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" THE CONTRIBUTION OF EKKLESIA IN  
UNDERSTANDING THE NEW TESTAMENT  
CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH "

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## I. Introduction

The church today is being studied from every angle. Both those within and without are evaluating the church. The church means different things to different people. Some conceive the church to be a building, others, a fellowship; for some the church is a denomination, for others a local church. Some know little about the church's origin and original meaning, and others are uncertain about its meaning today. The Protestant Church is seeking to understand the nature and meaning of the church today in light of its New Testament origin and its nineteen hundred years of history.

Professor Knudsen says the doctrine of the church is central in theological discussion today for the following reasons:

- (1) The church is being restudied in the light of the revealed and accepted dimensions of the Christ of the New Testament.
- (2) The church has failed to match adequately the tragic involvements of this power-mad world.
- (3) Western man has found it difficult to differentiate between western culture and Christianity.
- (4) The church is disintegrating into many fragments, sects, and denominations, diverse and competing.
- (5) The rise and growth in our world of the ecumenical movement has united, to some extent, the forces of the church for the purposes of the Gospel.
- (6) The church has sought to discover its true nature, what it is, and what it is to do in the world.<sup>1</sup>

My own interest in studying the New Testament concept of the church springs out of a conviction that renewal and relevance in the church today must be preceded by a thorough understanding of the New Testament concept of the church as well as an understanding of the church throughout history, especially reformation history.

In this paper we can only examine one aspect of the New Testament concept of the church; namely, the contribution of the New Testament

Greek word for church, EKKLESIA, to the New Testament concept of the church.

We must begin with the background of the English word "church", which is used to translate EKKLESIA. The etymology of EKKLESIA, including the Greek and Old Testament usage, will be examined. The examination of the New Testament usage, of the word, "EKKLESIA", will be the heart of this paper. To get an overview of the New Testament concept of the church to which EKKLESIA contributes, we must take a brief look at parallel expressions of EKKLESIA in the New Testament. These parallel expressions of the EKKLESIA should also contribute to a better understanding of the Life and Mission of the Church.

The last chapter (VII) will reflect most surely my present understanding of the meaning of the New Testament Church, based on this study and all other previous studies and experiences in the church. This final chapter will be an attempt to relate my ecclesiology with other formal branches of theology. It is hoped that this study will contribute toward a better understanding of the nature and meaning of the New Testament Church and thereby become a meaningful resource for the church today.

## II. The Word "church"

The English word "church", which translated the New Testament Greek word "EKKLESIA", carries with it today associations completely foreign to the Greek term in the New Testament. Dana says, "There is no term in the New Testament which has suffered more misapprehension and distortion in its transition into modern speech than the term EKKLESIA."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it is imperative that we take a look at the origin and total development of the use of the English word "church" before we trace the etymology of EKKLESIA, from which the word "church" is translated in the New Testament.

Though the etymology of our English word "church" is not entirely a settled question, it is believed that its origin is centuries later than the origin of the New Testament Greek word "EKKLESIA." Both German and English philologists say that the word "church" was derived from the Greek word "KURIAKON" which means "of or for a lord or master, belonging to the lord."<sup>2</sup>

Dana says that the word was first applied by Christians to the house of worship. Just when that began is not certain, but he feels it was not later than the third century of the Christian era.<sup>3</sup>

It is thought that the word "church" came from the Greek KURIAKON through Latin, through German, to English "church."<sup>4</sup> Lidell says that the word "church" no doubt is the original of the Teutonic kirk, kirke, church, etc., but how this Greek name came to be adopted by the Northern nations rather than the Roman-Latin name "ecclesia" has not yet been satisfactorily explained.<sup>5</sup> Since the Teutonic tribes received their first church organization from Roman Christianity, why did they not borrow the word for church from the Latin ecclesia (which is a

transliteration of the Greek EKKLESIA) like we have in the Romance and Celtic languages? In fact, it seems certain that in the Teutonic family of languages we have derivatives of KURIAKON in every case. "The English word is 'church'; the Anglo-Saxon (or Old English) was 'cirice'; in the German we find 'Kirche'; the Scottish 'kirk'; the old Scandinavian 'kyrka!'"<sup>6</sup>

Dana maintains that the Greek word "KURIAKON" found its way into the Teutonic tongues through the Goths. The oldest Gothic word for church we know today is "kyreika". You can readily see its similarity to KURIAKON. Dana suggests three ways in which the Greek word "KURIAKON" could have been adopted into the ancient Gothic language.<sup>7</sup>

1)The Goths were the first Germanic tribes to penetrate Christian territory. Their first acquaintance with Christianity came when they marquded Greek Christianity as early as 255 A.D., five hundred years before the Germanic tribes were completely subjugated to the Roman See. In 259 A.D. the Goths penetrated Ephesus and Corinth, two outstanding Greek Christian centers. John Oman says, "It is easy to understand how the German seized on the name of the building (KURIAKON) he robbed rather than on the name of the fellowship (EKKLESIA) he did not appreciate. Moreover, the marquders were much more likely to have picked up a word from the common speech like KURIAKON, than a word with high ecclesiastical associations like EKKLESIA."<sup>8</sup>

2)The first effective evangelization of the Goths was carried out by the Greek Christian Ulphila from Cappadocia. It is thought that Ulphila would inevitably introduce KURIAKON to the Goths in its general meaning, but give it a distinctive Christian conception since many had already heard of the term through earlier Gothic invasions

into Greek territory. Unfortunately, both New Testament passages (I Cor. 11:20, Rev. 1:10) which contain the Greek word "KURIAKON" are missing from the extant manuscripts of Ulphila's Bible, so we have no absolute way of determining just how Ulphila translated the term.

3) Many of the Gothic tribes lived on the north bank of the Danube, just next to Greek Christianity. They could observe the Greek Christian communities south of them. Probably the most tangible expression of Greek Christianity (at least after the third century) was its houses of worship (KURIKONS).

"The word 'church' is of colloquial and not literary origin."<sup>9</sup> The Goths did not develop literarily like the Greek and Latin worlds did. Their communication of ideas depended mostly on word of mouth until Ulphila came and invented an alphabet for them and began a literary history by translating the Scriptures into their native tongue. Thus, the tangible ceremonies and sacred places of Christianity meant most to the newly converted Goths. When Roman Catholic Christianity took over the Gothic-German territory, they made no special effort to impart a more spiritual view of the church. Dana concludes by saying, "The church building became the embodiment and essential expression of the religion which they accepted. By an easy and natural modification, the term for the building came to be applied to the religious institutions which it represented; the institution itself was 'the church'; the building its tangible expression. So the religious state of mind which gave to this word its etymological origin, it meant a great ecclesiastical, universal

body, focalizing its interests and prerogatives in a single center of control."<sup>10</sup>

We can already see that even at its birth our English word "church" was far removed from the meaning of EKKLESIA in the New Testament sense. The later development of attributing to the church, the idea of institution and center of control, was even farther removed from the EKKLESIA of the New Testament. Before the tenth century, the word "church" came to be sacerdotal and hierarchial in its significance. Though the Roman Catholic Church still holds to priestcraft and centralization, the Protestant Church, and to some extent all English speaking Christians, reject such associations to church. Nevertheless, the idea of ecclesiastical organization as church still persists with both Roman Catholic and most Protestant groups.

If the earlier meaning of KURIAKON (belonging to the Lord) would have persisted, it certainly would have come much closer to the New Testament meaning of EKKLESIA (the people of God).<sup>11</sup> The two uses of KURIAKON in the Greek New Testament are not at all with this later meaning of church as ecclesiastical organization and center of control.

In fact, the meaning in I Cor. 11:20 (KURIAKON DEIPNON) is in connection with The Lord's Supper. It is true that here there is an indirect reference to the body of believers coming together, but KURIAKON is not used for that. KURIAKON (here) is a predicate adjective modifying the noun "supper" (DEIPNON). The Supper belongs to the Lord or "The Lord's Supper."



In Rev. 1:10 KURIAK<sup>E</sup> is used in the same adjectival sense as in I Cor. 11:20, except that here it refers to the Lord's Day. The day belongs to the Lord. John was on Patmos in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.

It is clear, then, that the Greek word "KURIAKON", which meant "belonging to a lord", came to mean in the New Testament, "belonging to the Lord". We see, however, that the Greek New Testament does not apply KURIAKON to people or to believers; only to inanimate things (these belong to the Lord). About the third century in the Christian era, KURIAKON came to be applied to the "House of Worship". From the contact of Greek Christians with pagan Goths, the Greek word KURIAKON slipped into Teutonic tongues. From the Teutonic words "kirk", "kirche", "kyrka", "cirice", came the Anglo-Saxon (English) word "church" which accumulated the idea of church not only as "House of Worship" but as center of power and organizational and ecclesiastical body.

Therefore, our English word "church", whose etymological origin comes from the Greek word "KURIAKON" has no etymological connection with EKKLESIA of the Greek New Testament. Fairbairn says, "Now our English word 'church', as a rendering of EKKLESIA, is doubly unfortunate, for while it fails both to represent and interpret the Greek original, its historical and conventional usages carry us even farther away from both the Hellenic and the Hebrew minds and associations."<sup>12</sup>

Seeing that the English word "church" applied more to the place of assembly than the fellowship itself, several of the earliest Protestant English versions <sup>of the New Testament</sup> discarded the word "church" and used the

word "congregation" instead (Tyndale's version, 1534, and Cranmer's 1539). "But the new word did not take. Accordingly, the Genevan version, 1557, began to revert to the term 'church' which had been nearly 300 years in use in the Wycliffite versions; and this term alone was used in the Authorized Version, 1611. The Westminster Revisers, while retaining the exclusive use of 'church' in the text, have in several places inserted 'congregation' in the margin as an alternative rendering."<sup>13</sup>

We will now see further how inadequate, if not inaccurate, the connotations of the English word "church" are, in translating the New Testament Greek word "EKKLESIA".

