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# Church as Body

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In the process of revelation God used various illustrations in relation to the church.<sup>1</sup> The very word for church, *ekklesia*, is an analogy from Greek culture. The word was used among the Greeks of a body of citizens gathered to discuss the affairs of state, of an assembly, a regularly summoned political body.<sup>2</sup> The illustration of a shepherd and sheep is used several times. Christ is called the chief shepherd (I Pet 5:4). The church is called a flock (I Pet 5:2-3; Acts 20:28) and the word pastor (Eph 4:11) is the word for shepherd. Another analogy which is used for the church is the focus of this study. Several places in the New Testament (Rom 12:5; I Cor 10:17; 12:13,27; Eph 1:23; 2:16; 4:12,16; 5:23,30; Col 1:18,24; 2:19; 3:15) the church is called a body. The truth taught is that a church as a body of believers gifted by the Holy Spirit is to function in unity and harmony as a human body does.

The principle that the church is a body needs to be clearly understood today because there is often division within local churches. The gifts of the Spirit are to be used within this body (Rom 12:5,6; Eph 4:11,12). Christians need to understand that God's appointed place of service for them is within a body of believers, a local church.

The purpose of this study is to see the ways that the word body is used in relation to the church in the New Testament and to draw practical applications for the ministry of pastors and the lives of Christians. The plan for this study necessitates a brief study of the word church and the two ways it is used in the New Testament. A study of the word body follows in relation to the two usages of the word church. The practical applications follow.

## Uses of Ekklesia in the New Testament

The word *ekklesia* is used 114 times in the New Testament.<sup>3</sup> In a few instances *ekklesia* is used in its secular sense, as an assembly of citizens (Acts 19:32,39,41). It is also used of Israel assembled in the wilderness (Acts 7:38) and of the whole congregation of Israel (Heb 2:12). All other uses refer either to local congregations or to a greater unit.

First, *ekklesia* is used predominantly in reference to local visible churches in specific geographical locations. It is used in this way in most instances where the word occurs. Erickson explains this usage:

The term usually has reference to a group of believers in a specific city. Thus we find Paul's letters addressed "to the church of God which is at Corinth" (I Cor 1:2; II Cor 1:1)... "to the churches of Galatia" (Gal 1:2), "to the church of the Thessalonians" (I Thess 1:1) The opening portion of John's apocalypse (Rev 1:3) was addressed to seven specific churches. In Acts also, *ekklesia* refers primarily to all the Christians who live and meet in a particular city such as Jerusalem (Acts 5:11; 8:1; 11:22; 12:1,5) or Antioch (13:1). Paul visited local churches to appoint elders (14:23) or to instruct and encourage (15:41; 16:5).<sup>4</sup>

The word *ekklesia* is also used in a second sense. It is used of a church composed of all believers from this age who will assemble in heaven. A biblical term for this church is "the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven" (Heb 12:23). The term for this church which will be employed here for convenience is greater church. Hebrews 12 clearly teaches that the church composed of all believers from this age will assemble in Heaven:

But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

From these verses the following facts are seen. (1) This church is composed of born again people (v 23); (2) This church's membership is recorded in heaven (v 23); (3) This church is composed of the righteous (v 23); (4) This church is founded upon the new covenant (v 24). Since the new covenant was sealed by the shedding of Christ's blood (Heb 9:15; 12:24) it is obvious that this church is composed of all born again, justified persons from the sealing of the covenant forward. Scofield says that this greater church, being composed of the whole number of regenerate persons from Pentecost to the first resurrection (I Cor 15:52) united together and to Christ by the baptism with the Holy Spirit (I Cor 12:12, 13), is the body of Christ of which He is the Head (Eph 1:22,23).<sup>5</sup>

Since this greater church is composed of all believers from this age, some already in heaven and some on earth, it is not now functioning but is prospective. This church is in the process of being formed but will not function as a whole nor can it meet until all believers from this age gather in heaven with Christ. The local church and the greater church are not identical. The greater church is clearly prospective. It will meet as a whole in heaven with Christ (Heb 12:22,23). The local church is a visible body of believers functioning in a particular place.

This concept of a greater body of Christ is found in several NT references in addition to Hebrews 12:23. In Matthew 16:18 *ekklesia* is used of this church in prospect: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." There are two indications that this is the case. First, Jesus spoke of the foundation of the church. He said, "Upon this rock I will build My church." The rock is Peter's confession of His deity. People who are in this church are all those who have come to faith in Him as the Son of God. Jesus also promised, "I will build my church." This church which is His is certainly not a single local congregation but all the redeemed from this age.

Ephesians 1:22,23 also has the greater church in view. Verse 21 declares the supremacy of Christ in this age and in the age to come. Part of His exaltation is that He is the head of the church (v 22). Since the headship of Christ over the church is eternal (v 21) then the church (v 22) must be that church in prospect which is spoken of in Hebrews 12.

Ephesians 3:21 is another clear use of *ekklesia* as the prospective greater church. The church will glorify God in eternity when it is complete.

Ephesians 5:24,27 uses *ekklesia* in this sense. Christ gave Himself for the church (v 25). While each local church is bought with Christ's blood (Acts 20:28), the church spoken of here is that one which will be presented to Himself in full holiness (v 27), the body of all believers, sanctified and glorified in heaven.

Colossians 1:18 is another verse where this greater church is evident. Christ, its head, is the firstborn from the dead. All the redeemed will join Him in the resurrection at His coming (I Cor 15:20,23). He is and will be the head of this redeemed, resurrected church.

The figure of the human body is used to teach believers about the nature of local congregations and also about the nature of the greater gathering of believers of this age. After a survey of the concept body, verses presenting the greater body will be examined and in the last section those verses teaching about local churches.

### **Soma and the Church**

The word *soma* is used 146 times in the New Testament.<sup>6</sup> Regularly translated body, it is used in several relationships, of the bodies of men and animals, whether dead or alive (I Cor 12:2), of the bodies of plants and of stars (I Cor 15:37,38,40,41), of a number of men closely united into one society or family as it were; a social, ethical, mystical body (Eph 1:22,23). It is a unified body, especially as the body of Christ which He fills or enlivens or crowns as its head.<sup>7</sup>

The task of identifying the passages where *soma* is used of the church is relatively easy because the church is clearly named in most of them. In I Corinthians 12, the body of verses 13 and 27 is clearly identified as

the church in verse 28. The same is true in Ephesians 1:23; 5:23; and Colossians 1:18,24. In other passages, although the church is not named, the word body is to be understood as reference to the church.

Romans 12:3-8 is such a passage. The body of verse 5 must be understood as the church as indicated by the following: (1) This passage deals with the relationship within a group of people who have faith (v 3); They are regenerate people; (2) The function of this body of persons is illustrated by the function of the human body (v 4); (3) It is a body of many persons (v 5), not a physical body; (4) As a body these people exercise different functions, just as the parts of the physical body perform varied functions (v 6-8).

I Corinthians 10:17 is a similar passage. The body referred to must mean the church, because Paul identifies himself with all others who know Christ as one body.

