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“For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to battle?” 1Corinthians 14:8

# The Original BAPTIST OBSERVER



“Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls...” Jeremiah 6:16

# LIVING CLEAN

**Why do we teach and insist on clean living?**  
Because the fruit of the Spirit is characterized by purity.

Consider, for contrast, the works of the flesh. (Galatians 5:19-21) Two things are clear in reading these Scriptures. Works of the flesh are unclean and they are not works which should characterize the lives of God’s children.

On the other hand, the fruit of the Spirit is clean in every respect. Believers who walk in the Spirit will manifest the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:25)

- There are nine aspects, or expressions, of this fruit of the Spirit:
- 1) Love - God is love, and His children should manifest His love in their lives. (1 John 4:8,19)
  - 2) Joy - there is continuous joy for those who walk in the Spirit, and fellowship with Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:16)
  - 3) Peace - the believer’s peace passes all understanding because he is at peace with God. (Romans 5:1; Philippians 4:7)
  - 4) Longsuffering - this is patient endurance, even under stress and mistreatment; it is a trait which God has, especially toward lost people. (2 Peter 3:9)
  - 5) Gentleness - this characteristic of Christ should be displayed by believers, especially brethren within church fellowship. (Ephesians 4:32)

- 6) Goodness - moral worth is a vital part of the fruit of the Spirit. (Romans 15:14; Ephesians 5:9)
- 7) Faith - this is confidence in, dependence on, and faithfulness to God and His work. (1 Corinthians 15:58)
- 8) Meekness - a willingness to learn and to accept God’s will is always a good trait. (Matthew 11:29)
- 9) Temperance - self-control keeps a believer walking in the Spirit and denying the flesh and its desires. (1 Corinthians 9:27)

**Why do we teach and insist on clean living?**  
Because clean living glorifies the LORD.

Doing all to the glory of God should be every church member’s aim in life. (1Corinthians 10:31)


There should be nothing more important than giving God glory. Consequently, this should be considered in everything we do.

The Bible doesn’t specifically deal with every problem confronted by God’s children today, but this principle of giving God glory in everything does.

The Bible does deal with some of the modern vices of our world such as drinking, dancing, and speech. No one can rightly claim to drink alcoholic beverages “to the glory of God”. (Proverbs 20:1; 23:31-35) Those who frequent dance clubs, or any other atmosphere where drugs and alcohol

are widespread, would surely not claim these activities glorify God. There is much said in the Scriptures about one’s speech. (Colossians 4:6; James 3:9-12) Much impurity comes from the lips of those who should be doing “all to the glory of God”. This is a good reason for insisting on clean living. The LORD will call into account even the idle words we have spoken. (Matthew 12:36) Certainly the lost will at the final judgment, but it is also true of believers at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

When one considers the alternative to clean living, he should realize that it is better to insist on clean living. Anything less will not please the LORD. It will not influence the world for God. It will not satisfy the leadership of the Holy Spirit in one’s life.



**KING JAMES BIBLE  
USED FOR ALL  
REFERENCES TO  
GOD'S WORD IN  
THIS NEWSPAPER**

## Sounding Out The Faith

# WE REJECT CONVENTIONISM

June 2011 Issue

**MATTHEW 20:25-28**  
**AN EXPLANATION:**  
It is difficult to combat an error without having misunderstandings. It is difficult for people to keep from taking things personally. For example, one can oppose the doctrinal error of a particular denomination, but some take it as a personal attack on themselves. They say, “I used to be a member of one of those churches, and there are some fine people in them. I don’t appreciate your talking about them.” Or, “My mother is a member of one of those churches, and I don’t want you talking about my mother.” If people could see error needs to be opposed regardless of where one finds it, perhaps they could keep from making it such a personal matter.

This article is not a personal attack on the churches commonly called “Southern Baptist Churches”. Many Missionary Baptists have been members of Southern Baptist Churches at one time or another. Many have relatives who are now members of such churches. There may be some with Southern Baptist origins or tendencies creeping into our work presently. Therefore, we should be aware and informed of the convention system and avoid it. There are

doctrinal issues involved, not just personal.

