

Ἐκκλησία in the New Testament, Part Three: Quotations from Sources on the Meaning and Use of Ἐκκλησία in the Greek New Testament

During the many years which I have been reading on this subject, I should have been collecting quotations. Below are a just few which I went back and found. **Redlining** marks particularly important statements. Many of the authors which are quoted below believe in a “universal church” and in an “institutionalist church” in some sense. We are highlighting here statements which they have made which we believe are nevertheless inconsistent with such beliefs, as well as statements which, in part, confirm the *generic* and the *mystical* senses of ἐκκλησία, as we have developed them, instead of the *universal* sense.

Thomas M. Lindsay. *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries, The Eighteenth Series of The Cunningham Lectures.* Minneapolis, MN: James Family Publishing, reprint 1977 [originally published, New York: George H. Doran Company, n.d.]

[Also available at http://www.ccel.org/ccel/lindsay/early_church.html]

The One Body of Christ is Present in Every Local Congregation

[page 14] ... [T]he unity of the Christian Church is, in the first instance, the oneness of an ideal reality, and is not confined within the bounds of space and time as merely material entities are. **It can be present in many places at the same time, and in such a way that, as Ignatius says, “Where Jesus Christ is, there is the whole Church.” [To the Smyrnaeans, 8.] The congregation at Corinth was, in the eyes of St. Paul, the Body of Christ or the whole Church in its all-embracing unity – not a Body of Christ, for there is but one Body of Christ; not part of the Body of Christ, for Christ is not divided; but the Body of Christ in its unity and filled with the fulness of His powers. It is in this One Body, present in every Christian society, that our Lord has placed His [page 15] “gifts” or *charismata*, which enable the Church to perform its divine functions; and all the spiritual actions of the tiniest community, such as the Church in the house of Nymphas – Prayer, Praise, Preaching, Baptism, the Holy Supper – are actions of the whole Church of Christ.** [Emphasis original]

The Local Congregation is not A Body, nor a Part of the Body, but is THE Body of Christ

[Footnote, page 14] Exegetes differ about the exact translation of 1 Cor. xii. 27: ὑμεῖς δὲ ἐστε σῶμα Χριστοῦ. A few (such as Godet) translate it: “a body of Christ”; by far the largest number translate: “the Body of Christ”; many [translate] “Christ’s Body,” leaving the exact thought indeterminate. It seems to me that the exact rendering, *a* or *the*, cannot be reached from purely grammatical reasoning. St. Paul is completing his metaphor or interpreting his parable. **He has been emphasizing the fact that the [page 15] Christian community at Corinth is an organism with a variety of parts differing in structure and function. It is a perfect organism in the sense that there is no necessary part lacking that is required for the purpose the organism is intended, to serve for its support [sic, support] or increase or for work. The life which pervades the organism in its totality and in every minutest part is Christ (Col. iii. 14 [sic, 4]). The organism is the Body of Christ.** [Emphasis original]

John Murray. *Collected Writings of John Murray, Volume one: The Claims of Truth.* Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1976.

[Murray indisputably believes in the concept of a universal church, but nevertheless in the middle of arguing for the universal church, he concedes points which, if understood and applied, cannot be reconciled to the concept.]

Chapter 31. The Church: Its Definition in Terms of ‘Visible’ and ‘Invisible’ Invalid

Abuses Which Require Correction

[page 232] ... The distinction between the church visible and the church invisible is not well-grounded in terms of Scripture, and the abuses to which the distinction has been subjected require correction.

Matthew 16 Does not Refer to an Invisible Church

[page 232] ... When Christ said to Peter: ‘Upon this rock I will build my church’, the investiture of the succeeding verse shows that the church is something to be administered upon earth. It is not an invisible entity but one in which ministry is exercised. And when in the execution of discipline, Jesus says: ‘tell it to the church’ (Matt. 18:17), the church must be conceived of as the congregation to which information is to be conveyed.

The Generic Use of the Term ‘Church’ [Ekklesia] in Ephesians and Colossians

[page 233] ... The generic reference of the term [‘the church’] is patent in 1 Corinthians 12:28 (cf. Eph. 4:11, 12).