Ephesians 2:16 is another verse where body must refer to the church for the following reasons: (1) Those who are part of this body were formerly alienated from God (Eph 2:11,13); (2) They are now reconciled to God by the death of Christ (v 13); (3) Jew and Gentile in Christ are in one body (v 14,16).

Ephesians 4:4,12,16 are uses of body which are to be understood as referring to the church because: (1) God's purpose for the church is that it glorify Him (Eph 3:20); (2) The use of *oun* (therefore) in Ephesians 4:1 relates the succeeding exhortation to unity within the body (Eph 4:1-16) to the preceding principle that the church is to glorify God.

There are several places in the New Testament where *soma* cannot properly be understood in reference to a local assembly but must be understood in reference to the greater church. I Corinthians 10:17 is to be understood this way. All believers bless the cup of communion of His body (v 16). Yet being many all believers are one bread and one body for they are partakers of that one bread (v 17). The Lord's Table is clearly to be observed when the local church comes together (I Cor 11:18, 20-34). In coming together as a local assembly to symbolize and remember the work of Christ, believers also portray the union which they share with all believers everywhere with Christ. Thus the local church is a picture of the larger union which will eventually be realized in the church of the firstborn when it meets in heaven (Heb 12:23,25).

I Corinthians 12:13 must be understood in the same sense. All believers by the Spirit's baptism have been joined to Christ in one body. An interesting and important logic appears in Paul's writing at this point. In the same passage where he speaks of all believers from this age unified in one body, he moves to speak of the local assembly of believers as a body. In verse 27, speaking to the Corinthian believers, Paul tells them that they are "a body" of Christ (without a definite article). In verse 13, speaking of the union of all believers with Christ he uses the first person plural to say "we were all baptized into one body." Verse thirteen teaches

that all believers from this age are members of one body; believers in the church of Corinth were a body (v 27). Paul begins with the body which is made up of all believers who are joined to Christ (v 13) and moves to the local body which ministers here on earth. Vine states:

There is no definite article before "body" in the original. Its insertion (though not impossible, as a rendering) mars the meaning. It would be possible to render the sentence "ye are a body of Christ," and this is true of every scripturally constituted assembly. But there is more than this. The omission of the article has the effect of laying stress on what is conveyed by the noun itself. Hence stress is upon the word "body" and what it suggests, while the "ye" is emphatic. The proper rendering is "ye are body of Christ" (not ye are Christ's body, which puts emphasis on "Christ"), that is to say "body of Christ" is the quality or condition of the assembly as a whole of which each individual forms a member.<sup>8</sup>

Paul in Romans 12 reasons the same way that he does in I Corinthians 12. He identifies himself as one with them. He says, "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Rom 12:5). Paul was not a member of the assembly at Rome and had not yet even visited them (Rom 15:23) still he considered himself to be a part of the same body with them. Paul thus must be referring to the body of which all believers from this age are a part. He immediately proceeds from that principle to speak of gifts which are presently used in relationship with other believers (v 10,16) and in service to the Lord (v 11). Paul begins with the principle of the union of all believers in one greater body in Christ and reasons to the harmonious function of a local assembly as a body.

Ephesians 3:21-4:16 is yet a third passage where this same line of reasoning appears. The church of Ephesians 3:21 will glorify God eternally. This is consistent with the church of the firstborn (Heb 12:23) which is composed of all believers from this age. This greater church is one body, unified by the Spirit (Eph 4:4) yet gifts were given which are to be used now to edify the body of Christ (Eph 4:11,12). This must be the local body at Ephesus and local bodies like it elsewhere. This local body needs to mature, to be fortified against false doctrine, to speak the truth in love, and to work together to build itself up in love (Eph 4:12-16). This body which is present needs evangelists and pastors to minister to it. So again the Holy Spirit through Paul begins with the unity of the greater prospective body and makes application to the life of the smaller local body.

The greater church is Christ's body. It is not symbolized as just any body but Christ's body. The church and believers in it have a unique relationship to Christ as well as to one another. The greater church made up of all the redeemed of this age is clearly spoken of as His body (Eph 1:23; Col 1:24). Christ occupies the supreme position in this body as its head (Col 1:18). Christ reconciled sinners to God in one body (Eph 2:16). Believers have a spiritual relationship to one another because of their spiritual relation to God through Christ (Eph 2:16; Rom 12:5; I Cor 12:13).

This relationship makes possible the spiritual relationship of believers on earth to one another in local assemblies. The local church is called a body of Christ (I Cor 12:27). Thus the local body can function to minister to its members (Rom 12:10), to know unity (Rom 12:16), sympathy (I Cor 12:26), order (I Cor 12:28), and love (Eph 4:16).

As to the relationship of these two churches, what is true of the body of all believers from this age is to be mirrored in the local bodies. The greater body of all believers is a pattern for the local body to imitate. Strong describes this relationship when he says:

The local church is a microcosm, a specialized localization of the universal body...Local churches are points of consciousness and activity for the great all inclusive unit and they are not themselves the units for an ecclesiastical aggregate. They are faces, not parts of the one church.<sup>9</sup>

This study has thus far established that the word church is used in two non-secular senses in the New Testament. It is used of all the redeemed from this age and of local assemblies, each called "body." The local church is a microcosm of the macrocosm. The next step is to examine the truths revealed in those passages where body has reference to the greater church.

### **Christ's Greater Body**

Eight passages speak of the greater body of Christ. Three passages teach that in the greater body of Christ all believers of this age are unified in a common relationship to Christ. Believers are made one by the work of the Holy Spirit. Five passages emphasize that the body is Christ's and that He and He only is the head of that body.

### **Unity**

Three passages assert the all inclusive oneness of the greater body of Christ. All true believers of this age participate. All are made a spiritual unit, a special work of the Holy Spirit.

**Romans 12:5.** Although the primary teaching of Romans 12 relates to the local church, Paul begins by dealing with the relationship of all believers to Christ and to one another. He identifies himself with the Roman believers. He had not yet visited Rome and was not a part of that congregation, still in identifying himself with them collectively as "we" he indicates that all believers, regardless of geographical location, are part of Christ and therefore members of one another. Their spiritual relationship to each other is because of their mutual relationship to Christ. Thus they are one body in Christ.

**I Corinthians 10:16,17.** In an exhortation against idolatry (I Cor 10:14,15,19-21), Paul contrasts idol worship with the Christians' observance of the Lord's Table. This ordinance is to be observed when the local church comes together (11:20-34). In this context Paul speaks of the unity of all believers. He was not with them at the time he wrote the epistle but he regarded himself as united with them in the body of Christ. Believers have partaken of Christ's body by faith (John 6:35) and when they observe the Lord's Supper in their local churches they symbolize the communion or fellowship of Christ's blood and body. The Lord's Table is not drinking and eating of Christ's blood and body. Clearly a symbolic ordinance rather than a sacrament is in view here.

