

**"Ye Are the Body of Christ"**  
*Dr. Thomas M. Strouse*  
**Emmanuel Baptist Theological Seminary**  
**Newington, CT 06111**

**Introduction**

C.I. Scofield's Reference Bible has been the "single most influential publication in Fundamentalism's history," according to David Beale.<sup>1</sup> As such it has helped shape the theological expressions of fundamentalists, even Baptist fundamentalists, with regard to certain so-called "fundamentals." The two major theological positions in which Scofield has influenced fundamentalists are the so-called "Gap" or restitution theory and the universal, invisible church theory. Although most fundamentalists of the twenty-first century do not countenance the teaching of or the need for the interpretation of a "gap" between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2 to allow for the "geological ages," this is not the case with the second theory. Scofield popularized the Protestant notion<sup>2</sup> of an invisible church or mystical body of Christ that has become a "fundamental" tenet within fundamentalism. In fact, the term "fundamentalism" in some Christian circles is synonymous with the movement of the mystical body of Christ.

Scofield expressed this popular theory as follows:

The Church was clearly prophesied by Him in Mt. 16:18...and constituted as the Church after His resurrection and ascension at Pentecost when, in accordance with His promise (Acts 1:5), individual believers were for the first time baptized with the Holy Spirit into a unified spiritual organism, likened to a body of which Christ, is the Head (I Cor. 12:12-13; Col. 2:19)...As those saved individuals who compose Christ's true Church fulfill their Lord's command to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth (Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:46-48; Acts 1:8)...<sup>3</sup>

Neo-evangelical theologians, who often influence fundamentalist theology, continue to promote this Protestant theory as Chafer and Ryrie demonstrate. For instance, Chafer, in defending the "Church" as the New Testament (NT) redeemed in contradistinction to the Old Testament (OT) saints, states: "The most basic and fundamental reality respecting the Church is that she is a temple for the habitation of God through the Spirit. She is regenerated, baptized, and sealed by the Spirit."<sup>4</sup> Ryrie maintains the necessity of the Spirit to baptize all NT believers in the mystical body of Christ, saying, "The instrument

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<sup>1</sup>David O. Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity* (Greenville: Unusual Publications, 1986), p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>The Presbyterian, and therefore Protestant, Westminster Confession states: "The catholic or universal Church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, (Philadelphia: Great Commission Publications, n.d.), p. 15.

<sup>3</sup>C.I. Scofield, ed., *The New Scofield Reference Bible* (NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), p. 1162.

<sup>4</sup>Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. IV (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1980), p. 45.

that places the believer into that sphere of the risen body of Christ is the Holy Spirit, and this is what is taught in both Acts 1:5 and I Corinthians 12:13."<sup>5</sup> Fundamentalist theologian Rolland McCune wholeheartedly promotes and succinctly defines this Protestant, albeit dispensational, view of the body of Christ, stating:

The Body of Christ is the whole spiritual body of believers of this age (the Church Age) regardless of location or circumstances. More particularly, it is the total number of Spirit-baptized believers, or all of those saved between the Day of Pentecost and the Rapture, whether they be in Heaven or on earth...the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the building agent of the Body, and this began at Pentecost and will terminate at the Rapture.<sup>6</sup>

All of these theological expressions are based on the interpretation that the Spirit baptizes believers in the mystical, invisible, body of Christ on or since the Day of Pentecost. This position assumes that Spirit Baptism occurred/occurs simultaneous with regeneration and that the body of Christ is identical with the universal, invisible, and mystical Church.

This essay will refute with Scripture the popular views of Spirit Baptism and the body of Christ and thus show that all practical ramifications coming from these false views, including the para-church movement, are illegitimate and lacking all biblical authority. Furthermore, this exposition will demonstrate exegetically that each of the Lord's churches is the body of Christ in its respective locale, thus restoring biblical authority, importance, and dignity to that which the Lord Jesus Christ loves (Eph. 5:25).

## **The Popular View**

### **The History of the Popular View**

#### *Platonic Philosophy*

The Apostle Paul addressed the Corinthian church, stating "*Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular*" (I Cor. 12:27). Although Paul's inspired words are addressed to an assembly of baptized believers (cf. Acts 18:8 ff.), today there is great hesitancy and denial to address one of the Lord's assemblies as "the body of Christ." From whence has this resistance come? The popular view that the body of Christ refers to all the redeemed in the "church" dispensation from Pentecost to the Rapture, is based on Protestant theology which is essentially reformed Romanism. The following is the simple history of the development of neo-catholic ecclesiology popular among Baptists today.

Following on the heels of the inspired Christian Scriptures came the writings of "church" bishops whom historians categorize as ante-Nicene (before AD 325) "church fathers" or Patristics. Many of these writings are extant and indicate that these Patristics embraced Platonic philosophy and practiced faulty hermeneutical principles, resulting in proto-Roman Catholic theology. The well-known Greek philosophers of the ancient world influenced the Greco-Roman world into which Christianity came. Such men as Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle contributed to the ancient world's knowledge in

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<sup>5</sup>Charles C. Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), p. 78.

<sup>6</sup>Rolland McCune, "The Body of Christ," *Frontline*, May-June, 1991: 35-37.

math, ethics, government, science, and religion. This latter category, religion, constituted the worldview of the philosopher and was foundational to all other disciplines. All of the aforementioned philosophers embraced pantheism and its inherent Gnostic tenets.<sup>7</sup>

Plato (429-347 BC) determined that reality was in the universal, or Oversoul, and that it was imperfectly manifested in the physical world as shadows on a cave wall. In his thinking, each man had a "soul," which was part of the universal "Oversoul." The goal of life was to be free from the physical realm and to reunite one's soul with the Oversoul. His mind/body dualism and universal/particular contrasts had a major impact on this famous student Aristotle, and his emphasis on Goodness as the supreme universal had a major impact on the Patristics.<sup>8</sup> Plato's emphasis on the universal, in contrast with the particular, led to universalism or "catholicity." Permeating all of life, catholicity was the warp and woof of the Greco-Roman world. Catholicity corresponded to that which was absolute, ideal, perfect;<sup>9</sup> it was the rational outworking of pantheism ("God is all and all is God").

The Patristics, along with the rest of the Greco-Roman world, embraced and applied Platonic catholicity. Several examples of the Patristics' Platonic eisegesis are instructive. The author of the *Didache* (c. AD 125) manifested his catholicity applied to ecclesiology, stating, "as this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains and being gathered together became one, so may Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom."<sup>10</sup> Again, the author prayed that the Lord will "gather it together from the four winds--even the Church which has been sanctified."<sup>11</sup>

The first writer to combine "catholic" with "church" was not a NT writer, but it was Ignatius (AD 30-107), who stated "wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church."<sup>12</sup> Ignatius, along with others, developed an external and catholic institute to offset supposed heretical movements. Ignatius expressed this visible catholicity in following terms, demanding the need for church leadership to legitimize a church: "apart from these [deacons, bishop, presbyters], there is no church."<sup>13</sup> Irenaeus' well-known defense for apostolic succession which included his proclamation, "For with this church [Rome], because of its position of leadership and authority, must needs agree every church, that is, the faithful everywhere; for in her the apostolic tradition has always been preserved by the faithful from all parts."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Satan offered his alternative theological tenets of deification ("ye shall be as gods") and deathlessness ("ye shall not die") couched in knowledge, to Adam and Eve in the garden, initiating pantheistic gnosticism (Gen. 3:4-5).

<sup>8</sup>Edward G. Selwyn, ed., *A Short History of Christian Thought* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1949), pp. 29, 43.

<sup>9</sup>Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?* (Old Tappan, NJ: F. H. Revell Co., 1976), pp. 52-55.

<sup>10</sup>J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Baker book House, 1976), p. 126.

<sup>11</sup>Lightfoot, p. 126.

<sup>12</sup>A. Cleveland Coxe, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1981), p. 90.

<sup>13</sup>Coxe, p. 67.

<sup>14</sup>Henry Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church* (NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 1957), pp. 96-97.

Cyprian (AD 200-258) advanced the necessity of this external, catholic institution with his famous expression *extra nulla salus ecclesiam* ("outside the church there is no salvation"). His concept established the connecting link between soteriology and ecclesiology in the thinking of the Patristics. Berkhof states, "Thus Cyprian was the first to bring out clearly and distinctly the idea of a catholic Church, comprehending all true branches of the Church of Christ, and bound together by a visible and external unity."<sup>15</sup> By the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century the concept of "*the catholic church*" was firmly fixed in ecclesiastical writings and practice.