### III. Etymology of EKKLESIA

"EKKLESIA is the New Testament word for 'church', and is, therefore, one of the most important of all New Testament words. Like so many New Testament words, it has a double background."<sup>1</sup> Johnston says, "Philology cannot shed much light either on the genesis or the development of doctrine, yet it does enable an answer to be given to the question why this word was 'adopted' as the name of that society of people who worship God through Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup>

A. Greek Origin of EKKLESIA: The original Greek meaning of EKKLESIA was a political and not a religious one. Lidell and Scott indicate that it was "an assembly of the citizens regularly summoned, the legislative assembly."<sup>3</sup> The idea was applied to Homeric, Samian and Spartan assemblies. In Athens it meant "an assembly of all the citizens", which with the Senate had power to make decrees but not laws. Arndt & Gingrich simply indicate that the Greek EKKLESIA was an assembly, a regularly summoned political body.<sup>4</sup>

EKKLESIA comes from the Greek noun EKKLETOS, which means, "called out or called forth" (selected to judge or arbitrate on a point). According to Thayer, the noun EKKLETOS comes from the Greek verb EKKALEO, which means to summon forth; a community of citizens chosen to report on certain questions; "a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; an assembly; from Thucydides down (it meant) an assembly of the people convened at the public place of council for the purpose of deliberating."<sup>5</sup>

The dominant original meaning seems to be a political assembly called out from their homes to a specific appointed place to deliberate or make decisions on some issue. Some churchmen have sought to emphasize the "called out" idea of EKKLESIA. Johnston refutes this "called out" emphasis of Deissmann,<sup>6</sup> and ~~K.L.~~<sup>K.L.</sup> Schmidt.<sup>7</sup> Deissmann and Schmidt interpret EKKLESIA as the church, the community called out of the world by God. Johnston says, "Such a qualification may legitimately be deduced from passages in the New Testament, according as the 'world' is defined, but it is not present in the world itself."<sup>8</sup> As we have seen above, Thayer suggests that EKKLESIA derives from EKKLETOS which has in it more the idea of being selected in the midst of society to arbitrate, and not "called out" of that society to deliberate. "From Hellenistic usage we may also think of them as those appealed to for the execution of functions like arbitration. What EKKLESIA emphasizes is the purposiveness of the assembled community."<sup>9</sup> It is true that not all residents of the ancient Greek city were qualified to be citizens in the EKKLESIA.

It is clear, then, that the Greek EKKLESIA was a political assembly in a city, to which qualified citizens were called or selected to a certain place to make decisions on almost all civic matters, in accordance with the laws of the state. Outside the Old and New Testaments, EKKLESIA had no religious connotation whatsoever. Dana summarizes his discussion on the classical use of EKKLESIA by listing four elements in it which were pertinent to the New Testament meaning: "(1) The assembly was local; (2) it was autonomous; (3) it presupposed definite qualifications; (4) it was conducted on democratic principles."<sup>10</sup>

#### IV. Hebrew (Old Testament) Usage of ~~term~~ EKKLESIA

EKKLESIA does not only have a Greek background but also a Hebrew one. Certainly Hellenistic Jews knew Greek well and, therefore, knew and used the political term EKKLESIA. In fact, in inter-testamental times the Hellenistic Jews at Alexandria could only speak Greek. Thus, the demand came to translate their Hebrew Scriptures (O.T.) into Greek. Tradition says that seventy-two Scribes translated the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek and their translation was called "Septuagint" (a derivative of Latin word for seventy).

It is in this Greek Septuagint (LXX) that we first find a religious usage of EKKLESIA. The Greek EKKLESIA was used to translate the Hebrew word for assembly or congregation. In the Septuagint, EKKLESIA is always found to have a religious meaning. However, EKKLESIA was not limited to religious worship only; it could refer to the people assembled for any purpose--peace, war, worship or civil assembly. It must be remembered that for Israel, all of life was related to

religion. "Religious, ethnic and political aspects of the people of God were merged into one."<sup>1</sup> You can look at it another way. If you could limit religion to one aspect of Israel's Theocracy, then EKKLESIA, in the Greek Old Testament, would carry more than a religious import (especially in the modern sense of the term). But if you see EKKLESIA in the life of the total Old Testament Hebrew society, it always is used with a religious meaning.

It is highly important to understand the meaning of EKKLESIA in the Septuagint because the primitive Christian Church in the New Testament drew from the Hebrew and Greek Old Testament Scriptures. Paul and most early Christians used the Septuagint as their Bible. In fact, more than half of the quotations from the Old Testament found in the New Testament are quoted from the Septuagint.

EKKLESIA occurs in the Septuagint more than eighty times. "In all but three cases it is the translation of the Hebrew term for the whole community of Israel as the people of God, the word QAHAL."<sup>2</sup>

Dana lists six variations of the word EKKLESIA as it occurs in the Septuagint:<sup>3</sup>

(1) Five times it is used to mean an aggregation of individuals without reference to any specific religious character as in Ps. 25:5.

(2) Thirteen times it refers to a group assembled for a special purpose as in II Chron. 20:5.

(3) Twenty-six times it refers to an assembly in a particular locality for religious purposes, usually for worship as in Ps. 21:22. This is particularly prevalent in Israel's later history.

(4) Thirty-six times it refers to a formal gathering of all the people of Israel in Jehovah's presence (by far most frequent). EKKLESIA here most nearly reproduces the Hebrew QAHAL as in Deut. 9:10.

(5) Seven times it refers to all Israel in an ideal sense as the peculiar possession of Jehovah, not as Spiritual Israel, but a general principle with a literal gathering of people in a definite time and place as in Deut. 23:3.

(6) Nine times it refers to that remnant of the faithful in Israel who returned from Babylonian exile as in Neh. 8:2,17.

Sometimes Jehovah precedes QAHAL in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Septuagint translates this EKKLESIA KURIOU or church of the Lord or God's possession of His people. This "church of God" idea is strong in the New Testament, especially in Paul.

EDHAH, another Hebrew word, was also used to refer to much the same idea as QAHAL meaning the assembly of God's people. EDHAH occurs early in the Septuagint (in the Pentateuch only). Johnston says, "Accordingly, we find both translated by SUNAGOGE in Exodus, Numbers, and Leviticus; in other books QAHAL is rendered by EKKLESIA. The change may be due to the fact that translators saw the need for two words and chose EKKLESIA because of its similarity to QAHAL. On the other hand, a sufficient reason would be that SUNAGOGE is less accurate Greek and EKKLESIA is exactly the right term to use."<sup>4</sup> "QAHAL gradually displaced EDHAH, and after the Exile became the almost exclusive term for the people of God, either in local assembly or in the absolute sense of all Israel."<sup>5</sup> In the Pentateuch SUNAGOGE is often used to translate QAHAL; after Deuteronomy 5:10 EKKLESIA is the usual translation. After about two centuries EKKLESIA had attached itself to the nuances of QAHAL, especially in the idea of the congregation of God's people. By the middle of the first century A.D. EDHAH and QAHAL were no longer current and both were replaced by another Hebrew word meaning the local congregation of Israel. (synagogue).

Greek Judaism (i.e. Philo and Josephus) often preferred EKKLESIA to SUNAGOGE but there is no special use of the word, in which they

spoke dogmatically of the EKKLESIA of Israel. Johnston says, "It is unwarrantable to conclude, as Dr. Goodenough does, that early Christianity could take EKKLESIA for its community directly from Greek Judaism."<sup>6</sup> Philo rightly applied EKKLESIA to the assembly of the Jewish race. New Testament Christianity needed to add some new elements to EKKLESIA, as we shall see.

As we have seen above, the Hebrew word EDHAH was translated SUNAGOGE in the Greek. SUNAGOGE developed in time. In Classical Greek SUNAGOGE could describe a religious group as well as its general meeting. In the Septuagint, it also translates QAHAL on occasions, and, therefore, would be sometimes equivalent to EKKLESIA as the assembly of the congregation of Israel.

While SUNAGOGE was still possible to denote a local Jewish community, in New Testament times it came to be restricted to a place of meeting. Paul never refers to SUNAGOGE as the church. "The current limitation to the place of worship and to the local Jewish body perhaps prevented the Septuagint practice from encouraging Christians to appropriate it as the title of their own society."<sup>7</sup> However, Johnston says that evidence has been found to indicate that both EKKLESIA and SUNAGOGE were used at first to describe early Christianity.

One cannot help but note the similarity of development of the two Greek words KURIAKON and SUNAGOGE. KURIAKON came to mean a Christian house of worship. SUNAGOGE came to mean a Jewish place of worship.

The classical non-Biblical origin of EKKLESIA gives us the meaning of a political assembly selected to deliberate at a given place

and time. The Hebrew use of QAHAL and SUNAGOGE give us the religious idea of the assembly of the congregation of Israel called together by God to listen to or act for God. The Septuagint use of EKKLESIA gives us the following ideas:<sup>8</sup> (1) of a concrete assembly with spatial and temporal limitations; (2) of an ideal assembly of Israel belonging to Jehovah, but with a literal gathering of people; (3) of a local assembly gathered for the purpose of worship (especially in later period).

The resultant idea of EKKLESIA is a combination of classical and Hebrew elements; a community of persons possessing certain qualities and regarded as uniquely the people belonging to God who devote themselves to God and conduct themselves according to democratic principles.

The Hebrew concept of EKKLESIA, especially as expressed in the Septuagint, was probably the stronger in primitive Christianity, but as the Kingdom extended to the Gentile world, Christian conceptions became more and more influenced by Greek thought.

Fairbairn says that the word EKKLESIA is in itself more distinctly Greek, while SUNAGOGE is distinguished for its Jewish associations. "It is through its Greek associations that the term must be interpreted."<sup>9</sup>

Before we leave this discussion of the Hebrew (O.T.) use of the term EKKLESIA in the Septuagint, we must note again that EKKLESIA was the Greek word which usually translated ~~to~~ the Hebrew word QAHAL in the Septuagint. Though EKKLESIA was a secular word referring to summoning a political assembly, QAHAL brought the meaning of a religious assembly.



J. Y. Campbell takes exception to the religious assembly idea for QAHAL. He claims the word simply means an assembly of some kind much like the secular original Greek meaning of EKKLESIA. He says that ~~EDAH~~<sup>EDHAK</sup>, translated in the Septuagint as SUNAGOGE, is the word which expresses the idea of the people as a whole whether assembled or not. Campbell concludes that the uses of QAHAL and ~~EDAH~~<sup>EDHAK</sup> afford little basis for the Christians employing EKKLESIA to mean Israel, the people of God. Nelson says Campbell's view has neither been supported or rebuffed.<sup>10</sup>

Although scholars who accept the QAHAL-EKKLESIA hypothesis cannot describe exactly how EKKLESIA came to have a distinctly Christian application. There is a strong clue in the fact of translation from QAHAL to EKKLESIA in the Septuagint. "It would be too simple to suppose that the Christians just decided at an early date that EKKLESIA would be their name."<sup>11</sup> Nelson suggests, based on K. E. Schmidt,<sup>12</sup> that since the language of Jesus and possibly the earliest documents of Jesus were Aramaic, the early Christians at first called themselves K'NISHTA which expressed both the idea of the divine calling of the people (EKKLESIA), and the people in common assembly for worship (SUNAGOGE). "If Christianity had not shown itself so soon to have a universal destiny, and if Aramaic had not been so provincial a language, the Church might have been extensively known as the K'NISHTA."<sup>13</sup>

Johnston suggests three reasons why the word EKKLESIA was chosen for the "people of God" and finally ousted all other designations in its favor becoming the exclusive possession of Christians (we shall see that Paul's use of EKKLESIA had much to do with its prominence):

(1) The disciples of the risen Christ believed themselves to be the true people of God; they were the Messianic community. This could be expressed in KNISHTA, the Congregation of God. But in Greek, apart from SUNAGOGE which had definite limitations as we have seen, EKKLESIA was the only word capable of receiving the content of the Christian claim.

(2) It was not so distinctively Jewish as to be unsuitable for a society which quickly accepted Gentiles to membership on the profession of their faith in Christ as Lord.