Since all partake of Christ to be saved, the mutual relationship of all believers to Christ is in view here also. Ironside notes that, "When we take the Lord's Supper we recognize our unity with every fellow believer on earth."<sup>10</sup> Barnes further elaborates, "The main idea is, that by partaking of this cup they showed that they were united to Him and to each other; and that they should regard themselves as set apart to him."<sup>11</sup>

**I Corinthians 12:13.** This verse also teaches the unity of all believers in one body. As a body is one, so also is Christ one (I Cor 12:12). All believers are one because they have been baptized into this one body of Christ by the Holy Spirit.<sup>12</sup> They have also been made to drink in this Spirit. Alford explains how the Greek teaches this:

The organic unity of the various members in one body is predicated also of Christ, i e the church as united in Him...By the repetition...**tou soma...tou somatos...soma** the unity of the members as an organic whole is more strongly set forth.<sup>13</sup>

The emphasis in verse thirteen is on the phrase in one spirit. There is a two-fold work of the Holy Spirit taught here in relationship to the believer. First, the believer has been baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ. This is true of all believers regardless of race (whether Jews or Gentiles) and regardless of class (whether bond or free). Walvoord explains:

Using the figure of the human body as representing the church, individual believers are revealed to be joined to the living church by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is then the work of the Holy Spirit forming and adding to the living unit of the church.<sup>14</sup>

There is a vital organic character to this unity. In a human body the different parts all come from a single cell of life and they are all of one.<sup>15</sup> So also in the body of Christ all believers are joined to that body by the same Spirit.

The second work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the believer which is dealt with is His indwelling work. He not only baptizes the believer into the body of Christ but the believer is "given drink" in that one Spirit. The words of Jesus in John 7:37-39 explain this statement:



In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Jesus invites the thirsty sinner to come to Him and drink of living water (Isa 55:1; Jn 4:14). Once a person has drunk of that life-giving water, the Holy Spirit indwelling him is a river of life-giving water flowing out of him.

This passage thus teaches that the unity of all believers in the body of Christ is built upon the three-layered foundation of a mutual relationship to Christ, the baptism of all believers by the Spirit into Christ, and the indwelling of all believers by the Holy Spirit.

### **Interrelated**

In addition to emphasis on the unity of the body, passages referring to the greater body of Christ stress the interrelationship of believers in this greater body. Being united in one body includes submission to the head of the body and coordination with other members of the body.

**Ephesians 1:22,23.** These verses are the conclusion of a section in which Paul describes the exaltation of Christ after His humiliation on the cross. Christ is at the Father's right hand and placed above every power and name in time and eternity. In this context Paul declares that Christ is the head of His body which is the church. The church as His body is the complement of Him who fills the universe.

In this passage Christ is described as the head of the body which is the church. This speaks of Christ's exalted position over the church. Bruce explains that the expression head over all things is as much as to say supreme head.<sup>16</sup> The head of a body is the control center for the whole body. So Christ is head of the church, as Moule states, "as at once Chief to rule, and Life-Centre to vivify."<sup>17</sup>

There is another implication in this passage. If Christ is the head of the body, then the body must be in subjection to its head. Sawyer notes that "Jesus Christ being the head of the body implies that the body is under total submission to the direction of the head just as a human physical body would be under the impulses and desires of the brain."<sup>18</sup> Meyer further explains that "While Paul has before been setting forth the exaltation of Christ over all things, he now expresses the subjection therewith accomplished of all things under Christ."<sup>19</sup>

**Ephesians 2:16.** This passage (v 12-16) describes the work of Christ at Calvary. Before the death of Christ on the cross Gentiles were separated from God and from the covenants God had made with Israel. By the blood of Christ Gentiles are made nigh, reconciled to God and to all fellow believers in Christ. Verse sixteen clearly states that both (Jew and Gen-

tile) are reconciled to God. They are also placed into one body. The enmity or hatred that exists between them was killed by the sacrifice of Christ.

For believers in Christ there should be no racial barriers to separate. All believers of all races are one body in Christ. When a man is reconciled to God he can be reconciled to his brother in Christ regardless of the brother's race or nationality. What makes possible the church, the one body, is the cross (2:16) or its message, the gospel (3:6). All who are reconciled to God are part of His body, the church.

**Ephesians 4:1-16.** This is an urgent exhortation to a lifestyle that is worthy of the Christian calling (Eph 4:1). This exhortation is urged upon the believers in Ephesus who are a body of Christ (4:16). The exhortation begins with a plea for humility, forbearance, and love (4:2,3). This plea to the local church will be dealt with in the next section. It is important here because in this section Paul refers to the body of which all believers are a part. He declares in the beginning of the section that the church will glorify God in all eternity (3:20). This church is obviously the gathering of all believers from this age in heaven. Paul clearly has this church in mind (3:10,15). In eternity it will no longer be divided with some believers on earth and some in heaven. All will be gathered together with the Lord.

His plea for unity in the local body is based upon the unity of all believers. His argument is that there can be the unity of the Spirit in the microcosm (local body, 4:1-3,6) because all are united in one body in the macrocosm (greater body, 4:4). Paul declares that a seven-stranded band binds all believers together. All are placed in one body, indwelt by one Spirit, look forward to one hope, serve one Lord, affirm one faith, experience one baptism and worship one God.

**Ephesians 5:23,30.** In this passage Paul deals with the relationship between a husband and his wife. The marriage relationship is an illustration of the unity between Christ and His church. Twice Paul refers to the church as Christ's body. Paul teaches several truths about the church in this passage. Christ is the head of the church (v 23). He possesses authority over it, as the head controls the body. This authority is rightly Christ's because He is the church's savior. His authority is His by right of redemption. Therefore the church is subject to Christ (v 24). It is under authority to Him. He has the right to direct and control it.

Believers are members of Christ's body; they are of His flesh, and of His bones (5:30). This speaks of the close and intimate union between Christ and His saints. This headship or authority of Christ over His church is rooted in a living union between Christ and the church. Bruce states that, "As Christ is the deliverer and defender of the church which is His body so (the implication seems to be) the husband is the protector of his wife who (according to the Genesis narrative) is one flesh with him."<sup>20</sup>

**Colossians 1:18,24.** The epistle to the Colossians was written in response to an heresy of incipient Gnosticism.<sup>21</sup> The Gnostics taught that all matter was inherently evil. Christ, having a material body, could not be God but one step in a progression of worship through angels ultimately to God. Paul countered with a frontal attack, declaring that in Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead (1:19) and that bodily (2:9). God has given the incarnate Christ preeminence (1:18) and with His physical body Christ reconciled sinners to God by His death on the cross (1:20-22).

In this context Paul declares that the redeemed who make up the church are spiritually His body (1:18-24). This use of the body is in its greater sense, applying to all who have been reconciled to God. Robertson states that this figurative language clearly emphasizes Christ's supremacy:

The Gnostics dethroned Christ from his primacy (1:18) and placed him below a long line of aeons or angels. They did it with words of praise for Christ as those do now who teach Christ as only the noblest of men. The headship of Christ is the keynote of this epistle to the Colossians and the heart of Paul's Christology.<sup>22</sup>

As head of the body the church, God has given to Christ preeminence (1:18). Christ is, as Alford states, "first in rank—the word is a transitional one from priority in time to priority in dignity."<sup>23</sup> Preeminence means first in rank, dignity, honor, and power.<sup>24</sup> Since Christ is preeminent, it is the work of the church to exalt Christ. Christ alone is worthy of glory in the church. The basis for His preeminence is His resurrection from the dead (v 18).

