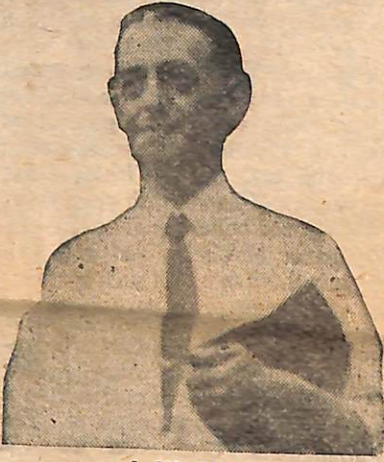


## Baptists . . . Rejected

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universal; but instead visible and local. The Greek word for 'church' is 'ecclesia,' and those who know that language are agreed that the word signifies 'an assembly.' Now an 'assembly' is a company of people who actually assemble. If they

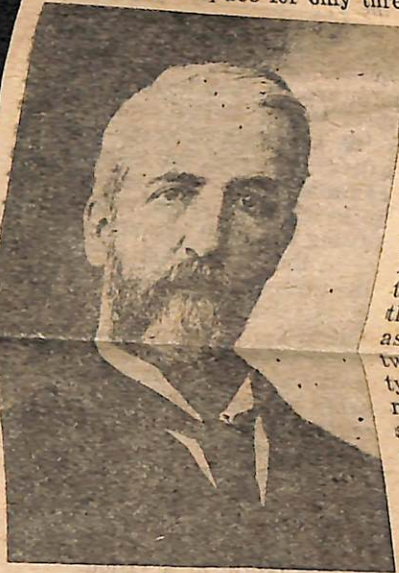


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never 'assemble,' then it is a misuse of language to call them 'an assembly.' Therefore, as all of God's people never have yet assembled together, there is today no 'universal Church or assembly' (STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES, Dec. 1927).

T. T. Eaton (1845-1907) was editor of the WESTERN RECORDER, state paper of Southern Baptists in Kentucky, for twenty years. A reader wrote him and requested that he give the reasons why he believed the word "ecclesia" in Matthew 16:18 meant a local assembly. Elder Eaton replied:

We have seven reasons, but here we will take space for only three,



T. T. EATON

either of which we believe to be decisive.

"1st. It is conceded that, according to the usage of classic Greek, the word "ecclesia" means a local assembly. It is also conceded that it means the same thing according to the usage of the Septuagint, which is the Greek version of the Old Testament, in use in Palestine in the time of Christ. Can it be believed that our Lord, in using this word for the first time, would, without any explanation, give it a meaning entirely different from what it would be understood to mean by those to whom He spoke?

It is not ingenuous for a teacher, without a word of explanation, to use words to his pupils with a meaning entirely different from what they understood the word to have. Christ knew that the Disciples would understand Him to mean a local assembly by His use of "ecclesia." Knowing that, He used the word to them, without a word of explanation. To charge Him with using the word with an entirely different meaning is to charge Him with disingenuousness, and this is not to be considered for a moment.

"2nd. The usage of our Lord Himself compels us to believe that He meant local assembly when He said: "On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Christ used the word "ecclesia," so far as the record tells us, just 22 times. We will set aside, for the sake of the argument, this passage, Matthew 16:18, as doubtful, and look at the 21 passages, to determine our Lord's usage of the word. Whatever that usage is, must be applied to this passage. In Matthew 18:17, Jesus says: "Tell it to the church, but if he neglect to hear the church." This is the local assembly. In Revelation I, II, and III Christ uses the word "ecclesia" 18 times, e.g., "the seven churches," "to the angel of the church at Ephesus," etc., and in every one of these cases there can be no sort of question that He means the local assembly. It is Christ that says this, because the one who told John to write what is here recorded, says of Himself: "I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death." Again, in Revelation 22:16, we read: "I Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches." Certainly here "ecclesia" means the local assembly.

"Thus in every one of the 21 instances in which Christ uses the word "ecclesia" there can be no question that He meant the local assembly. The probabilities, therefore, are twenty-one to nothing that He meant local assembly in Matthew 16:18—the passage which, for the sake of the argument, we set aside as doubtful. A probability of twenty-one to nothing is a certainty. Hence, it is certain that Christ meant the local assembly when He said: "On this rock I will build my church."