(3) In particular, EKKLESIA had Scriptural authority and was familiar to all.<sup>14</sup>

Since the early Christians did choose EKKLESIA to designate themselves as the church, we must now examine how EKKLESIA was used in the New Testament, including Jesus' own use of the word.

#### V. The New Testament Use of the Word EKKLESIA

The New Testament usage of EKKLESIA probably reveals more about the meaning of the New Testament concept of the church than any other single New Testament word.

In the New Testament, EKKLESIA occurs at least one hundred and fourteen times in seventeen of the twenty-seven books.<sup>1</sup> Smith lists a total of one hundred and fifteen occurrences.<sup>2</sup> Three times there is no reference to the church.<sup>3</sup> Eighty-five times the local idea is prominent. Twenty-six times the word is used in various ways.<sup>4</sup> "The word EKKLESIA is not found in the following books: Mark, Luke, John, II Timothy, Titus, I Peter, II Peter, I John; II John, Jude."<sup>5</sup>

It is well known that within a few years after Pentecost, the church began to be known as the EKKLESIA and the word's use was well established by the time Paul wrote his letters. The more difficult question is, what was the continuity between the

EKKLESIA of the Old Testament LXX (Hebrew assembly) and the New Testament EKKLESIA (Christian assembly)? How did the New Testament EKKLESIA look at itself in relation to the Old Testament EKKLESIA? If both Old and New Testament assemblies were EKKLESIA, what was the content of each? Some say the church began with Abraham or with Israel as a people.<sup>6</sup> Some say the church began with Jesus;<sup>7</sup> and others at Pentecost.<sup>8</sup> Jesus' use of EKKLESIA should give us some clue to these questions.

Thāt there was some continuity between the Old Testament EKKLESIA and the New Testament EKKLESIA, there can be no question, else Jesus and other New Testament characters would never have used this Old Testament Greek word. Brunner rightly asserts that "it is easily forgotten that the primitive Christian community began its existence as a Jewish sect."<sup>9</sup> It was quite awhile before the first church in Jerusalem freed itself from the cultic obligations of Judaism. Only gradually and following violent struggles was the New Testament EKKLESIA released from the Old Testament EKKLESIA (Judaism). "The EKKLESIA of Jesus Christ is God's people, the elect people--that was also the rightful description of Israel."<sup>10</sup> Dr. Bender says that EKKLESIA is deliberately used with the "intent to identify the church as the people of God in pre-Pentecost and Old Testament times. This is not to imply that the Old Testament term EKKLESIA has the same content as the word when used in the New Testament; there are significant differences. ...In both Testaments the first and essential meaning is the same, namely that a given historic group stands in such a relationship to God as to belong to Him as His people."<sup>11</sup>

But to unduly emphasize the Jewish sect idea of the first Christian community is to mislead us into misunderstanding of the meaning of all the facts. "Because they remained entirely within the bounds of their native Judaism at first, they gave the general appearance of being just another sect. Indeed, the Jewish hierarchy and the Roman rulers specifically referred to the Christians as such,<sup>12</sup> for outwardly they seemed to be nothing more than a small band of Jews with some religious ideas peculiar to themselves, often called simply The Way. ...But the idea of their being only one sect among others fails to contain the elements of newness and uniqueness which were characteristic of their belief in Jesus Christ, with all the soteriological and eschatological implications of that belief, which made them altogether distinct from their co-religionists, even while remaining a part of Judaism."<sup>13</sup>

Flew declares that the original disciples could not have thought of themselves as just a sect. "But the disciples were Israel. They were the church or People of God. They did not separate from Israel. They could not. It was the rebellious sons of Israel who forfeited their Covenant by rejecting Christ."<sup>14</sup> It was Christ who brought newness into the New Testament EKKLESIA.

The concept of the Old Testament remnant cannot be overlooked in this discussion. "The true people of God were always the spiritual people, not the biological people, and they were a remnant produced by God's judgment and grace."<sup>15</sup> God was always, through His prophets, seeking to make more of ethnic Israel become spiritual Israel. The saved remnant was to be a saving remnant to the Old Testament

EKKLESIA and to all the nations. Paul identifies this present remnant as the New Testament EKKLESIA.<sup>16</sup> "It is plain to see how very adaptable the remnant-idea was for Paul's explanation of the church, not merely as an analogy, however, but as a veritable identification of the church with the Remnant which the prophets had described and foretold."<sup>17</sup>

It may be questioned whether Jesus ever consciously applied the Remnant idea to His disciples since he never personally referred to the remnant as such. This raises the question whether Jesus and Paul held the same view concerning the relation of the EKKLESIA to the remnant. It may be simply that Jesus does not see his disciples as the object of theological reflection as Paul does.<sup>18</sup> Does Jesus' lack of stated theological reflection indicate that there is no connection between the Old Testament remnant and the New Testament remnant? Could it be, as Flew suggests, that Jesus' actions speak louder than his words? "The Jewish Church was the people of God. His man mission was to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But His actions indicate His conviction that the Old Israel was to be purged and reconstituted in view of the nearness of the Kingdom of God."<sup>19</sup>

Some see the birth of the New Testament EKKLESIA idea, especially the calling and instruction of disciples idea,<sup>20</sup> go back to the forming of the remnant in Isaiah.<sup>20</sup>

Nelson prefers the interpretation of a number of recent scholars who "have attributed to Jesus Himself the function of bearing the continuity of the Remnant through the critical passage from the old aeon of Israel to the New."<sup>21</sup> The idea is that

the remnant (true Israel) has continually diminished because of faithlessness until Jesus alone is left to bear the remnant. At the cross Jesus is absolutely alone as the true seed of Abraham. There was not even a remnant, only a man who obeyed unto death. After the resurrection the remnant is continued in the EKKLESIA. This view may give some insight into the absence of Jesus' mention of the remnant, but, as Nelson says, it may be difficult to grasp without faith in the church as the body of Christ.

It is clear by now that the Old Testament remnant had some connection with the New Testament remnant. Following this remnant idea from <sup>the</sup> Old to <sup>the</sup> New Testament gives us some new content of the New Testament EKKLESIA. Whether Christ simply purges an old remnant to make it new or whether he ends the old one at the cross to become the founder of the new, he is still the center and the relation between the two.

A. THE GOSPEL USAGE OF EKKLESIA: Just at what point the New Testament EKKLESIA was to have originated is still a valid question even though we see it, in some sense, continuous with the Old Testament EKKLESIA. We have seen that the New Testament indicates some newness about the content of EKKLESIA. Just when in the career of Jesus did the New Testament EKKLESIA take shape? Was it at the call of the first disciples? Was it at the confession of Peter? Or was it at the Last Supper? Or was it at a post-resurrection phenomena at Christ's appearances and/or at Pentecost?

To deny that Jesus had anything to do with the idea of a community of believers or a church is an extreme view and few hold it

today. The modified view that although Jesus did not actually found or establish the church, the idea of EKKLESIA was really present in His teaching and work, is gaining some attention.<sup>22</sup> The disciples were not yet the church but forerunners of it. The Old Testament EKKLESIA took on a new relationship to God when Christ was made its head. Johnson calls this "adoptionist ecclesiology."<sup>23</sup>

Scott says that Jesus Himself laid down no directions as to how His followers were to order their society. He only gave them a task to fulfill, and left them to discover for themselves how they might do so most effectively.<sup>24</sup> Scott suggests further that the essential constitution of the church rested on the disciples' allegiance to Jesus. The Christians looked back to Jesus as the source and principle of their community, but He personally had nothing to say about this community.

Flew takes a stronger view, showing that Jesus preached the coming of God's Kingdom (BASILEIA) and that He had every intention of instituting the community of the New Covenant to live under His divine sovereignty.<sup>25</sup> On the basis of Jesus' teachings and acts, Flew substantiates Jesus' intention to establish the EKKLESIA through his analysis of Jesus' life in the following ways:<sup>26</sup>

(1) Jesus had a conception of a new Israel in His teachings and actions. His appeal was first of all to the remnant as we have seen. He taught His disciples as the nucleus of new Israel;

(2) The ethical teaching of Jesus is social and individual. The remnant will be given a new power (Holy Spirit) to fulfill Jesus' demands. The remnant will have a new way of life;

(3) His conception of Messiahship presupposed the gathering of a community;

(4) His "Word of God" conception constituted a new community. He preached and His message inevitably marked off those who accepted and those who did not;

(5) He sent His disciples on a certain mission, showing His conception of the mission of the new community.

Flew says that the New Israel begins with the call of the first disciples and was constituted in the act of Jesus at the Last Supper, if we are to look for ~~any~~one moment.<sup>27</sup>

Johnston gives validity to Flew's five point argument above but feels ~~the~~ <sup>that</sup> Flew's emphasis on Jesus' teachings and actions concerning the new community does not go far enough to explain the New Testament EKKLESIA. "The weakness of this is its failure fully to do justice to the necessity of Jesus' death for the constitution of the new Israel." Calvary must first take place. "Without the cross and the resurrection there is no church."<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, Johnston asserts that a stricter definition of EKKLESIA is required. "Apart from Acts 19:32,39,41 (a secular assembly), 7:38 (the assembly of Israel), and Hebrews 12:23 (an assembly of the heavenly host), we find complete unanimity in the New Testament as to its use: it is a technical term and exclusively for the Christian society."<sup>29</sup>

In the gospels, only Matthew mentions EKKLESIA twice (Matt. 16:18, 18:17,18). Mark and John do not mention it, but they must have known the word. Luke, the historian, only mentions EKKLESIA in his two-volume work (Luke-Acts) after Pentecost. The disciples may have been called potentially the church. They are and they are not yet the EKKLESIA. We may speak of the community of the disciples. But "EKKLESIA, that is 'church', should be reserved



for the society which gathered itself into a vital fellowship as a result of the Resurrection, inspired and called by God."<sup>30</sup>

But, is it not possible that to unduly limit the content of EKKLESIA to post-resurrection Pentecost as Johnston seems to do, we may be missing one of the most significant elements of EKKLESIA, namely discipleship. Harold Bender, in the opening paragraph of his book, clearly sees the continuous relationship between Jesus' pre-pentecost gospel call to discipleship and the post-pentecost EKKLESIA.

"On the day of Pentecost one hundred and twenty men of Isra~~e~~l who had responded to Jesus' call to discipleship were together in a house in Jerusalem in the intimate fellowship of prayer and expectation. Assured that the Jesus from whom they had received the commission to make disciples of all the nations was now reigning as Lord over all, they awaited with confidence the descent of the promised Holy Spirit with power."<sup>31</sup>

This same group of Spirit-filled believers were later called the EKKLESIA in Acts.<sup>32</sup>

If we accept Flew's fivefold analysis of Jesus' teaching and acts, one can readily see the relevance of the discipleship concept for the New Testament EKKLESIA.<sup>33</sup> If, we accept the thesis, that though Jesus hardly ever used the word EKKLESIA, if ever, he nevertheless had a definite community of followers (disciples, MATHETES) in mind, Then discipleship becomes the basic relationship to Christ, that those have who belong to this EKKLESIA. Luke uses the word to refer to those who belonged to the EKKLESIA.<sup>34</sup> In fact MATHETES (disciples) is used 238 times in the four gospels and 30 times in Acts.<sup>35</sup> It seems as though Jesus simply prefers to use this simple pupil-learner word to designate his followers. In the New Testament MATHETES is only found in the four gospels and Acts.