Paul follows this statement of Christ's preeminence in His body with a statement of his suffering in the service of Christ (1:24). Paul rejoiced in his service and suffering for Christ. His suffering had nothing to do with salvation, which suffering was completed by Christ at Calvary (1:20,22). His suffering was so that the church, Christ's body, could be completed. He suffered for the perfection of the church in Christ. Every saint who suffers for the cross (eg Rev 1:9) fills up in his own place the suffering of Christ on behalf of his body<sup>25</sup> (cf I Pet 4:13-19).

**Summary.** Spiritual blessings and practical applications are obvious from the truths seen concerning the church as composed of all believers from this age.

All believers are joined to Christ and therefore are members of one another (Rom 12:5). The bond exists and is real. Believers from divergent backgrounds and locations may meet for the first time, but they sense the oneness they have in Christ. John Donne correctly observed that "No man is an island."<sup>26</sup>

At the Lord's Table believers enter into the communion of the body of Christ. Paul teaches that this is also a symbol of the fact that all believers are in one body (I Cor 10:17).

The union of all believers to Christ is accomplished by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (I Cor 12:13). This becomes the basis upon which unity is possible within a local body (I Cor 12:12,13; Eph 4:3,4).

The crucified, risen, exalted Christ is the head of the church (Eph 1:20-23). He is the One who should control the church. It follows therefore that no man has the right to control Christ's body and that the body is subject to Christ (Eph 5:24).

Scripture clearly teaches that racial differences are not a barrier in Christ's body. The enmity between the races was slain at the cross, and all men are reconciled to God by Christ (Eph 2:11-16).

Because all men are in the greater body (Eph 2:16; 4:4), there can be unity in the local body by submission to the indwelling Spirit (Eph 4:3).

The union of Christ and His body is inseparable (Eph 5:30). This is a spiritual truth giving great security to the believer. It also teaches a solemn lesson concerning the mystery of the permanent union between a husband and wife (Eph 5:31-33).

Christ is preeminent in the church (Col 1:18,24). It should be the unified purpose of the local body to glorify Him (Acts 2:46,47; Rom 15:5,6; Phil 1:27).

Paul's suffering in preaching the gospel was for the body's sake. Servants of Christ should be willing to sacrifice and suffer for the good of the body and the advancement of the cause of Christ.

## **The Local Church a Body of Christ**

In three major passages and in two minor ones Paul refers to the church as a body in a way which can only be understood as referring to a present visible local church. Each local church is a body of Christ. Before examining the passages which deal with this truth two crucial principles need to be grasped.

First, it must be clearly understood that the reference to the church as a body of Christ is as Saucy observes a figurative reference:

It is important to recognize that when Scripture speaks of the church as the body of Christ, it speaks figuratively or metaphorically and not literally or in any realistic sense which makes the church equal to Christ as an extension of His incarnation.<sup>27</sup>

The union of Christ as the head with His body the church is a spiritual union of relationship. It has nothing to do with an organization as the visible expression on earth. No organization can use this reasoning to claim to be the one true church. Gundry points out Paul's clear distinctions between the physical body of Christ and the church as His body:

But whether or not Paul was the first to use "body" for a collective but single organism, a better reading of Paul will bring into view a distinction between the physical body of Christ and the ecclesiastical body of Christ. Paul himself knows the distinction in writing, on the one hand, about Christ's "glorious body" (Phil 3:21; cf I Cor 15:42-49) and, on the other hand, about the larger body whose feet, hands, ears, eyes, and other members consist of believers (I Cor 12). Moreover, to equate the present physical body of Christ with believers wreaks havoc with the temporal distinction Paul carefully makes between the pastness of Christ's resurrection and the futurity of believers' resurrection (see esp I Cor 15:20-28; cf II Tim 2:17-18). On the other side, not to equate believers with a body of Christ, merely to attach them sacramentally and mystically, would fail to do justice to Paul's statements (previously quoted) that the church is the body of Christ and that individual believers make up the specific organs and limbs.<sup>28</sup>

The second principle to be understood is a matter of focus. All believers are part of Christ's body and a local church is a body of Christ; these facts relate to the inner life of the church. It deals with the relationship of believers as members of Christ's body to one another and to Him. While the health of the body will affect its ministry to the lost in the world, this truth focuses on the inner life of the body. Gundry clarifies:

However, where Paul uses the phrase, "the body of Christ," he discusses the inner structure and workings of the body in the inter-relationship of its various organs and limbs. Paul nowhere relates the body of Christ to outward activities in relationship to others. Thus the cohesiveness and harmonious function of a single physical body, considered by itself, provides Paul with a model for the church in the inter-relationships of its own members.<sup>29</sup>

The church, Christ's body, is the center of Christ's activity now, as His physical body was during His earthly ministry.<sup>30</sup> Thus the church is the extension of His ministry, as Erickson states:

As the body of Christ, the church is the extension of his ministry. We ought not press this idea too far in the direction of viewing the church as a literal incarnation of Christ, for the result would be a virtual pantheism. Rather, we should look to Christ's Great Commission. Having indicated that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to him (Matt 28:18), he sent his disciples to evangelize, baptize, and teach, promising them that he would be with them always, even to the end of the age (vv 19-20). He told them that they were to carry on his work, and would do so to an amazing degree: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father" (John 14:12). The work of Christ, then, if it is done at all, will be done by his body, the church.<sup>31</sup>

In each of the major passages dealing with the local church as a body of Christ there seems to be a similar thought pattern. Each passage revolves, in the same order, around the concepts of unity, diversity, and mutuality.<sup>32</sup> These concepts will be traced in each passage.

### Romans 12:3-8

**Unity.** This passage begins with a plea for unity within the body, based upon humility of mind in each believer (v 3). Members of the body are not to be exalted in pride. Certainly the life of the individual Christian is to be characterized by humility.<sup>33</sup> Proper thinking of oneself comes from a mind which is not conformed to the world but has been transformed by the renewing of the mind.<sup>34</sup> This humility of mind is the responsibility of every believer (v 3). The phrase “all the ones being with you” is “a strong bringing out of the individual application of the precept.”<sup>35</sup> Alford points out the forceful argument for humility of mind:

There is a play on the words *phronein*, *hyperphronein*, and *sophronein* which can only be clumsily conveyed in another language: “not to be high minded above that which he ought to be minded, but to be so minded, as to be sober minded.”<sup>36</sup>

Proper thinking by the individual of himself will produce the realization there are many members in a body and all believers with a common relationship to Christ are one body in Him. The common relationship of the many to Christ is the basis of unity within the body. This unity is achieved when believers in a church realize that they are to the body of Christ what body parts are to the physical body—namely individual functioning members of the whole.