### **WE REJECT CONVENTIONISM BECAUSE OF ITS PURPOSE:**

According to the charter of the Southern Baptist Convention, as recorded in the 1958 Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, on page 26, “...said corporation being created for the purpose of eliciting, combining, and directing the energies of the Baptist Denomination of Christians, for the propagation of the gospel...” That was the purpose of the organization at its origin in 1845, and it is still the purpose as stated in its constitution.

Since it is God’s purpose to us, as New Testament churches, to propagate the gospel, one can see conventionism clearly supplants, or supercedes, the work of the LORD’S churches. (Mark 16:15) It is the business of the LORD’S churches to propagate the gospel, and any other organization claiming to have that same purpose is unnecessary, if not totally unscriptural.

Also, notice how conventionism purposes to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of Baptist churches. “Elicit” means to draw out the energies of churches. “Combine” means to put together the energies of

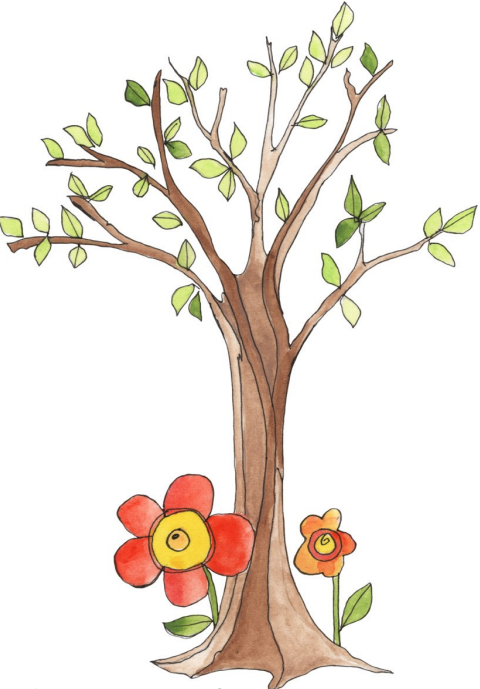
churches. “Direct” means to regulate, govern, and control the energies of the churches. That is too near supplanting the work of the Holy Spirit, John 16:13; Luke 24:29. (Acts 1:8) No human agency, convention, or association has the right, or is right when eliciting, combining, and/or directing the energies of Baptist churches. Maybe our own American Baptist Association would do well to consider the Scriptural arguments set forth here, with interest to the propagation of the gospel.

### **WE REJECT CONVENTIONISM BECAUSE OF ITS MESSENGER REPRESENTATION:**

The constitution of the Southern Baptist Convention states the basis of determining how many messengers represent each church. Each church has a right to have a messenger, if it contributes to the convention work. However, additional messengers are allowed on the basis of membership numbers, and how much was contributed to the convention work, with a limit of course. One can see churches with large memberships and large contributions having more messengers and votes than the smaller churches with smaller contributions. (Continued on page 2)



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# WE REJECT CONVENTIONISM

(Continued from page 1)  
Such a method denies the principle of church equality, and could lead to violating the very principle Christ enjoined on His churches, Matthew 20:28. Is allowing larger churches to be "lords over God's heritage" any more Scriptural than allowing a pastor to be one? (1 Peter 5:3)

Possibly just as dangerous is the setting up of rules, no matter how well intended, that constrict or inhibit churches from taking the gospel out in missionary efforts, because of the "rules" imposed upon them by a committee or association.

## WE REJECT CONVENTIONISM BECAUSE OF ITS MISSIONARY PRACTICE:

Past practices and policies of the convention's Foreign Mission Board stated that one of their duties was to hold "the responsibility of receiving applicants, judging qualifications, deciding the field of labor, setting salaries, and handling the funds of missionaries who work on foreign fields". These conclusions come from such sources as the Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists. The board takes responsibility to decide who goes and where they go.

The Holy Spirit and God's churches should determine the fulfilling of qualifications set forth in the Scriptures and the field of labor for missionaries, Acts 13:2-3. It certainly should not be a process of application and interview before a board, similar to the secular hiring for a job, to determine these matters.