MATHETES is used to designate an adherent of any great leader or movement.<sup>36</sup> But most of the time MATHETES, refers to believers in Christ.

Jesus began to illuminate his specific concept of discipleship to his disciples as soon as Peter confessed him as Messiah.<sup>37</sup> This is not to say that Jesus did not teach his disciples before Peter's Confession. Jesus most certainly introduced discipleship at the first call of his disciples.<sup>38</sup> But not until they believed that Jesus was their Messiah, did Jesus tell them the demands of suffering and self-giving involved in being his disciple.

Bender considers the church (EKKLESIA) as derivative from its concept of Christianity as discipleship. He considers the church as a company of disciples.<sup>39</sup> The sixteenth century Anabaptists, who sought to base their beliefs on the New Testament, ultimately derived their concept of church from their concept of Christianity as discipleship.<sup>40</sup>

Knudsen also identifies this discipleship content of EKKLESIA when he indicates that Jesus' appointing of the twelve, "to be with him, and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons (Mark 3:14)," was probably a declaration which directly represented the real germ of the Christian Community. For in this learning and serving fellowship is to be seen the true spirit which emerged in the church. The Old Testament concept of 'the people of God' constituted the remote origin of the church, while this apostolic group, Jesus' chosen ones, established the immediate origin of the church, The references to 'the sheep of the flock' (Matt. 26:31) and to the 'little flock' (Luke 12:32), which initially refer to the twelve apostles, suggest the core of the new community.<sup>41</sup>

It would seem then that Jesus had certainly the EKKLESIA in mind in his teachings and actions, though he may seldom, if ever, used the word. It would also seem that MATHETES may be one of the most important and descriptive terms used by Jesus to describe his followers, who were later called EKKLESIA. Discipleship, following Christ, meant having Christ as your Lord. Is not this pre-pentecost Discipleship the most important element in the content of the post-Pentecost EKKLESIA?

We cannot conclude this discussion of Jesus and the church without relating the word 'Kingdom' (BASILEIA) to EKKLESIA. Some feel that BASILEIA is completely divorced from EKKLESIA or that BA BASILEIA was in conflict with EKKLESIA.<sup>42</sup>

BASILEIA means "Kingly rule" or "sovereignty". BASILEIA is used 162 times in the New Testament, and is used with various meanings, sometimes meaning an evil kingdom. By far, the most frequent use of BASILEIA is in the Synoptic gospels, and there most often with the meaning of kingdom of God or kingdom of heaven.<sup>43</sup>

Schmidt says that the New Testament stops short of identifying the BASILEIA TOU THEOU with the believers of Christ. Only one passage suggests this (Rev. 1:6).<sup>44</sup> Flew writes, that in the first four centuries of the Christian era the identification of EKKLESIA with BASILEIA TOU THEOU on ~~earth~~ is nowhere made.<sup>45</sup> Flew points out that if we exclude parallel versions of the same saying, there are sixty sayings and parables in which Jesus speaks of the BASILEIA. Only in nine of the sixty is the thought of a community prominent. The overwhelming <sup>majority</sup> ~~majority~~ is BASILEIA as the Reign or

Rule of God".<sup>46</sup> The Kingly rule is to be consummated in the future but the coming rule is anticipated in the activity of Jesus.<sup>47</sup> "It is Jesus Himself who represents in His own preaching, teaching, and redemptive activities the final establishment of God's Kingly rule on earth."<sup>48</sup>

Yet, Flew writes, that, "The church is not to be identified with God's Kingly rule." Neither is it a conception substituted for that of the Kingdom in later writings of the New Testament."<sup>49</sup> The Church is the object of divine activity, but not God's Kingly rule. Johnston takes a similar view when he writes that "the church is not the Kingdom."<sup>50</sup> Flew and Johnston both seem to identify BASILEIA closely to the being of God, God's Kingly Rule, in contrast to man's activity on earth. The disciples on earth are simply objects and instruments of God's Kingly Rule. The Kingly rule of God, or God's sovereignty, does operate in Jesus on earth; the gathering of the twelve, the mission of the Twelve and the Seventy and in the Last Supper. Since God's Sovereignty does not operate in a vacuum, Flew introduces a secondary sense of BASILEIA to describe the sphere of God's Kingly Rule, namely the "Realm of the God". Jesus speaks of men entering the BASILEIA.<sup>51</sup> But Jesus also speaks of BASILEIA where a community is implied.<sup>52</sup>

Flew concludes his discussion by saying that "The sayings and parables of Jesus with regard to the BASILEIA have not furnished us with more than a few slight indications that he had a community in view. Nowhere does Jesus speak of members of the Kingdom."<sup>53</sup> Flew says, as we have seen above, that community is found in Jesus actions rather than words.

Is it necessary or even possible to distinguish so sharply in BASILEIA, the idea of God's Kingly rule as God's domain, and the idea of man's domain, the place where God acts? (as Flew does)? God's activity on earth in Post-Pentecost times most certainly includes the EKKLESIA, though God is not limited to the EKKLESIA. The BASILEIA is, even by implication, identified with the activity or the preaching of the EKKLESIA by its members, as the book of Acts shows.<sup>54</sup>

There may be some validity to designating the BASILEIA primarily to Jesus activity on earth, including his birth, work, death and resurrection.<sup>55</sup> In that sense Jesus could say "The Kingdom of Heaven is here."<sup>56</sup> Then EKKLESIA could be seen as coming into existence through the acceptance of God's rule.

Bender brings BASILEIA and EKKLESIA much closer together. The gospel is the kingdom of God to men. Christ brought the good news (gospel) that men could enter the kingdom by accepting him. Kingdom, meaning reign of God, was His most all-inclusive term for the outcome of the Gospel. It meant that God will establish his rule over those who accept his gracious offer, making them disciples. The proclamation of the reign of God in the kingdom, which was the message of Christ in the Gospel, is still the message of the church of disciples.<sup>57</sup> It is interesting to note that BASILEIA is used more in the four gospels and then fades out throughout the rest of the New Testament. On the other hand, EKKLESIA is almost never used in the gospels, but is steadily used in the rest of the New Testament. This suggests nothing more than, that the

BASILEIA idea may have been incorporated more and more in the EKKLESIA. This does not mean BASILEIA and EKKLESIA are identical equivalents. "In other words, the church (EKKLESIA) is in a real sense the kingdom (BASILEIA) which Christ announced, however much is ultimately to be included in the kingdom."<sup>58</sup> "The arguments of Schweitzer and others that he (Jesus) cannot have intended to found a church because he anticipated an immediate end are irrelevant because EKKLESIA in New Testament useage is itself an eschatological term - the community which is promised, the Kingdom (BASILEIA) of God."<sup>59</sup>

/, Matthew 16: and 18: (Jesus)

We now come to the controversial and only gospel passages which use EKKLESIA (Matt. 16:18, 18:17). We have left this discussion till last because these passages have been disputed for some time, especially Matthew 16:18. Up to the nineteenth century Matthew 16:17-19 was considered the locus classicus in the gospels for the view that Jesus intended to establish the Christian church. In the nineteenth century H.J. Holtzmann affirmed that Jesus did not intend to suggest a church.<sup>60</sup> In the latter part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century many influential theologians said that the statement in Matthew 16:18 came from the early church after that church had separated from Judiasm. They questioned the future tense "I will build my church", because Jesus seemed to predict an occurence before it took place.

"The assumption that Jesus could not have forecast events which were soon to happen credits him with less insight than competent

human leaders possess in every generation."<sup>61</sup> Immediately following Peter's confession and his statement about the church, Jesus began to foretell his death and resurrection, which did happen in the future (16:21). Before we draw final conclusions let us take a further look at the difficulties of Matthew 16.

Nelson sums up the pros and cons of the authenticity dispute over Matthew 16:<sup>62</sup> First on the negative side:

- (1) The argument from silence says that neither Mark nor Luke or John record these words. Either, they did not know them or else they thought them spurious.
- (2) How could Jesus proclaim the eschatological, imminent ~~and catastrophic~~ coming of the Kingdom of God and at the same time make provision for building a continuing church?
- (3) Bultmann says <sup>that</sup> these words were a later insertion in Matthew because this <sup>specific</sup> attitude toward Peter and the church ~~developed~~ later. Also, in the synoptic gospels there is no distinctive ecclesiological words which belong to original sources of Jesus.
- (4) In Mark 10:40 and Matthew 19:28 Jesus rejects the idea of giving any one disciple a place of privilege, for all shall have places of glory.
- (5) Peter's own life does not show that he was a rock of a man, but an undependable character who denied his Lord. Furthermore, James held an equal position to Peter's in the Jerusalem church.

Therefore, on the basis of these above textual and historical criticisms some scholars are now taking the view that Matthew 16:18 was never spoken by Jesus.

On the other hand, there are a number of other authorities who have just as convincing views that Jesus words to Peter were authentic and consistent. F. Kattenbusch and K.L. Schmidt have gone farther than Harnack in their belief, that not only was Matthew 16:18 authentic, but it literally applies to the Christian

EKKLESIA. Nelson lists the following reasons on the positive side of the question:<sup>63</sup>

- (1) No known ancient manuscripts omit Matthew 16:18.
- (2) K.L. Schmidt asserts that EKKLESIA is itself eschatological and is meant thus in Jesus' words.<sup>64</sup> The EKKLESIA was connected with the kingdom of God preaching of Jesus.
- (3) If Jesus gave Peter a sweeping commission of authority why was there no appeal made to it? God gave Israel revelation of Himself in spite of their continual sinning, so He did to Peter. Jesus built the church on Peter's confession of faith, so all enter the Messianic community. The power of the keys is to all disciples to unlock the mysteries of the Scriptures and recognize Christ.

We can see from the above positive arguments, from the manuscripts and internal evidence, that Matthew 16:18 is congruous with the teachings of Jesus and could represent a genuine statement from Jesus.

Matthew 16:18 "And I tell you, you are Peter (PETROS) and on this rock (PETRA) I will build (OIKODOMESO) my church (EKKLESIA), and the powers of death shall not prevail against it."

The context of Matthew 16: is that Jesus is preaching in Galilee. The Pharisees and Sadducees are beginning to test him. Jesus, knowing and detecting the increasing opposition turns to his disciples to try them, to see where they were in their commitment to him. Jesus asks, "who do men say that the Son of Man is (16:13)?" Then he said to them, "But who do you say that I am (16:15)?" Evidently, Jesus was asking all the disciples, for several responded to his first question (16:14). But in the second question, "who do you say I am?", Peter answers the question,



"You are the Christ (16:15)." The context indicates that Jesus was addressing the whole group and no evidence can be found here that Jesus was especially addressing Peter. But Peter did respond, possibly for the group, or representative of it. Or possibly Peter gave the answer all felt. There was no more to say. Then Jesus responds to Peter's response. "Blessed are you Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven (16:17)." After Jesus credited Peter's answer with coming from God, Jesus further delineates the meaning of being able to speak by the Spirit of God and confess the Messiah as God's Son.