All members of the body are a unity, but each member is diverse in function. All members do not have the same office (v 4). The word office identifies an activity, thing to be done, or function.<sup>37</sup>

**Diversity.** The differing functions within the body are there by design. God in His grace has given differing gifts to believers. In each church there is a plurality of members, each with varied capacities. Each believer is to remain in his function.<sup>38</sup> Several of the differing gifts given to believers are named in this passage. Some had the gift of prophecy (v 6). Others had the gifts of ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, ruling, or mercy (v 7,8).

The Holy Spirit makes an analogy in this passage between the different parts of the human body and the different gifts given to Christ's body. The body is one (unity) with many differing parts having different offices or things to be done (diversity). As the different body parts work together to make the body function, so the different members of Christ's body use their gifts for the harmonious working of that body.

**Mutuality.** Saucy describes the concept of mutuality when he says, “As the operation of the human body demands the cooperation and dependence of its members one upon another, so the body of Christ demands a mutuality.”<sup>39</sup> The head needs the eye and the brain to coordinate its movements. Each part of the body is dependent upon the heart and the vascular system to provide it with blood. So in the same fashion each member of Christ's body is dependent upon the other members of that body.

In this passage the mutuality of believers is only stated. Believers are part of one body because they share a mutual relationship to Christ (v 5). Believers so united to Christ are mutually dependent on one another as Kuyper states:

And this applies to the church in every respect. That great body requires the doing of many and various things for the common weal. There is need of guidance, of prophesying, of heroism; mercy must be exercised, the sick must be healed, etc. And this great, mutual task the Lord has divided among many members. He has given to His body, the church, eyes, ears, hands, and feet; and to each of these organic members a peculiar task, calling, and office.<sup>40</sup>

Scripture clearly bears out this truth in several places. Peter speaking of spiritual gifts gives instruction as to their use: "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (I Pet 4:10). Believers are to use their gifts to minister to one another. These gifts are to be used in serving others in the local body of Christ. Paul sets forth that same principle when he instructs the Galatian Christians that by love they serve one another (Gal 5:13).

### **I Corinthians 12:12-30**

Paul sets forth his proposition at the very beginning of this section (v 12): (1) The body is one (unity); (2) The body has many members (diversity); (3) The body members, being many, are one body (mutuality); (4) The three aforementioned principles, true of the human body, are also true of Christ.

After this propositional statement Paul spends the major portion of the passage dealing with the principles of unity, diversity, and mutuality in the physical body. Only in verse 27 does he directly apply those principles to the church as a body of Christ. It is already clear from the parallel in verse 12 that the Holy Spirit intends readers to understand that what is true of the physical body is true of the spiritual body. The parallel is reinforced by the use of the verb *etheto* in verses 18 and 28. God's design is apparent in both bodies. For this reason applications will be made as they become apparent in this section.

**Unity.** The unity of a local body of Christ is first based upon the unity of all believers in the larger body (v 13). All believers have been baptized into one body by the Holy Spirit. If all believers are part of Christ's body and have been joined to Him by the Holy Spirit's baptizing work, then the unity of believers within a local body should be both possible and actual.

The unity of a local body of Christ is further built upon the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit. Since all believers have been indwelt (made to drink into one Spirit, v 13) then the Holy Spirit should control them all and bring unity to a local body.

This two-fold work of the Holy Spirit in the believer is a potent argument for the unity of a local body. Because of these works of the Holy Spirit, a local body, diversely gifted, can and should live in a condition where there is no schism (v 25) in the body, but rather a mutual sympathy and joy among the members of the body (v 26).

It must be noted that this unity can exist only when believers recognize and willingly submit to the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. A J Gordon puts the issue in clear focus:

Whether the authority of this one ruling sovereign Holy Ghost be recognized or ignored determines whether the church shall be an anarchy or a unity, a synagogue of the lawless or a temple of the living God.<sup>41</sup>

**Diversity.** There is a wide diversity among believers. As believers comprise a local body there is a diversity within that body. In the first part of this chapter Paul states a three-fold diversity: in gift (v 4), in administration or ministry (v 5) and in operation or works wrought (v 6). This diversity in gift, ministry, and effect among believers is based upon their unity. The diverse gifts come from the same indwelling Spirit, the varying ministries are from the same Lord, and the different works are from the same God. The diversities in ministry and work accomplished spring from the diversities of gifts among believers.

The diversity in the body comes from the unity of the body. The Spirit gives gifts to every man (v 7). All the gifts have their source in the Holy Spirit (v 11) and are given to men sovereignly, according as He will (v 11). After these statements Paul illustrates the truth by the diversity within the human body (v 14-18). He draws a parallel between the diverse gifts within the church and the diverse parts of the body. Just as the Holy Spirit gives to men as He will (v 11), so God set the members in the body as it hath pleased him (v 18). It is clearly stated again that God set the gifts in their order in the church (v 28). The same verb, *tithemi*, is used in verses 18 and 28. God set both members of the physical body and gifts in the spiritual body. God creates and orders the body according to His will. God similarly puts people with varying gifts in the church and forms each church according to His will for its ministry. Each local body is unique, formed by God for its individual ministry. It follows that believers should take seriously their places in the body. Believers should actively participate in the ministry of the local body because they have been placed there by God to contribute to the body's health and function.

Further, believers should take extreme care in the matter of leaving one church for another. There are scriptural guidelines for fellowship. When the scriptures are ignored it may be necessary for a believer to leave a local church. Many believers leave churches rather than solve problems biblically. Sometimes believers leave churches for silly or selfish reasons. Since God set gifts in the church (v 28) then believers ought to consider that they are placed by God in the body. They ought not to leave unless there is compelling scriptural reason.



Diversity is needed in the church as it is in the human body. Both foot and hand (v 15), both eye and ear (v 17) and smelling (v 17) are needed in the body. All of the parts of the body are necessary to the body and to each other. No body parts are independent of the others. Believers need to be aware of the hand of God in the diversity within the church. Rather than desiring another's gift, believers should accept theirs as from God and use it for His glory (I Pet 4:10,11). Vine states:

Further, since the differing functions in the spiritual body, the local assembly, are analogical to those of the physical, any discontent, envy, pride or indifference on the part of any member of the spiritual body is nothing short of dissatisfaction with God's plan, and revolt against His will.<sup>42</sup>

**Mutuality.** There is a demonstrated interdependence among the members of the physical body and also between the members of the spiritual body. Neither the eye nor the hand nor the head nor the feet can function without the others (v 21). In the physical body the seemingly feeble members are necessary (v 22). Perhaps Paul has in mind here that a diseased or weak member of the body receives more care than the physically strong parts of the body. Special attention is also given to those parts of the body which are less honorable (v 23). Limbs which by custom are covered or parts of the body whose exposure would be indecent are given garments of honor.<sup>43</sup> God has tempered the body together according to His plan (v 24).

There is a two-fold purpose for this divine building of the human body stated in verse 25. The first purpose in a clause introduced by *hina* (in order that) is that there be no schism in the body. The diverse parts of the body ought to function together harmoniously as a unit. Paul follows the negative "no schism" with a clear contrast by the use of the word *alla* (but). The positive is that the members should have a mutual care for each other. The verb carries the idea of concern for the welfare of another.<sup>44</sup> This care is directed by each part of the body to the other parts of the body. Verse 26 carries this thought to its logical conclusion. The same care by the parts of the body means that healthy members compensate for suffering ones and all members rejoice in the honor of the others.