## WE REJECT CONVENTIONISM BECAUSE OF ITS DOCTRINAL STAND ON THE CHURCH:

In "The Baptist Faith and Message", adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1963, there is a paragraph under section VI, "the Church", which states, "The New Testament speaks also of the church as the body of Christ, which includes all of the redeemed for all ages." (The Baptist Messenger, Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma: Oklahoma City, OK. 1959; Vol. 58, No.32, p.14)

That is the universal church doctrine! The

New Testament will not support such a view. Acts 14:27 speaks of gathering "the whole church together". Acts 15:22 speaks of "the whole church", which was only one church congregation. These passages certainly would not support such a general view as "The Baptist Faith and Message". No other passages support it if correctly understood and taught.

## WE REJECT CONVENTIONISM BECAUSE OF ITS PROMOTION OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE:

The Baptist General Convention of Texas gave away literally thousands and thousands of the second editions of the Good News for Modern Man. The title page reflects the American Bible Society published them especially for the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Additionally, the Broadman Press of the Southern Baptist Convention had the American Bible Society publish a special edition of this imitation Bible, marked "Broadman Press Edition". It is clear that conventionism has historically supported this version of the New Testament.

However, this version omit's the word "blood" in reference to Christ in several places, Colossians 1:14, 20; Hebrews 10:19; and 1 Peter 1:19 being a few. Also, it states that Joseph was the father of Jesus in Luke 2:33 and 43. This version casts the question on the virgin birth of Christ in Luke 1:27, as well as removing the word "virgin" in other passages. There are other serious objections to this modern version of the New Testament, but these serve to indicate the gravity of conventionism's support for such a heretical version. Any version of God's Word besides the Authorized King James Version, should be shunned by all Missionary Baptist Church ministries.



# MISSION WORK

ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES  
Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21-23; Acts 1:8

The words "mission" and missionary" are not found in the authorized King James Version of the Bible. Yet, the practice has its foundations in the gospels during the time of Jesus' ministry; and there are examples of starting churches of like faith and order scattered throughout the Book of Acts.

By the word "missions" we mean: "the carrying out of the commission through evangelistic work of a local church; going into another area with the purpose of starting a church of like faith and order; sending, or being sent, with certain powers to accomplish the very things our LORD has commanded His churches to do in the Great Commission".

A "missionary" then, is literally: "one sent with certain powers; particularly, an ordained minister sent by a church into a field of labor to prepare, by evangelism and discipleship, others who would enter into Scriptural New Testament service through the organization of another church of like faith and order". In the Bible, these ministers are called "evangelists". This term seems to clearly distinguish those who did this work with authorization from the churches to baptize and prepare disciples for church membership, who were not already ordained as apostles or doing the work of an ordained "bishop", as a pastor of a church.

This lesson is about the importance and the manner of starting churches according to the pattern left to us in the Scriptures. E.C. Gillentine, in his study course Baptist Doctrine, suggested six "W's" of mission work.

1) The "Whence" of missions: God Himself, through Jesus' mandate in the commission give us our order and authority for doing the work of evangelizing and starting churches, Matthew 28:18-20. Mission work, or the starting of churches, has its origin in the power of the Holy Spirit and His leadership through the churches, Acts 1:8; 13:2. Any-

one outside the faithful work of a Scriptural church, no matter how well intending, is outside the realm of the Spirit's leadership in this.

2) The "Whom" of missions: the churches with lineage from Jesus' first congregation in Jerusalem are the only authorized agency for conducting His work in the world today, Luke 24: 46-49; John 20:21-23; Ephesians 3:10,21. Others may tell the story of Jesus and His wonderful love (Revelation 22:17), but only scriptural churches are commissioned to do this work of starting other churches.

3) The "Where" of missions is unlimited, wherever man is to be found: to "all nations", Matthew 28:19; Luke 24:47; to "every creature", Mark16:15; "every where", Mark 16:20; "into the world", John 17:18; and "unto the uttermost part of the earth", Acts1:8.

4) The "When" of missions is now, in this age, and until the LORD Jesus returns; "and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world", Matthew 28:20; . . . "behold, now is the day of salvation", 2 Corinthians 6:2.

5) The "What" of missions is the means of carrying out this work in other locations. An ordained minister sent out by the authority of a local church with intent of evangelizing, baptizing, and teaching children of God to serve acceptably through a church of like faith and order. Then, bringing them together through the leadership and efforts of the sending church. Examples of this are found in Acts 11:19-26; 13:1-4. Other examples of this are found in the Book of Acts, which by subject matter could well be called the "Acts of the Churches". These efforts are supported by, and overseen through the efforts of the sponsoring church, and organized into a new church by authority from the same, a local congregation authorizing and working with the missionary.