The whole dialogue seems to be between Jesus and the whole group of disciples present with Peter being singled out only for a moment to highlight to the whole group the personal meaning involved for each individual disciple. The paragraph begins with Jesus addressing his disciples, not just Peter (16:13). The paragraph ends with Jesus telling that they should tell no one, he was the Christ, again addressing the whole group, as if all of them confessed this Messiahship, not just Peter (16:20).

This passage raises two important questions: (1) What was Jesus relation to the church? (2) What was the actual position of Peter in that church?

To the first question we have already addressed ourselves above (A. Gospel Usage of EKKLESIA).<sup>65</sup> We have said that Jesus probably intended to establish the EKKLESIA, and that EKKLESIA was in Jesus mind, actions and teachings, though he seldom used

that specific term. If this passage is authentic, and we have cited evidence that it certainly could be, then here in Matthew 16:18 we find additional evidence that Jesus definitely had an EKKLESIA in mind. " I will build " is in future tense. Did Jesus mean he was going to build in immediate future, or distant future? Probably both. Peter was living now and made his confession right there and yet Peter lived also later in the new EKKLESIA.

Did Jesus mean EKKLESIA only in the sense in which the disciples understood it on this occasion or did Jesus mean EKKLESIA also in the eschatological and prophetic sense? "If the meaning of the term was limited by the comprehension of the disciples who heard him at that time, then we must agree with Hort and Bartlet that "My EKKLESIA" merely meant the bringing of the old congregation of Israel into a new and final relationship to Christ."<sup>66</sup> Certainly the disciples immediately thought about EKKLESIA or QAHAL of Israel. Furthermore, Jesus was probably speaking in Aramaic and was using the modification of the term QAHAL.

But Jesus seemed to go further in this statement than just bringing the old congregation of Israel into a new relationship to himself. Granted that the disciples might have understood, that on the basis of a divinely transformed character which grew out of a faith in the Messiahship of Jesus expressed in Peter's confession, a new congregation was to be built, distinct from the old congregation based on the nation of Israel. Yet, at this stage of the disciples' development they probably knew little

more than that the new EKKLESIA was to be different. They could not possibly know what the nature and characteristics of this new EKKLESIA would be. When the Holy Spirit fully came to the EKKLESIA on Pentecost the words of their Lord fully dawned on them.

We can conclude by saying that Jesus definitely founded the church and called it his EKKLESIA. It was a conscious act. "He found the New Covenant, not as an ecclesia invisibilis, as those who regard the church purely as an invisible spiritual body would have us believe, but as a real community, a people, however unassuming it may have seemed at first, whose constitution is the blood of the New Covenant."<sup>67</sup>

The second question is more difficult. What was the position of Peter? What did Jesus mean by saying "On this Rock I will build my church?" Was Jesus actually building on Peter?

We have seen above that Jesus was speaking to all the disciples. Jesus first questions on "Who do men say I am?" was answered by several or all. But Jesus second question "Who do you say I am?" was addressed to all but here recorded only to be answered by Peter. The context reveals corporateness but Jesus did respond to Peter individually.

Not much help can be gotten from the two different Greek forms of rock used here namely PETROS (Peter, rock) and PETRA (rock, stone). Peter's name in Greek, PETROS means big rock while the second word used by Jesus "on this rock" was PETRA which means little rock or stone. For in Aramaic, which Jesus probably spoke here, the word for PETROS is KEPHA which means a rock or stone. In Aramaic KEPHA would have been used for both PETROS AND PETRA.

Bruce M. Metzger says that the most obvious meaning is that Peter is the rock on which Jesus will build his church.<sup>68</sup> Let us remember though that Jesus was saying this to Peter in the midst and not apart from his fellow disciples. Peter was the rock-man historically on which Jesus built his church. But let us not read more into it than what is here. There is absolutely no indication here that Peter was to be a sort of first Pope who was to have successors.

What actually happened in the New Testament church can help us to understand what Jesus may have meant here. True, Jesus could have meant more than what Peter could produce, but other sayings of Jesus to Peter indicate that Jesus took Peter's weakness into account (Luke 22:31-34). "At Pentecost it was Peter who, by his sermon, used the keys of the kingdom (Matt. 16:19) to open the church to many Jewish believers (Acts 2:14-41). Later when Peter preached to the Roman centurion, Cornelius, he opened the church to Gentile believers (Acts 10:24-48)."<sup>69</sup> In both cases Jesus was using Peter to build His church. We must take it in its simple historic meaning.

The interpretation that Jesus play on words with PETROS and PETRA, meant that "you are Peter and on a confession like yours I will build my church," is a possible meaning, but it cannot be fully substantiated by the Greek meaning of the two words. The "confession" interpretation for rock must be taken from the wider context rather than the etymology of PETROS alone. Perhaps Jesus was pointing out Peter in the midst of his colleagues as a symbol of a rock-man by which all must come into the kingdom.

Therefore, we must conclude that Jesus had no special place for Peter in His EKKLESIA but Peter was to be an early leader among others. To be sure the implication is, that all leaders and all disciples must come the same spiritual path of confession of Christ in the midst of other disciples, before they can be a rock-man for Christ. Though Peter was mentioned first in all the lists of apostles (Matt. 10:1-4, Mk. 3:16-19, Luke 6:14-16), that in itself is no proof of primacy. Peter from the beginning shared leadership with James in Jerusalem, with Paul later in the Acts. Infact, Paul withstood Peter to the face on one occassion (Galatians 2:11). "The New Testament gives not the slightest evidence for any suggestion of the primacy of Peter. He was one with others in the new fellowship of the Spirit." 70

Mathhew 18:17:

Matthew 18:17 "If he refuses to listen to them tēll it to the EKKLESIA, and if he refuses to listen even to the EKKLESIA, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."

This passage is less controversial than Matt. 16:18. The context shows that immediately after Peter's confessed 'Jesus as the Messiah' Jesus foretold his sufferings and death and resurrection (Matt. 16:21). He further told them the cost of following Him in discipleship (Matt. 16:24-28). Then Jesus took Peter, James and John to a mountain and was transfigured (Matt. 17:). Jesus' disciples began to feel insecure at the things he was saying. Jesus was leaving them and that would leave his leadership open for others. The discipls were asking the wrong questions "Who

is the greatest" among them (Matt. 18:1). Jesus then, tells them several qualifications for entering and relating in the kingdom (18:4,5,7,10,14). In Matt. 18:15-22 Jesus deals with offenses and sins between disciples. If you have a difference with a brother go straighten it out between you and him. If you get no-where, take a third brother along to help. If that does not work tell it to the EKKLESIA. Jesus seems to mean here the EKKLESIA in the local sense. Go tell your differences to a specific local assembly. In Matt. 16:18 EKKLESIA has more of a universal sense including all local EKKLESIA'S.

The emphasis in this passage is to bring about recon~~X~~ciliation. Tell the offense to the EKKLESIA as a last recourse. If the offender does not <sup>listen to you</sup> ~~hear~~ them, consider him a heathen or Gentile.

EKKLESIA here is a serious group to which all brothers must reckon with. Though the disciples may again have had the Jewish conception of congregation of Israel it nevertheless, spoke to them. Later EKKLESIA, certainly meant to them the people of God who follow Christ and confess him.

We do well to remember that EKKLESIA here as for the later Christian church, meant a local assembly, and whatever was bound by a member of that assembly must have first been bound (BEDEMENA) and approved or released (LELUMENA) by God in heaven. The local EKKLESIA is a heaven governed assembly with Christ as its standard and head. Christ evidently conceived of the Christian EKKLESIA as a body of believers possessing self-government in which questions of discipline were to be decided by the collective judgment of the members.<sup>71</sup>

The context indicates that reconciliation in the EKKLESIA is of paramount importance. Matt. 18:21-22 gave us an insight into the inner nature of EKKLESIA. Two or three gathered, reconciled to each other can expect Christ, the head in their midst. This is the essence of the local EKKLESIA.

The use of the word EKKLESIA in the gospels begins a new dimension of that word. Not only do we find the Greek meaning of EKKLESIA here, to be summoned out to a place of assembly in the midst of life to deliberate and the Old Testament (LXX) use of EKKLESIA - the people of God summoned together by God to listen to and act for God, but also the gospel idea of the character and conduct of those who were summoned to the EKKLESIA. In the gospels, the EKKLESIA is in the charge and ownership of Christ who calls, enlists confession and loyalty responses from men, building close relationship and reconciliation between men and with Himself. Let us now examine other New Testament uses of EKKLESIA to discover their contribution to the expanding idea of EKKLESIA in the Scriptures.

B. Luke's use of EKKLESIA (Acts):

In the book of Acts Luke uses the word EKKLESIA twenty-four times in fourteen chapters in contrast to the gospel usage by Matthew in only three instances in two chapters.<sup>72</sup> This sudden acceleration of the use of the word EKKLESIA by Luke in the progression of the New Testament may not in itself be highly significant, but certainly we would expect some new activity or insight in this repeated use of EKKLESIA that deserves examination. Was

there a sudden awareness of the gospel us<sup>of</sup> of EKKLESIA? Was there a growth toward the concept of a new EKKLESIA? Was there some new discovery or new experience that caused the people of God to become more self-conscious or aware of themselves as EKKLESIA? Or was there simply an awareness of the need for a continuation of a revitalised Old Testament EKKLESIA? Let us briefly examine EKKLESIA in the book of Acts.

In the book of Acts Luke summarizes the growth of the early church from its origin in Jerusalem, the capital of a comparatively unimportant country within the great Roman Empire, to the arrival of Paul at Rome, the capital of the then civilized world. Between these two cities the author traces the gradual expansion of the church during the thirty years following Jesus' death and resurrection. By the early sixties A.D. every important city in Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, Thrace, Italy, and Egypt had one or more Christian congregations.<sup>73</sup>

The designation EKKLESIA was not immediately given to the Christians after Pentecost, if we accept it that EKKLESIA was not in Acts 2:47.<sup>74</sup> Whether EKKLESIA is retained or not does not really change the sense of this passage. The subject is really "all who believe" (PANTES DE OI PISTEUONTES Acts 2:44) were together. And the Lord added to their number (or EKKLESIA) those who were being saved (Acts 2:47).<sup>75</sup> Luke opens the book of Acts by telling the story of Jesus' ascension with the apostles (TOIS APOSTOLOIS, Acts 1:2). The "apostles" are the subject but in Acts 1:15, the whole group is called "brethren" (ADELPHON). In Acts 2:15 Peter simply calls them "these men". In Acts 2:37, 43, 4:33, Luke



calls them "apostles" again. In the same passage they are also called brethren (2:37). In 2:44 and 4:32 the group is called "all who believed" as we have seen above. It should be pointed out that "brethren" is not only used to refer to the believing Christians but also to Israelites (Acts 2:29, 3:17). In 4:23 they are designated as "friends" (TOUS IDIOUS).