"3rd. Christ, in Matthew 16:18, promised to build His church, which certainly was very dear to His heart. He did not promise to build but this one. If He meant anything else than the local assembly then we have this result, viz: He promised to build His church and then never made the slightest reference to it afterwards; but in speaking on the subject of church twenty-one times, He, in every case, referred to something entirely different from what He promised to build. That He should speak twenty-one times about the church He did not promise to build, and never make the slightest allusion to the church He did promise to build, is simply incredible. Can there be a reasonable doubt that the church Christ spoke of twenty-one times, and the

only one He did speak of, is the church He promised to build?

"These are three of our reasons each one of which, by itself, we think is decisive. We have four others we will not now give. 'A three-fold cord is not easily broken.'"

(Cited in MY CHURCH, pp. 69-71)

A. C. Dayton (1813-1865), associate editor of the TENNESSEE BAPTIST and president of Houston Female College in Ga., said:

"But, Mr. Courtney," said the strange lady, "let me ask you if the advocates of provincial and national and other associated Churches do not present some texts of Scripture on which they rest their claim. I have heard so often of the Holy Catholic Church, Church militant and the Church triumphant, of the Church on earth and the Church in glory, of the ancient Church, of the apostolic Church, and of the Church universal, that I am sure there must be some Scripture for such phrases."

"You have heard many things for Scripture, madam, which nobody can find in the Bible. Not one of these phrases is there. They are all mere human fancies — very pretty, and in a certain sense sufficiently true; but in the strict and literal Bible sense of the word 'Church,' there is no such thing as a Church, except it be a simple local assembly or congregation of believers, organized according to Christ's requirements, and for the specific purpose which He intended. The Church of Christ is simply the visible judiciary and executive in His visible kingdom."

"But you don't deny that there is such a thing as the Church invisible, as well as the Church visible."

"You can conceive, madam, of a great ideal invisible Republic embracing all those who in every age and country have hated Kings and kingcraft, and have longed for freedom. It is not a thing that exists. It never has existed. Yet you

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### WORD STUDIES

ing again.  
Thy righteousness, open my blinded eyes, renew my wicked heart, and make me a disciple. Lord save me, or else I shall perish in my sins forever."



## Baptists . . . Rejected

(Continued from page three)

can think about it; you can talk about it; orators can make speeches about it; poets can write songs about it; and it might come to occupy a place in our minds and in our language, as though it were an actual reality. So I can conceive of an invisible 'assembly' of Jesus Christ, comprising all who in their heart have loved Him, and obeyed Him in their lives, so far as they could understand His will. We can talk of such an assembly, and sing what a glorious and happy convocation it would be, but here upon the earth no such assembly has ever existed, or ever will exist. What may take place in Heaven is another matter.

(THEODOSIA ERNEST, pp 303-304)

S. H. Ford (1819-19??), Baptist historian and editor of the WESTERN RECORDER AND FORD'S CHRISTIAN REPOSITORY, said:

"We affirm that there is no such thing in existence as a catholic—that is, universal, church. Church means always an assembly. It means nothing else. If the persons supposed to constitute it have never assembled it is not an assembly or church. The thing is absurd. There cannot be a meeting until persons meet. There cannot be a convention till persons convene or come together. There cannot be a church until (to coin a word) persons are church'd, that is, assembled. There never was a universal assembly of professed Christians, or, as the expression is, the aggregate of believers on earth.

The term is not found anywhere in God's Word. The inspired apostles use no term that is its equivalent. It is foreign to the New Testament. It has no real meaning.

"The term is found in the so-called Apostle's creed. But while it is certain this was not composed until centuries after the apostolic age, it is also true that the word catholic was inserted in it long after it appeared, and change after change occurred in it till at length it assumed its present form, I believe in the Holy Catholic Church.