¶ It is particularly in the Epistle to the Ephesians that this generic and embracive use of the term ‘church’ appears. No restriction can apply to such propositions as these: God gave Christ ‘to be head over all things to the church’ (1:22), ‘Christ is the head of the church’ (5:23), ‘Christ loved the church and gave himself for it’ (5:25; cf. 3:10, 21; 5:24, 27, 29, 32; Col. 1:18, 24). These propositions indeed apply to each fellowship of the saints in its own individuality and they cannot have relevance in abstraction from the concrete manifestations of the body of Christ. But the fact is indisputable that to all collectively is applied the designation ‘the church’, and the whole company is considered in the broadest perspectives of Christ’s design and accomplishment. [Murray here is ambiguous in using the expressions “all collectively” and “the whole company – does he mean the local gathering in its role as part of “the broadest perspectives.”] ¶ It might seem that in these latter passages the ‘church invisible’ is in [page 234] view and that only to the church as such can the various properties belong. With reference to this inference there are several considerations:

¶ 1. Beyond doubt the reference in the term ‘church’ extends beyond the confines of this age and has its outreach to the age to come (cf. Eph. 3:21; 5:27). The church glorified is contemplated. But when this age gives place to the age to come and the whole body of Christ is perfected, we may not think of the church as invisible. It will be consummated in visibility. [In other words, the generic reference may extend into glory, but that does not change visibility.]

¶ 2. Paul’s doxology: ‘To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus’ (Eph. 3:21) cannot be regarded as having exclusive reference to the church as glorified; the church of which Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 12:28 (cf. Eph. 1:22; 4:11) surely comes within the scope of that within which glory redounds to God. [In other words, glory applies generically to the local church in this age also.]

¶ 3. When Paul affirms, ‘Christ is the head of the church’ (Eph. 5:23; cf. vs. 22; 1:22; Col. 1:18), this must apply to the church as administered upon earth, of which the apostle speaks elsewhere (cf. 2 Cor. 11:28; Eph. 4:11), and of which our Lord himself spoke (Matt. 16:18; 18:17). [In other words, this refers generically to local churches on earth.]

¶ 4. The church as visible is subject to Christ (Eph. 5:24) and cannot be excluded from his dominion. The nourishing and cherishing that Christ imparts (Eph. 5:29) are activities wrought

in the church visible by which it is maintained in accord with Christ's promise. [[In other words, these are activities which apply generically to local churches on earth.]]

¶ 5. The church as an organized institution, endowed with the ministries of Christ's appointment, cannot be excluded from that through which *now* is made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10). [In other words, this all applies now generically to local churches.]

¶ These considerations suffice to show that it is impossible to dissociate the church visible from the relevance and application of the various propositions in these contexts. Hence, even in those passages in which the concept of the 'church invisible' might appear to be present, the case is rather that **there is no evidence for the notion of the 'church' as an invisible entity distinct from the church visible. ... [T]here are those aspects pertaining to the church that may be characterized as invisible. But it is to 'the church' those aspects pertain, and 'the church' in the New Testament never appears as an invisible entity and therefore may never be *defined* in terms of invisibility.**

[page 235] **When Paul enjoined upon believers all diligence 'to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Eph. 4:3), he was surely thinking of the relations that obtain within the church in its visible character and expression (cf. Phil. 4:2). This is demonstrated by verse 7, for there the thought is the distribution and diversity of grace in the church. The charge he gives is for harmony in the unity of faith (cf. vs. 5). It should be apparent how alien to this obligation is escape to the idea of the 'church invisible'. It is to desert the practical for an outlet without [page 236] warrant, and one that fails to provide the means for keeping 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace'.**

¶ Strictly speaking, it is not proper to speak of the 'visible church'. According to Scripture we should speak of 'the church' and conceive of it as that visible entity that exists and functions in accord with the institution of Christ as its Head, the church that is the body of Christ indwelt and directed by the Holy Spirit, consisting of those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be saints, manifested in the congregations of the faithful, and finally the church glorious, holy and without blemish.

John Murray. *Collected Writings of John Murray, Volume two: Select Lectures in Systematic Theology*. Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1977.

