

Baptists Who Rejected The Universal Invisible Church Theory

Almost without exception, modern Baptists teach the concept of a universal, invisible church. Those who hold to covenant theology maintain the true church is the total sum of all the elect of all ages. Dispensationalists make the true church to consist of all the saved from Pentecost to the rapture. Both ideas ignore the primary meaning of the Greek word for church which can mean only an assembly of people. They also ignore the predominate usage of church in the New Testament which all admit means an assembly.

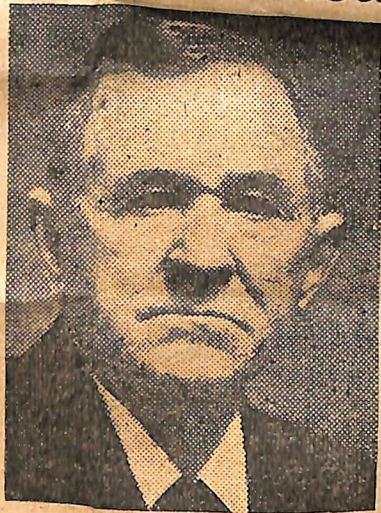
By reading books by liberal Baptists you would get the impression that the local church is a necessary evil, or at least, secondary in importance. This idea of a universal, invisible church is subversive to all local church affairs and promotes the ecumenical bride.

world over can be found who believe this doctrine. But can so much as one liberal theologian be found who holds to the view of the local church only? Will my Reformed Baptist brethren please cite me to just one? Why can't liberal theology endure Landmarkism?

Contrary to popular belief, there have been many leading Baptists who lived in America who rejected the dogma of a universal, invisible church. They did not all live in the South. They were found throughout America. Following are some who opposed the now popular theory of a universal, invisible church:

J. W. Porter (1863-1937), attorney, pastor, publisher, and editor of the WESTERN RECORDER, said:

"The invisible Church is an unorganized organization, unorganized, intangible, inaudible, and without a local habitation, and minus a membership. It has never



J. W. PORTER

had a meeting and is without a local habitation, and minus a membership. It has never

Gospel; does not baptize and gives nothing for the temporal or eternal welfare of a wrecked and ruined world. It has neither a mission nor a commission, and is without doctrine or deeds.

"The only possible apology for this unfumigated figment of fancy is to make some one feel that he is a member of a church, when he is not. A Christian (?) Scientist (?) would say it is an 'illusion of mortal mind,' or, to speak more accurately, a suggestion of the lack of a mind.

"There is one thing about this ethereal phantom that may commend it to some people—it never exercises any discipline. In fact, it is somewhat after the similitude of a cemetery—those who are out don't want to get in, and those who are in can't get out, or be turned out. Really, the tantalizing nonentity known as the invisible church reminds us of the man who said:

"If you were I, and I were you, and we were both of us, which one would you be?" We give it up."

Jesse B. Thomas (1832-??), professor of Newton Theological Institution and a prolific writer, said: "A church universal, composed of a disintegrated, unorganized throng of 'members of all churches,' is from the functional point of view inconceivable. And how could an indistinguishable, unrecognizable company of God's elect, the invisible Church, serve either the one purpose of a church or the other. A perverted 'ecclesia' is, to borrow Paul's phraseology, no 'ecclesia'" (THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM, page 275).

A. W. Pink (1886-1952), a profound scholar and a prolific writer, said: "Now the kind of church which is emphasized in the New Testament is neither invisible nor" (Continued on page 3, column 1)