Augustine (AD 354-430) was a neo-Platonist whose work "represents the climax of Platonic spirituality."<sup>16</sup> Augustine's controversy with the Donatists helped shape catholic ecclesiology for centuries to come. The Donatists criticized his "visible church" because of its lack of a pure membership, asking if the church was actually split into two churches, the mixed church of the present and the pure church of the future.<sup>17</sup> In seeing the Donatists' legitimate criticism of the impure "visible church," Augustine was forced to attach his concept of the elect with his Cyprianic concept of the catholic Church. Berkhof sums up Augustine's position by stating "the real unity of the saints and therefore of the church is an invisible one. At the same time it exists only within the catholic Church, for it is there only that the Spirit works and that true love dwells."<sup>18</sup>

The theological ingenuity of the bishop of Hippo had a two-fold effect. It not only helped Augustine to sidestep neatly the Donatists' objections, but it also was the source for later ecclesiological error. Although Augustine did not use the term "invisible" with catholic Church, he did originate the concept of the "invisible catholic church" out of theological necessity. So by the 5<sup>th</sup> century there were at least two different concepts for "church."<sup>19</sup> To the Augustinian catholic, the true church was within the visible, catholic institution, married to the Roman state by Constantine (after AD 313), entered into by infant baptism, and maintained by the implementation of the sacraments. To the Donatists, the true church was the assembly of immersed believers in a particular locale, maintaining their purity through strong preaching and church discipline.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), p. 229.

<sup>16</sup>Selwyn, p. 58.

<sup>17</sup>Reinhold Seeberg, *Text-Book of the History of Doctrines*, trans. Charles E. Hay, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), I, p. 325.

<sup>18</sup>Berkhof, p. 229.

<sup>19</sup>Seeberg rightly admits the difficulty of having two different concepts of the nature of the church, stating, "From a critical point of view, the Donatistic objection is not without justification, for the church of the sacraments and church of grace can only with the greatest difficulty be intellectually harmonized...We may, accordingly, speak of a two-fold, or even a three-fold, definition of the church in Augustine," p. 326.

<sup>20</sup>The Lord's immersionist candlesticks had no biblical mandate or practical necessity to seek ecclesiastical unity beyond the local church, especially in times of grievous persecution. This tendency held true for the most part until the Toleration Act in 1689, which permitted toleration to dissident religious groups including Baptists in England. As Baptists began to be accepted by Protestants they reciprocated and tolerated Protestant fellowship and doctrine (including the universal church and Calvinism). Eventually Baptist leaders received theological education from Protestant institutions and compromised their NT doctrine.

### *Faulty Hermeneutics*

Although the Apostolic Fathers stood near the Apostles, this chronological proximity may have caused them to be unable to discern distinctive NT truth. Berkhop offers several characteristics of the Patristics theological writings. Their writings reflected the lack of originality, depth, clearness and definiteness.<sup>21</sup> The Patristics, most of whom were unregenerate,<sup>22</sup> considered the NT Scriptures to be the continuation of the OT with no distinctions concerning the people of God or His agency through which He ministers (i.e., the assembly of immersed believers; cf. Mt. 28:19-20; I Tim. 3:15). In failing to use the historical-grammatical (dispensational) hermeneutic to interpret Scripture, the Patristics superimposed the *sacral* society concept upon the NT. They looked to the OT for the antiquity of church leadership and for the meaning and mode of baptism.<sup>23</sup> The *sacral* society concept is the state religion in a certain region, headed up by one leader, entered into by one means for all inhabitants, and defended by exterminating all dissidents. Constantine embraced the Platonic catholicity of the Patristics to form the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), with its one head in the bishop of Rome, with its entrance through the baptismal regeneration of infants, and with its persecution of all dissidents. This visible catholic ecclesiology, initiated by Ignatius and his ilk, propagated by Irenaeus and Cyprian, and popularized by Augustine, became the orthodox position for Christendom until the Reformation.

In 1521, the Augustinian-trained monk named Martin Luther was faced with an ecclesiastical conundrum upon his ex-communication from the visible Roman Catholic Church. Luther, like all later Reformers, considered the RCC the "good movement gone bad," needing reform. Upon being forced out of the visible RCC, Luther harked back to the ecclesiology of Augustine and found himself in the invisible catholic church--the "true" church of the elect. Luther, who died as a baptized Roman Catholic, believed the true invisible church was within the visible RCC.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, under the protection of Frederick of Saxony, Luther established his version of visible catholicity with its invisible "reality," in Germany. Other Reformers followed, establishing their respective *sacral* society ecclesiology upon various locales in Europe. For instance, Henry VIII became head of the Anglican Church in 1534, Zwingli established Zurich as his catholic empire in the 1520's, and Calvin made Geneva his "holy city" by 1541. Calvin expanded the concept of the invisible church to include all of the elect, whether in the visible catholic movement or not. Calvin's view became foundational for the Westminster Confession and for almost all subsequent theological expressions of ecclesiology, including Fundamental Baptists.<sup>25</sup> Most historians would agree with this presentation of

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<sup>21</sup>Berkhof, p. 38-39.

<sup>22</sup>The writings of the following men indicate their dim awareness of soteriological truth. Ignatius taught baptismal regeneration, Cyprian believed in purgatory, Irenaeus maintained salvation by works, and Augustine held to prayers for the dead.

<sup>23</sup>Coxe, pp. 16; 144, respectively.

<sup>24</sup>Luther popularized Augustine's novel view, and according to Berkhof, "stressed the oneness of the Church, but distinguished between two aspects of it, the one visible and the other invisible," p. 236.

<sup>25</sup>Almost all non-Baptist and most Baptist historians and theologians attempt to defend the notion that Baptists came out of the Reformation, especially out of the Separatist/Congregational movement within the Anglican Church. Cf. H. Leon McBeth, *The*

the development of the doctrine of the church, arguing that Calvin rightly understood and delineated Pauline ecclesiology.

## **The Basis of the Popular View**

### *Unproved Assumptions*

The invisible catholic church/mystical body of Christ position is based on two theological, but unproved assumptions. The first unproved assumption is that the Holy Spirit baptizes all NT dispensation believers, at the time of individual regeneration, in the mystical body of Christ. The second unproved assumption is that the body of Christ refers exclusively to the realm of regeneration. These two unproved assumptions are inextricably linked together so that they rise or fall as a unit. Since the Protestant Reformation, theologians have defined the body of Christ as the regenerated invisible church, and have required Spirit Baptism as the mechanism for placement into this mystical body. Modern theological writers, regardless of theological or religious background, have popularized I Cor. 12:13 as the *locus classicus* for the doctrine of Spirit Baptism.

For instance, neo-evangelical theologian C. C. Ryrie, explains the standard "orthodox" view, albeit unproved assumption, of Spirit Baptism from the dispensational perspective. He lists five characteristics of the "Baptizing Work" of the Holy Spirit: 1) It is limited to this age; 2) It is universal among all believers of this age; 3) It is repeated each time a person is converted but is experienced only once by each believer; 4) It is a non-experiential work of the Spirit; and 5) It is the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>26</sup> Further, he summarizes Spirit Baptism by stating, "The instrument that places the believer into that sphere of the risen body of Christ is the Holy Spirit, and this is what is taught in both Acts 1:5 and I Corinthians 12:12...the chief emphasis is on the Spirit as the agent of baptism, who places us in the Body of Christ."<sup>27</sup> For Ryrie, the Holy Spirit baptizes the believing sinner into the mystical body of Christ simultaneous with the believer's regeneration.

Fundamentalist scholar, Charles W. Smith, expresses the second unproved assumption that the body of Christ refers to all the redeemed. He explains the body of Christ as expressed in I Cor. 12-14, stating,

The relation of the members to the body aptly illustrates the union of the body of Christ (v. 27). Each believer individually is a member of the body of Christ. The body of Christ, here as in Ephesians, is the church. As important as the local church is in God's program, that is not what Paul is discussing here. *The local church is not the body of Christ; the local church is not a member of the body of Christ.* The relationship here under discussion is the relationship of the individual believer to the Lord Himself. The body is composed of all believers in direct union with the Lord, the life of the body being supplied by the Holy Spirit [italics mine].<sup>28</sup>

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*Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), pp. 21 ff.