6) The "Why" of missions is the spreading of the gospel, and starting churches in other areas, which will follow the patterns of

like faith and order handed down through the centuries by Baptist churches before us, back to the church started by Jesus Himself.

The real "mission" of our efforts has its end in establishing other churches in new communities and areas throughout the world. This does not happen by setting up shelters or distribution points for temporal needs, but in taking the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ and God's saving grace to those who need it. Whether they be campaigns with any other goal in mind, or for any other purpose, it does not fulfill this command that Jesus left for His churches to accomplish. You will not find the command to "start churches" in the Scriptures, but this is how we "teach, baptize, and teach" according to the doctrines and practices left to us in the Bible. We should always be careful not to forsake or pervert any doctrine. This is as important after presenting the gospel message as it is to keep the message of salvation pure and simple, Jude 3.

There is a great need today for cooperative effort within our churches to do this work of starting other churches. For this kind of effort takes many hours, much money, and more resources than many single churches may have available. Other churches may contribute finances and help in many ways, but authority for organizing and doing the work should be firmly understood to be through one local church. If done after the Biblical pattern. Cooperative and associational work may aid individual churches, but this authority cannot be delegated to any other organizational entity. Otherwise, what we're doing is something other than keeping His commands and continuing His work as left us in the Scriptures.





# BIBLE SENSE... ABOUT GOD THE TRINITY

The Bible declares that there is one God. (Deuteronomy 6:4, Malachi 2:10, Mark 12:29) We simply believe this statement of fact or we reject the Bible altogether. From Genesis to Revelation God reveals Himself to us through descriptive names, attributes, and actions. It is our responsibility to know God as He has revealed Himself through Scriptures and to worship and serve Him accordingly.

In Genesis 1:1, we are introduced to God by the Hebrew word Elohiym, the plural word for Deity. Genesis 1: 26 states, “ And God said, Let us make man in our image...”, another plural reference God used concerning Himself. In Matthew 3:16-17, when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, it records “... the heavens were opened unto him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Matthew 17:5 records a voice from heaven glorifying the Son, Jesus, when He was in the presence of some of the apostles. I John 5:7 declares, “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.”

Without going into great detail, the Scriptures are overflowing with references that the Father, Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit are God. (Romans 1:7, Hebrews 1:8, Acts 5:3-4) Many have difficulty understanding and harmonizing the Scriptures relating to God as a trinity because they use their understanding of sinful man and force this concept upon a perfect and righteous God. Trouble arises when we try to intellectualize God, thinking we can “figure” Him out, finding it easier to believe God is one person manifesting Himself to man through three personalities. This conception of God allows sinful man a means by which he can figure out the “Oneness of God”, while being revealed to man in three ways. This belief creates much confusion when studying various doctrines of the Bible.

In John 17:11, 21-22 Jesus prayed that His church would be one as He and the Father are one. Church members are not, nor will ever be, manifestations of one universal member. We can be one in unity, purpose, and will, but never as one person manifesting ourselves as multiple personalities. Through salvation, the new birth, we become the sons of God and as such, an heir of God. ( John 1:12, Romans 8:9-17) Romans 8:17 also promises church members that they can be joint heirs with Jesus if we suffer with Him. A manifestation does not inherit, but we see that Jesus is granted the Kingdom of Righteousness and faithful church members will rule and reign with Jesus for a thousand years.