Up to Acts 5:11 where Luke makes a summary statement about "fear coming to the whole EKKLESIA", there is no indication that anyone was calling this new Holy Spirit-filled group EKKLESIA. As we have seen above, different nouns, adjectives or participles describing the activity of the group were used to designate them. When a new thing emerges in life, people first attempt to describe it, then they label it. It could be that Luke used EKKLESIA in his summary statements in Acts because he was writing after the events and possibly after the church had begun to use EKKLESIA quite freely as its conscious label. If an early date *is possible for Luke's writing of Acts, possibly* at the end of Paul's Roman imprisonment, or a later date, Paul's extensive use of EKKLESIA most surely influenced Luke in his writings. EKKLESIA in 5:11 refers to the local church in Jerusalem.

In Acts 7:38 we have the second (or third Acts 2:47) use of EKKLESIA in the book. Here Stephen is answering charges of blasphemy in the EKKLESIA (Congregation) in the wilderness, reflecting Deuteronomy 9:10. The meaning here is clearly the Old Testament idea of congregation whom God calls and directs.<sup>76</sup>

In Acts 8:1,3 you have the phrase, "persecution arose against the EKKLESIA in Jerusalem." Again this is EKKLESIA in the local sense. In 9:31 we read "the EKKLESIA throughout all Judea and Samaria had peace." Here we have an expanded idea of the EKKLESIA, possibly meaning EKKLESIA in the composite sense. That is, all the EKKLESIA (or EKKLESIAS) had peace. Some manuscripts read EKKLESIAL (plural) here.<sup>77</sup> This may indicate that the local concrete (Greek idea) physical gathering of the EKKLESIA is not the important emphasis, but rather the New Testament idea of the quality of the EKKLESIA or the people of God belonging to Christ wherever they gather. Let us remember though that Luke wrote 9:31 as a summary historical statement of the condition of the church, at least twenty-five years after the events happened.

H. E. Dana feels that in the eleventh chapter of Acts we have a decided transition in the development of the EKKLESIA idea.<sup>78</sup> The Gentiles were responding to the gospel and the Jewish EKKLESIA (11:22) in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to check into the strange events at Antioch. Barnabas got Paul and they together accepted and taught the EKKLESIA in Antioch, where the believers were first called Christians (CHRISTIANOUS), for one whole year.

Dana may be right about the eleventh chapter of Acts being a transition one in the concrete development of the local EKKLESIA idea in the New Testament but certainly evidences of expansion of the EKKLESIA idea can be seen as soon as the local EKKLESIA in Jerusalem is scattered by persecution (8:1,3; 9:31). God seems to use the persecution of the Christians as a positive element in their concept growth of the EKKLESIA idea (Acts 12:1,5).

In Acts 13:1 the local EKKLESIA at Antioch (not Jewish) becomes a sending missionary church. In 14:27 Paul and Barnabas gather (SUNAGAGONTES) the EKKLESIA at Antioch to report on their establishing of leadership (elders) in every founded EKKLESIA (14:23) where they had made many disciples (MATHETON, 14:22) and encouraged them to enter the kingdom of God (TEN BASILEIAN TOU THEOU). The content of EKKLESIA is expanding from a local Jewish Jerusalem church to the possibility of local congregations everywhere in a world-wide movement which included Gentiles. Members of the EKKLESIA are still called disciples here and as entering the kingdom.

Because of the dispute that arose between the two important church centers (the Jewish Jerusalem EKKLESIA and the Antioch Gentile EKKLESIA over the significance of Jewish law (circumcision) in becoming a member of the EKKLESIA of Christ, a Jerusalem conference was called (15:3,4). The conference concept of the EKKLESIA was born when these representatives of local EKKLESIA's met and openly discussed all views of the Christian brotherhood and came to a consensus on the problem (15:22). A special recognition of the gathered EKKLESIA seeking consensus as the domain of determining the mind and will of the Holy Spirit was no doubt felt in this conference (15:28).<sup>79</sup>

In Paul's second missionary journey (15:41; 16:5) his motive seemed to be to strengthen the already established EKKLESIAI. Here we have the only two instance of EKKLESIA in the plural form. But EKKLESIA in singular and plural form seem to be used indiscriminately. Sometimes when several local churches are meant or implied

← the singular form EKKLESIA is still used (9:31) in many cases. As we have observed before, the local physical place is not the important development of EKKLESIA but the content and quality of those who belong to the EKKLESIA, AT THE end of Paul's second missionary journey (18:22) he greeted the EKKLESIA in Jerusalem before returning to the Antiochian EKKLESIA. This use adds nothing new.

On Paul's third missionary journey his preaching caused riots in Ephesus. People were gathered together (19:25) in a secular assembly (EKKLESIA, 19:32,39,41) to protest the preaching of the missionaries. This is <sup>the</sup> only chapter in Acts (19) where EKKLESIA is used in a purely Greek secular sense of gathering together at a certain place in the town to deliberate a matter.

Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit through Paul established a church in Ephesus. Later Paul was passing by Ephesus at Miletus and called for the elders of the EKKLESIA at Ephesus (20:17) to encourage them. In that final talk with them he admonished them to feed the church of God (EKKLESIAN TOU THEOU or TOU KURICU). Here in this final mention of EKKLESIA in the book of Acts we have the beginning of Paul's particular use and emphasis of EKKLESIA. Paul connects the EKKLESIA with the Lord as Jesus himself spoke of his church (Matt. 16:18).

It seems clear from the varied somewhat developing use of the word EKKLESIA in Acts that neither the classical Greek background nor its Old Testament (LXX) use, were the prime factors in determining a new content for EKKLESIA in the New Testament. Rather

the Greek background provided the physical shell for EKKLESIA (gathering for a purpose). The Septuagint (OLD TESTAMENT) provided the religious and spiritual atmosphere (God calling his people to listen and act). The gospels linked Christ to the EKKLESIA. But the content of EKKLESIA in Acts really took form as a result of the historical experience of the New Testament believers with the Holy Spirit after Pentecost. It was their existential experience in history interacting with the Holy Spirit of God that gave the EKKLESIA its developing content and character and not the dogmatic root or derivative meaning of the word EKKLESIA. EKKLESIA was chosen as one of the key designations for the believers, perhaps not because its background and structure were not important, but because it had flexibility within which new meanings could be poured. All that is being said here, is that the developing meaning of EKKLESIA was existentially determined and not primarily etymologically. Words were chosen to explain experiences, not experiences to fit words.

C. Paul's Use of EKKLESIA:

Let us now examine Paul's letters briefly. If you include the prison epistles written during Paul's Roman imprisonment, then most of Paul's letters were probably written within the span of time recorded in the historical account of the Acts of the Apostles (all except I & II Tim. & Titus). Therefore, we would not expect Paul's usage of EKKLESIA to differ greatly from its usage in Acts, if our thesis is correct, that the meaning of EKKLESIA developed along with the history and experience of the church. Karl L. Schmidt says that Paul's usage of EKKLESIA is about the same as

that of Acts.<sup>80</sup> Both the local and the wider sense of the word EKKLESIA found in Acts are also used in Paul's letters.

1. Early Epistles:

The order of discussion of the New Testament books which use EKKLESIA is not of highest importance, and yet if EKKLESIA's content developed with time some semblance of chronological order must be attempted.

Galatians,

Paul's letter to the Galatians Christians is thought by some to have been written at the close of the first missionary journey of Paul. In that case it may have been prepared as a brief for the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15). At least Galatians may be considered one of Paul's early epistles. Galatians has to do with the relation of law to grace.

EKKLESIA is used only three times in the Galatian letter and all occurrences in the first chapter. Paul opens his letter by addressing the churches (1:2), "to the churches (EKKLESIAIS) of Galatia. Here we have the plural probably referring to a number of individual churches in the Galatian community, using the plural much like the two instances by Luke (Acts 15:41, 16:5). Perhaps the use of the plural in this way indicates that congregations stand side by side on an equal footing.<sup>81</sup>

However, there seems to be an easy passing from singular to plural or vice versa. The second use of EKKLESIA in Galatians is also found in the first chapter, "I persecuted the church of God" (EKKLESIAN TOU THEOU, 1:13). There seems to be here the idea of

corporate unity, meaning specifically a number of local churches around Damascus, which Paul persecuted but affecting all the churches extant in that first century. There is also the genitive (TOU THECU) which was first mentioned in Acts (20:28). Paul links the church as belonging to God even as Jesus did, giving it a special divine dimension (Matt. 16:18).

The third and final use of EKKLESIA, in Galatians is found at the end of the first chapter where Paul returns to the plural use of EKKLESIA, "to the churches of Christ in Judea" (TAS (TNS) EKKLESIAIS TAS JOUDAIAS TAIS EN CHRISTO, 1:22). Here he is addressing the churches in Galatia corporately (1:2) telling them about his first experience with the churches in Judea. Paul makes no reference here about the superiority or primacy of the founding churches in Jerusalem. Paul speaks of the churches of Judea and churches of Galatia on an equal basis. The only new word that Paul introduces here is that the churches are in Christ or of Christ. It is probably not a new idea but typically Pauline as we have seen in the latter part of Acts (20:28) and in this chapter (Gal. 1:13) where Paul refers to the church as being "of" God. It seems as though Paul is using the genitive TOU THECU (1:13) of God and TAIS EN CHRISTO (1:22) of Christ interchangeably. However, the latter introduces Paul's famous "in Christ" idea as well putting perhaps an additional meaning into EKKLESIA. The churches in Judea or anywhere are those people who have a close relationship to Christ personally and collectively. Possibly too Paul was highlighting the Judean Christians as "being" in Christ, making real the struggles of the faithful Christians in Judea, in accepting Paul, a former persecutor of the church.

We conclude that Galatians adds little new to the New Testament EKKLESIA idea except to underline the local and corporate use of the singular and plural, and to underline the genitive divine idea of the EKKLESIA belonging to God and Christ. There is an additional hint of the quality of the relationship of EKKLESIA members to Christ in the "in Christ" phrase.

Thessalonians,

In <sup>the two</sup> ~~both~~ letters to the Thessalonians EKKLESIA is mentioned only four times in the eight chapters which deal mostly with eschatology.

In contrast to Paul's opening or greeting to the Galatian Churches (EKKLESIAIS, Gal. 1:2), he addresses the Thessalonians in the singular (Τῆ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΕΟΝ ΕΝ ΤΗΕΟΥ, I Thess, 1:1, II Thess. 1:1). Perhaps there was only one local congregation at this time, since it is thought that Paul wrote this letter only a few months after the founding of the church.<sup>82</sup> As we have seen in Galatians above the use of singular and plural of EKKLESIA by Paul does not decisively indicate the number of individual churches in one particular community. In both introductions to the Thessalonians (1:1 & 1:1) Paul uses an interesting combination of God and Jesus Christ (To the church of the Thessalonians in God the (our) Father and the Lord Jesus Christ). On the one hand this merging of God and Christ in describing the EKKLESIA at Thessalonica may be a further indication of Paul's use "of God" (Gal. 1:13) and "of in Christ" (Gal. 1:22) inter-



changeably in Galatians. On the other hand, the elaboration of the Thessalonians greetings "God the Father" and "the (our) Lord Jesus Christ" may be an indication that Paul meant slightly different things by the two phrases. In comparing the Thessalonian church with the Judean church Paul refers to the EKKLESION (plural) of God in Christ Jesus (I Thess. 2:14). This adds nothing new to Paul's use except the name Jesus to Christ which was also in the greetings.