"The word is for the first time used, or found, in the very questionable epistles of Ignatius. In his supposed epistle to the Smyrneans he says: 'Wherever the bishop (pastor) shall be seen let the people also be, as where Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic church.' Here it is evident it is a real assembly, a local church, the one body with its pastor worshipping at Smyrna, to which he refers. It was not a universal or supposed assembly, or the churches in Asia Minor, or the aggregate of believers; but the one real assembly or church. But it soon obtained a different meaning. The churches, as the apostles called them, were made or conceived to be one church—the church; and thus received the name catholic. Words govern things, and the word catholic has been a governing, a misleading word, prolific of soul-ruining error, and of terrible oppression.

"The term catholic is affixed to some of the epistles as Peter,

John, James, and Jude. But no such word is found in any of the old manuscripts; and it is well known that the term was prefixed to them in the year 1549 by the famous French printer, Robert Stephens. It is rendered in King James' version 'general' before these epistles; but is omitted in our revised version as unauthorized. KATHOLICHOS means universal. Catholic church means a universal church. We repeat there is no such thing. And the fact that the Philadelphia Confession of Faith adopts this word gives it no weight. For that confession says in its 31st article: 'We believe that laying on of hands with prayer upon baptized believers as such is an ordinance of Christ, and ought to be submitted to by all such persons as are permitted to participate of the Lord's Supper.' But Baptists never have been unanimous in regard to this. Danvers, shortly after the confession was issued, wrote a treatise in opposition to it. The Philadelphia Confession adopted it. But it has been almost universally abandoned. Indeed, Baptists have no authorized confessions. But though this London and Philadelphia Confession says, 'The catholic church or universal church consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one in Christ,' they affirm of these elect, that 'they are called out of the world through the ministry of the Word,' and 'Those Christ called He commanded to walk together as particular churches.' The members of these particular churches are saints by calling, visibly manifesting and evidencing in and by their profession, 'and willingly consent to walk together according to the appointment of Christ.'

"So that while, as the confession says, 'The catholic or universal church—the elect that ever have been, are, or shall be only with respect to the eternal work of the spirit and truth of grace—may be called universal, these elect are commanded to walk in particular societies or churches, visibly manifesting their call by walking together in their professed subjection to the ordinances of the gospel.' Thus it is. Catholic church is all the elect; the elect are called to particular churches in subjection to the ordinances, and the only universality is 'the internal work of the spirit' whose operation is as the viewless wind.

"What is there in this resembling a positive, a real, a veritable universal church? — an assembly which never assembled? It is the 'baseless fabric of a vision.'"

(Published in CHRISTIAN REPOSITORY, September, 1899).

D. W. Faunce, Baptist pastor, contributor to Baptist papers and author of books in the 1800's, said:

"The question here occurs: In what sense is the church on earth one church? I answer, in no sense at all. The churches may in some figurative sense make up "one body," of which in some figurative sense Christ is "head." But the idea of a universal church is a contradiction in terms. Who ever saw this church universal? Who ever attended its sittings? Who were its officers? What did it do? The New Testament indeed speaks of the church as an institution, and discusses its duties. But it has not in mind any great body composed of all who were ever members of churches. When we discuss the

question of the power or right of (Continued on page 5, column 3)

According to Jude 24, the Saviour is to present all the elect "with exceeding joy." He will be glad to see those He has carried in His heart from eternity, for whose sake He came into the world and died, for whom He interceded in Heaven, and for whom He came a second time to receive unto Himself that they may be forever with Him (John 14:1-3; I Thess. 4:17). Those who have received Christ and loved Him though unseen, and served Him at a loss and hazard of all, will be glad to see Him in all His glory and royalty. How happy will be their hearts when they hear Him say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34).

Jesus Christ solemnly promised to own before the angels and His Father in Heaven every person who confesses Him before men as the Messiah and Saviour. But He also solemnly promised to disown all who fail to confess Him as Messiah and Saviour. "But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven" (Matt. 10:33). "But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God" (Luke 12:9). To deny Christ before men is to refuse to give Him reverence, trust, obedience, and love which He claims. All who deny Christ will be accused by Him of all their faults and told to depart into Hell. He will not own them as His servant who would not own Him for their Master.

Have you confessed Christ before men? Or is your soul unjustified, unsanctified, unpardoned by the blood of Jesus and by the Spirit of God? Have you washed your robe and made it white in the blood of the Lamb? May it please the Lord to convict you of sin and cause you to cry out, "Oh, wash me with Thy blood, clothe me with