Chapter 26, The Nature and Unity of the Church

Inclusive Generic Sense

[page 323] But now we must also take account of the inclusive use of the word 'church' in the New Testament. No passage is more significant than **Matt. 16:18. The generic use here is apparent**, but is confirmed by the contextual considerations. One particular, localized assembly could not measure up to the role assigned to Peter, and the stewardship of the kingdom of heaven, in terms of which the administration of the affairs of the church is defined. **When Jesus speaks of 'my church', he is thinking of those gathered and knit together** after the pattern provided by the Old Testament as the people for his possession, **as the community which he is to constitute**, and which stands in a relation to him comparable to the congregation of the Lord in the Old Testament. [In other words, Jesus refers to a literal gathering. Murray is saying Matthew 16:18 is inclusive of all particular gatherings in the generic sense – inclusive generic.]

Particularized Generic Sense

[page 324] The other instance (Matt. 18:17) is particularly interesting in this connection, because there is particularization [particularized generic].

Universalizing (Generalizing?)

[page 324] ... **Paul uses the singular in the inclusive** [that is, generic] **sense**. ... [W]e are told that ‘he laid waste the church’ (acts 8:3), and he uses similar terms in his own confessions. ‘I persecuted the church of God’ (1 Cor. 15:9; cf. Gal. 1:13; Phil. 3:6). We see already in this use that there is a universalizing, so that unity as well as plurality applies to the church of God and of Christ. [Murray must mean “generalizing,” which is one possible sense of “universalizing.”]

The Local Congregation is the Fullness of the Body of Christ

[page 324] Which is more basic and determinative, the general or the particular? K. L. Schmidt, for example, contends that **‘the Church is not a great community made up of an accumulation of small communities, but is truly present in its wholeness in every company of believers, however small**. The proper translation in those verses [1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1] is not “the Corinthian Congregation” – taking its place beside the Roman, etc. – but “the Congregation, Church, gathering, as it is in Corinth”. ... [W]e must recognize that, wherever believers are gathered together in accordance with Christ’s institution and in his name, there is [page 325] the church of God, and to the church of God belong all the functions, prerogatives, and promises which God has accorded to the church. ... **The localized assembly is the body of which Christ is the head**. ... **The local church is ‘the church of the living God ...’** (1 Tim. 3:15); it is **‘the fulness of him that filleth all in all’** (Eph. 1:23).

Ephesians and Colossians are Generic Uses

[page 324] It is in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians that the inclusiveness and oneness come to fullest expression. It is easy to conclude that here the church is viewed transcendently as the whole body of the elect in all ages, and is to be equated with what has been called the church invisible. ... **There are reasons for calling in question this interpretation**.

¶ 1. **The first instance (Eph. 1:22, 23) is sufficient to warn us against this facile solution. When the Father is said to have given Christ to be head over all things to the church, this refers to the investiture that took place on Christ’s exaltation**, to Christ’s mediatorial lordship as the exalted, ascended God-man. It is not something that antedates his mediatorial exaltation. [In other words, this excludes the elect before Christ’s exaltation.]

¶ 2. The church is here said to be Christ’s body. We are bound to think of Matthew 16:18 where Christ speaks of his church as that to be built [future] and [to be] administered [future] in the way stated in the context.

¶ 3. The church is said to be subject unto Christ. **In the context there must be a concreteness that is parallel to that which is enjoined**, namely, that in like manner wives should be subject to their husbands. **The exhortation would be bereft of its strongest appeal if the analogy is something that belongs simply to the invisible and transcendental realm**.

¶ 4. When Paul says that he fills up the things that are lacking of the afflictions of Christ in his flesh ‘on behalf of his body, which is the [page 326] church’, **he is again thinking of the benefits that accrue to the church in the concrete existence of the existential**.

¶ It would be, therefore, far too abstract to find in these two Epistles reference to the church viewed transcendently and invisibly. It is the church, exemplified in the saints and faithful brethren in Ephesus and Colosse, which Christ loved and of which he is the head.

¶ ... **[T]he generic, the inclusive ... [reaches] its highest expression in these two Epistles**. ... **[I]n these Epistles ..., we must not conceive of the church as anything other ... than that which the church in Corinth or the church in Judaea is**. [Murray (page 324) takes the use of *ekklesia* in Acts 9:31 as a singular instead of a plural, and interprets it as a regional Judaeian “church.”]