The application comes to the local church as a body of Christ in verse 27. The Corinthian church was, and local churches are, a body of Christ (v 27). Each believer has gifts diverse from the others (v 28). All are mutually dependent upon the others. Paul is clear to point out that all believers do not have the same gift. The gifts are given by the Holy Spirit according to His divine purpose (v 11). The rhetorical questions of verses 29 and 30 make it apparent that no gift is given to all believers. There is a spiritual way by which all believers one with another yet diverse in gift can work together for their mutual good. It is a more excellent way (v 31), the way of love (I Cor 13).

## Ephesians 4:1-16

In urging believers to a lifestyle that is worthy of their calling, Paul exhorts the Ephesians to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (v 3). He immediately introduces the concept of the body as the basis of this unity (v 4). He then deals with the ministry gifts and their divinely intended purpose, which twice relate to the body (v 12,16). This is a passage which deals with the local church as a body of Christ since it relates to service in the body here on earth (v 3,11,12,16).

**Unity.** Unity seems to be the major purpose for which this passage is written. The passage begins with a plea for unity (v 3) and sets forth unity to be one of the goals of the gifts (4:11-13). The call for unity is fortified with a seven-fold foundation which should produce unity within the body.

The first fact which lends itself to the unity of a church is "one body" (v 4). Paul has stated earlier in this chapter that all believers are one body in Christ (1:22,23), that all barriers between believers are abolished in Christ (2:15), and that all are reconciled together in one body in Him (2:16). If all believers are part of that one body, then certainly believers in a local church can function in unity.

The second reason why unity can prevail in a local church is because of "one spirit" (v 4). The same Spirit indwelling all believers should control them and produce unity (v 3; I Cor 12:13).

The third reason for unity is "one hope of your calling" (v 4). That hope is the appearing of Christ for His saints (Tit 2:13,14; I Jn 3:2,3). If all saints look for the return of Christ, then they should be able to function together in unity on earth.

The fourth argument for unity is that all believers serve "one Lord" (v 5). Christ, for whom all saints look (v 4), is the Lord whom all saints serve.

The fifth reinforcement of unity in a local church is "one faith" (v 5). This is probably a reference to faith in the objective sense,<sup>45</sup> the body of truth which has been revealed by God (Jude 3).

The sixth reason for unity is "one baptism" (v 5). We take this to refer to the water baptism of believers rather than to Spirit baptism. Bruce succinctly states the reason for this interpretation:

If the "one baptism" here had meant Spirit-baptism to the exclusion of water-baptism, it would surely have been associated with "one Spirit" and not "one Lord." But the point here is that Jewish and Gentile believers alike acknowledged one Lord, shared one faith in Him, and had undergone one baptism in His name.<sup>46</sup>

The last foundational truth to unity is "one God and Father of all" (v 6). This is probably a reference to Malachi 3:10.<sup>47</sup> Having received Christ by faith all believers can call God their father.

The Trinity is named in this call to unity. This list of seven reasons for unity fall into two triads. One triad comes from the Spirit (v 4) and one from Christ the Lord (v 5). The Father stands alone because all are traceable to Him, and He is "above all, through all and in you all" (v 6).<sup>48</sup> It is possible that Paul was referring here to an early creed which was used among first century Christians.<sup>49</sup> Hendricksen summarizes: "Accordingly, what we have here is a seven-fold description of a three-fold unity, a statement of the character of Christian unity and of its trinitarian source."<sup>50</sup>

**Diversity.** Diversity within the unified body is expounded upon beginning in verse 7. The gifts are given to every one. These gifts are given as manifestations of God's grace (cf I Pet 4:10). They are given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Eadie points out the diversity taught here:

The gift is measured; and while each individual receives, he receives according to the will of the sovereign Distributor. And whether the measure be great or small, whether its contents be of more brilliant endowment or of humbler and unnoticed talent, all is equally Christ's gift...and forms an argument why each one gifted with such grace should keep the unity of the Spirit.<sup>51</sup>

The gifts named in this passage (v 11) could be called the ministry gifts. They refer to the ministry of the word in the local body. Apostles were a foundational gift to the church as was prophecy (Eph 2:20). Apostles had to be witnesses of Christ's earthly life and resurrection (Acts 1:21,22). This appears to have been true of all the apostles except Paul, who saw the resurrected Lord in glory (I Cor 15:8). Apostleship does not continue today. Prophets received direct revelation from God. When the New Testament was completed, this gift ended.<sup>52</sup> Evangelists are a continuing gift to the church. This gift is named only two other times in the New Testament. Philip was called an evangelist (Acts 21:8) and Timothy, a pastor, was instructed to do the work of an evangelist (II Tim 4:8). Pastor-teachers are men who occupy the office of pastor in churches in every generation. Bruce notes:

The two terms 'pastors (shepherds) and teachers' denote one and the same class of men. They are the men who 'tend the flock of God' and care for its wellbeing, showing other Christians by precept and example alike the path of Christian faith and life (I Pet 5:2; Acts 20:28). They are the same people as are elsewhere called elders and bishops, one of whose qualifications is being 'apt to teach' (I Tim 3:2).<sup>53</sup>

The next verses are very important because they reveal the purpose for the gifts to the local church. They show the immediate purpose (v 12), the goal (v 13), and the results (v 14,15) for the ministry and for these gifts when used in the ministry.<sup>54</sup> The immediate purpose of the gifts is to perfect or to equip the saints for the work of ministry or service<sup>55</sup> and to build up the body (v 12). Jones notes this purpose:

Why does He give these gifts? for the sake and the good of His people. 'And he gave some, apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.' What for? They are there for the benefit of the church. He has planned the church and brought her into being, and He has provided these offices and officers in the church 'for the perfecting of the saints.' It is in order that we who have become believers, and are in this 'one body,' and sharing in this glorious unity, might be taught and trained.<sup>56</sup>

The goal of these gifts is the unity of the body in faith and the maturity of the saints (v 13). The results of the ministry will be the discernment (v 14) and growth of believers in Christ (v 15).

**Mutuality.** The results of the ministry and the gifts accompanying it are accomplished through the mutual cooperation of the members with one another. It should be noted that Paul shifts the emphasis in verse 12 from those who have received the ministry gifts to those to whom the gifted ones minister. The emphasis on the body as a whole continues to verse 16. Also the illustration with reference to the body changes. In I Corinthians 12 the parts of the body referred to were hands, feet and eyes. In this passage the joints are used.

The body grows up in Christ who is the head. He is not only the head of His body which is made up of all believers from this age (Eph 1:22,23) but He is also the head of His body in a local vicinity which is ministered to by evangelists and pastor-teachers (vv 11,12,15,16). The body is dependent upon every member. Though each person is diversely gifted each one contributes to the good of the whole. Each one has been fitly framed with the others and put together with the others to form the body (v 16).<sup>57</sup> As joints hold the physical body together so each one supplies something to the unity and work of the whole body (v 16). As each person fitted into the body contributes to the body under the control of Christ the head, the body increases and builds itself in love (v 16).