<sup>26</sup>Charles C. Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), pp. 75-77.

<sup>27</sup>Ryrie, p. 78.

<sup>28</sup>Charles W. Smith, "The Gifts of the Spirit (I Cor. 12-14)," *Biblical Viewpoint* VII, no. 2 (November 1973): 117.

New evangelical writer Radmacher avers the fallacious and inane position that identifies the local church with the universal church on the day of Pentecost, saying, "The first local church was in reality the universal church; and the universal church, the body of Christ, expressed itself in one visible local church, the church at Jerusalem. For a brief period of time, at least, every member of the body of Christ was living on earth and was a part of the one local church."<sup>29</sup> This position demonstrates the slavish devotion of its adherents to the concept of the universal church. Why call it universal if it was local? And when did the "universal church" become distinct from the local church at Jerusalem? When did the body of Christ become "mystical, invisible, and universal," especially in light of I Cor. 12:27?

Statements such as Smith's and Radmacher's perpetuate Platonic catholicity evinced in the Roman and Protestant patristics. In fact, Erickson is so sensitive to this charge of Platonic catholicity leveled toward the universal invisible church theory he remonstrates,

At this point some people might accuse theologians of adopting a Platonic perspective whereby local churches are regarded as instantiations of concrete particular manifestations of the pure Form, the abstract Idea, of church. Note, however, that theologians are not reading this concept into the Bible. The concept is actually present in the thought of Paul and Luke; it is not introduced by their interpreters. There is on this one point a genuine parallel between biblical thought and that of Plato. This is neither good nor bad, and should not be considered an indication of Platonic influence upon the Bible. It is simply a fact.<sup>30</sup>

The ramification of this Popular View equates ecclesiology with soteriology and thereby demands a dual interpretation of the nature of church. Accordingly, the "true" church is the realm of regeneration and the ultimate agency for Christian service. This universal church theory is the basis for the para-church movement. Numerous para-church organizations exist as the "handmaidens" to the local church, helping local churches with education, missions, fellowship, to name a few. Supposedly, this is the realm where "the greater cause of Christ" is accomplished. In contrast, local churches are the agencies in which Christians may minister depending on their view of baptism, polity, doctrine, finances, convenience, etc. Local churches are important, but are extremely limited and certainly not as important as the true church, and this demeaning attitude toward the Lord's candlesticks is glaring. For instance, Stewart Custer propagates the dual nature of church, subtly exalting the universal church at the expense of the local church:

Although there are a few interpreters who will argue that there is no universal church, only the local church, the vast majority of believers see both doctrines in Scripture. 1. The Lord Jesus said, "I will build my church" (Mt. 16:18). He certainly was not referring to the local church of Caesarea Philippi. He did mention the local church elsewhere (Mt. 18:15-17). 2. Acts presents the doctrine of the universal church in two passages: Acts

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<sup>29</sup>Earl Radmacher, *What the Church is All About* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), p. 321.

<sup>30</sup>Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), p.

9:31; 20:28. The local church is also mentioned (8:1). 3. Paul gives a very clear presentation of the doctrine: dividing all mankind into Jews, Gentiles, and "the church of God" (I Cor. 10:32); describing all the gifts that God set in the church (no one church has them all, I Cor. 12:28); sadly admitting that he had persecuted the church of God (far more than a local body, I Cor. 15:9); declaring that God gave Christ to be the "head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all (no local church would claim to be this, Eph. 1:22-23); holding that the church manifests to principalities and powers the great wisdom of God (some local churches manifest something very different, Eph. 3:9-10); referring to Christ, the head of the church, and describing how He loves the church, how He will present the church to Himself as a glorious church, etc. (Eph. 5:23-32). These passages go far beyond the possible fulfillment by any local body. 4. The writer to the Hebrews mentions that believers are come "to Mount Zion...to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven" (12:22-23). He is certainly not referring to the local church of heaven. However, the epistles also teach the local church (I Cor. 1:2; Phil. 1:1, etc.).<sup>31</sup>

Chafer gives the logical conclusion to the demeaning of the local church. Since man can not serve two masters (Mt. 6:24), the "dual nature of church" theory effectively excises the local church from Christianity. He states:

The true Church is not divided, nor could it be; yet the visible church is a **broken and shattered attempt** at the manifestation of a Scriptural ideal... No responsibility or service is imposed on the church per se. Service, like the gifts of the Spirit by whom service is wrought, is individual. It could not be other wise. The common phrase, "the church's task," is, therefore, without Biblical foundation. It is only when individuals sense their personal responsibility and claim personal divine enablement that Christian work is done...Relative to the mission of the visible church, Dr. C. I. Scofield writes: "Much is said concerning the 'mission of the church.' The 'church which is his body' has for its mission to build itself up until the body is complete... **but the visible church, as such, is charged with no mission.** The commission to evangelize the world is personal, and not corporate (Mt. 28:16-20; Mk. 16:14; Lk. 24:47; Acts 1:8)[bold mine]."<sup>32</sup>

After reading the sentiments of these two authors, and especially Chafer, why would any Christian desire to invest time, energy, and resources in a local, visible church?

### *Summary*

The two unproved assumptions upon which the universal, invisible church is based are that 1) Spirit Baptism is the mechanism that places all believers in the realm of regeneration and that 2) the realm of regeneration is called the mystical body of Christ. These assumptions are asserted but never proved exegetically. Upon their assertion the local church is diminished while the universal church is exalted. Advocates who assert these unproved assumptions utter unusual expressions such as the body of Christ does not refer to the local church and Paul and Plato were united on reality being in the abstract Idea and not in the local manifestation of the Idea. The ramifications of these unproved

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<sup>31</sup>Stewart Custer, *Witness to Christ: A Commentary on Acts*, (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press), p. 132.

<sup>32</sup>Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, IV, p. 149.

assumptions include the promotion of the existence for and practice of para-church organizations and the increasing denigration of the Lord's *ekklesia*.

## The Biblical View

### What the Bible says about "Spirit Baptism"

#### *The Prophecy of Spirit Baptism*

There are six passages in the NT that speak clearly and precisely about Spirit Baptism (e.g., Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16; Jn. 1:33; Acts 1:5 and 11:16). For instance, John the Baptist records the first chronological reference to Spirit Baptism in Mt. 3:11, stating, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." The remaining five references are the other Gospel writers' renderings of John's Spirit Baptism prophecy. The careful Bible student will recognize that John paralleled at least five truths of the two baptisms--water and Spirit. The first truth John paralleled was that the administrators were different. John administered water baptism and the One coming after him wearing shoes (i.e., sandals), the Lord Jesus Christ, administered Spirit Baptism. The second truth was that the activity in both cases was baptism (i.e., immersion).<sup>33</sup> The third truth was that the audience was the same and expected their respective baptism subsequent to their salvation (cf. Mt. 3:6-9). The fourth truth was that both baptisms would occur "in" (*en*)<sup>34</sup> some medium. The fifth truth was that the medium for John's was water and the medium for Christ's was the Holy Spirit and fire.<sup>35</sup> In summary, John immersed believers in water subsequent to their faith in Jesus as the Christ. John predicted that the Lord Jesus Christ would immerse believers in the Holy Spirit subsequent to their faith in Jesus as the Christ.

#### *The Fulfillment of Spirit Baptism*

John predicted the future Spirit Baptism to his audience. The Book of Acts records the fulfillment of his prediction. Four occasions mark this significant event, according to Luke (Acts 2:1-4; 8:15-17; 10:45-46 and 11:14-16; 19:1-7). The first

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<sup>33</sup>*Baptizo* is the Greek word for dip whereas *rantizo* is the Greek for sprinkle and *cheo* is the Greek for pour. The last two words are never used with regard to the church ordinance. Paul included in his definition for baptism the likeness of a burial (Rom. 6:4 and Col. 2:12) and of a planting (Rom. 6:5), and Peter likened it to the Flood (I Pet. 3:20-21).

<sup>34</sup>In the 2700 plus references to *en*, most are understood in the locative sense ("in"). In fact, A. T. Robertson states, "one must observe that all the N.T. examples of *en* can be explained from the point of view of the locative. The possibility of this point of view is the reason why *en* was so used in the beginning. I pass by examples like...Mt. 3:11 as probably not being instances of the instrumental usage as all." *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), p. 590. All six of the aforementioned Spirit Baptism references utilize the preposition *en*, stressing the locative (not dative case "with" or "by") and requiring the interpretation "baptized in [the sphere of] the Holy Spirit."