A one person God also creates drastic errors when we consider bridal relationship and the bride of Christ. In Jeremiah chapter three and Hosea chapter two it is written that God hath put away (given a bill of divorce) Israel for playing the harlot. The millennial kingdom prepares Israel for God



to take her back and be betrothed in righteousness. (Hosea 2:14-23) In I Corinthians 15:24, it's stated that Jesus delivers up the Kingdom unto His Father. Jesus will have prepared Israel, purifying and making her a fit bride for the Father. Jesus, at that time, is already married to His Bride, the church. The New Testament teaches that Jesus is espoused unto His Bride, the faithful members of every scriptural church. John the Baptist in John 3:29, declared Jesus to be the Bridegroom who had His bride. In II Corinthians 11:2, the Apostle Paul told the church at Corinth they were espoused to Jesus. Ephesians chapter five records that Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus concerning their relationship as the espoused bride of Christ. The great marriage and marriage supper takes place in Heaven when Jesus takes His faithful church members out of all the redeemed that were raptured unto Himself. Given these teachings we find in the Scriptures, we either believe that the personalities or manifestations of God will marry separate brides, or we must correctly conclude that the Father and Jesus are distinct persons of God that will have their own bride. Believing that God is one person having three manifestations completely destroys the perfect picture of marriage and we would see God with multiple wives. We would then have to concede that the Morman's have the doctrine of marriage correct.

The true teaching of the Scriptures concerning God is that He is a Trinity, three persons perfectly joined together in unity, purpose, will, and in carrying out that will. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit give us the perfect example of how we are to be one. We cannot be one in person, as a husband and wife, or as a church body, but we can be one in unity, purpose, and will, just as God is. In our sinful state, we cannot fully understand how three persons can be perfectly one in every way, but with God all things are possible. The fact that God is three persons in no way diminishes the fact that He is one God.

# SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL CHURCH

**Each church member should support his or her local church and its ministries because there is a need for regular attendance to services.**

Common sense dictates that each member needs to support the total ministry of the church of his or her membership. Also, anyone should be able to see that the conditions of the times require greater devotion to our churches than ever before.

One area in which each member with reasonably good health can support their church is by attending all services. This is the very least support a member should give. It is one area which many take lightly, as witnessed by the drop in attendance in many Baptist churches from Sunday morning to Sunday evening, and then also in relation to midweek prayer service.

The Bible issues a command for God's people to assemble for worship, Hebrews 10:25. First, God commands His people not to forsake the assembly for worship. Second, He commands His people to exhort one another to be faithful in attendance. Third, He commands a more concerted effort to attend as the return of Christ approaches. As a matter of fact, the doctrine of the second coming should challenge all of us to be more faithful to worship services.

Furthermore, the LORD Himself promised to be in the midst of each true church as the members gather together to worship Him, Matthew 18:20; 28:19-20. The book of Revelation presents Christ walking in the midst of His churches. (Revelation 1:13, 20; 2:1)



With Christ present as a church assembles for worship, every member should see that he or she has both a privilege and a duty to be in attendance.

Flimsy excuses cannot override God's clear command and the LORD'S precious promise. Providential hindrance is one thing, but hindering providence is altogether different. Every member should support the church of his or her membership by faithfully attending all services.

**Each church member should support his or her local church and its ministries because there is a need for giving financially.**

The total ministry of a church requires financial support. As the economy of the times grows more severe, the need for devotion in this area is greater.

A church needs to pay the pastor. He is a man whom God called into the ministry. Consequently, a church should take his support seriously. He should be considered worthy of double honor. A church should avoid hindering him by supplying his needs and fully rewarding him for his labors. (1 Corinthians 9:1-14; 1 Timothy 5:17-18)

A church needs to pay the missionaries. Many times they are in lonely positions without regular fellowship and close communication. Regular and ample support financially for his needs provides confirmation that he is not left to “fend for himself” by those who send him and his family out.

The church building and property, and the maintenance and upkeep of these, are an ever increasing burden to keep up. Utilities continue to increase in rate, and they require regular payments. Some churches have vehicles to operate and maintain. All of this represents an increasing expense. Members must give to provide the funds for

the regular upkeep of a church's needs.

These, and a dozen and one other predictable and unpredictable expenses, confront a church week after week, and month after month. These pose a genuine need for financially supporting the total ministry of a church. (1 Corinthians 16:2; Galatians 6:5)

However, the greatest reason for supporting the LORD'S church should be because of one's love for the LORD and His church. (Matthew 6:19-20)

**Each church member should support his or her local church and its ministries because there is a need for praying.**

Another vital area in supporting the total ministry of a church is prayer. No member has any excuse for not supporting the church by his or her prayers.