The growth of the body is from Christ in love. It appears that part of the growth of a local church is dependent upon its inner spiritual health. The diverse members of a body must be properly related to each other for the body to be able to grow and increase. The body must be fitly joined together (v 16), joined closely together.<sup>58</sup> The body must also be compacted (v 16), coalesced, or united together.<sup>59</sup> Bruce explains how each believer contributes through this unity to the growth of the body.

Each individual Christian ought to grow up into spiritual maturity, but spiritual maturity in the individual Christian is not enough; there must be spiritual maturity in the corporate personality of the church. And one indispensable for such corporate maturity is spiritual unity.<sup>60</sup>

The emphasis of this passage is upon the unity of the body. It begins with an extensive plea for unity (v 1-6). It shows how the diversity within the body contributes to the equipping of each member for ministry and

to the building of the body. It concludes by showing how the diverse members, unified by being joined closely and coalesced, contributed to the growth of the body in love.

### **Colossians 2:19**

After describing the work of Christ at Calvary which reconciled sinners to God (1:20-22), blotted out the law and its curse (2:14), and destroyed the powers of Satan (2:15), Paul urges the Colossians not to be judged nor deceived by those who would enslave them again. He has taught them that Christ is the head of the church (1:18) and that they are complete in Him (2:9,10). They are not to be judged (v 16) nor beguiled (v 18), which would draw them back into the old bondage and keep them from holding fast to the head (v 19) who is Christ (1:18).

Colossians 2:19 teaches the same truth and uses the same imagery of Ephesians 4:16. Several truths are emphasized about the church, Christ's body. Since it is a church made up of believers who are contributing to its unity and experiencing its growth, it is to be understood as a local visible body of Christ.

Christ is the head, and this verse declares that the increase or growth of the church comes from Him. Using the preposition out of, Paul declares that Christ is the one who produces the increase of the body. Lightfoot notes, "The supplication and worship of angels is a substitution of inferior members for the head, which is the only source of spiritual life and energy."<sup>61</sup> Christ is the head of His local body as well as of His universal body. No Diotrophes (III John 9) has the right to seek to control nor to dominate a local body of Christ's believers. As head, Christ alone has the right to control the body. Only He can give it its growth.

The other truth taught here has to do with the unity of the body. The body is joined together by ligaments and joints and in that unity increases or grows with the growth that God gives it. This is parallel to the teaching of Ephesians 4:15.

### **Colossians 3:15**

The Colossians are exhorted to let the peace of God rule in their hearts. Previously in this chapter Paul has urged them to put to death sin (v 5) and to put off wrong sinful feelings and words (v 8,9). He also instructed them to put on the new man (v 10), to put on kindness, compassion, and patience toward one another (v 12,13), and to put on love (v 14). Having put off the evil and having put on the holy, they can let God's peace rule in their hearts and within the body. This is a strong plea for unity within the body. The peace of Christ is to be in command in the heart of the believer and in the body to which the believer has been called. Eadie explains the concept:

And such tranquility, which in its highest aspect in Christian felicity was not simply to be in their hearts, but it was to “rule” in them; it was not merely to have existence, but it was to exercise supreme command.<sup>62</sup>

It appears that peace and unity within the body is in large measure dependent upon the spiritual relationship of the believer to his Lord. If he puts off the vestiges of the old nature and puts on the new man, he will have the peace of Christ controlling in his own heart. As all the members of the body are obedient to God in this way it logically follows that there will be peace in the body to which they have been called.

**Summary.** Local churches and believers within them can learn much from the truth that a local assembly is a body of Christ. Pastors need to study, preach, and teach this truth to their people. Its application in the lives of churches and believers has the potential to revolutionize the corporate life and ministry of local churches everywhere.

Great emphasis is placed in the NT upon the unity of the local body. The foundation of unity includes the common relationship to Christ shared by all believers (Rom 12:15), the baptizing and indwelling work of the Holy Spirit (I Cor 12:13), and the seven-fold cord which is trinitarian in its nature (Eph 4:4-6). Believers are exhorted to preserve the unity of the Spirit within the body (Eph 4:3). The diverse gifts within the body should promote the unity of the body. God intends for there to be no schism in the body (I Cor 12:25) and for the members of the body to care for one another (I Cor 12:25). The diversely gifted members are to be fitted together to give growth to the body (Eph 4:16). As God’s peace rules in the heart of the obedient believer there can be peace within the corporate body (Col 3:15).

Believers who are one in Christ are endowed with diverse gifts (Rom 12:3-8; I Cor 12:10,11,28-30; Eph 4:11). These gifts are given according to grace (Rom 12:6), the will of God (I Cor 12:11,28), and the measure of Christ (Eph 4:7). It is not for believers to covet the gifts of others, but rather to use their own gifts for God’s glory in ministering to the body (I Pet 4:10,11). Believers should abide in their own gifts. No one should look down on others because of the difference in gifts. The differences between gifts must be recognized and the unity of the body must be preserved.<sup>63</sup>

This diversity should result in mutual care by the members for each other (I Cor 12:25). Each member supplies something which aids the growth and unity of the body (Eph 4:16; Col 2:19). As the parts of the physical body are dependent upon one another, so the members of the spiritual body are dependent upon each other (I Cor 12:15,17,21). God has designed both the physical body and the spiritual, local body of Christ

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This diversity should result in mutual care by the members for each other (I Cor 12:25). Each member supplies something which aids the growth and unity of the body (Eph 4:16; Col 2:19). As the parts of the physical body are dependent upon one another, so the members of the spiritual body are dependent upon each other (I Cor 12:15,17,21). God has designed both the physical body and the spiritual, local body of Christ



the same way (I Cor 12:18,28). This demands that Christians understand that God has formed Christ's body and put them into it. Faithfulness to the local body is essential.

There is a philosophy abroad today that Christians can "free lance" the use of their gifts and not be a part of a local church if their gifts do not mesh with the body.<sup>64</sup> The teaching of the Scriptures is just the opposite. The gifts are given to be used within the body and to build the body (Rom 12:5; I Cor 12:13,14; Eph 4:11,12). It must not be overlooked that the three major passages which deal with the gifts deal also with the body. God intends for believers to serve Him on earth in Christ's body, a local church. Erickson, eloquently explains this:

The image of the church as the body of Christ emphasizes that the church is the locus of Christ's activity now, just as was his physical body during his earthly ministry.<sup>65</sup>

Christ is set forth as the head of His local visible bodies (Eph 4:16; Col 2:19). He supplies the growth to the body (Eph 4:15; Col 2:19). Believers, the members of the body, are to hold fast to Christ who is the head of the body (Col 3:19). The believer is complete in Him; He is the believer's sufficiency (Col 2:9,10). He is the preeminent One (Col 1:18). No man has the right to seek preeminence in the body (III John 9). He alone is to be glorified in the body.