<sup>35</sup>Fire in this context is certainly a reference to judgment (vv. 10-12; i.e., "unquenchable fire"), and not to blessing (i.e., Acts 2:3). The baptism "in fire" might refer to the judgmental consequence the Pharisees would receive when they "blasphemed the Holy Ghost" (Mt. 12:31-32).

occasion of Spirit Baptism occurred on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1 ff.) when both Jews and Gentiles worshipped at Jerusalem. On this day the Lord Jesus Christ, in fulfillment of John's prophecy, baptized the one hundred and twenty believers assembled in the upper room (Acts 1:15) in the Holy Spirit,<sup>36</sup> giving them "the promise of the Father" (Lk. 24:49). Peter interpreted the event as that about which Joel had spoken concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:17-18 with Joel 2:28-32). The Scripture speaks of two comings of the Holy Spirit, His being poured out on the one hundred and twenty at Pentecost (Acts 2:33, 10:45) and His being poured out on all living saints at the beginning of the Millennium (Isa 32:15, 44:3).<sup>37</sup>

At least four divine activities occurred on the Day of Pentecost. First, the one hundred and twenty men and women were filled (*eplesthesan*) with the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:4).<sup>38</sup> Second, the same group of believers were permanently indwelt with the Holy Spirit, in fulfillment of John 14:17: "*for he [the Spirit of Truth] dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*" This permanent indwelling was the spiritual aspect of the New Covenant which Christ ratified with His shed blood (Mt. 26:28). The New Covenant was promised to national Israel for the outset of the Millennium (Jer. 31:31 ff.). According to Ezekiel, the New Covenant had both physical and spiritual aspects for Israel. The physical aspect included promises associated with the land of Canaan (Ezk. 36:28 ff.). The spiritual aspect was the promise of regeneration through the agency of the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This regeneration would occur for national Israel when the Lord put His new Spirit in each individual, replacing each one's stony heart with a new heart<sup>39</sup> and cleansing each Jew (Ezk. 36:25-27). However, when the Lord Jesus ratified the New Covenant for national Israel, including the future physical (land) and spiritual (regeneration) aspects, He made it possible presently for all individuals, Jew or Gentile, to participate in the spiritual aspect of regeneration upon one's faith in His shed blood (cf. Rom. 5:9; 3:24-25). This new aspect of salvation was now available, once Christ had been glorified in His death (Jn. 7:39; 12:23-24; 13:31) and the Holy Spirit sent (Jn. 14:17-20, v. 26; 16:13).<sup>40</sup> The saved believers meeting in the upper room (Acts 1:15) were for the first time permanently indwelt with the Holy Ghost, regenerated, and in Christ. According to the Lord, when believers received this regeneration they took on the

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<sup>36</sup>This could hardly refer to the Holy Spirit baptizing all believers in a universal, invisible "mystical Body of Christ."

<sup>37</sup>Just as the OT saints understood that the Messiah would come (cf. Isa. 61:1-2a with Lk. 4:17-20), but not necessarily twice, so the OT prophets knew that the Holy Spirit would be poured out, but not twice. However, Christians with the completed canon of Scripture recognize the complete teaching of the First and Second Advent of Christ as well as the "first" and "second" advent of the Spirit.

<sup>38</sup>The filling of the Holy Ghost refers to the control of the Spirit over the submissive believer (cf. Eph. 5:18; Acts 4:8; 6:5; 7:55; 13:9).

<sup>39</sup>Cf. Paul's teaching to the Corinthians: "*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*" (II Cor. 5:17; cf. also Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:9-10).

<sup>40</sup>As a member of the Godhead (Mt. 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; II Cor. 13:14; I Jn. 5:7), the Holy Spirit is always omnipresent. However, His special indwelling was an additional blessing for believers in salvation. This indwelling ministry was inaugurated after Christ's resurrection and will temporarily terminate at the Rapture (II Thess. 2:7), and be reinstated at the outset of the Millennium (Joel 2:28-32).

status of being "in Christ" (cf. Jn. 14:20; Eph. 1:1-3; I Thess. 4:16).<sup>41</sup> The Lord Jesus Christ designated this realm of regeneration, or being "in Christ," as the Kingdom of God (Jn. 3:3-5; cf. also I Pet. 1:23; I Jn. 3:9, 4:7, 5:1).<sup>42</sup> The Kingdom of God is both universal and invisible (Lk. 17:20), and is the biblical term for the universal invisible entity in the New Testament.

The third divine activity was the supernatural empowerment allowing the one hundred and twenty to speak in tongues (Acts 2:4).<sup>43</sup> The multitude, represented by sixteen dialects, heard the Jerusalem congregation speak about "*the wonderful works of God*" in their respective languages (vv. 6-11). This reversal of the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:9) amazed both Jew and Gentile. Peter, after affirming that the prophet Joel predicted supernatural empowerment with the coming of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-32), preached to the multitude (v. 29) with three thousand responding by repentance and faith in Jesus the Christ (vv. 37 ff.).

The Lord publicly inaugurated His new institution of the local church as the fourth divine activity on the day of Pentecost. The OT records three public inaugurations of Jehovah's designated institution for divine presence, worship, and service. In the first example the Lord inaugurated the Tabernacle He required Moses to construct, with His glory filling it when Moses finished the work (Ex. 40:33 ff.). The Scripture states, "*then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle...and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle*" (vv. 34-35). Later, Jehovah inaugurated His new institution of the Solomonic Temple, demonstrating to the Jews that this would be His new place of divine presence, worship and service (I Kings 8:1 ff.). No longer was the Lord's institution the Tabernacle, nor the tent pitched by David (II Sam. 6:17), but the Temple built by Solomon. Scripture states, "*the cloud filled the house of the LORD...for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD*" (vv. 10-11). Ezekiel predicted that the Millennial Temple will be inaugurated similar to these aforementioned institutions (Ezk. 43:1 ff.). This third inauguration indicates that the Millennial Temple will be the Lord's new place of divine presence, worship, and service. The Scripture states, "*And the glory of the LORD came into the house...the glory of the LORD filled the house*" (Ezk. 43:4-5).

On the day of Pentecost the Lord demonstrated beyond any question that He was publicly inaugurating His new institution of divine presence (Mt. 18:20, 28:19-20; Rev.

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<sup>41</sup>Actually the Holy Spirit was "given" for regeneration in Jn. 20:22 (cf. Jn. 14:16-17), at least to the ten disciples (Judas and Thomas were absent). The Lord promised that the Father would "send" the Spirit for empowerment on the Day of Pentecost (Jn. 14:26; 15:26; and 16:7). For the one hundred and twenty (minus the ten), the giving and the sending of the Holy Spirit coincided on Pentecost.

<sup>42</sup>The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven (cf. Mt. 3:2 *et al*) will be identical at the outset of the Millennium. At that time all living saints will be ushered into the Millennial kingdom and regenerated (Ezk. 36:25 ff; Zech. 14:16 ff.; see also Mt. 8:11-12).

<sup>43</sup>The Lord gave tongues, along with other signs such as demon exorcism (cf. Acts 16:16), serpent "handling" (cf. Acts 28:3 ff.), "poison drinking" (cf. Lk. 10:19 [?]), and laying hands on the sick (Acts 5:15), to confirm the preached, and ultimately, written word of God (Mk. 16:17-20). These confirmation signs would eventually end, as Paul stated, when the NT canon was completed: "*Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail: whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away...when that which is perfect is come*" (I Cor. 13:8, 10; *vide* vv. 11-13; cf. also II Cor. 12:12).

1:13-20), worship and service--the local church. The Jews needed to be convinced through divine accreditation with signs and wonders (Mt. 12:38; I Cor. 1:22) that the Lord was done with the Zerubbabel-Herod Temple (Mt. 23:38), and that His new institution would be the Lord's *ekklesia* (cf. Mt. 16:18; Rev. 3:1 ff.). As the glory of the Spirit of the Lord filled the Tabernacle, the Solomonic Temple, and will fill the Millennial Temple, so too His Spirit "*filled all the house where they were sitting*" (Acts 2:2). The Spirit Baptism of Pentecost included both personal and public divine activities. The believers Lord baptized in the Holy Spirit personally received the permanent indwelling of the Spirit resulting in regeneration and filling, and publicly were empowered with tongues accrediting the Lord's inauguration of His *ekklesia*.