All true Baptists are supposed to be people of prayer. (Luke 11:2-4) There is a constant need for strength, guidance, and courage in view of the trials, hardships, and temptations of life. Therefore, there is a constant need for prayer. In view of this, the LORD encouraged His disciples to pray constantly and persistently. (Luke 18:1)

The fourth paragraph of most of our churches' covenants contain the promise “to remember each other in prayer”. That promise is certainly Scriptural because the Bible commands it of God's people. (James 5:16)

Repeatedly, Paul prayed for the churches to whom he wrote in 1 Thessalonians 1:2. (and similar statements in most of his epistles) Paul asked for the prayers of God's people. (1 Thessalonians 5:25) This apostle's example and teachings challenge those within the LORD'S churches to pray for one another.

Prayer supports a church. It causes the





# SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL CHURCH

Continued from page 3

members to have a better fellowship with one another, and a greater influence for God.

*Each church member should support his or her local church and its ministries because there is a need for upholding one another, supporting our church, and exhorting one another.*

Each member needs to support the total ministry of the church of his or her membership by participating in each thing he practically can. Not every member will take part in each function, and sometimes men's Bible studies and women's fellowships will happen separately at the same time. But, a church that only meets during its regular worship service, and then because it is expected of them, is either slowly dying, or already dead. The need in this area in many of today's churches is so evident it isn't funny.

Many outsiders are not happy without slandering the LORD'S churches. Sometimes there are church members who never seem to be happy without griping and groaning about everything the church does. The sad thing is, that they often carry their complaints outside the membership to the community that the church is trying to win with the message of God's grace and love, or to the new converts who've just begun to serve the LORD with enthusiasm. This does great harm to the LORD'S churches. (1 Corinthians 6:1-11; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

Church members need to support their church. They should never speak in a degrading manner of their church, nor should they allow others to do so with their approval. Only a mean person would slander God's institution which He purchased with

His own blood. (Acts 28:20) We should be just as careful with each one (member) of the LORD'S churches.

Some members attack their church because the majority of the members refuse to bow to their whims. They want to control the church, which violates the principle of membership equality. (Matthew 20:25-28) Baptists do not believe in having a pope, but some Baptists do seem happy having a few "Diotrepheses" around once in a while.

Some people get their feelings hurt and refuse to support their church with their attendance, money, or their prayers. Others have been known to become vindictive toward a particular member. Such cold, hard, indifferent attitudes cannot stand long in light of the Scriptures. (Galatians 6:10) All members should uphold and defend the church of their membership out of love for one another. (John 13:34-35; 15:12,17)

Maybe it's been a while since you reviewed the promises made in the church covenant that was referenced earlier in this article. Lest we forget, the second paragraph states that we engage to "contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel throughout all nations". Are we edifying and supporting our church thus, or are we tearing it down by the neglect of these things?



# WE REJECT THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH DOCTRINE

MATTHEW 16:17-18

**BECAUSE "UNIVERSAL" AND "CHURCH" ARE CONTRADICTORY TERMS:**

Basically, there are only two concepts of a New Testament Church - universal and local. Some try to hold to both, while placing more emphasis on one than the other. The universal doctrine has two basic approaches - visible and invisible.

Roman Catholics teach the universal, visible church idea. "Catholic" means universal. The universal, visible church would be a combination of all Catholicism.

Protestants generally hold to the universal, invisible church idea. That is, all the redeemed of all ages make up the "mystical" body of Christ.

However, "universal" and "church" are contradictory terms which should never be used together. "Universal" means "whole; all; entire; unlimited". "Church" has a narrower meaning - "a called-out assembly". It pertains to a visible congregation of people who congregate in a particular place. The two terms have opposite meanings. Consequently, it makes no sense to use them together.

**BECAUSE UNIVERSAL CHURCH IS NOT FOUND IN THE BIBLE:**

The Greek word for "universal" is not in the New Testament. The Bible never refers to a universal church. By the very nature of the word translated "church", it refers to an assembly in a certain location. There is no double meaning for the term. Thus, the universal church idea is totally without Biblical basis.

One passage which many try to use to teach the universal church doctrine is Ephesians 5:23-32. It speaks of Christ as the Head of the church. "The church" is there taken to embrace more than a local congregation. However, since Paul was writing to the local church at Ephesus, one may conclude any reference to "the church" in this epistle as to the Ephesians' Church. Otherwise, he would have clarified his ref-

erence, lest he confuse those to whom he wrote. By no means, does Paul refer to a universal conglomeration as a church.