The Church is Always a Visible Entity

[page 326] The church may not be defined as an entity wholly invisible to human perception and observation. ... [The church] is always a visible observable entity. ... [V]isible association and organization are necessary to the church. ... [T]he visible entity which is called the church may comprise within its membership those who do not truly belong to the body of Christ. ... [I]t has been customary to define the church, viewed from its visible aspect, in terms merely of profession, and thus to allow for the discrepancy between the church ideally considered and the church realistically considered. ... [page 327] This, I submit, is an error, and contrary to what we find in Scripture.

¶ When Paul addressed the church [of Corinth, 1 Corinthians 1:1-2], he did not construe the church in such terms as would allow for the inclusion of those persons who might have borne the Christian name, and had been admitted to the privileges of the church, but who were not sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be saints. This is all the more significant in view of the disciplinary provisions of Chapter 5. (Paul recognized that there was old leaven which needed to be purged out. But he does not address the church as a community to be defined in terms of new leaven and old leaven.) ...

¶ This is an all-important distinction, namely, that between what a situation may existentially be by reason of the sin, hypocrisy, and infirmity of men, on the one hand, and the terms in which the church is to be defined, on the other. For only if we apply the latter can we maintain the character of that to which the promises belong, indeed, maintain the primary idea in terms of which the church is to be defined, the covenant people of God. Only thus understood can we use Peter's terms (1 Pet. 2:9, 10). Only thus can we entertain Christ's promises: 'The gates of hell shall not prevail against it', and 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' Only thus can we conceive of the church as the body of Christ. Only thus can we think of the church as Christ's bride (Eph. 5:25-32). [In other words, Paul addressed the *ekklesia* as the regenerate elect, regardless of unbelievers and non-elect who may have associated themselves with it.]

Partaking of Christ's Body Constitutes the Body

[page 328] There is a reasonable question as to 'body' in 1 Cor. 10:17. ... [W]e may conclude that in verse 17 Paul refers to believers as 'one body', and that this is symbolically represented by the one loaf (cf. Rom. 12:5). ... [I]t is only as one body in Christ, or as the body of Christ, that believers are one body. ... **It is because we are partakers of Christ's body that we are one body in him.** It is because we are the beneficiaries of the offering of the body of Christ once for all, because he bore our sins in his own body upon the tree, **that we are constituted the body of Christ.** It is because representatively, and **by mysterious identification with Christ** ... in that which he accomplished in his own body, that we are one body in him. Indeed, it is because he was [page 329] obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that he is head over all things to his body the church.

The Figure of Christ's Body

[page 329] [I]n the proposition, 'the church is the body of Christ', we have figurative language. ... [N]o one would attempt to literalize the proposition, 'I am the vine: ye are the branches' ... [page 330] ¶ It is a principle never to be forgotten that analogy is not identity.

The Mystical Body of Christ

[page 330] **The figure of the body implies an organic relationship that exists on an infinitely higher plane than anything with which we are acquainted in our phenomenal experience ... the mystical body of Christ.**

The Church as the Fullness of Christ

[page 330] The church as the body derives all its life from Christ the head. ... [page 331] [T]he church is the receptacle of the fulness, and in this sense is being filled with him who himself fills all things ... This is the meaning of [Ephesians] 3:19: 'in order that ye might be filled unto all the fulness of God'; of 4:13: 'until we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ'; and of Col. 2:10: 'and ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and authority', properly rendered ... 'ye are filled in him' or 'ye are in the condition of having been filled by him'. ¶ The church is the fulness of Christ in that the fulness that resides in him ... is being communicated to the church. ... ¶ More recently L. S. Thornton has presented this viewpoint ... effectively. 'In the primary sense ... **the Church is the fulness, because the mystical body is like a vessel into which the fulness of Christ is poured.** ...'