The fourth mention of EKKLESIA in Thessalonians is found in the second letter (TAIS EKKLESIAIS TOU THEOU, 1:4). Paul here refers to all the churches outside Thessalonica who are proud of the Thessalonian church.

The Thessalonians add nothing new to the stream of Paul's use of EKKLESIA except that a further elaboration of the genitive-divine dimension (of God, of our Lord Jesus Christ). Also Paul seems to imply that the few months old EKKLESIA in Thessalonica is just as surely a church as the older EKKLESIA'S in Judea.

### I Corinthians,

In I Corinthians EKKLESIA is mentioned twenty-two times, with nine (almost half) uses in chapter fourteen where the gift of tongues in the assembly is discussed. Paul wrote this letter while on his third missionary journey in Ephesus. Paul had founded the metropolitan Corinthian church about three years before on his second missionary journey. A Corinthian delegation was sent to Ephesus to seek Paul's advice on certain disorders and problems in the church. The Apostles responded with this letter.

The vantage point or point of reference from which Paul speaks in I Corinthians is all from the local EKKLESIA. Paul was trying to help one local Corinthian congregation solve its problems. Other local congregations may have existed in Corinth but each problem was viewed from within the essence of each local congregation.<sup>83</sup>

Paul opens his letter in typical Pauline fashion, "To the church of God (EKKLESIA TOU THEOU) which is in Corinth (1:2) and uses the same expression in other places (10:32, 11:22, 15:9). In all these, Paul is stressing the genitive-divine dimension. The church belongs to God. In the first four chapters Paul is stressing the unity of the church and is eager to tell them the consistency of his own teaching, (I teach them everywhere in every church, PASA EKKLESIA, 4:17). Paul refers to the same consistency of his own teaching but uses the plural form when dealing with some moral questions in chapters 5-7 (this is my rule in all the churches, TAIS EKKLESIAIS PASAIS, 7:17). The right and responsibility of the members of the local EKKLESIA to settle internal difficulties is stressed in 6:4, as other local congregations elsewhere have to do.

By far the most frequent reference to EKKLESIA in I Corinthians is in the "order In Worship" (chapters 11-14), section, especially the tongues chapter (14). Paul certainly used EKKLESIA in the local sense with the sense that each local EKKLESIA is an legitimate spiritual entity in itself. With three exceptions,<sup>84</sup> he used the plural form of EKKLESIA <sup>85</sup> to mean the churches outside the Corinthian church and the singular form to mean the local Cor., Church.

In this section an interesting word describing the gathering or coming together (SUNERCHO MAI) is used with EKKLESIA (11:18, 14:23), underlining again that EKKLESIA in the New Testament means more and more the quality and conduct of those who gather and not just the Greek meaning of gathering. Perhaps that is why an additional word was prefixed to EKKLESIA to describe coming together.

Chapter 12 offers a new concept of Paul. He relates the body of Christ (SOMA CHRISTOU) with the EKKLESIA (12:12-28). Paul elaborates on God's appointment of officers in the EKKLESIA (apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle workers, healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in tongues). As individual members of the body God has organized and appointed members to carry out His ministry. The Holy Spirit gives gifts as he wills (12:1-11).

Over eighty images and analogies of the church are found in the New Testament but "body of Christ" is probably one of the most striking.<sup>86</sup> Even though the body image is here applied to the EKKLESIA by Paul it is not inherent in the EKKLESIA. Paul is definitely applying new content into EKKLESIA. The body concept is strictly Pauline and found in only five books - Romans, I & II Corinthians, Ephesians and Colossians.<sup>87</sup>

SOMA is actually introduced before chapter twelve but not directly related to the EKKLESIA as here. In the sixth chapter (6:19,20) Paul says that our bodies are God's temple. He moves the metaphor over to the church when he speaks of the body of Christ in Communion (10:16,17, 11:24,27,29). The body idea stresses the inter-relatedness of the individual members to each other and to Christ.

At the end of the letter (16:19) Paul closes by bringing greetings to the Corinthian Christians from the Asian Christians and Aquila and Prisca. ΟΙΚΟΝ ΑΥΤΟ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ (the church in their house) represents not necessarily a new idea but a particularization of the place of assembly of the ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ. To meet in a house says also something about the kind of warmth and informality that may have been present.

I Corinthians adds the "body" dimension of the ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ and certainly says more about the internal life of the ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ, the gifts of the Spirit, Worship, Communion.

### II Corinthians,

ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ is mentioned nine times in this letter.<sup>88</sup> II Corinthians was probably written only a few months after I Corinthians on Paul's third missionary journey. In this letter Paul seeks to vindicate his apostleship and ministry and makes an appeal to the Corinthian Church to help other churches in need.

The letter opens almost the same way as I Corinthians (to the ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ which is at Corinth 1:1). All forms of ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ are in the plural except the first in the introduction. Paul speaks mostly about ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ when he is appealing to the Corinthian Christians to help other churches in need in other places. (8:1, 18, 19, 23, 24). In the last section of the letter (10: - 13:) where Paul opens his heart he reveals his own relationship to other churches (11:8,28, 12:13) to which he wanted the Corinthian ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ to relate by giving a gift.

Nothing new is added to EKKLESIA In II Corinthians except that an expressed (hitherto implied) concern and close relationship between Paul and all the EKKLESIAS existed.

Romans,

EKKLESIA is mentioned only five times in the letter to the Romans and only in the last chapter.<sup>89</sup> Paul is thought to have written this careful, logical letter to the Roman Christians whom he had never seen at the close of his third missionary journey while at Corinth. His aim seems to be to expound on the nature of Christs' work. It is highly theological doctrinal and ends up with a practical section. (12:-16:).

In Romans Paul seems to use other words for EKKLESIA like God's beloved, saints (1:7), brethren (10:1, 12:1, 15:30).<sup>90</sup> Did Paul have such a high concept of EKKLESIA that he reserved the designation for those Christians who meet certain qualifications of conduct and organization? Paul had not yet seen or visited the Roman Christians (1:15). Paul uses EKKLESIA only at the conclusion of his letter when he introduces Christians and other churches to the Roman Christians (16:1, 4, 5, 16, 23). Paul again introduces the church in the house of Aquila (16:3-4).

Romans adds no new content through the Pauline use of EKKLESIA. However, the content of the gospel, the behaviour and attitude of the Christian is certainly expounded on in greater detail and profundity than ever before. Certainly Paul was addressing himself to one local EKKLESIA in Rome and to all EKKLESIAS everywhere on how they should think and act. One could say that Paul implied the

EKKLESIA . He was filling new content into it hoping that the Roman Christians would become a more mature EKKLESIA.

## 2. Later Epistles:

It is in the later epistles of Paul that many feel his first explicit treatment of EKKLESIA occurs.<sup>91</sup> Many have speculated as to where Paul draws his ideology from in these later epistles. Some feel that it was a Gnostic ideology which was made to serve a Christological ecclesiology.<sup>92</sup> Whatever the world view or framework from which Paul spoke, a most lofty view of the EKKLESIA is evident.

### The Prison Epistles (Eph. Col, Phile. Phil.),

Ephesians was written from Paul's Roman imprisonment and mentions EKKLESIA nine times in its six chapters.<sup>93</sup> We must remember that in Ephesus Paul did his greatest missionary work. He therefore could speak with some maturity and insight. The Roman imprisonment provided for him, after a long ministry, a time of reflection. He could express great thoughts from the background of his education and personal experience in the EKKLESIA.

Paul introduces a new aspect of the "body of Christ" idea, identifying it with the EKKLESIA as before,<sup>94</sup> but now making Christ the head (KEPHALĒN) of the EKKLESIA and not just the prototype (Eph. 1:23,23, 5:23). Christology and ecclesiology seem to merge in Paul.<sup>95</sup> The EKKLESIA as the body of Christ is not a mere fellowship of men but persons gathering together who have communion with Christ. The closeness of the marriage relationship is compared to Christ's relation to His EKKLESIA (Eph. 5:21-33).

In the Colossians letter, Paul seems to be fighting some heresy. It is very similar to the Ephesian letter and was probably written at the same time. Whereas Ephesians emphasized the unity and grandeur of the church, Colossians makes Christ Deity and all-sufficient. It is similarly logically structured to be read in the churches. As in Ephesians, the head of the body, the EKKLESIA is Christ (1:18,24). It ends up its four chapters with a total of four instances of EKKLESIA.<sup>96</sup> The last two mentions of EKKLESIA are typically Pauline, in that they introduce the Colossian Christians to other Churches (4:15,16). The church in a house is mentioned again (4:15).

The letter of Paul to Philemon is one chapter and is simply a letter to an Colossian Christian friend to appeal to him to accept his naughty slave Onesimus, who had run away. Philemon had an EKKLESIA in his house (1:2) and Paul greeted that EKKLESIA in his letter.

The letter of Paul to the Philippians mentions EKKLESIA only twice in its four chapters.<sup>97</sup> It is a little missionary letter to a church he had founded about ten years before. Paul still in a Roman prison, seems to address them very warmly and does not use the more formal and inclusive term of EKKLESIA until he speaks of his own persecuting of the church (3:6) and of his own relation to other churches regarding finances (4:15). He rather uses designations like saints (1:1), you (1:3), brethren (1:12,3:1, 4:18) beloved (2:12).

I Timothy,

Paul's letters to Timothy were probably written a few years later than the prison epistles above. It is thought that they were written between Paul's first and second imprisonment. Paul's pastoral concerns for the Ephesian church are made known here as well as his final words before martyrdom. Timothy was charged with training pastors.

Thrice EKKLESIA is used in this little letter.<sup>98</sup> Paul gave Timothy some qualifications of a bishop. He was to rule his household well, or how could he care for the EKKLESIA (3:5)? Immediately there after Paul identifies the household idea with the church. The household of God (which) is the EKKLESIA of the living God. (THECUIZONTOS) (3:15). This is also the first time that we have seen living (ZONTOS) prefixed to God. It may indicate Paul's increasing belief in the dynamism of God. God acts in history ~~and~~ in the EKKLESIA.

We have seen that Paul ~~has~~ certainly added to the content of EKKLESIA. He gave us the genitive-divine dimension (church of God), the body of Christ idea, the clarification of the local idea and corporate idea of EKKLESIA, the head of the body is Christ, the EKKLESIA as the household of God.

