—continued on page 15)

gether, except they be agreed!”

6. A body covenanting to do what He has commanded. Here, in addition to doctrine, we come upon deeds. Jesus’ repeated, emphatic, inescapable command was to “go,” “evangelize,” “baptize,” and “teach.” To omit the “make disciples of all nations” is to take the heart out of the commission. Whoever does so, breaks fellowship with real Baptists and disowns Christ. Therefore, a Baptist church is essentially missionary. Christ’s command constitutes its marching orders; His spiritual weapons make up its armor; the “ends of the earth” are its objective.

This principle should be inculcated in all who unite with churches. Too often they are received and neglected until a shock is needed to awaken them to missionary endeavor, as persecution scattered abroad the Jerusalem church. The pity is that some never awake. They live as missionary drones, die unwept by the church and go to wear a starless crown. If their souls are saved “their works perish.” They are “saved yet so as by fire.” Jesus is saying to some very “orthodox” people: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of the father which is in heaven.” “Why call ye me Lord and do not the things I have commanded?”

7. A body cooperating with other like bodies in Kingdom enterprises. The proverb runs: “Birds of a feather will flock together.” Like associates with like. This principle determines church membership. It should also determine church cooperation. The principle also preserves and propagates birds, animals, and plants. Those that go or grow in groups crowd the others out and preempt the territory. Here is a lesson writ large. “He who runs may read.”

Paul commended the Macedonian churches for their readiness to help. He was accompanied by members of cooperating churches who participated in his beneficent work. The task of feeding thousands of poor saints in Jerusalem was too great for any one church, though that church were the generous Gentile church at Antioch. The largeness of the undertaking constituted the challenge: the spirit of service met that challenge in a combined effort. They did “team work.”

people, for the people, and by the people.

The local church is fundamental in the propagation of the gospel. A clear understanding of a gospel church is so important that I venture to consider the subject from a slightly different viewpoint than the one just presented. Take this definition: A gospel church is an organized body of baptized believers equal in rank and privileges, administering its affairs under the headship of Christ, united in the belief of what He has taught, covenanting to do what He has commanded, and cooperating with other like bodies in Kingdom movements. Analyze this definition.

1. An organized body. A church is not a mob, or a mass meeting. It is more than a congregation John the Baptist preached to multitudes and many of them followed his teaching but they were not a church. They were unorganized. Jesus began the first Christian church with two of John’s disciples. He gathered others and worked the material into an organization. This organization He filled with power on Pentecost. Wherever in the course of his missions Paul planted the Gospel, he never counted his work complete until he had organized a church and ordained pastors by a democratic procedure of election by “show of hands.” (See David Smith’s *Life and Letters of Paul*, page 105.) A building is not essential to the existence of a church, but organization is. The building is useful, the organization, indispensable. Immediately after a group of people come together for the purpose of constituting a church, they adopt certain principles as their binding and controlling bonds. They then select their officers and perfect such organization as may promote efficiency.

2. A body of baptized believers. Baptism means baptism. The Greek word was not translated in the King James or Revised Versions; it was anglicized. Had the original been translated it must necessarily have been “immerse,” as in the Bible Union New Testament. The meaning of the word, the description of the administration, the symbolism of the ordinance, the uniform practice of the early fathers, all unite in emphasizing immersion, and immersion only, as Christian baptism. This baptism is for believers—those who have exercised saving faith in Jesus Christ. John the Baptist demanded a change of heart before he would baptize those who came to him. Jesus commanded that discipling should precede baptism.

Those who “gladly received His word” were baptized by Peter and his co-laborers. Philip ascertained that the Eunuch believed before he baptized him. Paul’s converts, even the households, are described as believers. Without a single exception, baptism in the New Testament was always upon a profession of faith. In all the recorded instances faith preceded and baptism followed *immediately*.

This doctrine eliminates infants because they do not need baptism. It eliminates the unconverted because they are unfit for baptism. It includes every one who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour, and imposes upon every such one a solemn duty to obey.

3. A body equal in rank and privileges. Ruling classes are foreign to a gospel church. Jesus condemned such custom of the Gentiles and said of his people, “it shall not be so among you.” Officers are chosen for service not for dictation, for leadership not for lordship. Except as one’s character and service may have given him the confidence of his brethren, one has no more influence than another in a New Testament church. His power with his fellow members is not official. Even the pastor, whom the Holy Spirit makes the overseer, cannot exclude the least significant member. As a member of the local church his rank is precisely that of any and every other member. “Orders” in the ministry are unscriptural and “orders” from the pastor are unauthorized.

So with the privileges of individuals,—they are equal. Only in a gospel church is this true. No other denomination, and no civil government, grants equal suffrage to young and old, rich and poor, male and female. Membership in a Baptist church entitles every member to a voice and to a vote. Hence, a Baptist church is a pure democracy; the only one in the world to-day. Of course these privileges are accompanied, as are all privileges, by penalty for their abuse. Democracies have their perils, though they are of a nature different from those to which other governments are subject. Enlightened consciences are the safeguards of Baptist churches.

4. A body administering its own affairs under the headship of Christ. That is to say, a Baptist church governs itself. Its “authority” is

limited, however, to the determination of its own membership, the administration of its temporal affairs, and the direction of its own corporate spiritual activities. The form of government is congregational as distinguished from papistical, episcopal, or presbyterian. It has all needed administrative and judicial power. From its decision there is no appeal, since it is both the trial court and the supreme court. It constitutes the judge and the jury. It has no legislative powers. The New Testament is the law and Christ is the law-maker. He is “head over all things to the church.” The right for which the small nations, and the oppressed people of the larger nations, have fought, viz.: to determine for themselves their government and officials, has been a fundamental principle in a Baptist church from the very beginning of Christian history. That principle was first expressed in the New Testament and has been recognized as a guiding rule of every Baptist church since that time.

5. A body united in the belief of what Christ has taught. This means the “common faith” which is also the “faith once for all delivered unto the saints.” Embraced in it are such doctrines as man’s sinful nature and his inability to save himself; God’s eternal love for his creatures; Christ’s deity and Saviourhood—He was God-man and made atonement for sin; the office and work of the Holy Spirit; escape from the power and penalty of sin by the sinner’s repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; Christ’s ability and promise to keep those who are saved ; the two ordinances in their proper order and significance; the church as a single, spiritual, democratic group; a heaven of unending service and unalloyed bliss for the saved and a hell of eternal misery and unmitigated suffering for the impenitent.

Baptists may fellowship as Christians those who do not hold to certain of these tenets, but they do not fellowship them as church members. They may be saved and not be in a church. We pass no judgment on their religion; we do adhere to the New Testament in our church fellowship. It follows that an intelligent church member of a Baptist church can never unite with a body that repudiates these doctrines without stultifying his conscience. It also follows that there can never be “organic church union” or even the “interchange of church membership” or “open communion” until “all come into the unity of the faith.” “How can two walk to-