The Unity of the Body not Invisible, but Local

[page 331] The body of Christ is a unit, and all the members are united to the head and to one another. ... [page 332] **[W]e may not attempt to escape from the implications of this oneness, and the obligation incident to it, by taking refuge in the notion of the invisible church.** When Paul says to the church [sic, believers] at Rome, 'we, the many, are one body in Christ, and members one of another', he is thinking most concretely ... Or again, when to the church at Corinth Paul says, 'we the many are one body', he is directing this truth to the schismatic discrimination practised at Corinth ... In a word, **the unity of the body of Christ, is not a tenet that may be relegated to the transcendental realm of invisible, spiritual relationship, but a truth that governs, regulates, and conditions the behaviour of the people of God in that communal, covenant relationship which they sustain to Christ in the institute of the church.**

Robert J. Banks. *Paul's Idea of Community, Revised Edition.* Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, LLC, 1994.

Chapter 3, Church as Household Gathering

The Classical Use of Ekklesia

[page 27] **In Greek, *ekklesia* was a familiar word. From the fifth century BC onwards it referred to the regular "assembly" of citizens in a city to decide matters affecting their welfare.** ... [[footnote 2] Compare Thucydides, *Histories* 1.187 [sic, 87], 139; 6.8; 8.69. Philo, *On the Special Laws* 2.44; *Every Good Man* 138 et al.] We have an example in the NT where *ekklesia* is used to describe just such a meeting ... (Acts 19:21-41). ... Here we have two instances of the typical Greek use of the word in reference to an assembly of the people.

The Jewish Use of Ekklesia

[page 28] **In Jewish circles,** as the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint or LXX shows, *ekklesia* is generally used to translate the Hebrew word for the "assembly" of the people of Israel before God, [[footnote 3] Deut 4:10; 9:10; 2 Chron 6:3, 12; Ps 106:32.] though sometimes this is rendered by *sunagoge*. ... [T]he "gathering" of an army in preparation for war (1 Sam 11:4-7; 2 Chron 28:14) or the "coming together" of an unruly and potentially dangerous crowd (Ps 26:5; Eccles 26:5). ... Josephus also uses the word frequently ... always of a gathering. These vary in character; religious, political, and spontaneous assemblies are mentioned. [[footnote 4] Josephus. *Antiquities* 4.309; *The Life of Flavius Josephus* 268; *Jewish War* 1.654, 666.] Of Philo's thirty uses, all but five occur in quotations from the LXX, and these five are in the classical Greek sense. Despite the context in which the word generally appears in these writings, it is clear that it has no intrinsically religious meaning. **It simply means an assembly or gathering of people in a quite ordinary sense** so that, **as in Greek usage,** it can refer to meetings that are quite secular in character.

The Distinctive Christian Use of Ekklesia

[page 29] Most probably the word “church” [sic, *ekklesia*] was already in Christian use before he [Paul] commenced his work, at least in Hellenistic-Jewish Christian circles. This means that **from the earliest times such communities distinguished their gatherings from Jewish assemblies on the one hand and Hellenistic cults on the other.** With one exception, the Greek term for a Jewish community, *sunagoge*, is never used of a Christian gathering in the NT. [Actually, James 2:2 is not an exception, because the point of this passage turns on the specific reference to the place of meeting. Because *ekklesia* cannot be used for the place of meeting, James instead had to use the common Greek word for a place of meeting, *sunagoge*.] ... The three usual terms that describe the Hellenistic cults (*sunados*, *thiasos*, and *koinon*) do not occur at all. The reason for the absence of these terms is probably as follows: the synagogue was so centered around the Law and the [Greek religious] mysteries [were] so focused on a cult, that use of either word [sic, set of words] would have resulted in a misunderstanding of what *ekklesia* was all about. ... Paul still uses the verbal form *sunagomai* alongside *ekklesia*, and later pagan writers and church fathers refer to the Hellenistic churches as *thiasoi*. [[footnote 5] Cf. Lucian, *The Death of Peregrinus* 11. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3.2, 3. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 10.1.]