The second occasion of the fulfillment of Spirit Baptism occurred to the Samaritan believers (Acts 8:12 ff.). Peter and John evangelized the Samaritans and some of them believed and received water baptism. Upon having hands lain on them, these saved and water baptized Samaritans received the Holy Ghost. The Lord Jesus baptized the Samaritans in the Holy Ghost and they received regeneration, filling, and empowerment (cf. vv. 18-19), with the Lord publicly accrediting his newly inaugurated *ekklesia* that now included Samaritans. The Jerusalem believers now were convinced that the Lord's new institution of the local church was for both Jewish and Samaritan believers.

The third time the Lord Jesus Christ baptized believers in the Holy Ghost occurred to Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:44-46; 11:14-18). Upon believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, the members of this Gentile household received Spirit Baptism, spoke in tongues, and received water baptism. Peter recognized that these Gentiles had received the fulfillment of John's prophecy of Spirit Baptism just as he had experienced (11:15).<sup>44</sup> The Lord, having inaugurated His *ekklesia*, now accredited to the Judean brethren the inclusion of Gentiles, along with Jews and Samaritans, in the new institution of the local church.

The final reference to Spirit Baptism in the Lukan *corpus* occurred to the twelve disciples of John the Baptist (Acts 19:1-7). More than twenty years after John the Baptist was martyred, Paul met twelve of John's "disciples" in Ephesus and evangelized them. That these twelve were ignorant of John's message about the Holy Ghost (cf. Mt. 3:11) is evident in that Paul restated the forerunner's words and the disciples became ready candidates for baptism. Since Paul demanded salvation before baptism (cf. I Cor. 18:8; Mt. 28:19-20), he recognized that this group of unsaved "Baptists" needed to experience initial faith in Christ (v. 4).<sup>45</sup> Once Paul had discipled and baptized them, they received Spirit Baptism and spoke with tongues and prophesied. For the fourth and final time the Lord Jesus Christ baptized these twelve Gentiles in the Holy Ghost subsequent to their

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<sup>44</sup>Just as Peter received Spirit Baptism subsequent to his salvation, so likewise with the Gentiles who believed and repented and then were subsequently Spirit Baptized.

<sup>45</sup>This is not an example of "re-baptism" since there is no evidence that the twelve were saved before receiving the Baptist's baptism or even understood John's message about Christ (Jn. 1:29) and the Spirit. John's ministry of baptism was in the NT era (cf. Mt. 11:13 and Lk. 16:16), and received by Christ (cf. Mt. 3:13-17), authorized by Heaven (Mt. 21:25), continued in the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20), and required for Apostleship (Acts 1:21-22). John's baptism was the one baptism of Eph. 4:6.

salvation, and accredited to the Jews the inclusion of Ephesian Gentiles,<sup>46</sup> along with Roman Gentiles, Samaritans and Jews, in his newly inaugurated institution of the *ekklesia*.

In summary, John the Baptist prophesied Spirit Baptism and Luke recorded four occasions of fulfillment. John taught that the Lord Jesus Christ would baptize believers in the Holy Ghost subsequent to their salvation experience. The book of Acts records that this was both a private experience on the part of the believer and a public activity on the part of the Lord. Privately, the believers were indwelt, filled, and regenerated. Publicly, the Lord inaugurated His new institution of the *ekklesia* with tongues, accrediting to the Jews that He intended to allow Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles to experience His presence in worship and service.

### *Exegesis of I Corinthians 12:13*

The popular interpretation of I Cor. 12:13 as expressed by Scofield, Chafer, Ryrie and McCune is faced with an exegetical predicament--it is incongruous with the Scripture. The popular view posits that the Holy Spirit baptizes believers, simultaneous with their salvation, in Christ (i.e., the mystical body of Christ). The Bible teaches both in prophecy and fulfillment that the Lord Jesus baptized believers, subsequent to their salvation, in the Holy Spirit. The popular view is incongruous with Scripture in regard to the agent, timing and element of Spirit Baptism.<sup>47</sup>

Paul's "controversial" reference is the following:

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

Since advocates of the popular view cannot make this verse harmonize with the clear and precise verses on Spirit Baptism, it must be concluded that there are two different Spirit Baptisms, or that the popular view is incorrect. In that the former proposition does not attempt to answer questions but only creates additional ones (especially in light of Eph. 4:5), one must conclude the latter proposition. The popular interpretation is based on the contrived theological necessity of requiring Spirit Baptism to be the mechanism of placing the believer in the mystical body of Christ, and is therefore not biblical. What then is the interpretation of I Cor. 12:13?

A careful exegesis of the larger and immediate contexts of I Corinthians and the comparison of Scripture with Scripture demonstrate the following truths.

1. The Corinthian Church was dis-united over the practice of baptism (e.g., I Cor. 1:11-17) and the "drinking" relative to the Lord's Supper (e.g., I Cor. 11:18-34).

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<sup>46</sup>Paul emphasized this mystery "*that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel*" (Eph. 1:6) to the Ephesian church members.

<sup>47</sup>Wallace fails to salvage the popular view with his disingenuous "en + dative for personal agency" category, suggesting that Christ used the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit as the personal means for Spirit Baptism in this "rare" example. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1996), p. 373-374; also *vide* 440.

2. Paul was concerned that the Corinthian church should unite over doctrine and practice in light of her diversities (cf. vv. 12:4-6, 12, but especially v. 25).

3. Paul employed the expression "*by one Spirit*"<sup>48</sup> (*en heni pneumati*) in Phil. 1:27 as "*in one spirit*," referring to "*the spirit of unity*." Since *pneumati* is anarthrous in I Cor. 12:13, Paul differentiated *pneumati* ("spirit") from the seven previous articular references to "the Spirit" (*to pneumati*)<sup>49</sup> as deity.

4. The Apostle declared "*we are all baptized*," referring to both the Corinthians and himself. Paul was baptized in Damascus (Acts 9:18-19) and of course the Corinthians had been baptized in Corinth (Acts 18:8). Until this point in his letter to the Corinthians Paul never alluded to Spirit Baptism, so if this is that about which he was teaching, the exegesis is based on special pleading.<sup>50</sup>

5. The water baptism placed Paul "*into*" (*eis*) or "with reference to" the Damascus body and the Corinthians "*into*" (*eis*) the Corinthian body. The Scriptures teach that the Ephesian church was a body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23), that the Colossian church was a body of Christ (Col 1:18), and that the Corinthian church was a body of Christ (I Cor. 12:27).

6. Paul concluded that all the Corinthians had been made "*to drink into*" (*eis*) or with reference to "the spirit of unity." This refers to the required unity around the Lord's Supper for the Corinthians, whether they were Jew or Gentile, bond or free.

7. Paul taught the Corinthians, as he had every church (I Cor. 4:17), the necessity for unity around the ordinances, i. e., believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper. The verse at hand, I Cor. 12:13, does not refer to the novel<sup>51</sup> and contradictory teaching that the Holy Spirit baptizes believers in the mystical body of Christ. It teaches that the Lord through the Apostle Paul demands unity around His church ordinances, baptism and the Supper.

### *One Baptism*

The Book of Ephesians was written around AD 60 along with three other Prison Epistles (Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon). Several years had passed since Paul started the Ephesian church (3-4 years). The Apostle listed a series of uniting truths including "*One*

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<sup>48</sup>The original *King James Version* (1611) did not capitalize "spirit" in this verse. Capitalization of deity is a phenomenon of the English language but not of the biblical languages.

<sup>49</sup>Cf. versus 4, 7, 8 (2x), 9 (2x), and 11.

<sup>50</sup>The only allegorical reference to baptism in I Corinthians is Paul's usage in 10:2, and it should be noted that the Israelites "*were all baptized unto Moses*." The preposition is *eis* which means "with reference to" [i.e. identifying with] as it does in Rom. 6:3. Paul no more taught that the Roman Christians were baptized into (*eis*) "the mystical Body of Christ" than he taught that the Jews were baptized into (*eis*) "the mystical body of Moses"!

<sup>51</sup>The first reference to I Cor. 12:13 in Ante-Nicene patristics has Clement of Alexandria referring to the sacraments. A. Cleveland Coxe, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. II, (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1983), p. 217. Furthermore, even John Calvin interprets the verse to refer to the sacraments, and not Spirit Baptism. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. II (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1975), pp. 520-521.