D. Other New Testament Usage of EKKLESIA.

K.L. Schmidt feels that the rest of the New Testament usage add nothing new to what has been said above.<sup>99</sup>

The letter of James, the brother of Jesus, was written after thirty years as a pastor of the Judean church. He seems to prefer the warm term brethren (~~ABELPHOI~~) to designate his hearers. Young



lists at least fifteen occurrences of ADELPHOI.<sup>100</sup> Only once do we find EKKLESIA (5:14), ~~When~~ some Christian is sick he may call for the elders of the EKKLESIA to have them pray over him. EKKLESIA here is used in a rather official sense.

Though it is <sup>not</sup> known for certain who wrote Hebrews, ~~it~~ is felt that its date is sometime before the destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>101</sup> It seems like its burden is to relate the New Covenant to an inferior Old Covenant with Christ as the Mediator. Much of its imagery and language is Hebrew in character. Perhaps it is a final message to Judaism. Neither of the two instances of EKKLESIA in this book contribute much to the New Testament concept of church. In 2:12 EKKLESIA clearly refers to the Old Testament QAHAL or congregation since it is quoting from Psalm 22:22. In 12:23 it is difficult to say whether EKKLESIA here really means church in the New Testament sense. Is the author talking about the future gathering in heaven or does he really mean the EKKLESIA on earth? It is so clothed in Old Testament heavenly language that it is difficult to tell from the context whether the EKKLESIA of Christ is really meant.

The only other <sup>passages</sup> left to examine are the writings of John.<sup>102</sup> In III John, the author is writing to the elder Gaius and uses EKKLESIA strictly in the local sense of a congregation.

In Revelations we have EKKLESIA occurring thirteen times in the plural and seven times in the singular referring primarily to the seven churches of Asia. John wrote an individual message to each one. In 22:16 the author has Jesus saying that he sent his angel to the churches.

VI. PARALLEL EXPRESSIONS OF EKKLESIA IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Since EKKLESIA is a Greek word for a Biblical phenomena it is not surprising that the Biblical idea of church does not stand or fall with EKKLESIA. Therefore, many times in the New Testament we find the church under discussion but not called the EKKLESIA.

One of the most outstanding absences of EKKLESIA is I Peter. This book contains a rich analysis of the EKKLESIA of God. (An elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession (2:9), a spiritual house, a holy priesthood (2:5) are all old Testament designations given to God's New Testament people.

Other New Testament writers also use parallel expressions for EKKLESIA. Paul says "we are the circumcision" (Phil. 3:3). We are the "Israel" (Rom. 9:6), the "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16), "Abrahams seed, heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:29). James says we are "Twelve Tribes" (James 1:1). Peter says we are "sojourners of the Dispersion" (I Peter 1:1).

Other designations, not already described in relation to EKKLESIA above, describe more the faith and ideals of the Christians. We have already mentioned the disciples (MATHETAI). Disciples is mentioned at least thirty times in Acts. (6:1,2,7). Another designation for Christians throughout the New Testament is the brethren (ADELPHOI) mentioned several hundred times throughout (e.g. Acts 15). The word saints (HAGIOI) is often used by many. Paul seemed to be especially fond of the word (e.g. I Cor. 1:2). Sometimes the early Christians called themselves "the believers (e.g. Acts 5:14)", or the "saved (e.g. II Cor. 2:15). Before the believers were called Christians (CHRISTOS) at Antioch (Acts 11:26) they were often called "of the Way" (ODOS, Acts 9:2, 19:9,23).

We have already mentioned "the Household of God", the body of Christ. The bride of Christ, the remnant is sometimes used.

There are other related themes germane to the life and mission of the EKKLESIA. Koinonia (fellowship, sharing) is a very expressive word for the inner life of the EKKLESIA.<sup>2</sup> AGAPE (love) is the primary gift of the Spirit given to the EKKLESIA for its relationships both to God and men.<sup>3</sup> DIAKONIA or ministry of service is the EKKLESIA's mission to the world.<sup>4</sup> KERUGMA, or preaching is the proclamation of the EKKLESIA.

*to the New Testament (concept of the church),* ~~In the~~ *Though this paper is the study of the contribution of EKKLESIA*  
New Testament has given great content to EKKLESIA through its use. Matthew links Jesus with the EKKLESIA. Luke has shown

how the Holy Spirit brought together the EKKLESIA to give them his orders. Paul brought the genitive-divine dimension of the church belonging to God with Christ as the head of the body. Other New Testament writers really only re-echoed Paul. The New Testament has really contributed greatly to the Christian content of the Greek word EKKLESIA.

#### VII. ECCLESIOLOGY AND RELATED THEOLOGIES.

As the author Paul has shown us above Ecclesiology and Christology are very clearly related! Christ is the head of the church. It is through the EKKLESIA that Christ expresses himself in the world. He is at the center of the EKKLESIA. His humanity and deity are expressed through those who commit themselves to him as disciples. God's mission in the world is carried out through the church with Christ as its head. Christ is also the way a person enters the EKKLESIA. He is the one who made possible the EKKLESIA by giving His life on the Cross.

Pneumatology is also closely related to ecclesiology, especially in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit is a real person who thinks and acts in the New Testament church. He is the power by which members of the EKKLESIA carry out Christ's mission in the world. He is the one who creates a community of loving relationships in the EKKLESIA. He is present in each individual believer's life. He is the one who makes KOINCNIA (fellowship) possible in the church. The Holy Spirit teaches the member of the EKKLESIA. He reveals the Christ to ~~them~~. The Holy Spirit helps the EKKLESIA in making decisions, finding God's will together concerning God's mission in the world and their life together, bringing members to a consensus and helping EKKLESIA members to act.

Soteriology and ecclesiology are involved with each other. Salvation to men is brought to the world through already redeemed members of the EKKLESIA. But before anyone can enter the EKKLESIA they themselves must come through Christ, the head and Saviour of the Church. Salvation under the New Covenant is simply accepting God's offer in Christ. Salvation brings new life after repentance. Baptism, ~~Man's~~ response to God and the offer of Christ, is to live a redeemed life of forgiveness and love as a disciple of Christ. Man is justified by his response of the faith life which is sanctification.

Deontology is related to ecclesiology in that the moral law of God becomes the foundation of man's ethics. No man can carry out God's laws, as was demonstrated in the Old Testament. So Christ is the one who gives the power to live an ethical life.

AGAPE is the chief expression of the EKKLESIA in relation to God, to neighbor, to fellow Christian, to self. The moral law of God, through Christ becomes the framework through which EKKLESIA members express their moral life in the world. The very nature of God is demonstrated through the church members' lives.

Anthropology is not unrelated to ecclesiology. People are the raw material out of which the EKKLESIA is developed. It is highly important for church members to recognize their true nature, the meaning of their creation and the world, God's purpose for their being. Man must realize that he has inherited a tendency toward sin that can only be corrected or dealt with through Christ. Man has choice <sup>only</sup> within limits, but <sup>he</sup> can respond to God's offer of redemption <sup>in his</sup> out of the predicament. Sin corrupts and needs stop gaps. Sin can be forgiven and man can be restored to fellowship with God through the Christ. The <sup>only</sup> way persons can participate in the EKKLESIA is by recognizing their true sinful self and allowing God to correct it.

Eschatology and ecclesiology have their connections. Members of the church are awaiting the return of their Lord as they live for Him now on earth. Though the present concern of the EKKLESIA is primarily in this world, the coming Christ will take back to him the <sup>members of the</sup> EKKLESIA. The resurrection of the body and the last judgment are the final aspects of our redemption in <sup>the coming</sup> Christ <sup>(second time)</sup>.

The existence of God in theology proper undergirds all other theologies. The nature of God as person, Spirit, unity and Trinity give meaning to the inner life of the EKKLESIA. The work of God in the world and in the EKKLESIA provide further opportunity

to learn to know the being of God and His will. Without God there would be no EKKLESIA.

Even the prolegomena in theology are related to ecclesiology. Without the revelation of God throughout the history of man through voices, angels, visions and finally in Jesus Christ man would be in the dark as to his deeper nature and purpose. The record of God's revelation as recorded in the Bible provide for the EKKLESIA a searching guidebook for faith and life. The Bible can become the Word of God to man today as the EKKLESIA exposes the Word to men. God speaks to the EKKLESIA through the Word and through church history.

We have not said much in this study about formal corporate worship, the public declarations of the great acts of God in history through baptism, communion, ordination. You can find hints of them in the New Testament but the more formal aspects of EKKLESIA developed later. Let us review the ecclesiology in the New Testament as contributed by the word EKKLESIA in the following conclusion.

#### VIII. CONCLUSION.

We have gone a long trek in trying to understand the contribution of EKKLESIA to the New Testament concept of the church. It is clear now that a certain view of the church has resulted. However, the primary focus of this paper was on the contribution of EKKLESIA toward a concept of the New Testament church. The thesis is that EKKLESIA's meanings must be taken seriously before anyone can honestly approach a New Testament concept of church. It is true,

of course that what we bring to our study, objective and scholarly as we may wish to be, colors to some extent, any outcome. A concept of church continues to grow with time, but now hopefully with some new Biblical evidence.

The English background of the word church is helpful in observing just how "church" was chosen <sup>rather</sup> ~~rather~~ than congregation or some other word closer to the original meaning of EKKLESIA.

The Greek word EKKLESIA came gradually, into the religious arena. Its root meaning is "to call out". The Greek used the word to designate "the assembly of citizens who were called out of their homes to deliberate on a subject." The Hebrews in the Old Testament (LEX) used the word to translate the Hebrew word for congregation. They gave it a religious meaning referring to "God calling his people together to listen and act for Him."

The New Testament ~~was~~ this old Testament meaning sometimes but pours new meaning into the word. Jesus predicts his establishment of the EKKLESIA. The Acts of the Apostles used the word to refer to their assemblies of believers who accepted Christ and sought to follow Him in discipleship. Acts shows us that the EKKLESIA is the domain of the Holy Spirit. EKKLESIA took on more and more of the New Testament church's life. Paul clarified its meaning to be an assembly of God's people called together to follow Christ, the head of that body. The EKKLESIA came more and more to mean the quality and character of those who belong to it. EKKLESIA was the local congregation of believers anywhere. It was also the aggregate of congregations in any community. It also came to mean the universal church that is all the congregations in the world who follow Christ.

Paul developed what Jesus predicted that he will build his church. In the New Testament EKKLESIA never meant a building or place of meeting. It simply meant that people who respond to Christ and follow Him in obedience gathering and relating to each other anywhere come to be called EKKLESIA.

The English word church shows us that it did not translate well the New Testament EKKLESIA. The Greeks provided the stage. The Hebrews (LXX) gave us the actors and the atmosphere. The New Testament gave us the subject and content of the play. EKKLESIA in the New Testament sense truly has its debtors but the greatest of all, is to the faithful life of the first century Christians who poured into EKKLESIA their very essence and life together under the Holy Spirit.

Praise God! Christ provides the essence, the existential experience with himself and with each other, then the church has the responsibility to find words of this world like EKKLESIA which best describe its life and mission.



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