Ekklesia is Applied Only to an Actual Gathering of People

[page 29] What is Paul’s early usage of the term *ekklesia*, church? He first uses the term in his greeting to the Christians in Thessalonica (1 Thess 1:1). Here he is using it in the same way as in Greek and Jewish circles and yet is consciously distinguishing the “assembly” to which he is writing from others in the city. ... Though, like other assemblies in the city, it is described as a “gathering of the Thessalonians,” it is marked off from the regular political councils by the addition of the words “in God the Father” and from the weekly synagogue meetings by both the use of the term *ekklesia* and the addition of the phrase “in the Lord Jesus Christ.” The same ascription reappears in Paul’s second letter to the same community (2 Thess 1:1). Elsewhere in these letters we have reference to other Christian gatherings only in the plural, viz., to “the churches of God” generally and to “the churches of God” in Judaea specifically (2 Thess 1:4; 1 Thess 2:14). This suggests that **the term is applied only to an actual gathering of** [page 30] **people or to the group that gathers as a regularly constituted meeting and not, as in today’s usage, to a number of local assemblies conceived as part of a larger unit.** ¶ Now this does not appear to be always obvious from a casual reading of the NT writings. Indeed some statements seem to contradict it. There is, for instance, Paul’s reminder early in Galatians of his original persecution of “the church of God.” [[footnote 6] Galatians 1:13; 1 Cor 15:9; Phil 3:6.] ... **[M]ost probably he refers to those he persecuted as a “church” [generically] rather than as “saints” (or some similar term) because, as Acts suggests, it was as they [believers] met that arrests were made – the fact of their gathering providing evidence of their Christian associations** (Acts 8:3; compare 2:46). Something like this must be in mind, since a few lines further down Paul speaks distinctively of the “churches of Judaea” in the plural (Gal 1:22). ¶ That *ekklesia* is used for a gathering of people is supported by other literary evidence. In the greeting at the beginning of Galatians (1:2), throughout the following two letters to the Corinthians, [[footnote 7] 1 Cor 7:17; 11:16; 14:33-34; 2 Cor 8:19, 23-24; 11:8, 28; 12:13.] and at the end of Romans (16:4, 16), **we always find the plural form when more than one church is in view.** The only exceptions to this are once where the distributive expression “every church” (1 Corinthians 4:17) occurs, and twice where **“the church of God” (1 Cor 20:32) is mentioned in a generic or, just possibly, localized sense.** The plural references to “the churches in Galatia” (Gal 1:2; 1 Cor 16:1), “the churches of Asia” (1 Cor 16:19), “the churches in Macedonia” (2 Cor 8:1), and “the churches of Judaea” (Gal 1:22) demonstrate that **the idea of a unified**

provincial or national church is as foreign to Paul's thinking as the notion of a universal church. Only if there were an occasional provincial meeting of all Christians could he have spoken of them in this way. The names of the provinces, or inhabitants, simply provide him with a convenient way of grouping them in his thinking, though sometimes he can speak more generally of "the churches of the saints" and "the churches of the Gentiles" (1 Cor 14:33; Rom 16:4). The primary sense of "gathering" is particularly clear in [page 31] 1 Corinthians 11-14, in such expressions as, "when you assemble as a church" (1 Cor 11:18) and "it is shameful for a woman to speak in church." [[footnote 8] 1 Cor 14:35, RSV; cf. 14:4, 5, 12, 19, 28.]

The Term Ekklesia Never Refers to Christians Scattered Throughout the World, Nor to a Building

[page 35] In these early letters of Paul, the term *ekklesia* consistently refers to actual gatherings of Christians as such, or to Christians in a local area conceived or defined as a regularly assembling community. ... It is a regular occurrence rather than an ongoing reality. The word does not describe all the Christians who live in a particular locality if they do not gather. Nor does it refer to the sum total of Christians in a region or scattered throughout the world at any particular time. And never during this period is the term applied to the building in which Christians meet. ... [I]t is in the home of one of the members that *ekklesia* is held ... [[footnote 16] Cf. also Acts 18:7-8; 20:8.]

Robert Freidman. *The Theology of Anabaptism*. Quoted in Jerry Locher article, "A Recovery of Baptist Ecclesiology," <http://www.kindredminds.org/Articles/recovery.html>

The Idea of the 'Invisible Church' Originated with Augustine

The idea of the invisible church originated with Augustine ... For the Anabaptists nothing could be further from the truth than that. Theirs was always a visible church, the living brotherhood-congregation which they regarded, at least in part, as the nucleus of God's kingdom on earth, or its attempted realization. In this sense Littell speaks correctly of 'realized eschatology'. If that has been the basic feeling of the brethren, then ideal and reality are not too far apart, and no theology of an invisible church could have meaning for them.