*Lord, one faith, one baptism*" (Eph. 4:5). The context demands that "one" refers to the numerical one, such as numerically one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. Although some may want to posit the interpretation that "one" refers to "one kind" of baptism, and thus argue that there is "one kind" of water baptism and "one kind" of Spirit Baptism, this interpretation is facile and breaks down contextually. Another interpretation requires that the one baptism is only Spirit Baptism, but this is fallacious since the water baptism of the Great Commission has never been rescinded (Mt. 28:19-20). The biblical interpretation is that Spirit Baptism was a temporary activity, along with its tongues manifestation (I Cor. 13:8),<sup>52</sup> and had ceased by the time Paul wrote Ephesians. The last occasion of Spirit Baptism was when the twelve disciples had received it through Paul's ministry (Acts 19:1-7). The one baptism is water baptism, started by John, received by Christ, continued in the Great Commission, practiced by Paul in the churches and continues down to this very day.<sup>53</sup> John's baptism was perpetual for the church age; Spirit Baptism was temporary in the church age and occurred only for special reasons during the first century.

Some, especially those who make unproved assumptions about Spirit Baptism and the mystical body of Christ, conclude then that something is lost in the doctrine of soteriology. They deduce that if there is no mechanism (Spirit Baptism) to place believers "in Christ" (the mystical "body of Christ")<sup>54</sup> then Christians do not have a complete salvation. Of course, their fallacious premise based on unproved and non-biblical assumptions, leads to faulty conclusions. The Scriptures teach that the realm of regeneration is the Kingdom of God which one enters based on one's faith/repentance (Jn. 3:3-5). Today, the child of God receives at salvation regeneration including Spirit indwelling and cleansing (cf. Ezk. 36:25 ff.), justification (Rom. 5:1), adoption (Rom. 8:15), sealing (Eph. 1:13), reconciliation (II Cor. 5:18), and is "in Christ" (Jn. 14:20; Eph. 1:1 *et al*). The Christian has all of God's redemptive blessings in the Kingdom of God, including fellowship with other Christians in the Kingdom of God. Since there is no Spirit Baptism to place the Christian in the non-existent mystical body of Christ, then the believer has lost nothing soteriologically. Scripturally, those who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ have every spiritual blessing the Lord wants for them.

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<sup>52</sup>Although Pentecostal theologian H. Ervin carefully refutes James D. G. Dunn's popular interpretation that Spirit Baptism is a "conversion-initiation" event, Ervin does not establish an exegesis for the continuation of Spirit Baptism or for tongues. Howard M. Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit: An Engaging Critique of James D. G. Dunn's Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publ., Inc., 1984), pp. 98-102.

<sup>53</sup>Calvin, who had no affection for the Anabaptists of his day, nevertheless conceded "the ministry of John was the very same as that which was afterwards delegated to the apostles. For the different hands by which baptism is administered do not make it a different baptism, but sameness of doctrine proves it to be the same. John and the apostles agreed in one doctrine." *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. II, p. 516.

<sup>54</sup>It is often assumed, albeit incorrectly, that "in Christ" is equivalent to "in the body of Christ." The first expression is soteriological and the second is ecclesiological, overlapping with each other but not identical. Those "in Christ" are all regenerated saints of the present local church dispensation (cf. Jn. 14:17-20; Jn. 3:3-5); those in the body of Christ are regenerated saints who have been water baptized and become members of a NT church (Acts 13:22-23; 18:8; I Cor. 1:1; 12:13; 12:27 *et al*).

## What the Bible says about "the Body of Christ"

### *One Body*

The second unproved assumption is that "the body of Christ" refers to the universal, invisible, mystical realm of regeneration that all Christians enter at salvation and which constitutes the Church. However, close scrutiny to the New Testament reveals that Paul never identified the body with the realm of regeneration. The Apostle Paul utilized the ecclesiological expression "*the body of Christ*" (*soma christou*) twice (I Cor. 12:27; Eph. 4:12), denoting Christ's possession of His Body. He used other combinations of the expression as well, such as "*one body*" (*heni somati*) eight times (Rom. 12:4; I Cor. 10:17, 12:12 [2x], 13, 20; Eph. 4:4, and Col 3:15), "*one body in Christ*" (*hen soma en Christo*) once (Rom. 12:5), "*His body*" (*to soma autou*) twice (Eph. 1:23, 5:30), and "*the body*" (*tou somatos*) twenty times (I Cor. 12:12, 14, 15 [2x], 16 [2x], 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, Eph. 3:6, 4:12, 16 [2x], 5:23, Col. 1:18, and 2:19).<sup>55</sup> Every ecclesiological reference to *soma* Paul utilized was in an epistle to a local church. He never addressed non-baptized, and therefore non-church member, Christians.<sup>56</sup>

The first chronological reference to "one body" is significant and establishes the foundational meaning to the term. In a non-ecclesiological illustration, the Apostle stated, "*What? Know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? For two, saith he, shall be one flesh*" (I Cor. 6:16). This sordid example nevertheless establishes Paul's meaning of "one body." The man and the harlot are two bodies uniting with one purpose in mind--fornication. This union of immorality is comprised of two individual bodies, which are indeed distinct one from the other, but are united in a common goal. Paul used the expression "one body" to mean "united bodies." The man's body was distinct from the harlot's body. Their union of bodies never constituted some sort of "mystical body of fornication." "One body" to Paul meant one man's body united with one harlot's body (two literal bodies = united bodies [in purpose] = "one body").<sup>57</sup> This usage of "one body" in the Pauline *corpus* must remain intact since he never rescinded it. Therefore, throughout the Apostles' Epistles, "one body" means either numerically one body (e.g., Eph. 4:4) or "united bodies." When this Pauline interpretation is applied to ecclesiological passages, it becomes apparent that the Apostle stressed unity among various local church bodies (cf. I Cor. 12:27; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18), as well as unity within each body of Christ. The Lord Jesus is the Head of each of His local churches or Bodies (cf. Rev. 2-3). Just as the omnipresent Lord is the Head of each man (I Cor. 11:3), so is the same Lord the Head of each one of His bodies in Christ.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>The NT also refers to the physical body of Christ, using variations of these expressions (cf. Rom. 7:4), which expressions are not germane to this essay.

<sup>56</sup>Although some may hopelessly cling to a universal church from Paul's address to "*all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord*" (I Cor. 1:2), I Corinthians repudiates local church problems and offers solutions which would not be pertinent to or authoritative over non-church member Christians.

<sup>57</sup>The rationalistic thinking Christian may argue that one equals one but divine revelation says "*for two, saith he, shall be one flesh*" (I Cor. 6:16).

<sup>58</sup>It should be noted that each of the Lord's Candlesticks is both an organization (Tit. 1:5 ff.) and an organism (cf. Eph. 4:11-16).

Several test passages may be offered for proof of the Pauline interpretation of the "united bodies" definition. In I Cor. 12:13, the Apostle affirmed that he and the Corinthians ("*are we all baptized*") had been baptized "*into (eis) one body,*" or water baptized with reference to united bodies. The body in which Paul had been baptized was the Damascus *ekklesia* and the body in which the Corinthians had been baptized was the Corinthian *ekklesia*. These bodies were united in common doctrine and practice (cf. Jude 1:3). Another "difficult" verse is Rom. 12:5, wherein Paul declared "*So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*" Paul certainly was not a member of the church at Rome since he had not been there, but presumably he was still a church member of the Antioch assembly from which he was sent (Acts 11:26, 13:1-4). The church body at Rome and the church body at Antioch were "*one body in Christ,*" or united bodies in Christ.

### *Ye are the Body of Christ*

In concert with the aforementioned arguments for the Pauline usage of "united bodies" is Paul's obvious and clear reference to the Corinthian church as a "body." This New Testament writer declared under inspiration to the Corinthian *ekklesia*, "*Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular*" (I Cor. 12:27). Greek scholars Robertson and Plummer struggle with the interpretation of this verse because their pre-conceived and unproved assumptions conflict with the anarthrous construction *soma Christou*. They state,

"Body of Christ" is the quality of the whole which each of them individually helps to constitute...It does not mean, "Ye are the Body of Christ," although that translation is admissible, and indicates the truth that each Christian community is the Universal Church in miniature; nor, "Ye are Christ's Body," which makes "Christ's" emphatic, whereas the emphasis is on *soma* as the antithesis of *mele*. Least of all does it mean, "Ye are a Body of Christ," as if St. Paul were insisting that the Corinthians were only *a* Church and not *the* Church, a meaning which quite remote from the passage. Nowhere in the Pauline Epistles is there the idea that the one Ecclesia is made up of many Ecclesiae...He means here that the nature of the whole of which the Corinthians are parts is that it is Body of Christ, not any other kind of whole.<sup>59</sup>

They reject the clear meaning that Paul addressed the Corinthian church as "the body of Christ,"<sup>60</sup> one among many, and rather argue for the fallacious and facile "Platonic body"--the Corinthian body was a visible manifestation of the true body. Moving beyond theological assumptions based on Platonic philosophy, one should ask how the Corinthian church was the body of Christ in Corinth? First, it had the Lord Jesus Christ as the Head (I Cor. 1:1-3; 11:3). Second, it was the living organism with feet, hands,

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<sup>59</sup>Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1955), p. 332.