The various uses of "the church" by the LORD in the gospels, and then by inspiration in the Book of Acts, causes some to maintain their position on the universal church doctrine. The LORD referred to "My church" in Matthew 16:18. He referred to "the church" in Matthew 18:17. The Book of Acts refers to "the church" in Acts 2:47; 5:11; 8:3. However, there was only one church in existence until the scattering of this particular congregation, and here it was called "the church which was at Jerusalem". (Acts 8:1) It was a local, visible assembly. You cannot stretch that to refer to an universal church.

The Bible speaks only of local, visible churches. The plural usage of the word "church" emphasizes this point. Acts 9:31 is an example of the more than thirty times "churches" is used in the New Testament. Acts 14:23 carries the same weight to this Biblical doctrine, referring to "every church". If the universal church doctrine were correct, there would be no need for the plural form of the word "church".

**BECAUSE IT MINIMIZES THE LOCAL CHURCH DOCTRINE:**

Those who hold to the universal church idea emphasize the universal church as being the true body of Christ. At the same time, they minimize the local church doctrine as being a necessary evil. To them it matters little if one belongs to a local church because they consider it to be man's institution. They errantly teach it is more important to be a member of the true body of Christ, which they propose is the universal church.

However, a universal church cannot do anything God expects of a true church. It cannot meet on earth. That is its greatest shortcoming, which leads to others. Because it never meets, it has no worship services on the LORD'S Day. Therefore, it doesn't have a preacher to preach, singers to sing, or deacons to serve. It supports no mission work. It never observes the ordi-

nances. It cannot discipline its members. Yet, all these, and other matters commanded by the LORD, are carried out by local churches. In other words, a universal church is totally meaningless in administering the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and in carrying out the Great Commission. Even the universal church promoters must rely on local churches to get anything done.

God's Word preserves the nature of a church as being a local, visible assembly. Read Acts 19:23-41 to see that the word "assembly" was used to refer to a local, visible group of people. "Ekklesia" is translated "assembly" there, just as it is "church" many other places in the New Testament. By no stretch of the imagination can one take the universal church view from a close study of this passage.

Besides, the universal church idea minimizes doctrinal teaching. It encourages a loose view of every major doctrine of the Bible. A local church should emphasize doctrinal truth. This is in harmony with what Paul, by inspiration, taught Timothy to do, 2 Timothy 4:1-4.

**BECAUSE IT DESTROYS THE SCRIPTURAL FIGURES OF A CHURCH:**

The universal church doctrine makes shambles of the figures used to refer to a New Testament Church.

First, a building is used as a figure of a church, 1 Corinthians 3:9, Ephesians 2:21-22. What could be more local and visible than a building?

Second, the Bible refers to a church as the body of Christ, Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18. Has anyone ever known of a universal body in any other aspect? If one's body is not local and visible, he is in trouble.

Third, each true, local church is considered in the Scriptures to be the espoused bride of Christ, out of which He shall select His wife, John 3:29, 2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:7-9. Perhaps wives should be cautious about husbands who promote the universal church doctrine. Do they also

believe in a universal wife? Surely not!

Fourth, the church of God at Ephesus is referred to as "the flock", Acts 20:28. If a flock is anything but local and visible, the shepherd is in trouble.

Fifth, a candlestick is just about as local and visible as anything can be. The LORD used seven candlesticks as figures of seven churches in Revelation 1:20. Why did He use seven, when one could have done as well? Wouldn't one candlestick have better represented and backed a universal church doctrine?

These and other figures are absurd when taught in the universal church doctrine. Further, the universal church people today confuse the church with the family of God. All the saved are in the family of God, Ephesians 3:15. In other words, all the redeemed of all ages comprise the family of God, but are not recognized as comprising the church in the Scriptures. This is contradictory to the modern doctrine of universal church.

Another thing to consider is the fact that the universal church doctrine arose after the completion and confusion of many modern English versions of the Bible. One who checks out his church history will find Catholicism and Protestantism gave birth to the universal idea, and both of them had post-Biblical origins. True Baptists have never taught the universal church doctrine.