Franklin H. Littell, "The Anabaptist Concept of the Church," writing in Guy F. Hershberger, editor. *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision*. Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1957.

The Doctrine of 'the Invisible Church' is a Primary Means Used to Escape the Revolutionary Implications of Biblical Teaching

[page 122, footnote] I agree wholeheartedly with Robert Freidman's denunciation of the doctrine of "the invisible church" as alien to Anabaptism, MQR (April 1954) 28:148-54. This teaching, which is spiritualizing in effect and perhaps in origin, has been from the 16th century to the present day the major underground tunnel by which leaders of established Protestant churches have been able to escape from the position to which their Biblical insurgency at first has led them.

T.M. Lindsay, *A History of the Reformation* (New York, 1941) 2:443. Quoted in Franklin H. Littell, "The Anabaptist Concept of the Church," writing in: Guy F. Hershberger, editor. *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision*. Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1957.

The Real Church is an Association of Believing People

[page 120] The Anabaptists would have nothing to do with a state Church; and this was the main point in their separation from the Lutherans, Zwinglians and Calvinists. It was perhaps the one conception on which all parties among them were in absolute accord. The real Church,

which might be small or great, **was for them an association of believing people**; and **the great ecclesiastical institutions** into which unconscious infants were admitted by a ceremony called baptism long before they could have or exercise faith, **represented to them an idea subversive of true Christianity**.

Edward T. Hiscox. *The New Directory for Baptist Churches*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1970 [originally published, Judson Press, 1894.

The Primary and Literal Meaning of “Church” [Ekklesia]

[page 24] ... [W]hen it is said, “Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church,” etc., Eph. 5:25,27, it presumably refers to no particular congregation of believers, but to the entire company of the saved – the universal, invisible Church. In the same way is interpreted the much-quoted declaration of Jesus: “On this rock will I build my Church.” – Matt. 16:18. Also, “To the intent that now might be known *by the* [page 25] Church the manifold wisdom of God.” – Eph. 3:10, “He is the head of the body, the Church.” – Col. 1:18. “The general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven.” – Heb. 12:23. **These, with a few other passages, are supposed to refer not to any localized congregations of believers, but to the universal fellowship of the faithful. And yet it is likely that some of the passages usually thus interpreted might, by a more careful exegesis, be found to bear the primary and literal meaning of a particular congregation. Certain it is that this literal meaning of the word is its first and ruling signification, as is certified in a vast majority of cases.** And if in certain cases another meaning attaches to it, such other meaning is purely tropical and secondary. And such secondary meaning grows directly out of, and bears a strict resemblance to, the primary.

The Misuse of the Word ‘Church’ – Untrue to the New Testament Idea

[page 25] The word *Church*, in common language, is used with a large latitude of meaning. It is applied to a congregation of Christian worshipers, to a religious establishment, to a given form of ecclesiastical order, to the aggregate of all the saints, and to a building used for religious purposes. This last-named use, though common, is hardly legitimate, and the passages of Scripture sometimes cited to justify it (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 11:18; 14:19, 28) will not warrant such application. **And to call the aggregate of those who profess the Christian faith – of all names in all the world – “the Christian Church,” is a misuse of the word not warranted by the Scriptures.** [page 26] **There is no such thing as a universal Church on earth embraced in one grand communion.** Equally baseless and unsupported by Scripture is the claim that all the religious congregations of a nation, or of a given form of faith in a nation, constitute a national, or a denominational church. It contradicts the New Testament idea. It is common to speak of “the Church of England,” or “the Church of Russia,” or “the Church of Rome.” We understand what is intended, but such terms are extra-evangelical, and untrue to the New Testament idea.

The Church and the Kingdom are Not the Same

[page 27] ... **[T]he Kingdom and the Church are vitally related, but not identical. ... The Church is the outward, visible, organic expression and development of this spiritual, real, but invisible Kingdom of Christ**

More quotations will be added as time permits.