<sup>60</sup>This genitive construction is a semitism which makes the *nomen regens* (body) articular since the *nomen rectum* is a proper noun (Christ).

ears, and eyes (I Cor. 12:15-22). Third, it was the means by which the Lord Jesus would accomplish His Great Commission in Corinth and the surrounding area (Mt. 28:19-20).<sup>61</sup>

The interpretation that *soma Christou* refers to the local church may be applied to several representative passages. In Eph. 1:22-23, the Apostle equated the *ekklesia* to the *soma* ("*the church, Which is his body*"). Since all 115 references to *ekklesia* in the *textus receptus*<sup>62</sup> refer to a visible assembly (civic [Acts 19:32, 39, 41], Israel [Acts 7:38], or Christ's [Mt. 16:18, *et al*]), it follows that the *soma* was the visible assembly at Ephesus. Paul declared that this same body at Ephesus would include both Jews and Gentiles as fellowheirs,<sup>63</sup> a mystery not taught in the OT (Eph. 3:5-6). Furthermore, the Apostle taught that Christ was the savior of the body, the Ephesian church for which He gave Himself (Eph. 5:23, 25). The Lord loved and died for the church at Ephesus. Now it is true that He loved and died for other churches, for all Christians and all OT saints, and for the whole world (Jn. 3:16). But all this verse requires is that He loved and died for the Ephesian body of Christ. Paul also affirmed that the Lord was the Head of the Colossian body of Christ (Col 1:18), which had close association with the churches (bodies) at Nymphas' house and in Laodicea (Col 4:15-16).

Those that assume that the body of Christ refers to all Christians regardless of any church membership must prove from exegesis that their assumption is valid. To do so they have several biblically exegetical obstacles to overcome. First, they must show that the body of Christ is exclusively a soteriological expression, which they cannot do since the term is found only in Epistles addressing local churches. Second, they must demonstrate exegetically that "one body" cannot mean "united bodies" but instead must mean numerically "one" body. Third, they must explain exegetically, without assuming, that Paul did not address the Corinthian church as "the body of Christ."<sup>64</sup>

In summary, since the unproved assumptions of the popular view of Spirit Baptism and the mystical body of Christ are Scripturally challenged and found wanting, it stands that they are not true. What is true is that Spirit Bapism was a first century spiritual phenomenon that has since accomplished the Lord's purpose and has ceased, and that the term body of Christ refers to the Lord's visible churches by which He fulfills the Great Commission through this His only agency.

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<sup>61</sup>The Great Commission for Christ's assemblies includes baptizing converts. The so-called mystical body of Christ does not baptize converts because of the vast confusion evinced in Christendom surrounding the ordinance, and because of the lack of biblical authority.

<sup>62</sup>The Critical Text rejects "*to the church*" in Acts 2:47, along with other proto-Romish attacks on NT ecclesiology such as omitting the requisite faith for believer's baptism (Acts 8:37), and promoting the territorial church ("then had the *church* rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria") in Acts 9:31.

<sup>63</sup>The reality of I Cor. 12:26, "*And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it,*" should set in when one recognizes this could only be applied to the local church.

<sup>64</sup>Some have claimed that the Corinthian church had the character or quality of "body of Christ-ness" but was not the true "body of Christ." This may be likened to saying that a four-legged animal with a wagging tail has all the characteristics of a dog but it is not a true dog; it is merely the visible manifestation of the universal, invisible dog!

## Ramifications

The ramifications of the biblical teaching that the local church is the body of Christ, that Spirit Baptism was a temporary phenomenon, and that the mystical body of Christ does not exist are broad and serious. If there is no con-current Spirit Baptism and no mystical body then there is no divine authority for organizations or efforts outside of the local church to practice the Great Commission. Since the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20) requires evangelism, baptism, and instruction in the Word of God, para-church organizations have no divine authority for their existence. If there is no divine authority for para-church organizations then there is no divine authority for para-church Bible colleges/seminaries, mission boards, or structured church fellowships, associations or conventions.<sup>65</sup> These so-called "handmaidens" to the local church have no authority "to help" the Lord's candlesticks because the latter have His presence (Rev. 1:13) as their respective Head (Eph. 1:22-23) and all power to accomplish His Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20).

The impact of these para-church "handmaidens" on the Lord's candlesticks has been biblically and theological disastrous. Scholars operating in the realm of the "big" universal church offer unbiblical and therefore confusing theological restatements of the Scriptures. Their weak ecclesiology impacts other doctrines such as bibliology, soteriology, and eschatology. They foster notions such as "God has preserved His Word in all the extant manuscripts through the scholars of the mystical body of Christ,"<sup>66</sup> "all the saved are in the universal Church," and "Christ will rapture the Church."<sup>67</sup> To them "true" scholarship occurs in the para-church university or seminary where theologians, trained by other para-church theologians, postulate the "truth" of Scripture. The local church is ill equipped and the pastor is ill prepared to do the real work of the ministry in the realm of scholarship, they maintain. These scholars, whether they have any affiliation with a local church or not, have earned doctorates from accredited para-church academic

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<sup>65</sup>This is not to suggest character flaws in Christians who participate in para-churches. Many Christian leaders, because of the faulty teaching of "fundamentalism," are untrained in or ignorant of consistent, exegetical NT ecclesiology. Surely those who are convicted by ecclesiological passages will respond in obedience. After all, Solomon asserted, "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning" (Prov. 9:9).

<sup>66</sup>These para-church "scholars" claim that they will restore the original Greek NT text, which they say the Lord never promised to preserve (cf. Ps. 12:6-7; Isa. 40:8; Mt. 4:4, 5:18, 24:35; Jn. 17:8 *et al*), back to a mid-fourth century "oldest is best" rendering based on Gnostic-laced Greek manuscripts and anti-supernatural rationalistic techniques of textual criticism. They conclude that the best theory for the transmission of the NT text is either manifested in the apostate Critical Text or the novel Majority Text (which still has no English translation since its creation in 1982), even though neither "theory" is predicted by the Scriptures. As of 2005, these critics have not produced for Christendom the original wording for the Greek NT, since the techniques of textual criticism continue to change and the discoveries of archeology continue to uncover new manuscripts.

<sup>67</sup>The NT never says that "the church" will be raptured. Paul does state that those "*in Christ*" (i.e., the Kingdom of God) will be caught away (I Thess. 4:16-17).

institutions,<sup>68</sup> and therefore think that they have the last word on theology. Their condescending attitude toward the Lord's assemblies is supposedly justified because they are the "doctors" of theology since they are in "the big church."

This disastrous impact undermines the authority of the Bible and usurps the ministry of the Lord's *ekklesia*. Scripture states that the church is "*the pillar and ground of the truth*" (I Tim. 3:15),<sup>69</sup> that the *ekklesia* is to "*commit [theological training] to faithful men*" (II Tim. 2:2),<sup>70</sup> that the church member "*is to study to shew thyself approved unto God*" (II Tim. 2:15),<sup>71</sup> and that the assembly has been given Christ's gift of "*pastors and teachers*" (Eph. 4:11).<sup>72</sup> The local church as the divinely ordained doctrinal training institution is the Lord's "college." College comes from the Latin *collegium* that means a group of colleagues who have banded together around a particular guild or trade. The particular "guild" in which the local church is engaged is the scholarly pursuit of studying the Scriptures (cf. Acts 17:11).