## **Conclusion**

The fact that the church is Christ's body makes several deep, spiritual impressions. The Lord Jesus Christ can claim the church as His body because He loved it and gave Himself for it (Eph 5:23-30). In His exaltation He is rightly its head. All believers in this age regardless of geographical location or race are joined to Him and thus to each other. Believers now in heaven, those on earth, and those yet to come (if Jesus carries) will meet together in heaven with Him in eternity. The meeting of that body perfected in holiness and glory (Eph 5:25-27) with the Lord Jesus her head (Eph 1:22,23) in heaven (Heb 12:23,24) is a wonderful prospect indeed. The Holy Spirit baptizes all believers into Christ's body (I Cor 12:13) and all believers are one body in Him (Rom 12:5).

Each local church is also called a body of Christ. He is not only the head of the body of all believers but also of each visible body (Eph 4:15,16; Col 2:19). He is its authority. The local church is not man's to direct but Christ's. He alone is its head. Believers are set in the local body (I Cor 12:28). They are given gifts with which to serve one another and to glorify God. As the saints are perfected the work of the ministry will be performed (Eph 4:12) and the church will grow into unity, maturity, discernment, and love in Christ (Eph 4:13-16).

Believers in the body need to be aware that they not only need the other members of the body, but also that the other members need them.

The physical body needs all its parts to contribute to its proper functioning. The members of the spiritual body need what each member can contribute to the whole and to the other members.

A proper attitude prevails when Christians remember that their gifts are given by the Holy Spirit according to His will. No one should boast of his gift nor be ashamed of it. God has given each his gift to use. This awareness will promote humility of mind, willing service and genuine care for other believers. Believers need to realize also that the gifts are to be used within the body. The church is the place where God's work is to be done in this age. It is a place of fellowship, service and encouragement.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This article was developed from "The Use of *Soma* in Relation to the Church" an unpublished paper submitted to Central Baptist Theological Seminary of Minneapolis in partial fulfillment of requirements for the Doctor of Ministry degree.

<sup>2</sup> W E Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Westwood: Fleming H Revell Co, 1966) p 84; W F Arndt and F W Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press, 1957) p 240

<sup>3</sup> W F Moulton and A S Geden, *A Concordance to the Greek New Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1926) pp 316,17

<sup>4</sup> Millard J Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985) pp 1032,33

<sup>5</sup> C I Scofield, *Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford Univ Press, 1945) p 1304

<sup>6</sup> *Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons Ltd) pp 717,18

<sup>7</sup> J H Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ House, 1962) p 611; Arndt and Gingrich, pp 806,807

<sup>8</sup> W E Vine, *First Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ House, 1965) pp 175,176

<sup>9</sup> A H Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1976) p 892

<sup>10</sup> H A Ironside, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Loizeaux Bros, 1938) p 299

<sup>11</sup> Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament, I Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979) p 190

<sup>12</sup> For an explanation that this is Spirit baptism and not water baptism see Warren Vanhetloo, "Spirit Baptism" *Calvary Baptist Theological Journal* Vol 3, No 1 (Spring, 1987) pp 39-65

<sup>13</sup> Henry Alford, *The Greek New Testament II*, (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell and Co, 1887) p 580

<sup>14</sup> John Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Dunham Publ Co, 1965) pp 140,141

<sup>15</sup> D Martin Lloyd Jones, *The Basis of Christian Unity* (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publ Co, 1965) p 27

<sup>16</sup> F F Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (Old Tappan: Fleming H Revell Co, 1974) p 43

<sup>17</sup> H C G Moule, *Ephesian Studies* (London: Pickering and Inglis, n d) p 51

<sup>18</sup> Vincent S Sawyer, "The Church as Body" (unpublished term paper, Calvary Baptist Seminary, 1985) p 6

<sup>19</sup> H A W Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Ephesians* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1892) p 345

<sup>20</sup> Bruce, pp 114,115

<sup>21</sup> Robert G Gromacki, *Stand Perfect in Wisdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981) p 13

<sup>22</sup> A T Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament, IV* (Nashville, Broadman Press, 1931) p 497

<sup>23</sup> Alford, III, p 205

<sup>24</sup> Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament, Colossians*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979) p 250

- <sup>25</sup> Alford, III, p 210
- <sup>26</sup> John Donne, "No Man Is an Island" in *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, ed Paul Lee Tan (Rockville: Assurance Publ, 1979) p 904
- <sup>27</sup> Robert L Saucy, *The Church in God's Program* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972) p 25
- <sup>28</sup> Robert H Grundy, *SOMA in Biblical Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ Press, 1976) p 228
- <sup>29</sup> Gundry, p 226
- <sup>30</sup> Erickson, p 1036
- <sup>31</sup> Erickson, pp 1038,1039
- <sup>32</sup> Saucy, pp 26,27
- <sup>33</sup> Alva J McClain, *Romans, The Gospel of God's Grace* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979) p 209
- <sup>34</sup> Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament, Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979) p 272
- <sup>35</sup> Henry Alford, *The Greek New Testament II* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell and Co, 1887) p 440
- <sup>36</sup> Alford, III, p 441
- <sup>37</sup> Arndt and Gingrich, p 704
- <sup>38</sup> F Godet, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ House, 1970) p 430
- <sup>39</sup> Saucy, p 27
- <sup>40</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publ Co, 1941) p 182
- <sup>41</sup> A J Gordon, *The Ministry of the Holy Spirit* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1964) pp 129,30
- <sup>42</sup> W E Vine, *First Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ House, 1965) p 173
- <sup>43</sup> Alford, II, p 582
- <sup>44</sup> Arndt and Gingrich, p 506
- <sup>45</sup> B F Wescott, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (Minneapolis: Klock and Klock, 1978) p 58
- <sup>46</sup> Bruce, p 80
- <sup>47</sup> Bruce, p 80
- <sup>48</sup> William Hendrickson, *New Testament Commentary, Exposition of Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967) p 185
- <sup>49</sup> Tom Julian, *Inherited Wealth, Studies in Ephesians* (Winona Lake: B M H Books, 1976) p 75
- <sup>50</sup> Hendrickson, p 185
- <sup>51</sup> John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Minneapolis: James and Klock Publ, 1977) p 280
- <sup>52</sup> Jack Jacobs, *What's Right with the Church, Studies in Ephesians* (Schaumburg: Regular Baptist Press, 1980) p 63
- <sup>53</sup> Bruce, pp 85,86
- <sup>54</sup> Julian, pp 84-87
- <sup>55</sup> Arndt and Gingrich, p 419
- <sup>56</sup> Jones, pp 34,35
- <sup>57</sup> Eadie, p 322
- <sup>58</sup> Thayer, p 601
- <sup>59</sup> Thayer, p 595; Arndt and Gingrich, p 785
- <sup>60</sup> Bruce, pp 86,87
- <sup>61</sup> J B Lightfoot, *St Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ House, 1973) p 198
- <sup>62</sup> John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians* (Minneapolis: James and Klock Publ, 1977) p 248
- <sup>63</sup> David M Gower, "Body Unity and Diversity" *The Baptist Bulletin*, Feb, 1986, p 17
- <sup>64</sup> Joseph C Aldrich, *Lifestyle Evangelism* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1981) pp 163,164
- <sup>65</sup> Erickson, pp 1036,37