Para-church organizations not only produce disastrous results in theological academia, but also in the area of missions. Para-church mission boards usurp the privilege and responsibility of local church missions. The Great Commission is the divine mandate to plant immersionist assemblies both locally and worldwide. Only the Lord's candlesticks can produce NT churches. Para-church mission boards cannot baptize converts and cannot commission missionary candidates. Nevertheless, these same boards develop a hierarchy of unbiblical offices, such as "missions president/director," and dictate to "their" missionaries and to the pastors of supporting churches, their policies, practices, and doctrines. The NT teaches, in contradistinction, that the church at Antioch acted as Paul's "mission board" and sent out Barnabas and the Apostle (Acts 13:1 ff.). To be sure, other churches such as the Philippian church helped support Paul's missionary endeavors on his second journey (Phil. 4:15-16).<sup>73</sup>

Much of the same criticism could be leveled toward highly structured Baptist fellowships. The unbiblical mindset of the universal church produces the necessity for organized hierarchy outside of the local church. Fellowships, associations and

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<sup>68</sup>There should be no question that man-centered accreditation brings federal funding which in turn "broadens the financial base" of the academic institution. The Lord's assemblies have no biblical warrant to seek academic accreditation and the consequent federal funding for their local church ministries (cf. II Tim. 2:15).

<sup>69</sup>All that theological scholarship accomplishes outside of the Lord's *ekklesia* will have built in biblical limitations in its lectures, syllabi, books, journals, videos, ministries, etc., and will not advance authoritative understanding of the truth.

<sup>70</sup>It is difficult to comprehend how para-church ministerial institutions will prepare men biblically for the work of the ministry in local churches. In fact, they do not have biblical authority and consequently they are unequipped to do so.

<sup>71</sup>For the church member and for the local church itself, God's approval is the only accreditation needed.

<sup>72</sup>The English word "doctor" comes from the Latin *doctores* which is the translation of the Greek *didaskalous*, as in the Latin Vulgate "*pastores et doctores*" (Eph. 4:11). The pastor is the doctor of the Lord's *ekklesia*, as he is the one who teaches "doctrine."

<sup>73</sup>The author is not ignorant of the complexities of visas, taxes, language schools, funding, etc., for modern NT missionaries, and is not suggesting that there is an easy and simple answer to these difficulties. Nevertheless, the biblical pattern should be followed rather than man's contrived and non-authoritative efforts.

conventions, which develop organizational structure beyond the local church, end up usurping the autonomy of each of the Lord's assemblies. The presidents, regional directors, etc., of these non-authorized structures tend to dictate to the churches resolutions which in turn become "suggested" tenets for orthodoxy and fundamentalism. Some pastors feel intimidated and hesitate to reject these suggestions, ultimately embracing the "traditions" of men (Mk. 7:7) and incorporating these tenets in their particular *ekklesia*.<sup>74</sup> The NT does teach that there is a place for churches to fellowship around "the faith once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3). Furthermore, the churches of Galatia were united in biblical doctrine around the Lord Jesus Christ, while retaining their respective autonomy (Gal. 1:2; 3:27-28).

Once the Lord's churches recognize that the unproved assumptions of Spirit Baptism and the mystical body of Christ have no biblically exegetical defense, then they may realize the authority, importance, and dignity the Lord gives exclusively to His candlesticks. The Scriptures teach that the church at Jerusalem had the divine authority<sup>75</sup> in precept and set the precedent to practice the Great Commission. Christ gave the precept of the Great Commission to the apostles who were representatives of the 120 disciples who made up the Lord's *ekklesia* on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:20). This *ekklesia* began to evangelize, baptize and instruct Jews and Gentiles as the Book of Acts gives ample precedent. The Scriptures make some amazing and outstanding claims for the Lord's churches. For instance, Paul taught that Christ, Who is Head over all His creation, completely fills His body, the local church (Eph. 1:23).<sup>76</sup> He revealed that the saints in the local churches teach the angelic realm redemptive truths (Eph. 3:10). He averred that local churches, like the Ephesian church, grow up in Christ to become mature bodies through doctrinal teaching (Eph. 4:11-16). He proclaimed that the Lord Jesus Christ both loved and died for individual church members (Eph. 5:25) and that He will cleanse the church members through the washing of the word to present each *ekklesia* as glorious (Eph. 5:26-27). Elsewhere, the Apostle taught that the local church, the one with a bishop and deacons, was the pillar and ground of the truth (I Tim. 3:1-15). The Lord spoke through the Apostle John and gave His apocalyptic revelation to seven local churches (Rev. 1-3). When one realizes that the Scriptures teach the local church is

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<sup>74</sup>For instance, Resolution 04-07 "Concerning Unity in the Essentials" for the 84<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship, Inc., in 2004 stated "Historic Fundamentalism exercised great latitude among the brethren regarding conviction over which good men disagree. Therefore we must not so restrict this latitude in our day by narrowing our fellowship exclusively to those brethren with whom we agree on all points and hereby hinder the greater cause of Christ. We must continue to study, know, and defend the essentials and to agree to disagree, if necessary, on those which are not (such as philosophy of youth work, pastoral authority, political involvement, versions, certain aspects of Calvinism, dating, divorce, evangelism/discipleship methodology, etc.)...we must prioritize an active love for our brethren, so that we demonstrate a Biblically-based tolerance towards those with whom we disagree." "2004 FBFBI Resolutions," *Frontline*, July/August 2004: 23. This non-authoritative essential/non-essential dichotomy of Scripture is for "the greater cause of Christ," in a word, for the non-existent "universal, invisible church."

<sup>75</sup>This divine authority is primarily vertical, that is it is from Christ through His Word, to all of His churches. The authority is not horizontal primarily, contra Landmark, Successionist, chain-link Baptists, flowing historically through the ordinance of baptism.

<sup>76</sup>With Christ as its Head, the local church is both an organization and an organism.

the Lord's sole institution for His presence, worship and service, then one recognizes the glory, dignity, and honor that should be attributed to each and every one of Christ's assemblies.

### Conclusion

The popular view that the Holy Spirit baptizes believers in the mystical body of Christ simultaneous with their respective salvation is based on two assumptions that can not be proved from Scripture. Advocates of the popular view assume that their interpretation of Spirit Baptism is exegetically defensible and that the mystical body of Christ exists. This view has a catholic history and was built upon a fallacious exegesis of Scripture. Historically, the patristics read into biblical passages Platonic catholicity, producing a universal church concept for *ekklesia*. Biblically, the architects of this view assumed that some Scriptural references to church and body were universal, fostering the Platonic notion of reality in the Idea and not in the particular. After the Reformation, Protestants needed a mechanism to place Christians in the catholic body and foisted their hermeneutics on I Cor. 12:13, culminating in the exegetically incongruous and historically novel Spirit Baptism interpretation.

The biblical view, in contrast, clearly reveals the nature of Spirit Baptism both in its prophecy and in its fulfillment. Scripture predicted that Christ would baptize believers, subsequent to their salvation, in the Holy Ghost. Exegesis of the Book of Acts demonstrates that this occurred four times for certain believers of the Jews, Samaritans, Roman Gentiles and Greek Gentiles (Acts 2, 8, 10-11, and 19). The result of Spirit Baptism gave private indwelling and filling of the Holy Spirit to these believers, and public authentication and empowering to the Lord's new institution of the *ekklesia*. Careful exegesis of I Cor. 12:13 reveals Paul's concern that the Corinthian church would be united around the church ordinances--baptism and the Lord's Supper. Since Paul wrote Ephesians after the last example of Spirit Baptism in Acts 19, he revealed, with no inconsistency, that there was one remaining baptism--water baptism. Furthermore, the Apostle revealed that his definition for "one body" meant either numerically one body (in a locale) or "united bodies" referring to several local churches, thus eliminating any mystical notions about the body of Christ. With full biblical authority Paul could and did say to the Corinthian church "*Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*"

The ramifications of the biblical interpretation of Spirit Baptism and body of Christ effectively eliminates the authority and need of para-church organizations attempting to fulfill the Great Commission. These "handmaidens" to the Lord's churches have no biblical authority or spiritual wherewithal to be "*the pillar and ground of the truth.*" New Testament churches have Scriptural authority based on the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20); para-church organizations must derive their authority elsewhere. When the Lord's assemblies are freed from the false assumptions and unbiblical exegesis for the existence of para-church organizations such as Bible colleges, mission boards and organized fellowships, then they will begin to give biblical authority, importance and dignity to the *ekklesia* which the Lord Jesus Christ loves. "*Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular*" will take on a new, and *the* biblical meaning, for their respective assembly.